The Paradox of Indigenous Peoples' Rights

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Abstract

This paper argues that contrasting experiences of embodiment give rise to intensely political processes, and are maintained by those processes. The dominant social science perspective focuses on the ways we internalise and embody dominating processes. This paper highlights the emerging (or re-emerging) perspective which focuses on the way intersubjective equality predates and continually subverts any such imposition of control. In the first half, the paper focuses on the issue of indigenous peoples' rights through examining Adam Kuper's writing. Kuper eloquently expresses the dominant perspective, and at the same time his writing concerns the same egalitarian hunter-gatherer peoples who – through ethnographic accounts of their inclusive practices – have helped give rise to the emerging perspective. In the second half, the paper focuses on the emerging perspective evident in recent psychological research and in ethnographies of infancy amongst these African egalitarian indigenous peoples. The paradox of indigenous peoples' rights that is examined here is that although the dominant perspective seeks to portray them as a way of granting special favours to groups of people claiming a distinct identity, they are perhaps better understood as a way of asserting the most fundamental right due to all humans: the right to resist dominating processes and to reassert a sociality based on the equalising processes of collective agency.

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1. Introduction

The assumption of domination – of order having to be imposed by a superior realm onto an inferior realm – appears to be all-pervasive in the social sciences: whether in intellectual theory or pedagogical practice. This dominant analysis mirrors (and helps to maintain) relations between the 'developed' and 'developing' 'worlds', it structures our understanding of adult-infant relations evident in such terms as 'child-rearing', and it permeates our understanding of the place of humans in socio-ecological systems in a way that removes any sense of human or other agency. If challenges to this dominance assumption focus only on one area (for example, the political, social or psychological) they can be absorbed, while leaving the overall hegemonic pattern intact. Eric Wolf writes that a hegemonic pattern depends on a 'repetition of redundancy', and that the development and maintenance of an overall hegemonic pattern depends:

> "not so much on the victory of a collective cognitive logic or aesthetic impulse as the development of redundancy – the continuous repetition, in diverse instrumental domains, of the same basic propositions regarding the nature of constructed reality" (1990: 388).

For this reason this paper seeks to bring together diverse research, not in order to cover these areas in sufficient depth, nor to achieve some overall synthesis, but in order to continue fundamentally challenging the dominant perspective. In doing so, it seeks to outline how the dominance perspective prevalent throughout the social sciences cuts us off from the authority of our embodied experience.

The paper is based on a range of research into the experience of infancy, and research with indigenous peoples, particularly in Central Africa. The hegemonic pattern it disputes is, however, so all-pervasive that – to use Sahlins words from a different context (1974: 1) - "one is forced to oppose it polemically, to phrase the necessary revisions dialectically". With the intention of being creatively provocative, the paper uses a Weberian 'ideal type' opposition to highlight the overall hegemonic pattern in the academy which, it is argued, profoundly supports the ongoing colonial project. This is as evident in international conservation and environmental policy and practice, as it is in international financial, development and military policy (Argyrou 2005). In highlighting the dominance perspective, it argues that there is a profound connection between the ongoing struggle for indige-

nous peoples' rights and the emerging theoretical perspective in the academy that has the potential to help us to move beyond the assumption of domination, and beyond the practices of domination.

The emerging perspective draws on a "three-level check" (Allen and Hoekstra, in Harries-Jones 2004: 294**)** which recognises the nature of the engagement (in this case, indigenous peoples' rights), the broader structures and flows which give the engagement its significance (the socio-ecological context), and the particularities and contradictions inherent in the embodied interaction that are both microcosms of larger processes and hold the potential to radically open up those broader processes (our embodied experience). In line with this three-level approach, this paper starts with a social science focus on the socio-political level: that of indigenous peoples' interaction with state power. It then seeks to contextualise this interaction by drawing on recent research into the ecological macro-level and into the personal micro-level, to demonstrate how the emerging perspective can surprisingly but fruitfully bring together domains which, as social scientists, we have been trained to keep apart.

Kuper argues that just as "culture has become a common euphemism for race" so "'native' or 'indigenous' are often euphemisms for what used to be termed 'primitive'" (2005: 204). He argues that the term 'indigenous peoples' is based on "obsolete anthropological notions" (2005: 218), that 'they' are no different to 'us', and that we should therefore stop according them any rights as indigenous peoples. However, the term 'indigenous peoples' is currently crucial to the peoples who self-identify locally or internationally as part of the indigenous peoples' movement (Niezen 2003: 216-221), and it is crucial analytically in identifying similar yet distinctive historical processes of dispossession. Where the category 'indigenous peoples' emerged as part of the colonising processes in which the 'other' was categorised the better to control them, 'Indigenous Peoples' Rights' have emerged in national and international law in response to these situations of injustice (Asch 2001). As I hope to demonstrate, mostly in relation to the Central African indigenous peoples, Kuper's critique of both the 'indigenous peoples' and 'culture' categories is highly illuminating, but for reasons which completely undermine his purposes. I will argue that accepting his critique means developing, rather than dispensing with, these categories, through recognising that any understanding of the socio-political level is already embedded in, and emerges from, our fundamental experience of interpersonal ecological embodiment.

2. Indigenous peoples in the African context

There are powerful national governments and international corporations who have a vested interest in seeing arguments such as Kuper's succeed, and there are many highly marginalised peoples who have a strong interest in engaged academics holding the line for Indigenous Peoples' Rights (Ramos 2003). There is a 'real world' in which such debates as this have real consequences. For example, whatever one may think of the strategic sense of the tactics used by Survival International to support the 'Bushmen' of the Kalahari, De Beers cite Kuper's writing as support for why the 'Bushmen' rights to land should not impede their expulsion from those same lands and should not interfere with De Beers activities (Survival International 2003: 10). The Government of Botswana itself makes similar use of Kuper's analysis (Republic of Botswana 2006). Thus, although it is easy for Kuper to deride Survival International as perpetuating a Western fantasy of the 'Noble Savage' (2003: 395), it is important to remember the political context and to bear that in mind when considering his basic point that 'they' are no different to 'us'. The 'us' to which he is referring is presented as an uncomplicated apolitical 'us', but in fact there are profound political consequences depending on how we understand the nature of this 'us' that is no different to this 'them'. In an analysis that mirrors the political context with which indigenous peoples have to contend, Nicholas Thomas points out that the presentation of ones own culture in essentialist terms, is sometimes the only discourse the 'other' can use against the power of the coloniser (Thomas 1994: 188), and that, paradoxically, anthropology becomes an essentialising discourse precisely to the extent that it does not examine its diverse implications in systems of power, and instead presents itself as an absent 'objective' science that can neutrally arbitrate on others' identities (Thomas 1994: 194).

Debates over the rights of dispossessed Indigenous Peoples' in Africa have often been troubled by a lack of understanding of the dynamics of egalitarian hunter-gatherer societies there (but see contributions to Barnard and Kenrick 2001, Solway 2006). This can lead to either an essentialising or a denial of difference. However, the real push for Indigenous Peoples' Rights worldwide has come from people sharing similar situations of injustice and structural oppression.

Kuper's claim is that the Indigenous Peoples category is bogus, that it is a reinvention of western notions of the 'Primitive, the 'Noble Savage', and the 'Native' (2005). To the extent that

'Indigenous People' is a category invented and used by those with power to control and subject relatively powerless societies and so secure their resources, then Kuper is right. To the extent that those same peoples use the claim to Indigenous Peoples status in order to resist forces which would seek to appropriate their lands, and to establish alliances between peoples with similar understandings, and with similar social processes centred on maintaining relations of equality, then he is wrong. What is missing from Kuper's analysis is an understanding of both the political context such people are operating in and the political processes present in such societies.

Thus, in Africa, 'Indigenous Peoples' should not be understood as a static description of an enduring category. The definition is only useful if it is understood not in terms of imposed categories but in terms of peoples seeking to resist extractive processes, and to maintain egalitarian processes. In the literature on Central and Southern Africa (Barnard and Kenrick 2001, Widlock and Tadesse 20005, Solway 2006), the category is clearly used as a working description of themselves, by those who have experienced the domination of colonising processes and who also share distinctive practices; practices normally structured by social relations that are focused not on exclusive ownership but on 'including in' any who wish to engage in livelihood strategies which respect ongoing common ownership and use of resources. Many studies have outlined the way in which Central African hunter-gatherers have been profoundly discriminated against by their farming and pastoralist neighbours, and by national governments and international conservation and development agencies, as a consequence of their attempts to pursue socially and ecologically egalitarian practices (Woodburn 1997, Lewis 2005, Kenrick 2005, Kenrick and Lewis 2004). For example, the Batwa of south west Uganda were forcibly evicted from their forests (and therefore from using their economic and social resource base) when they were evicted from Mgahinga and Bwindi wildlife parks in 1991. Farmers who were evicted were compensated because they had visibly altered the forest, whereas the Batwa received little or no compensation because their interactions with the forest had wrecked no visible alteration. As a consequence of the World Bank's need to abide by its own 'Indigenous Peoples Policy', it commissioned research on the situation of the Batwa which lead to proposals to compensate the by now completely landless and impoverished Batwa. However such compensation for the Batwa was rejected by their powerful neighbouring farmers who had already been compensated for losing their fields in the forest, and who (in arguments

which parallel Kuper's) saw the compensation being offered to the Batwa as 'privileging' – rather than compensating – these indigenous people. These farmers echoed the attitude of many neighbors of Central African hunter-gatherers: claiming that they should not have control over their own labour, their lands or their marriages. This denial of their rights to compensation, simply continued an attitude which had long denied them rights to the land they hunted and gathered over, and in so doing they were "freely, even casually, dispossessed of the land by agricultural and pastoral people" (Woodburn 1997: 350).

3. A Scottich parallel? Colonisation by Europe within Europe

However this debate is not only immediately relevant to dispossessed peoples in Central and Southern Africa it is also increasingly relevant to people in both the 'developing' and 'developed' world who are seeking to reclaim control over resources in a wide variety of 'life projects' (Blaser 2004). Such 'life projects' present a stark challenge to existing inequitable property regimes. Their attempt to regain local control of social and ecological processes is not through essentialist notions of exclusive identity. "Life projects have no political horizons: they are the political horizon. They are not points of arrival, utopian places, narratives of salvation or returns to paradise. They are the very action of maintaining openendedness as a politics of resilience" (Blaser 2004: 40).

For example, there are direct parallels between the debates over Indigenous Peoples' Rights and over land reform in Scotland today. In both cases marginalised minority groups are using shared public notions of their having been historically dispossessed by incoming powerful land owners, and of their having socially and ecologically sustainable practices, to secure support for their attempts to reclaim community control over their political processes, including land ownership. In response to local campaigns which drew on a huge wave of public sympathy, one of the earliest and most radical acts of the new Scottish Parliament was to establish the Land Reform (Scotland) Act in 2003, creating the political space for crofting communities to take back control of their land from large and often absent land owners (McIntosh 2001, 2003). Such campaigns by crofting communities have lead to successful community buy-outs (e.g. at Assynt in 1992, on Eigg in 1997) and have proved the thin end of the wedge: there is now a growing movement in Scotland pushing to extend the legislation to cover urban land reform as

well (Wightman 2003). In an interesting twist to Kuper's basic argument that 'they' are no different to 'us'; urban communities are making the same argument not by calling for an end to rural communities right to buy, but by calling for this to be extended to their own communities right to buy areas of land and buildings which developers see as a means to their profits and which local people see as essential to their well-being.

In some ways the movements for Indigenous Peoples' Rights and those for Scottish Land Reform are both simply a means to redress a historical process in which the powerful have used violence to enclose and appropriate the community-managed commons. Thus when Kuper writes that "Even in the most extreme nationalist circles it is not generally argued that the Celts and perhaps the Saxons should be given special privileges in Britain as against descendents of Romans, Vikings, Normans, and, of course all later immigrants" (2003: 390) he is entirely missing the point. Both devolution (the pulling back of power from London to the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly), and Scottish land reform, are not about racist distinctions but about a process of reclaiming local control by local people, they are about acknowledging histories of dispossession, and challenging the 'special privileges' powerful interests have accrued through the violent histories of (internal and external) colonial expansion.

The Scottish example demonstrates that when an inequitable political system is forced to recognise the rights of some marginalised groups by allowing them to establish more equitable social relations, this can open up the political space for others to make the same claim for equity. In a similar way, Central African hunter-gatherer's daily claims to equitable property ownership, and broader claims to have their land rights recognised, can be the basis for establishing alliances of the dispossessed rather than involve "granting special privileges to a particular category of poor people" as against other "poor and underprivileged people" who cannot make the same claim to being indigenous (Kuper 2006: 21-22). Central African hunter-gatherers like the Mbuti of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Bagyeli of Cameroon, or the Hadza of Tanzania, have an attitude of inclusiveness which informs their relations with everybody. Woodburn's description of Hadza inclusiveness sums up this attitude:

> "Hadza society is open and there is simply no basis for exclusion. Equality is, in a sense, generalised by them to all mankind but, sadly, few of the rest of mankind, so enmeshed in property relations, would

> be willing to extend parity of esteem to hunter-gatherers who treat property with such a lack of seriousness." (Woodburn, 1982: 448).

When Kuper writes that: "One category of local people can now make legitimate claims for land, fishing and grazing rights, shares in resource companies and political representation. Others however, are excluded" (2006: 21), he is arguing that the rights claimed by Indigenous Peoples (or, presumably, crofters) are illegitimate attempts to seek privileged status based on notions of exclusive descent, and so should be denied. However – leaving aside the fact that he is entirely mistaken in analysing the situation of Indigenous Peoples in Central Africa in this way – he is also mistaken about the consequences of acknowledging Indigenous Peoples' Rights. This is because the struggle for Indigenous Peoples' Rights can better be understood as a first step in reclaiming local power from extractive forces, and therefore rather than necessarily privileging one supposedly indigenous group above other equally marginalised non-indigenous poor people, it can – in the Central African and many other contexts - be understood as establishing a basis for broader coalitions of collective action to reclaim local control over local resources.

For Central African hunter-gatherers, as for crofters, rights to land are not understood as based on some 'blood and soil' understanding of descent as involving domination and exclusion. For Central African hunter-gatherers land is a metaphor for equality and for 'including in' those who wish to join them through establishing 'good relationships' based on egalitarianism (e.g. Berg and Biesbrouck 2000: 35-36, Lewis 2005: 63, Kenrick 2005: 125). Thus where Kuper seeks to draw parallels between the indigenous peoples' movement and xenophobic European racism (2003: 390), the more appropriate parallel is between an inclusive indigenous peoples' movement (Saugestad 2004: 264) and the resurgence of moves towards equality in Scotland.

Where the Scottish campaign for rural land reform might be seen as having been grounded in a discourse which has involved essentialising crofters as some romantic other; in fact it has created a potent space to resist neo-liberalism (witness the defeat in the Scottish Parliament of attempts by New 'Labour' to introduce 'free' market principles into the crofting system in 2005). This is now creating further space to resist in urban areas too through the campaign for urban land reform (Wightman 2003). In other words, rather than breaking the world into dualistic and essentialist categories (indigenous, non-indigenous) such campaigns implicitly argue that we are all indigenous people, not in some

romantic sense, but in the sense that we all belong; and that it is a particular dominant and destructive economic system which does not (Milton 2002: 134-135, 150-151). In the egalitarian indigenous communities studied by anthropologists in Central Africa and elsewhere, being indigenous is not established in opposition to others who are non-indigenous (e.g. Lewis on the 2005, Rose 1992, Feit 2004). That is the logic used by dominating groups and by those internationally who define the indigenous as those who existed in a land prior to colonisation by a dominant other. Instead in indigenous communities such as the James Bay Crees, Feit points out that non-Cree are not excluded, instead there is a presumption that all who need to can use the resources of the land, that there is enough to go round as long as the land is treated respectfully (Feit 1995). Likewise, for the Bagyeli of Cameroon, access to land is not based on exclusive property rights but on the rights which flow from good relations; and therefore the process of building good relations, rather than firm boundaries, is key (Berg and Biesbrouck 2000: 36). In such contexts, it is an egalitarian relationship with human and non-human others which is the defining feature of belonging for such peoples, not some essentialist category.

4. Kuper's mistaken critique of the 'indigenous people' category

Kuper's call for us to abandon the notion that 'indigenous peoples' are somehow different to other people on the planet, and to therefore stop according them any rights as indigenous peoples, was made in an article 'The Return of the Native' (2003), which is also the final chapter justifying his 2005 reissue of 'The Invention of Primitive Society' (1988) under the title 'The Reinvention of Primitive Society'. Jerome Lewis and I replied that fundamentally the problem of indigenous peoples was the problem of a discrimination against common property and shared ownership regimes, by states which only recognise exclusionary systems of land ownership. We wrote that the problem is not indigenous peoples; it is instead the existence of a particular system of empire built on the exploitation and impoverishment of the social and environmental support systems on which we all depend:

> "What the people who are claiming indigenous status are seeking is not a privileged position, but equal rights based on an acceptance of the legitimacy of the economic and social basis of their ways of life.. . . If Kuper was asking us to dispense

> with the term indigenous peoples in order to better focus on the particular processes of domination and dispossession experienced by such peoples then his argument could be useful. However surprising, it seems clear that by arguing we should simply dispense with the term, Kuper's argument seems blind to the suffering of indigenous peoples and serves to reinforce the processes that seek to disempower them and deny their contemporary and historical experience of discrimination, marginalisation and dispossession." (2004: 9)

If we were to accept Kuper's attack on the legitimacy of Indigenous Peoples claims, it would appear they can't win. First, they are systematically dispossessed by European empires on the basis that they are distinct from 'us' and are too backward to manage themselves or their lands (Asch 2000, Povinelli 1998). Then, when those who have survived this process demand some recognition of their land rights and right to self-determination, Kuper likens their arguments to those who advocated apartheid and separate cultural development in South Africa, and to "extreme right-wing parties in Europe" (2003: 390) and tells Indigenous People that their "land claims rely on obsolete anthropological notions and on a false romantic vision" (2003: 395).

In a powerful rejoinder, Werner Zips highlights the way in which the real parallels are not between the arguments of those advocating indigenous peoples' rights and the arguments of extreme right-wing parties. The real parallels are between the substance and purpose of Kuper's argument and the substance and purpose of these same extreme right-wing parties. Zips writes of Kuper's argument that:

> "Where it draws on false analogies with apartheid, blood-and-earth Nazi ideology and the far right-wing of racist European xenophobia, Kuper's 'return of the native' comes dangerously close to an inversion of perpetrator and victim that is so common in these circles" (2006: 28).

So, on a practical political level, how should one respond to the plight of these highly marginalised impoverished groups who are seeking to achieve some recognition of their rights to their land, if not through supporting them to claim internationally recognised rights as 'Indigenous Peoples'? Many argue instead for an approach which is seen as less likely to be contentious with

African governments: poverty alleviation (e.g. Suzman 2002).

However, Sidsel Saugestad - in her book *The Inconvenient Indigenous* on the Basarwa of the Kalahari - has pointed out that poverty alleviation measures do not address the root causes of such impoverishment. The root cause being the dominant groups' entrenched discrimination against the Basarwa. Saugestad identifies the way in which the majority population continue to perpetuate this impoverishment and inequality through an insistence that all citizens are *already* equal. Drilling new boreholes for the Basarwa for 'free' can fuel majority resentment and discrimination because it is seen as 'favouritism' rather than as being a just compensation for past dispossession. Thus, unless the structural relations of injustice are addressed, such poverty alleviation policies only serve to strengthen the majority view that the problem of the Basarwa is not one of justice but "one of poverty only" (2001: 171); in the process further disempowering the Basarwa.

In one negative sense, there is a strong parallel here between how we need to analytically and politically deal with racism and how we need to deal with the discrimination experienced by indigenous peoples in Africa and elsewhere. Whilst 'race' is a culturally constructed term which sociologists and anthropologists like to think they have long since discredited as a scientific category, 'racism' is an empirical reality that has to be analysed and addressed (Solomos and Back 1994). In this light, 'positive discrimination' measures are clearly the opposite of discrimination, since they are designed to counteract the severe historical and ongoing discrimination suffered by groups labelled as non-dominant 'races'. In the same way, arguing for the recognition of Indigenous Peoples land rights, livelihood systems, and for their political rights to self-determination, is not to treat them in a privileged way, but is to acknowledge the way in which their lands and rights have been systematically taken from them.

One obstacle placed in the way of Basarwa organisation and representation is the Botswana government's misrepresentation of their demands for dialogue as being demands for secession from the nation-state. In fact their demands are much more challenging than this. Like other Indigenous peoples, they are seeking neither separation nor assimilation but integration, defined as "a process by which diverse elements are combined in a unity while retaining their basic identity" (Thornberry 1991: 4, in Saugestad 2001: 161). As Saugestad points out: "integration means that the majority must also change" (ibid).

The implications of this are profound. It means that 'integration' should not be understood along the lines of the French Republican tradition: as involving a reciprocal moving towards each other that does not in fact address the historical violence and structural inequalities which continually reconstruct racialised groups as problematically outside the dominant society (Gibb 2003: 92). Instead 'integration' here means that the previously dominant partner has to recognise the history of injustice upon which its position has in part been built. It means the dominant society listening as indigenous people "present their own experience" and so highlight "the exclusionary and incomplete accounts of the founding of states" (Niezen 2003: 23). Attempts to listen in this way - such as the widespread movement in Australia to acknowledge and apologies to 'the stolen generations' of Aboriginal children forcibly removed from their parents until the mid-1960s (Armitage 1995) - can be understood as attempts by those identified as members of the dominant group to reclaim their sense of their own humanity by acknowledging how the ongoing denial of the subordinated group has not only limited the life chances of the subordinated party, but has severely limited their own development. And this is the key point. Where many would see those wielding power as benefiting from that dominating power, I am arguing that although in an either/or world, were one to have to choose between wielding power over others or being at their mercy, one would be expected to choose the former, in fact both parties in non-egalitarian systems of domination are caught in a power game which limits them both.

To put it at its starkest: there may be an incalculable difference between the suffering and consequences for a concentration camp prisoner and for a guard whose job it is to herd people into gas chambers – but to understand how this process has arisen and can continue, we have to analyse the way in which the guard's ability to acknowledge his relational humanity is also severely diminished. This can be highlighted by contrasting it to the case of a woman who refused to be implicated in such processes of domination. Michael Carrithers tells the story of "a German psychiatrist who refused to participate in a sterilization program for the mentally handicapped. When her superior tried to persuade her by saying, "Don't you see that they aren't like you?" she replied, "There are many people who aren't like me, in the first place, you" (2005: 440, citing Reemtsma 2001: 99).

To argue that those wielding power over others are also diminished by the act of domination may seem misguided, a truism, or at best an inconsequential point. However, if one understands

historical processes dynamically rather than in isolation then this is actually a point of fundamental importance. The German psychiatrist does not base her argument on the need to protect the weaker group, but on a refusal to be diminished by being identified by her 'superior' with processes which sought to diminish others. If one traces the historical experience of Nazi Germany back not only to cultural, social, political and economic roots, but to the manifestation of those roots in embodied experience one can see Hitler's ability to mobilise others as rooted in a collective experience of childhood in which one was forced to identify with the oppressor and learn to dominate both one's own feelings and those of others (Miller 1983: 142-197). This is not to 'psychologies' historical process, but to acknowledge that history happens through the engagement of embodied experience. Its relevance to the present is that some historical moments become emblems which cannot be questioned. Thus, for example, the concentration camps lead to a rewriting of European history in which 'we' collectively defeated Nazism (the parallels between the ideology of French and British empire, and the ideology of Nazism being quickly discarded), and in the process the UN system and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights sought to usher in a new era. Carrithers argues that this new era was made possible by the collective dis-identification with everything the Nazi's stood for (2005). However, the other side of this coin has been the granting of an emblematic status to the state of Israel in which its treatment of Palestinians and now our treatment of those we identify as 'Islamic militants' appears to involve denying their equivalent humanity in processes eerily resonant of earlier imperial and Nazi dehumanisation campaigns.

Non-egalitarian systems of domination limit the ability of both the dominating and dominated party to develop and experience their 'responsive relatedness' (Milton 2002: 48) – a way of relating which has been highlighted by anthropologists as being the authoritative mode amongst many hunter-gatherer peoples, often the very same indigenous peoples whose ways of relating to the land and each other is being denied by supposedly 'culturally-neutral' governments such as Botswana, and by supposedly 'apolitical' anthropologists such as Kuper. Tim Ingold highlights the centrality of trust to systems where mutually responsive relatedness is recognised as being central to human-human and human/ non-human relations (e.g. 2000: 69-72). He points out that trust cannot involve coercion (otherwise it destroys the mutuality at its heart), it has to involve risk (the risk that the other might not respond in ways that take me equally into account),

and it depends on developing rapport. Whilst relational ways of knowing may have authority amongst such hunter-gatherer peoples (Bird-David 1999), Milton, Bird-David and Ingold all argue that – even though dualistic modes of domination are given authority in non-egalitarian social systems – for humans in general "it is responsive relatedness that constitutes personhood" (Milton 2002: 48). Furthermore, Bird-David and Milton point out that this experience of responsive relatedness is experienced not just between humans, but is experienced whenever we treat any aspect of the environment as a responsive agent. From this emerging perspective, humans are indisputably immersed from the start in a network of reciprocating persons, one which includes all aspects of the environment (Milton 2002: 45).

This may seem a long way, all of a sudden, from arguments over Indigenous Peoples' Rights and from histories of discrimination and marginalisation; but in fact this is the other side of the coin. For a relational understanding of the term 'indigenous people' should not only focus on 'indigenous people' as describing one side in a relationship between certain unequally powerful groups of people (the main point in all the arguments against Kuper's position); but should also focus on such peoples relational understanding of reality. Friedman usefully points out that "When indigenous people 'romanticize' their territories is this not because they maintain some practical and spiritual relation to them? Does this contradict the equally obvious fact that people also move, that the history of global systems has been one of massive displacement as well as the emergence of dominant global elites?" (2002: 29) In terms of the need to recognise the communities which bring themselves into being through sustainable life projects, and the need to recognise the impact of global processes of impoverishment on them, Friedman is surely correct when he goes on to say "I fail to see the need to take sides here" (ibid) in terms of analytically prioritising the importance of processes of displacement or processes of connection.

Perhaps, the reasons why non-egalitarian societies first sought to annihilate, then assimilate, then contain, and now deny the existence of indigenous peoples, is not only to legitimise the violent appropriation of their lands and labour (Rose 1992: 190-198), but also because of the threat their existence poses to the totally unwarranted but all-pervasive belief in those societies who dominate the global system that there is no workable human alternative to dominant dualistic belief systems and to the non-egalitarian social relations that accompany them. From a relational perspective: this peculiar belief is inscribed in our

social structure and embodied experience so deeply that we take it for granted that it is reality, rather than recognising it as being the consequence of a dualistic reframing of our fundamental experience of mutuality.

5. The usefulness of Kuper´s critique

The crux of Kuper's argument is that, firstly, we need to abandon the notion that 'indigenous peoples' are somehow different to other people on the planet, and that therefore, secondly, we need to stop according them any rights as indigenous peoples. His first point would appear to be absolutely correct, but therefore his second point would appear absolutely mistaken. To make my point as clearly as possible, I will state it in stark and polemical terms:

> 'Indigenous Peoples' are, indeed, no different to 'us': not because they are fundamentally like 'us', but because 'we' are fundamentally like 'them'.

The 'us' Kuper invokes, the 'us' that can make sweeping statements about 'them' without even consulting them, is the 'us' which Durkheim, Weber and Marx made the focus of the social science tradition. From an optimistic modernist perspective we are expanding knowledge and imposing order, there is a certainty and inevitability about social evolution (about certain forms of technology, science and social orders) which draws on notions of evolution, economics and progress for its legitimacy. From a pessimistic modernist perspective (or from the perspective of those who are so modernist they are post-modernist) we are isolated individuals having to impose meanings on experience (rather than discover meanings in it), having to compete for resources and promotions (rather than engage in productive social enterprises), and having to reach out from our isolation to others, never sure that the meanings we intend are the meanings they make, and never sure that the meanings we take are the meanings they intended.

These may seem like extreme caricatures, but they appear to be all-pervasive. Furthermore - it would seem from both long-standing and recent research - that these understandings of 'us' are based on a completely mistaken perception of fundamental human experience, however much this misperception may pervade the anthropological literature; and however much it may resonate with the way of experiencing which our political, economic, social and familial institutions persuade us is *the* human

experience (see, for example, Quinn 2005 on the institution of 'child rearing').

I will flag up two areas of research that fundamentally challenge these assumptions about the nature of 'us', and that suggest that the understandings of interpersonal relations and human/non-human relations evident amongst egalitarian hunter-gatherers better reflect our own fundamental experience than the atomistic and dualistic understanding we are persuaded to believe in. To do this, I will need to first briefly and crudely sketch a contrast between the 'orthodox' anthropological perspective and the 'emerging' perspective.

The orthodox perspective highlights division as being the fundamental nature of our experience. Whether constructed by culture, dominated by discourse, or driven by genes, the space for agency is minimal, reactive or illusory. In contrast, the emerging perspective highlights our fundamental experience as being one of openness to self and other (people, species, ecosystems) grounded in a fundamental sense of mutual emergence. An openness which is then either enabled by equalising processes, or is channelled by cross-culturally diverse forms of dualism into hierarchical systems of domination. When this openness is enabled by equalising processes, such processes involve mutually responsive agents working collectively and non-coercively through taking risks to develop rapport. When this openness is channelled by dualism into domination, this involves the 'superior' category controlling, and denying its dependency on, the 'inferior' category (see Rose 1992, Rose 1999, Feit 2004, Lewis 2005, Kohler 2006, Kenrick 2005, Kenrick forthcoming).

It could be argued that in opposing equalising processes to processes of domination I am retaining a dualism or dichotomy of my own. Foucault would argue that we are mistaken to set equality and domination in opposition to each other in this way, and that instead we need to understand the operation of power as being simultaneously liberating and repressive (but see Ramazanoglu 1993, Sangren 1995). However one of the reasons why the orthodox dominance perspective is so convincing is because it appears to simulate - whilst being entirely alien to - the emergence perspective which is the grounds of our experience. In egalitarian social contexts one can identify a clear movement back and forth between being open to new experience and integrating it: for example, in relation to property through demand-sharing (see e.g. Woodburn 1997, 1998), and in relation to abundance or misfortune through ritual and rhetorical processes (see e.g.

Widlock 2001). However, in non-egalitarian social contexts, whilst there is still that (egalitarian) movement going on, there is also in addition to this the dual process of the imposition of 'order' from the 'superior' realm, and the struggle of mutual social relations to cope with the ensuing disorder (division) which continually results from this (see e.g. Bloch 1992 for an account which explicitly sees such processes of domination as a human universal). In other words what I am arguing for is the need to replace what I am calling a the 'dominance perspective' or 'category-dualism' (in which order is understood as needing to be imposed from above) with what might be called the 'relational perspective' or 'process-dualism' in which processes of mutuality are understood as continually needing to resist and subvert those processes which seek to solidify such mutuality into hierarchies of domination. In this perspective power is liberating and/or repressive. The need is not to make essentialist claims that it is one or the other, nor to make politically and personally paralysing claims that it is simply both, but to disentangle the liberating from the repressive aspects: strengthening the former and subverting the latter (for a parallel discussion concerning the way rituals are used politically to liberate or repress, see David Kertzer 1988).

6. The dominant orthodox perspective of category dualism

Whether in the guise of Dawkins 'selfish gene' (1998: 308), or of Durkheim's conception of society as being something separate from and imposed on the individual organism (1915: 16), whether in the guise of the constructionist's seeing humans as imposing meanings on experience (e.g. Geertz 1973: 46), or the postmodernists seeing humans as shaped entirely by discourses of power (e.g. Foucault 1976: 123, in Sheridan 1980: 184), the orthodox view essentialises an opposition and fragmentation at the heart of experience: a division that may be overcome by power, by culture, by imposing meanings, or by acknowledging our driven biological nature.

Kuper's version of the orthodox view usefully highlights the danger of imposing essentialist cultural categories, while actually doing just this by deconstructing some categories but not others. By deconstructing 'culture' or 'indigenous peoples' but not deconstructing the paradigm and power relations which have given rise to our shared understanding of 'culture' (Kuper 1999), and not examining the paradigm and power relations which are

the context within which Indigenous Peoples are struggling to reclaim the right to determine their futures (Kuper 2005).

Kuper usefully critiques anthropologists for using 'culture' as a kind of fall back explanatory model, and calls for us to instead break this concept down into other categories such as "knowledge systems, ideological accounts, myths, rituals" (Kuper in Gibb and Mills 2001: 210). However - and here I will put the matter emphatically, if polemically, in order to highlight the problem - *Kuper's approach would seem to involve throwing the baby out with the bathwater and then throwing the bath at the baby*.

(i) *Kuper usefully throws out the bathwater*:
By challenging the picture the public might mistakenly gain from anthropology that 'culture' is an entity that allows you to draw lines between different groups: an acceptable "politically correct euphemism for race" (1999: 240), and therefore for excluding those we decide are different.

(ii) *But he is throwing the baby out with the bathwater (and it is important to keep the baby!)*:
By seeking to dispense with the 'culture-concept' completely he is dispensing with a crucial lens through which anthropologists do exactly the opposite work to racists. It is an old and clichéd point, but through using the holistic culture-concept - alongside the recognition that culture is always contested, constructed and contingent - anthropologists highlight the fact that categories, beliefs and practices which are assumed to be natural, have in fact arisen through social processes and can change through them.

(iii) *He then appears to throw the bath at the baby:*
With the 'indigenous people' concept, Kuper takes a public caricature of such peoples and then suggests that it is a racist concept. He simply wants to dispense with the term because he equates it with 'primitive', rather than dispense with it in order to better analyse the actual histories of such peoples within systems of power, systems which mean that claiming rights as 'indigenous peoples' may be the only avenue open to them to resist structural discrimination. Similarly, with the 'culture' concept Kuper appears to be taking a public caricature of how anthropology once was (seeing cultures as mutually exclusive categories) and for that reason seeks to simply dispense with the term, rather than analyse the social and historical processes which have given rise to it, and which continually give rise to changing forms.

So 'Indigenous Peoples' are, indeed, no different to 'us'. However, this is not because 'they' are fundamentally like 'us'. To put the matter starkly: if their ways of representing the world more accurately reflect our own experience than the way of representing it that dominates in the social sciences, then it would be more accurate to say that 'we' are fundamentally like 'them'.

In one of the many instances where Kuper follows Marcus and Fischer (1984) and others, in seeking to deny the 'radical otherness' of other peoples lifeways, he cites Roger Keesing's account of a Solomon Islander man who's:

> "cultural alterity is perhaps as radical as any in the world of the early 1990s . . . Yet I see no reason, in all the texts, to infer that the pragmatic way in which he finds his way in the world is qualitatively different from the way in which I find my way through mine; or that his culturally constructed senses of individuation and agency (or personhood or causality or whatever) are strikingly different from mine" (Keesing 1994: 304, in Kuper 1999: 244).

However, this critique of radical otherness misses the point. What an *awareness of the impact of processes of domination enables* is a recognition of the similarities between the ways in which domination is reproduced through diverse category-dualisms in non-egalitarian social contexts. What an *openness to the existence of radical alterity enables* is a recognition that the continuities that run between different social contexts may not simply mean that we can understand the anthropological 'other' as engaged in similar sense-making processes to those of Eurocentric anthropologists. Instead, this recognition may have its grounds not in 'common sense' European ideologies of the everyday, but in the fundamental experience of mutuality which is evident in the practices of egalitarian societies, an experience which may also be fundamental to people in all societies.

So although Kuper is right to argue that 'Culture' needs to be deconstructed, rather than this involving simply breaking 'culture' down into other categories (or involve dispensing with this category and asserting in its place a uniformity which provides no critical edge with which to re-interpret our own experience) we need to replace this category thinking with a recognition of processes. This would involve identifying, mapping and challenging processes of domination (and the ways they divide us from each other and ourselves). It would also involve identifying and

strengthening equalising processes which build mutually-supporting alliances and continually subvert processes of domination within and between peoples (Cooper 1992). This is the emerging perspective which focuses on relational processes.

7. The emerging perspective of relational processes

The 'Emerging' process approach rejects the dominant 'Orthodox' category-dualism which opposes, on the one hand, human culture and social life and, on the other hand, our fixed biological nature which to a greater or lesser extent is seen as determining the limits of our agency. The 'Emerging' process approach does not seek to dispense with this dualism by claiming that our biology is simply another site for the exercise of social power. This latter claim would resonate strongly with a Foucauldian approach, an approach which is incredibly useful in highlighting the embodied way in which power is exercised over subjects and ultimately internalised by those subjects to control themselves. Foucault famously writes that "When I think of the mechanics of power, I think of its capillary form of existence, of the extent of which power seeps into the very grain of individuals, reaches right into their bodies, permeates their gestures, their posture, what they say, how they learn to live and work with other people." (Foucault, in Sheridan 1980: 217). Foucault's language and perspective resonates with our experience of domination in a way which, it could be argued, perpetuates rather than challenges its claim to hegemony.

In contrast, the 'Emerging' process approach could be sharply (or, perhaps, crudely) summarised in the following terms:

> *It is our biological experiential nature to experience ourselves and others as creative agents – consciously and responsively shaping and being shaped by events and persons – and it is non-egalitarian social systems which seek to cut through, diminish, channel and make use of that agency and responsiveness by claiming that such mutuality and creativity is an aberration from, or an outcome of, the rule of imposed order that we must live by.* (See e.g. Ingold 2004, Milton 2002, Bird-David 1999, Kenrick 2005, 1999).

From this perspective the need is indeed to move away from an essentialising view of culture - or of indigenous peoples for that matter - but not in order to take the ground away from under indigenous peoples' struggles, or from under anthropology's ability to bring together what a Cartesian perspective wishes to break apart.

The need is to break culture down not into other questionable categories but into contested processes of dominating political power (e.g. Saugestad on a relational understanding of indigenous peoples as the dominated party), and processes of equalising and engaged embodied practice (e.g. Ingold and Milton on how we know the world). Mark Harris's writing is a good example of someone trying to bring together such embodied histories through the examination of the "the complex corporality and historicity of practice" (2005: 197).

In his 2004 article: 'Beyond biology and culture: the meaning of evolution in a relational world', Tim Ingold argues that we need to recognise the centrality of our engagement in a relational world. Here he seeks to undercut the divisions we are accustomed to make between culture and nature, mind and body, humans and non-humans. Instead he follows the egalitarian hunter-gatherer understanding that reality does not come down to discrete atomised individuals, nor down to a fundamental split in the world, but comes down to our engagement as equals in an unfolding life process. Ingold has superbly analysed egalitarian hunter-gatherers understanding of social and ecological processes (2000). However, it is important to note that, just as Kuper seeks to claim he is making an empirical statement about social categories which is non-political, so Ingold does not appear to grasp the political implications of his own analysis of egalitarian hunter-gatherer experience (Kenrick, forthcoming).

Nevertheless, Ingold's 2004 article is a lucid critique of what he sees as the widely held, but entirely mistaken, notion of evolution as a genetically driven process. Instead he argues that there is no difference between culture and nature: that walking and playing the cello are both learned in the body in a developmental context shaped by the actions of those who have gone before us. This holds true for all species: for all of us history, creativity, biology, embodiment are the process of developing "within a continuous field of relationships" (2004: 219). There is no division between beings trapped in biology and humans who are freed to make culture: 'we' did not stop being biological beings when 'we' were hunter-gatherers, our genetic programme being fixed and cultural history taking over from that point on. Instead of thinking of people 'back then' as being 'anatomically modern humans' who were by implication biologically the same as us, but lacking 'modern humans' culture, history and progress; we need to treat "organisms of all kinds, and not just humans, as beings rather than things . . . every organism – like every person

– should be understood as the embodiment of a particular way of being alive" (2004: 219).

If we remove the anthropocentric assumption of culture as something that makes us distinct from and superior to other life forms, if we remove the elitist assumption that culture is the possession of the enduringly powerful, and finally if we remove the exclusivist assumption of cultures as incompatible that Kuper rightly critiques, then what sort of workable definition of culture might we be left with? Culture can be understood as contested, constructed, contingent, but above all internalised ways of knowing the world, expressed in self-consciously distinct ways of being in the world where that sense of self is a contingent and changing collective construction. The term points to the contingent and collective nature of the sense of self. For this reason, it is important to highlight the dominant but mistaken understanding of the self that underpins the social sciences, for it is this misunderstanding which then leads to Kuper's unnecessarily bleak assessment of the place of 'culture' both in anthropological theory and in political practice.

In its many different guises, the dominant understanding of infancy sees the self as constructed in the face of a world experienced as inchoate (e.g. Carrithers 2005: 442, Jackson 2002: 341). In this perspective the infant is understood as isolated, ignorant, unable to communicate clearly, while being regularly surrounded and abandoned by more powerful others (e.g. Devereux 1967: 32). In this perspective the self is understood as being constructed by internalising more powerful others, by opposing them or by acquiescing to them (e.g. Quinn 2005: 482). From this perception of our individual pasts, it is easy to construct an understanding of culture as being necessarily based on mutually exclusive human social arrangements, grounded in distinct and often incompatible processes of meaning-making. Thus racist assumptions concerning mutually exclusive cultures are not simply political occurrences happening in an external 'social' domain between people, but are deeply rooted in the contingent and collective ways of making sense of the world those of us trained in the social sciences were first trained in as infants (e.g. Eidelman 2004: 683, Hewlett 1996: 15).

It is understandable, then, if some suggest simply dispensing with the term 'culture' or 'indigenous peoples' since such terms can so easily appear to be harking back to constructions which assert the mutually exclusive nature of being in the world. However, the vehemence with which the suggestion to dispense

with them is made belies its own roots, roots which lie in the oppositional and isolated self experienced in and through the dominant 'Western' experience of infancy. If we can arrive at a more empirically accurate understanding of the ways in which this individual self learnt it's sense-making in infancy despite these contingent conditions of dualism being represented as givens, then we can perhaps arrive at an analytically more accurate understanding of culture, one which is also potentially emancipatory.

If culture refers to internalised and contested ways of knowing and being in the world, this involves both the powerful and totalising and the contingent and changing nature of the processes being referred to by the term, and today none is a more powerful internalised way of knowing the world than the social contract claim that we are atomised individuals picking and choosing cultural practices within what is seen as an inevitably universalising capitalism (see Graeber 2001 for a trenchant critique). On the last page of *Culture: the anthropologists' account* (1999: 247), Kuper rejects the concept of culture because he sees it as inevitably needing to be understood as some Durkheimian external frame being imposed on the individual (he writes: "even if I accept that I have a primary cultural identity, I may not want to conform to it"). He therefore rejects it as a category. Yet a moment later he is writing that the world he finds himself in is one in which "I operate in the market, live through my body, struggle in the grip of others". He is clearly aware of the processes of domination that are working their way through him, but they are left on the last page as fundamental givens of experience, rather than being analysed as peculiar beliefs which are externalised power structures, power structures which are simultaneously internalised as ways of knowing the world.

To challenge the all-pervasive notion that these are the fundamental givens of experience requires recognising a very different fundamental given, that of the experience of 'equalising and engaged embodied practice'. It involves recognising the processes of domination embodied in category-dualism, and recognising that it is equalising processes (not some abstract cultural category) which are central not only to egalitarian societies but to the experience of sociality in any society. For this reason, Saugestad's extremely useful approach to defining indigenous peoples, an approach which understands them relationally in terms of their experience of 'powerlessness', of being dominated (2001, 2004), needs to be supplemented by a different relational understanding which highlights the 'powerful' degree of autonomy and interdependence made possible through their ways of experiencing and

structuring social ecological relations (Ingold 2000: 40-76, 89-110). Fully recognising that 'they' are fundamentally no different to 'us' involves acknowledging not only 'their' entanglement in systems of domination, but recognising that 'our' fundamental experience is similar to 'theirs'. In other words it is in the nature of embodied beings to be able to apprehend the world directly through embodied engagement as whole beings rather than through relying on imposed concepts (Ingold 2000).

Thus we do not live in mutually exclusive cultural worlds, not only because of the impact of colonial and capitalist power regimes, not only because "all cultures are the result of a mish-mash, borrowings, mixtures that have occurred, though at different rates, since the beginning of time" (Levi-Strauss 1985: 330, in Kuper 1999: 243), but because the nature of embodiment is to be fundamentally open to other and is embedded in an experience of relationality which means that we are prepared to recognise and relate on the basis of an equivalence which welcomes – rather than is threatened by – the other.

From the emerging perspective, category-dualism presents two traps: one of essentialism, the other of constructivism. Essentialism would seek to assert the validity of the 'indigenous peoples' category by asserting that they exist in a different cultural world (echoing the traditionalists or isolationists in the Kalahari debate [e.g. Lee 1992]). Constructivism would see 'indigenous peoples' otherness as an outcome of the impact of our political power, or our psychological projections, on them (echoing the revisionists position in the Kalahari debate [e.g. Wilmsen 1989]).

In contrast, the emerging perspective takes as its starting point a completely different understanding of how we know and experience the world. Following on from Ingold (2000) and Milton (2002: 45-48): we do not (contra the essentialist model) live in mutually exclusive cultural worlds, and we do not (contra the constructivist model) understand the world by imposing concepts onto raw experience. We know and experience the world directly through embodied engagement as whole beings: epistemology and ontology are inseparable.

8. Infancy and the atomistic division of a relational world

In contrast to this emerging perspective that places 'responsive relatedness' (Milton 2002: 48) at the heart of our experience, the vast majority of writing in the social sciences continues to see

atomism and dualism as being the universal grounds of human experience. In this orthodox perspective, the infant or child is understood as being passive. The title of Naomi Quinn's article 'Universals of human child rearing' itself implies the action of the active and superior adult on the passive, ready-to-be-moulded infant. She writes that:

> "The feelings of being loved or being unloved retain their capacity to arouse strong emotion into later life. With this emotion, they carry the continuing motivation to seek love and avoid its withdrawal. On this emotionally arousing, motivating base, caretakers build the child's subsequent, more culturally shaped and elaborated, understandings of what behavior is approved and will earn adult love and other rewards, and what is disapproved and will bring love withdrawal and even punishment." (2005: 482)

In this perspective different cultural values, behavioural predispositions, and world-views, are built on the universal experience of the passive isolated infant requiring to be shaped and be given meaning in order to be able to make sense of an otherwise overwhelming inchoate world. Michael Carrithers restated this assumption concerning the nature of being human, when he approvingly cited James Fernandez as using:

> "the idea of the inchoate to capture the general human plight of continually threatening uncertainty, obscurity, and danger, the as-yet-not-grasped, '*the dark at the top of the stairs*'" (2005: 442, emphasis added).

There is an assumption here that our primary and underlying experience is one of having to impose concepts on 'threatening uncertainty'. Carrithers goes on: "People respond by applying native wit and contrivances of culture plucked from a common store to *make a movement* away from the inchoate" (ibid, emphasis in original). He goes on to say that he understands this "to mean a move towards sense and policy, toward an interpretation of the situation and a plan" (ibid). However, this seems to be quite the opposite: it appears to be a movement away from sense (from bodily experience) and into an illusory mind-as-separate-from-bodily-experience.

Michael Jackson, in an excellent article exploring our experience of machines, opens up new possibilities of reconceptuali-

sing our experience, but also closes down that possibility through a habitual restatement of what are assumed to be the universal 'truths' of dualism and atomism. Jackson usefully argues that there is no sharp contrast between societies which anthropomorphise and those that are governed by scientific rationality: in his view, all people in all societies anthropomorphise. However, because he doesn't unpack the term 'anthropomorphic' he ultimately reinforces rather than reconceptualises, dominant ways of understanding experience. Since the very term 'anthropomorphism' assumes the projection of human qualities onto non-human others, those using the term (e.g. Boyer 1996) are unable to understand what is fundamentally involved in recognising qualities of personhood in non-human others. Rather than demonstrating that 'we' are in fact just like 'them' in interacting with our social and ecological environments on the basis of responsive relatedness (Milton 2002), Jackson reinterprets all human experience in dualistic and atomistic terms which in fact reduces 'them' to 'us'. He says that it is not simply that we project human consciousness onto machines. It is that:

> "intersubjectivity so shapes our experience from early infancy that it constitutes a 'natural attitude' towards *the world into which we find ourselves thrown* – a world that includes persons, machines, words, ideas, and other creatures" (Jackson 2002: 341, emphasis added).

Jackson argues that this approach is largely illusory, but that - in the face of the unpredictable and ungovernable ways in which the extra-human world impacts on us - it is comforting "to act as if the object world were obedient to the ground rules of interpersonal life" (Jackson 2002: 335). Jackson views this strategy as helping us to cope with what we experience as "the trauma of the unresponsiveness of matter" (George Devereux 1967: 32-4; cited in Jackson 2002: 335).

The notion that this is a "world into which we find ourselves thrown" is a perfect summary of the atomistic experience of the world, just as the notion that matter is unresponsive is a perfect summary of our dualistic presumption. These are not, however, given truths about the nature of reality, however much these experiences of isolation and unresponsiveness are fundamental to the particular cultural patterning learnt within dualistic non-egalitarian societies. Jackson appears to see these particular cultural patterns – for example infants' experience of abandonment - as universal rather than culturally specific.

Thus, for example, he writes about intersubjective relations as "steeped in ambiguity" (2002: 335), and notes that psychoanalysis "traces this experience back to the period of primary intersubjectivity when an infant's dependence on the mother entails both affirmation and negation". He goes on to cite Deveroux as saying that "the prototype of all panic caused by a lack of response is the reaction of the infant to the absence, or temporary unresponsiveness, of its mother" (Deveroux 1967: 32, cited in Jackson 2002: 335).

Throughout anthropological and psychoanalytic writing on the experience of infancy there is this assumption that this experience of isolation, abandonment and passivity are not only universal but are the grounds from which we attempt to bridge the self-other divide by reaching out through language and through learning appropriate cultural codes (e.g. Quinn 2005). However, Barry Hewlett's studies on the cross-cultural experience of infancy challenges the idea that this is a universal truth concerning infancy (1992, 1996).

In contrast to the dominant Western experience of infant care, in Central African hunter-gatherer groups there are multiple caregivers providing almost continuous physical contact and comfort to infants, and as infants grow into children they take on roles which are as essential to the community as those of youths, adults and elders. Far from inhabiting an idealised and devalued world of childhood that is seen as a precursor to entering the real adult world of harsh choices, children carry central responsibilities including those of regulating adults through ridiculing those engaged in disruptive behavior, and through their central ritual role (see Turnbull 1983: 41 on the Mbuti; see Lewis 2002: 124-128 on Mbendjelle *massana*, a term as applicable to children's play as to adult ritual). Barry Hewlett (1992, 1996) contrasts the percentage of daylight time in which infants are held or touched. At 3-4 months Aka infants are held or touched over 99% of the time, whereas studies in Holland and America indicate that infants there are held or touched for between 12-20% of the time. By 7-8 months it is 75% of the time for Aka infants, and less than 10% for these Western infants. Hewlett points out that in the West orphaned infants are described by psychologists as deprived if they are held for only 5% of the time, so even by our own standards our normality comes close to our own ideas of deprivation and scarcity (1996: 8). Turning to the percentage of the time that a comforting response within ten seconds is provided to infants who cry, he noted a contrast between the Efe who would provide such a response 85% of the time for those up to 3

months old, and still over 75% of the time at the end of the first year. By contrast in the Western studies, caregivers deliberately didn't respond 44 - 46% of the time during first 3 months, apparently believing that not responding would encourage the infant to stand on its own two feet (1996: 14). Hewlett points out that when the context of childcare is one of egalitarianism in which men's and women's work is equally valued, and in which childcare is seen as the responsibility of everyone in camp, then this level of responsive relatedness can be maintained (1992: 32-36). The consequence, he suggests, is that Aka infants who "receive almost constant touching and holding and sleep with several people at night" are far more "self-assured, independent and secure" than middle-class American children (1996: 15).

These findings fit with Colwyn Trevarthen's (1989) studies of mother-child relations, and Sue Gerhardt's writing on how affection nurtures the infant's brain (2004), both of which suggest that the fundamental experience for even newborn infants in the West, as elsewhere, is an experience of intersubjective sociality. Infants enter into an exchange of feelings in which they are the initiator as much as the responder: thus the ground of our experience is that of mutual responsiveness. Alongside this, numerous studies recognise that what we had assumed to be the universal experience of infant abandonment and passivity (of atomism and dualism), are actually culturally peculiar practices, albeit ones which are reproduced in a range of ways throughout many societies. Arthur Eidelman writes that:

> "Unfortunately, current "standard" care practices in all too many hospitals interfere with the normal mammalian sequence of labor delivery and neonatal care. . . .infants are spirited away from their mothers, delivered to the care of the nursing staff, washed, injected, swaddled and put to bed for hours before returning to their mother's care. . . . In turn, rather than being provided with the calming, soothing, and regular stimuli of KC [Kangaroo Care, or skin to skin contact], which enhances adaptive behavior to extrauterine life, the infants are subjected to random intrusive stimuli" (2004: 683).

Through examining recent work on emotions and infancy in the west it becomes clear that the relational interpersonal sense of self - which infants in Central African hunting camps are encouraged to experience and develop - is not only completely different to

the isolated dualistic sense of self we learn to experience through the impact of our current "standard" care practices, but also that the relational interpersonal self is an accurate representation of our own initial and underlying bio-social experience.

Such work as that of Sue Gerhardt and Colwyn Trevarthen fundamentally questions our dominant understandings that concern the need to move from a lesser, irrational, threatening state to a higher, rational, controlled state. In terms of our understandings of infancy, this orthodox dominant view is evident in Piaget's notion that the child has to move from a self-absorbed irrational state to a state of logical competence. It is evident in Freud's notion that we require the internalisation of society to control our otherwise destructive instinctual desires. It is evident in approaches, such as that of Lacan, which appear to move beyond this dualism by questioning the existence of any such higher order: for Lacan there is no rational ego, "there are only defences played off against each other to give particular ones the illusion of pre-existing personality" (Weiner 1999). This picture could be very helpful if it was seeking to highlight the illusory nature of the defended isolated self, but instead of pointing to the fundamental experience of relationality underlying our sense of isolation, it assumes isolation as being a fundamental given: an assumption evident throughout the anthropological literature too.

Trevarthen's studies demonstrate that in the infant baby there is a readiness, an anticipation, an ability to be aware of a human presence and to initiate communication and respond. Where earlier studies took place in artificial situations where infants were observed responding to particular stimuli, Trevarthen studies their interaction with mothers in their own surroundings, where the relationship (not the experiment) comes first, and where the infant can negotiate the exchanges. In this situation of relaxed normality the exchanges are intimate, equal, spontaneous, and close, provided that neither are distracted by reserve, distress or fear (Trevarthen 1993: 137).

Trevarthen's research stresses that from at least the moment of birth, an individual is self-aware and can "enter into an exchange of feelings", that the experience of inter-subjective sociality is present from the start (Trevarthen and Logotheti 1989: 167). An infant will check whether there is an open attentiveness in the other - will check that the other is willing to enter into a mutual dialogue - and if so will initiate and respond; if the other ignores the emotional quality of what the infant is seeking to convey (or

seeks to impose control on the 'conversation') the infant will abandon the conversation:

> "From birth infants have no trouble in detecting and interacting discriminately and optionally with the mental states of other persons. Very soon after birth, they can enter into a dynamic exchange of mental states that has a conversational, potentially intention-and-knowledge-sharing organisation and motivation." (Trevarthen 1993: 161).

By co-operating, we reason with feelings; and the co-operative mental powers in infants' means that the biological and cultural can no longer be seen as mutually exclusive categories. Thus

> "the human mind does not build itself, at least not in childhood, by power of reason and by mastery of emotions, as Descartes thought, but by emotional regulation of a sharing of ideas with others. Private reason, the thinking 'I' postulated by Descartes, stands in contrast with the idea of a self with feelings that flourish in a community. The former depends upon the latter." (Trevarthen and Logotheti 1989: 181).

Thus the interpersonal self is present from birth, since "it is in the nature of human consciousness to experience being experienced: to be an actor who can act in relation to other conscious sources of emotions while accepting emotional qualities of vitality and feeling from other persons by instantaneous empathy." (Trevarthen 1993: 121). Although our psychological tradition places all its emphasis on cognitive powers, and assumes that the mind of the infant is incoherent and undefined, a "delicate and immediate with-the-other awareness comes first." (Trevarthen 1993: 122):

> "it would seem that the communicating interpersonal self is the very foundation for the cognitive or thinking self who will grow up to solve problems 'in the head'. The core of every human consciousness appears to be an immediate, unrational, unverbalized, conceptless, totally atheoretical potential for rapport of the self with another's mind." (Trevarthen 1993: 121)

This is the experience with which the infant anticipates a relationship of equivalence and mutuality, even if in non-egalitarian

societies there may very rapidly be driven into us a sense of being fundamentally isolated, and of requiring a higher order to control the chaotic and threatening other both of our internal emotions and of the apparently external, threatening, chaotic and inherently meaningless world.

Sue Gerhardt usefully contextualises the widespread assumption in psychoanalysis and the social sciences that the mind has to learn to impose order on the body, or in Freudian terms that the civilised superego has to learn how to control our biological instinctive urges through the mediation of the ego. When Gerhardt writes that, in fact, "the unseen forces which shape our emotional responses through life, are not primarily our biological urges, but the patterns of emotional experience with other people, most powerfully set up in infancy" (2004: 15-16), we have only to think of the "standard" care practices endured by infants to recognize how such patterns of atomism and dualism are set in motion. Gerhardt describes how an infant tunes in to her caregiver physically and emotionally and if the caregiver is able to be emotionally attuned to the infant then that has physical/ emotional consequences in the body and brain and allows the brain to develop a rich network of neuronal connections. She writes that "The most frequent and repetitive experiences start to form well-trodden pathways, whilst those connections that lie unused begin to be pruned away" (2004: 44). The patterns of interaction with caregivers create pathways and internal images which provide a practical guide to interaction. A mother consistently wrinkling her nose with disgust and grumbling while changing a nappy, and pulling it off roughly, will lead the baby to expect nappy changing to be unpleasant - to carry an inner image of another's face and an inner feeling in the body - that may become linked to seeing her body as disgusting to others. A mother's smile and dilated pupils communicate her pleasure to the gazing baby, arousing the baby's nervous system, releasing beta-endorphins and helping the prefrontal cortex to grow (Gerhardt 2004: 41). Gerhardt writes that "Lots of positive experiences early on produce brains with more neuronal connections - more richly networked brains" (2004: 43) and that the "pathways and internal images we develop provide a practical guide to interaction . . . [that] underpin our expectations of others without our realising it" (2004: 45). "What a small child needs is an adult who is emotionally available and tuned in enough to help regulate his states." (2004: 48) However our approach to children means that even if early contact sustained an awareness of mutuality, being sent to nursery often means that the child experiences increased stress hormones (e.g. cortisol) due to the absence of an adult

figure who is responsive and alert to their states moment by moment. Gerhardt goes on to say something quite extraordinary. She points out that, since adult security depends on a sense of a coherent narrative about their story, "In fact, it seems that mostly we prefer our expectations to be confirmed, even if they are unpleasant" (2004: 45).

In his article 'Anthropology, sociology, and other dubious disciplines', Immanuel Wallerstein writes that "The whole lesson of the sciences of complexity is that if one changes the initial conditions ever so minutely the outcome may be radically different" (2003: 459). From this perspective the initial conditions experienced by a baby lead to particular ways of holding emotion in the body, responding to difficulties, and a particular way of interpreting reality that reassuringly assumes that this pattern of expectations is the nature of reality, however unpleasant. Thus there is a particular pattern of expectations which accompanies and buttresses a very painful picture of reality which is learnt in infancy through western 'child-rearing' practices and which is then replayed through the dominant paradigms which those infants reproduce as socio-economic systems as they become adults, systems which constrain and shape the experience of infancy (see also Bourdieu 1972: 94).

Gerhardt paints a completely different picture of the infants experience to that of psychoanalysts and anthropologists from Freud onwards. She writes of the inherent relationality of the process, and of the way it is human warmth and affection that enables the brain and understanding to develop, not some imposition of mental order on an otherwise chaotic world. She writes that: "The baby's heart rate has been found to synchronise with the parent's heart rate, if she is relaxed and in a coherent state, so will the baby be. Her autonomic nervous system in effect communicates with her baby's nervous system, soothing it through touch. When we are physically held, we know we are supported by others" (2004: 40).

The basic point to draw from the emerging research into infancy in the West, and from the contrast between the dominant experience of infancy in the West and amongst Central African Forest Peoples, is that even in the West the interpersonal self underlies the individual self, while at the same time the individual self is seen as needing to be built on the ability to control the supposedly emotional instinctual biological self. The imaginary split between controlling culture and threatening nature is made experientially real through such processes.

This fundamental premise – of the need to impose adult rationality on childish emotion, or more optimistically develop adult rationality out of childish self-absorption – clearly informs our understanding of the self and reality. The premise derived from Central African hunter-gatherer' experience of infancy and adulthood would appear, however, to be much closer to our own experience. Rather than there being an infant trapped in its instinctual biological self which is inevitably terrified of the inchoate world, and which needs disciplining or developing into rational adulthood through learning tools such as language which enable it to reach out and make contact with others, there is instead a fundamental consciousness of others - and an ability to communicate with and respond to others - present from the start. What our child-rearing practices in the West do is diminish that fundamental understanding that reality comes down to relationship, rather than to the individual in isolation. Paradoxically, we learn through bodily experience that we are fundamentally alone, that there are threatening feelings that lurk beneath our controlling minds, that there is always "the dark at the top of the stairs".

The crucial point being that the resulting oppositional sense of self informs not only dominant societies' ways of responding to indigenous peoples, but also informs anthropologists' analysis of a vast range of issues. It is evident, for example, in Dominic Boyer's use of a psychoanalytic model to examine the New Europe and Islamophobia, when he writes that "a self only achieves certainty of its existence and autonomy in recognition and domination of an other" (2005: 521). Clearly this fundamental and mistaken assumption concerning the nature of the self is one that reflects the dominant political economy as it is refracted through our intimate experience of infancy. This dualistic assumption - that the imposition of order is the necessary precondition for, rather than the denial of, sense and order - reproduces itself in political decision-making, embodied practice and analytical discourse, as if it was an existential given rather than a contingent construction.

9. Indigenous peoples and the Nation-State

Thus, at a level which resonates with our earliest embodied experience in non-egalitarian societies, the existence and assumed legitimacy of mutually exclusive modern nation-states in the political realm, mirrors our sense of the atomised self as having to be constituted in opposition to others. However, just

as this understanding of the atomised self is in fact a narrow and distorted refraction of a deeper experience identified in the emerging literature on the relational self, so the tendency to assert the singular nature of state sovereignty is only all-pervasive at one level of analysis. At this level of analysis, Benedict Anderson argues that the modern state claims "sovereignty [that] is fully, flatly, and evenly operative over each square centimetre of a legally demarcated territory" (1991: 19). He argues that nation state sovereignty is so hegemonic in shaping our imaginations that the nation-state "structures both political realities and subversive political imaginaries" (Tomas Biolsi 2005: 240, referring to Anderson 1991: 156). According to Ferguson (1997:123) "we can hardly help but see national independence as almost synonymous with dignity, freedom, and empowerment".

However, Biolsi argues that where Anderson has focused on the rise of the exclusive nation-sate, in fact there are many other ways of making sovereignty. These can involve devolving power over others, such as free-trade zones arrangements in "which developing states such as Malaysia outsource some state functions to other states or transnational corporations" (Biolsi 2005: 240). Biolsi is here referring to Aihwa Ong's description of "variegated citizenship" (Ong 1999: 217) in which different populations are subjected to "different kinds of rights, discipline, caring, and security" (Ong 1999: 217). Biolsi points out that modern states have always been graduated, for example people defined as Black were originally deemed property by the American state, and so were denied the status of legal personhood under the U.S. constitution, while, at the same time, the state outsourced their governance to (white) others. Where Biolsi tends to focus on situations where the state devolves power the better to exert control over others, under current neo-liberal arrangements the state itself often has rights, responsibilities and power devolved to it and taken from it by those acting through international bodies supposedly established to regulate trade (see Graeber 2001, Guha and Martinez-Alier 2000). However, there are also other forms of sovereignty which can involve those who have previously been marginalised negotiating the space to reclaim agency. The movements for land reform in Scotland and the worldwide indigenous peoples' movement (Niezen 2003) can be understood as examples of this.

However, as we have seen, what such movements are up against is a powerfully entrenched dualism of domination, evident not only in national and international political structures but also in anthropological theory. For example, it can be seen in Elizabeth

Rata's critique of the relationship between indigenous peoples' rights, democracy and the nation: a critique which has strong parallels with Kuper's. She argues that the indigenous peoples' rights' approach is a culturalist one which is essentially racist. She argues that in this approach "we are seen to live our daily lives (culture or how we live our lives within social relations) because of our ethnic (racial) inheritance (who we are)" (2005: 270). In contrast, she says, "the universalism that underpins democracy is that we are born into the human race, and become members of ethnic or racial groups through socialization into the cultural practices of those groups" (ibid, emphasis added). On one level of analysis this is undoubtedly correct, but at another level what is being assumed here is that the individual can be understood as separate from relationships, as being in a "world into which we find ourselves thrown" (Jackson 2002: 341).

In fact to acknowledge our embodiedness and embeddedness does not mean seeing ourselves as determined by monolithic cultural categories. Instead it means starting from the relational nature of being human: a relational nature which is better expressed through egalitarian processes of inclusion than through imposing exclusive categories on experience. Rata goes on to say that she is taking a universalist approach which means that, according to Kant, we must "exercise our powers of reasoning in accordance with general principles, retaining at the same time, the right of investigating the source of these principles, of testing, and even of rejecting them" (Kant 1993 [1781]: 491, cited in Ratna 2005: 271). However, if the source of the general principles that separates the individual from the relations that constitute her or him is a belief in the accuracy of the discontinuity model of atomism and dualism, and if that model is empirically inaccurate, then we need to exercise "our powers of reasoning" to reject the logic that pits indigenous peoples' rights against democracy and universalism. What requires reinstating here is not the universalism of some general principle which we strive to impose on the world in order to achieve scientific knowledge and civilised order, but the universalism of human experience which undercuts the dualisms we assume, and which implies that recognising the indigenous peoples' rights of the egalitarian peoples referred to in this paper can be a step towards unlocking the dualisms of domination that can deceive us all.

10. Conclusion

If the practices of egalitarian indigenous peoples profoundly challenge any dualistic assumptions we may have about who we are in relation to the broader ecological field and in relation to the intensely personal field of our emergence as infants, politically it is the category of the 'modern nation state' which 'indigenous peoples' most dramatically challenge, both in political practice and in analytic theory. Just as the superiority and accuracy of dualistic frameworks is challenged by acknowledging egalitarian practice, the rights of egalitarian indigenous peoples requires the 'modern nation state' to examine the violent grounds of its emergence: the alternative histories and sovereignties it has submerged, assimilated and denied. This involves recognising the way in which these histories have not simply impacted on the 'marginalised other' but have shaped and impoverished dominant identities in a way which works its way down into our most fundamental sense of self, and works it way out through the ways in which we interpret and analyse the world.

Thus 'indigenous peoples' rights' is not fundamentally about exclusive cultural categories or essentialist definitions, but is about identifying and challenging processes of violent historical appropriation, and is about identifying and supporting processes of collective egalitarian action. This is a challenge that may have its roots in the recognition of local histories and local relations, but it is also a challenge which is fundamentally aligned with the collective movement for global justice and equality. Carrithers suggests that one of the most fundamental questions anthropology asks is that "Given the diversity of human forms of life, what must be true of humans in general?" (1992: 4). We can either answer from within the dominant tradition which assumes a sense of self which fits with dominant political arrangements, or we can explore the implications of other histories of identity that challenge our political and personal assumptions; explorations which may demand of us that we reshape our analytic frameworks and our political structures.

In relation to indigenous peoples' rights, I have argued that Kuper's two main points were: *Firstly*, that we need to abandon the notion that 'indigenous peoples' are somehow different to other people on the planet, and *Secondly*, that we therefore need to stop according them any rights as indigenous peoples.

In relation to his first point: I have argued his first point is true but for the opposite reason to that he advances. Drawing on studies of infants and perception, I have argued that the atomistic

and dualistic assumptions about the universal nature of human experience which underpin positions such as those of Kuper, are simply dominant cultural assumptions which do not even reflect back to us our own lived experience, let alone the experience of the egalitarian 'indigenous peoples' referred to here. Thus these 'indigenous peoples' are indeed no different to those of us who have grown up in the societies which have given rise to the social sciences, not because 'they' are like 'us'; but because their perception of the world, and their ways of relating to other persons (including non-human others), provide us with a far better representation of 'our' own underlying experience than the dualistic and atomistic epistemology which still dominates in anthropology, sociology and Wallerstein's other dubiously divisive disciplines.

Therefore, in relation to his second point: I have argued that indigenous peoples' rights to collective systems of land ownership, their right to determine their own futures, and their right to demand of the dominant society that it examine and reverse the ongoing histories of domination imposed on indigenous peoples, should be seen as part of a process of liberating us all from a completely unsustainable system of property ownership and resource use, and from completely inadequate ways of responding to planetary, social and personal problems. This system is unsustainable not because it is driven by some innate human greed, ignorance, alienation or desire for power, but precisely because it is based on an understanding of ourselves and of social and ecological systems which is so completely at odds with the evidence presented to us by ecological systems, social systems and even – or especially – our personal experience. In the emerging process perspective there is a recognition that the macro-level of human-environmental relations, the mid-level of socio-political relations and the micro-level of personal experience are mutually constitutive. There is also the recognition that by bringing together what we have been trained to separate - distinguishing between processes not between categories - we can enable anthropology to "reclaim its place as a fundamental intellectual discipline, and one which could contribute not only to understanding the world, but to changing it" (Eriksen 2006: 129).

The paradox of indigenous peoples' rights is that, although the ongoing colonial project may appear to portray them as a way of granting special favours to groups of people claiming a distinct identity, in fact they are a way of beginning to recognise the most fundamental right due to all humans: the right to resist dominating processes and to reassert a sociality based on the

equalising processes of collective agency. Resisting the divisive nature of dominant category-dualism, and recovering a relational approach to understanding ecological, social and personal processes, is perhaps one way in which anthropology can help us to collectively move towards the recognition and realisation of such inalienable rights.

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