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Introduction: money and the morality of exchange

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This collection is concerned with the way in which money is symbolically represented in a range of different societies and, more especially, with the moral evaluation of monetary and commercial exchanges as against exchanges of other kinds. The focus, then, is on the range of cultural meanings which surround monetary transactions, and not on the kinds of problems of monetary theory which have conventionally preoccupied the economist. There is now a very large literature on so-called 'primitive money', but this does not centrally concern us here since all the chapters in this volume deal principally either with state-issued currencies which act as a general medium of exchange, or – as in our two Andeanist contributions – with the symbolism of precious metals and their relevance to Andean ideologies of production and exchange.

The first thing these essays collectively emphasise is the enormous cultural variation in the way in which money is symbolised and in which this symbolism relates to culturally constructed notions of production, consumption, circulation and exchange. It becomes clear that in order to understand the way in which money is viewed it is vitally important to understand the cultural matrix into which it is incorporated. This may seem a bland enough lesson, but it is one which has often been forgotten by anthropologists writing about money – and less culpably also by historians and sociologists. As a result they have commonly fallen into the trap of attributing to money in general what is in fact a specific set of meanings which derive from our own culture.

At another level, however, our essays reveal a unity which underlies all of the apparently diverse examples they consider. This is to be found neither in the meanings attributed to money nor in the moral evaluation of particular types of exchange, but rather in the way the totality of transactions form a general pattern which is part of the reproduction of social and ideological systems concerned with a time-scale far longer than the individual human life. It is only when these total patterns are

compared that we can begin to go beyond the conclusion that the variable symbolic elaboration of money and monetary exchange is yet another illustration of the way in which different cultures see things differently. Each of our case studies, we argue, reveals a strikingly similar concern with the relationship between a cycle of short-term exchange which is the legitimate domain of individual – often acquisitive – activity, and a cycle of long-term exchanges concerned with the reproduction of the social and cosmic order; and in each case the way in which the two are articulated turns out to be very similar. This suggests something very general about the relationship between the transient individual and the enduring social order which transcends the individual.

Thus in the first part of this introduction we are centrally concerned with the way in which our own cultural discourse about money has inhibited a proper appreciation of the variability in its cross-cultural construction. In the second part we try to develop the thesis that once we move to the wider, more encompassing, level of the total system of exchange some important continuities begin to emerge.

The revolutionary implications of money in Western discourse

One particularly prominent strand in Western discourse, which goes back to Aristotle, is the general condemnation of money and trade in the light of an ideal of household self-sufficiency and production for use. The argument goes something like this. Like other animals, man is naturally self-sufficient and his wants are finite. Trade can only be natural in so far as it is oriented towards the restoration of such self-sufficiency. Just as in nature there may be too much here and not enough there, so it is with households which will then be forced to exchange on the basis of mutual need. 'Interchange of this kind is not contrary to nature and is not a form of money-making; it keeps to its original purpose – to re-establish nature's own equilibrium of self-sufficiency' (Aristotle 1962: 42). Profit-oriented exchange is, however, unnatural; and is destructive of the bonds between households. Prices should therefore be fixed, and goods and services remunerated in accordance with the status of those who provided them. Money as a tool intended only to facilitate exchange is naturally barren, and, of all the ways of getting wealth, lending at interest – where money is made to yield a 'crop' or 'litter' – is 'the most contrary to nature' (Aristotle 1962: 46).

Aristotle's writings re-surfaced in the Western world in the thirteenth century and were taken up by Thomas Aquinas through whom they achieved a new renown. His influence on the economic thought and attitudes of the Middle Ages was, as Polanyi (1971: 79) observes, quite as great as that which Smith and Ricardo were to exercise on the thinking of

a subsequent epoch; and his authority was invoked in support of the Church's profound disquiet about material acquisition. Some of the ideological reasons for this medieval unease about money – especially money as representative of the merchant's profit and the usurer's interest – are briefly reviewed in Parry's contribution to this volume. Here we may simply note that one of the major problems was that the merchant apparently created nothing, while the usurer earned money even as he slept. 'The labourer is worthy of his hire', but it was not at all clear that the merchant and the money-lender laboured. It was essentially this idea of material production as the source of value (Le Goff 1980: 61) which prompted Tawney (1972: 48) to remark that 'the true descendant of the doctrines of Aquinas is the labour theory of value. The last of the Schoolmen was Karl Marx.'

Our own intellectual tradition, however, also contains another very different kind of discourse about money and monetary exchange which sees it as a far more benign influence on social life, for the conclusion to be drawn from Mandeville's *Fable of the bees* and from the 'many advantages' Adam Smith put down to man's propensity 'to truck, barter and exchange' was that the happiness and prosperity of society was founded on the individual pursuit of monetary self-gain. In fact as Hirschman (1977) points out, and we return to his argument below, this theory goes back much further than either of these writers and originally took the form of condoning money-making as a comparatively harmless and gentle vice that could be positively harnessed to the commonweal as a curb on other 'passions' of a more dangerous and disruptive kind.

Between these two radically opposed views of money there are, of course, a very large number of intermediate positions. Simmel (1978), for example, saw in it an instrument of freedom, and a condition for the extension of the individual personality and the expansion of the circle of trust; but at the same time as a threat to the moral order. But what all these different strands in our cultural tradition appear to agree about is that – whether for good or ill – money acts as an incredibly powerful agent of profound social and cultural transformations. Regardless of cultural context and of the nature of existing relations of production and exchange, it is often credited with an *intrinsic* power to revolutionise society and culture, and it is sometimes assumed that this power will be recognised in the way in which the actors themselves construct money symbolically. The essays collected here cast some doubt on both these propositions. Money, we believe, is in nearly as much danger of being fetishised by scholars as by stockbrokers.

Marx and Simmel on the social corollaries of money

This 'fetishism' appears in different degree in the work of two highly influential writers on money, to whom we have already referred: Marx and Simmel.

For Simmel (1978), money was of major significance for the development of the cognitive world we now inhabit since it helped to promote rational calculation in social life and encouraged the rationalisation characteristic of modern society; while in the same vein others have seen money as the basis for an abstract system of thought (cf. Frankel 1977: 7). More than a reflection of other structural features of a modern economy and society (as Dalton [1965] would represent it), Simmel saw money as an active agent which constitutes 'the major mechanism that paves the way from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft*. Under its aegis, the modern spirit of calculation and abstraction has prevailed over an older world that accorded primacy to feelings and imagination' (Coser 1977: 194). Encapsulating the modern spirit of rationality, calculability and anonymity, it represents a privileged instance for investigating the whole.

Unlike Simmel, who sees money itself as the principal catalyst for the transformation of social life, Marx's treatment links it to the (for him) more fundamental phenomenon of production for exchange – this being what ultimately creates the need for an abstract money medium. For both writers, however, money is associated with, and promotes, the growth of individualism and the destruction of solidary communities.

Like Aristotle, Marx's condemnation of money and market exchange reflects a certain romantic nostalgia for a world in which production was for use and the interdependence of the human community had not been shattered by exchange. However exploitative the old order, it was not – as capitalism is – based solely on explicit, relentless, egotistical calculation. If the labour theory of value invited a critique of capitalism (and of the abstract money medium with which it is associated) on grounds of equity, the new mode of production also gave rise to a grave misgiving – shared also by many non-Marxist writers – that it denied those moral 'bonds which unite men one with another' which Durkheim emphasised as the basis of all social solidarity. Exchange (by which Marx meant *market* exchange) begins with the exchange of surpluses between communities. But once objects have become commodities in external trade, they inevitably tend to become commodities within the community and to dissolve the bonds of personal dependence between its members. Independent communities become dependent, and dependent individuals become independent (Roberts and Stephenson 1983: 13). Exchange and the abstract money form from which it is inseparable, thus stand condemned as agents of individualisation (cf. Marx 1964: 96) and

of the dissolution of the communal bonds which obtained in the world of production for use.

When, Marx argues, the direct labour a medieval serf owed to his lord was commuted into a rent-in-kind and then (more significantly) into a money-rent, a contractual relationship replaced the bonds of personal dependence between them and many peasant holdings were expropriated, while some serfs managed to buy themselves free from their rent obligations and become independent peasants with property rights in the land (Roberts and Stephenson 1983: 20–1).

Simmel traces a rather similar evolution but emphasises the advance in human freedom which results.

The lord of the manor who can demand a quantity of beer or poultry or honey from a serf, thereby determines the activity of the latter in a certain direction. But the moment he imposes merely a money levy the peasant is free, in so far as he can decide whether to keep bees or cattle or anything else (Simmel 1978: 286).

While money erodes older solidarities, for Simmel it also promotes a wider and more diffuse sort of social integration. In the case of barter, trust is confined to the parties directly concerned in the transaction; but monetary exchange extends this trust to an enormously expanded social universe. ‘Now each,’ as Frankel puts it (1977: 31–2), ‘[is] no longer dependent only on his relation to the other but also on relations to the economic circle which, in an abstract and indefinable way, guaranteed the functioning and acceptability of the money they made use of.’

Not only is it claimed that money changes the way in which people think, and dissolves bonds between persons based on kinship and other ascriptive criteria, it is also held to effect that separation between persons and things which, as Mauss (1966) stressed, is denied by many primitive and archaic societies. Money permits possession at a distance. Only in the form of money can profits be easily transferred from one place to another, allowing for a spatial separation between the owner and his property which ‘enables the property to be managed exclusively according to objective demands while it gives its owner a chance of leading his life independently of his possessions’ (Simmel 1978: 333). While the gift of a specific object always ‘retains an element of the person who gave it’, exchange relationships tend to be ‘more completely dissolved and more radically terminated by the payment of money . . .’ (ibid. p. 376; cf. Mauss 1966).

Notwithstanding Marx’s insistence that property is really a relationship between people masquerading as a relationship between persons and things, there is a sense in which he too represents money as driving a wedge between persons and things in that it appears to sever the relationship between the producer and his product. The worker has no

access to the means of production and is paid a wage for his labour. As a result his product is held to belong to somebody else, and is alienated on the market in an absolute way as if it had no connection with him. The commodity comes to appear as though it has 'a "natural price", a relation to money and other commodities independent of the human factors involved' (Ollman 1976: 196). While in the feudal world the lord and his serfs were inseparable from the land in which they had rights, with private property freely exchangeable against money a man's individuality is not conflated with his property in the same way (*ibid.* p. 208–9).

The impersonality and anonymity of money, it is argued, lends itself to the impersonal and inconsequential relationships characteristic of the market-place and even to a complete anonymity in exchange. Destructive of community, money depersonalises social relations. 'The indifferent objectivity of money transactions is in insurmountable conflict with the personal character of the relationship . . . The desirable party for financial transactions . . . is the person who is completely indifferent to us, engaged neither for us nor against us (Simmel 1974: 227).

Anonymous and impersonal, money measures everything by the same yardstick and thereby – it is reasoned – reduces differences of quality to those of mere quantity. It is in its denial of the unique, and in the fact that it may easily come to be regarded as the means to *all* ends so that its possession confers an almost god-like power, that Simmel locates its most dangerous potential. Similarly Marx (1961: 132) speaks of money as 'the radical leveller, that . . . does away with all distinctions' – not even the bones of the saints being able 'to withstand this alchemy'.

In the light of such arguments it is tempting to conclude that money acts as a kind of acid which inexorably dissolves cherished cultural discriminations, eats away at qualitative differences and reduces personal relations to impersonality. It is only to be expected, then, that those 'traditional' cultures which must for the first time come to terms with it will represent money as a dark satanic force tearing at the very fabric of society.

It is not only in such a world, however, that money is credited with a mastery over men. Though in the ideology of fully fledged capitalism no longer an agent of some evil empire, money is nevertheless credited with a life-like power. Indeed, as Marx saw it, this fetishism of money as the pre-eminent example of the fetishism of commodities is inseparable from capitalism. Here money itself is endowed with fecundity. Money 'breeds' money much – Marx ironically observed – as 'it is an attribute of pear trees to bear pears . . .' Money as capital is ideologically transformed into the source of production, reducing the workers to mere appendages, making it appear only right and proper that capital should reap its 'just reward'. Moreover money as a generalised standard of value misrep-

resents production by making the value of a commodity expressed in money terms appear as an intrinsic quality of the commodity itself – like one of its physical properties – rather than of the labour which went into its production, which now becomes lost from sight. Relations between people masquerade as relations between things.

Non-monetary: monetary :: 'traditional' : 'modern'?

Given that money is held to have the kind of profound impact on society and culture to which we have alluded above, it is hardly surprising that there is a tendency to postulate a fundamental division between non-monetary and monetary economies (or even *societies*). By the process of slippage which Harris describes in her contribution (chapter 10), it is also easy to see how this opposition gets elided with a series of other dichotomies – 'traditional' and 'modern', pre-capitalist and capitalist, gift economies and commodity economies, production for use and production for exchange – with money acting as a major catalyst of the 'great transformation' between them, or at least as a telling index of it. The effect of this has been to blind a number of writers to the importance of money in many 'traditional', pre-capitalist economies.

Fuller's chapter makes this point with devastating effect in reference to anthropological discussions of what has inappositely been called the 'Hindu jajmani system'. What he shows is how this so-called 'system' has been used to exemplify a radical opposition between 'traditional' and 'modern' economic systems and ideologies and how, in the service of this objective, anthropologists (and others) have managed to ignore the overwhelming historical evidence for the importance of monetary exchanges and market integration in the 'traditional' Indian rural economies to which their models purport to refer. This is true of a whole range of commentators from those nineteenth-century writers for whom the moneyless world of the jajmani 'system' was part of a picture of the village community as a 'little republic' sufficient unto itself, to Wisner who perpetuates this stereotype, to Dumont who is concerned to demolish the idea of the village as a sociologically meaningful isolate but who nevertheless contrives to downplay the significance of market exchange in the pre-British era. What implicitly seems to underlie this misrepresentation is a deeply entrenched notion about the transformative potential of money such that its presence becomes an index of a 'modern' society, with the corollary that in a 'traditional' one it can only be of peripheral significance. But whatever the cause of such blindness, its effect was to encourage Marx in the formulation of his highly questionable theory of an unchanging 'Asiatic mode of production', and Dumont in his overdrawn contrast between the political economy of pre-British

and British India, and perhaps also between *Homo hierarchicus* and *Homo aequalis*.

More generally, Fuller's argument should alert us to the possibility that the significance of money and market exchange has been similarly under-estimated in the ethnographic description and analysis of pre-capitalist economies elsewhere in the world, and to the fact that the extent of monetisation is not a reliable index of the atrophy of the 'moral economy'. As Bayly (1985: 286) has concluded from the Indian historical record, the expansion of the cash economy 'did not . . . dissolve the relations of dominance that arose from the interplay between the norms of caste and the structure of the petty kingdoms'. Even within the domain of the market

buyers and sellers were constrained by obligations that required that they purchase certain things at certain times, in certain markets. The widespread existence of markets, money-lenders, and double-entry account books was not incompatible with the persistence of pre-capitalist mentalities in material culture . . . money of itself could not transform relationships . . . (ibid. p. 316)

Gifts and commodities

A further opposition in this sequence on which several of our chapters have some bearing is that between gift and commodity exchange. In Gregory's (1982) neat formulation the first is based on an exchange of *inalienable* objects between *interdependent* transactors; the second an exchange of *alienable* objects between *independent* transactors. It is, moreover, often assumed that this radical opposition between the principles which underlie the two types of exchange will be reflected in an equally radical contrast in their moral evaluation. Stirrat's chapter, however, reminds us that there are commodity contexts in which the alienable object is transacted between conceptually interdependent persons; while in the case which Parry describes the *gift* is alienated as radically as possible and must never return to the donor, for it is held to embody his sins (cf. Parry 1986) – and this is so regardless of whether it is in cash or kind. Here money is clearly far from being a purely depersonalised instrument. Like the gift in kind it contains and transmits the moral qualities of those who transact it.

As this suggests, the idea that the very impersonality of money makes it of questionable appropriateness as a gift (except significantly in charitable contexts where the relationship between donor and recipient is similarly impersonal) seems to be a peculiarity of our own culture – a peculiarity which is explored in some detail in the chapter by Bloch (see also Wolfram (1987). The gift, as Schwartz (1967) has noted, imposes an identity on both the donor and the recipient, and reveals 'the idea which

the recipient evokes in the imagination of the giver'. But gifts of money do not impose an identity in the same way, and in this respect its abstract impersonality dissolves the giver's authority. The problem seems to be that *for us* money signifies a sphere of 'economic' relationships which are inherently impersonal, transitory, amoral and calculating. There is therefore something profoundly awkward about offering it as a gift expressive of relationships which are supposed to be personal, enduring, moral and altruistic. But clearly this awkwardness derives from the fact that here money's 'natural' environment – the 'economy' – is held to constitute an autonomous domain to which general moral precepts do not apply (cf. Dumont 1977). Where it is not seen as a separate and amoral domain, where the economy is 'embedded' in society and subject to its moral laws, monetary relations are rather unlikely to be represented as the antithesis of bonds of kinship and friendship, and there is consequently nothing inappropriate about making gifts of money to cement such bonds.

The radical opposition which so many anthropologists have discovered between the principles on which gift and commodity exchange are founded derives in part, we believe, from the fact that *our* ideology of the gift has been constructed in antithesis to market exchange. The idea of the purely altruistic gift is the other side of the coin from the idea of the purely interested utilitarian exchange (Parry 1986), and we cannot therefore expect the ideologies of non-market societies to reproduce this kind of opposition (cf. Strathern 1985). In his contribution to this volume Parry discusses a series of cases which exemplify a whole range which runs from a situation in which the (supposedly) morally unproblematic sphere of gift exchange is opposed to morally perilous commodity exchange, to one in which it is gift exchange which represents a dire moral peril while commodity exchange is distinguished from it by its moral neutrality, to a context from which this kind of opposition in moral evaluation appears to be largely absent.

While those who write in the Marxian tradition stress the mystification which accompanies commodity exchange, they tend by antithesis to treat the world of gift exchange as non-exploitative, innocent and even transparent. An instance of this romantic idealisation of the world of gift exchange is Taussig's otherwise highly suggestive discussion of the way in which the peasantry of the Cauca valley in Columbia have symbolically constructed the world of commodity relations (Taussig (1980). By contrast the chapters by Sallnow and Bloch in this volume show just how far from being politically innocent such non-commodity exchanges often are, while Parry argues that in Hindu India it is not commodity exchange which is ideologically problematic and loaded but rather what is often made to stand for innocence in Marxist writing – the exchange of gifts.

How misleading it may be to imply that there is universally some kind of unbridgeable chasm between gift and commodity exchange is illustrated by Hart's recent discussion of exchanges of fish for yams and vegetables between coastal and inland villages in the Trobriands. Sometimes these exchanges take the form of ceremonial prestations (known as *wasi*) between community leaders; sometimes of barter between individual households (*vava*). Hart argues that the first reflects:

high social distance and weak political order, bringing big men and corporate organization into play. Informal interpersonal haggling reflects low social distance and strong political order. The issue is whether individuals belonging to different groups feel free to risk the conflict inherent in barter without invoking all the danger, magic, prestige and hierarchy that go with ceremonial exchange. Thus one form is a temporary social framework created in the relative absence of society; the other is an atomised interaction predicated on the presence of society (Hart 1986).

The essential point for our purposes is that Hart's approach allows him to emphasise the dynamic aspects of these institutional arrangements, for it is easy to see how a breakdown in political relations between coastal and inland villages would effect a shift from barter to ceremonial exchange, and their reestablishment a move back in the other direction. Here at any rate the opposition between 'gift exchange' and 'commodity exchange' looks rather less absolute than is often implied, for it seems that one may evolve rather easily into the other.

We are similarly somewhat sceptical of the radical opposition between 'gifts' and 'commodities' implied by the notion of 'fetishism' to which we have previously referred, and of the enormous significance attributed to money in the creation of such phantasmagoric constructions.

For Marx there is a crucial distinction – though it is not always consistently maintained – between money as capital when it is exchanged for labour power, and money as mere money when it is exchanged for the products of labour. Since surplus labour is the source of capital accumulation, and since it is only in capitalism that labour power is routinely exchanged for money, it may be argued that it is only here that money will generally appear to have the self-expanding value implied by the notion of fetishism – that it becomes an aspect of the nature of money that it 'breeds' more money. At any rate Marx writes as though, in the absence of commodity exchange mediated by money, the products of labour are recognised for what they really are. In the pre-capitalist world, relations do not take this 'abstract' form but rather the form of concrete personal relations. In the Middle Ages, for example, the personalised nature of economic relations meant that there was

no necessity for labour and its products to assume a fantastic form different from their reality. They take the shape, in the transactions of society of services in kind and payments in kind. Here the particular and natural form of labour, and not, as in a society based on production of commodities, its general abstract form is the immediate form of social labour. Compulsory labour is just as properly measured by time, as commodity producing labour; but every serf knows what he expends in the service of his lord is a definite quantity of his own personal labour power . . . the social relations of individuals in the performance of their labour appear at all events as their own mutual personal relations, and are not disguised under the shape of social relations between the products of labour (Marx 1961: 77).

Or again, we have the more general formula that:

the whole mystery of commodities, all the magic and necromancy that surrounds the products of labour so long as they take the form of commodities, vanishes therefore, as soon as we come to other forms of production (ibid. p. 76).

What such statements would seem to suggest is that in the pre-capitalist world the products of labour are *not* surrounded by 'magic and necromancy' – a proposition which is difficult to square with Mauss's characterization of the gift in primitive and archaic societies, which he describes – in terms reminiscent of Marx's description of the commodity – as 'not inert' but 'alive and often personified' (Mauss 1966: 10). Moreover, Mauss's evidence (ibid. pp. 43–4) suggested that the ceremonial 'coppers' which were exchanged in the potlatches of the northwest-coast American Indians are represented as 'begetting' other coppers (Mauss 1966: 43–4), much as money is said to 'breed' money. On the face of it, then, it would seem that the objects of exchange are as likely to be fetishised in a pre-capitalist economy as in a capitalist one (cf. Comaroff 1985: 72–3; Josephides 1985: chap. 9).

It is, however, possible to argue that the magical halo acquired by the objects of exchange have quite different origins in the two cases. It might, for example, be said that the fetishism of commodities derives from the separation between the product and the producer, which confers on the commodity the appearance of a quasi-independent existence, while – following Mauss – that of the gift would derive from the lack of separation between persons and things, which gives it the appearance of being animated by the personality of the donor (Taussig 1980: 36–7). Or, again, one might distinguish between the 'fetishism' or 'objectification' characteristic of capitalism, where for the most part persons are spoken of as though they were things, and the 'personification' characteristic of pre-capitalist economies where things acquire the attributes of persons (cf. Gudeman 1986: 44). Such distinctions smack, however, of a certain arbitrariness and special pleading. 'Money talks' in a capitalist economy; persons are sometimes transferred in a

remarkably 'thing-like' manner in some pre-capitalist ones, while (to give but one example) 'the history of cloth in India also shows how things could retain the quality of the people who fashioned and exchanged them, even in a fully monetized economy' (Bayly 1986). It is therefore quite unclear to us that there is any simple divide between the kind of mystical aura which surrounds the objects of exchange in capitalist and pre-capitalist economies, or that it can be money which explains the (alleged) difference.

The impact of money on 'traditional' worlds

The dominant notion which we have identified in our own cultural discourse about money – that it represents an intrinsically revolutionary power which inexorably subverts the moral economy of 'traditional' societies – has often, we believe, been taken over somewhat uncritically by the anthropologist. The effect of this has been to misrepresent the real complexity of the causal factors at work in the transformations experienced by many cultures as they are sucked into the world of the capitalist market. It is perhaps worth pausing over two particularly striking examples of this kind of misrepresentation.

Probably the best-known discussion of the impact of Western money on a previously non-monetary subsistence economy is Bohannan's account of the case of the Tiv of northern Nigeria (Bohannan 1955, 1959; Bohannan and Bohannan 1968). The 'traditional' Tiv economy contained three distinct ranked spheres of exchange: a lowest ranking sphere of subsistence goods transacted mainly by market exchanges in which people tried 'to maximize their gains in the best tradition of economic man' (1968: 227); a sphere of prestige goods in which brass rods served as a medium of exchange, standard of value and means of payment; and the highest ranking sphere of rights in human beings and, in particular, of rights in marriageable women. Small localised agnatic lineages formed ward-sharing groups in which rights in the daughters of the group were vested. The elder men of the group were the guardians of one or more girls whom they exchanged with outsiders for a wife for themselves or for one of their close agnates – the only entirely acceptable recompense for the gift of a girl being the return of another.

The vast majority of exchanges were what Bohannan calls 'conveyances' *within* the sphere, and these were morally neutral. But under certain circumstances 'conversions' between spheres were possible, and these were the focus of strong moral evaluations – grudging admiration for the man who converted 'up', scorn for the one who converted 'down'. Conversions between the subsistence and the prestige spheres occurred, for example, when an individual was forced by an acute scarcity of

subsistence products to exchange brass rods for food. Conversions between the prestige sphere and the sphere of rights in women occurred, for example, when a man managed to contract a *kem* marriage which did not involve giving a ward in return, but which did involve a payment of brass rods for the wife's sexual and domestic services and a subsequent payment for the rights of a father over any of the children she bore him. Since such a wife had been acquired without obligation to the ward-sharing group, they had no claim in her daughter whom the father could allocate in marriage as he chose. He had in effect converted brass rods into rights over people.

Central to Bohannan's analysis is the importance he attaches to the introduction of Western money in subverting Tiv spheres of exchange and converting this 'multicentric' economy into a 'unicentric' one. Other factors, like external trade, are acknowledged to be of significance, but Bohannan's main emphasis is on the new medium of exchange which provided a common denominator which allowed all commodities to be compared against a single measure and made them immediately exchangeable. 'It is in the nature of a general-purpose money that it standardizes the exchangeability value of every item to a common scale. It is precisely this function which brass rods, a "limited-purpose money" in the old system, did not perform.' 'Money', he concludes, is 'one of the shatteringly simplifying ideas of all time, and like any other new and compelling idea, it creates its own revolution' (1959).

This, we believe, considerably overstates the case for it is not *a priori* obvious that *by itself* money does indeed reduce everything to a common measure, or make it impossible for the Tiv to deny that certain things can be bought for money – as we deny that academic and political honours, marriage partners, sexual favours and so on can legitimately change hands against a money payment. Nor is it clear that such a reduction has in fact occurred to the extent which Bohannan's more general statements imply. At the time of his fieldwork, for example, there was little evidence that land was becoming a commodity. The idea of renting or selling it was regarded as thoroughly immoral, and as tantamount to renting or selling one's genealogical position (1969: 90–2). Nor could it be exchanged against anything else at all – not even another plot of land – and all this in spite of the fact that for various reasons there was now increasing pressure on what was already a scarce resource.

This is not, of course, to claim that nothing has changed – only that the transformation of Tiv economic behaviour may not have been quite as radical as Bohannan implies. But more importantly we would argue that the introduction of Western money does not account for these changes, and that other factors are of far greater significance. The first of these was an expansion of the 'economic frontier', in significant measure as a result

of the *Pax Britannica*, and the penetration of an external market into Tivland – money being one index of this penetration though incorporation into the wider market meant far more than the introduction of a ‘general-purpose’ medium of exchange. What it meant above all was that Tivland became a market for significant numbers of Ibo traders who paid cash (essential to the Tiv for the payment of tax) for agricultural produce which they then exported – driving up prices and creating shortages in Tivland itself. It is small wonder, then, that the Tiv claim that the Ibo ‘spoil a market’ and try to exclude them from it. What’s more, these outside traders had no commitment to the moral economy of the Tiv, and were presumably quite ready to trade prestige goods for cash – thus effectively destroying the barriers to conversion between the prestige and subsistence spheres.

At the other end of the scale the British effectively destroyed the impermeability of the highest sphere by legislative fiat. Traditionally what had inhibited the conversion of prestige goods into rights over women was the institution of exchange marriage which meant that normally the only way to obtain a wife was to offer a girl in exchange. But under missionary pressure and ‘what appeared superficially to be popular demand’ (Bohannon and Bohannon 1968: 248) the colonial authorities managed – with surprising success – to outlaw such exchange marriages. The result was that instead of brides being exchangeable only for daughters and sisters, they now became freely available on payment of brass rods. The effect of this seems to have been to deprive the lineage elders of much of their power, for they had clearly wielded influence over the young men by controlling their access to women. Unable to convert the fruits of their labour into marriage payments, the young men had traditionally been beholden for wives to the elders of the ward-sharing group. ‘Popular demand’ to do away with exchange marriage was not perhaps so ‘superficial’ after all. At any rate it would seem to be a reasonable inference that Tiv spheres of exchange buttressed a system of ‘gerontocratic’ authority, and their subversion posed a direct threat to that authority.

It is not surprising, then, that when Bohannon writes about the Tiv’s mistrust of money it always seems to be the *elders* who are deploring the situation. Although we can find no direct evidence that the young men invoked a different discourse about money, we rather doubt that they were so unanimous or unequivocal in their condemnation. It is, however, clear that Tiv elders talk about money in the way that *we* are apt to do – they make it into a condensed symbol of market relations, fetishise it by attributing to it an innate force independent of human will, and blame it for all the woes of their world.

Our second, and more recent, example of this tendency to represent

money as *the* crucial agent of social and economic transformation is Kopytoff's (1986) rich and fascinating paper on 'The cultural biography of things', in commenting on which we confine ourselves exclusively to that part of his argument which bears most directly on our central theme and with which we have the greatest difficulty.

For Kopytoff, the crucial attribute of a commodity is its exchangeability, and commodity exchange is a feature of *all* societies. A perfectly commoditised world would be one in which everything is exchangeable for everything else; while in a completely decommoditised one everything would be singular, unique and unexchangeable. Neither, of course, is conceivable in practice and all real world situations fall somewhere between the two poles – exactly where depending on the balance struck between two opposing tendencies towards an expansion of the field of commoditisation and its restriction. While a radical movement in the first direction denies cognitive discrimination, and thereby culture itself, a trend towards complete 'singularisation' would make exchange – and thereby social life – progressively impossible.

The natural world must therefore be arranged into value classes for exchange, and these value classes – which necessarily exist in *every* society – constitute what anthropologists have conventionally called 'spheres of exchange'. Acknowledging the difficulties involved in the labour theory of value, Kopytoff notes its relevance for an understanding of these separate exchange spheres. Produce and items of manufacture, say, yams and pots, can be compared by reference to the labour which went into their production, but no such common standard is available in the case of, say, pots and ritual offices, or yams and wives, and it is the absence of any obvious measure of equivalence which forms 'the natural basis for the cultural construction of separate spheres of exchange' (p. 72).

The problem, then, as Kopytoff sees it, lies not in explaining why the Tiv had separate spheres of exchange but rather in explaining why they had only three spheres and not more. His answer – and this brings us to the heart of our disagreement with him – lies in the technology of exchange, for commoditisation is pushed to the limits which the relatively inefficient exchange technology of the Tiv allowed.

One perceives in this a drive inherent in every exchange system toward optimum commoditization – the drive to extend the fundamentally seductive idea of exchange to as many items as the existing exchange technology will comfortably allow. Hence the universal acceptance of money whenever it has been introduced into non-monetized societies and its inexorable conquest of the internal economy of these societies, regardless of initial rejection and of individual unhappiness about it – an unhappiness well illustrated by the modern Tiv. Hence also the uniform results of the introduction of money in a wide

range of otherwise different societies: more extensive commoditization and the merger of the separate spheres of exchange. It is as if the internal logic of exchange itself pre-adapts all economies to seize upon the new opportunities that wide commoditization so obviously brings with it (p. 72).

Consistent with this, Kopytoff goes on to claim that the expansion of the field of commoditization which accompanies capitalism is not a consequence of capitalism itself, but of the exchange technology with which it is associated and which places 'dramatically wider limits to maximum feasible commoditization' (p. 72). In every economy, we are told, there is an inherent drive – restrained only by the cultural need to discriminate – toward 'the greatest degree of commoditisation that the exchange technology permits'; and in small-scale societies this drive is critically inhibited by 'the inadequacies of the technology of exchange' (p. 87).

As will be clear from what has gone before, we are extremely sceptical of this kind of technological determinism, and would instance Barth's (1967) Darfur study as one example which clearly shows that it cannot be the inadequacies of the technology of exchange alone which provides the basis for spheres, for here we find both. Moreover, if money is really such a 'fundamentally seductive idea' it is perhaps strange that the colonial powers in Africa should have repeatedly found that they needed to tax people in order to draw them into the wider economy. It is also surprising that a great many societies failed to borrow the idea of a generalised medium of exchange from more astute neighbours. One might have expected Kapauku or Tolai ingenuity to spread like wildfire. The main point we want to stress, however, is that by coupling money to capitalism in his suggestion that it was money – and not capitalism with which money was associated – that was responsible for a dramatic expansion of commoditisation, Kopytoff ignores the existence of money as we know it in many pre-capitalist economies. He does not say exactly when he believes the 'dramatic expansion' occurred, but it is surely clear that widespread monetisation considerably pre-dates the dominance of a capitalist sector, while experience elsewhere in the world would suggest that the existence of money does not inexorably result in wholesale commoditisation (and rather seldom in the commoditisation of land and labour). As we have previously argued, in the Tiv case at any rate there seem to be grounds for reversing Kopytoff's proposition: the expansion of commoditisation owed far more to an expansion of the market sector than it did to the introduction of Western money. In the 'inexorable conquest of the internal economy' of this previously non-monetised economy, the heavy armour was not money but the new set of exchange relations with which the Tiv were forced to come to terms.

Money and the end of evil

Another assumption which runs through much of the literature we have reviewed, and is marked in the work of both Marx and Simmel, is that money gives rise to a particular world view. It occurs in a particular form in a recent paper by Macfarlane (1985), on which we comment in order to signal a more general doubt.

As a broad cross-cultural generalisation, Macfarlane suggests that a strong sense of evil is undeveloped in hunter-gatherer societies; is a dominant aspect of the value system of the densely populated agrarian 'peasant' societies of China, India, parts of South America and Catholic Europe; and has largely disappeared from 'modern' society. His central problem is to account for this (alleged) disappearance, and this he does in terms of a contradiction between two different ideological currents. The first of these is encapsulated in St Paul's warning that 'the love of money is the root of all evil'; the second in Adam Smith's hard-nosed observation that 'it is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own self-interest' (Smith 1904: 16). Avarice, the root of all evil, becomes the foundation of society; Publick Benefit derives from Private Vice; the good of the collectivity is served by the evil propensities of the individual. In the face of this contradiction, Macfarlane argues, the absolute distinction between virtue and vice is eroded, and it becomes impossible to sustain an overpowering sense of unmitigated evil.

While this ideological double-bind might seem to be culturally highly specific, at various points Macfarlane couches his argument in more general terms. Echoing Simmel's observation that money is subversive of 'moral polarities', for example, he writes that:

'Money', which is a short-hand way of saying capitalist relations, market values, trade and exchange, ushers in a world of moral confusion . . . [it] complicates the moral order, turning what was formerly black and white into greyness . . . it is money, markets and market capitalism that eliminate absolute moralities . . . (p. 72).

Burridge's discussion (1969) of the preoccupation with money in the symbolism of Melanesian cargo cults is cited in support of this general proposition that 'money disrupts the moral as well as the economic world.'

Interesting though Macfarlane's argument is, we believe it to be seriously flawed – both in its specific application to Western Europe and in its more general form. With regard to the latter, it is abundantly clear from the different chapters in this volume that money and market exchange are central features of the political economy of many peasant

agrarian societies of the type in which, in Macfarlane's view, an ideology of evil is most likely to flourish. To cite Bayly (1985: 316) once more:

What is striking [in India] is the way in which the formal apparatus of markets and a monetized economy molded themselves to and were accommodated by mentalities that still viewed the relationships between men, commodities, and other men in terms of good (pure) and evil (polluting).

Not only is it entirely illegitimate to conflate money with capitalist relations and market values, but the extent to which either money or the capitalist market 'ushers in a world of moral confusion' is culturally extremely variable, and depends – as our collection repeatedly shows – on the nature of the system they confront and on the mechanisms it is able to develop for 'taming' and 'domesticating' them. Contrary to Macfarlane's assumption, the concern with money we find in many Melanesian cargo cults is not – Parry's chapter argues – a concern with its morally perilous nature or its subversive quality, but merely with discovering the secret of its fecundity, of making it multiply; a possibility which appears quite 'natural' in a world in which traditional valuables regularly attract an increment in exchange.

As for its specific application to Western Europe, what we find surprising about Macfarlane's argument is its curiously ahistorical nature. He writes as though St Paul's condemnation of avarice were a constant and unchanging value in Western civilisation. But while it may well be true that an unswerving pursuit of riches has been widely frowned upon at all times, it is clearly the case that the extent to which money-making and money-mindedness have been seen as a moral peril has undergone considerable shifts of emphasis. Little (1978:34), for example, notes how it was at the end of the thirteenth or beginning of the fourteenth century that 'the pictorial theme of men and also apes defecating coins made its appearance in the margins of gothic manuscripts', and explicitly contrasts the mentality that produced these drawings with 'the one that, in the ninth and tenth centuries, used depictions of royal and imperial coins to decorate sacred books'. It was during the eleventh (Little 1978: 36), or perhaps the twelfth (Duby 1982: 322), century that avarice supplanted pride as the vice *par excellence*, and this period saw a burgeoning of satires on the theme of money (Murray 1978: 72). The timing is significant since this was a period of rapid urban growth and of a major expansion of market trade. In other words, the attention devoted to money, trade and avarice as a moral peril grew with the significance of the money economy. So far from a general erosion of the sense of evil, as Macfarlane's thesis would suggest, what we really seem to witness is a *heightening* of the sense of evil inherent in money.

What happened in the West, we would argue, is not that money

subverted a sense of evil, but rather that *one* discourse (amongst others) *about* money made money-making more and more marginal to the devil's domain, and almost (but never quite) succeeded in wresting it from him entirely. Hirschman (1977) traces the fascinating story of how, from the later Middle Ages on, the sin of avarice becomes in official ideology less and less heinous, and is eventually removed from the category of 'passions' to become an 'interest'. Crucial to this transformation is the theory that one 'passion' can be set to tame another; that 'greed, avarice, or love of lucre, could usefully be employed to oppose and bridle such other passions as ambition, lust for power, or sexual lust' (ibid. p. 40) which were seen as more socially disruptive. The notion that Publick Benefit derives from Private Vice was a theory about statecraft before it became a justification for market capitalism, for money-making was seen as a more enlightened way of conducting affairs than 'passions' of a more bellicose nature. With Dr Johnson's pronouncement that 'there are few ways in which a man can be more innocently employed than in getting money', it becomes a positively harmless pastime. Indeed, as the most dogged and persistent of passions, it ceases to be a vice at all and becomes a legitimate 'interest' of the individual, opposed to his 'passions' by its very predictability and rationality; and a society in which men freely pursue their interests is contrasted to 'the calamitous state of affairs that prevails when men give free reign to their passions' (ibid. p. 32). The paradox, however, was that:

as soon as capitalism was triumphant and 'passion' seemed indeed to be restrained and perhaps even extinguished in the comparatively peaceful, tranquil, and business-minded Europe of the period after the Congress of Vienna, the world suddenly appeared empty, petty, and boring and the world was set for the Romantic critique of the bourgeois order as incredibly impoverished in relation to earlier ages – the new world seemed to lack nobility, grandeur, mystery, and, above all, passion' (ibid. p. 132).

The meanings of money

While writers like Simmel and Macfarlane see money as giving rise to a particular world view, what we would like to emphasise is how an existing world view gives rise to particular ways of representing money.

As our two Andeanist chapters suggest, it is Taussig's (1980) failure to give due weight to this cultural template that vitiates much of his re-interpretation of Nash's (1979) ethnography on the folklore and ritual practices of Bolivian tin-miners. According to this folklore, Tio – 'the devil' – controls the fertility of the mine, claims the miners' lives when he is not properly reciprocated for his gifts of ore by appropriate sacrificial offerings, and enables some individual miners to enrich themselves by

entering into a secret pact with them. As Taussig interprets it, such beliefs represent an indigenous reflection on the power, danger and immorality of the new capitalist economy, and on the perils which result from the fact that what is extracted as a gift from the spirit guardians of the mine is then transformed into a commodity. This makes mining very different from the traditional peasant economy of production for use in which there is an unproblematic and undisrupted reciprocity between the peasants and the supernatural sources of fertility.

What Harris's chapter shows, however, is that peasants too may be said to owe their riches to a pact with the 'devils', and it is therefore implausible to interpret the belief in such 'devil contracts' as a commentary on the evils of proletarianisation and capitalist relations of production. Neither in symbolism nor in ritual are agriculture and mining opposed. The fertility of the mines is ritually restored in a strikingly similar way to the fertility of the fields and flocks; minerals are held to grow in the mines like potatoes, and it is said that – like land – a mine should be left to lie fallow to recuperate its fertility. As Sallnow points out, it is only in mining that death at the hands of the spirits is a permanent occupational hazard, but this is only an extreme variant of the requirement of a sacrificial spilling of blood in Andean agricultural ritual. Since Andean peasants have long been incorporated into the market, and market relations do not represent a comparable supernatural danger, it is clearly not commoditisation itself which constitutes the problem. Rather the real explanation for the mystical danger of mining lies in ideas about the cosmological significance of precious metals as supreme commodities, the proper use of which is to flow upwards as tribute to the state. This tribute reproduces an ordered relationship between the state and the local community – a relationship which is the source of the latter's fertility and prosperity, and which is threatened by any individual appropriation of gold and silver that would disrupt this flow. Hence the dangers of mining derive not from the fact that the ore:

is extracted as a gift and disposed of as a commodity – that is, from the imperfect articulation between the dictates of capitalism and the norms of Andean culture – but rather from within the culture itself . . . The supernatural perils of gold-mining [and by association of all mining] are a consequence not of the ultimate commoditisation of the product, but of the cultural logic in which it is initially embedded.

When the argument that money brings about a radical transformation of society is extended by the proposition that it must therefore lead to revolutionary and *specifiable* changes in world view, it is easy to further assume that money means what money (supposedly) does. Regardless of culture, it will always tend to symbolise much the same kinds of things.

But seen as set, what the authors in this volume appear to show is that the meanings with which money is invested are quite as much a product of the cultural matrix into which it is incorporated as of the economic functions it performs as a means of exchange, unit of account, store of value and so on. It is therefore impossible to predict its symbolic meanings from these functions alone.

At first sight, however, it might seem that such relativism is called into question by several of the cases discussed by our contributors who document cases where money does indeed appear to carry the kind of symbolic load with which we are familiar from our own tradition. The Shona spirit mediums described in Lan's chapter, for example, avoid and reject European goods as incompatible with the sacred domain of ancestral authority. Similarly, Stirrat reports that the Sri Lankan fishermen with whom he worked associate money with disorder and a disruption of the proper hierarchical order of caste; and Toren that the Fijians talk of the world of money as the antithesis of the ordered moral world of chiefs and kinship.

In fact, however, these apparent similarities with our own cultural discourse are largely illusory. Though Shona mediums must avoid all contact with Western commodities like soap, petrol and Coca-Cola, we unexpectedly find that there is no such prohibition on money – in part because it is symbolically assimilated to a traditional item, hoes. Unlike these other items, money does not stand in opposition to the realm of the sacred. Again, the seeming familiarity of the Sinhalese case turns out to reflect an entirely different set of meanings, for the fishermen's distaste for money has far less to do with an hostility towards commoditisation and the market than it has to do with the fact that here the control of money is in the hands of women. The Fijian example is also a case of false familiarity, but one which suggests a rather different kind of difficulty with those traditional arguments which attribute to money a specific significance regardless of context: a difficulty which derives from a misunderstanding of the nature of symbolism itself.

The Fijian opposition between money (standing for anti-social acquisitiveness) and *yagona* drinking (standing for community) does at first sight indeed seem redolent of our own opposition between commerce and instrumentality on the one hand, and kinship and morality on the other. What Toren makes clear, however, is that this opposition has as much to do with the contrast between cross-cousins and other kinsmen as it has to do with the contrast between the market and the pre-monetary economy. At this point not only does what is seemingly familiar from our own culture begin to look very much less familiar, but it becomes apparent that we are not dealing with a simple opposition of irreconcil-

ables, but rather with interconnected concepts which are part of a transformative discourse.

This is easiest to appreciate when we consider the kinship aspect of the Fijian contrast which opposes an image of society as ordered by a fixed hierarchical pattern of consanguinity, affinity and chiefship represented in the ritual of *yaqona* drinking, to an image of the ephemeral, egalitarian, sexual and chaotic relations of unmarried cross-cousins. The relationship between these two orders is not, however, one of static and absolute opposition, for one side of the contrast is continually being transformed into the other in a way which, far from being threatening, actually represents an image of the successful reproduction of the community. This is because cross-cousins should become spouses, and hence the chaotic world which is partly conjured up by money is the necessary precursor to the world of ordered hierarchy conjured up by *yaqona*. What we therefore have is a continuing dialectic in which cross-cousins who are opposed are then united by marriages which belong to the domain of hierarchical kinship, but these in turn renew the opposition through the birth of children who are again opposed as cross-cousins. This synthesis is represented in the ritual of 'drinking cash' by the combination of the symbolism of money and of *yaqona* drinking. In the first part of the ritual the subversive creativity of cross-cousins assumes the form of monetary competition, but in the second part this chaotic behaviour is harnessed to the reproduction of the ordered *yaqona* drinking community when the result of the cash rivalry becomes a beneficial social fund. This type of transformation is – as we shall see – in no way exceptional.

Not only does money mean different things in different cultures, but – as this example suggests – it may mean different things within the same culture. Sometimes represented as subversive of the most valued social relations, it can also be viewed as an instrument for their maintenance. While in one context life 'in the manner of money' is the antithesis of the 'Fijian way', in another, money is morally neutral or even positively beneficial. Again the ambiguity is by no means unusual. What the Fijian example also demonstrates therefore is the misleading nature of the assumption that symbolic meanings can be precisely specified. As Lévi-Strauss (1958: 147–80) has argued is the case with symbolism in general, the Fijian symbolism of money and *yaqona* drinking are continually being combined in creative ways to express processes and transformation. It is consequently not only impossible to say what money will 'mean' irrespective of cultural context, it is even misleading to presuppose that it will have any fixed and immutable meaning in a given context – a point which is also suggested by Appadurai's (1985) astute comments on the typically antagonistic interests of merchants (as cham-

pions of unfettered equivalence in exchange) and the political elite (as champions of regulation and control) in a world in which the status hierarchy is protected by sumptuary laws. What money means is not only situationally defined but also constantly re-negotiated.

Transactional orders

We must, therefore, shift our focus from a consideration of the meanings of money to a consideration of the meanings of whole transactional systems and to the kind of transformative process we have identified for the Fijian case. When we do this a very different kind of picture emerges. What we then find are significant regularities which strongly qualify the highly relativistic conclusions to which a consideration of money in isolation has led us in the first part of this introduction. A particularly clear instance of the kind of regularity we have in mind is provided by Carsten's chapter in this volume.

As in the Fijian case, the Malay fishermen she describes symbolically transform money from a subversive and threatening force into something moral and socially positive. As in our Sri Lankan case, there is an intimate connection between the symbolism of money and the symbolism of gender, but there the similarity ends. Unlike Stirrat's Sinhalese, the Malay fishermen of Langkawi are quite willing to engage in commercial exchanges, though they can only legitimately do so with comparative strangers, for such relations are seen as incompatible with the moral bonds of kinship. Once the money has been earned, however, the men hand it over to the women who remain uncontaminated by contact with the amoral domain of market transactions. The women can then, as it were, 'de-contaminate' the money they receive, transforming it into a morally admissible resource which sustains the household and the community. This they do by analogy with the way in which they transform raw food into a cooked meal, the eating of which is one of the strongest Malay symbols of solidary relations. Women, Carsten argues, symbolically 'cook' the money, and thereby convert it into something which can be safely incorporated into – and will nourish – the household.

The fishermen of Langkawi are thus involved in two different transactional orders: a world of fishing and commerce in which men engage with strangers in a myriad of short-term transactions and where individual competition, if not sharp practice, is acceptable; and a world which is oriented towards the longer-term goals of reproducing the household, which in Malay ideology provides the model for representations of the wider community.

The crucial and more general point is that, as for the Malays, in one form or another, each of the cases discussed in this volume reveals a

similar pattern of two related but separate transactional orders: on the one hand transactions concerned with the reproduction of the long-term social or cosmic order; on the other, a 'sphere' of short-term transactions concerned with the arena of individual competition.

Amongst the Shona, the long-term transactional order is symbolically constructed in terms of an image of an immortal chiefdom which is represented by the spirit mediums who embody the ancestral rulers, who in turn dispense fertility to their descendants in return for obedience, respect and tribute. In both our Andean cases, it again revolves around a sacred and enduring polity which is represented as the source of the prosperity and increase which flows down to the local community as long as tribute flows up. Again, in Fiji, exchanges of *yaqona* between chiefs and the people construct an idealised image of an unchanging hierarchical order; while in the Sri Lankan case the predictable long-term order of caste with which the men identify is opposed to the short-term amoral sphere of the market in which the women assume the crucial roles. With the Merina of Madagascar, we similarly find an image of the eternal descent group symbolised by the immobile stone tomb, which is seen as opposed to – but also as partially dependent on – individualistic transactions of a short-term acquisitive nature. Finally, in India, gifts to the Benares Brahmins are concerned with the reproduction of the cosmic and social order and – by ridding him of his sins – with restoring the pilgrim's place within it. In each case this long-term transactional order is concerned with the attempt to maintain a static and timeless order.

In each, however, cultural recognition is also explicitly given to a cycle of short-term exchanges associated with individual appropriation, competition, sensuous enjoyment, luxury and youthful vitality. This is variously the world of commerce, wage-labour or brigandage, and is often identified with exchanges between strangers. In the Merina case, for example, such transactions are concerned with *harena* – movable goods which are individually acquired through competitive activities like war and trade. In life a legitimate source of sensual enjoyment, *harena* must at all costs be dispersed before death for they are firmly rooted in a transient world which defies and negates the image of a permanent and collective ancestral essence embodied in the tomb.

As this might lead one to expect, there is a close association between Merina funerary practices and the two transactional orders, and an explicit connection is made between ancestral body-substance and inherited wealth on the one hand, and between the vital substance of the living and *harena* on the other. The case is instructive for it seems to reveal something more general about the relationship between the two cycles of exchange. The short-term individualistic transactions concerned with

harena are morally acceptable so long as they remain subordinated to, and do not compete with, the long-term restorative cycles which focus on the undifferentiated collectivity of the ancestors. Indeed such activities are particularly desirable when the goods they yield are used to maintain this over-arching order – as, for example, when individually acquired wealth is employed to restore the tombs or fund the ceremonies associated with them.

But, of course, all this is extremely similar to what we have already said about the Fijian and Malaysian cases where the morally equivocal money derived from short-term exchange cycles is transformed by a simple symbolic operation into a positively beneficial resource which sustains the ideal order of an unchanging community. Much the same pattern emerges once more from Parry's Indian example, where even wealth acquired through the most devious means by merchants, bandits and kings is unproblematic so long as a proportion of it is gifted to Brahmans as part of the long-term cycle of cosmic purification. Again, in Sri Lanka we find that money ceases to be dirty and becomes a legitimate interest of men when it is used in consumption to maintain the solidarity and class identity of the fishing village and to reproduce the household; and this kind of conversion is also graphically illustrated by Harris's vignette of impoverished Bolivian peasants pouring away their wealth in libations to the sacred earth, and down their throats to produce holy drunkenness.

What we consistently find, then, is a series of procedures by which goods which derive from the short-term cycle are converted into the long-term transactional order – procedures which include the 'drinking' of cash in Fiji, the 'cooking' of money in Langkawi, and the 'digesting' of the pilgrims' gifts by the Brahmans of Benares. And of course it is no accident that such transformations should so often be expressed in an alimentary idiom, for everywhere this is one of the most powerful of all possible metaphors for transformation. It is not that what is obtained in the short-term cycle is a kind of ill-gotten gain which can be 'laundered' by being converted into socially approved channels of expenditure and consumption. It is rather that the two cycles are represented as organically essential to each other. This is because their relationship forms the basis for a symbolic resolution of the problem posed by the fact that transcendental social and symbolic structures must both depend on, and negate, the transient individual.

It is widely argued that outside the ideological ambit of the capitalist market, the economy is seen as being 'embedded' in society, that the relentless individual pursuit of material self-gain is generally discountenanced, and that collective goals are normally accorded primacy over those of the individual. Much of the so-called 'formalist-substantivist' controversy turned on the issue of whether maximizing man exists, either

in fact or theory, in the pre-capitalist world; and – though Polanyi himself was a creditable exception (see, for example, Polanyi 1971) – the answers provided have generally tended to take the form of a straightforward ‘yes’ or ‘no’. What we believe our discussion illustrates, however, is that all these systems make – indeed *have* to make – some ideological space within which individual acquisition is a legitimate and even laudable goal; but that such activities are consigned to a separate sphere which is ideologically articulated with, and subordinated to, a sphere of activity concerned with the cycle of long-term reproduction. The relationship between the politico-economic domain of *artha* and the moral order of *dharma* in Hindu theory provides an almost paradigmatic case of this kind of relationship between the two cycles. We therefore find it strange that Dumont (1970) should see the world renouncer as more or less the sole representative of the values of individualism in Indian society, and should apparently deny any role to such values in the sphere of *artha*.

That this ideological space should exist is, we believe, inevitable – for the maintenance of the long-term order is both pragmatically and conceptually dependent on individual short-term acquisitive endeavours. Not only do the latter in fact provide much of the material wherewithal necessary for the reproduction of the encompassing order, but it also has to be acknowledged that this order can only perpetuate itself through the biological and economic activities of individuals. What we claim to be describing then is an extremely general set of ideas about the place of the individual in a social or cosmic order which transcends the individual.

The articulation between the two spheres is, however, by no means unproblematic. If the long-term cycle is not to be reduced to the transient world of the individual, they must be kept separate – witness the Malay preoccupation with insulating the domestic domain against commercial transactions. But if the long term is to be sustained by the creativity and vitality of the short-term cycle, they must also be related – hence the concern with the kinds of transformative processes of which the ‘cooking’ of money in Langkawi is just one example.

The possibility of conversions between the two orders also has much to do with their moral evaluation. While the long-term cycle is always positively associated with the central precepts of morality, the short-term order tends to be morally undetermined since it concerns individual purposes which are largely irrelevant to the long-term order. If, however, that which is obtained in the short-term individualistic cycle is converted to serve the reproduction of the long-term cycle, then it becomes morally positive – like the cash ‘drunk’ in Fiji or the wealth given as *dana* in Hindu India. But equally there is always the opposite possibility – and this evokes the strongest censure – the possibility that

individual involvement in the short-term cycle will become an end in itself which is no longer subordinated to the reproduction of the larger cycle; or, more horrifying still, that grasping individuals will divert the resources of the long-term cycle for their own short-term transactions.

The nightmarish spectre of this last eventuality is illustrated by our two Andean cases. Sallnow vividly evokes the extreme danger and secrecy with which Peruvian peasants associate the mining of precious metals. The reasons for this are complex, but one way of unravelling its logic is to start from Harris' report that – though infinitely more valuable – precious metals are seen as growing in the earth like tubers or potatoes. Fertility and increase of all kinds is a blessing of the mountain spirits, and normal crops – like potatoes – require the normal reciprocation of libations and an occasional blood offering. One who obtains precious metals, however, is obtaining a kind of super crop, for which the only possible return is the life of the miner himself. But the temptation of course is to try to conceal the appropriation and thus avoid the debt; though such a stratagem is thoroughly anti-social since the mountain spirits will then extract their return at random. A renegade of this sort who threatens to permanently divert the resources of the long-term cycle to his own short-term advantage, is the antithesis of the paragon who liberally pours libations on to the earth or into his body in order to transcend, through drunkenness, his calculating individualist self. Through his self-abnegation the latter ensures that what he derives from the long-term cycle has been returned to it even before it has been given.

Similarly in the Benares case, the Brahman who receives *dana* but fails to pass it on *in toto* is in effect diverting wealth destined for the long-term cycle for his own short-term ends. The consequence is not only that he himself will rot with leprosy and suffer the torments of hell, but that – since he is blocking the channels of purification which flow in the opposite direction to *dana* – he also brings sin and misfortune to his unwitting donors. But when the munificent merchant confers *dana* on the Brahmans he is doing exactly the opposite. He is converting wealth accumulated in short-term acquisitive activity into a long-term cycle concerned both with a whole chain of purification and elimination of sin, and with the support of Brahmans whose ritual activities sustain the cosmos.

Equally, our ethnography also illustrates the other horrendous possibility that the individual will become so embroiled in the short-term cycle that he will ignore the demands of the long cycle. It seems to be this danger with which Merina notions about tree-planting are concerned. Since the tree outlasts the individual who planted it, it represents a kind of illicit immortalisation of the type of wealth that should be dispersed before death. This anti-social attempt to perpetuate his own individuality

amounts to a denial of the claims of the long-term cycle associated with the undifferentiated collectivity of the dead, and is therefore liable to be punished by the ancestors.

Again, for the Sri Lankan case, Stirrat documents the existence of two different 'spheres of consumption': one concerned with reproducing the basic viability of the household and marking its equivalence to all other households within the community; the other concerned with an intensely competitive expenditure between households. Though both kinds of consumption are positively valued, expenditure in the second sphere of competitive conspicuous consumption is most fully justified when it is directed at social reproduction through marriage; but it becomes distinctly immoral when it jeopardises the viability of the household and thereby subverts the long-term order. Much the same considerations, we suggest, lie behind the tirade of Toren's Fijian teacher against 'the world of money'. In other circumstances Fijians regard money as morally unproblematic, but what the old man bewails is that it tends to take people over and encourage them to neglect chiefship and kinship. When the short-term cycle threatens to replace the long-term cycle then the world is rotten. It is in such circumstances that a morally indeterminate instrument becomes something morally opprobrious.

Money and the two transactional orders

We have argued, then, that money is accorded quite different meanings in different cultures, but that once we focus on the broader patterning of transactions some rather significant regularities begin to emerge. With hindsight, however, this conclusion is what we might have expected to start with, for the symbolism of money is only one aspect of a more general symbolic world of transactions which must always come to terms with some absolutely fundamental human problems. One of these is the relationship between the individual human life and a symbolically constructed image of the enduring social and cosmic order within which that life is lived; a relationship also discussed in our introduction to *Death and the regeneration of life* (Bloch and Parry 1982), with which the argument of the previous section is very much in line.

The obvious corollary of our relativistic conclusion about the meanings of money is that it is quite impossible to penetrate these meanings without an understanding of the ways in which they are informed by the wider symbolic and social orders, a point which is admirably demonstrated by Martin's (n.d.) discussion of the contrasting significance of money in Taiwan and the United States. Such superficial similarities which do emerge in the meanings given to money in different cultures is, we would suggest, a kind of epiphenomenon of regularities

which exist at a deeper level. That is, they are a consequence of regularities in the way in which the transactional world as a whole is symbolically constructed in terms of what we have called long and short-term cycles. Both in Madagascar and in the Andes, certain forms of money are closely identified with the long-term order of exchange. Because of the instrumental uses to which money lends itself, the more familiar case however is for it to be most closely associated with the short-term order (as, for example, in our Fijian and Malaysian cases), and it may even become a condensed symbol of that order. Such similarities in symbolic construction as exist, we are arguing, derive from similarities in the way in which this order is constructed by different cultures.

It is, as we have seen, a commonplace assumption that money gives rise to a specific world view and to particular kinds of social relationship, but this is very dubious. The further implication of our discussion however is that – within rigorously circumscribed limits and with or without money – the vast majority of cultures make some space for exchanges which display many of the features which are sometimes, as in our own society, associated with monetary exchange (a degree of impersonality, considerable scope for individual gratification and a concern for pure instrumentality, for example). Those writers who credit money with the paternity of these features are therefore constructing a false history in which what is actually an extremely general contrast *within* cultures between the domains of the long and short-term orders becomes a contrast *between* cultures – and it is on this basis that the notion of a ‘great divide’ between the monetary and pre-monetary worlds has rested. In one way or another the chapters by Fuller, Harris, Lan and Bloch which follow all make reference to this kind of historical falsification.

We do not, of course, intend to imply that everything is everywhere the same, or to downplay the great variety of symbolic systems documented in this volume. Nor do we wish to suggest that the kind of scheme we have outlined is either universal or eternal. While we believe the pattern we have identified as common to all our case studies is typical of a wide range of societies, it is arguable that the mature ideology of capitalism would be an example of something entirely different. By a remarkable conceptual revolution what has uniquely happened in capitalist ideology, the argument would run, is that the values of the short-term order have become elaborated into a theory of long-term reproduction. What our culture (like others) had previously made room for in a separate and subordinate domain has, in some quarters at least, been turned into a theory of the encompassing order – a theory in which it is *only* unalloyed private vice that can sustain the public benefit.

What is also possible, however, is that the conceptual shift has been

rather less radical, and that what has really happened – as Mauss's essay on the *The Gift* implied long ago – is rather that Western ideology has so emphasised the distinctiveness of the two cycles that it is then unable to imagine the mechanisms by which they are linked. One of the merits of this formulation would be that it suggests a way of understanding the quite contradictory representations of money – as devilish acid or as instrument and guarantor of liberty – to which we are heirs. What, in other words, these two different discourses would reflect is the radical divorce between the two cycles, each discourse deriving from the perspective of one side of the dichotomy alone.

These are issues which we cannot properly tackle here, however, for the central focus of this collection is on ideologies which have been largely developed outside the centres of capitalism. The general comparative lesson of which they provide a timely reminder is that the specificity of the particular symbolic system, the similarities in the solutions which different cultures provide to the same fundamental problems of human existence, *and* the way in which historical forces act on and transform an existing cultural template, all have to be taken into account if we are to begin to understand the meanings of money. The lesson is also one which we need to take to heart if we are to understand our own representations of exchange.

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