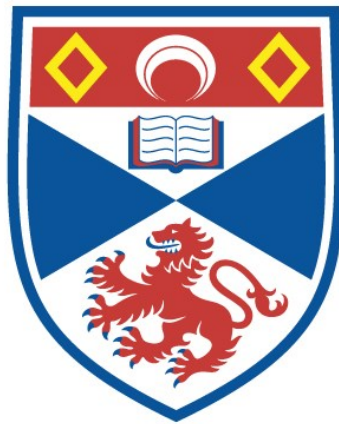# THE MORAL (IM)POSSIBILITIES OF BEING AN APPLIED ANTHROPOLOGIST IN DEVELOPMENT : AN EXPLORATION OF THE MORAL AND ETHICAL ISSUES THAT ARISE IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

Christopher MacLullich

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews

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The Moral (im)Possibilities of Being an Applied Anthropologist in Development

An Exploration of the Moral and Ethical Issues that Arise in Theory and Practice

Christopher MacLullich

Dissertation submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

to the

School of Philosophical and Anthropological Studies

University of St. Andrews

Date of Submission: 30 June 2003

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(i)   I, Christopher MacLullich, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 100,000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

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Acknowledgements

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Preface

My overnumerous intentions have made this thesis both challenging and fascinating to write. I hope that the latter characteristic endures more strongly in the reading of it. My initial aim had been to write a monograph about rural development projects that involved the Mapuche of Chile. I hoped to add to the anthropological critique of development policy and practice. In particular I wanted to present the argument that a greater understanding of indigenous knowledge, sociality and values is urgently required if development practice can change in ways that will enhance the well being of indigenous peoples. Whilst this thesis was never written, certain aims remain intact.

Personal circumstances made it impossible to undertake the long term field work that I had planned. For this reason, my choice of fieldwork had both opportunistic and deliberate elements to it. The range of localities that I undertook fieldwork was matched by the range of genres and discourses that I examined, all the while seeking connections between them and holding onto some of the insights that I had gained in my first year of preparation. The experience of being immersed in the world of the interpretative social anthropology of Amazonia and then aiming to apprehend the policy discourse of DFID (The UK government's Department for International Development), various NGOs and the UN was instructive, not least in deciphering the verisimilitude or veracity of each discourse and their fundamental disagreements.

In addition to library research, I gathered data, understood new questions and came to conclusions in the following research endeavours.

In Bolivia I worked, with other social anthropologists, as a consultant for DFID. Here I collaborated with members of CIDOB, an organisation that represents the indigenous peoples of the lowlands of Bolivia. Following this I undertook two further research tasks for DFID, this time for the Civil Society Department. The central objective of the first report was to present an analysis of the views, policies and practices of UK based NGOs on a 'rights based approach' to development.

Part of this report involved doing research in Lima and Callao, Peru to assess a project entitled 'Pilot Training Programme for the Promotion of Economic Rights in Peru'. The project was designed collaboratively by the UK based NGO Womankind Worldwide and the Peruvian women's rights organisation *Asociacion Aurora Vivar* with further input from *Federacion de Centrales de Comedores Populares y Autogestionarios de Lima y Callao* (FECCPAALC). The purpose of this report was to give an analysis of a pilot project design which sought to enhance women's access to their economic and participatory rights in Lima, Peru.

The final report I wrote for DFID comprised a review of the ways in which projects funded by the 'Joint Funding Scheme' in Central and South America reflected a 'Rights Based Approach' to development. On the basis of the above analysis, I made a number of recommendations to DFID's Civil Society Department on ways in which future funding decisions and requirements can better achieve a rights based approach.

The resulting reports written for DFID are as follows:

Kidd, S. and MacLullich, C. (2000) *(1) An Analysis of Indigenous Organisations and Indigenous Representativity in Lowland Bolivia and (2) Possible Areas of Future Work for DFID among the Indigenous People of the Region* (Internal Report - Latin American and Caribbean Desk).

MacLullich, C. (2001) *Implementing a Rights Based Approach to Development; Policies, Practices and Reflections of UK Based Non-Governmental Development Organisations (Civil Society Department – DFID).*

MacLullich, C. (2001) *A Review of the ways in which projects funded by the Joint Funding Scheme in Central and South America reflected a 'Rights Based Approach' to development (Civil Society Department).*

MacLullich, C. (2001) *Pilot Training Programme for the Promotion of Economic Rights in Peru. An analysis of 3 NGO's Concerted Approach to Income Generation, Training for Work and Participatory Political Proposals for Women in Lima (Civil Society Department).*

These separate research projects are not presented individually in the thesis. Instead, what I have sought to do is draw upon this research to inform my discussion on the moral and ethical dilemmas of social anthropologists working in development.

Abbreviations and Glossary

CDI	Community-Based Development Initiatives
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women
CERD	Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
CP	Civil and Political
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSCF	Civil Society Challenge Fund
CSO	Civil society organisation
CSP	DFID Country Strategy Paper
DAC	Development Assistance Committee of OECD
DFID	Department for International Development
EEC	European Economic Community
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
ESC	Economic, Social and Cultural
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
HRA	Human Rights Assessment
ICCPR	International Convention on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
IDT	International Development Target
IFI	International Financial Institution
ILO	International Labour Organisation
JFS	Joint Funding Scheme
NGO	Non-governmental organisation.
NNGO	Northern NGO
OECD	Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development
PFA	Platform for Action
PHRA	Participatory Human Rights Assessment
PPA	Participatory Poverty Assessment
RB	Rights Based
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
SNGO	Southern NGO
UN	United Nations
UNDHR	Universal Declaration on Human Rights
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
WHO	World Health Organisation
WTO	World Trade Organisation

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Abstract

My broadest aim in this thesis is to explore some of the central ethical concerns of social anthropologists vis-à-vis the phenomena of development. In particular, what I want to bring out and examine is the dynamics of the 'moral experience' and 'moral force' of anthropologists in this area. I go about this by considering the historical unfolding of the anthropological conceptual and evaluative apprehension of planned social and economic change. On this basis, I also consider the nature of the critiques and contributions that social anthropology has generated. I also make an attempt to review the major conceptual moral controversies and agendas that are intrinsic to development from an anthropological perspective. Whilst the concepts and values that emanate from social anthropology are multi-faceted and many stranded, I believe that the anthropological standpoint is both distinctive and potentially counter hegemonic. I look specifically at the moral resources that can be unearthed from the emerging field of 'development ethics' which is largely articulated in terms of the maxims that are fundamental to Western moral and political traditions. I attempt to set out the terrain of the ethical deliberation of anthropologists involved in development in terms of some of the moral difficulties of Western society. I argue that Western moral reasoning, as a result of deep disagreements about the sources of value in human life and society, tends to rely upon procedural, instrumental and coercive ethical frameworks. On this basis, one of my assertions is that communitarian arguments, whilst also being needed as a healthy antidote to the excesses of liberal individualism, also constitute a reflection of the aspirations of people(s), many of whom are beleaguered by the alienation, atomism and instrumentalism of modern society. The communitarian perspective also underpins a political commitment to supporting those besieged indigenous communities that struggle to defend their integrity in the face of the aggressive intrusions of the market mentality. This may involve supporting the maintenance of 'traditional' versions of moral reasoning, well being, and sociality (such as indigenous life-worlds), collective rights in the face of the fragmentary and individuating neo-liberal development policies, and to support the 'construction of new associative networks such as 'new social movements' that represent the aspirations, and embody the values, of marginalised and disempowered social groups.

Chapter 1

Introduction

'. . . and it also follows that we have not yet fully understood the claims of any moral philosophy until we have spelled out what its social embodiment would be' (Alasdair MacIntyre 1997: 23).

Development, Ways of Self-Understanding and the Apprehension of the 'Other'

One of the central tasks of contemporary social anthropology is to try to elucidate the ways in which our modern concepts and values are efficacious in particular social worlds and how they shape our discourses of, and towards, the 'other'. The 'background picture', that is, the moral and ethical repertory that underlies our own historically and culturally specific, as well as our personal settings, conditions our ways of seeing, apprehending, categorising, and ultimately, treating, those we encounter and have interaction with. Similarly, the increasingly interrogated assumptions which underlie the practice of social anthropology constitute more than just propositional knowledge; they presuppose moral philosophies and are inevitably dialogically linked to material practices, becoming efficacious forces in the social world. As Charles Taylor (1985b: 125) writes, in our endeavour to understand the languages of self understanding of the other, implicitly or explicitly, we are also challenging our own.

If the complex array of moral resources that characterise the 'modern moral outlook' constitute the basis of our initial apprehension and conceptualisation of the 'other', and are brought to bear on our interactions with, the 'other' the ethical implication would seem to be that it is imperative to consider the substantive sources from whence concepts and values reside and emanate. As Gow (1991: 17) argues, 'we must find out how local people use their idioms, and such an enquiry should not be prejudiced, at this point by trying to fit into an alien discourse'. This task then, demands both self reflexivity and the detailed ethnographic endeavour of understanding the other on *their* terms, as Hastrup (1995: 17) affirms; the invention of culture in anthropological writing must reflect the ways in which cultures invent

themselves if anthropology wants to be faithful to its aims. Additionally, if, as R.D. Laing (1968: 15) writes, 'my behaviour is an experience of the other', what is of further interest is apprehending the contexts where accommodation and resistance between different cultural realities are played out. Hornborg (1994: 238) agrees that whilst it is salutary 'for anthropology to side with 'locals'', this should go hand in hand with a critical appreciation of 'the modern project of which anthropology itself has been a part' (*loc. cit.*). Apprehending the nature of this 'anthropological condition' - where one constitutes a locus of reflection between different life-worlds – is a necessary starting point for the consideration of what an ethical approach to the anthropological endeavour in development means.

In the contemporary setting, the principal way, at least in terms of political and economic arrangements, in which the 'West' interacts with indigenous peoples, 'poor countries', the 'South', HIPC[2]s, 'LDCs[3]' or the 'Third World' is through 'Development'. Esteva (1992: 8) argues that 'development occupies the centre of an incredibly powerful semantic constellation'. The ubiquitous presence of this phenomena at a local level is expressed by Croll and Parkin who observe that 'development is as much a fact of everyday life for most peoples of the world as the other kinds of overarching frameworks of assumption and action' (1992: 8). Development constitutes an arena where, around the frameworks of modernisation, relative values, knowledges and moralities are contested and modified.

The ways in which the moral and political presuppositions that characterise the 'West' become embodied in the array of discourses, practices and impacts that fall under the rubric of 'Development' is simultaneously an area of anthropological interest and constitutive of deep moral dilemmas that pertain to the discipline itself. It is worth keeping in mind anthropology's philosophical and theoretical inheritance here which implicates our forebears in an obtuse and tautological depiction of the other, as Overing writes;

'It has been anthropology, the science of alterity *par excellence*, that has provided the objectified, simplified imagery and the 'technical' language

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[2] Highly Indebted Poor Countries, a term used by the IMF and World Bank
[3] Least Developed Countries, a term used by the World Bank.

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through which all those peoples who were conquered and colonised by the Western state could be digestibly incorporated into, and depreciated by, a supremacist European mental framework' (2000: 11).

Anthropologists, nevertheless, have become increasingly cognisant of the moral and intellectual imbroglio of being occupants of the role of 'cultural brokers between societies with disparate political, economic, and cultural resources at their disposal' (Fardon 1987: 3). An area where these dynamics are patently acute is the arena of applied anthropology; development constitutes a domain where, arguably, anthropology's most abstruse and urgent moral and ethical dilemmas are played out. Escobar captures this quandary:

> 'Few historical processes have fuelled the paradox of anthropology – at once inextricably wedded to Western historical and epistemological dominance and a radical principle of critique of the same experience – as much as the process of development' (1991: 662).

The key moral and philosophical presuppositions that underlie development practice and give it legitimacy and authority flow from whence development is driven, that is the 'West', although the discourses of development are multi-layered, complex and not always uni-directional. 'The West' in this thesis, is not meant to be understood geographically. The conceptual universe of modernity as opposed to 'pre', or 'non' modern cultural realties should not necessarily be regarded dichotomously as being intrinsic to distinct societies but more often as different principles that operate to different extents within different social realities. Marcus and Fischer (1986: 75) insist that social anthropologists have to be cognisant that, in many contexts: 'Outside forces in fact are an integral part of the construction of the inside, the cultural unit itself, and so must be registered even at the most intimate levels of cultural processes'. This is not to deny, however, that particular non-modern forms of sociality are, in many ways, *in*commensurable with the dynamics of modernity.

It would be a mistake to be overschematic in assembling a portrait of development. Featherstone suggests that there are 'emerging sets of 'third cultures', which themselves are conduits for all sorts of diverse cultural flows which cannot be merely

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understood as the product of bilateral exchanges between nation states' (1990: 1). The development context is an example of this kind of arena where protean values, knowledges and idioms meet to be contested, negotiated and imposed. The social anthropologist, then, cannot avoid being mindful that a self-reflexive mien is imperative in grasping this complex reality.

As, on the whole, development involves *planned* social and economic change, anthropologists have increasingly exposed the duplicity of development planners' narratives that depict 'underdeveloped' areas in pathological terms that can only be remedied by the West[4]. The protagonists of orthodox economic development, whilst perhaps not wearing their imperial hearts on their sleeves, have unmistakable inheritances. Historically, development is usefully understood in terms of 'Modernisation'. Arce and Long give a very good definition of development in this sense:

> 'A comprehensive package of technical and institutional measures aimed at widespread societal transformation and underpinned by neo-evolutionary theoretical narratives' (2000: 2).

However, unlike colonialism, which transparently served imperial interests, the idea of development is often understood and/or sold in terms of an emancipatory ideal. Sachs (1992: 11) notes for instance that 'the countries of the South proclaimed development as their primary aspiration after they had been freed from colonial subordination'. Nevertheless, considering the asymmetrical and hierarchical positions of those driving and aspiring towards the development ideal is important. A lasting legacy of the colonial period is the adoption of the ideal of progress (with a concept of entelechy that ascribes authority and prestige to Western economic, technological and political mantras) throughout the Third World. Development, then, constitutes a shared but bitterly contested global language that is spoken in almost every corner of the world.

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[4] However, whilst the modern concept of development is closely linked to grand-scale central planning, development can also be understood in terms of *unplanned* changes, and changes whose links to planning are tenuous. Social change often comes about as an *un*intended consequence of action, that is, as Ortner puts it, 'a by-product . . . however rational the action may have been' (1994: 401). Clearly,

The evangelical zeal with which a common 'development language' has been broadcast has also been interpreted as a stealthy harbinger of the establishment of coercive social and economic relationships. This point is made by Godelier (1993: 112); 'in some way dominators and the dominated, exploiters and the exploited must share the same representations'. Hornborg adds that the language of modernity can be both peremptory and coercive;

'In submitting to their own conceptual encompassment by notions of 'development' generated by Western science (in particular economics), the 'Rest' cannot resist domination and exploitation by 'the West' (Hornborg 1994: 239).

The implication that Hornborg points to is that 'a first and necessary step toward emancipation must be an awareness of the nature of this relationship' (*loc. cit.*). The question of the teleology of development, that is, who defines the means through which the 'underdeveloped' are to achieve the conditions of life that can be called 'developed', has been the focus of anthropological and sociological critiques (Hobart 1993, Croll and Parkin 1992; Sachs 1992, Grillo and Stirrat 1997, Gardner and Lewis 1996; Ferguson 1990, for instance). Teleological approaches, taking for granted a specified end state, have been criticised on a number of fronts, particularly the assumption that the social and economic realities of industrialised nations constitute a desirable and sustainable goal on a global level. The state of being 'underdeveloped' is presented ideologically as a prior and inferior state to that of the developed world. Sbert (1992: 194) argues that 'what had been called by Europeans uncivilised, uneducated and backward all over the world, had a new name: *underdeveloped*'.

Development thinking commonly resorts to the use of metaphor to explicate its implicit key ideas and motivations. Certain cultural forms and traditions are reified as 'obstacles' to change, knowledge is constituted as a 'mirror' of reality, as a neutral

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the intransitive sense of 'to develop', that is, the unfolding of latent potential in response to new opportunities is also relevant to the analysis of development.

'space' for positive exploration[5]. The idiom of 'development' itself evokes an organic idea of inevitable unfolding and flourishing immanent in every society (whether its members have worked this out, or otherwise).

Hobart *et. al.* (1993) argue that the systematic knowledge systems which inform professional discussions of, and approaches to, development generate ascriptions of 'ignorance' associated with conditions of 'under-development', a state that has to be changed by superior knowledge:

> 'Ignorance is not however, a simple antithesis of knowledge. It is a state which people attribute to others and is laden with moral judgement. So being underdeveloped often implies, if not actual iniquity, at least, stupidity, failure and sloth' (Hobart 1993: 1).

Here it is appropriate to note the latent ambivalence in Weber's (1930) as well as Winch's (1964), foundational demonstration of the qualitative differences between different cultural realities. It is one of my central contentions that this equivocation is one of the key tensions in the consideration of the ethics of applied anthropology. On the one hand there are the dichotomous evaluative apprehensions of the qualitative differences between modern and non-modern societies that are central to both modernisation and dependency theory. These dichotomies draw a great deal of valid criticism. Nelson and Wright, for instance, note that, within anthropology, 'by the late 1970s the discipline's division of humanity into schemes of contrasting 'cultures' was seen to be part of the conceptual underpinning of colonialism and continuing Western domination' (2001: 46). Strathern argues that 'we are heir' to the modernist imagery of parts and wholes' (1992: 75). Said's uncovering of the Orientalist tendencies of Western ideology which continuously projects an inferior 'other' onto different cultural realities so as to produce a superior definition of itself has been extrapolated onto the analysis of development. The West's approach to 'the Rest' is understood as;

> 'Dealing with it by making statements about it, authorising views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short Orientalism [can

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[5] See Rorty (1980) for his discussion on western epistemology understanding itself in terms of a mirror that, if not contorted or obscured will give an accurate representation of reality.

be analysed] as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and dealing with the Orient' (Said 1978: 3; see also Hornborg 1994).

On the other hand, anthropologists have sought wider recognition of the intrinsic *value* of cultural realities that differ in important ways from modern, Western societies and the ways in which Western intrusions are harmful to these ways of constructing well being. It is crucial to pay attention to ways in which the elements of life are conjoined in culturally specific ways. De Coppet (1992: 78), for example argues: 'Comparison is only possible if we analyse the various ways in which societies order their ultimate values. In doing so, we attempt to understand each society as a *whole*, and not as an object dismantled by our own categories'. Despite assertions that we live in a 'post-cultural' age, applied anthropologists are often in the predicament of being interpolated between the monolithic instrumental capitalist machinery of economic development and particular indigenous cultures that are clearly fragile in the face of such encroachment, and objectively disappearing.

However, whilst the argument that the sum effect of development is an exploitative, neo-imperialist system is highly plausible, it is important to recognise the tensions that exist between different positions and philosophies that exert an influence on development. In the contemporary setting, engaged analysts are seldom entirely condemnatory of development. Indeed Grillo (1997) criticises the tendency of 'anti-developmentalists' such as Hobart (1993) in their distance from the actual deliberations of those involved in the work of development. As Thin (an anthropologist and senior development consultant) with mild consternation, observes

> ' . . . the irony of the more strident anti-development anthropologists forgetting their anthropological principles, pontificating about 'the development discourse' with minimal attempt to understand development concepts from the point of view of users and consequently with woefully inadequate recognition of the diversity of development discourses. This is rather like letting theologians, but not clergy, worshippers, and anthropologists, tell us what religion is about, or letting music critics but not musicians, dancers, composers and ethnomusicologists tell us what music is about.' (pers. comm.)

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Grillo (1997: 21) is correct to observe that 'although development is sometimes guided by authoritative monocular visions . . . development is not usually a single set of ideas and assumptions'. Various actors with different, and often competing interests and political commitments, contribute to the extensive range of activities and representations that come under the rubric of development. Ferguson (1990: 17) rightly considers that grasping the multiple meanings that are generated by development involves deciphering a 'riddle, a problem to be solved, an anthropological puzzle'. Indeed, a formative observation for the formulation of this thesis is that the intentions and aspirations of development actors are often very different from the effects of their work. The intentions of anthropologists, for example, have to be filtered through and combined with, complex procedural considerations, cultural assumptions and hierarchies of values within the development context.

So, the manifold and shifting nature of development discourse disconcerts any facile characterisation of the ethics of involvement. It is important to observe, with Gardner and Lewis (1996: 128) that 'contrary to the impression given in much contemporary analysis, discourses of development are not all the same; nor indeed are they fixed'. Grillo and Stirrat concur; 'to think of *the* discourse of development is far too limiting (1997: 21), whilst Hobart refers to 'several co-existent discourses of development' (1993: 12). This very feature of the mutability of development practice and policy presents enticing possibilities to anthropologists who are motivated to influence change within it, perhaps seeking to subvert dominant neo-liberal agendas, or to emphasise the importance of social and cultural factors in any intervention. However, beneath the rhetoric and/or earnest idealism that one encounters in development language, there lies unavoidable disagreement, frustratingly blind proceduralism and even straightforward chaos.

The Professional and Personal Judgement of the Applied Anthropologist

Given the above, applied anthropology clearly involves a convergence of thorny ethical issues. As I will explore, the direct and immediate impacts of involvement in the ironies and pathos of development constitutes a serious challenge to the anthropologist's moral outlook. In anthropological literature, there has been relative inattention to exploring the phenomenology of dealing with the moral dilemmas that arise in the course of anthropological endeavours in the context of development. Geertz, however, argues that the topic of 'the moral experience of social scientists' should be a searching investigation of a central aspect of modern consciousness (2001: 17).

Anthropologists working in development are required to be a locus of reflection and interaction between different and disparate life worlds, somehow channelling both needs and solutions, required to represent and make explicit the nature and value of different cultural settings. Croll and Parkin argue that decision making in the field of applied anthropology involves 'not just methods about how to get things done, but entails moral prescriptions, various collective enthusiasms, different and competing hierarchies of adherents and an over-riding assumption that human betterment is society's primary essence and by which it justifies itself' (1997:8). Having an understanding of the terms of reference for the eschatology, or *telos*, as well as the methods, of development is therefore essential.

In this thesis, I am concerned with a 'normative view of development' that is, viewing development models in terms of different understandings of the 'good life', of well being and of sociality. Indeed, the tensions that exist within and between anthropology and development emerge from differing visions of the good which often stem from anthropologists' identification with, and advocacy of, the aspirations of those they work with. This is Quinlan's point; 'both the vitality of the discipline and the persistent criticism of it are due to the awkward position that anthropologists occupy between their patrons, subjects and other disciplines' (2000: 134). Anthropologists, as individuals with heterogeneous views of social justice, morality and the value of community vis-à-vis the individual, for instance, will obviously bring variable opinions and moral reactions to bear onto the practices and philosophies of development.

Also, generally coming from diverse social backgrounds, applied anthropologists in the field, encounter other cultural realities as strangers who carry particular kinds of cultural baggage (Okely and Callaway 1992). Intrinsic to applied anthropology then, is a questioning of the anthropologist's own visions of the good. Obviously, when involved in decision making, one's personal allegiances are bound to become evident, as Gledhill observes; 'there are limits to the degree of duplicity anthropology can successfully practice, since people are inclined to demand answers to questions about one's personal views on social and political matters' (1994: 219). Recognising this inevitability, Mies proposes that anthropologists should be more honest and open about their moral and political commitments rather than making a pretence of neutrality:

> 'The postulate of value free research, of neutrality and indifference towards the research objects, has to be replaced by conscious partiality, which is achieved through partial identification with the research objects' (Mies 1983: 22; cf. Rabinow 1986).

A prevailing contemporary view is that academia, whether its practitioners like it or not, has an inevitable impact upon governance, by design, or by neglect. Rapport speaks of the 'inevitably political character of anthropology's own pronouncements' (forthcoming). It is arguably a small step from the idea of *understanding* the values, social structure, culture, and behaviour of defined populations to contriving to *control* that population. As Hobart notes;

> 'The social and historical vision of the world order, and the rationality, which subtends it, has been in no small part constituted and justified by academic writings. In so far as such accounts are adopted by the governments or people of the developing countries as constitutive of their aspirations, they are hegemonic in Gramsci's sense' (Hobart 1993: 3).

Schrijvers expresses this view more explicitly, contending that 'value free' research is now understood 'as an obfuscation of the power relationships involved' (1993: 33-41; 1979) and, she argues elsewhere, that research agendas are often 'ethno- and andocentric' (1995: 20). Sponsel complains that anthropologists are far better at

writing *about* indigenous peoples than communicating with them and showing genuine solidarity (1992). Hobart also concludes in relation to development research; 'questioning and answering are activities which are the exclusive prerogative of the researcher. Things wait to be discovered. They are passive: the activity belongs to the explorers who discover, map and master them' (1995: 53). The citations given above demonstrate the anthropological suspicion of contributing towards governance or overt political advocacy.

Applied anthropologists, however, may envisage the necessity of engaging with governing institutions and see the promotion of anthropological understanding as contributing to the alleviation of poverty and enhancement of the well being of the peoples of the Third World. The view here is that by preciously opting out of engagement with the institutions of development, in effect, one is granting greater agency to the very dynamics that one criticises. This is Gardner and Lewis's position:

> '(Applied anthropologists) as we ourselves might prefer to put it, are trying to raise living standards – not only in material terms, but with regard to legal rights, freedom of expression, quality of life – for the poorest sections of the world's population' (1996: 29)

In very broad terms, there appear to be three main ways of envisaging anthropology's relationship with development. The first is a hyper-critical perspective that sees anthropologists working in development as *colluding* with a neo-imperial agenda. The second view is one based upon a belief that anthropology already has made, and will continue to make, a *positive or at least tempering* impact on development philosophy, policy and practice. The third view is that, whilst anthropologists may flatter themselves in terms of their importance in the formulation of development policy, their efforts always have been and will remain *marginal* to the dominant agenda.

The Communitarian Imperative in Applied Anthropology

An argument that I make throughout the thesis is that the duplicity and profound rifts that underlie the apparently universal agreement of the putative aims of development

(freedom, benevolence, 'all human rights for all' etc.) can only be understood in terms of an appreciation of the thoroughly fragmented nature of the modern moral outlook. Further, I want to argue that social anthropologists, notwithstanding the points made above, often, at least in aspiration, occupy standpoints of moral resistance vis-à-vis what Taylor calls the 'disengaged and instrumental modes of thought and action which have steadily increased their hold on modern life' (Taylor 2000: 495), identifying more with the strands of Western moral thinking concerned with the search for, or continuation of, sources which can 'restore depth, richness and meaning to life' (*loc. cit.*). This is not to characterise and cordon off social anthropologists as if we are all 'Romantics'[6] but to signal the complexity of moral aspiration that is intrinsic to the phenomena of development. Rather than understanding this fragmentation in terms of coherent interest groups rationally discussing differences of opinion, I would argue that fragmentation is apparent in our own individual moral thinking, as Charles Taylor argues:

'These are goods, moreover, by which we moderns live, even though those who believe they deny them: as disengaged rationalists still puzzle through their personal dilemmas with the aid of notions like fulfilment; and anti moderns will themselves invoke rights, equality, and self-responsible freedom as well as fulfilment in their political and moral life' (2000: 511)

Anthropologists are not immune to the moral equivocation that comes as part and parcel of the 'modern liberal identity', and, as such, are presented with a range of different strands that pertain to different moral traditions and origins in their moral formation and deliberation. Taylor proposes that some dominant strands are as follows: firstly, Judeo-Christian 'other regarding', secondly, the Enlightenment; disengaged rationality, autonomy, freedom, human equality, universality, and thirdly, the Romantic emphasis on connection with nature, belonging, human fulfilment, wholeness and expressive integrity.

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[6] In the sense of ' the picture of a restored harmony within the person and between people . . . the breaking down of barriers between art and life, work and love, class and class, and the image of harmony as a fuller freedom' (*loc.cit.*). Indeed, Michael Jackson argues that the idea of culture that was adopted by nineteenth century anthropology had its origins in German romanticism (2002: 109).

Pels is one anthropologist who, having concluded that a great deal of poverty and inequality is actually caused and perpetuated by the globalised liberal political agenda, believes that the Western insistence on individual freedom has to be balanced with a sense of responsibility, as he writes;

'The anthropologist's duplex position, situated, like a 'trickster', in between different moralities and epistemes, discovers some of the impossibilities of maintaining the liberal desire for individual autonomy of choice and opinion at a distance from political struggle over existing inequalities in the world' (Pels 2000: 136).

On this basis, one of the central contentions that I make in the thesis is that in this moral disarray, more precisely in the lack of agreement about the political, economic and ethical models that underlie development, instrumental and individuating agendas continue more or less unabated. Contemporary moral debate generally involves trying and failing to rationally settle the claims of rival moral concepts which stem from incommensurable evaluative premises and traditions – 'an unharmonious melange of ill assorted fragments' (MacIntyre 1997: 10). As there is no way of settling these rationally, contemporary moral debate risks becoming interminable. In practice, the manner in which these debates are finally settled, becomes a matter of emotive assertion, power, and persuasion; no more than a masquerade of rationality. As the most powerful global 'moral' agenda in currency is liberal individualism and its accompanying individuating economic and social models, other forms of morality, well being and sociality are often obliviated in moral debate and in the decisions of planners and policy makers.

Contextualising this view in terms of an ethical approach to applied anthropology in development, should not, I argue, mean adopting a pessimistic stance. On the contrary, I want to argue that an important moral counterpoint to the liberal individuating agenda is the anthropological critique of, and response to, the failure of dominant liberal institutions to allow the continuance and flourishing of 'communities' within which social groups achieve well being. I contend that it is from the communitarian perspective, often embodied in highly particular and nuanced

forms in indigenous life-worlds, that we can best understand the mistakes which lie at the heart of modernity.

Whilst, as I have argued, it would be facile to characterise Western society solely in terms of liberal individualism, procedural ethics and instrumentalism, I submit that these models exert an overbearing influence upon Western thinking and practice. As Taylor (2000: 196) argues, in the West, 'without a special effort of reflection on this issue, we tend to fall back into an atomist/instrumentalist way of seeing'. One of my assertions is that communitarian arguments, whilst also being needed as a healthy antidote to the excesses of liberal individualism, also constitute a reflection of the aspirations of people(s), many of whom are beleaguered by the alienation, atomism and instrumentalism of modern society, to realise their visions of the good life.

There appears to be an affinity, for example, between Aristotelian concerns with human flourishing, belonging in a moral community and the interests of many anthropologists seeking to describe the sociality of the peoples of Amazonia (see for instance Overing and Passes 2000; Ales 2000). Alasdair MacIntyre's (1997) reading of Aristotelian ideas of human functioning, particularly the view that affiliation and reciprocity with others is an intrinsic part of being fully human are particularly apposite for the anthropological interest in the moral value of community. MacIntyre's understanding of virtues which are grounded in a shared 'social teleology' is helpful in conceptualising the particular nature of the achievement of culturally specific visions of the good. The Aristotelian perspective stresses the intrinsic goodness of the relationships of love, nurturing, care and acknowledged dependence that bind people together whilst not denying personal autonomy. The individual who exists utterly outside such a life, according to Aristotle, simply can not achieve a completely fulfilled human life. As Nussbaum (1990: 373-4) explains, 'a solitary good life that does not need other human beings because it does not have the forms of dependency and neediness that lead human beings to reach out to one another would not be a human life'[7].

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[7] Interestingly, Aristotle argued that there was no need for moral virtues among the Greek gods. This was, as Nussbaum (1990: 378) argues, because the social life of the gods was uninspired by need and as a result they were at liberty to be frivolous and irresponsible; 'just plain callous, lacking totally the painstaking effort of mind and desire that is involved in human justice . . . they simply don't fully see what is going on in our lives, they lack compassion' and exhibit a 'carelessness inseparable from their

On this basis, then, I submit that anthropologists should take seriously the moral claims of those 'powerless, dispersed, disparaged peoples' seeking to recapture 'something of the integrity and authenticity they feel they *personally* lost' (Jackson 2002: 107) as a result of the instrumental machinations of modernisation. The same can be said for those besieged indigenous communities that struggle to defend their integrity in the face of the aggressive intrusions of the market mentality. This may involve supporting the maintenance of 'traditional' versions of moral reasoning, well being, quality of life and sociality (such as indigenous life-worlds), collective rights in the face of the fragmentary and individuating neo-liberal development policies, and to support the 'construction of new forms of community within which the moral life can be sustained' (MacIntyre 1997: 263). One of the ironies of the anthropological involvement in development is that whilst the anthropologist may be aware of the incommensurability of indigenous ideas of well being vis-à-vis those that are in currency in the West (principally universalist, rights based, procedural ethics), a key aspect of the applied anthropological task in the defence of communities of well being involves utilising these same Western moral resources, as I will explain.

I will now outline how I will approach the many questions that I have signalled above.

Structure of the Thesis

My claim is that applied anthropologists, without a good grasp of the wider political and ethical issues that are implicated in their work, risk floating adrift in the stormy

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transcendence of our wholly needy way of life'. It is interesting to juxtapose this argument with the anthropologist Rapport's feting of the 'transcendent individual'. Rapport 'wants to keep the idea of God alive, but 'under a new name: Individual'. 'The transcendent individual, the individual who writes herself, and, in the process, rewrites the socio-cultural environment around her, is most fully a Nietzschean one. It is the essential, objective, inherent nature of the individual self, Nietzsche believed, to be self-caused and free' (1997: 4.). This is powerfully stated and without a few necessary qualifications, one could say *over*stated. Taylor argues that atomist views 'don't stand up very well in argument' and 'even a modicum of explanation is enough to show their inadequacy' (2000: 196). I would agree with MacIntyre that 'the necessary counterpart to the virtues of independence (are) the virtues of acknowledged dependence' (1999: 120).

seas that their very profession requires them to navigate. I wish to emphasise the intractability of ethics from the practice of applied anthropology. Anthony Cohen (1994: 192) admits to a certain 'missionary zeal' in his advocacy of social anthropology as '*the* fundamental discipline in the humane study of society'. One of the most important contentions in this thesis is captured by Cohen in the following quote:

> ' . . . not just the idle claim that we do it better than other scholars. Rather it is the plea that we *must* do it better in order not to allow a licence by default to those dull political dogmatists to invent selves for us in the image of their own self-interestedness' (*loc. cit.*).

The thesis has been organised in three sections, reflecting three imbricated lines of enquiry. These are:

- 'The Moral and Ethical Dilemmas of Applied Anthropologists in Development',
- 'Slow Steps Towards a Relevant Anthropology: Theoretical Resources for Applied Anthropology' and finally,
- 'Anthropological Engagement with the Ethics of Development Theory and Practice'.

I will now briefly go through my intentions in each of these sections, give an indication of the substance of each chapter and trace the (hopefully) accumulative direction of my argument.

A: The Moral and Ethical Dilemmas of Applied Anthropologists in Development

This comprises the following chapters

Chapter 2: *An Apprenticeship in Applied Anthropological Angst*

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In this chapter, through the prism of the work I undertook in Bolivia as a development consultant and researcher on behalf of the UK government's Department for International Development (DFID), I introduce the main issues that I will be addressing throughout the thesis, that is, the moral ethical dilemmas that I contend are intrinsic to the applied anthropological task in development. Here I collaborated with members of CIDOB (*Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia*), an organisation that represents the indigenous peoples of the lowlands of Bolivia in writing a proposal to the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) requesting funding for a large scale consultation of the various indigenous groups throughout lowland Bolivia that would result in the presentation of their perspectives and needs to the forthcoming 'National Dialogue' which focused upon the allocation of funds that were to be released by proposed debt cancellation under the IMF's (International Monetary Fund) HIPC II scheme (Highly Indebted Poor Countries II). The consultation also involved assessing whether or not CIDOB constituted a sufficiently representative and effective organisation vis-à-vis the indigenous groups spread throughout the Eastern lowlands. Further, DFID asked myself and another anthropologist/consultant to do an assessment of the principal 'threats and challenges' that the indigenous people of lowland Bolivia experience, to undertake an analysis of development work already being carried out by other donors and NGOs and to give a series of recommendations for DFID's future support of the lowland indigenous peoples. This involved speaking to the constituent organisations within CIDOB, travelling to various indigenous communities, undertaking 'participatory poverty assessments', interviewing the staff of NGOs and relevant Bolivian governmental departments as well as studying relevant literature. The chapter largely involves a description of the nature of the consultancy task I undertook and serves as basis for the more detailed analysis that follows in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: *Caught in Webs of Moral Bewilderment; The Ethics of Anthropological Involvement in Development Interventions*

Here, I begin by setting out the main moral issues that emerged directly from my work in Bolivia, and then move on from these immediate reflections to discuss the

wider ethical and political issues that lie at the heart of applied anthropology. These are discussed under the following headings:

- 'Negotiating Incommensurable and Multi-layered discourses';
- 'Aspects of the Asymmetric Positionality of the Anthropologist as Consultant';
- 'Controlling one's Contribution – Co-option or Critical Engagement?';
- 'Development and the Question of Relativism' and
- 'Emotion and Detachment in Development'.

Chapter 4: *Social Anthropology as Moral Conduct*

This chapter opens up and situates the question of the moral and ethical dilemmas of applied anthropology by exploring the assertion that 'social anthropology *is* moral conduct'. On this basis, I attempt to delineate and introduce some of the principal characteristics of contemporary moral conditions (mainly with regard to the public sphere) that are ineluctable in any attempt to achieve clarity on the ethical stances that social anthropologists might take in relation to development policy and practice.

Firstly, as was observed in my opening remarks, I make a case for the necessity of the thorough self examination of the conflicts of modernity. As part of this endeavour, I note that because the transmission and imposition of Western values is not always transparent, an important anthropological task involves 'unmasking' and defamiliarising these values from the doxic practices of Western institutions.

In the following section, I put forward the view that there is a strong feeling of disconcertion and resistance with regard to the self-examination of Western ethical models. I believe that this discomfiture can be apprehended in two ways. Firstly, I argue that procedural and rights based ethics comprise an insufficient moral language to articulate the range of moral intuitions that we feel. Secondly, I suggest that intrinsic to Western public morality is a defensive resistance to scrutiny. Development, as a universalistic discourse, inevitably involves a 'lack of fit' in relation to culturally specific perspectives and sources of value. We can see here the root of the moral dissonance that accompanies every development intervention.

A subsequent argument that I make is that the Western compartmentalisation of academic disciplines, which is thankfully gradually dissolving, but which social anthropology, for a great part of its history inherited, has resulted in narrow and truncated conceptualisations of morality. Whereas in reality morality, or ethics, involves the conjoining of the inner life with social action, there has been a preponderance of paradigms in social anthropology attuned to describing the outer manifestations of human behaviour whilst either consigning the 'inner life', the emotions, for example to other disciplines or envisaging them in deterministic structural terms. Secondly, I argue that narrow academic compartmentalisation is also restrictive in the sense of constraining the extent to which anthropologists are able to exert a moral influence upon wider society.

In this chapter, I also present a critical analysis of social anthropological professional codes of ethics and present the argument that only a dim light will be shed on the substance of the moral deliberations of social anthropologists by examining these codes which I consider to be little more than celebratory platitudes. Codes of ethics tend to serve institutional purposes, and offer an obscure reflection of the manifold ways in which anthropologists influence, and are involved in, decision making of moral import in development. Further, by examining these codes, it is difficult to discern anything that amounts to a shared moral commitment by anthropologists beyond standard liberal formulas. My argument is that the whole idea of professional ethics has to be based upon a definition of what the profession *is* and what its professionals *do* and *experience*.

Drawing upon the preceding sections, in anticipation of the next section, I introduce the idea of the 'relevance' of social anthropology.

B: Slow Steps Towards a Relevant Anthropology: Theoretical Resources for Applied Anthropology

Over Chapters 5, 6 and 7, I review the substantive body of theoretical and ethical resources within social anthropology for the applied task in development. My main

concern is to unearth the aspects of anthropological theory that have been drawn upon in applied anthropology in the endeavours to relevantly and ethically reflect and respond to those who are affected by, and involved in, planned social and economic change.

This review of anthropological theory necessitates choosing a wide angle lens, which in turn, means that the exposition of particular areas will be restricted. It is obviously difficult to faithfully typologise different theoretical directions and the periods associated with them. Even Ardener (1985: 48), for example, concedes that: 'over many years of trying to examine what social anthropology is about, I have been forced to the conclusion that there is no account of the intellectual history of social anthropology that would command universal support'. However, Ardener also writes encouragingly, that anthropological works and the lives of their authors are closely meshed and 'are not impossibly numerous, bibliographically or demographically' (1985: 54). It should, therefore, be a feasible project to locate and define, in broad terms, the major trends and innovations of the discipline in relation to development policy and practice.

The history of applied anthropology is often presented in terms of an enlightened progression from positivistic beginnings at the service of nation states to more partisan approaches to the amelioration of social, economic, and technological problems. Generally in agreement with this view, I trace the gradual assembling of the theoretical perspectives that allowed the discipline's relevance to the disempowered and oppressed to be sharpened over time. I look especially at the emergence of persuasive and forceful critiques of the dominant discourses in development on the basis of a relativistic approach to human flourishing in different contexts. In the contemporary setting, anthropologists are increasingly involved in arguing for the incorporation of indigenous and local perspectives in development practice and planning, in promoting participatory approaches, self-determination, and development that is rooted in particular traditions. The background to this contribution constitutes an interesting history.

Chapter 5: *A Brief History of Development Thinking*

Here I begin by setting out the main characteristics of Development's pre-history in which the central forces and ideas that preceded the phenomenon of development in the West are identified. This is followed by a description of the ideational aspects of the particular historical period when the idea of development became an explicit global project. After this, in turn, I look at variations on the theme of the two dominant currents in development thinking, that is 'Modernisation Theory' and 'Dependency Theory'. I also review the major critiques of these explanatory models. One of my key arguments here is that the uni-directional evolutionary narrative or interpretative grid of both modernisation and dependency theory legitimises the role of 'homogenising' Western scientific, bureaucratic and management solutions to the perceived problems of under-development. This dichotomisation of 'nature' and 'culture', 'people' and 'things' underlies what Arce and Long call 'the purification principle of conventional science' (2000: 6). I also argue that whilst both modernisation theory and dependency theory have been thoroughly turned over and impugned by theorists, they remain powerful explanatory models for both development practice and in the critique of development, perhaps partly because of their symbiotic nature. The anthropological response to both of these theories has been to insist upon a more accurate and more nuanced grounding of economic relations in local contexts without pre-empting the specificity of social and cultural dynamics. However, the underlying argument of dependency theory remains compelling and highly plausible as a way of grasping the wider dynamics of global capitalism.

Chapter 6: *Practical Values; Slow Steps Towards a Relevant Anthropology*

Here, I look at the major theoretical developments in anthropology from the colonial period until the 1980s and present a sketch of the unfolding of applied anthropology. My aim is to explore the creative tensions between the sociological frameworks that anthropologists grappled with to apprehend different social realities and their growing understanding of the often drastic changes that Western expansion was causing. One aspect of this is the analysis of the meetings and mutual antipathies between anthropologists and colonial authorities. I look at the various theoretical paradigms that anthropology moved through in terms of the way they inhibited or facilitated the anthropological response to planned social and economic change. I note an important

paradox of the colonial era - that functionalism, whilst being a relativistic paradigm that emphasised the importance of societal coherence, was a peculiarly appropriate and compliant theory vis-à-vis colonialism. Following this, I trace the major theoretical movements that accompanied the demise of colonialism. As it became untenable to write credibly without reference to the social and political forces that were imposing themselves upon 'traditional' societies with unprecedented impact, anthropologists, with a certain recalcitrance in many cases, began to explore the urgent issues of social change, agency, power, relative values, ethnicity and identity. I trace these accumulative and iterative developments to introduce the 'practice perspective', which I consider to be of particular importance as a theoretical resource for applied anthropology. This perspective sought to merge materialist and idealist frameworks into a compatible and coherent theoretical project.

Chapter 7: *Theoretical Resources for Applied Anthropology*

This chapter is a continuation of the endeavours of the previous chapter both historically and in terms of theoretical developments. Again, in largely abstract terms what I try to do is to locate the principal theoretical resources that anthropologists draw upon in their applied work in development. Here I look at aspects of the sweeping politicisation of anthropology from the late 1970s onwards. I argue that whereas the 'social' and the 'individual' had been relatively *de*politicised in theoretical paradigms such as structural functionalism and structuralism, subsequent theoretical developments actively sought new understandings of power, social change, agency, authority and representation and the relationship between the local and the global. The chapter is organised as follows;

- Understanding Social Change
- Political Economy Approaches
- Agency-oriented theories of social action moving towards 'Practice'
- Pervasive Power and Knowledge
- Local Complexity and 'Lack of Fit'
- Feminist Anthropology and Development
- Post-modern applied anthropology

<u>C: Anthropological Engagement with the Ethics of Development Theory and Practice</u>

In the preamble of this introductory chapter, I have already given an indication of my espousal of a communitarian approach to the ethics of applied anthropology. This is one of the agendas that I pursue over the next four chapters.

Chapter 8: *Western Thinking on Global Poverty*

In this chapter, I set out the core issues of development ethics and also, the key features and characteristics of the development context. Whilst development anthropologists tend to work in specific localities, I introduce some general features of their shared global work place and discuss some of its main trends in moral terms. Looking at global dynamics is indubitably part of the anthropological task as these clearly have an impact on every locality. Globalisation is understood in this thesis in terms of complex and overlapping trends of social and cultural splintering, the emergence of new kinds of transnational networks and elites and vertical polarisation within and between nations. I look at the adaptations of the development agenda within this context, particularly the current emphasis on human rights and the ways in which civil society organisations (CSOs) have embraced the idea of 'development as leverage'. This section is rounded off with an effort to list the main threats and challenges that relatively financially poor, disempowered and marginalised people(s) experience in the 'developing world'.

I then look at what the bases of moral deliberation for development thinking might be in terms of Western moral discourse. This is followed by a series of discrete but accumulative arguments that amount to an assertion that Western society (of which social anthropology is a product) has a moral responsibility to respond to global poverty that is greater than what has been achieved thus far. I also argue here that it is *as* important to achieve clarity with regard to the moral dimensions of development as with the scientific, political, sociological, management, ecological and technical aspects. In the final part, I look at the rationalisations that often amount to moral abdications on the part of the affluent and powerful when thinking about development.

Here, I set out the major bundles of theory that make up the substance of development ethics. I also evince the aspects of this body of work that are relevant to the consideration of the ethical and moral dilemmas of anthropologists involved in development. This chapter on the whole, stays within the boundaries of contemporary Western moral and political reasoning. Whilst maintaining a critical perspective, I seek to elicit ideas that offer moral *possibilities* in the Western tradition for anthropologists involved in development.

Before going on to discuss specific development models, I look at the compromises and possibilities of modern liberalism, which I believe to be necessary in terms of setting out the conceptual background to development ethics and practice. Following this, I work through a number of critiques of the dominant paradigms for development. Specifically, I look at the rationale that underlies 'Commodity Based', 'Utilitarian' and Kantian 'basic needs' approaches.

Following this analysis, I present the main characteristics of *'The Capabilities Consensus'*. This approach is a highly persuasive paradigm for development ethics which has assumed a dominant status among development ethicists and, to some extent, in practice. Fundamentally, this approach is founded in political liberalism[8] and seeks to establish a cross-cultural consensus on human values and the basic human 'functionings' that are necessary for dignified living. This approach differs from basic needs and welfare approaches in its focus on looking at what people are *'able to do and to be'* in actuality rather than looking only at the *means* for human functioning. As the norms proposed by this approach are intended to be applicable universally, they have a very general nature. This approach constitutes a hybrid of different philosophical positions; keeping the Kantian emphasis on personal autonomy, including utilitarian and Marxist critical argumentation concerning welfare and bringing in Neo-Aristotelian concerns on human flourishing and the ways this is

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[8] Political liberalism is a model for social co-operation associated with Rawls. It is different from comprehensive liberalism in that it does not propose one vision of the good over any other but sets out to establish a model of pluralism delimited by, and achieved through, political virtues and principles such as tolerance, protection from discrimination and the provision of basic needs to all, regardless of merit (Rawls 1993).

often connected to belonging in a moral community. I argue that, among the models in currency for development ethics, this approach has the greatest correspondence with the applied anthropological endeavour to combine an appreciation of the particularity of different forms of well being with poverty alleviation and social justice.

In the final section, a discussion entitled *'Meaningful Universals'* follows. Here, developing the ideas presented above, I look at an anthropological conundrum, that is how to articulate the idea of 'culture', which remains a central concept in the anthropological construction of social and moral belonging, in relation to proposed universal values. I present a number of arguments that support the view that universal norms *should* provide a basis for development ethics, at least at the level of agreeing on constitutional guarantees. I also introduce the counter, or tempering, arguments put forward by theorists who stress the importance of contextualising ethical considerations. Both communitarian (neo-Aristotelian) and post-modernist perspectives, albeit in significantly different ways, make the charge that universal norms may obfuscate the imposition of paternalistic Western liberal individualism, commercialism and ethnocentrism upon peoples with different moral interests. My overall argument in this thesis draws upon communitarian sources but I also contend that defending universal frameworks of human value at the level of public action, does not contradict this contention. My argument is that whilst anthropologists can support universalising frameworks and agendas, (such as rights) as these constitute useful resources and means for the achievement of well being, the capabilities approach also has scope for the anthropological agenda of understanding well being at the level of shared life worlds (communities, indigenous nations, particular individuals and social groups).

Chapter 10: *The Western Moral Tradition in Pieces*

In this chapter, I pick up on several themes that I introduced over the last few chapters but was unable to discuss in depth. Primarily, what I want to explore is the difficulty and awkwardness that arises in Western ethical thinking in attempts to grasp, let alone

translate, non-modern 'visions of the good'. I contend that the difficulties that I describe in the Western moral tradition are also apparent in development practice and therefore need to be understood in abstract terms as a basis for an adequate anthropological critique of development. I contend that this normative blindness comes about as a result of the skewed nature of Western liberal individualist and perspectivist ethical narratives that stress the 'individual' in contradistinction to inter-subjectivity and the achievement of sociality, which conceives of the 'social' primarily in terms of political and legal structures, which artificially excises the emotional, aesthetic and domestic from consideration of the 'moral' and which stresses obligation, coercion and enforcement as opposed to virtue and trust in 'moral' societal relations. I propose that the tradition of virtue ethics which allows a finer and more nuanced appreciation of particular social teleologies offers an important resource for applied anthropologists in their pursuit of an ethical approach to their work.

Chapter 11: *Using Rights to subvert the Neo-Liberal Discourse*

In this chapter I draw from 3 different research sources. Firstly, I refer to a series of interviews I undertook with the policy makers of a number of major UK based development NGOs' on their interpretation of a 'rights based agenda in development'. I also draw data from a desk based study that I undertook of DFID funded project reports. Finally, I present a case study from research I undertook in Lima and Callao on Women's Economic Rights in Peru'.

My aim here is to articulate the conceptualisation of the rights agenda from the point of view of professionals seeking to elevate the status of economic, social and cultural rights vis-à-vis, and alongside, civil and political rights. Here, on this basis, notwithstanding the critique I have given of the rights agenda, I highlight the aspects of the rights agenda that, due to their sidelining in the Western emphasis on individual civil and political rights, it would be salutary for anthropologists to engage with. The rights agenda can be interpreted in terms of the anti-liberal-individualist emphasis on human *solidarity* and the protection of communities rather than restricting the discussion to a narrow individuating rights agenda. Notwithstanding the inherent danger that rights language is so easily co-opted by liberal individualistic

presuppositions, this discourse provides a useful resource to create the conditions that are necessary for well being (land rights, for instance) and these goals can only be achieved by harnessing the legitimacy of rights language and processes.

The Moral (im)Possibilities of Being an Applied Anthropologist in Development

To sum up, whilst traditional ethnographies would not have undertaken to bring together such a wide range of topics, each of which demands a great deal of work in its own right, the experience of anthropologists in development practice is such that all of these areas are, by necessity, reflected upon and acted upon. Thus, the descriptive endeavour of this thesis is to evoke some of the underlying conceptual, ethical and moral questions which anthropologists are faced with through their engagement with development practice.

Chapter 2

An Apprenticeship in Applied Anthropological Angst

> *'It is desirable that development managers and policy investigators are able to identify and articulate their own personal and ethical boundaries . . . Development is replete with examples of those who have come to help but who have made things worse' (Blackmore and Ison 1998: 63).*

This chapter introduces the main issues that I will be addressing throughout the thesis, that is, the moral ethical dilemmas that I contend are intrinsic to the applied anthropological task in development. I hasten to add that this chapter, by definition, then, asks many more questions than it answers. The first part of this chapter involves a description of the work I undertook in Bolivia as a development consultant and researcher on behalf of the UK government's Department for International Development (DFID) along with a brief description of the social, economic, and policy context.

This section would seem to confirm Seymour Smith's argument that 'in general, the training of anthropologists includes relatively little instruction, guidance or debate over ethical issues arising in the fieldwork situation (1988: 95). I do however, problematise Seymour Smith's statement that 'the most common, or at least the traditional, position among the majority of anthropologists is to separate the area of academic research from the area of personal commitment and to consider that questions of ethics are to be decided by the anthropologist according to personal criteria apart from academic considerations' (*loc. cit.*). A key argument in this chapter is that an attempt at resolving the moral dilemmas of working in development is utterly unavoidable, as in fact, these ethical considerations are intrinsic to *being* an anthropologist.

In the next chapter I extrapolate from this basis to define a number of related areas that I posit as moral questions central to the theory and practice of applied anthropology in development many of which also relate to the ordinary fieldwork situation. In an attempt to find a balance between maintaining narrative flow and

providing sufficient detail, I use footnotes extensively in this chapter, particularly in the first part.

Deliberating with DFID and CIDOB

The research and consultation that I undertook with DFID involved four separate but inter-related tasks (I was joined for the latter part of the work, by another anthropologist, Stephen Kidd). The first task was to collaborate with members of *Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia* (CIDOB), a civil society organisation (CSO)[1] that represents the indigenous peoples of the Eastern lowlands of Bolivia[2], in writing a proposal to the PNUD[3] (United Nations Development Programme) to request funding for a large scale consultation of the various indigenous groups throughout lowland Bolivia. As will be described in more detail below, this consultation was to result in a document that would be presented to the Bolivian government at the time of a 'National Dialogue'. This event constituted a debate between the government and civil society groups on the ways in which money released by debt relief could be used for poverty reduction.

The second requirement of the consultancy was an assessment of the main 'threats and challenges' experienced by the indigenous people of lowland Bolivia. This research involved a combination of visiting indigenous communities[4] throughout the

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[1] DFID define 'Civil Society' as 'the broad range of organisations in society which fall outside government and which are not primarily motivated by profit. They include voluntary associations, women's groups, trade unions, community groups, chambers of commerce, farming and housing co-operatives, religious and tribal-based groups, cultural groups, sports associations, academic and research institutions, consumer groups and so on'. From 'All Human Rights For All', a speech by the erstwhile Secretary of State for International Development, Clare Short's speech to the Law Society, (3 December 1998). This speech stressed the indivisibility of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and argued that, in many Western countries, civil and political rights have been given more weight than economic, social and cultural rights. She argued that a 'rights based approach' to international development must redress the balance to work for the attainment of all rights for all people. Empowering civil society is an important part of this strategy.
[2] CIDOB is the umbrella federation for the many indigenous organisations representing the indigenous peoples of lowland eastern Bolivia.
[3] *Programa de Naciones Unidas para el Desarollo* (United Nations Development Programme - UNDP)
[4] Over an extremely intense two month period, interviews were undertaken with different representatives of all the regional indigenous organisations – ORCAWETA (Organización de la Capitanía Weehnayek), CPESC (Coordinadora de los Pueblos Etnicos de Santa Cruz), CPITCO (Central de Pueblos Indígenas del Tropico de Cochabamba), CIRABO (Central Indígena de la Región Amazónica de Bolivia), CPILAP (Central de Pueblos Indígenas de La Paz), CPIB (Central de Pueblos Indígenas del Beni), APG (Asamblea de Pueblos Indígenas) as well as with numerous local community organisations for example, CANOB (Central Ayoreo Nativa del Oriente de Bolivia) COPNAG (Central

lowlands and interviewing indigenous leaders and staff of NGOs and government agencies working with indigenous peoples.

Further, the consultation involved making a judgement on whether CIDOB properly represented the perspectives of the indigenous groups spread throughout the Eastern lowlands and whether it was a sufficiently 'effective' organisation.

Finally, part of the consultancy was to undertake an analysis of development work already being undertaken by other donors and NGOs and to give a series of recommendations for DFID's future support of the lowland indigenous peoples. I will go through each of these in turn and then, on this basis, isolate what I consider to be the main moral and ethical dilemmas that emerged. This will be followed by a more general discussion of the moral deliberations that I submit to be intrinsic to the applied anthropological task in development.

Supporting CIDOB's involvement in the National Dialogue

At the time when I was beginning my research, DFID were in the process of ascertaining how they should best continue their support of the indigenous peoples of the Eastern lowlands of Bolivia. This coincided with an IMF programme of debt

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de Organizaciónes de Pueblos Nativos Guarayos), CMIB (Central de Mujeres Indígenas del Beni), CABI (Capitanía del Alto y Bajo Izozog) CONIYURA (Consejo Yurucare) and CIDDEBENI (Centro de Investigación y Documentación para el Desarollo Beni). We looked in some depth at the work of each of the work commissions within CIDOB, that is, 'Investigations'. 'Communication, 'Land and Territory, 'Gender', 'Economy and Development', 'Education and Culture', 'Natural Resources', 'Health', and 'Organisation'. We also gathered views and information from indigenous people and non-indigenous professionals involved in specific projects linked to CIDOB such as CENDIC (Centro de Documentación, Investigación y Información), Projecto Hidrocarburo, DFID Natural Resources Investigation Programme, CPTI (Centro de Planificación Territorial Indígena) PDI (Proyecto de Desarrollo Indígena) and PDPI (Proyecto de Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas). A number of indigenous communities were visited for three or four days at a time to undertake 'participatory poverty analyses'; Guarayos - Ascención de Guarayos and Urubicha, Ayoreo - Puesto Paz and Poza Verde, Moxenos and Sirionos - Bella Brisa, San Ignacio de Moxos and Yurucaré - Puerto Cochabamba, Misión and Ibarricito. We also undertook extensive consultation with the following NGOs and CSOs – CEJIS (Centro de Estudios Jurídicos e Investigación Social), CARITAS, CIDAC (Centro de Investigación, Diseño Artesanal y Comercialización Cooperativa), APCOB (Apoyo para el Campesíno del Oriente de Bolivia), CIDAC, ALAS (Asesoria Legal y Asisténcia Social) Pastoral Social, Oficína de Asistencia Social de la Iglesia and Jubileo 2000 and the Instituto Cultural Bilingüe. We also met with staff from other international development agencies; SNV (Servicio Holandés de Cooperación al Desarrollo), HIVOS (Dutch), IBIS (Belgium), DANIDA (Danish International Development Agency), and the government agencies VAIPO (Viceministerio de Asuntos Indígenas y Pueblos Originarios) and BOLFOR (Proyecto de Manejo Forestal Sostenible en Bolivia).

relief[5] which Bolivia was eligible for on the condition that the government presided over a participatory process of consultation with a cross section of civil society organisations (CSOs) that represented the different sectors of Bolivian society to formulate a comprehensive plan to reduce poverty (Coventry 1999). This was entitled the 'Participatory Poverty Reduction Process' (PRSP). This wide ranging consultation was to culminate in a 'National Dialogue'; that is, a forum where the various sectors of Bolivian civil society were to make representations to the Bolivian government about their needs, challenges, perspectives and proposals for the allocation of funds that would be released through the proposed debt relief.

DFID had already declared that one of its aims was to enhance the ability of indigenous people to engage in policy dialogue with the Bolivian government. When the PRSP was announced, DFID staff sought to seize the opportunity to support CIDOB, one of the many civil society organisations of Bolivia, to ensure that indigenous voices and perspectives were gathered, collated and represented at the National Dialogue. I was to assist CIDOB in obtaining a grant from the United Nations Development Programme (PNUD) to undertake a large scale consultation with the indigenous peoples of the lowlands of Bolivia about the major challenges to their well being which was to be presented by a representative indigenous delegation to the Bolivian government. My task as a consultant was to assist and facilitate the process of introducing this idea to CIDOB[6] and then collaboratively to pull together the people and resources required to get the necessary consultation done and the document produced. The end result of the consultancy was to be a document that would detail the major challenges to the livelihood of these communities, the state of their political participation and representation and a number of positive proposals for development projects and changes in legislation that would benefit the indigenous population. The importance of monitoring the government's implementation of its

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[5] This was entitled the 'Highly Indebted Poor Countries II' (HIPC II) scheme - whereby countries such as Bolivia would stand to have a proportion of their national debt annulled if they agreed a comprehensive programme of poverty reduction in consultation with civil society organisations (CSOs) such as CIDOB. Following this, under the two accumulative tranches of HIPC I and II, the international community cancelled approximately £1.4 billion from Bolivia's external debt, freeing £220 million in repayments over 2002 and 2003 (DFID CSP 2002: 13).
[6] I worked collaboratively, for the first three days of the consultancy with another anthropologist, Dr, Rebecca Ellis.

poverty reduction strategy to assess whether its impact on the indigenous population is positive was also stressed.

After collaboratively designing a process of consultation that involved meetings of indigenous communities throughout the lowlands that would be attended by a number of consultants who would work with a committee to write the final document that would be presented at the PRSP, we secured funding from the PNUD. The consultation unfolded over a 3 month period and the document was successfully presented.

The 'Threats and Challenges' Facing the Indigenous Peoples of the Eastern Lowlands. A Picture of the Political Landscape.

The indigenous population of lowland Bolivia is commonly recognised to be between 250,000 and 300,000. Taking into consideration the indigenous people living in urban areas, the total indigenous population in lowland Bolivia rises to approximately 500,000. 21 ethnic groups inhabit the Amazonian region, 4 in the Chaco area and 4 in the Eastern region according to Diez (1995: 14) However, the indigenous people of the lowlands themselves (or at least the members of CIDOB) state that they number 34 separate groups, going by their own definitions of cultural and linguistic differences. The indigenous groups that have political representation through CIDOB are as follows; in the department of Santa Cruz; the Ayoreo, Chiquitano, Guaraní and Guarayo, in the departments of Pando and Riberalta; Araona, Cabineno, Chacobo, EsseEssa, Machineri, Pacahuara, Tacana, Yaminagua, in Tarija, the Weehnayek, in the department of Beni, the Baures, Itonoma, Canichana, Cayubaba, Mosetenes, Itonoma, Moré, Movima, Moxeno-Trinitario, Moxeno-Javierano, Siriono and Tsimane, in the departments north of La Paz; Leco, Moseten and Tacana and in the Tropic of Cochabamba, the Yuqui and Yurucaré (Szabo 1998; VAIPO 1999; Perez 1998; Hirsch 1991; Ellis and Arauz. 1998; Velazquez 1999). In addition, a number of groups remain out of contact with mainstream society, for example, the Toromonas and Nahua whose populations are not known. The smallest of the groups in regular contact with CIDOB are the Pacahuara with only 17 individuals, whilst the largest are the Guaraní people who have a population of over 77 000 (at the time of our research - 2001). The lowlands cover 70% of the surface area of Bolivia (Marinissen 1998).

In our report to DFID, we deliberately avoided descriptively emphasising solely the *manifestations* of 'poverty'[7] among indigenous people, such as high infant mortality, poor nutrition, lack of formal education, for instance (World Bank, 1999A and 1999B). Instead we concentrated on what we considered to be the key causes of their relative deprivation, disempowerment and marginalisation.

We sought to identify the issues that we thought CIDOB should be assisted to address if it was to succeed in having a widespread and sustained impact on indigenous livelihoods. It is important to note here that whilst CIDOB and the indigenous movement more generally had achieved some very important political advances, many more subsequent and urgent challenges had emerged. In 1990, a protest march (entitled '*La Marcha Indígena por el Territorio y la Dignidad'*) between Trinidad and La Paz by the indigenous people of Beni (the march was the initiative of the then recently-formed CPIB [*Central de Pueblos Indígenas del Beni*] but was supported by CIDOB), signalled the beginning of a decade of intense engagement with the State that aimed to achieve a recognition of the rights of indigenous people, essentially through a transformation in the national legislative framework. The result of the march was the award, by means of a *Decreto Supremo*, of just under one million hectares to the indigenous people of Beni. This success was followed by a proposal for a *Ley Indígena* which focused on a range of key issues such as territorial rights, intercultural education, political participation and the environment (CEJIS 1999a). Parliament refused to pass this law in its entirety but many of its key elements subsequently reappeared in legislative proposals that did receive Parliamentary assent

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[7] In our proposal to the UNDP, the following statement setting out the indigenous understanding of poverty vis-à-vis mainstream Bolivian society was included. Essentially, the point is that the relative 'poverty' of indigenous people has come about as a result of them being historically systematically disadvantaged and denied justice, rather than being due to the lack of capacity often ascribed to them by NGOs, government agencies and wider Bolivian society. Indeed, the indigenous people we spoke to often referred to the affluence that their forebears enjoyed before Western intrusion. Whilst their basic rights are gradually being recognised in legislation, this legislation has not, so far been reflected in practice and indigenous people continue to be disadvantaged; 'El sentido, con que generalmente se ha venido utilizando el término de "pobre" asociado a los pueblos indígenas, ha sido como algo inherente a nuestra naturaleza de ser indígena, esta percepción acerca de nuestra situación hiere nuestra dignidad, por el contrario, consideramos que estamos sumidos en una situación tal debido a que sistemáticamente se nos han negado oportunidades y derechos que si bien progresivamente están siendo reconocidos en la legislación nacional, más allá de la realidad legal, falta mucho para que se plasmen en prácticas sociales. En principio, nuestra perspectiva de análisis acerca de la pobreza y los factores que la provocan no puede estar divorciada de la dignidad. Más allá de estos principios básicos, es necesario enriquecer esta noción de pobreza con el concurso de nuestras bases'.

(the most significant of these laws were: the *Ley del Medio Ambiente* (1992), the *Ley de Participación Popular* (1994), the *Ley de Reforma Educativa* (1994), and the *Ley Forestal* (1996). In addition, CIDOB played a key role in promoting Bolivia's ratification, in 1991, of the International Labour Organization's 'Convention Concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries' (Convention 169) and was instrumental in ensuring that indigenous concerns were included in the reform of the national Constitution that took place in 1994. Probably the most significant success of CIDOB followed a second large scale march, in 1996, of 1,500 indigenous people from Santa Cruz to La Paz. Its aim was to protest about the land question and after travelling 120 kilometres the government negotiated with CIDOB and agreed to promulgate the *Ley del Servicio Nacional de Reforma Agraria (Ley INRA)*. This law set out a framework for the resolution of all indigenous land claims (Marinissen 1998; Kidd and MacLullich 2000; Castillo and Chirif 1994; Ip-Latina/CEDETI 1995; Torres, 1999). Notwithstanding these impressive and significant achievements, as noted above, many new challenges had emerged, mainly due to the difficulties that indigenous people were experiencing in ensuring that these legislative changes were made concrete and carried out by the government at all levels.

There is a great deal of variation in the livelihoods of the many indigenous communities spread throughout the lowlands (Suarez 1998). It was obvious that an easy characterisation of indigenous people in terms of 'poverty' would be facile. Some groups have little or no land and eke out a living by selling their labour at the lowest end of the market whilst others possess relatively large areas of land where they continue to practice a more traditional economy relatively unmolested. Thus nutritional status varies enormously throughout the lowlands. Malnutrition is obvious in many indigenous communities, especially some groups such as the Weehnayek and the Ayoreo (Suaznabar 1995; Velazquez 1999) in the departments of Tarija and Santa Cruz respectively as well many Guaraní communities in the department of Chuquisaca, who live on restricted areas of land or on land belonging to non-indigenous landowners (see also Beneria-Surkin, 2000). Nevertheless, many communities in Amazonia have an abundance of food due to the relatively large areas of land available and the fertility of the soil.

We agreed that focusing solely on what indigenous people *lack* might divert attention away from the important assets that could be built upon. On this basis, we sought to give a picture of the political landscape within which the indigenous population could assert a greater influence. The most obvious assets that we stressed were their entitlement to their traditional territories and their social capital (organisations and shared goals throughout the lowlands) which could be used to advance their political aspirations.

'Besieged' - Accessing and Controlling Indigenous 'Tierras Comunitarias de Origen' and 'Propiedades Comunales'

The most urgent concern of lowland indigenous people was to secure sufficient land for their present needs and future development. The land crisis was at a crucial stage at the time of our research. As mentioned, the march of 1996 lead to the promulgation of the *Ley del Servicio Nacional de Reforma Agraria (Ley INRA)* which established a framework for the resolution of indigenous land claims. Since this date, a large number of claims had been presented to the Bolivian government and were being processed at the time of our consultancy. The major territory claims are called *Tierras Comunitarias de Origen (TCO)*. In 1998, 43 *TCOs* were being processed, totalling 17,113,554 hectares for 120,729 people (de Vries 1998). *Propiedades Comunales (PC)* are smaller land claims and refer to the land occupied by an individual community. There are between 2,500,000 and 4,000,000 hectares of *PCs* (de Vries 1998:14). There was great tension surrounding the land titling process as the success and integrity of each claim was under serious threat. It was clear that the Bolivian government was actively striving to find ways to reduce the size of the claims. The chief concern of the indigenous people was that unless the government's attempts to reduce the land claims were resisted, they would be forced to accept areas of land insufficient for their nutritional requirements, particularly in their aspiration to continue traditional livelihoods which involved hunting, gathering and fishing and distinct forms of sociality within which these livelihoods were embedded.

A serious source of frustration for indigenous activists was that the legal basis for land claims which had been established through the *Ley INRA* ceded a great deal of discretionary power to the government (VAIPO 1999B). Essentially the *Ley INRA*

involved the idea of the government *granting* land to indigenous communities. This is quite different from the ILO Convention 169's insistence on the *recognition* of indigenous people's rights to land they traditionally occupied over and above the rights of ownership of more recent landowners. In 1991, Bolivia ratified ILO Convention 169 which stipulates: 'The rights of ownership and possession of the peoples concerned over the lands which they traditionally occupy shall be *recognised*' (Article 14). However, as land claims were being processed through the *Ley INRA*, rather than through appeal to Convention 169, significant proportions of their traditional territories were excised from the agreed TCOs (CEJIS 1999A). It appeared that indigenous activists agreed to the process of being granted land from the government as they understood that this would be faster and more likely to succeed even if the territories agreed would be less extensive.

There were two main ways in which the government reduced the size of the TCOs. Firstly, before titles are agreed, a process of '*saneamiento*' must be undertaken. This involves ascertaining the legal rights of non-indigenous land-owners and businesses to remain within the territory and have their lands excluded from the TCO (*Tierras Comunitarias de Origen*). This can mean dramatic reductions in the size of TCOs, for example, the TCO pertaining to the Weehnayek people was shrunk from 196,849 hectares to 13,000 hectares. Secondly, VAIPO (the Bolivian government's vice ministry for indigenous affairs)[8] is given the task of making an assessment (called a spatial needs study) of the area of land that each indigenous community 'requires' for its future subsistence. The results of these studies caused great concern among the indigenous communities as the areas of land recommended by VAIPO were significantly smaller than the land traditionally occupied (which had already been diminished by the *saneamiento*)[9]. Paradoxically, VAIPO, whilst being part of Bolivian central government, for its work on land titling was being funded by the Danish governmental aid agency DANIDA which had the intention of supporting indigenous peoples. DANIDA's aim was to assist indigenous people to regain their territories whereas VAIPO was shrewdly using this funding to *reduce* the areas titled and to legitimise the claims of non-indigenous landowners (see also CEJIS 1999A).

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[8] *Viceministerio de Asuntos Indígenas y Pueblos Originarios*

Once an indigenous community gain title to their territories, they assume the status of landowners. This lead to the challenge of managing valuable assets that could be used for the sustainable benefit of the communities or, conversely and commonly, a source of conflict between, as well as within, different communities about the use of land which often lead to a competitive scramble to sell assets and a rapid depletion of resources[10].

It was widely felt, among the indigenous people, that the government bureaucracy was being used shrewdly to make the processing of indigenous land claims as complicated and difficult as possible. It was, in fact, a legal requirement for indigenous people to draw up sustainable land management plans for their territories before they could proceed. We noted the urgent need to assist the indigenous communities who had gained title to land to acquire the skills and resources required to undertake 'participatory land management planning'. It was also clear that the land management plans required for the sustainable well being of indigenous communities demanded far more involved and comprehensive preparation than what would be entailed by purely commercial approaches such as the normal practices of non-indigenous companies involved in the non-sustainable extraction of timber. Recent experiences had shown that genuinely participatory management plans involving the shared decision making and ownership of *all those within a* TCO that would provide for an equitable and sustainable distribution of economic and social benefits were extremely complex and required a considerable amount of time, thought and resources to put together.

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[9] Various activists we interviewed argued that VAIPO pre-determines the area of land to be that would be recommended in terms of spatial needs prior to undertaking the study. Examples were given of recommended areas dovetailing with forestry interests within a territory.

[10] We heard numerous examples of non-indigenous timber firms exploiting forest resources and building roads, for example, in the province of Ballivián (department of Beni), in the traditional territory of the Cabineño people, in the Parque Nacional Pantanal San Matías (Santa Cruz), in the province of Iturralde (department of La Paz), the traditional territory of the Araona people, and within the Tacana TCO in the province of Vaca Diez. Whilst most of these cases appeared to be carried out without any indigenous assent or involvement, we noted widespread cases of accusations and counter accusations between indigenous communities about the sale of assets, for example, the vice president of CIDOB was 'investigated' for sale of assets in the Parque Nacional Isiboro Secure whilst the president was accused of the sale of land in the community of Barrio Nuevo. Both of these individuals were later declared to be innocent. In the Guaraní community of Villa Paraíso, land had been sold to non indigenous farmers with false documents by a member of the community. The other members of the community had resolved not to allow this land to be used and had made representations to the government to resolve the issue (Oyendu No.6 1999).

The government was widely approving forestry concessions to private companies and which were to be excised from TCOs. 75% of the total area of the TCOs is recognised as having forestry potential (de Vries 1998:32). Further, illegal logging was a widespread threat and was causing conflict within communities as some indigenous leaders were unilaterally selling areas to loggers (see footnote 10).

At the time of the consultancy, there was insufficient expertise available to the indigenous communities to undertake these plans as TCOs were being titled. In the meantime, indigenous communities were being inundated with offers from commercial interests to set up plans for the exploitation of their natural resources. This was leading to a multiplication of conflicts, the rapid depletion of resources and the consequential diminishment of the potential benefits to indigenous communities.

After these considerable difficulties, further challenges confronted indigenous communities in their efforts to reclaim, and defend the integrity of, their traditional territories. The main threats were firstly, natural resources[11], (timber, gas oil and minerals) being exploited without their consent or control and secondly, the invasion of their lands by 'colonisers' (usually subsistence farmers from the Andean regions) (Orellana 1999A).

As indigenous people do not have 'sub-surface' rights to land, the Bolivian government had a free hand in granting concessions to private companies to explore for petroleum, gas and minerals within TCOs (CEJIS 1999A; Marinissen 1998 Cartagena, Gonzales, Oehlerich, 1999). CIDOB was working to demand that the Bolivian government respected Article 15 of ILO Convention 169 which states that indigenous people should be consulted before natural resource exploration takes place, participate in the benefits of these activities and be compensated for any damage (CEJIS 1997, 1999A, 1999B; Beneria-Surkin, J. 2000).

Problems with Political Participation

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[11] Concessions for oil exploration affect 32 TCOs totalling 22% of the area of the sum of all TCOs. Mining concessions amount to 575,153 hectares within TCOs (de Vries 1998).

A further difficulty for indigenous peoples was their lack of political representation at every level of government. Despite the passing of the *Ley de Participación Popular*, indigenous people were still largely marginalised from positions where they could have meaningful political influence (Lianos and Perez 1998; Diez 1998)[12]. With the promulgation of this law in 1994 it was expected that indigenous communities would gain greater access to government resources through the municipalities and the *prefecturas*. This law widened the role of, and increased the resources channelled through, municipal government. Indigenous communities and organizations were given the opportunity to be recognized as *Organizaciones Territoriales de Base* (OTB). An OTB is the lowest level of administration within a Municipality but its functions include proposing work to be undertaken by a Municipality and the monitoring of a Municipality's resource use in the fields of health, education, the environment and sustainable development. To enable OTBs to exercise control over a Municipality, a *Comité de Vigilancia* should be established which consists of a representative from each *cantón* or district. These representatives should be elected by the constituent OTBs. Although some of the people we consulted believed that the *Ley de Participación Popular* has benefitted indigenous people, most suggest that it has failed in its aim of giving indigenous communities enhanced control over local government resources. In many areas indigenous people cannot gain access to the *Comités de Vigilancia* and, even when they do, the *Comités* rarely exercise influence over the Municipalities. As a result, indigenous people often remain last in the list of priorities of the Municipalities and *Prefecturas*.

In short, the interests of indigenous people generally figured far down the list of government priorities at every level. The Municipal elections of 1999 revealed some of the dynamics of indigenous political representation. Only 35 indigenous people were elected as councillors and only two were elected as mayors throughout the whole lowland area. Some of these owed their success to being co-opted as token indigenous candidates on party lists. Following their election, a common experience was that these councillors have been unable to respond to the demands of the

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[12] As only listed political parties can take part in elections, to enter the political arena, indigenous people are forced to form alliances with them. Their actual ability to influence decision making within parties is often minimal. Also, indigenous candidates practically never have the resources or power to compete with local elites in their campaigning, bargaining power, bribery or threats in election campaigns.

indigenous population and have either followed party lines or been marginalised within their parties.

The difficulties that indigenous people faced in competing in the manipulative and unscrupulous political arena, then, constituted a serious challenge. We considered it important to recommend that a programme of 'civic education' be initiated so that indigenous people were better equipped to be able to participate effectively in, and exert greater influence upon, the political process. Many of the specific difficulties that indigenous people voiced involved a chronic lack of basic services such as health, education and means of communication. We argued that this could be only be improved if a greater, and fairer, share of local government resources were made available to indigenous communities. This, in turn, would only be achieved if indigenous people had greater political power. Similarly, the perspectives of lowland indigenous people continue to be a low priority at the level of central government spending. The Bolivian government received the vast majority of its resources for indigenous peoples from international donors, for instance, only 3% of VAIPO's (Vice Ministry for Indigenous Affairs) budget is provided by the Bolivian State. More generally, 50% of Bolivia's public investment is made up by external donors (VAIPO 1999A)

We observed that that gender relations among lowland indigenous people were becoming progressively less egalitarian, possibly as a result of changing work patterns. Whilst gender relations in lowland South America are highly egalitarian, a number of observers we spoke to had noted that this had been progressively weakening. Some manifestations of this are as follows. The labour burden of women had been increased in many areas with the introduction of rice cultivation. Girls' access to secondary education was relatively restricted as this often meant leaving their communities. Generally, in relation to boys, girls are often expected to remain in the communities to carry the responsibility of domestic work (Suaznabar 1995). Indigenous women's earning power and job security was also far lower than that of men (Tijaraipa 1993). Similarly, women's access to positions of decision making power and influence is very limited. We also found that these problems were also reflected within indigenous organisations. Very few community leaders were women. Only CIDOB and one regional organisations had 'gender secretaries' and in these

cases, their role was understood primarily in terms of reproductive health. There were, however a few indigenous women's organisations. Bolivia, in fact, has a comprehensive rights framework written into its constitution. Part of this is the ratification of legislation pertinent to the rights of women, such as Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The indigenous movement, as far as we could make out, had barely used this legal resource for the benefit of women.

In general, we noted that there were many areas in which the rights of indigenous people were being denied and access to justice was severely restricted. For instance, a key area in which indigenous people suffered continual abuse of their rights was employment. An increasingly large proportion of the indigenous population were resorting to working on large farms on extremely low wages with no security. We found that these workers were often unaware of their labour rights. In the zone of Ingre, for instance, where there are several landless Guaraní communities of 780 households (3800 individuals) in the Department of Chuquisaca, the majority of the population (men, women and children) were forced to work as 'peones' (labourers with no labour rights, often held in bondage by spurious and often unpayable debts to their employers) on non-indigenous farms/ranches. They normally worked 14 hours six days a week, suffered malnutrition, had no educational provision and were paid only 5 Bolivianos per day[13] (from interviews with CIDOB investigators, Rene Pablo Perez, Jose Martinez. See also Oyendu 1999 No.6).

Equally, the extent to which indigenous people had access to their civil and political rights was severely compromised by their lack of knowledge about their rights. This was arguably compounded by entrenched racist attitudes and practices in Bolivian society and its police and legal institutions (CEJIS 1999B).

Assessing the Representativity and Efficacy of CIDOB

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[13] Ayoreo women in the community of Puesto Paz told me that they can collect an average of 30 Bs per day by begging in central Santa Cruz which often compares favourably with opportunities in their communities.

CIDOB is the umbrella federation for the many indigenous organisations representing the indigenous peoples of lowland eastern Bolivia. The Confederation is organised in the form of a pyramid, with individual communities at the base and CIDOB's National Office at the apex. Directly below the National Office are seven regional organisations and each regional organisation consists of a number of affiliated, smaller organisations. The essential role of each organisation within the Confederation is to represent its affiliated members in their dealings with non-indigenous society. When dealing with government, local organisations work at the level of the Municipalities, regional organisations with departmental governments, and the National Office with central government.

A central aspect of the consultancy was to assess CIDOB's role firstly as a representative organisation and secondly gauging its capacity to achieve the technical, organisational and political goals of the indigenous people they represented. This involved describing the historical development of CIDOB before moving on to an examination of its role and internal organisation, personnel and capacity. The following figure and table give an overview the confederation's structure and it's constituent groups.
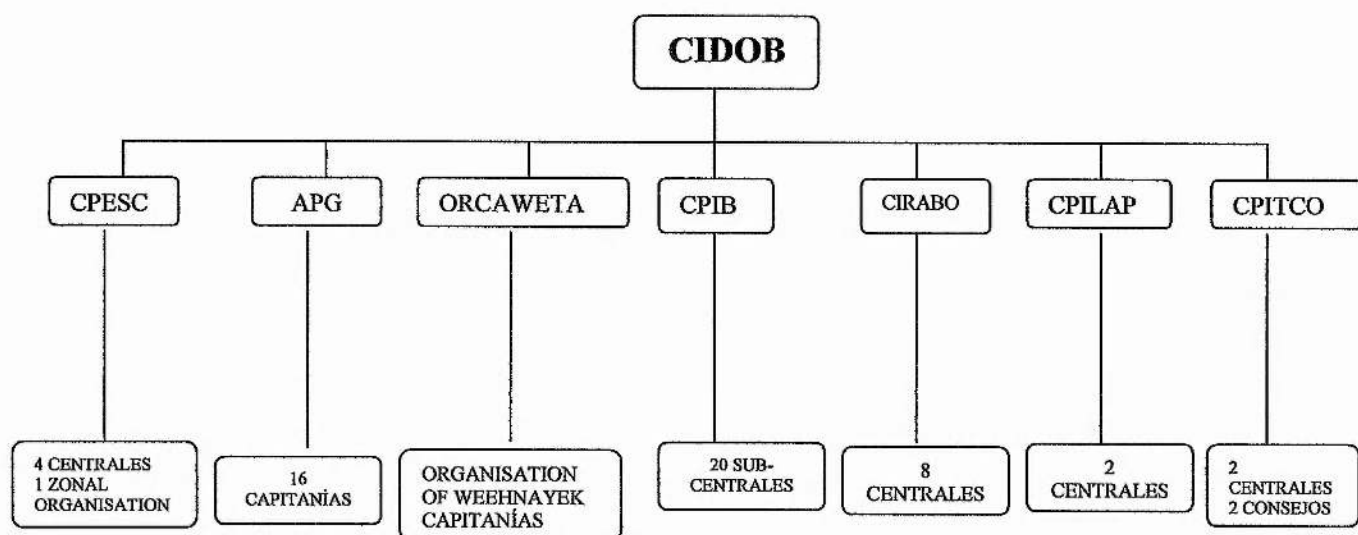
Regional Organisation	Intermediary Organisations		Indigenous groups	Department

CPESC Coordinadora de Pueblos Etnica de Santa Cruz	CANOB	Community Organisations		Ayoreo Chiquitano	Santa Cruz
	OICH	Zonal Organisations		Guaraní	
	ZONA CRUZ CABI		Community Organisations		
	COPNAG	Consejos Comunales	Community Organisations	Guarayo	
APG Asamblea de Pueblos Guaraníes	Departmental Consejos de Capitanías; Santa Cruz, Tarija, Chuquisaca.		Community Organisations	Guaraní	Santa Cruz, Chiquisaca, Tarija
ORCAWETA Organizacion de Capitanías Weehnayek	Community Organisations			Weehnayek	Tarija
CPIB Central de Pueblos Indígenas de Beni	Sub-central Baures Sub-central Canichana Subcentral Cayubaba, San Javier Subcentral Magdalena Sub-central More Sub-centrales; Bella Selva,Puente S. Pablo,Rosario Tipnis, San Francisco de Moxos, Pueblos Mosetenes San Ignacio de Moxos Sub-central Siriono Sub-central San Lorenzo de Moxos Sub-central Tsimane			Baures, Canichana Cayubaba, Mosetenes Itonoma More Movima Moxeno-Trinitario Moxeno-Javierano Siriono Tsimane	Beni
CIRABO Central Indígena de la Region Amazonica de Bolivia	Sub-central Araona Sub-central Cabinenos Sub-central Chacobo Sub-central Esse Essa Sub-central Machineri Sub-central Pacaguara Sub-central Tacana Sub-central Yaminagua			Araona, Cabineno Chacobo EsseEssa, Machineri Pacaguara Tacana Yaminagua	Pando, Riberalta
CPILAP Central de Pueblos Indígenas de La Paz	CIPTA, CIPLA, PILCO, OPIM	Community Organisations		Leco Moseten Tacana	North of La Paz
CPITCO Coordinadora de Pueblos Indígenas del Tropico de Cochabamba	Centrales: CIRI, Consejo Yuqui, CONIYURA, CONISUR	Community Organisations		Yuqui Yurucare	Tropic of Cochabamba

Our enquiry into CIDOB as a representative organisation came to the following conclusions. There were no other indigenous organisations competing with CIDOB for the right to represent indigenous people[14]. Instead, all organisations were integrated into the Confederation, respected its structure and accepted the national office's position at the apex of its pyramidal structure. However, we concluded that CIDOB was not achieving its potential of being an organisation that comprehensively and effectively represented the peoples of the lowlands. We observed firstly, that the flow of information from the National Office to community level and *vice-versa* was often problematic. For instance, lower level organisations often did not hear about initiatives at the national level while, conversely, the National Office was frequently not informed of problems experienced by local communities. A common complaint was that members of the National Directorate did not visit local communities often enough. Indeed, people in local communities had often never heard of CIDOB and the only organisations of which they were aware were their local and regional organisations.

Secondly, conflicts occasionally arose between organisations at different levels of the pyramid. Lower level organisations frequently decided to follow policies that conflicted with the recommendations of the Confederation thereby provoking uncomfortable relations with the organisations above them. Thirdly, the larger and more capable organisations within the Confederation often implemented strategies and representation to government at a national level without fully consulting the National Office. Some of the regional and lower level organisations, particularly clearly had greater technical capacity and expertise than the National Office of CIDOB. CPESC (Coordinadora de los Pueblos Etnicos de Santa Cruz), and CABI (Capitanía del Alto y Bajo Izozog), for instance were involved in the management of budgets many times greater than that of CIDOB and, arguably, had greater political impact[15] (Beneria-Surkin 2000).

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[14] The Bolivian government had made an unsuccessful attempt to replace CIDOB with their own agency some years before.

[15] The $2,000,000 *Plan de Desarrollo Indígena* (PDI) was being managed by CPESC. CABI independently set up a foundation (Ivi Iyambae) to administer finance for its various projects as well as co-administrating a USAID-funded project to manage the Kaa-Iya National Park which at 3.4 million hectares is the largest in South America.

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Nevertheless, we concluded that CIDOB possessed significant assets upon which future work could be based. Arguably the most important were its powerful image and the respect in which it was held by the Bolivian government, primarily as a legacy of its past political successes. The government along with external donors, international solidarity organisations, NGOs and other indigenous organisations regarded CIDOB as the legitimate national and international representative of the lowland indigenous peoples of Bolivia.

The past successes of CIDOB in changing areas of Bolivian legislation that were crucial to the interests of the indigenous peoples of the lowlands had, in fact, multiplied their challenges in engaging with the interpretation and implementation of these laws. We stressed that it was important to strengthen the capacity of CIDOB to respond adequately to the many challenges (outlined above) that were facing indigenous people.

One aspect of this task involved looking at the professional capacities of the elected indigenous members of CIDOB in relation to the professionals who worked alongside them, the majority of whom were not indigenous. CIDOB's national office comprises eleven indigenous members of a 'National Directorate' who are elected as representatives of the regional organisations and are expected both to design and implement policy. We noted that 'while there have been, and are, some gifted *dirigentes*[16] who have done excellent work, this is often not the case'. *Dirigentes* were not always chosen because of their capacity to fulfil a specific role, but achieved their position for other reasons, such as their influence or status within their communities. It was obvious that, in some cases, candidates who displayed few of the necessary skills and, in some cases, lacked the proper motivation had been elected. We concluded that CIDOB, rather than relying solely on an electoral system that did not seem to produce the best candidates for the very demanding jobs that were set before them, could overcome its current incapacity by the employment of capable professional staff (indigenous or otherwise), known as '*técnicos*' (technicians). CIDOB's past successes had, in fact, involved very significant input from technicians

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[16] The choice of the term *dirigente* inappropriately suggests a formal hierarchy in the organisation. The essence of this role may have been better encapsulated by the choice of a term such as *representante* (representative). The use of the term *dirigente* is apparently derived from the *sindicatos* (trade unions).

who maintained good working relations with the indigenous *dirigentes*. In interviews with CIDOB *dirigentes*, it was frequently expressed that the posts of *'técnicos'* should be filled by *indigenous* professionals. Nevertheless, in our report to DFID we suggested that 'while this aim is laudable, the problems faced by indigenous people are so serious that every effort should be made to employ the highest quality staff possible. At the same time, in the course of their work technicians should place a high priority on the transfer of skills to indigenous people'.

In fact within CIDOB, whilst there was a strong sense that indigenous people should have ownership of all the major decisions taken, there was also recognition that the indigenous movement is not, in fact, restricted to indigenous organisations as it also encompasses a number of non-indigenous NGOs and individuals who are politically committed to the indigenous cause and work closely with indigenous organisations at all levels. Arguably, CIDOB was originally set up on the initiative of anthropologists working in a local NGO[17], whilst CIDOB instigated the creation of many of the lower level organisations. The indigenous organisations of lowland Bolivia did not appear to have emerged spontaneously from indigenous society (Riester 1985, Marinissen 1998; Castillo and Chirif 1994; Ip-Latina/CEDETI 1995; Torres, 1999)

In fact it seemed clear that this pattern of initiative and finances originating with the non-indigenous agencies and individuals working with indigenous people was still prevalent. My fellow consultant, Stephen Kidd, opined that this model of financial support being provided from above had correspondence with the traditional practice of the indigenous leader being generous and providing for his community. In addition, this pattern fits with Bolivia's political system which is thoroughly patrimonial and clientelist (World Bank 2000)[18]. A potential implication of these dynamics was that the indigenous leadership were becoming more accountable to donors and open to corruption. After these observations, we explored CIDOB's relations with its current donors and made an analysis of why indigenous people themselves did not offer financial support to their own organisations. CIDOB, in common with almost all indigenous organisations in lowland Bolivia received no funding from those it

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[17] APCOB (Apoyo para el Campesino del Oriente de Bolivia)

[18] In Transparency International's 'Global Corruption Report', Bolivia was perceived by the international business community as being the 85th worse out of 91countries in the survey (2001).

represented and was maintained by external (mainly European) donors. We noted that the absence of financial support from the communities threatened the sustainability of indigenous organisations and made them less accountable to their constituents.

Recommendations to DFID for the Future Support of the Indigenous Peoples of Eastern Lowlands

Before suggesting potential areas of future DFID support, we undertook a study of the existing development programmes among lowland indigenous peoples. This meant undertaking a 'stakeholder analysis'[19]. On this basis, we made the observation that while there were a wide spectrum of development initiatives underway, very few of these had a clear political focus to their work. We concluded that the majority of these sought to directly improve indigenous livelihoods without creatively challenging the political status quo. The brief analysis and consultation described above had, we argued, demonstrated that the approach that would most benefit the indigenous population was an avowedly political one.

We concluded that, despite the difficulties of representativity, efficacy and capacity that we identified, there was clear potential for future DFID collaboration with CIDOB in areas that would have a significant impact on the livelihoods of indigenous people. After examining the range of projects underway in lowland Bolivia, it was also apparent that space existed for DFID to support work that is not currently being covered by other institutions[20].

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[19] A 'stakeholder analysis is a research tool used by DFID before any development intervention. It involves finding out what development work is already underway, where and by whom. The analysis also involves figuring out what the likely prognosis of different project ideas would be vis-à-vis views and political positions of the various stakeholders (community groups, landowners, political groups, church groups, NGOs and other CSOs) and identifying likely risks that might preclude undertaking a project, for example corruption or the possibility of exacerbating existing social tensions.

[20] Whilst indigenous people are targeted by development agencies extensively, and there were a wide range of development projects underway among the various indigenous groups, only a tiny number had a political focus. We identified a few projects that dealt with indigenous land rights, such as legal assistance provided by CEJIS, ALAS and the Catholic agency, *Equipo Pastoral Indígena*. CEJIS was impressive in the sense that, with modest resources (from Oxfam UK) it unfolded a multi-faceted legal aid project nationally for indigenous people, as well as working on land rights, staff also focused on such issues as water, labour, and civil and political rights, aiming to modify national legislation. However, the majority of NGOs sought to improve indigenous livelihoods in various ways but did not address underlying political difficulties. A number of NGOs implement small-scale projects focused on improving agricultural production, sustainable use of forest products (such as honey) for sale in local and global markets, artisan workshops, micro-credit systems, commercial outlets sanitary facilities and the provision of basic infrastructure. Some programmes were partially supported by central government

The specific areas of future work that we recommended were as follows. Firstly, we recommended supporting CIDOB to acquire the technical capacity to respond politically to the main threats and challenges facing indigenous people. Given that the land struggle was at a critical stage, we considered it imperative that CIDOB was strengthened in its capacity to effectively monitor and challenge the government which was quite explicitly delimiting the potential benefits to indigenous peoples of recent changes to the legislation[21].

Secondly, on the basis of our analysis of regional organisations, we recommended that DFID could support efforts to strengthen the capacity of indigenous organisations and leaders throughout the confederation to make effective political representations.

Thirdly, in conjunction with the above, we recommended undertaking a programme of raising indigenous people's awareness about their rights and trying to increase their access to mechanisms through which they could claim these rights[22].

On the basis of our observations concerning the relations within the confederation, we suggested that DFID should involve Regional Organisations in any discussions about future projects.

Having noted the lack of co-ordination and occasional conflicts of outcome that existed between the different international donors supporting the indigenous movement, we advised that any discussions on future support should include all of these parties. We suggested that any future DFID project should be channelled

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(usually with external donors)., such as the *Proyecto de Desarrollo de Pueblos Indígenas en el Beni* (PRODESIP), the Ministry of Education's intercultural education programme and VAIPO's reproductive health programme. According to some commentators, these projects seemed to be more active before elections. New projects, managed by combinations of NGOs and indigenous communities had arisen as a result of compensation payments for the impact of large-scale development projects (such as roads and gas pipelines) on indigenous territories.

[21] Specifically, we recommended the resurrection of the *Centro de Planificación Territorial Indígena (CPTI)*. This had been a project designed to provide the technical support for indigenous communities to defend their land claims. The Centre (which was based in CIDOB's national office) had the most advanced computer mapping systems in Bolivia. Staff here had worked to collate and monitor information on land claims and was a significant resource for the indigenous movement in its defence of land claims. Due to conflicts over the management of the Centre, funding was withdrawn and the CPTI ceased to function in 1999. This had been a huge blow to the indigenous movement as the national office was presently unable to co-ordinate land claims process at a national level and effectively challenge the Bolivian government.

through a 'platform of donors' and that all donors should agree a common set of aims prior to entering into discussions with CIDOB on future funding.

Finally, we argued that future support for CIDOB should aim to establish the financial independence of the national office and the regional organisations with regard to their core funding whilst acknowledging that funding for technical teams would be beyond the capacity of the indigenous population[23].

Emergent Ethical Issues

From this experience as a consultant, I became aware of a number of areas of moral confusion or moral ambiguity that I submit to be intrinsic to the applied anthropological task.

As consultants in Bolivia we were required to rapidly assimilate the complexity of the tasks presented to us and to distil recommendations about how to achieve agreed goals from our engagement and immersion in this intricate and often indecipherable context. There was a obviously a huge contrast between the relatively manageable and coherent world presented in our report for DFID and the complex disarray and *imbroglio* of the political, economic, inter-cultural and moral world that we had been plunged into. It could be argued that the report had no more than a verisimilitude of consistency, predictability and order. As DFID has an explicit commitment to a 'rights based approach to development', we sought to present our analysis and recommendations in terms that would fit with, and appeal to, proponents of this agenda. In reality, the sometimes messy experience of researching and writing this report brought forth many wider perplexing issues than those that finished on the desks of DFID.

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[22] For instance, Bolivia has ratified CEDAW, Convention 169 and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

[23] We argued as follows; 'existing donor support for the core funding of indigenous organisations - especially the National Office - should continue for two years. Then, over a period of three years, it should be progressively reduced to zero. During this period of five years, donor support should focus on developing the financial independence of indigenous organisations, which should include contributions from member communities'.

Not having worked as a consultant before, I was interested in more than the terms of reference defined with DFID. Probably as a result of this openness, I found myself bewildered by the complexity of the situation I found myself in. I found it daunting to reflect that I had to quickly capture the crucial aspects of the fast moving issues that surrounded me in a succinct report written in 'development reportage'. As I pondered the many different issues that converged on the consultancy, it occurred to me that the moral validity, or otherwise, of what I was doing would be difficult to figure out. The question of what role I was supposed to fill, how best to do it along with the worry of being caught up in something that I would not wholly agree with came to occupy my mind as much as the research and report writing I was being paid for. I found myself contemplating a wide range of moral dilemmas that I surmised to be intrinsic to the whole development process. Principally, I was concerned with the positionality of the anthropologist/consultant in relation to those we were supposed to represent (simultaneously DFID and the indigenous peoples of the Eastern lowlands of Bolivia). I realised that these considerations opened up a wide range of questions about the philosophical presuppositions and models as well as the political goals that underlie development practice.

The most difficult task seemed simply understanding the nature of the different levels of development discourse and practice in the context of radical global asymmetry. Whilst I considered it essential to gain a grasp of the agendas and multiplex relationships that exist between levels that join the politics of bilateral lending discussed in DFID's Victoria Street London offices to the aspirations of individuals in specific indigenous villages, I found it challenging to know where to start.

In short I was struck, although not paralysed, by the thoroughly moral texture of the work I was undertaking. My initial reflections were as follows. I had to confront the fact that I was thoroughly unclear about where I stood in the complex positionalities of people from different backgrounds, representatives of different agencies, powerful funders and an indigenous organisation that was regarded as being less than efficient and efficacious and was even suspected of being corrupt. I felt uncomfortable about aspects of the consultancy such as the scrutiny that we were putting the indigenous organisations under, the sense of being an intrusive auditor at times. It was disturbing to consider the very real possibility that our findings would be interpreted in such a

way as to end DFID's funding of CIDOB. I was perturbed by the mis-match between the potential implications of our report and the extent of my knowledge and expertise. It rankled my anthropological sensibilities or aspirations to play a fleeting and fugacious role in the lives of the research subjects in indigenous communities, extracting information with no promise of what the outcome would be. On a more theoretical level, I began to consider the inevitable difficulties of negotiating between the politically pluralist approach necessary for indigenous well being and the ineluctably paternalist perspectives of DFID and the Bolivian government. In writing the report, I began to confront the limits of development language and became acutely aware of the entangled asymmetries of knowledge, power and finance. Specific dilemmas also arose such as advocating for the land rights of indigenous peoples over and above the need that landless settlers had for land[24]. In the next chapter, I will look at some further developments of these initial reactions and some reflections of these in anthropological literature.

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[24] As human rights legislation opens up possibilities for indigenous peoples to gain legal title to land that they are the historical occupants of, questions arise with regard to the well being of the displaced landless peasants who are moved on and forced to eke out a living on the margins of urban society. The anthropologist, adopting the expected role as advocate of indigenous people, risks becoming an accomplice in the removal of recent colonisers of unused land. Nugent argues that peasants in Amazonia are often rendered invisible in many anthropological representations. He asserts that where they do figure on the margins of ethnographies, they may even be demonised (1993). Whilst the fact that, in Bolivia, at least, indigenous people tend to also be the most marginalised and financially impoverished, may make claiming special rights for them seem less problematic, it remains that there was a tension between different discourses of entitlement here. Landless peasants may suffer multiple deprivations, vulnerabilities and insecurities as severely as indigenous groups whilst having no recourse to special rights. The logic of granting whole indigenous communities legal personality is not, primarily, to do with income-poverty, but involves respecting the value of indigenous life-worlds as distinct and precious ways of being. It also putatively involves indigenous people managing the resources on their land according to their own decision making processes, even if this means not exploiting the land's commercial potential, although land management planning usually involves the external professionals. The idea of collective rights, however, clashes with individual rights. Some development professionals we spoke to were concerned about the position of women in indigenous communities, arguing that previously egalitarian gender relations were being eroded and currently left a lot to be desired. They argued that these women were becoming doubly disadvantaged within their own communities.

Chapter 3

Caught in Webs of Moral Bewilderment; The Ethics of Anthropological Involvement in Development Interventions

Negotiating Incommensurable and Multi-layered discourses

Many applied anthropologists, perturbed by the realities of poverty, or of the failings of exclusionary styles of development, feel compelled to take on the role of advocate and/or commit themselves to some form of *solidarity* with those whose lives they seek to represent. Gabriel makes a distinction between 'development anthropology' and the 'anthropology *of* development' in terms of the former dealing with 'what ought to exist in the future' as opposed to research that deals with 'what exists at present' (1991: 37). The very fact of anthropological involvement indicates that a moral choice has been made.

Recent increases in the involvement of anthropologists in development combined with clearer understandings of the inextricability of power and the production of knowledge, (for example through the regularities in development language which arguably reproduce dominant perspectives [Escobar 1995]) complicate the picture further, as Manderson and Wilson argue:

'In the past, romantic accounts situated anthropologists as unproblematically 'champions of the weak'. Now, more often, we are caught in a delicate balance of different moralities, ethics and responsibilities: of those who fund and support our work, whose objectives – at least for many applied anthropologists – are concordant rather than at odds with our own: those who provide institutional approval for our presence or under whose auspices we work; and those whose lives are the subjects of our inquiry and investigation. Ethical, moral and political circumstances intrude at every point in the research process' (1998: 215).

Critiques of development often contain the erroneous assumption that anthropologists have radically different views from those of developers (for instance Sachs 1993;

Esteva 1993; Illich 1993). Marcus, in fact asserts that despite previous stand-offs, there is an emerging affinity 'between bureaucrats, officials, professionals, and left-liberal scholars that may be disturbing to the latter, but which progressive scholars would have to take self-consciously into account in pursuing future projects' (1999: 9). Often development interventions, either in terms of a specific input, or regarded more generally, are valued and supported by anthropologists. I could not discern anything sinister in the self aware efforts that DFID professionals in London were making to support the indigenous peoples of the lowlands of Bolivia. The approach was one of empowerment, the promotion of greater autonomy and involved a participatory approach. Notwithstanding this, I found it perplexing to consider that DFID forms part of a government that quite blatantly defends and promotes its dominant geo-political and economic position in a world system that arguably creates the very conditions that development interventions are designed to mitigate. The efforts, work and resources of DFID in comparison to the effects of the machinations of global capitalism was obviously minute.

However, it is not implausible that anthropologists may see globalisation as an inevitable reality that has to be worked within even though it is orchestrated by Western or Northern hegemony. Gledhill, for instance, raises the provocative and rhetorical question of whether there is any 'compelling reason why an anthropologist should not, for example, be convinced of the long term desirability of Northern models of global modernisation. It is as least logically possible to believe that such models can be implemented without riding rough-shod over human rights and denying people opportunities to continue to express cultural diversity' (1994: 209). Rapport (1997) is one anthropologist who, with a few qualifications, appears to propound this view.

There seems to be an assumption in academia that the anthropologist will always be on-side with the views of the people s/he has come to represent, cleverly taking a wry anti-development stance in solidarity with the people. This is frequently untrue. Esteva, for example, describes his confusion when discovering that the people he was conducting research among were enthusiastically embracing the benefits a development project offered. This was quite contrary from what he had learned in his academic preparations about development: 'I kept asking myself: 'Why haven't the

settlers and (Nakanai) villagers realised that development stinks?' '(1987: 35). The multiplication of conflicts within and between indigenous communities that we became aware of in lowland Bolivia was partially caused by incidents of indigenous people abandoning their commitment to their own communities and unilaterally selling resources that were owned collectively.

I think it is important to make the point that dichotomising between a homogenous, scientific, rationalist, neo-colonial, top-down depiction of development discourse on the one hand and 'recalcitrant indigenous people only versed in local knowledge' on the other, is simplistic; 'there is as much diversity *within* the community of 'professional developers' as between them and other stakeholders or players' (Grillo and Stirrat 1997: 21). These idealised differences are both naïve and patronising. Richards observes that it is a frequent mistake to assume that 'small scale cultivars necessarily abound in agro-ecological wisdom' (1993: 61); they may, and often do, benefit from Western technological inputs[1]. In our consultancy, one of the primary benefits that we envisaged coming from Western professional sources was the expertise to construct participatory land management plans that would allow the continuation of sustainable livelihoods in limited areas. Indigenous people, to the extent that this was possible, were hastily studying these skills with the assistance of various European donors.

The pressure and urgency to resolve these dilemmas of involvement and making a judgement about the long term impacts of development, the benefits of Western technology and the threat of capitalist social fragmentation, is heightened by the fact that the worlds that development addresses itself to are often fraught with human suffering and injustice. From the beginnings of the discipline, anthropologists have asked themselves whether or not they can make a difference by getting involved in the forces of colonialism or development. Whereas Benedict (1934) insisted that no one

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[1] One of the most urgent points that was reiterated in my participatory poverty assessment in the Ayoreo community of Poza Verde was their necessity for a tractor. The last tractor owned by the community that had been part of an aid package from the World Bank had never been maintained and still stood rusting and stripped of parts at the edge of the village (there was also an empty one room school house which had not been served by a teacher for three years). Whilst the members of the community benefited in the short term from the use of their first tractor in terms of being able to cultivate more land and to transport their produce to local markets more easily, they did not have the expertise or resources to maintain the tractor.

culture should assume superiority by prescribing solutions to the apparent problems of another, Malinowski argued in 1945 that:

> 'The native needs help. The anthropologist who is unable to perceive this, unable to register the tragic errors committed at times with the best of intentions, at times under the stress of dire necessity, remains an antiquarian covered with academic dust in a fools paradise . . . But research in order to be of use must be inspired by courage and purpose . . . Shall we therefore mix politics with science? Decidedly "yes" ' (in Hackenberg and Hackenberg 1999: 1).

Whilst anthropologists may have ethical concerns about the forces driving colonialism and/or development, they may opt to engage with these forces so as to temper them, to work critically within the development framework. Gulliver relates his thinking in 1952; ' . . . colonialism was the going regime and it seemed reasonable and attractive to try and work within it, to contribute towards amelioration and improvement and even, just a little, to hasten its end' (1985: 45).

The decision to get involved in development obviously carries the risk that one might be compromised ethically but for many, this is preferable to adopting a diffident or disdainful posture as Gledhill reasons:

> 'A holier than thou attitude of scholarly detachment and smug complacency regarding the transcendental wisdom embodied in a discourse restricted to the academic arena hardly seems a much more politically satisfactory position for an anthropologist than selling one's conscience for a quick buck' (1994: 216).

Whilst these are hyperbolic characterisations of both the academic anthropologist as an irrelevant, vainglorious and trivial buzz-word and tail chasing figure and the applied anthropologist as an unscrupulous mercenary, Gledhill draws attention to an area that has been the locus of a great deal of anthropological deliberation and even angst. The academic studies that I had undertaken of the peoples of lowland South America, which focused almost exclusively on indigenous life-worlds, sociality and cosmology had furnished me with a commitment to be part of an agenda that assisted

indigenous peoples to maintain and protect their traditional ways of life (see for example Overing and Passes *et. al.* 2000). The field of social anthropology, as will be discussed in the next chapter, from its most abstract and inaccessible theory building to its most obvious applications, is obviously suffused with ethical and moral deliberations.

In defence of academia and what it has to offer to practice, Geertz warns against hastiness in the production of knowledge about other societies, saying that 'to judge *without* understanding constitutes an offence against morality' (2001: 40). Whilst this view is now central to the work ethic of social anthropologists, on the other hand, it could also be argued that to understand without judging and acting in the face of suffering or injustice constitutes a *worse* offence. In fact, Geertz notes that 'there is a diagnostic *and* a remedial side to our scientific concern with (other) societies, and the diagnostic seems, in the very nature of the case to proceed infinitely faster than the remedial' (2001: 24). Applied anthropologists set out to be professionally involved in the *remedial* counterpart of the diagnostics of anthropology, rightly or wrongly, feeling an urgency to 'do something'.

However, anthropologists, whilst aiming to contribute to the well being of those they work among by getting involved in development, at the same time, may have deep concerns about being part of a global project that extends the social, cultural, economic and moral reach of the West whilst being acutely aware of the accompanying stark inequalities, environmental damage and alienation (see also Jackson 2002: 107-8). Anthropologists often have profound difficulties with the whole idea of Western driven progress, and the society that development aims towards. The philosopher Charles Taylor asks why it is that 'rational control over nature, which has grown with the European philosophical and technological achievement, has nevertheless produced such anti-human results' (1968: 226).

Anthropologists, ambivalent about the moral basis of Western society, are inevitably confronted with the question of whether they should be supporting and defending non-modern models of human morality, sociality and interaction with the natural environment as evidently, Western interventions are often felt to be intrusive, offensive, aggressive and poisonous by indigenous groups (see Overing and Passes

2000). Gow gives an apt description of the impression of 'white people' that the Piro people of the Bajo Urubamba, (Peru) have developed over the course of their contact with them:

> 'When they say that white people are *mshinikatu,* 'disrespectful' they refer to the shockingly disrespectful manner in which white people treat each other and everyone else. As they say, 'Go to the white man's house and see if he will feed you! That's where you will learn to suffer!' White people either do not notice other people's hunger, or they do notice it and do not care' (2000:52)

Theorists with radically different stances can not help agreeing with the evidence that economic development has generally been carried out in an exclusionary and inequitable manner. Vargas Llosa, (whilst coming from a very different political position [right wing, neo-liberal and pro-development] from anthropologists of Gledhill's ilk), writing from the Peruvian context, admits that 'the very notion of progress must be difficult to conceive by the communities whose members never remember having experienced any improvement in their lives, but rather, prolonged stasis with periods of regression' (1983: 36).

I am personally persuaded by views that are militantly against mainstream development considering it, as Sachs writes, to have 'provided the fundamental frame of reference for that mixture of generosity, bribery and oppression which has characterised the policies towards the South . . . a blunder of planetary proportions' (1993: 1, 3). I also think that a crucial insight in the apprehension of the orthodoxy of economic development processes is its *relational* aspect, that is, the active and coercive categorisation of people and resources in asymmetrical relations. Escobar also makes a strong case for this view, asserting persuasively that development planning has 'contributed greatly to the production of the socio-economic and cultural configuration that we describe today as underdevelopment' (1992: 132).

There is an almost seamless identification between capitalism and development, both in its economic motivation and the reparations and redistribution carried out through various kinds of projects that are its consequential necessities. A concern of many

critics of the development process as a whole is that, essentially, the narrow organising principles of capitalism render valueless all aspects of nature and society that are not priced in the market. The anthropologist Hornborg, for instance, makes the case that capitalism retains its monolithic consistency as a system of power 'precisely because it is not a species of culture but *the very denial of culture*, in the sense of specific and implicit local meanings' (1994: 240, my emphasis). The relentless exploitation of natural resources that underpins Western industrial society often ignores ecological processes that are essential for the regeneration of these resources[2]. Similarly, the perspectives of those people whose needs are not satisfied through, and whose visions of well being are out of synch with involvement with, market mechanisms are also ignored, rendered worthless if they are not engaged in market oriented productivity (see also Berthoud 1992, Sbert 1992 and Bauman 1990).

Economic growth has historically often caused poverty and social dislocation for those removed from previously viable and sustainable traditional livelihoods. The anti-development position, involves the defence of indigenous life-worlds against the inexorable individuating pressure of capitalism which can reduce persons who once belonged relatively securely within a traditional moral community to the level of landless, migrant or slum-dwelling proletarians competing with others in a deregulated informal economy. Apffell-Marglin, for instance, from her collaborations with anti-development anthropologists in Andean Peru, laments the capitalist obliviation and denigration of the rich world of 'peasant livelihoods':

> 'Native agriculture and culture (are) not only appropriate to that environment but alive and vibrant – despite the efforts of development, education and a long term history of attempts to extirpate the native culture – and embody a totally different mode of being in the world, of being a person, of relating to others both human and non-human, and of notions of time and space and of nature . . . it is only from the perspective of development, which makes one

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[2] Across the world we continue to see the pollution of air and water, over-fishing, the destruction of tropical and temperate rain forests, the extinction of entire species, desertification, erosion of precious topsoil, and the disappearance of wilderness for development.

wear modern Western lenses, that peasant agriculture and culture looks backward, stagnant and altogether lacking (1998: 3)[3].

This irresolution and vacillation then, between the desire to contribute to the well being of others who are perceived to be in need, (which is practicable and can make real gains), and the cynicism (or realism) about the neo-colonial basis of development, is a central part of the anthropological moral experience of others' 'poverty'. For the most part, however, anthropologists in development are unlikely to jettison their discipline and the development process in its entirety and will work with a pragmatic agenda of balancing the *autonomy* of indigenous communities against the *anonymity* of the omnipresent market economy.

When considering the ethical dimensions of development, it is also necessary to look at the social and political models that accompany development. As development agencies increasingly adopt a 'rights based approach', which embodies a particular kind of morality, the challenge for anthropologists is to understand the impact of this morality (which has pretensions to universality) in specific contexts. As will be discussed below, the moral sensibilities of indigenous peoples are formed in qualitatively different traditions. Whilst, in my work as a consultant, I did not have sufficient time to personally explore the many indigenous forms of sociality and morality throughout lowland Bolivia in any depth, it was apparent that their necessarily combative engagement with the Bolivian government through rights legislation involved a leap away from their accustomed ways of relating socially.

Marcus and Fischer argue that 'Liberalism, including a strong relativist component, triumphed as the explicit ideology of public policy, government and social morality . . . It became the defining framework for discussions of rights and justice' (1986: 32). There is, however, opposition to this agenda in Western theory. Annette Baeir, for instance, argues that the wholesale adoption of rights based or contractarian, procedural systems of morality would mean that 'life will be nasty, emotionally poor and worse than brutish' (1995: 14 – this debate is discussed in Chapter 10). Gledhill

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[3] She further describes how members of Andean collectivities, that explicitly set out to engender the regeneration of indigenous culture and agricultural practices, who were also trained as anthropologists

also contends that the presupposition that Western models of liberal democracy are the most hopeful for global society in terms of social justice and liberty 'remains an open question'. He asks 'whether real history is really going the way of Rawls and Rorty on the basis of the evidence . . . presented thus far on the realities and politics of poverty, even in the countries which come closest to realising liberal ideals' (1997: 90). Anthropologists need to consider these debates which originate from an ambivalence and equivocation about Western values, so as to know where they stand in relation to the force of 'human rights' and the values it enshrines and negates.

Aspects of the Asymmetric Positionality of the Anthropologist as Consultant.

> *'. . . the privileged interpreter, the producer of knowledge that might or might not be put at the service of others' (Gledhill 1994: 222)*

One of the first moral difficulties that I became aware of was the asymmetry of the relationships that made up the various encounters I was involved in and observed, in terms of decision making power. I look here at how the dynamics of asymmetry relate to privileged kinds of 'knowledge' and language, ascriptions and assumptions of 'ignorance', uni-directional 'scrutiny' and the radically unequal economic status between developers and the 'under-developed'. I attempt here to make a virtue out of my naïveté[4] and method out of my ignorance, writing this section in terms of my perceptions at the time of the consultancy and the further considerations that these initial intuitions and reactions lead to.

I had written to DFID speculatively about research possibilities and had unexpectedly been given the opportunity to take up this consultancy. The role that I filled had two aspects. On the one hand I was there to assist CIDOB write a funding application to the PNUD, on the other I was there, along with the other consultant, to make potentially influential recommendations regarding the ways in which DFID might

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in Western universities underwent a 'moral passage' that made clear to them 'the impossibility of participating in the Andean collective actions from within the profession' (*op.cit*: 5).

[4] As Rapport notes; 'Naiveté . . . was an anthropological duty, inasmuch as it behoved the investigator to retain an open mind, open to all manner of influences and informations while conducting his [or her] research, open to the fullness and diversity of experience, while at the same time the investigator had ultimately to achieve closure, at least to the extent of writing a final paragraph to the account of his research. It was in naiveté that such openness and closure met.' (2000:1)

support the indigenous peoples of the lowlands (the funding for an existing DFID project was coming to an end). Whilst some of the difficulties I describe originated from the fact of my naïveté and lack of experience, I submit that these issues also arise for more seasoned and cognisant consultants, although perhaps not so acutely.

The dynamics of the consultancy were such that I quickly became acutely aware of the tensions inherent in my role. I was simultaneously perturbed and challenged by the (co)responsibility of finding myself in a position in which I had to quickly grasp, understand, and unpack the colossal amount of information, opinion and strategy that surrounded the consultancy and then re-package all of this in a language that would be acceptable to DFID. I knew that our report could have far reaching consequences and for this reason I also felt the import of ensuring that all of the information that I gathered was cross referenced or triangulated from different sources.

Whilst the whole purpose of DFID's support for CIDOB was explicitly spoken about in terms of empowerment[5], there still remained the dynamics of asymmetrical power between the researcher/consultant and the subjects of research. There are various aspects to this asymmetry.

Firstly, as consultants, we were positioned so that we could scrutinise and make decisions *about* the other without being subject to the same from those who were the 'targets' of the development intervention. A central task in this research was to give DFID a judgement on the extent to which CIDOB truly represented the interests of the indigenous peoples of lowland Eastern Bolivia. This involved travelling to speak to the people of as many indigenous communities as possible, seeking their views on CIDOB and checking whether or not their concerns were reflected in the projects that were being realised. The question of representation also meant asking questions about the political autonomy of CIDOB, whether accusations of corruption[6] and feuding

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[5] 'The goal of DFID's future strategy is that state and society work together to achieve sustainable poverty reduction in Bolivia' (DFID CSP Bolivia 2002).
[6] Our report came up with a number of recommendations with regard to this. At one level, this seemed morally appropriate, finding what the most efficacious way that aid could be invested and ensuring that those who would receive the funds would be accountable to both the people who were meant to benefit from it and from the donors. However, there was no parity in scrutiny, for example if CIDOB wanted to challenge the way in which DFID spends money. Here, though, I found the idea of corruption far from straightforward. Corruption, or clientelism, at one level, was simply the way in which politics

between different groups had any basis and whether the democratic structure of the organisation was adhered to in decision making. The scrutiny and judgement here was decidedly one-way.

A related aspect of asymmetry is the positionalities of the production of knowledge and decision making power. Various theorists have commented on this dynamic of knowing. Sponsel, for instance, criticises the tendency of applied anthropologists to speak *about* indigenous peoples, and rarely *with* them (1992). Geertz notes that the uneasy reflections on applied anthropology stem from 'the field's complicity in the division of humanity into those who know and decide and those who are known and are decided for' (2001: 95). The reports written by applied anthropologists are often unavailable to, or untranslated for, the people to whom they refer. Being aware of this, we made sure that our report was translated professionally and sent to CIDOB when it was finished.

A number of the people I spoke to in various indigenous communities complained that so many researchers had filed through their village over the years, often given them rapid fire questioning, extracted information (albeit sometimes using participatory methods) and then disappeared without ever sharing the results or (more often than not) non-existent implications of their findings. Their lives then, are re-packaged in development language in terms of current understandings of poverty and fed into the ruminations of development agencies without any palpable change. The information is given over and left to development professionals to make their judgements[7]. It was difficult not to be lame when answering the utterly pertinent question in the indigenous communities about whether there was likely to be any positive outcome from all our interviewing, tours of the communities and close questioning. Whilst it was clear that I would benefit from the research in terms of financial remuneration and data for my thesis, the benefits were not so obvious for the people I interviewed. Abbot recounts a similar experience and was forced to admit that 'even where research is more directly policy related, it is not likely that those

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were done in Bolivia and also in conditions of extreme inequality of power and wealth, corruption was seen by some as a means of redress, as long as it did not involve stealing from one's own.

[7] Another aspect of this asymmetry of knowing is the possibility of the consultant being swayed by particular interests; 'on the other hand, he or she is likely to be ignorant of much that other actors know about the local society and thereby highly susceptible to manipulation' (Gledhill 1994: 217).

being researched will benefit immediately – policy change is more likely to have an indirect affect on others like them' (1998: 219).

The main problem seemed to be that the anthropologist-consultant, as well as being in the difficult position of being a messenger (who may, or may not prove to be influentially persuasive) becomes caught up in a position where it is necessary to engage in an asymmetrical discourse where the modes of representation of the other's experience is already set. Development language, as will be explored in subsequent chapters, involves the production of self-referential meanings that, even if translated into the languages of the subjects of research, may remain opaque and limited as a reflection of their lives. Bloch contends, with regard to even academic anthropology, that 'the way anthropologists conceptualise the societies they have studied in their ethnographic accounts almost always seem alien, bizarre, or impossibly complicated to the people of those societies' (1992: 127). Hobart makes a similar point that, in some anthropological accounts, 'human agents are reconstituted as ciphers of a narrow and exclusive anthropological imagination, such that not only are they alienated from their own actions, but the agents become largely unrecognisable, even to themselves on the few occasions they obtain access to ethnographic descriptions of themselves' (1995: 66). Certainly, in our work, there was little scope for writing about indigenous sociality, in fact, our tactic was actually to side-step this to focus on land rights so that indigenous groups might be able to secure the conditions where they could maintain their traditional lives relatively unmolested.

If this is true about the painstaking efforts of social anthropologists spending years in one setting to represent the lives of the 'other', then how much more so in development where research is often rushed, limited in its scope and in which meanings are pressed into the narrow terminologies associated with market driven progress and human rights? The applied anthropologist, working as a consultant, is confronted with the difficulties of properly communicating matters of great moral import (such as the achievement of conviviality and the sociality within which different forms of well being are achieved) across different language, idiom, cultural and professional barriers. This asymmetry of knowing and experiencing, as well as the sometimes private and opaque language of development, leads inevitably to insensitive and inappropriate development interventions.

These difficulties in being conversant with a language sufficient to communicate different visions of well being cross-culturally in the development arena seem to be at the heart of the ethics of applied anthropology. Whilst social anthropologists have been at the forefront of attempts to improve the ways in which other's experience of marginalisation, disempowerment, poverty and aspiration are communicated and translated into policy and practice, this process remains problematic (see Nelson and Wright 2001 and Mosse 2001 for critiques of participatory approaches). The very fact of being a detached professional anthropologist, involved in the development process to a greater or lesser extent, but essentially remote in an experiential sense from those living in poverty and adhering to a separate agenda and personal outcome, is for some writers, a gulf that cannot be crossed until there is an attempt at genuine 'solidarity'. Apfell-Marglin despairs about this difficulty and seems to recommend a cessation of the anthropological contribution to development practice:

'No matter how much one tries to develop more sensitive, more appropriate methodologies, or modes of representation, the anthropologist's agenda and that of the anthropologised are not usually the same or even similar. However, self-reflective, however sensitive anthropologists' representations become, however much anthropologists try to give voice and agency to their subjects, the fact that anthropologists (and other social scientists) are located in the university means that their agenda and the agenda of the people they study cannot be the same' (1998: 10).

Apfell-Marglin argues, further, that to a greater or lesser extent, 'professional researchers live their work lives within the parameters and paradigms framing their profession' (1998: 14). I would disagree with this view. In our work, whilst admittedly, it was unrealistic to achieve 'solidarity' with the members of indigenous communities, especially because of the extremely short research windows we had to make the most of, I think that there were many aims expressed in our report that reflected indigenous aspirations (particularly political empowerment and land rights). Also, many anthropologists undertaking long term fieldwork seem to achieve meaningful dialogue with indigenous people that can be translated into political commitments and meaningful teaching in the academy.

The social organisation of academic and applied anthropology does, however, impose certain conditions that mark it as a distinct language game that requires editing and re-formulating one's experience according to particular rules in order to be published. Certainly in applied anthropology, 'facts must be presented with affective detachment under penalty of being labelled 'romantic', or 'biased', labels damaging to one's professional reputation'(*loc. cit.*). This could engender a kind of ethical recalcitrance or compliance for applied anthropologists who want to be given further assignments from their employers. Gledhill asserts that 'some anthropologists are reluctant even to bear witness publicly to events for fear of damaging their professional interests' (1994: 209) although he does not give examples. I think that the crucial point is that, working within development practice and discourse may mean that anthropologists are constrained in how they define the most pertinent research agenda for the alleviation of poverty, disempowerment and marginalisation, their critical voices may be de-radicalised so as to be institutionally non-offensive. Ferguson (a development anthropologist) observes that 'reports which are too critical are condemned as being irrelevant or useless and are not acted upon because they do not fit into the discourse' (1990: 69. Gardner and Lewis, on this basis, note that 'it would seem that anthropology is welcomed by developers but only on their terms' (1996: 164). On a different consultancy, I had written two reports for DFID on NGO's understandings of a rights based approach to development and had been advised to reformulate them before submission by an experienced consultant as, whilst he thought they gave a good analysis, they were too critical or 'negative' and would therefore 'not be read'.

Another aspect of asymmetry is that of what the anthropologist/consultant comes to represent by association with Western development. In the field, the predicament of the anthropologist/consultant is that s/he is posited, however privately critical, as a representative of Western progress, and is forced to speak in the restricting language of development discourse. Geertz describes this as an instance of 'anthropological irony';

> 'Irrespective of what one does, thinks, feels or wishes, by virtue of the fact that the anthropologist is a member, however, marginal, of the world's more privileged classes . . . unless he (she) is either incredibly naïve or wildly self

deceiving, he can hardly bring himself to believe that the informant, or the informant's children, are on the verge of joining him as members of this trans-cultural elite' (2001: 31).

This is an extremely contentious and perplexing remark on a number of levels. There appears to be the assumption that the aspirations of the 'targets' of development are co-valent with the normative models and ways of life that characterise 'privileged' Western industrial society (that Geertz seems to consider himself to be a successful exemplar of). The truth is that indigenous people have more considered views of Western people and what they represent. To see the contrast between Geertz's self ascription and an indigenous description of non-Indians, consider Echeverri's citing of one of his Uitoto (Colombian Peruvian Amazon) informants:

'I remember one very potent image which (Enokakuido) constructed to express his understanding of the relationship between non-Indians and Indians . . . He likened the situation to that of a woman showing her vagina to a man: non-Indian's showed the Indians 'that woman's vagina' that is, 'money, alcohol, merchandise, technology' . . . For Enokakuido, the whole matter is thus a question of sexual education: of how to regulate desire, how to know the limits' (Echeverri 2000: 35)

The philosopher Charles Taylor echoes the views of many anthropologists who have worked with indigenous peoples; 'an instrumental society, one in which, say a utilitarian value outlook is entrenched in the institutions of a commercial, capitalist and finally a bureaucratic mode of existence, tends to empty life of its richness, depth or meaning . . . the individual has been taken out of a rich community life and now enters instead into a series of mobile, changing, revocable associations, often designed for highly specific ends. We end up relating to each other through a series of partial roles' (Taylor 2000: 500-502). In the volume edited by Overing and Passes 2000 there are numerous examples of the ways in which Amazonian peoples understand the 'good life'. Jamieson, for instance, writes that 'living good' for the Miskitu people (Nicaragua) 'also means the absence of politics, give and take, negotiation, hustle and compromise (all of which provide potential threats to harmony), and the presence of

an atmosphere in which villagers exercise concern for each other's well being' (2000: 83).

However, at another level - that of strategic financial disparity between the West and the 'Rest' - Geertz *does* point to the radical asymmetry between what development putatively offers and what it actually delivers. This chronic lopsidedness resonates in the ethics of development. Being cognisant of this, anthropologists are often involved in the detail of worthwhile projects and in the very valuable promotion of participation and empowerment. It is vexing that, at the same time, their work, for DFID, at least, is arguably subsumed within a liberalising, individuating, democratising and essentially capitalist agenda. DFID, for example, as part of its commitment to poverty reduction in Bolivia was seeking to promote 'increasing competitiveness and productivity', 'to open markets', 'know-how and technology transfer mechanisms' and to attract 'foreign direct investment' (DFID CSP 2002: 3). I felt a strong ambivalence about this agenda on various levels[8]. Part of DFID's democratising agenda involves the promotion of human rights standards. My suspicion was that DFID would tend to support the strengthening of *civil and political* rights whilst giving less emphasis to economic, social and cultural rights. This latter group of rights would involve greater spending but might reduce poverty levels whilst some, such as labour rights may present a disincentive for foreign investment which was regarded as being essential for Bolivia's economic growth. In short, the reduction of poverty was subsumed within a larger neo-liberal agenda, involving a particular kind of 'progress' entailing open markets, high productivity, foreign investment and the inculcation of competitive values intrinsic to the market mentality.

In our report, we relied upon the international language of human rights as the principal framework to represent the difficulties of the indigenous communities, as well as a way of formulating solutions. This was an idiom that indigenous activists were already familiar with, to some extent. In their struggles with the Bolivian government, utilising human rights instruments was clearly the most efficacious

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[8] Geertz argues that there is a 'radical short run incompatibility between the two economic goals which together comprise what agrarian reform in the long run consists of: technological progress and improved social welfare. Less abstractly, a radical increase in agricultural production and a significant reduction of rural unemployment seem to be directly contradictory ambitions' (2002: 25). It is difficult

approach to challenge the besieging of indigenous territories and to combat other forms of dispossession and exploitation within the current political and economic climate. Here, indigenous people have had to come to terms with the fact that Western political engagement is a kind of sublimated warfare, or as MacIntyre aptly puts it 'modern politics is civil war carried on by other means' (1997: 253). Beyond this rights based world of negotiation, we were aware that various richer pictures and versions of well being resided in the indigenous communities.

According to anthropologists who have sought to understand the moralities of the indigenous peoples of Amazonia (see Overing and Passes 2000), the 'rights based approach' has proved to be very limited as a way of apprehending indigenous ideas of sociality or well being. The implementation of rights here was very much an example of indigenous peoples 'learning to do our politics' so that they could achieve territorial autonomy thus allowing them to sustain their own distinct forms of sociality and morality. The only kind of answers offered by a rights based approach were in Western political institutional terms. Adopting a rights perspective, then, is a pragmatic decision, not one that reflects one's moral commitments. The rights perspective, as MacIntyre argues, 'contains within itself a certain note of realism about modern society; modern society is indeed often, at least in surface appearance, nothing but a collection of strangers (and interest groups), each pursuing his or her interests under minimal constraints' (1997: 250-251).

It is one of my most important contentions that indigenous moralities are more comprehensible from a 'virtue ethics' perspective rather than a rights based approach. This will be explored in subsequent chapters (particularly Chapter 10) where I indicate how the differences between these approaches run very deep. What I am going to suggest is that from the indigenous perspective, the rights based approach is strangely skewed and can, in certain instances, be felt as being *immoral*.

Over the course of the consultancy, it was clear that the relationship between local knowledge/expertise and decision making power was often inversely proportional, especially in relation to some of the activists who had been working in the indigenous

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to see how this is only a 'short run incompatibility' as agrarian reform generally involves *permanent* displacement of subsistence farmers.

movement for many years. Arriving, for the first time at CIDOB's national office was perturbing in the sense that my identity had already been cast in terms of my putative 'proficiency' and status as a representative of DFID. On the first day, I was introduced to the members of the 'national directorate' of CIDOB and the representatives of the largest constituent groups of the confederation. We were seated around a large hall with the various delegates waiting expectantly. I introduced myself and the terms of reference that had been agreed between ourselves as consultants with staff at DFID's London offices. My knowledge of the political, social and cultural context in lowland Bolivia was minuscule compared to those sitting around me, yet somehow, *a priori*, I had been constructed as an expert who would be indispensable to them in their efforts to obtain funding from PNUD. This was an uncomfortable and unmistakably false position to be in. I had expected to go there to conduct research, not to play a semi-authoritative role with regard to indigenous leaders in their efforts to make representations to the Bolivian government. I realised quickly that the issues that were of the greatest importance in the consultancy were thoroughly political and required knowledge of the Bolivian constitution, the working of the various vice-ministries, the personalities therein, as well as the formal and informal alliances, rivalries and agreements that existed. It was clear that for many of the indigenous activists, 'far from being isolated from the same world system that forms the anthropologist's cosmopolitan consciousness, (they were) often equally, if not more, aware of its operation than the anthropologist himself' (Marcus and Fischer 1986: 86).

A similar scenario occurred later in the consultancy when some long serving employees of a local NGO paid us a visit at our hotel to discuss aspects of our consultancy. Personally, I felt that there was something excruciating about sitting by the swimming pool of a luxury hotel (paid for by DFID) with these individuals who had dedicated their careers to the indigenous movement and were consummate experts on every aspect of the scenario that we were researching, knowing that they were being paid less in a month than DFID consultants receive in a day[9]. They knew a lot more than we did yet we were in a position of far greater decision making power solely by dint of our association with DFID. I perceived that there was a clear tension in the air as we discussed the issues.

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[9] At the time of the consultancy, the rate of pay for DFID consultants was £360.00 per day + expenses.

Any idea of solidarity or genuine shared concern was tenuous and difficult to maintain. I intuited from them a kind of contempt, not for us personally, but for the whole role of consultants who live in relative luxury[10], who play a fugacious role in their lives, who do not have to answer to the results of their decisions, who will never actually experience poverty, who, because they have not lived with the 'targets' of development often don't really grasp their most important concerns and values, who are blind to the nuances of the sociality of indigenous communities, who lack autonomy of decision making and who are concerned chiefly about fulfilling the requirements of the terms of reference that have often been conceived elsewhere. I had a glimpse of what it was to be a presumptuous consultant who had never had, and would never have, an existential experience approaching that of dispossessed and politically oppressed indigenous peoples, purporting to make authoritative statements about their needs and perspectives. This discomfiture, however, was a species of 'guilt by association'; probably wrongly perceiving that the local experts ascribed to myself and Stephen Kidd (who had spent a decade living among the Enxet of Paraguay), a caricature of the worst excesses of development consultants.

A further aspect of asymmetry is the one-way judgement of 'efficacy'. We had been asked to assess the ability of the indigenous communities to meet certain standards that had been conceived by DFID. I felt that the very fact of our being there as consultants involved an implicit imputation of the incapacity or lack of initiative of the indigenous movement. This clashed with my initial experience described above of the *expertise* of many of those involved in CIDOB and other organisations. With regard to the support that DFID wished to give to CIDOB to ensure that indigenous perspectives were represented at the national dialogue, there seemed to be an assumption that the indigenous organisations themselves would not be able to put together a proposal to the PNUD so as to acquire the funds required for the wide-ranging consultancy with the indigenous communities of the lowlands. Perhaps the fear was that the indigenous movement was divided and partisan and that this consultancy might not be carried out in an equitable and fully representative manner,

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[10] The work is certainly lucrative. Flying in business class flights is standard (on this consultancy, DFID booked flights for their consultants that cost seven times more than economy class). Consultants can take their pick of hotels.

perhaps favouring some indigenous groups over others. As can be discerned from the summary of our report given above, we did, in fact, on the basis of looking at the historical development of the indigenous movement and by observing the actual work and achievements of indigenous *dirigentes,* come to the conclusion that the capacity of the indigenous movement to engage effectively with the Bolivian government and society in general was far from optimal. However, this 'weakness' was presented in our report as a relative disempowerment, marginalisation and comparative disadvantage in the political arena of mainstream Bolivian society as a result of financial and educational disparities. Blackmore and Ison (1998) note that in the dynamics of investigative processes that are linked to policy development there are inevitable disparities in 'expertise', education' and social position, for instance. Complex ethical issues emerge when development professionals, on principle, seek to elevate the status of those who might normally be excluded from decision making because of their real, or perceived lack of experience or education and promote these individuals to positions of responsibility with regard to a development project. 'Decisions to blur these boundaries may result in expectations about action or outcomes that are impossible to meet, while 'reversals' can be very difficult to achieve' (Blackmore and Ison 1998: 65). The moral tension here is between on the one hand ensuring the success of an intervention by simply employing those most capable and on the other avoiding a paternalistic approach. Our recommendation to combine capacity building towards empowerment with a gradual diminishment of funds to indigenous organisations to promote self-funding was intended as a step towards turning around the paternalistic pattern that seemed to rob the initiative from indigenous communities. We also recommended that indigenous *técnicos* where possible, and when suitably qualified, replace non-indigenous professionals.

When travelling to various indigenous communities to undertake 'participatory poverty assessments' (PPAs) and to assess the 'representativity' of CIDOB, the straightforward financial asymmetry between the consultant and those involved in these assessments was apparent. I discuss some of the more visceral reactions to this in a section below. Here I will briefly look at the moral implications of this asymmetry of financial means and explore Geertz's perspective on this issue further. He makes the argument that the anthropologist working in development can not help but feel the acute paradox of, on the one hand, being perceived, or rather, *presented* as

a successful and affluent exemplar of modern western society (which is being proffered by the institutions of development), and on the other, being aware that certain benefits that he or she enjoys are, realistically, unlikely to be available to those upon whose behalf s/he is putatively working. Geertz paints a picture of the anthropologist in development in a way that I only partially recognise, remarking that s/he is:

> 'A display case for goods which are, despite their surface resemblances to local products, not actually available on domestic markets' (2001: 32).

These dynamics are perhaps only acute for anthropologists explicitly working for Western development agencies in that they are expected to provide a 'road map' to a 'better life' for those understood to be living in 'poverty'. There are tensions inherent in the doubly problematic position of being a foreign-based researcher, and a 'privileged surveyor of poverty'. Whilst I recognised that indigenous peoples do not necessarily aspire wholesale to the 'goods' of the Western world, and hold dear quite different understandings of well being, it was clear that being provided with basic services (health, education etc.) in every community that I visited was a universally voiced aspiration. The political and economic reality of Bolivia however, meant that this aspiration would be unlikely to be fulfilled in the near future.

One aspect of 'applied anthropological angst' then is that the straightforward disparity in terms of social and health services as well as financial wealth between Bolivia and the UK points to a global asymmetry that is outwith the scope of the consultant's work. Gardner and Lewis seem to be rather resigned in accepting that:

> 'Although (anthropology) may be able to contribute to problematising and changing aspects of development discourse, there are far wider issues involved over which individual anthropologists and their methods have little influence. Ultimately, for the quality of people's lives in poorer countries to improve, global conditions must change' (1996: 167).

The deflating and illusion puncturing irony of the anthropologist/consultant is that, from the perspective of global asymmetry and inequity, despite the financial

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remuneration and kudos, as well as instances of mitigating exclusionary styles of development in this work, in the grand scheme of things, s/he often plays a fairly partial, minor, thwarted and impotent role. Geertz, getting to the crux of the matter, expresses the vexing nature of this predicament:

> 'The sort of moral atmosphere in which someone occupationally committed to thinking about (developing countries) finds himself often seems to me not entirely incomparable to that of the cancer surgeon who spends most of his effort delicately exposing severe pathologies he is not equipped to do anything about' (2001: 29).

From conversations with indigenous activists, I felt a recognition of this in our work, that DFID, whilst purporting to represent the social and political concern of the UK, in comparison to the structures of inequality that are presently written into the global economy, could not be regarded as being radical or transformative. Whilst DFID was actively supporting a 'rights based approach to development', and in so doing commutating Western values, the more fundamental causes of global inequality which made resources so very scarce in countries like Bolivia and which locked in the advantages of the already powerful, carried on regardless.

Controlling one's Contribution – Co-option or Critical Engagement?

An immediate difficulty of anthropological involvement in development is being in control of the contribution one makes to decision making, as a supposed conduit, representative, or intermediary, of the people whom the development initiative is being aimed at. The danger is that anthropologists' observations and critical concepts, pressed into the narrow spaces of development reports, no mater how coherent, compelling or persuasive, can be domesticated, institutionalised and eventually used in ways that the anthropologist would not intend. Gardner and Lewis argue that in the necessary abridging and/or bowdlerisation of anthropological work for the purposes of planners, there is a danger that 'development may absorb anthropology – potentially its most radical critic – into the dominant development discourse' (1996: 162-3).

Such fundamental components of life as 'work', 'family'', well being', 'land', 'health', 'property', authority' are defined through the organising principles of development planning and become embodied in the execution of duties and mandates. Transitive, or intransitive, participation in the processes of development entails involvement in a world carved up in particular ways; 'a world of conventional lexical referentiality – the names of things and things so demarcated' (Wagner 1991: 45). Development projects involve the orchestrated mobilisation of material and human resources and ideally require the establishment and negotiation of shared meanings with regard to the economic, social and moral life of the people whose lives are affected by development. The multi disciplinary and cross-cultural realities of development projects, and the range of representations and genres of which they consist can be described as polyphonic, perspectivally relativistic, and fragmented. The question of whose voice is heard, whose perspective is valued, and which fragments are included in the synthesising totality of policy reports is a crucial one.

Our final set of observations and recommendations in the report for DFID were deliberately designed to be easily consumed by pressured development professionals and we had to make judgements about how to vastly simplify the many perspectives and conflicting voices that we had listened to and engaged with from indigenous communities, NGOs, indigenous leaders and government officials. In addition, the time afforded us to undertake this study would have been far too short to properly even begin a truly social anthropological study of even one of the thirty four indigenous groups of lowland Bolivia. Our way of dealing with this was to practically leave out any detail about the social and cultural lives of the indigenous peoples that we had gleaned or had studied in advance, to focus upon finding a balance between the rights agenda of DFID and the ways in which rights could be used to further the aspirations of indigenous peoples to control their territories.

This reflected our recognition that social anthropology's predilection for detail and thoroughness may sometimes be at odds with the reductionist and concise analyses and action oriented directives development planners require. Kuper cites the pragmatic colonial administrator Mitchell's complaint of anthropologists in the colonial period as

'asserting that only they were gifted with understanding, busying themselves with enthusiasm about all the minutiae of obscure tribal and personal practices [from which studies] resulted a large number of painstaking . . . records . . . of such length that no one had time to read them and often, in any case irrelevant, by the time they become available to the day to day business of government' (1987: 107).

As the causes and impacts of poverty are often obvious and the causal connection between those who wield power and those who do clearly do not are quite clear, to avoid making straightforward statements about this (choosing instead to pursue endless detail) would surely constitute an abnegation of moral and intellectual responsibility. I believe that general recommendations about the causes and dynamics of social injustice can be given without the meticulous recording of every point of view. Applied anthropologists are caught in a liminal zone between different discourses (academia and multi-disciplinary practice), although I think that there are clear correspondences in intent between these. Green, on the contrary, is pessimistic about the possibility of meaningful communication between development and anthropology and declares that a common language in which to conduct debate has never been achieved; 'the professional style of academic anthropology is exclusive and does not encourage the participation of non-academics in debates within the discipline' (2000: 6). It is outwith the scope of this discussion to examine the on-going debates within anthropology between emphasising 'structure' or 'experience' in our theoretical approaches. The focus here is the problem of reducing anthropological insights into development language whilst retaining the integrity of these hard won ethnographic insights and values. I contend that high quality ethnography, rich in detail and sensitive to the multi-vocality of different social settings needs to underpin and inform the applied anthropological necessity of reducing their knowledge to the language acceptable to development planners. In simple terms, 'bad' anthropology and 'bad' development deserve each other.

Anthropologists, in their endeavours to acquire professional legitimacy in academy must contribute to the knowledge of their profession where, arguably abstraction and fine detail endows prestige. Working in development means being caught in a double bind of retaining the status of being sensitive and subtle observers of the nuances and

complexities of culture whilst also communicating solutions to problems in 'development speak'. In applied anthropology, the attitude of ethnographic 'openness' is fundamental, although it must be combined with the skills and forthrightness that allow observations to be synthesised into conclusive statements, that is, to somehow arrive at closure in a language that can be acted upon. Development reports demand coherence and straightforward surety about facts and can not be written in an open ended style, requiring certain kinds of reduction (although, as will be seen in Chapter 7 there are affinities between the heteroglossia of 'post-modern ethnography' and participatory approaches to development). Stirrat, rather than criticising academia, asserts that the difficulty is that development consultants are forced to communicate their views in a format that delimits the scope of what can be said:

> 'the practice of development consultancy works against certain kinds of analysis, imposing rigid econometric cause and effect model onto social reality, in the process ensuring the perpetuation of the yawning chasm between the views of the world held by local populations and those of developers' (2000).

On the other hand, some theoretical approaches would disavow the validity of the necessary reductionism that development reports require. Geertz, for instance, notes that 'post-modernists have questioned whether ordered accounts of other ways of being in the world - accounts that offer monological, comprehensive, and all-too-coherent explanations are credible at all, and whether we are not so imprisoned in our own modes of thought and perception as to be incapable of grasping, much less crediting, those of others' (2001:102). Post-modernist theory questions the validity of the analyses of particular positioned individuals (such as consultants) to act as commutators of 'truth'. Gledhill notes that 'new ethnographies' aiming to represent the polyphony of all cultural settings encounter the difficulties of giving the subjects 'their own voices', and finds that 'there is little prospect that the full range of power relations involved in the genesis of the dialogue will be laid out in its textual representation' (1994: 223). There is a comparable difficulty in the composing of development reports. In short, an anthropology that will be relevant to the deliberations of development needs to come to firm conclusions (see also Gledhill 2000: 5).

The recommendations that we made, in a sense, bypassed some of the difficulties of representing the indigenous cultural perspective, or depicting their values, or visions of the good and how these were quite different from Western values. Our report focused primarily on indigenous *political* aspirations which amounted, above all, to regain the integrity of their traditional territories so that within these territories they could maintain their social and cultural integrity. However, at various moments, the question of relativism did emerge in various ways. This is clearly a central issue for the ethics of applied anthropology.

Development and the Question of Relativism

The anthropological analysis of development shows that, as Croll and Parkin (1997: 8) phrase it, 'it does not just refer to methods and plans about how to get things done, but entails moral prescriptions, various collective enthusiasms, different and competing hierarchies of adherents and an overriding assumption that human betterment is society's primary essence, that for which it exists and by which it justifies itself'. The description of relative values, beliefs, ontologies and the spiritual, aesthetic and emotional quality of life and how these are contested is crucial not only to the anthropological endeavour but also to the anthropological critique of development practice. Thus the issues of cultural, cognitive, epistemological and ethical relativism permeate the field of applied anthropology on a multiplicity of levels. The ethics of intervention depend very much on how these issues are conceptualised.

Inherent to the idea of development is an impulse to bring about change, and therefore the necessity to make judgements about current states of affairs in different settings. Viveiros de Castro[11] presents the sociological implications of the ethnography of Amazonian ontologies and argues that, in order to understand these societies, a redistribution of the predicates which are normally correlated (in Western epistemology) with such dichotomies as nature/culture, body/soul and particular/universal is necessary. Notwithstanding this anthropological insight,

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[11] 'Relativism, Epistemological and Otherwise', address given at the University of Edinburgh's 'Munro Lecture' Feb 1998.

economic theory and the administrative practices of nation states in their dealings with indigenous peoples are not held back by such scruples as the possibility of incommensurate cultural universes. Anthropological critiques of development however, increasingly bring to light the ways in which social and economic change initiated by Western agency often has the concomitant effect of obliviating the webs of significance through which people in local and indigenous cultures construct their existence. This dynamic of knowledge in practice can be understood as the growth of *ignorance* - ignorance of other epistemologies, the ethnocentric and judgmental ascription of ignorance to others and the result - a profusion of ignorant plans put into action. (see Hobart *et al.* 1993).

Within development discourse, the question of relativism elicits strong and very varied reactions. For some development theorists, the urgency of alleviating poverty and the uniformity of the fact of deprivation throughout the world, renders the question of relativism very relative itself. Chambers for instance, exclaims that 'the extremes of rural poverty in the Third World are an outrage' (1983: 2). MacNamara similarly, describes the conditions of life for those in 'absolute poverty' as being 'beneath any reasonable definition of human decency' (1978). Sen, on the contrary, asking for a more considered approach calls such statements as 'unleashings of personal morals on the statistics of deprivation' (1981: 56). Hobsbawn makes the important observation that the ways in which planners define and apprehend poverty necessarily contain a moral element 'that may or may not coincide with the conventions of the society in which it occurs' (1968).

Definitions of poverty inevitably are often based on Western ideas of 'relative deprivation' and a comparative, cross-cultural perspective. Sen makes an important distinction between the 'conditions of deprivation', as defined by development planners and feelings of deprivation defined by the 'targets of development, noting that 'material objects cannot be evaluated without reference to how people view them' (1981: 45). Pearse underlines this point, describing the disparity of perception between those defined as 'the poor' and the planners; 'what for the economist were indubitable signs of poverty and backwardness . . . were often integral components of viable social and cultural systems rooted in different non-modern social relations and systems of knowledge' (1971: 25). The tension here is primarily between, on the one

hand, paternalism and the power of Western discourse and values to define and control the livelihoods of others on the pretext of development and in contrast to those who insist on the recognition of a plurality of voices on the subject of well being.

As noted above, cosmological premises very different from our own may inform the interpretative constructions and evaluations indigenous people make of themselves vis-à-vis their environment. Croll and Parkin (1997), for instance, present the argument that anthropological insights into rural development, particularly among indigenous peoples, challenge the uncritical application of the conventional oppositions between human and non-human agency and between the human individual and the physical environment. Cosmological ascriptions of agency to the natural world may well involve the individual and society in a morality that extends beyond the categories of western ontologies. In the same way that anthropologists have used the concept of metaphor as a 'safety net' so as to make figurative the apparently irrational statements which were intended literally (Overing 1985: 52) so too have the practitioners of development been incredulous to indigenous conceptualisations of person and environment. The planned social and economic change of rural areas through the vision of Western development inevitably involves the ignoring or negation of these ontologies towards the end of material and/or technological progress. Hobart, with reference to imposition of Western scientific knowledge on indigenous life-worlds, for example, speaks of the 'darker side of knowledge' (1995: 49) which is manifested, for example in the fear of becoming it's object or of having one's own knowledge obliviated by the domination of another way of thinking and doing, of individuals or groups being rendered 'ignorant' by an inaccessible expertise which defines 'legitimate' practice (1993:21).

The 'work ethic' or disciplinary common sense of applied anthropology involves a degree of cultural relativism in that there is recognition of differences in behaviour and in cultural categories in different populations of people and that applied anthropologists advocate that cultural practices should be understood in their own terms and thus respected in any kind of intervention so as to encourage more appropriate strategies[12]. A central tension for anthropologists cognisant of the above

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[12] Lummis argues that 'to treat people justly may require treating them differently; on the other hand to treat them as if they were the same is not necessarily to treat them justly' (1993: 38).

issues is that development practice, however, whilst recognising variation, arguably still follows the 'Enlightenment project' of emancipation and human liberation through 'rational' means, with the optimistic credo that putatively universal evils ('poverty', 'injustice', 'marginalisation' etc.) can be treated by the universal cure of communication, understanding and ultimately, Western rationality which assumes superiority and dominance over all other forms of knowing and being.

For applied anthropologists, the discussions that surround relativism are played out in the ethics of intervention. A position of strong ethical and epistemological relativism would seem to lead to either a 'principled objectionism' or 'monitorism' with regard to development projects. Gellner argues, from a liberal stance, that the position of ethical relativists can result in a kind of paralysis; 'the pursuit of a unique culture-transcending truth is damned. The very idea is a cover for domination' (1996: 2). Such a position of ethical relativism, as depicted by Gellner (in deliberate caricatures) and the championing of cultural autonomy and its corollary criticism of intervention loses credibility for activist anthropologists who become aware of conditions which they understand as unjust or cruel and which they ascribe to the workings of ubiquitous processes. Anti-interventionist approaches which are based upon the idea that development is an expression of Western hegemony, are basically naïve, and are essentially apolitical and ineffectual, doing nothing to counter the excesses of capitalism or cultural imperialism. However, the extreme epistemological relativist position that people live in cultural universes which are equally true and valid but incommensurable and opaque to each other is described more by its critics than those accused of being its adherents (also see Rosaldo 1989: 218). Marcus and Fischer argue against Gellner's reactionary position;

> 'Relativism has all too often been portrayed as a doctrine rather than as a method and a reflection on the process of interpretation itself. This has made it especially vulnerable to critics who charge that relativism asserts the equal validity of all value systems, thus making moral judgements impossible and in its insistence on fundamental respect to cultural differences among human societies, it has paralysed all schemes of generalisation, by which the progress of any science must proceed' (1986: 32).

Liberalist caricatures of measured relativist positions are, in my view, anathema to an ethical approach to applied anthropology. Anthropological responses to the 'rationality debate' have argued persuasively that western definitions of rationality and knowledge fail in many respects to explain, apprehend and describe the flow of social life and the ways in which the practices of others can be understood. (Stoller 1989: 133ff, Hobart 1995: 49-72, Overing 1985). Writers such as Overing (1975, 1985, 1992), Viveiros de Castro (1992) and Gow (1991) have demonstrated in great detail how a coherent, literal and moral reality within the specificity of a particular setting is projected through ontologies and forms of reasoning and interacting which differ from our own. These writers, however, do not propose the kind of relativism which conceptualises discrete cultural universes utterly opaque to each other but rather emphasise the infinite diversity, richness of detail and depth of imagination in the worlds that we create alongside the possibility of dialogue. The anthropological discussions which have followed Winch's argument that rules of thinking are socially constructed and thus differ validly from culture to culture (1964) have brought into question the viability of trying to understand, let alone explain, other rationalities with the particular 'scientific' logic which is associated with western culture without distortion.

Emotion and Detachment in Development

> *'The "tropics" really are sad . . . they beckon with those dubious feelings of intense conviviality (which brings fragile comprehension) and with that formidable distance (which leads to objective authority)' (DaMatta 1993: 123).*

The anthropological task in development cannot be adequately described and discussed in technical and purely rational terms; there are clearly emotional issues involved. When encountering extreme poverty whilst conducting research among rubbish collectors in rural India, Abbott describes her affective reaction: 'there are no sociological guidelines to deal with this, or the guilty feelings that I developed, because whereas I could walk away at anytime, the people who had become my friends could not. I have never felt comfortable in the position of surveyor of poverty and I could not remain objective as I was angry at what I saw' (1998: 220). Abbot

resists the professional expectation of being able to view the suffering of those she has come to know and to feel a sense of shared humanity with, as merely another feature of their lives to describe dispassionately, as if somehow her feelings had to be hermetically sealed off from the research task. There is a primary experience of empathy and sympathy, as Blake writes; 'Can I see another's woe, And not be in sorrow too? Can I see another's grief, And not seek for kind relief?'[13] The question is not whether or not anthropologists *have* feelings (most of the ones I know seem to), but rather whether each applied researcher can defend development as the way in which poverty and injustice can be alleviated and thereby vindicate one's transient and sometimes fleeting role in the lives of others caught up in development.

Whilst my investigations into the experience of 'poverty' and marginalisation involved short studies of a few days in each indigenous community, I had similar reflections to the above. One of the most troubling aspects was the high infant mortality rates among indigenous communities from easily preventable diseases and from conditions that required simple operations. Doing no more than gathering this information from families who had recently suffered infant deaths was deeply disconcerting. Nussbaum observes that the circumstances of deprivation, 'affect the inner lives of people, not just their external options: what they hope for, what they love, what they fear, as well as what they are able to do' (2000: 31). The objectively radical difference in life chances between myself and the families I interviewed simultaneously provoked within me a sense of guilt and responsibility.

Another aspect was witnessing the apparent disarray of indigenous communities, such as the Ayoreo, who could no longer follow traditional hunting and gathering practices but were forced to work for extremely low wages on ranches and farms, as migrant workers or resorting to begging or prostitution in Santa Cruz (see also Suaznabar, 1995 and Suarez, 1998). DaMatta describes this in terms of 'anthropological blues', that is 'the melancholy that comes from working with societies that my country (Brazil) does not recognise as nations . . . a true tropical sadness comes from the realisation that some of the societies we study with such affection, sacrifice and sympathy are about to perish' (1993: 123).

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[13] From the poem, 'On Another's Sorrow'.

The question of scientific detachment becomes problematic when experiencing strong emotional reactions to the realities of poverty and injustice. Geertz, despite paying close attention to the acute and often excruciating moral dilemmas that anthropologists in development experience, seems to opt for a defence of scientifically driven progress and a justification of academic detachment: 'Detachment comes not from a failure to care, but from a kind of caring resilient enough to withstand an enormous tension between moral reaction and scientific observation, a tension which only grows as moral perception deepens and scientific understanding advances' (2001: 40). My feeling is that development practice should, in fact, be fuelled by these primary intuitions of empathy and concern, although, as touched upon briefly in the section above, care and detachment are required in the consideration of the form that development takes.

Aspects of Applied Anthropological Angst

I have attempted in this chapter to introduce, or at least signal the main issues that I will be exploring further throughout the remainder of the thesis.

Development practice flows from the values that are written into modern, Western society. Development constitutes a phenomenon in which partially incommensurable moral traditions encounter one another. The difficulty is that we have no rationally grounded principles that will allow a 'transvaluation' whereby complete agreement could be reached. One of my central contentions is that one 'moral tradition' (liberal individualist, rights based and minimalist) has more force than many traditional moral economies and inevitably compromises the capacity of these systems of well being to remain intact. I contend that this is because, as MacIntyre argues, the Western moral tradition is based on a series of moral fictions based on the ideas of rights and utility through which arbitrary forces of economic power achieve their ends (1997).

Whilst controversies that are intrinsic to social anthropology, such as cultural relativism, the problems of representation, translation and asymmetry are unlikely to ever be definitively resolved, I argue that it is both worthwhile and necessary to identify what the major issues, questions, and principles are. Applied anthropology is

unavoidably an ethical and political pursuit in the sense that any kind of intervention in others' lives cannot be undertaken from a 'neutral' perspective; certain values are bound to be affirmed whilst others will be denied.

Chapter 4

Social Anthropology as Moral Conduct

Part 1: The Moral Nature of Anthropological Conduct

> *'An assessment of the moral implications of the scientific study of human life which is going to consist of more than elegant sneers or mindless celebrations must begin with an inspection of social scientific research as a variety of moral experience'* (Geertz 2001: 23)

Discussing anthropological ethics, Geertz puts forward Dewey's 'succinct and chilling doctrine that thought is conduct and is to be morally judged as such' (2001: 21). This pithy statement condenses a wide range of important questions for the field of social anthropology. The postulation of an essential continuity between 'thought', 'social action' and 'morality' draws out manifold implications for social anthropology, both in terms of the ways in which we approach and depict the subjects of our research, and with regard to our own professional and personal self-understanding. This is more than merely observing that 'ideas have consequences' (Lal 1985: 10); anthropology as an interpretative endeavour cannot help but admit that the ways in which we (as individuals, as professionals) engage with the consequences of ideas is a matter of moral import. Dewey was concerned with philosophy when he urged; 'philosophy recovers itself when it ceases to be a device for dealing with the problems of philosophers and becomes a method, cultivated by philosophers, for dealing with the problems of men' (in Gouinlock 2000: 207). By replacing 'philosophy' and 'philosophers' with 'anthropology' and 'anthropologists', an interesting challenge emerges. This challenge is especially pertinent in this time of intense anthropological reflexivity and the opening of anthropological concerns to more socially relevant questions beyond the scope of the discipline's previously relatively limited universe of self-referential meanings. My view is that an imperative for an ethical social anthropology is that of *relevance*. This is a difficult topic to legislate for as often the relevance of a given issue may be discovered through an iterative process. Also issues that may seem to be of urgent, or direct, relevance, such as the interactions between an indigenous group and the state can only be approached

in an ethical manner on the basis of an in depth knowledge of indigenous values, something that might be seen as being indirectly relevant.

Dewey held 'knowledge to be an instrument for action, rather than an object for *disinterested* contemplation . . . or a passive reflection of the fixed, objective structure of things' (Quinton 1999: 679). On this view, the distinction, in moral terms, between academic theorising/the intellectual life and social action is essentially artificial. Theoretical enquiry is an iterative and self-corrective process that has to be understood as occurring in specific historical and cultural circumstances. As the work of social scientists involves 'direct, intimate and more or less disturbing encounters with the immediate details of everyday life, encounters which can hardly help but affect the sensibilities of the persons who practice it' (Geertz 2001: 22-23), the moral force of social science and the ethical lives of its practitioners are inextricably related. Iris Murdoch argues that one's whole 'texture of being' has an ethical dimension (2001). The experience of participatory fieldwork certainly involves the whole person where the anthropologist learns

> 'not only through the verbal, through the transcript, but through all the senses, through movement, through their bodies and whole being in a total practice' resulting in a knowledge that is more than cerebral but also embodied. This knowledge can only be made sense of through 'profound resonances' between the personal, theoretical, emotional and political' (Okely 1992: 16).

Maintaining this means that the acquisition of a better understanding of the 'moral quality of the experience of working social scientists' becomes a crucial concern (Geertz 2001: 22). The 'moral passage' of the anthropologist working in development, then, involves the distillation of their experiences, reactions and intuitions and the translation of these into actions that make an impact in one way or another on the perceived rights and wrongs of the development encounter. The practice of social anthropology is, then, both a 'variety of moral experience' and a 'moral force' (Geertz 2001: 23). The thesis sets out to examine the dynamics of these overlapping aspects of the profession of social anthropology, that is, their moral *experience* in development tasks and the moral *force* that they exert upon

development thinking and practice as anthropologists in development or in the academy.

A definition of 'morality' that is probably too broad to be meaningful is that which 'deals with all human acts, and dispositions to act, insofar as these affect persons and other sentient beings' (Fox and DeMarco 1990: 21). Instead, following Taylor, the range of ideas that I will discuss under the rubric of 'the moral' are as follows:

> 'In addition to our notions and reactions on such issues as justice and the respect of other people's life, well being and dignity, I want also to look at what underlies our dignity, or questions about what makes our life meaningful or fulfilling . . . what makes our life worth living' (2000: 4).

As will be discussed below, this covers a lot more than the concerns that tend to figure in anthropological professional codes of ethics. In fact, the subject matter of social anthropology inevitably evokes issues of a moral nature, as Overing argues:

> 'Anthropologists are asking about moral universes, their basic duty being to understand the intentions and objectives of actors within particular social worlds, as well as what these actors say, understand, believe truth and those worlds to be, a task in metaphysical description . . . the facts of the ethnographer, the truths we describe, are almost always tied explicitly to a world of values ' (1985: 4)

Bourdieu, among others, illustrates how speech acts are creative socially; literally bringing into existence that which they evoke (1991). The centrality of meaning to practice is underlined by Sahlins; 'no object, no thing, has being or movement in human society except by the significance man can give it' (1976: 170). Rappaport signals the importance of recognising that our language and understandings are formative in the construction of the world (in Borofsky 1993: 155) whilst Murphy argues that the relationship between Concept and Act is 'the very substance of our discipline' (in Borofsky 1993: 59). This can be usefully extrapolated by Hornborg to argue that:

'If our images of the world take an active part in shaping it, we need to be more reflexive about the potential impact of the images we produce. Perhaps we should understand the present impasse as hesitation at some kind of threshold in the development of a morally more self-conscious social science' (1994: 12).

Hornborg is arguing that social anthropology has reached an impasse in the sense that the discipline has split along the same Cartesian lines that divides the academic community as a whole into 'objectivists' and 'relativists' or 'scientists' and 'humanists' (Hornborg 1994: 10). Another way of explaining this same impasse is as an 'epistemic dualism' within the discipline which involves a 'continuing and complex dialectic between the universalism of 'Anthropos' and the diversitarianism of 'Ethnos' (Stocking 1982: 361; cf. Rapport 'Culture is no Excuse' forthcoming *Social Anthropology*). The nature of this threshold will be explored throughout the course of the thesis.

An awareness of the outcomes and impacts of the work of anthropologists beyond the boundaries of their discipline and institutions is fundamental, as arguably, 'the institutions in which professionals make and transmit knowledge are instruments of governance . . . the double participation of researchers is a participation in the local activity as hidden agents of governance' (Addelson 1994: 161). Rapport also stresses that anthropology has a moral case to answer; 'inasmuch as anthropological writings now operate in a global arena as tools of political engagement , we are obliged to make unequivocal pronouncements - that can feed into moral and legal judgements (forthcoming; 'Culture is no Excuse' in *Social Anthropology*). The work of anthropologists, through speaking, writing and engaging, inevitably has manifold impacts upon the worlds it moves within and between.

It seems obvious that discussing moral issues would require agreement on what constitutes 'reality'. However, many theorists, in post-modern anthropology would not now attempt to juxtapose cultural representations against a fixed idea of 'material reality' (transparent only to researchers). Indeed, asserting, as a generalisation, that the development encounter is characterised by relations of social inequality and

unequal exchange implies the idea of a grand narrative, which is anathema to constructivist post-modern anthropology. However, I will argue, with Hornborg that:

> 'The imperative of addressing such interfusion of participants' representations and some less accessible level of 'reality' is obvious once representations are recognised as 'real', not only in the sense of emerging from objective conditions but also – and more importantly - in the sense of being active ingredients in those conditions' (1994: 10).

That is, assessing the morality of development practice and the anthropologist's role in it, requires apprehending the ways in which the models of reality that are in currency become embodied and impact upon the experience of those involved. The equal important corollary is the perspectives of those who are the targets of development.

Describing the moral deliberations of the anthropologist requires firstly setting out terms of reference. It is important to have clarity about the models we use to apprehend the mediating realities of culture and the individual person. Rapport is emphatic in his exhortation to fellow anthropologists that;

> 'We must rigorously define what we take to be the *ultimate* constituent units of human life. Do we posit the ontological existence of experiencing individuals over and beyond the particular contexts of their social interactions and identities, as has philosophical liberalism throughout the centuries? And what bears the most fundamental rights: individuals, or normative relations and institutional groupings?' (forthcoming; 'Culture is no Excuse' in *Social Anthropology*).

These are perennial questions that are often routinely and implicitly answered in the presuppositions of analysis and action. The analytical categories 'thought', 'conduct' (or social action) and to a lesser degree, 'morality' figure frequently in anthropological analysis. There has been great variation in the way each has been apprehended and also, in how the relationships between them have been understood. The difficulties of imagining and interpreting these ideas are compounded by the

challenge of translating them across culturally different settings. In order to make sense of how well being is achieved in different cultural settings, we have to think about the kinds of values and beliefs that are embedded in particular communities. When considering the dynamics between social action and morality, ideas of 'culture' and the 'individual' intrude at every juncture.

The 'background picture' that underlies our claims to rightness, or justice, or what 'well being' consists of, is normally implicit and remains unmolested. However, as Charles Taylor argues, we are forced to spell out these underlying postulates when we have to defend our responses in the face of failure or alternatives (2000). The involvement of anthropologists in development, which inevitably involves transgressing particular moral imperatives in favour of others, is a scenario in which it is crucial to be able to understand our own moral presuppositions and stances.

Part 2: Characteristics of Contemporary Conditions for the Conceptualisation of Ethical Practice for Applied Social Anthropologists

Ways of Self Understanding and the Development Encounter

Crucial to the morality of the representation of the 'other' and by extension, the development encounter, is the role of language and the ways in which knowledge of the 'other' is apprehended and then used. Anthropology is inevitably an intervention in the lives of others. Overing argues that

> 'Because all knowledge has power implications, it is the right, the need, or the duty of the anthropologist . . . to comment openly and self-reflectively upon those implications relevant to the particular body of knowledge that one claims as one's own. If judgement *is* to be assumed to be part of the anthropological endeavour, the anthropologist must also justify the *standards* used for such judgement.' (1985: 24)

A premise of my argument, then, is the simple observation that the dynamics of our own society are inescapably present in our views of and conduct towards the 'other'. For this reason, the focus of my enquiry is directed as much towards the nature of

moral conditions and debate in Western society as in the localities where development practice is directed. Anthropologists, as individuals coming from particular contexts, let us assume Western, must confront the particular views of the world, of themselves and others and the constituent relationships in order to gain an appreciation of the ways in which people of other cultural traditions may experience Western values. Marcus and Fischer argue that achieving a relevant anthropology 'demands not only an adequate critical understanding of oneself through all phases of research, but ultimately such an understanding of one's own society as well' (1986: 110).

Development practitioners nowadays frequently evoke the idiom of *dialogue* between peoples of different cultural realities. I would argue that any attempt at authentic dialogue must be preceded by a vision of anthropology, that does not, in Merleau Ponty's words, 'seek to vanquish the primitive or give him reason to oppose us, but instead (seeks) to situate ourselves on a terrain on which we can be mutually intelligible to each other, with neither reduction not brash transposition . . . The task . . . . consists of enlarging our reason in order to be able to comprehend that which, in us and in others, precedes and extends reason' (1962: 183, in DaMatta 1993: 125).

Merleau Ponty is implying that, underlying the various cultural lenses through which the world is made intelligible, there exists a common humanity that is both recognisable and knowable cross culturally. A key aspect of the ethics of applied anthropology is deconstructing and understanding the ways in which our morality reduces, is brashly transposed upon or, alternatively, offers prospects for conviviality with, those of different arenas of interpretation, value and social action.

An immediate difficulty here is that the ways in which Western categories, values and forms of social action are communicated and imposed are not always transparent.

Unpicking Opaque Practices

The modes of transmission of Western values are not always obvious and may be encoded in the opaque practices of institutions. For Hornborg, the work of making these practices 'more transparent' or 'unmasking' them, is a responsibility that anthropologists should take up: 'we cannot understand or hope to solve global

problems of solidarity and survival unless we are prepared to experience a radical 'defamiliarisation' *vis-à-vis* conventional categories of economics or technology' (1992: 1). Ferguson argues that 'the purpose of institutional ethnography is to unpack the work of institutions and bureaucracies, to train ourselves to see what we are used culturally to overlook, namely the participation of institutional practices in the making of the world' (1994: 113). Gledhill seems to be evoking a universal understanding of power when he argues that:

'In striving to transcend a view of the world based solely on the premises of European culture and history, anthropologists are also encouraged to look beneath the world of appearances and taken-for-granted assumptions in social life in general. This should help us to pursue critical analyses of ideologies and power relations in all societies' (1994: 8).

Following MacIntyre, I will argue that *unmasking is* a peculiarly modern activity (cf. Crewe 1998) that is reflected for example in 'critical' approaches to ethnography. Thomas argues that 'critical ethnography' seeks to uncover implicit forms of dominance; 'Our culture entraps us in common sense and multiply segmented worlds in which "reality" includes a variety of mechanisms for assuring social harmony and conformity to interactional norms, organisational rules, institutional patterns, and ideological concepts' (1993: 3; cf. Berger and Luckmann 1967: 19-28).

MacIntyre (1997) contends that unmasking, in addition to shrill *protest,* is a response to the deep-seated contradictions, or 'schizophrenia' (Stocker 1976) of Western moral reasoning. Protesters and theorists seek to reveal the oppressive forces of will and power behind Western discourses of rights and utility, i.e. what is really happening behind the rhetoric of public decision making.

This critical perspective, however, demands imagination as well as deconstruction and means transcending the Western tendency to delimit its vision of the other by the belief that its master tropes of society[1] are in fact universally applicable.

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[1] William's discussion on 'Society' (1983: 293) shows how this idea (in its abstract form) emerged relatively recently in Western society (18th century). Society, in the Western sense, immediately conjures up ideas of jural rules, coercive institutions, social control and hierarchy. This very particular

Arguably, we are liable to be distracted from seeing the particularity of Western cultural representations by the belief that our perspectives are in fact sufficient to apprehend the realities of the other, as they are, we assume, universally valid. Dumont, to the contrary, points to the experience of 'existential relativism' that fieldwork can bestow upon an anthropologist, allowing one to look from an estranged position 'back to our modern culture and society as on a particular form of humanity that is exceptional in that it denies itself as such by its profession of universalism' (1978: 207). Touraine makes a similar observation; 'the Western countries resist every analysis of their own specific mode of modernisation, so convinced are they of their own incarnation of universal modernity itself' (1989: 121). It seems clear that, in order to understand the drives, motivations and values of development, it is essential to adopt a relativistic perspective towards the societies from which development emanates.

Anthropologists, through immersion in a cultural life that differs in important respects from that of the West, may call into question that which they previously took for granted. This 'duplex position' whilst not being unique to anthropologists, offers a valuable vantage point from which to evaluate the various exchanges and impositions between different cultural traditions. Ingold argues that the experiences gained through long-term fieldwork may allow anthropologists to be able to see their own society in relief, with new intuitions and orientations;

> 'The education provided by life . . . is brought to bear in a systematic
> interrogation of the foundational terms of Western academic discourse – terms
> like individual and society, culture and nature, language, art and technology,
> individuality and personhood, history and memory, equality and inequality,
> even humanity itself' (Ingold 1996: 4).

As 'much of modernist social theory, including that of anthropology, is derived from the same rationalist, formalist and juridical model of a 'rights-centred' view of

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idea of interaction and collectivity is quite at odds with many indigenous visions and practices of togetherness (see also Overing and Passes 2000).

society' (Overing and Passes 2000: 4), an important anthropological task is to examine how these models are apprehended in the 'other's' terms and, on this basis, to collaboratively evaluate (and possibly oppose) in strong moral terms the impact that these models might have on the well being of non-Western individuals and groups.

Moral Disarray "where we are coming from"

It has been argued that contemporary moral reasoning is in a state of disarray[2]. On the one hand, this confused state of affairs can be explained in terms of the heterogeneity of global culture and the countless sources that are jumbled together for moral reasoning. A more contentious argument is that the particular Western liberal moral outlook is inherently confused and contradictory. Taylor writes.

> 'We are torn two ways . . . we don't have any formula . . . we can only make difficult judgements in which demands are balanced against each other, at some sacrifice to one or both' (quoted in Kerr 1997: 152).

MacIntyre concurs;

> 'We have all too many disparate and rival moral concepts, rival and disparate concepts of justice, and . . . the moral resources of the culture allow us no way of settling the issue between them rationally' (1997: 252).

Clearly, apprehending the foundations for our moral intuitions and ethical pronouncements is far from straightforward. Starting from an essentialist view of culture and of personhood will be unhelpful in the contemporary setting, as 'in the grand assemblage of juxtaposed difference' (Geertz, in Borofsky, 1993: 465), it is difficult, as Hornborg (1994: 234) notes, to 'know where to centre our ethnocentrism'; as this is, 'ultimately a question of personal identity. Diversity, or rather the awareness of diversity, has invaded us at all levels'. Marcus concurs with this view and argues that a generalised confusion is also reflected in the academy:

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[2] See MacIntyre (1997), Stocking (1976) and Taylor (2000).

'In anthropology and all other human sciences at the moment, "high" theoretical discourse – the body of theories that authoritatively unify a field - is in disarray' (1986: 166)[3].

Much of what I am saying here may be stating the obvious but it is nonetheless important to keep the above in focus so as to set out the moral implication that in the ensuing chaos and the lack of a shared vision of the good, arbitrary powers (economic, social and cultural) determine the arrangements under which people live, thus impacting upon the quality and possibilities of their lives. My contention is that this is a key dynamic of the development relationship.

Language Constraining Moral Intuitions

This discomfort in plumbing the depths of Western moral intuitions and performance can be understood in two main ways. Firstly, having to rely upon procedural and rights based ethics, there is, in the West, a real difficulty with actually being able to explain where we are coming from morally and ethically. Secondly, perhaps as a result of the coercive and competitive nature of the public domain in the West, there is an instinctively defensive resistance to scrutiny.

With regard to the first point, the moral responses that we bring to bear on our lives and work emerge from a background moral ontology that remains largely implicit. Cohen writes that the logic of the reflexive turn in anthropology is that we 'need to think about (our) selves in order to think about how other people think about themselves' (1994: 135)[4]. This statement assumes an ironic air if combined with Taylor's view that a symptomatic feature of modern identity is that there is sometimes a mis-match between our feelings and the concepts we use to explain them, that is, we

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[3] In subsequent chapters, the following aspects of this disarray will be explored: The so-called 'Crisis of representation' , uncertainty about adequately describing social reality, loss of confidence in existing scientific paradigms, disbelief towards meta-narratives, profound critiques of the West's colonialist legacy, feminist critiques, 'paralysis' or overdone reflexivity, focus on selfhood and literary analysis and a generalised insecurity and doubt about the legitimacy of the anthropological enterprise

[4] MacIntyre argues, conversely, that, in our everyday lives, 'our self-knowledge depends in key part upon what we learn about ourselves from others, and more than this, upon a confirmation of our own judgements about ourselves by others who know us well, a confirmation that only such others can provide' (1999: 94).

lack a vocabulary or set of ideas sufficient to apprehend and communicate our own underlying moral reactions (2000).

When considering our moral outlook, we do not seem to be conversant with a sufficient language. The ethical language for explicating our moral outlook to each other as individuals living in a Western, liberal democratic context can be counter intuitive. Part of Taylor's project is to retrieve from our own cultural and moral history modes of thought and description, such as Aristotelian, or virtue ethics, that have misguidedly been made to seem problematic and have been theorised away, so that we are either embarrassed to appeal to them or we have even forgotten that they exist (2000; Kerr 1997). Taylor argues that, with regard to modern moral reasoning and intuition,

> 'Over wide areas, the background tends to remain unexplored. But beyond this, exploration may even be resisted. That is because there may be – and I want to argue, frequently is – a lack of fit between what people . . . officially and consciously believe, and what they need to make sense of their moral reactions on the other' (2000: 9).

This observation, if accurate, begs the question of whether it is paradoxical that the *raison d'être* of anthropological studies is putatively to reveal the underlying motivations and conceptual schemata of other peoples' moral intuitions and understandings of well being. That is, anthropologists have purported to explain the essence of other cultures and other peoples' behaviour without sufficiently undertaking to do the same in their own settings.

With regard to the second point, a disconcerting observation made by Said with reference to academics in positions of relative power is 'an authoritative, explorative, elegant, learned voice speaks and analyses, amasses evidence, theorises, speculates about everything – other than itself' (1978: 142). The discomfiture of self-examination obviously has political implications, DaMatta argues that:

> 'Many of the great academic centres of the West have tended to avoid and resist studies of their own culture. It is as if the study of the "distant other"

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sometimes were an excuse for impeding the "defamiliarisation" of ourselves . . . it avoids a certain kind of radical political questioning that often permeates the anthropologies of the so-called "Third World" countries' (1993: 125).

Development, as an instrumental and universalistic discourse, is cut off from the sources of value that exist in different cultural realities and operates under a pretence (or faith) that it constitutes a neutral arbiter between communities and force for universal progress. On this basis, I will argue that moral dissonance is a universal experience for all those involved in development.

Uneasy Moral Bundles

Given the confusion described above, it would be simplistic to represent the individuality and self-hood of anthropologists by arguing that, at least in terms of their professional lives, they form part of a particular and definable cultural reality. However, various authors, both moral philosophers and social anthropologists, have sought to define the characteristics of a definable kind of modern, or Western, or liberal identity, of which the anthropologist is a particular example (Taylor 2000, MacIntyre 1997, Pels 1999). Taylor's depiction of modern identity as inhering in a bundle of strands that stem from our particular history is summarised by Parkin:

> 'We are made up of at least three mutually conflicting strands in which are intertwined all the important Western formative threads from classical antiquity to the present day. The three are: an other-regarding Kantian moral one that derives ultimately from the Judeo-Christian tradition; one that privileges disengaged rationality, autonomy, freedom, human equality, universality, which comes from the Enlightenment; and the Romantic one which emphasises the demands of nature, human fulfilment, and expressive integrity[5]' (1985: 20)

The communitarian critique of modern liberal theory offers the argument that rationalist, disengaged and individualist approaches to understanding well being, or

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[5] Talcott Parsons referred to the Hippie Movement of the 1960s and the generalised resurgence in the non-rational in Western culture as constituting an 'expressive revolution' (Joas 2001: 127)

the goods by which we live, are both cramped and partial and must give way to a more inclusive vision. In our society, the expressive counterpart to the disengaged, rational self has been evoked in a nostalgic mode chiefly through the Arts and lacks presence in discourses of practical ethics and public life. Overing and Passes observe that

> 'The dominant trend in contemporary moral philosophy . . . has been to purify ethics of all aesthetics and desire and to narrow the definition of the moral domain so as to centre moral reasoning upon abstract issues of justice, and the rights and obligations adhering to it within the impersonal context of the impersonal relations of the public domain (2000: 4).

From these competing models and intuitions, somehow individuals formulate particular value commitments. The kinds of questions that I explore with anthropologists working in development relate, for example, to 'which types of actions and which types of experience produce the deeply emotional and subjectively emotional feeling that something is good or bad, praiseworthy or outrageous?' (Joas 2001: 130).

Throughout the thesis, I make an attempt to map out the moral territory that the anthropologist emerges from and must traverse when involved in development.

The Limits of Disciplines

Given that the inner life and social forms are conjoined and mutually efficacious, if social anthropologists wish to conceptualise and examine morality, it is clearly no longer tolerable for anthropologists to privilege the 'outer' manifestations of human life, whilst leaving the 'inner' person to other disciplines. As Cohen and Rapport argue, the disciplinary boundaries of Western academia consign the study of the 'inner person' as being 'either a matter of imagination (fiction, philosophy) or for specialised scientific investigation with a discovery objective different from anthropology's' (1995: 3). MacIntyre would agree:

'There seems something deeply mistaken in the notion enforced by the conventional curriculum that there are two distinct subjects or disciplines – moral philosophy, a set of conceptual enquiries, on the one hand and the sociology of morals, a set of empirical hypotheses and findings, on the other' (1997: 73).

The anthropological tendency to characterise people of different traditions as 'other' by focusing upon the external cultural, institutional differences led to a relative paucity in anthropological apprehensions of the inner life of the other – indeed, as Cohen argues, 'it is perhaps an indication of its former intellectual insularity that anthropology took so long to realise what it had been doing' (1994: 136)[6]. On the other hand, it has to be said that anthropology's precise intellectual mission has always been far more diverse and difficult to pin down[7]. The originally eclectic and diverse nature of the field of social anthropology is something that it would be salutary to recover. In 1910, Boas declared that:

'The field of the work of the anthropologist is more or less accidental, and originated because other sciences occupied part of the ground before the development of modern anthropology' (1910: 372).[8]

This 'accidental' nature should not be seen as a limitation but rather as a condition in which we can foster an evaluation of the diversity of approaches and interests that social anthropology can undertake and address. The debates of moral philosophy are abstract and faint echoes of the actual conversations, puzzles, conflicts, private decisions, dissents and agreements that go on between people as they interact, work together and find meaning in their practices. An anthropology that seeks to apprehend the moral quality of people's lives is thus bound to transcend the fences that de-limit the scope of enquiry of different disciplines. Grasping the inner and outer

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[6] There were some important forerunners such as Firth (Culture and Personality school).

[7] 'One of the advantages of anthropology as a scholarly enterprise is that no one, including its practitioners knows exactly what it is. People who watch baboons copulate, people who rewrite myths in algebraic formulas, people who dig up Pleistocene skeletons, people who work out decimal point correlations between toilet training practices and theories of disease, people who decode Maya hieroglyphics, and people who classify kinship systems into typologies in which our own comes out as "Eskimo" all call themselves anthropologists' (Geertz 2001: 89)

[8] Levi Strauss made a similar point about the historical development of the discipline; 'It made itself out of all kinds of refuse and left-overs from other fields' (in Borofsky 1993: 2)

manifestations of moral deliberation and the interplay between these requires an eclectic anthropology. Geertz, reflecting upon the increase in the cross-fertilisation between anthropology and philosophy, writes; 'I was hardly alone among people working in the human sciences trying to find their way out of their stoppered fly bottles' (2001: xi)[9].

The dialogical continuity between the individual's inner moral reasoning/intellectual talk and the social and political embodiment of these is being increasingly explored in relatively novel modes of enquiry where moral philosophy, literature and psychology are informed by social anthropology and vice versa (Carrithers 1991; Overing and Passes 2000; MacIntyre 1999; Taylor 2000; Cohen and Rapport 1995; Rapport 1997, Lutz and White 1986, Lutz 1988, Lutz and Abu-lughod 1990).

A second way in which disciplinary boundaries may constrain the extrapolation of an ethical anthropology is as follows. Narrow academic compartmentalisation is restrictive not only with regard to the range of approaches available to social anthropology but also, in turn, constraining the extent to which anthropologists are able to exert a moral influence upon wider society. DaMatta contends that academic life (in 'North America' and 'England') is characterised by extreme compartmentalisation with the effect that academia ('theoretical', 'technical', 'market oriented') and intellectual life become dislocated. He argues that in Brazil, for example, 'the goal is to be an "intellectual", read and known outside the academy' which is seen as 'limited, formal and reactionary' and 'not seen as socially significant'. He states that 'In Brazil, in order to become an intellectual, an academic has to reach beyond the university walls and try to affect the entire society' (1993: 128)[10]. Gledhill laments however, that 'there has been little practical progress in transcending conventional academic modes of producing knowledge about the world,

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[9] Appealing to the expertise and corroboration of other disciplines is, however, nothing new, the *Annee Sociologique* for example, declared that
'A comprehensive knowledge of the facts is only possible through the collaboration of numerous specialists . . . Only mutual supervision and pitiless criticism can yield firm results' (in Carrithers 1991: vii).
[10] Da Matta's arguments here have close correspondence to the ideas of 'liberation philosophy' which, starting in Argentina, spread throughout Latin America in the 1970s. The intentions of this movement were to assist poor and marginalised people in reclaiming philosophy and to use philosophical reasoning from their perspective, so that philosophy was not solely in the hands of the affluent and educated. This movement was deeply influenced by 'liberation theology' which had emerged a decade earlier in the same continent. (Schutte 1993)

which may be Western in origin but are now institutionalised on a more or less global scale' (1994: 225).

Part 3: Anthropological Professional Codes of Ethics

It would appear that those who seek to bring ethical concerns out into the open arena of public debate are often met with indifference or suppression: 'among many social scientists there also appears to be a high degree of wary indifference to those who show a strong interest in ethics' (Graves III and Shields: 1991:132)[11]. The idea of the dysfunctionality of morality has evocative power in Western society, that lives are often *constrained*, rather than enhanced by moral codes (through blame and guilt) without sufficient compensating gains. Pels, however, contends that the circumnavigation of the attempt to agree on shared moral commitments is irresponsible. He says that liberal anthropological morals 'may cover up new structures of exploitation' and represent the 'desire to create a subject position divorced from political struggle . . . and this political aloofness partly explains why attempts to create ethical discussion among anthropologists often has received little feedback or met with scepticism, even disapproval ("Why waste time on that")' (2000: 136). Geertz concurs that those who challenge academic orthodoxy are sometimes met with considerable resistance;

> 'Revolutionary moralists . . . are never much liked, particularly by those, in this case, practitioners of the intellectual trades, whom they so severely call to account' (2001: 21).

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[11] The recent 'El Dorado' scandal is a dramatic illustration of calling a colleague to account too hastily. An investigative journalist, Patrick Tierney and two anthropologists Terry Turner (representing the AAA) and Lee Sponsel publicly accused Napoleon Chagnon and colleagues of deliberately administering a 'virulent' vaccine' which caused an epidemic of measles thus killing thousands of Yanomamo people as part of a 'fascistic eugenics' experiment. They further asserted that medical treatment was refused to those infected so that the effects of the epidemic could be observed. Chagnon countered that the epidemic had started before they arrived and that they had brought a proven vaccine which actually helped control the epidemic. This was confirmed by other sources. It was argued in Tierney's book 'El Dorado' that Chagnon sought to 'cook' his data on conflict among the Yanomamo (to support his allegedly Hobbesian theories that the most successful head-hunters reproduce more and have more wives) by fomenting conflict between neighbouring communities. Chagnon obviously denies this (see also Chagnon: 1968)

If this is true, an interesting area to explore might be whether it is difficult for social anthropologists to speak openly to each other about their personal views on morality. The formulation of codes of ethics is ostensibly one way for anthropologists to speak about their ethical concerns.

The American Association of Anthropologists defines an anthropologist as;

> 'Someone whose first and paramount responsibility is to 'protect the physical, social, and psychological welfare and to honor the dignity and privacy of those studied.' (Principles of Professional Responsibility, AAA).

In 1949, the Society for Applied Anthropology was the first organisation within anthropology to create an ethics statement, which called upon the anthropologist to, 'take responsibility for the effects of his recommendations, never maintaining that he is merely a technician unconcerned with the ends toward which his applied scientific skills are directed' (in van Willigen 1993: 32).

My reading of this is that our discipline should not just be about producing knowledge *of* the 'other', but about producing a particular kind of knowledge that is directed *towards the achievement of well being* in different contexts, especially where cultures that have finely tuned their idea of human flourishing are facing problematic social and economic upheavals.

The Point of Professional Ethics

I would contend that professional codes of ethics for the discipline of Social Anthropology serve inter-institutional purposes and functions *within* the discipline and tend to be celebratory and conservative rather than truly revisionary. The philosophical basis of these codes is detached and liberal, offering no shared vision of the good. The codes are characteristically defensive, being concerned with *not harming* research subjects rather than promoting well being. Gledhill concurs with this view; 'Anthropologists have found it easier to agree on what is definitively not ethical than establish any common goals for themselves' (1994: 217).

Whilst all the various social science specialities have developed codes of ethics which relate to their particular exigencies, they have all stemmed from the basic model of experimental, bio-medical research (see Grave and Shields 1991: 135)[12], which specifically attends to the de-limitation of harm done to the guinea pigs of manipulative experimentation. An equivalent ethical discourse in social science concerns itself with topics such as 'deception, anonymity, confidentiality, and informed consent' (*loc. cit.*). However, this emphasis on the *protection* of subjects of research reflects only part of the moral demands within social science.

Professional Codes of Ethics however, are based on minimalist liberal ideals of political neutrality, allowing individuals to pursue their own conceptions of the good. Liberalism is clearly the dominant ideology at the institutional level of social anthropology and is characteristically defended in negative terms that highlight the dangers of alternative doctrines. The discipline as a whole then, remains detached and fragmented as a moral force. Gledhill argues that we should have

'the courage to stop hiding behind a paternalist liberal relativism and a stance of academic detachment. Anthropologists should be readier to argue publicly for more inclusionary human futures' (1994: 227)

Pels observes that, despite the aforementioned resistance, there has been a recent resurgence of interest in ethics, and particularly in revising codes of ethics (1999, 2000). There have always been regular attempts to redefine the Principles of Professional Responsibility, but it could be argued that these usually remain in the

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[12] Most discussions on ethics and social anthropology focus on the question of the accountability of the researcher vis-à-vis research subjects (Fluehr–Lobban 1991, Givens 1993, Levy 1993, Pels 1999). Graves and Shields, for instance, comment that, 'The message of our various professional codes of ethics is very clear – the rights and interests of science must never override the rights of the subjects of research, and it is the researcher's responsibility to ensure that they do not' (Graves III and Shields 1991:137). This emphasis on 'protection' is problematic in the sense that it is not always clear who, or what we are protecting, and what/who from, and then, if we work this out, the question remains of how 'to protect' that which we have decided 'to protect'. Also, as anthropologists collaborating with fellow human beings, it is clear that our hierarchy of values must place subjects first and science second. This focus on the individual researcher's responsibility *not to cause harm* to their subjects presupposes that the goals of science may be at odds with the well being of individuals or groups. Indeed, since the mid eighties in particular, critiques of the traditional research relationship and the authoritative perspective in social anthropology have abounded, contending that this approach can directly undermine the rights and interests of the subjects of research. The ASA proclaims that: 'Anthropologists have a duty to anticipate problems *and insofar as is possible to aim to resolve* them without damaging the research participants or the research community' (ASA 1998: 523).

realm of platitudes. Chambers argues that 'discussions of ethics are more about trying to create and enforce the parameters of an imagined community of anthropologists' (1985: 159). Recalling Cohen's argument that a community's shared symbols may often be a 'very superficial gloss upon an enormous variety of opinion . . . people of radically opposed views can find their own meanings in what nevertheless remain common symbols' (1989:18). Chambers argues;

> 'We talk the same way, using similar words, in order to maintain the belief that we have something to discuss and yet, within our competing spheres of activity, we often mean different things by the words we use' (1991: 159)[13].

It is true that in any given society, the appearance of behavioural equivalence often formally disguises the diversity of interests and motivations of their members. Wallace, on this basis is resigned to 'the practical impossibility of complete interpersonal understanding and communication, and the unavoidable residuum of loneliness that dwells in every man' (1961: 137, in Rapport 1997: 185). My view is that this stress on diversity of perspectives can belie the very real shared commitments that anthropologists have.

In short, formal codes of ethics cannot be read as anything more than a vague gauge of the actual moral positions of social anthropologists. Chambers argues that there is a gap between the 'laboriously negotiated and circumspect wording of our ethical statements' (1985: 157) and the real content and dynamics of professional discourse and application. Looking at different features of 'ethics talk' within the discipline, he concludes that 'we tend to agree that anthropologists should do good work which benefits humankind and does no harm. But there is clearly a difference between what is actually said (or meant to be said) when we start discussing ethics and the shared discourse by which we say it' (1985:157).

The drawing up and revision of Professional Codes of Ethics fulfils an important dual function *within* the imagined community of anthropologists; to simultaneously foster

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[13] Geertz might argue that this lack of precision, or studied vagueness on ethical issues is both necessary and positive, as his use of Wittgenstein indicates: 'is an indistinct photograph a picture of a

competition whilst reinforcing principles that everyone can agree with. In these revisions, core principles are seldom attacked and specific situations, rather than being addressed directly, are dealt with by referring to wider principles. Arguably, the continual revisions often do not fulfil their putative purpose of making changes but fulfil a *conservative* function. These revisions are, 'rarely about changing values and situational ethics – (they are) nearly always in reference to what speakers hold to be absolute values' and similarly; 'often little more than a repetition and re-emphasis of our already codified general principles' (Chambers 1985: 158). So, whilst the task is expressed in terms of revision, what usually happens is that ethics talk is celebratory rather than radical.

Ethics talk, expressed through the ritualistic formulation of codes of ethics, occurs within a closed profession among professionals who consider *themselves* to be the best judges of what their ethical conduct should be. This dynamic is problematic according to the philosopher Addelson:

'The unquestioned right to know in terms of one's disciplinary concepts and methods is at the foundation of the cognitive authority of scientists and other professionals. It places them in the local sites of laboratory and field, not as participants but as 'judging observers' who are themselves to be unjudged' (1994: 161).

The possibility of the anthropologist really engaging with those among he or she is working depends, to a highly significant extent, on social and, can I say 'moral' skills, such as empathy, rapport and conviviality. Anthropologists often have to react and adapt to a multitude of unexpected events and ways of being treated. Obviously, if the anthropologist is encumbered by an aura of the 'Western expert' , then his or her human antennae and receptiveness will be significantly dampened.
The distinction between insiders and outsiders in social anthropology is also problematic. The problematic conceptual delimitation of what anthropologists do and experience as professionals, as opposed to their lives *per se* has been discussed by Okely (1992). On this basis, I would argue, with Chambers, that the abstraction of a

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person at all? Is it even always an advantage to replace an indistinct picture by a sharp one? Isn't the indistinct one exactly what we need?' (P1, 71, in Geertz 2001: xiii).

category of particularly-professional-problems in ethical conduct means that 'we invariably alter the problem and limit the kinds of solutions that might be achieved' (1985). Going back to Geertz, the ethical lives of the individuals as people (not just professionals) brings a lot to bear on the making of the moral vision of the discipline. Most ethics talk focuses on the dilemmas and difficulties that arise through the ethnographic enterprise (fieldwork, writing and use of material) *as if* these are peculiar to the anthropologist. However, it has been argued that many of these difficulties are inseparable from the 'dilemmas of the neo-liberal self', and as such 'cannot be divorced from politics' (Strathern 2000: 10). Pels argues that, in current conditions, the anthropological split, or 'ethical double-self' is made accountable and marketable to a public domain through the definition of professional duties. The accompanying contemporary ethical standards, according to Pels *lack* the 'concept of an ideal towards which every person would strive' (1999: II.).

The two main points that I would like to make about professional codes of ethics, then, are as follows. Firstly, the boundary between those within the profession and those outside it is essentially artificial. Professional Ethics serve particular institutional purposes and may not have very much to do with the transcendent and dialogic aspects of fieldwork. Secondly, codes of ethics are often minimalist, conservative and dry and do not offer a moral vision for the discipline. There does not appear to be any will to find consensus within the discipline of social anthropology on how we should understand and promote human flourishing or well being.

Part 4: The Importance of Relevance

The final part of my introduction to 'Social Anthropology as Moral Conduct' is a short discussion on the idea of the 'relevance' of Social Anthropology. Again, this is a theme which emerges and re-emerges throughout the thesis and the following observations are intended as being preliminary and introductory.

Following on from argument made above, in order to put the well being of our research subjects first in our anthropological hierarchy of values, engaging relevantly with the issues that *they* regard as being most important is essential. Ahmed and Shore argue that a central problem in anthropological ethics is that of *relevance*. They

examine the ways in which social anthropology has to develop 'new domains and methods of enquiry that are commensurate with the new subjects and social forces that are emerging in the contemporary world.' (1997: 14). This requires reinventing cherished methodologies, theories and practices as well as finding ways to communicate and engage with a wider audience.

In order to be of relevance to the contemporary world, complementing the expertise anthropology has in describing 'exotic, small scale, disappearing worlds' (Ahmed and Shore 1997: 37), what is required is greater concern with emerging worlds, the culture of the 'colonisers' as well as those of the colonised, and on subject areas that cannot be defined by traditional fieldwork methods alone' (*loc. cit.*). This idea of a 'post-cultural' social anthropology is expressed by Bhabha:

> 'What is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is the need to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences. These in-between spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of self-hood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself' (Bhabha 1994: 1-2).

My view is that whilst it is essential for social anthropology to engage with the creative interfusion of different cultural realities, this should be complemented by a continuing interest in (and defence of) the substantive sources of indigenous life worlds. Indeed as Rapport observes, 'many anthropologists would see their project as essentially a 'moral' one, which extends the perspective of different cultures so that areas of overlap become clear' (1997: 185). A crucial aspect of the anthropological contribution to the moral nature of the 'overlap' or interstice of different cultural realities, then, is to be cognisant of the 'darker side of knowledge', that is, the ways in which particular powerful, or aggressive world views can obliviate the value of others.

Ahmed and Shore suggest a number of ways in which we can ask whether social anthropology is relevant to the contemporary world. The first relates to a technocratic,

or utilitarian interpretation of relevance, 'much favoured by the government' (1997: 31). A number of writers have explored how the government actively fosters and cultivates this kind of relevance through making academic funding decision subject to market forces (Pels 2000, Strathern et al. 2000). A current contention in the discipline today is that the 'success of a university principal – traditionally one of the most privileged and isolated of national institutions – is now determined predominantly by how much money he or she can raise for the college' (Ahmed and Shore 1997: 32). This context of market oriented forces shaping knowledge impacts not just on the areas we research, but also what it is about them that we are funded to research, and how we go about it. Similar dynamics abound in debates surrounding applied anthropology, which I will look at in subsequent chapters. In order to go beyond the technocratic forces that diminish the independence and critical quality of theory making, it is essential to turn our attention to the moralities that govern the production of anthropological knowledge.

Secondly, the *'explanatory power'* of social anthropology is an important factor in its relevance. Recent articles in journals such as 'Critique of Anthropology' have adopted stances which are 'explicitly anti-postmodernist', interpreting postmodernist perspectives in social anthropology as being focused on deconstruction and the abandonment of 'truth' for a celebration of 'the poetics and aesthetics of our own literary creations as an end in their own right' (Ahmed and Shore 1997: 32). On this view, the 'preoccupation with text, writing and selfhood' constitutes 'a retreat from society and the idea of reality' (*ibid.*: 32) and therefore, for social anthropology to retain its relevance, its explanatory power as a social science must continue to hold a recognised place.

I would agree with Nyamwaya, however, who considers that the problem is not so much the relinquishing of quantitative methods but the lack of understanding other disciplines have of the contribution qualitative methods can yield:

> 'Anthropology is still regarded as the 'don't disturb the people discipline'. In the minds of most planners, health and other development personnel, the discipline belongs in the same class as classical music and fine art, implying that it possesses little practical value . . . Many development experts believe

that quantitative information is of more value than qualitative. Although the discipline has incorporated quantitative techniques, it is still lumped with literature in terms of its intellectual contribution to development' (Nyamwaya 1997: 199).

A third aspect of anthropological relevance to the contemporary world, centres on the moral significance of the discipline. This concerns the way knowledge is used (or misused) and its ethical and political value. Referring back to earlier points made about postmodernism, Ahmed and Shore argue that 'at the heart of deconstruction there is an ethical vacuum' (1997: 33). Their contentious argument is that anthropology's potential for 'creating some harmony in a world riven with conflict' or 'doing some good' is not being harnessed and with the advent of postmodernism, is on the threshold of 'philosophical nihilism' (*ibid.*: 40). The indication is that the direction taken by 'liberation anthropology' whereby knowledge is explicitly put at the service of those with relatively less power may be an option for a morally relevant anthropology. The theme of post-modern ethics in relation to applied anthropology is one which is interlaced throughout the thesis and is properly discussed in Chapters 7 and 10.

Chapter 5

A Brief History of Development Thinking

In this chapter, by looking at the history of development thinking, my aim is to draw out the main themes that persist in current theory and practice. I will concentrate on the question of explanation, that is, how theorists and development practitioners have defined the 'problem' of under-development and how they have understood, or glossed over, the dynamics of different kinds of knowledge, agency, moralities and power in their formulation of appropriate responses.

Many of the issues that are central to the field of 'development studies' have a short history. As will be discussed below, until the official withdrawal of the colonial powers from their 'territories' an enduring assumption was that colonialism, and the concomitant asymmetries in power and 'wealth' reflected real differences in the capacities and/or environmental constraints on the peoples of the North and the rest of the world. Development, whilst having its roots in imperialism and colonialism, is a modern concept that was fuelled by the polarities generated by the Cold War as well as North/South, rich/poor and industrialised/non-industrialised dynamics[1]. Thin argues that alongside these economic dynamics, the twin ideas of the possibility of achieving universal standards of well-being and human rights for all of humanity were radically new in the late 1940s and provided the main impetus for the modern idea of development (*pers. comm.*). The directions of development and human rights, however, have been divergent until recent attempts to bring rights legislation to bear on development practice, as we will see later.

Development's Pre-History

Here, as part of my discussion on Development's 'pre-history', I will look briefly at a number of studies that examine the colonial gaze towards indigenous peoples and extend the argument that this 'monologue' of assumed European superiority is

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[1] Arguably, the East/West and capitalist/non-capitalist polarities associated with the Cold War have now been exposed as not very polar at all, since both sides of the iron curtain were complex mixes of capitalism and socialist ideologies.

efficacious in the development context. The following, then serves as a prelude to an analysis of Sach's contention that 'from the start, development's hidden agenda was nothing else than the Westernisation of the world' (1992: 4). I wish to explore the fundamentally *tautological* nature of universalistic Western depictions of its 'other' and advance the argument that this dynamic can be discerned at different levels. For instance, at the level of economics (with reference to the formalist substantivist debate in economic anthropology), I will argue, with Hornborg that:

> 'There is not much point in reducing the great variety of local meanings to a single formula. In trying to say everything . . . the formalists say nothing that is not tautological' (1992: 2).

An important aspect of anthropological resistance is in relation to this monological recycling of Western categories in development discourse.

No Prospects for Conviviality; Correspondences between Development and the Colonial Gaze

In Overing and Passes' volume "The Anthropology of Love and Anger" (2000), anthropologists explore various permutations of the word 'conviviality' as a way of grasping the social ethics or aesthetics by which the peoples of Amazonia achieve their ideals of a good, harmonious life, or well being as individuals and together, collectively. Mason extends this discussion by grounding his analysis in both the historical texts of the Conquest of the Americas and in recent ethnographies of Amazonia, to consider the resonances of the word 'conviviality' in the meetings of indigenous and Western societies[2]. Mason's object of analysis is 'the long moment of cross-cultural contact between European travellers to and observers of the New World, on the one hand, and the Native Peoples of the American continent on the other' (2000: 190). By observing how they saw each other, he examines whether or not their respective views offer any prospect of living together in any form of conviviality.

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[2] As Mason puts it, 'the kind of societal relations that Ivan Illich had in mind in his 'tools for Conviviality' (1973) – in other words, the good life, a life which, arguably, can never be carried to excess' (2000: 189).

A central argument advanced is that, whilst indigenous American and European images of the 'other' make use of comparable constitutive elements, they are, in important respects, *incommensurable*. Further, I will argue that the 'lack of fit', in terms of the representation of the life-worlds of the subjects of development, involves a certain manipulative mystification in the sense that 'the representational properties are simply incommensurate with that to which they refer' (Friedman 1998: 19).

Mason, after noting a number of salient characteristics of Western discourse and practice, goes on to show how the view of the South American indigenous 'other' can be seen as a reflection of the hegemonic interests and assumptions present in 'European Culture'. Overing unearths and names these assumptions and argues further, that these constitute formative postulates in the disciplines of anthropology and sociology which can lead to a conceptual blindness to indigenous life-ways:

> ' . . . that it is the West which discovered the Individual, and also the mature rationality upon which individuality must be based, all towards the end of democracy, for equality, whatever . . . It is nevertheless the case in Amazonia that we meet a strident individualism, an insistent individualism. We also find a value upon community relationships, or upon sociality. For the Piaroa, their highly valued community is only achieved through the practices of individuals: personal autonomy is necessary for the creation of their community. Thus it is the case that our analytical and disciplinary categories, and the relationships that might hold between them never quite fit the Amazonian life-ways' (1995).

Emerging from this ethnography is the argument that, in both theory and practice, the Western apprehension of, and interaction with, the indigenous peoples of South America stemmed from a historically peculiar array of ideas that had erroneous pretensions to universality.

Mason's thesis is that the range of Western images of the Native American, rather than being arbitrary, or innocent, are essentially at the service of the colonial strategies of superiority, subjugation and ultimately, the physical and moral conquest

of these peoples. Depictions of indigenous peoples often focused on relative 'lack' (in terms of European standards), or equated them with all that was despicable, weak and in need of reform, patronisation or eradication in the home society; with the mentally ill, the criminal, the savage, the child, the impoverished, the morally dissolute, the ignorant, the sexually profligate, or perverse. The colonial discourse also sought to feminise (in Western terms) the landscape and those within it so as to justify the enforcement of manly, military, mature control. Made to fit into Western ideas of order, disorder and hegemonic ideas of gender, the American continent was presented as being in need of reform and control; established as *inferior* in the colonial gaze. As Mason argues,

> 'Columbus's use of the single epithet 'naked' already frames the inhabitants of the New World as a people who live in a primitive state resembling either the mythical golden age of the past or a brutish condition awaiting social and technological advance' (2000: 193).

The difference of the 'other' is construed as *vacancy* or blank sheet awaiting inscription upon its blankness by those who wield the power to confer meaning; 'Columbus's epistemology anticipates the non-conviviality of the *Conquista* and the resulting genocide' (*op.cit:* 210). The tautology intrinsic to the colonial gaze was that there was no real attempt to know or understand the indigenous world view on terms that were not related to European perspectives or values so that the idea of primitivity was imputed and projected. The Western view of alterity is dominated by what Levinas calls the 'order of the same'; that is, thinking shut inside a solipsism of reason and the drive to objectify and universalise which inevitably makes the 'other' a version of the 'Same'[3] (1984: 12). In short, this opaque characterisation of indigenous peoples clearly served the colonial purpose of subjugation.

Indigenous ideas of the Western Interloper

The corollary is the complex of ideas that lie behind indigenous ideas of the Western interloper. Whereas Western views of indigenous people were formed in the context

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[3] A true meeting with the Other requires the transcendence of an idealist ontology, a rupture and an epiphany (see Lechte 1996:115-119).

of a colonial agenda and came, in the first place from a hierarchical and stratified society which was comprised of defined groups differentiated in terms of power privilege and freedom, and so sought to define Amerindian peoples in terms commensurable with Old World hegemonic interests, indigenous images of alterity were formed by a dynamic with quite different categories, morality, intent and ethos (see Overing 1995).

Overing (1995) shows that central to Piaroa images of alterity is the understanding that 'otherness' is both dangerous and necessary for both proper social living and fertility when properly domesticated. Otherness denotes a potency that is different from self, but is not necessarily, *inferior* to self. As Overing states:

> 'Since the right to domination is alien to the Piaroa understanding of proper social relations, they would not judge external others, even if monstrous, as *inferior beings who were therefore rightly subject to Piaroa domination.* Judgements carrying connotations of inferiority tend to have as little relevance to their logic of exteriority as to that of interiority' (1995: 5, my emphasis).

Whilst the 'other' may be regarded as improper, indecent and ignorant socially, this does not lead to an imputation of inferiority or of a need for reform.

Self Fashioning

Todorov (1984a) argues that there are three levels of knowing or understanding in the meeting of different cultural realities: firstly, relating to value judgements, secondly the extent of perceived, or real differences in each others' identity and thirdly, the extent or depth of knowledge about each other. Clearly, making judgements, defining distinctions, gaining knowledge of each other and establishing a way of interacting with, and accommodating, each other are all intertwined. In the development and colonial relationship, it is apparent that a coercive language emerges from the asymmetrical nature of the encounter - politically, militarily and economically, as well as with regard to the instrumental intent to profit from the other. Thomas (1997: 189) agrees with this analysis;

'Within the oppositional process in which a variety of dominant and dominated groups reify the attributes of others and themselves in a self-fashioning process, the resulting relationship will be an asymmetrical one'.

The arguments presented above illustrate the anthropological endeavour to understand the 'other' before judging or acting and to articulate the ways in which power asymmetries are evident in the languages of relating (see also Said 1978: 40). My view is that it is morally insufficient for anthropology to be so enlightened about the way that power works, as political and economic forces continue regardless, unabated by these esoteric observations.

The ways in which the asymmetries described above continue to exert a fundamental influence on the dynamics within the development context will be examined in greater detail in following chapters. Analytically, the uses of language and of knowledge remain central to an understanding of the moral nature of the development encounter.

In a manner commensurate with the vilification and patronisation of Native Americans throughout the Conquest, Hobart (1993:2) argues that, with reference to the subjects of development;

'In order for them to be able to progress, these people first have to be constituted as 'underdeveloped' and ignorant. Conversely, without such underdevelopment and ignorance, the West could not represent itself as developed and possessing knowledge'.

The whole idea of development specialist professionals implies that there are perceived inadequacies in the knowledge and expertise of development's 'subjects'. Escobar's critiques of development discourses focus on this dynamic. His core contention is that the whole idea of the 'Third World' is a construct invented by the powers that be in the West. Through labelling, institutionalisation and professionalisation, a particular framework for understanding 'underdeveloped areas' is created anterior to interaction. This 'development gaze' paves the way for the exercise of domination over the subjects of development.

Despite the post-modernist observation that, in the West, faith in 'progress' has been profoundly shaken, ideas of evolutionism, instrumentalism and rational, scientifically driven progress remain strong currents in the Western consciousness and are discernible in various more or less obvious guises in development theory and practice. I will now trace the major theoretical questions that arise when thinking about development.

Visions of a Global Community

Clearly, the phenomenon of development has to be understood in its historical context, where, through the emergence of capitalism, fundamental changes in the nature of productive relations allowed spectacular advances in material progress and profits to be extended over areas where economic change, on the whole, had been more gradual; 'The global economy now produces as much in seventeen days as was produced in a year at the turn of the century' (Postel and Flavin 1991: 186).

Tenbruck argues that development has to be understood in terms of the 'ideologies of political progress, liberalism and socialism, which provided paths towards the same goal, the global community' (1990: 198). The vision of 'One World' of nations was, at the onset of development, one that was presented as being a novel idea to deliberately strive for. Historical materialists understand the spread of capitalism throughout the world as an inevitable and anonymous process. Nevertheless, the particular form of the development 'dream of a secular ecumeme' as a moral force and vision of the future has a specific genealogy. This 'dream' continues to reverberate in the Western consciousness, as Tenbruck observes, 'generations of children have grown up with the vision of a just world order as an ideal' (1990: 197)

The underlying assumptions of development, in particular, the idea of uniformly and universally applicable laws and its missionary character could only have come about, Tenbruck contends, 'in the context of secular remnants of Christian theology of history' intrinsic to which was the 'idea of an equal and common development of humanity as the fulfilment of history' (1990: 200). He argues further that these conceptions acquired their historical dynamic from the French revolution and its ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity.

The teleology of development then, involves a massive imaginary leap to an ahistorical future state. Development, then, if we understand it as an expression of modernism, can be seen to be, in Ardener's words, 'parasitical on philosophies of historical progress, in which styles of the past in thought or taste received labels; the future received its labels in advance. The Modern is thus a kind of appropriated future' (1985: 57).

Uncertain Landscapes

One of the central tensions in development theory and practice is precisely that of the ideological rhetoric of universality and ahistoricity which is opposed by the historic, particular and situated struggles of individuals and groups to retain their specificity. Appadurai argues that;

> 'both sides of the coin of global culture today are products of the infinitely varied mutual contest of sameness and difference on a stage characterised by radical disjunctures between different sorts of global flows and the uncertain landscapes created in and through these disjunctures' (1986: 308).

In this section, with these remarks in view, I will examine the major ideas that prefigured the universally known but fragmented phenomena of development. The first and most obvious contention that I have been alluding to is that development is a continuing form of neo-imperialism and/or colonialism (cf. Escobar 1988, 1991, 1995, Ferguson 1990, Gledhill 1994, Hobart 1993, Sachs 1993, Worsley 1984, Wallerstein 1974, 1993, Appadurai 1986). Marcus and Fischer claim that 'the view of the world order in terms of capitalism is common intellectual currency in the West as well as in the third world where anthropologists still largely work' (1986: 87). This perspective provides a ready historical framework for the analysis of the ways in which local contexts are encompassed by a 'world system'.

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Larrain writes that 'it was in the struggle of the British bourgeoisie against the remnants of feudalism that the idea of development was born' (1989: 2). He further contends that theories of development have emerged as products of particular periods in the growth of capitalism, thus effectively arguing that colonialism, imperialism and development are all epiphenomena of capitalism. He distinguishes 3 stages; firstly the age of competitive capitalism (1700-1860), secondly, the age of imperialism (1860-1945), and thirdly, late capitalism (1945 to the present day).

'Competitive capitalism', was characterised by the precepts of classical political economy, in particular those of Smith, Robertson and Ricardo. In their thinking, the material, or substantive value of traded goods were overridden by the idea of 'exchange values'. There was no room for a critical appraisal of the resulting reality of unequal exchange in this schema. The fact that asymmetric trading relations of energy, labour, leisure, use of land, crops, forests and unrenewable mineral resources has become the norm in global trade remains outside this discourse.

This was followed by the age of Imperialism and neo-classical political economy. From the mid 1800s onwards, the evolutionary theory of Darwin and its extrapolation to 'social Darwinism' added scientific authority to these beliefs. Anthropologists such as Tyler (1871), Morgan[4] (1857) and Frazer (1890) stamped an evolutionary and ethnocentric orthodoxy upon their discipline. Tyler famously argued that the science of culture is essentially a reformer's science that should guide us in our duty of leaving the world better than we found it (1871: 410, 439-40). Arguably, a general concern with the nature of change and historical process was what fuelled anthropology at its inception. Early theorists postulated a temporal pattern of progression from the simple, ignorant and primitive to complex and sophisticated modern society.

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[4] Morgan assumed an evolutionary approach in his later work.

The Impact of the Enlightenment

Conterminous with the fracturing of feudalism by the rising bourgeoisie and the burgeoning of free trade was the unfolding of the Enlightenment, which caused a revolution in Western society, new understandings of personhood and ways of relating to the 'other'. Kant obviously figures here and Kantian ethics will be discussed properly in Chapters 8 and 9. Here it suffices to reiterate Kant's radical assertion of the possibility of human autonomy through rationality (from theodicy and from values handed down on the basis of tradition). Touraine argues that the idea of *revolution* is at the heart of the Enlightenment vision of modernisation. The chief dynamic of this revolution is 'the removal of obstacles to the exercise of reason' (1989: 121), meaning replacing custom and tradition with a rationalist mode.

On the account given by Sahlins (1994: 439), the growth of capitalism involved 'some peculiar Western ideas of the person as an imperfect creature of need and desire, whose whole earthly existence can be reduced to the pursuit of bodily pleasures and the avoidance of pain'. Whereas previous to the Enlightenment, bodily lusts and avarice were viewed theologically as something to be brought under a higher moral control, Locke and Smith viewed certain desires as spurs to material prosperity. As Smith argued; 'it is not from the benevolence of the butcher that we expect our dinner but from his regard for his own self interest' ([1776] in Campbell and Skinner (eds.) 1974:24). Weber observed that the main motivation of capitalist man was 'to sink into the grave weighed down with a great material load of money and goods' whilst arguing that to make acquisition, for its own sake, the goal in pre-capitalist society, would be unworthy and contemptible; 'the product of a perverse instinct' (1930: 71).

Continuing this theme, Simmel argued that the transition to modern society where social communication was dominated by a market mentality necessarily involved the dissolution of traditionally held bonds as these would be felt as constraints;

> 'The increasing emphasis upon individuality which cuts itself off most sharply from the immediate environment . . . signifies a growing distance in genuine inner relationships and a declining distance in more external ones' (in Frisby 1994: 476).

Berthoud contends that, from the same perspective that presented the market as boundless and the possibilities of technology limitless;

> 'Being human is to be motivated by a constant search for material well being . . . to strive *to escape from constraints*, both natural and social, to become an independent individual . . . to be able to exercise one's individual rights to accumulate goods within a culturally recognised competitive context' (1992: 82-3 my emphasis).

The movement to modernity then, involved a concept of freedom and a liberating disentangling from the perceived bondage of tradition alongside a strong compulsion to subjugate the natural environment. The idea of enlarging people's choices continues to be an important concept in development. The UNDP for example, discusses development in terms of an expansion of choice (also Sen's 'Development as Freedom' 1992). Herzfeld notes that 'Choice itself is hardly a culture free or ideologically neutral notion; it is a key component of neo-liberal economies . . . and it is often claimed as the hallmark of western individualism' (2001: 154). This is a contentious area that will be discussed in later sections. For now, the main observation that I would like to make here is that freedom, whilst celebrated as 'the logical antithesis of repression' (*loc. cit.*), like consumption, is not an unlimited good, as Thin reflects;

> 'There are lots of ways in which downtrodden people need more choice, but this does not mean that in general the expansion of choice will result in greater happiness or responsibility. Excessive choice is often psychologically unwelcome (and therefore a source of unhappiness in itself) and a cause of socially irresponsible decisions' (pers. comm.)

Alongside endorsements of material ambition and individualism, the Enlightenment also promoted reason, toleration and the liberation of people from 'ignorance' and 'superstition'. There was also a firm belief in the superiority of these values and an optimistic vision that the standard and quality of life in Western Europe was upwardly

mobile and compared favourably with that of other parts of the world, as Adam Smith proclaims:

> 'The accommodation of a European prince does not always so much exceed that of an industrious and frugal peasant, as the accommodation of the latter exceeds that of many an African king, the absolute master of the lives and liberties of ten thousand naked savages' (in Campbell and Skinner (eds.) 1974:24).

This dynamic of imputed superiority remains central to development discourse, as Tenbruck observes; 'the USA regards their democracy[5] as the universal prescription for progress . . . their own history as the universal paradigm for the reliable interplay of independence, democracy and progress . . . something all people naturally desire with their hearts and minds' (1990: 199).

A related belief was that human progression involved individuals and societies 'fighting their way up a ladder of moral improvement using the weapons of hierarchy, order and education (Kuper 1999: 67). Darwin exemplifies this perspective when opining of the Feugians in 1826:

> 'The perfect equality among the individuals composing the Feugian tribes must for a long time retard their civilisation . . . it is difficult to understand how a chief can arise till there is property of some sort by which he might manifest his superiority and increase his power' (Journal of Researches, Chapter X, in Kuper 1999: 67)[6].

Dichotomous evaluative ascriptions, such as the above, were a central feature of Enlightenment discourse and, as we will see, have their latter day analogues in ascriptions of 'developed' and 'undeveloped'. This dynamic is discussed below.

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[5] For instance, the contemporary development ethicist Crocker asserts that 'A nation with the right sort of basic political, economic, and social institutions – for instance stable families, infrastructure, certain kinds of markets, a democratic government, a free press, and non-governmental organisations – can prevent and remedy both [famine and chronic hunger], while a society without the right set of interlocking institutions is likely to experience one or other if not both' (1996: 215)

In development thinking, following 1945, Larrain argues that the age of late capitalism, characterised by modernisation theory, was followed by a period in which neo-Marxist critiques entered the discourse. I will now outline the main themes running through these developments.

The Inauguration of Development

Given that I am arguing that many of the underlying themes from imperialism pervade development, it might seem arbitrary to say that there was a moment when development became the paradigm that replaced colonialism. However, over the period when the colonial powers officially withdrew their administrations, development rose to ascendancy as a way of explaining the relationship between the West (or North) and the rest of the world, and as Arce and Long observe, 'development studies arose as a distinctive field only after 1945' (2000: 5). Sachs proposes that we call the age of development:

> 'that particular historical period which began on 20 January 1949, when Harry S. Truman for the first time declared in his inauguration speech, the Southern Hemisphere as "underdeveloped areas". The label stuck and subsequently provided the cognitive base for both arrogant interventionism from the North and pathetic self-pity in the South' (1992: 2).

Tenbruck adds to this, that whilst the groundwork had been done in Western consciousness for the phenomena of development, 'it represented a revolutionary step to turn development aid into a global task and therefore into a regular duty together with a justified claim' (1990: 195). Development began optimistically and with a surety that the future for developing countries was already exhibited in the modern West.

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[6] In fact, throughout the history of capitalism, financial inequality has always been the norm. For example, in nineteenth century New York, the wealthiest 4% of citizens owned more than 80% of all wealth (Schwarz 1995).

The presence of the colonial powers, of course, continued in economic terms, and with the Cold War, direct and indirect military interventions were a continuous feature of life in the 'new states'[7]. In the 1950s, development was understood in terms of industrialisation. On a global scale, developing nations were encouraged to follow the dictates of Western economists who, in hindsight, had seriously flawed theories. Weak and often ethnically divided post-colonial states were unrealistically expected to quickly establish centrally planned economies. The emphasis in the 1970s was on the use of natural resources (mining and agriculture) and massive loans were given to develop these potential sources of raw materials. In the 1970s and 1980s, as targets were not met and global prices punished developing countries[8], Third World indebtedness became widespread and entrenched. The direct government approach was abandoned for neo-liberal 'shock therapy' where the State was to diminish whilst the private sector was to expand as markets were opened. In Chapter 11, I give an analysis of neo-liberal policies in Peru over the last decade. Repayments of debt became tied to structural adjustments demanded by IFIs (international financial institutions) who were the main creditors. Structural adjustment often meant the imposition of austerity measures, which impacted on the poorest sectors of the population. Today, the governments of previously occupied countries effectively have to share their sovereignty with IFIs. Generally, as Chambers, notes, 'more than ever before, power is concentrated in the cores of the North, including power to determine national policies in the South (1997: 4).

Over the period in which 'development' grew out of the disintegration of colonialism, theorists made no apology for defining progressive strategies from a First World perspective. Imperialism' became a more apt term than 'colonialism' for the ways in which rich countries in the modern era exert undue influence over poorer countries. Some aspects of post-colonial development, such as nation building and democratisation, are strongly antithetical to the spirit of colonialism.

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[7] Part of the political motivation for the capitalist West to support modernisation in developing countries, as well as opening up new markets, was clearly a strategy to counter the perceived threat of communism. In fact, the term 'Third World' was coined in the early 1950s as a way of designating the embattled territories which were being contested over ideologically by the 2 superpowers.

[8] Oil prices rose throughout the 1970s, there was a decline in Africa's commodity prices whilst the cost of imports continued to rise

Nevertheless, as Gardner and Lewis observe if one believes that 'life is generally better in the Northern countries than in their poorer neighbours in the South . . . modernisation is an inherently optimistic concept, for it assumes that all countries will eventually experience economic growth' (1996: 13). Ayres exemplifies this view;

> 'The technological revolution is irresistible, the arbitrary authority and irrational values of pre-scientific cultures are doomed . . . the only remaining alternative is that of intelligent, voluntary acceptance of the industrial way of life and the values that go with it . . . Not only do our people eat better, sleep better, live in more comfortable dwellings, get around more . . .and live longer than men have done ever before. In addition to listening to radio and watching television, they read more books, see more pictures and hear more music . . .'
> (1962, in Sbert 1993: 194)

Whilst these claims seem quaint and parochial as a depiction of the constitutive elements of the good life, the underlying credo of progress and modernisation, although now less blatant, continues to be emblematic of much of the West's dealings with the Third World. From this perspective, under-development is seen as something unfortunate that can be remedied by the various masteries of the West. Enduring and dominant themes in the evolution of development thinking and practice stem from this presupposition.

Modernisation Theory

'Modernisation Theory' refers to a group of approaches that were latent in colonialism and Imperialism, became explicit at an early phase in the history of development and continue to echo thematically in contemporary theorising[9]. Indeed, Gardner and Lewis argue that these perspectives, 'whilst at their most influential in the 1950s and 1960s, continue to dominate development practice today' (1996: 12). Crewe, in accord, claims that 'ideology within development agencies is still at least partially informed by the evolutionist heritage of modernisation theory, with its racialist theories prevalent during colonial times' (1997: 73). It is important to keep in

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[9] The first journal devoted to development studies promoted a modernisation perspective and was significantly entitled '*Economic Development and Cultural Change*'.

mind the duplicity that is intrinsic to modernisation. Herzfeld sees this in terms of 'institutions taking refuge in their own theodicy – 'the system' as an ethical alibi for self-fulfilling formulations, such as for example, bromides about the 'culture of poverty' (2001: 231). The main features of modernisation theory, then, are as follows.

The premise of this group of theories is that political and economic stability can be achieved by replacing traditional practices, economies and forms of social organisation and governance with the Western package of the modern state, technology, industry, principles of law, family size and time management. Corbridge notes that 'clocks and condoms were among the most tangible forms of development assistance in the 1950s' (1995: 2). Rogers (1980) showed how Western planners made basic androcentric assumptions such as the belief that farmers are men and that women play an ancillary role in productive activities (cf. Boserup 1970)[10]. Modernisation theories are now commonly regarded as being fundamentally evolutionary, prescriptive and teleological. However, this group of approaches was given extensive theoretical justification. Various explanatory incarnations of modernisation theory emerged; some giving pre-eminence to sociological factors, others to psychological or economic factors, or all of these in different combinations.

Towards Economic 'Take-Off'

From an economic perspective, highly influential theorists such as Rostow[11] (1960) and Foster (1962) depicted underdeveloped countries in terms analogous to medieval and pre-industrial Europe and prescribed a linear path to a developed, industrialised society characterised by high mass consumption. From the historical development of Europe from feudalism to the USA's libertarian capitalism, different stages were

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[10] As will be explored later, these assumptions sometimes amounted to self-fulfilling prophecies whereby men were given opportunities to utilise technological innovations leading to a feminisation of subsistence activities.

[11] Rostow, who died early in 2003, as well as being an academic, was one of the chief architects of policy to the US government during the Vietnam War and was one of the first officials to argue for the extensive bombing of North Vietnam. Following this, when he began lecturing at the University of Texas, he was regarded as a pariah by many fellow academics and students staged protests at his appointment. Rostow's economic theory provided much of the ideological underpinnings of the Vietnam War. Following the war, he maintained that US intervention, in net effect, had been correct and worthwhile (Noel Dolan, Obituary of Rostow in The Glasgow Herald 20 Feb 2003).

extrapolated for developing countries to work their way thorough before they could achieve economic 'take off'[12]. For example;

> 'It is useful, as well as roughly accurate, to regard the process of development now going forward in Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America as analogous to the stages of preconditions and take-off of other societies, in the late eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries' (Rostow 1960: 21).

The 5 stages proposed by Rostow, as both factual and prescriptive were 'traditional society', 'preconditions for take-off', 'take-off', 'road to maturity' and finally the age of 'high mass consumption'. 'Tradition' was understood here as referring to relatively inert anachronistic instances of the surviving past. Williams argues that, from this perspective, '"traditional habitats" are isolated, by some current hegemonic development as elements of the past which now have to be discarded' (1993: 601)[13].

Alongside this recognition that development is a social process, strong currents in development thinking were purely pragmatic, explaining under-development in terms of removing obstacles such as a lack of technical knowledge or finding ways to cope with difficult climatic conditions and landscapes. The initial conceptualisations of the necessary 'inputs' required to transform poor countries were straightforward and focused upon infrastructural programmes to allow markets to be opened up, technical and bureaucratic training towards the goal of increased productivity and 'good governance'. The concept of improving the capacities of poorer countries remains central to development practice today although levels of local consultation have improved.

'Tradition' as an Obstacle

Modernisation was envisaged as a process that had to be engendered through the establishment of particular institutional arrangements, division of labour, values and

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[12] See Larrain 1989 for a thorough Marxist critique of modernisation theory.

[13] As we will see, contemporary social development theory and practice, on the contrary, is 'pervaded with the notion of lost tradition and the 'recovery', 'rehabilitation' or 'revival' of latent community practices' (Mosse 1994: 265). This is understood by some theorists as an applied version of 'salvage

the entrepreneurial spirit[14]. Berthoud discusses how the 'principle of boundless expansion in the technological and economic is generally alien' in 'traditional' societies and that this principle 'presupposes overcoming symbolic and moral 'obstacles', that is, ridding these societies of various inhibiting ideas' (1992: 72). Berthoud exemplifies this perspective with a citation from an article (disturbingly) entitled '*The Social Anthropology of Economic Development*':

> 'Economic Development of an underdeveloped people by themselves is not compatible with the maintenance of their traditional customs and mores . . . What is needed is a revolution in the totality of social, cultural and religious institutions and habits, and thus in their psychological attitude, their philosophy and way of life' (Sadie 1960: 302)

Development was understood as a phenomenon that had to be fuelled by economic progress and steered by technological and politico-economic experts. Hobart writes that, 'in modernisation theory, society or culture is treated, suitably reified, as an obstacle to change, more rarely as facilitating it' (1993: 6). However, it is more accurate that these theorists sought to engender a *particular kind of society*, one conducive to high mass consumption. Indeed, until the 1970s, the terms economic growth and development were used interchangeably (Corbridge 1995: 4). Long and Long observe that modernisation envisages 'development in terms of a progressive movement towards technologically more complex and integrated forms of "modern" society' (1992: 19)

Normative Polarities

Dichotomous typologising of the 'cultures' of developing countries as compared with Western society provided the justification for this ideological movement. Various sociological models that dichotomised 'traditional' and modern societies lent themselves to modernisation theory, in particular Tonnies' theories of *Gemeinschaft*

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anthropology'. The language of recovery in development discourse will be examined in greater detail below.

[14] From the 1950s onwards, in the emerging discipline the 'sociology of development', a clear dichotomy became apparent between theorists concerned with exploring the social and institutional

and *Gesellschaft* (1887/1955), Durkheim's mechanical solidarity and organic solidarity, Spencer's distinction between homogenous[15] and heterogeneous societies, and Redfield's theories of 'folk communities'. However, Larrain argues that it was Weber's theoretical perspectives, which exerted the greatest influence upon Modernisation theorists (1989: 88). An interesting but seldom observed implication of Weber's qualitative distinctions between the rationalities, roles and social institutions that characterised particular societies in particular times and places was that latent within these typologies was the modernisation theorists' normative rendering of a polarity between the traditional and modern.

For example, Parsons'(1949) and theories of social roles and relations in traditional and modern settings were rooted in Weberian theoretical postulates. Parsons set out 'pattern variables' of roles and social relations, which differentiated typically traditional and modern societies. Traditional societies were given the general label *'ascriptive particularistic'* whilst industrial societies are 'acquisitive universalistic'[16].

Germani (1965), also drawing from Weber, offered a comparable polar conceptualisation of the core differences between 'traditional', primitive, or pre-industrial societies and their modern counterparts. He argues that the normative frameworks for social action in pre-industrial societies tend to be *prescriptive* rather than elective (and rational). He also contended that whilst in modern society, change is the norm and is both promoted and managed by its normative frameworks, in traditional societies, change is resisted and regarded as pathological, in the Durkheimian sense. Traditional societies, according to Germani, tend to have a

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arrangements which advanced or impeded development and those who, from a Marxist perspective, developed critical theories of neo-imperialism.

[15] Interestingly, the contemporary philosopher Martha Nussbaum asserts that the cultural anthropology of a previous era imagined homogeneity where there is really diversity because of a methodological error: 'for often the anthropologist selected a single 'native informant' and built the picture of the culture on this basis' (2000: 49). She does not, however, give any proofs for this assertion.

[16] This polarising schemata can be summarised as follows; firstly, roles and relations in 'traditional societies' tended to be *affective* (roles or activities are undertaken for their intrinsic gratification) whilst in modern societies roles tended to be informed by non-affective instrumental rationality. Secondly, roles in traditional societies tended to be *particularistic* and bound by social conventions, which are not transferable rather than being 'universal'. Thirdly, some roles in traditional societies tend to be evaluated *ascriptively,* that is, on the basis of socially defined categories (age, sex, or lineage, for example), rather than in terms of actual performance or merit. Finally, modern societies tend to be characterised by the allocation of specific bureaucratic roles and relations whereas, in traditional societies, roles are *'diffuse',* or multi-functional. A further dimension as to whether individuals in

smaller number of multi-functional institutions rather than the proliferation of specialised and differentiated institutions of modern societies.

Engineering Transition

Transition from one form of society to another involved engineering fundamental changes in roles and relationships. Three main kinds of change were discussed as being necessary for the transition to modernity. Firstly, the disentangling of the individual from close primary bonds was understood as being essential. Secondly, changes in the social roles and relations as depicted in the reified societal forms described above. Ascriptive orderings of role had to make way for stratification based on patterns of acquisition, merit and labour demand in the market. Thirdly, Larrain notes that a change in personhood was deemed a requirement for the transition to modernity.

> 'In traditional societies, a kind of personality predominates which is suited to the internalisation of prescriptive norms whereas in industrial societies there is an emphasis on the kind of personality which internalises elective norms, that is to say, personalities able to choose between various courses of action' (1989: 90).

The entrepreneur was one such 'type' held as being essential to the transition to modern society. McClelland (1966) generalised historically and geographically from Weber's theories of the 'Spirit of Capitalism' to develop a theory of the psychological factors that underlie economic success, on the premise that certain types of societies tended to promote in its members the predilection for achievement (understood in terms of material gain)[17]. McClelland concluded that the entrepreneurial personality and drive could be instilled in children through education[18].

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traditional societies tended to be motivated by collective, rather than private interests or vice versa was left an open question by Parsons.

[17] McClelland's methods were preposterous; he measured various societies 'achievement rating' through analysis of children's fantasies (looking for entrepreneurial tendencies) and then compared this with the amount of electricity generated in that country (an indicator of economic development), finding a high correlation!

[18] Hobart links the promotion of the entrepreneurial personality as a way of countering the homogenising tendencies of Marxist theory to 'transactionalism; 'the anthropological resuscitation of

Changes would also have to be wrought in the relationships between civil society and the State; local forms of association, such as indigenous communities had to be integrated into statutory bureaucratic norms and brought to participate in the political life of the nation. In addition, the relationships forged in different societies between knowledge, rationality, belief and technology had to conform to the disciplinary and productive boundaries that characterise modern societies. DaMatta notes that, up until 1960, Brazilian anthropological studies were based on an evolutionist schema that envisaged the integration of tribal groups within the national system as being parallel to a movement from 'primitive mores' to the values and life-ways of civilisation. DaMatta argues, however, that

> 'this schema forgets that indigenous societies are not in fact uniform blocks capable of being integrated into the national order . . . territorial, political and economic integration can occur without automatic assimilation of other spheres of tribal life. A tribal group may be economically assimilated while remaining relatively isolated in terms of kinship system, ceremonial and religious beliefs' (1993: 129).

Asychronicity and 'Aspiration'

Germani (*op.cit.*) envisaged change towards modern capitalist society as occurring in a patchy and incongruent manner, allowing the formation of 'intermediary' societies where traditional moralities and institutions persist and individuals live in and out of mutually contradictory spheres of life, for example, production and religious belief. Centre-periphery relations where urban areas and particular social groupings develop faster and accrue more capital than rural areas and other social groupings occur as a result of this 'asynchronic' development. The extremes of financial inequality that now characterise developing countries appear to bear out this view[19]. This was seen by some theorists as a necessary, if unfortunate stage:

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utilitarianism, in which rational individuals set out self interestedly to maximise their utility, whether defined as wealth, power or status' (1993: 8).

[19] Thin makes the point that the tendency to uncritically use 'inequality' as a short-hand for 'financial inequality' is itself a version of commodity fetishism perhaps best described as money fetishism. There are important differences in the kinds of inequality that have been altered by development; while

'Unhappiness and discontentment in the sense of wanting more than is obtainable at any moment is to be generated. The suffering and dislocation that may be caused in the process may be objectionable, but it appears to be the price that has to be paid for economic development; the condition of economic progress' (Sadie 1960: 302)[20].

Germani also argued that as higher levels of consumption became established among certain social categories, this would produce an 'aspiration effect' upon the rest of the population. A similar notion featured in modernisation theory's take on technological change; 'the diffusion of modern technology is supposed to provide an example (a demonstration effect') to progressive farmers' (Hobart 1993: 13). Germani observed that underdeveloped nations, whilst having the aspirations of developed countries, would not be able to establish provisions such as welfare initially but would exhibit patterns of conspicuous consumption among traditional elites and newly established middle classes, thus producing social inequality and conflict until the economy had diversified and caught up with industrialised nations.

On the whole, modernisation theory was based upon a 'faith' in progress and the short lived optimism of the 1950s with regard to global economic development, rather than upon in-depth studies of the relative viability of different economic and social models in different settings.

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financial inequality in and between nations has tended to rise over the past century, other forms of inequality such as life expectancy, access to health care, drinking water, and education have been massively reduced (pers. comm.)

[20] This theory has its contemporary equivalents and has been the topic of many empirical studies. Barro, for example argues that 'higher inequality tends to retard growth in poor countries and encourage growth in richer places. The Kuznets curve - whereby inequality first increases and later decreases during the process of economic development - emerges as a clear empirical regularity' (1999). The implication would be that strategies that promote greater equality in 'poor countries' would encourage growth. This means the redistribution of the resources gained by the richer sectors of society, or from those who benefit extraneously, in a period of economic development. From his analysis of the relationship between poverty, growth and inequality, Lal concludes that 'alleviating poverty is not synonymous with reducing the inequality of income' (1985: 10). Fundamental disagreement between economists seems to be the norm. This is alarming in the sense that their decision making and professional judgement has both great prestige and huge importance for the livelihoods of those affected by economic policies. Chambers, drawing on empirical research on the degree of disagreement between top economists which shows very low levels of consensus on fundamental issues, declares that 'practical economic policy is an area where economists can be deeply uncertain, widely divided and often wrong' (1997: 52-3)

These theories clearly leave gaping holes if one is interested in a satisfactory account of well being. Hobart notes that 'the categories of 'traditional' and 'modern' are vague and idealised constructions . . . the process of development is defined teleogically by reference to the supposed state of the dominant party' (1993: 6). Gardner and Lewis argue that modernisation theory's 'assumption that all change inevitably follows the Western Model is both breathtakingly ethnocentric and empirically incorrect' (1996: 14). Some of the major failings of modernisation theory, then, are as follows.

Disenchanting Modernisation

The initial optimism of modernisation theorists was worn away by the realisation that development projects, despite huge investment were not achieving the desired results. There are various dimensions to the perceived inadequacy of modernisation theory.

Firstly, development was manifestly not achieving what it was supposed to. Studies of the effects of development have resulted in 'a much keener realisation that the new states are indeed in something of a fix' (Geertz 2001: 24). Corbridge reflects that 'in the wake of continuing famine in Africa, a lost decade of development in Latin America, and the tragedy of Rwanda, it can be difficult to credit the spirit of optimism that marked the Golden Years of the 1950s and 1960s' (1995: 4).

A widespread disenchantment with development's telos tempered efforts to move towards the original unproblematic modernist representations of what a developed society should be. The kinds of societies that were emerging as a result of development, such as vast shantytowns with appalling sanitation and rife with preventable diseases and malnutrition, were obviously aberrations of what developers had envisaged. Economic development was envisaged as entailing the movement of 'under-employed peasants' in rural areas to urban industrial centres, combined with the transition from subsistence agriculture to cash cropping. The evidence seemed to indicate that the global economic system, whilst causing ecological destruction through developed countries' uncontrolled consumption and waste was also foisting this destructive, egocentric lifestyle upon the societies of developing countries.

It has also become clear that economic development has had unequal benefits and has frequently created new kinds of poverty and social marginalisation (Chambers 1983, 1997; Ferguson 1986; Grillo 1997). Gross levels of economic growth in Third World countries had scarcely changed by the late 1960s and poverty levels had increased. Orthodox economics, being primarily focused upon efficiency in the deployment of resources, had no logical remit to include the ethical considerations of the equitable distribution of income or the relief of poverty. Lal notes that a fundamental difficulty is that 'we lack a consensus about the ethical system for judging the desirability of a particular distribution of income' (1985: 10). The idea that economic growth in some sectors would spread to others automatically ('trickle-down') has proven to be naïve. Development literature clearly shows that rapid economic growth does not guarantee the eradication of dire poverty (for instance, Brazil) whilst also showing that where economic growth is stagnant, poverty can be held at bay (for example Costa Rica).

Lal however, argues that the standard economic presumption that real wages will rise as the demand for labour grows, relative to its supply, is universally valid; 'the fruits of growth, even in India, will therefore trickle down' (1985: 12). His conclusions are based upon a mathematical formalist surplus labour theory, which does not take various factors into consideration. More recent research has shown that capital accumulation *does* have a limited trickle down effect to certain sectors, which results in greater inequality between groups. Government interventionist strategies are required if wealth is to be re-distributed more equitably (Aghion and Bolton 1997: 151-172). The redistribution of resources depends upon factors such as the provision of policies that are effective in improving living standards of the poor, 'augment their capabilities, such as building human capital, or expand their opportunities, such as more equal land distribution and employment growth in manufacturing or services' (Ahuja et.al. 1997: 291). These measures are generally inadequately provided for in developing countries.

As noted above, poverty levels have often increased in countries where there has been economic growth. Sen has shown that increasing inequality can also occur *within* households (1981). Whilst economic inequality was anticipated in modernisation theory as a function of economic growth, and the fact that societies are composed of

people with different amounts of power, access to resources and interests was recognised, the processes through which these different sectors were to eventually benefit from development was not understood contextually.

It became evident that new economic opportunities and structures can cause the exacerbation of existing tensions and the emergence of new conflicts at a local or national level. The modernist view of the 'poor' was often simplistic. The benefits and burdens of development interventions have proven to be unequally divided between groups that are differentiated by criteria such as ethnic identity, class, caste, geography, sex or access to education (Hill 1986).

However, whilst, in relation to the unguarded optimism of the 1950s and 1960s, development has fallen short of its promise, the argument that development has been a complete failure is difficult to sustain. The Human Development Reports published by the UN show a fairly balanced representation of both the shortcomings and challenges of development as well as clear evidence of progress. For example, life expectancy in all developing countries rose from 46 to 62 years, infant mortality per 1000 live births fell from 170 to 150, the proportion of people with access to clean drinking water has reportedly risen from 10% to 60%, adult literacy has risen from 46% to 69% and diseases such as smallpox have been all but eradicated (Human Development Reports 1995 and 1996).

In relation to reviewing modernisation theory it is important to acknowledge that, in general there has been a correspondence between patterns of economic growth and poverty reduction and also to consider that no country has reduced poverty without economic growth. Alongside this, however, it is important to note that whilst the percentages of development indicators may show improvements, with population increases, the absolute numbers of people afflicted by poverty rises accordingly. It is also important to look at the impact of economic growth on the quality of life of different social groups. Overall poverty reduction can occur whilst the living conditions of the 'poorest' worsens.

The assumption of an unproblematic emulation of Western economic development has proven to be simplistic and erroneous. There are two related dimensions to this

critique. Firstly, economic activity is often integrated with quite different values, practices and rationales (Dilley 1992; Epstein 1962, 1973; Sahlins 1994). Nussbaum disclaims the 'obtuse' universalising assumption that people are all simply rational agents in the global market;

> 'seeking to maximise utility whatever their traditions or context . . . neglecting tradition and context and their role in constructing desire and preference, neglecting the many different conceptions of the good that citizens of different nations have and their urgent need to be able to live in accordance with these conceptions' (2000: 32).

This is related to the wrong headed pedagogical presupposition that developing countries can, and should, learn from the particular historical paths trodden by developed countries. Gardner and Lewis observe that 'anthropological research has continually shown that development comes in many shapes and forms; we cannot generalise about transitions from one 'type' of society to another' (1996: 14). Arce and Long support this view, writing that 'in modernisation theory, economic, technological and demographic conditions, and the organisation of appropriate social institutions and value frameworks, were located as functionally segmented orders and thus treated by experts as separate from the multifarious and at times contradictory experiences and practice of everyday life' (2000: 5).

Secondly, assuming the superiority of Western knowledge over local and/or indigenous knowledge in terms of economic and material gains in difficult circumstances has often proven to be mistaken (Croll and Parkin 1992; Hobart 1993, Long 1992). Modern, developed societies are depicted as being rational, technologically sophisticated, secular, universalistic and profit-motivated, whilst underdeveloped societies are understood as being held back by tradition, particularistic irrational modes of thought and *un*motivated to profit. In his skilful dissection of development's persistent mistakes, or 'embedded errors', Chambers contends that;

'In matters amenable to investigation by hard science, development professionals are inclined to believe that 'we know', and that our technology is superior' (Chambers 1997: 19).

It is clear that there are many areas in which these claims are true, in particular with regard to aspects of both medical science and engineering. However, the generalised confidence that Western knowledge is superior has often proven to be mistaken. Firstly, there are examples where Western scientists have been categorically wrong and local knowledge has proven to be superior in terms of the desired goals. The scope of this thesis does not permit me to cite examples[21]. Secondly, whilst Western scientific knowledge has often offered something useful, it has sometimes been imposed inappropriately, at the expense of other aspects of the quality of life, in ways which have clearly done more harm than good (Hill 1986; Mair 1984).

A further misapprehension in modernisation theory is the idea that 'poor' people are not motivated to serve their best interests. Hence the arguments cited above to the effect that an 'aspiration effect' is required or that the entrepreneurial spirit has to be inculcated. This myopic and ethnocentric modernist assumption reduced well being to market viability. Lal, for example, appears to be arguing from a formalist perspective in his argument that people's 'best interests' can be understood in economic terms:

'The most basic misconception underlying much of development economics has been a rejection of the behavioural assumption that, either as producers or consumers, people . . . would act economically; when the opportunity of an advantage was presented to them they would take it' (1985: 11)

As noted above, an implicit assumption in Western economic reasoning is that hierarchy, inequality and competition are necessary.

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[21] See Chambers (1997), especially chapter 2, where he presents a literature review which amounts to a litany of the most pernicious and enduring errors made by development professionals. Amongst other topics, he discusses; The Green revolution, Wheeled tool carriers, Wood-fuel forecasts, People's relationship with the environment, Human made desertification, Himalayan environmental degradation, Soil erosion in Africa, Pastoralism and Integrated Rural Development Programmes.

However, at this juncture, I would like underline the conclusions of research that has shown that people in 'undeveloped countries' often know far better strategies than those of development planners to optimise their livelihood in a sustainable manner in difficult circumstances (Croll and Parkin 1992). Indigenous concepts of how to use natural resources, or their concept of work may be radically different from that of maximising neo-classical economics but this does not mean that indigenous people are somehow ignorant about how to best achieve well being and efficiency, that is, optimising a balance between various components in complex livelihoods.

A related failing in modernisation theory is the depiction of 'tradition', or local knowledge as an obstacle. In practice, until fairly recently, local culture was generally sidelined by planners or treated as a *constraint*. Viewing local people's perspectives as being obstacles to development has proven to be counterproductive and has resulted in disastrously inappropriate development interventions (Mair 1984).

A further key presupposition in modernisation theory is that underdevelopment can be understood in terms of a number of obstacles or lacks that can be dealt with pragmatically (Gardner and Lewis 1996: 14) such as opening up markets by improving transport links. Again, especially with regard to the more marginalised and disempowered sectors of society, this approach has often proved to be simplistic.

The idea, which had been central to development rhetoric, of the US being at the apex of a social evolutionary scale became untenable as the ecological consequences and non–sustainability of industrialisation have become obvious. Illich was one of the leading figures to draw attention to the myth of unlimited economic growth:

> 'During the late 1960s, it has become evident that less than 10 per cent of the human race consumes more than 50 per cent of the world's resources, and produces 90 per cent of the physical pollution which threatens to extinguish the biosphere' (1973: 149).

Equally, awareness has grown that the social and political models that are prevalent in the modern west are themselves deeply flawed, as Chambers asserts; 'Socially, in terms of well being, for many in the North, the experience is of increasing

unemployment, job insecurity, crime, drug abuse and anti-social anomie. Simultaneously, for the privileged of both North and South, the visual social reality perceived or repressed includes mass slaughter, genocide, starvation, child soldiers, mutilation by land mines, and the like, brought literally home on television screens' (1997: 4).

From the mid-1960s onwards, 'Dependency Theory' assumed ascendancy in academic circles and has provided an ideological basis for much of the work of development NGOs. Modernisation theory was tempered to reflect concerns about increasing poverty and in the 1970s, even the World Bank began to incorporate ideas about 'redistribution with growth (Corbridge 1995).

In the most basic terms, the fundamental difference between modernisation theory and dependency theory is that the former envisages poverty in terms of domestic considerations whilst the latter is predicated on the claim that poverty and powerlessness are largely caused by the exploitative incorporation of 'marginal' areas into larger systems. In fact, dependency theory arguably constitutes modernisation theory's most vital critique in its assertion that underdevelopment has to be understood relationally in terms of historic systems of unequal political and economic exchange. However, as we will examine below, dependency theory has proven to be equally prone to many of the criticisms levelled against modernisation theory.

Dependency Theory

From the late 1960s onwards, 'Dependency Theory' seized upon 'Modernisation Theory's' uncritical perspective on the power asymmetries inherent to development and its omission of wider historical processes in its explanatory framework. 'Dependency theory' is often referred to as if it constitutes a single, coherent theoretical paradigm. In fact, there are important fractures within this body of theories[22].

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[22] There are 3 main strands identified in the literature. Firstly there is the theory that underdevelopment is caused in dependent areas by central economies and further, that within the dynamic of this relationship, peripheral economies cannot progress within a capitalist economic model (e.g. Frank 1969). Secondly, the emphasis upon the obstacles to development that the central economy constitutes, whilst not asserting that capitalism is doomed to be futile for peripheral areas. Thirdly, a closer focus

Adopting a neo-Marxist perspective[23], dependency theorists understood development to be, in the final analysis, a continuation of imperialist and colonialist forces, where the putatively emancipatory goals of poverty reduction were to be disbelieved (Frank 1969, Cardoso and Faletto 1979). Rather than seeing poorer countries as being under-developed prior to their contact with the North, dependency theorists argued that poorer countries were *actively made* 'under-developed' in both ideological and real terms by the capitalist interests of the North. Frank proposed that marginal areas have a higher standard of living when their relationship to urban centres is weakest (1969). Poorer countries provided a peripheral source of raw materials and labour for the richer countries central to the world economy (Wallerstein 1974). Frank argued that global capitalism was responsible for the underdevelopment of Latin America from the 16th century onwards (1969).

From a 'Dependency' perspective it was considered paradoxical, absurd and disingenuous to posit wealthy developed countries as models for the projected economic development of developing countries primarily because the capitalist system depended upon the incorporation of peripheral areas which could be plundered (Cardoso 1977; Frank 1966)[24]. Cardoso however, predicted that the pessimistic views of Frank, (who argued that only Socialist revolution along the lines of Cuba or China could prevent the disastrous incorporation of poor countries into an exploitative relationship) would not be borne out by history (1977). The economic successes of countries that were regarded as being peripheral to the world capitalist system, for example in the Far East, along with the collapse of socialist states have made certain aspects of Frank's arguments less credible. Larrain argues, however, that on the basis of this evidence, the critique of dependency theory went too far; 'in describing new dynamic processes of industrialisation in certain less developed countries it hastily jumped to the conclusion that the Third World was disappearing' (1989: 210).

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on local systems of dependency without necessarily extrapolating the underdevelopment of local areas to a global system of dependency (e.g. Cardoso and Faletto 1979).

[23] Larrain argues that whilst several important Marxist theorists have disowned dependency theory as being at variance with Marxism, 'to say that dependency theory is not Marxist is a wild exaggeration. There is no point in denying the Marxist origins of most dependency approaches' (1989: 194)

Centre-Periphery Metaphors

The core premises of this view continue to have explanatory power and persist in contemporary critiques of development. Larrain contends that 'the dependency approach, in so far as it constitutes the application of historical materialism to the analysis of peripheral capitalist countries, is not dead' (1989: 210). According to dependency theory, an unequal centre-periphery relationship reoccurs at every level (urban/rural, educated/uneducated, politically influential/politically powerless etc.). Hobart notes that the use of various metaphors in modernisation theory both reflect and promote this dynamic; spatial metaphors of up/down and centre/periphery are compounded by 'a sexual metaphor in which the powerful, superior, male West imposes itself upon weak inferior, captivated (and female) others' (1993: 6). Chambers argues that value-laden words pervade the whole fabric of development;

> 'Language has played a trick on us, accommodating and affirming the cultural imperialism of the first world . . . the usage of 'primitive' has shifted from 'original' and ancient' towards the negative sense of backward' (1991: 172)[25].

Dependency theorists argue that these binary oppositions at the level of development discourse, are indicative of the continuation of inequality, the strategies of Northern countries to maintain a position of superiority and reflect the institutionalisation and professionalisation of these dynamics.

Dimensions of Dependence

The relationship was understood as being one of dependence in various ways. Poorer countries were not granted the capital to develop the technology or the specialised skills that advanced manufacturing required, nor indeed the wealth to consume specialised or luxury products and were simply used as a source for materials at a

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[24] In more general terms, dependency theorists used variants of standard socialist critiques of capitalism, citing the inevitable conflict between workers and owners, boom and bust business cycles, unemployment and poverty.

[25] Chambers provides an extensive list of value laden dichotomies that refer to Western professional biases, for example: urban/rural, industrial/agricultural, high cost/low cost, predictable/unpredictable, modern/traditional, marketed/subsistence, visible/invisible, educated/illiterate, male/female, adult/child, rich/poor, accessible/remote, office/field, tidy/untidy, major/minor etc. (1991: 172-4).

price decided upon by those in power. The negotiating capacity of poorer countries was diminished by their lack of relative economic power and, through the granting of unrepayable loans by institutions created by the countries of the North, were forced to re-structure their economies on the instructions of these institutions. It was surmised that the middle classes in underdeveloped countries were in alliance with First World and metropolitan interests and that it was in their interests to maintain a social and economic order of dependence. Thus Third World export oriented countries developed, where it was not uncommon to have endemic malnutrition in regions devoted to producing the coffee or tobacco demanded by international markets.

World Systems Theory and Local Complexity

Marxist-informed concerns with wider systems of colonial political economies in the 1960s and 1970s were generally at variance with the finely detailed ethnographic aspirations of interpretative social anthropologists. World systems theory, whilst being a form of dependency theory, made greater efforts to make sense of the dynamics between global and local forms of cultural determination. The need for an explanatory model to apprehend the obvious realities of global asymmetry was held in tension with the burgeoning anthropological resistance to grand narratives. This is captured by Marcus and Fischer:

> 'The ethnographic task lies ahead of reshaping our dominant macro-frameworks for the understanding of historical political economy, such as capitalism, so that they can represent the actual diversity and complexity of local situations for which they try to account in general terms' (1986: 88).

This is a question that recurs time and again in the wake of world system theory. Wallerstein sought to make world system theory the basis of a school with a politically committed vision (see also Marcus and Fischer 1986: 81). However, its enduring significance has been the dissemination of a radical explanatory model for the phenomena of development which, by virtue of its simple foundations, became widely diffused in social science. The fundamentally political perspective of dependency theory and world systems theory has engendered a politicisation of development in theory and practice as reflected in the agendas of NGOs and

government agencies. These theories also 'force(d) international relations onto the anthropological agenda (Gledhill 1994: 6). Gardner and Lewis argue that

> 'by focusing upon the ways in which profit for some is connected to loss for others, neo-Marxist analysis remains an important contribution to the understanding of development, even if as an analytical tool it is sometimes a little blunt' (1996: 19).

World systems theory continues to be at the heart of contemporary critiques of development practice (Kay 1989). Marcus and Fischer concur;

> 'What is important is the impetus the debate about it (world systems theory) gave to political economy research. Rather than hardening into dogma or a 1950s style paradigm, the so-called world systems theory survives today primarily as a general orientation that thrives on detailed studies of regions and historical periods . . . political economists have focused their attention on close analyses of the historic and ethnographic conditions of regions and locales' (1986: 81).

What remains problematic is how to represent the embedding of richly described local cultural worlds in larger impersonal systems of political economy. Indeed the effort to reconcile political economic theories with a global scope with attention to local realities has been abandoned by many. Appadurai, for instance, argues that 'the new global economy has to be understood as a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order which cannot any longer be understood in terms of existing centre-periphery models' (1990: 296). Articulating the complexities of 'disorganised capitalism' within a world systems model has proved to be very difficult.

Disaffection with Dependency

Whilst these apparently radical theories, as descriptive models on a global level of analysis are highly plausible in both historical and contemporary settings, and bring to light key political points passed over by modernisation theory, their fundamental discrediting of the roots of development as being inherently exploitative does not readily provide a basis for realistic solutions.

Dependency theory tended to reify ideas such as 'class' or 'capitalism' uncritically. A certain air of learned helplessness pervaded early dependency theory in the sense that nothing but a radical solution, involving establishing an alternative to capitalism would do. Frank for example, argued that for underdeveloped countries, economic independence could only be achieved by means of a socialist revolution (1969).

Implicit in deterministic Marxist theory is the contradiction 'that neutralises all the anthropological good intentions' (Sahlins 1994: 413), that is, whilst insisting that 'peripheral peoples' should have the power to shape their own material conditions according to their own world view, Marxist and cultural ecologist theory impose the meta-narrative that world views are derivative of these material conditions.

Dependency theory is also guilty of the homogenisation of local populations, cultural realities and knowledges, frequently presenting them fatalistically as constituting a passive victim culture. This is apparent in Tenbruck's grim warning that

> 'History proceeds by the formation and dissolution of peoples, languages, cultures, nations, states, and will continue to do so more than ever in our era of global development' (1990: 204).

Thus, dependency theory shares with modernisation theory a basic assumption of the inexorable course of history. It imposes a teleology similar to that of modernisation theory and in so doing approaches local histories in terms of their gradual

incorporation into capitalism whilst anticipating that their integrity is bound to be lost[26]. Featherstone argues that there is now general academic agreement that;

> 'It is misleading to conceive of a global culture as necessarily entailing the weakening of the sovereignty of nation states which, under the impetus of some form of teleological evolutionism or other master logic will necessarily become absorbed into larger units and eventually a world state which produces cultural homogeneity and integration' (1990: 1).

What is problematic for many contemporary theorists is that the arguments underpinning dependency theory are rooted in an interpretation of the underlying motivations of development as stemming from a grand theory of power that seeks to elucidate the whole history of Western history and society. Leys, noting the similarities in language between dependency theory and modernisation theory contends that;

> 'It is not really an accident that these simplistic pairings, developed/underdeveloped, centre/periphery, dominant/dependent resemble those of bourgeois development theory (traditional/modern, rich/poor, advanced/backward, etc.) they are basically polemical *inversion* of them' (1977: 92).

In dependency theory there is a general difficulty in recognising the pro-active and creative practices of people affected by development in opposition, modification, collusion or support. Sahlins criticises this tendency; 'the explanatory principle, as Shineberg says is that 'there must be a white man behind every brown' (1967: 214)' (1994: 412). Sahlins also argues, citing Wolf (1982), that an overblown historical materialist perspective renders colonised and 'peripheral' peoples nothing more than victims and silent witnesses of their subjugation. On this view, 'it had seemed that there was nothing left for anthropology to do but the global ethnography of

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[26] Frank, whilst often depicted as a dogmatist with regard to an all encompassing world system in fact, equivocated about whether the world capitalist system would necessarily encompass or incorporate pre-modern or 'pre-capitalist' economies. In 'Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America' (1969), Frank gives a monolithic version of the world system whereas in 'Dependent Accumulation

capitalism' (1994: 412). Wolf echoed these views, criticising the treatment 'of history as a process without a subject' (1982: 79 see also Hornborg 1992 and 1994). The denial of agency and cultural integrity constitutes, as Sahlins captures it, a 'super structural expression of the very imperialism it despises' (1994: 413).

The assumption that areas peripheral to the global market would stagnate has also proved to be mistaken. Long (1977) for instance, rather than beginning his analysis at a macro level, undertook research in Peru which revealed the flourishing of new markets in remote areas that were not in a subservient relationship to an urban or industrial centre. Whilst conducting research on community kitchens in the settlements on the margins of Lima, I was struck by the proactive political, social and economic initiatives, such as land invasions, pressure groups, education and local forms of social welfare that had characterised the history of the 'shantytowns' of Lima and Callao[27]. In Chapter 11, I look at this research in greater depth.

Sahlins pursues this idea further and is concerned to show that the presuppositions of dependency theory may be odds with what happens in practice; the goods of development are often welcomed, subsumed and transformed within the dynamics of a given cultural setting according to local meanings;

> 'From the point of view of the indigenous people, the exploitation by the world system may well be an enrichment of the local system. Even as there is a net transfer of labour power to the metropole through unequal exchange rates, the hinterland peoples are acquiring more goods of extraordinary social value with less effort than they ever could in the days of their ancestors' (1994: 415).

A further difficulty with dependency theory is the way in which it has been appropriated for specious political purposes. Gledhill, for instance, contends that dependency theory provided a rationale for the dictatorial presidencies of Latin

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and Underdevelopment' (1978), he argues that world capitalism will not necessarily dissolve 'pre-capitalist modes of production' (see Larrain 1989: 127)

[27] The striving of the inhabitants of the settlements to improve their living conditions and the life chances of their children could, however, only achieve so much in the face of their disadvantageous and marginalised social, economic and political position.

America to take control, using the pretext that they were protecting their nation from imperialistic Northern interests; 'dependency theory thus not merely proved weak at explaining variety in political responses to under-development in scientific terms; it was sometimes coopted by the torturers' (1994: 6). Dependency discourse is broad enough to allow various competing ideologies to justify their interventions. Appadurai argues similarly that the fear of Americanisation or some other form of homogenisation, 'can be exploited by nation states in relation to their own minorities by posing global commoditisation as more 'real' than the threat of its own hegemonic strategies' (1986: 296).

Finally, Ortner complains that the political economy model that underlies dependency theory is too economic and not *political* enough:

> 'One hears a lot about wages, the market, the cash nexus, economic exploitation, underdevelopment, and so forth, but not enough about the relations of power, domination, manipulation, control and the like which those economic relations play into, and which for actors constitute much of the experience of the pain of economic injustice' (1994: 387)

In short, the anthropological response to dependency theory has been to insist upon a more accurate and more nuanced grounding of economic relations in local contexts without pre-empting the dynamics. Nevertheless, in broad terms, the underlying premises of dependency theory remain compelling and influential in the way anthropologists look at global capitalism and the imperialistic dynamics of development.

With these observations in mind, over the next two chapters, I will trace some of the major historical developments in anthropological theory that I consider to be relevant to the anthropological response to development, that is, I will be looking at the theoretical resources for an ethical approach to applied anthropology.

Chapter 6

'Practical Values': Slow Steps Towards a Relevant Anthropology

In this chapter, I am concerned to elucidate the mutually efficacious relations that exist between the development of anthropological theory and the involvement of anthropologists in development practice.

Grillo (1997) tackles the thinking behind distinctions between *development anthropology* and the *anthropology of development* (Charsley 1982) noting that these are often confounded due to their conceptual inextricability, each being a necessary counterpart to the other. Development anthropology is understood as the application of anthropological knowledge and/or methodologies to development policy and practice. The anthropology of development is understood as the analysis of development as a cultural, social, political, economic and moral phenomenon. The difficulties and dangers of making false distinctions between knowledge 'for understanding' and 'for action' was also discussed by Long and Long (1992) arguing that cross fertilisation between both fields should not be discouraged by different writing styles and goals. This chapter looks at development anthropology through the shifting perspectives of the anthropology of development[1] and seeks to highlight the major mutual influences between theoretical change and development practice. Two anthropologists actively involved in both theory and development practice contend that:

> 'The insights gleaned from knowledge produced primarily for academic purposes can have important effects upon the ways in which development is understood. This in turn can affect practical action and policy' (Gardner and Lewis 1996: 50)

This contention will be examined over the next two chapters.

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[1] The 3 main areas where anthropologists have analysed development are firstly, looking at the cultural and social impact of economic change, secondly, the impact of development interventions and thirdly, 'studying up' the development community.

The 'Practical Values' of Anthropology

The term 'applied anthropology' is often attributed to Pitt-Rivers in 1881 and it appears to have been first taught in 1906, as a diploma in Oxford (Howard: 1993). Temple promoted the idea of anthropology as a 'practical science' in the colonial context in 1914 (Grillo 1985: 5; Gardner and Lewis 1996: 29) and Radcliffe-Brown taught applied anthropology in the 1920s (Kuper 1987). Malinowski promoted the study of social change as a derivative and lesser branch of mainstream theoretical academic anthropology (Grillo 1985: 9).

'Overseas Development' is not the only area where anthropologists applied their knowledge and methodologies[2], but has centrality to the British understanding of 'applied anthropology' as a result of its formative beginnings in colonial Africa. The history is different in the US where applied anthropology is rooted in the early experiences of anthropologists in the 'Office of Indian Affairs'[3].

Applied Anthropology; A Subversive History?

If one looks at the pre-history of the current involvement of anthropologists in development, it becomes apparent that avowedly political ethnographic work on the impact of government policies had been undertaken before there was any recognised institutionalised relationship between the discipline of anthropology and State authorities. For example, the anthropologist Vincent shows that ethnologists working from the Smithsonian Institution did not only make public the injustices that white society imposed upon Native Americans but undertook to confront the federal bureaucracy on numerous occasions (1990: 52-5). Asad's (1973) well known critique of ethnographers of the colonial period for failing to examine their relationship with the phenomena of colonialism and for acquiescing to a view that colonialism was either inevitable or actually benign is understood as being only part of the story by

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[2] From the earliest days of the discipline, anthropologists have been involved in, for example, counter-insurgency activities for the US government, inner-city community health care, management, and attitudes to work and productivity in production lines (see Schwartzman 1993 for a brief history).

[3] US State funded applied anthropology was properly launched following the 1934 Indian Reorganisation Act (Foster 1969: 200). It should be acknowledged that alongside efforts to bolster indigenous institutions to facilitate economic and social regeneration, an important angle was figuring

various theorists. Running through the whole of this thesis is in fact an exploration of Vincent's contention that 'it is historically inaccurate to regard the discipline simply as a form of colonial ideology' (1990: 2). In the contemporary context, Gardner and Lewis optimistically insist that;

'Rather than necessarily being trapped within the dominant discourses of development . . . the anthropology of development can be used to challenge its key assumptions and representations, both working within it towards constructive change, and providing alternative ways of seeing which questions the very foundations of developmental thought' (1996: 50)

This argument can be seen as being derivative of, or being parallel to theoretical moves made a decade earlier. Clifford, for instance, in his survey of the relationship between ethnography and power concludes that:

'Ethnographic work has always been enmeshed in a world of enduring and changing power inequalities, and it continues to be implicated. It enacts power relations but its function within these relations is complex, often ambivalent, potentially counter-hegemonic' (1986: 9).

The ways in which anthropologists have sought to subvert, rather then just 'question' dominant discourses and enhance the lives of those affected by development is a central theme of this thesis. It is significant that the first anthropological societies, both in the UK and the US, had their origins in the humanitarian movements of the 19th Century. Groups that had successfully campaigned for the abolishment of slavery[4] became concerned with the welfare of the indigenous peoples of the colonies. Differences in approach within the nascent societies of ethnographers and anthropological theorists were apparent from the beginning. 'The Aborigines Protection Society', which had been established in 1838 in London, was fractured by a group of members who, rather than siding with missionaries who wished to bring the benefits of European civilisation to indigenous peoples, sought to *study* them in

out how entrenched 'Indian' cultural values and attitudes could be adjusted so as to align the indigenous population with the White majority. (Barnett 1956)
[4] The slave trade was abolished in 1807 and the Emancipation Act was passed in 1833.

'pristine condition' instead. Reining (1962) notes that the motivation to form the resulting putatively more scientific 'Ethnological Society of London' was considered suspect by the British public who regarded it as a 'rather sentimental negrophile organisation with a thin veneer of scientific pretension' and considered ethnology to be 'an inexact and tentative science with little practical value or popular interest (1962: 593). A fundamental split developed within the Society over the question of whether there were different races of human beings with different physical, intellectual and moral endowments. Those who wished to question the psychic unity of humanity formed the 'Anthropological Society of London' (Eddy and Partridge 1987: 4). The pamphlets produced by this Society made frequent claims that anthropology was a 'hard science' with practical applications that could benefit mankind in terms of order and progress. Reining writes that the anthropologists of this group;

'were filled with confidence in their new science and felt it had limitless potentiality for the betterment of man. They also considered themselves to be able to view man dispassionately on a scientific basis as contrasted with the previous 'metaphysical' view. They would admit no subject to be out of bounds to them, making a particular point that no philosophy or religion was exempt from their inquiries' (1962: 596).

In the mid 19th Century, the society was criticised from both Christian and liberal political groups who agreed that all human 'races' should be considered as being equal. This lively period was followed by the collapse of the Society and its amalgamation with the Ethnological Society to form the 'Anthropological Institute'. Discussing the practical applications of the subject became a minor concern as the members of the institute sought to gain greater academic rigour and respectability. Tyler's establishment of anthropology at Oxford in 1883 was a key moment in the graduation of the subject from a pastime or hobby to an acknowledged academic subject. In general, anthropologists steered clear of the previous enthusiasm of

applying their discipline with a few exceptions[5] until Malinowski championed it in 1938, as if it was a relatively novel idea:

'The anthropologist with all his highly vaunted technique of fieldwork, his scientific acumen and his humanistic outlook, has so far kept aloof from the fierce battle of opinions about the future and welfare of native races' (1938: x).

It would seem that this uneasy relationship between anthropology's humanitarian values and its scientific practical applicability is emblematic of the sub-discipline of applied anthropology. In this chapter, I will explore the creative tensions that exist between the sociological frameworks that anthropologists grappled with to apprehend different social realities and their growing understanding of the often drastic changes that Western expansion was causing. Herzfeld argues, in relation to the tension between positivistic and humanitarian directions in anthropology that 'while we find that [this] basic dilemma is unresolved, one constructive spin that we can put on it is by capitalising on the productive discomfort it generates' (2001: 154)

The Unfolding of Applied Anthropology

Applied anthropology was shaped by both the opportunities presented to anthropologists and the theoretical orthodoxies that dominated the universities of the time. From the emergence of the discipline, a proportion of British anthropologists courted the colonial administrators, presenting themselves as scientists whose insights could have great utility for those ruling overseas territories[6]. Opportunities came not only from government funding, as Gledhill notes; 'Rockefeller money not only supported the development of American anthropology within the United States' growing international sphere of interest, but much of the classic fieldwork of British anthropologists in the 1920s and 1930s' (1994: 3). Grillo argues that the tension

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[5] For instance, British anthropologists began to be employed from 1908 onwards under the rubric of indirect rule in Africa. Radcliffe Brown wrote an article in 1930 entitled 'Anthropology as Public Service and Malinowski's Contribution to It' (Foster 1969: 187).

[6] 'In the case of East and West Africa we want to know all about the native in order to develop his capacity to the fullest extent, and gradually to increase that capacity so that he may, in the future, assist in the administration of the Government and of the business of his own country . . . the more we look

within anthropology concerning its relationship to development in terms of both critique and utility is as relevant today:

> 'Anthropologists in development and other applied fields often still feel obliged to 'sell' anthropology . . . The British journal *Anthropology in Action* was partly created in order to provide a forum in which applied anthropologists could present their wares' (1997: 5)

However, despite this marketing of the discipline (and contrary to contemporary theorising that depicts anthropology as the active handmaiden of colonialism), Kuper argues that, particularly before WWII, 'the British government and the public were not easily stirred to a sense of the possible uses of anthropology [and] the colonial government were equally unimpressed (1987: 103). The inescapable conclusion is that there was never much of a demand for applied anthropology from Whitehall or the colonial governments' (*op.cit.* 116). Evans-Pritchard famously commented; 'During the fifteen years in which I have worked on sociological problems in the same region I was never once asked my advice on any question at all' (1946: 97). Gledhill also notes that the Royal Anthropological Institute approached the government formally on several occasions, but the official response towards anthropology remained one of suspicion (1994: 3). Funding for anthropological research actually increased at the same time that Britain abandoned the colonial territories, in the 1950s. The anthropological and ethnological work undertaken by missionaries far outweighed the anthropological research papers of the colonial administration, at least until the 1940s.

In general, whilst anthropologists may have been paid, on occasions, to undertake 'the little studies dreamt up by the administrators' (Kuper 1987: 112), over the colonial period, most saw their future in academia and so dedicated themselves to writing the scholarly works that were acceptable to the British universities of the time.

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upon the native in South Africa as a scientific problem the less we shall feel he is a social danger' (Nathan 1914: 67, cited in Kuper 1987: 102)

The mutual antipathy between academia and application can be understood in various ways. Anthropologists working for the colonial administrations were often in an unenviable position, being denigrated by purely academic anthropologists whilst also being treated with some suspicion by District Administrators. The polarity between the 'muscular colonial anthropologist' and the recalcitrant 'ivory tower scholar' was apparent at an early stage. Frazer, for example, in 1908 humbly declared, of himself as an anthropologist:

> 'He is no seer to discern, no prophet to foretell a coming heaven on earth, no mountebank with a sovran remedy for every ill, no Red Cross Knight to head a crusade against misery and want, against disease and death, against all the horrid spectres that war on poor humanity. He is only a student . . .who cannot, dare not tell you what ought to be . . .' (Inaugural lecture at Liverpool).

Academic anthropologists tended to discredit the intellectual demands and content of applied work, as well as shunning what some considered to be its dubious moral status; 'A continuing divergence between mainstream academic anthropology and applied anthropology promoted a feeling among many university based staff that only the second-rate anthropologists carried out applied work, while the 'real' anthropologists worked on loftier, self-determined subject matter' (Gardner and Lewis 1996: 36). Mair described applied anthropology as 'an occupation for the half-baked' (1969: 8) whilst Kuper notes that 'it was regarded by the more mandarin as less demanding intellectually, and therefore as best suited to women' (1987: 110).

The 'image problem' for anthropologists *vis-à-vis* colonial administrators was predicated upon a disapproval of their allegedly romantic tendencies and suspicion about the proximity they had to native peoples. The discipline contemporaneously is still sometimes viewed by other development professionals as a 'weak or soft discipline which has yet to make any significant impact on policy and planning

(Nyamwaya 1997: 197)[7]. Wilson notes anthropology has been lambasted as 'the last bastion of cultural absolutism, and anthropologists as purveyors of exotica' (1997: 3).

Anthropologists were considered by some administrators to be perfectly positioned to cause problems or complicate the agenda of extending the reach of the market into the colonial territories. This view had some basis as many anthropologists, in principle, resented colonial intrusions into traditional societies, having grave doubts about their future well being under colonial administration; 'the image of the pathetic remnants of Australian and North American tribes haunted them' (Kuper 1987: 106).

However, during the colonial period, before WWII, patron-client relationships between some anthropologists and the colonial administrators were sporadically established. Applied anthropological studies during the colonial period focused primarily on administrative issues, such as interpreting traditional law, systems of land distribution, labour arrangements, traditional authority, and local economic systems. Alongside this, anthropologists also undertook relatively independent scholarly work focused upon the meeting of indigenous cultures with colonial administrations through social research institutions, such as the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures (set up in 1926), or the Rhodes Livingstone Institute (1930 onwards), whose work and insights I will discuss below.

One aspect of the alleged moral turpitude of the anthropology of the colonial period was its silence with regard to the subjugation of whole peoples to colonial rule (Asad 1973). Anthropological involvement was often confined to the ostensibly value neutral or detached domain of administration where wider questions were not asked (Barnett 1956). The failure of anthropologists to speak with a coherent and critical political voice meant that the colonial authorities' stereotyping anthropologists as being romantics interested in salvaging information from disappearing cultures was not hard to uphold.

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[7] Kaufmann shows how in contemporary development practice, policy makers can still view anthropologists as being unnecessarily complicated and sometimes consider their inputs to 'constrain project design and implementation' as social participation throws up conflicts of interest (1997: 122).

Shortly after WWII, Fortes challenged the stereotype of the romantic anthropologist seeking only to preserve the 'unspoiled savage' from trade, Christianity and government and to keep them as museum pieces (1945: 223). Simultaneously, however, he also warned that as 'primitive societies' were broken up and their members dispersed, there would be a danger of creating rabbles of 'acquisitive or exploited individuals . . . the prey of irrational mob impulses if they cease to have common cultural values' (*loc. .cit.*). Fortes illustrates here the initial difficulty in explicating the nature of social change (and in conceptualising the social realities that emerged through the breaking up of traditional settlements by labour migration, for instance) in terms of the anthropological theoretical frameworks of the time. As will be seen below, members of the Rhodes Livingstone Institute later undertook seminal studies on this anticipated 'detribalisation' in newly established mining towns to find the enduring presence of traditional bonds in these settings (Epstein 1958; 1956).

Colonialism and Anthropology's Theoretical Conveniences

The theoretical phases that were in currency during the colonial period were evolutionism, diffusionism and functionalism, each with different implications for the anthropological engagement with colonial administrations. Anthropologists of this period had largely moved towards the adoption of a functionalist and, later, a structural functionalist perspective. Meanwhile the colonial administration was permeated by a paternalist and evolutionist ethos. The officials of this time, in Kuper's words, 'saw themselves as bringing the benefits of civilisation, with a minimum of the ills, to backward peoples who might – after centuries of evolution – reach the stage where they could be entrusted with their own fates' (1987: 118).

Resistance to enforced rapid social change would seem to be inherent to functionalism. There was, within this paradigm, a presumption that change foisted upon traditional societies would lead to calamitous disintegration. This concern engendered an increasing focus on understanding 'social cohesion'. The predominance of functionalism meant that 'the tendency to study societies as if they were static remained strong in the period up until the Second World War (Gardner and Lewis 1996: 27). Wolf observes, further, that in the 1950s, there was a similar conceptual blindness to social change among anthropologists working in the Americas

who 'tended to short-circuit four centuries of history, to draw a direct line between the pre-Colombian past and the Indian present' (1986: 326).

Additionally, cultural relativism, as a logical extension of functionalism, raised ethical concerns about the validity of importing Western values into traditional societies. In functionalism, then, there would seem to be grounds for a genuine antipathy to the colonial project. It would seem plausible that anthropologists trained in functionalist theory where traditional societies were represented as integrated wholes, and where rapid change was assumed to be pathological, would have instincts incommensurate with progressive capitalist colonial administration[8].

British anthropologists, at this time did not however, achieve a radical critique of colonialism and their recalcitrance with regard to 'progress' was interpreted as romanticism and nostalgia for untouched societies, exhibiting 'the (singularly western) romantic fantasy of the desirability of a return to native wisdom mysteriously in touch with human nature' (Hobart 1993: 5)[9]. DaMatta observes that a similar dichotomy emerged in the Brazilian view of its indigenous other:

'The "Indian" is an outsider, giving rise to romantic fantasies of the noble savage who has to be either isolated and protected from the evils of civilisation or be eliminated from the national landscape for incapacity to take part in modern progress' (1993: 122).

Critiques of anthropology's uncritical participation in the colonial project (Asad 1973, Ferguson 1990, Escobar 1988, 1992) do not refer solely to the instances where anthropologists willingly furnished administrators with information to be used for their imperial purposes. The theoretical orthodoxies of the period, in particular the

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[8] Boas, incidentally, had a direct influence on US immigration policy, which was tending towards favouring the influx of British or Northern European groups as these 'races' were considered to be 'superior' or more likely to integrate with the US population. Boas argued against this view using illustrations from both physical and cultural anthropology.

[9] Taylor argues that in Western society, the romantic rebellion continually recurs: 'The Romantic Rebellion continues undiminished, returning ever in unpredictable new forms – Dadaism, surrealism, the yearning of the hippie, the contemporary cult of the unrepressed consciousness. With all this surrounding us we cannot avoid being referred back to the first great synthesis which was meant to resolve our central dilemma [between expressive unity and radical autonomy]: which failed but which remains somehow unsurpassed' (Taylor 1978: 49-50)

lack of focus on the history of colonialism itself, lie behind anthropology's belated resistance to the negative effects of colonialism on the people who were the subjects of their ethnographies.

An important paradox of this era, then, is that, whilst the anthropologists of this period ostensibly opposed the intrusion of colonial powers into what they considered to be stable and coherent cultures, functionalism seems to have been a peculiarly appropriate, naive and compliant theory vis-à-vis the colonial authorities. Relativistic functionalist anthropologists are considered in a number of important critiques as unconscious contributors to the justification of the colonial project, which depended upon a 'savage' or 'primitive' 'other'[10] (Asad 1973, for instance). Arce and Long are concerned to warn against pernicious conceptions of ahistorical and reified traditional societies, whose 'exoticism revealed to the West the need for these backward societies to strive for development and cultural modernity' (2000: 5). Kuper argues that, on this basis, there is an enduring suspicion of the anthropologist in ex-colonial countries as 'he was the specialist in the study of colonial peoples; because, by identifying his study in practice as the study of the coloured man, he contributed to the devaluation of their humanity'[11] (1987: 120), to be identified with the erstwhile 'primitive' or 'savage' of the evolutionists' (*op.cit*: 119). Secondly, by highlighting native cultural values, anthropologists paved the way for colonial administrators to ally themselves with the more conservative traditional leaders whilst discrediting progressive, or more radical elements. Gledhill argues that the coercive colonial use of anthropological data was double edged: 'The authorities were interested in witchcraft accusations and blood feuds with a view to stamping out what was not acceptable to European 'civilisation'. Yet there were some areas of indigenous practice, such as customary law on property rights, which colonial regimes sought to manipulate for their own ends, and might even codify as law recognised by the colonial state' (1994: 1)[12]. The

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[10] This paradoxical aspect of patronising the Other as being 'different' is as old as anthropology. An edition of '*The Popular Magazine of Anthropology*' published in 1866 simultaneously promulgated the thesis that 'the Negro' could not be expected to attain the civilised standards of Europeans due to moral and mental differences whilst also criticising the slaughter of aborigines in Queensland. The irony that the white settlers were using these very arguments as a justification for their genocide did not appear to have occurred to the writers (Reining 1962: 599).

[11] There were, of course, important exceptions, for example, Gluckman, Kuper, Hellman Worsely, see Kuper 1987: 99-120.

[12] Conversely, according to Nehru, the colonial authorities in India encouraged the 'disruptive, obscurantist, reactionary, sectarian and opportunist element in the country as a way of underscoring the appearance of the relative coherence and scientism of the British (in Nussbaum 2000: 39).

resulting identification of anthropology with the positioning of native peoples as subjects of colonialism had profound moral consequences that continue to surface in anthropological ethics talk today (Mathur 1989).

Whilst functionalism was attractive as a framework for writing coherent ethnographies, it became increasingly untenable to write credibly without reference to the ineluctable social and political forces that were imposing themselves upon 'traditional' societies. However, whilst studies of effects of change on traditional societies were more frequently undertaken, the majority of studies in the 1940s and 50s continued to be functionalist in perspective, describing the ahistorical unchanging foundations of social stability and order in particular societies. Studies of change were sometimes inserted as a single chapter in otherwise orthodox monographs. Gledhill contends that;

> 'The analyses of mainstream academic anthropology, in both Britain and the United States, proved incapable of confronting the fact that its object of study was a world structured by Western colonial expansion and capitalist imperialism in a systematic way' (1994: 4, cf. Marcus and Fischer 1986: 84).

It is widely acknowledged that, during this period, 'the anthropologist did not treat the total colonial situation in a scholarly fashion. Few studied settlers and administrators for example, and this robbed their work of a vital dimension of reality' (Kuper 1987: 119). Evans-Pritchard, for example, is charged for noting without reproof the raids of the British colonial authorities on Nuer settlements which he acknowledged to include the machine-gunning of camps. Cockburn and St.Clair also observe that 'Nor did he regard this rending of Nuer society by the British as a topic worthy of inclusion in his description of stresses in Nuer society' (2001)

Looking back at functionalism, contemporary insights allow us to discern that the irrelevance of anthropological theory to the rapid and often catastrophic change of this period was the orthodox belief in 'the thinglike nature of society which failed to ask in any systematic way where the thing comes from and how it might change' (Ortner 1994: 403). The functionalist problematic marked out a limited range of language and concepts for apprehending this particular historical juncture. Functionalism then, can

be seen as containing a failure, or refusal, to deal with the total colonial reality in terms of disparate economic, political and cultural power (cf. Grimshaw and Hart 1993: 14-29; cf. Marcus and Fischer 1986: 77-84).

The key interest of anthropological research and theory was the deterministic structure of social systems and a concern with the maintenance of equilibrium. Structural-Functionalist 'political anthropology' focused upon the institutional relationships of power and decision making within bounded societies. The range of issues that British social anthropologists tackled at this time was relatively limited. Scholars focused on kinship theory; marriage, law, property, religion and politics were largely understood in terms of segmentary or lineage systems. Also, the majority of research was undertaken in British colonial dependencies[13].

Introducing Agency and Power: Slow Steps Towards Greater Relevance

Both Leach and Gluckman[14], whilst developing innovative approaches with regard to the ways in which social tensions were manipulated by groups and individuals, positioned their work at this stage in relation to lineage theory (Gluckman 1950; Leach 1954). Their work was indicative of a burgeoning interest in new ways of understanding political systems. In different ways, both sought to explicate the ways in which social tensions, oppositions and norms or political activity were actively manipulated and resolved within particular frameworks.

Gluckman observed that political oppositions between factions in Zululand, rather than forming part of a balanced equilibrium, involved the increasing exploitation of one group by another, which had superior power through Government support (1940). This recognition of the disintegrative dynamics of social systems affected by external

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[13] During the 1950s, funding for anthropological research from the British government increased. An increasing number of studies focused on such issues as cash cropping, urban life and the formation of trade unions. The Colonial Social Science Research Council (CSSRC) and, to a limited extent colonial government commissioned anthropological research on land tenure and labour migration. However, as noted above, anthropological data and insights were used very selectively and pragmatically by the colonial administrations; 'the economist and rural development expert were the new gurus' (Kuper 1987).

[14] Gluckman, along with other South African colleagues, had a predilection to understanding social anthropology in political terms: 'At a time when their British based contemporaries tended to avert their eyes from the realities of power and deprivation in the colonial societies, they found it difficult to ignore the contexts of the systems which they investigated' (Kuper 1987: 144).

pressures was combined with a commitment to a conventional organicist view in which deep conflicts were contained in durable social systems. In 1958, he gave an important analysis of the complex relationships and structural oppositions between white authorities, Zulu chiefs and local people. This work set out an exploration of the ways in which social equilibrium was achieved through highly complex processes of conflicts and oppositions (not in the French structuralist sense, but involving actual shifting factions of individuals) held in tension. His later analyses of Central African societies as totalities, that is, incorporating the impacts of Europeans on African 'culture-groups' included the historical analysis of periods of relative stability and conflict. One area of interest was the ways in which 'intermediary' individuals, such as village headmen had to deal with the dual demands of the colonial authorities and local people.

Ortner characterises the 'Manchester School' in terms of the 'stress that the normal state of society is not one of solidarity and harmonious integration of parts, but rather one of conflict and contradiction' (1994: 376). An important analytic question then, was how group solidarity was maintained in such a way as to encompass enduring social division and conflict.

The members of the Rhodes-Livingstone fellows were, to different extents, influenced by Marxist theory although this was implicit in their work. Gluckman, who had established the research school within the Rhodes Livingstone Institute, became Professor of Social anthropology at Manchester University, bringing a number of his fellows with him. The resulting department, which had effectively been brought together in the field, had particular interests, most notably exploring the dynamics between conflict, schism and equilibrium in particular societies (Gluckman 1958, 1963, Turner 1957).

The theoretical directions taken, therefore, were simultaneously influenced *by* experiences in colonial dependencies and influential *in* the perspectives adopted by applied anthropologists. Members of the 'Manchester School' were also beginning to explicitly focus on the nature of power and change in the colonial territories. The historical context of particular peoples and the understanding of change as being a constant aspect of social life (rather than something revolutionary) began to figure in

anthropological analysis. This realisation was foundational for the long term intertwining of anthropology with development.

Epstein (1958), for example, undertook important studies of the conflicting norms and allegiances that urban workers who had moved from rural areas experienced between their identification with tribal loyalties and values in the face of new occupational and political exigencies (see also Godfrey and Monica Wilson's book; *The Analysis of Social Change* [1945], based upon fieldwork in British East Africa). Processes of appropriating labour for industrial centres and plantations were described as undermining the cultural, economic and political life at a village and tribal level. Men from rural areas throughout Africa frequently travelled back and forth between city or mine and village without sufficient remuneration thus diminishing agricultural production, causing economic difficulties and disrupting kinship obligations[15].

As well as looking at social change in terms of the effects of extraneous influences, a number of innovative works looked at dynamism 'within' particular societies. Turner's 'social dramas', for instance, constituted a step forward in the analysis of conflict and power differentials in complex settings in terms of shared symbols. Taking forward Gluckman's theoretical line, Turner concluded that, in Ndembu society, 'conflict is endemic in the social structure but a set of mechanisms exist whereby conflict itself is pressed into the service of affirming group unity' (1957: 129). Ndembu symbols were deciphered in terms of their utility in allowing social transformations that simultaneously allowed individuals to jostle for power (the pragmatics of symbols), resolve conflicts and strengthen 'solidarity' (1967). Turner's focus on the interpersonal dynamics between individuals and collectivities presaged aspects of methodological individualism, although he continued to view social systems in terms of hidden structural principles, which could be discerned by studying the symbols that upheld this coherence. Herzfeld writes of 'a certain aridity in Turner's attempts to subordinate all rituals to a pre-existing schema that is especially crude when dealing with the massive happenings staged by modern bureaucratic states' (2001: 257).

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[15] This problem had been identified earlier; Wilson suggested to the Colonial authorities that the disruptive effects of male migration would be eased if the populations of whole villages were able to resettle near industrial centres (Wilson 1941).

Firth and Nadel, in different ways, sought to subvert idealist structuralism, that is, the idea of social structure as the central organising principle of social analysis, which dominated the discipline, 'demanding that greater attention be given to the irrepressibly selfish, manipulative individual' (Kuper 1987: 129). Nadel argued that structures should be regarded as heuristics that should be subordinated to purpose and utility in the explanation of social theory (1957). Firth, in a neo-Malinowskian manner focused upon the 'calculating man' and individual choice making and sought to distinguish 'social organisation' from social structure, with the former to be understood as involving the making of strategic decisions and the exercise of choice (1951). This approach to action theory has counterparts in contemporary theory and will be discussed in the next chapter.

Leach was interested in how different ideal social systems were symbolised and approximated to during the perpetual processes of transformation in Highland Burma (1954). Leach's work constituted a brilliant step forward at the time. This work, by virtue of it's relatively novel situating of a society in a larger regional context, according to Ortner 'has been something of an unclassifiable (if admired) freak' (1994: 386). Leach sought to develop a dynamic theory for anthropology at a time when, in Firth's words, the anthropological treatment of institutions in change tended to be 'mainly descriptive, or where it became abstract the concepts (were) apt to become over-elaborate, highly artificial, and out of relation to the real world of observed human actions in specific societies' (foreword to 1964 edition of 'Political Systems of Highland Burma').

At the core of Leach's critique of static structuralist approaches were two insights, firstly the thesis that seeking for *power* is the basis of social choice and secondly that all societies maintain a precarious balance at any one time and are really in a constant state of flux and potential change. He argued that current understandings of social structure which he calls 'equilibrium assumptions' should be understood not as inescapable structures but '*as if*' models that are modified by groups in their dynamic acquisition of power. Whilst Leach continued to present reductionist arguments about

social meanings in relation to structure[16], his exploration of the mediating space between structure and practice was a very important forerunner to the actor-oriented approaches of anthropologists such as Comaroff (1985), Long (1997), Long and Long (1992), Lewis (1996), de Vries (1992), Preston (1994), for instance.

Analyses that combined a focus on the ways in which individuals made choices between cross-cutting ties in the context of an overbearing structure which was being imposed by colonial and capitalist powers opened the way to a more relevant political anthropology. Equally, the insight that ideal structures provided a schema and norms (both for social groups and for anthropologists), that diverse individuals either followed or diverged from, led to speculation about the actual underlying determinants of political behaviour, such as ecological and material pressures or related ideas of status. Barnes, for example, contended that 'we need to watch these systems in action, to study tactics and strategy, not merely the rules of the game' (1980: 301). Leach's radical contention was that social norms, rather than determining a social group's distribution of wealth and power, served as an inchoate and purposely ambiguous legitimation for the ongoing struggle between individuals and factions (1961)[17].

Whilst I have focused on the development of anthropological theory in Britain, alternative paradigms were being advanced throughout the 1960s elsewhere. Of particular importance are the cultural or symbolic anthropology of the US, cultural ecology and French structuralism. I will discuss these briefly in terms of their relationship to applied anthropology.

Proponents of 'Symbolic Anthropology' were less concerned with looking at the ways in which shared symbols were efficacious in terms of a social system and more interested in 'the question of how symbols shape the ways social actors see, feel and think about the world, or, in other words, how symbols operate as vehicles of culture' (Ortner 1994: 375). Semantic anthropology was part of the 'quiet revolution which

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[16] 'According to Leach, Kachin statements about the supernatural world are 'in the last analysis, nothing more than ways of describing the formal relationships that exist between real persons and real group in ordinary society' (Asad 1986: 151)

had led anthropology from a concern with function to a concern with meaning' (Fardon 1987). Geertz, in particular pioneered a framework that gave pre-eminence to the ways in which social relations derived from actors' interpretations and intentional choices, or 'symbolic action' (1973). Individuals were envisaged as actively interpreting their institutional and interpersonal contexts thus reproducing but also modifying and transforming them.

Those pursuing semantic anthropology considered their perspectives to be relevant to social issues in the sense that by insisting upon the importance of understanding the meanings of non-Western peoples, they were building a counter-hegemonic argument for the right of these peoples to determine their own futures. Also, Apthorpe's study of development discourse in 1986 presaged the contemporary interest in unpicking the presuppositions and motives inherent in development's orthodoxies; 'the semiotic avenue into cultural analysis of policy has an original contribution to make to the study of development' (1986: 388).

There was growing recognition in social science generally that the crucial area of interest should be the dynamics between the component parts of Berger and Luckman's triptych: 'Society is a human product. Society is an objective reality. Man [sic] is a social product' (1967: 61). Social science had focused upon the latter two and was beginning to focus more on human intentionality and creativity. Again, these developments have relevance to agency oriented theories of social action which, in turn have important implications for applied anthropology.

Lévi-Straussian Structuralism, however, in contradistinction to this theoretical current, was a paradigm that was felt to be at variance with the instincts of anthropologists concerned with social change and power struggles in a number of ways[18]. An important aside here is that Lévi-Strauss's body of work should be carefully distinguished from 'the 'cook-book' Structuralism that followed Lévi-Strauss's lead' (Ardener 1985: 53) in terms of lasting impact.

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[17] Leach, as well as Needham (1973), also took up aspects of Lévi-Straussian structuralism, although rather than considering universal structures of mind to be parallel to social structures, they considered the creations of mind (myth and ritual) to reflect (and resolve) social structures and the tensions therein.
[18] Perhaps paradoxically, Lévi-Strauss actually considered himself to be fundamentally influenced by Marx.

The thoroughly abstract conceptualisation of underlying structures in Structuralism was far removed from an interest in the everyday interactions of individuals in specific settings and ruled out examining intentionality. Also, 'meaning' was understood in cognitive terms and was, as such, divorced from a concern with ethos. Similarly the analysis of meaning in terms of binary oppositions was arbitrary in terms of values. An interest in reflecting on the operations of power within and between social groups could not be undertaken on the basis of the idea that 'structure' was parallel to the universal human mind, rather than in a mutually efficacious relationship with intentional human beings. Fardon points out that:

> 'To differing extents, each of them [French structuralism, American cultural anthropology] transposed the assumptions of structural functionalism from their behavioural referent to an ideational domain. What was kept in equilibrium was not society or the social system but a systematically integrated set of ideas, which assured ontological security or meaningful interaction or personal integrity' (1987: 4)

Asad is concerned that, by studying this *ideational realm* on its own terms, attention is diverted away from the material contexts that underpin the negotiation of these meanings. Further, he argues that a central ethical problem with structuralism is that, rather than being concerned with historically situated speech, it engenders the 'attribution of implicit meanings to an alien practice *regardless of whether they are recognised by its agents'* (1986: 161; cf. 1983, emphasis original).

However, on a brighter note, Lévi-Strauss, as Lechte argues; 'shows the complexity of non-industrialised cultures which the West – often through its anthropologists - has assumed to be equivalent to the childhood of mankind and who, through that fact, were deemed to be more primitive and more simplistic than the West in their thinking' (1994: 76). Further, taking Lévi-Strauss's universalist theory of structure and mind to its logical conclusion gives no basis for a placing different societies in any kind of hierarchical schema.

The important contribution of post-structuralism to the anthropological critique of development is discussed below in the next chapter where I will discuss how the strong reactions that structuralism caused in the academic community was very salutary, especially with regard to stimulating debate on 'practice' and 'agency'. (Barnes 1980; Bourdieu 1977; Geertz 1983; Sahlins 1981; Giddens 1979).

Theoretical Movements and the Demise of Colonialism

From the late 1950s through to the 1970s, applied anthropology's niche as part of the colonial administration was removed. The role of anthropologists in the UK government Foreign and Commonwealth Office was minimal in the 1960s and, as was discussed in the last chapter, development, at this time, was largely driven by economists and engineers. The lack of opportunity was accompanied by a generalised disaffection for applied anthropology.

Clifford characterises this period in terms of an emerging anti-imperialist mood in academic circles; 'A rapid decade, from 1950 to 1960, saw the end of empire become a widely accepted project, if not an accomplished fact . . . Imperial relations, formal and informal, were no longer the accepted rule of the game' (1986: 10). Herzfeld notes that this had reverberations in anthropology; 'as anthropologists turned against the colonial underpinnings of their discipline, they not surprisingly became increasingly critical of development's assumptions as well' (2001: 153).

Alongside growing recognition of the ineffectual or compliant role played by anthropologists in the colonial periods, controversial instances of anthropologists being involved in counter-insurgency activities (most famously 'Project Camelot'[19]) strengthened academic anthropologists' wariness towards applied anthropology.

The accusation has been made that the wary distance, that many anthropologists carefully maintained, from the political and economic struggles of those among whom

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[19] The goal of Project Camelot in Chile was enhancing the U.S Army's role in counterinsurgency. Chile in fact, at this time had a long record of peaceful governmental succession. Subsequent to the project Allende was violently overthrown and Pinochet was installed as dictator, with the help of the CIA. Anthropologists and other social scientists had been involved in 'spying activities' and in

they were conducting research was often based upon spurious arguments. Gardner and Lewis, for instance, argue that a notable aspect of the discipline (at least in the West) in the 1960s was its preciousness, recalcitrance and diffidence:

> 'Few anthropologists had attempted to forge links with professionals in other fields. Anthropologists in general gained a reputation for being over concerned with the intellectual independence of their academic agendas and unrealistically inhibited about the dangers of 'selling out' (1996: 37)

Meanwhile, economists and agriculturists were making their mark in development policy and practice at both a macro and micro level. Anthropology, until this time, was primarily a theoretical pursuit within the walls of the academy and there was very little cross-disciplinary collaboration with practical sciences such as agriculture and economics. Anthropology's potential contribution to these areas was decidedly slow in coming to fruition. However, the current close involvement of anthropology with rural development did, however, have some important harbingers (see Rhoades 1984). Geertz, for instance, made an ambitious and important anthropological analysis of rural development in Indonesia that explicated the complex social, cultural, political and economic inter-relationships involved (1963)[20].

It was not until the 1960s, when the theoretical advances of the 'Manchester School' began to be felt, that anthropologists in the UK began to go beyond understanding societies as equilibrium systems where an individual's behaviour could be explained with reference to social structure and order. Kuper contends that, in the 1960s, 'economics and ecology, began to re-emerge as issues of primary importance' (1987: 140). In the US, in the 1960s onwards, anthropologists were becoming increasingly involved in researching and formulating social policy on issues such as appropriate technology and the delivery of medical services, for example (Hoben 1982).

The US continuation of materialist evolutionist anthropology diverged into various strands that had important implications for contemporary theory. Unlike Morgan and

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providing information used by the US. The subsequent outcry led the AAA to revise its statement on ethics.
[20] Peddlers and Princes (1963) and Agricultural Involution (1963)

Tyler, Steward (1953 and 1955) for instance, did not propound a general theory of evolution whereby societies progressed through proscribed stages of social, political and technological advancement (variously understood in terms of 'historical dialectics', 'greater capture of energy' etc.). Prior to this challenge, the diverse positions with the evolutionary fold shared a focus on changes that were generated within closed cultures (Sahlins 1964: 135-136). Steward was more concerned to look at the adaptations of particular societies to their changing ecological circumstances (1955). Sahlins took this further to focus on the adaptation of societies to the impingement of external forces (natural and social) as well as the opportunities they offered. This theoretical development is seen by Ortner in terms of 'a large scale rejection of the study of the inner workings of both culture in the American sense and society in the British sense' (1994: 378). The great shift of the so-called cultural ecological approaches, whilst retaining a neo-evolutionary perspective, was scepticism that societal change was mainly generated 'from within' for adaptation purposes and that cultures were closed systems[21]. In this sense, this theory was an important forerunner of dependency theory.

There appears to be disagreement about the general nature and theoretical direction of anthropology in the 1970s. Kuper, for example, contends that in the 1970s and 1980s, anthropologists in the UK 'were intellectually conservative, more interested in 'cognitive' matters and less in sociological problems than hitherto; parochial, both with reference to international developments in their discipline and to relevant developments in other disciplines; and evidently still fascinated by ethnographic detail' (1987: 189-190). This strong contention is countered by other theoretical commentators. Fiske and Chambers, for instance, opine that 'in the 1970s, anthropology students demanded more attention to the relevance of anthropology to *pressing human needs*' as well as better preparation for the uncertain job market they

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[21] Non-evolutionist cultural ecological theory became an important offshoot of these theoretical developments (Harris 1966; Rappaport 1967). Social systems were understood in terms of the optimisation of a given society's material requirements and possibilities. Harris, for example, interpreted Aztec human sacrifice in terms of the protein requirements of the population at the time. Symbolic anthropologists' postulation of the mediating status of culture with regard to all human action was therefore challenged by the cultural ecologist's direct identification of social system and protein requirements, food chains or seasonal variations in rainfall.

would soon be joining (1997: 284)[22]. The dissonance may have been one of different generations.

An impression of theoretical haziness in the 1970s is discerned by Fardon; 'our intellectual accountants have reached no consensus about what distinguished the 1970s brand of anthropology or whether it was produced at a profit' (1987: 1). However, directly disagreeing with Kuper's appraisal, Fardon extricates important advancements in the 'sense of relevance' of anthropology to social concerns over this period. Anthropologists moved outside traditional categories and began to directly examine the relationships between polity and economy, change and continuity, old and new, society and the individual. Riches noted 'that matters of power are being ignored is a common cry of criticism these days (1987: 84; cf. 1970; Kapferer 1976). Ortner enjoins that 'the anthropology of the 1970s was much more obviously and transparently tied to real world events than that of the preceding period' (1994: 382). Gardner and Lewis would agree, attesting that there was a conterminous emergence of critical approaches in anthropological theory and new poverty-focused development strategies that involved anthropological insights; 'anthropologists from the 1970s onwards were therefore able to make some impact on the allocation of development resources to low-income groups' (1996: 48).

The 1970s also saw an increased interest in ethnographies that subverted the image of the anthropologist as an authoritative and objective observer. There had been what Clifford calls 'earlier disturbances'[23], to the emergent self-reflexive fieldwork account but this period saw the publication of a number of key texts in this tradition (for instance Dumont 1978; Rabinow 1977, Malinowski's Trobriand diaries 1967).

Social theorists such as Durkheim, Weber and Parsons had been far more prominent than Marx in social science prior to the end of the 1960s. The emergence of radical social movements (the women's movement and anti-Vietnam War protests, for instance) both fuelled, and was informed by, a proliferation of critical theory and

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[22] Although, as Kuper notes, only 10% of the articles in 'Man' in the 1970s focused upon 'exchange, entrepreneurship and other economising matters', whilst 'race and ethnic relations in Britain (were) were hardly ever discussed (Kuper 1987: 189).
[23] For example, Lévi Strauss's 'Tristes Tropiques' (1975), Smith Bowen's 'Return to Laughter' (1954), Maybury-Lewis's 'The Savage and the Innocent' (1965).

rethinking of the presuppositions underlying Western institutions (including academia).

Structural Marxist approaches sought to uncover the asymmetrical social relations that lay beneath the 'superstructural' level, that is, the values, beliefs and linguistic and social classifications that make social life intelligible[24]. Linkages were made between material realities, social relations and the level of ideas and cultural conceptions in any given social setting. Culture was understood in ideological terms, where existing power inequalities were legitimised and mystified by fetishism.

This perspective, whilst insisting upon a deterministic conceptualisation of capitalist political economy, at its best, embedded the analysis of everyday life and social meaning in relation to structures and, as such, allowed for pioneering ethnographic linking of the macro and micro (e.g. Taussig 1980; Willis 1981).

However, in the sense that culture was understood as legitimising ideology (that is, maintaining the existing social order and being the immediate relationship people have to the world), structural Marxist analyses had an unintended affinity with functionalist analysis. Also, whilst putatively being concerned with exploitation, Structural Marxism, according to Lechte, actually says very little about *how* ideology is related, in practice to the bourgeois maintenance of the status quo and what can be done about this (1994: 40). Further, the analytical apparatus of structural Marxism, apart from neo-evolutionary branches, 'was largely non-historical, a factor which, again, tied it to earlier forms of anthropology' (Ortner 1994: 385)[25].

In short, the rich but confusing theoretical developments of the 1970s yielded many important insights, not least what Fardon calls the 'convulsions which accompanied

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[24] The 1960s had seen fierce debates and reassessments among Marxists stimulated by contemporary events such as Khruschev's denunciation of Stalin oppressive rule (which had been putatively carried out on Marxist principles), the student revolutions (especially Paris) and the failure of working class revolutions globally.

[25] Althusser, the leading proponent of structural Marxism, rejected 'humanist' tendencies in Marxist thought (those that ascribed efficacy and transcendence to the individual in the face of historical processes, for instance, Gramsci (1971) and, drawing on Lacan, insisted on the 'death of the subject', that we are mere puppets led by impersonal forces. However, Althusser saw Marxism as a scientific approach to grasping the nature of historical change and therefore providing a strategy to bring about working class revolution (1965, 1976). The doctrine of the 'death of the subject' contrasts sharply with the perspective of 'Critical Theory', which made a strong defence of the subjectivity of individuals.

anthropology's breakout from a comfortably self-referential universe of meanings' (1987: 7). Ardener, writing about the decline of 'modernism' in Social Anthropology, marks the 1970s in terms of a profound dislocation of some of the discipline's presuppositions; 'by the middle 1970s . . . the genuine failure of Structuralism had become the chief problem. Its collapse took with it the revisionist Marxism that was associated with it. The rubble buried most of the debate. That was the final collapse of Modernism in social anthropology' (1985: 54).

Building upon this, the 1980s was characterised by a resurgence of interest in, and deconstruction of, the classic texts of twentieth century anthropology 'and the serious historical study of the development of the anthropological discipline reflected a new and critical awareness of the responsibility anthropologists owed to their project' (Fardon 1987: 3). This movement was part of a wider phenomenon that reverberated through the social sciences and the 'arts'. Following the publication of 'Writing Culture' (Clifford and Marcus 1986) and 'Anthropology as Culture Critique' (Marcus and Fischer 1984) there was an intense period of anthropological self-criticism particularly with regard to the positioning and representational orthodoxies of Western scholarship vis-à-vis cultural others. 'Under the labels post-modernism and then cultural studies, a bracing self-critical self-examination was initiated by many practising scholars in the social sciences and humanities' (Marcus 1999: 6).

In the mid eighties, Marcus claimed that, in anthropology, ' "high" theoretical discourse – the body of theories that unify a field – is in disarray' (1986: 166). Emerging from this theoretical complexity, Marcus believed that the most worthwhile developments were those which focused upon micro-social description, contextuality and the point of view of the actor thus allowing a 'bottom-up reformulation of classic questions' (*loc. cit.*). Interpretative analysis was becoming firmly established as a new orthodoxy in academic anthropology although Marcus argued that these 'meaning perspectives', whilst challenging positivistic structuralist paradigms, had not yet developed so as to be able to offer meaningful explanations of the linkages between micro and macro settings[26]. The emerging 'practice' perspective sought to respond to

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[26] Bourdieu's 'Outline of a Theory of Practice' is singled out as the key exception. Marcus also proposes Solzhenitsyn's 'The First Circle' as an inspiration for the combining the depiction of real larger systems with the meanings these have at a local level.

this 'central problem for social theory' by merging materialist ('what had been characterised as 'Marxist') and idealist (Weberian) frameworks into a compatible and coherent theoretical project (Habermas 1973; Giddens 1979).

In the next chapter, I will look at these themes, with a particular focus on the dynamics of power and personal agency in the conceptualisation of development.

Chapter 7

Theoretical Resources for Applied Anthropology in Development

In the last chapter, I gave an indication of the ways in which anthropologists' (tardy) espousal of an anti-imperialist perspective and involvement in radical or mainstream social justice concerns and activities was related to important theoretical shifts. This chapter continues this endeavour, looking at the substance of these theoretical developments in largely abstract terms. My central aim in this chapter is to locate the principal theoretical resources that anthropologists draw upon in their applied work in development.

There are a number of broad areas where anthropologists have sought to apprehend the nature of power, intentionality, change and authority in their ethnographic analyses. The theoretical approaches to social change and the workings of power within and between societies that have predominated over the last three decades, in comparison to previous eras, are more difficult to categorise coherently in terms of particular schools of thought. This is primarily due to widespread attacks on grand narratives and the 'isms' associated with them. Approaches have proven to be highly eclectic; crossing disciplinary boundaries more than in the past. It could be said that this subversion of the idea of coherent and discrete intellectual traditions is intrinsic to social anthropology because 'our fine-grained ethnographies never quite fit the grand theory' (Parkin 1995: 144). Nevertheless, it is still worth attempting to pin down the major perspectives and starting points for analysis. Here I consider particular theoretical positions to offer a shorthand and provisional way of describing general tendencies.

In an attempt to unearth the main insights that have relevance to the anthropology of development, I have delineated this discussion into following categories:

- Understanding Social Change
- Political Economy Approaches
- Agency-oriented theories of social action moving towards 'Practice'

- Pervasive Power and Knowledge
- Local Complexity and 'Lack of Fit'
- Feminist Anthropology and Development
- Post-modern applied anthropology

Understanding Social Change

I have already covered the important developments in the understanding of social change from the theoretical foundation of structural functionalism. Before going on to look at further developments in the understanding of change, I will briefly reiterate the main advancements of these theories.

In the last chapter, I looked at the recognition of the fact that the relative stability of traditional societies was being profoundly and often irrevocably disrupted by political and economic changes that had been conceived externally. Labour migration was observed to cause disruption to local kinship arrangements, to the stability of individual families and to the agricultural output of rural settlements. This perspective of rural-urban relations has close correspondence to the centre-periphery models of world systems theory. Also, alongside the effort to develop theoretical models that allowed for the explication of external impingement, change itself came to be understood as being perpetual and caused by individuals and groups in the acquisition of power. There was a gradual erosion of the anthropological insistence that all schism and conflict could be understood in terms of a larger harmony.

By necessity, then, anthropologists, trying to keep up with the radical changes that traditional livelihoods were undergoing as a result of development interventions, stimulated new theoretical innovations and an appreciation of the complex and differential nature of change. Geertz's (1963) observations of the effects of the agricultural transformation (from labour intensive, subsistence farming towards wage-labour, mechanisation and cash crops) on dispossessed peasants and subsistence farmers in Indonesia was an important antecedent for the basic needs and 'farmers first 'movements (Chambers *et al.* 1989). Geertz related micro-level analysis of subsistence farmers with a wider social and cultural understanding of the political opportunities that post-independence wealthy landowners seized to create a large

export market which excised taxes from peasants thus creating a two tier structure in agricultural production. He also discerned the social problems that arose when technological progress in agricultural caused the massive displacement of rural labour. Geertz concluded that 'a radical increase in agricultural production and a significant reduction or rural un- (or under-) employment seem for the moment to be directly contradictory ambitions' (2001: 25; cf. Epstein 1962; Farmer 1977; Pearse 1980). These views were often borne out in the analysis of the Green Revolution where it was widely found that the benefits of technological innovations and increases in agricultural production were distributed according to existing power inequalities in a given locality. Indeed, the previous relations of stable inequality were often exacerbated as competition increased (Epstein 1962). There was a growing realisation that the nature of the impact of economic and technological change is diverse, being contingent upon the social, cultural, political and ecological context.

Social change from the perspective of 'practice', which will be discussed below, is not always envisaged in terms of one definable class rising to replace another, bringing with it a new social order. Rather change may involve alterations in the meanings that are invested in existing social relations and institutions. This may be influenced by the catalytic effect of new opportunities or the intrusions of outside interests.

Sahlins (1976, 1981, and 1994), as discussed in the last chapter, promoted this way of understanding social change. His arguments offer a great deal to the conceptual apparatus of applied anthropologists. Recognising the diversity of views, and relative positions, in relation to resources and political power in any given social setting, Sahlins argued that different constituent social groups will respond differentially to the introduction of novel political, economic and cultural phenomena[1].

Sahlins' example (1980) of Captain Cook arriving in Hawaii and being apprehended in terms of local meanings has parallels with the dynamics of a development project

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[1] In the development context, Sahlins perspective sheds light on the idea of development as the expansion of choice, or freedom, as Herzfeld writes; 'the premise that development gives local communities the freedom to set their own agendas may actually be a means of securing that collusion, or at least that of a local elite anxious to co-operate in anything that will further its own short term interests' (2001: 154).

being offered to, or foisted upon indigenous peoples. Sahlins' theoretical apprehension of these settings is as follows. Existing networks of relationships and characteristic modes of relating socially in a setting facing external impingement are arguably put under strains which may lead to transformations in structural and social configurations as well as in terms of new idioms of relating. Sahlins' assumption that social groups will have different 'interests', does not mean that enduring social networks and positionalities will be torn asunder by conflict when new and differential opportunities arise. Rather, traditional or conventional ways of relating will continue to be used by actors but as new interests cause these relationships to be invested with different meanings, they will be altered structurally. As Sahlins puts it;

'Their differential relationships with Europeans thereby endowed their own relationships to each other with novel functional content. This is structural transformation. The values acquired in practice return to structure as new relationships between its categories' (1980: 50).

This alteration of meaning, which may take generations, both reproducing power relations and realigning them, according to Sahlins, is no less a revolution than the actual displacement and replacement of social groups. Contemporary equivalents of this thesis insist that it is important to recognise the ways in which Western discourse becomes embedded in new cultural settings. This is captured by Arce and Long:

'Thus science, politics, economics, technology, the environment, religion etc. acquire their own operating principles and explanatory laws with the consequence that we are prevented from comprehending the manifold ways in which modernity in fact reproduces itself as a complex set of ideas and practices through the proliferation of hybrid forms' (Arce and Long 2000: 7).

Notes of caution, however, have been raised about this. Sahlins, for instance, has been accused of simplifying his enculturation argument by resorting to an ethnocentric 'interest' perspective. Ortner, for instance, argues that 'he does not really grapple with the full range of thought and feeling that moves actors to act, and to act in complex ways' (1994: 400). Sahlins also underplays the aspects of cultural life that remain fairly constant and maintain certain kinds of social relationships despite radical

changes in practice and new 'interests'. Similarly, from the perspective of Bourdieu (1977), for example, power is diffused through social relationships as much by being inscribed into the everyday, the intimate and the domestic as by being negotiated at a political, economic and institutional level. Change or enculturation, then, as well as being a longitudinal process in terms of the 'whole social sphere' may accelerate in one area of social life while being resisted or irrelevant to other areas (such as the domestic or religious).

Political Economy Approaches

Following on from these question of how best to conceptualise social change in the development arena, the 'political economy approach' analyses transformations in the local settings typically studied by anthropologists in terms of external impingements and/or new opportunities (typically colonialism and capitalist encompassment). This perspective was discussed in Chapter 5 in terms of the thinking of development planners and I will not reiterate the main aspects here. However, I will make a few points and clarifications that are relevant to the conceptual apparatus of applied anthropology as contemporary political economy approaches are more grounded theoretically than the incipient versions discussed in Chapter 5.

Political economy approaches occupy a spectrum that begins with highly deterministic approaches to the impact of the global market on 'local cultures' to those that give greater emphasis to the internal dynamics of a given society and its responses to external realities. Ortner characterises these less teleological approaches as follows;

> External impingements are taken into account, but there is a greater effort to delineate forces of both stability and change at work within a given system, as well as the social and cultural filters operating to select and/or reinterpret whatever may be coming in from the outside (Ortner 1994: 402).

The key differences of most political economy approaches to those of structural Marxism, along with the strong historical perspective, relate to the scale and starting point for analysis. Dependency Theorists started with a macro-economic theory and

combined this with analyses of the ways in which social groups have been affected by capitalist encompassment and penetration. Reflection on the nature of change concentrated upon the ways in which 'peripheral' areas were coerced into dependent and disadvantageous social and economic relationships. Building on this, newer approaches, responding to the challenge set out by Sahlins, set out to interrogate the exploitative dynamics of capitalism on local settings in a less deterministic manner than those approaches outlined in Chapter 5. Comaroff (1985: 3), for instance, deeply influenced by the practice theory of Bourdieu, seeks to 'examine the reciprocal interplay of human practice, social structure, and symbolic mediation, an interplay contained within the process of articulation between a peripheral community and a set of encompassing sociocultural features'.

The phenomenon of Western modes of thought becoming entangled with local epistemologies, values and frameworks for action was increasingly looked at as an important aspect of change. Comaroff's (1985) study of the Tshidi of South Africa provides a good example of this. Here he details how Evangelical Christian ideas served as a 'vanguard of colonialism' and gradually became inextricable from the values and predispositions of the industrial work place, becoming 'engaged with indigenous social systems, triggering internal transformations in productive power relations and anticipating the more pervasive structural changes that were soon to follow' (1985: 2). Paradoxically, the Tshidi's expression of resistance to exploitation later found expression in 'a biblically validated defiance'. The intertwining of Christian and local idioms in particular rituals became indirect, although also unambiguous, expressions of dissent and resistance to 'the authority of the hegemonic order' (*loc. cit.*).

This recognition of the correspondence between the 'production' of cultural meaning and symbols and material and political 'realities' (Bourdieu 1977) has led to important developments in social theory.

Agency-oriented theories of social action moving towards 'Practice'

The 'practice' approach seeks to find a middle way between these approaches by focusing on the experience of the individual actor caught in a dialectic tension with

society. Political anthropology, according to Fardon (1987: 3), in the 1960s, 'tended to represent itself in terms of a coherent development in the course of which a static, typological and systems orientation was replaced by processual and transactional approaches that paid more attention to actors and events'. The idea of distinct, relatively internally coherent, durable 'cultures' where a clearly structured system of relations between persons, institutions and defined symbols has gradually unravelled in anthropological theory as critical and actor oriented perspectives have gained ground. Agency oriented approaches emphasise micro-developmental processes, transactions between actors, the plasticity of symbolic meanings and the strategies of individuals often contending with competing norms and split allegiances. Looking at the reasoning and intentions of actors is deemed just as important as studying social structure abstractly, as Herzfeld argues; 'the present focus on agency and practice demands that we always open up moral issues for debate rather than closing them down with peremptory partiality' (2001: 153).

'Practice' approaches, whilst focusing on the individual's intentionality and creativity, nevertheless, generally involve a strong idea of the influence of the social setting on the experience and behaviour of individuals. In this sense, the practice approach diverges from previous theoretical paradigms that had focused on the autonomy of actors. Husserl's phenomenology and offshoots such as Goffman's 'symbolic interactionism' (1959) or the transactionalism of anthropologists such as Kapferer (1976), for instance, envisaged social structures or 'social organisation' as non-determining frameworks or 'negotiated orders'. There was disagreement about the extent to which these frameworks 'conditioned' behaviour. An important question that arose was whether an individual's motivations should be analysed in relation to longer term developmental goals, which are often influenced by cultural 'visions of the good' (becoming), or in relation to shorter term tactical strategies (getting).

As the anthropological versions of these latter approaches, in part, represent a reaction to the overly deterministic theoretical approaches, any conceptualisation of a reified 'structure' is conspicuously absent[2]. Riches, for instance, argues that meaning at the level of conscious action is of central importance in this form of enquiry:

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[2] Historically, agency oriented approaches predated or were parallel to functionalism, structural functionalism and structuralism through Marx, Weber, Sartre, Gramsci, Husserl, Simmel etc. although

'The idea of objective macro-forms – such as larger aggregates or structures which transcend the experience of individual actors – is unacceptable to the interactionist: such objective forms are not encapsulated as actor's meaning' (1987: 98).

In contrast to the above, Ortner announces that 'the newer practice theorists share a view that "the system" *does* in fact have a very powerful, even determining effect upon human action and the shape of events' (1994: 390). In this sense, these approaches are strongly influenced by post-structuralist perspectives[3].

A strong focus in the 'practice' approach is exploring how, and why, 'structures' (social stratification, social roles, systems etc.) are actually produced and modified by intentional actors (Giddens 1979). This is balanced, or held in tension with the idea of the 'pervasive', 'hegemonic'[4] workings of power, or the domination of culture over the individual, which had been most fully elaborated in structural Marxism. Whilst 'practice' perspectives envisage 'culture' in terms of the enabling of individuals to interact intelligibly, to meet their basic needs and to establish and maintain visions of the good, the 'darker', manipulative aspect of power is also central to this theoretical direction. A basic assumption of the practice approach is that 'in any actual society there are specific inequalities in means and therefore in capacity to realise [the whole social] process' (Williams 1977: 109). The practice approach then, containing an intrinsic methodological focus on the asymmetry of power in social relations has a particular appeal for applied anthropologists.

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the significance and impact of these approaches in social anthropology, in the UK at least, was patchy until the 1970s. Kuper (1992) proposes that, even now, anthropological theory can be divided into 2 broad camps; those who lean towards Malinowski (basic needs of man, calculations, strategy, and individual agents) and those who follow Durkheim (collective representations, the socially constituted individual).

[3] Foucault, for instance, believing that actor's intended and unintended consequences add up to a meaningful whole speaks of the 'machinery of power . . . implanted in bodies, slipped in beneath modes of conduct, made into a principle of classification and intelligibility, established as a *raison d'être* and a natural order of disorder' (1980: 44).

[4] Williams, in his commentary on Gramsci, defines hegemony as 'in the strongest sense a 'culture', but a culture which has to be seen as the lived dominance and subordination of particular classes' (1977: 110)

Also whilst, in the sixties, theorists spoke in terms of a clear demarcation between Marxist 'materialism' and Weberian 'idealism', within the practice perspective, the materialist aspects of Weber were stressed alongside the 'human' aspects of Marx. The 'practice approach' rather than separating the cultural and material aspects of social life and then deciding which has a causative influence on the other, sets out to consider the 'whole social process' as it is actually lived, played and worked out in 'practice'. The idea of 'practice' is related to the ways in which people's interactions in the 'everyday order' (Comaroff 1985) contribute to, or reflect the distribution of power in a given setting.

In the 'practice approach', a given cultural reality is understood to have differential enabling and constraining effects on different social groups. Therefore, certain kinds of social relations, that are advantageous to some and not to others, are maintained by the very nature of everyday practice. Culture is understood to influence and to condition behaviour at a deep level through 'socialisation' (in the Durkheimian sense through both ritual and the influences of the everyday). Particular cultural realities provide a particular, albeit alterable and flexible, range of concepts, of appropriateness, of emotional expression and developmental aspiration which enable as well as constrain in particular configurations (Rabinow 1977; Bourdieu 1977; Foucault 1980). The 'system' is thus reproduced whilst also being modified by the behaviour of conditioned individuals.

There is obviously an intrinsic tension in practice approaches. On the one hand, there is the belief that asymmetry in power relations is inextricable from an understanding of social life. On the other, there is a commitment to grasping the complexities of the motivations of the actor without imposing teleological theoretical frameworks.

This tension is also apparent in the thinking of applied anthropologists. In relation to the former issue, applied anthropologists working in development are explicitly concerned with *asymmetries* between and within social groups and are interested in either narrowing these or prevent them from being exacerbated by a development intervention. In terms of the second issue, applied anthropologists, rather than adopting a Hobbesian view of human nature, are also interested in the complex webs of relationships and motivations that are informed by different values and

epistemologies. 'Community Development' approaches, for instance, do not write off cultural values as 'ideology' but set out to understand and promote the social forces of cohesion, reciprocity, communication and co-operation in a given setting.

The anthropological emphasis on understanding contextualised agency or 'social performance' forms the basis of anthropological critiques of the asymmetry and mutual unintelligibility between development planners from the farmer's or indigenous or 'emic' perspective (Chamber 1983; Richards 1993). The coping skills, knowledge, improvisational capacities and values shared by individuals in particular settings are, in the final analysis, often more crucial to their subsistence and well being than the macroscopic formulations of planners (incidences of drought, famine and social conflict may, however, take matters out of the local control). Richard's account of cultivation as 'performance' emphasises this perspective:

'A central point that modern social theory requires us to grasp is that social life is simply not corrigible by outside observers. Outsiders may be able to rebuild the set (or to mix a metaphor, move the goal posts) but they do not make the action' (1993: 71)

Long (1977) and Long and Long (1992), from what Grillo calls the 'Wageningen perspective', made an important contribution to the actor oriented perspective in the anthropology of development. Arce and Long, leading proponents of this Wageningen approach write that;

'We are sometimes seen as being intellectually aggressive because we always take a strong stance against simplistic and reductionist diagnoses of the 'modern condition', as well as against theories that deny (even if implicitly) the force of people's own capacities and abilities to intervene and shape the conditions of social life' (2000: 1).

Consideration of the potentially active and strategic efforts of 'marginal social groups' is now incorporated into a great deal of development policy although there is still recognition that social groups may be systematically marginalised by social and economic forces (Lewis 1996). In this sense, an important and hopeful implication of

agency based, or action oriented theories is that oppression and poverty are neither inevitable nor uncontrollable.

Lewis, for example, sets out how notions of individuals' motivations are considered in contemporary anthropological analysis of poverty that recognises the cultural embeddedness of action. Individuals' strategies for survival and/or profit are balanced and shaped by existing cohesive social networks and responsibilities;

> 'Where prevailing poverty – or the ever real prospect of it - encourages the constant search for strategic advantage through cheating and deceit, constrained only by the possibility of discovery and sanction within one's immediate community. This Hobbesian image of a society and its people living under conditions of extreme scarcity, hovering on the brink of disaster, existing precariously at the boundary between co-operative and competitive behaviour is modified by the analysis of a sustained structure of transactions across communities' (1996: 4).

Lewis appears to be basing his analysis on transactionalist theory. I think that, at this stage, it is important to note a number of important conceptual pitfalls in the whole area of 'agency'. Modern social theory has struggled to formulate analytical models which facilitate an understanding of the dynamics between the control of resources and the capacity to make decisions (power), institutions (structure) and the role and performance of individuals (agency). Indeed, Giddens considers the elucidation of these dynamics to be *the* central problem of contemporary social theory (1979). Dependency theory was shown in the previous chapter to construe individuals to be passive in the face of economic forces whilst modernisation theory assumed that traditional societies somehow constrained individuals from being active self-maximising agents. In both cases, the initiative and potential framework for action is assumed to be guided by the 'hidden hand' of impersonal capitalist, or revolutionary, forces, somehow not realising that 'the stage is dead without the actors' (Richards: 1993). On some transactionalist theories, agency is sometimes identified directly with the values of the modern market economy, as Hobart makes clear;

'Agency at first seems vested in the enterprising individual. But he or she only responds to market forces, the patters of which are elucidated by economists, planners and others. It is the market itself which determines what happens' (1993: 13).

The anthropological insight resists these tautological tendencies to insist that the actual agency of individuals is complex, variable and unpredictable and cannot be captured in a facile theoretical framework. It is clearly important to look at manifold ways in which people are motivated and also how this varies culturally. It is theoretically facile to assume that people are always tactically chasing productive goals or seeking to transform their social and political environment for their personal benefit.

Social life involves contending with all sorts of complexities, responsibilities, burdens, routinised behaviours, as well as the expression of shared values, which may unfold over the course of longitudinal developmental strategies. Considering the *embedded* self in this way requires looking at the particular 'visions of the good' that are shared in different social settings (Carrithers 1991; Kuper 1992; Strathern 1993; Overing and Passes 2000). Ortner explains the implications of this approach:

'Intrinsic to this latter perspective is a sense of motive and action as shaped not only by problems being solved, and gains being sought, but by images and ideals of what constitutes goodness – in people, in relationships, and in conditions of life' (1994: 396).

This is a key insight. Taking on board this sense of the relativity of 'visions of the good', ideas of normative life cycles and how western versions, as exported by development, at a planning level, often obliviate these, is obviously crucial for the consideration of the ethics of development[5].

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[5] Equally, the temptation to characterise so called western institutions as straightforward conduits of imperialism should be resisted; the rejection of essentialist and homogenising characterisations of non-Western cultures should be accompanied by an appreciation of the complexities and ambiguities of Western culture. On this basis, Herzfeld emphasises that 'an agency based approach must recognise

Agency oriented theories of social action' have fed into development practice in important ways (for instance 'Farmer' or 'People First' movements, slogans such as 'Helping People to Help themselves'). The stress on understanding contextualised practice and the relativity of peoples' motivations and 'visions of the good' are crucial to the formulation of methodologies to incorporate indigenous knowledge, participatory development and self-determination.

Conceptualising Power and Knowledge

Conceptually and methodologically, there is an important distinction to be made between focusing on the 'knowledge of power', that is, focusing on what we know about power and the 'power of knowledge' meaning considering the efficacy and force of knowledge (Fardon 1987:1-20). I will look at these in turn.

Knowledge of Power

Using 'power' as an explanatory concept is notoriously complex, often leading to endless regressions that are questionable in terms of their applicability to alleviating social injustice or chronic poverty. Power is usually identified in anthropological theory in terms of either its perceived effects or by looking at the nature of the processes of its production. It is variously conceptualised in terms of 'power *to do* something', 'power *over* something or somebody' and thirdly in terms of a decentred invisible ideological pervasive force. In this section, my aim is to isolate the ways in which theoretical understandings of knowledge and power have been picked up on by anthropologists engaged in the practice, or critique of, development.

Grasping 'power' as the object of analysis (knowledge of power) is sought through observing what seem to be power's visible effects; in any given social organisational context, there are those who gain and those who lose. This can be looked at in terms of the differential distributions of degrees of freedom, self-determination, 'goods', or decision making power. Nelson and Wright point out that power is experienced in the face to face encounters of everyday life as well as through the workings of systems. '

the huge range of possibilities for action, benign and malevolent, in all forms of government and administration' (2001: 233).

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"The family" is experienced in personalised, face to face relations within a household, but those experiences are not idiosyncratic; they are systematic, heavily imbued with ideology, with some aspects subject to intervention and control by the state' (2001: 7).

Keeping this in mind, analyses of the visible signs of the possession of power (such as accumulated wealth, juridical power, social status, military might, educational status, for example) have also been complemented by considering the ways in which power is inscribed into non-disputed practices. Bourdieu (1977), for instance, argues that doxic or uncontested knowledge constitutes the naturalised manifestation of power relations. Fardon observes, similarly, that we cannot always 'read off' power from observable events; certain issues may be kept from view or suppressed ideologically. On this basis, 'the area of non-disputes becomes relevant to our judgement of the distribution of power' (Fardon 1987: 9). 'Power' is understood in this invisible sense in terms of a relation, rather than a possession.

A conceptual difficulty that often crops up in anthropological considerations of modernity, arises from the observation that the self-determination of an exploited social group may take the form of the acquisition of the very means of exclusive power that they were 'oppressed' by. Whilst this group may make gains in terms of status and economic well being, the pre-existing and diffuse dynamics of power have not changed. The social group, by dint of their elevation within a capitalist economy, for instance, whilst now wielding more of the attributes of power is still within the wider system. Nelson and Wright characterise this theorisation as follows;

> 'Inadvertently, however, and 'behind their backs', the invisible side effect logic of the development apparatus (will) be incorporating the marginalised in even more distant clusterings of power, undermining their resistance' (2001: 11).

Power is envisaged in post-structuralist theory as permeating through the institutions, values, categories and 'common sense' of given settings. On this view, Dirks *et. al.* observe that 'politics was inscribed into the texture of the everyday' and that 'the effects of these shifts on the concept of power have been multiple' (1994: 4). In its most basic form, this perspective boils down to the commonsensical (or 'vulgar')

Marxist notion of society as a totality made up of elements that express economic relations. This omnipresence of power is what Foucault called 'the government of children, of souls, of communities, of families, of the sick' (1982: 221).

In different ways, both Foucault's notion of discourse and Gramsci's concept of hegemony[6], as 'dominant ideology theses', 'emphasise the degree to which culture is grounded in unequal relationships and is differentially related to people and groups in different social positions' (Dirks *et. al.* 1994: 3)[7]. Foucault's maxim is that power is ever present in the regularities of knowledge and practice which he calls 'regimes of truth' (1983: 133). Fardon encapsulates Foucault's core argument; 'the antinomy of power and truth is rescinded in favour of a composite power-knowledge itself productive of truth' (1987: 5).

This apprehension of knowledge, from the perspective of power, evokes an interest in how knowledge is socially, historically and politically constructed, how all forms of knowledge are inherently political and how discourses have real effects that are instrumental in the maintenance of particular social orders. Anthropologists, on the whole, whilst drawing upon these approaches, have resisted a wholehearted acceptance of Foucault's unification of power and knowledge. There are various anthropological apprehensions of these dynamics that are very relevant to applied anthropology and the critique of development. I covered some of these perspectives in relation to the correspondences between colonialism and development in terms of dichotomous evaluations between the modern and traditional, for example, in Chapter 5.

The realisation that much of applied anthropology has been taking place within what Escobar (1995) calls the 'dominant discourse' began to stimulate discussion about anthropology's potential to challenge its hegemony and to draw attention to other, less visible discourses' (Gardner and Lewis 1996: 41). This apprehension of development as a discourse opened the way to a radical rethinking of the presuppositions of development thinking. As culture was understood in terms of in terms of contested

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[6] Gramsci emphasised 'practice' and the historical actor..

meanings, development, as a bundle of values and epistemologies, was increasingly understood as a contingent social construct. On this basis, anthropologists increasingly turned to deciphering the ways in which the phenomena of development can be seen to construct social environments in particular ways.

From a macroscopic perspective, Escobar stresses the ideological background to development and argues that the West extended its power over the developing world by depicting it in terms of 'abnormalities' which, 'with the guidance of the West, could be cured, a strategy that enabled the creation of a 'field of intervention of power' and permitted increasing intervention in the lives of people living in the Third World (1985: 387). Secondly, as development became an area of scientific study, problems that were clearly political were presented as 'scientific' problems that could be solved by Western expertise. Thirdly, development was institutionalised nationally and internationally creating a

> 'multiplicity of sites of power which produce regulations and guidelines to control the activities of local people and villages and bind them to certain socio-economic practices and beliefs. In controlling development practice, these local and global institutions have constituted a system of disciplinary power which aims to produce normalised individuals – through these political strategies, 'development colonised reality . . . became reality' (Escobar 1995: 214).

From this vantage point, the anthropologist Ferguson contends that 'the thought and actions of development bureaucrats are powerfully shaped by the world of acceptable statements and utterances within which they live' (1990: 18)[8]. This conceptualisation of pervasive, decentred power over everyone and everything, however, leads to a problematic denial of the competence of actors to know what the 'real' locus nature of power is. This is exemplified by Foucault's apparently patronising assertion that:

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[7] Foucault's perspectives goes beyond envisaging individuals as fulfilling prescribed functions, having the insight to see social reality as involving perpetual interpretation, negotiation, jostling for authority and control of the definition of reality.

[8] Hobart envisages 3 incommensurable and co-existent discourses in the development relationship; that of local people, of professional developers and of the state or national government (1993: 12). Grillo notes that Escobar opts for three different kinds of discourse in development; 'the developers, those

'People know what they do; they frequently know why they do what they do; *but what they don't know is what they do does*' (in Ortner 1994: 187).

There are various strands to this line of argumentation or 'dominant ideology thesis'. One version is that people are surmised to have differential ideas of self-interest and aspiration, that is, social groups in an oppressed position have a distorted perception of self-interest 'through the ideological manipulations of a privileged category marshalling superior resources for monitoring their position and disseminating information to obscure their self-interested machinations' (Fardon 1987: 9)[9]. Lukes' explication of this dynamic is;

'A exercises power over B by influencing, shaping or determining *his very wants* . . . As a result B accepts his role in the existing order of things and no conflict arises (1974: 23-24 my emphasis).

A related theorisation, is that of *fetishisation*, that is, where both the 'oppressed' and the 'oppressors' are mystified by the same ideology, with differential effects (see Hornborg 1992).

Ferguson (1990), on the basis of fieldwork in Lesotho tracing the history of development intervention from the 1970s, contends that whilst development projects often failed in terms of their explicit objectives, a wider result was that the reach and control of the state into the lives of marginalised communities was nevertheless strengthened. Development discourse, according to Ferguson, in this context, was selective in terms of the use of data and the way it was represented. Although the development project failed to meet its stated objectives, the final result was an endorsement of the role of the State[10]. Problems, such as marginalisation of particular groups, which local people would explain in terms of social and political dynamics are represented by the developers in terms of the lack of technical inputs that they can

who are developed, and those who resist development' (1997: 16). The question of the communicability of different bodies of knowledge or discourses is discussed in the next section.
[9] This reasoning is the basis of the critique of 'subjective welfarism' in utilitarian economics, which will be looked at in Chapter 9.

provide. In this way, by representing the causes of inequality in politically neutral terms, the State legitimated its role. Ferguson, in his argument that development can be used as a means to increase social control and reproduce social relations of inequality, sees a wider coherence in the 'unintended' consequences of development projects.

However, whilst theorisations based on a 'dominant ideology thesis' offer a ready made framework for analysing the ideological aspects of development thinking, institutions and practice, there are limits to the usefulness of this model. Foucault's conceptualisation of power as decentred and subjectless, not possessed by any one social category, institutions or individual but somehow invisibly animating society and perpetuating different forms of subjugation, in ways that cannot be predicted by plotting the various interests of contending groups is actually depoliticising. This view begs the question of how, if everyone is controlled by the invisible sway of decentred power, can empowerment be possible without perpetuating the same controlling system? This thesis would seem to render meaningless any effort to address the oppressive aspects of power.

Charles Taylor (2000: 172) argues that this vision of power is an over-simplification and 'leaves too much out':

> 'Foucault's oppositions between the old model of power, based on sovereignty/obedience, and the new one based on domination/subjugation leaves out everything in Western history which has been animated by civic humanism or analogous movements . . . without this in one's conceptual armoury, Western history and societies become incomprehensible'.

Ferguson and Escobar, however, do, in fact, delimit their treatment of Foucault to argue that it *is* possible to step outside the 'dominant development discourse'. This is obviously crucial for development anthropology. They insist that it is possible to analyse reflectively about the political embeddedness of development interventions

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[10] Hobart would agree that there is more going on than achieving the explicit objectives of projects, arguing that 'most development projects fall seriously short' (1993: 3).

and also to resist the imposition of harmful ideas and policies (see Escobar's discussion of social movements in Latin America 1992b).

Again, going back to the theme of local transmutations of 'modernity' which was introduced with reference to Sahlins earlier in the chapter, a difficulty that results from an over-emphasis on studying development on its own terms is that scant attention is paid to local understandings of power, value, efficacy and knowledge. Anthropologists have shown in persuasive accounts that there is little point in examining global development strategies in isolation from the ways that they are transformed, filtered, adapted and altered in local social contexts. This is Mosse's contention:

> 'What is often omitted is an analysis of power through which global development concepts mould and are moulded by existing social and political relationships. Practitioners sometimes assume they are creating new local institutions when they are, in fact, recombining existing roles, relationships of power and social status' (2001: 144).

This leads on to consideration of the difficulty that anthropologists have had to conceptualise 'power' in cross-cultural terms. Riches (1987), for instance, argues that 'power' is *our* (Western) representational model for understanding aspects of social action. The implication is that we are bound to end up with a misapprehension if we set about trying to understand the intentions and meanings which motivate actors in cultural settings different from our own if we pre-empt the meaning of 'power'. Anthropologists have sought to explicate notions comparable to 'power' in different settings.

Strathern interprets power relations in terms of culturally specific constructions of personal agency in Melanesian societies and the ways in which individuals are credited and ascribed with empowering features that are recognised in particular contexts (1987: 61-82). Power is understood here in a wider Weberian sense of agency that does not necessarily entail subjugation. Fardon picks up on Strathern's comparison of Melanesian conceptualisations of potent agency with African ideas that tend to be related more to formal role or office and less to personal attributes (1987:

11). Parkin similarly shows how the communication of credible and powerful knowledge is contingent on the way in which the act of communication is construed by the participants; the power of statements inheres not solely in their formal meaning (1985b: 49-60). Acknowledging the importance of explicating the varying cultural construction of potent individuals is relevant to the interpersonal dynamics of knowledge exchange in development projects. Nelson and Wright's (2001) volume on participatory development explores some of these dynamics.

The next section looks specifically at anthropological depictions of the interplay between Western rationalist knowledges and 'local' knowledge. In anticipation of this section, I will now discuss further permutations of power and knowledge.

Power of Knowledge

Knowledge may be regarded as 'powerful' or otherwise by virtue of who bears it and puts it into practice. Certain kinds of knowledge may be distinguished from others and raised to a particular status whilst others are denigrated. In relation to the process of acquisition of knowledge; individuals and groups may be excluded or may be required to undergo displacement or subjugation to an alien ideology or morality to gain privileged knowledge. Hobart writes with regard to the rhetoric of the spatial and visual metaphors of knowledge prevalent in Western practice, that 'the greater the superiority of the observer, the more objective and rational the surveilling gaze' (1995: 52).

Knowledge may be conceived as being instrumental for a particular group, (for example the developers) or for the continuance of a particular social order. The central difficulty of this kind of analysis is the facility of imputing uniform interests and aims to individuals within a given category. As Fardon says; 'behind the mechanics of this analysis must lie assumptions about the extent to which ideational or normative consensus is, in fact, a precondition of particular forms of collective life' (1987: 8). Putting ascriptive boundaries around 'powerful' and 'powerless' groups fails to recognise the heterogeneity of interests and aims within and between social categories. These issues lead to the consideration of the complexity of outsider/insider relations in terms of representations and the difficulty of apprehending the dynamics

of knowledge within local groups which may be masked by the appearance of consensus (Mosse 1994: 508).

Local Complexity and 'Lack of Fit'

On-going debates within anthropology regarding the (in)commensurability of different cultural traditions, local knowledges and ways of self understanding explore the significance, in development practice of relativistic approaches to the 'other' (Firth 1985; Hobart 1993; Hastrup 1995; MacIntyre 1997; Mason 2000, Overing 1985; Parkin 1985a).

Anthropologists, in the 1990s increasingly adopted an 'anti-rationalist' approach to social knowledge. Vitebsky, for instance, from a relativistic perspective states that particular bodies of knowledge, including western scientific paradigms 'rather than being categories of any absolute philosophy, can be little more than folk categories of the people who use these words' (1993: 100). Similarly, Ingold argues that 'human beings do not construct the world in a certain way by virtue of what they are, but by virtue of their conceptions of the possibilities of being. And these possibilities are limited only by the power of the imagination' (1995:63).

In 1985, Overing argued that the analytical concern with the truth-value of statements often sheds very little light upon the extrapolated cultural meanings of statements that can only be understood by knowing the social world from which they emerge and have efficacy. The elevation of the criteria of truth-value and the connection between statements that are characteristic of a given culture and its apparent mastery of the material world for productive purposes led philosophers to impute superiority to Western rationality. Overing challenged these views on two levels, firstly, by signalling the ethnographic perspective that often contextualises the intended meaning of utterances beyond their formal appearance, and secondly, by highlighting the moral import of understanding other cultural realities before imputing value judgements of superior or inferior status to them according to our criteria. Agreeing with Overing's critique of the conceptual blindness of Western rationality, Hastrup observes it is important to recognise that 'reason never worked on its own. It invariably got stuck,

and history moved as much by irrational impulses and uncontrolled emotion as by rational calculation' (2001: 10).

Hobart is particularly concerned with the status of Western *'scientific'* knowledge vis-à-vis local knowledges. He argues that development practice tends to impose quantitative understandings upon realities that are perceived locally in qualitative terms; 'kinds of food become cash crops and human activities become labour. What is lumped together here is often regarded by the peoples concerned as heterogeneous and qualitatively diverse in practice' (1993: 6). Wagner would agree in his argument that sociological scientism 'has 'nickeled and dimed' (i.e. devalued and debased) *human* realities to death' (1991, in Overing and Passes 2000: 9).

Similarly, Hobart builds on critiques of both 'liberal' modernisation theory and 'radical' dependency theory in terms of their blindness to different 'knowledges', for example, different cultural constructions of the relationship between land, work, productivity, change, economy and well being. The shared anthropological argument is that a fundamental error shared by both modernisation and dependency theories, which continue to influence development practice, is that they are based upon a rationalist epistemology and motivated by instrumental concerns that are legitimated by 'science' and efficacy. Whilst anthropologists have been to the fore in making criticisms of exclusionary economic or technological models of development, Hobart warns that, 'despite some well-rehearsed differences, sociological theories of development often involve presuppositions drawn from the same rationalist scientific epistemology. Whilst these critics may be critical of certain assumptions of economists, the effect is to replicate the dominant epistemology in a subtler guise . . . these critics may unwittingly be caught up in helping to perpetuate what they claim to criticise' (1993: 5).

Building on these insights, this strand of the anthropological critique of development roots its arguments on the observation of 'embedded', non-modern, or indigenous cultural realities. The reasoning is related to Winch's (1964) contention that the intelligibility, or criteria of logic which would explain given actions inheres in and is relative to particular contexts or 'modes of life'. Hobart *et al.* (1993), situating their observations in rural areas, describe the plurality of knowledges and practices with

which people make meaningful, productive, moral and aesthetically pleasing their relationships with the land and with each other. They explore the ways in which different development contexts are endowed with particular meanings, languages, aesthetics, shared interpretations and appropriate behaviours. Their arguments emphasise the creativity of development's 'beneficiaries' and describe local knowledges in their vernacular forms, as more about *knowing how* than 'knowing as' or 'knowing that' (Cohen 1993: 31), that local knowledges can be better understood as 'performance' (the playing of an instrument rather than a dramaturgical metaphor) (Richards, 1993: 61-78), as practical, pragmatic, factual, detailed and personal, sensible to the particularities of place, occasion and circumstance, subject to testing and modification, involving theory and metaphysical presuppositions, can be considered as social activity, (Hobart 1993: 1-30) involve dialogue, negotiation and conceptualisations of agency which differ from that of western specialist knowledge (Parkin 1985(b): 135-51).

Rather than conceiving of knowledge as an abstract conceptual scheme, this approach gives priority to the sense given to things in *practice* and which are intelligible as part of a larger (but not determining) context. The focus of this approach is precisely the meanings and concepts that animate, create, define and differentiate objects and activities in rural livelihoods. This stress on local and individual meanings and contingencies without reifying culture is antithetical to reductive explanations of objects, environment, people, and actions that stem from instrumental and economic paradigms. Further, this perspective, rather than focusing solely on the material and ecological effects of technological systems, or on the meanings which societies impute to them, allows for the description of the processes by which materiality and technological systems are both formative of, and formed by, cultural and/or interpersonal dynamics.

Issues of Encompassment and Incompatibility

On the basis of these arguments, a concern in applied anthropology in relation to relativistic approaches, is the recognition that development, which inevitably involves articulating world-views which flow from different histories, requires the consideration of 'how, and how far, issues of boundedness and incompatibility come into play' (Harris 1995: 109). The translation of relative knowledges is inextricable from considerations of relative power (Asad 1986).

One of the most crucial questions that arises here is whether the encompassment of these indigenous societies by capitalist society necessarily denies, or makes impossible, their integrity. This argument brings us to a central moral and theoretical difficulty for anthropologists in their conceptualisation of the relationship between what is characterised as 'the West' and those societies that can be considered as 'pre' or 'non' modern. Hornborg (1992 and 1994) gives useful insights here.

Whereas Sahlins' contention was that capitalism is a species of culture, 'a curious cultural scheme' (1993: 384), Hornborg argues that 'capitalism and culture are phenomena belonging to different orders, if not altogether *opposed* to each other . . . for some reason he (Sahlins) does not want to concede the fundamental *asymmetry* between the West and the Rest' (1994: 239-240).

The argument advanced by Hornborg is that capitalism is a *denial* of culture in the sense that it thrives on the decontextualisation, re-evaluation and pricing of the elements that are constitutive of particular, local, experience-near cultural realities which have intrinsic value (at the very least are valuable for those who 'belong' to specific communities). As was discussed above, Sahlins objects to the idea that, in the final analysis, people of indigenous, non-modern, or 'peripheral' cultures will necessarily be engulfed by capitalist systems of meaning and argues that these people equally can, and do, in turn, 'culturally encompass' or construct Western culture according to their own presuppositions. Hornborg contests this 'sympathetic' view, stating that;

> 'It is not a question of Western "peoples" encompassing other "peoples", but of the conceptual universe of modernity encompassing and dominating pre-modern universes . . . And the brute fact of the matter is that "pre-modernity"

cannot encompass modernity, because, in terms of self-reflexivity, the latter transcends the former . . . and such movements are irreversible . . . no attempt to champion the constructions of the encompassed will help to empower them' (1994: 240).

Whilst, as Sahlins argues, the peoples of 'the Rest' may integrate aspects of Western culture into their own symbolic schemes, the manner in which the 'West' encompasses 'the Rest' is by 'asymmetrical subsumption'. By this Hornborg means that 'the submission to the concept-*cum*-institution of general-purpose money is an implicit admission to new, decontextualising modes of self-objectification (notions-*cum*-relations of products, prices, profits, labour time, wages, etc.) quite sufficient for the imperialist scheme of modernity to run its pervasively dissolvent course' (*loc. cit.*).

The crux of the matter, here, is that whilst it is important to recognise that intrinsic to all 'cultures' is a capacity to respond creatively to the meanings and practices of other cultural realities, there is, undeniably, something particular about modern Western capitalist and instrumental forms in the reduction, decontextualisation and disembedding of local cultures. When one looks at the history of the indigenous peoples of South America vis-à-vis Western society, for instance, this view seems compelling, to say the very least.

Nevertheless, whilst some indigenous societies continue to exist more or less 'intact', or unmolested, the vast majority of indigenous peoples have, to greater or lesser extents, been encompassed by capitalist expansion in terms of their 'work' and 'productive' capacities for example. Applied anthropologists generally, work in this arena of conflicting values. Marcus (1986) writes that, whilst anthropologists have aimed to moved away from ethnography that depicts a 'primitive' other, there remain two narrative postures that are reminiscent, or constitute positive transformations, of this history. The first he calls 'before the deluge', or 'salvage' anthropology, where the ethnographer purports to depict a society in its original state, before impending transformation. The second he calls the 'redemptive mode' as it involves the explanation of the social life of societies that have undergone undeniable transformations in terms of the surviving traces and enduring values of a previously

existing (pre-contact) cultural system (e.g. Comaroff 1985; Gow 1991). Whilst Marcus seems to be critical of these 'manoeuvres', both of these approaches have parallels in, and provide important insights for, applied anthropology in the effort to deal with the dichotomy described above.

In his conceptualisation of overlapping or merging knowledges, Hobart evokes a theorisation of the conceptual encompassment of local knowledges as they are rendered 'ignorant' and 'obsolete' by the more dominant and unscrupulous practices flowing from Western economic and technological models. As Hobart's volume presents a number of persuasive ethnographic case studies of these very processes, his theorisations are compelling. Nevertheless, there are empirical difficulties with Hobart's conception of a world 'with on the one hand a series of relatively discrete 'local' or indigenous' knowledges (plural) . . . on the other there is 'western scientific knowledge' (singular) which consistently underestimates the value of these knowledges'(Grillo 1997: 13). Hobart does seem to essentialise these as being discrete 'bodies of knowledge' with the result that he focuses upon the separateness of these ways of knowing[11]. Grillo's assessment of Hobart's perspective is that

> 'He does not go quite so far as to say so, but his thinking implies cultural solipsism: 'local' knowledges are grounded in such different philosophical foundations from 'Western' knowledge that communication between them is in fact impossible; rationalities are not shared or share-able' (1997: 14)

Applied anthropologists, if they are concerned with the defence of indigenous visions of the good, necessarily have to temper this epistemological and normative relativism in their endeavours to communicate the indigenous perspective in development planning.

A minority of social anthropologists are quite open about their belief that western scientific knowledge is a 'superior' form of knowing in the material realm at least.

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[11] Elsewhere, Hobart describes a moment which felt like an instance of incommensurability, 'One woman leaving the theatre performance remarked:
Pragina kaliwat duweg, tiang atenga mati kedek
(The actors were so clever I nearly died laughing)
To claim I knew what she meant would be laughable' (Hobart 1995: 68)

Gellner, for instance argues that Western scientific knowledge, by dint of its very efficacy will replace non-western belief systems (Gellner 1993 and 1995; cf. Kuper 1992). On this basis, Gellner argues that societies that do not have access to western technology are objectively *deprived*. He goes further to imply that western technology necessarily carries western culture with it. Parkin counters this view to assert that while this technology constitutes forms part of 'globally homogenising influence, it does not follow that all else of a society's beliefs and practices are displaced by this technological knowledge' (1995: 148). Parkin's (1995: 149) view here, using the example of the uptake of western medicine knowledge in Islamic contexts, is that the undoubted benefits of Western medical treatments are spreading throughout the world and are principally used to treat acute physical illnesses. However, non-Western peoples typically continue to benefit from their traditional medical knowledge with regard to mental health, psychosomatic illnesses and in the maintenance of good health. What is happening, he argues is 'not a wholesale demonstration of technological superiority by bio-medicine but rather a re-organisation of partially overlapping areas of competence as between it and pre-existing therapies'.

Clearly indigenous knowledges and ways of being exist because they are valued aspects of the creation of well being. As such they demand to be valued in the development process. Parkin observes that 'it is precisely against the power and seeming inevitability of technological homogenisation that many so-called counter-cultures arise or existing cultural practices and beliefs are re-accentuated (1995: 148).

On the basis of these arguments, the key issues for development practice are countering the ignorance that planners have of the significant ways of knowing and valuing that are intrinsic to indigenous well being and which are intertwined with their traditional livelihoods. De Coppet and Hornborg's arguments that development is bedevilled by a conceptual and normative blindness to indigenous world-views and versions of well being because of the restructuring of whole societies that comes with instrumental capitalism, imply that indigenous societies need to be defended as 'wholes' (as we tried to do through land rights in Bolivia, for instance). Applied anthropologists, on the whole, though, work in contexts where 'modernity' and 'capitalism' are already ubiquitous and therefore need to work in the resulting context of hybridised cultural and political forms (see Croll and Parkin 1992).

Feminist Anthropologies and Development

A crucial part of the aforementioned 'politicisation' of anthropology has been the significant advances and enrichment of feminist thought in the discipline. This has also formed an important aspect of the anthropological critique of development practice.

Schrijvers writes, however, that feminist theory should not be seen as a mere addition to the 'view from below' perspectives that were being developed more generally; 'theoretical and methodological rules which had been excluded women's perspectives had to be changed' (1995: 20)[12]. Grillo agrees, arguing that 'the great volume of work since 1970 concerned with gender . . . has not simply 'illuminated' the cultural dimensions of development but transformed ways of thinking about social, economic and political relations' (1997: 6). Gardner and Lewis, in fact, see the pressure that came from feminist critiques of many andocentric anthropological assumptions as 'the precursor to the increasingly reflexive nature of anthropology in the 1980s and into the 1990s' (1996: 62).

An important contribution to development critique was the dissection of the differential impacts of economic change on women and men (Boresup 1970). An further line of research and critique has been that of the 'feminisation of subsistence' (Gardner and Lewis 1996: 60-61). Schrijvers also notes that black feminist critiques of the assumptions of the 'learned voices of white women' (such as 'universalising theories of male oppression and female solidarity) have highlighted the often very different social dynamics that women in non-Western settings experience (1995: 21; Overing and Passes' 2000: 4-5).

Study of the intricate economic and social relations that women are involved in on a daily basis has resulted in theoretical and methodological advances for apprehending complex social inequality; 'it has become clear that ethnic and race relations cross cut

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[12] Schrijvers also makes the persuasive contention that women anthropologists, already knowing the feeling of 'otherness' and the struggle to be recognised as subjects rather than objects, have

gender, as do class, culture and age' (Schrijvers 1995: 21). These insights have made an impact on development planning, as well as stimulating a radical rethink of familiar anthropological categories (such as 'the household', 'work', 'decision making', and 'production' for instance) in terms of the dynamics between men and women in different cultural contexts.

This 'grounded theory' would meet with the approval of the feminist philosopher, Martha Nussbaum who complains that

> 'Some feminist philosophy, particularly the type influenced by postmodernist literary theory, has involved a type of abstraction that turns the mind away from reality, and that does not help us see or understand real women's life better. A focus on real cases and on empirical facts can help us to identify the salient features that a political theory should not efface or ignore' (2000: 11).

This leads on to the next topic.

The Mixed Blessings of Post-modernism for Development Anthropology

There would appear to be inherent contradictions between post-modernist anthropology and development on a number of counts. Firstly, development policy and planning depends upon 'objectivity' and gives credence to positivistic comparative studies. Rosalind Eyben[13] argues that development planners have to rely upon notions of 'objectivity and certainty' to inform strategies for change (2000), whereas she holds post-modernist approaches to be inherently relativistic. The assumption here seems to be that to be post-modernist is to lack an empirical approach. However, proponents of hermeneutic approaches (which are often considered as being co-valent with post-modernism, e.g. by Gellner 1993) would counter that their empirical observations are central to the task of deconstructing the very *un*empirical assumptions of theoretical models such as structural-functionalism,

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'consciously tried to mediate between the positions of the subject and the object in anthropological research' (*loc. cit.*).

[13] An anthropologist who became the Head of the Social Development Division of DFID. She is credited as having made significant changes to the conceptualisation of social development in the

or Marxism, for example. Grillo argues that the themes that converge in post-modernism and reflexivity 'make an unlikely bed-fellow for applied anthropology' but that these strands do nevertheless come together in the ideas and practices constituting the anthropology of development (1997: 1-2). This is an interesting area for discussion not least because of the strong reactions that it evokes.

On the one hand, post-modernist tendencies in social anthropology are criticised as being 'vapid generalisations relatively unanchored in either ethnography or history' or 'retreats into the terrifying complexity of the 'local' or insistent claims that grand narrative is dead and there is nothing that we can really know' (Gledhill 2000: 206). Kuper, in a recent interview exclaimed that the post-modernist 'movement' is 'extremely dangerous for the development of anthropology . . . extremely destructive of what seemed to me to be the most important kinds of anthropology, which were serious, empirical, comparative, addressing major issues of theoretical importance and public concern. All of this was being frittered away by a kind of rather superficial extreme relativism of a very adolescent kind' (in Fausto and Neiburg 2002: 311)[14].

The charge that post-modernism is problematic ethically is also made. Di Leonardo, for example asserts that 'there is no place for any morally evaluative or politically committed stance within the disintegrating logic of post-structuralism. It is fundamentally nihilist' (1991: 24). A related point is also made by Gellner who accuses post-modernists of being apolitical and thus treating all ideologies as being equivalent (1993).

There is also an issue about whether academics overly concerned with post-modernity risk becoming incomprehensible to all but themselves and irrelevant to the concerns of the everyday, as Barnes And Duncan contend: 'It is highly debatable whether the crises of representation extends beyond a tiny coterie of hyper-educated intellectuals . . . the claims for a post-modern era are overdrawn in that they erroneously generalise from an intellectual elite to the population at large' (1992: 251).

British Government's overseas aid programmes, principally making the concept of the 'social' more central, alongside economic and technological approaches.
[14] Kuper, in an earlier article (1992), in his promotion of a more positivistic approach to *social* anthropology (as opposed to North American *cultural* anthropology) disputed the post-modernist

The consternation implicit in this views seems to be based on the shared argument that the post-modernist alleged obsession with endless difference, with 'contested meanings', 'heteroglossia', deconstruction and irony amounts to an exclusively academic perspective that has no vision of the good, or basis upon which to make generalisations cross culturally.

If these critiques *did* reflect the nature of post-modern approaches, the charges would be serious. However, the views given above approach being glib, or at least rhetorical, as they stress the excesses of post-modernism and rely upon definitions that are closer to caricature than reality. Parkin makes this point (albeit with an idiosyncratic and slightly mind-boggling use of this metaphor); 'the post-modernist horse that [Gellner] depicts and spends much energy gleefully flogging probably had very few punters' (1995: 145)[15].

Because the label 'post-modernist' is often used loosely almost as a 'catch-all' term and is attributed to groups of theorists whose common interests and concerns are only vaguely connected, the charge that post-modernism is apolitical is facile. What might be more accurate to say is that there no *defined* political agenda among those who pursue a post-modernist approach. The inscription of political sensibilities into ethnography have opened up through a diverse movement of experimental writing associated with post-modernism. As Gledhill states: 'One of the major contentions which has been made by this broad and disparate movement is that ethnographic writing should represent the 'polyphony' present in all cultural settings' (1994: 223). The resulting lack of definition in terms of one political or ethical stance or another stems from the fact that the most basic underpinning of this diffuse movement is a thoroughgoing scepticism of explanations based on grand narratives. Both Gellner and Kuper seem to be falling into the trap of essentialising post-modernism in order to pursue their respective agendas of promoting western scientific knowledge and '(neo) positivism' (Kuper's own wording 1992).

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observation that ethnographers inevitably bring their own personalities and cultural backgrounds into their work.

With regard to the charge that post-modernist approaches are nihilistic, it would seem sensible to argue as follows. The empirical observation that there *are* different ways of knowing and valuing that are efficacious in the construction of meaningful life-worlds and that all of these different realities cannot be reduced to one form of evaluative discourse or explanation does not preclude the attribution of value *per se*.

It is clearly unfair to contend that anthropologists, setting out to account for their ethical positions are indulging in what Gellner writes off as 'indulgent hermeneutic-subjectivist excess' (1993: 7). The practice of development anthropology directly affects the lives of project 'beneficiaries' and the aspect of self-reflexivity in this work is not so much focused upon meditating upon one's self as on the impact (in terms of both process and end-state) of the presuppositions, meanings and categories of the institutions that the anthropologist is involved with. Geertz warns against exaggerated versions of post-modernist relativism when describing a kind of paralysis among the generation of anthropologists studying in the eighties; 'They are harassed by grave inner uncertainties amounting almost to a sort of epistemological hypochondria, concerning how one can know that anything one says about other forms of life is a matter of fact so' (1988: 71). Notwithstanding this counsel against the excesses of navel gazing and unproductive ruminations, reflexive anthropological practice, which has been profoundly influenced by post-modernism, in reality, is more concerned with the dialogical aspects of work, such as resisting the imposition of our categories upon other people's life worlds.

It also seems fair to claim that the irony of post-modernism is that it can be de-politicising. They also warn of the dangers of a kind of hyper-criticism where any initiative taken by those in a position of supposed relative wealth or power is surmised to be at the service of domination, 'those from the North become silenced, unable to act beyond producing hostile critiques of the work of those who are involved . . . they detract while adding nothing' (1996: 157). Asad (1973), for instance, is sceptical about the significance of anthropological efforts to subvert or resist the dominant colonial agenda. He writes these 'largely isolated efforts' off as reflecting a naïve 'bourgeois consciousness', that is, one that stems from a social theory that does not

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[15] To 'flog a dead horse' is to waste time on an impossible cause. To mix another metaphor, Gellner would probably be quite happy to let sleeping (post-modernist) horses lie.

consider social practice as *always* an embodiment of relations of power and inequality. Asad's assertion might elicit the frustrated response that 'you're damned if you do, you're damned if you don't'.

I would argue that the insights and concerns attributed to post-modernism that remain highly relevant and conceptually useful to development anthropology are as follows.

Firstly the recognition that the presence of the anthropologist in the research setting has profound effects on the construction of data that needs to be acknowledged.

Secondly, attention to the way in which the anthropologist's initial raw data is manufactured and constructed into material for publication, dissemination and decision making is of the utmost importance. Throughout the process of representing social life, significant choices are being made in the use of language, the conceptual framework and the literary devices deployed. The rules of the construction of representations must themselves be subject to interpretation.

Thirdly, a priority for development anthropology is vigilance about the ways that concepts that may stem from one cultural background are imposed upon the data. As Fardon writes, the terms 'global' and 'local' work off one another 'through mutual provocation (literally calling forth of one another)' (1995: 2). As local and universalised knowledges are purveyed from positions of relative power, close attention is required to the universalising assumptions that are carried by particular representations of the other.

Political post-modernism

On this basis, Johannsen sees post-modernism as a highly political reaction against monolithic authority. On this basis, she attempts the synthesis of directions within the discipline of social anthropology, which are often depicted as being antithetical in her definition of 'Post-modern applied anthropologists' (1992). Her starting point is that both of these bodies of knowledge, applied and post-modern, recognise explicitly that anthropology is inevitably an intervention in the lives of others, whether it is undertaken for the production of written texts in academia or forming part of the

design or implementation of actual projects. This understanding of the anthropologist is quite different from the functionalist image of participant observation as 'the intervention of the social anthropologist at a point in time and a point in space in which he or she behaved like an ideal metering device' (Ardener 1985: 57).

Johannsen advocates collaboration between these fields, arguing that there is a convergence of theoretical, methodological and ethical concerns:

> 'The meticulous, self-critical recording of the process of cultural representation as exercised by post-modernist ethnography could be a source of guidance for interventions in applied anthropology. On the other hand, the conclusions of interventionist applied anthropology could contribute to solving some of the dilemmas identified, but as yet unresolved, by interpretative anthropology' (1992: 71).

Johannsen wants to challenge the idea that applied anthropology is necessarily a poorer or simplistic version of it's academic counterpart; it can offer unique insights through the praxis of involvement and through the experience of sharing the aspirations and goals of informants. Also, the easy identification often made of applied anthropology with scientistic rationalities and interpretative anthropology with a more humanistic approach are shown to be simplistic in terms of both the experience of anthropologists and the theoretical importance of understanding the role of values and subjectivity in development projects (as I hope I conveyed in this chapter). The contribution of interpretative and epistemologically relativistic approaches to applied anthropology involves the 'self-critical concern with ethical responsibilities in the representation of a culture' and the emphasis on a 'self-consciously ethical ethnography' (1992: 74). Such ideas as the establishment of dialogue, the primacy given to actor's meanings and the dispersal of authority as pioneered in interpretative anthropology can be usefully translated to the practicalities of intervention.

Johannsen also criticises aspects of interpretative anthropology, echoing firstly Spencer (1989) in the assertion that more emphasis and effort is given to describing dialogue with informants than to the dialogue itself and, secondly, Watson (1989) in

his argument that the avoidance of textual dominance in the production of academic texts is impossible. In an optimistic conclusion, however, notwithstanding these observations, Johannsen suggests that anthropology would do well to fashion mechanisms which facilitate local people's production of their own texts, aspirations and cultural representations. Post-modern applied anthropologists, she proclaims, *let the people represent themselves*.

Post-Modernism and Neo-Liberalism

Whilst essentialising and writing off post-modernism is a mistake, as I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, meta-theoretical attempts to define particular theoretical moments is more usefully seen as efforts to grasp general tendencies. My view is that post-modernist approaches, whilst offering a great deal to development anthropology are also peculiarly convenient to the global neo-liberal political economic agenda. The paradox seems to be that, whilst post-modernist approaches recognise the failings of theoretical grand narratives to capture local realities or particular perspectives, the extrapolation of this observation to form a coherent critique of the way in which grand narratives inform the very real workings of institutions with often pernicious results for particular social groups is lacking.

Development anthropologists have sifted through the benefits and pitfalls of post-modernist approaches vis-à-vis their concern with the real-world impact of values and ideas from a comparative perspective. Development anthropologists acknowledge the post-modernist uncovering of the partiality of representations and efforts to take apart ethnocentric, dualistic and totalitarian paradigms. However, development anthropologists specifically concerned with confronting, subverting and opposing asymmetric power relations that cause poverty and injustice are interested in more than deconstruction.

A key goal for development anthropologists is facilitating processes whereby the versions of reality that are kept in place by relatively powerful social groups are challenged and transformed by the representations of the relatively powerless. Many development anthropologists are strongly committed to universalist, cross-cultural norms of justice, equality and rights (at least in relation to political institutions). Their

argument, as will be covered in Chapters 9, 10 and 11, is that this universalism does not necessarily obviate cultural differences. Arce and Long, for instance, as scholars dedicated to studying development from a 'practice' and avowedly realist perspective, have the shared 'aim of arguing against those (mostly of a post-modernist position) who are for the 'end of development' as if the critical issues of social transformation and planned intervention are simply spirited away with the demise of developmentalism and the turn to neo-liberal thinking' (2000: xi). I would support this argument.

In the previous chapter I discussed the charge that functionalism, (due to its naïve relativism) was peculiarly suited to the colonial agenda. In the contemporary context, a number of theorists contend that post-modernism, for all the critiques it generates, in effect, plays an overall compliant role within the neo-liberal agenda that is dominant globally. Post-modernist approaches fail to make strong generalisable statements about human value that can counter Western individualistic, liberal, procedural ethics. On an apparently positive note, the mood of post-modernism has close correspondence to the liberal ideal of affirming the right of individuals and groups to pursue their particular visions of the good in a mosaic of cultures, interests and communities. However, a consequence of this co-valence is that the criticisms that are levelled at liberal theory therefore also have relevance to the ethical implications of post-modernism.

What is problematic is that both of these perspectives, if it is possible to generalise, lack a rational and credible basis for consensus over how to establish common political and social goals. Without such a basis, it is difficult to establish limits for the excessive freedoms of western consumers, for example, that are objectively causing irreparable environmental damage. The lack of agreement on moral commitments often means that the winning positions are those with the most prestigious backers and 'whose proponents shout the loudest' (Nussbaum 2000: 300). As grand narratives are anathema to post-modernism, it is difficult for proponents to make statements of phenomena (such as social exploitation) in more than a piecemeal fashion. Looking specifically at feminist anthropology, Joke Schrijvers is concerned that:

'Post-modernist preoccupations with discourses, representations and texts have increasingly undermined the direct link between politics and feminist studies that was so clear in the beginning . . . post-modernism can support an extremely relativistic and amoral attitude, which implicitly embraces a political choice: the liberal, survival-of-the-fittest', and the taken for granted attitude which entails taking sides with the more powerful voices in society' (1995: 21; 1993).

As I argued in the opening chapters, the idea of the 'policy' of the discipline of social anthropology is best understood in broad and implicit terms, that is in terms of patterns of behaviour that have a net outcome. The implicit net policy of the discipline of social anthropology vis-à-vis social injustice is a product of the intuitions and theories of anthropologists; some of these are thoroughly examined whilst others remain inchoate. The same post-modernist, liberal mood which pervades wider society is also dominant in the academy. My view is that the resulting lack of ethical and political coherence from social anthropology as a discipline ill serves the cause of social justice.

Theoretical Resources for an Ethical Applied Anthropology

In this chapter I have tried to consolidate the theoretical gains that I consider to be basic resources for the conceptualisation of an ethical approach to applied anthropology in development.

At the beginning of the chapter, I explored the ways in which social anthropologists have apprehended social change. Here I stressed the relevance of political economic approaches which sought to explicate the impingement of Western, capitalist frameworks upon 'non' or 'pre' modern societies. Here I noted the importance of non-teleological approaches which combined materialistic and ideational perspectives.

I emphasised the importance of 'action oriented' perspectives which look at the agency of individuals in different settings and which recognise the complexity and fluidity of sociality animated by different visions of the good. Here I noted that seeking to understand the motivations and aspirations of individuals contextually has

been important for the applied anthropological insistence on self-determination and participation in development projects. Applied anthropologists working in development have an interest in elucidating and often countering the *asymmetries* between and within social groups in the development process. They are also interested in the different visions of the good lived out by different groups which are, in many ways, inseparable from aspects of their traditional livelihoods and forms of sociality. I have also sought to highlight the importance of recognising that 'people actively engage in shaping their own worlds, rather than their actions being wholly pre-ordained by capitalism or the intervention of the state' (Gardner and Lewis 1996: 59; *cf.* Long and Long 1992: 33).

As was discussed, the possibility of transcending oppressive forces is a hopeful implication of agency based, or action oriented theories. This approach underlies the influence anthropologists have exerted upon policy makers to, in Nelson and Wright's words 'enable categories of people traditionally objectified and silenced to be recognised as legitimate knowers; to define themselves, increase their understanding of their circumstances and act upon that knowledge' (2001: 11).

As anthropology has moved away from structural, normative and teleological theorisations towards a more dialectical, person and meaning centred perspective, the critique of development practice has evolved similarly. Interpretative anthropology, with it's subject of interest being mind-created worlds, draws quite different conclusions from a view of people in rural areas as populations and resources fixed within a deterministic causal order of necessary uniformities. The anthropological contribution to development is distinctive in that it makes a speciality of the translation or management of relative moralities and knowledges. The consequences of the Western scientific and bureaucratic approach, which imposes particular discrete disciplinary understandings on reality, which might be quite different from local meanings trouble Arce and Long (2000: 1) who argue that 'systematic modes of 'ignorance' arise out of 'the specialisation and thus fragmentation of development expertise, and from the inappropriateness of rationalist assumptions in assessing the success or otherwise of economics and social systems'.

Within the Western tradition, despite the preponderance of liberal individualist and capitalist forces, there are ethical resources that social anthropologists, as well as indigenous and marginalised peoples can draw upon in the construction and defence of different traditions of well being. I will explore this over the next three chapters.

Chapter 8

Western Thinking on Global Poverty

Thirty years ago, the philosopher Peter Singer explored the moral implications of global poverty vis-à-vis wealthy individuals and nations. From his deliberations, he arrived at the conclusion that there are no valid rational justifications for way in which people of relatively affluent societies (do not) respond to the extreme deprivation of those in faraway places.

> 'The whole way we look at moral issues – our moral and conceptual scheme – needs to be altered, and with it, the way of life that has come to be taken for granted in our society' (1996: 230).

The gist of Singer's utilitarian argument is that suffering and death from lack of food, shelter and medical care are unnecessary evils and, if we can prevent these from recurring without sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance, then we should be morally bound to do it[1]. He uses the following compelling analogy:

> 'If I am walking past a shallow pond and see a child drowning in it, I ought to wade in and pull the child out. This will mean getting my clothes muddy, but this is insignificant, while the death of the child would presumably be a very bad thing' (*loc. cit.*).

Singer recognises the radicality of this argument within the milieu of Western secular society; 'It may still be thought that my conclusions are so wildly out of line with what everyone else thinks and has always thought that there must be something wrong with the argument somewhere' (*loc. cit.*). Whilst this view, which prescribes making a strong connection between personal responsibility and public action, may rankle Western liberal sensibilities, Singer maintains that the logic is irresistible.

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[1] The idea that all persons should be respected on the same basis, as equally valid, is fundamental to Singer's understanding of utilitarianism.

I will keep this challenge in mind in my review of the major conceptual moral controversies and agendas that are intrinsic to development and my analysis of how these have been articulated in terms of the maxims that are fundamental to Western moral and political traditions.

The Background of Development Ethics

The subject matter of the next two chapters, 'development ethics', is a quintessentially multi-disciplinary endeavour. Crocker argues that this emerging field should be practised as a "multidisciplinary cross-cultural 'moral dialogue'" (1996: 457). Throughout the chapter, whilst I emphasise the aspects of this field that are of particular importance for the ethics of applied anthropology, I will reiterate that my central focus is the conceptual and moral resources that are available and brought into play in Western culture when deliberating about the morality of development.

These same issues will echo throughout the thesis as I seek to contextualise them in the world of applied anthropology. Delimiting my discussion of development ethics to what is relevant to the thesis topic (the moral and ethical dilemmas of social anthropologists working in development) requires leaving out far more than I have included[2]. This field is one which is characterised by a continual expansion of areas of enquiry and can verge on becoming amorphous, covering everything from indigenous cosmologies to macro economics. I have therefore sought to be as concise and

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[2] 'What should take place in World Development? What ends should poor countries pursue? What should be their fundamental economic, cultural and political goals? . . . Should the concept (of development) be ethically positive, negative, or neutral? Should development be descriptive, prescriptive, or both? How should the benefits and burdens of development be distributed? What ethical and other value issues emerge in development policies and practices and how should these be resolved? What moral responsibilities if any, do rich countries, regions and classes have towards impoverished countries, regions and classes? What international structures are called for by international or global justice? What can 'developed' areas learn from 'developing' countries with respect to their own 'authentic' development? Who ought to decide these questions? Social 'insiders', 'outsiders', or both? Technical experts, government officials, the market, social scientists, philosophers, the people? Which people? How or by what procedures or methods should these 'should' questions be answered? By internal or external criticism and enquiry? What are the implications of political realism and moral scepticism for the possibility and practice of development ethics?" (Crocker 1991: 457)

selective as possible in my treatment of the major debates that are of relevance to my topic.

Characteristics of the Contemporary Development Context

Globalised Polarised Disassembly

Development thinking has been transformed by the colossal changes in the world economy, political relations and the opening of world-wide communication that have occurred over the last few decades. The vested interests of the erstwhile dominant economic centres polarised in the West and East to fund development programmes that were fairly stable from the 1940s to the end of 1980s have altered radically. Whilst capital accumulation has decentralised dramatically, this process has been uneven and unequal. The view that the development of the North has a directly exploitative relationship with the underdevelopment of the South, which had the status of a presupposition in academic circles in the 'pre-globalisation era'[3] has been seriously undermined with the emergence of new centres of capital accumulation in the 'third world'. However, the global economy is configured such that the discernment of systematically exploitative relationships between different regions and within all regions remains obvious. Alongside the identity based cultural and social fracturing of the modernist statist project, an unquestionable feature of globalisation is new forms of social and economic polarisation and the concomitant increased vulnerability and deprivation of different social groups and regions.

Geertz observes that massive changes in the kinds of alliances and concerns that characterise world politics (a process that he calls "disassembly") requires new theoretical apprehensions:

> 'The shattering of larger coherences, or seeming such, into smaller ones, uncertainly connected one with another, has made relating local realities with

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[3] I use this term advisedly; whilst the volume of international trade, the speed, ubiquity and penetration of global communication and the sophistication of world wide institutional arrangements has increased exponentially over the last 20 years in particular, the world economy was already highly integrated in the late nineteenth century (Hirst and Thompson 1996).

overarching ones, "the world around here" with the world overall, extremely difficult . . . In a splintered world, we must address the splinters" (2001: 221)

The integrative tendencies of economic globalisation and the greater emphasis given to global institutions such as the UN have been countered by fragmentary or 'centrifugal' tendencies of differentiation. The idea of 'identity', whether rooted in region, religion, nation, ethnicity, or sexual orientation has become an increasingly persuasive idiom for resistance against modernist, imperialist and statist hegemony. Whereas previous models of development were cast in terms of effecting change through the apparatus of the modernist state through homogenising, and democratising forces, where ethnic identity, for instance, was rendered secondary to national unity, contemporary considerations of development now acknowledge strong forces that resist hegemonic cultural assimilation. Whilst Western culture is clearly the dominant and fastest growing political, economic and social system globally, this does not imply that members of other cultures simply accommodate themselves to this reality. Rapport observes that the view that 'through reactionary measures as diverse as religious fundamentalism and female circumcision, ethnic militancy and romantic localism (other cultures) are sporadically making war against the West as best they can' is in common currency (1997). Although one might wish to examine the dynamics by which cultural practices come to be understood as being 'reactionary' as opposed to 'traditional' and from whose perspective. Further, it is important to note that the non-confrontational ways in which members of other cultures adapt and respond to Western culture are also significant.

Highly organised ethnic groups armed with human rights legislation and appeals to international bodies positively set out to acquire greater control of the decision making power with regard to resources that was previously the exclusive provenance of the state. Wilson asserts that 'the language of human rights has moved in to fill the vacuum left by the demise of grand political narratives in the aftermath of the Cold War (1997: 1). This re-ethnification of social groups[4] compounded by the internal differentiation of nation states alongside the increasing mobility of capital through

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[4] Globally the numbers of people identifying themselves with a particular indigenous group/tradition has increased over the last 20 years.

trans-national corporations has resulted in an apparent generalised weakening of the state's ability to centralise and control all resources.

It could be asserted that in this dynamic, the minimalist state is a 'mask for expanded state domination, and its accompanying programmes of deregulation, privatisation and 'outsourcing' as new and more effective techniques for managing a social body dismembered by capitalist restructuring'(Gledhill 1997: 101-102). It is true to observe that the protectionist role of the State can disempower those in receipt of welfare through the denial of autonomy and heterogeneity. However, the neo-liberal stress on 'self-help' often emphasises individual efforts and pays scant attention to structural conditions which systematically disadvantage groups and individuals. The idea of 'self-help' can be sometimes paradoxically based upon an extremely patronising view of the economically disadvantaged, somehow not acknowledging the ingenuity, hard work and sheer endurance that the poor have to draw upon to survive in very difficult circumstances. The neo-liberal insistence on individual responsibility is ironic in the sense that there is simultaneously a moral stigmatisation of poverty and an ethical validation of voting on the basis of self interest, thus perpetuating conditions of poverty (also see Gledhill 1997: 88). In either case, self help or welfarism, the state's strategy amounts to the inhibition of the challenging of domination.

Friedman (1998) argues that as new global elites have emerged, in the 'old centres' (the EU and the US), social inequality has deepened both locally and globally. In the US, for example, in the last decade, whilst the Gross National Product reached a historic high, over the same period, poverty, homelessness and hunger progressively increased. A clear indicator of this is that child poverty increased to over 20% . There are important variations in the extent to which nation states assume responsibility for the welfare of their citizens. In the EU, for example, a strong version of social contract ensures that the majority of those whose income is below that of the poverty line are assisted financially whilst in the US only 0.5% of those below the poverty line are raised above it with government assistance (Hacker 1997). With these variations taken into consideration, there is still a clear downward trend in the extent to which the wealthy nations are delivering basic socio-economic rights (Symonides 1999, Hauserman 1998).

With the demise of the Cold War, Western government's efforts to win over the loyalties of Third World states by promising the redistribution of wealth through "partnership in progress", has arguably petered out to be largely replaced by an international agenda chiefly concerned with risk management, democratisation and strategic investment in a culturally polycentric world, albeit one that has clearly polarised concentrations of power. Chambers asserts that 'global power is now concentrated in the North, and especially in Washington. The North is now less concerned with what happens in the South' (1997: 4). The previous strategic interest in influencing third world governments ideologically has been replaced by a concern to perpetuate the prosperity of the Northern countries through controlling the terms of trade as well as a 'rush to ward off the flood of immigrants, to contain regional wars, to undercut illicit trade and to contain environmental disasters' (Sachs 1993: 3). Gardner and Lewis attempt to capture a frame of this fast moving picture:

> 'Development, both as theory and as practice, is increasingly polarised. While multilateral agencies such as the World Bank or United Nations agencies embrace neo-liberal agendas of structural adjustment, free trade and 'human development', others stress empowerment and the primacy of indigenous social movements. As the notion of development loses credibility, development practice is becoming increasingly eclectic. This can be both confusing and directionless, and liberating; a source of potential creativity' (Gardner and Lewis 1996: 22)

Whilst rights criteria have been made more available to disadvantaged peoples as a set of tools to protect their well being and self-determination, it is also contended that the individualising tendencies of economic and cultural globalisation have undermined their social cohesion and sense of belonging (Larrain 1989, Gledhill 1994, 2001). Increasing pressure has been exerted on indigenous peoples and other minorities in their efforts to retain their cultural particularity and traditional ways of life and well being. The use of rights language by identity based groups has increased as a function of the inequality, insecurity and fragmentation that is concomitant with the neo-liberal economic policies of many developing countries, thus accentuating and politicising

cultural difference. The particular vision of economic development associated with globalisation is dominated almost everywhere by neo-liberal theory and practice. These theories advocate the liberalisation of capital in the pursuit of profit, often to the cost of social goals. There is general agreement in the development community that the international and national regulation of these market forces is the single greatest priority in pro-poor policy advocacy (e.g. Leys: 1977)[5].

In recent years, civil society organisations have played an increasingly significant role in the formulation of international treaties[6]. NGOs' responses to changing world conditions have continued to evolve as they have elaborated new visions of development practice, making increasing use of the human rights framework for their activities. NGOs' practice and internal organisation have changed in order to form new alliances, partnerships and forms of solidarity locally, nationally and internationally with an increasing emphasis on advocacy and political pressure, combined and integrated with their traditional roles of service delivery and capacity building.

> 'Chief among these changes are a movement from 'development-as-delivery' to 'development-as-leverage'; new relationships with corporations, elements of states, the military, international institutions and other groups in civil society; and new skills and capacities to mediate these linkages.' (Edwards *et al* 1999: 117).

The role of NGOs and other CSOs has shifted towards the agenda of monitoring, pressurising and negotiating with States and private interests to fulfil their obligations and have consequently found that understanding the ways in which policy is created, and influencing those processes requires different tools from project management[7].

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[5] On the topic of globalisation, the UN Millennium Forum, which consists of representatives of civil society and NGOs world-wide concluded that 'while it offers significant opportunities for people to share and learn from each other, in its currently unregulated form, it increases inequities between and within countries, undermines local tradition and cultures and escalates disparities between the rich and poor, thereby marginalising large numbers of people in urban and rural areas' (Statement of the Millennium Forum at the UN Millennium Summit, Sep. 2000.

[6] Particularly the Summit Conferences of Beijing, Cairo, Copenhagen, Istanbul, Rio and Vienna.
[7] Edwards defines the 4 key challenges for NGOs as:
1.   How to mobilise a genuinely inclusive civil society at every level of the world system;

The numbers of people who view the world from contexts where the word 'remote' means places of economic and military power, wealth and privilege far outnumber the those who share a Western outlook. Chambers captures this sense of the relativity of experience and perspective;

> 'For others, from the farming or fishing village, the pastoralists camp, the small town or the city slum, the details differ, for each is local and special. For them, the world is not a global presence that has penetrated the living room, as in the North, but a specific outside, a particular surrounding of people, resources, services, opportunities, threats and conditions' (Chambers 1997: 4).

Notwithstanding the importance of apprehending local experiences of deprivation, this can be complemented by looking at the wider picture. Conventional figures, whilst not capturing the diverse realities and causes of poverty, can at least give an idea of the major figures, trends and contrasts.

Globally, the numbers of people living in absolute poverty continues to increase. There are a number of factors alongside income poverty that contribute to the experience of deprivation. These are the interlinked dimensions of 'physical weakness, isolation, vulnerability and powerlessness' (Chambers 1997: 7; 1983: 108-39). I will now give a brief overview of some of these realities and how they are experienced before beginning my discussion of the moral and ethical issues that emerge.

Uncertainty and Vulnerability: Most localities across the globe are subject to, and feel the impact of irregular and unexpected changes in markets, prices, services, and

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2. How to hold other institutions accountable for their actions and ensure that they respond to social and environmental needs;
3. How to ensure that international regimes are both implemented effectively and work to the benefit of poor people and poor countries;
4. How to ensure that gains made at the global level are translated into concrete benefits at the grass-roots (1999: 129)

supplies. Additionally, the negotiation of new forms of governance means that there are constant changes in institutional arrangements and in the civil order.

Less control: The globalisation of the market means that people at a local level as well as nation states have less control over their economies.

Polarisation: As mentioned above, the gap between the rich and poor continues to grow both locally and globally. In 1999, in the US, this gap had reached the widest since records began. The income of the poorest 20% of the US population continues to decrease whilst that of the richest 20% has increased by 20%.[8]. Between countries, a huge 'consumption gap' exists between industrialised and developing countries. The world's richest countries, with 20 per cent of global population, account for 86 per cent of total private consumption, whereas the poorest 20 per cent of the world's people account for just 1.3 per cent.

Endemic Poverty: Most of the countries of the 'developing world' are termed as "low-income, food deficit countries" by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The criteria for this definition is not producing sufficient food to meet the nutritional requirement of their people in addition to not being able to afford sufficient imports to cover the shortfall[9].

Unwarranted Deprivation: The fact that children are the primary victims of world hunger has to be considered in any discussion of development morality. At least 70% of the malnourished people of the world are children. Approximately forty thousand children die of starvation every day. The moral philosopher La Follette stresses the innocent and helpless nature of the majority of the victims of starvation; 'unless

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[8] These changes are understood by
- Increased automation;
- Increased manufacturing in developing countries;
- Increased reliance on temporary/low-wage workers;
- The decline of unions;
- More single parent families.

[9] In these countries, 800 million people are chronically malnourished and 2 billion people lack food security. Nearly 60 per cent of the population of 'developing countries' lack basic sanitation, one quarter lack adequate housing, and 20 per cent do not have access to modern health services. The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that about 1.1 billion people do not have access to clean water.

others provide adequate food, water, and care, children will suffer and die' (1996: 1; cf. WHO 1974: 677, 679).

Structural Causes and Vicious Circles: Whilst separating the world into distinct and opposed classes oversimplifies reality, there do appear to be generally stable groups (at different levels; social groups within nations and differences between nations), who live in structurally guaranteed asymmetric relations. The economically and politically powerful have multi-faceted interlocking privileges, advantages and resources which are pro-actively drawn upon to maintain their superior position. The marginalised and impoverished, in turn, have multiple interlocking disabilities, vulnerabilities as well as a chronic lack of bargaining power which contrive to make it virtually impossible to engage on an equal footing with the relatively powerful[10].

Preventability: Whilst our sensibilities are shocked by the bare facts of global inequity and the resulting scale of human suffering, the global response to poverty by those in power has been a fraction of both what it could be and what is necessary to eradicate it. We are more aware of what is going on everywhere in the world and it is obvious that the levels of poverty that exist today are an unnecessary evil. For instance, the UNDP calculates that the cost of eradicating poverty would be only 1% of global income.

The Moral Imperatives of Development Deliberation

Global resources amount to many times more than human requirements. At the same time the number of people living in conditions of extreme destitution and powerlessness continues to increase. Chambers wants to rouse a reaction in making this provocative point;

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[10] Developing countries, in order to pay their foreign debts, have to give their best land over to cash crops, while subsistence food farmers are pushed to survive on marginal land nearer deserts or up steep hillsides where the soil is eroded away. Brazil, for example, is the second largest agricultural exporter in the world, yet 60 per cent of its population suffers varying degrees of malnutrition.

'That some nations should be rich and others poor can even seem inevitable . . . . *These deep divisions seem rooted in the sort of people we are*' (1997: 2)

The very fact that there have been improvements shows that even with the efforts made, which are a fraction of what could be done and despite having to fight against systematic exploitation, poverty is not inevitable[11] and the extremes of inequality that characterise the modern world are unnecessary. This reality occurs as a result of people's choices, assumptions, actions and decisions not to act or assist. Singer's melancholic reflection is that;

'The suffering and death that are occurring . . . are not inevitable, not unavoidable in any fatalistic sense of the term . . . Unfortunately, human beings have not made the necessary decisions. At the individual level, people have, with very few exceptions, not responded in any significant way' (1996: 229).

More recently, the economists Dreze and Sen concur that there is 'no real evidence to doubt that all famines in the modern world are preventable by human action' (in Crocker 1996: 216). Nevertheless, the spending priorities of the developed nations quite clearly reflect an overwhelming interest in maintaining their superior position and expensive consumption habits. Whilst a great deal is known about the numbers of people now living and the resources that they need to live on, we seem to be living out what George Orwell called the ultimate obscenity; one half of the world watching the other half starve, knowing that they could do something about it.

On the other hand, there appears to be greater understanding of the dynamics of global poverty and a burgeoning will to act on behalf of those who lack power and whose livelihoods are vulnerable. This is evidenced by the increasing support and influence of international NGOs and the increasing attention to poverty reduction among the official development agencies. Chambers, in his analysis of the role played by development professionals argues that a powerful driving force in the development

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[11] For instance, child death rates in developing countries are less than half what they were in 1960.

effort, alongside political and economic manoeuvring, is the spirit of 'selflessness, generosity, commitment to others and the fulfilment these qualities bring' (1997: 13).

He argues further that all of the actions of development agencies are considered, consented to, resisted and carried out by individuals; 'people are complex and diverse. People can choose how to behave and what to do' (*loc. cit.*). In the following sections, I will look at the kind of moral deliberations individuals involved in development might have.

Moral or Technical Deliberations?

Notwithstanding the contention just made, the question of whether global poverty is fundamentally a *moral* or, instead, a technical[12] problem remains a moot point. By dint of the fact that development is perceived as a matter of specialist, technical and pedagogical input (rather than to do with the overconsumption of the affluent countries and the rules of international trade that benefit the richer nations), those without 'specialist knowledge[13]' may feel justified in relinquishing responsibility. Indeed, the rationale for the involvement of anthropologists in development is partly that they are deemed to have specialist knowledge and skills. A common role for anthropologists is to ensure that projects are culturally appropriate and really in tune with people's aspirations. However, it seems obvious that whilst there may be contexts in which expert knowledge is required before proceeding, the gross causes of mass starvation throughout the world are surely not outwith the bounds of everyday knowledge and expertise.

The dissonance between our moral intuitions about poverty and the inadequacy of Western society's actual response through programmes of solidarity and support remains puzzling. Is this because people do not connect their feelings of empathy or sympathy to be connected to moral responsibility? Perhaps Singer's assertion is wrong and people *do* respond both locally and globally but find that the achievement of human well being is very difficult and complex.

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[12] Improving the social, economic and technological order in different settings and in international relations.
[13] Social affairs, social policy, foreign policy, Social Anthropology, economics, agriculture, medicine, management, for example.

My view is that, in the final analysis, a moral response must underlie the ensuing technical, social and political deliberations of development discourse. Certainly, as Crocker asserts, 'the moral dimension of development theory and practice is just as important as the scientific and policy components' (1996: 206). The Cambridge philosopher Onora O'Neill writes that intrinsic to development discourse is profound moral content; 'social inquiry itself is no matter of ethically neutral facts. The debates between different experts often show that their disputes are *already* moral debates' (1996: 88). Facts and values are inevitably intertwined because what we perceive, or discern, as the ethically salient features of a given situation reflects our moral values. Ethical reflection plays a critical, guiding and also an *interpretative* role in relation to social reality and change:

> 'An ethic proposes norms for assessing present social institutions, envisaging future alternatives, and assigning moral obligations. An ethic provides a basis for deciding how agents should act in particular circumstances . . . how we 'read' the situation, as well as how we describe and classify it, will be a function of our value commitments and even our moral sensitivities' (Crocker 1996: 213)

For instance, if reflecting about the recurring famines of the Horn of Africa, our initial responses are likely to be emotional and fuelled by an intuitive sense of right and wrong. Thinking these reactions through will branch out to different ethical positions.

A Kantian might say that we should help the malnourished in the short term as hunger prevents them from being autonomous agents and we should also support them in the future to achieve long term autonomy. A neo-Malthusian utilitarian response might be that the famine is a natural process that should be allowed to run its course as, in the end, there will be a more sustainable population left over, as well as hard lessons learned. Adherents of a human rights perspective might stress the international duties to respond to others' 'right to food' and bemoan the fact that certain rights, such as this one are still not 'positive' or obligatory vis-à-vis the richer nations. Communitarians would advocate solidarity with those suffering and suggest that the richer nations can afford to cut their own consumption and redistribute wealth more

equitably. In each case, the socio-political philosophical position taken will seize on different aspects of the problem and, from each perspective, the implications for action and the resulting demands are very different.

In the next chapter, I will look at the implications of a number of key ethical models that are central to development ethics. First, before considering the ways in which our moral response branches out, I will now look at what the bases of moral deliberation for development thinking might be in terms of Western moral discourse. This next section constitutes a series of discrete but accumulative arguments that amount to an assertion that Western society (of which social anthropology is a product) has a moral responsibility to respond to global poverty that is greater than what has been achieved thus far.

A Universally Resonant Intuition

On an intuitive level, it seems beside the point to ask whether or not we should give aid when we become aware of the plight of emaciated families staggering across parched fields towards food stations. As Crocker argues, 'we should not take seriously those who insist that no action be taken until an argument is found to justify the view that the rich in the North should help the poor in the South' (1996: 212). There does not seem to be any good reason to contest whether we should alleviate their suffering and assist them to improve their long term prospects. La Follette (1996), echoing Charles Taylor (2001), argues that our initial reactions of sympathetic care for suffering children should be taken seriously as the basis of our moral response, that is, we should act on these instinctive intuitions [14].

Nussbaum also insists that any moral philosophy has to be grounded in the idea of human dignity which has cross cultural resonance and intuitive power:

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[14] The scope of this thesis precludes a proper discussion on 'intuitions' in ethics. Here, I present my belief that certain facts that are ethically irreducible can be, and are, intuited for the most part cross culturally. I simply refer to the uncontroversial intuition that all human beings are worthy of, and need to be recognised as separate moral agents with certain requirements that should be met to make their flourishing possible. Obviously, further discussions should ensue from this position as to what further irreducibly ethical properties, or facts are intuited. Social constructivists use the idea of intuition in a different way, not in a pre-political or pre-cultural way but rather to describe the plurality of higher order intuitions as functions of different life worlds. The related topic of Aristotle's assertion that ethics and morality need to be grounded in an idea of human nature is discussed in the next chapter.

'For we see a human being as having worth as an end, a kind of awe inspiring something that makes it horrible to see this person beaten down by the currents of chance - and wonderful, at the same time, to witness the way in which chance has not completely eclipsed the humanity of the person' (2000: 73)

La Follette (1996) asserts that those theorists who argue that we should *not* give aid; 'go to great pains to show that this sympathetic response should be constrained. They typically claim that assisting the hungry will demand too much of us, or that assistance would be useless and probably detrimental' (1996: 5). On some libertarian views, it is inadvisable for the state to respond to the appeals of those in need as a matter of course: 'In this rigorously methodologically individualist conception, involuntary, structurally imposed situations are convenient fictions dreamed up by totalitarian wolves masquerading as liberal humanist sheep' (Gledhill 1994: 80).

Notwithstanding these objections, the urge to respond to the avoidable suffering of others is, I believe, the appropriate starting point for a discussion on the morality of development practice. I discuss the implications of the Kantian insistence on treating others as ends rather than means in the next chapter.

The ironic stance of post-modern thought which stems from perspectivist roots, whilst not supporting the idea of universal 'human nature' that can be intuited or worked out rationally, can still, according to the philosopher Rorty (1986) and the social anthropologist Rapport (1997), support a political position that insists upon the intrinsic value of each individual life. Whilst post-modernists consider all truths to be relative, recognising the fact that all human beings can feel pain[15], experience joy, be creative and gain fulfilment in different ways can form the basis of an ironically

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[15] The utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham held that the fact that all human beings have the possibility of experiencing pain and pleasure provides a basis for equality. Whilst humans behave so as to maximise pleasure and avoid pain, correct political action should be based upon inculcating the principle of all people seeking the greatest utility for all. He also held (in a way similar to post-modernists) such ideas as 'natural rights' to be fictions or 'nonsense upon stilts' which, nevertheless, were useful for the ordering of society (Harrison 1983). MacIntyre similarly argued that the belief in natural rights is 'one with belief in witches and unicorns' (1997: 67)

universal ethic. On this basis, leaving ideas of 'Truth' aside, the individual has an irreplaceable value.

The Question of Restitution

An important question within development ethics is whether the West has been causally responsible for global poverty; 'Did we, individually or collectively, cause their hunger or create the environment which made their hunger and malnourishment more likely?' (La Follette 1996: 3). Several important theorists argue convincingly that the affluent nations are collectively historically responsible for many of the difficulties that developing countries now experience (O'Neill 1993; Sen 1996; Crocker 1996; Balakrishnan / Narayan 1996). On this account, poverty exists, in part, due to the colonial disruption of economies that were previously comparatively viable. For example, the view that imperial powers systematically prevented forms of trade or manufacture and encouraged the production of goods that did not compete with the industries of the developed world (coffee, oil, rubber, for instance) constitutes a widely accepted argument.

Responsibility and Acknowledged Dependence

A further, and in my view, more persuasive argument for responsibility complements the above. This is the view that there is an onus to counter global poverty regardless of the imperialistic dynamics described above. La Follette asserts that we have a basic moral responsibility that is *independent of blame*: 'This shared responsibility springs from our common vulnerability, and from our ability to respond to others who are similarity situated (*loc. cit.*). All human beings are vulnerable to dangers that are outwith our control and foresight and therefore 'shared responsibility and sympathy conspire to create the sense that we should go to the aid of those who cannot alleviate their own acute needs' (*loc. cit.; cf.* MacIntyre 1999: 120-155). Whilst a great deal of attention is given to 'liberty' in Western moral and political philosophy, this clearly has to be counter balanced by the mundane and everyday experiences of finitude, weakness, poverty and mutual dependence, as I will argue in the next Chapter.

The Condition of Connectedness

As the inter-dependency between the developed and undeveloped world is undeniable, it is not sufficient to argue that those who are unaffected by multiple deprivation can avoid contributing to poverty by simply going about their everyday lives. Chambers underlines this point; 'Humankind is closer together, and the peripheries are closer to the centres of power, than ever before' (1997: 14) [16].

Given this condition of connectedness, Singer and Chambers concur that our obligation to mitigate the causes of deprivation is not lessened by the number of people who, in respect to that evil, are in the same situation as we are (although Singer recognises that, psychologically, there is a big difference) [17]. With regard to our reactions (as affluent Westerners) to poverty on a global level it is generally argued that if everyone contributed a little, the accumulated total will be sufficient, that is, extraordinary lengths are not required by individuals. This hypothetical premise, however, as pointed out by Singer, is unlikely to ever come true and morally, more is often required than doing the minimum in the vain hope that everyone else will do the same.

Solidarity with Strangers

The commitment to abide with the requirements of assuring the well being of others is obviously taxing, especially as the principle of universal solidarity takes no account of distance:

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[16] This echoes the well known speech made by Nehru on the eve of the Independence of India:' . . . for all the nations and people are too closely knit together today for any one of them to imagine that it can live apart. Peace has been said to be indivisible; so is freedom, so is prosperity now, and so also is disaster in this One World that can no longer be split into isolated fragments' (Speech delivered in the Constituent Assembly, New Delhi, 1947. (in Nussbaum 2000: 10).

[17] Singer is a utilitarian and this particular argument would be described more specifically as countering 'rule-utilitarianism whereby 'the right action is that which is consistent with those rules which would maximise utility if all accepted them' (Crisp and Chappell 2000: 909)

'If we accept any principle of impartiality, universalisability, equality or whatever, we cannot discriminate against someone merely because he is far away from us (or we are far away from him)' (Singer 1996: 231)[18].

La Follette suspects that the greatest obstacle to helping those in chronic need is that most people do not feel any personal bond with people of poor, developing countries. However, as Ardener observes, 'Anthropological works and anthropological lives are very closely meshed' (1985: 54). For anthropologists who have worked closely with people who are struggling with the realities of poverty, the connection is almost certainly going to be there. It is important to remember that the idea of 'poverty' is relative; indigenous people healthily living far away from urban centres but without Western material plenty, cannot be described as being 'poor', although they might be categorised as such in development reports. Anthropologists may be concerned to contribute to their well being through less tangible means than contributing directly to development projects, such as through communicating and teaching indigenous versions of well being and dignity (e.g. Goldman's [1963]work on the Cubeo of North West Amazon where he describes their ideas of quality of life in terms of their harmonious relationships involving large networks of close social and personal bonds and conceptions of fertility and fecundity (Santos-Granero 2000: 270).

Moral Equivocation

Notwithstanding the assertions just made, in Western moral discourse, there are many readily available reasons for not responding wholeheartedly to those who experience multiple deprivations. Whilst trying hard not to homogenise the diversity of opinion and perspectives in the West, I tentatively propose that the following features of Western culture are efficacious in the continuation of global poverty as described above. My opinion is that whilst there is obviously an almost endless diversity of

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[18] It is interesting to note that a distinction is often made between 'development ethics' and 'international ethics'; Amartya Sen, for instance, in his recent book, *Development as Freedom*, explicitly separates these fields of enquiry in his focus upon how state policies should engender an ethic based upon the principles of 'human capabilities'. Martha Nussbaum departing from a similar starting point attempts a definition of internationally applicable principles of human capabilities but, like Sen, does not extend her argument to international ethics in the sense of connections and responsibilities between peoples/nations.

dynamic cultural realities in the countries of Europe and the USA, certain patterns, or net results point to common tendencies in Western thinking.

A Minimalist Ethic: Western distinctions between duty and charity are often based upon a liberal minimalist ethic concerned chiefly with what makes life tolerable. Acts which impact upon the safety or liberty of others are prohibited. The arguments against a moral code that demands more than this are that, inevitably, there will be problems with compliance or the abuse of authority. Acts based upon charity, generosity or inspiration, add to the quality of living but are not requirements. In a subsequent section, I discuss various critiques of this minimalist ethic.

Sacrifice as Anathema: The idea that we have to sacrifice something in order to balance the extremes of inequality is present in Western consciousness but has little evocative power in terms of individuals changing their lives radically for the sake of strangers. Western liberal morality contains a hierarchy of values which ranks subjective personal fulfilment higher than solidarity. The obligation to give up things that we feel that we have a right to is anathema to the standard liberal morality that infuses our culture. La Follette asserts that Western culture largely opts for a minimalist . . . version of morality with regard to public action which sets 'expectations which all but the most weak-willed and self-centred person can satisfy' (1996: 15).

Learned Helplessness: Faced with the statistics given above, resignation is a common response; human nature is like that, there will always be rich and poor and solutions are never going to be easy to find. Chambers echoes this observation; 'Much that happens in a vast scale is neither accountable, nor under effective control . . . Such global trends present themselves, like the weather, as hazards to be observed and forecast fallibly, but seemingly outside human control' (1997: 12).

Pessimism: A milder form of resignation is pessimism. The realities of economic development, as touched upon above, clearly favour those who are already in positions of power and, arguably, always will[19].

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[19] It is reasonable to conclude that contemporary political arrangements are simply not compatible with international justice. Economic development requires capital investment, technological innovation and

Blaming the Victim: The objection is sometimes raised that we cannot be responsible for those in chronic need when they are the cause of their own difficulties, whether this be because of corruption, bad management, wastefulness, laziness or whatever[20].

Theoretical Fundamentalisms: As will be discussed in subsequent chapters, in their extreme forms, both Marxist and neo-liberal theory do not attribute sufficient agency to the individual to change his or her life and surroundings in a self-conscious and intentional way. On the former view, material forces are what determine the course of history whilst on the latter this is decided by a simplistic understanding of human beings as self-maximisers. Other fundamentalisms can be used to justify not assisting those in need. Neo-Malthusians, for instance make comparisons between the lives of the well off to the plight of passengers on a life-boat, who can rescue those around them only at the risk of sinking and drowning everybody (Hardin 1996).

'Kindness that can Kill': A pragmatic objection to aid might be that 'throwing our money' at what we perceive as poor countries is a simplistic reaction, albeit motivated by good intentions. For instance, a common example given is that as the direct delivery of free food can send market food prices plummeting, causing a disincentive for farmers to grow food, this kind of aid may be counter productive. In this circumstance, the maxim of assisting those afflicted with malnutrition will in actual fact, mean *delimiting* food aid. Caplan argues further that 'to receive charity from aid

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trading opportunities, all three of which are relatively scarce in most developing countries. International capital can be attracted by developing countries only if they offer favourable investment opportunities. Investment is based upon potential profit rather than neediness. As a result of this, rural development for instance, is chronically under funded as, generally speaking, investors consider it to offer poor returns (depending on the state of the market and the trade tariffs imposed on different countries and products). Investors are more likely to put capital into the manufacture of expensive luxury items. Developing countries are often forced to attract investment by bypassing human rights standards, for example in 'export processing zones' where long hours, dangerous working conditions and low remuneration are the norm. Further, even when Third World products are potentially cheaper, developed countries may discourage their import so as to avert competition with the high earning producers of the richer countries.

[20] However, as noted above, the majority of the victims of multiple deprivation are actually children who are 'paradigmatically innocent since they are neither causally nor morally responsible for their plight. They did not cause drought, parched land, soil erosion, and over-population; nor are they responsible for social, political, and economic arrangements which make it more difficult for their parents to obtain food. If anyone were ever an innocent victim, the children who suffer and die from hunger are' (La Follette 1996: 213). It is also obvious that the marginalised and malnourished have little say in the way that they will be affected by adverse environmental conditions or callous governmental policies.

workers is to be outside the normal mechanisms of reciprocity, and thus marginalised, even dehumanised' (1994: 20; cf. Douglas 1977). Also, the objection is often raised that aid often does not reach the people it is intended for, and is swallowed up by corrupt officials or NGOs. These arguments are plausible in the paradoxical sense that it is risky to hand over resources to countries that are extremely polarised in the distribution of wealth[21].

Responding to Poverty as a Moral Imperative

In this chapter, I have sought to lay out some of the core issues of development ethics and also, the key features and characteristics of the development context. These themes will be looked at in more punctual terms in the next chapter.

On the basis of the arguments made above in the penultimate section, it would seem logical to argue that revising our current global economic and political arrangements is a matter of *'justice'*, something that is not morally optional. Going back to Singer's challenge, I submit that responding to global poverty is not a supererogatory act, (one that is good to do but not wrong not to do); it is a binding moral requirement or *duty* (Singer 1996; cf. Heyd 1982). The issue of poverty overseas, then, is *primarily a moral issue* although there are further, ensuing secondary questions of a sociological, anthropological, economic and political nature. For those who are concerned with the inequalities endemic in the world, considering how to establish just relations opens up many new questions.

The next chapter draws upon both the moral imperatives and abdications or qualifications that have been described above. In the next chapter, I try to move beyond a *'tout noir'* version of Western morality to focus on the moral resources that I believe anthropologists can draw upon to contribute to an ethical applied anthropology. I discuss the political, social, cultural and economic models that have characterised Western approaches to development policy and practice. The discussion moves towards a description of the positive rights based and capabilities approaches

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[21] Angola for example, 'earns $3-5 billion a year from natural resources, and yet every three minutes an Angolan child dies from a preventable disease' (Oxfam report to UN Security Council). However, this

to development which have emerged as a result of sustained critiques of other approaches, philosophical reflection and lessons learned in practice.

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does not justify not giving aid. Measures can always be introduced to increase the transparency and efficacy of aid.

Chapter 9

The Moral *Possibilities* of the Dynamics of Western Driven Development as Social Change

So far, I have sought to establish and make clear that the particular distribution of wealth that characterises the modern world is unbalanced and inequitable. I have also argued that Western rationalist and individualist economic theory has directly anti-human consequences. What is of interest is how these facts are interpreted and dealt with in Western reasoning through its particular social inheritances.

On the whole, when I refer to Western moral reasoning, I am speaking of the dominant liberal individualist tradition. The communitarian tradition in the West, which can be traced back to Roman ideas of *'sensus communis'* (and beyond) is often wrongly maligned by associating it with collectivism and the mutilation of individual freedom and autonomy for the sake of collective structures. Communitarianism, in fact, is usually far more subtle than its critics suggest and seeks to articulate the importance of 'belonging' and relating to others as well as the myriad ways in which mutual well being can be achieved in different social forms.

One of my contentions in this chapter is that whilst important qualifications have to be made, development ethics cannot be properly conceived without a simultaneous, albeit very careful, espousal of universal values and a focus on the embedded, contingent and contextual nature of the social construction of well being. The position that I adopt tends towards the communitarian and seeks to draw attention to the failings of liberal individualism. My view is that the dominance of neo-liberal values directly creates poverty and the dislocation of viable life-worlds. Development ethicists, in general, argue against the gradual global erosion of policies of redistribution and social cohesion. Nevertheless, these concerns involve 'swimming against the current' when articulated through the conceptual framework of the Western moral tradition and the practice of neo-liberalism.

Development is ostensibly about trying to alleviate the suffering of those affected by hunger, famine and preventable disease and to assist them to gain the social, economic and cultural resources to make them less vulnerable to these problems. In Copenhagen 1995, through the UN, the global community committed itself to the goal of 'eradicating poverty in the world, through decisive national actions and international co-operation, as an ethical, social, political and economic imperative for humankind' (WSSD, 1995).

Clearly, *ethical* development strategies must focus on the sustainability of livelihoods. In the case of many indigenous groups, this means that they should be assisted in defending their livelihoods from the social fragmentation that often accompanied the encroachment of market forces. In wider, capitalist society, addressing chronic need means bringing about long term, sustained and in-depth change in social relationships and institutions. In their current thinking and, increasingly in their practice, both official and non-governmental development agencies have established a reasonably stable set of concepts and shared understandings about what 'good practice' and beneficial social change means. This generalised consensus brings together a number of areas:

- Human rights have been in the ascendancy in development thinking, especially over the last 6 years; the phrase 'all human rights for all' which is sprinkled throughout recent development literature captures this approach. (The difficulty, (that will be discussed shortly) is that, in practice, 'positive' rights are given far less emphasis than 'negative' rights which are associated with liberal individualism;
- Interventions seek to ensure that the most vulnerable individuals and groups have the means to maintain a basic livelihood (or have employment possibilities) locally and have recourse to 'safety net' resources in times of need;
- This often entails 'capacity building' of various kinds (to assist individuals to be able to compete in local markets, to learn skills, to create co-operatives, to know their rights, for instance);

- The State, in developing countries, as far as is possible, is expected to provide basic services (such as clean water, health, education) whilst not neglecting to expand the market locally and globally (although, for many theorists, this market mentality is itself *the* problem);

- Alongside this is the effort to strengthen the possibilities for poor and marginalised groups to play an active part in political decision making and to insist upon the accountability of politicians and bureaucrats.

I will now look in greater detail at the ways in which this consensus has come about.

The Compromises and Possibilities of Modern Liberalism

At this stage, it is necessary to briefly discuss the model of 'Modern Liberalism', which, as the dominant and fastest growing political system in the world, constitutes the primary conceptual context for development thinking. Gledhill makes the cautionary remark that, 'liberalism is a far from a uniform doctrine as far as conceptions of social justice are concerned' (1994: 79). With this in mind, I admit that in my characterisation of liberalism here, I run the risk of being over-schematic, as the different philosophical currents that run into liberalism mingle and combine in countless forms. Nevertheless, I am going to make an attempt at a summary of the main themes. Briefly here, I aim to map out the reasoning behind modern liberalism as concisely as possible[1]. Further implications of this model for development ethics are discussed throughout the chapter and also, in the next chapter.

At one level, development policy and practice is deeply influenced by the maxims that underlie this approach. At another, critical voices in development, whilst being acutely aware of its failings, because of its very ubiquity and persuasive force, still feel that it is necessary to work within it - trying to curb its excesses. Grasping the *real-politick* of the contemporary political and economic order is essential for those who hope to work successfully on behalf of, or with, the poorest and marginalised.

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[1] Space does not permit a discussion of the relationship between liberalism and democracy. My discussion on rights below, however, does allude to the dynamics between social exclusion and political participation and representation.

There are different ways of approaching 'distributive justice'. The philosopher Nozick, a rights-based libertarian espouses 'procedural justice' which is based upon the principle that any economic distribution is 'just' if the process by which it comes about is itself 'just' (1974; MacIntyre gives an excellent critique of Nozick in 1997: 244-255). Examples of approaches that are based on procedural reasoning are Libertarianism and its expression, Capitalism. On this view, 'freedom' is defined in terms of individuals not being *constrained*; and the right of not being interfered with (unless they harm others), the government's role should be minimal, paying for the care of other people should be optional, the state should not be involved in the redistribution of resources. Whilst liberal individualists put a good face on this, stressing the benefits of freedom, the logic of this approach leaves perplexing gaps. One comes across counter intuitive and odd assertions such as that to be deprived of food by the unintended consequences of other's action is not to be deprived of freedom (Nozick 1974). This abstract idea seems at odds with our intuitive sense. Freedom here also becomes segregated from the social and material conditions that are necessary for human beings to function together. The conception of 'rights' here ignores the question of whether or not the thing that I assert that I have 'a right to' is something that I really need, will benefit from, or whether the exercising of this right will be in harmony with, or intelligible within, a particular social setting.

Perhaps what makes this system so problematic is that it is grounded in a simple belief that human beings are basically motivated by narrow self-interest where the possessive individual, rightly or wrongly conceives of himself as utterly sovereign in his moral authority. Clearly there are gaping holes in this view of human nature and of relating, as I argued in the last chapter. From this belief stems the rationale that competition creates the most efficient economic system. Capitalism incorporates a process view of distributive justice[2] where material and social inequality are entirely natural. State or community intervention should be kept to a minimum as this is seen as menacing and unnecessarily compromising the self-realisation and rights[3] of individuals.

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[2] Looking at capitalist society in terms of the 'end-state', the idea of meritocracy is also central, that is, the idea that those who have achieved wealth have done so by their own ingenuity and hard work.
[3] MacIntyre notes that 'there is no expression in any ancient or medieval language correctly translated by our expression 'a right' until near the close of the middle ages: the concept lacks any means of

An alternate approach to procedural justice is to consider 'end-state justice' which looks at the actual distribution of wealth and freedom in a society. Socialism, on this basis, stresses *justice* more than efficiency. Freedom here is understood in terms of not being oppressed as a result of being deprived of basic requirements such as nurturing, education and health care. This seems to be based on the self evident observation expressed by Nussbaum 'the various liberties of choice have various material preconditions, in whose absence there is merely a simulacrum of choice' (2000: 53). The obvious implication is that, if a society's economic and political frameworks mean that certain groups are routinely disadvantaged, redistribution of resources is necessary.

Approaches to distributive justice can also be understood in terms of rights. Libertarianism, for instance recognises *negative* rights, whereas its antithesis, socialism stresses *positive* rights[4]. On the latter view, rights are recognised to have only a spectral reality for those who are not able to exercise these rights as a result of disempowerment, marginalisation, oppression or discrimination. At the opposite end of the spectrum from libertarianism, 'radical egalitarian' approaches negate the idea that there is any good reason why some people should have access to more resources than others and assert that there is no justification for subordinating the lives of some individuals to allow the excessive freedoms of others. The phrase 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his need', associated with Karl Marx, captures this ethos[5].

However, the socialist insistence that 'need', rather than merit, contribution, or effort should be singled out as the criteria for distributive justice is seriously contested. Rawls[6], for example, argues that justice is not the only moral issue in economic matters; efficiency, liberty and tolerance are also moral values or 'virtues' that play a

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expression in Hebrew, Greek, Latin or Arabic, classical or medieval, before about 1400, let alone in Old English, or in Japanese even as late as the mid-nineteenth century (1997: 69).

[4] Negative rights are those which protect basic civil and political freedoms. Positive rights are those social, economic and cultural rights to the material, social and cultural conditions that are necessary to be able to exercise basic freedoms.

[5] This phrase actually originated with the 'early French socialists of the Utopian school and was officially adopted by German socialists in 1875' (Rescher 1966: 73).

[6] Who is considered to be 'at the forefront of modern attempts to reconcile liberal concerns with liberty and social equality' (Gledhill 1997: 84)

role in the creation of human well being and societal order (Rawls 1971). Whilst being committed to measured redistribution, Rawls' liberal warning is against political approaches that impose material equality by claiming an excessively heavy toll on individual liberty.

Modern Liberalism, then, takes on board some of the above objections to libertarianism in the recognition that people through no fault of their own sometimes cannot compete with others and cannot provide for themselves. On this basis, navigating between these different positions, modern liberalism constitutes a mixed political and economic system, characterised by the constant negotiation of compromises.

Modern Western democracies, in theory, have sought to strike a balance between liberty and equality so that no social groups are so vulnerable that their welfare is impossible whilst taxes are kept down so as not 'to rob' others of liberty. Rapport captures the liberal solution as being rooted in 'a universalistic procedural justice and a compromise: a curtailing of the final end of absolute liberty of each individual so as to make room for that of others, and also a curtailing of expectations concerning the everyday reach of deep understanding or love' (1997: 184)

Nevertheless, one can not deny that the compromises of liberalism are fraught with continuous shrill argumentation and often result in a generalised and electorally decisive tolerance for the existence of poverty and marginalisation. A standard consensus in liberal societies is that the State can legitimately neglect certain social, cultural and economic rights[7].

This brings us back to development ethics. It is important to note how these basic political philosophies provide a background picture here. Development ethicists have sought to formulate ways of comparatively gauging the well being of individuals and social groups cross-culturally. This corresponds to the international liberal agenda of agreeing overlapping, or universal values that are broad enough to embrace the diversity of cultural and political settings. This endeavour requires looking at

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[7] Gledhill gives a good analysis of this phenomenon in the US over the last 20 years (1997).

distributive ethics, political liberalism and the ways in which different visions of the good and corresponding ideas of conduct can co-exist. Within this broad agenda there are a number of approaches to development thinking that need to be singled out. As I discuss these, I will also introduce a number of critical perspectives that reveal the manifold difficulties of liberal individualist approaches to achieve societal well being.

Dominant Paradigms for Development

Here I look critically (and as concisely as possible) at a number of dominant approaches to development with the aim of tracing the emergence of the 'capabilities approach' which has become an increasingly important way of thinking about ethical and effective human development[8]. My aim in this subsection is to identify which theoretical presuppositions have been used to judge one approach or argument as being superior to others in the field of development ethics.

Commodity based Approaches

The identification between successful development and higher 'gross national product' (GNP) has a central place in economic development policy and planning. This approach makes the apparently elementary mistake of assuming that the expansion of goods and services can be used as a barometer of societal well being as well as a way of making comparisons between nations in terms of 'quality of life'. The plain fact that commodities are valuable only to the extent that they are available (and valuable) to people has often been circumnavigated by many orthodox development economists (see Corbridge 1995, Sen 1989, Frank 1966, Lal 1985 and Booth 1985, for instance). If the entitlement of all people to goods and services within a nation happened to be more or less equal, there would be a logic to using the total amount of wealth as a measure of basic economic well being. However, as Sen affirms, 'that assumption is a non-starter' (1996: 118). Firstly, the actual distribution of wealth is not specified and, further, the connection between income and other factors (parameters such as gender, age, ethnic group, geographical area) is not

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[8] The UNDP's Human Development Reports since 1994 have adopted an evolving capabilities approach.

explored[9]. Additionally, no information about the correlation between income and other measures of well being (or goods, such as education, health, nutritional status[10], employment, political and other freedoms etc.) is forthcoming .

In his seminal book, 'Poverty and Famines', Amartya Sen (1981) corrected what had been received wisdom in his argument that famine is not so much caused by a shortage of food but rather the fact that large numbers of people have somehow lost their *entitlements*. Entitlements are understood in terms of people's capacity to obtain food, to control land and make independent decisions regarding the production and reservation of food and other commodities. Sen looks at entitlements in relation to social groups, households as well as attending to individuals *within* households. Due to the fact that nearly every part of the world is linked up as part of local or global exchange economies (traditional and purely subsistence economies are now scarce globally) hunger is less likely to be caused by a lack of availability of food (as a result of crop failure or some other 'act of God') than by a lack of entitlement to food. Polanyi (1944) had argued similarly that, apart from large scale natural disasters, starvation has been uncommon in 'pre-capitalist' societies that often enjoyed sustainable abundance and that trading food at the expense of local production for consumption has been a contributory factor to recent famines. Whilst there are local production failures, what is significant is that those who are first to suffer from this are those who have 'low entitlement status', for instance those without work, land, the marginalised, the weak or those who have meagre networks of support. The fact of starvation does not necessarily mean that there is a lack of food available to a population as a whole but *does* imply the relative poverty of those affected. Also, starvation itself is far less likely to be the cause of death than any one of the easily preventable diseases that the malnourished are susceptible to (de Waal 1989, 2000). In short, as chronic malnourishment occurs in places (or understood in global terms) where there is an abundance of food, the issue is now understood to be people's access to or command over available resources. In previous chapters, I looked at other

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[9] A clear example is that, according to the UNDP's Human Development Report of 1997, whilst the GNP per capita of Honduras, Pakistan and Zimbabwe were at similar levels, gender inequality in Pakistan was markedly worse.

[10] Relevant factors to be considered when looking at the distribution of food; age, sex, whether pregnant or lactating, metabolic rate, body size, activity levels, medical condition, climatic conditions, social needs of communal life, education, access to medical services, social class, ethnic group (Sen 1996: 188)

failings of the commodity based approach in terms of devastating social fragmentation through such phenomena as labour migration and rural displacement which may well be form part of a general upswing in a country's GNP.

The GNP approach, then, has clear drawbacks and blind spots as a way of grasping, promoting or comparing human well being. The very fact of its preponderance in development, combined with how little sense it makes, confirms the assertion that the operation of Western political and institutional forces attains only a pretence of rationality.

Utilitarian Approaches

'Utilitarian economics' is used prevalently as a model for development policy (Lal 1985). Utilitarianism, according to Weale, 'is a social ethic that may be interpreted as giving a pre-eminent place to the idea that the welfare of 'society' should be the over-riding goal of public policy' (2000: 927). Similar problems to the commodity based approach are immediately apparent. However, to say this is not to deny that certain aspects of utilitarian approaches have contributed to socially beneficial practices. This reformist perspective explicitly recognises that social arrangements can be altered so as to maximise 'happiness'. Utilitarian reasoning emerged as a consequence of the Enlightenment's discarding of hierarchical, 'superstitious' and teleological modes of moral reasoning and constitutes an attempt to formulate a rational way of reconciling the Enlightenment's stress on the autonomous individual moral agent pursuing his own ends with a balanced social order[11]. On this basis, utilitarian reasoning supports social engineering approaches such as the welfare state, national health services and social work provision that characterise many Western democracies. Welfarist approaches have focused on 'utilities' as the standard of value and, on this basis, policy decisions are based upon the average, or total, 'satisfaction' or 'utility' of a given population. However, as a basis for social development, utilitarianism has a number of fatal flaws.

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[11] Rapport (1997) advocates a comparable combination of the Nietzschean self with Mill's utilitarianism.

Immediately, it can be noted that this focus on averages and majorities results in the same inattention to the particularity of individual well being or that of specific social groups. In short, in a region where a majority expresses satisfaction about a good such as educational provision, it is possible that a minority have utterly no access whatsoever. Making decisions based on general levels of 'utility' will inevitably mean that some goods will be 'traded off' against others.

Secondly, going by the logic of utilitarian theory, focused upon the goal of gaining happiness for the greatest number, it is possible to interpret the alleviation of malnutrition and other deprivations as 'secondary goals' that do not necessarily have the status of moral imperatives. The neglect of certain sectors of the population for the 'greater good' may be considered to be just[12]. O'Neill claims that some utilitarians, 'in their darkest Malthusian moments thought that average happiness might best be maximised not by improving the lot of the poor but by minimising their numbers, and so have advocated policies of harsh neglect of the poorest and most desperate' (1996: 104).

A further difficulty is that on utilitarian versions, 'well being' is not necessarily understood in terms of 'active doing and being' but rather, in terms of 'satisfaction'. This is one of Nussbaum's central criticisms; 'One thing we want to know is how individuals feel about what is happening to them, whether dissatisfied, or satisfied. But we also want to know what they are actually able to do and to be' (2000: 63). It seems apparent then that 'confining attention to utilities amounts to seeing people in a highly limited way' (Sen 1996: 188). The question of 'well being' is surely inextricable from healthy human functioning or flourishing and how this is aided and constrained by the circumstances in which individuals exist. A utilitarian approach to public action does not elicit sufficient information to allow decisions to be made regarding well being on an individual basis. The polymorphous nature of 'well being' and the radically different ways in which this can be achieved mean that utilitarian assessments always risk being crudely reductionist. This point is expressed by MacIntyre: 'Different pleasures and different happinesses are to a large degree

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[12] Intrinsic to neo-liberal approaches to economic development is the conflict between launching policies that are bound to destroy the viability of fragile livelihoods so as to promote economic expansion.

incommensurable: there are no scales of quantity or quality on which to weigh them' (1997: 64).

Fourthly, from certain kinds of utilitarian reasoning, paternalistic approaches, that subvert the self-determination of individuals and groups, are endorsed (see Crocker 1996: 224). The utilitarian recognition that people may not be able to achieve autonomy is a strength in the sense that there is provision for those who, for whatever reason, can not acquire the means for a dignified life without support. The assistance they receive, however, does not necessarily lead to greater independence or autonomy (which as we will see in the next section is a central commitment of Kantian ethics). In this sense, utilitarian approaches do not necessarily endorse empowerment, 'bottom up' or participatory planning.

A fifth serious difficulty arises when one considers the controversial issue of 'subjective welfarism' (which is the utilitarian attempt to mitigate their reliance on averages). On this method of establishing economic policies, an individual or group's 'utility' is gauged according to assessments of whether their 'subjective preferences' are being satisfied. Nussbaum (2000) argues that 'social conditioning' shapes the content of people's 'preferences' and insists that some sectors of society may be conditioned to accept ways of living that are 'objectively' beneath universally agreed standards of human dignity. On this theory of 'adaptive preferences', the idea is asserted that the 'possibilities of being' imposed upon individual or group come to delimit their preferences (Nussbaum 2000: 136)[13]. Nussbaum sees this as dangerous because subjectivist views could be used by economic planners to justify the 'quiet acceptance of deprivation' (2000: 139). Sen argues similarly that: 'judging importance by the mental metric of happiness or desire fulfilment can take a deeply biased form due to the fact that the mental reactions often reflect defeatist compromises with harsh reality induced by hopelessness . . . the hopeless underdog loses the courage to desire a better deal and learns to take pleasure in small mercies. The deprivations appear muffled and muted in the metric of utilities' (1996: 189). Weale makes a similar observation, 'happy slaves might be better off changing their preferences than having them satisfied' (2000: 927). The converse also seems

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[13] As captured in Aesop's fable of the sour grapes.

plausible; that people living in relatively luxurious circumstances have adapted their preferences and expectations to unreasonable levels.

I would stress here that this whole debate clearly traverses dangerous ground in the sense that by insisting on 'universal standards' of what constitutes 'well being', policy makers can easily become overbearingly paternalistic and pre-empt what particular groups consider to be a good and fulfilling life by prescribing all sorts of Western improvements such as certain kinds of education leading to certain kinds of employment. This possibility immediately rankles anthropological sensibilities that have been alerted to the arrogant and obtuse Western tendency to systematically deny others' intelligence and relative ideas of well being.

Nevertheless, despite these qualifications, there is something to be said for the establishment of certain universal standards (problematics as they are) that oppressed groups can appeal to vis-à-vis their government's intransigence over issues such as labour or linguistic rights.

Basic Needs; The Influence of Kant

Kant's 'categorical imperative' has reverberated throughout development thinking. For our purposes, the key features are as follows, the emphasis on the inviolability of the 'person', the obligation to provide all with 'basic needs', and the belief that moral principles have to be founded upon autonomous reason and 'self-given laws', not by appealing to theological or metaphysical claims about the nature of the good. The implications of Kantian theory for development ethics are manifold but, as we will see, limited in important moral respects.

Basic to this approach is the assertion that, in all moral deliberation, we should appeal to the Supreme Principle of Morality, or 'categorical imperative'. There are many different versions of this principle, however, for illustrative purposes, I will concentrate on one known as 'The Formula of the End in Itself':

'Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means but always at the same time as an end' (Kant 1998)

This principle sets out the minimal conditions for just interaction, that is, that each party uses their autonomy in such a way that this does not subordinate the autonomy of others. There are three main implications of this maxim for development policy. Firstly, the exercise of this principle precludes *disingenuousness* or *coercion* in the relations between individuals or groups. Secondly projects should not be *paternalistic* in their outcomes and thirdly the *basic needs* of all human beings are a requirement for their autonomous action and should be provided for. I will go through these in turn.

Non-Coercion: O' Neill presents the following argument; 'in Kant's view, acts done on maxims that endanger, coerce or deceive others, and thus cannot in principle, have the consent of those others, are wrong' (1996: 98). This means that when one group cannot realistically refuse entering into an economic relationship that will not benefit them, they are being used as a *means* rather than an end by the other party. A concrete example of this might be the IMF withholding indispensable funding to an indebted country, if certain structural adjustments that will cause the devastation of the livelihoods of large sectors of the population, are not undertaken[14]. The possibility of free consent and dissent is precluded by the coercive nature of the relationship. Respect for autonomy here would ensure that the weaker party had the possibility of opting out of the economic arrangement.

Non-paternalistic Projects: If Kantian maxims constitute an obligation to assist others to be in a position to act for themselves, this would imply that preference must be given to non-paternalistic, empowering, capacity building and 'bottom up' development interventions[15].

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[14] So as to obtain continuing funds, states indebted to the IMF have had to assent to economic measures which have included opening markets to foreign investors, cutting social expenditure (including basic welfare spending on health, food aid and subsidies), devaluating the local currency drastically, selling food stores, diverting agriculture from food crops to cash crops etc.

[15] As was discussed above, utilitarian approaches may justify paternalistic approaches.

A difficulty here though is that Kantians may impose rigid standards of what 'rational autonomy' is. Kant, after all asserted that, as MacIntyre puts it, 'if the rules of morality are rational, they must be the same for all rational beings, in just the way that the rules of arithmetic are' (1997: 44). Kant also denied that one's understanding of happiness, or desires, could be used as a guide to moral action, in fact, happiness and morality are segregated domains. The implication here is that Kantian moral theory may purport to offer a 'superior' version of morality based on practical reason, independent of circumstances and conditions in relation to the moralities of particular social groups. This sense of superiority and disengagement from the affective dimensions of morality may be used for the paternalist justification that those who, by Kantian standards, are not acting as rational agents, are not capable of acting autonomously and need to be treated like children or as if they have mental health problems (see Mason 2000, for an illustration of this tendency).

Basic Needs: Nussbaum implies that Kant's theory is best understood in terms of individualistic and *negative* rights when she writes that 'Marx was departing from Kant in some important respects, by stressing (along with Aristotle) that the major powers of a human being need material support and cannot be what they are without it' (2000: 73). However, arguably, Kantian theory can be extrapolated to support the provision of *positive* rights, albeit in a limited sense. Whilst Kantian theory is frequently assimilated to theories of civil and political human rights, it also involves a strong conceptualisation of human *obligations*, that is, just action requires more than non-interference. Given that the state of relative powerlessness that accompanies poverty makes autonomous action a practical impossibility, the Kantian maxim of treating others as *ends* would demand that those in vulnerable circumstances should be assisted to rise above a certain threshold that would allow autonomy. As O'Neill affirms;

> 'Since finite rational beings cannot generally achieve their aims without some help and support from others, a refusal of help and support amounts to failure to treat others as rational and autonomous beings' (1996: 99).

Contributing to the improvement of others' material and institutional prospects can assist them in acquiring or regaining autonomy. Kant recognised the natural limits of

individual autonomy and the universality of vulnerability (finitude). As well as being constrained by material factors, human beings are also inevitably bound to different kinds of (mutual or asymmetrical) *dependence.*

The problem here, though, is that different groups will often disagree with each other's values, and therefore, in practice, will *not* support the autonomy of those with whom they compete. For this reason, Kant's theory ends up being compelling only in the minimalist sense of not treating others as means. The alleviation of other's need when they are unable to act autonomously, constitutes the summit of Kantian obligation, but then only if the autonomy of the other is not considered to threaten one's own autonomy. For this reason, the Kantian approach is understood as underpinning 'basic needs' approaches to development.

A further supposed advantage of a Kantian approach is as follows. In the endless diversity of context in which development ethics need to be applied, Kantians argue that, as their ethics is not framed by local contingencies, but involves reasoning based upon 'universal principles' it can form the basis for moral reasoning in relation to any eventuality. Rather than seeking to rank actions or institutional arrangements in terms of 'goods' or 'utilities', Kant's ethical theory is drawn upon to decide whether proposed actions are 'just' or otherwise. O'Neill argues that the advantage of Kantian reasoning, being less sensitive to gaps in our causal, or local knowledge, 'may help us to reach conclusions that are broadly accurate even if imprecise . . . we do not need to be able to generate a complete list of available actions in order to determine whether proposed lines of action are not unjust and whether they are beneficent' (1996: 103-104)[16].

However, from an anthropological point of view, this is clearly making a virtue of a serious limitation. Following Kant's universalist deontology may be counter-intuitive at times since obeying a single rationalist principle may mean putting aside other moral considerations, or aspects of human well being other than their rational

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[16] The philosopher Scheler's view of ethics was overtly anti-Kantian, ranking personal values highest — these personal values were based not on the 'ego' but on the idea of the person being able to know (or intuit) real values which should precede both utilitarian and Kantian ideas and calculations of goods (Dunlop 1991). A fundamental premiss of Kant's thought is that we do not have a substantive account

autonomy. The individualistic and rationalist basis of Kantian thought may delimit its scope to apprehend the affective basis of moral communities. Wilson, writing about the ways in which legal thought and language exists in a dialectical relationship with social relations, being contingent - both constituted by and constituting them - argues that;

> 'Kantian universalism . . . obscures the untidiness of everyday life by accepting the compromise of categorical certainties. An existential ethnography of rights, on the other hand, shows humans replete with feelings, engaged in their brute material existence and enmeshed in the complexities of their social world' (1997: 15)

This characteristically Kantian excision of emotion, aesthetics and desire in the calculation of 'right action' is, problematic to say the least for the ethics of applied anthropology. The severe dislocation of 'reason' from other aspects of being human makes Kantian theory awkward and dangerously limited in apprehending the real and efficacious ways in which these are conjoined in moral practice. Drawing upon Amazonian ethnography, Overing argues that

> 'it is only by acknowledging aesthetics in the broader sense of its meaning, where beauty in daily practice is understood as an expression of moral and political value, that anthropologists can begin to perceive the characteristics and affective conditions of everyday social life in Amazonia, and indigenous reasoning about them' (2000: 18).

This requires the kind of embedded or thick description that is anathema to Kantian procedural ethics. Nevertheless, in relation to political ethics and the workings of development institutions, the Kantian imperatives of non-coercion, basic needs and non-paternalism continue to be evoked in theory at least, if not in practice.

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of the good. By contrast, Scheler's thought was fundamentally Catholic, deriving from Augustine and Thomas Aquinas and seeking to combine their respective emphases on love and reason.

Chambers states that 'a massive shift in priorities and thinking has been taking place, from things and infrastructure to people and capabilities.' (1997: 9). The capabilities model constitutes a framework for ethically assessing the institutions, policies and actions of development and has been adopted on this basis by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP):

> 'The purpose of development is to create an environment in which all people can expand their capabilities, and opportunities can be enlarged for both present and future generations' (Human Development Report 1994: 13).

This approach, then, focuses on human 'capabilities' and 'functionings' rather than 'satisfaction' or 'resources'. The philosopher Martha Nussbaum has also taken up and adapted this approach, finding that it had close correspondence to her interest in Aristotelian ethics and Marxist ideas of human functioning, particularly the view that affiliation and reciprocity with others is an intrinsic part of being fully human[17]. Nussbaum's arguments are based upon a specific concern with the position of women particularly in the developing world. However, on the basis that women's views are systematically suppressed and marginalised to varying degrees, throughout the world, thinking from this perspective can be used to usefully extrapolate insights for other relatively unacknowledged and disadvantaged groups. Another important feminist philosopher, Luce Irigaray, argues that the philosophy, written overwhelmingly by men, that has formed Western culture could not have been achieved without the background presence of women who largely played a supportive role (1985). She argues that a thoroughly partial philosophy has been the outcome. A similar argument can be made for those who suffer multiple deprivations. They, like women throughout the course of history, have not been afforded the freedom and opportunity to articulate their perspectives to the same extent as the privileged minority.

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[17] Noam Chomsky makes the following challenge to academics: 'Intellectuals are in a position to expose the lies of governments, to analyse actions according to their causes and motives and often hidden intentions . . . For a privileged minority, Western democracy provides the leisure, the facilities and the training to seek the truth lying hidden beneath the veil of distortion and misrepresentation, ideology, and class interest through which events of current history are presented to us' (1967: 324).

Nussbaum advocates the Aristotelian idea that the central task of ethics is exploring the ways in which people can become, or are impeded in becoming, 'fully human'. All people are considered to be bearers of 'capabilities'. These are 'basic powers of choice that make a moral claim for opportunities to be realised and to flourish' (Nussbaum 2000: 298). Capabilities are those functions of human life that are understood to be necessary to be able to live a fully human life. From the capabilities perspective, concepts such as 'resources', 'commodities', 'utilities', 'needs' or 'rights' play a subsidiary role and, essentially can never be more than *means* to the end of human well being.

Nussbaum considers the various 'functions' that are necessary for human life and bases moral judgement on the criteria of whether or not individuals or social groups within different settings are able to fulfil these functions or not. This approach focuses upon how a given context affects what an individual is actually in a position to do. This is different from looking at either the individual's 'satisfaction' with his or her context and his or her role in it (utility) or calculating the resources that available to an individual (commodity). Nussbaum's list of 'central human functional capabilities' is as follows: 1. Life, 2. Bodily Health, 3. Bodily Integrity, 3. Sense, Imagination and Thought; 5. Emotions; 6. Practical Reason; 7. Affiliation; 8. Other species; 9. Play, 10. Control over one's environment (material and political)[18].

Rather than looking at the basic material resources that should be provided for individuals and groups, this approach focuses upon ensuring that the *conditions* that are required for human beings to be able to fulfil their capabilities are available to all. The social goal is to ensure that individuals do not live in conditions in which they cannot function in a truly human manner[19]. The focus of the capabilities approach

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[18] Finer distinctions are 'basic capabilities' - that is the rudimentary capacities for being human (rationality, empathy, language etc.); the 'internal capabilities'; the development of the basic capabilities to a state where they can be enjoyed and shared. These (such as the capacity to interact healthily) require nurturing and example. Finally there are 'combined capabilities' which are the possibilities that come into fruition when the internal capabilities can be exercised because of necessary external conditions also being in place

[19] This is not to say that a person living without fulfilling these central capabilities should be somehow regarded as being sub-human. The capabilities model is not intended as a description of what it is *to be* human but rather about the human functions that should be there for human flourishing and fulfilment. Also, both Sen and Nussbaum stress that the responsibility for attaining the capabilities can only be the responsibility of individuals although the provision for the possibility of fulfilling them should be a matter of governments in collaboration with civil society and society in general.

then, is upon finding a cross-cultural way of evaluating and comparing the idea of 'quality of life' in terms of what individuals are able to actually do, or *become* according to their own volition in particular contexts (*ibid.* 35). From an anthropological perspective then, it is interesting to note that there is scope in the capabilities approach for appreciating and supporting culturally specific ways of realising well being that do not depend upon Western economic or social presuppositions.

Adding important perspectives that derive from both Marx and Aristotle[20], Nussbaum argues that 'fulfilment' is a more worthwhile concept than 'autonomy' and the associated idea of 'basic needs'. Sen's work, also shows that a fruitful approach to development policy is to look at the ways in which individuals and groups are frustrated in their attempts to live their lives 'to the full'. On this basis, 'economic development is best seen as an expansion of people's 'capabilities'' (1996: 187) which can be understood as independence, skills and the conditions (nurturing, education and resources) in which to develop them. As with the rights approach, however, the way in which 'fulfilment' is understood and implemented may be influenced by dominant agendas.

My view is that the capabilities approach constitutes an enhancement of the rights approach as it embraces political liberties, stresses the importance of *obligations* that can be put on to governments but also has a finer and more culturally flexible grasp of human agency, flourishing and possibility. Civil and Political rights, from the capabilities perspective, if enshrined in law, are really the *means*, or guarantees that certain obstacles (such as discrimination) that might get in the way of a person's well being, flourishing or dignity, can be removed. Economic, Social and Cultural rights are not so easily realised but can be understood as aspirations of what the basic requirements for well being are and which should be progressively achieved in a society committed to these rights.

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[20] An important distinction here is that whilst Nussbaum draws from Marxist Aristotelianism and refers to Catholic Thomistic Aristotelianism (whose best known proponents are Alasdair MacIntyre and Charles Taylor both of whom are practising Catholics), as a liberal egalitarian, she is anxious to point out that her approach is not illiberal in terms of deciding *for* people what their vision of the good *should* be. She argues that Marxist versions and some Thomistic versions are flawed in this sense.

Rights, unless they are secured or exercised, are really nominal or fictitious whereas 'capabilities' describe the actual conditions of whether a person is able to live in a way that meets the minimum requirements of human dignity. Economic rights could be interpreted in terms of how much a group or individual 'gets' and this may not take into consideration the different amounts of resources that will be required for different people in different circumstances to be able to function within their own idea of well being and dignity. In this sense then, rights are a way of understanding the means required for well being. One of the difficulties with rights is that they do not necessarily translate into duties and, if duties are connected to rights, there may be disagreement about who carries the responsibility to fulfil them.

Before concluding, I will now consider a theme which has surfaced occasionally up until this point but which needs to be looked at in greater detail, that is, the question of universal values.

Meaningful Universality?

'In general, people seek not the way of their ancestors but the good'

Aristotle

A contentious area in the field of development ethics is whether, or to what extent, cultural or moral relativism should preclude formulating universal norms for development practice and cross-cultural comparison. Nevertheless, both Nussbaum and Sen are in 'strong agreement about the poverty of cultural relativism and the need for universal norms in the development policy arena' (Nussbaum 2000: 13). By necessity, and for pragmatic reasons, development ethicists must look at the kinds of reasoning that characterise the public domain, that is, the abstract considerations of distributive justice, political and economic models, the obligations that can be put on governmental bodies, for instance.

Nevertheless, as applied anthropology is ostensibly concerned with assisting individuals and social groups in achieving the everyday and ordinary fulfilments that are necessary for dignified human living, there is a clear exigency to understand and

uphold what this means for different people(s) in particular settings. Herskovits' 1947 assertion in the American Anthropological Association's statement on human rights that 'the individual realised his personality through his culture, hence respect for individual differences entail a respect for cultural differences' (1947: 541) remains compelling. Alongside this long-standing anthropological commitment to specificity, it has to be recognised that the achievement of well being, for any social group, is certain to be under the aegis or oppression of particular social institutions and political systems. For this reason, it is also essential to look at how these political settings impact upon, constrain, protect, or even inspire, particular groups in their pursuit of a 'good life'. In this sense, applied anthropology has to entail the consideration of what the constitutive elements of a good society might be. Here, the interests of development ethics and applied social anthropology surely converge.

Whilst social anthropologists are often sceptical of universal norms (especially if based upon an idea of a 'knowable essence' of being human, as will be discussed in Chapter 10), it seems clear that the very ubiquity of development demands the formulation of a strongly universalist normative response that contains an insistence on pluralism. This project is correctly complicated by the anthropological demand for sensitivity to context. The discipline of Social Anthropology has obviously contributed to the view that there is independent merit and value in different and contrasting cultural schemata for the individuals involved. However, a difficulty with this elastic perspective, in practice, is that without an overarching scheme for arbitrating between competing world views, contradictions and conflicts between the local and the global can not be resolved and cross cultural standards are difficult to arrive at. In practice, members of indigenous societies often need to appeal to universal standards in their efforts to safeguard their specificity.

On this basis, Nussbaum has sought to articulate an ethics for development which can be the object of 'an *overlapping consensus* among people who otherwise have very different comprehensive conceptions of the good' (2000: 5). This is close to the Rawlsian idea of social co-operation (1971). Her contention is that there are certain indispensable principles that any credible ethical model can not do without. These considerations are explicitly applied to the morality of practical reason and social and political arrangements. Addressing herself to a 'broad interdisciplinary audience,'

Nussbaum sets out 'the philosophical underpinning for an account of basic constitutional principles that should be respected and implemented by the governments of all nations, as a bare minimum of what respect for human dignity requires' (2000: 5)[21]. The capabilities approach, described above, constitutes her formulation of a universally applicable model of basic human functioning.

Asserting the importance of being able to work with cross cultural categories, Nussbaum presents a series of counter arguments to what she considers to be the three principal challenges to universalism in ethics. She assents that there have often been arrogant versions of universalism but answers that this need not be the case. She double guesses some communitarian perspectives in her controversial assertion that whilst it is true that 'theorists often come from nations that have been oppressors (2000: 35) and there have been 'obtuse ways of thinking across cultural boundaries . . . which typically assumed that the ways of the colonial power were progressive and enlightened (and) the ways of the colonised peoples primitive . . . universal values *may even be necessary for an adequate critique of colonialism itself* (2000: 31) and 'we require a set of values that give us 'a critical purchase on cultural particulars' (2000: 51). Again, here, as was noted with regard to rights based thinking, which singles out the individual as the object of moral allegiance, cultural realities which are perceived to delimit the well being, freedom or dignity of individuals are (in a paternalistic mode) rendered suspect.

She looks firstly at the *'argument from culture'* which amounts to a respect for the different visions of the good people share in different contexts, even though these visions of the good will often disagree. The example given by Nussbaum is the 'anti-Westernising' position in India which says that Indian culture, through Islam and Hinduism, has powerful norms of female deference and self-sacrifice which can lead to lives equally, or *more* fulfilling than careerist, stressful high divorce rate lives of Western women (2000: 41). A powerfully argued philosophical basis for epistemological, ethical and cognitive relativism can be found in the work of Nelson

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[21] Scope does not permit looking at the permutations of the particular arrangements that should be put in place for the provision of a threshold level for central human capabilities in terms of the responsibilities and self-help. As will be noted in the discussion on rights, this is obviously an issue that is contested heavily. Also, some of the capabilities, such as 'being able to use the imagination' would something a government might be able to contribute to but not guarantee.

Goodman (1978) who argues that the linguistic categories and symbols that we construct mediate our perception, and understanding, of the world(s) we inhabit. We make, rather than *encounter* worlds. Different configurations of symbols are bound to be incommensurable with others which means that there can never be one version of the truth, that is, there are many worlds that imbue value, well being and purpose to people's lives (See also Overing's ethnographic contextualisation of this perspective among the Piaroa [1990]).

The position taken here by Nussbaum is that universal norms should not preclude the choice of people to live 'traditional' lives, but only on the condition that they have in place alternative cultural, political and economic choices. There is recognition of the facility with which 'traditional' cultures have been depicted in terms which homogenise their members rather than recognising that, in every cultural setting there is contestation, change and negotiation. For some time now, social anthropologists have been working with an unreified idea of culture, that is, recognising heterogeneity and hybridity and denying ideas of discrete 'cultures' being hermetically sealed.

Appeals to cultural relativism 'fail', Nussbaum confidently argues, because 'people are resourceful borrowers of ideas . . . the ideas of every culture turn up inside every other' (2000: 48-9) and, anyway, more blatantly, 'why should we follow the local ideas, *rather than the best ideas we can find?*' (*loc. cit.* my emphasis). Her logic is that if in a given setting, we give one particular world view 'the last word', 'we deprive ourselves of any more norms of toleration or respect that could help us limit the intolerance of cultures' (*loc. cit.*). Rapport, on this point, gives the following example;

> 'The correct defence of the liberal West in not handing over Rushdie to Khoemeni's fatwah is not 'This is how we do things here', but 'This is the right thing to do: this is how things ought to be done everywhere' (forthcoming - 'Culture is no Excuse' in *Social Anthropology*').

On this account, then, cultural relativism is potentially antithetical to the toleration of diversity, despite the fact that this might seem counter intuitive in terms of older social anthropological reifications of culture. It seems to me that Nussbaum is either

working with an idea of cultural relativism that anthropologists understand as being naïve, (Gellner's aforementioned caricatures) or, more likely, she is using this argument only with respect to instances where particular 'cultures' systematically condone the maltreatment of individuals or groups. She contends that substantive and universal ethical principles can be constructed out of largely 'uncontroversial' and minimal ideas of human functioning[22] that do not require profound substantive agreement. She further asserts that this framework is not in conflict with descriptive relativism, that is the recognition of diversity in moral reasoning and by extension, that human 'capabilities' can be fulfilled in a myriad of ways.

To postulate that one of the universal values should be 'personal choice' would then, be considered offensive to only the most authoritarian traditions; we should 'reflect before we conclude that women without options really endorse the lives they lead' (Nussbaum 2000: 43)[23].

A difficulty that Nussbaum (or Rapport) do not seem to take into consideration here, though, is that, generally speaking, the commutation of norms and practices between different moral traditions is not a neutral process. That is, cultural borrowing tends to be 'top down', driven by the active interests of those who embody and represent the globally dominant individuating and culturally homogenising agenda. The 'last word' she refers to somehow always ends up being spoken in a Western liberal idiom. Traditional communities are, generally speaking, in a state of siege.

Nussbaum's answer to this criticism is that the liberal argument proposes an overarching political framework within which not just *individual* liberty, but the rights of self ascribed 'cultures' is affirmed and guaranteed (but always asserting the pre-eminence of individual rights). This appeals to social anthropologists who ascribe to the view that individual agency makes sense only within a shared universe of meanings and that some very particular kinds of human agency and well being depend

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[22] This approach is known in philosophy as 'constructivism in ethics' – which could be confusing in relation to 'social constructivist' views of ethics, some version of which are thoroughly relativistic. (O'Neill 1989; Rawls 1971)

[23] The choice of individuals to submit themselves to harmful cultural practices might be, in the liberal view, a case of 'mournful realism' where a choice which is considered to be the best in bad circumstances is made.

upon the continuation of distinct cultural realities (Hastrup 1997; Gledhill 1994; Overing 1985).

Nussbaum sets out to refute that the *'argument from the good of diversity'* sufficiently challenges the validity of universal norms. This argument, she says, boils down to the statement that 'our world is rich in part because we don't all agree on a single set of categories but speak many different languages of value' (2000: 50). That is, the world becomes a poorer place with every diminishment of cultural expression, idiom, cosmology, impoverished as living cultures perish to be remembered in journals and museums.

Not necessarily so, asserts Nussbaum. Diversity is a good thing, she affirms, and it would be a bad thing if the 'materialism and aggressiveness' that are part of the value system of 'America' was emulated needlessly elsewhere (*loc. cit.*). Making an interesting distinction between 'languages' (which, she says, 'do not harm people'[24]) and 'cultures' (the practices of some which frequently do), she asserts that aspects of life that are normalised in a given cultural setting, such as female genital mutilation or the stoning of 'adulterous women' can be understood to be universally wrong:

> 'Insofar as there is diversity worth preserving in the various cultures, it is perhaps not in traditions of sex hierarchy, any more than in traditions of slavery that we should search for it' (2000: 51).

The possibility of making moral judgements about particular cultural practices in terms of human dignity and the access of individuals to fundamental requirements for flourishing is therefore affirmed. Communities, or traditions, on this account (much like political organisations) can only be justified by the contribution, or otherwise they make to the possibilities of individuals to function in a way that reflects human dignity, defined in universal terms[25]. An anthropological affirmation of this perspective is given by Rapport:

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[24] This is obviously a highly questionable distinction given the dichotomous evaluations ascribed to traditional versus modern societies in colonial discourse for instance.

[25] Greenhough gives an interesting and controversial discussion on why Bengalis when stricken by famine did not riot but progressively neglected and resigned individuals of lower status to death. His thesis is that this mode of reacting was based upon a hierarchical value system (1982; Dumont 1986).

'For I wish to work out an ethic for anthropology which will condemn Nazism, religious fundamentalism, female circumcision, infanticide and *suttee* because of the hurt they cause to individuals, because of the harm which accrues in those social milieux where an ethic of interpersonal tolerance is not managed: the violation of individual integrity, the threat to individual's conscious potential, the ideological prioritising of the community above and beyond the individuals who at any one moment constitute it' (1997: 181).

This is in contradistinction to Herskovits' contention that norms that are particular to a given culture should never be supplanted by values that have originated extraneous to this setting, as if there is a 'moral rectitude' intrinsic to every discrete culture (Wilson 1997: 1-27). Again, Nussbaum, and Rapport are looking negatively at instances in particular 'cultures' where the rights of particular categories of people are not respected. I would argue that great care has to be taken here as it is all too easy for Western commentators to construct entire arguments around these negative observations which can potentially, by extrapolation, be used to discredit the *whole* (reified) morality that is implicit within these particular cultures. It is also easy to use these observations in terms of a complementary opposition which validates Western society, ('there is no *suttee* here') whilst failing to mention the very grave failings of the West, past and present. In a personal communication to Rapport, Rorty asserted that 'the cruelty and humiliation that paves the way for universal liberal democracy is a necessary evil, like the cruelty and humiliation involved in socialising a child' (in Rapport 1997: 186). This appears to be a bold and honest statement of his belief in the superior maturity of liberal individualism vis-à-vis 'illiberal' political and cultural systems that need to 'grow up'. Nevertheless, without wishing to make too much of Rorty's comment, it is obviously doubtful that his idea of good parenting would meet widespread approval. Learning to use cruelty and humiliation would seem to be anathema to the achievement of well being in most societies and one can think of many ways in which 'Western culture' appears 'infantile from the perspective of other cultures.

Lastly, Nussbaum examines what she calls the '*argument from paternalism*'; 'when we use a set of universal norms as benchmarks for the world's various societies . . . we

show too little respect for people's freedom as agents' (2000: 51). As a liberal, Nussbaum clearly wants to affirm the rights of people to make their own choices about their values and indeed this very value (which is at the basis of such liberties as freedom of religion and of association, among others) is one that she asserts as being valid universally. Again she only envisages that being paternalistically liberal, or encouraging the inculcation of equal employment rights or education for all, for instance, as being a difficulty for illiberal groups with regard to whom she insists that individuals should have the possibility of opting in or out of on the basis of personal choice:

> 'In that way, any bill of rights is 'paternalistic,' vis-à-vis families or groups . . . that treat people with insufficient or unequal respect, if paternalism means simply telling people that they cannot behave in some way that they have traditionally behaved and want to behave' (2000: 53).

At a political level, Nussbaum is reiterating the standard Rawlsian liberal argument that a cosmopolitan overlapping consensus can be based on the principles of all human beings being free and equal, as all *reasonable* views can endorse this, albeit from different perspectives.

Rawls sought to establish a model through which a given society's economic, social and political institutions could be gauged in terms of their ability in allowing 'the adequate development and exercise of their moral powers and a fair share of the all-purpose means essential for advancing the their determinate (permissible) conceptions of the good' (1993: 187, in Gledhill 1994: 87). The idea of paternalism is important with respect to the point made earlier that vulnerable individuals and groups may not have access, in practice, to the rights that are enshrined in their country's constitution. The State, then, should, in some cases, be positively 'paternalistic' in protecting those who are disadvantaged, marginalised and abused.

Let me recapitulate. I have sought to simplify the complexity of the compromises of modern liberalism as this forms the main background picture for the consideration of development ethics and is the most prevalent ethical framework in Western politics and institutional practices.

The most hopeful framework for development ethics that I have come across is the 'capabilities approach' which postulates an idea of human well being which can be achieved in different ways without necessarily making a fetish of commodities, machines, bureaucracy or individualism. The strength of this approach is that it provides scope for the explication of the achievement of well being in terms that do not necessarily involve the domineering and often negative Western interrogation of whether particular societies have the necessary ingredients ('rights', commodities, certain kinds of knowledge) that are deemed necessary in the West.

Nevertheless, as with all frameworks, the capabilities approach in the hands of policy makers of an individualist persuasion is likely to be twisted in particular directions that are unlikely to favour communitarian or ecological aspirations. For this reason, the dual imperative for applied anthropologists, in my view, is to subvert this dominant agenda through firstly by facilitating the understanding of particular communitarian social ethics while critiquing Western liberal individualism within the development discourse and secondly, supporting the aspects of the rights discourse that favour communitarian aims. Over the final two chapters, I will look at these in turn.

Chapter 10

The Western Moral Tradition in Pieces;

The Virtues of a Universal Social Teleology for the Anthropology of Development

It has been one of my central contentions that the realisation of individual identity and morality can not happen in isolation from the social life (or spheres of sociality) to which one cannot help belonging (in variable ways). Taylor argues that moral intuitions are drawn upon by the individual in particular 'moral spaces', where feelings form as central a role as rationality; 'identity is intimately linked to orientation in a moral space' (1985a: 28) which implies that 'social actors not only acquire a sense of what is natural, they also acquire strongly motivating sense of what is desirable. They not only know, they also care'. In practical life, knowledge so often isolated as cognition in theory is not independent of emotion and evaluation' (Hastrup 1995: 118; see also Rosaldo 1986). Overing and Passes for instance, drawing from a number of Amerindian ethnographies, conclude that Amazonian peoples 'desire above all else a high degree of emotional comfort in daily life, a stress substantiated by the political and moral one that sets as first priority the achievement of conviviality in the productive relations of community life. (2000: 1-2).

Also, one of the themes that has reverberated throughout the thesis, that is, the tension between universalism and cultural/ethical relativism will be looked at in greater detail. My contention is that comparative social anthropology, if it aspires to a be a self-consciously moral discipline across the board of its interests and applications, also needs to make an attempt at conceptualising the universals of human well being. As I will argue, because the *construction of cultures* is universally human, and also, as being human implies *belonging* to some form of community (not just 'Society'), the achievement of well being can only be understood in relation to individuals embedded in particular cultural inter-subjectivities. The rhetoric of this chapter, in terms of the ethics of the anthropological grasp of the 'individual' vis-à-vis the 'social', is fortuitously perfectly encapsulated by de Coppet:

'But is a reverence for the rights of the human person truly incompatible with a judgement that societies also deserve respect? To refuse them such respect means spurning all differences, all specific cultural identities. What is worse, the refusal to take into account this communal social dimension inherent in the human condition, far from offering protection against totalitarian deviations, may lead to them. The intention to recognise only individuals often assumes the character of a destructive mania' (de Coppet 1993: 62)

Anthropological Moral Ontologies of the Self

Moral philosophy and social anthropology often ask the same questions, albeit to different ends. Practitioners of the former have often dealt with the concepts that are used to understand morality in different times and places as if they were part of a limited catalogue of timeless ideas whilst those of the latter, more often than not, have sought to describe the ways in which particular moral concepts are efficacious in the flux of specific cultural settings. A key concern shared by these disciplines is conceptualising the relationships between the individual, society and nature.

There appears to be disagreement, if not confusion, about how social anthropologists can, or should, conceive of a moral ontology of the self in society. This scepticism is kept in tension with the generalised intuition that there *is* a definable commonality that all human beings share. The philosopher Nussbaum, for instance, declares that:

> 'We should work to make all human beings part of our community of dialogue and concern, base our political deliberations on that interlocking commonality, and give the circle that defines our humanity, special attention and respect' (1996: 9).

The anthropologist Engelke notes that this idea 'is not far from what some, perhaps many, anthropology professors would admit to as one of their agendas in an introductory anthropology course' (1999: 316). A perennial anthropological question, however, is whether different discursive practices are 'simply untranslateable and incommensurable, or is there some possible middle ground?' (Arce and Long 2000: 3). Overing's position on this point is that extreme relativism ' . . . is a stance that no

anthropologist would seriously hold' as 'we wish to . . . encourage points of contact between cultures, not discourage them, or the idea of them. Our business is, after all, translation' (1985: 3). The difficulty, she emphasises, is coming to agreement about what defines this commonality both in ontological terms and with regard to conceptualising the idea of 'well being', 'basic needs', or 'rights' cross-culturally. A further concern is the way in which 'universals' are utilised by dominant agendas. This is obviously a dynamic that has been of concern to anthropologists in development witnessing the persistence of colonial characterisations of non-modern societies in terms that facilitate their dismantling.

The Social Anthropological Wariness of Discussing 'Human Nature'

Notwithstanding this wariness, it would seem that an obvious starting point in the consideration of an ethics for applied anthropology would be to make an attempt at some basic definition of what a human being is and what a human being's basic needs and requirements for fulfilment are. However, from a pragmatic point of view, the aim of reaching agreement about human nature is considered to be just too big a task. It would mean descending into depths of reflection that will not necessarily yield answers that are relevant to the urgent questions about social life that anthropology asks. On this basis, the anthropologist Wilson dismisses the appropriateness of considering questions of human nature in anthropological investigations:

> 'We can afford to be agnostic about such cabalistic musings. The question of human nature is a metaphysical one which cannot be answered on phenomenological grounds, and we should bracket it and proceed with our contingent and historical investigations' (1997: 14).

Indeed, the extent to which anthropologists *should* theorise on definitions of human nature *at all* is contested and contentious. Gledhill, for instance, makes the claim that 'anthropologists are not social and political philosophers, and our role is largely one of observing how these developments manifest themselves in practice' (2001: 20). Another anthropologist, Wendy James completely disagrees, arguing conversely, that 'our central concern with human nature differentiates anthropology from other disciplines' (in Ingold 1996: 45). I think it is worth noting that whilst Rorty asserts

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that 'no such discipline as philosophical anthropology is required as a preface to politics, but only history and sociology' (in Gledhill 1997: 89), it is also clear that some conceptualisation or other of moral ontology, is inevitably present in any attempt to describe and construct theories around social action, in any case. Whilst the ontological question itself, in metaphysical terms is usually considered to be out of social anthropology's scope, working definitions of human nature, each with different moral implications continue to evolve in social science and to have efficacy in the workings of society[1].

The consensus among social anthropologists is that the creation of cultures is constitutionally human and also that the trope of 'culture' figures as the central way employed by humans to apprehend and describe our social relations. This is highly significant in moral terms, especially if one considers that societies differ so radically in their ways of achieving well being. An understanding of the cultural, social, and historical backgrounds in which individuals are embedded is obviously fundamental to any consideration of moral ontology. On this basis, interpretative anthropology has focused on the description of the particular, concrete, local manifestations of human beings rather than on the universal, constant and abstract principles proposed by the Enlightenment.

Anthropological Defence of the Particular and the West's Hijacking of Universals

Wilson asserts that 'for most anthropologists, the category of human nature is one of the more *offensive* ways of imposing the prejudices of 'Western culture' (*ibid.*: 5, my emphasis). Charles Taylor points out that, on this basis, discussing human nature is resisted in contemporary social science:

> 'The very words ring bells. We fear that we may be setting up some reified image, in face of the changing forms of human life in history, that we may be prisoners of some insidious ethnocentrism' (1985: vii).

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[1] Geertz, for example, argues that cultural and biological factors must be considered as being intertwined; 'between the cultural pattern, the body, and the brain, a positive feedback system was created in which each shaped the progress of the other' (1973: 48). The sociologist, Parsons conceived of human beings as 'a synthesised *combination* of living organism and a "personality system" (1978: 331; emphasis original).

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This diffidence within the discipline of social anthropology to making statements about human nature with universal pretensions would appear to be based on two main foundations. Firstly, there might be the awareness that certain versions of human moral ontology have served as justifications for limiting the category of being human, or what is 'natural', to a certain group, class or echelon, or for defining others as being 'sub-human' or 'perverse'. The idea of complete unity, for the social historian Isaiah Berlin (1994), who evokes the European totalitarian experience, cannot be separated from the silencing of those who disagree with the dominant agenda. The implied argument is that, as Kerr observes 'the only way of saving humanity from oppression of some kind or other is precisely to give up once and for all the aspiration to resolve our moral and political differences completely' (1997: 153). Taylor proposes that another reason for the suppression of essentialist moral ontology is partly because the pluralist nature of our societies makes it much easier to live that way (2000).

Secondly, anthropologists arguably understand their disciplinary rhetoric and/or responsibility vis-à-vis other academic approaches that are more prone to easy generalisations as specialising in the articulation and expression of difference and alterity. This defence of *otherness* as part of anthropology's disciplinary mantra, thus postpones, or at least problematises facile theoretical aspirations to the global reconciliation of humanity (especially in terms of naturalist or behaviourist paradigms). A key point, then, is that anthropologists, recognising the embeddedness of the self in partially incommensurable social settings, consider it an important aspect of their disciplinary ethic to stress that the creation of cultural differences is a universal social strategy that requires a measured relativism. There are various further important reasons for the anthropological paean for difference, some of which, in my view, can be taken too far.

Fragmentation, Antagonism and Contextuality

Going back to the 'post-cultural' dynamics discussed at the beginning of the chapter, it could be argued that post-modern ethnography stresses difference because it could not be otherwise. This is Stephen Tyler's argument:

'We confirm in our ethnographies our consciousness of the fragmentary nature of the post-modern world, for nothing so well defines our world as an absence of a synthesising allegory, or perhaps it is only a paralysis of choice brought on by our knowledge of the inexhaustible supply of such allegories that make us refuse the moment of aesthetic totalisation, the story of stories, the hypostatised whole' (1986: 132)

On this view, the depiction of fragmentation then, simply reflects the social world *as it really is*. As Bhabha notes, in Western academia, there has been increasing recognition of the 'devastating implications of the issues of contextuality and indeterminancies in human life for the construction of abstract systems, based on clearly derived and universal principles of justice, morality and discourse (Bhabha 1995: 236; cf. Rorty 1980). Anthropology, in the task of evoking different life worlds has felt more keenly than other disciplines, the necessity of discarding or at least problematising these universals for categorising social life. This is clearly one of the discipline's more important contributions to development discourse.

Also, through the influence of theorists such as Marx, Freud and Foucault, there is a strong Nietzschean and Hobbesian influence in post-structuralist social theory that envisages unity or conviviality to be essentially illusory and hiding what Tyler calls a

' . . . "lower" gyre of the unconscious, where dwell in mutual antagonism the dark forces . . . and the demonic rational powers of "underlying structures" – into the past, in memory, the mind carnal and incarnate' (Tyler 1986: 133).

Foucault in fact, when asked who opposes who 'in those exercises of power which constitute social, cultural, and intellectual life' answered, that it is 'all against all . . . Who fights against whom? We all fight each other. And there is always within each of us something that fights something else' (in MacIntyre 1999: 53). Cultural representations, on this view, are understood as expressing particular (sometimes unconscious) interests. Foucault has sought to demonstrate how this underlying drive to power is concealed through pretensions to neutrality, procedure and the disinterested performance of traditions (as discussed in Chapter 7). This

overwhelmingly negative view casts an unflaggingly cynical eye on every aspect of social life and, in my view does not amount to an adequate framework for apprehending different moral traditions.

Invocations of holism in different cultural realities, or social scientifically contrived systems, which depict functional integration, are now generally understood in social anthropology as 'tropes', that is 'vehicles that carry imagination from the part to the whole'. Tyler argues that 'knowing them for what they are, whether mechanistic or organismic, makes us suspect the rational order they impose' (op.cit 132).

I would caution here, though, that this radical distancing of the idea of 'society' away from the imagined 'Individual' diverts emphasis from the distinct possibility that society is actually *valuable and valued*, something involving an ineradicable sense of belonging, as something other than an arbitrary ideology. Consider the contrast in outlook here. From Overing and Passes (2000: 2) there is agreement that one of the characteristics of Amerindian sociality is an intense and self-aware commitment to conviviality and to the achievement of the sociable life together but nevertheless, 'the self who belongs to the collective is an independent self, and the very creation of the collective self is dependent upon such autonomous selves who have the cognitive/affective skills for congenial, social interaction' (see also de Coppet 1993 for a discussion on *societas* and *universitas*).

Post-Modernist Non-Ontologies

Another important influence in contemporary social anthropology is obviously post-modernism. Post-modernist theory and ethnography explicitly resists universalising meta-narratives or any attempt to pin down human nature. Lyotard, (1984) for instance, argues that the philosophical discourse of modernity and the Enlightenment grand narratives, (progress, universal justice, peace, *sensus communis* and Truth) are anachronistic as they have been overtaken by dynamics that they do not properly describe. Lyotard's view is that the comfort provided by the teleological visions provided by Marx, Hegel or Kant, for example, are chimerical; it has become clear that humanity is manifestly not progressing in the manner proposed by any of these theories.

Lyotard propounds the tolerant, post-modern view that there exist any number of 'first order natural pragmatic narratives', each of them having a right to express its own distinctive values, belief system or criteria for what should count as a 'truthful' or 'valid' statement. This perspective has close correspondence to contemporary anthropological method.

Lyotard advocates 'dissensus', that is, a proliferation of differing views on issues of ethical, or political concern. Because, epistemologically, post-modernism is sceptical of any possibility of universally valid truth or knowledge, the ethical implications of Lyotard's theory of knowledge are that it would be wrong to apply one monological set of criteria defining justice and truth, to evaluate, criticise and judge the narratives, practices, or beliefs of others who may have quite different terms of reference, priorities and explanatory frameworks.

An observation I would make here, though, is that whilst post-modernist methodological approaches ('polyphony', 'heteroglossia', irony etc.) are worthwhile pragmatic and theoretical perspectives to be taken up, in the moral lives of individual anthropologists, *not* believing in moral absolutes is generally counter intuitive. Gardner and Lewis (both involved in development) state this boldly;

> 'There *are* moral absolutes in the world; people are not merely atomised individuals, endlessly fragmented by diversity, with wholly different perceptions and experiences. People have a right to basic material needs; they also have a right to fulfil their individual potential; whether this involves becoming literate, retaining their cultural identity or their freedom, having the means to generate an income or whatever. Yet many millions of people throughout the world are denied these rights' (1996: 157)

Whilst post-modernists stress diversity, a strong case can be made for the argument that the causes of human misery are depressingly uniform and can therefore be addressed in reasonably straightforward ways that do not necessarily obliviate cultural difference.

Various authors, whilst assenting that the principle of the *'differend'* is important, criticise Lyotard's claims as amounting to a collapse of moral and intellectual nerve. Lehman warns that 'most seriously, a contempt for ontology does not suggest good prospects for a post-modern environmental ethic. The issue of nature's intrinsic value will tend to be dismissed as nonsense' (2000: 439). The claim made by Morris is that post-modernism's 'exaggerated reaction against Cartesian metaphysics and positivism . . . invokes a rather bleak scenario, where the choice we are given is between two extremes: absolutism or nihilism.' (1997: 315). This counter- reaction against post-modernism is based upon an objection to perspectivism, that is, the belief that there is no 'real world' without the human mental construction of it. The contrasting realist perspective, asserts that our moral reasoning must be based upon certain universal realities. Whilst the refusal to impose reified universal moral categories indiscriminately, is unquestionably salutary, for Gellner, for instance, it would be going too far to deny any idea of universal truths. As a strong proponent of universalism in anthropology, he argues that:

'One simply cannot understand our shared social condition unless one starts from the indisputable fact that genuine knowledge of nature is possible and has occurred and has totally transformed the terms of reference in which human societies operate' (1995: 8).

Between these positions, there seems to be a sensible general consensus that there *are*, in fact, moral absolutes but that social knowledge can only be the work of an embodied agent interacting with others. Anthropological critiques of Kant's universalising ethics centre around the objection that moral judgements only make sense, or given weight of feeling, in the context of particular life-worlds, traditions, communities, language games, forms of sociality, moral economies etc. (Overing 1985). This principled emphasis on cultural relativism which is based on the empirical observation that moral life has to be understood in specific contexts has important implications. Anthropologists have set about deconstructing the presuppositions of Western thought in terms of their inappropriate imposition (either in theory, or in development programmes) on non-Western cultures and have highlighted the resulting moral difficulties.

I began this chapter with an assertion that the Western moral tradition, particularly the stress on individual*ism*, the excision of the aesthetic, emotional and spiritual from social morality and the emphasis on coercion in moral matters as carried and commutated through the mechanisms of development, can be experienced as aggressive by non-modern societies. I will give a brief discussion on these issues.

Conceptualising the Individual in Society and Vice Versa

At the level of the individual *in* society, a major tension regularly surfaces in Western formulations of explanatory frameworks through which to articulate an understanding of moral ontology. The tension I refer to is that between the necessity of *belonging* in some way to a moral community and the concomitant fear of intimidated conformism in closed societies, or what Kerr calls 'conventionalism, according to which what passes for knowledge, truth etc., is no more than the shared beliefs of a particular restricted community' (Kerr 1997: 137). This fear is the motivation of Nussbaum's series of arguments that were discussed in the last chapter, that it is a moral imperative that the rights of the individual should supersede respect for a cultural reality as a whole.

'Belonging' and Moral Ontology

Taylor, in his critique of the Enlightenment conception of rationality and autonomy argues that the idea of 'autonomy' (which he defines as freedom and the ability to be impartial) should be complemented by the idea of 'authenticity'. For Taylor, 'authenticity' means the contextualisation of freedom in terms of our interdependence with Nature and with regard to particular shared other-regarding values and virtues (2000).

The Enlightenment, from this perspective, constituted a 'catastrophic' departure from generic and individual man's dialogic relationship with the archaic or sacred, however this be conceived[2]. Taylor notes that Dostoyevsky once 'identified Descartes' *cogito*

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[2] Of course, across modern global culture there are many versions of the re-sacralisation of the community (sometimes in racialist, hierarchical or conventionalist forms), or the re-establishment a meaningful relationship with Nature mingled with technocratic, individualist and utilitarian ways of

as the root of the modern evil. What he was opposing was the belief that humans affirm their dignity in separation from the world' (2000: 452). Similarly, the Jewish theologian, Martin Buber asserts that the rediscovery of this link is urgent; 'the strict anthropological question (what is human nature?) . . . becomes insistent in times when, as it were, the original contact between the universe and man is dissolved and man finds himself a stranger and solitary in the world' (1958: 132). Taylor goes further to argue that the Romantic critique holds the Enlightenment, in its separation of facts from values, as responsible for the breaking of the *social* bond, as well as with that with nature; of cutting human beings off from 'relations of meaningful solidarity', of 'killing spontaneity' (2000: 150). In the capitalist or technological vision so prevalent in the modern West, Kerr argues 'we have a completely de-sacralised vision of the cosmos, and the community itself is not regarded as sacred. On the contrary it exists largely to serve productive goals, it is an instrument designed for the furtherance of individual goals, at least on the standard liberal view' (1997: 150). MacIntyre agrees:

> 'For liberal individualism, a community is simply an arena in which individuals each pursue their own self-chosen conception of the good life, and political institutions exist to provide that degree of order which makes such self-determined activity possible . . . it is, on the liberal view, no part of the legitimate function of government to inculcate any one moral outlook' (1997: 195).

The moral ontology envisaged by Taylor, which has been discussed above, is one that simultaneously resists disengaged instrumental modes of reasoning, means-end utilitarian, procedural ethics, Cartesian dualism, the decentred, atomised self and non-realist ontologies (which, incidentally, approximates to a summary of neo-liberalism). Taylor's intent is to invite us to give credence to certain moral intuitions, which he believes to be universal and which, rather than being rendered valid, by culturally contingent criteria or individual idiosyncrasies, are with variable levels of faithfulness

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being. The failure of Marxism and capitalism, as well as communitarianism in its organicist, hierarchical and conventionalist versions is the failure to be what Taylor calls 'dialogue societies' (1968: 160).

told through the medium of cultural narratives but nevertheless, stand independently of these and offer standards by which these can be judged.

Taylor's point is that social philosophies such as the means-end individualism and utilitarianism of the Enlightenment, raise human beings above Nature and any idea of the existence of the 'good' beyond self reference. He argues that 'there is something ultimately tail chasing, self-referring in an infinite regress about this' (Taylor 2000: 160). The stress Taylor puts on *connectedness* (both to Nature and to other human beings) is related to his warning that liberal individualist and instrumental ideas of separation easily become affirmations of domination. Nature and the demands of society do not just constrain freedom, but should, ideally guide the exercise of autonomy.

Nietzsche's Individual; 'Creatio ex Nihilo'

Rapport argues from an avowedly anthropocentric perspective that our moral deliberations should be based upon on the category of the self-creating individual as a unique, subjective, self-conscious agent. He explicitly sets out an 'ontological' and 'moral' agenda in a series of essays that are, among other things, committed to promote an approach to anthropological investigation that envisages society, culture or any collectivity as being constituted by self-conscious and creative individuals (1997). Where Rapport's version of moral ontology departs from Taylor's is his conferring of the power of *creatio ex nihilo* upon 'transcendent individuals'. This view is based upon an interpretation of Nietzsche's perspectival theory of truth, which, in MacIntyre's words, depends upon an appreciation of

> ' . . . the multiplicity of perspectives from which the world can be viewed and the multiplicity of idioms by means of which it can be characterised . . . but no single world which they are of or about. To believe in such a world would be the illusion of supposing that "a world would still remain over after one subtracted the perspective" [Nietzsche *Der Wille zur Macht, 567]* ' (1990: 36).

Rapport pronounces that individuals are 'divine in their originality, their creativity, their uniqueness, but they are mortal, short-lived actors, and the substance of their

creations is perspectival, not factual or complete . . . they are merely beautiful in what they do, in the substance of their original creations' (1997: 4). He wants to keep the idea of God alive, but 'under a new name: Individual'. The moral ontology propounded (which is also intended rhetorically as a reaction to the reductionist tendencies of social science) is exemplified as follows:

> 'The transcendent individual, the individual who writes herself, and, in the process, rewrites the socio-cultural environment around her, is most fully a Nietzschean one. It is the essential, objective, inherent nature of the individual self, Nietzsche believed, to be self-caused and free' (ibid.).

Acknowledged Dependence

The difficulty with this view in terms of formulating an anthropological ethic is the idea of 'man as his own measure' and the perspectivist Nietzschean claim to the effect that reality is simply what we human beings make of it, or project on to it. Also, there is the obvious tautology of Nietzsche's assertion; to claim that there is no non-perspectival truth is itself asserting a non-perspectival theory of truth[3]. However, this perspectival approach now operates widely in social anthropology as a pragmatic approach to truth and representation.

A further difficulty in Nietzsche's moral ontology, is the potential lack of acknowledgement of the inter-dependence of human beings, societies and the natural environment inherent in this view[4]. MacIntyre, without denying the value of individuality, argues that 'the necessary counterpart to the virtues of independence (are) the virtues of acknowledged dependence' (1999: 120). Whilst an inalienable

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[3] Habermas makes the same observation of post-modernism, that it constitutes a performative error in making a universalistic claim that no universal truths exist (1973: 185-210). Nietzsche, however, recognised that perspectivalism as a claim was non-perspectival. 'That's why he argued for a reality beneath intellection: something corporeal, individual and existential. Last century Sartre phrased it as 'existence preceding essence'; i.e. the meanings and identities we make (our essences; our cultures) are undercut by the reality of our existence (our bodies and our capacities to think and create meanings and identities). i.e. an existential reality undercuts all cultural (and social) ones' (Rapport - pers.comm). This seems to be a realist argument.

[4] Rapport, following Rorty, argues that Nietzsche's obsession with his own self can be best tempered by John Stuart Mill's utilitarian doctrine of not 'hindering or despoiling the individuality of another' (1997: 4). I will argue in a later section that this argument has proven to be inadequate as either a

aspect of being human is fragility and inter-dependence, this has often been overlooked in moral philosophy. He proposes that greater attention should be given to 'the vulnerability and disability that pervade human life, in early childhood, in old age and during those periods when we are injured or physically or mentally ill, and the extent of our consequent dependence on others' (1999: 155). Equally importantly, he further asserts that Nietzsche's achievement is based upon a perspective that can only ever be imaginary:

> 'Nietzsche in a heroic series of acts isolated himself by ridding himself, so far as is humanely possible, of the commitments required by the virtues of acknowledged dependence. He was then able to tell us from that new vantage point how human nature and the human condition appear from it' (1999: 162).

An ethic that does not acknowledge interdependence is obviously incomplete and is also an ethic that is particularly convenient for those who wish to deny responsibility for the well being of others. In short, an ethic that is built around the figure of a disengaged individual utterly free to pursue his or her own subjective ends is a peculiarly Western fantasy.

MacIntyre argues that Nietzsche's 'great man', (which he, MacIntyre, considers to epitomise the greatest challenge to Aristotelian virtue ethics) by choosing to isolate himself (believing that *all* versions of morality were nothing more than disguised versions of the will to power) from all shared visions of the good, by refusing to enter into relationships based upon the authority of a shared moral tradition debars himself from ever knowing and appreciating the good in others. This suspicious moral solipsism has tragic consequences for the individual and offers nothing to ameliorate the moral crises of the contemporary world[5]. MacIntyre argues that in many ways,

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personal or global ethic, as Lehman argues, 'To say the least, modern environmental theorists are more aware of the dangers of instrumentalism and anthropocentrism' (2001: 435)

[5] For example, 'A great man, a man whom nature has constructed and invented in the grand style – what is he? . . .If he cannot lead, he goes alone; then it happens that he may snarl at some things he meets on the way . . . he wants no "sympathetic heart", but servants, tools; in his intercourse with men he is always intent on *making* something out of them. He knows he is incommunicable: he finds it tasteless to be familiar: and when one thinks he is, he usually is not. When not speaking to himself, he wears a mask. He rather lies than tells the truth: it requires more spirit and *will*. There is a solitude within him that is inaccessible to praise or blame, his own justice that is beyond appeal' (Nietzsche 1962: note 962).

'Nietzsche is *the* moral philosopher of the present age' (*op.cit:* 114) as he perceived most clearly the failure of rational secular accounts of the nature and status of morality (*op.cit:* 256). Nietzsche jeers at the notion of basing morality on 'real' moral intuitions in Taylor's sense, or on the rational foundations of the Enlightenment. The implication is that 'morality' can be nothing but a series of disguises for the will to power.

MacIntyre argues that whilst it is true that 'the Enlightenment has failed', Nietzsche's negative solution, whilst having a certain plausibility, can only be truly vindicated if the Enlightenment's reaction against the Aristotelian (or virtue ethics) tradition can be shown not to be misconceived and mistaken. In other words, MacIntyre argues that the Aristotelian tradition still stands as a way to a better life. Whilst seeing Nietzsche as the most thoroughgoing critic of the morality of the Enlightenment, MacIntyre argues that he is also the 'ultimate antagonist of the Aristotelian tradition' (*op.cit:* 259). However, the conclusion that MacIntyre reaches is that Nietzsche's 'pseudo-concept' (although sadly not a fiction) of the 'great man' represents 'individualism's final attempt to escape from itself' (*loc. cit.*) and considers that the two great antagonistic views of viewing the world (suffused through social science) are liberal individualism and the Aristotelian tradition[6]. The antagonistic rivalry between liberal individualism and the Aristotelian tradition is the central and most important debate to be considered in our deliberations over the moral and ethical base of the social sciences:

> 'The differences between the two run very deep. They extend beyond ethics and morality to the understanding of human action, so that rival conceptions of the social sciences, of their limits and their possibilities, are intimately bound up with the antagonistic confrontation of these two ways of viewing the human world.' (MacIntyre: *loc. cit.*).

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[6] The Nietzschean tradition if it can be called as such, as a moral force, has certainly not produced a world that its originator would have approved of, MacIntyre argues that Nietzsche, if suddenly transported to a contemporary context would find life as unpalatable as Aristotle might.

The anthropologist Hobart, makes a similar identification; 'Collectivism and individualism in one form or another are entrenched intellectual positions in a long running battle' (1993: 8).

Communitarian Critiques of Liberal Individualism

The Enlightenment endorsement of the disengagement and abstraction of the individual from constitutive attachments and demands meant that 'morality' came to be seen in terms of decontextualised 'rights'. Whilst this paradigm has assumed the status of a global ethic, Taylor reminds us that 'what is *peculiar* to the modern West is that its favoured formulation for the principle of respect has come to be seen in terms of rights' (2000: 256). Alongside positively defending individuals from oppression, a negative aspect of this conceptualisation of human freedom is the accompanying aspiration to be free from the limitations of nature and the demands that arise from the condition of vulnerability. On this view, ideas of right and wrong are based upon consequentualist, minimalist ethics, and instrumental calculations of survival.

Whilst on the standard liberal view, it is desirable (and hopefully possible) for each individual to pursue his or her own ends, from a 'virtue ethics' perspective, it is difficult to conceptualise of the achievement of liberty and equality at a societal level without *fraternity* (or *sorority*). Virtue ethics, rather than looking primarily at the consequences of actions (utilitarianism) or fulfilling one's duty for duty's sake (Kant), is concerned with the kind of person one's actions exhibit and requires one to be (Kerr 2002: 115). Virtue ethics also involves considering the nature of a 'good human life' and therefore, what human beings must be like, and how they must behave, if they are to achieve their shared vision of the good. This is expressed by the Thomist theologian Kerr;

> 'We have to discover the place in our conceptual system for the concept of the good as the object of our allegiance – of our love – the good as the privileged focus that draws our attention and opens our moral world' (1997: 139).

Overing and Passes also assert that, among the moral traditions of the West, the virtue centred perspective has the closest correspondence to Amazonian peoples' adherence

to an ethics 'primarily centred upon the quality of 'the good life' which is engendered through the artful practices[7] and skills of those who personally and intimately interact in everyday life . . . the interactive relationships that might lead to the creation of a high quality of personal relations among those within the same life-world, such as, for instance, those concerned with the care, trust and responsibility for raising of children' (2000: 4)

The liberal principle of non-interference in the pursuit of subjective happiness, in the experience of the vulnerable and powerless might be felt as *neglect* (Gilligan 1987: 170). Liberal theorists take a defensive view of versions of morality that place the sense of concern for the good of others too centrally or which value interdependence above independence; the idea of a version of morality that pertains to one group in society becoming a constraint upon the whole is rejected. The warning is broadcast that Communitarianism is 'often hierarchical, and always exclusionary with regard to those who do not belong'. The danger is expressed of being subsumed, into a moral community that denies freedom and autonomy. As Rapport argues, individuals, after all 'have the *right* to resist and opt out of the norms and expectations of particular social and cultural groupings and chart their own course' (2000: 166-7). Fearing totalitarianism, where the individual becomes incidental to the group ethos, the argument is made that:

> 'To decry the seeming atomism of individually conceived human rights . . . is to wish to replace a politics of individual rights with a politics of common good, and an emphasis on collective life and the supreme value of the community' (Rapport 2000: 167).

However, notwithstanding this defence of individuals from malign totalitarian forces, I would agree with Baier's argument that, as a moral perspective, the minimalist, rights based model, by default, constitutes its own kind of totalitarianism, in that it prevents the flourishing of other versions of well being. The achievement of a society where an ethics of care are felt in practice would require a 'closer co-operation from others than respect for rights and justice (would) ensure' (1995: 44). Also, in a rights

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[7] 'Artful' is used in the old sense of being characterised by 'art, beauty' and not in the modern sense of 'using deceit or cunning' (footnote from original).

based world, those who *do* actively engage in the care of others can easily be taken advantage of. They usually end up being conveniently rewarded as the minority who salve the consciences of the less altruistic many; those who catch those who fall by the wayside in a competitive and sometimes callous society. Baier argues:

'Volunteer forces of those who accept an ethic of care, operating within a society where power is exercised and the institutions redesigned, or maintained by those who accept a less communal ethic of minimally constrained self-advancement, will not be the solution.' (1995: 44)

This is, of course, the precise role of many NGOs who seek to mitigate the impact of neo-liberal policies.

Ethics and the Social Embeddedness of the Self

Thinking, in terms of its potentiality, is arguably, 'the most consequential of social acts' (Geertz 2001: 21). Addressing the social nature of thought has gained greater currency in moral philosophy and social science following Wittgenstein's argument that we cannot properly conceive of thought in terms of private languages; language is essentially public[8] (1953).

In order to consider the nature of moral experiences, an attempt to apprehend the relationship between individual thought and social action is essential. MacIntyre asserts that

'Rational enquiry is essentially social and, like other types of social activity . . . it depends for its success on the virtues of those who engage in it, and it requires relationships and evaluative commitments of a particular kind . . . it is something *we* undertake from within *our* shared mode of practice' (1999:156-7).

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[8] Wittgenstein argued that analytical philosophy, through the metaphysical extension of ideas or words, considers them in isolation from their use, and should ask the question whether these words/ideas are ever actually used in this way in the language in which they are at home. Murdoch argues that whilst we may have 'inner' introspectible objects (images, talking to ourselves etc.), inner words 'mean' in

Hastrup argues that 'there can be no moral agency at all without a sense of shared moral space; there can be no sense of self for that matter. To know who you are is to know how to orient yourself in a moral space, to experience yourself among other selves' (2001: 14, see also Taylor 2000: 35). Morality has been conceptualised in terms of rationality, feelings, social organisation, religious belief, power and ideas of false consciousness. It could be argued that the discipline of anthropology, by privileging one perspective on morality over another, has historically dealt with questions of morality in ways that oversimplify the reality of human beings' experience. For example, an easy identification of morality with social structure excises, or diminishes, the crucial role of human agency (Berger and Luckmann 1967). The western tendency to analytically separate the dimensions of human nature and experience, rationality from emotion, mind from body and so on, has resulted in truncated descriptions of moral agency. Hastrup argues that

'A good many features of social life and of cultural judgement simply defy the labels of rationality or irrationality . . .This has important consequences for the link between universal and local standards. They cannot simply be measured against each other as more or less rational, according to an absolute (if arbitrary) scale of reason. Vast areas of moral conduct are neither articulated in language nor reducible to reason' (Hastrup 2001: 11)

Her contention, that thought is fundamentally 'social', requires reflection on how to understand the relationships between the specificity of cultural realities, moralities and different manners and modes of thinking. Her point is that 'the semantic features of language are public features' (1995: 183) although this does not impose uniformity in the ways these meanings can be interpreted by individuals.

Recent ethnographies of Amazonian peoples concur that, 'social talk . . . pertains to a language of affect and intimacy that *conjoins thinking and the sensual life* . . . their 'emotion talk' is also 'social talk' in that they consider the management of their affective life *vis-à-vis other people* to be constitutive of moral thought and practical

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the same way as outer words; and I can know my imagery because I know the public things which it is of' (1971: 14).

reason' (Overing and Passes 2000: 3). The question here might be whether the semantic separations between the public from the private, the rational and the emotional etc., that characterises Western discourse, presents an obstacle for our understanding of the very real and substantive linkages between these abstracted areas. The scientific method separates fact and value, whereas in social reality, facts emerge through, and are intertwined with, our moral reactions and emotions. Speech acts fulfil their purpose insofar as there is a degree of intelligibility both for the speaker and the listener in terms of the context of a shared social practice, no matter how fleeting. This intelligibility clearly depends upon the agents having knowledge of, and abilities within, a shared social context (see also MacIntyre 1999: 30).

An important adjunct, however, is considering the question of individual human agency. Whilst it appears clear that an individual's conduct inevitably flows from the accumulated experiences and decisions that form his or her personality:

> '*Action* involves *character*, which involves *choice* – and the *form* of choice attains its perfection in the distinction between Yes and No . . . though the concept of sheer *motion* is non-ethical, *action* implies the ethical, the human personality' (Burke: 1966: 11, emphasis original).

So, the anthropological balancing act involves appreciating the social embeddedness of the self with the individuality and agency of the person (which is quite different from individual*ism*). Todorov argues that 'it is said that liberty is the distinctive trait of the human species. It is certain that my milieu pushes me to reproduce the behaviour it valorises; but the possibility of uprooting myself from it also exists' (1984a: 428). The idea of the individual moral agent and his or her relationship to society is complex and has to be apprehended in relative terms that appreciates the ways in which individuals construct life-worlds which reflect and allow the realisation of their values.

The Discontents of Modern Western Liberal Individualist Society

A society can be imagined in which justice reigns supreme, where individuals are secure in their contracts, have equal opportunities, participate in political debate,

where there are no restrictions on association and there is education, health and welfare for all at an adequate level, where women and men are equal in front of the law and torture and prejudice are dealt with severely.

What is disturbing for some contemporary moral philosophers and social theorists is that this world is entirely compatible with misery, boredom and alienation. As Baier argues, people in such a society may well be 'lonely, driven to suicide, apathetic about their work . . . find their lives meaningless and have no wish to leave offspring to face the same meaningless existence' (1988: 44). Similarly, as Simmel writes of life in the metropolis, 'indifference and . . . antipathy protect us' (in Josephson 1972: 154). MacIntyre complains that 'modern society is indeed, at least in surface appearance, nothing but a collection of strangers, each pursuing his or her interests under minimal constraints' (1997: 250-51). Fernandez observes that the Weberian thesis 'about the 'unprecedented condition of inner loneliness of the individual' of which Marx also spoke, which was an increasing condition of modern life (Weber 1930), a product of bureaucratic rationalisation and the resultant isolating compartmentalisation of life' continues to have currency in contemporary social theory (1995: 36)[9].

I argued in Chapter 4 that the question of the ethics of development should be framed in terms of 'what makes life fulfilling' rather than in terms of the ethics that are built up to protect the impersonal smooth functioning of a merely tolerant liberal democratic society. I also argued that for anthropology to be relevant, it must take seriously non-modern visions of the good. Overing and Passes, for instance, stress the importance of recognising;

> 'the enormous valorisation in which the indigenous peoples of Amazonia place upon good humour, affective comfort and a sociable mutuality in their everyday, intimate relations and practices of everyday living. The fact that many Amazonian peoples equate sociality with the convivial personal is not trivial to our anthropological task. *Their* quest for a convivial sociality is the

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[9] Through 4 brief vignettes, Fernandez describes the ways in which individuals consciously, or unconsciously, in order to counter this disaffection and disenchantment, which is a consequence of the

product of a powerful and egalitarian ethics and social philosophy, where humour, generosity and goodwill provide its sustenance; whereas *our* anthropological tools of the trade have been created to unfold the grave structures of hierarchy and formal order' (2000: 17).

Some of the limits of these 'grave structures' are as follows.

The Wrongs of Rights

The language of rights has never been as prominent in development discourse as it is today. There are various ways that anthropologists have responded to this emerging rights agenda as the universal language of development aspiration. For now, I would like to briefly mention two moral philosopher's critiques of Western ethical models Annette Baier and Alasdair MacIntyre (Charles Taylor's critiques are sprinkled throughout the thesis). Their shared view is that rights-based ethics hold a doubtful or incomplete role as the foundation of human well being or flourishing.

Baier argues that the liberal orthodox stress on *obligation* as the key moral concept emphasises such questions as 'On what basis should a person/group be obliged to do something?' or 'Who should be deprived of what freedom for the sake of what right?' The question, in its barest form is how, in a 'just society' can coercion be justified? The concept of obligation becomes central to a moral system characterised by the idea of punishment and the justified limitation of freedom. Baier argues further that the modern model of contractual obligation is based upon a very 'cool' relationship where only minimal trust is placed on the obliging person, and for whom considerable punitive power is required (1995: 13, 116).

In concentrating on obligations, rather than *virtues,* modern moral theorists have chosen to look at the cases where more trust is placed in enforcers of obligations than is placed in ordinary moral agents, the bearers of the obligations. Such a notion of improper trust, Baier argues, where the upholding of morality depends upon the trusting of others to coerce, distorts our moral vision to suppose that all obligations

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'decommunalisation of modern life', proceed towards a re-enchantment through somehow becoming part of a meaningful whole 1995).

conform to what is in fact an abnormally coercive model. The resulting emphasis on coercion results in a distortion of our moral vision where what is right is associated with enforcement rather than virtue. This is the essential paradox of the modern notion of freedom. If this type of coercive structure of morality is regarded as the backbone of our moral gaze, then 'undoubtedly life will be nasty, emotionally poor and worse than brutish' (*op.cit:* 14).

This modern Western emphasis on obligation is considered in some feminist theory to be specifically masculine. The argument, in simple terms, is that contemporary men, in the West, generally understand morality in terms of obligation, contract and justice as this reflects their attachment to personal autonomy and independence. Women, in contrast, are more communitarian and view morality with reference to the virtues and qualities connected with the bringing up of children, that is, the engendering of love, care, trust and co-operation (Gilligan 1987). Overing argues that this argument would be difficult to sustain in Amazonia;

> 'For the Piaroa, the values of care and trust are relevant equally to the judgements of both men and women for they relate to notions about living an acceptable type of human life on earth. At the same time, the right to personal autonomy is likewise an un-gendered value. In other words the western tendency to see communitarian values to be on the side of the female and the value of freedom to be basically a male perspective ill fits the Piaroa' (pers.comm.).

Nevertheless, whilst Gilligan's theorisation does not fit Amazonian life-ways, her critique is important in the sense that it reveals something of the West's skewed emphasis on liberty as something *opposed* to certain basic responsibilities or aspects of human mutuality.

A further difficulty in the West arises from another tendency in the West that, as Taylor argues, the only ethics generated beyond the quest for self-fulfilment in our age is that of 'procedural fairness' (1989: 508). Hastrup concurs, asserting that to build a moral community on a sense of fair trial and perceive it as a 'culture' that may embrace everyone is strikingly modernist (2001: 12). The corollary of this is a neglect

of the extrapolation of virtues, such as trust, care, or generosity that can attribute a greater meaning to interpersonal relationships than the mere negotiation of contracts. I shall now look briefly at MacIntyre's critique.

The Incommensurable Fragments of Modern Liberal Society and Arbitrary Power

In everyday moral reasoning, tradition and socially particular views of virtue endure and are mixed with characteristically modern and individualistic concepts such as rights or utility. MacIntyre adds to his demonstration of the fictitious nature of both the concepts of *'rights'* and *'utility'* by elaborating on the highly specific properties of these fictions. He further claims that a central characteristic of these moral fictions is that, as they were conceived to serve different purposes, claims invoking *rights* are incommensurable with claims centred on *utility* or on *justice*.

MacIntyre argues that the dispute between these two positions cannot be settled by appealing to abstract reason. If we accept the starting points of analytical liberal theorists such as Robert Nozick (1974) or John Rawls (1971), we should agree with their conclusions, for their accounts are internally coherent. The problem is that neither theorist can show *why* we should accept their starting point to begin with. Further, he argues that whilst these positions have intractably opposed premises, they do share a number of, mostly negative, similarities. Firstly, in both, there is recognition that the achievement of justice for one party inevitably has a cost to some other. This means that different social groups have a stake in deciding which version of distributive justice achieves prominence in a given context. Secondly, he notes that both theorists build their arguments on individualistic premises; the notion of community is absent from Nozick's version and a pre-supposition of Rawls' view is that 'we must expect to disagree with others about what the good life for human beings is and must exclude this from our understanding of justice' (*op.cit:* 250)[10].

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[10] This division between law making and individual morality was a component of Adam Ferguson's Enlightenment view of the status of law in relation to individual morality: 'We are not to expect that the laws of any country are to be framed as so many lessons of morality . . . Laws, whether civil or political, are expedients of policy to adjust to the pretensions of parties, and to secure the peace of society (Principles of Moral and Political Science ii. 144).

Also, as one of MacIntyre's central tenets is that moral philosophy is an abstract reflection of the actual moral positions puzzled over by people in their everyday lives, he argues that whilst neither positions make any reference to *virtue* or *tradition* in their argumentation, in social reality, individuals *do* in their reasoning and intuitions. For instance, it is argued that Rawls and Nozick delimit the relevance of the past in their respective formulations of the principles of justice, albeit in different ways. Rawls' appraisal of justice is entirely based upon contemporary patterns of equality and inequality, not how these came to be. For Nozick, the past is only relevant in terms of previous legitimate transactions; if someone has lawfully inherited a fortune, it is his to enjoy; the present day distribution of resources, no matter how unequal, is not factored into his conceptualisation[11]. A related observation is that neither theorist makes any reference to *desert*, or merit in their accounts of justice, something that MacIntyre contrasts again with moral reasoning in everyday life. The real life counterparts of Nozick and Rawls might appeal, respectively, to such ideas as a working person being entitled to enjoy what he has earned, or that the poor are undeserving of the misery they were born into and should be given the same opportunities as others.

MacIntyre's point, drawing from these accumulated observations is that Rawls and Nozick share a view in which individuals are primary, and society secondary, in the formulation of moral or social bonds, the idea of desert, in contrast, 'is at home only in the context of a community whose primary bond is a shared understanding both of the good for man and of the good of that community and where individuals identify their interests with reference to these goods' (*op.cit*: 250).

MacIntyre therefore argues that this liberal-individualist view of social life as an aggregate of voluntary, rational, abstracted individuals with prior interests excludes the possibility of conceptualising morality in terms of the shared visions, virtues and tasks that are required to achieve particular versions of human well being. In everyday moral reasoning, then, as opposed to the abstractions of Western moral categories,

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[11] It is also worth noting that the excision of the past from Rawls' account of justice makes claims for retribution impossible. Similarly Nozick's lack of consideration of historically illegitimate entitlements (such as those which benefit the present owners of most of the Highlands of Scotland, or Amazonia, for example) where land was gained through violence, gives no scope for retrospective justice to benefit indigenous peoples, for example.

tradition and socially particular views of virtue endure and are mixed with 'characteristically modern and individualistic concepts such as rights or utility' (*op.cit.:* 252). This causes a discrepancy between the representation of public discourse on rights and utility as being rational and coherent and what is actually happening. To make sense of the moralities that are operative in the creation of the achievement of well being, we have to think about the kinds of values and beliefs that are embedded in particular communities.

This leads us to an important insight for the understanding of the politics of modern societies, and indeed, the tensions that arise through the negotiations of development. MacIntyre (1997) depicts modern, public culture as being characterised by the tension between an individualistic set of claims made in terms of 'rights' and another set of claims made through bureaucratic institutions, which are expressed in terms of 'utility'. As both rights and utility are 'incommensurable fictions', it follows that the modern moral idiom, as MacIntyre (1997: 71) explains, 'can at best provide a semblance of rationality for the modern political process, but not its reality'.

It is clear that contemporary moral controversies, both public and private, are notable for their *interminable* nature, which is due to the incommensurability of the premises of different positions and also disagreement about the constitutive goods and telos of moral debate. In addition, as MacIntyre observes, the contending parties in contemporary moral debate are often arbitrarily positioned (1997:1-22, 256). On this view, we have passed from states of relative order to a contemporary state of confusion[12]. This is not to say that people are necessarily any less 'moral' than they

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[12] The three salient characteristics, in summary then, of contemporary moral debate are as follows:
- Different positions are based upon incommensurable premises and their resolution becomes a matter of the relative and arbitrary power of each contending party, thus making 'shrillness', 'unmasking' and defensiveness notable features of moral debate today.
- There is a paradoxical air to moral disagreement: whilst the mode of impersonality, purporting to rational argumentation is used, for example, referring to supposedly shared standards of justice or duty, in reality, the force of moral argument depends upon the context of the utterance and the relative positions of the speakers.
- The range of moral sources that provide the background to contemporary debates is wide and heterogeneous and the term 'moral pluralism' is often used complacently, as if it means a set of definable perspectives engaged in ordered dialogue. The reality is that, as noted above, the countless moral cultures in the contemporary world (and the faint and selective reflection of these provided by moral philosophy) are generally constituted by 'an unharmonious melange of ill-assorted fragments'. The evaluative expressions that are used in moral discourse today have taken on new and different meanings from those with which they were invested in the historical contexts from which they have now been deprived.

would be if part of a coherent moral tradition, but that it is much more difficult to settle disputes and *to know how* to proceed morally under present conditions.

It could be argued that moral debate has, and always has been interminable, and this is not a feature unique to our modern contemporary culture. MacIntyre answers this by referring to the claims of emotivism. He asserts that certain profound difficulties in Western moral reasoning have resulted from emotivism being not just a philosophical phenomenon, but a key characteristic of modern culture: 'we live in a specifically emotivist culture . . . a wide variety of our concepts and modes of behaviour – and not only our explicitly moral debates and judgements - presuppose the truth of emotivism.' (1997: 22). Emotivism, essentially, purports to be an account of *all* moral expressions, being the 'doctrine that all evaluative judgements and more specifically all moral judgements are *nothing but* expressions of preference, expressions of attitude or feeling, insofar as they are moral or evaluative in character' (*op.cit.:* 1997: 12). According to emotivism, evaluative statements are likely to be imperative in nature rather than statements of fact based on practical reason or shared values.

What is of concern here, and this is the point, is the fact that the language of rights and utility, and the fragmented rationality that characterises it, simply conceals the arbitrary powers that scramble towards the resolution of competing claims. This pattern is manifest in the extremes of inequality between different social groups in contemporary society. Hornborg recognises that this dynamic often operates to the cost of traditional cultures:

> 'The ideology of abstract utility emerges as the legitimation of Western market expansion. Parallel to the social process whereby the market conspires to subsume all local cultures, its own tautological cosmology aspires to engulf all local systems of meaning' (1992: 3; see also Gudeman 1986, 1989 and Taussig 1980).

So, in the fragmentation and irrationality of public and political discourse which involves the contestation of incommensurable claims based on individualistic, procedural rights discourses, as opposed to bureaucratic and institutional narratives that focus on utility as a legitimation for decision and finally a myriad of survivals in

the modern consciousness of other moral traditions, the end result is that instrumental forces usually driven by economic interests exert the most dominant influence. This assertion, then, if true, means that development ethics is faced by the inexorable persuasive force of arbitrary economic powers.

Given that achieving a shared version of practical reason for public moral deliberation is obviously a tall order, in the meantime, a more realistic response might be one of resistance or 'opting out'. Indigenous communities, for instance, may elect, as far as possible, not to engage with Western political and economic realities. Anthropologists, in their insistence that societies and particular moral traditions, rather than being oppressive ideological structures that the individual is best to free him or her self from, constitute arenas where relational values and particular virtues are lived out and nurtured for the well being of embedded individuals. Another point of resistance is making plain the poverty of rights based ethics as a route to well being.

The Virtues and Social Teleology

The supposedly morally neutral stance of the development planner, or the social scientist involved in development can be traced back to the philosophical and social beginnings of the 'facts first' approach to social action which rejected Aristotelian teleological frameworks for evaluative claims. The philosophers of the Enlightenment believed themselves to have left behind the 'Dark Ages' by shining light on reality, on unadulterated facts, without being encumbered by Aristotelian teleological ideas and 'visions of the good' about nature, and humanity's place in it. Aristotle (1953) depicted human beings as being in pursuit of goods (or ends) that were intrinsic to their nature, and their capacity to achieve these goods depended upon the virtues and vices that they acquired through reason, education, discipline, and repetition. Here, unlike the distinction made in the Enlightenment, morality and reason were not placed in different spheres of enquiry and the focus was primarily on what it is 'good to be', rather than what it is 'good to do'. The excision of references to intentions, desires and emotions as well as reasons for action in the Enlightenment science of human behaviour reduced the enquiry into human action to a form of mechanics. This is part of anthropology's sociological inheritance, a consequence of which is that, in the

effort to apprehend what well being means, anthropologists are forced to shed Western moral categories and reconsider pre-modern ethics.

Aristotle proposed his own metaphysical biology as the basis for morality and the definition of the human *telos*. He reasoned that as human beings are of the same species, essentially, we share the same *telos*. The problem of distinction between capacities or 'virtues' which should or should not inform morality is based, for Aristotle, on the idea that some capacities promote human flourishing or happiness (*eudaimonia*) whilst others do not and those who fail to attain or actualise these capacities, or virtues, will never reach their full potential. The major difficulty in revisiting Aristotle is the whole idea of universal *telos* based on human nature or capacities as a grounding for morality; primarily because people and cultures are so different, it is problematic to define a shared telos. Secondly, even if a shared telos could be defined, the question remains as to what description of human nature this is based on and how this is shaped by dominant agendas.

In his characterisation of the core virtues, MacIntyre (1997) argues that we can ground the shared telos that people aspire to together, not on Aristotle's ideas of human nature, but on a teleology of social traditions. The moral traditions of which one forms a part, through the narrative history of each individual life, provide a shared, significant social aspiration that can be viewed as the telos that ascertain the virtues for that society. In his bringing together of different traditions of virtue, MacIntyre explores how 'virtue' has been variously understood in different traditions[13]. Intimately related to each of these apprehensions of virtue is a vision of a particular kind of society. Indeed, a common feature to all accounts is a necessary background goal of social and moral life that can orient the moral agent and enable distinctions to be made between vice and virtue. Without such a shared vision in a

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[13] For example, the Homeric account is based upon a rigid demarcation of social roles; an individual can be considered as virtuous to the extent that he or she fulfils a prescribed role. The social role is therefore the determinant and prior concept of this version of virtue. Aristotle's account of the virtues, as outlined previously, is based upon the idea of the *telos* of the human being as determining which human qualities can be called virtues, that is, those which lead to the achievement of this telos (*eudaimonia*). This same basic idea is common to the virtues depicted in the New Testament and Thomas Aquinas, although there are some important differences. According to MacIntyre, Jane Austen's theory of the virtues is a mixture of Christian and Homeric virtues. Benjamin Franklin's version denotes useful, practical and thrifty virtues that are clearly oriented towards the external goals of success, prosperity, and (Protestant) salvation.

shared tradition, the virtues can not be made intelligible. The virtues are channels through which relationships are defined between people who share agreed purposes and standards.

Sadly, it is outwith the scope of this thesis to look properly at the social teleologies and particular virtue-ethics that are lived out in different groups and how anthropologists have represented these. Nevertheless on the basis of reading the contributions to Overing and Passes volume, The Anthropology of Love and Anger (The Aesthetics of Conviviality in Native Amazonia), I will make the argument that the self-aware, nuanced and highly skilled achievement of well being in Amazonian societies which involves the nurturing of a shared vision of the good can not be apprehended by the acrimonious tensions, trade-offs and compromises that characterise modern liberalism.

The relevance of virtue-ethics for the ethics of applied anthropology is two-fold. Firstly, as noted above, by considering the culturally specific visions of the good that characterise particular cultural settings in terms that do not originate from the Western moral tradition, the anthropologist is more likely to be able to communicate the aspirations that pertain to the society as a whole. As I argued at the beginning of the chapter, the Western individuating agenda, both in theory and practice, dismantles life-worlds that are the very setting where well being is achieved. Many of the features of pre-modern virtue based moral thinking have resonance with the moralities of non-modern societies, such as the indigenous peoples of Amazonia and therefore this perspective provides a model more likely to be able to facilitate the description of what well being means in these societies. Secondly, a virtue based perspective, which requires a definition of the good, or shared *telos*, either within a practice (such as development) or tradition or between traditions, is also pertinent to the dilemmas that present themselves in our chaotically developing world as, rather than resorting to social pessimism, it requires an active search for agreement on the shared good for individuals and groups.

A paradox that emerges from this chapter in relation to the ways in which applied anthropologists might approach the issue of development and the aspirations of indigenous peoples is that whilst, as I have argued with regard to Amazonian peoples,

the rights ethic does not capture their way of achieving well being, indigenous peoples are, in the contemporary context, often obliged to utilise the rights agenda in order to maintain their distance from the acrimony of a rights based, liberal individualist world. I will explore this paradox in the next chapter.

Chapter 11

Using Rights to Subvert the Neo-Liberal Agenda in Development? Perspectives from NGOs

In my treatment of the rights framework here, I set out to elicit an interpretation that is especially relevant to efforts to mitigate the impact of exclusionary neo-liberal models of development. In previous chapters I tried to establish that rights based thinking is left wanting in terms of apprehending the nuances of social ethics and the myriad ways in which well being is achieved. But I have also argued that rights constitute a set of tools that are now intrinsic to, and ineluctable within, the development landscape. In short, what I am going to suggest in this chapter, is that social anthropologists *can* and should engage with rights as one strand of their pursuit of an ethical approach to working in development.

My understanding of this emphasis is influenced by research I undertook (on DFID's behalf) on the ways in which policy makers in the major UK based development NGOs[1] interpreted a rights based agenda in development. This research involved writing three reports. The central objective of the first of these[2] was to present an analysis of the views, policies and practices of UK based NGOs on a 'rights based' approach to development. This was carried out through questionnaires and interviews with individuals responsible for policy in 15 UK based development NGOs. I have organised this chapter around the categories that these development professionals tended to use when speaking about their rights based work.

For the second report[3], I undertook a desk based study of 17 DFID funded project reports. Some of these had been funded through DFID's 'Joint Funding Scheme'

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[1] Action Aid, CAFOD (Catholic Fund for Overseas Development), CARE INTERNATIONAL, Christian Aid, CIIR (Catholic Institute for International Relations), CORD (Christian Outreach Relief and Development), EWD (Empowering Widows in Development), FARM AFRICA, IDS, ODI (Overseas Development Institute), OXFAM GB, Save the Children, SCIAF (Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund), War on Want, WATERAID, Womankind World-wide.

[2] 'Implementing a Rights Based Approach to Development: Policies, Practices and Reflections of UK Based Non-Governmental Development Organisations'.

[3] 'A Review of the ways in which projects funded by the Joint Funding Scheme in Central and South America reflected a 'rights based approach' to development'.

(JFS), others through its successor the 'Civil Society Challenge Fund' (CSCF)[4]. Here I identified project goals, approaches and wider objectives with rights criteria. The frequency of occurrence of rights compatible goals was recorded and ranked. This was complemented by textual analysis of the project reports from proposal through to final evaluation.

Another aspect of this consultation involved research in Lima and Callao, Peru to assess a project entitled 'Pilot Training Programme for the Promotion of Women's Economic Rights in Peru'[5]. The project was designed collaboratively by the UK based NGO 'Womankind Worldwide' and the Peruvian women's rights organisation *Asociación Aurora Vivar* with further input from *Federación de Centrales de Comedores Populares y Autogestiónarios de Lima y Callao* (FECCPAALC). The aim of the analysis, which was framed in terms of DFID's Civil Society Department's agenda of supporting initiatives which, whilst having a clear poverty focus, seek to enhance people's knowledge of, and access to, their rights, was to locate good practice and pinpoint the conceptual strengths of this project.

In this chapter, whilst I draw upon some of the content of these reports, my main focus is to explicate the particular reasonings of the development professionals I spoke with about their interpretation of the rights framework. Space does not permit going into the detail of the methodologies of the projects, the problems associated with these and the fine tuning of project design. Similarly, my evaluation of the success, or otherwise, of the projects and NGOs in attaining their goals has been omitted from my analysis here. What *is* articulated is the conceptualisation of the rights agenda from the point of view of professionals seeking to elevate the status, and promote the realisation of, economic, social and cultural rights vis-à-vis, and alongside, civil and political rights.

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[4] These schemes are DFID's main way of funding NGOs on a project by project basis. NGOs submit project ideas to DFID and, if they are accepted are usually funded on a 50/50 basis with the NGO making the proposal. Some of the bigger NGOs, such as CAFOD, Oxfam and Save the Children also receive block funding and have a freer hand to use this funding as they see fit.
[5] Resulting in a report entitled 'An analysis of 3 NGO's Concerted Approach to Income Generation, Training for Work and Participatory Political Proposals for Women in Lima'.

'Rights based development', has become the focus of optimistic development innovation, within both official and NGO policy making as well as through new forms of engagement between these actors. OXFAM GB, for instance, has recently framed all of its work under 5 rights based aims and is 'asking that all programmes identify the changes in policies and practices that will be needed for these rights to be fulfilled as well as existing human rights covenants and legislation which may assist in doing so' (Chris Roche pers. comm.). DFID is also explicitly committed to a 'rights based approach to development' and is continuing to explore what this means in practice (DFID 2000, Hausermann 1998). Over a five year period following the commitments[6] made at the World Summit for Social Development[7], an unprecedented convergence of the goals of the UN system, national Governments and global civil society in the eradication of poverty and achieving social integration has unfolded. Greater consensus has emerged around both the definitions of the *goals* of development and the *means* by which these ends can be arrived at, that is, in terms of the standards set out in UN treaties and conventions on civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

Wilson observes that there is a correspondence between Kant's idea of a 'cosmopolitan' or universal right which underlies his idea of 'perpetual peace' and CIIR's reference to 'the rights and duties of citizens in *international civil society*' (CIIR's 1993 Annual review). The fact that a large number of NGOs who are taking up the rights agenda have sprung from Christian sources is not surprising for Wilson;

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[6] International Development Targets:
- 50% reduction in the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by 2015;
- Universal primary education in all countries by 2015;
- Demonstrated progress toward gender equality and the empowerment of women by eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2005,
- A reduction by 67% in the mortality rates for infants and children under age 5 and a reduction by 75% in maternal mortality by 2015;
- Access through the primary health care system to reproductive health services for individuals of appropriate ages as soon as possible and no later than the year 2015;
- The implementation of national strategies for sustainable development in all countries by 2005, so as to ensure that current trends in the loss of environmental resources are effectively reversed at both global and national levels by 2015.

Targets for international development have been set up without genuine commitment many times in the past. The IDTs defined by the UN and member states have also been taken up by the World Bank and the IMF and as part of OECD's (Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development) aims in its partnerships with developing nations.

'It is no mistake that Christian organisations as well as human rights organisations are actively participating in the construction of a futuristic notion of an 'international civil society' based upon human rights, since both share a commitment to universalism and global intervention' (1997: 25). Whilst this is true, the work of these NGOs is quite clearly imbued with a mildly relativist and communitarian ethos often quite at odds with the individuating agenda of neo-liberalism.

To give an idea of the range of the universal rights framework, the following table (which draws on the research I undertook) sets out the central aspects of the UN Declarations in terms of the development strategies undertaken by NGOs.

	NGO/CSO Policies and Activities
Social Inclusion	Capacity building and communication strategies to enable disadvantaged groups and individuals to claim their rights
	Effective representation of needs and rights of disadvantaged by civil society
	Building of self esteem of disadvantaged and marginalised groups
	Challenging attitudes and cultural practices that are permissive of the maltreatment or exclusion of individuals or groups
	Capacity building of public decision makers in rights issues
Participation in Decision Making Processes	Capacity building to strengthen ability of disadvantaged to participate in decision making processes
	Lobbying government to ensure gender balance in their structures
	Setting up forums where government, local people can negotiate decisions regarding public spending priorities
Minimum Livelihood	Community coping mechanisms
Employment and Labour Standards	Increasing capacity of trade union movement to represent marginalised groups and informal sector workers (core labour standards, free association, equal remuneration, child labour, non-discrimination).
	Ensuring that private sector meets labour standards
	Lobbying for prioritisation of programmes that most directly promote long term job growth/ labour intensive employment
	Provision of training in non-traditional/innovative professions
	Support to micro and medium size local businesses
Service Delivery / Accountable Institutions	Local monitoring of service delivery (protection of expenditure and prioritisation for services which benefit the poor and disadvantaged) according to internationally agreed development targets
	Involving civil society and community level organisations in negotiating culturally appropriate and affordable standards for the public provision of services
	Lobbying for policies that allow poor and disadvantaged sectors to gain access to basic services

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[7] Copenhagen 1995

	Lobbying for the provision of information on local and national government policies and performance
Information and Freedom of Expression	Promotion of access of marginalised people to information and communication technologies
	Training in information technology
	Support of cultural diversity
Conflict Reduction	Increasing the capacity of civil society to engage in conflict resolution processes at all levels
Accessible Justice/ Security of the Person	Crisis/Counselling Centres for victims of crime, domestic violence and conflict
	Addressing harmful traditional practices, such as FGM.
	Challenging cultural subordination of women
	Challenging cultural subordination of socio-cultural groups
	Advocacy to ensure accessible justice for the disadvantaged
	Promotion of knowledge about national Human Rights institutions and processes
	Lobbying for national level judicial and institutional reform to ensure access to legal justice

NGO's Perspectives on a Rights Based Approach to Development

All 15 of the NGOs interviewed considered themselves to be implementing an evolving rights based approach to development and shared a broadly similar vision of what this means, both in theory and practice[8]. Responses reflected general agreement on core values and aspects, such as the 'universally inclusive' scope of such an approach, the centrality the 'person', the importance of freedom and self-determination, and the implication that rights always have matching responsibilities or duties (although the central difficulty here is that there is often disagreement about *who* carries these responsibilities in different contexts). 'Empowerment' was present in most definitions, alongside the view that this approach involved addressing the root causes of inequality.

The word 'dignity' was used by several organisations in their response, designating the person as 'both the object and subject', or 'at the heart', of human development[9]. The emphasis on agency means that this approach goes beyond 'paternalistic models of development' and is *necessarily participatory* and demands that 'the poor and marginalised are themselves empowered to be agents of change, given equality of

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[8] Several NGOs considered themselves to be 'as much human rights organisations as development agencies' (CIIR) whilst the *raison d'être* of a significant number of the organisations who contributed to the consultation is gaining, protecting or furthering the rights of specific disadvantaged, vulnerable or marginalised groups using human rights instruments.

opportunity to change their environment, allowed to participate in public decision making with regard to social, political, economic, cultural and religious realities' (CAFOD). The observation was also made that this approach implies that people are given the opportunity 'to fulfil their responsibilities as well as claim their rights'.

The scope of a rights based approach, covering 'all aspects of human interaction and all levels of institutions' (from grass-roots to global) was mentioned and one interviewee made the bold statement that a rights based approach is

> 'Singularly capable of providing an explanatory framework for human well being from the personal level to the international level. Through illuminating and exposing the obstacles that people face in achieving well being (in whatever sense; cultural, political participation, access to education etc.) a rights based approach provides a framework for action at every level whilst allowing for variation and the generation of culturally appropriate policies'. (Britta Schmidt of 'Womankind').

I would disagree with the scope of this statement on the basis of my argument that the principle kind of answer offered by rights is in *institutional* terms and in defending well being when it is aggressively threatened. As I have argued elsewhere, the idea of rights as a framework for well being is often quite at odds with indigenous conceptualisations. Rights, in contrast to virtues, are primarily invoked as a means of defence and in making demands about political commitments and standards. Wilson is in agreement with this point;

> 'Groups who now refer to themselves as 'indigenous peoples' are aware of human rights discourses, if only because they have experienced state violence and marginalisation from national political processes' (1997: 9).

Perhaps because of this *defensive* stance, the rights paradigm was seen as an extremely useful resource for the work of NGOs, from the level of 'personal empowerment' to international treaties to topics such as labour rights. However, there

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[9] Three organisations pointed out that their espousal of this conception was primarily derived from Catholic Social Teaching.

was realism about the emphasis of certain rights (generally civil and political) and the sidelining of others by governments and international financial institutions (IFIs). An interviewee at CORD made the following observation:

> 'It is also not clear to us what the responsibilities of international organisations are in their role as 'duty bearers'. We observe that, in the past, donor governments have applied human rights instruments rather selectively and according to the interests of their foreign policy'.

NGOs' Misgivings with regard to a Rights Based Approach

Several respondents were sceptical, or realistic, about the limited nature of Northern governments' putative commitment to the whole raft of economic, social and cultural rights, noting that DFID's policies were contradicted by other UK policies[10]. It was typically argued that a rights based agenda will have very limited results without changes in inequitable macro-economic policies. Andrew, from CAFOD, giving a narrower understanding of rights made the distinction between the *oppression* of people caused by global and/or structural inequalities and the *repression* of people's rights by some nation states. National governments may be doing everything within their power to ensure people's access to their rights but are crippled by a lack of resources and are unable to meet the very real economic challenges to fulfilment of entitlement to food, education, health, water and shelter'. On this view, responsibility lies with Northern governments who preside over exploitative global economic relations. CIIR, on this basis, argued that 'the UK government should support efforts for ILO (International Labour Organisation) standards to be brought to bear on the working conditions of all countries with whom Britain trades – perhaps through social development contracts'.

There was also agreement that a major stumbling block in a rights agenda was the major gaps in the ratification of fundamental Conventions. Chris Roche of Oxfam argued that 'If the UK government is serious about 'All Human Rights for All', greater pressure should be put on governments who have failed to sign UN treaties

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[10] Similarly, the UN's spending as a whole on the rights of indigenous peoples only amounts to 1% of its budget.

and declarations, (especially the US)'. This was echoed by Action Aid; 'DFID might be in a better position to bring pressure to bear on the US government to sign the declaration of Social, Economic and Cultural rights as well as the CRC (Convention on the rights of the Child)[11]. These omissions constitute a major obstacle to progress in reducing inequality and poverty'. Another interviewee from Christian Aid was concerned about the double standards that lay beneath the rights agenda: 'It is difficult to conceive of promoting democracy in the South until our (UK) pivotal position in the IMF, World Bank, UN and WTO yields more democracy in these institutions'. Indeed, the rights agenda was seen by another respondent as a ploy for 'southern governments to be held accountable to fulfilment of rights as an excuse for the further conditionality of aid'. Space does not permit going into the many other misgivings were expressed[12].

Strategies for Poverty Reduction through a Rights Based Approach

NGOs, recognising the limited nature of northern government's commitments were increasingly taking up a *strategic* and overtly political approach ('development as leverage') to the realisation of the rights that are routinely sidelined. Responses showed agreement that 'development is essentially a political process' (War on Want) where 'political will is fundamental to failure or success' (EWD). Some consider 'the frameworks within which (they) work' to be inherently political, focusing on causes rather than effects'(CIIR). It was argued that considering the 'personal to be political' (Womankind) means gearing strategies towards challenging power structures. The expression of this political emphasis is tempered by the fact that in order to keep their status as 'charities', NGOs can not admit to being overtly political organisations. Perhaps for this reason it was typically stressed that their political work is never

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[11] The US is one of only a handful of countries that has failed to sign the CRC.

[12] For instance, CAFOD pointed out that 'a rights based agenda, if managed insensitively, can be confrontational and may magnify existing tensions. It is important to take into account the relations of dependency and other tensions that exist between different stakeholders. Seeking to redress power imbalances can potentially exacerbate tensions between groups who exist in relationships of stable inequality'. CIIR proposed that 'DFID should support the proposal of taxing (on a global scale) short-term international transactions by a very small percentage - the so-called 'Tobin Tax' so as to raise funds for social development. 'Oxfam demanded that 'DFID, along with the UK government and international NGOs, recognises its part in the 'imperfect obligations' that it has in realising human rights world-wide as part of the International Community. This would, for example make it difficult for the UK government to be considered to be while it remains the second largest arms dealer in the world.'

oriented towards particular parties. However, Oxfam that it 'recognises the clout of party politics in the partners' countries and supports cross party political coalitions'[13]. Strengthening the representation of marginalised and poor people, or supporting southern advocacy can have a significant impact on local politics. As most respondents 'give priority to projects with a social transformational dimension', whilst 'not overtly challenging the political structures' they would consider themselves to have an indirect but deliberate influence on local politics.

Using the legal basis of the human rights framework was indeed, for some, 'the fundamental characteristic', or distinctive feature, of a rights based approach, allowing development agencies to 'expand their range of responses to poverty and marginalisation beyond the project level' (Christian Aid). Several organisations linked a rights based approach to sustainability, stating that this approach involves the aim of enshrining rights in legislation and institutional practices (at local, national and international level).

There was, however, some variation in which aspects or rights were emphasised. This was partly due to organisational specialisation (women, children, water etc.) and partly due to some organisations' view that working to enhance people's access to their rights *should follow a sequence*. Several respondents emphasised their prioritisation of 'minimum conditions' with reference to the right to livelihood security, clean water and food. An interviewee from the NGO Farm Africa, for instance, believed that the place to start was with 'the most fundamental human rights; those associated with basic rights to food, clean water, shelter etc. . . . there is no point in getting political when people are starving'[14].

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[13] An example is the support to the women's coalition in Zimbabwe, which intervened in the recent electoral processes by supporting all women candidates, regardless of political affiliation or ideology. The coalition created a local and national media campaign to raise the visibility of women candidates and awareness of the specific types of concerns and problems they face, and provided them with a forum to present the interests of women. At a time when the political agenda was being dominated by violence and a narrow male dominated agenda, the Coalition wanted to transform women's status and condition in Zimbabwean Society through the promotion, protection and enforcement of women's human rights. To do this, they had to ensure women's views were represented and central to local and national decision making processes, in the event, eleven women, supported by the Coalition, were elected, three of which were actual activists of the Coalition (Fabienne Warrington).

[14] Organisations added that when involved in humanitarian relief or 'purely assistential' projects, there is still scope for adopting an approach which is participatory, which engenders local ownership, is a learning experience and which confronts issues of inequality at a local level. In addition, when involved in humanitarian relief, there are internationally agreed standards and principles to conform to.

Whilst DFID strictly only funds projects that have a 'poverty focus' as a primary goal, War on Want, to the contrary, stated that there is a 'difficulty in always combining rights work with a poverty focus as those best positioned to work for rights are not necessarily the poorest. A great deal could be achieved by building up the capacity of trade unions, for example. However, members of trade unions are seldom deemed to be appropriate targets for a poverty focused intervention'. In contrast to the view expressed above (which places basic needs first in the *sequencing* of rights), the view of a minority of interviewees was that there should be a *hierarchy* of rights where political empowerment for the authentic exercise of constitutional rights comes first. Their view is that

> 'Recognition and assurance are central to the concretisation of rights and there can be no assurance in any matter unless the people have the power to defend their rights and unless they are recognised by the society in question. In other words, working for rights places true political empowerment in front. Rights legitimise the efforts of people . . . to identify and articulate interests, demand appropriate protections, when these are threatened, and redress sufficiently to restore an interest when it has been harmed' (Action Aid).

However, the majority of policy makers in the NGOs argued that strategic work should be grounded in projects so that that advocacy work does not become disassociated from 'grass-roots realities'[15]. Several organisations made the point that long-term sustainable change is more likely to be achieved when linking grassroots activities with national and international advocacy work[16]. Respondents cited various policy developments and changes that reflect this thinking[17]. Whilst a number of

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[15] One respondent (CIIR) explained how 'recent internal organisational changes, which involved amalgamating their advocacy and 'skill share' departments, have enhanced the extent to which the advocacy section is informed by practice and current experience. Bringing grass-roots experience and campaigning together has been challenging but has allowed the formation of integrated programmes designed to give greater priority to the perspectives and needs of poor and marginalised people'.

[16] Womankind, for instance in their work to support local organisations set up to further the rights of women for example, use the Beijing 'Platform for Action' as a framework for policies which seek to assist women to be eligible for land inheritance, to lobby governments and raise awareness on issues such as domestic violence, 'harmful traditional practices' or employ para-legals to use CEDAW (UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women) in local contexts.

[17] A good example here is a project designed by CIT (CODA International Training) and the MCN (Nicaraguan Community Movement) to increase the development impact of local community based

respondents stated that there is 'a lot of disillusionment with direct service delivery' (Care International), they maintain that many project elements (credit, technical inputs) continue to be crucial and should complement a programmatic approach. Indeed, projects often provide a window of opportunity to engender positive social change through incorporating educative and empowering elements.

Bringing these areas together, the general consensus was that NGOs were moving towards a more programmatic and strategic approach, away from 'development as delivery' models. There was a consensus that previous development strategies which involved work at a local level with a specific set of beneficiaries had a predictably limited impact. NGOs have traditionally focused on the achievement of 'minimum livelihood' (such as the provision of clean water, food, providing access to credit, enhancing income generation in rural areas, building and strengthening community coping strategies etc.). Whilst NGOs saw this work as being fundamental to their focus on poverty, scattered discrete projects were gradually being incorporated into strategic programmes. Newer approaches were based on the recognition that impact is maximised and 'critical mass' is more likely to be achieved through collaboration, linking partners together, and providing strategic links between programmes. Typical statements on this topic were that were NGOs were 'developing underpinning strategies to link grassroots activities with advocacy at national and international level' (Christian Aid) and 'gradually shifting from a project approach to a programme approach. Programmes are beginning to be defined; they tend to incorporate

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efforts (focused on immediate needs such as primary health care, sanitation, electrification, nutrition, as well as supporting community centres and addressing people's representation) through a nation wide integrated process of institutional capacity building focused questions of governance, internal democracy, the establishment of permanent capacity building in leadership and community activist training, promotion of women in leadership, and an audit of the human and material capacity of the organisation nationally. A further dimension of the project centred around the 'local agenda' methodology, whereby a community conducts its own analysis of locally determined development needs and seeks to build consensus with key stakeholders around their collective priorities and plans for local development. These 'local agenda' methodologies involve not just pressurising local government institutions, but identifying other actors involved in development processes and defining their responsibilities as duty bearers. Through identifying stakeholders, training sessions in local government structures and citizen's rights, the project sought to enable communities to forge constructive and creative relationships with agencies of government as well as with service providers and sources of funding for development initiatives. The engagement of MCN with local politicians, councillors, business people, media, health and teaching professionals, and academics involved a change in approach from 'protest politics' to 'proposal politics' (from analysis of DFID project proposals).

networking and other strategies to give a greater voice to partners and beneficiaries' (CAFOD).

Several reasons were given for this move towards a more strategic approach. It was argued that the 'traditional role of northern NGOs is under question and that there is an urgent need for greater relevance' (CIIR). New generations of staff 'for whom 'political' action is the key to achieving development objectives have also influenced policy-making' (Care International).

In summary, NGOs agreed that a rights based agenda departs in significant ways from previously dominant models of development, principally because of:

- the centrality of the agency and dignity of the person;
- the politicisation of self-determination;
- the indivisibility of rights;
- an emphasis on removing obstacles to rights, through political and institutional engagement;
- an emphasis on the corresponding governmental and private duties and responsibilities that accompany rights.

I would argue that these definitions, which are grounded in an idea of the indivisibility of rights, are pushing beyond the limits of the habitual Western usages of rights language which give preponderance to civil and political rights in isolation from economic, social and cultural rights.

I will now go through the conceptual basis of a strategic rights based approach, as understood by the policy makers of the NGOs I did research with. This will be followed by a more discussion of this anti-liberal individualist interpretation of the rights approach which draws from UN documents. As space does not permit a proper discussion of many examples to illustrate each of the points that I would like to make, I make use of footnotes to provide short summaries of apposite projects and policies.

Participation in Decision Making Processes

All respondents stated that they are committed to promoting participatory processes throughout programme life cycles, from identification and planning through to direct management of components of work and overall monitoring and evaluation[18]. The NGO, Farm Africa, gave the following example;

> 'We are moving towards more inclusive participation though, and an example is the planning process for a joint forest management project in Tanzania, involving a preliminary stakeholder's workshop. Representatives from communities and government officers were brought together to identify the constraints and opportunities of the proposed project. This provided positive guidance in the preparation of the proposal document'.

Strengthening the Voices of the 'Poor' and Marginalised to Promote Policy change

Most interviewees agreed with the statement that 'there is no direct way to oblige national governments to fulfil their responsibilities, with regard to human rights treaties and documents; this is the role of the UN and the donor community' (Farm Africa). Nevertheless, NGOs were active in pressurising governments. The main strategies here involve; firstly, recording and reporting people's rights status, secondly, campaigning on specific and general issues to both 'southern' (developing country) and 'northern' governments, as well as to International Financial Institutions and thirdly, seeking to support the efforts of civil society 'to enhance democratic processes'.

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[18] Various methodologies were cited as examples:
'Always involving our partner groups in a bottom up (not top down) methodology' (CORD);
'In country co-ordinators, trainers and facilitators are almost exclusively local people' (Oxfam);
'Involvement of project stakeholders in initial baseline studies and in deciding upon indicators to measure project success' (Action Aid);
'Identification of programmes of work in consultation with local partners' (CIIR);
'For participatory monitoring and evaluation, indicators are identified with partners organisations and sometimes with beneficiary groups' (Wateraid).
'Assessment procedures involving intensive negotiation with local partners and whom they represent' (Care International).
'The promotion of 'a sense of ownership' of projects, aimed at through the encouragement of 'cost sharing and community contribution towards physical inputs. This may be community labour, for example in the construction of a water point, or the provision of goats only on credit, to women's groups' (FARM AFRICA).

As outlined above, a central aim of rights based work is augmenting the influence that disempowered and oppressed groups have in public decision making processes. Work at programme level is complemented with advocacy and campaigning on broad issues at national and international levels[19]. Interviewees noted that, in previous development strategies, there had been a focus on grass roots work at one level and international campaigning on another, leaving a gap in the intermediary levels. A crucial area of innovation, then, was establishing fora whereby duty bearers can be publicly identified and standards such as benchmarks in service delivery or participatory rights, for example, agreed and monitored[20].

Obliging Duty Bearers

NGOs considered it crucial to develop new methodologies and skills to further their *obliging* agenda for economic, social and cultural rights, linking the narrower or more immediate objectives pursued at a local level with changes at a legislative, political or wider institutional level. This is usually approached by strengthening the institutions that represent these groups so as to foster their ability to make an impact on local and national political fora[21]. Increasingly, projects are designed to support civil society and community level organisations in negotiating culturally appropriate and affordable standards for the public provision of services. Networks of civil society organisations who have shared goals are also being supported[22]. Civil society

[19] Womankind Worldwide has a policy of supporting partner organisations 'both financially and strategically in producing *alternative* reports to the CEDAW (UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women) committee, when their countries' governments are reporting officially on how they have implemented the Convention'.

[20] As an example, Britta Schmidt explained how 'Womankind's Gender Advocacy Programme has supported grassroots women in directly influencing domestic violence legislation. A delegation of grassroots women visited the South African Parliament to discuss their concerns and provide input into the drafting of the domestic violence act. These women's organisations have subsequently been involved in monitoring the legislation and whether it is delivering. Womankind believes that bringing about policy change is important, but monitoring its implementation is perhaps even more significant. Such reports are perfect lobbying tools for holding governments accountable to their commitments. Womankind supported partner organisations in producing alternative reports for the Beijing +5 review, at the same time we also participated in the review, using partners experiences and translating them into policy proposals that are then used to hold government accountable to the commitments they have made by signing the Beijing Platform for Action'.

[21] Through financial input, management training, forums for discussion and debate, to engage people in analysis of their situation and through creating inter-agency networks which allow mutual learning, 'leadership training', and civic education, for example.

[22] Womankind has recently organised exchange visits between different partner organisations (South Africa Rape Crisis and Albanian Family Planning) and the sharing of strategies across different

organisations are being assisted to develop specific policy proposals, and to ensure that these reach a forum of discussion with policy makers moving away from 'protest politics' to 'proposal politics'. The example from Lima which will be given below exemplifies this approach.

As the effects of people's lack of access to their rights are far more visible than the underlying structural and processual causes, NGO's were becoming more and more involved in political and institutional analysis. The challenge was understood as 'identifying the institutional arrangements that perpetuate social exclusion and vicious circles of poverty and working for socially inclusive and accountable alternatives' (Fabienne Warrington, Womankind). This involved making connections between people's rights status and the responsibilities of appropriate duty bearers at a local, municipal, district or regional level[23].

As socially excluded groups may not have considered the possibility of holding those in public office to account, education in the roles and responsibilities of public institutions was understood as often being an essential first stage in standard setting. A project manager at Christian Aid explained that 'training those in public office to respond to local perspectives through participatory planning and process consulting is another area that needs to be developed in order to make links between CSOs and statutory bodies'[24].

As noted above, I undertook research on a rights based programme in Lima and Callao which sought to mitigate the effects of neo-liberal economic restructuring through the economic and political empowerment of women involved in 'community

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countries has proven to be very successful in developing strategies that enable women to increase their access to their rights, in this case particularly the right to a life free of violence.

[23] 'In Ethiopia, the role of the peasant association is an important vehicle for bringing together rural people with local government officers. Farm Africa works very closely with these peasant associations and in doing so assists in building those links to government. One NGO which is often involved in large scale projects which are implemented through government agencies has set up stakeholder workshops where representatives of rural communities are brought together with government decision makers in the early stages of project planning. These workshops were initially resisted by government personnel who felt that their power and authority would be challenged. In practice, the same government officials admitted that the workshops were beneficial and that the consensus reached with local communities enhanced the project's success'.

[24] 'Government staff are seconded to many of our projects in all countries in which we work. This allows them to gain direct experience in the approaches used on the projects and to use that experience when they return to their line ministries'.

kitchens'. As I consider this project to exemplify many of the perspectives outlined above, I will now give a sort summary of its key characteristics.

Women's Economic and Participatory Rights in Lima and Callao

The programme I investigated was designed collaboratively by the UK based NGO Womankind Worldwide, *Asociación Aurora Vivar* and FECCPAALC (the latter two based in Lima). The project's goal was 'to empower women from poor urban sectors to improve their income generating capacity and employment opportunities and promote their economic rights' through seeking 'to involve women from grass-roots organisations in making policy recommendations with regard to the macro-economic environment affecting their economic rights'. At a grass roots level, the project sought to provide a response 'to immediate felt needs' by assisting women to improve their income generation capacity and to manage their community kitchens while also addressing the strategic need for women to be more involved in policy development at the municipal and state level through education, training and lobbying. Additionally, the project sought to tackle issues of gender stereotyping with regard to women's role in work by providing a model for training in non-traditional activities for women'.

The programme was thoroughly pragmatic in the sense that whilst its fundamental goals were to mitigate the dominant neo-liberal agenda, by lobbying for labour rights, for instance, women were also being assisted to make a living in the competitive and chaotic economic conditions that characterised Peru at this time.

The project design was built around, and sought to add to, the considerable achievements of women's organisations in Lima in their efforts to alleviate poverty, access their rights and to demand authentically democratic structures. As a response to the difficult economic conditions and increased social exclusion of the 1990s in Peru, women in Lima formed a range of community based self-help organisations, firstly to work together to alleviate the difficulties individual families were having in meeting their most basic requirements and from there, to form local, regional and national networks of organisations. Together, these groups have initiated a series of political campaigns, mass mobilisations, political proposals and have undertaken,

through collective social vigilance, to hold the government to commitments made in international treaties.

Through the linkages between grassroots organisations and NGOs, many women from community kitchens have gone on to participate in, and, after appropriate training, manage income generation projects. To varying degrees, these women have also developed negotiating and 'leadership skills', acquired detailed knowledge of the legal and economic realities which confront them, engaged creatively with municipalities and participated as electoral candidates.

Seeking to multiply, consolidate and build upon these achievements, the collaboration between Womankind, AAV and FECCPAALC resulted in the diagnosis of a multi level and multi faceted programme. Here, the urgent need to assist women to increase their earning capacity was combined with a concerted effort to address the underlying reasons why women are disadvantaged economically. The strategic component of the project consisted in the generation of positive proposals for policy change in specific municipalities and the development of a nation wide 'Women's Economic Agenda' to define policy changes which will allow the better use and orchestration of government resources, private capital and the human and social capital constituted by women and their organisations as well as bringing labour rights to bear on employers. Through insisting upon positive collaboration with local and central government, the project was designed to be a catalyst of better governance as this was considered to be the only guarantor of the sustainability of this initiative[25]. In short, through strengthening the negotiating power of women and their community based organisations, and in assisting them to define their collective strategy to gain their economic rights in real terms, the project sought to redefine the relationship between government, the private sector and the urban poor and their organisations.

I will now look very briefly at the social, political and economic context of the programme, describe the challenges that were facing women in gaining access to their

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[25] As Klaus Toepfler, the director of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) asserts, "It is now widely acknowledged that urban development cannot flourish in an environment of poor urban governance. Accountability and transparency in the use of public funds, participatory democracy at the local level and enabling policies can have a far greater impact on poverty reduction efforts than direct investment in urban development programmes" (Toepfler 2000: 5).

economic rights and then give a brief account of the way in which a strategy has been developed to confront these challenges.

The Impact of Neo-Liberal Policies on Poverty and Social Exclusion in Lima

Peru, over the course of the 1990s, underwent a fundamental shift away from state interventionism toward a commitment to market oriented solutions[26]. In effect, from the outset of President Fujimori's first term, efforts to achieve equity or distribution were abandoned in favour of a clear policy emphasis on macroeconomic stability, reduction of inflation, reinsertion into the international community and reduction of the role of the state in the economy[27].

Fujimori's 'success' in restoring economic stability, was gained at the expense of the living conditions of large sectors of the population. The stabilisation program implemented in August 1990, just 3 weeks after Fujimori was inaugurated, devastated living standards[28]. The *Programa de Emergencia Social* (PES) intended to alleviate the effects of these policies through food aid administered through 'FONCODES', did not have either the financial or institutional capital to make a significant impact[29].

In 2000, the Peruvian government claimed that poverty had *decreased* since 1991, with the greatest advances in Lima. 47.6 % of Lima's inhabitants population were living in poverty in 1991 whilst levels in 1997 fell to 35.5% (Instituto Cuanto). The apparent 'lowering' of poverty levels since 1991 was deliberately misleading since, following the economic shock of 1990, poverty levels increased dramatically.

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[26] The central policies which unfolded under Fujimori were the privatisation of state owned enterprises and peasant co-operatives, a major overhaul of the tax system, elimination of regulations on foreign investment, the liberalisation of trade and a drastic reduction in social spending. The 1980s had seen various attempts to implement structural adjustment programmes and alternative heterodox programs whose eventual failure led to the collapse of the Peruvian economy in 1988.

[27] However, whilst the role of the State has diminished with regard to protecting worker's rights, its capacity to intervene in the formation and activity of unions, including strikes and collective bargaining has been extended.

[28] Price increases and cuts in social expenditure nearly doubled, the number of Peruvians living in conditions of critical poverty, rose from 6 to 11 million overnight, fully half of the country's population. In Metropolitan Lima, consumption expenditures, which had already dropped by 46% between 1986 and 1990 fell an additional 31% between June 1990 and October 1991, the period when Fujimori's economic package was implemented. (Burgos 1994: 282) Abugattas reports that in 1994, chronic infant malnutrition had risen to 25.9% in cities and 53.4 % in rural areas. (Abugattas: 1994 in Francke 1997)

[29] Social Spending in 1991 per capita was $51. This rose by 229% to $169 in 1997. (Valladolid 1999: 3) Compare this however with Argentina; $1570 and Chile - $821 at the same time.

There were also important variations in how any benefits had been distributed among geographic areas and economic sectors. From 1992 onwards, the extreme poor benefited slightly from increases in social spending whilst a large swathe of the population remain chronically poor. It is important to note that the donation of food aid significantly and artificially affects the statistics with regard to the extremely poor[30] and does not constitute a guaranteed or sustainable solution, much less an indicator of human development (Youngers 2000: 13). According to one Peruvian economist, if one subtracts the impact of FONCODES and discretionary payments by the Presidential Ministry, levels of poverty remain the same. He further suggests that, in effect;

> *'Si uno saca el impacto de los programas sociales a traves de FONCODES y del Ministerio de la Presidencia, la linea de pobreza es el mismo . . . La linea de pobreza depende de la voluntad del Presidente Fujimori'* (Gonzalez de Olarte, E. Presentation George Washington University. Quoted in Youngers 2000: 76)

In short, the statistical level of poverty depended on the will of the President. The major social developmental difficulties which resulted from, or remained unresolved by, government policies were unemployment and sub-employment[31], equity, low wages[32], the lack of institutional capacity for administering democratic[33] processes and poor education and health infrastructure and quality. Those working in the formal sector were seldom able to cover their basic needs which meant that the informal

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[30] Constituting an estimated 20% of their income. (Youngers 2000: 14)

[31] In 1990 19% Economically Active Population (EAP) were fully employed, compared to 45% in 1980. This fell to 14% in 1992. Sub-employment rose from 48% to 78% over this same period.(Burgos 1994: 38). The composition of the unemployed reflect the large scale redundancies from industry; in 1997, in Lima 9.6% of the unemployed were over 55 years old (Eduardo Caceres Valdivia CEDAL/ APRODEH 1998:35-37). 35.5% of the male and 49.9% of the female Peruvian Urban Economically Active Population were sub-employed. 6.9% of males and 8.9% of females were unemployed. (Valladolid 1999: 12) In 1990, 60% of wage workers had security in their employment, in 1996, this had fallen to 25% (Youngers 2000: 15)

[32] In real terms, between 1980 and 1992, wages fell by 65%. Among civil servants, wages fell by 94% over this period. (Burgos: 1994: 38)

[33] A recent report published by WOLA details the disarray of Peruvian democratic structures. (Youngers 2000)

sector was growing rapidly, as well as the number of working children[34]. The lack of opportunity in sustainable income generation and formal employment was compounded by a lack of investment in human development. In real terms, reductions on spending on health and education in Peru had been the most severe among the six biggest Latin American countries during the 1990s. The dependence of almost half of Peru's population on food aid[35] in a context where government led income generation and job creation were remote possibilities left large sectors of the Peruvian population chronically poor. This was compounded, as will be briefly described below, by the difficulties of political representation and participation.

Challenges Facing Working Women in Lima

In urban areas throughout Peru, 52.2% of women are active in the labour market but occupy a disadvantaged and marginalised position. Work traditionally carried out by women is undervalued, in both economic terms and with regard to social prestige. Where women work alongside men, promotion and career development is made difficult by discrimination. As described above, the labour market is de-regulated, highly competitive, precarious, fickle, gender discriminatory and characterised by short term contracts (Valladolid 1999: 8). Women tend to work in jobs which have few entry requirements and, for the most part, receive little remuneration or opportunity for increasing earning capacity, no social security, sick pay, maternal leave or pension and that demand either very long or extremely short working days. This is reflected in recent figures on sub-employment[36]. Women over the age of 45 are much more vulnerable to losing stable employment as they are displaced by men or younger women. Women in both the formal and informal sectors also earn significantly less than men[37]. The segregation of employment and remuneration is

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[34] The number of children working more than 15 hours per week has grown by 64% over the last decade (Valladolid 1999: 41)

[35] In 2000, 42.5 % of the Peruvian population.

[36] Urban Peru – Employment levels (percentages)

	1996		1997	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Employed	68.5	43.5	71.8	47.9
Sub-employed	37.3	**30.3**	35.5	**49.9**
Unemployed	6.4	7.9	6.9	8.9

(Valladolid 2000: 12)

[37] In Metropolitan Lima, in 1993, female independent workers made on average only 38.2% of male independent workers. (Censo Nacional 1993. Valladolid 1999: 16)

horizontal as well as vertical; women tend to be limited to auxiliary and non-technical employment. Women tend not to have access to training before, or after commencing, employment in managerial or technical specialities and even armed with appropriate qualifications, their prospects may be further jeopardised by discrimination.

The Demise of the Unions and the Emergence of New Associative Networks

The economic crisis and concomitant changes in labour legislation forced popular sectors to find new and innovative institutions. The failure of existing institutions, trade unions and the state to respond to the needs of the popular sectors was evident (Cameron and Mauceri 1998: 6). The efficacy of trade unions in representing worker's concerns has been in slow decline since the 1980s[38]. The legitimacy and political strength of the union movement in Peru, after economic recession, massive layoffs, the dismantling of labour rights, the growth in the number of small businesses and the explosive increase of the informal sector had been severely weakened. In the context of the severe recession of the 1980s, the existing legislation on job security, wages and working conditions became increasingly difficult to achieve in practice, hence making union demands meaningless in real terms. This lead to a generalised loss of faith in union leadership and a recourse to support for liberalising legislation by many in the workforce. (Cameron and Mauceri 1998: 3). In addition, repeated experiences of the futility of confrontational strategies between 1980 and 1992 in achieving any improvement in conditions alienated the union leadership from many workers (Burgos 1994: 141). Many workers adopted a more pragmatic approach, seeking to try to save their jobs rather than increase their wages. This was at odds with the more radical perspective of union leadership (Valdivia: pers.comm).

Within the neo-liberal framework described above, the government dismantled regulatory and interventionist legislation and sought to reduce the possibilities for the collective negotiation of working conditions. Liberalising tendencies in the labour market had already begun to unroll under the governments of Belaunde and Garcia,

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[38] In Lima , in 1991, 47% of salaried workers were represented by a trade union; in 1996 this had fallen to only 12.7% (CEPAL/ APRODEH 1998: 37) In 1970, 80% of salaried employees were part of a union. Balbi 1997: 140). The Bill of Collective Rights 1992 gives a great deal of latitude to the private sector whilst restricting the right to form unions by giving the government control over the Register of Unions and the authority to dissolve unions. Complaints have been made to the ILO as it is argued that this bill conflicts with previously ratified agreements.

however, under Fujimori, greater leeway was given to employers with regard to hiring temporary workers, dismissing staff and dealing with staff discipline at the expense of job security[39].

As a direct consequence of the government's import-substitution development model, the composition of the work force altered radically. The decrease in the number of wage-workers in productive industry caused a dispersion of former union members into a multitude of economic activities in the informal sector, hence making collective action difficult.

Unions failed to incorporate the perspectives of the dramatically increasing numbers of temporary workers[40]. Public support for the rationalisation of the public sector, which was considered to be inefficient and corrupt, isolated the efforts of the union CITE[41] to appeal against layoffs and wage reductions. The increased number of temporary workers, who were forced to compete on an individual basis for contracts abandoned collective negotiation. Unions failed to adapt to incorporate the concerns of temporary workers into their agenda.

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[39] Most of the legislation affecting working conditions was passed by decree through the executive branch rather than through parliament. For example, Supreme Decree 077 in 1991 gave new rules allowing the hiring and firing of temporary workers according to the needs of the market, without firms' decisions requiring justification from the Ministry of Labour. This was followed by a further 119 decrees in the same year which consolidated the discretionary power of employers. This encouragement of flexibilisation, whilst increasing efficiency, exacerbated the precariousness of employees' positions. The 1993 Constitution further undermined workers' possibilities for appeal for job security.

[40] In Lima for example, in 1998, it was estimated that 45% of wage workers in the private sector are currently temporary workers and are not part of unions (Balbi 1998: 137). The growth of numbers of small businesses was also significant as workers in firms with less than 20 employees are not permitted to form part of unions. Younger workers were also much less likely to be represented by a union. Younger generations are much less likely to be represented by a union - "67% of unionised workers are 35 years of age or older, 27% are between 25 and 34, while only 6% are younger than 24." 70% of workers in companies with less than 20 employees are under 37 years of age. 75 % of this group are not members of unions. (Balbi 1997: 136).

It was clear to the women of the Community kitchens that the unions had failed to represent the interests and perspectives of workers as they adapted to the changing economic circumstances.

Whilst neo-liberal restructuring divided the interests of the popular sectors and resulted in them becoming more heterogeneous, individualised, weaker organisationally, and politically fragmented, over the course of the 1990s in particular, there was a dramatic emergence of new associative networks, new types of social organisations and forms of grassroots democracy. The way in which women's groups have organised themselves firstly to address immediate needs and then to initiate strategic campaigns for political and societal change is a prime example of this, as Degregori explains:

> *'Pero ahora los hijos y los nietos de esos migrantes han desarollado otro tipo de movimientos. A pesar de la crisis ya no piden reinvindicaciones sociales o de servicios, como tierras, agua, luz, desague o amuento de sueldos, sino reclaman ciudadania, respeto al voto, moral. . . En estas dos decadas tambien aparecio el movimiento de las mujeres, que empezo con los comedores populares, y ahora continua con una agrupacion de clase media como 'mujeres por la democracia'* (Degregori 2000:45).

The majority of the inhabitants of the *pueblos jovenes*, or shanty town areas of Lima are first, second or third generation immigrants from rural areas who continue to experience relative marginalisation from the social, cultural and economic life of metropolitan Lima[42]. Over the last four decades, unmet demands for low cost housing led rural migrants and urban slum dwellers to organise massive land invasions in the city's outskirts where they built precarious dwellings and struggled to obtain basic

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[41] Central Intersectorial de Trabajadores Estatales

[42] 30% of Peru's population live in Lima. Lima's growth has been spectacular: a city of 500,000 in 1940, Lima today has 6.4 million inhabitants. (Burt 1998: 289). A decline in opportunities in the countryside both in terms of basic services and life chances and perceived growing opportunities in the city are the main reasons behind urban migration. Political violence was also an important factor in rural migrations in the 1980s and early 1990s

services[43]. Government policy towards these *pueblos jovenes* has been *laissez faire* with no real effort to remove land invaders and, likewise, little effort to improve living conditions. These areas lack basic infrastructure; water, electricity, sewage, public transport, health and education facilities. Limited educational opportunities and the lack of opportunity in the formal sector present unfavourable conditions for people to compete for salaried employment (Salcedo 1995: 32). The majority work in the informal sector. The aims of grass roots organisations in these areas has evolved over time and has increasingly moved from a discourse of claims for better conditions to one demanding full citizenship, political participation and authentic inclusion in decision making.

From the end of the 1970s, in Lima, women had been organising themselves, on a self help basis, in community kitchens to address the difficulties families face in meeting their most needs and to demand basic services from the government. The role women played in the urban migrations and the land occupations of the outlying areas of Lima in the 1950s constitute the antecedents of this organisational experience. Various authors have argued that the principles of reciprocity, egalitarianism and communal work that are characteristic of the kitchens are best understood as having their origin in the moral economy of the women's indigenous background (Schweppe 1993, Lora 1996). Growing deprivation after the economic shock of 1990, caused the numbers of Community kitchens to multiply[44]. This was accompanied by recognition of the importance of forming strong organisational links and coherent campaigns.

The community kitchens represented by FECCPAALC are known as *comedores populares autogestionarios[45]*. The average number of members in each kitchen is 20.

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[43] It has been calculated that if a group of low income families petitioned the state to cede them a vacant lot on which they might build, they would have to work their way for six years and eleven months through ministries and municipal offices and spend approximately $2,156 (56 times the minimum monthly wage at the time) per person. (Mario Vargas Llosa 1995: 288)

[44] Numbers of Community Kitchens in Metropolitan Lima

Year	Number of Community Kitchens
1980	172
1985	884
1990	3259
1998	4400*

(Valladolid 1999) *Figures represent *all* Community kitchens; FECCPAALC represents approximately 1800.

[45] Other kitchens, such as those under the administration of the '*Clubes de Madres*' receive direct subsidies from the government. *Vaso de Leche* is also government funded.

FECCPAALC constitutes the apex of an organisational pyramid through which approximately 1800 community kitchens and businesses are linked. The community kitchens are organised firstly into 57 zonal *centrales*, followed by district *centrales* at the level of the 4 cones of Lima and Callao and finally represented by the Federation. The Federation was formed in 1992 and has had 3 Presidents democratically elected over this time. An important step forward for the women of the community kitchens was achieving of the passing of Law 25307 which allows the members of kitchens to form legally recognised organisations and putatively guarantees a government food contribution[46]. Through the Federation, a co-ordinating body at a national level for Community kitchens has been set up.

The first priority of the kitchens is the preparation of food of sufficient nutritional quality[47] on a daily basis for families in each neighbourhood. In addition, kitchens often provide for the most vulnerable members of the neighbourhood who are unable to pay, often in collaboration with local parish churches. Whilst they receive deliveries of food aid from government programmes[48]. However, as the Federation has been carefully monitoring the quantities of food it does receive in the community kitchens, it has been established that the government only provides 17% of what it is committed to. (Relinda Sosa, pers.comm). The kitchens are not otherwise subsidised and maintain a strong principle of autonomy from the State. This is of utmost importance with regard to the integrity of their political campaigns and negotiations with municipalities. It was common knowledge that the government used food aid selectively as a way to win votes[49].

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[46] The passing of Law 25307 was possible through a concerted effort, initiated by FECCPAALC and supported by NGOs and various parliamentarians. The law ostensibly guarantees the basic nutritional requirement for all Peruvians. Through this law, the government, through establishing the *Programa de Apoyo a la labor alimentaria de las organizaciones sociales de base,* committed itself to providing 65% of the food that the community kitchens were providing in their neighbourhoods with the other 35% being paid for by the revenue of the portions sold. An important additional part of this law was that the community kitchens were to be recognised legally as grassroots organisations and that local governments should support them in their efforts to generate income. However, so far, the regulation of this law has never been achieved and the government's financial commitment is not included in the national budget.

[47] Achieving set standards in the nutritional value of each portion is an important aim of each community kitchen. The Federation provides education on how this can be best achieved. However, as the kitchens receive food aid directly rather than economic subsidies, the nutritional value of portions is often less than it should be. The quality of food deliveries is monitored by FECCPAALC.

[48] The distribution of food from the government is administered through the Programa Nacional de Apoyo Alimentario (PRONAA).

[49] 'al PRONAA se le ha asignado el rol de atender las demandas alimentarias de la poblacion mas pobre. Pero este ultimo . . .es realizado de modo sesgado: el apoyo se canaliza hacia organizaciones

Since their inception, there has been a progressive incorporation of educational and capacity building elements into the work of the kitchens, with materials focused on the financial, administrative, health and nutritional practicalities of running a kitchen and increasingly on leadership, negotiation, citizenship and rights. These materials have been formalised into a number of courses for community kitchen members which are run in co-operation with other agencies through the *Escuela de Dirigentas 'Amanda Suarez Barrueta'*.

The federation's unofficial motto 'Protesta con Propuesta' ('Protest with Proposal' [sometimes explained as 'protest *by* proposal']) captures the dual approach of maintaining a critical distance from the State whilst actively seeking practical and strategic solutions to the causes and effects of urban poverty. Beyond addressing immediate needs, the federation has initiated a number of strategies to enhance women's access to their economic rights and their participation in decision making, such as mass mobilisations, specific political proposals, social vigilance, lobbying and collaboration with wider networks such as *Consorcio Mujer*[50] The members of the Federation have a clear agenda of contributing to democratisation and social equity through positive engagement with municipalities and campaigning. Through the organisational experience gained through the Federation, a significant number of women have gone on to participate in local, municipal and Parliamentary elections, in immediate response to the recently promulgated *'Ley de Cuotas'* (1998) which guarantees that 25% of participants in electoral lists must be women[51].

Developing a Strategy to Enhance Women's Access to their Economic and Social Rights

The government food aid programme, whilst being of value in terms of immediate nutritional needs was neither sustainable nor creative in stimulating income

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favorables al regimen. Es decir, a la usanza de los 'politicos tradicionales' que tanta gusta criticar el Presidente Alberto Fujimori' (Burgos 1994: 41).
[50] This is made up of CENDOC MUJER, CESIP, FLORA TRISTAN, MANUELA RAMOS and associated institutions – AMAUTA – Cuzco, CEPCO – Tarapoto and IDEAS Piura.
[51] Unfortunately, the experiences of some women participating in elections has been that they have been invited onto party's lists without any serious intent on the part of the parties to have them elected. Women's organisations are campaigning to have the quota lifted to 50%.

generation[52]. Taking the initiative, many of the community kitchens have developed commercial interests. Of those that have succeeded in maintaining a slim profit margin, the majority operate at a micro-level whilst a number, through developing technical capacities and increasing the quality of products, have competed successfully to win contracts with State bodies such as FONCODES (clothing) or PRONAA (bread production for schools). These commercial interests are grounded in a commitment to the movement for social justice and a proportion of any profits made from the ventures that emerged from the kitchens are re-invested for further development.

The potential benefits, in terms of income generation, of training in specific technical professions for individual women, are being discovered through FECCPAALC's collaboration with AAV and Womankind Worldwide. This collaboration, in addition to the expansion of technical training for work, builds upon the well established practice among community kitchens of encouraging personal and organisational empowerment with a view to enhancing women's access to their rights. Experience has shown that efforts are unlikely to succeed unless they are based upon an integrated strategy which involves forming supportive community based networks and engaging creatively with local government[53].

The shared vision of FECCPAALC, Asociación Aurora Vivar[54] and Womankind emphasised the integrated development of women but gave particular importance on the centrality of economic concerns in women's lives. The accumulated experience of these organisations in the promotion of women's economic rights attested to the entrenched nature of the problems faced by women and that a multi-faceted, multi-level and multi-disciplinary approach was necessary. This programme drew not only

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[52] Neither in the community kitchens themselves, or for local producers.

[53] The coherence of the practice, strategy and vision of these women's organisations in enhancing access to economic rights and political participation is not matched by government practice. Peru's ratification of relevant UN treaties has not been reflected by authentic changes in policy or practice with regard to women's economic and participatory rights. A number of interviewees explained that the Peruvian government has a 'double discourse' whereby commitments made at Beijing, for example, are followed up by specific but isolated target programmes (such as guaranteeing that women will be assisted at childbirth), whilst failing to undertake more comprehensive investments in social development and authentic participation. Relinda Sosa, pers.comm, Betsey Valdivia, pers. comm.)

[54] AAV have their institutional roots in the union movement and worked primarily with and on behalf of wage working women. However, AAV adapted the focus of their work to accompany and assist the

on knowledge gained but also on resources of human and community based social capital, which have been forged through previous collaborations.

In sum, then this rights based strategy was designed to empower women in terms of self esteem, knowledge of their rights and how to access them, how to build organisational strength and, on this basis make political gains that would benefit them and their communities. Training was accompanied by mounting a challenge to prevailing restrictive or discriminatory societal attitudes through supporting the creation and diffusion of positive experiences. The programme also sought to impart these inclusive and enabling attitudes to decision makers in local government. For this reason, a pedagogic approach extending beyond the range of immediate beneficiaries was fundamental to the project design. Through demonstrating the potential benefits of the government investing in education and training, access to financial services, social services, and developing conducive economic and fiscal policies, the project sought to establish more lasting opportunities for women.

In order to foment a wider and more lasting impact of this promotion of women's economic rights and opportunities, those involved worked collaboratively to develop a strategic 'women's economic agenda' that would be made up of policy and legislative recommendations and demands. This agenda drew upon the experiences of women engaged in economic activities as well as decision makers and was to be agreed through a thorough process of consultation. When I finished my research the following topics had been identified for the 'Women's Economic Agenda' through the ongoing collaborations:

> 'Permanent consultancy and capacity building that will allow gradual commercialisation of micro-enterprises. That labour rights are respected. That it is ensured that resources reach the most excluded parts of society. Definition of policies and programmes for those running small companies with attention to their needs, size and experience. That access to training, marketing information, benefits of formalising business and financial packages is provided. That these policies and proposals are included in the agendas of

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huge numbers of women who lost regular employment by initiating training for work in alternative and non traditional professions.

local government, public bodies, NGOs, financial institutions and national and international networks'.

The diffusion and dissemination of these perspectives with other actors in civil society was to be established through mutually supportive community networks. Working groups gathering actors from NGOs, community groups, government, businesses and workers to share perspectives and together develop detailed, integrated and coherent strategies were being set up.

A rights based agenda as conceived by the representatives I interviewed then, has breadth in seeking to enhance the access of all target and identity based groups to their rights, and depth in seeking to promote these rights at a local level and through changes to legislation and institutional arrangements at national and international levels. In the ensuing final section, I will now discuss the principal features of the rights agenda that is being taken up by NGOs in terms of the content of UN treaties and Declarations.

'The Right to Development'

The effort to address growing extreme poverty, social marginalisation and excessive differentiation in the distribution of resources (nationally and globally) has gradually become more central to the UN agenda. 'The Right to Development', adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1986, was declared to be

> 'An inalienable human right by virtue of which every human person and all peoples are entitled to participate in, contribute to and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be realised'.

The Declaration is intended as a synthesis of previous treaties and declarations[55]. The declaration identifies 'the person as the central subject of development and therefore

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[55] The Declaration on the Right to Development (1986) had been preceded by several years of consultation and argumentation from both governmental and NGO sources. The Declaration is intended

an active participant and beneficiary of the right to development' (Symonides 1999: 5).

as a synthesis of UDHR, ICCPR, ICESCR, CEDAW and CRC, but as discussed above, has a number of important new emphases. The Core Conceptions of the Declaration are as follows:

- The right of peoples to self determination, meaning the right to determine freely their political status and to pursue their economic, social and cultural development;
- Their right to full and complete sovereignty over all their wealth and natural resources;
- Elimination of massive and flagrant violations of the human rights of peoples and individuals;
- All human rights and fundamental freedoms are indivisible and interdependent, and equal attention should be paid to the promotion of all rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural. Promotion of certain human rights and fundamental freedoms cannot justify the denial of other human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- International peace and security are essential elements for the realisation of the right to development;
- The human person is the central subject of development process and development policy should therefore make the human person the main participant and beneficiary of development;
- Equality of opportunity for development is a prerogative both of nations and of individuals who make up nations and, hence, resources released through disarmament should be devoted to the economic and social development and well being of all peoples and, in particular, those of the developing countries;

Perhaps most radically, efforts at the international level to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms should be accompanied by efforts to establish a new international economic order. (see also Baxi 1999: 99). The Declaration has been given a central place on the agendas of further United Nations world Conferences; World Conference on Education for All (1990), World Summit for Children (1990), UN Conference on Environment and Development (1992), Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (1993), International Conference on Population and Development (1994), Fourth World Conference on Women (1995), Vienna Conference Declaration for Social Development (1995).

Consideration of the profound implications for social policy of the Declaration on the Right to Development (1986) has been placed on the agendas of subsequent treaties. The Conference on Environment and Development in Rio (1992) included a cross-sectoral reflection on the situation of vulnerable groups and the urgent necessity of satisfying basic needs. 'Agenda 21' explicitly linked economic and social development with environmental protection as mutually reinforcing and interdependent. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (1993) emphasised that democracy, development and respect for human rights are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. The Vienna Conference further declared that states and should co-operate so as to eliminate obstacles to development through adopting equitable and sustainable policies at a national level and through establishing an international economic environment that is more conducive to the economic stability and growth of the poorer nations. Discussion took place in this forum on the universal nature of human rights and various nations proposed a more relativist model of rights. The Vienna Declaration however confirmed the universality of rights and reaffirmed that states are duty bound, regardless of religious, political, economic and cultural factors, to protect and promote *all* human rights. The World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen (1995), in its programme of action, called upon governments and other agencies to tackle all obstacles to people's access to all human rights, 'including those relating to education, food, shelter, employment, health and information, particularly in order to assist people living in poverty'. The Right to Development was also affirmed by the Platform for Action of the World Conference on Women. The right to participate in public decision making, a core theme of the Right to Development was further affirmed in 1997, at the Universal Declaration on Democracy (Cairo), where participatory democracy was identified as a basic right of citizenship. The General Assembly called upon all member states to move away from theoretical and or political debate about the implications of the Declaration to undertake practical measures to bring about its implementation. The adoption of the Declaration on the Right to Development began a process whereby governments, UN agencies and NGOs have sought to find concrete expression of the Declaration in policies and programmes. Through this process, greater clarity is being gained in defining and approaching the major obstacles to people's access to their social and economic rights.

Echoing the concerns of the NGOs outlined above, the characteristics of the Declaration on Right to Development that I will focus on are:

- an unequivocal emphasis on the *centrality of the person* to development;
- for the first time in UN history, confirmation of *the indivisibility of human rights*;
- a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of *the nature of obstacles to rights* and
- a radical expansion of the concept of *'duty bearers'*.

Person Centred Development

Identifying the human person as the centre of developmental endeavour, as both end and means, implicitly transcends state and community sovereignty and has important implications in our understanding of both rights and responsibilities. In the Declaration on the Right to Development, 'for the first time in recent history we move from conceptions of rights as resources for individuals against state power to the conception of human rights as species rights as well' (Symonides 1999: 100). The definition of duty bearers is thus extended, in principle at least, beyond state parties to *all* human beings and organisations. The Declaration solicits the participation of individuals, private interests, and NGOs in equitable and sustainable development, moving away from a governmental and administrative approach.

The Person in Context

The Copenhagen Declaration recognises 'the family' as the basic unit of society and acknowledges the importance of different kinds of human association in social development and states that 'as such (the family) should be strengthened, with attention to the rights, capabilities and responsibilities of its members'. Anthropologists will be reassured to see that the document recognises that 'in different cultural, political and social systems, various forms of family exist' (Section B sub-paragraph [h]). A person centred approach therefore begins policy making at the level of the particular values, rights, needs and perspectives of individuals, families, and communities situated in their specific contexts. In this declaration, governments are not defined as the only, or best, judges of what constitutes well being and the common good. What is called for is the involvement of civil society

organisations representing the poor, disadvantaged and marginalised sectors of society in public decision making and an authentic devolution of power and authority in public institutions.

However, the insistence upon the rights of the individual are important here as it has to be recognised that the 'family' or 'tradition' whilst often being foundational for fulfilment and well being, through care, nurturing and care, can also be a context of abuse and the restriction of flourishing. For this reason, the rights of the individual are presented as superseding the rights of a group, family, or tradition over an individual. The danger here is that if this is over-emphasised the idea the health and well being of the individual and the health and continuation of community go hand in hand may be obliviated.

Poverty and the Indivisibility of Human Rights

The Vienna Declaration states that 'extreme poverty and social exclusion constitute a violation of human dignity' (Paragraph 2). From the perspective of human rights, poverty is perceived as a comprehensive denial of opportunities to achieve well being, liberty and basic dignity[56]: 'extreme poverty is multidimensional, not only limited to income, but also affecting livelihood, health, education and housing as well as social, cultural and political participation.'[57] In addition, poverty is often accompanied by discrimination and exacerbates the difficulties experienced by the more vulnerable members of society. In short, the experiences of the extremely poor constitute a set of proofs for the necessity of understanding human rights as *indivisible*:

> 'The violation of the right to a reasonable standard of living entails the violation of all the other human rights, since their observance is quite simply made materially and structurally impossible' (Pettiti and Meyers-Bisch 1999: 159)

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[56] The idea, however, that dignity is impossible for those living in conditions of 'poverty' is obviously highly questionable.
[57] ATD Fourth World 1999: Redefining Human Rights Based Development: The Wresinski Approach to Partnership with the Poorest: 3

Whilst Economic, Social and Cultural (ESC) rights are often approached by States in terms of large scale measures, the effects of being denied these rights impact upon each individual conscience and dignity as acutely as being denied Civil and Political (CP) rights. Hemmed in by the conditions of extreme poverty, individuals are thwarted in achieving goals and responsibilities such as caring for one's family, having one's values respected, fulfilling one's potential through education and cultural participation and having an influence on political decisions that will affect one's life.

Development policies which identify sectors of the population in terms of welfare, or basic needs requirements therefore do not fulfil the profile of a person centred approach, primarily because this amounts to a discrimination between, or hierarchy of, human rights categories. In the experience of the poor, to be the recipient of food aid, or to basic housing stock whilst denied the right to participate in decision making, or to adequate education, is to be considered as a second class citizen.

The Failings of Political, Social and Cultural Contexts vis-à-vis Human Rights

Recognising the indivisibility of human rights and understanding poverty in terms of mutually reinforcing deprivations, insecurities and vulnerabilities, rather than in terms of quantitative thresholds, means shifting the analysis of causes to focus on ways in which the dynamics of particular political and social systems systematically deny the rights of particular groups.

Public institutions may be impeded in efforts to address poverty comprehensively because 'the failure to recognise the idea of indivisibility is reflected in administrative divisions' (Pettiti and Meyers-Bisch 1999: 160). Whilst the circles of deprivation and insecurity are experienced *together* by those in poverty, different elements (such as health or discrimination) are separated out and dealt with in a piecemeal and inconsistent fashion by different bureaucratic divisions. This is compounded by a lack of cross over between different areas of knowledge and between different disciplines.

These insights require that indicators of developmental progress do not merely measure the minimum requirements for survival, but rather take a far more

comprehensive and qualitative perspective that assesses whether the conditions of human dignity are being met. This approach demands that both rights and participatory responsibilities are included in policy making.

Cultural Rights and Empowerment

Without cultural rights, especially those to maintain and express one's identity (either cultural or individual), access to other rights is problematised. Through not being recognised as potential initiators and participants in decision making, marginalised peoples are rendered bereft of rights and become recipients of services conceptualised around basic needs. Womankind Worldwide, for example, in a project focused on indigenous women's rights in Peru, state that women have reportedly benefited greatly from undertaking a study which traced the impact of 'Arab gender values' on medieval Spanish culture which, in turn, has influenced the relations between indigenous men and women over the last five centuries. This history was contrasted with the cosmologies and mythologies of indigenous people which revealed the existence of far more egalitarian relations between men and women. Recapturing this history was salutary for these women in re-evaluating and challenging the gender relations that exist today (from my research in Cuzco 2001).

Removing Obstacles to Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Article 6 (3) of the Declaration on the Right to Development exhorts States to eliminate all obstacles to the observation of both Civil and Political and Economic, Social and Cultural rights[58]. The implications of this article are far reaching: if the State itself constitutes an obstacle to people's access to their rights, it follows that it should be reformed, if not transformed. Governments that do not respond, within their means, to the perspectives of their citizens, or do not respect their participatory rights, can according to the declaration, be considered obstructive to people's rights. Article 8 of the same declaration asserts that governments must be responsive to the requirements and preferences of the governed.

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[58] This article was based on the reasoning that States have so far failed to meet the obligations of the International Covenants.

Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPAs) have developed to obtain a better understanding of the obstacles that poor and marginalised people face in realising well being (see Maxwell 1999). It has become increasingly clear that 'poor' people, in addition to the difficulties they face accessing services and meeting basic needs, are concerned with governance issues, the lack of accessibility to and, transparency and accountability of, public institutions as well as their sense of powerlessness in public decision making. The creation of spaces for dialogue between civil society, government and private interests, equitable sharing of information and the establishment of transparency and accountability in public and private institutions are essential components of this vision of multidimensional processes of determination in development programming.

A more contentious implication of Article 6 is that it does not limit itself to institutional obstacles. Equally, it presents a challenge to those elements within society or culture more generally, which violate or obstruct human rights. A profound implication of this article is that it invites, and legitimises, a close scrutiny of the social, cultural, political and religious forces and values which underpin and animate particular national and cultural contexts, according to human rights criteria. The removal of obstacles to the UN's progressive view of development, then, involves not just undertaking reforms to social and economic policy but involves challenging particular world views, social hierarchies and prejudices if they stand in the way of people's access to their rights.

This interventionist perspective is based upon the observation that the distribution of political power in public and private institutions reflects the very power differentials that exist in wider society[59]. Norms, in any given setting, are immanent in social relations, or as Wilson puts it, 'internal to their very expression . . . a particular form of power and governance interior to the social body and are embedded in matrices of value distinctions (1997: 14). Civil Society, as noted above, is as susceptible to these

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[59] Patronage and clientelism may prevent disadvantaged groups from gaining access to decision making, judiciaries may not be independent and are influenced by social and political forces, party systems lack strength and coherence and presidential style, centralised decision making prevents locally elected bodies from investing resources at a local level.

power dynamics as State structures and may be actively dominated by State powers.[60] CSOs often find themselves in the difficult position of balancing their goals of protesting against social inequalities caused by State decision making, and the goal of influencing State strategies through working with government bodies. Whilst autonomy and the maintenance of a critical distance from the State is essential for the integrity of CSOs, their goals may well be to integrate their activities with State bodies, or to encourage State agencies to undertake responsibility for delivering services they have been carrying until that point.

Participation

Popular participation in public decision making is regarded by NGOs as the most direct and effective strategy to oblige governments to fulfil their obligations. The dynamics of collaboration with government can assume different forms and vary in extent. Leaving aside non-collaborative or intransitive participation, where people are caught up in, and do not contest circumstances that are not of their own making, participation can be reactive (monitoring and responding to government policy making and delivery of services) or proactive (popular initiation[61], articulation and implementation of development programmes).

Exclusionary styles of development, in which economic growth has been accompanied by huge increases in the numbers of people living in poverty, is in opposition to a rights based and integrative model for development as depicted above. 'New' social movements have responded to the perceived inadequacies of current economic and political models. In the wake of economic restructuring and the dramatic increase in poverty levels throughout the 90s in Latin America for example, new modes of popular organisation and social activism have emerged. The so called

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[60] 'Underlying the ideologies of national unity there is a hegemonic imperative which drives the state and the self-proclaimed dominant social groups to seek to control and shape civil society . . Most regimes severely restrict access (to the political system) by preventing the autonomous and pluralistic organisation of subordinated social groups. Instead, rulers either attempt to integrate the various social forces into single movements, or set up intermediary and indirect means of control. Their objective is to enlist the dominated social groups within the existing space of domination, and to teach them to be subject to the State' (Bayart 1986: 113, in Gledhill 1994: 103-4)

[61] An example of the latter is the creativity of civil society groups working towards collaboration with the Peruvian government at municipal level, their approach encapsulated by the slogan 'Protest by Proposal'. (REFERENCES FROM PERU)

'New Social Movements' have pushed for an 'expansion of the democratisation agenda, towards issues of social welfare and a variety of concerns that had traditionally remained marginal, such as identity, the environment, and ageing, among others' (Escobar and Alvarez 1992:5). The last decade in particular has seen a proliferation of civil society organisations including women's movements, labour support organisations (in both the formal and informal economy), peasant associations, neighbourhood movements, indigenous rights organisations, civil rights mobilisations, Christian base community organisations, organisations organised around issues such as external debt, among many others (Escobar and Alvarez 1992)

Responding to the complexity of social inequality, these movements often articulate specific claims on the basis of identity (cultural, gender, age, ethnicity, and locality) as well as socio-economic position. In addition to their focus on identity, these movements are distinguished from their predecessors by many analysts by characteristics such as decentralised organisational structures, the use of unconventional tactics, their use of human rights legislation and international links. The formation of civil society organisations and wider social movements are based on the *promotion* of cultural values or the normative model of society that they hold dear, the *defence* of particular groups of people from exploitation and oppression and/or *competition* for resources and/or decision making power (Escobar and Alvarez 1992).

Rights to freedom of speech, of association, and of legitimate governance are essential here but may not be sufficient as the articulation of the needs and perspectives of powerless and/or marginalised groups may never reach public forums, not because of illegal suppression but through more subtle forms of discrimination (see Bayart 1986). Authentically participative decision making is often thwarted when transparency is denied and where dominant elites at different levels enforce their will often whilst playing lip service to democratic and/or devolved/decentralised decision making. DFID Document Human Rights for Poor People (Feb. 2000), paragraph 3.15 observes: 'The evidence suggests that decentralisation may increase the participation

of marginalised peoples, but only if it takes place within the context of a political framework which promotes the equal rights of all people'[62].

Poverty, social exclusion, and marginalisation persist in nations where democratic processes operate relatively equitably. It is clear that democratic participation alone is insufficient for the most disadvantaged to gain access to their rights. To complement participation, *obligation* and political pressure is also a requirement of a rights based approach. This entails poor and marginalised people's involvement in public decision making and being enabled to hold public and private agencies accountable for policies that affect or involve them.

Popular Representation, Justiciability and Obligation.

The discussion above shows the significance of the indivisibility of all rights in any attempt to address extreme poverty. For example, a pre-requisite for the right to participate in public decision making is freedom of speech and expression. The importance of having access to all human rights can be seen in the example of the manipulation of food aid by Peruvian authorities to gain votes – here the right to food is played off against the right to vote freely (from my research in Lima).

Whilst the integrated perspective described above has made a rights based approach far more relevant to the work of development agencies, there are still no 'positive rights' for those with low entitlement status. Indeed it is argued that the relevant articles of the UDHR and UN Covenants remain seriously inadequate as a framework for addressing poverty eradication. Among the various Charters, only that drawn up by Organisation of African Unity explicitly exhorts solidarity (Chapter II, on duties). The issue of the effective implementation of the component rights of the Right to

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[62] As I observed in Chapter 2, in Bolivia, the Popular Participation Law, promulgated in 1994 gave constitutional recognition to the traditional decision making structures of indigenous peoples and putatively guaranteed the involvement of these groups in decision making at municipal level with regard to the allocation of government resources. However, recent research (Kidd and MacLullich 2000) has shown that significant barriers continue to prevent indigenous communities enhancing their control over local government resources. These obstacles relate to the lack of recognition given to indigenous organisations at municipal level, their lack of negotiating (financial) power, the necessity of gaining access to decision making through political parties which, controlled by local elites, often co-opt indigenous candidates and promise co-operation with indigenous people at election time but do not follow up. Indigenous people often feel forced to vote for the parties who are controlled by local elites because these same groups are their employers.

Development is a complex with regard to both the justiciability of these rights and the definition of duty bearers.

The fact that a large number of recognised human rights have yet to reach a sufficient stage of concrete, contextualised elaboration to be justiciable in legal terms[63] requires that other forms of obligation are used, such as standard setting, charters and demanding transparency and accountability. Reaching agreed targets with regard to economic rights is primarily dependent on resource availability, possibilities for income generation, establishing entitlement rights and the efficacy and equity of redistributive policies. Hence, an essential component of a rights based agenda is one which sets out to empower poor and disadvantaged people to participate in the decision making processes which affect their lives and to be able to hold public and private service providers and employers accountable for their policies and performance. One of the most serious difficulties faced by extremely poor people is achieving proper representation; as Pettiti and Meyer Bisch state:

'They are socially nothing and that, when all is said and done, might well be the socio-political definition of poverty' (1999: 252).

The Communitarian Agenda in Rights; Swimming against the Current

In summary, the rights agenda, in the context of modern liberal institutional arrangements, offers useful, but limited, possibilities for the protection of the well being for dispossessed, marginalised and impoverished individuals and groups. In the contemporary global political and economic setting, rights constitute a ubiquitous set of claims that can be used to elicit basic guarantees and protection from governments. Rights can be used to pin down what has to be put in place or removed in order to create the conditions within which people can function and thrive. The chief difficulty is that the communitarian effort to harness rights instruments will always be thwarted by the instrumental, individualistic and market mentality that bedevils modern liberalism and which sets the shape of political commitments.

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[63] All Nation States are obliged to uphold, protect and engender respect for civil and political rights as well as to ensure the minimum livelihood of all citizens. Economic, cultural and social rights are to be realised progressively.

Essentially, rights can be regarded as a framework within which finer considerations of human flourishing can be worked out. The rhetoric of rights language places an emphasis on personal autonomy and freedom of choice; 'there is a big difference between pushing people into functioning in ways you consider to be valuable and leaving the choice up to them' (Nussbaum 2000: 101). In my discussion, I have sought to emphasise the efforts that have been made within the rights agenda to underline the importance of creating the material, social and political circumstances which make freedom of choice real and actual, rather than the identification of rights with possessive individualism. Lukes asks some incisive questions about the assumptions that underlie individualistic ideas of autonomy:

> 'Are lives not rendered less autonomous by unintended actions, by social relationships and by impersonal and anonymous processes that may radically restrict people's alternatives of thought and action . . . and also the lack of resources? Why should we conceive of their 'essential interests' as what narrowly conceived rights protect and narrowly conceived opportunities promote? Why should they not include basic needs, or the conditions of normal functioning and their access to wider opportunities and a fuller life, and why should these not have a more urgent claim on society's resources to the extent to which they remain unmet?' (1997: 69).

I have quoted this passage in full because it sets out very lucidly the urgency that underlies the anti-liberal individualist interpretation of a rights agenda. For some theorists, the rights agenda will always reflect the power differentials that pervade society, thereby rendering the social, economic and cultural rights sites of hegemonic struggle where 'Western ruling classes' will tend to emerge the victors. The recognition of Western society as being not a balanced plural arrangement of different conceptions of the good but rather involving 'structures of power which seek to impose comprehensive doctrines on members of society' (Gledhill 1994: 89) demands attention to the ways in which rights discourse is contested and shaped by dominant individuating agendas.

The fact that the idiom of rights *simplifies* reality is simultaneously problematic and useful as Wilson explains; 'rights accounts impose meaning and coherence upon chaotic and indeterminate events in order to create discrete units of information which are capable of being distributed and consumed globally' (1997: 21). The defence of 'collective' rights appeals to traditional anthropological sensibilities. Achieving conditions that allow the well being of individuals, insofar as this depends to a significant extent on the individual's social context, may mean looking at the positionalities of social groups as units. The assertion of collective rights in a given society (such as women's economic rights, or indigenous land rights) are clearly fundamental to the well being of individuals within these categories. Also, given that there are different conceptions of the 'good life', the inculcation of the pre-eminence of individual rights and personal choice may be out of synch with models of well being that pertain to particular ethnic or social groups.

Chapter 12

Conclusions

> *'What matters at this stage is the construction of local forms of community within which civility and the intellectual and moral life can be sustained through the new dark ages which are already upon us. And if the tradition of the virtues was able to survive the horrors of the last dark ages, we are not entirely without grounds for hope. This time however, the barbarians are not waiting beyond the frontiers; they have already been governing us for some time. And it is our lack of consciousness of this that constitutes part of our predicament. We are waiting not for Godot, but for another, doubtless very different, St. Benedict' (Alasdair MacIntyre 1997: 263).*

Social Anthropologists, as individuals who have their own thoughts about the good, about human values, moral aspiration, well being, the choices that people are able to make, and who have working definitions of such ideas as care, justice, neglect and responsibility, when involved in development, can not help but find that their personal ethical self understanding, as well as their views of the evaluative concepts that characterise different asymmetrically positioned cultural realities, become radically interrogated, if not seismically shaken. In this context, it would seem vital to deliberate 'about which theories we really want to hold onto, which intuitions are really the most deeply rooted in our moral sensibility' (Nussbaum 2000: 300). The practices and policies of development are simultaneously the product of a sum of people's moral intuitions, choices and ethical theories as well as being hugely consequential - from global economic structures to the social life of the most 'remote' communities.

Anthropologists are more aware than most that the question of the morality of development is complicated by the fact that the 'targets' of development interventions consider the impacts and opportunities from evaluative standpoints that are qualitatively different from the modern presuppositions that underlie development. A further, indeed, probably the most crucial, complication is that in MacIntyre's words, 'the language – and therefore also to some large degree the practice - of morality

today is in a state of grave disorder. That disorder arises from the prevailing cultural power of an idiom in which ill-assorted conceptual fragments from various parts of our past are deployed together in private and public debates which are notable chiefly for the unsettleable character of the controversies thus carried on and the apparent arbitrariness of each of the contending parties' (1997: 257). In this fragmentation, as I have argued, certain agendas, which are often implicit, have more persuasive force than others. In this respect, I have pursued the contention that the instrumentalism and individualism of modernity that finds its most thoroughgoing expression in neo-liberal economic development paradigms is a dynamic that it would be salutary for anthropologists to resist in their pursuit of an ethical approach to development. Given that I have sought to emphasise the Aristotelian connection between well being and belonging to a moral community, the following argument by Hornborg captures one of my principle concerns:

> 'In realising his own projects of self-definition, the modern individual was required to redefine his relationship to places and to people. These could no longer constitute his points of reference as particulars, only as categories . . . modernity implied a *movement from concrete to abstract reference points for identity construction* . . . Specific places and people had to be detachable from, rather than constitutive of, the conception of the person' (1994: 237).

The passage from the 'pre-modern' to modernity, then, can be understood in terms of a movement (or forced extrication) away from the individual's involvement in a specific forms of sociality to enter, instead, into 'a series of mobile, changing, revocable associations, often designed for highly specific ends. We end up relating to each other through a series of partial roles' (Taylor 2000: 502). On this view, the non-modern socially embedded person, entering into Western modes of political discourse has to make sense of a cultural shift to the Western stress on competitive self-reliance, the pursuit of subjective happiness, coercion and emotive argumentation that underlies the cover of rights based ethics. This can be felt existentially as a move from 'Cosmos' to 'Chaos'.

The very discomfort that social anthropologists feel in relation to modernity is therefore, a reflection of a wider phenomena. As I indicated in the introductory

chapter, anthropologists often occupy standpoints of moral resistance to the modernising project of development. I believe that is principally because of the anthropological insistence that the deliberations of development can never be undertaken in 'analytic neutral' and it is the duplicitous use of 'universals' in modernity that masks the imposition of a Western mode of being upon other cultural realities. Many anthropologists, in fact, conclude, like Gledhill, that the Western imaginary has always been based on the arrogant assumption that 'all humankind could benefit in the long term from allowing the West to exercise domination' (1994: 227). Anthropologists are often well placed to survey and feel the dubious nature of what has been delivered by the West and to consider the starkness of the failure of the West to meet its promises.

A key question that has regularly surfaced in my discussion has been that of how to best conceptualise the characteristic and particular moralities and bodies of knowledge of the modern West, that is, those which distinguish the West from non-modern cultural settings. Taylor is also concerned with this question in his discussion on 'cultural and acultural theories of modernity'. On the 'cultural[1]' theory of modernity, the coming into being of modernity is understood 'in terms of the rise of a new culture' (in Houston 1998: 234), given vision and power through the west's social imaginary of 'the good'. As Houston argues, on this view, 'the notion of *progress* is problematised' (1998: 234, my emphasis). Alternatively, *a*cultural theories of the transformations that lie behind the rise of modernity point to 'culture-neutral operations', often associated with the Enlightenment, such as 'the growth of reason . . . . issuing in a set of changes that any and every culture can go through as its members begin, or are forced to see, that previously held beliefs are erroneous or even self deluding' (Houston 1998: 234). On this view, which envisages the formation of a cultural state in which previously held beliefs and values are discarded or made obsolete through the introduction and extrapolation of 'superior' reasoning, 'the notion of cultural equality is problematised' (Houston 1998: 234).

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[1] In Taylor's writings, 'any particular culture is taken to encompass an ensemble of practices and ideas regarding personhood, social relations, states of mind/soul, goods and bad, virtues and vices etc.' (Taylor 1995: 24) and is unified to the extent that it is viewed as a single constellation among others, as a member of the plurality of human cultures.' (Houston 1998: 234)

The teleology of an acultural theory of modernity that places the technological advances of the west at, or near, the causal centre visualises the inexorable incorporation of non-Western societies into the West and its ways. Taylor is opposed to the modern vogue of ethical thinking, which tends to try to derive all our obligations from some single principle (such as utilitarianism or Western technology). On this basis, we can see the ethnocentric implications of acultural theories. In their emphasis on one line of enquiry (rationality, the rise of the market economy), acultural theories do not have the scope to conceptualise the real differences in the moral economies of different peoples in different places and times. As Houston states, 'in ignoring the cultural transformation (i.e. the change in implicit self understanding etc.) that informs modernity, acultural theory takes for granted that all cultures have to experience the same social changes as the west' (1998: 238). A cultural theory of modernity, instead, opens up consideration of the relative moralities and visions of the good that structure social and economic change.

As I have argued, the 'visions of the good' that characterise the modern West are thoroughly fragmented. Due to the interminable nature of moral reasoning in the West, dominant economic, instrumental and individuating agendas continue unabated, relatively unchecked by the force of shared values that emphasise the pre-eminence of social relationships rather than material things. Recent critiques of development, reflecting these, and other, concerns, have been subsumed by a larger critique of modernity. Hornborg, for instance, argues that the dominant dynamic of the West's relationship to 'the Rest' has been a 'strategy of conceptual encompassment which defined modernity as simultaneously a cognitive and a socio-political phenomenon' which has implications in domains that are superficially distinct, such as 'identity construction, knowledge construction, economic exploitation and ecological destruction' (1994: 232). Perhaps most crucially, for the ethics of applied anthropology, Hornborg's contention is that the asymmetric agentive conceptualisation and reordering of 'the Rest' (i.e. the non-modern) involves the often destructive 'disembedding' of individuals from particular life-worlds and forms of community wherein well being is achieved.

So, the moral predicament of the applied anthropologist in development is such that he or she, if interested in formulating an ethical approach, needs to consider the moral

conflicts that inhere in modernity and which are evident in the West's idioms of relating to the 'other'. As I will discuss below, the areas that appear to be present the greatest challenge, within Western moral and political discourse, for the formulation of an ethics for applied anthropology, are the Western dichotomies between the public and the private, between society and the individual, the over bearing rationalist mode, the individuating agenda of liberalism, the market mentality and the paternalism and peremptory and coercive language that characterises Western approaches towards the 'other'. One of my main arguments has been that it is from a communitarian perspective, often embodied in highly particular and nuanced forms in indigenous life-worlds, or in the aspirations and social practices of new associative networks or social movements, that we can best understand the mistakes which lie at the heart of modernity.

On the basis of these observations, it is clear that moral reaction to, and reflection on, the development phenomena, as a modernising project, is complex, manifold and wide ranging. In this thesis I have explored, in broad terms, the moral predicament, and more directly, the ethical *dilemmas* of social anthropologists vis-à-vis the phenomena of development. My agenda in Chapters 2, 3 and 4 was to set out the terrain for this discussion. Beginning with an account of the deliberations surrounding the British government's consideration of their support of the indigenous peoples of lowland Bolivia through the eyes of an incipient, and admittedly naïve, anthropologist/consultant, I sought to unravel the ethical tensions of development practice which generate its inherent conflicts. On this basis, I sought to assemble a fairly abstract portrait of the anthropologist/consultant, with the particular moral choices he or she is confronted with. I approached this second aspect in two main ways.

Firstly, in Chapters 5, 6 and 7, I looked at the theoretical resources that social anthropologists have devised, guided by different kinds of moral discernment and wider theoretical movements, in relation to grasping and evaluating planned social and economic change. My chief concern was to trace the anthropological endeavour to properly, that is, relevantly and critically, describe social change; apprehending the workings and impacts of economic, political power in development. Following this I proposed that anthropology's privileged focus or the 'anthropological concrete' (at

least in relation to development) should be apprehending the ways in which socially embedded individuals achieve well being together in ways that may be partially incommensurable from the dominant categories that organise development.

Secondly, in Chapters, 8, 9, 10 and 11, I considered the ethical frameworks that structure development practice from the point of view of the fragmentary modern moral outlook. My contention throughout was that applied anthropologists cannot avoid apprehending the ethics of involvement in development other than as being inextricably related to one's own individual personal ethics. Similarly, extrapolating from individual moral *experience*, the anthropologist can not avoid tackling the question of the moral *force* that is exerted by the discipline of social anthropology in terms of its pronouncements and relationship to governance and political values. A core contention I made was that it is vital to recognise that social anthropologists are implicated in the conflicts that inhere to the modern liberal identity and that social anthropology as a discipline is positioned in an uneasy relationship with the modern moral western outlook.

I will briefly outline my main conclusions from each of these sections.

The Moral and Ethical Dilemmas of Applied Anthropologists in Development

Anthropologists in development find themselves posited as a locus of reflection between asymmetrically positioned life worlds, simultaneously representing local people and the 'development community', articulating needs, values and resolutions. Extrapolating from my experience as a anthropologist/consultant in Bolivia, I argued that the dynamic of radical *asymmetry* between the development enterprise and the life-worlds of those considered to be targets of development underpinned practically all of the moral difficulties that arose. This asymmetry was manifested in various ways such as the uni-directional analytical and intrusive auditor's gaze of development researchers as well as issues surrounding financial asymmetry and power of decision making disparities. I noted that the opaque and peremptory language of economic development routinely results in inappropriate development interventions.

The anthropologist/consultant can not but engage with the regularities of the development discourse, wrestling with modes of representation and terms of reference that are defined *a priori*. Because of this, an unavoidable difficulty is devising a language that is adequate to the task of reflecting the aspirations and perspectives of those the anthropologist seeks to represent whilst remaining within the scope of development discourse. Being aware that, beyond the limited range of concepts that are negotiated in the development discourse, there exist richer and more nuanced understandings of well being, the anthropologist is faced with the difficult task of reducing ethnographically gleaned insights into development language without haemorrhaging the integrity of meanings of those on whose behalf he or she purports to be writing. What is especially challenging in terms of applied anthropology as a kind of writing, then, is that the insights of the ethnographer have to be balanced with a demonstration of the skills and forthrightness that allow observations to be synthesised into conclusive statements that can be acted upon. Because of this, discernment is required with regard to the presuppositions and dichotomous evaluations of modernisation that continue to colour the very terms that developers use. This was explored further in Chapter 5 which looked at correspondences between development and the colonial gaze.

'Slow Steps Towards a Relevant Anthropology: Theoretical Resources for Applied Anthropology'

As noted above, my concern here was to trace the growing relevance and explanatory coherence of social anthropological approaches to development. In particular I sought to identify the ways in which anthropologists developed approaches which combined explanations of the dynamics of Western driven planned social and economic change whilst also resisting models that attributed a narrow version of personhood to individuals (as in versions of modernisation and dependency theory). My view is that the discipline of social anthropology, in its enduring opposition to obtuse universalism continues to undergo a moral passage involving a perpetual reshaping of theory, shedding aspects of pre-emptive sociological scientism so as to be faithful to the evaluative meanings that inhere in specific contexts. Nevertheless, as noted in the previous section, particularly in applied anthropology, anthropologists can never fully

let go of the frameworks that inform policy and planning as he or she must write and speak in this idiom so as to be intelligible within the development discourse.

I pursued these arguments by considering the historical unfolding of the anthropological conceptual and evaluative apprehension of planned social and economic change. On this basis, I also considered the nature of the critiques and contributions that social anthropology has generated. I noted the correspondences that exist between development and the colonial gaze and traced the principle ideas that became prominent as development was inaugurated as a morally 'justified' global project. The idiom of development involves a claim that the 'first world' has now relinquished the exploitative dynamics of colonialism in relation to the 'third world', and now extends fraternal help in an ethos of global co-operation in the effort to eradicate poverty (see also Larrain 1989 6-7). However, this idiom of assistance belies the power asymmetries that are infused through development encounters at every level. Hobart (1993: 2) suggests that 'because the prevailing rhetoric is of altruistic concern for the less fortunate, it is useful to remember that development is big business'. Because of this, a troubling issue for anthropologists is that the language of, and knowledge interests which inform, development, whilst cast in terms of support and assistance, have arguably inherited the same underlying dynamics that fuelled the colonial enterprise. These questions relate to the initial perspective, the means undertaken and the end that is aimed towards. Hobart (1993) signals the 'agentive' aspect of development representations of the other, that is, the linking of particularly defined states of being, such as 'poor', 'backward' or 'small farmer', to ameliorating activities, whether it be management, law, investment, land reform or whatever. The nature of the relationship between the 'developers' and the 'developed' can therefore be gauged by the idiom of expression used. As Escobar argues; 'Labels and institutional practices are issues of power; they are invented by institutions as part of an apparently rational process that is fundamentally political in nature' (1991: 667). I argued that a crucial aspect of applied anthropology precisely involves the simultaneous subverting of the dichotomous evaluations that development's language of relating inherited from colonialism and the support of those aspects of development discourse which emphasise personal agency, local knowledge and shared values and the empowerment of disempowered and downtrodden social groups.

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In my discussions on power and knowledge in development, the importance of apprehending local knowledges and the contribution of post-modernism to development critiques, a key argument that I made was that whilst it is crucial for social anthropology to show the ways in which Western development discourse and practice often involve a 'lack of fit' with local realities and aspirations, the task of applied anthropology has to do more than deconstruct and stress the diversity of perspectives.

An important paradox of the colonial era was that functionalism, whilst being a relativistic paradigm that emphasised the importance of societal coherence, being bereft of a critical perspective on the dynamics of political and economic power served as a peculiarly appropriate and compliant theory vis-à-vis colonialism. I asked the question whether a similar dynamic can be discerned with regard to the relationship between post-modern approaches and the realities of neo-liberalism. It seems to me that whilst post-modernist approaches, which stress 'polyphony' and the contingency and false authority of grand narratives, offer a great deal to the critique of development, this emphasis on the *differend* can divert attention away from the shared values (globally and locally) that are necessary for both coherent political critiques and the achievement of well being in particular social settings.

More precisely, my point is that post-modernism's recognition of power differentials in representation is not equivalent to political action and self-conscious partiality, that is, deliberately and constructively taking sides in a given debate. Gledhill makes the accusation that the apparent politicisation of the discipline through post-modernist approaches has not resulted in many clear statements about social injustice. He asserts that in the current climate, 'it is not merely difficult to achieve a consensus on principles, but not even clear that the practice of the profession at large is changing in any profound way as a result of talking about problems' (1994: 210). On this basis, I have agreed with Nussbaum, who, as a proponent of cross-cultural values, asserts that whilst 'sensitive thinkers' have become 'sceptical about all forms of universalism . . . universal values may be necessary for an adequate critique of colonialism itself' (2000: 31), although, as will be discussed in the subsequent section, great care needs to be taken with the whole idea of universals.

My contention throughout this section was that it is essential for social anthropologists to continue to undertake a critical and reflexive approach to ubiquitous Western social, cultural economic encroachment and encompassment. Herzfeld also makes a case for looking at the suffering that results from the imposition of Western society;

> 'For it is here that "society" - anthropology's favoured object – has failed its members, by almost any standard one could invoke. And it is here that the categorical brand of reflexive thinking may offer glimpses, if not of solutions, at least of understanding the source of that suffering' (2001: 239).

Nevertheless, as Gardner and Lewis argue, 'to criticise the inability of 'development' to deliver is relatively easy; understanding and supporting the alternatives are more difficult' (1996: 155). With this in mind, it is important for an ethically relevant applied anthropology to engage with the values and aspirations that are embodied in political struggle and the emergence of new kinds of social movements, for instance. In short, one of the key assertions that I sought to make was that social anthropology's expertise in deciphering and translating indigenous and local perspectives, as well as the discipline's incorporation of the critical perspectives of post-modernist discourse need to be combined with a relevant engagement with the social forces that characterise economic development. Anthropology's insistent defence of the value of indigenous and local perspectives combined with post-modern critiques of Western dominant discourses is essential to 'disrupt the existing establishment of narratives and frameworks of social thought' (Marcus 1999: 11). The applied anthropological task, however, by necessity, goes beyond dismantling and deconstruction to constructively engage with development planning by grounding and systematising 'critical initiatives into more sociological empirical terms' (*loc. cit.*).

Anthropological Engagement with the Ethics of Development Theory and Practice

In addition to this analysis of the theoretical resources relevant to applied anthropology, a second related aspect of my investigation was to unearth the moral and ethical resources in the West that are brought into play when considering the

ethics of development. Again, my intention here, whilst maintaining a critical perspective, was to identify those aspects of the Western moral tradition that provide a basis upon which anthropologists, in their pursuit of an ethical approach to their applied work, can meaningfully engage with. Within the Western tradition, despite the preponderance of liberal individualist and capitalist forces, there are ethical resources that social anthropologists, as well as indigenous and disempowered peoples, can draw upon and contest in the construction and defence of different traditions of well being and which can form a basis for 'pro-poor' political advocacy.

In Chapter 8, I set out some of the characteristics of the contemporary development context, which I characterised under the heading 'globalised polarised disassembly'. On the basis of an overview of the stark realities of global poverty, I introduced some features of the dominant neo-liberal agenda in economic development and, as an aspect of the more open politicisation of development discourse, I noted that NGOs are taking up increasingly eclectic strategies in their efforts to mitigate the social and economic inequality, individuation, insecurity and fragmentation which they consider to be concomitant with neo-liberal policies. As a prelude to Chapter 11, I observed that the human rights framework has become central to development deliberation.

My main interest, though, in Chapter 8 was to examine the reasoning behind the Western (lack of) response to global poverty, in the face of unprecedented global wealth and technical capabilities. I discussed the reasons why the utilitarian philosopher Singer's challenge - that if we can prevent poverty without sacrificing something of comparable moral importance, then we should be morally bound to do so - has little evocative force in the West. I then explored the moral equivocations (that can, in many cases, I argue, be considered to be moral abdications) that underlie the intransigence and duplicity of the West's discourse on 'third world poverty'. Noting the dissonance that exists between our moral intuitions with regard to the suffering caused by poverty and the rationalisations that underlie Western recalcitrance to go beyond self-congratulatory charity, I argued that Western ethical models are often counter intuitive. Ethical frameworks can be considered hegemonic if we understand them as being profoundly shaped by the instrumental concerns that are pre-eminent in Western thought. Here I introduced the argument that the West's skewed emphasis on 'liberty' as something opposed to certain basic responsibilities or

aspects of human mutuality and acknowledged dependence at a social, as well as transnational level is profoundly problematic in the consideration of development ethics. Given that ethical models provide a basis upon which to interpret and act, my argument here was that a central aspect of the ethics of applied anthropology is to interrogate and contest the moral and political philosophical explanatory models that underlie Western development policy and practice.

Presenting an introduction to this endeavour was the task of Chapter 9. Here I examined the emerging field of 'development ethics' which is largely articulated in terms of the maxims that are fundamental to Western moral and political traditions. My intention in this chapter, building on observations made in my discussion on the theoretical resources for applied anthropology, was that development ethics cannot be properly conceived without an active engagement with, and espousal of, certain universal moral commitments and a simultaneous focus on the embedded, contingent and contextual nature of the social construction of well being. I also developed my claim that the Western emphasis on personal liberty and the pursuit of subjective happiness is duplicitous in the sense that these liberties of choice and self-fulfilment are rendered inaccessible in the absence of the very social and material preconditions that neo-liberal policies actively remove for large sectors of the population of developing countries.

Building upon an account of the compromises and possibilities of modern liberalism which constitutes the primary conceptual context for Western development ethics, I presented a number of critiques of 'commodity based', 'utilitarian' and 'Kantian' approaches to development policy and practice. Within the modern liberal framework, I acknowledged that the Kantian imperatives of 'non-coercion', 'basic needs' and 'non-paternalism' contain useful resources for development ethics and that certain aspects of utilitarian social engineering can result in socially beneficial practices. However, I also sought to explicate the failings of these models from an anthropological perspective. In general terms, I observed that Western development discourse, which often involves an erroneous pretension to being based on universally valid principles, is routinely at odds with non-modern perspectives and sources of value. This is the basis of the moral dissonance that is ubiquitous in development practice. My principle critique of these ethical frameworks, then, centred firstly on

their different normative and conceptual insensitivities and blindnesses to particular social contexts and secondly, their various abstractions and fetishisations of certain truncated understandings of the *means* to well being (such as commodities, rights, rationality, or liberty), rather than looking at the myriad ways in which well being is actually achieved or thwarted in different contexts.

The Socially Embedded Individual; The 'Applied Anthropological Concrete'

My view has been that the Western radical distancing of the idea of 'society' away from the abstracted and disengaged 'Individual' diverts emphasis from considering the ways in which the social and the individual are constitutive of each other in culturally specific ways. It also clouds consideration of the ways in which sociality is deeply valued and the ineradicable sense of belonging and purpose that underpins people's active participation in their cultural settings. On this basis, it seems important that applied anthropologists, in the face of Western development discourse, stress that the creation of cultures or shared moral spaces is intrinsic to being human, that is, a universal social strategy that can nevertheless only be apprehended in measured relativistic terms.

I acknowledged that critiques of exclusionary and severely hierarchical versions of collectivism are often valid in the sense that certain forms of sociality constrain the well being of individuals and groups within a community. Nevertheless, one of the key interests that I pursued over Chapters 9 and 10 was that this should not dissuade applied anthropologists from maintaining their enduring and profound respect for the ways in which people apprehend and experience their own societies as relatively coherent, although dynamic, wholes. Indeed I have argued that there is a contemporary urgency to resist the Western tendency to perfunctorily dismantle specific cultural realities so as to privilege the disengaged individual as the sole focus of ethical interest. As human flourishing is utterly inextricable from the myriad ways in which sociality is constructed, the achievement of well being can not be understood in terms abstracted from the apprehension of the socially embodied knowledges of individuals embedded particular cultural inter-subjectivities.

Let me recapitulate. My arguments in Chapter 10 centred on the contention that the Western moral tradition's tendency to perfunctorily privilege the individual over the community results in narrow understandings of the ways in which well being is achieved. A glaring difficulty with Western liberal individualism is the characteristic resistance to accepting that a necessary counterpart to personal liberty and the pursuit of subjective happiness is what MacIntyre calls the virtues of acknowledged dependence (1999: 120). I also argued that the emphasis on coercion, that is intrinsic to rights based ethics, rather than highlighting the virtues that make social life possible and more than merely tolerable, such as trust or generosity, is often out of step with people's moral aspirations and understandings of a good life. Standard Western ethical systems are often too narrow to allow an appreciation of embedded virtues, the richness of personal relationships and the nuances of sociality for achieving well being.

A crucial moral imperative for social anthropology, then, is to continue explaining how indigenous world views, rather then being moribund survivals, are primary and constitutive of life-worlds from whose vantage point Western perspectives and practices are often devastatingly disruptive and profoundly *im*moral. An ethic for applied anthropology has to adequately grasp and explain the qualitative rational, intuitive and affective moral distinctions that are essential to the construction of the social and individual well being of particular groups and moral traditions. Building on these critiques, I argued that the virtue ethics tradition offers a great deal in the anthropological endeavour to apprehend culturally specific ways of achieving well being.

In short, virtue ethics begins with a consideration of the nature of a 'good human life' or vision of society and extrapolates from this to look at what 'it is good to be' that is, an interest in which kinds of human conduct, for example one's attitude towards others, facilitates or disrupts the mutual effort of people to achieve their shared vision of the good. This is quite different in emphasis, and has different implications from, a primary concern with the *consequences* of actions (utilitarianism) or the perfunctory fulfilment of one's *duty* (Kant). Aristotle, from whom virtue ethics are largely derived in the Western moral tradition, understood the human telos in terms of a particular definition of human nature. MacIntyre's idea of the shared telos, that individuals

achieve through the practice of virtues, emphasises the importance of culturally specific visions of the good life. Virtues differ from society to society as they are inextricable from, and only fully intelligible within, the shared visions of particular kinds of society. I argued that this perspective in the first place, by virtue of the emphasis on particular visions of the good that inhere in shared moral spaces, does not pre-empt what the moral aspirations of a given society are, nor what they ought to be, by Western standards. Secondly, the virtue ethics perspective, in any setting, requires an apprehension of what a shared vision of the good means, which, can only be salutary, at least as an antidote to the inscrutable sovereignty of the disengaged Western individual.

The above seems to be a thoroughly relativistic argument. However, with regard to the idea of moral absolutes, I have drawn again from Taylor in his insistence that whilst there are cultural differences in conceptualising moral values and different stories invented to explain, and affirm, certain instincts (such as the reluctance to inflict death on one's own), certain moral intuitions are in fact, universal[2]. We feel an innate sense of responsibility to help malnourished children, for instance, we intuit a sense of responsibility to them. Taylor wants to establish that, beneath the various ontological arguments that exist about morality, which often veer away from what really matters to us, are deep moral instincts that are in touch with our human nature and spiritual predicament.

> 'We should treat and deepest moral instincts, our ineradicable sense that human life is to be respected, as our mode of access to the world in which ontological claims are discernible and can be rationally argued about and sifted' (2000: 8).

On this realist view, our most profound moral sensibilities precede rationalistic proofs and arguments. This idea for Taylor is central to his argument (and to this thesis) that the ethical and political models that have been created around us and which we are born into in the West, because they have been profoundly shaped, one might say contorted, by exclusive instrumental concerns, are often counter-intuitive to our moral

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[2] This idea has was also asserted by Hume; 'No quality of human nature is more remarkable, both in itself and in its consequences, than the propensity we have to sympathise with others' (1978: 316).

sense. If one accepts this argument, (and I believe that intuitively, many people do) it becomes clear that the Western dislocation of its moral frameworks from deeper human intuitions should be a matter of self-effacement, especially in relation to an enterprise so hugely consequential as development.

The anthropological consensus that I have been aiming for, then, is that there are moral absolutes but these can not be considered in isolation from the recognition that social knowledge can only be the work of an embodied agent interacting with others, that is by apprehending the active embeddedness of the self in shared social and moral spaces. On this basis, given that social realities, whilst being the only settings in which well being can be achieved, equally, can also impede and prevent well being. For this reason, I have argued that the privileged focus, or object of allegiance for applied anthropology has to be considered in terms of the socially embedded, but not entirely determined, individual.

Whilst great care has to be taken in making moral judgements about different cultural settings on the basis of the extent to which individuals within that context are deemed to be able to live in such a way that it is possible for their dignity to remain intact, I believe that this foundational allegiance to the individual person is essential for a valid approach to applied anthropology. What makes this problematic is the Western tendency to denigrate entire societies on the basis of particular civil and political 'human rights abuses', whilst diverting attention from the West's devastating neglect of economic and social and cultural rights in their dealings with 'third world countries'

On the basis of my critique of these Western ethical paradigms, I identified the 'capabilities approach' as offering the greatest scope for an intermeshing of anthropological concerns with development ethics. This approach brings together aspects of the philosophical frameworks that I have discussed. There is an acknowledgement of the Kantian insistence on autonomy and basic needs as well as the utilitarian concern with welfare but these are considered in concert with a neo-Aristotelian interest in human flourishing, belonging in a moral community and culturally relativist perspectives. Stemming from the liberal egalitarian tradition, the capabilities approach combines an allegiance to the flourishing of individuals with a

recognition of the culturally specific social goals that create the conditions for people to function in a truly human manner.

In short, this approach involves looking at the achievement of certain universally defined human functions which are considered to be indispensable in the creation of 'a good human life', in terms of what individuals are able to actually do, or *become* according to their own volition in particular contexts. The 'central human functional capabilities' include such things as 'being free to imagine'; 'not having one's emotional development blighted by overwhelming fear and anxiety, or by traumatic events of abuse or neglect'; 'to be able to use one's senses'; 'being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's life' (Nussbaum 2000: 77-80). From an anthropological perspective, the strength of the capabilities approach is that it provides scope for the explication of the achievement of well being in terms that do not necessarily involve the domineering and often negative Western interrogation of whether particular societies have the prerequisites that are often fetishised in the West (such as commodities, technology or bureaucracy). An important insight within this approach is that capabilities (such as fulfilling one's emotional life, or bodily health) can be brought within reach by very different kinds of commodities (for example, land for indigenous people so that they can continue their traditional livelihoods rather than food aid or increasing employment opportunities).

It has been my argument that this framework offers interesting possibilities for the engagement of anthropological perspectives which seek to bring together an appreciation of cultural specifics with wider political issues of social justice and poverty alleviation. An important aspect of the capabilities approach is the attempt to establish clear 'universal standards' that refer principally to 'constitutional guarantees'. In this sense, human rights are considered as occupying an often necessary although subsidiary role, that is, as a potential means to the creation or protection of well being. In principle, then, this approach seeks to avoid the obtuse versions of universalism that I described above.

Obviously, in addition to a defence of otherness, there is a clear imperative for applied anthropology to engage with the political discourses that unfold in development

practice. The well being of indigenous people as well as other disempowered groups depends to a very great extent upon the politics of the nation state. For this reason, a necessary aspect the agenda of applied anthropology, involves addressing the local transmutations of Western human rights discourses. In terms of the contested pragmatics of development practice, applied anthropologists need to consider the *meanings* and *uses* of universals (such as rights) as they actually unfold in practice and how these discourses are interpreted and modified locally (see Wilson 1997). Universal frameworks, such as transnational rights discourses, are acted upon in practice through the institutions of development and need to be understood as social facts that are variously interpreted and shaped by the defensive and opportunistic responses of local people.

Whilst rights based ethics do not constitute an adequate framework for the apprehension of the complex ways in which sociality is achieved in different settings, rights can be usefully invoked as a means of the defence of both individuals, particular social groups and, indeed whole societies. The rights framework constitutes an ubiquitous set of claims that can be used to elicit basic guarantees. In the thesis, I emphasised two broad aspects of the rights agenda in relation to applied anthropology.

Firstly, in relation to the indigenous peoples of Bolivia, I argued that anthropologists can usefully support the collective rights of indigenous peoples. Protecting indigenous rights is based upon harnessing the legal resources available to indigenous people to protect themselves from being reduced to the experience of proletarian exploitation (sweat shops, working on large scale farms with no labour rights). When indigenous peoples gain legal control over their traditional territories and their political structures are recognised legally, the value of indigenous life-worlds as a distinct and precious shared way of being is affirmed and protected. For this reason, an important and traditional contribution anthropologists can make in development is the self aware defence of communities from overbearing individualising processes. Gledhill, in defence of communitarian autonomy, contends that;

> 'The burden of state action on native communities has been to work for individuation against collectivism and holism, which anthropologists have

generally seen as a process which undermines cultural coherence. 'Natives' become welfare-dependents, alcoholic, persons in need of treatment or food-stamps. They also become people whose identities are shaped by the state agencies on which they come to depend' (1997: 99).

Whilst this catastrophic view of the dissolution of cultures and the consequent moral dispossession of individuals is not always the case, the point is a very serious one. The effort to maintain communitarian ties is especially difficult in the context of neo-liberal social change where labour markets are de-regulated, highly competitive and characterised by short term contracts. Anthropologists should be alert to the fact that the minimalist neo-liberal state involves subordination through individualisation, and normalisation.

Secondly, on the basis of research with the ways in which UK based NGOs interpret and utilise the rights agenda, I emphasised the 'anti-liberal-individualist' aspect of the rights framework which constitutes a set of arguments and tools which can be used to mitigate the impacts of exclusionary neo-liberal models. I illustrated this argument with reference to a particular project on Women's Economic Rights' in Peru, a country that throughout the 1990s experienced the devastating social effects of neo-liberal economic 'shock therapy'.

It is a plausible argument that appealing to rights is insufficient to challenge the hegemonic order because the rights discourse is ultimately shaped by this same order. My view here is that this defeatist view does not take into consideration the very real gains that indigenous communities and social movements have made in their pursuit of the realisation of the rights that give pre-eminence to the value of social relationships and the protection of disempowered groups. I believe that the very purpose of applied anthropology would be rendered futile without a belief that the dominant discourse can be subverted, challenged and, in the case of indigenous societies that seek to remain their territorial and cultural integrity, opted out of.

In summary, in my review of the moral possibilities and impossibilities of the applied anthropologist in development, I have argued that a contemporary imperative for the discipline is to adopt a broadly communitarian contraposition to what I consider to be

the dominant liberal individualist and instrumental agenda in development thinking and practice. I have argued that whilst the concepts and values that emanate from social anthropology are multi-faceted and many stranded, I believe that the anthropological standpoint is both distinctive and potentially counter hegemonic. I looked specifically at the anthropological disruption of the moral and ethical frameworks that underlie development policy and practice. A core argument has been that Western moral reasoning, as a result of deep disagreements about the sources of value in human life and society, tends to rely upon procedural, instrumental and coercive ethical frameworks and ways of relating to the 'other'. On this basis, one of my assertions is that communitarian arguments, whilst also being needed as a healthy antidote to the excesses of liberal individualism, also constitute a reflection of the aspirations of people(s), many of whom are beleaguered by the alienation, atomism and instrumentalism of modern society, to realise their visions of the good life. I sought to stress that the anthropological understanding of morality, along with considerations of social justice and the universally conceived basic requirements of human dignity, should also involve an intense interest in, and defence of, the particular virtues and visions of the good that are lived out in particular social settings and which underlie the possibility of human flourishing. The communitarian perspective also underpins a political commitment to supporting those besieged indigenous communities that struggle to defend their integrity. In the face of the fragmentary and individuating neo-liberal development policies, the communitarian response also involves emphasising economic, social and cultural rights (that are routinely sidelined) to protect indigenous societies and, also, to support the construction of new associative networks that represent the aspirations, and embody the values, of marginalised and disempowered social groups.

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