IDEOLOGICAL CONFORMITY:
A FUNDAMENTAL CHALLENGE TO THE SOCIAL SCIENCES
IN NEW ZEALAND

Christopher Tremewan

On 27 January 2004, the leader of New Zealand's conservative National Party opposition, Don Brash, gave a state-of-the-nation address to the Orewa Rotary Club near Auckland on the subject of Nationhood. This speech precipitated a stunning reversal in the opinion polls. From languishing far behind the Labour Government, the National Party shot ahead. In his dry professorial style, Brash had tapped into a major source of public disquiet with unexpected success.

His focus was 'the dangerous drift towards racial separatism in New Zealand, and the development of the now entrenched Treaty grievance industry. We are one country with many peoples, not simply a society of Pākehā and Māori where the minority has a birthright to the upper hand, as the Labour Government seems to believe' (Brash, 2004).

He was accused of a supreme act of political cynicism which fed off the basest instincts of the electorate. Others saw him as a political neophyte who accidentally struck it lucky. I do not wish to promote or contest any view of his political tactics. Rather I wish to raise a more significant set of issues which are highlighted by this event.

These issues centre on the question of why, in a democratic society presumably open to the public contestation of ideas, such a welling-up of unexpressed political dissent had occurred that it was available for political mobilisation. The pent-up pressure from diverse currents of dissent was ready for release. Why?

Some partial explanations are ready to hand. These include the fact that, although the ideas presented by Brash had been in the public arena for some time, they had not been expressed so convincingly and with such evident con-

viction by a credible contender for state leadership. The second component of this explanation is the furore in the preceding months over the question of whether the New Zealand foreshore and seabed is owned by the state or by Māori tribes. The anxiety levels of the political mainstream, 'middle New Zealand', shot up over whether New Zealanders could have open access to the beach for their impending summer holidays and where the process of restitution to Māori for historical grievances would end. So the mid-summer speech was perfect timing.

These explanations address the immediate circumstances in which political dissent was tapped more than the reasons for its existence. They are therefore insufficient to account for the phenomenon. Deeper analysis must examine the ideological verities which had become aligned with government social policy, which were legislatively programmed and ideologically policed. At the root of this ideological conformity, a dead hand that stifled rather than promoted critical debate, lies the failure of the social sciences to provide an adequate critique of social norms in this country.

The role of social science is to discern and explore fundamental social phenomena, to contest superficial, self-interested and populist explanations for social behaviour, and constantly to broaden the arena of debate beyond the self-referential modes of embedded polarities. That this role has been urgently needed in New Zealand is attested to by the public sense that there are deeper issues behind the national skirmishes over race, indigeneity and culture, and that it is not racist to assert the need for deeper enquiry.

Yet the social sciences in New Zealand have not merely failed to make a critical contribution. They have been complicit in a process of racial categorisation that may well have destructive consequences for those it is meant to help and for the whole society.

The intellectual climate in New Zealand is so politicised that, to make my argument in a way which will minimise misinterpretation, I start with an illustration from India in order to open a window to the New Zealand experience. That window is Meera Nanda's recent study of postmodern critiques of science and Hindu nationalism in India in her book *Prophets Facing Backward* (Nanda, 2003).

Many observers of India were not sorry to see the collapse of the Congress Party's dynastic grip on the national government in 1996 owing to its thorough-going political opportunism and corruption. But few welcomed the

advent of a Hindu nationalist government in the form of the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) administration backed by the shadowy bosses of the RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) paramilitary and other chauvinist forces. This signalled the end of the secular Indian state and the heightening of vicious communal strife.

In this context, Meera Nanda (2003:1) talks of the 'betrayal of the clerks', that is:

> men and women of secular learning, intellectuals who uphold left-wing *political* ideals, but who have lost all confidence in the classic left-wing *cultural* ideals of scientific reason, modernity, and the Enlightenment. These postmodern intellectuals and activists, in other words, display a passion for radical social transformation, alongside an equally passionate rage against the Enlightenment's promise of progressive social change through a rational critique of superstition, ideologies, and flawed reasoning. They have come to see the claims of universalism and objectivity of science as so many excuses for Eurocentrism and the 'mental colonialism' of non-Western people. Their vision of a socially egalitarian world calls for, above all, an epistemological egalitarianism which respects the rights of non-Western and other non-dominant social groups to develop 'their own' sciences, reflecting their culturally distinctive reason.

Nanda's book shows how these despairing intellectuals have 'helped deliver the people they profess to love – the non-Western masses, the presumed victims of Western science and modernity – to the growing forces of hatred, fascism, and religious fanaticism'. She notes how theories of 'alternative epistemology' and 'local knowledge' characteristic of postmodernist thought in the late twentieth century have 'served as a bridge to reactionary modernist movements darkening the horizons in the twenty-first century…' (Nanda, 2003:2)

She terms this alternative modernity 'reactionary modernism' following on Herf's study of Nazi Germany which identified 'reactionary modernism' as modernity without liberalism, the embrace of technology without the reason of the Enlightenment or liberal democracy (ibid:7). We are encouraged to draw the link between the nationalist cultural romanticism of the Nazis and the Hindu culturalist argument for the Indian nuclear bomb.

The core of Nanda's argument is the way she demonstrates how the 'politics

of resentment and cultural redefinition has come to be adopted by all three intellectual-political currents – i.e. postmodernist, postcolonial and Hindutva [*Hindu culturalism*] – against the core values of democratic individualism and sceptical Enlightenment' (Nanda, 2003: 6).

This kind of politics of resentment and cultural redefinition and these intellectual currents have also reached a confluence in New Zealand. They have produced an orthodoxy which has a hegemonic grip on New Zealand social science. This is exhibited in an intellectual environment characterised by widespread fear of the professional and personal consequences of contesting this ideological conformity.

The orthodoxy goes by many names: culturalism, biculturalism, cultural relativism, neo-traditionalism, ethnic identity politics or cultural essentialism. In the popular mind, it is seen as a central component of Kiwi political correctness, a moral enforcement incomprehensible in terms of lived social reality but comprehensible in terms of a reconstructed social reality.

The culturalist notion is that the most fundamental characteristic of a person is their culture. In Grillo's words, 'the culture to which I am said or claim to belong defines my essence. Cultures [*are seen to*]…determine individual and collective identities, and the subject's place in social and political schemas. Cultural membership is thus virtually synonymous with ethnicity' (Grillo, 2003: 160). This leads to notions of 'cultural conservationism', the protection of 'cultural authenticity' and the generalisation of 'cultural anxiety' or the worry by a community about what is happening to their 'culture' (Grillo, 2003: 158,160). Debates of this kind are widespread in Europe and North America, as elsewhere, and have been for decades if not centuries. But they have acquired a new salience in many places as difference is not only recognised (as in the multicultural paradigm) but is absolutised as inviolate and unbridgeable.

An extreme and entrenched form of culturalism has developed in New Zealand. It insists on a biological connection between ethnicity, culture and entitlement and, in my view, is better termed *cultural fundamentalism*. Its historical antecedents are invidious. Yet it dominates policy prescriptions and academic analysis of New Zealand society.[1]

Underlying this antipodean cultural fundamentalism are a number of assumptions in addition to primordial notions of racial origin. They include, despite vast empirical evidence to the contrary, the incompatibility of Pākehā and Māori 'cultures' and thus the need for formal separation followed by for-

mal negotiation between discrete entities. There is also an inference as to the inferiority of Pākehā culture owing to its ostensible emphasis on individuality (rather than communality) and its lack of territorial legitimacy, despite the historical facts of annexation and conquest. These assumptions accord with the observation by Stolcke of the extreme right-wing in Europe and its elaboration of a politics of exclusion with respect to migrants. In that context, cultural fundamentalism is characterised by the idea that 'relations between different cultures are by 'nature' hostile and mutually destructive because it is in human nature to be ethnocentric; different cultures ought, therefore, to be kept apart for their own good' (Stolcke, 1995: 5). In both contexts, there is an undertone of purification by separation.

One of the few writers to develop an academic critique of this ideological trend for almost a decade is Elizabeth Rata. Her argument is summarised in her book *A Political Economy of Neotribal Capitalism* published in 2000. It is further developed in a recent article (Rata 2003) in the journal *Political Power and Social Theory* entitled 'Leadership Ideology in Neotribal Capitalism' as well as elsewhere. Rata states that the identity politics of the left (biculturalism) and the neoliberal economic programme of de-regulation (or re-regulation) and privatisation, jointly provided the conditions for the emergence of neotraditionalist ideology in New Zealand. The rapid acceptance and proselytization of this ideology 'by both leftist biculturalists and rightist neoliberals (albeit for different reasons) enabled a neotribal elite to acquire control of historical grievance settlements, to control the interpretation of the Treaty of Waitangi, and to broker a non-democratic neotraditionalist ideology into the institutions of the democratic state' (Rata, 2003: 44).

In India, social activists and intellectuals sought to mobilise mass movements on the basis of anti-modernisation developmental objectives, stating that local cultural norms are as valid as any other. Some have found – with the permeation not only of rural masses but also of the middle-class and the bureaucracy with Hindu nationalism – that ideas have consequences and often not the ones intended. For others, interest and intentionality have coincided. In this respect, Nanda states, the evidence shows:

> that it is not the poor and the culturally marginalised classes/castes who are clamouring for indigenous sciences or authentic models of development. Rather, it is the upward mobile urban middle classes, the newly-enriched agrarian classes who are the chief beneficiaries of anti-modernist ideas. This enables them to enjoy the benefits of new technology, new consumer goods, and new economic oppor-

tunities without losing control of their traditional subordinates, the
women, the lower castes and the poor (Nanda, 2003: 31).

Similarly, the social and economic justice goals of Māori inclusion and cultural legitimacy, which was the progressive project of the 1970s and since, was, according to Rata, 'derailed by tribal elites and restructured as neotribal capitalism' (Rata, 2003: 46). The new elite uses the camouflage of neotraditionalism and revived communality to disguise class interests it pursues through the Treaty process and, of late, through notions of group rights.

She identifies a new brokerage class of 'culturalist intellectuals and Māori neotraditionalists (increasingly the same people) …[*who have*] provided the conduit for the brokerage of neotraditionalism into intellectual and political institutions' (Rata, 2003: 47). She fears for the future of democracy in New Zealand as the reified undemocratic practices of a reconstructed tribal aristocracy, the *nouveau riche* of culturalism, are validated by law.

According to Rata's scenario, Māori concentrated in the lower socio-economic strata are informed of their communal nature by their neotraditional leaders and are persuaded by the culturalist ideology of their authentic role as tribal followers. This cultural obedience is ideologically presented as an active commitment to Māori emancipation from the Pākehā yoke. The members of the neo-tribe are thereby removed to an extent from the processes and protections of the democratic state. This is despite decades of Māori involvement in the labour movement and, of course, in wars against fascism and ideologies of ethnic superiority, not to mention the protest movement against *apartheid*. Taken further, the ideological formation of young, poor Māori in large numbers through a wide range of culturalist indoctrination in state-funded institutions, including in wānanga[2] of dubious educational quality (Cohen, 2003: A34),[3] could be seen as providing the willing political force to insist on ethnic allegiance as the primary political marker in this country. Perhaps, if eventually organised in tribal or cultural associations, elements of such a force could parallel the emergence of the Hindu paramilitary-martial arts community organisation mentioned earlier. Another case of ideas having unintended consequences.

Or were they unintended? The success of Brash's appeal partly lay in a strong unease amongst the public that, in Chris Trotter's words, 'those of us living in the present are being called upon to not only redress the wrongs of the past, but to also acquiesce in the creation of the nation that should have resulted from the Treaty of Waitangi – but didn't' (Trotter, 2004: 18) Trotter draws two

pieces of evidence to support this argument. First, he calls on historian W. H. Oliver's investigation of the quasi-legal body for dealing with historical grievances, the Waitangi Tribunal, in his essay 'The Future Behind Us':

> There is a fleeting golden age of promise, a fall from grace, a recovery from the fall, and the timeless principles of truth persisting through denial and adversity… What was lost in the past through the fall is being recovered by the movement towards justice which the Tribunal embodies [*leading*] beyond description of past sufferings to the delineation of a past which did not occur but might have – to a retrospective utopia (Cited in Trotter, 2004:17).

The second statement more directly implies governmental purpose when Trotter quotes Margaret Wilson, then Minister for Treaty Settlements, as saying:

> [*T*]he notion of constitutionalism which is the foundation of western democratic liberal government, must accommodate cultural diversity in accordance with the conventions of mutual recognition, consent and cultural continuity (Cited in Trotter, 2004:17).

He interprets this as saying that the 'democratic system of government must give way to a system which recognises and enshrines the political beliefs of traditional Māori culture…rigidly hierarchical, sexually exclusive, and, in political terms, aristocratic, anti-democratic and discriminatory…'

By the time Brash spoke out in early 2004, these kinds of public utterances by ministers and the opacity of the political debate provided grounds for public unease. This lay partly in the suspicion of an unstated agenda by a brokerage elite successfully influencing the government's social policy and going far beyond the established and largely accepted consensus of redress of proven historical wrongs, mainly with respect to land.

In addition, the political right, sensing the emergence of a new capitalist elite and thus a competitor, was not so naïve as to believe there was no self-interest behind such moves even if cloaked in the pursuit of apparently worthy goals. Attempts to domesticate Māori brokerage leaders within major political parties around the same time largely proved unsuccessful, partly from the claim to a higher racial loyalty than party discipline could recognise and partly from party hierarchies rejecting the view that cultural entitlements license ethical behaviours which, in law, are proscribed as nepotistic and corrupt.

Also, there had gradually emerged, over preceding years, a broad public sense of unreality and disconnectedness when people (often friends and acquaintances) whose social and political formation was identical to many other middle-class New Zealanders, suddenly began to claim an extraordinary sense of alienation and the right to be excepted from the legal and constitutional norms which had ensured their rise to public prominence and private wealth. Discovery of descent from even one remote ancestor of Māori lineage somewhere on a family tree appeared to be sufficient to produce a raft of mid-career 'born-again' Māori with a standard toolkit of grievance, vague allusions to chiefly forebears, and often visceral anti-Pākehā contempt. In these cases, individual cultural identity was being formed more on the basis of what one opposed intellectually than on the basis of a lived socio-cultural reality. This contrivance was perplexing but highly successful in gaining the moral high ground in inter-personal and intra-institutional relationships. The antagonistic social relationships it set up had nevertheless worn very thin by early 2004 and, as a by-product, gifted moral equivalence to white racist opinion.

Until a year or so before the Brash speech, the public dissent in the face of these developments was contradictory, conditional and masked. It rarely found public expression except on the political fringe or in cynical humour. Most people apparently wanted to believe the best of the process of historical restitution even though the arena of ideas was dominated by the artifice of semi-religious moral dualisms, a tendency derided with respect to the Bush administration in Washington D.C. but apparently acceptable in Wellington, New Zealand: for or against the Treaty, for or against biculturalism, acceptance of white guilt or approval of oppression, for or against immigration, acceptance that Māori have the right not to be criticised by others for racism, sexism, poor parenting, abuse and crime versus white cultural superiority and so on. These polarities were routinely read as code for being for or against all Māori and the pressure to categorise opinion according to them appeared to prevent more nuanced consideration.

It seems that generalised public unease reached a threshold in late 2003 and 2004. The fear of being labelled racist even when genuinely sympathetic to the resolution of historical indigenous grievances probably still confined the public response of many New Zealanders. But there was, at this time, a confluence of all the subterranean streams of dissent, from the unease of liberal opinion to the pathology of white racism, which provided a political charge ready for Brash's touch paper. As the Government quickly determined after the speech, the explicit insertion of race into all aspects of social policy by means of the euphemism of 'Treaty principles'[4], and for the widely-perceived benefit of a

vocal brokerage elite (both Māori and Pākehā), had emerged in multiple ways to racialise New Zealand politics against the majority of voters.

One can argue about how clever this was in terms of political tactics if the primary goal was social and economic equity for Māori. More important to the focus of this analysis is the paradox of trying to redress the wrongs of racism using its categories and the absence from the arena over the preceding years of any spirited academic debate about the validity of the culturalist position and the categories of ethnicity, race, indigeneity and culture which had become normalised in public administration and general parlance. Walls had been built higher or built where they had previously not existed and this was done in the name of redistributive justice on the basis of race. This happened in the midst of global condemnation of similar processes in Kosovo and Rwanda.

Although I have examined culturalism and its implications, I make no claim to an exhaustive analysis. Rather, this treatment of cultural fundamentalism provides the context for the main objective of this paper which is to ask why the social sciences have been largely complicit in its ideological hegemony? Why are there not more Nandas and Ratas, more social scientists with a critical gaze – and sooner? Why does this critique, which posits the rise of a new elite by calculated political leverage of the opportunities afforded by the marriage of culturalist ideology and neoliberalism, seem to surprise, even offend, many social scientists, policy-makers and activists in New Zealand?

One reason may lie in the shift of the discipline of anthropology in New Zealand in the 1960s and 70s as it slewed away from its British origins of effete paternalism which encompassed both a largely sympathetic observation of the social structure of the 'natives' as well as a distaste for the Continental fixation on theory. It shifted to the culturalist orthodoxy of American anthropology and, in the words of Peter Munz (1994: 61) in his critique of Anne Salmond's *Two Worlds*, its 'reliance on the finality of uncritical self-representation'. What the 'natives' say about themselves is what must be taken as true. This anthropological ideology has been termed romantic primitivism and, in its most extreme form, is often related to the anthropological lineage of Margaret Mead.[5]

It is an ideology with a static and nostalgic view of culture which leaves the way open for the extreme cultural essentialism of 'linguistic determinism and cultural incommensurability'.[6] Even if most anthropologists no longer accept such definitions professionally, in the New Zealand context of institutional

politics, intellectual fashion and academic careerism over the past 20 years, it may have suited social scientists not to contest the popularisation of such inadequate and socially destructive notions.[7] Certainly, the intellectual vacuum was filled by essentialist rhetoric[8] and eventually by a comprehensive justification for cultural exceptionalism: Linda Tuhiwai Smith's *Decolonising Methodologies* (1999). Institutionalising the avoidance of any critical examination of cultural fundamentalism emerged as a clear strategy in government social policy circles as well as in academia. Theoretical criticism was painted as culture-bound and its application to any thought or activity of Māori was regarded as oppressive owing to unequal power relations. This culturalist logic therefore goes only one way. It is acceptable for 'Māori' to critique 'Pākehā' intellectual method.

The consequences of an extended battle twenty years ago within New Zealand anthropology, particularly in Auckland, over the colonial origins of the discipline, along with the intimidatory atmosphere which increasingly marked the intellectual side of the urban Māori cultural renaissance, have combined to ensure such ideological initiatives to limit academic freedom have been largely unchallenged by social scientists. In addition, the *ad hominem* nature of cultural fundamentalism works to neutralise and silence any person who is, in the first instance, not Māori, and in the second, not born in New Zealand (and thus not a 'partner' to the Treaty). This excludes the majority of academics from the right to speak.

The French anthropologist, Alain Babadzan (2000:150), notes with respect to this culturalist orthodoxy that, 'with its sacralisation of cultures and identities… [*it is*] increasingly used as a privileged tool to legitimise political domination'. By rejecting critical method and democratic practice as culturally 'white' or politically imperial, we are left with the social constructivism of postmodernism which looks to re-create a golden past that never existed. The reification of culture and its connection to primordial notions of race or indigeneity has the purpose of authenticating notions of uniqueness and exclusiveness in contemporary identity politics. Claims of cultural antiquity, unconvincingly portrayed as pre-dating traditions of scientific enquiry (not that they carry greater weight even if they do), are used to characterise critical enquiry as cultural impertinence and corrosive of indigenous values. The latter is undoubtedly true but that train left the station with the enthusiastic assistance of Māori leaders well over a century ago.

Today, New Zealand observes the spectacle of those schooled in critical enquiry, replete with the benefits of the modern social institutions in which it

is embedded, and aware of both its creative and destructive power, seeking to circumscribe it on cultural grounds constructed to protect and advance their personal and political interests. Shaping legal frameworks and ethical conventions around class interests is no more or less than other social groups have done historically, not least the British ruling class. In understanding New Zealand society today, it would seem important to recognise that a new class is emerging to grasp its own share of the market economy.

Therefore, one reason that the Rata critique may be rejected by social scientists is the dominance of the analytical framework deriving from the romantic primitivism of colonial-period 'culture contact' anthropology which renders opaque the real social processes at work and actively collaborates in disguising them. This ideological stance has gained momentum from the symbiotic relationship between the emergent neotraditional leaders and the intellectuals from the romantic primitivist tradition. Each validate the other. The intellectuals provide academic legitimacy to the neotraditional view that biological connection establishes unbroken rights of inheritance and is the necessary condition for cultural behaviour, that racial exclusiveness is both natural and necessary in the context of contested multi-ethnicity. They provide or endorse the intellectual rationale for the corporate boundaries and brand image of neotraditionalism. The neotraditional leaders supply the intellectuals with the cultural recognition and endorsement of those licensed to bestow primeval favours. They also provide continuing access to the neotribal leadership along with most-favoured status with respect to social policy development of the state and the many opportunities which that offers.

A second reason is undoubtedly left-wing idealism's settlement with identity politics. The political context created by the sudden de-regulation of the economy by a Labour Government from 1984 onwards, demonstrated that the New Zealand intellectual left was not up to the task of analysing the revolutionary effects of post-1950s capitalism. Its response to the Labour Government's neoliberal reforms was one of nostalgia for the redistributive policies of a previous era but with the surrender of class politics for the attitudinal self-righteousness of gender and ethnic identity politics. In other words, like left wing idealism elsewhere, it avoided the intellectual complexities of the challenge of relating the global development of the market economy and the demise of the socialist bloc to New Zealand society by collapsing it all into a quasi-religious claim: the Original Sin of British colonialism, white settlers and their current representatives.

The definition of these representatives appears to be anyone with no Māori

ancestry and thus creates, in the name of a putative social justice, the moral and social contradictions of any racial categorisation based on 'a single drop of blood' definition.[9] Other Polynesian peoples, Asian and recent European/ 'Western' migrants are mostly left in a purgatory of unrecognised unbelonging – compared to the recognised unbelonging of Pākehā, the 'Treaty partner'. Yet, if the racist definition was uniformly applied and all those with even a drop of European blood were forced to return whence they came, New Zealand would be left to other Pacific peoples and to peoples from Asian countries. Those currently classified as either Māori or Pākehā would have to leave.

However, according to the extreme culturalist position, only extraordinary acts of self-mutilating contrition by Pākehā will expiate their indelible guilt. Expropriation of the Pākehā majority and the visiting of the suffering of dispossession upon them have been included in the formula for setting right the relationship between the essentialised, hermetically-sealed groupings of Māori and Pākehā, groups which, as I have noted above, are social constructs and do not exist in reality as separate entities.[10] (This is not to question the existence of Māori or Māori culture.)

The culturalist tendency also developed further as part of the 'development debate' as newly independent countries struggled for economic viability. The debate raged internationally from the 1960s. Cultural relativism was seen as a 'progressive' strategy against the establishment of 'Western' concepts of governance, property rights and economic development as universal norms. While some important principles were established (e.g. the importance of non-state actors and of local decision-making in human rights advocacy and poverty reduction), it also led to the surprising acceptance of the claim to the equality of all 'truths'.

As we know now, cultural relativism was soon employed by the most repressive governments of developing countries as a rationale for not accepting universal human rights, labour standards or codes of good governance. Similarly, in New Zealand, sensitivity to Māori cultural traditions has increasingly come to mean assuaging the wrongs of colonialism by acknowledging the right of a neotraditional elite to political leadership and to claim to speak for all Māori in perpetuating essentialist notions of culture. A vibrant social science would analyse and contest this social process of emerging class privilege based on racial identification under the guise of cultural authenticity.

A third reason for the critique of neotraditionalism and culturalism to be seen as novel or to be rejected is that culturalism has shone a spotlight on the real

needs of some groups of New Zealanders and on the cultural riches, such as the Māori language, which had been insufficiently valued in the past and a target for active discrimination. In response to non-government organisation, church and grassroots political activism on these issues, the government policy apparatus began to support this greater sensitivity to Māori culture. Significant resources have been channelled into such areas of need as a consequence and much has been achieved in making the cultural heritages of all New Zealanders mutually respected and available as a common heritage.

However, the imposition of definitions of race and culture by cultural fundamentalists has now led to a series of social policy failures and misdiagnoses of social needs. Past gains have been put at risk. Cultural fundamentalism now makes it difficult for policy-makers to resist claims of cultural exceptionalism advanced as the authenticity of ancient tradition even when re-invented by modern elites immersed in the market economy and parliamentary politics.[11]

In this context, what is the task of social scientists? Immanuel Wallerstein (2003: 9) states in *The Decline of American Power* that 'we are all engaged in a triple task: the intellectual task of analyzing reality critically and soberly; the moral task of deciding what the values to which we should give priority today are; and the political task of deciding how we might contribute immediately to the likelihood that the world emerges from the present chaotic structural crisis … into a different world-system that would be appreciably better rather than appreciably worse than the present one'.

It is difficult to see how social scientists can remain true to their discipline and measure up to the three-fold challenge posed by Wallerstein if we suspend critical judgement of ideas and beliefs – *especially* those ideas and beliefs which proponents maintain are validly protected by a force field of cultural exceptionalism. The silence of social scientists or their hurried repair to coffee table tomes on culture contact – even if well written – have ensured that intellectual leadership has been left to those whose sense of righteous discipleship has overwhelmed their role as intellectuals. There is nothing as implacable as academics, NGO activists or government policy analysts policing their colleagues for political conformity under the guise of academic rigour. The New Zealand research community, from the biomedical sciences to the social sciences, is almost inured to ideological imperatives in funding applications and conference paper selections. Those critiquing the dominant culturalist paradigm, even obliquely, are likely to miss out on funding or be excluded from presentation roles at multi-sectoral policy conferences.

If the intellectual and political task of social scientists, as stated earlier, is to contest superficial explanations and broaden the arena for debate, how might it be broadened beyond the current culturalist paradigm? For social scientists uncomfortable with the rejection of scientific critique and the reluctance to take a dispassionate view in evaluating ideas, a way forward is provided, as suggested already, by the comparative study of the region in which New Zealand is located. Many engaged in the comparative study of Asian societies would find Rata's observations on the emergence of a new elite unexceptional. It may be, therefore, that the 'flight path' of British colonialism en route to this country is under-researched, that the dynamics of colonialism and post-colonialism have more to offer us than a handy polemical term for the enemy within our gates.

There is some very good contemporary writing on New Zealand history and some of it seeks to avoid the culturalist paradigm (King, 2003; Belich, 1996, 2001). Britain, the 'Mother Country', and Australia loom large. But, to my knowledge, very little of it draws on the historical experience of the countries through which British governance came to New Zealand and the way this journey shaped institutions in this country. Such studies may yet provide us with many examples of culturalist ideology and the politics of ethnicity which could assist a deeper consideration of our current dilemmas.

Nicholas Tarling (2001: 4) notes in his *Southeast Asia – A Modern History* how colonial census-takers were obsessed with ethnicity:

> 'There is no doubt', a North Borneo census report remarked in 1931, 'that a good deal of confusion and doubt exists not only in the minds of the enumerators but of the natives themselves as to which [*tribal*] subdivision they really belong in'.

Official categorisation by ethnicity was, in many circumstances, an alien imposition for both isolated peoples who were 'just us and we're the only ones here' and for *entrepot* communities where there was an ebb and flow at many levels of social life over centuries. It is a form of objectification which has found its way into New Zealand's census through a prioritisation system[12] reflective of both the inheritance of British governance (an obsession with ethnicity) and the particularity of the politicisation of race in this country. It has been advanced by an order of magnitude through the 'audit culture' of neoliberalism whereby 'routines and disciplinary practices are the vehicles through which governments seek to instil new norms of conduct and behaviour into the populations over which they rule' (Shore, 2004). In academia, there are

now teaching, research, administrative, environmental, equal opportunity and many other audits in addition to financial ones. Many have ideological functions cast as risk management or social responsiveness. New Zealand is entwined in a constant ethnic audit, formal and informal, of self-categorisation and entitlement to resources, to historical legitimacy and personal worth, to the right to belong to the society and to speak. The New Zealand ethnic audit is an ideological project of massive proportions which introduces thresholds of social division whose implications can only be guessed at.[13] Academics who have railed against neoliberal managerialism in university administration appear to find no contradiction in becoming enforcers of the ethnic audit.

It is highly significant that, in a polity where biological ancestry is made to have new salience and where a rapidly increasing proportion of the population is able to claim multiple inheritances, claiming a link in one direction cancels out all other inheritances…and that this is a routine of academic analysis and of government policy. And I do not refer to the former Yugoslavia. With respect to New Zealand, we see such predictions as:

> The ethnic diversity of New Zealand's population is rapidly increasing. According to the 2001 census, by 2050, Māori (currently 23% of all children) will be 35% of all NZ children; Pacific Islanders (currently 10% of all children) will be 22% of all children; and Asians (currently 6% of all children) will be 11% of all children. Thus by 2050, at least 68% of all New Zealand children will be non-European. (*Equal Opportunities Action Plan 2003 and Strategic Priorities 2003–2005,* The University of Auckland, 2003, p.iii).

> …by 2051 the ethnic Māori population will almost double in size to close to a million, or twenty-two percent of the total New Zealand population. Even more dramatically, by 2051 thirty-three percent of all children in the country will be Māori… (quotation from Professor Mason Durie at the head of an advertisement for Nga Pae o te Maramatanga Policy Seminars, Turnbull House, Wellington, 4 and 18 February 2005).

These statements are part of a polemic over-simplifying the New Zealand reality: increasing multi-ethnicity is selectively represented as the 'browning' of New Zealand. It could equally well be presented as the 'whitening' of New Zealand.[14] The polemic may be partly motivated by the compulsion to plant the flag of a Māori-Polynesian ethnic franchise against the increasing Asian presence – as well as the more obvious motivations of using ethnicity to iden-

tify need and of letting Pākehā know, erroneously, they will be on the back foot as a minority and should therefore acquiesce to culturalist demands if they are to have a future in New Zealand.

A summary of a few of the social facts and trends underlying the census figures from the work of social policy analysts and demographers Chapple and Callister reveals a more complex picture.[15] For example:

- ethnic identity is not necessarily primary; some people of Māori descent have strong ethnic Māori identity, others have little or none

- one in every four officially measured Māori in 1996 was not Māori in 1991

- one in every twenty officially measured Māori in 1991 had exited the group in 1996 (Chapple, 2000:104)

- the majority of Māori ethnic group children growing up today have a non-Māori parent (Chapple 2000:105)

- some individuals in the census acknowledge ancestry but not ethnicity – 'In 1991, 1996 and 2001, a higher number of people noted some Māori ancestry than chose Māori as one of their ethnic groups. In 2001, the number reporting ancestry was 604,110 while the total Māori ethnic group was 526,281. In 2001, 5,322 respondents reported they belonged to the Māori ethnic group but stated they did not have Māori ancestry, while a further 6,846 respondents did not know if they had Māori ancestry but nevertheless recorded themselves as belonging to the Māori ethnic group. …in 2001, there were 8,796 people who wrote down an ethnic response 'New Zealander' while simultaneously recording Māori ancestry.' (Callister, 2004:115)

- 'High levels of out-marriage provide further evidence that the Māori ethnic group boundary is quite permeable for a majority of Māori. The figures suggest high amounts of cultural similarity and high levels of social interaction between Māori and non-Māori. Intermarriage is the reason for high numbers of people who identify both as Māori and non-Māori and also for the substantial margin of people who have Māori ancestry and do not identify as Māori. Many non-Māori New Zealanders have Māori relatives, and vice versa. The Māori population, sole or mixed in ethnic identity, also possesses many non-Māori ancestors. Ignoring these

facts creates an oppositional picture of ethnic relations in New Zea-
land and misses powerful forces promoting social cohesion.' (Chapple,
2000:108)

One would have thought increasing multi-ethnicity, with its implication of
shared cultural practices, linguistic familiarity and the development of unique
cultural forms shaped to time and place, would be seen as a positive develop-
ment rather than one requiring people to choose a singular identity from the
mix. The identification of need using such a metric exclusively is likely to be
anomalous and self-defeating – as is obvious from the above statistics[16] – and
one would be naïve to ignore the political interests driving these develop-
ments. Why is race becoming the major way of identifying human beings in
New Zealand and sorting them into their social places? Why is race connected
to culture in terms of causation? Does biology cause culture?

For New Zealand, there are many instructive examples of ethnic politics in
Asia and many forms of ethnification. Reflecting on the way a rural nine-
teenth century Malay aristocracy was intentionally transformed by colonial
policy into a capitalist ruling class and came to have an interest in a com-
munal politics which was racially differentiated would prove rewarding for
New Zealand analysts. This would include attention in the modern period to
the multi-faceted experiment of Malaysia's New Economic Policy in favour
of *bhumiputra*, a collective term for communities included in a reconstituted
indigeneity.

Another instructive comparator lies in the resistance of Singapore's govern-
ing People's Action Party to permitting ethnic politics to arise in the form
of a Malay party and its suppression of autonomous identity politics under
the guise of multiculturalism. Similarly, we could observe this Party's implac-
able demolition of leftwing Chinese cultural and political organisations in the
1960s and 70s to make way for a globally-connected, English-educated, corpo-
ratist state apparatus which then claimed the cultural authenticity of Chinese-
ness (Tremewan, 1994). Such instances, with their local causes, rationales and
results would repay study by New Zealand policy-makers.

These studies would, at the very least, raise the possibility that the neotribal
Māori elite is more than likely to invest Treaty settlements and to seek its
fortune in the international economy owing to the logic of the marketplace
and the need to preserve its dominance. If so, idealist supporters of cultural
fundamentalism who hope for an indigenous 'alternative', economically and
politically, are headed for a backwash of disappointment and recrimination.[17]

Returning to the colonial census-taker in Sabah, if there is an irony in all this it must be that the ethnic constructs of self-definition such officials rendered on paper, to the evident bemusement of their subjects, are now frequently claimed by the offspring of those so inadequately described, as their deepest identity. More dangerously, these colonial definitions are claimed as their indelible and exclusive future, an identity set against outsiders who share the same history, much if not all of the same culture and, in a great many cases, the marital bed.

In addressing the issue of cultural relativism and human rights in Asia more than a decade ago, I noted that cultural relativism emerged in opposition to the perceived Western ethnocentrism of concepts of human rights. Cultural relativism asserted 'the commonplace of anthropology that conceptions of rights vary according to culture…that each system of values can be understood only within its own context and that moral claims derive from this context which is also the source of their validity. These ideas were set against the idea of a 'universal morality' (Tremewan, 1993: 22).[18] Such arguments could be mobilised by governments to claim that adherence to international human rights norms is culturally inappropriate. Subsequently, the Asian values debate was used by several Asian governments after the end of the Cold War to ensure that the universal human rights agenda was not used as a lever against them.

But, in making these observations ten years ago, I was not aware of the way in which the relativist argument would be used to overwhelm the universalisms of democratic practice, individual rights and critical intellectual inquiry in my own country. I did refer to the point made by R. J. Vincent that, if the local value or cultural reflex is to assert global superiority, then the proponents of an absolutist cultural relativism can mount no moral critique against it (Tremewan, 1993: 23). Nevertheless, I failed to direct the same critical gaze upon New Zealand as I did upon Asia. That task is now unavoidable.

A culturalist orthodoxy that measures intellectual merit and moral standing on the basis of biological descent and ideological conformity must be opposed. I claim that New Zealand social science has failed in its task of providing an adequate critique of social norms in this country and that it is intellectually and morally obliged to begin to do so now.

A few individuals have, to a greater or lesser extent, elaborated a critique of culturalism. Among them, I have referred to Elizabeth Rata (political science and education), Peter Munz (history), W. H. Oliver (history), Chris Trotter (political journalism) and Andrew Sharp (political philosophy). I ought also

to refer to Erich Kolig (2005) whose article 'From a "Madonna in a condom" to "claiming the airwaves"' examines the politics of indigeneity and the implications of biculturalism which:

> …has if not created then certainly legitimated an oppositional socio-political discourse. Elevating what in effect is a counter-hegemonic ideology to a position of official recognition and national strategy, has done little to harmonize wider New Zealand society and to pacify Māori aspirations (Kolig, 2005:136).

The objective, he notes, is for biculturalism to become the ruling ideology (Kolig 2005:145), moving to a dominant position from its current role as just one of the key resources in a counter-hegemonic strategy. Kolig also offers a typology of the varying anthropological interpretations of the 'Māori renaissance': first, a 'state-sponsored diversionary tactic' to disguise the condition of an ethnically-defined underclass; second, an elite strategy pursued for class interests; third, a genuine cultural continuity and renaissance (Kolig, 2005:147). While social science writing has spanned all these viewpoints and various combinations of them, the focus of most has been overwhelmingly on the first or the third tendency: either a repetitive critique of neoliberalism with the implication of an indigenous people being drawn unwillingly into the capitalist vortex or an insistence on cultural continuity, disadvantage and protection.[19] In other words, there is no consistent or comprehensive critique of the culturalist paradigm which could have resourced the public debate. Rata, who represents the second tendency, appears as the outstanding exception. Other exceptions are mainly those I have noted above. They have begun to do this in an aggressively negative atmosphere owing to the convictions so many hold about the prevailing orthodoxy and the interests of an elite in its perpetuation.

What questions then ought we to be asking, in order to measure up to Wallerstein's challenge?

First, we face the intellectual task of analysing reality critically. The results of a hard-edged system of racial classification in a multi-ethnic context of shared histories are unlikely to be contained by the gentle modulating influences of social democratic institutions. This is especially so when clear-eyed calculations have been made to outrun them. What are its likely economic consequences? What are the likely thresholds of social conflict? Does the bicultural paradigm provide an adequate basis for understanding contemporary New Zealand society? Are biculturalism and the ideology of indigeneity

emancipatory, or are they merely disguises for elite collaboration, a product of the polarising tendency of economic globalisation towards various fundamentalisms, ethnic, religious, or nationalist? Ought they to be the ideological basis for state sector policies? Is the Treaty of Waitangi and its unstated principles an acceptable and useful basis for New Zealand's future? How do migrants from East Asian countries, casually ethnicised as 'Asian', fit into the shared Māori-Pākehā romantic primitivism? Why should ethnicity be used as a marker at all?

We should start questioning ideological categories masquerading as something else. We are familiar with 'the West', an ideological category implying a cultural personality masquerading as a geographical one, or 'Islam', a political category masquerading as a religious one (Lazarus, 2002: 44). Ethnicity, used as an official regulatory category, deprives people of their human particularity, their individual personalities. 'Asian' or even 'Pacific Island' shoves them into a box as the exotic other, an undifferentiated mass which does not belong. Ethnicity has concrete results: used as a census category it becomes a way of sorting people into their social places in many contexts. The ethnic audits in New Zealand now do this explicitly (e.g. the Tertiary Education Commission's Draft Ethnic Responsiveness Strategy and the Medical Council's draft on 'cultural competence').

Then there is the moral task of deciding the values to which we should give priority. There is a great danger in a society which actively undermines or discredits its own liberal traditions. A country or a university which falls back from critical intellectual inquiry, from democratic and secular mores into acquiescence to or support of 'reactionary modernism', will soon reap a whirlwind of intolerance, a social dislocation which will increasingly disenfranchise both democratic politics and the intellectual endeavour.

The social sciences are part of a tradition of learning built up in our universities for over a century and stretching back beyond that. We need to be more diligent in communicating the values which provide the foundations of this scholarship – and openness to critique must itself be an assumed value. I do not minimise the need to challenge the norms of social science itself or the difficulty of doing so and, indeed, that is the core of the task I am proposing.

This means we cannot avoid choosing priorities among the multiple universalisms that surround us. While universal values have been regarded as oppressive, there is no refuge in particularisms, specifically cultural fundamentalism and its insistence on an unchanging past to be re-constituted in the present as

a universalism to which all others must adjust. The power to mis-define this debate as a radical discontinuity and as an antithesis between the local and the universal must be resisted and exposed. Lazarus (2002:51) has noted of the new left that 'failing to register the structuration of the modern world by capitalism, it can only present modernity under the sign of culture'. I do not minimise the difficulties of shaping a progressive politics today. But it is clear that secular, democratic institutions and critical intellectual inquiry underpin such a development.

Finally, there is the political task of deciding how we might contribute to a better world. We need in this country a higher and more intense level of debate in contexts where ideas are presented, challenged and refined for the common good. To achieve this we must dispense once and for all with the notion that the right to speak lies only with those who assent to the culturalist paradigm or that they are granted some higher authority to adjudicate on the utterances of others. It is time to reject the gate-keeping role of ideological compliance, a role which confines social science to introversion and domesticity, and public policy to unworkable solutions which undermine public institutions and threaten the welfare of the poor.

On the other hand, it is not sufficient to assert a generalised and possibly equally romantic return to the principles of the Enlightenment. Lazarus (1999:3) observes that while 'the tradition of European bourgeois humanism has always insisted upon its civility, has always gestured toward – even made a promise of – a universalistically conceived social freedom, it has never delivered on this promise, except, arguably, to the privileged few, and even then on the basis of the domination of all the others'.

But his pyrotechnic route through the shoals of culturalism makes it clear that intellectual rigour is basic to confronting it and that the creative force for this may come from writers and intellectuals whose cultural and intellectual practice is:

> …their simultaneous commitment to the 'philosophical discourse of modernity' and its urgent critique, their extraordinary command of and respect for the European humanist (or bourgeois) canon existing alongside an equally extraordinary knowledge (and critical endorsement) of other cultural works, social projects, and historical experiences, the necessary consideration of which cannot be accomplished on the provincial soil of the European (or bourgeois) canon. Might it not be these figures in whom …contemporary his-

tory has encoded 'tradition', and they, therefore, who, enjoined to find ways to hate it properly, are uniquely placed to do so? (Lazarus, 1999: 8)

In this way the culturalist orthodoxy might best be contested. Such respect and rigour would preclude the contestation becoming the province either of anti-Māori sentiment or a rearguard action of shared Māori-Pākehā ethnic romanticism. Along those routes lie racial exclusivism, economic decay and violence.

The emergence of a new elite by leveraging a state-approved system of racial classification is socially dangerous and morally unacceptable. The silence of many New Zealanders at the moment may indicate a declining faith in national institutions and mechanisms of governance to overcome the excesses of cultural fundamentalism. If so, this is a situation of considerable peril. The contribution of New Zealand social science must be to move out of its current stance of complicity or acquiescence and towards ensuring that the unexpressed dissent tapped into by Brash is understood and mobilised in constructive ways. For the danger lies, not in the debate, but in the lack of it.

NOTES:

1 The term 'cultural fundamentalism' has earlier been used by Stolcke (1995) in analysing the 'rhetoric of exclusion' in Europe in the context of recent immigration flows. She defines it in contrast to traditional racism thus: 'Rather than asserting different endowments of human races, contemporary cultural fundamentalism …emphasises differences of cultural heritage and their incommensurability' (Stolcke 1995: 4). The human targets of this exclusion are not seen so much as racially inferior as being 'strangers, aliens, to the polity' (ibid:5). It is difficult to see how this distinction can be maintained in the New Zealand context where the definition of stranger is based on race alone.

2 *Wānanga* is Māori for a place of advanced traditional learning. The term has been applied to state-funded post-high school institutions run by Māori for Māori, at least one of which claims equivalence with universities.

3 also see a) Eleanor Black, 'Wānanga: Inside our Separatist Education System' *Canvas, Weekend Herald*, 12–13 April 2003, pp. 19–21, in which John Minto, chairman, Quality Public Education Coalition, states, "I think there will be a real crisis of quality when it comes to some of the courses." b) Ruth Laugesen 'The Race for Students – Warnings are sounding over the sudden transforma-

tion of a tiny Māori organisation into the country's biggest tertiary institution', *Sunday Star Times*, 17 August, 2003.

4 Without specifying what they were, the Court of Appeal in 1987 ruled that the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi over-ride the specifics of past legislation and require Māori and Pākehā to act in good faith as partners to the Treaty (King, 2003: 500–501). This led to a spate of similar insertions in legislation and thus to interpretations of partnership which included consultation with Māori corporate neo-tribes by public and private bodies on everything from road construction to the assignment of broadcasting frequencies. King details instances where the sensitivity accorded to Māori cultural norms appeared not to be accorded more generally and sparked resentment (ibid: 516–518).

5 A more sophisticated treatment of this difference between the British emphasis on social structure and the American emphasis on culture can be found in the debate between Kuper (1994) and Sahlins (1999) referred to in Grillo (2003: 161).

6 See also Andrew Sharp (1995: 118) where, in analysing the New Zealand bicultural paradigm, he critiques viewing cultures as 'separate spheres' or as 'separate, incommensurable, self-justifying ensembles'.

7 On the general phenomenon of the upsurge of cultural essentialism in many countries, Sahlins (1999: 414) notes 'Irony it is … that anthropologists have been to so much trouble of late denying the existence of cultural boundaries just when so many peoples are being called upon to mark them. Conscious conspicuous boundary-marking has been increasing around the world in inverse relation to anthropological notions of its significance'. Unfortunately, NZ social scientists have not been prominent in issuing such denials in the public debate but have been, in general, more active in supporting the culturalist agenda.

8 This rhetoric became dominant in teacher education institutions and schools of education and appears to endow the most mundane observations with the aura of a deeper wisdom and render theoretically improbable conclusions impervious to rigorous enquiry. See Rata (2004a,b).

9 The issues and contradictions associated with ancestry, self-identification of ethnicity and ideologies of racial inheritance are scoped for their empirical implications for public policy in New Zealand by Callister (2004).

10 See Ani Mikaere (2004: 33–45) where she states, 'For Pākehā to gain legitimacy

here, it is they who must place their trust in Māori, not the other way around. They must accept that it is for the tangata whenua [*indigenous people*] to determine their status in this land, and to do so in accordance with tikanga Māori [*Māori tradition*]…a process which Pākehā do not control.' She calls giving up control a 'leap of faith'.

11 Tariana Turia, leader of the Māori Party, is reported as saying that nepotism is not a word that Māori use. 'We see it more as whanaungatanga [*kinship*]'. *New Zealand Herald*, 21 February, 2005, p. A6.

12 Census prioritisation ranked ethnicities in order of priority so that any individual ticking more than one would be classified solely under the ethnicity of the highest ranking. The top rank was Māori and the residual category after all other ethnicities was NZ European. This highly political race ranking system has resulted in the kinds of projections which follow in the text.

13 My current research explores the 'ethnic audit' of New Zealand society and will be presented in a forthcoming book.

14 This point was first made by Chapple (2000:107).

15 This summary is mainly from a policy paper 'Diversity and The University of Auckland' I prepared for the University of Auckland Senior Management Planning Meeting, January, 2004.

16 See Callister, 2004, on the complexities of targeting social policy, notably health, on the basis of racial classifications. Chapple (2000:108) also notes: 'The evidence very much suggests that we live in a world where being Māori explains little of the variances in socio-economic outcomes. In particular, consideration only of group averages creates a distorted picture in which all Māori are viewed as failures, all non-Māori as successes, as well as strongly and inaccurately suggesting that Māori ethnicity is socio-economic destiny.'

17 Since the anti-apartheid movement was highly influential in determining the character of Māori urban politics, it is also relevant to note the assessment that, by 1996, 'the anc government's economic policy had acquired an overt class character, and was unabashedly geared to service the respective prerogatives of national and international capital and the aspiration of the emerging black bourgeoisies, perhaps above all – at the expense of the impoverished majority's hopes for a less iniquitous social and economic order' (Marais, 1998:147).

18 The article was based on a lecture to the Asian Studies Centre at St Antony's College, Oxford University, in 1992.

19 See *Sites* 18 (1989) and 30 (1995) for a selection of this writing.

REFERENCES

Babadzan, Alain 2000 'Anthropology, Nationalism and 'the Invention of Tradition'', *Anthropological Forum*, 10 (2): 131–155.

Belich, James 1996 *Making Peoples,* Auckland: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press.

Belich, James 2001 *Paradise Reforged,* Auckland: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press.

Brash, Don 2004 'Nationhood', speech to the Orewa Rotary Club, 27 January 2004, unpublished (www.nationalparty.co.nz).

Callister, Paul 2004 'Ethnicity measures, Intermarriage and Social Policy', *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand*, 23: 109–140.

Chapple, Simon 2000 'Māori Socio-Economic Disparity', *Political Science*, 52 (2): 101–115.

Cohen, David 2003 'A Victim of Success? A Māori university in New Zealand tries to cope with rapid growth' *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 25 July, pp. A34–35.

Grillo, R.D. 2003 'Cultural Essentialism and Cultural Anxiety', *Anthropological Theory* 3 (2): 157–173.

King, Michael 2003 *The Penguin History of New Zealand,* Auckland: Penguin Books.

Kolig, Erich 2005 'From a "Madonna in a Condom" to "Claiming the Airwaves" – the Māori Cultural Renaissance and Biculturalism in New Zealand', in Toon van Meijl and Jelle Miedama (eds) *Shifting Images of Identity in the Pacific,* Leiden: KITLV Press.

Kuper, A. 2003 'The Return of the Native (1)', *Current Anthropology,* 44 (3): 389–402.

Lazarus, Neil 1999 *Nationalism and Cultural Practice in the Postcolonial World,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lazarus, Neil 2002 'The fetish of "the West" in postcolonial theory', in Stal Bartolovich and Neil Lazarus (eds) *Marxism, Modernity and Postcolonial Studies,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Marais, Hein 1998 *South Africa: Limits to Change – The Political Economy of Transformation,* Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press.

Mikaere, Ani 2004 'Are we all New Zealanders now? A Māori Response to the Pākehā Quest for Indigeneity', *Red and Green*, 4: 33–45.

Munz, Peter 1994 'The Two Worlds of Anne Salmond in Postmodern Fancy Dress', *The New Zealand Journal of History*, 28: 60–75.

Nanda, Meera 2003 *Prophets Facing Backward,* New Brunswick, New Jersey, London: Rutgers University Press.

Rata, Elizabeth 2000 *A Political Economy of Neotribal Capitalism,* Lanham: Lexington Books.

Rata, Elizabeth 2003 'Leadership Ideology in Neotribal Capitalism', *Political Power and Social Theory*, 16: 43–72.

Rata, Elizabeth 2004a 'Ethnic Ideologies in New Zealand Education: What's Wrong with Kaupapa Māori', paper presented at the Teacher Education Forum of Aotearoa New Zealand, July.

Rata, Elizabeth 2004b 'Under-achievement in Māori Education: Why Kaupapa Māori Can't Help', paper presented at the symposium on The Politics of Early Childhood Education, 21–22 September. Available on www.education.auckland.ac.nz

Sahlins, M. 1999 'Two or Three Things I Know about Culture', *JRAI* 5 (4): 399–422. Salmond, Anne 1991 *Two Worlds: First Meetings between Māori and Europeans 1642–1772,* Auckland: Viking.

Shore, Cris 2004 'Audit Culture: Towards a Critical and Reflexive Anthropology', Inaugural Professorial Lecture, The University of Auckland, 26 October.

Sharp, Andrew 1995 'Why be Bicultural?', in Margaret Wilson and Anna Yeatman (eds) *Justice and Identity – Antipodean Practices,* Wellington: Bridget Williams Books.

Smith, Linda Tuhiwai 1998 *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, Dunedin: Otago University Press.

Stolcke, Verena 1995 'Talking Culture: New Boundaries, New Rhetorics of Exclusion in Europe', *Current Anthropology,* 36 (1): 1–24.

Tarling, Nicholas 2001 *Southeast Asia – A Modern History,* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Tremewan, Christopher 1993 'Human Rights in Asia', *The Pacific Review* 6 (1): 17–30.

Tremewan, Christopher 1994 *The Political Economy of Social Control in Singapore*, London: Macmillan; New York: St Martin's Press.

Tremewan, Christopher 2004 'Diversity and The University of Auckland', policy paper presented to The University of Auckland Senior Management Planning Meeting, 26 January 2004.

Trotter, Chris 2004 'To Build a Nation', speech to St Aidan's Presbyterian Church, 12 August 2004.

Wallerstein, Immanuel 2003 *The Decline of American Power,* New York, London: The New Press.

BEWARE THE MĀORI ELITE?
A Reply To Christopher Tremewan's *Ideological Conformity;*
A Fundamental Challenge to the Social Sciences in New Zealand.

Jeffrey Sissons

Political correctness aspires to become an authoritative discourse in a field of competing ideologies. Its proponents, who aspire to moral authority within this same field, claim the right, which is represented as an obligation, to police competing discourses in the name of a higher morality. Political correctness functions, therefore, as a religious ideology and is the antithesis of good social science. A central objective of social science must be to explain, and expose as ideological, discourses such as political correctness by relating them to the social conditions (historical and material) within which they are produced. In so doing, social science cannot allow its claims to truth to be policed by the ideologies it seeks to expose because to do so would be to accept that it is just another competing discourse laying claim to an alternative moral authority. Social science is not just another competing ideological discourse because it does not aspire to the form of moral authority that is claimed by religion. It seeks instead to understand the social conditions within which all such moral authority is claimed, accepted and rejected.

Biculturalism has clearly become an ideology. Promoted by the state in an effort to contain Māori demands for greater autonomy, it has become a discourse of co-option that aspires to moral authority. Biculturalists assume the right, represented as an obligation, to police competing discourses that do not represent the nation as fundamentally binary and culturally divided between Māori and Pākehā. The role of social science in New Zealand should be to explain and expose these developments rather than to participate in them. I therefore welcome Tremewan's comparative discussion of the role of social scientists in relation to cultural fundamentalisms and I share his desire to read more critical analyses of culturalist discourse in New Zealand. However, explaining the rise and dominance of culturalism is no simple task. It is not enough to invoke shadowy forces controlling the minds of Māori and Pākehā for dubious ends. It is not enough to say that the back-room biculturalists are

wrong or naïve and that the nation has been duped. What is required is careful historical and social analysis that draws upon thorough research.

Contrary to Tremewan's assertions, a significant number of New Zealand anthropologists have been doing just this. Tremewan refers to a paper by Erich Kolig, but there is no acknowledgement that this is merely one of the most recent anthropological critiques. Steven Webster sought, in his *Patrons of Maori Culture: Power Theory and Ideology in the Maori Renaissance* (1998), to understand cultural politics within Auckland University in class terms and to locate the origins of Māoritanga in Apirana Ngata's ideological denial of class. The 1989 issue of *Sites*, which Tremewan dismisses as failing to critique the culturalist paradigm, contains articles from Keith Barber, Hal Levine and Steven Webster that were early challenges to culturalist explanations. I have sought to describe and explain the systematisation of Māori tradition and re-visited Webster's class explanation for Māoritanga and biculturalism (Sissons, 1993; 2000). Most recently I have critiqued tribalism and dealt comparatively with issues such as indigenous authenticity, urban indigeneity and indigenous citizenship in my book, *First Peoples: Indigenous Cultures and their Futures* (Sissons, 2004; 2005). Beyond anthropology, Poata-Smith's well-known article on class and cultural nationalism has been widely used in anthropology and sociology courses (Poata-Smith, 1997). There are many other examples. It is simply incorrect, therefore, to assert that the discipline of anthropology in New Zealand has shifted towards the cultural orthodoxy of American anthropology. Anne Salmond's work may have, but her writing hardly represents the diversity of New Zealand anthropology, far from it. Webster's sustained criticism of Salmond's approach at Auckland is legendary and to a limited extent his book was an extension of his internal critique.

But Tremewan does not merely urge anthropologists and other social scientists to develop critiques of cultural fundamentalism – he wants us to write, and presumably think, more like Elizabeth Rata. It is here that my disagreement with Tremewan sharpens.

Rata's argument that the Treaty claims process has created a new tribal elite is, I think, an exaggeration. Certainly it has meant that some tribal leaders are now dealing with large capital sums and are using them in new ways, but most tribal leaders do not fit the stereotype of powerful elites manipulating their followers. On the face of it, developments within Ngāi Tahu and Waikato seem to support the Rata view, but even within these tribal groupings there is considerable dissent and diversity of opinion surrounding the nature and place of cultural authenticity. At a recent Ngāi Tahu planning summit, for example,

the future direction of the tribe was widely debated among members who had come to Christchurch from all over the South Island and places further north. I was invited to provide a critique of cultural fundamentalism. On the basis of my discussions with Ngāi Tahu I suggest that anthropological critiques of culture are better understood within this tribe than they are within Political Studies!

Rata's (and Tremewan's) terms, 'neotribal' and 'neotraditional', strike me as odd in that all tribes have been 'neo' since the late nineteenth century. Ballara's (1991) work makes this very clear. Tribes have always been a product of Māori engagement with capitalism. They were promoted by the state following the individualisation of land ownership and the disempowerment of hapū leaders and they were perpetuated through trust boards established to receive compensation for land confiscation. It is stretching the point to describe most members of trust boards and rūnanga throughout the country as belonging to a powerful elite. The Waimana representative to the Tuhoe Trust Board, a local farmer, would certainly find such a label amusing. I recently prepared a report for the Tuhoe claim before the Waitangi Tribunal on the impact, in Waimana, of the Native Land Court and my experience with this claim has left me in no doubt that flax-roots Tuhoe are very willing to hold their tribal leadership firmly to account for their actions.

And what is the difference between neotraditionalism and common or garden traditionalism? We know that all traditions are constantly being reinterpreted. Ngata's meetinghouses, for example, were 'neotraditional' in that they were a standardisation of innovative architectural forms developed in the nineteenth century (Sissons, 1998a). I think there has been an excessive standardisation of Māori culture encouraged by tourism, state education and the government bureaucracy and that this can constitute an oppressive authenticity. But the source of this oppressiveness is not some powerful Māori elite imposing tradition upon the poor.

The approach championed by Tremewan is in fact an elite analysis masquerading as a class analysis. I am reminded of a similar argument proposed by Epeli Hau'ofa for the Pacific. Back in 1987 Hau'ofa argued that government officials, business people, professionals and intellectuals were the main beneficiaries of the economic flows within the South Pacific and that they were closely integrated into a single, privileged strata having 'a great deal more in common with each other than with members of the other classes in their own communities' (Hau'ofa, 1987:3). Cultural diversity was to be found mostly among the under-privileged, especially among the poor who had remained in rural

areas and who adhered to their traditions out of necessity. These poor were forced to suffer the added indignity of having neotraditions thrust upon them as part of a determined effort by elites to maintain social stability and, secure the privileges that they have gained, not so much from their involvement in traditional activities, as from their privileged access to resources in the regional economy. In such a situation traditions are used by the ruling classes to enforce the new order (Hauʻofa, 1987: 12).

Well, here we go again:

> The new elite uses the camouflage of neotraditionalism and revived communality to disguise class interests it pursues through the Treaty process and, of late, through notions of group rights…the lower socio-economic strata are informed of their communal nature by their neotraditional leaders… (Tremewan, p. 6 of this issue).

The problem with this elite analysis is, as I have argued previously (Sissons, 1998b), that it over-simplifies the agency of a shadowy, vaguely defined group and misunderstands their class position, substituting a simplistic binary analysis (elite/non-elite) for one which recognises a range of different class positions and interests. I won't repeat my argument against Hauʻofa in detail here as it was specific to island Oceania, however my conclusion that Hauʻofa mistakenly reduced a complex middleclass agency to a single self-serving motive, domination, is also applicable to the Tremewan/Rata approach. In the 1990s I found that the middleclass project of tradition in the Cook Islands was driven by many diverse motives – there were artists challenging the hegemony of the Church, language teachers challenging the dominance of English, local sub-district leaders (mataʻiapo) attempting to pass on traditions to their young people, youth workers encouraging tattooing, Ministry of Cultural Development staff promoting dance, dancers practicing daily to win the national competition. These people were neither powerful elites nor obedient poor. Most were middleclass. Māori traditionalism is similarly complex and it too includes a wide range of middleclass projects, including projects of distinction that entail redefinitions of cultural capital. An analysis that reduces them to neotraditionalism foisted upon the lower strata is no more convincing than the overly simplistic binarism of biculturalism; it is an analysis closer to ideology than good social science.

REFERENCES

Ballara, A. 1998 *Iwi: The Dynamics of Maori Tribal Organisation from c.1769 to*

c.1945, Wellington: Victoria University Press.

Barber, K. 1989 'New Zealand "Race Relations Policy", 1970–1988', *Sites*, 18: 5–16.

Hau'ofa, Epeli, 1987 'The New South Pacific Society: Integration and Independence', in A. Hooper *et al* (eds) *Class and Culture in the South Pacific*, Auckland and Suva: Centre for Pacific Studies, University of Auckland and Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific: 1–15.

Levine, H. 1989 'Constructing Treaty Rhetoric', *Sites*, 18: 17–22.

Poata-Smith, E. 1997 'He Pokeke Uenuku i Tu Ai: The Evolution of Contemporary Maori Protest', in P. Spoonley, D. Pearson and C. Macpherson (eds) *Nga Patai: Racism and Ethnic Relations in Aotearoa/New Zealand*, Palmerston North: Dunmore Press.

Sissons, J. 1993 'The Systematisation of Tradition; Maori Culture as a Strategic Resource'. *Oceania* 64 (2): 97–116.

——1998a 'The Traditionalisation of the Maori Meetinghouse'. *Oceania* 69 (1): 36–46.

——1998b 'Conspiracy, Class and Culture in Oceania: A View from the Cook Islands'. *The Contemporary Pacific* 10 (1): 164–178.

——2000 'The Post-assimilationist Thought of Sir Apirana Ngata.' *New Zealand Journal of History*, Millenium Issue, 34 (1): 47–60.

——2004 'Maori Tribalism and Post-settler Nationhood in New Zealand' *Oceania*, 75 (1): 19–31.

——2005 *First Peoples: Indigenous Cultures and their Futures*. London: Reaktion Books.

Webster, Steven 1989 Maori Studies and the Expert Definition of Maori Culture: A Critical History, *Sites*, 18: 35–60.

——1998a *Patrons of Maori Culture: Power, Theory and Ideology in the Maori Renaissance,* Dunedin: University of Otago Press.

GOODIES-AND-BADDIES?
On Christopher Tremewan's *Ideological Conformity:
A Fundamental Challenge to the Social Sciences in New Zealand*.

Tom Ryan

One of the most problematic aspects of Christopher Tremewan's essay is that, despite its stated purpose of outlining a 'fundamental challenge' to New Zealand anthropology, its actual relationship to the real people and real events that have constituted and shaped the discipline in this country over recent decades is extremely tenuous. I recall Tremewan as a fellow graduate student in anthropology at Auckland University in the early 1970s. For most of his career since then, or so I have been led to understand, he has been studying and working overseas, mainly in Asia. Unavoidably, and certainly not improperly, these personal circumstances both mark and restrict his present work. But they also impose on him a professional responsiblility to inform himself appropriately about the actualities of New Zealand anthropology and social science – ideally before issuing the *fatwa*-ish kind of 'fundamental challenge' that is at the heart of his present article.

When I first read his essay, it seemed to follow very naturally in the wake of Steven Webster's 1998 book, *Patrons of Maori Culture: Power, Theory and Ideology in the Maori Reanaissance*. The latter was concerned with establishing the historical development of notions of Māori 'culture' by neo-traditionalist leaders and Pākehā anthropologists during the period 1920s–1990s, and with critiquing the theoretical and political links he believed existed between essentialist interpretations of 'Māori' culture, identity, and ethnicity – especially in Māori Studies and Anthropology at Auckland University – and contemporary theoretical trends like 'postmodernism' and 'poststructuralism'. Not dissimilarly, Tremewan sees himself as critiquing a powerful intellectual strand that he believes has established and consolidated itself over recent decades through an alliance between a privileged Māori elite, a self-serving fraction of the academy, and the post-1984 neoliberal state, resulting in an ideological orthodoxy which has a 'hegemonic grip on New Zealand social science… an orthodoxy which goes by many names: culturalism, biculturalism, cultural

relativism, neotraditionalism, ethnic identity politics or cultural essentialism'.

The empirical and theoretical overlap between these two works is undeniable. Most intriguing, however, is the absence of any reference by Tremewan to Webster's work. Whatever the reason for this strange case of 'ancestor denial' – there must be a Latinism somewhere in our anthropological lexicon to describe the phenomenon! – in this particular context it is indefensible. At the very least, Tremewan has an obligation to indicate his familiarity with, and opinion of, Webster's work. I say this for much the same reasons why I also believe that Tremewan himself must be allowed to freely outline his present argument and that anthropologists and other social scientists should be encouraged to respond to the issues he raises – precisely as I am doing here.

Similarly indefensible is the failure of Tremewan to mention the writings of a loose grouping of anthropologists – especially Keith Barber, Michael Goldsmith, Jeffrey Sissons, and Toon van Meijl – who over the past twenty years have written widely and forcefully on biculturalism, the Māori renaissance, national identity politics, and 'race' and ethnic relations in New Zealand. Presumably this is because they do not take the same 'strong' positions that he prefers. Instead, they tend to be nuanced in their ethnography and cautious in their conclusions, while patently *not* being the naive cultural relativists he suggests typify anthropology in and about this country – in other words, three very good reasons why Tremewan also should have indicated familiarity with at least some of their writings.

This is very different, too, from Tremewen's elevated reverence for the work of sociologist Elizabeth Rata. Over the past decade I have several times invited Rata to seminars and conferences, and chaired her presentations, and discussed her research in my classes. But, I must confess, her increasingly dogmatic pronouncements, and especially her over-the-top attacks on the so-called 'Māori elite', Kaupapa Māori, and 'the postmodernists', all leave me feeling rather uneasy. At times I am mollified by her affirmations of a continuing commitment to social justice and the political left – but then my doubts return when I hear gurus of the right like Simon Upton and Frank Haden singing her praises. Sometimes, too, I think I see parallels between the ravings of Australian reactionary-modernist historian Keith Windschuttle and the writings of Webster, Rata, and now Tremewan – and that worries me even more so.

I was appalled, also, that in his essay Tremewan resorts to that hoary old chestnut about Pākehā who, on discovering 'descent from even one remote ancestor of Māori lineage somewhere on a family tree', transform themselves 'into

mid-career "born-again" Māori with a standard toolkit of grievance, vague allusions to chiefly forebears, and often visceral anti-Pākehā contempt'. Such a claim is worthy of red-neck talkback-land; it is Brashian gutter politics at its worst. Of course there are individuals who have redefined themselves on discovering, rediscovering, or even imagining Māori connections; and maybe a few have benefited materially from the change. But a far greater number of Pākehā with Māori descent – including the present writer and his numerous kin – have done nothing of the sort. Most of us have principles similar to the rest of the population: while we are proud of our ancestry, we usually keep such facts to ourselves and tend to not use them for private gain. Probably, too, most of us would consider Tremewan's caricature itself to be more racist and contemptuous than any reality he incidentally might have described.

Likewise, I am concerned at the several barbs in Tremewan's essay regarding the turn to 'culture contact' studies in New Zealand anthropology, and especially what seem to be jabs at a specific anthropologist who has pursued this direction. One is left with the impression that he considers the only valid focus for our discipline to be that defined by him and his select little circle – few of whom, judging by his bibliography, are actually anthropologists. Being myself an anthropologist who is also a practising historian – indeed, one who is so *un*-PC that he continues to write enthusiastically about the dreaded Captain Cook! – I can only wonder about this antagonism of his. Most historically-inclined colleagues never stop commenting on contemporary issues; for committed anthropologists, the ethnographic present, in its everyday sense, never disappears. And does not all effective historiographical writing actually tell us as much about the lived present as about the dead past it pretends to deal with?

Tremewan's not-so-subtle linking of 'cultural fundamentalism' in New Zealand with genocidal racism in Kosovo, Rwanda, and Nazi Gemany has to be rejected outright: contrast yes, comparison never! Similarly, his claims of 'academic policing' by the 'biculturalists' and 'postmodernists' in our universities and public institutions must be treated with a grain of salt, given that the only 'evidence' he provides are vague allusions to him and/or Rata not being invited to speak at some public policy conference and missing out on some funding application. More realistic is his suggestion that Asia-focussed scholarship might provide models for analysing New Zealand ethnic politics – though, logically, one could propose similar for Africa, the Americas, or Europe. Finally, I agree wholeheartedly with Tremewan's criticism of the current official New Zealand systems of 'ethnic' classification, and of crude population projections based on them – and I especially look forward to seeing from him

in the near future substantive empirically-driven research on this important issue.

But also I have to note a probably irresolvable epistemological problem I have with Tremewan's piece, and also with the related writings of Rata and Webster. Specifically, their structural and rhetorical dependence on powerful, but simplistic and misleading, binarisms: e.g. liberalism-tribalism, egalitarianism-elitism, progressivism-traditionalism, rationalism-culturalism, universalism-relativism, modernism-postmodernism, Kantianism-Rousseauianism, realism-romanticism, true-false, right-wrong, friend-enemy, and numerous variations thereof. Tremewan may say that here I have imposed my own views onto his work, that he has not actually deployed all these specific oppositions in his current essay. Maybe: but nevertheless I recognise a very familiar positive-negative mode of reasoning running through his text, and I know from experience that the invariable pattern with this genre is a too selective division of the world and its inhabitants into 'Goodies-and-Baddies' – if I might borrow a useful descriptor from my 'Cops-and-Robbers' / 'Cowboys-and-Indians' boyhood.

Intriguingly, too, this same kind of thinking is mirrored in biculturalisms' own Māori-Pākehā dichotomy, right down to the privileging of the first term in the pair, so that – at least in more extreme versions of biculturalist ideology – Māori are the 'goodies' and Pākehā the 'baddies' in narrations of national history. Perhaps some critics of biculturalism have recognised, if only subconsciously, that as well as the social transformations of the past three decades initiated through the enforcement of biculturalist agendas in Aotearoa-New Zealand, a discursive 'hijacking', a semio-logical inversion, also has occurred. The writings of Webster, Rata, and Tremewan might be read as valid reflections on this realisation.

On the other hand, in place of the latter's scenario of biculturalism posing a 'fundamental challenge' to New Zealand anthropology and social science, it can be argued that the real 'fundamental challenge' faces these scholars themselves: specifically, how they might break from an epistemology premised on oppositional positive-negative binarisms, and indeed, one tainted by association with the very biculturalist ideology they claim to be critiquing. Until they confront this particular set of paradoxes, the likes of Webster, Rata, and Tremewan always will seem to be trying to 'turn the clock back' … to our nation's not-so-distant monoculturalist past, when 'Yurapeans' were the 'goodies' and 'Maowries' were the 'baddies'.

REFERENCES:

Ryan, Tom. 2001. Review of Webster, Steven, *Patrons of Maori Culture: Power, Theory and Ideology in the Maori Reanaissance*. (Dunedin: Otago University Press, 1988), in *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, 110:1, pp. 101–03.

Webster, Steven. 1998. *Patrons of Maori Culture: Power, Theory and Ideology in the Maori Reanaissance*. Dunedin: Otago University Press.

IT'S TIME TO ANSWER THE IMPORTANT QUESTIONS –
A RESPONSE TO SISSONS AND RYAN

Christopher Tremewan

Why has the ideology of cultural fundamentalism so thoroughly permeated the body politic in New Zealand? What are the thresholds of social conflict this ideology has likely produced? Why has there been so little public challenge or contestation from social scientists? How might we go about the task now?

My article addresses these questions. My argument is that we need a more publicly-engaged and critical social science which can resource a public, democratic discussion in a context where the social reality has moved far beyond bicultural ideology. We need this because we cannot predict what thresholds of social conflict will be crossed if various elites or political parties are able, uncontested, to mobilise socially-constructed ethnic divisions for their own purposes. I noted the improved fortunes of the National Party after Brash's Orewa speech and sought explanations beyond reflexive value judgements. I drew out the interplay between the ideologies of neoliberalism and neotraditionalism, especially the way in which race has been re-politicised. I stated that the way forward has to involve a wider comprehension of the politics of ethnicity than can be gained from a solely New Zealand focus.

Neither Sissons nor Ryan encounters these issues in any substantive way.

I understand that, for many New Zealand academics, these questions are very difficult to handle. They occur on the fault line between the partisan mentality and the scholarly temperament, between a commitment to a social or political agenda and the obligation, simultaneously, to critique one's own position.

This tension was recently examined by Lee Bollinger, President of Columbia University, (Bollinger, 2005:B20) when he said that universities are 'charged with nurturing a distinctive intellectual character – what I would call the scholarly temperament'. He summed this up as the ability

> To set aside one's pre-existing beliefs, to hold simultaneously in
> one's mind multiple angles of seeing things, to allow yourself to
> believe another view as you consider it…. The stress is on seeing
> the difficulty of things, of being prepared to live closer than we are
> emotionally inclined to the harsh reality that we live steeped in ig-
> norance and mystery, of being willing to undermine even our com-
> mon sense for the possibility of seeing something hidden.

Because this 'extreme openness of intellect' is not easy to maintain, Bollinger
states that it needs both regular exercise and 'a community of people dedi-
cated to keeping it alive' (ibid). He sees universities as such communities.

It is my high opinion of the social science community that causes me to ask
about its influence on the key concerns of New Zealand society. Has it suffi-
ciently exercised or kept alive its critical reflexivity with respect to culture, race
and class? I believe it has an important role that it should exercise to broaden
the arena of public discussion and to prevent the false closure of debate.

Both Sissons and Ryan appear to agree with my basic argument but then, in
different ways and with differing degrees of emotion, fall back to that hardy
annual of classification which distinguishes the insider from the outsider in
order to dismiss the latter. It is unlikely, but I am willing to consider the possi-
bility, that if I read more of the 'nuanced' internal debate among New Zealand
social scientists I would not make the claim that culturalism had not been suf-
ficiently critiqued.[1] It is unlikely because I would still need to ask my central
question of why this critique has apparently had little effect on the dominant
public policy paradigm and the public discourse on ethnicity.

My article stated:

> Although I have examined culturalism and its implications, I make
> no claim to an exhaustive analysis. Rather, this treatment of cultural
> fundamentalism provides the context for the main objective of this
> paper which is to ask why the social sciences have been largely com-
> plicit in its ideological hegemony? (Tremewan, p. 9)

Therefore, my paper is an appeal to examine the *politics* of culturalism in New
Zealand and its practical consequences.

So, what are the insights offered by Sissons and Ryan into the key issue of why
social science has not challenged the culturalist orthodoxy that has domi-

nated the public space? What do they tell us of the effects, if any, this nuanced, critical writing has had on the dominant public ideology, on policy formation, on contesting the assumptions of official biculturalism? What more do they recommend be done? Why are the few academic public critics so marginal to their disciplines? Or have most social scientists conceded the field of New Zealand ethnic politics and now focus their intellectual efforts elsewhere?

Sissons provides a masterly analysis of political correctness and the ideology of biculturalism. If this is the professional critique of a significant number of social scientists, why is this kind of strong contribution not reflected routinely in the national media, in submissions to select committees, or in consultancy reports to social policy ministries? Far from wanting him 'to write, and presumably think, like Elizabeth Rata' (Sissons, p. 29), I want more social scientists of his acuity to shift the dominant discourse and to engage publicly where it will have real effect. New Zealand has too few intellectuals of his clarity and calibre who will enter the public domain at the sharp end.

Ryan's disagreement with my argument appears to require serial misrepresentations of my position and *ad hominem* attacks. This tactic provides the empirical evidence for the aggressive politicisation which has attenuated the public discussion and has left criticism of culturalist ideology to all the people he abhors. But it gives no clue how my argument could be refined, as it surely can be. It is merely dismissed. In my view, unless our ideas about culture and race (and the programmatic expression of these ideas in such areas as parliamentary democracy or affirmative action) are contested and further developed, many of the values that both Ryan and I would likely support may be overwhelmed politically. To put it in Bollinger's words, 'We must understand…that the qualities of mind we need in a democracy are precisely what the extraordinary openness of the academy is designed to help achieve' (Bollinger, 2005:B20) If we do not keep the scholarly temperament alive, who will? Any orthodoxy which draws a line through the academy from outside is immediately to be opposed. A line which we draw ourselves is up to us to test and contest as part of our academic vocation.

In this respect, the interventions by Sissons and Ryan do contain several major areas on which further discussion would be constructive.

The first is the question of elites. Let me clear away the notion that the identification of elites as a political force means 'to invoke shadowy forces controlling the minds of Maori and Pakeha for dubious ends' (Sissons, p.28). Do some groups exercise real political power and can they be identified by means of

their social position, their class, their claims to ethnic identity, their relationship to the increasingly obsolete post-1980s model of governance based on official biculturalism or some combination of these? Depending on your academic tradition you may wish to identify these groups in different ways. But they surely exist. It does not require a conspiracy theory or the summoning up of dark forces to undertake this analysis. The key question is what is their political effect, especially at the level of the state?

Sissons avoids the question of state power. Instead he mentions his analysis of the 'middleclass project of traditionalism in the Cook Islands' (involving artists, language teachers, local sub-district leaders and youth workers passing on traditions and challenging the church and the use of English) and that Hau'ofa's study of this social process 'mistakenly reduced a complex middleclass agency to a single self-serving motive, domination…' (Sissons, p. 31). He states that I have made the same mistake with respect to Maori traditionalism.

The parallel escapes me. Is there not a fundamental difference between community activism and unofficial local group ascriptions of the type Sissons describes and the official recognition by the state of groups on the basis of race as constitutionally more legitimate than others and the use of this ethnic politicisation to advance the interests of ethnicised elites or classes? Was *apartheid* a benign middle-class phenomenon unrelated to state power?

Sissons objects that my article is 'an elite analysis masquerading as a class analysis' (Sissons, p. 30). Again, the distinction is mystifying. Elites have a class location and class interests. Perhaps, there is a disciplinary boundary issue here whereby anthropology has not routinely dealt with elites, class interest, ideological hegemony and the use of state power to the same degree as other social sciences. Yet, judging by a recent ASA monograph, there is substantial interest within the profession. 'One of the merits of a focus on elites is that it compels us [anthropologists] to address wider issues of economics, politics and social change – themes eclipsed by agendas of postmodernism since the 1980s – thereby restoring a more sociological and historical perspective to anthropological analysis.'(Shore, 2002:9). Shore attempts to define elites:

> As a working definition, elites can be characterised as those who occupy the most influential positions or roles in the important spheres of social life. They are typically incumbents: the leaders, rulers and decision makers in any sector of society, or custodians of the machinery of policy making. Elites are thus 'makers and shak-

ers'; groups whose 'cultural capital' positions them above their fellow citizens and whose decisions crucially shape what happens in the wider society. Equally important, they are the groups that dominate what Elias (1978) called the 'means of orientation': peoples whose ideas and interests are hegemonic.

The very idea of 'elites' suggests qualities of 'agency', exclusivity', 'power', and an apparent separation from 'mass society' – concepts that in different ways, oblige us to consider related themes of stratification, hierarchy, brokers and causal agents behind events (Shore, 1992:4).

The other challenge to anthropology is that the gaze is no longer directed exclusively at the 'other' but at the social arrangements of the societies of which anthropologists are a part. 'The study of elite cultures challenges anthropology to rethink not only its methods and its ethics, but also its wider remit as a discipline concerned with all of humanity, including ourselves' (Shore 1992:18). As I have noted above, this is not an easy task if only because it is not instinctive and makes emotional distance problematic.

The second area for discussion is the concept of neo-traditionalism. Sissons' insights from his experience with Ngai Tahu and Tuhoe are valuable as is his question about what is 'neo' about Māori traditionalism. He is correct that 'tribes have always been a product of Māori engagement with capitalism' (Sissons, p. 30). My understanding of Rata's terminology[2] is that she is not referring to the simple fact of the engagement with capitalism or to the truism that 'all traditions are constantly being reinterpreted' (Sissons, p. 30). Rather, by the use of the prefix *neo*, I understand her as referring to the ideological nature of contemporary tribalism and to the concealment of the class nature of social relations in the capitalist tribe, to the pretence that it is simultaneously engaged with capitalism and outside of the class relations of capitalism. It is its function of disguising the real social relations at work that makes neo-traditionalism ideology and ideologically powerful.

The third point, which underlies Sissons' comments and which surfaces in his concluding sentence ('it is an analysis closer to ideology than good social science'), needs to be read for its intellectual content rather than its emotional one. It implies that Rata's analysis is not scholarly. She can, of course, take this up in her own way if she wishes. But, by means of a small allusion, I draw Sissons' attention to two comments by others:

> Looking for a more realist approach to American Indian politics, Elizabeth Rata's theory of 'neotribal capitalism' comes to mind. To be fair to American anthropologists, while most of her ideas are not entirely new to North American research, they have never before been expressed in the coherent theoretical fashion of Rata's model, (Schroder, 2003: 435).

> This book makes an important and innovative contribution to the critical analysis of commercial enterprises by neotribal Maori organisations in recent New Zealand history. …[*The book*] will no doubt become a landmark in the field of contemporary Maori studies (Toon van Meijl, 2001: 210, 220).

In conclusion, it appears that neither Sissons nor Ryan agree that the public response to Brash's speech and to cultural fundamentalism indicates a critical threshold in New Zealand society, if only because they fail to address this question. Far more than the internal discussions and rivalries within the social sciences, this question ought to concern us.

NOTES

1   I did indeed read many of the writers indicated by Sissons and Ryan, much of it of interest, without obtaining any sense that they had a wider impact beyond immediate academic circles or local controversies or that their critiques went beyond marginal comment to constitute fundamental challenges. Webster has, of course, made a valuable contribution within the discipline but I was unaware his 'sustained criticism' of Salmond is 'legendary' (Sissons, p.29). Criticism of Salmond is not one of my primary objectives. Rather, I wish to see a constructive public discussion of the various ways of understanding race and culture in order to contest the settlement with any orthodoxy.

2   Sissons ascribes my description of Rata's analysis to me and omits my words 'According to Rata's scenario…' (see quotation from my article, Sissons, p. 31). He also uses the device of bracketing our names, presumably in order to imply that if he deals with Rata's argument he is also dealing with mine. That is not so. I have posed a broader set of questions to which he does not respond. Also, while I have made it clear that I think Rata has taken a pivotal step in critiquing cultural fundamentalism, I do not wish to take credit for work which is entirely her own or to be understood as implying that Rata has made the only useful contribution to the critique.

REFERENCES

Bollinger, Lee C. 2005 'The Value and Responsibilities of Academic Freedom', essay adapted from a speech to the Association of the Bar of the City of New York, March, 2005, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 8 April, 2005, p. B20.

Schroder, Ingo W. 2003 'The Political Economy of Tribalism in North America: Neotribal Capitalism', *Anthropological Theory* 3(4): 435–456.

Shore Cris 2002 'Introduction: towards an anthropology of elites', in C. Shore and S. Nugent (eds) *Elite Cultures – Anthropological Perspectives* London: Routledge, 1–21.

Van Meijl, Toon 2001 'Review of Rata, E. 1999 "A Political Economy of Neotribal Capitalism" Lanham Md: Lexington Books', *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 110(2): 210–220.