Chapter 12
Africa: Globalisation and the Ethical

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It seems easier to imagine a time when nature, as it were, laboured and gave birth all at once to the whole creation, present and future, than to imagine a continual activity.

–Prévost and Dumas 1824

Introduction

In 1945 Hannah Arendt made a statement that still reverberates through the corridors of philosophical thought. Referring to the absolute evil of Hitler and Stalin's totalitarian regimes, she declared that "[t]he problem of evil will be the fundamental question of postwar intellectual life in Europe" (in Bernstein 2002: 1). In this statement the phrase "fundamental question" can mean one of two things. One, that evil will become the subject of speculation among many or perhaps major European philosophers or two, that the subject can and perhaps must be used as a key to unlock or a lens to reveal what is most fundamental about postwar life in Europe. In the first sense, her prediction turned out not quite right since, as Neiman (2002: 2) points out, after Arendt's own work on evil no major philosophical texts appeared on the subject in any of the dominant European languages. In the second sense her prediction may yet turn out to be true for, since George W. Bush launched his War on/of Terror, few words have been abused with such spectacular abandon as the word "evil" (see Bernstein 2005). But the question of Arendt's prediction is not to be settled here. I started with it simply because I want to appropriate her hyperbolic prediction for my own ends and I want to do so in the second sense namely, that such a statement may draw our attention to a problematique which, despite its lack of universally popularity, may yet be key to understanding what is most fundamental about a specific time.

To take the edge off the potential uselessness of my own hyperbolic statement, I shall try to dress it up more respectably as the conclusion to three premises that

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seem more or less indisputable. One: that there is a process of global convergence in motion that we loosely describe as the phenomenon of "globalization"; two: that an epiphenomenon of this convergence is the emergence of a global community variously described as "global village" or "global civil society"; three: that, as in the case of any other community, we have to start thinking about this "global civil society" or "global community" also in terms of, or *as,* an *ethical* community. From this follows my hyperbolic conclusion: the problem of Africa's place in this community will be the most fundamental ethical question in a future globalised world.

Following the logic of Arendt's prediction, this does not mean that most or even many people will care to write about or even consider this question. But exactly therein lies the ethical rub. The reason why this question may not become the most universally discussed philosophical subject is because in terms of geo-politics the continent's marginality is quite staggering. As a whole the continent accounted in 2007 for "a miniscule 1,7% of foreign investment worldwide" (Walt 2009: 39). Given the current global recession, things are not looking up. Some implications for Africa of this recession include the impact on aid programmes of the need of wealthy nations to regain control of budgets burdened with financial-system bailouts and economic-stimulus packages; the fact that "Oxfam estimates the global recession could cut more than $8 billion from the total 5-year, $50 billion commitment by G-8 countries made in 2005" (Walt 2009: 38); a decade of solid growth in Africa is being threatened by a sudden drop in demand for its natural resources and minerals – a drop that amounts to a decrease in its overall growth rate from a recent 5,5% to 1,5% which, according to the World Bank president Robert Zoellick, could lead to a "human catastrophe" (Walt 2009: 38). Given these statistics one must ask a simple question: how can a continent haunted by such a staggering inverse relation between its geographic/demographic size and its geo-political importance present an emerging global community with its most fundamental ethical challenge? But as I've already indicated, the answer is implicit in the question. Humanitarian interventions of any kind, whether military, economic or human rights based, are not ethical because they are driven by self-interests. Quite the contrary, they become ethical only in the absence of such interests, that is, when such interventions are politically and economically speaking of no consequence. That is what makes such interventions *ethical* as opposed to economic or political interventions. Now, political realist have been telling us for decades that morality is not to be confused with politics; that the political, like the moral and juridical, is an autonomous domain and that to drag ethics into geo-politics is at worst naïve and at best idealistic. But that was before we had to start re-thinking our global co-existence in terms of one community, one global civil society, one convergent *ethical* community. If, of late, there has been a renewed global fascination among intellectuals with the concepts of hospitality, tolerance and the cosmopolitan it is exactly because this inescapable ethical dimension – of which Africa, *because of its marginality,* is the fundamental marker – has been pushed to the fore.

This chapter is an attempt to rethink what it means to prioritise the ethical dimension of our global communality in this way. But it is not a chapter on ethics; it is an

attempt to chart a certain topography of thought; *that* topography within which the Africa-West relationship appears paramount. It asks: how did the West historically think this relationship and how can complexity theory help us move beyond the limitations of that thinking? In short: how can complexity thinking help us to rethink Africa's place in this emerging, global, ethical community?

History, Genealogy and Systems of Differentiation

Understanding globalisation from a post-colonial African perspective means understanding Africa's place in it – and to understand that, it is always necessary to understand the history of Africa's place in the world. In other words, one cannot understand globalisation from an African perspective without first understanding the history of thinking its place in the world. The inequalities that haunt the difference between a globalised North and South are functions *of*, can be traced *to* and can only be understood *in terms of* the different ways in which the identities "Africa" and "the West" historically differentiated themselves.

This chapter offers a genealogy of the Africa/West difference. It analyses the evolution or this difference in terms of three systems of differentiation distinguished from each other in terms of their emphasis on *space*, *time* and *space-time*.[127] Perhaps "emphasis" is a misnomer for it is rather a case of each system constituting identities differentially in terms of space, time and space-time. The fist of these systems organised the Africa/West difference *spatially* in a static Great Chain of Being while in the second system the difference becomes a function of *time* as societies and individuals are placed in a linear trajectory of development framed by an immanent teleology of Development. In the third system, a combination of contemporary chaos and complexity theories allows us to read the warping of space *and* time characteristic of globalisation systemically, that is, in terms of the logic of complex dynamical systems that no longer refer to the transcendental legitimations or teleological ends presupposed by spatial and temporal systems of differentiation. While the first two systems are premised on an understanding of space and time as absolute – "the place and time of God and teleology" (Urry 2003: 19) – in a complex, spatio-temporal system "time and space are not to be regarded as containers of phenomenon, but rather all physical and social entities are constituted through time and through space" (Urry 2003: 7). The first part of the paper analysis the a priori principles that historically constituted the spatio- and temporal systems of differentiation and which continue to determine much of our thinking on Africa in relation to the rest of the world – as will be illustrated with reference to the phenomenon of African "failed states" in the context of a Hobbesian, anarchic state system. In the second part of the paper I argue that the ethical turn implicit in complexity theory offers us a way beyond the determination of these principles.

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[127]My use of this phrase is distinct from, but interfaces with, the "de-materialisation" of time and space as a function of globalisation (Urry 2003: 2).

First System of Differentiation: Space

Since "time is not taken seriously" (Lovejoy 1964: 262) in the Great Chain of Being, it is quite appropriate to refer to it as constituting *differences spatially*. More precisely this visual chain of difference consisted of an

> infinite number of links ranging in hierarchical order from the meagerest kind of existents, which barely escape non-existence, through 'every possible' grade up to the *ens perfectissimum* – or, in a somewhat more orthodox version, to the highest possible kind of creature, between which and the Absolute Being the disparity was assumed to be infinite – every one of them differing from that immediately above and that immediately below it by the 'least possible' degree of difference. (Lovejoy 1964: 59)

The above mentioned view of time suggests the following a priori principles that will be explained here below.

A Priori Principles

The "a priori principles of the Great Chain of Being" (Lovejoy 1964: 52) can be divided into three primary and two secondary principles. The first of the primary principles is that of *plenitude* and derives from Plato's notion of the Good according to which no genuine potentiality of being can remain unfulfilled. The second is the principle of *continuity* first introduced to natural history by Aristotle[128] according to whom the relation between all quantities in reality is continuous and not discreet. For instance, in a linear series classes are not really distinct from, but rather shade off into one another so that when we imposed a discrete classificatory system on the continuum many twilight creatures (zoophytes, pygmies etc.) belong to more than one class and therefore to none. The third is the principle of *unilinear gradation* which gives directionality to differentiation by effectively creating a hierarchy or "ontological scale" – a notion also derived from Aristotle who first arranged creatures either according to their degree of perfection or, as he argued in *De Anima*, their "powers of soul." Important about this *scala naturae* is that it prefigured a first secondary principle that would only fully emerge in evolutionary discourse, namely the principle of *recapitulation* or the idea that a higher order possesses all the powers and characteristics of those below it in addition to a differentiating one of its own (Lovejoy 1964: 59). The second secondary principle evoked by plenitude is *sufficient reason* of which at least one version maintains that the explanation for the truth of a metaphysical statement is implicit in the statement itself (Smith 1995: 99). For example, the statement "God is Good" necessarily leads to the conclusion that the created world is the best possible world, or as Abelard (Lovejoy 1964: 71) argued, that "it is intrinsically impossible for God" to have created a different world.

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[128]In the Chain this principle would fuse with that of plenitude despite the fact that Aristotle in his *Metaphysics* explicitly denied the principle of plenitude (Lovejoy 1964: 55) – which, again, is curious given that the principle of continuity can be logically deduced from that of plenitude.

Together these primary and secondary principles metaphysically ground the facts (1) *that* things exist, (2) *as* they (can only) do.

The epistemology of this essentially pre-modern episteme has been analysed by Merchant (1983) and Foucault (1970: 18–25). While the latter focused on epistemology (the historical a priori of Western pre-modernity) and outlined the different kinds of resemblances (*convenientia, aemulatio*, *analogy and sympathy*) which held the world together like a chain, Merchant offers a detailed ontological description of this world and its implicit epistemology as organismic. To say that "for sixteenth-century Europeans the root metaphor binding together the self, society, and the cosmos was that of an organism" (Merchant 1983: 1) is to say that the interrelatedness of what *is* was isomorphic to the interrelatedness of what there was to *know* (self, society and cosmos). Knowledge was about understanding one's place in the world – for instance, that man's "body was governed by one of the zodiacal signs, so that as a microcosm, he was a miniature replica of the celestial spheres, or macrocosm" (Merchant 1983: 100–101). This isomorphic relationship between the micro and the macro, knowledge and being, is important for two reasons. One, it provided the ontological foundation for an epistemology of sympathy (Foucault) which postulated a deep interrelatedness on the basis of which both agency (actions can have an effect across the cosmos) and knowledge (the cosmos can be known through its resemblances) became possible. Secondly, it represented the continuation of an analogical tradition rooted in ancient Greek cosmology (Gould 1977: 13–17) which would re-emerge in chaos and complexity theory as a concern with ontological depth variously conceived in terms of self-similarity, nested hierarchies and so forth.

A Prudent Mediocrity

Implicit in the Chain is an "ethics of prudent mediocrity" (Lovejoy 1964: 200–207) which is a direct function of the absence of time. In a speculative metaphysics legitimised by the a priori assumption that it is also the best possible world, there can be a concept but not a practice of freedom. Proponents of the Chain of Being argued that links in the Chain existed for their own sake and not for the benefit of others[129]; that, while they may be unequal in dignity, all creatures existed equally and that man occupied a middle place, not in the middle of the series with an equal number above and below, but half-way between sentient and intellectual forms of being. This gave rise to a fair amount of relative condescension in which, in the words of Pope (Lovejoy 1964: 193), superior beings "shew'd a Newton as he shew'd an Ape". The result was a systemic "racial inferiority-complex vis-à-vis more perfect creatures" (Lovejoy 1964: 190). Although Newton was considered far above the Hottentot this was strictly speaking not yet racism because the meaning of this difference had not yet been politicised in a practice of exclusion nor was it denied that

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[129]That they may exist for the benefit of others was a modification that occurred under the influence of Christianity which maintained man as the crown of creation.

all elements were racially inferior to other elements in the Chain. For instance, just as a Hottentot could not aspire to become a Newton, a pygmy could not become a European and Newton could not become an angel. Man's eternal fascination with improving his station was taken either as an indication of a possible "relative perfection" or, more laconically, as merely constitutive of what it meant to occupy that place in the Chain.

The demise of this static and spatial politico-ethical system of differentiation coincided with the temporalisation of difference represented by the new biology that emerged at the end of the 19th century (Jahoda 1999: 32). The abolition of the slave trade coincided with the increasing racialisation of the Chain of Being (Jahoda 1999: 54) which in retrospect suggests that the Chain – because of its principles of gradation and plenitude and its ethics of prudent mediocrity – appears as the historical, perhaps even transcendental, condition for the possibility of the racialising of differences that occurred when the gradation of angels and pygmies gave way to an evolutionary concern with apes and blacks.

There is no abrupt discontinuity between the end of the Chain's spatial differentiation and the birth of temporal differentiation represented by subsequent evolutionary sciences. In fact, the 18th century marks not only the emergence of an *a posteriori* scientific world-view but also the widest diffusion and acceptance of the belief in a Chain of Being (Lovejoy 1964: 183). Conceptually, the transition from a spatial to a temporal system of differentiation is spanned by the strange and paradoxical "Temporalization of the Chain of Being" (Lovejoy 1964: 242): when various authors started viewing the Chain less as a static chain than a Ladder marked by "the perpetual progress which the soul makes towards the perfection of its nature, without ever arriving at a period in it" (Addison in Lovejoy 1964: 247). These attempts effectively amounted to a double-thinking teleology which acknowledged not only that man may draw ever nearer to God in greater degrees of perfection but also that he would never get there. It was a teleology of immortality haunted by Zeno's paradox.

There can be little doubt that the Chain as a logical, speculative metaphysics could have accommodated, however paradoxically, the notion of change *ad infinitum* by continuing to reduce change to a mere chimera, to no more than a logical problem to which there would always be logical solutions (however apparently paradoxical). But to describe the way in which theorists of the Chain adapted to changing times through the incorporation of ever more complex logical paradoxes as the gradual "Temporalization of the Chain" is to acknowledge that the Chain, qua system of differentiation itself, was subject to time, that *it* was changing and that, even though qua system it existed by virtue of the exclusion of time, it nonetheless remained subject to time itself; in other words, the Chain as static system was always already historical and therefore temporal. While its paradoxical, theological logic might have continued to contain stasis *within* the system (by increasing its dogma, paradoxes and declared heresies) it could never accommodate or represent to itself the change *of the system* as such – its change *over* time, *in* time and as a function *of* time – exactly because qua system it was founded on the exclusion of temporality. The "Temporalization of the Chain of Being," therefore, reflects the transparent (to

itself) attempts at accommodating the changes wrought by the opaque changing of the system over time. Simply put: a system premised on the a priori exclusion of historicity (time) cannot represent *within* that system, changes *to* that system which occur as a function of the very historicity *of the system* (in time) itself. Time does not stand still for any system and if a system exists by virtue of the exclusion of time, it will at some point collapse under the contradiction of trying to accommodate time (in the form of change) while simultaneously attempting to sustain the a priori exclusion of time that made it possible in the first instance. What logic makes transparent on the inside, history makes opaque on the outside. The paradox inherent in the logic of exclusion haunts all systems of differentiation and I return to it later.

Second System of Differentiation: Time

For the West, time and temporality were epiphenomena of modernity which in all its secularised, scientific complexity could no longer exclude or reduce to a logical chimera the reality of time (now recognised as change, development, progressetc.). Thus, we see the emergence of a second, *temporal* system of differentiation. Borne of a need to explain or at least accommodate historicity, the resulting temporal system – broadly "evolutionary" – represented differentiation in a vocabulary that represented to itself not only the changes ("evolution") of the elements *within the system*, but also the changes or evolution *of the system* as such. For instance, the principle of differentiation we know as "decent with modification" applies equally to both elements of the system and the system itself. In an evolutionary system of differentiation, not only do the elements of the system evolve over time but also the system as such so that there are many species of evolutionary theory and all have modified with decent. In what follows, I first look at the a priori principles constitutive of this temporal system of differentiation before I return to the paradox of exclusion and how the implications of the latter still reverberate in our thinking about Africa's place in a globalising world.

Immanent Teleology; Or, We Are the End

The first a priori principle of this second, temporal system of differentiation comes into focus when we ask: what accounts for change and/or the apparent increase in complexity of living creatures over time? Preformationists maintained that all complexity is present in a creature from birth and that ontogeny is really the "unfolding" of this complexity; epigenesists, that "parts are formed sequentially by external forces acting upon matter only potentially capable of normal development" (Gould 1977: 17). Although this distinction dates back to Aristotle, the temporal system of differentiation consolidated its hegemony when preformationism was finally discredited and the validity of epigenesist embraced as a "true" account of change and

growth. Charles Bonnet (1720–1793) was pivotal to this change. His preformationist vision of a parallel unfolding of ontogeny and phylogeny represents not only the end of the analogical tradition but also the most extreme attempt to incorporate time into the Chain of Being. Although his Chain consisted of an infinite gradation of creatures each analogically unfolding their preformed essence, it was an "entirely static" (Gould 1977: 23) world created all at once and limited by what was really a reconfiguration of the prudent ethics of mediocrity. Integral to Bonnet's vision of ever increasing perfection was the fact that he equated "increasing perfection" with "increasing complexity" which carried with it its own implicit teleology since it amounted to "a series of *improvements* in design" (Gould 1977: 28; emphasis added) culminating in "the emergence of perfected germs of restitution *at the end of time*" (Gould 1977: 28; emphasis added). The principle of concern here emerged when Bonnet temporalised perfection in what can perhaps best be described as an *immanent teleology*. Although most evolutionists and contemporary complexity theorists resist equating complexity with increasing perfection (chance having replaced design), their nexus would nonetheless resurface in the work of social Darwinists who insisted on inserting complexity into a linear path of social development which maintained the superiority of Western societies on the basis of their "increased complexity". The resulting power/knowledge nexus divided the world into those who *named* (increasingly complex) stages of development and those who *imitated* them. Through this difference, the imitated became an immanent end that could never be achieved by those who imitated them because by the time the latter got there, the former would have already "evolved" to an even more complex or "higher" stage of development. This was effectively a temporalised reconfiguration in immanent terms of Addison's theological statement celebrating the immortality of the soul:

> There is not, in my opinion, a more pleasing and triumphant consideration in religion than this of the perpetual progress which the soul makes towards the perfection of its nature, without ever arriving at a period in it. (in Lovejoy 1964: 247)

Second and third markers of the change from a spatial to a temporal system of differentiation were the change in the meaning of the word "evolution" and the introduction of recapitulation as mechanism that accounted for change – a mechanism whose legitimation was a function of the decline in the belief in "unfolding essences". Applied to the social sciences the idea that ontogeny *recapitulates* phylogeny meant that societies are primitive when, and because, they manifest a stage of development Western societies had already recapitulated.

Recapitulation – Or: We, Too, were Once Children

When recapitulation was first introduced, the word "evolution" had none of its contemporary Darwinian connotations. On the contrary, it was used to capture the essence of preformation. For instance, in 1744 Haller wrote that according to the theory of evolution "all human bodies were created fully formed and folded up in the ovary of Eve and that these bodies are gradually distended by alimentary humour

until they grow to the form and size of animals" (Gould 1977: 29). This derived from the Latin meaning of the word *evolutio* which denotes "an unrolling of parts already existing in compact form, as in a scroll or the fiddlehead of a fern" (Gould 1977: 29). Spencer transformed the meaning of evolution when he limited its use to describing a process of progressive change towards increasing complexity – thereby denying that change was driven by an internal, preset or encoded logic. Instead, evolution came to be seen as the result of an organism's interaction with external forces.

At the same time Haeckle explained the relationship between the evolution of life (macro) and the evolution of the individual (micro) in a manner that was no longer static or analogical. He invented the terms ontogeny and phylogeny and proceeded to recast the ancient, static and analogical relation between micro-and macro in terms of a dynamic scientific (mechanistic) law according to which a micro entity (individual; society) re-enacts or re-capitulated the most important biological changes of a collective entity (society; civilization). Central to his theory was the notion of "gradual elevation" through recapitulation which effectively flattened the Chain of Being into a Chain of Becoming – one no longer regulated by a static, spatial ascension to perfection but rather by temporalised progress towards ever superior or "elevated" complexity through a re-enactment of stages of development. The immense promise held out to social science by the theory of recapitulation was neatly summed up by Conklin in 1928 when he wrote:

> Here was a method which promised to reveal more important secrets of the past than would the unearthing of all the buried monuments of antiquity – in fact nothing less than a complete genealogical tree of al the diversified forms of life which inhabit the earth. It promised to reveal not only the animal ancestry of man and the line of his descent but also the method of origin of his mental, social and ethical faculties. (in Gould 1977: 116)

Genealogically, recapitulation reconfigured the spatial ethics of prudent mediocrity by subordinating the principle of change to the maintenance of the system of differentiation itself. Concretely this meant that any resistance to one's status as child-like primitive was reduced and codified by the system itself (through paternalism) as one more stage of development within the system ("the natives are child-like/restless"etc.). The inescapability of this logic realised itself with particular perniciousness in criminal anthropology, racism, child development, psychoanalysis and colonialism. In America Stanley Hall devoted most of his time to studying childhood play as a re-enactment of the rituals, beliefs and conventions of their savage adult ancestors. "The child," he wrote, "revels in savagery, and if its tribal, predatory, hunting, fishing, fighting, roving, idle playing proclivities could be indulged . . . they could . . . be far more humanistic and liberal than all the best modern schools could provide" (in Gould 1977: 142).

For Africans the power/knowledge nexus represented by recapitulation entailed being subdued, converted and disciplined towards maturity. The implications of this reconfigured and now temporalised ethics of prudent mediocrity cannot be overstated. It subsequently structured every linear idealist and materialist grand-narrative of social evolution (Hegel, Marx, Modernisation; Rihani 2002: 3–4) in which, to emphasise a mechanistic as opposed to organistic reading of Marx (Rader 1979),

"the country that is more developed industrially only shows, to the less developed, the image of its own future." Recapitulation exemplified the mechanistic world-view that replaced the organistic world-view of Western pre-modernity with an epistemology concerned with revealing the unchanging laws of nature – of which recapitulation was one. Mechanism was based

> on the logic that knowledge of the world could be certain and consistent, and that the laws of nature were imposed on creation by God. The primacy of organic process gave way to the stability of mathematical laws and identities. Force was external to matter rather than immanent within it. Matter was corpuscular, passive, and inert; change was simply the rearrangement of particles as motion was transmitted from one part to another in a causal nexus. (Merchant 1983: 102–103)

Perhaps it is no exaggeration to say that, while the tradition of mechanistic meta-narratives of social evolution was rooted in the linear historicity of revived social contract theory in the 17th century, it continued through the work of Hegel and Marx only to culminate in classical Modernisation Theory. These narratives combined reconfigured spatial principles of differentiation (gradation, continuity, *telos*) with the introduction of mechanisms of change that would account for their temporal, as opposed to spatial, character. While difference (gradation and perhaps even continuity) is constitutive of any system of differentiation, *telos* as a transcendental or immanent End is not. It is exactly on the issue of a transcendental ("perfection") or immanent teleology ("civilization," "development," "maturity" or "increased complexity") that a third spatio-temportal system of differentiation can be distinguished.[130] This system allows us to think difference without any reference to a transcendental or immanent teleology. In it, difference is not legitimised teleologically and exactly therein lies its invitation to re-think questions of ethics, justice and community in a time of globalisation. However, before I outline this spatio-temporal system of differentiation a brief look at the paradox of exclusion that haunts all systems of differentiation and the way it still determines how we think "failed states" in Africa.

Systems: Context, Differentiation and Re-integration

In this section I explore some of the implications of a number of ideas put forward by Luhmann as discussed by Rasch (2000). Paramount among them is the notion that all systems originate in making a *difference* between itself qua emerging system and its environment. That difference is then copied into the system where it is used to make *distinctions* within the system. In this way a founding distinction is replicated within the system as a difference. The working of differences inside the system

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[130]Later, when discussing this system, I follow Urry (2003: 17) in offering a non-mathematical account in which chaos theory, fractal geometry, the non-linear and complex are treated as a single paradigm. Justification derives from the fact that there is no consensus on their relation with some authors (Thrift 1999) arguing that this domain of knowledge is emerging chaotically.

will always be paradoxical because, while they necessarily presuppose the unity of the system in order to make differences meaningful, the very unity of the system is constantly undermined or deconstructed by the fact that differences within the system are the result of a primary difference (qua distinction) that made the system possible in the first instance. Rasch (2000: 108) offers a clear description of this logic and its implication:

> The paramount distinction of much of Western modernity, for example, the one between rationality and irrationality, is made not by God but by rationality itself. This paradoxical relationship between a distinction and its resultant, yet presupposed space is what allows distinctions to be so easily deconstructed.

But some distinctions are paradoxical in the additional sense that their application or the unfolding of their logic produces exactly what they are designed to exclude. For instance, the transcendence/immanence distinction generates practices aimed at achieving other-wordliness (religion, prayer, retreating etc.) but invariably leads to the re-production of more worldliness or immanence in the form of churches, retreats, monasteries, jobs, advertising, commerce and so on. That which is pursued reproduces more of what is denied by the pursuit. The intellectual history of the Chain of Being illustrates this logic quite clearly. Founded on a distinction between the temporal and a-temporal, the Chain qua static system of differentiation was premised on the exclusion *of time* but could not sustain its integrity indefinitely because it nonetheless remained subject *to time.* For a while it sustained its coherence and integrity by expunging paradoxes as heresies but ultimately it collapsed in the ultimate paradox: attempts at "temporalizing the Chain of Being" amounted to the obliteration of the very difference between the temporal and a-temporal, time and stasis, upon which the Chain of Being was founded. Failing, as it had to, to find an internal solution to the paradoxical, founding exclusion of temporality the Chain of Being collapsed when it obliterated the one difference that made it possible. But "collapse" is not the right word for we are not dealing with a physical entity here. Perhaps it is more correct to suggest that the Chain qua system of differentiation turned inside out like a Möbius strip. The subsequent temporal system was haunted by a different version of the same paradox – one whose political implications are much more keenly felt today – particularly in thinking about Africa.

Overlapping in time with the attempts at temporalising the Chain of Being, was an emergent temporal ("evolutionary") system of differentiation that incorporated temporality into its very logic in such a way that both the elements within the system as well as the system as such could evolve over time. In that way it solved the problem of temporality. But it did so only by generating its own paradoxical, founding distinction between the "civilised" and the "uncivilised" represented as a difference between "those who have evolved" and "those yet to evolve." Just as the rational/irrational distinction is made by the rational, so the civilised/uncivilised distinction is made by the "civilised." Because these distinctions are generated *performatively* – rationality *makes* a rational distinction between the rational and irrational, the "civilised" auto-nominate the difference that legitimises them in

making the difference – both remain constitutively deconstructible: "the belief in reason is just as much an irrational leap of faith as the belief in God" (Rasch 2000: 108) and practices of slavery and colonialism were often more barbaric than anything the "uncivilised" came up with. Important as the civilised/uncivilised distinction is and as enlightening as it may be to read the last 400 years as the violent auto-deconstruction of this difference, I am more interested here in pursuing another paradox of Western modernity that dovetails with the civilised/uncivilised difference and which is constitutive of the Westphalian state system qua system, namely the founding exclusion of relations from a system premised on the a priori assumption that entities are conceptually and analytically prior to relations. In a very real sense, interdependence is to the principle of sovereignty in the state system as time was to the principle of stasis in the Chain of Being. I want to briefly tease out this analogy before moving on to the third, spatio-temporal system of differentiation.

The State System: Differentiation and Re-integration

Hobbes' political project was fundamentally mechanist because it assumed that entities (atoms, individuals, states) precede their interaction and that this self-nomination as separate entities conceptually and historically preceded their voluntarily and consensual entrance into relations (agreements, contracts). Internal to contract theory this generates a familiar logical paradox: how do we agree on the enforcement of a contract without presupposing contractual agreement on how to do so? (Hampton 1986). Unsurprisingly, the political problems generated by a mechanist world-view cannot be solved within the system itself, for a system premised on the exclusion of interdependence cannot solve the problems that arise internally to the system as a consequence of the lack of such interdependence. Alternatively, it can do so but only by risking the very exclusionary gesture that founded the system, here the principle of sovereignty. In this way our mechanistic political world-view (of which a state system that prioritises sovereignty over relations is the marker *per excellence*) is gradually collapsing under the same logic that accompanied the delegitimation of the Chain of Being: while the decline of the latter was marked by the imperative to incorporate temporality, the decline of the mechanist political world-view is marked by the imperative to incorporate the principle of interdependence excluded at its founding moment. *Time* and *interdependence*: excluded at the origin, return to mark the end. While theorists of the Chain sought refuse in logical paradox to contain time, champions of state sovereignty employ ever escalating levels of violence in order to establish or sustain sovereignty at a time marked by its global erosion.

Why is it so difficult for the Westphalian state system to solve the problem of interdependence? Historically there have always been two questions of interdependence at play: (1) the interdependence of Western states and (2) the interdependence of Western and non-Western (here: African) states. To appreciate this duality at the level of concern to us we must remember that the Hobbesian social contract adopted by Western state theorists as a model for the anarchic state system separated as two

temporally distinct moments the *naming* of an entity as separate, autonomous entity and its *integration* into the system (individuals exist prior to the social contract). State and international relations theorists capitalised on this separation in order to think through both questions of interdependence. Firstly, it allowed them to conceptualise the movement through which Western states enter(ed) into supra-national agreements, treaties and the like in contractual terms. Secondly, it enabled them to distinguish between those states whose emergence was co-terminus with the system itself ("the civilised") and other states whose incorporation was deferred to a "time to come" ("the uncivilised" who continued for the time being to inhabit a state of nature) – a deferral legitimised with recourse to the a priori principles of *immanent teleology* (in the from of Developmentalism) and *recapitulation* (Africa must first recapitulate the states of evolution). While the co-terminus emergence (or self-nomination) of entity and system constituted the Western state system, the foundational exclusion of interdependence vis-à-vis non-Western states would continue to haunt the state system in the form of real inequalities behind a façade of formal sovereignty and equality (see Jackson 1990, Keene 2002).

Far from being a simple question of integrating states into a global state system, what is required is nothing less than an engagement with the founding paradox of the state system, namely the exclusion of interdependence and the prioritising of entities over relations. Only such an engagement with the founding difference between the West/Africa, and between sovereignty/interdependence will allow the state system to evolve into a *system* in the complex sense of the term. As usual, the entropic cost of a system grappling with its founding difference will be visible on the periphery of that system, here in the phenomenon of Africa's "failed states". A discourse that refers to these failures not as symptomatic of a "system" that prioritises entities of relations but as the failure of individual entities themselves is obviously problematic, for as Urry (2003: 14) points out, "this … limited and often individualistic way of formulating relative failure … does not explicate just how these so-called side effects may be systemic features of the system in question". At stake is the difference between reading Somalia as *a* failed *state* and reading it as a node in a complex network of interests (Cold War, multinational, supra-national ideological etc.) that always already deconstructed its founding moment as possible sovereign entity. These so-called failed states show us with uncanny precision the under-belly of a state- "system" violently premised on the priority of entities of relations. To the extent that there is real failure, it is systemic failure or at least the logical outcome of founding principles.

In system terms it seems as if globalisation and the cosmopolitan vision represent de facto shifts away from such a modernist prioritising of entities over relations and a thinking away from evolution towards co-evolution in a constantly changing fitness landscape (Walby 2003) and that the de facto political interdependence of states (one of the hallmarks of globalisation) is returning to haunt the Westphalian state system as a paradox in much the same way that temporality returned to haunt the Chain of Being. This suggests perhaps a general systemic principle: the exclusion that marked the birth of one system will function as founding principle of the next system (the exclusion of time in the Chain became the founding principle of

evolutionary discourse; the exclusion of interdependence [modernity] becomes the founding principle of globalisation [post-modernity] etc.). This generates an interesting meta-historical question that I cannot address in any detail here. If the system cannot find an internal solution to the paradox generated by its founding exclusion, how do we nonetheless account for the arrow of time, the movement we call change? How is it that systems undergo the magnitude of change suggested by the examples offered here? Two pointers and an example will have to suffice. Firstly, it is possible that once a system has become sufficiently self-conscious of its founding paradox and of the tensions generated by its founding inclusive/exclusive difference, hitherto excluded possibilities may re-emerge as a function of that very self-consciousness; secondly, that during a window period of change or transition we may witness the quasi-organic re-integration of the excluded. In an anticipated future retrospective sense of the phrase, this may yet become the importance of the Kosovo debacle of 1999. After NATO's intervention in Kosovo in 1999 it is generally agreed that the future interpretation of international law – particularly Articles 2(4) and 51 in conjunction with the whole of Paper VII – will be guided by ethical practices and that such practices "*will evolve without formal amendment*" to international law (Slaughter 2008: 4; emphasis added). The Kosovo intervention was declared "illegal but legitimate" – illegal because it side-stepped authorisation by the UN Security Council but nonetheless legitimate in the eyes of NATO and the wider international community for constituting a "legitimate humanitarian intervention." The deep ethical dimension of this de facto legitimacy is perhaps best articulated by the phrase suggesting that the practice of state interaction may "evolve without formal amendment to international law." The implicit suggestion is that humanitarian interventions based on ethical reasoning must remain so exceptional that they cannot be codified. Of course this is treacherous terrain but we have to ask: is the possible destruction of law in the name of justice, a possibility that should exist in any and every application of the law that wants to be just and not simply the application of rules (Derrida 1992), not treacherous for the very implied suggestion that justice always exceeds the law? And is this treacherous point beyond the law not the place where the juridical and ethical intersect? Lastly, is it not possible that in recognising the justness of intervention, not *despite* but *because* of the impossibility of their codification, the inescapable ethical (Levinas) dimension of an interdependence that always already precedes its codification in ethics and law, was re-affirmed? With that possibility we arrive at the single most important distinguishing feature of the third, spatio-temporal system of differentiation: relations constitute entities.

In the following section I elaborate on this system of differentiation. In the process I distinguish between "politics" and "the ethical." I use the former to delimit the domain of modernity – to thinking obligation, duties and rights in a mechanistic world-view premised on the autonomy and priority of entities over relations, the conditions of their entry, the obligations and duties that accompany such entry and the various mechanisms generated by the intractable problem of authority but nonetheless required for maintaining volition-based commitment to the integrity of the system. I use "ethical" to refer to a logic that emerges only

when we acknowledge that relations are prior to entities, that acceptance of our "obligations" or "responsibilities" should be preceded or framed by acknowledging our embeddedness in a system; that such recognition is anterior – analytically and historically – to both the rights and privileges we employ to conceive our participation in that system as well as the obligations and responsibilities with which we respond to the demands made of us by other elements in the system. In a wider sense, "ethical" denotes an emerging political discourse that legitimately begs the question of authority by embracing the assumption of interdependence. This discourse views societies – both local and globalising networks – in complex dynamical terms.

In the remainder of this paper I briefly consider the outlines of this third, spatio-temporal system of differentiation before I conclude by considering the question: what is the real impact of all this on the way we respond to what some consider the thorniest ethical issue of them all, namely development aid in relation to Africa?

One brief caveat regarding the historiographic assumptions of this paper's talk about "systems of differentiation" is in order. For Arendt (1965: 52) the political fallacy of modern Idealism, particularly that of Hegel, consisted in "describing and understanding the whole realm of human action, not in terms of the actor and the agent, but from the standpoint of the spectator who watches a spectacle". As such, the new world ushered in by the 18th century revolutions was armed, not so much with a "new science of politics" (Tocqueville) as with a "philosophy of history" (Arendt 1965: 52). In this modernist philosophy of history one thing simply follows another: modernity is followed by post-modernity or, here, the temporal system of differentiation might be succeeded by a spatio-temporal system of differentiation. Post-modern theorists have devised many ways of resisting this modernist linearity. Lyotard (1984: 79) argued that postmodernism is not modernism at its end but rather modernism in its nascent state and Scott (1998) considers post-modernity simply as "modernity on the turn." Here the problem would consist in narrating the systems of differentiation in a linear fashion – as if history moved from a spatial Chain of Being to a temporal concern with Becoming to a spatio-temporal recognition of complexity – and which would amount to a continuation of the a priori assumptions of the temporal system of Becoming. Rather than adopting the language of postmodern theorists like Lyotard or Scott, I want to articulate the emergence of this third system of differentiation consistent with that emergence itself: not as the dawn of a new post-Westphalian world order or even the return of the historically excluded and repressed logic of interdependence but rather by using as historiographic fiction the spectre of Möbius that has been shadowing this paper all along. Charting the contemporary recognition of the priority of relations requires nothing less than the opposite of what Arendt defines as a modernist philosophy of history. It requires of us to place ourselves inside the very logic that remains irreducible to our speculations on it – in this case, to walk along the Möbius strip of modernity and to bear witness to that familiar turning of the inside-out which, in this case, reveals on the outside what had always been concealed on the inside, namely the constitutive priority of relations.

Third System of Differentiation: Space-Time

A genealogy of complexity theory may point in three directions. Firstly, the interface of natural and social sciences; secondly, the systemic and systematic inversion of the entity/relation distinction and thirdly, a recognition that the binaries of modernism can no longer do the work required of them – one of which is the opposition between natural and social sciences which derives from the Cartesian separation of the *res cogitans* (mind) and *res extensa* (matter) (Capra 1983: 45). As for the first, contemporary natural science has illustrated that we cannot comprehend matter from a Newtonian perspective. The implication of these developments has been that many of the phenomena social scientists have always been interested in are now recognised as hybrid phenomena in the sense that they clearly manifest a combination of natural and social forces at work: health, population studies, migration, the behaviour of the stock exchange etc.(Urry 2003: 17). From a post-Newtonian scientific perspective, these collectivities display behaviour that is not random but chaotic in the sense that they demonstrate statistical probability which refers to recognisable patters that emerge in apparently random systems. This obviously raises the question of free-will and determination. To suggest that such phenomena invariably produce recognisable patterns that can be mapped in phase-space implies that the free-will binary has exhausted its analytical usefulness, that individuals, societies and global networks operate somewhere between the two domains in a third that constitutes a free-play of order and chaos. To think the working of complex systems is to think that domain and genetics offers a good example of what that means. Formerly divided between the preformationist (order is immanent) and the epigenesists (order is the result of chance interactions with the environment), modern genetics

> is about as midway as it could be between the extreme formulations of the eighteenth century. The preformationists were right in asserting that some pre-existence is the only refuge from mysticism. But they were mistaken in postulating preformed structure, for we have discovered coded instructions ... The epigeneticists, on the other hand, were correct in insisting that the visual appearance of development is no mere illusion. (Gould 1977: 18)

Another of these unworkable binaries is the entity/relation binary separated and temporalised by Hobbes. Complexity does not simply invert this binary in order to suggest that relations are conceptually prior to entities. Rather, it suggests that entities are constituted relationally. Some argue that the questions generated by complexity have or are being dealt with in post-modern philosophies. This is not the case. For one, there is a systemic convergence of social and natural studies through the hybrid phenomenon they study to which post-modernism is a limited response given that it derives from a literary, textual or humanities paradigm. Postmodernism, for instance, can assist us in understanding the meaning of violence and migration (Derrida 2000) but it cannot help us understand migration as hybrid phenomenon.

What then are complex systems? Cilliers (1998: viii–ix) usefully distinguishes between complicated and complex systems:

> If a system … can be given a complete description in terms of its individual constituents, such a system is merely complicated. Things like jumbo jets or computers are complicated. In a complex system, on the other hand, the interaction among constituents of the system, and the interaction between the system and its environment, are of such a nature that the system as a whole cannot be fully understood simply by analysing its components. Moreover, these relationships are not fixed, but shift and change, often as a result of self-organisation.

In complex systems, "[c]onventional notions of cause and effect do not apply within an indivisible whole where the interrelations between parts are more fundamental than the individual parts" (Urry 2003: 20). For complexity theorists, the infinite number of variables at play, their interaction with their immediate environment, sensitivity to initial conditions and the feed-back effect that proportionally augment the effect of small changes beyond their predictability combine to make any prediction impossible. Central to this analysis are the following concepts: predictability gives way to probability and probability manifest in terms of recognisable patterns, islands of order amidst a sea of chaos (Prigogine) or apparent randomness. For instance, against a backdrop of thousand upon thousand throws of the dice, a pattern will eventually evolve which massive computation power reveals as always the same (Sierpinski). The patterns they converge are called "attractors" which can be mathematically modelled in phase-space and which map the emergence of ordered patterns in any hybrid phenomenon.

The nation-state or even modernity can be read in these hybrid terms (Rihani 2002: 9). There is nothing Western in the centralising-peripheralising dynamic that produced the core-periphery dynamic ("Western modernity") of the last 300 years. There are two related critiques of such a Western-modernist view of modernity. Firstly, modernity was never an endogenous phenomenon: what is commonly referred to as "Western" modernity was the result of a core-periphery dynamic to which the periphery was always a necessary supplement (Derrida). To refer to this dynamic solely in terms of *Western* modernity is nothing but the violent attempt of a system, premised on the assumptions of autonomy ("the" West), to reduce what it cannot accommodate (a *relation* of dependence with the periphery) to the logic of the system itself. Contemporary human rights discourse is another such dynamically emerging phenomenon. It is as much indebted to the legacy of the French Revolution as to the anti-colonisation struggles of former colonies (Nabudere 2000). Secondly, this dynamic is part of a long, historical process which, from a world-systems perspective, maps the ever shifting centrality of the global political economy which Thompson (2000), for instance, describes in terms of K-waves and leadership cycles. The ascendance of Western Europe marks a shift in the process and maps, in complexity terms, the global movement of a centriphery attractor (Baker 1993; or, "power-resistance" attractor, Castells 1997). Two aspects of this analysis are of direct importance. First, the post-Cartesian insistence that the driving forces accounting for the formation of the attractor are not either Ideational or Material but a combination of both. Baker (1993) uses the term "idergy" to denote this. In as much as countries on the periphery (or "outpost") seek to de-centre the centre, they do so at a level that is at once Ideational and Material. For instance, South African President Thabo Mbeki's notion of an "African Renaissance" is an

Ideational (cultural) notion inescapably linked to the Material (economic) neo-liberal policies of NEPAD. By the same token, hegemonic power, i.e. the idergic attempts of the centre to retain the integrity of the centre qua centre, do so at a level that is at once material (waging wars, economic dominance) and Ideational (cultural, diplomatic). The usefulness of looking at the centriphery dynamic in terms of an idergically driven attractor is that it allows us to reconceptualise meta-narratives in a non-teleological manner – that is, in a manner that retains the indispensable differentiation of societies without in the process valuating them in terms of the kind of immanent teleology that characterised the temporal system of differentiation. One proponent of such an approach is Baker (1993: 140–141) for whom social evolution

> has essentially been a move from a few humans living in many small centres with weak centripheral and centrifugal forces, using low amounts of energy, and having a very limited entropic effect on their environments to many humans living in a few large centres with strong centripheral and centrifugal forces, using vast amounts of energy, and having an enormous entropic impact on their environments. There has been a movement, then, from low entropy to high entropy societies, from many to a few social centres, and from slowly changing to quickly changing social formations. The notions of centriphery and entropy can, therefore account for the pattern of human social evolution.

Because this movement or arrow time is idergic, the narratives of nationalism are constitutive and therefore indispensable to this movement. Far from deriving their legitimacy from an arbitrary distinction between oppressive and emancipatory nationalism (Zeleza 2003: vi) these nationalist narratives (or the ideologies of nationalism as such) are inextricable Ideational components of an idergic, centriphery dynamic.

In such a non-teleological complexity-based meta-narrative there is no immanent teleology either. Outside their implicit and mutually constitutive power struggle there is no sense in maintaining that high entropy societies are superior to low entropy societies or even that higher entropy and/or increased complexity is a desirable state of affairs. Change is reconfigured, not as mimesis, but simply as the result of contending centralising demands that unfold in a fitness landscape (Walby 2003).

But this centriphery analysis is challenged by world-wide convergence or globalisation. Increasingly viewed as one complex dynamical system (Rihani 2002, Urry 2003, Jervis 1977) globality will change the attractor dynamic away from "simplistic" grand shifts in the global political economy viewed in uni-polar and/or hegemonic terms to the co-existence of several glocalisation attractors constituted by the interplay of various local and globalising forces all over the world. Urry (2003: 15), for instance, comments:

> The strange attractor of glocalisation is … an attractor that involves parallel processes through which globalization-deepens-localization-deepens-globalization and so on. Both the global and the local are bound together through a dynamic, irreversible relationship, as huge flows of resources are drawn into and move backwards and forwards between the two. Neither the global nor the local can exist without the other. Diverse social and physical phenomena, including existing societies, are attracted towards the 'glocal', which develops in a symbiotic, irreversible and unstable set of relationships.

   This essentially post-hegemonic vision of the future (Nye 2003) suggests that, instead of a dominating centriphery attractor, the future global system will be punctuated by various glocalisation attractors that will appear and function as nodes in a global network. Intriguingly, this globality qua system of differentiation can no longer invent itself along the lines suggested by Luhmann (Rasch 2000), that is, by making a *difference* between itself and the environment which it then copies into the system and employs as a *distinction* for the self-reproduction of the system. There is no "outside" of/to a global complex network. This means that the signifiers hitherto used in order to invent and legitimise such systems of differentiation from the outside – God, time, autonomy, evolution, rationality, Freedom, Democracy and so forth – have and will increasingly become drawn into the system, revealing in the process their immanent role as always already having been constitutive of a surface play of domination (Foucault 1970). Contorted remnants of previous legitimations, they will increasingly give rise to a symptomatic relativism: whose rationality? Whose concept of freedom? Whose notion of democracy? Whose freedom fighter and who's terrorist? When this occurs we will have moved, in the terms of analysis offered here, from a politics to an ethics. More precisely, we will have witnessed the end of (modernist) politics and a return of/to the ethical.

The Ethical

What is the relevance of all this for how we think about Africa's place in the world? Does the logic of this third spatio-temporal system of differentiation suggest different ways of thinking, for example, about development, poverty and aid? The ambitious architecture of this paper makes it impossible to engage the question of the ethical at the general level of (post)development and post-colonial theory. There is a substantial literature on this.[131] Instead of analysing the transition from politics to the ethical at the speculative level of abstract theory I want to situate it at an ethical, grassroots level where NGO's in Africa have to confront the entire history of colonialism, outlined so far in this paper and which made them both necessary and possible, *without being able to conceive of their role in terms of a development vocabulary derived from exhausted spatio- and/or temporal systems of differentiation*: "aid," "upliftment," "development" have become impossible guidelines for thinking about the nature of poverty alleviation interventions. My shift away from the speculative (abstract theoretical) to the contingent and historical (the dilemmas of NGO's) is also consistent with the historiographic fiction employed here: writing and reflecting along the Möbius strip of modernity requires not only that we speculate on the (re)articulation of the constitutive priority of relations, but also that we place ourselves inside history in a way that acknowledges that we are no longer mere spectators. The journey of self-interrogation of the NGO *Enda Graf*

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[131] See especially James Ferguson's "Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order" (2006).

Sahel (Dakar, Senegal) as discussed by Matthews (2006, 2007)[132] will be used as illustrative example of the ethical I have in mind here.

Post-development theory offers a radical and far-reaching critique of conventional development discourse and its implicit assumption that:

> assistance involves[s] outsiders deciding on behalf of others what these others need and how these needs can be met. Post-development theorists do not think that such 'outsiders' – such as NGO's, foreign or even national governments, and international financial institutions – can *legitimately* decide what is best for communities they little understand. Rather, we should look to 'the local', to 'new social movements' or 'popular organisations', as agents of desirable social change. Members of advantaged societies should support such movements, both in their own and in other societies, but should guard against becoming involved with them in ways that entail *paternalism* or an *imposition of foreign values* (emphasis added). (Matthews 2006: 66)

Implicit in the post-development position – particularly its radical democratic variant – is the commitment to a broader political agenda aimed at undermining oppressive and unjust power relations at home and in the assisted country. This essentially post-sovereign, post-authority, radical democratic position generates a predictable critique: statists insist that the state is a more likely agent for desirable change while other critics bemoan the absence of any criteria for deciding which social movements to support (Matthews 2006: 66). In the absence of such criteria, it is argued, the post-development position can only lead to political irresponsibility and indifference.

Traditional development discourse tends to view poverty as located "over there" and "not here" – an ideologically over-determined spatialisation and temporalisation of a difference on the basis of which intervention becomes a voluntary, charitable act of intervention in the lives of the poor. Assistance is conceived of in terms of volition and exteriority, its ethics, one of conscience and not responsibility. Enda Graf Sahel started out from this position in the 1970's, viewing themselves as conduits for the transfer of knowledge and resources on the basis of "presenting the poor as victims, the neglectful state as the persecutor and themselves as the 'good cowboys' heroically rescuing the poor" (Enda Graf Sahel 2001, in Matthews 2006: 69). They soon found themselves marginalised in the very communities they tried to assist because of their insensitivity to local knowledge and the arrogance of imposing development discourse on communities. More recently, they have moved to a post-development position which "recognise[s] the complexity of the causal relations that lead to impoverishment and oppression and . . . seek[s] to transform these relations, particularly by working to correct the ways in which 'our' societies contribute to the impoverishment and oppression of distant others" (Matthews 2006: 67). The difference is fundamental and pivots on the distinction: is failure/poverty individual, peculiar to *a* state or *a* people, or is it systemic? Just as state failure is an example, not of individual but systemic failure, post-development theorist argue that poverty is a systemic failure of which the causes and solutions are not linear (poor state =

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[132]For additional reference several of the primary Enda Graf Sahel publications are listed in References.

poor citizens, therefore assisted state = assisted citizens) but, indeed systemic, complex and non-linear and that those who are assisting are very much part of poverty as systemic phenomenon:

> Poverty is the result of a long process. For this reason we prefer to speak of impoverishment and of the mechanisms which create poverty in each of us. As far as we are concerned, we do not fight against poverty, but against everything that creates poverty in our lives. (De Leener in Matthews, 2006: 74)

On this basis Enda Graf Sahel reinvented themselves as "a network of groups, horizontally and fairly haphazardly related, which provide support for a variety of community initiatives" (Matthews, 2006: 70) to such an extent that it is often difficult to say whether some of its constituent groups are best described as NGO or community based organisation. In terms of complexity theory, this post-development position can be described as a node in a system of interaction – the full extent of which cannot be fully comprehended or commanded by any element (person or organisation) in the system. In this capacity as node, the organisation fulfils various networking functions: connecting other organisations, introducing other to ideas and approaches they may be unaware of and providing alternative "takes" on the conditions, origins and results of poverty (Matthews 2007: 137). It is exactly this embeddednes in the network that creates the problem of criteria alluded to by development theorists and critics of post-development theory. However, it is only on the basis of their purported exteriority to the system that these critics can insist on "criteria" to be "applied" in order to distinguish between social movements that qualify for assistance. I would argue that the history of Enda Graf Sahel illustrates that the absence of such criteria does not produce indifference or political irresponsibility but rather invites us to consider an immanent and complex dynamical ethic which understands the non-linear and systemic nature of global poverty.

The Enda Graf Sahel journey of self-interrogation traces the outline of the genealogy offered here. It culminates in a contemporary understanding of the social (local or global) in systemic terms which nobody can fully articulate, comprehend or control. It is the hallmark of all complex systems that they cannot be reduced to an understanding of their totality (Malan and Cilliers 2004: 10); in this instance, such an act of comprehensive understanding or calculation is exactly what would be required for the formulation of a set of "criteria" upon which intervention in the system will be based. Any such criteria not only presuppose a comprehensive act of understanding (the system of which it is part), but will also necessarily have to invoke as legitimation for such a calculation any one of the Signifiers of spatial and/or temporal systems of differentiation. In reference to such an encompassing act of comprehension, Readings (1996: 186) writes that the social bond

> is the fact of an obligation to others that we cannot finally understand. We are obliged to them without being able to say exactly why. For if we could say why, if the social bond could be made an object of cognition, then we would not really be dealing with an obligation at all but with a ration of exchange.

The impossibility of such a calculation goes to the heart of viewing society or globality as complex, dynamical systems. In such systems, "there is no way of calculating an ethical choice by merely using rights and rules" (Malan and Cilliers 2004: 16) such as the "criteria" for intervention. The social, as a complex system, is incomprehensible and this incomprehensibility invokes the ethical as a response to justice – which is always more than the application of a law. It also leaves us with what Readings (1996: 185–186) calls a "community of loose ends" [133] in which

> the singularity of the 'I' or the 'you' is caught up in a network of obligations that the individual cannot master. That is, the network of obligations in which an individual is caught up in is not entirely available to the subjective consciousness of that individual, so that we can never pay all our debts. Indeed, the assumption that we can pay all our debts is fundamentally unethical, since it presumes the possibility of overcoming all responsibilities and obligations, achieving 'freedom' from them. Autonomy as freedom from obligation to others, holds out the impossible imagination of subjective self-identity: I will no longer be torn up, divided from myself by my responsibilities to others.

Enda Graf Sahel does not have a definitive answer to the question: how, on the basis of what criteria, do you decide which organisations to support? Given the nature of the social bond as theorised by Readings, it is as misplaced and unethical to ask for such criteria as it is to hope that the UN can solve the problem of its own legitimacy. What one can do is articulate core values – respect for others, conviviality, reflexivity and protection of the environment (Matthews 2006: 77) – and in the praxis of co-operation, engage those role players these values resonate with. This is not the same as asserting criteria or pre-emptively filtering out elements in the system. It means ethically engaging the indeterminate question of co-operation every time it emerges – the result of which may or may not manifest a glocalisation attractor in a greater system of global interaction. To insist on "criteria" is to reiterate a demand forged in the textual archive of spatio- and temporal systems of differentiation. It expresses the melancholy sigh used as epigraph to this paper, that it is always "*easier to imagine a time when nature, as it were, laboured and gave birth all at once to the whole creation, present and future, than to imagine a continual activity.*" What I am referring to here as a complex dynamical ethic is such a continual activity invoked by the possibility of co-operation. A paper like this cannot but place itself in the genealogy of the very difference it takes as thematic, cannot but offer itself as further instantiation of that difference. What that means cannot be determined or framed in advance of any discussion simply because there is no criteria to invoke, in advance and/or in self-defence; no predeterminations that would not already be further instantiations of that difference, actualised in history.

In 1995, 50 years after Arendt's sweeping declaration that "[t]he problem of evil will be the fundamental question of postwar intellectual life in Europe," Delbanco

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[133] See also Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community* and Maurice Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community* for an attempt "to think a community without identity, without a commonly shared core that would ground the social bond" (Readings, 1996: 227 *ft*) – an idea also expressed by Agamben's notion of the social bond as *transience*, "the solidarity of those who have nothing in common but who are aggregated together by the state of things" (Readings 1996: 187).

added the melancholy observation that "a gulf has opened up in our culture between the visibility of evil and the intellectual resources available for coping with it . . . The repertoire of evil has never been richer. Yet never have our responses been so weak." (in Bernstein 2002: 1) From this author's perspective, nothing can be as visible as the ethical demand that Africa's is making and will continue to make on an emerging global community. Despite the global recession is seems to me that the repertoire of intellectual, financial and political means to respond to this ethical demand has also never been richer – but that will only become visible to those who insist on reading our global communality firstly in ethical terms and not only so as an after-thought to politics.

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