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Development at the millennium: Malthus, Marx and the politics of alternatives*

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Development is a highly contested term and set of practices at the beginning of the new millennium. This paper explores both the state of development and poverty from the vantage of the present and offers a constructive critique of the so-called alternatives to development school by returning to the classical debates of Malthus and Marx over the „Great Transformation". While each does so from a different theoretical vantage point and in a very different political register, Malthus and Marx struggled over what I call popular radicalism and a deepened sense of deliberative democracy. Using the case of food security I explore the links between rights, governance and deliberative democracy as a way of exploring some of the prospects for development.

Entwicklung an der Jahrtausendwende: Malthus, Marx und eine Politik der Alternativen

Der Begriff der Entwicklung und die Entwicklungspraxis sind zu Beginn des neuen Jahrtausends stark umstritten. Dieser Beitrag diskutiert den Stand von Entwicklung und Armut aus heutiger Sicht und entwickelt über den Rückgriff auf die klassischen Debatten von Malthus und Marx zur „Great Transformation" eine konstruktive Kritik der sogenannten „Alternatives to development school". Sowohl Malthus als auch Marx setzten sich – aus unterschiedlicher theoretischer Perspektive und mit äußerst differierenden politischen Standpunkten – mit Formen von populärem Radikalismus und einem vertieften Verständnis deliberativer Demokratie auseinander. Am Beispiel Ernährungssicherung werden Zusammenhänge zwischen Rechten, Governance und deliberativer Demokratie untersucht und als Möglichkeit für die Gestaltung zukünftiger Entwicklung erörtert.

The 19th century is not yet over.
Richard Sennett

1998 marks two important birthdays, both of which celebrate the release of what are arguably two of the more influential tracts published in the English language.[1] The first is the bicentennial of the publication of T. R. Malthus's first edition of *An essay on the principle of population* published anonymously in 1798. Whatever one may make of Malthus's polemical tract, it is incontestable that the essay has left an indelible mark on the ways in which population and its relation to economic growth and development – what has become the population „problem" – has been framed over the

* A modified version of this paper was delivered as part of the Hettner Lectures at the University of Heidelberg on June 15th 1999 in the Hörsaal der Physik, Im Neuenheimer Feld. I am especially grateful to my friend Professor Hans-Georg Bohle who moderated the event and for the discussion that followed. I wish to acknowledge the generosity of Professor Peter Meusburger and his colleagues in the Department of Geography, and to the students who participated in the subsequent colloquium. Michael Hoyler in particular provided excellent editorial comments on this version of the paper. An earlier, and much different version of this paper was delivered to the Global Futures Conference at the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague in October 1998.

1 My devotion to 1998 may seem curious, if not altogether arbitrary. It reflects the fact that I was asked to

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last two hundred years.[2] Darwin, Wallace, Ricardo, J.M. Keynes – to say nothing of such lesser luminaries as Paul Ehrlich or the framers of the momentous 1995 United Nations Population Conference in Cairo – all paid homage to the English parson and to the critical influence of his ideas on their intellectual formation. The second is the 150th anniversary of the appearance of *The Communist manifesto*, written by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels – though the final version of the 23 page text was almost certainly composed by Marx – released one or two weeks before the popular revolutions which spread like a prairie fire from Paris across continental Europe. Written in response to a request for a manifesto from a revolutionary secret society formed in Paris in the 1830's, the League of the Outlaws [Bund der Geächteten] – itself a forerunner of the League of the Communists – the Manifesto was published in February 1848 care of the Worker's Educational Association in the City of London. It is a magisterial polemic, a pamphlet of astonishing rhetorical force. It is without doubt „by far the most influential single piece of political writing since the French Revolutionary *Declaration of the rights of man and citizen*" (Hobsbawm 1998, p. 4)

The *Manifesto* and the *Essay* both bear the marks of youth – neither author was more than thirty two years old at the time of writing – and, one might add, of a certain rhetorical excess. The authors themselves were of a distinctively classical outlook, the products of the tumultuous century between the appearance of the first English factories and the mid-century European revolutions of 1848. Marx and Malthus are, with good reason, customarily seen as antagonists: the latter the voice of conservative reaction and of landed property, the former of revolutionary and working class insurgency. Malthus the demographic pessimist, Marx the socialist optimist. Yet both were materialists, grand theoreticians of poverty and growth (it is to be recalled that Malthus held the first chair of Political Economy in England) and both figures are indisputably prescient (is not Marx's clairvoyant assessment of capitalism in the Manifesto scarily relevant for the *fin de siècle*?). Every year sees Malthus arise phoenix-like from the ashes of popular opinion: did not Malthus, laments the leader in one of the major newspapers, have it right after all?[3] In the US press at least, the passing of the millennium has predictably witnessed a veritable storm of neo-Malthusian speculations on the existential nightmare of an overpopulated world when (and if) we celebrate the next millennial birthday. John Avery's new book – *Progress, poverty and population* – just off the presses to celebrate the third century of the essay, tells us in any case that „the logic of Malthus is finally catching up with us" and that the future will hold much worse than „misery and vice" (to employ Malthus's language) but an „ecological catastrophe, possibly compounded by war and other disorders, could produce famine and death on a scale unprecedented in history – a catastrophe of unimaginable proportions, involving billions rather than millions of people" (Avery 1997, p. 100–101 and 105). Malthusian pessimism returns with a vengeance.[4] The debate over fertility and poverty simply refuses to go away as the contestation over the reform of welfare in the United States vividly testifies. For every case of demographic optimism [for example Eberstadt's (1997) recent identification in *The*

deliver the Hettner Lectures one year prior to the event and hence my remarks were shaped by the prominent birthday celebrations which surrounded these two events during the months when my lecture was composed.

2 For an early geographical treatment of this issue see David Harvey (1974).

3 Most recently in the „millenial" issue of *The Economist*, December 31st 1999, „Like herrings in a barrel", pp. 13–14, in which the author says that „Malthus was wrong ... but not far wrong" (p. 13).

4 In her review of that book Himmelfarb (1998) – in a discussion strikingly congruent with the political economy discourse of the end of the eighteenth century in its tenor and timbre – notes that Avery"s (1997) projections are „unrealistic". The true problem – another demographic revolution as she sees it – resides elsewhere: namely, the crisis of the fatherless family.

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tyranny of numbers of population decline, what he calls population „implosion", in the advanced industrial democracies] there is always a neo-Malthusian reaction [for example Kaplan's (1997) pernicious account in *The ends of the earth* of Africa's return as the Dark Continent descending into „eco-demographic wars"].

In equal measure, *The Communist manifesto* has lost none of its luster, and its legacy has in no way been dimmed by the evenements of 1989 or by the self evident failure of one of the Manifesto's central predictions, namely that the bourgeoisie will „above all ... [produce] its own grave diggers" in the proletariat. The Manifesto has after all been the inspiration for one of the most influential assessments of modernism and modernization – Marshall Berman's *All that is solid melts into air* – and none other than Jacques Derrida's most recent encomium, significantly entitled *Specters of Marx*, has affirmed the need to „read, and reread and discuss Marx", to radicalize Marx, and in a gesture to the Manifesto, to admit his spectral presence in the current post Cold War conjuncture (Marx and Engels 1998, Berman 1982, Derrida 1994, p. 32–33). As if to drive home the point that Marx is not really dead, even at the moment of neoliberal triumph, none other than the New Yorker magazine (October 27th 1997, p. 248) – citing the authority of the head of a New York investment bank no less – identified Karl Marx as „the next thinker". With Tina Brown and Wall Street on his trail, the great man must have rolled over in his Highgate grave.

In other respects, however, Malthus and Marx stand as outdated commodities in the current market-place of academic ideas, and very much at odds with contemporary social science theory. Indeed both men are out of favor with much of what passes as critical *fin de siècle* thinking about development and its millennial prospects. It is not simply that Malthus and Marx were poor forecasters – to wit, the inevitability of demographically induced famine, or of a proletarian overthrow of capitalism – but rather that their entire classical vision, their grand narratives, is so wracked with essentialisms, determinisms and Eurocentrisms (a shameless modernism in short) that it has little to offer a development project which in the 1990's has come to represent, in some quarters at least, a colossal modernist failure. The very idea of „post-development" – or of alternatives to development – has certainly resurrected the search for alternatives amidst the wreckage of Western disenchantment but there is no space for Marx and precious little for Malthus.[5] It is precisely the modernist grandeur and reach of a Marx or a Malthus that represents their fatal flaw. My purpose is in fact to question this abandonment of Marx and Malthus, and to attempt to reclaim them from a somewhat unusual vantage point: namely, through the idea of popular radicalism and its relation to notions and practices of governance.[6] Neither of these theorists spoke the same language, or indeed in the same register, on matters of right and democracy. But insofar as they posed these questions at all, there is an affinity between them, and indeed a kinship with another birthday – which, alas, I shall not talk about here – namely the events of 1968.

My purpose in this essay is to link Marx and Malthus to contemporary „millennial" discussions of the crisis of development and more particularly to the idea of development alternatives (or in some quareters altenatives to development). I shall begin with a sort of brief on what one might call the state of poverty at the new millennium, and then turn to an assessment of an influential line of theorising – sometimes

5 The „alternatives to development" school which I discuss below has a somewhat ambiguous view on Malthus. While the threat of numbers often stands at odds with the purported powers of „the people", its populist endorsement of population planning as imperialism position is occasionally superseded by strangely Malthusian sentiments as when Esteva and Prakash, two of the school's intellectual figures, casually refer to the spectre of „ten billion waiting around the corner of the new century" (Esteva and Prakash 1998, p. 1).

6 I am in part returning to the eighteenth century and have some sympathy in this regard with Postman's (1999) book, which is an effort to reclaim the Enlightenment principles.

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referred to as the post-development school. My critique of this body of work, rooted in the very experience of modernity itself, provides a ground on which I can return to Malthus and Marx. The common point of reference I argue is their engagement, in quite differing ways, with notions of popular radicalism, of democracy, of rights and governance. It is precisely these ideas, I argue, that are central to what is arguably some of the most original thinking about development in the last half century, namely the work of Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen. I examine how Sen's ideas might be pushed further, in some measure by engaging with the legacies of Marx and Malthus. Finally I turn to a concrete case study of food and food security – a foundational issue in the study of poverty and development – to illustrate how such legacies might hold out a prospect for thinking concretely about alternatives as a sort of deepening and reworking of modernity. I conclude with a brief assessment of how such alternatives can be assessed on the larger canvas of twenty-first century capitalist triumphalism and of the so-called extinction of actually-existing socialisms.

1. Development at the Millennium

> „Not all people exist in the same Now. They do so externally, through the fact that they can be seen today. But they are thereby not yet living at the same time with others .... They rather carry an earlier element with them; this interferes ... [the old] contradicts the Now; very strangely, crookedly, from behind. The power of this untimely course has appeared, it promised precisely new life, however much it merely hauls up what is old" (Ernst Bloch 1986).

Impoverishment and well-being has always been central to the language and practice of development. Poverty constitutes, as the famous International Labor Organization declaration put it in 1944, „a danger to prosperity everywhere". Since the end of World War II this danger has not receded. Indeed, poverty eradication in the long half-century of development since President Truman's famous declaration on development and fair-dealing, has been, at best, disappointing. Of course, to suggest that the period since 1950 has only witnessed unrelenting economic regression would be fatuous and silly. The proportion of the world's population which enjoyed per capita income growth rates of over 5% tripled between 1965 and 1980. Some newly industrialized states in East Asia have experienced historically unprecedented rates of „industrial compression": Taiwan and South Korea were, after all, war torn, impoverished and archetypically post-colonial „underdeveloped" exporters of whigs, and sugar and rice in the 1950's. But on balance the record is mixed, and nowhere moreso than with respect to the plight and privation – the structured inequality – of women. Of the 1.3 billion people in poverty, 70% are women. Between 1965 and 1988 the number of rural women living below the poverty line increased by 47%; the corresponding figure for men was less than 30% (UNDP 1996).

Mass poverty has been stubbornly resistant to the changing fads and fashions of development policy. If the incidence of poverty declined as a proportion of the world's population in the post-war period [itself a contested fact in some quarters], the total number falling below the absolute poverty line has unequivocally increased. In the period since 1980, economic growth in 15 countries has brought rapidly rising incomes to 1.5 billion people, yet one person in three still lives in poverty and basic social services are unavailable to more than 1 billion people.

Locating poverty on the larger canvas of post-war development, allows us to see two important historical forces at work. First, some key constituencies did not participate in the growth and productivity achievements of the 1945–1980 period (women and rural landless for example): that is to say growth was accompanied by *exclusion*. And second, the record of the poor in participating in the market successes of the post-1980 period was constricted in the absence of redistribution: market-driven growth was marked by *marginalization*. One hundred countries totaling 1.6 billion people actually experienced economic decline; in al-

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most half of them average incomes are now lower than in 1970. The gravity of these figures is only deepened by a recognition of the growing polarities within the global economy as a whole. According to the United Nations Development Program, between 1960 and 1991 the share of the richest 20% rose from 70% to 85% of global income – while that of the poorest fell from 2.3% to 1.4%. Between states, the ratio of the shares of the richest to the poorest increased from 30:1 to 61:1. The problem is *polarization*: the proportion of the globe experiencing low income growth rates per head has grown, and since the 1980's has grown substantially.

The eradication of poverty, and by extension the universal achievement of full states of well-being, is central to the very idea of development. But in the history of ideas about poverty and the poor, the „first transition" in Europe was foundational because the questions and dilemmas it generated are still central to development thinking and the world of *realpolitik.* Two centuries ago poverty – what was in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Europe referred to as „pauperism" – and its relation to political economy were part and parcel of what Karl Polanyi in his magnificent book *The great transformation* called „the discovery of society" (Polanyi 1947). Pauperism in Britain was not simply about who were the nation's poor – those that cannot, or will not find *work* – but was part of the very invention of liberal government and the very fabric of new modes of governance and social regulation. Thomas Malthus in his famous essays on population and the poor spoke to the question of the rights to subsistence at a time of political radicalism and nascent civil rights in the wake of the events of 1789 on the one hand and of debates within classical political economy over growth and capitalist stability on the other. Society was in this sense discovered on the terrain of moral, social, political and economic struggles, conducted over almost a half century, which spoke to how the existence of poverty amidst plenty raised the most profound questions of civil, political and economic liberties. And this was assuredly no less the case for Marx a half century later. In *The Communist manifesto* Marx composed a narrative of revelation, to depict what had hitherto been hidden with the specific intention of providing a basis for political organization (Thomas 1998). Indeed as utterly improbable as it might have seemed from the vantage point of Malthus and the victory of liberal governance in the repeal of the Poor Laws, the European capitalist states were to be transformed by the rise of organized political movements (Hobsbawm 1998, p. 20). What distinguished Marx from the anarchists was politics, what had to be done. Marx sketched a political enterprise – which of course drew upon the popular radicalism of an earlier era – to radically rethink the capacities of civil society and to challenge the very idea of what was politically possible.

The question of the pauperism in rural England during the 1790's has, as the World Bank and other development agencies blandly document for us every year in their massive statistical compendia, its counterpart in the Cairo slum-dweller or the Bolivian peasant in the new millennium. The ethical and economic thinkers at the dawn of European industrialization were tackling many of the issues of poverty and policy that are central to development economics today. In Europe the struggles for civil liberty were opposed by those fearful of tyranny in the same way that the fight for political participation drew fire from those who saw enslavement for the masses. These battles over the dimensions of what we might now call human development were not easily won, and the fight remains far from over. In this long struggle, there are always, as Albert Hirschman noted, reactionary setbacks and counter thrusts (Hirschman 1991). The extent to which free-market capitalism was presumed to be capable eradicating poverty was controversial in 1800, and it remains so in 2000. Terrifying twenty-first century global inequalities, at a moment of enormous technological vitality and overwhelming environmental risks have, in fact, reposed the question with a compelling urgency.

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2. Development in Question

„[Modernity] is a mode of vital experience ... that is shared by men and women all over the world today. To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world – and at the same time that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are" (Marshall Berman 1982).

In view of the very recalcitrance of poverty in a world of unprecedented wealth and inequality, it is to be expected that the very doctrine of development should fall into some disfavor. But what is the nature of this ambivalence over, and indeed for some a wholesale repudiation of, developmentalism, and what is the shape and color of the alternatives against which a failed development project is counterposed?

It is perhaps a sign of our times that any discussion of reimagining development or development alternatives in the 1990's begins with the word, with language and with discourse. And from there it is a very short step to the „idea" of poverty, to the „invention" and social construction of development, and, within a cybercultural moment, to the virtuality of everything (to Baudrillard's (1983 p. 115) Nietzschean cry: „down with all hypotheses that have allowed a belief in the true world"). Alternatives, like everything else, can be imagined at will. Perhaps it is worth recalling that Marx who wrote, with imaginaries and futures on *his* mind, to a comrade in The Hague to the effect that all such conferences and congresses extolling the virtues of a communist utopia were „useless and harmful" unless „directly related to the conditions existing in this or that particular nation" (Marx and Engels 1955). Alternatives must be built *with*, not on, the ruins of capitalist modernization – a conundrum that Falk (1966) calls „rooted utopianism".

The intellectual field which constitutes the new critiques of development – one thinks of the work of Arturo Escobar, Gustavo Esteva, and Wolfgang Sachs and the new *Post development reader* as its compendium (Rahnema 1997) – is complex and differentiated, replete with the language of crisis, failure, apocalypse and renewal, and most especially of subaltern insurgencies which are purportedly the markers of new histories, social structures and political subjectivities (Pieterse 1996, Corbridge 1998). The Delhi Center for Developing Societies – to invoke one such important and visible cluster of erstwhile anti-development Jacobins and latterly referred to by Dallmayr (1996) as a Third World Frankfurt School – includes among its pantheon the likes of Ashis Nandy, Rajni Kothari and Shiv Visvanathan who in their own way represent a veritable heteroglossia of alternative voices from the South encompassing a massive swath of intellectual and political territory on which there is often precious little agreement. I have chosen, however, to provide a perhaps questionable unity to these critiques – drawn variously from post-marxism, ecofeminism, narrative analysis, postructuralism, postcolonial theory, and postmodernism[7] – by emphasizing their confluences around development as a flawed, in some quarters a catastrophically failed, modernist project.[8] Much but by no means all of this critique draws sustenance from the idea of the third leg of modernity – the dark side of modernity and the Enlightenment which produced the disciplines and normalized subjects – as much as by the Marxian leg of capitalist exploitation and the Weberian (and Habermasian) leg of the colonization of the lifeworld by monetization, rationalization, calculation and bureaucratization. This tale of disenchantment carries much of the tenor, tone and timbre of ear-

7 Much of this literature is drawn together in Rahnema (1997) and Sachs (1992). The work of the so-called Delhi School (see Nandy 1987, Kothari 1988) is also key as is Schuurman (1993) and Booth (1994). See also Watts (1995).

8 This disenchantment is not, of course, the prerogative or monopoly of the subalterns and their organic intellectuals. In the celebration of the 50th anniversary of Indian Independence, Prime Minister Gujral's address struck a note of total pessimism in his reference to the hopes and idealism of the past having been „squandered" (The Manchester Guardian, August 24th 1997, p. 5).

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lier critiques of development – most vividly of the 1960's but also of the 1890's and earlier as Michael Cowen and Robert Shenton have admirably demonstrated in *Doctrines of development* (Cohen and Shenton 1996) – readily apportioning blame to the multinational behemoths of global capitalism. Running across this body of work is the notion of development as an essentially Western doctrine whose normalizing assumptions must be rejected: „it [development] is the problem not the solution" (Rist 1997, p. 196). The sacred cows – for Esteva and Prakash (1998. p. 9–11) they are „the myth of global thinking", „the myth of the universality of human rights", and „the myth of the individual self" – must be substituted by what two of the post-development field's key voices have called „grassroots post-modernism". To say there is much hazy utopianism and populist sentimentalizing here is something of an understatement but, as Lehmann (1997) has noted, the critiques reserve their most virulent prose for the development establishment – the development business – itself. Much of this work rightly takes on the professions of development, proposing ethnographies of those development institutions which in the name of building freedoms (from hunger, from oppression, from arbitrary rule) create forms of classification, exclusion, individuation, normalization and discipline: in short, the conversion of „a dream into a nightmare".[9] Globalization – the dialectic of indigenization and cosmopolitanism – now projects Foucault's *The birth of the clinic* onto an unsuspecting Third World. In a world in which discourse seems to carry implausibly robust, powerful and hegemonic efficacy, post-development and alternatives resides in the hybrid, in critical traditionalism, in strategic essentialism – in the „discursive insurrection" of the Third World [this is Escobar citing Valentine Mudimbe].

Is this new deconstruction and reimagining of development really a distinctively original vision? What sort of vantage point does it provide for a post-development imaginary? To employ Arturo Escobar's own language in representing 1950's development economics, what sort of „world as a picture" is contained within the scopic regime of alternatives to development? One the one hand there is – as Lehmann (1997) shrewdly observes – a certain sense of 1960's *déjà vu.* A number of accounts of globalized political economy in this work – inspite of its aversion to metanarratives and totalizing history – rests clumsily on a blunt, undifferentiated account of world capitalism, in which institutions like the World Bank have untrammeled hegemonic power, and *the* Third World appears as a monolithic, caricatured and often essentialized realm of at worst normalized subjects and at best hybridized, subaltern emancipatory potential. It is surely appropriate to ask whether Gellner's (1979) Big Ditch has simply been replaced by the Big Panopticon?

There is an historical repetition of another sort of course which resides in the contradictory experience of capitalist modernity itself. The creative destruction of capitalist development has, as Berman (1982) notes, typically produced the experience of, and the reactions to, the solid melting into air. Modernity *contains* the tragedy of underdevelopment: development and its alternatives – the millenarian populists, the romantics – are dialectically organized oppositions within the history of modernity. This is not to simply fold the current antipathy to development into the grand, master narrative of modernity, but to observe that there is a danger of not learning from history, of loosing touch with the roots of our own modernity, of not recognizing that modernity in any case cannot be unproblematically located in the West, and of not seeing development and its alternatives as oppositions that contain the other (Harvey 1996).

9 Escobar (1995, p. 4). James Scott (1998) provides a complementary critique seeing in „high modernism" the desire to link the high ideals of developmentalism with the needs of states to be legible. The result is the crushing of all sense of popular creativity and the loss of metis, the sorts of subaltern practice that might hold out alternative models of human advancement.

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What *is* different from the 1960's crisis of development is the degree to which the state as a necessary and appropriate vehicle for national aspirations, and the universalistic (and anti-imperialistic) claims for liberation are no longer axiomatic and taken for granted. Locality, culture, authenticity are the forms of identification which stand in opposition to states, and the very fictions of the nationstate and nationalism are supplanted by what Lehmann (1997) calls „multi-national populist subcultures" in search of cultural difference [„cultural difference is at the root of postdevelopment" as Escobar (1995, p. 225) puts it][10]. One might say that the practical and strategic content of this vision is rooted firmly in the soil of civil society rather than in the state or market. But it is civil society of a particular sort: of grassroots movements, of subaltern knowledge, of cultural economics (in which to again return to Escobar, the economy is „not principally a material entity" (Escobar 1995, p. 59)), of hybrid autopoetic politics, of the defense of the local, of cybercultural posthumanism. Much less is said about the civil society that Jeffrey Alexander refers to as countervailing processes of decivilization, polarization and violence (Alexander 1995, p. 101) – which are typically modern themselves.

What I find striking about much of the more recent critiques of development is the following (if I may be permitted a brief shopping list):

- the curious, and perhaps appropriately ironic, extent to which a post-modern or post-structural sensibility is attached to claims and critiques of extraordinary totalizing power, certainty and rectitude (replete with its own essentialisms, its own magisterial claims, and its own antipathy to forms of universalistic liberal rights upon which its own position is typically predicated). Development, as Escobar has it, is „a historically *singular* experience" (Escobar 1995, p. 10, my emphasis).
- the extent to which the unalloyed celebration of popular energies of grassroots movements is not subject to the sort of hypercritical discourse analysis which might permit an understanding of their achievements, their political strategies, the limits of their horizons and vision.
- how there is a curious confluence between elements of the neo-liberal counter revolution [the World Bank's account, for example, of Africa's post-colonial modernization failure, its anti-statism and the need to harness the energies of „the people"] and the uncritical celebration, and often naive acceptance, of post-development's new social movements and of civil society itself.
- how the important critique of economic reduction and class determinism (the Marxian master narrative) – and it should be added the deconstruction of the free market myopia (the Smithian master narrative) – has produced, to quote Stuart Hall, not alternative ways of thinking about economic questions but instead „a massive, gigantic and eloquent disavowal" (Hall 1996, p. 258).

In making these abbreviated assessments of a complex and diverse field, I am simply attempting to position myself in relation to other discussions of imagining, or what I prefer to call *reworking* (Watts 1995), development. Such an imaginative effort must come, in my view, from within the complex and contradictory experiences of modernity (cf. Berman). And implicit in this judgment is a belief, if I may quote Anderson (1994), that the Enlightenment in all of its complexity and depth, must be defended and developed. And it is in this sense, among others, that we might profitably return to Malthus and Marx as exemplars of Enlightenment, not to simply build a bridge to the eighteenth (and nineteenth) century to replicate that time but to re-examine, as Postman (1999, p. 20) notes, much that is worthwhile about the modern world.

10 There is strong continuity here between Escobar and the cultural emphasis in the work of Kothari (1988) (and his stress on alternative modes of thought) and in Ashis Nandy"s (1987) work on „cultural frames" and critical traditionalism.

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3. Development and the Great Transformation

„Pauperism and political economy together form form of an indivisible whole: the discovery of society" (Karl Polanyi 1947).

Malthus was born in 1766, the son of a liberal English country gentleman whose liberalism – Rousseau and his mistress dined at the family house, the Rookery, near Dorking – he bequeathed to Thomas through an education within the dissenter's tradition. He graduated in mathematics from Jesus College, Cambridge and was subsequently elected a fellow in 1793, the same year that he took orders in the Anglican Church. He published his second essay on population (vastly expanded and less polemical) in 1803, the same year he became Rector of Walesby in Lincolnshire.

As befits such a controversial figure, Malthus's ideas and his life history, are steeped in invective, misrepresentation and mythology. Malthus's personal influence was probably at its height in Britain in the second decade of the nineteenth century when the debate over the abolition of the Poor Laws was at its most intense but the suturing of his name to any discussion of demographic growth and poverty has persisted in a way which exceeds the legacies of many of his great contemporaries – Adam Smith, David Ricardo, David Hume, William Godwin, and Tom Paine.[11] Malthus was manifestly staid in his life and behavior and made every effort to present his ideas as model of balanced and reasonable argument – what we might now call logical empiricism. But it was inevitable that the polemical nature of his population essay – whose argument changed radically in its subsequent editions – produced an acrimonious debate quite at odds with the image of the subdued clergyman. Coleridge claimed „the stupid ignorance of the man", Shelley called him a „eunuch and a tyrant" and William Hazlitt referred to the Essay as „the most complete specimen of illogical, crude and contradictory reasoning that perhaps was ever offered to the notice of the public".[12] Rumors circulated that he was the father of eleven girls (he had two daughters and a son), and that he was born, appropriately, on St. Valentine's Day (actually he was born the day before). His ideas, not unexpectedly, came to be associated with the birth control movement, with Social Darwinism and of course, in altogether different register, with Marxism.

What concerns me here is not the veracity of his demographic claims or laws[13] – was he or will he be *right* ? – or for that matter his sanity, but the larger question of the characterization and reception of his work. Here, if I may digress for a moment, I wish to invoke the name of Adam Smith (with whom Malthus differed on a number of issues but who was the other central figure in the hegemony of political economy in the first two decades of the nineteenth century). Smith, it seems to me, reveals how careful one must be in accepting interpretations of theoretical works as though they are immutable texts, as though there is only one Adam Smith to be received. Smith has of course figured centrally in our own society in the two

11 His book on population was the most widely read tract in the wake of Adam Smith's *Wealth of nations*.

12 Malthus it needs to be said gave as good as he got, refering to Godwin's ideas as „puerile" and to Condorcet's utopianism as „absolutely nugatory".

13 It seems to me to be perfectly obvious that (i) Malthus was writing about overpopulation at a time and place (early nineteenth century England) distinguished by the fact that his ideas did not hold there, and (ii) that both his claims about the relation between fertility and poverty and between the relative rates of growth of population and poverty („the power of population is indefinitely greater than the power of the earth to produce subsistence") have been shown in the period since he wrote to be quite wrong. I have spent much of my life working on questions of food security and famine in various parts of the Third World, and the Malthusian theoretical apparatus has – for my part at least – been singularly unhelpful. Furthermore in his later writing especially, Malthus bordered on the mordantly wacky, arguing in the fifth edition of his *Essay on the principle of population* (1817) that „to act consistently ... we should facilitate ... the operations of nature in producing mortality .... Instead of recommending cleanliness to the poor we should encourage the contrary ... but above all we should reprobate specific remedies for ravaging diseases".

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decades since the so-called neo-liberal counter-revolution led by Reagan and Thatcher. Laissez-faire, the invisible hand and free markets are central to the conservative hegemony and the reconstruction of the post-war Fordist pact. But in what sense was Smith a voice of conservative economics? Take for example the following point made by the Beatrice Webb almost a century ago:

> „The Political Economy of Adam Smith was the scientific expression of the impassioned crusade of the eighteenth century against class tyranny and the oppression of the Many by the Few. By what silent revolution of events, by what unconscious transformation of thought did it change itself into the „Employers Gospel" of the nineteenth century" (cited in Rothschild 1992, p. 88).

Emma Rothschild, David McNally and Christopher Herbert among others have all rightly made the point that Adam Smith was considered a friend of the poor, a subversive who wished to laicize morality and a voice for liberty and freedom in the widest sense (Rothschild 1995, McNally 1993, Herbert 1991). Yet by 1800 many of these ideas had been discarded and indeed it was Malthus who was a key figure in the ascendance of a particular form of political economy. Smith had been transformed into a hero of commerce in the course of the nineteenth century. He has been transformed again in our time into a voice for unbridled capitalist accumulation inspite of the fact, as Herbert (1991) shows, that Smithian political economy stands awkwardly in relation to the unfettered desires of accumulation and competition. Smith *feared* such desire since it threatened – as other critics of the market such as Schumpeter (1942) had believed – society itself; it was the self-destructive impulses capable of unleashing anti-social forces which, in Smith's view, only a robust civil society could control.

One must be careful therefore of perpetrating such „silent revolutions" for Malthus. In this sense to see him as a voice of political reaction, or some simple mouthpiece of the landed gentry, or as a pessimist is quite unhelpful.[14] All of these judgments are of course colored by the fact that his ideas – to be generous – „evolved" and changed over time.[15] All of which is to say that it is both true, and yet incomplete and overly simplified, to suggest that Malthus's views on population and poverty were derived from the vantage point of landed property or that they simply endorse bourgeois interest. I do wish to argue that Malthus is a voice of *reaction* – recognizing that his reactionary views necessitated reform, and indeed a quite radical reform by which the moral economy of the eighteenth century was displaced by new forms of liberal governance and forms of personal responsibility. Malthus's concern with political liberty is, as with all of his work, seized by a sort of paternalism and an irreducible class fear. To make these points clear, I wish to approach Malthus, however, from a quite different perspective than that of population narrowly understood, and put his ideas to work in a quite different setting and time. I wish to begin with Polanyi's (1947, p. 103) observation that I referred to earlier, that the debates over Speen-

14 This is a criticism that I think holds for Harvey's (1974) otherwise exemplary essay on Malthus, and Smith and Ricardo.

15 For example, his pessimism of the first essay is subsequently superseded by a more optimistic tenor in later editions which recognizes the role of moral restraint, „irregular practices" (birth control) and education of the working classes as „preventive checks", potentially unshackling the fetters of overpopulation. Likewise his writing on population is shaped by overpopulation (the Darwinian Malthus) but his *Principles of political economy* (published in 1820) turns on the problem of underconsumption and ineffective demand (the „Keynesian" Malthus)! His theodicy of the first essay actually ran afoul of the Church, not least because he seemed to argue that natural laws superseded civilizational norms. And not least while his tough love approach to the abolition of poor law reeked of a high Tory elitism, he could also speak in the strongest terms for universal free education and civil liberty: as he put it „No people can be much accustomed to form plans for the future who do not feel assured that their industrious exertions will be allowed free scope .... *Civil liberty cannot be permanently secured without political liberty*" (emphasis mine).

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hamland (the poor law reforms following the hardships of the early 1790's) – what he called pauperism and political economy – „together form a great whole – the discovery of society" (Polanyi 1947, p. 103). The figure of the pauper was in other words part of a conversation – in which Malthus was a central presence – in which poverty was constituted along with a form of liberal governance (Dean 1991). In a sense then population per se was less central than the shift from an Elizabethan moral economy (a paternalist system of policing to relieve and employ the poor as Edward Thompson (1991) sees it) to a liberal mode of governance fostering a space of individual autonomy and minimal state action. The conversation represented a break with „the discourse of the poor" as Dean (1991, p. 18) calls it along three dimensions:

1. the emergence of a strong abolitionist strain toward the poor laws
2. the insistence on voluntary charity as morally superior to the compulsion inherent in the poor rates
3. the substitution of make-work schemes by various contributory methods (life annuities, insurance plans and mutual assistance)

Implicit in the shift from Speenhamland in 1795 to the Repeal of the Poor Laws in 1834 is a parallel tectonic movement, namely a redefinition of the field of action of the state: a withdrawal of the state responsibility for relief to categories of the propertyless, and the centralization and bureaucratization of the state apparatus of relief. To the extent that this was part of a sometimes ascerbic debate over ethics, the historic role of Malthus was to root them in the overwhelming bioeconomic laws of population and subsistence. The figure of the pauper and political economy was of course, as Lord Cockburn put in 1868, „soaked in one event" – the Revolution in France. The Malthusian question and the poverty debate can only be grasped then as one contentious pole within the political arena of what I shall call, following David McNally, „popular radicalism". Paine's *The rights of man* appeared in 1791 and it is to be recalled that it was enormously popular selling 200,000 copies within a year. *The rights of man* politicized poverty – it accepted the logic of the free market but provided a program for political reform. The emergence of two radical societies in Britain – the Constitutional Society and the London Corresponding Society – can be seen as part of a stream of radical English Jacobinism, a continuous revolutionary-republican underground which runs from the mid 1790's to Chartism. The dearth of 1795–6 and the riots and grain seizures which it generated marked a forward surge of this Jacobin sentiment.

At the heart of the popular radicalism and its opposition to political economy was a debate within the English ruling class between those who sought to buttress traditional obligations to the poor as a means of circumventing mass upheaval, and those who favored jettisoning such self defeating efforts in place of the abolition of the poor laws (and in effect new institutionalized forms of personal responsibility and an effective national labor market). Malthus enters into this fray quite explicitly. It is to be recalled that his Essay was addressed explicitly to Condorcet and Godwin (and later Robert Owen and the Spenceans), two utopian/anarchist/socialists for whom the perfectibility of humankind lay in the possibility of the social reform of institutions. Malthus attempted to dispense with both radical utopianism of the Godwin sort and Adam Smith's sense of improvement in his irrefutable logic of population always trumping progress.

Malthus was the scientific theorist of antiradicalism opposing not simply the French Revolution – „the fermentation of disgusting passions" as he put it – but also the very idea of a *right to subsistence* (and by extension a Painite theory of natural rights). Malthus had no difficulty in accepting the incursions on civil liberties in the name of social order – he would rather submit to „great oppression than give the slightest countenance to popular tumult" – and by the same token rejected the right to subsistence as a „delusive argument". It was only fear of insecurity – driven by population growth – which could act as a spur to industry, indeed to progress. What troubled Malthus was precisely

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that the poor laws were „a kind of systematic and certain relief on which the poor could confidently depend" (it was a sort of right). And this confidence carried two enormous burdens: first, it was antithetical to the spur of fear and insecurity (of the disciplining effects of the labor market), and second it encouraged the poor to stand up for the subversive notion of the right to food. The renewal of the poor law debate between 1830 and 1834 was in this sense about a simmering crisis of social control and class hegemony. Malthus's achievement was to construct a discourse of poverty which challenged the radical Painites and their theories of rights and to this extent reflects both a voice of the status quo (the structures of society will always remain unchanged he said) and a fear of the enfranchisement of the popular classes (of social disorder from below). Fear said Adam Smith was typically „the wretched instrument of government"; for Malthus state oppression and violence were always a necessary source of order. The „heart of flint" that Godwin saw in Malthus was perhaps less about population as such than Malthus's reluctance to admit – as Condorcet and Godwin foresaw – that there were no natural laws as such but rather a process of perpetual political consultation including consultation of people without political power. This insight stands at the center of *The Communist manifesto* of course.

In the same way that Malthus's predictions about population growth and vice, misery and starvation have been shown to be erroneous, so in turn is Marx's claim, vividly articulated in the Manifesto, that capitalism's grave will be dug by the proletariat. The events of 1989 have made his prediction even more of an abject failure, notwithstanding the fact that there are those who properly claim that Marx himself would have predicted the demise of actually existing socialism! Marx did not, of course, like Malthus – he saw him as „mean" and an „apologist" for the ruling class – but he did believe that Malthus had identified with great clarity one of the great contradictions of capitalism, namely between pauperism and effective demand. Whatever its predictive failures as regards politics and revolution, the Manifesto was remarkably prescient as regards capitalism expansion, circuits of accumulation and what we would now call globalization:

> „The need for constantly expanding markets chases the bourgeoisie all over the surface of the globe. It must settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere. ... The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country. ... All established national industries have been destroyed or are being destroyed. They are dislodged by new industries whose introduction becomes a life and death question for all civilized nations. ... In place of the old wants, satisfied by the production of the home country, are new wants, requiring for their satisfaction the products of distant lands and climes. In place of the old local and national seclusion, universal interdependence of nations" (Marx and Engels 1998, p. 39).

The bourgeoisie, Marx and Engels went on to say, „draws even the most barbarian nations into civilization ... the cheap prices of its commodities are the heavy artillery with which it batters down all Chinese walls...". There is little here that Wall Street investment bankers would take exception to!

But predictions aside, what is the relevance of the Manifesto for my discussion of alternatives? The moral outrage that courses through the brilliant analysis of the capitalist integument – „no other nexus between man and man than naked self interest" – is put to the service of, to employ the language of Hobsbawm (1998), invoking choices and of political possibilities. At its centre is „the winning of democracy" – that is to say a commitment to politics even if the outcome might be not the revolutionary constitution of society but rather „common ruin". Politics was about a call for new social relations, about expanding and deepening the scope of politics, about winning the battle for democracy through various forms of collective action. And yet from the vantage point of the present, talk of democracy conveys a profound sense of incompletion. As Anderson (1998, p. 77) puts it:

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„Democracy is indeed now more widespread than ever. But it is also thinner – as if the more universally available it becomes, the less active meaning it retains."

Marx and Malthus are ideological contraries in all manner of ways but they both alert us, in different registers, to the centrality of civil and political liberties, and to the struggles over matters of right – and the right to subsistence in particular. They take us back to classical political economy. They both wrote at a time when, to return to Karl Polanyi, political economy and the pauper was about the *discovery of society*. The existence of mass poverty and hunger in the world is to say that the discovery of society is still in train. It returns us once more to the question of how questions of political struggle, enfranchisement and matters of rights – the retention of „active meaning" as Anderson says – bear upon the question of vulnerability among the poor, and to the ways in which hunger can be eradicated in the context of a world market which „creates a world after its own image", battering down the Chinese walls to compel nations on pain of extinction to adopt forms of the market economy. To put the matter starkly, the eighteenth and nineteenth century debates and struggles over popular radicalism – in which both Malthus and Marx participated from different positions – represented a call for *an expanded sense of politics, a deepening of democratic rights*, and *an exploration of governance*, through autonomous self-governing networks of actors.

4. Development, Popular Radicalism and Freedom

„To break through barriers of stagnation in a backward country, to ignite the imaginations of men ... a stronger medicine is needed than the promise of better allocation of resources or even the lower price of bread .... What is needed ... is faith – faith in the words of Saint-Simon that the golden age lies not behind but ahead ... [this] requires a New Deal of the emotions." (Alexander Gerschenkron 1952)

Marx and Malthus's engagement with the rights of the poor, with popular radicalism, with democracy, and the wretched power of the state, allows us to return to development anew, not through an abandonment of it or through a disavow of the economic. Rather it is to return to the exploration of progress and politics that was the hallmark of the Enlightenment. Here the reference point must be Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen and his notions of *capability*, and different forms of life (Sen 1992, 1999). The life a person leads can be seen as a combination of various „doings" and „beings" (what Sen calls „functionings"). These functionings vary from such elementary matters as being well nourished to more complex doings or beings such as having self-respect or participation in civic life. The capability of a person is therefore the various combinations of such functionings that are available; that is, the freedom a person has to lead one kind of life. Focusing on capability implies less an emphasis on goods *per se* as much as what they enable a person to do; it also means downplaying the utility associated with doing it. Poverty is not about low income or low utility (or the failure to meet basic needs of specified commodities) but about a capability failure. To have an inadequate income is not a matter of falling below some specified poverty line but to have an income below what is adequate for generating, via functionings, the appropriate capabilities for the person in question (Drèze and Sen 1989). Poverty eradication must address the root causes of the problem: namely capabilities. At its core is the creation of an enabling environment for a human development capable of meeting citizenship rights. Poverty eradication is, in this sense, about the acquisition of a full sense of human security, or more properly citizenship (Dasgupta 1993).

By emphasizing the question of politics and rights there is a way in which poverty and capability can be drawn into a more embracing theory of human needs – a vision of development in my view – in grafting Sen's ideas onto those of Doyal and Gough (1991) from their book *A theory of human need* (Figure 1). In this model all persons seek to avoid serious harm which prevents them from pursuing their vision of the good life, whatever it may be. To pursue pre-

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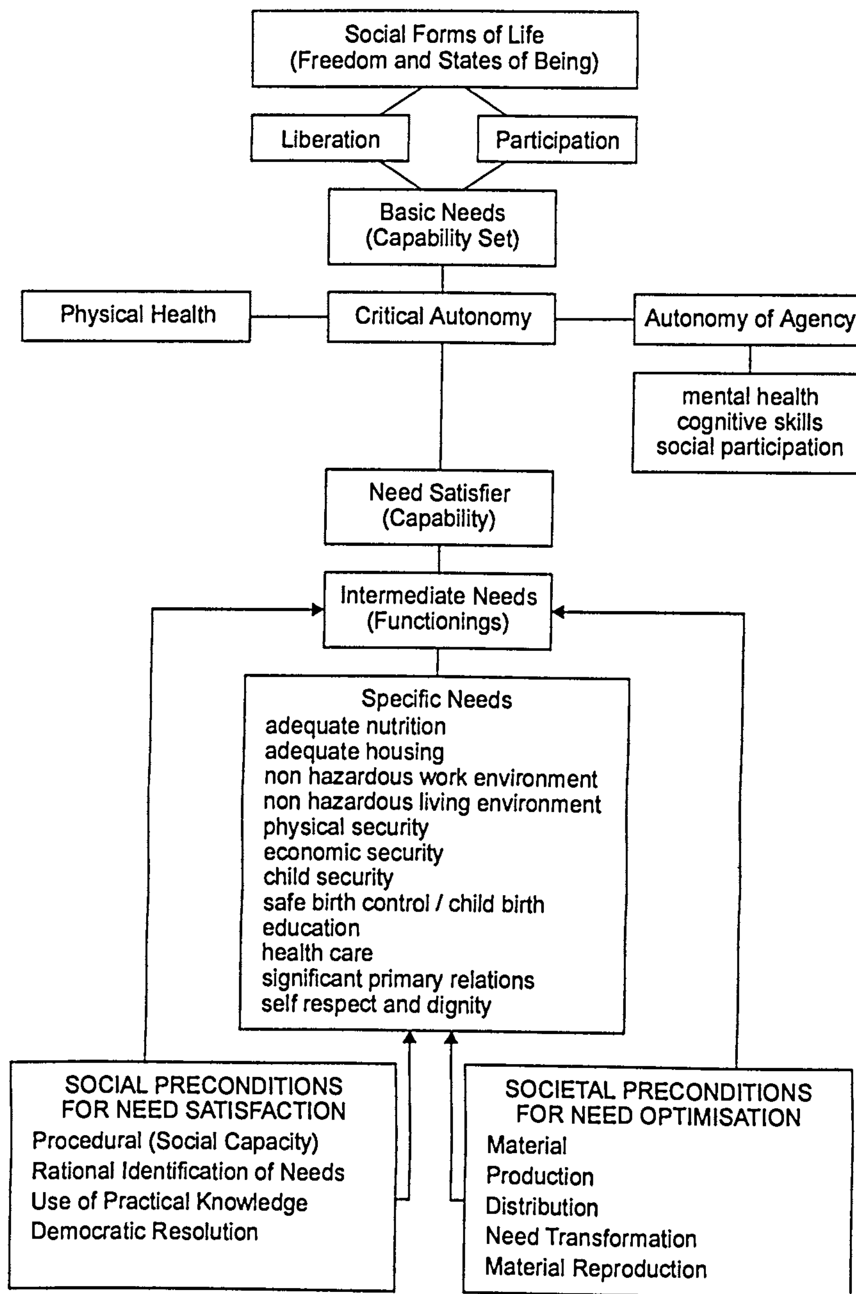

Fig 1:
A model of human need satisfaction

Key to Figure 1:
Basic needs are the universal prerequisites for successful and critical participation in one's social form of life. [The freedom to lead different types of life is reflected in the person's capability set; capability is a set of

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functionings representing the various alternative combinations of beings and doings any one combination of which a person can choose. Capability is a space of functionings which defines the wellness of a person's state of being]

Universal prerequisites are physical health and autonomy of agency i.e. the capacity to make informed choices about what should be done and how to go about doing it. [Capability achievement entails the promotion of well being and overall agency goals]

Universal satisfier characteristics (intermediate needs) are those properties of goods, services, activities and relationships which enhance physical health and human autonomy in all cultures. [Functionings represent parts of a state of a person – in particular the various things that he or she manages to do or be in leading a life. The different functionings of a person will be the constituent elements of the person's being seen from the perspective of his/her welfare]

Universal satisfier characteristics can be regarded as goals for which specific satisfiers can act as the means. [Individuals may differ a good deal from each other in the weights they attach to these different functionings such as escaping morbidity, mobility, self respect and so on]

Source: Sen (1992), Doyal and Gough (1991).

ferred forms of social life – what Amartya Sen calls freedom or well-being – presumes that persons can participate in the forms of life in which they find themselves (Cohen 1994). Basic human needs are those universal preconditions for a successful and critical participation in a form of social life – what Sen calls a capability set. In Sen's language, the freedom to lead different types of life is reflected in the person's capability set which contains a number of functionings representing the various alternative combinations of beings and doings any one combination of which a person can choose. Capability is a space of functionings which defines a person's state of being. However these ideas are expressed, the fundamental prerequisites can be seen as: *physical health* and *critical autonomy* (i.e. the capacity to make informed choices about what should be done and how to go about doing it). These basic needs can be met in a variety of ways – what can be called satisfiers or functionings. Universal satisfier characteristics (intermediate needs) are those properties of goods, services, activities and relationships which enhance physical health and human autonomy in all cultures. Functionings represent parts of a state of a person – in particular the various things that he or she manages to do or be in leading a life. The different functionings of a person will be the constituent elements of the person's being seen from the perspective of his/her welfare. Universal satisfier characteristics – which can be regarded as goals for which specific satisfiers can act as the means – contribute in other words to improved physical health and critical autonomy. The characteristics of these need satisfiers or functionings are:

* adequate nutrition and water
* adequate housing
* non hazardous work and living environments
* security in childhood
* adequate health care
* significant primary relationships/self respect and dignity
* economic and physical security
* safe birth control and childbearing
* appropriate basic and cross cultural education

These needs if they are to be met – and hence if poverty is to be eradicated – demand intermediate needs or functionings, that is *procedural* and *material* preconditions for enhancing need satisfaction. The former relate to the ability of the poor to identify and appropriate needs satisfiers in a rational way and for there to be the means available for political participation and claims making whereby people express their felt needs and dissatisfactions – which itself implies forms of democratic resolution (Fig 1). The latter refers to the capacity of economic systems to produce and deliver necessary and appropriate need satisfiers and to transform them into final need satisfaction. There is a strong moral case for codifying these intermediate needs into state guaranteed rights (Ghai and Hewitt de Alcantara 1994).

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Development in my view stands at the center of a theory of needs. On the one hand, poverty is the result of capability failure – the failure to secure the universal prerequisites for critical and successful participation in one's social form of life. On the other, poverty as a failure of human needs provision identifies the failure of universal procedural and material preconditions for enhancing need satisfaction. Capability and the theory of basic human needs has identified the societal preconditions which are necessary for optimizing need satisfaction (negative and positive political rights) and for securing the material preconditions for basic needs provision (Gore 1995).

Development is always about much more than income and consumption. And poverty alleviation is necessarily about much more than a wage packet and better food supply. But the likelihood of the poor being such beneficiaries necessarily takes us well beyond labor and food markets, and into the sphere of the social contract, governance and democracy and onto a wider sense of well being which rests on the productive energies and capacities of the poor. At its core is a strong sense of society: of a vibrant civil society in which community action is encouraged, grassroots mobilization facilitated, and the popular energies and creativities of the poor are unleashed and necessarily of what Gerschenkron calls faith. It is also a vision of society in which development typically occurs through dialogue, negotiation and the notion of irreducible rights. But the danger of conceiving development as dialogue and negotiation – even if the powers of rights driven social movements are upheld and enforced – is that development's primary reality remain struggle, strife and conflict. Work and security cannot be provided without infringing on massive corporate or state power, any more than gender equity can be realized without confronting the vast economic costs of maternity. Here as Perry Anderson has noted, the model of dialogue, and even social movement, may be a lure, a siren which calls up the dark side of modernity (Anderson 1994, p. 43). What sorts of faith – what sort of New Deal of the emotions – might be capable of encapsulating the realities of strife and of constituting a model of dialogue? I would return again, casting an eye back to Malthus, Marx and the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, to the emancipatory potential of rights and the challenges to governance which they might liberate.

It is often suggested that this sort of discussion of development and need suffers from a surfeit of universalism and, as Aronson puts it, an abstract conception of needs (Aronson 1995). My own position however is similar to Nussbaum who argues that social science, if it is to be critical of oppression, must be essentialist to invoke common extra-discursive capacities for human suffering; and because these inescapable and basic needs „allow in its design for multiple specification" (Nussbaum 1992, p. 224). In this regard, my model of needs is not incompatible with Nancy Fraser's account in *Unruly practices* (Fraser 1989) of „needs talk", that is to say the politics of need interpretation through discourse. Needs will always need to be politically validated; they will be interpreted and struggles over meaning and definition will ensue, and there will be conflicts over provision (that is to say satisfaction). Like Fraser, I take it as axiomatic that these needs – always marked by difference, relativity and variation in the discursive realm of needs talk – as justified claims must be translated into social rights (Parijs 1992).[16]

5. Development and Rights: The Case of Food Security

> Let us sit down to eat
> With all those who haven't eaten,
> Let us spread great tablecloths,
> Put salt in the lakes of the world
> Set up planetary bakeries,

16 It is unclear to me how a strong social constructivist sense of needs drawn from poststructuralism can address the fact that a radical humanism *requires* a form of essentialism and universalism, and does not dispense with it in the name of cultural authenticity.

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Tables with strawberries in snow,
And a plate like the moon itself
From which we will all eat.
For now I ask no more
Than the justice of eating.

Jorge Luis Borges, „The great tablecloth"

Much of this discussion has necessarily been abstract and I want to conclude with an illustration of how rights talk, popular radicalism, and rethinking governance might be made to speak to a concrete development problem. I shall take the question of food security and famine[17], and turn again to the work of Amartya Sen (1981), with the intention of trying to show how Sen's own brilliant exegesis on capabilities and needs, can be deepened and extended along the lines I have, in an attenuated form, derived from Marx and Malthus. Central to Sen's account of why food insecurity occurs is the process of transforming endowments into entitlements, so-called E-mapping. The sorts of entitlements which Sen details are rewards to labor, production, inheritance or asset transfer, and state provisioning (transfers) typically through social security and food relief policies (i.e. anti-famine policies of which the Indian Famine Codes are customarily seen as a model). Insofar as an individual's entitlement set is the consequence of E-mapping on the endowment set, entitlements can only change through transformations in the endowment or E-mapping. Famine occurs through a collapse or adverse change in endowment or E-mapping or both. Entitlement, in contrast to other theories, draws our attention to such variables as ownership patterns, unemployment, relative prices, wage-price ratios, and so on.

Deploying entitlement in this way, Sen is able to show how famines may occur without a decline in food availability and how entitlements attached to individuals through a generalization of the exchange economy – through markets – may shift in complex ways among differing classes, occupational groups and sections of the population. In Bengal in 1943 the events of the war years displaced entitlements of certain occupational classes with devastating consequences (over 2.5 million died in 1943–44). Food did not move into famine-stricken Wollo in Ethiopia in 1973 because food prices were not in general higher in Wollo despite starvation since purchasing power of the local population of peasants and workers had fallen with food output decline. Conversely a famine „*need not* necessarily occur even when there is a large decline of food availability" (Sen 1993, p. 36–37). Famines can then be seen to have differing dynamics: what he calls „boom" and „slump" famines expressing the conditions under which entitlements may fail. Sen is concerned to demonstrate that food supply is not unimportant. The entitlements themselves are influenced *inter alia* by the food system through changes in direct ownership or through contributing to food price rises. The real danger resides in concentrating exclusively on food production and availability which can often lull governments into soporific complacency, what Sen calls „Malthusian optimism":

> „Focusing attention on the Malthusian variable of food output per head, the food situation has often appeared to be comfortable even when there have been good economic grounds for expecting terrible troubles for particular occupational groups ...." (Sen 1984, p. 524).

Sen was of course addressing Third World conditions but the insight that E-mapping can change in a way in which hunger and even famine may occur amidst plenty, has a particular resonance in a number of post-socialist and advanced capitalist states. A concern with entitlement failure in market circumstances leads Sen to emphasize public action through entitlement *protection* (state funded famine protection through food for work or public food distribution) *and promotion* (a public social security net).

17 This focus on food, from my vantage point, is entirely appropriate both because it is central to the very idea of development as freedom, and because my own learning and understanding of the matter has benefitted enormously from my colleague and friend at the University of Heidelberg Professor Hans-Georg Bohle.

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The power of Sen's analysis derives in my view from the fact that it sees the poor and the economically marginal in terms of a set of endowments and the mapping – a complex and largely unexplored term in Sen's corpus – by which they gain command over food. It situates hunger, then, on a landscape, irreducibly social, of the capabilities that individuals, and potentially classes, may mobilize. By examining mapping as an active and transformative process – how the capacity to labor, or access to land can generate an entitlement – it dislodges a concern with output *per se* and focuses on access to and control over food. It offers a *proximate* sort of causal analysis predicated on what immediate or conjunctural forces might shift such forms of access and control and permits a social mapping of such shifts to understand *who* dies or starves (say artisanal craftsmen versus peasants) and *why*. Entitlements – the central mechanism in his intellectual architecture – are individually assigned in virtue of a largely unexamined endowment, and are legally derived from state law (ownership, property rights, contract). Entitlements necessitate making legitimate claims, that is to say, rights resting on the foundations of power (opportunity or actual command) and law (legitimacy and protection).

Running across Sen's scholarship on entitlements, however, are a number of unresolved tensions, a number of which it needs to be said, *contra* his critics, he is acutely sensitive to. Famines have in fact a complex internal architecture, which is to say that the E-mapping is much more complex and dynamic (involving all manner of social, cultural, institutional, and collective actions beyond the entitlements discussed by Sen). E-mapping is a rather passive term for the multiplicity – and the creativity[18] – of coping and adaptive strategies pursued by peasants or petty commodity producers prior to and during a food crisis. In addition, famines must be located historically in terms of the structural tendencies within the political economy, and the crisis proneness of systems of provisioning: proximate causes (Sen's strength) must be distinguished from longer term secular dynamics. A famine is inseparable from the historical processes and tendencies which may, quite literally, manufacture it. It is the relation between the entitlements of the individual and the social group – how are individual (micro) entitlements aggregated for example to account for (macro) class dynamics? – and between the existence of endowments and their social determination which are undeveloped in Sen's corpus. It is not simply that Sen, for example, ignores the role of war in famine genesis – clearly the fundamental cause of famine in much of post-colonial Africa – but that he simply assumes that war displaces production based entitlements which cause food shortage and famine. But war is often about the political *construction* of markets (Waal 1997). The social, historical, and structural character of famine is not reducible to individual entitlements as such.

I want to offer two ways in which Sen's micro-economics of poverty and food might be pushed forward. One accepts the intellectual originality of entitlements as proximate causes of hunger and famine but deepens and extends their definition and deployment. The second avenue focuses on class structure and modes of production – political economy – which helps us understand the mechanisms by which social forces give rise, through the food system, to particular entitlement outcomes and forms of E-mapping. While Sen says that entitlements are in reality a „network of entitlement relations“ (Sen 1981, p. 159) that depend on economic class structure and a mode of production, he pays scant attention to both the forces which cause entitlements to change or come into being, or to how entitlements are protected and/or promoted.

18 It can legitimately be argued that E-mapping is largely formulaic and almost passive in its characterization of the social dynamics of hunger. What the famine work of geographers, and others has done, is to demonstrate the agency and graduated forms of flexibility and choice (constrained but choice nonetheless, even among the poor) with respect to their endowment and the responses to growing food scarcity.

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To begin with entitlements themselves, geographer Gore (1993, p. 433) has noted that command over food depends „*upon something more than legal rights*" (emphasis added). Indeed, what the geographic work on famine and food systems has shown is precisely the panoply of forms of social interaction – the complex patterns of obligation and duty within communities and households, and collectivities – by which command over food is effected (for example redistributive institutions, forms of charity, gift-giving and so on, and the multiple forms of livelihood strategy through which command of food is achieved). In part such rules and norms may be part of a moral economy, in part they may be forms of sociability which reside within civil and associational life but lie, more pertinently, outside of the law narrowly construed. Sen is sensitive to these „social entitlements" but his own empirical approach to famine tends to neglect the ethnographic insights into, for example, household, social structural or community institutions and forms of cultural practice in which command over food may inhere. More importantly, such extended entitlements give reason to question the profoundly individual and legalistic definition of entitlement itself. The legal bias in *Poverty and famines* fails to accommodate the obvious fact that illegal acts (food theft by a peasant from a landlord's granary) may be a form of food security. More precisely, Sen's definition fails to give equal weight to:

- socially determined entitlements (a moral economy, indigenous security institutions)
- non legal entitlements (food riots, demonstrations, theft)
- non-entitlement transfers (charity)

To include the above under the rubric of entitlements – „extended entitlements" is the term Gore deploys – highlights a rather different way of thinking about E-mapping. First, entitlements are socially constructed (not just individually conferred); they are forms of social process and a type of representation. Second, like all forms of representation entitlements are complex congeries of cultural, institutional and political practice which are unstable: that is to say, they are both constituted and reproduced through conflict, negotiation and struggle. Entitlements are, then, political and social achievements which are customarily fought over in the course of modernization. And third, social entitlements confirm Sen's (1981, p. 159) unelaborated observation that the relations between people and food must be grasped as a „*network* of entitlement *relations*" (emphasis added). Food security or famine proneness are the products of historically specific *networks of social entitlements.*

To map such networks, however, requires an adequate theory of entitlements themselves. What are the sources of the entitlements, beyond the fact that they grow in the soil of endowments? Using the work of de Gay Fortmann (1990), one can conceive of a simple mapping along four dimensions:

- Institutions: affiliation to semi-autonomous, rule-making entities in which social networks and positionality determine whether, and what sorts of, entitlements are available.
- Direct Access: direct access to forms of legally derived access which turn on property and contract.
- State: forms of instrumental state law (in Sen social welfare) which identify need and categories of the poor and which in turn are rooted in citizenship rights as a bedrock of the modern nation-state.
- Global Legal Order: forms of humanitarian assistance grounded in human rights discourse and general principles of freedom, equality and solidarity for all people as embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In any setting, the network of entitlements which Sen invokes can be graphically depicted (Fig 2). The strength, depth and density of the entitlements in each of the four realms will of course vary (one could depict this graphically in terms of the size or shape of the triangular space of each broad category of entitlement), and this differing patterning of entitlements shapes what one might call the architecture of

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the „food security system". Put simply, the geometry of the network for a rural worker in Kerala in South India will look very different from a northern Nigerian peasant. In the former a regulated agrarian labor market and forms of institutionalized bargaining between state and landlords provide a wage sensitive to price increases; there is in addition a credible and relatively accountable public distribution system which operates effectively in rural areas; and not least there are a number of regional and local civic institutions which provide credit, food for work and other assistance. For the Nigerian peasant state derived entitlements are almost non existent, direct access to land is compromised by small holdings incapable of providing self sufficiency in staple foods, and local food security turns, in some degree, on his/her positionality with respect to local forms of support through lineages, extended families, village redistributive offices, Islamic alms, and the village moral economy.

Fig 2, in classifying the sources of entitlement, permits a better understanding of both the endowment process and of E-mapping. Endowment embraces not simply assets (land, labor) but *citizenship* (the right to state support), *local group membership* (civic identity in village or community association), and *universal human rights*. The E-mapping then refers to the actual transformative process by which assets, citizenship, and other claims are rendered into effective (i.e. meaningful) entitlement bundles. Put differently, actual state support depends on accountability and transparency (what Sen (1999, p. 15) simply refers to as „democracy". A functioning moral economy rests upon the forms of governance – what others have called social capital – within self-organizing heterarchies (Jessop 1998); humanitarian assistance depends upon the commitment of states and on the politics and accountability of relief agencies. In practice the four sources of entitlement are connected in complex ways. International humanitarian community is unaccountable in part because local states are decrepit and unaccountable. Much famine relief is channeled through state institutions the transparency and credibility of which may be open questions. Whether direct access to resources is safe and reliable may turn in large measure on the role of the state, the powers of the judiciary, or the robustness of civil institutions. Some entitlements in any case are the product of state and civic associations – public-private synergies as Peter Evans calls them (Evans 1996). All of which is to say the network of actually existing entitlements is much more complex than Fig 2 depicts. But posing entitlements in this way gives content to the idea of networks and the sources of the network configuration via the differing sources of power, authority, legitimacy by which the practice of E-mapping actually works out in practice.

The four broad categories of entitlement (and their differing social endowments) raise a number of observations. Firstly, the congeries of social entitlements will be configured in complex bundles in differing settings but they normatively represent what de Waal (1997, pp. 12ff) calls „an anti famine political contract" (what I prefer to call a „food contract"). This contract is both a functional configuration of entitlements to provide food security but also a *political achievement*. Second, *the shape* of the contract will change over time, and as a function of the dynamics of the political economy, forms of political and class conflict, and so on.

Structural adjustment in Africa and the growing privatization of the humanitarian industry for example, has reduced an already minimal set of state-based entitlements, and radically reconfigured the space of humanitarian aid. And third, the network of social entitlements and the food contract it represents delimits a field or social space of food security, or put differently it defines a „space of vulnerability" (Watts and Bohle 1993). Vulnerability is here understood as the risks of exposure and the limited capacities to respond to shocks or crises which precipitate entitlement or E-mapping changes. The network of entitlements is more or less inclusive, more or less robust, more or less reliable and so on. In light of particular perturbations – a drought, an economic recession, price fluctuations, unemployment and so on – one can

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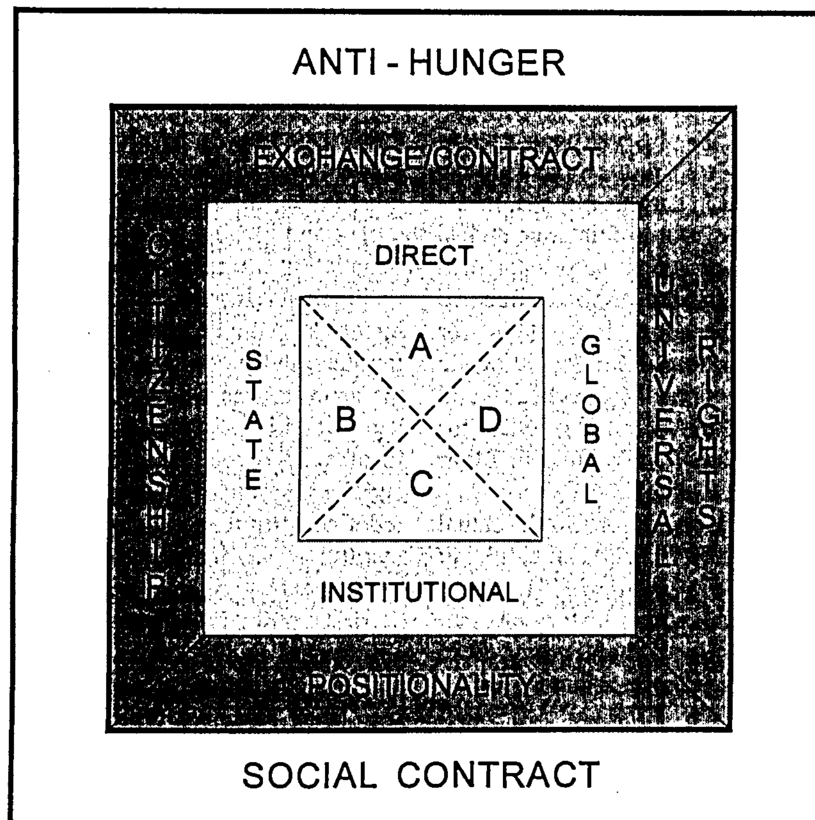

Key: *A* = Direct Entitlements *B* = State Entitlements
C = Institutional Entitlements *D* = Global Entitlements
A-D = Entitlement Space

Fig 2: The network of entitlements

begin to think about those who are structurally vulnerable in relation to the extant networks of entitlements.

Amartya Sen has, of course, linked his account of entitlements to politics both in his work on households – in which he links intra-household allocation questions to differing „perceptions" by household members – and to a general claim about the relations between famine and democracy. But the spheres of both democracy – discussed in large measure as the freedom of the press or more blandly as „public pressure" (Drèze and Sen 1989) – and of politics are typically quite abstract and almost bland in his work. There is for example little in the way of discussion of food riots, or struggles over the social security net, or an examination of the political discourses over the right to food. For this reason, I want to spend a little time invoking two empirical cases of food politics which speak directly to the intersection of democracy, rights and governance (see Mooij 1998, Watts 1992).

The first is drawn from the Indian food system, the Public Distribution System (PDS) and its differential effectiveness in two Indian states: Bihar and Kerala (Mooij 1998). The PDS was set up partly in response to the Bengal famine

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and institutionalized in 1964, as part of the Nehruvian socialist vision, in tandem with the state-run Food Corporation and the Prices Commission. It is a large scale rationing program which accounts for 2.5% of government expenditures and 10–15% of total production of grains. Staples are purchased in surplus regions, transported and stored and sold in fair price shops. By the 1980's 75% of shops were located in rural areas but the quantity of food allocated through the system varied across states – for example, Kerala distributes 63 kg/capita while Punjab accounts for a paltry 1 kg per head – and the „leakage" is also uneven among states (for rice, for example, from 70–80% loss in Bihar and Orissa to 18% in Kerala).

What Mooij's work reveals is how the actual performance of PDS is largely a function of how and whether food is „politicized" (see also Heller 2000). In Kerala a long history of grass roots activism and political mobilization from below has meant that leakage is low (state accountability and popular mobilization are mutually reinforcing) and distribution reaches the proper constituencies with little loss. In Bihar conversely leakage is exceptionally high, beneficiaries small, and food security is accordingly low. Mooij's argument turns on how populist politics in the state is of a different sort in which politicians do not require food to increase their popularity, politicians cannot make PDS function in such a way as to make political capital out of it, the diversion of PDS to the black market is a greater source of profit than targeting food insecure constituencies, and some of the households are too poor for PDS. In both cases the actual forms of democracy – one a redistributive politics associated with Marxist parties, and the other a decrepit and corrupt sort of authoritarian populism – have to be grasped in all of their local complexity to identify the ways in which food enters, so to speak, the social contract.

The second illustration refers to some work I conducted in Gambia (Watts 1992), specifically a smallholder irrigation project to increase food security and food productivity. At its heart lay a technological innovation (high yielding seeds and water control) at the point of production involving a crop (rice) for which there was a longstanding sexual division of labor by crop (rice was almost wholly a women's crop). Women customarily possessed some direct access to rice land through forest clearance and by inheritance through the female line. Increased output and income had the effect, however, of stimulating struggles *within* the household over entitlements. Insofar as a second rice crop was historically unprecedented among Mandinka families, the pressing question at the level of the growers was who would work (longer and harder and in new ways) and for what return? Insofar as women lost their traditional rice land and the standing of the improved irrigation was redefined (by men and by local Muslim legal institutions) as male property, the question of entitlements – to land, to the labor of others – carried a powerful valency. The struggles over entitlement in this case were intra-household and took the form of women bargaining with men (their husbands typically) over a share of the crop, over property rights (what claims women had over the improved land), and over the exchange of resources within marriage – that is to say the content of the conjugal contract. The household as a political arena – of mutual obligations, responsibilities and entitlements – was converted into a terrain of conflict, negotiation and struggle. How and whether increased food output at the household level actually enhanced food security of individuals in Mandinka households was in large measure a consequence of the ways women, and wives in particular, could win and establish their claims from their husbands in a patriarchal and patrilocal social structure.

What both of these examples have in common is that they vividly display how differing social entitlements are contested and fought over on the one hand, and how they enter differing sorts of political discourses and practices on the other. One turned on gender and domestic politics, the other on various forms of state populism. Each case suggests that while Sen is right that democracy and famine are related, politics can assume a panoply of forms in numerous

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arenas (the state, the workplace, the family). They show how entitlements have to be won, enforced and fought over, and that these struggles rest on the existence and enforcement of civil and political liberties. In short they return us to the spectres of Marx and Malthus. These political arenas and the struggles over entitlements which ensue are rooted in forms of social power (for example, Hindu populism or Mandinka patriarchy) and in modes of production (for instance, peasant forms livelihood in The Gambia or social democratic forms of regulated capitalism in Kerala).

One of the great strengths of Sen's approach to hunger is that its entitlements are part of a larger architecture of thinking about development as a state of well-being and choice or freedom. In his language, the capability of a person reflects the „alternative combinations of functionings the person can achieve, and from which he or she can choose one collection" (Sen 1993, p. 31). Functionings represent parts of the state of a person and especially those things that a person can do or be in leading a life. In seeing poverty or hunger as a failure of capabilities – rather than insufficient income, or inadequate primary goods as in the Rawlsian sense of justice – Sen shows how the freedom to lead different types of life is reflected in the person's capabilities.

Without entering here into philosophical debates over capability and its philosophical basis, the point is to recognize that hunger becomes grounded in politics as much as production, in democracy as much as geography, in social capacity and rights and governance as much as technology and distribution. While Sen properly emphasizes the continued need for public action in the construction of a food contract, one should also think about forms of voluntary association – what Paul Hirst (1997) calls „associational democracy". In this regard one might say that Sen's entitlements approach has shed some light on proximate causes of famine (entitlement shifts) and the absolute cause of food security (democracy). In between, and awaiting illumination, is on the one hand the great arch of capitalist political economy and its relation to endowments and E-mapping, and on the other the rough and tumble of actual democratic governance – that is to say democracy which draws from but extends beyond government, and this returns us necessarily to popular radicalism, and Malthus and Marx.

6. The Prospect of Development

> „The practical application of the principles will depend, as the Manifesto itself states everywhere and all times, on the historical conditions for the time being existing" (Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Preface to the 1872 edition of *The Communist manifesto).*

> „Associative democracy extends the principles of the democratic revolution of the eighteenth century to the „private sphere" created by that revolution. The separation between public representative government and individual freedoms created the space for growth of corporate power, corporations being perceived as voluntary associations of citizens. It also extends the principles of representative democracy into state administration ..." (Paul Hirst 1997)

What then are the prospects for a popular radicalism of rights and for new forms of governance for the poor, for the deepening and reworking of the modernist project? What in sum are the „historical conditions for the time being existing"? First, the liberation from capital is, as Ralph Miliband puts it, nowhere on the agenda of politics (Miliband 1994, p. 188). The new world (dis)order is and will be for some time dominated by corporate capital and states for whom some version of neo-liberalism is the touchstone. In conditions marked by new forms of complexity and uncertainity, reforming capitalism is – to employ Habermas's (1990) language – marked by a „fallibilist consciousness".

Capitalism development nonetheless is an open process; this openness resides in its contradictory and dependent character. Openness precludes the possibility of a telos [capitalism has no purpose except, as Joan Robinson noted long ago, to keep the show going] but capitalism can and does reveal developmental tendencies. At a moment of capitalist expansion and deepening, nothing risks killing off capita-

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lism more effectively than an excess of capitalism. As Schumpeter (1942) noted long ago, capitalism's rational frame of mind which destroyed so much of pre-modern turns against its own, by attacking private property and the whole scheme of bourgeois values. These „built-in defects are not like tonsils", said Schumpeter, but are „the essence of the organism that displays them". Capitalism is neither self-contained nor self-reproducing.[19]

Imagining development as an exercise in *realpolitik* must reside in the structural constraints and the conjunctural opportunities of the multiple trajectories of national and regional capitalisms. Capitalism depends on an unstable balance between its value and non-value forms which, as Jessop says, „rules out the eventual commodification of everything" (Jessop 1997, p. 562). Instead we find „uneven waves of commodification, decommodification and recommodification as the struggle to extend the value moments of the capital relation encounters real structural limits as well as increasing resistance, and it then seeks to overcome these again in new ways" (Jessop 1997, p. 562).

The prospects for alternatives, for building with, not on, the ruins of capitalism, can be located in the fact that capitalisms are not self-contained but are (to use Jessop's term) structurally coupled to their environment. This implies trajectories that are open but path-dependent and subject to resistances and struggles which arise from the contradictions between the developmental tendencies of capital and the life-world (Jessop 1997, p. 577). Development alternatives can be explored, to return to Jessop, within the circumference of the following two processes: the incompleteness of capitalist societalization, and the social and institutional embeddedness of capitalist development. The globalization of capitalism, triumphalist neoliberal claims of a world market and the collapse of actually existing socialisms, perhaps suggest that we are in the midst of a second „Great Transformation" [the refiguring of Atlantic Fordism, the replacement of Keynesian welfare with Schumpeterian workfare, the decomposition of civil society around exclusion and the erosion of citizenship rights]. In the same way that Polanyi talks of the „discovery of society" in the debates over the nineteenth and late eighteenth century working poor, might there not be a rediscovery of society (development) in the belly of this second Great Transformation?[20] Here development alternatives can grow from the soil of the disembedded nature of the (global) market and the resistances to the universalization of capitalism (Jessop 1997). Development, in this account, is about the re-embedding of economy and society and defense of non-capitalist societalization by the building of a historical bloc of durable social forces around the colonization of the lifeworld.

Reworking development is in my view unreconstructedly modernist. It succumbs neither to the pop high technology utopias of an Alvin Toffler nor the anti-modernist austerity of Ivan Illich. My antipathy to the project of modernity is matched by the possibilities for re-enchantment, what Gellner called, *contra* Max Weber, the „Rubber Cage" of modernity (Gellner 1979) There is a danger here of invoking a neo-modernization theory replete with the universalisms, linear histories, and pragmatisms of old. But modernity in the new millennium is less about universalism than the issues of universalization and norms of complementary recipro-

19 It was Jürgen Habermas who made the point that capitalists themselves cannot reproduce on their own the conditions which make capitalism possible (see Sassoon 1997, p. 766).

20 I fully recognize of course that the Great Transformation of which Polanyi spoke is far from complete in the Third World. A book for example like Salgado's (1993) *Workers: an archaeology of the industrial age*, which talks of the end of manual work fails to recognize that an industrial working class is still in formation in the South. The great arch of Polanyi's transformation is thus not complete. The second transformation refers in this sense to a deepening of market relations in the wake of a Keynesian revolution, and new frontiers of market disembeddedness in a diverse Third World characterized by a long but not complete, transformation of the Polanyi sort.

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city, what Arato and Cohen call the „ability to identify with the non-identical" (Cohen and Arato 1992).

Amartya Sen is right to claim that democracy is a prerequisite to resolve hunger, but one needs to add immediately that democracy and democratic forms of social governance are, as Norberto Bobbio (1987) says, fundamentally „incomplete". In this sense, Sen has, as he is doubtless fully aware, posed sharply the question of the relation between development and freedom in a world in which, to return to Bobbio, the two great blocks of descending and hierarchical power – big business and public administration – continue to hold out against the pressures from below. Once more this returns us to Marx and Malthus.

7. Coda

> „The concept of progress is to be grounded in the Idea of catastrophe. That things „just go on" is the catastrophe." Walter Benjamin

We must retain a hold on critical consciousness, to encourage what Edward Said calls the „unstoppable predilection for alternatives" (Said 1983, p. 247). To do otherwise – things „just go on" – is indeed a catastrophe: polarization, exclusion, social disintegration, civil strife. But Benjamin goes on to say that the blithe optimism of the Left is as much about just going on as the market triumphalism of the Right. Alternatives in Benjamin's view spring from the remembrance of history (rather than the imaginaries of emancipated futures) and from that moment when the human species „traveling in this train (of history), reaches for the emergency brake". In this sense the post-development school has reached, properly, for the break. But in restoking the engine of the train – if this be the right metaphor – I have some grave doubts whether it might regain any momentum at all, and indeed whether it might throw the poor old engine into reverse. The prospect of an alternative socialist imaginary is, it needs to be said, also not exactly looming on the horizon either (will the socialist train move too?).

Short of frantically invoking some desparate sort of faith in Hope and humanity, my own emphasis has been on the emancipatory aspects of modernity which draw from the still selective ways in which modernization has been carried out. This leaves space for social movements to continue the differentiation began by modernity leading to new forms of rights, forms of self determination and mutual identification, respect and reciprocity (Cohen and Arato 1992). In the context of growing global polarities these movements may increasingly and effectively operate at the level of a transnational civil society. But whatever its locus, for many countries occupying the broad space of global poverty, modernity surely must have emancipatory potential within its circumference. Perhaps indeed the nineteenth century has barely begun.

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