

Good Science, Bad Science: The Contribution of the Modern Anthropologist to the Delivery of Human Rights

Brian Milne

INTRODUCTION

For as long as I can remember I have been constantly irritated by the nit-picking argument between the arts and sciences about what science is, in that it overlooks the simplest answer. Etymo-logically the word ‘science’ derives from the Latin noun *scientia* (knowledge) and transitive verb *scio* (to know). In itself that is the most complete possible answer, however it does not usually suffice to win a head-on argument between representatives of the two factions. It has been corrupted into uncomfortable dichotomies that try to define what is and is not science and what is good or bad science. In the minds of natural scientists, social and political scientists are not scientific because of the very nature of their work. They are not, have never been and never will be scientists. That they were most commonly called ‘moral scientists’ a century ago and that ‘moral’ has been replaced by ‘social’ without ‘scientist’ ever having been replaced finds no place in that debate. I have, thus far, to hear or read an argument that convinces me. Indeed, as somebody whose understanding of such most basic disciplines as chemistry and physics have progressed very little beyond classrooms left roughly 35 years ago, I am therefore very heavily dependant on my ability to understand literal content rather than context. That is also conditional on the concepts expressed in the plainest of language rather than jargon or discipline specific language.

This almost inevitably leaves me vulnerable to the accusation of either not being interested in or misunderstanding what those people are saying. This, in turn, consistently allows those who consider themselves ‘scientists’ to say that whenever I consider their work to be entirely theoretical and thus, in my view, speculative, that I am in some way ignorant. The truth is anything but as simple. Because I have specialised in the field of human rights with the greater part of that given over to children’s rights and related topics, I have also needed to hypothesise on many occasions. On many

occasions the phenomenon or situation that is the object of my research is there waiting to be studied, we know it is there and what it is but research serves to provide detail and, especially in human rights specific cases, evidence. Needless to say, I am then obliged to set out to provide evidence in a particular fashion to construct and prove my argument. Since that evidence is simply knowledge collected as my own (primary) or from other source (secondary) data, they need to be assembled in such a way that they are not simply dismissed as a notion that needs to be given far greater consideration. If my point is proven, then it is scientific, literally knowledgeable. It is, I would argue, good science.

Of course, my forthcoming choice of words and phraseology may confound the reader since they sometimes drift into abstract rather than structured realms. Occasionally I illustrate my words with anecdotes and examples. Without claiming to be in any way unique, because I trained as a visual artist long before turning to anthropology and also have a solid grounding in skilled manual trades, I more or less know how to pick up whatever is available and make something. This is what anthropology has sometimes had to do. Indeed, much of what we record during fieldwork is often little more than fragments of anecdote or gossip but because it is not our role to question our informants about the authenticity of what they tell us we must accept it as truth. Because my earlier experience has taught me the value of material rather than theoretical tools I am far better equipped at using what is at my fingertips rather than what is in my mind. That material may be gossip recorded during fieldwork. Once I have heard the story retold often enough I can usually reconstruct it using all components that have substance. This is most certainly useful in the human rights world where one often has a great deal of hearsay and rumour to deal with amongst substantive data.

Naturally, as an artist I had to learn a great deal of theory, however I have never artistically had a hypothesis that I had to prove. Whilst it is

fair to say that I may have had concepts or inspirations that I had to convert into a physical work, the extent to which that intellectual task lasts is only as long as it takes to put a basic design to paper. That thereafter the design may be developed and modified has far less to do with the theoretical aspects of creation than the aesthetic or effect I intend to achieve. It is an ability I have retained in what I do today, finding it the key to far greater access to pragmatism than to theoretical work. Whatever the task is the common starting point is an idea that we may call a hypothesis if our task is then to scientifically research and prove it. This is common to us all using intellectual tools, irrespective of whether it is science or not.

The ability to abstract is to see not the object but the abstraction of that object as the starting point and thus words or images that are the outcome of this process are an exact depiction of the abstraction. Human rights are often far more abstract expressions of an ideal than depiction of a real world. They draw together far more aspects of the human condition than even the most imaginative fiction could ever do. Similarly, they clearly challenge 'social order' as the frequent marginalisation of human rights advocates as dissidents or anarchists clearly illustrates. In real terms, they are often quite simply very honest advocates of pure democracy who challenge particular events or situations that are not democratic. Since democracy is wide open to debate itself, it is sometimes very difficult to understand what these people want because they may be speaking out against something the majority support in what we perceive to be a democracy. This is one of the challenges of human rights and where one is at greatest risk of wishing to work in the service of humanity without being scientific in any sense.

Of course, it is wishful-thinking to imagine that those few opening words suffice to prove my case. Indeed, I suspect having exposed my artistic and practical origins I place a dark shadow of doubt over my position. However, I have had more than enough time in recent years to consider my argument and am confident that my analysis of the dichotomy 'scientific', 'unscientific' or 'good science' and 'bad science' is right. The so-called 'scientific community' demands evidence whenever I challenge them, usually under their own terms. Even then, they occasionally open themselves

to surprising acceptance of our 'social' science realm. As often the case, an anecdote serves the purpose all too well to begin to explain an example.

I live in a very small village a few minutes drive from Cambridge. This village, and surrounding small communities, sometimes pool human resources to do things together. One such venture was a production of the popular Cinderella pantomime that brought an extraordinary collection of people together. I should add that the area is predominantly middle class, affluent and professional, therefore dominated by highly educated people. I was responsible for scenery and shared some of the technical tasks such as lighting since I have not the least talent as an actor. After a rehearsal at which tempers had 'exploded', a number of us went to the village pub in order to calm down over a beer. Since I was not one of the 'actors', I was asked for my supposedly neutral opinion on what should be done. I jokingly said that I would ask the fairies at the bottom of my garden because I really did not think the subject was worth talking about there and then. In fact, I was using a moderately simple rhetorical device to stall for a little more time to consider the question. I was within a small group of men and women that included two accountants, a computer software specialist, a retired fireman and a deputy headmistress who taught drama studies. They collectively accused me of being unserious since they clearly thought any mention of fairies was whimsical if not outrageous.

My response was laughter, which did not have the desired effect. However, and very surprisingly, the woman who came to my defence said that 'the fairies' probably had far more to contribute than a group of angry and humourless human beings. I knew well that this particular woman's background is in some kind of theoretical physics that I could not begin to describe. She is also a very astute local politician, therefore knows the full value of the use of words. She set out to undermine the rejection of my capricious statement by demanding evidence that fairies do not exist. She extended the argument to the enormous amount of funding given over to *bona fide* scientific research into the existence of the 'paranormal' for much of the last century. That led on to complementary issues on the sidelines including the search for the yeti in the Himalayas, the Loch Ness monster and its ilk elsewhere, extraterrestrial visitors and

a whole string of other unresolved questions. She also touched on the highly contentious question of religion. I contributed by entering into an argument about what the English call fairies are sometimes accepted as real beings in other societies. Given that people believe in those entities as or as much as gods, they are deemed real. There is always a great deal of capital in the example of Iceland where their 'invisible people' are simply accepted as real, indeed have even been given a place in their Lutheran Christianity and are allowed for in civil law. It is also an extraordinary example in that the small Icelandic population has been said to be *per capita* the most computer literate and Internet active nation in the world. Thus, the modern scientific and 'primitive' domains meet on equal grounds.

I am not certain whether it was that woman's political persona or her scientific background that provided the language for her argument, however she used science to support her arguments. The story concludes with one of the accountants asking me to remember to tell them what the fairies had to say at the next rehearsal. I did not have the slightest inkling that he was saying that jokingly, more so that the weight of scientific argument had left the door to his mind very slightly ajar.

Once we had departed from the concern with our pantomime rehearsal, we had moved on to a far more profound issue. It had been argued, that I was using mythological creatures to divert attention from inability to answer the question. Ironically, as was also pointed out, Cinderella is a so-called fairy tale, and it seemed astounding that amateur actors were becoming so serious about their presentation of that fiction to the point of losing tempers. Since Cinderella is one of the world's most universal stories in its many variations, behind the variations in its morphology a deeper truth probably rests concealed. That is to say, that at least once, but probably several times, something with a degree of similarity to Cinderella's story has happened and that has given the ancient fairy tale its origins. It is unimportant how remote that initial grain of truth may be from the fairy tale we have today, which given how old it is has clearly been modified many times. There is a version recorded by Tuan Ch'engshih from Shantung in China who died in 863. Tuan recorded that it was told him by his servant Li Shih Yuan who came from the aboriginal tribes of Yungchow

in what is now Kwangsi. Cinderella is Yeh Hsien in one version (Lin Yutang, 1955) or Sheh Hsien (Jameson, see Dundes, 1982) in another translation. Tuan was what one might call a folklorist today. His version of Cinderella contains both the Slavonic feature of the animal friend and the Germanic lost slipper motif. It may have migrated westward, or versions emerged in Europe, whatever the case there are several versions and all share a great deal of morphological detail. Anna Birgitta Rooth's (1980) 'The Cinderella Cycle' is an analysis of the story as it recurs in 16 different regional traditions worldwide. Logically we should believe there to be at the very least a grain of fact behind that and many other fairy tales. It is above all else a question of belief. After many centuries, it is almost certain that the exact origins of Yeh Hsien or any other version of Cinderella is lost in the shifting sands of time. It is far more important how much of the story we believe to be true.

The right to believe is a fundamental human right. Since 1948 the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has expressed this through Article 18, similarly the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights through its Article 18, as too Article 2, part 2 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, and Article 14 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. There are suggestions of and reference to the same right in several other declarations and conventions. The right to our beliefs does not proscribe what it is we should be allowed to believe. Therefore, I contend that it matters very little whether it means our religion, our view that we have fairies at the bottom of our gardens or that Cinderella is a real person.

This inalienable right to believe, whether that is specifically religion or any other form of belief, demands at the very least an understanding of what belief systems are. This has been one of the main components of anthropology for over a century. Conversely, scientists largely appear have been more concerned with whether or not gods and various versions of Heaven and Hell could exist. It is not enough for 'science' to accept that because many people believe in something that is real, therefore their version of the Almighty exists. He, she, it or they exist because it is a shared knowledge. Anthropology has slowly and very painstakingly examined the detail of each belief

it has found without proving or disproving the factuality of the deity or the otherworldly realm. Is the black and white approach of science any more useful? I personally doubt it. We live in the early stages of the information age and there are many websites dedicated to religion. Whatever their content, they neither prove nor disprove the existence of the deities we have as figureheads of our religions. Those sites tend to serve members of their faith and denomination, attempt to evangelise in some cases, but go no further than the denunciation of non-believers at the most extreme. When they set out to prove the existence of the Almighty, however they perceive him, her, it or them, the tendency is to use scriptural citation and accounts of such phenomena as hard evidence. It is paradoxical that one of the tools of modern science is used as a means of proving their argument very unscientifically.

The problem science presents us with is that if evidence to disprove beliefs were to be conclusive and give us a 'here and now' doctrine for all time and all people, the right to all forms of belief would be undermined. Indeed, given that there are scientists who believe and disbelieve in religions particularly and that the most common scientific argument delivered is that notions of otherworldly, deity and so on are metaphors, where is the substance of their argument? The metaphor explanation is actually little better than outright disbelief, because it says (for instance) that the deity does not actually exist but is a metaphor for some other human need, for instance an emotion, in other words that the basis of the religion does not exist but something else (that can never be tangible) does.

What sets out to be good science becomes bad science since it disrupts the principle of the freedom to believe as a fundamental human right. That, in turn, could quite easily undermine the whole fabric on which a culture or society is based with absolutely devastating consequences. In human rights vernacular, it would violate any number of articles of various declarations and instruments of law that are concerned with the reason and dignity of all human beings. As an anthropologist, I see the knock-on effect of what started as a rather spurious matter in an English village hall as tantamount to the first step toward a far more sinister human rights issue. In this case, the minor matter it raised and escalated was resolved by scientific rationality and (probably) carefully chosen language. However,

nothing was actually concluded other than that any person's right (mine) to believe in fairies was inviolable.

I have very deliberately chosen this lengthy exploration of the right to believe as an introduction to my argument that anthropology has an extremely important role in the delivery of human rights. No issue is more open to abuse, denial and manipulation than belief since it has been the target of evangelists, zealots and messengers of Armageddon and all between, with a long history of discrimination through to pogroms and wars. Indeed, where beliefs are definably religions those extremes have often been internecine between cults or sects of one belief. Within the selfsame political boundaries of the state I live in this is being played-out today. For several centuries, Ireland has seen civil disorder and even warfare that lives on in the violent division between Catholic and Protestant Christians in Northern Ireland at present. Science has yet to begin to explain why this may be.

Within the humanities, anthropologists alongside historians, and probably sociologists and social psychologists amongst other disciplines, have provided a vast amount of explanation. Whilst we are unable to use the knowledge assembled within these disciplines to put an end to the dispute, we have more than enough knowledge to present a scientific explanation of the situation. It is very difficult to argue that because this 'scientific' knowledge has not been used to end the dissension that it is bad science since it has, at the very least, been exactly the evidence human rights activists and campaigners have used to state their case on countless occasions. To define and deliver human rights one of the core concerns is always what wrongs have been committed. The need for precise data to describe the wrongs that must be corrected in observance of our rights is the key to the success of the global attainment of rights for all. As anthropologists we concentrate our research on the importance of institutions (such as beliefs) and how they function within extant (and sometimes extinct) societies. These data are often the very same ethnographic detail that explain the rights and wrongs of the human race that give us the exactitude required for definition of human rights.

The foundations for data collection, especially when we are carrying out very lengthy and precise fieldwork, are the functionalism

given to us by the 'father' of British social anthropology. Bronislaw Malinowski (1884-1942) studied physics and mathematics at the Jagiellian University of Krakow in Poland where he obtained his PhD in the philosophy of science in 1908. During a spell in Leipzig where he studied economics and psychology he reputedly took an interest in language and folklore, thus in 1910 entered the London School of Economics (LSE) to carry out research on the culture of Australian aboriginal peoples. Without going into detail about his work that I presume most readers to know anyway, in 1927 he became the first chair in anthropology in London. He was probably the most influential single person in the break from the speculative and largely romantic tradition handed down by Frazer (1854-1941) to the use of methodological approach that employed intensive fieldwork. Malinowski never departed entirely from the discipline a mathematician must observe in even the most creative domain, he was foremost a scientist in his methodical approach. In common with scientists who are always delving further into their researches and applications, he frequently modified his notion of 'function'. Functionalism is as then a flawed theoretical approach, yet in taking all aspects of the current culture. Therefore the current form of kinship, rituals, economic structure, political organisation and all other components of a culture are studied as part of a holistic, tightly interrelated picture. This is the approach that many British social anthropologists continue to maintain, irrespective of which school of thought within the discipline any particular individual subscribes to.

It does not rely, as previous theories had, on explanation of customs and practices as 'survivals' from the distant past. It is quite converse, functionalism is able to accept changes, adoption of new practices and the development of culture independent of what their historical origins. It does not use history to provide a rational explanation. Here I must refer back to what I said about my own creative and practical origins in the event that what I am saying appears to be contradictory. Despite expressing my recognition of abstraction before moving on to the functionalist origins of ethnographic work, I am also the first person to be amused by the way abstraction is often rationalised as some kind of unregulated outburst against convention. In fact it is anything

but that, since to be convincing abstraction in visual art is very disciplined and for those who wish to allow a great deal of time to study it, has numerous theoretical schools of thought attached to it. If anything, it removes me from an attachment to the prevalent structuralist-functional orthodoxy of British social anthropology toward the more iconoclastic view of the discipline Edmund Leach (1910-1989) introduced with his preference for continental European structuralist thinking as an antidote to orthodox thought. That does not dismiss with it the functionalist approach to the method, but does open the door to other methodological positions. For instance, I am very much more impressed by Pierre Bourdieu's *Theory of an Outline of Practice* in what it has given me in the sphere of human rights than in its contribution my epistemological view of ethnographic research. As with art, science and all intellectual pursuits I have a very large 'supermarket' of theories to choose from. However, I do not rationalise why I have chosen them. That is again probably 'unscientific' rather than even bad science.

Anthropology, being an exacting but imperfect discipline, has not drifted into the realm of rationalism that pervades science. It has not lead us down the path that would have us believe that there are no ineluctable mysteries, thus go to the extent of leading some of its adherents to reject religion and superstition. Such notions are anathema. It should be possible to perceive anthropology as a creative and open-minded realm that sometimes appears somewhat irrational. For instance, it accepts that things are real because people believe them, thus defends human dignity in respecting the other. Dignity is another basic human right that arises in a number of declarations and conventions. Again the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Article 1.

All people are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

The 'being' of dignity is an abstraction, thus without scientific explanation. It is a condition without any part of it being tangible. Scientifically it cannot exist, yet it does. In the same article we find other concepts: 'free', 'equal', 'reason' and 'conscience', all of them abstract human conditions that vary between different cultures.

The new electronic media have attached a very high value to one of these concepts – freedom. In a truly free and liberal world, they are naturally right, but what they sometimes present to us is wrong in many people’s minds. Two examples that quickly spring to mind are the concern with Internet pornography, particularly child pornography, and political extremism. What those issues have raised is the spectre of censorship, policing and other degrees of control of electronic media. In order to do this thoroughly there are two clear choices: on the one hand some kind of filter system would allow intelligence and police services to control all traffic on the Internet and World Wide Web (WWW), on the other science could come up with something that would ‘sniff out’ and filter off what is considered bad material. In the former case in human rights terms that is the removal of the fundamental right of choice and free thought, in the latter it depends on the subjective evaluation of good and bad, as the lawmakers who nominate the two extremes understand them. It reminds me of the paradigm of those fortunate enough to live close to the border of a country that prohibits consumption of alcohol. Those who wish to drink can cross the border freely, but in the non-prohibition state, those who do not drink can only stay at home.

To work with such ideas that are not formulaic defies scientific law, which is often a point also missed by lawyers who use what is exemplified by prescribed standards such as constitutions, bills of rights and indeed the very ‘nuts and bolts’ of legal systems. They miss the profoundly unscientific by following what are essentially scientific principles. Behind the structures that give us the phraseology of human rights standards, there is also a great deal of influence from models given by the generally secular, Western world. Structurally, many human rights charters adopt the characteristics of the Constitution of the USA that is proudly secular: The Constitution of the United States of America, the First Amendment:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

The US Constitution is by no means unique, indeed several European nations have equally

lucid constitutions, basic laws, bills of rights and all aspects of a wide ranging legal system that have been adopted into many other instruments of law. Not only does this vein run through human rights, but can be identified in the secular constitutions of many of the political nations that have emerged throughout the twentieth century and are at present still emerging. Moving away from instruments of basic human rights to those that protect the person against physical or mental harm and all forms of discrimination, we move even further into the realm of concepts that in scientific terms are abstracts.

It would be a rather wasteful exercise to attempt to list the numerous UN conventions and covenants that are instruments of international law, as to the many declarations that are principles rather than laws and then the other humanitarian conventions and treaties that exist outside the UN. In summary it is easier to give example of some of the key areas they cover: abolition of slavery, abolition of the death penalty, abolition of torture and other cruel treatment and punishments, elimination of all forms of racial discrimination, elimination of discrimination against women, the protection of civil and political rights, regulation of employment conditions and statutory limitations on crimes against humanity including war crimes and rules on the conduct of war. Very few aspects of human behaviour are overlooked, especially where those are seen to be against the best interests or well being of any individual or group. Some human rights instruments are (almost) universally adopted; others are signed and ratified by very few nations. It is often extremely difficult to successfully draft any of these charters as truly universal expressions of human rights as they are understood in the diversity of economic, social and cultural settings that often exist within a single nation state, let alone between countries themselves. In effect, the many declarations and conventions are rationalisation of diversity. Whilst the ideals are set high, in practice, it is often difficult, if not impossible, to replicate the economic and social conditions in which they could exist in a modern, secular environment. It is further complicated by culture, religion and even other factors such as geography.

This is where anthropology probably offers the greatest opportunity of all disciplines to seek solutions. One of the foremost elements of that

search for elucidation is the fact that unlike other disciplines anthropology does not examine a situation in the way that, for instance, economics may well do, but takes the group or society in which it occurs. This approach does not collect knowledge in a way that provides universal data for national issues to be resolved, but emphasises the differences between distinct groups within a wider society. In human rights terms this is, for instance, the best way of looking at minorities. A step further is the contribution of the discipline to clear definition of minorities, bearing in mind the existence of 'minority' as a misnomer in many places that has far more of a cultural or political connotation than statistical substance. This introduces the element of statistics, usually an essentially 'scientific' approach that varies little between its application in the humanities and sciences in that it deals with issues numerically. Whilst quantitative methods play an important role and, indeed, part of the inheritance of Malinowski's functionalism is the use of censuses and statistical documentation of evidence for validation of his arguments, human rights issues tend to need greater stress placed on qualitative methods. Our data have to be very detailed in order to present a holistic picture from which assumptions and concrete conclusions can be drawn.

In science's terms, this is probably as far away from a scientific approach as anything can be. I can only compare it with an argument I once heard (although scarcely understood) about the viscosity of particular brands of oil used in cars. My unscientific response was not well accepted when I suggested that it really did not matter how it was measured technically as long as the engineer or mechanic had stipulated the thickness at the point of testing road ready production models of the car. As with the fairies at the bottom of my garden, my simple answer did not satisfy the scientific points of view the two men were presenting. Needless to say, both of them had PhDs in very technical areas and hardly felt a social anthropologist might supply a better argument than either of them. Yet what I said then about viscosity reflects my normal bias toward qualitative rather than quantitative research. Rather than running a series of complicated statistical tests to find out why something works, I tend to see that something works and then look at what it is composed of and how those things fit together. Human rights are exactly like the motor oil. When the correct

oil is used a particular engine will work, if not then it will probably eventually break down. The rate at which the breakdown occurs is probably commensurate to the degree to which the oil is unsuitable for that engine, although there may be countless other reasons beside. Thus society, if we use the metaphor of the car engine, which like all cars may appear to function in exactly the same way, is actually very different beyond the basic design and construction features. Leaving the metaphor behind, the point may now be a little clearer that it is very unlikely that any human rights instrument could ever be applied universally. Within children's rights, I have often argued that in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), Part I, Articles 28 and 29 shown here are biased toward a western interpretation of the meaning of education:

Article 28

1. *States Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall, in particular:*
 - (a) *Make primary education compulsory and available free to all;*
 - (b) *Encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, make them available and accessible to every child, and take appropriate measures such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance in case of need;*
 - (c) *Make higher education accessible to all on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means;*
 - (d) *Make educational and vocational information and guidance available and accessible to all children;*
 - (e) *Take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of drop-out rates.*
2. *States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity and in conformity with the present Convention.*
3. *States Parties shall promote and encourage international cooperation in matters relating to education, in particular with a view to contributing to the elimination of ignorance and illiteracy throughout the world and facilitating access to scientific and technical*

knowledge and modern teaching methods. In this regard, particular account shall be taken of the needs of developing countries.

Article 29

1. *States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:*
 - (a) *The development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential;*
 - (b) *The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations;*
 - (c) *The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own;*
 - (d) *The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin;*
 - (e) *The development of respect for the natural environment.*
2. *No part of the present article or article 28 shall be construed so as to interfere with the liberty of individuals and bodies to establish and direct educational institutions, subject always to the observance of the principle set forth in paragraph 1 of the present article and to the requirements that the education given in such institutions shall conform to such minimum standards as may be laid down by the State.*

My view is that the two articles lack the finesse of cultural relativism (or relativity) to recognise that they are, in part, contradictory to each other. Whereby Article 28 is prescriptive and firmly in favour of compulsory education for universal literacy and numeracy, Article 29 effectively favours the protection of children from compulsory education wherever their culture neither requires nor has adopted it. However Part 2 is a 'primed bomb waiting to go off' in that it allows, possibly encourages, individuals and bodies to set up schools in line with state policy, which may be one that suppresses the rights of some of its indigenous

minorities. My argument has often been expressed in terms of the educational needs of preliterate societies such as the !Kung in southern Africa where groups of them have maintained their hunting and gathering traditional way of life. In that society, the values of a literate and numerate world are lost when to be educated means something entirely different. Likewise, at present a great deal is being said about the Jarawa who live on the western side of two of the Andaman Islands who only recently come into real contact with other people on the islands. The Indian government, it seems, intends to 'resettle' them. That is a euphemistic way of saying that since they are 'primitive' they should be 'civilised'. At present it is very difficult to know what they actually want since very few people speak their language. It may well be that despite the impression that they have shunned outside influences until today, that they are better informed than assumed and have chosen to cross the threshold in one very short step. If that were indeed the case then education as it is described in Article 28 would be entirely appropriate. However, I suspect it is far more the case that they are curious about rather than having ambitions to join the so-called civilised world, then Article 29, 1 c, d and e are as far as that should go and no part of Article 28 at all.

One of the paradoxes of the Jarawa situation is that the people who have shunned the rest of the world for millennia have found a number 'champions' who use the WWW to defend their right to not be resettled or whatever. It is not as though we have concrete evidence that they want *Survival International* and such groups to defend them and tell us about them on their website, since the websites are telling us exactly how little is known about the Jarawa and what they (might) want. Here we find the crossroads between the 'Stone-age' and 'Internet Age' although there is no clarity where either road is coming from or going to. The right to choose what human rights advocates has become something based on the choice of others who have not asked. I am quite sure that the organizations defending the Jarawa are quite right, however my concern is more with whether or not they have the express wishes or informed consent of the people spoken for.

Another example of this clumsiness in human rights language is found in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article

24, Part 2:

Every child shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have a name.

Where I am as I write this those words are perfectly reasonable. There are still minority groups of people on this planet who neither know that it is possible or required and most certainly have no tradition of any form of registration. In fact where registration may occur it may still be in a setting where the organisation of a society does not include the kind of parenthood that enables them to do so for a number of reasons. On the one hand it may be that until a child reaches some form of initiation, which in the case of girls may coincide with the menarche and perhaps the first hunt or kill for a boy, then what we would generally recognise as a name is not given. In other cases, once born a child may be living within a society where all men are 'father' and all women 'mother'. This does not mean the men and women are 'promiscuous primitives' as Christian missionaries once assumed, but that they have a different form of social organisation and terminology to what are essentially western, nuclear family concepts. The article should contain a further set of words such as:

'...except in such places where registration is neither customary nor possible and at the very latest after a name giving ceremony or ritual'.

Whatever is different is hard to place in a human rights context. Anthropology has a long tradition of learning to understand such differences and has a duty to its subjects to help them enjoy their rights where they differ from universal understanding of the significance of name giving.

One solution to the dilemma this poses is that anthropology (and other disciplines of course) collect and present data that will allow additional protocols and amendments to be added to the rights instruments that will then prevent injustices in the name of humanitarian intervention. Science lacks the experience to contribute substantively to this work, although I imagine such work as DNA studies could provide good science to reinforce the arguments we would present. Once the human genome is mapped once and for all, it will be far easier to tell ethnic groups apart and even begin to place the geographic origins of people. Differences that are clearly definable enable us to draw the distinctions on which we base our arguments. From our point of view that would be good

science. It is debatable, of course, as to how far additional protocols and amendments to human rights charters would work since there is almost inevitably a saturation point at which the additions outweigh and confuse the document they are attached to. That almost certainly rests in the laps of administrators, diplomats, politicians and lawyers, none of whom many natural or social scientists have a great deal of time for.

If anthropology is able to resolve these issues then it will have to be through extremely methodical and precise research and analysis. The data will have to be presented in such a way that they will also bear scrutiny from the so-called scientific community if there is to be any kind of serious collaboration of the kind I have very briefly touched on. It is far more scientific to start from our position and work toward the 'scientist' who can establish without doubt either that our arguments are irrefutable or provide us with the possibility of an escape from an untenable position in which we have not and cannot prove a hypothesis. Historians may assure us that not so far back in history anthropology did not exist and that not so very much earlier scientists were considered magicians. Magic was often seen in a malign light thus the notion of good science (good or white magic) was usually overshadowed by a fear of bad or black magic (bad science). It may explain the often quite secretive and self-protective tendency of the scientist in comparison with social scientists. Beyond history we should have moved on to a stage at which there should be no labelling of the work of social scientists in terms of good, bad or even no science by 'scientific' disciplines. In most cases, we share the cause of doing good things for all of humanity and here I imagine there are just as many 'evil' anthropologists as scientists who occasionally upset our public image.

I have drawn together a number of strands; science, human rights, belief, folklore and a quite insignificant incident in the community I live in. Without taking those items in that particular order, they can also be drawn together to illustrate how important they all are. It has been said that Malinowski became interested in the study of humanity when he read Frazer's *The Golden Bough* during a spell of illness. Today that book is more likely to be found in a 'New Age' bookshop between science fiction and fantasy, astrology, tarot reading, Buddhism,

paganism and quite a remarkable hotchpotch of the kind of literature people who favour the 'alternative' life style tend to prefer. Whilst an avid science fiction reader myself, I find so-called science fantasy rather repetitive and derivative. They tell of muscle-bound heroes roaming far-flung worlds, where swordsmanship and casting spells is recalled from a blend of Greek mythology and Arthurian legends with hints of appropriation from early anthropology and folklore. Folklore was one of the most important continental European influences that spurred the interest in humanity forward. Folk beliefs were, and remain, an important part of all societies; they have often shaped our superstitions and even greatly contributed to how our religions function today. Those beliefs have given us moral codes, some of them incredibly varied from one place to another over remarkably short distances. Those very moral codes are the material from which we have taken notions of good and bad, thus defined them and made them into laws. A step further, right and wrong give us civil and human rights. Science has been penetrated as well, taking a step back to science fiction we would find, for instance, that in Isaac Asimov's 'robot trilogy' he gave us the *Laws of Robotics* that regulate how artificial intelligence will serve our race. This is one of the most eagerly awaited developments of our information age, as the computer moves toward maturity its progeny will surely be a new generation of 'robots' that will serve us. Our world will be synonymously peopled by those who live as our ancestors many millennia ago, to those who will no longer be satisfied with 'today' but will be striving forward for their vision of the future of humanity.

Despite our diversity, for each one of us the focal point of our lives is our community. Of course, even that means more than my reference to a small English village, but may mean our professional world on one of several other possibilities. Rather than a convergence of people as futuristic science fiction will have it, we are seeing a divergence that is almost certain to carry with it disagreements. The ideal of a world at peace appears as far as ever away. Where such diversity is found there is sure to be disparity. Those of us engaged in the service of our race in all fields will be the monitors of every right and wrong that will be visited on a fellow being.

If we are to be the eyes and ears of the world

to those who are working toward universal human rights standards then we will have little choice but to be as precise as the technicians and scientists whose accomplishments are taking us forward at such a rapid pace with infinite perspectives for where we can go. To sit and think a while is a privilege we have left long behind us, perhaps sadly, but to simply speak out against where it may be taking us is not enough. It almost seems futile to resist change, however we each personally feel about that, but to watch that all that is before us is appropriate to the greater good of humanity rather than to an elite few is a duty. We may again be 'moral scientists' but then somewhere in the equation there must be some people with a wider knowledge of humankind who can inform those driving us relentlessly forward.

As for good and bad science, well personally I am happy to sit on the fence whilst more formidable minds than my own resolve that debate. Whilst I sit on my fence, I shall be able to ask the fairies whether or not they believe anthropologists can provide their share of the knowledge required by the international community that will lead to an entirely appropriate delivery of human rights to all people. Information technology has presented us with the opportunity to move vast amounts of valuable data around the world; we no longer have any viable excuses for the non-exchange of knowledge. One of the outcomes of the degree to which we can now exchange information is that it must logically lead to an almost universal raising of standards, so that what does not meet qualitative needs can be quickly discarded or improved. Instead of some of the doleful excuses some anthropologists still use ("I don't know how to use e-mail...", etc.) the wider community of our discipline should see such insularity as inexcusable. One of the lessons learned in the human rights world is that only prompt action tends to succeed and that often requires precise information immediately. The resources are there, the channels of communication are there, it remains to be part of the service of our discipline to be participants in this ongoing revolution. Fairy tales do come true, science has given us our 'glass slipper' and just like Cinderella, we can all go to the ball if we really want to...

KEY WORDS Abstraction. Belief. Functionalism. Human Rights. Internet. Science.

ABSTRACT As the world changes, one challenge that confronts us is the end of the argument between humanities and sciences about what is and is not science. Anthropological experience and tradition are important factors in the steps forward into the information technology age that can raise the discipline's standards. The contribution a more 'scientific' anthropology has to offer is in the delivery of human rights. This can be achieved by helping to define the societal differences that will more clearly describe human rights and through the rapid delivery of knowledge that enable that process. However it is achieved, it should be all encompassing so that it allows for difference and diversity with fair allowance for what we have carried over from our past through beliefs and traditions.

REFERENCES

- Bourdieu, P.: *Theory of an Outline of Practice*, Cambridge Studies in Social Anthropology 19, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (1977).
- Dundes, A. (Ed.): *Cinderella: A Folklore Casebook*, Garland Publishing, Inc., New York (1982).
- Leach, E.R.: *Rethinking Anthropology*, Athlone Press, London (1961).
- Lin Yutang: *Famous Chinese Short Stories*, Pocket Books, New York (1955).
- Rooth, A.B.: *The Cinderella Cycle*, Arno Press, New York (1980).
- United Nations: Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948).
- United Nations: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1976).
- United Nations: International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (1976).
- United Nations: Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).
- United States of America: The Constitution of the United States of America, the First Amendment (ratified 15 December 1791).

Author's Address: Brian Milne, Freelance Research Consultant, The Old Store, High Street, Brinkley, Newmarket, Suffolk CB8 0SE, UK.
Telephone and facsimile: 00 44 1638 507 140. *E-mail:* blmilne@yahoo.com