



MEMORIES OF SILVERSTREAM

This supplement contains excerpts from the three Keynote addresses given at the 2010 Conference. They can be read in full on the website at www.sof.org.nz. Audio versions of these and the Panel Discussions are available on CD. The special Omnibus CD contains all addresses in audio form (as mp3 files) and in written form as (pdf files.)

Excerpts from

The Is/Ought Argument

Evolutionary Origins of Human Behaviour

Dr. Valerie Grant

Valerie Grant studied psychology at the University of Auckland, later specialising in evolutionary psychology. She taught at the Auckland School of Medicine for 34 years, first in Behavioural Science, later in Medical Ethics and the Humanities. She has a life-long interest in religion and the search for meaning.



Altruism now

If the behaviours related to survival and reproduction are still highly visible and of universal interest, what has happened to altruism in the modern world? Only 2-3,000 years ago (as compared with say, 30,000 years ago, never mind 300,000 years ago) there were new developments in thinking about altruism.

As everyone at this conference knows, Jesus proposed extending altruism to encompass more people than just immediate kin. In answer to the question “Who is my neighbour?” we have the story of the good Samaritan, encouraging us to practice altruistic behaviour beyond the reciprocal altruism found in the EEA: (Era of Evolutionary Adaptedness).

In our own time, philosophers and theologians have pushed this thinking even further. Peter Singer, widely regarded as one of today’s great humanitarian philosophers, writes of the need to extend altruism outwards in an ever-widening circle. This starts with the self, and then goes non-otroversially to family, kinsfolk and friends. But then Singer suggests we extend it further to other ethnic or religious groups, other nations, and then to humanity as a whole.

Note that in evolutionary terms one can view reciprocal altruism as an “is”. This “is” is what our forbears did. It was and “is” evolutionarily advantageous for us to behave altruistically towards kin and friends, provided the altruism is reciprocated. But now, suddenly we have moved to an “ought”.

From “is” to “ought”.

The big question is, “ought” we extend altruism to all humanity? Should we be trying to move beyond reciprocal altruism and go “unconditional”? As we’ve all been taught, “unconditional love” is our highest goal.

But putting this goal in the context of evolved human behaviour is proving trickier than first thought. After a lifetime working in evolutionary psychology, British scholar George Williams declared that natural selection is “evil” (see Robert Wright’s *The Moral Animal* p.151). Natural selection led not only to everything benign in human nature, but also to everything that is destructive. Robert Wright adds “If in this book I seem to stress the bad in human nature more than the good, it is because I think we are more in danger of underestimating the enemy than overestimating it” (p.151).

It is unlikely we will ever completely escape this “evil” in our human nature - that is, those intrinsic aspects of human behaviour which worked to ensure our survival and reproduction in the EEA. Indeed it is likely that if we did, we would not survive. So does our very survival depend on behaving badly?

At last, and perhaps ironically, because of the incentive provided by today’s rampant atheists, evolutionary psychologists and anthropologists have started to look at the evolutionary significance of religion.

While you could say there has been a hefty stand-off between religion and evolution, this seems to be changing, and the change is coming from the evolutionists. One of these is Jay Feerman. He has recently edited a book of essays by a number of different thinkers exploring this new question about religion. Why is it, they ask, that every surviving culture has a religion? Why is it that a culture without a religion fails? Why is it that a culture that has a religion flourishes, and when the same culture turns against religion, it then fails? “Fails” means ceases to exist (Sacks, 2000). Surely, they’re asking, *religion can’t be necessary, can it?* Well, it might be. But if religion is universal, there must be an adaptive advantage in having a religion - so what exactly is this adaptive advantage?

Several new and interesting answers to this question are beginning to emerge. Here is one of them. The behaviours associated with survival and reproduction under the extreme conditions of the EEA would certainly have led to murder, adultery, rape and theft. Reciprocal altruism is a very delicately balanced phenomenon and under conditions of life and death struggle, survivors behave in ways that violate it. So right at the very roots of our behaviour there is often a serious conflict between the strategies that would eventually produce a good life and the strategies required to stay alive and reproduce. And as societies grew larger the problems got more complex, especially those involving territoriality.

Did there come a time when rules for living became a necessary part of survival? The rules outlined in the Ten Commandments encapsulated this dilemma, and some would argue, the following of them in ancient times, ensured that those that did so flourished. Further, it is likely that the world’s other great religions evolved to solve the same problems. So although Christianity took the ideas to new heights, it was not the only religion to observe the gap between what one thinks would be a good thing to do and what one actually wants to do.

This thinking has given rise to a new take on what used to be known as “original sin”. Remember St. Paul’s great cry of anguish, echoing down the centuries (Romans 7:13-21). “I do not understand my own actions... For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do... I delight in the law of God, in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law of sin which dwells in my members. Wretchedman that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (R. S.V.)

Of course St Paul was not referring to the evolutionary origins of human behaviour. And his answer to the question about how to modify his sinful desires was that God would deliver him from it if he concentrated on Jesus’ teachings.

Is it possible that in the past, religion provided the necessary incentive to tilt reciprocal altruism just a little in the direction of pure altruism? We probably don’t want this tilt to be excessive, as according to the computer models, we already know that over-tolerance of free-loaders and cheaters ends in failure; indeed we all have efficient cheater detection systems built in so there is less likelihood of cheaters getting away with it. But we also know, from these same models, that if people can be encouraged to be just a little more considerate of those less fortunate than themselves, the society as a whole is more likely to function well.

Putting it all together

Here at last is the point of my talk. Now that we are beginning to understand our situation better - why we have the impulses we do, how ancient and deep seated they are, and how, in the past they were critical to our very existence. Let's acknowledge them. Instead of trying to ignore them, what I think we need to do is take on the "is" with acceptance, albeit ruefulness - a sort of realisation "so that's why we can't resist fatty foods, flirting, newspaper headlines about sex, murder and mayhem, celebrities, gossip, sports events, wars Basically these are all related to the building blocks that went to make up our fundamental drives to survive and reproduce. They are deeply embedded in us, both physiologically and psychologically, they are hugely resilient and very difficult, especially for some, to control or over-ride.

If, as I am arguing, these influences on our behaviour are a given, what can we do? In my opinion we should wholeheartedly, even urgently, set about re-defining the "ought". Now that evolutionary psychology has given us a greatly enhanced view of the forces ranged against us, we could build a much better understanding of the problems of individuals, and a much more robust way of dealing with them. What we need is that "kind but stern" form of altruism that Wright describes. On the one hand it avoids the perils of the contemporary "promiscuous altruism", and on the other a descent into anarchy. This is the kind of altruism that veers towards the generous, but avoids being exploited. I feel sure that by following this or a similar strategy, we would improve the quality of compassion at both the individual and societal levels.

One of the ways we can contribute to our community's and nation's wellbeing is by doing exactly what we are doing this weekend - thinking more about the origins of altruism and its relationship to compassion. Once we have a better understanding of both the benefits and the limitations of altruism we, like our ancestors, will need to find a way of motivating people to behave in the ways we "believe" will benefit both our local groups and humanity as a whole. What will help us here? Science, philosophy, spirituality, religion? All four, of course, but at present I think the one that needs some catch-up work is religion.



Excerpts from

Honouring the Other

The Quest for Respect, Equality and Small Goodnesses in Aotearoa-New Zealand

Professor Kevin Clements

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Honouring Maori – Honouring Pakeha

Aotearoa-New Zealand is notable for the fact that in terms of human settlement it is a young country. Until about 1200 there were no people here and, apart from a few bats, whales and seals, no mammals either.

.... [W]hile most Maori were concerned to try and maintain their natural resources through iwi and whanau guardianship, many Colonists had a more instrumental and exploitative view of the forests, the rivers, the wetlands and the landscape. From an early time, therefore, it has to be said that indigenous instinct to preserve and revere life and land in Schweitzer's sense ran up against a European desire to exploit it. It also has to be said

though, that it would be a gross simplification to say that all Pakeha were rapacious exploiters of natural resources and all Maori automatically conservationist. There were instrumental and conservationist tendencies in both cultures. The instrumental tendency, however, prevailed throughout the 19th century and well into the 20th before both Pakeha and Maori, became conscious of ecological loss and started acquiring slightly more reverence for the land and waterways and the fragile eco-systems that exist upon them. Recent debates about opening up National Parks or coastal waters for mining or Iwi desire to exploit their own land and resources for economic purposes, demonstrate that Maori and Pakeha face similar pressures in the 21st century to objectify and commodify nature rather than revere it. **Honouring the Other in human terms [here and everywhere] must begin, however, with an Honouring of Papatuanuku Mother Earth and a new consciousness of how all life is dependent on her.**

The first contacts between Maori and Pakeha (in the late 18th to mid 19th century) were an interesting example of two peoples coming together from a position of what is called "dual agency". This meant that encounters between British and Maori individuals, institutions, whanau and iwi were, initially, more or less equal exchanges on mutually acceptable ground. In these first interactions grudging respect was given from one side to the Other and there was some degree of parity in the exchanges. In fact many colonists learned Te Reo and were fluent in the Maori language. They acknowledged the value of Maori language, culture and traditions and were dependent on Maori for food, transport, shelter and housing and paid cash and goods for these items. These early cash and goods transactions meant that many Maori were able to establish themselves in business. The traditional kin based economy was gradually incorporated into the global market economy as finance capital started shaping the exchanges that took place.

This period of dual agency and mutual respect, however, rapidly eroded as Pakeha migrated in larger and larger numbers and their demand for land far outstripped the supply from Maori who were willing to sell. The opportunities for respectful relationships diminished even more when the colonisers resorted to force and military coercion to acquire land and then imposed tradeable individual titles on collectively owned land. As Linda Tuhiwai-Smith put it. "They Came, they Saw, they Named, They Claimed" and from that moment onwards New Zealand became a white settler society which defined itself positively in relation to what they saw as negative Maori Otherness.

Colonial British rule meant that many indigenous people of Aotearoa-New Zealand were stereotyped, labelled, and objectified as primitive, uneducated and in need of humanising and civilising. There was no attention to the Face of the Maori Other (except by artists like William Goldie and photographer Samuel Carnell who used Maori faces to advance their own artistic and photographic reputations). With a few exceptions (such as sympathetic commentators like Percy Smith and Elsdon Best) from the late 1850s onwards there was, therefore, little Honouring of the Maori Other on the part of Pakeha and from the Maori side growing despair and contempt of Pakeha.

In the last forty years of the 19th century New Zealand history was overwhelmingly written from the perspective of the Coloniser who saw Maori as inferior. This negative othering resulted in 19th and 20th century assaults on Maori language, customs, traditions and lineage, a dramatic decline in Maori population and the emergence of deep rooted structural inequality and injustice. This resulted in a dominant Pakeha culture and a subordinate Maori culture.

This dominant Pakeha culture generated many illusions about positive race relations in New Zealand during the 1950s and 1960s. ... The results of all this have been quite spectacular in terms of generating the basis for more equal exchange and respect and a restoration of some of that early 19th century "dual agency" at the heart of a bi-cultural and multicultural New Zealand. But much

remains to be done. Maori in all their iwi, hapu and cultural complexity, represent 17% of the 4.3 million people living in New Zealand. While cultural identity is much stronger now than it was in the 20th century and the Maori language has been revitalised. The gap between Maori and non-Maori is large and pervasive. Irrespective of cultural strengths there are some unavoidable deficits that also need to be addressed if we Pakeha are to learn from what is strong and vibrant within Maori culture and society. For example, Maori life expectancy remains ten years less than non-Maori and household income is 72% of the national average. Over half of all Maori males leave school with no qualifications and 50% of New Zealand's prison population are Maori. While such inequality exists and while there is an unwillingness to accord deeper Manaaki from one side to the Other the prospects for Pakeha really honouring Maori and vice versa are bleak. The questions that we Pakeha and Maori confront in the 21st century are many. What comes after Treaty Settlements have been concluded? What sorts of relationships do we want to have with each other? What sorts of joint futures do we want to see negotiated? Whose faces are we willing to attend to and what might flow from this attention?

What is interesting is that Maori intellectual leaders like Linda Tuhiwai-Smith are proposing protocols for engagement with Maori which are completely consistent with Levinas' idea of focusing on reading the face of the other in order to discern right and peaceful ways of engaging. She says that there are seven principles that should guide Maori and Pakeha research on or engagement with Maori communities. These are

- Aroha ki te tangata (a respect for people)
- Kanohi kitea (the seen face, that is, present yourself to people face-to-face).
- Titiro,whakarongo...korero (look, listen.....speak)
- Manaaki kit e tangata (share and host people, be generous)
- Kia tupato (be cautious)
- Kaua e takahia te mana o te tangata (do not trample over the mana of people)
- Kaua e mahaki (don't flaunt your knowledge).

Applying all of these principles to everyday Pakeha-Maori relationships will go a long way towards creating the conditions under which it is possible for Pakeha and Maori to Honour each Other. Both cultures have traditions of **Aroha** (charity, love and compassion), **Manaaki** (hospitality towards others) and **Utu** (basic norms of reciprocity). While paying rigorous attention to justice under the Treaty there must be a simultaneous focus on ways of realising these deeper traditions of love, care and hospitality. ...

Dame Joan Metge, has given her life to exploring the challenge of difference in New Zealand. In her most recent book, *Tuamaka*, she surveys three competing models of nationhood and ponders which is most likely to yield outcomes that will generate what I call positive othering of Maori by Pakeha and vice versa. The first model is the **assimilationist** (we are all New Zealanders) model. ... The second model, is **biculturalism** ... This is the model that is preferred by Pakeha and Maori Treaty Workers because it enshrines the Treaty at the heart of Maori-Pakeha relations. ... The third model is ... the **multicultural** model which directs attention to the large number of different ethnicities and cultures that exist in New Zealand and their "right to recognition". Metge is worried about this model because it seems to reduce Maori culture to one among many and also sidesteps the issue of national unity.

The fourth model, and the preferred one for Metge, is what she calls the "He Taura Whiri" model. This is a plaited rope which as a metaphor is commonly used to describe the way hapu are plaited together into the iwi by common descent and "the diplomatic skills of their rangatira (Chiefs)". ...

Having facilitated an awakening and consciousness of the Maori Other, why should Pakeha trust mana whenua to devoting any of their precious time to attending to Pakeha and [to]

incorporating us in their future? On a basis of past experience why should Maori gaze at Pakeha with honour rather than contempt?

The dead white males that have framed this lecture would say that it is at this moment that we need to double our efforts to attend to the Other to seek forgiveness for past wrongs, to establish common vulnerabilities and to establish an unconditional responsibility-to-and-for-the Other. In that process of positive Othering, Levinas argues, we will arouse in those who have historic reasons to treat us with contempt, a human gentleness based on a deep recognition of our common mortality, an acknowledgement of the ways in which we have historically done harm to each other and how we might do such harm in the future. In acknowledging our common vulnerabilities we will discover the basis for a new and different kind of relationship. We might be able to begin this process of Honouring the Other by summoning what Levinas calls "The abiding necessity of small goodnesses". When it looks as though communities are becoming less caring and more objectified – less willing to explore creative options in relation to each other and are not attending to the weak, the vulnerable and the dishonoured – that is when we have to resort to the small goodness, that is, the goodness that persists despite the regime, or despite the indifference of the majority of the population. These small goodnesses can and do occur in the face of the most appalling regimes. Small goodnesses precede the state and come after the state. They are what make us fully human and they enable us to make small steps for justice and peace at any time and in relation to any person or group.

We need to look for and nurture these small goodnesses in New Zealand in order to build mutuality and responsibility across boundaries of ethnicity, culture, gender and class. These small goodnesses will create a community of care, responsibility and inter-subjectivity in the face of the objectification of others; the cult of youth and celebrity and the totalising forces that prevent us from seeing the Other in his/her complete singularity and uniqueness.

If you don't find Buber, Schweitzer and Levinas helpful, you could return to George Fox who knew that when our hearts are softened "**Then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in every one; whereby in them ye may be a blessing**".



Excerpts from

Population, Development and Quality of Life

Sustainability & the Role of Compassion

Emeritus Professor Ian Pool, FRSNZ

Until his retirement in 2009, Ian Pool was Professor of Demography and Director of Population Studies Centre at the University of Waikato. After a long academic and international career in Demography often in Sociology Departments, he currently maintains his associations with: Waikato University's Population Studies Centre, as Honorary Professor; Jinjiang College; Sichuan University; and Associe de Recherche, Centre des Populations et Developpement (CEPED), Universite de Paris.



Enter the Millennium Development Goals

The MDGs represent global civil societies' first concerted approach to population and development that is grounded in compassion. It is important that I say this, and that I stress that I strongly support the MDGs, because I also have major concerns

about the way they were formulated and are being implemented, as will become clear.

The MDGs are, however, very important for two reasons. First, they represent the consensus opinion of the world's nations and a promise to try to implement the goals they have outlined. Of course, as critiques published recently show, the world is quick to promise but very reluctant to deliver, especially when one has the excuse of a "global crisis". But this is a crisis that recurs from time to time, and that is more a book entry crisis to do with creative accounting than a failure of the world system physically and in terms of its stock of human capital: the houses that figured in the prime mortgage scandals still exist, the workers are still looking for jobs, farmers are still harvesting their crops. But what the MDGs refer to are the continuing and worsening crises that do relate to physical and human capital, and the environment. They also often represent what are historically unique situations: global warming because of the impacts of humans is exactly a case in point.

Secondly, the MDGs represent a package. Up till now we have very much seen development in silos; the MDGs cover all the major development issues, bundled together under one cover.

My critiques are first that, having put together a package, this has once again been chopped up into de-facto silos; this is understandable from a programme standpoint because clearly defined objectives and targets are theoretically more attainable. Yet any singular issue is likely to be confounded by other intervening factors – that is the true reality. To add to this, for a person standing outside the United Nations' system, it looks as if the most powerful agencies in the family got the biggest or best slice of the pie: The World Bank got poverty (and nutrition, but little publicity is given over to this by comparison with a \$/day poverty); WHO got three, one of which, maternal health, seems to have made less progress than some others, perhaps because it is silo-ed off from gender equality, of which it is a kingpin. The UN Environment Programme got environment; UNESCO education and Unifem gender equality. But UNICEF seems to have missed on child health, and UNFPA, which should have a watching brief as all issues have a major population content, was pushed out of the picture it seems.

The silo-effect has some rather grave consequences. Poverty underpins, is deeply interrelated with, and determines all of the other six substantive issues, yet is siphoned off as a separate issue. Most public health experts would agree that nutrition is intimately interconnected to child (above all) and maternal health, and to the communicable diseases. The silo-ing effectively ignores the malnutrition-infection cycle, the great driver of the diseases of poverty.

Secondly, the MDGs are a-demographic, yet, as I have just mentioned, all of them, even environment, have a population content. In fact, demographic factors drive need and its differentials. And monitoring and evaluation should be based on the success of delivery to diverse population groups – a \$/day makes for great marketing, and has dominated the public face of the MDGs, yet it is extremely simplistic in both its conceptualisation and its implementation. ...

In sum ... the MDGs exist and are a collective judgement. They are certainly better than what we had before. So we need to build on them. The last part of my paper attempts to do so by stressing strategies that have a compassionate heart, but are also effective. My argument is that this is not as difficult as it might seem, as the efficient neo-liberal programmes of the past two or so decades have been neither compassionate nor effective, and thus ultimately not efficient either.

Towards a Model: A Manifesto for Compassion

In his report on tertiary education in New Zealand, Gary Hawke argued that efficiency and effectiveness were the same. That is conceptually confused, to say the least. Efficiency is completing a task with the minimum possible inputs, typically

seen as dollars spent, with less concern about the outcomes – these strategies are output-driven. Effectiveness involves changing a situation for the better at a cost which meets the needs – that is has a positive outcome for the population, but does not involve extravagances. Closely interlinked with effectiveness must also be equity.

All development initiatives must be effective: the health, education, housing, incomes, nutritional-status and overall wellbeing of all of the population must improve because of development. You will all be familiar with the basic problem with the standard measures used in economics, notably GDP, that they do not indicate overall well-being. This is a more general issue facing the MDG programmes, and you will be aware of recent media reports (eg. *Guardian Weekly*) that some countries have improved average well-being by effectively reducing the medians (i.e. 50+% have seen their wellbeing decrease, while the country's overall ranking has improved as the better-off get wealthier – the tax cuts in New Zealand are very much of this genre).

Measurement is improving and becoming more sensitive to real development, by the formulation of the Human Development Index by the United Nations Development Programme. It comes closer to measuring what happens to people by a composite index based on statistics derived from life expectancy, education and GDP. New Zealand is very close to the mean for the most developed countries, whose range is very narrow; we are affected by our lower GDP. What then might such development programmes look like? My model outlined below is a macro-level schema that is underpinned by three considerations:

- That the wellbeing of the population improves.
- That we accept that in the MDGs we have a list of global priorities for sustainable development.
- That, in the longer run, a more effective approach will also be the most efficient.

Population Perspectives Conducive to Sustainable Development

- First, any such programmes must have the support of global civil society. The MDGs have given us this assurance.
- Secondly, that all development meets the criteria for assessing human rights, both at a micro-level and a macro-level.
- Thirdly, that all development is directed to improving quality of life and also towards developing global caring capacity – for children, men and women, and the elderly.
- Fourthly, that demographic/sociological/economic analyses be used to identify more accurately sub-populations more in need, to monitor progress and to evaluate attainments. The *Spirit Level* is a first attempt to do this. [*The Spirit Level: Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better* by Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett].

Population Perspectives that are Anathema to Sustained and Sustainable Development

Population and development programmes also need to avoid some of the past approaches that have rendered them less effective and thus less efficient. Several types of interventions have been problematic:

1. Neo-liberal economics as exemplified by the World Bank
2. Population Bomb/ZPG/Ecology extremists: These are typically people whose hearts are in the right place but who seek simplistic solutions to what are complex situations.
3. Single-issue lobby groups

end