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Two quotations, one from the Greek 'father of history' and the other from the British 'mother of all encyclopædias', may help to identify some important ethical issues in present-day development research that no researcher should ignore:

The first quotation is about 2500 years old. It is taken from Herodotus. In *Book III* he told the following story: Darius, king of Persia, once summoned Greeks before him. He asked them what they would demand to eat their fathers' dead bodies. They refused to do it at any price. Then Darius summoned certain Indians from the tribe called Callatiae. They traditionally ate the bodies of their fathers. He asked them what would make them willing to burn the bodies of their fathers, as the Greeks did. The Indians cried out that he should not mention so horrid an act. Herodotus told the story to show what he thought obvious: people think, even after careful consideration, their own customs and values best.[1]

The second is from *Encyclopædia Britannica* in 1998. Here the general position of the social sciences at the turn of the century is described in the following way: 'At the present time, there is a significant and undoubtedly growing feeling among social scientists, especially younger ones, that the relationship [between science and government and industry, my comment] has become altogether too close. The social sciences, it is said, must maintain their distance, their freedom, from bureaucratized government and industry. Otherwise they will lose their inherent powers of honest and dispassionate criticism of the ineffective or evil in society. (...) They [such sentiments, my comment] cannot be taken lightly, as is apparent from the serious consideration that is being given on a steadily rising scale to the whole

problem of the relationship between social science and social policy' (Britannica Online).

These quotations should underline that the points made in this article are not about the important but more general issue regarding the relation between research and values. What is focused on here is the ethical justification for doing development research (and not, for example, politics or development ethics); the ethical implications of being a development researcher (and not, for example, a politician or an NGO activist); and the ethical problems involved in calling something 'research' when in reality such an effort may be guided by other considerations than what is good/bad research or true/false. I have previously tried to define what is a *development* researcher as compared to researchers dealing with other research topics.[2] This article will discuss what is a development *researcher* and development research as compared to other people and social systems dealing with development. This might not be as easy as it appears, since the distinction between what is a researcher and what is not a researcher or between what is research and what is not research has been blurred by a number of complicated historical and sociological reasons. I regard the current trend, namely that researchers when discussing ethical issues in research concentrate almost all their attention on questions like 'what is best development' or 'development ethics', as a reflection of this situation. Typically one focuses on ethical questions belonging to the system of politics and aid (or to the private domain) and *not* on the fundamental questions about what we as researchers do or what we do not do.

Research and Autonomy

The first story can indicate that reflections on ethical issues and what is ethical conduct in general must take note of variations in moral systems across time and space. For development research this is an especially important ethical question since its very nature is to analyse societies all over the world and how different peoples at different times have managed to transform their societies and physical environment. Reflections on research ethics within our research field must take note of conflicting, although not necessarily irreconcilable, value systems among different societies, such as those between Greek and Indian traditions, between Christian, Muslims and Hindus, or between Norway at the time of Snorre Sturlasson and Norway at the time when the development aid system was institutionalised.[3] But here I will focus on another issue: ethical arguments for reflecting upon the impli-

cations of different value hierarchies among different social systems in the same society, especially that between the development research community and development aid institutions in general. This is also related to the second quotation, which raises the question whether the values traditionally held in high esteem among researchers are being eroded not only by the close relations between power and research, but especially by the research community's inability to draw clear distinctions between what is research and what is not research.

The research system is distinguished from other social systems by its focus on certain specific values – what is good/bad research and on what is true/not true. There are and should be different value hierarchies in the world of politics,[4] in the world of foreign aid and in the world of development research. I will suggest that it is possible to argue in favour of ethical values that can and, it may well be argued, should be universalised within the research community, while these same values will not or even should not be fundamental ethical values in other systems. It should be possible to argue that all researchers (whatever their personal viewpoints on development ethics) should share the idea of academic freedom and independent research as an ethical ideal to strive for. Researchers should also accept that any choice of activity involves some closing of value options and some opening up of other value options, and that the position of these ethical values will tend to be relative to contextually contingent factors. I think that only by upholding and defending the above values as core values within the development research community, will it be possible to maintain the distinction between science and what is not science. We can then talk about the development research system as something substantially distinct from aid systems, aid bureaucracies, voluntary organisations, etc. Development researchers are not asked by rulers to eat or burn their fathers' dead bodies. They are, however, often asked to provide advice and legitimacy to political decisions. The question is then: How do we answer and what are our values?

It is rather worrying for the future of development research that there seem to be very little ethical reflections within the development research community about the whole issue of the relationship between science and politics and power. The worry expressed in *Britannica* is not often echoed among development researchers, although in this field there has been a long-standing and close alliance linking both individual researchers and the collective institutions of the scientific professions to the economic, industrial and political powers of the aid system. The distinction between research and the modern information industry is in many cases becoming very difficult to discover or iden-

tify. In many OECD countries the most active research centres are often funded by the foreign ministry or by the aid bureaucracies themselves, as is definitely the case in Norway. In Norway development research has to a large extent been financed by the Ministry for Development Co-operation or by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The ministries pay most of the bill for influential research centres and build up whole research programmes for political purposes, institutions and programmes that in some cases have also become integrated parts of traditional university affairs. Previous top politicians become researchers and previous researchers become top politicians, and research institutions, non-governmental organisations and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs join hands in campaigning for certain issues (the problem is, as I see it, not that researchers *become* politicians, because then they simply opt out from one system to another, but researchers who act as politicians while at the same time claiming to be a researcher operating within the research system, or people who go in and out of different systems and thus will tend to regard the distinctive core values of the research system as an obstacle). Researchers have quite often been involved in formulating policies and have thus become politically responsible for policies they later are supposed to analyse dispassionately, objectively and honestly. In development research the scientific subject, that is, the researcher, at the same time occupies an often hidden, but nonetheless direct place as the object of science. Official development thinking, donors' development strategies and governments' development aid have to a large extent been influenced by the research community. Researchers have formulated different development strategies, they have been the authors of different white papers on aid, been on the board of aid agencies, evaluated aid for foreign ministries, the UN and the World Bank. Much research internationally is done on behalf of some multinational institution or the World Bank, and the most discussed research reports are often reports published by the UN, the World Bank, or a foreign ministry. Academic freedom is weak in many of the so-called developing countries, not only because they live under various oppressive regimes, but almost as important, because they also are even more dependent on funds from different aid donors than what we are.

I think it is obvious that these institutionalised social forms have played a crucial role in influencing research questions and research behaviour. An empirical analysis of research on development and foreign aid one hundred years from now will most likely clearly register how this context influenced and shaped the conceptual orientation of the research endeavours. In a more short-time perspective, most re-

searchers will have experienced that research interest, research ques-
tions and even conclusions have been influenced by those who pay for
the research. It is often not very difficult to see that research has be-
come the continuation of politics and even institutional politics by
other means, and individual researchers do not in general seem to be
particularly concerned about their different and conflicting roles. I am
not arguing that research funded by aid agencies or governments is of
a lesser quality than research funded by other institutions. Nor am I
supporting a conventional critical viewpoint that regards applied sci-
ence as bad or intrinsically secondary to what is called free, basic sci-
ence. On the contrary, I have in many instances suggested that to do
different types of research and to try to analyse the world in a lan-
guage which politicians and bureaucrats can understand and, from
their perspective, may be very fruitful as a method to discover one's
own 'blind spots' and perceptual filters. What is alarming is that these
important ethical issues, related to questions about the distance to and
freedom from bureaucratised government and aid industry and how
this relationship is handled in the daily practice of the individual re-
searcher, are so seldom discussed or researched.

Questions of relevance to practical ethics are therefore: to what ex-
tent have the economic and political orders of this system produced
and reproduced a particular set of research approaches, concepts,
methods, etc.? What is the strategic position held by development re-
search and development researchers within the present international
system, and how is research legitimacy transformed into political
capital? How many scholars identify so closely with powerful aid in-
stitutions and dominating perspectives that their independence is vir-
tually an illusion? Will too many scholars regard themselves as
activists in or supporters of the system they are supposed to analyse
honestly and dispassionately? Why have so few studied these crucial
issues and why have the related ethical issues not been more dis-
cussed?

How this relation between the purposes of research and the close
relation between development research and development aid and for-
eign policy is conceptualised and resolved may very well determine
the fate of development research itself, still only a few decades old. I
therefore think it is crucial to raise discussions about practical ethical
issues related to this particular research field which can encourage the
kind of personal attitudes which most people will think are necessary
for autonomy and good science: adventurous scepticism and critical
open-mindedness. General ethical guidelines will not be of much help.
They will tend to become too rigid and too formalistic. What is

needed is more discussion and more confrontation regarding research findings and analyses within the research community itself, related to this particular issue of research and power, but also in general in order to maintain the research system's distinctiveness. When ethics is focussed upon within the research community, one tends rather to discuss ethical issues related to the world of politics, and researchers compete in being 'best' in the world of development ethics.

Of course, the quest for development continues to raise fundamental ethical questions. There can be no doubt that achieving significant progress in global development at a time when the number of people living in absolute poverty is on the increase and fewer and fewer companies control more and more of the world's resources, requires radical institutional change in domestic and international policy environments and changes in ethics and behaviour. But this was also the situation when the modernisation theory was formulated in the 1950s, the basic needs strategy in the 1970s, and the theory of human rights and development in the 1980s. It is understandable that the present dominance of reductionist and liberalistic economic approaches to development opens the door for ethics to find a place in development debates and practices. Since 'the free hand of the market' within the dominating New Development Paradigm is regarded as the ultimate development force (it can be seen as a neo-liberal version of the old idea of History at Work), alternative suggestions in favour of control of these forces for the benefit of the poor or the environment will be regarded as ethically motivated. This has caused some researchers to argue that it is now more important than ever that development research should present inductive and heuristic typologies of transition strategies involving specific plans of action moving from some sort of status quo to a definable point in the future, understood in terms of an improved state of affairs or a more progressive vision of development. On the one hand it should be noted that these demands for 'a new development ethics' and for more 'morally based development theories' are not something new in development research. One trait in the history of development research dealing with development and development aid is that it has been dominated by theories of a fundamentally normative and ideological character, although they paradoxically have been regarded as universal theories and typically based on what was seen as a kind of revelation of social and economic laws in history. Once we understand that researchers' formulations of so-called 'lessons from past development efforts' are continually refashioned by present-day experiences and hegemonic ideological discourses, we are less inhibited by the present (and the past) and less frustrated by the

fruitless search for sacrosanct development ideals. There are no general laws that made the development aid epoch necessary or inevitable – it was a particular course of events that made it not accidental and not inevitable but simply intelligible. My standpoint is this: Development research and development studies cannot offer scientific answers to the 'right' development strategy, or to questions as 'What is justice' or 'What is best development', or 'Is Westernization good or bad' or 'Do people have rights and, if so, what rights do they have'. These questions cannot be answered by social science, and the history of development research and social science shows that such fundamental ideas and concepts of development rely on normative assumptions. I will argue that the distinction between political philosophy and social science is not faint but vivid and important to maintain. I therefore think it is unethical and arrogant when development researchers act as politicians or propagandists for some good cause or another, but seek extra legitimacy by employing what is called scientific arguments or research findings. Playing political games or championing ideological crusades, while at the same time posing as a social scientist, is unethical, no matter how good the cause might be regarded.

On the other hand it would also be unethical to claim neutrality and objectivity where neutrality and objectivity in research are impossible. Even the three fundamental and apparently neutral ideas of historical social change – those of decline, cyclical change, and progress – have not been derived from empirical observations alone but depend on normative evaluations or value judgements. In hindsight it is rather easy to see that the grand theories of development which claimed to be nomothetic were based on definite normative and ideological foundations. My point is therefore that on the one hand development research has nothing particular to say about whether people should aim at happiness or knowledge or virtue or some other value people may hold dear (for example a more just world). Neither can it answer the question whether it is right or possible to justify living in affluence while billions of people are starving, or more prosaically, whether aid budgets should be increased or decreased. It cannot as a social science answer such questions precisely because they are ethical issues and ideological questions, concerned with both explaining and changing the world. For research to be ethically legitimate, it is neither necessary nor advisable to argue that one development path or political order is best. For social science the aim is not to transform ethics itself into a 'science' or science into 'ethics', but rather to study impacts of ethical standpoints and policies and whether they achieve what they promise.[5] Science has to do with asking such questions and then, by

the systematic organisation of knowledge based on data ascertained by empirical methods and described in a way that is inter-subjectively controllable, understanding better the processes of development.

Research and the Problem of Stereotypes and Power

Practical ethics has to deal with how ethical problems manifest themselves and is therefore concerned about how to tackle them in different contexts and social fields. I will argue that the special context of development research and the way the whole development research and development aid system has been institutionalised and reproduced, have made some other ethical issues important to every individual researcher. This has partly to do with the fact that researchers in Norway, dealing with global development issues at the very end of the twentieth century, are a segment not only of the dominant class, but of a victorious civilisation.[6] It has also to do with the fact that inherent perspectives in development strategies and subsequent conceptual categories in much development research have had a tendency to reduce the complexities of the world and have created particular stereotyped images of peoples and countries in the so-called developing countries. For development research the question is not so much whether the individual researcher is allowed to say what he/she thinks, but the ability and opportunity to think differently or independently *vis-à-vis* powerful aid authorities and development paradigms in an era when the West is globally triumphant and when the role of the research community to a large extent is to produce and legitimise the rationality of the hegemonic development discourse.

One factor of important ethical implications for every researcher dealing with development aid and development in a contemporary context is the ethical justification for development aid. Foreign aid as a phenomenon has an ethical justification which is difficult to question on an ethical basis and which is difficult to be neutral to. Most moral philosophers will agree on at least one point: It is possible to argue strongly in favour of a statement that rich countries, as well as rich individuals, should do more to help the poor people than what they generally do. Assistance to poor people or poor regions and countries (not least since this assistance is a result of requests from poor people or poor countries and poor regions) is ethically justifiable. A central insight of utilitarianism, that one ought to promote happiness and prevent unhappiness whenever possible, seems undeniable in this context. Even critics of the aid project as such,[7] or those who now celebrate the 'end of development', agree with this fundamental assumption. The

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libertarian argument that we have no positive duties at all can be dis-regarded in this context, since it has had no support within the development research community at large.

A researcher who studies development aid is thus researching a field where the researcher himself as a rule will accept and support the project's fundamental ethical basis and justification and will wish it to be continued. This contextual particularity should not be underrated. The ethical imperative makes it logical to identify with the aid project's aims and with both donors and beneficiaries. Most researchers (myself included) have no intention of letting our research 'destroy' this ethical, justifiable project. Rather, most want their research to play a positive role for the poor and oppressed and at least, indirectly, improve the aid system. At a time when aid fatigue has set in, the temptation to curtail oneself in order not to increase the opposition to the idea of development aid as such is even greater. Independence and critical autonomy therefore take on a different aspect in this field because development aid's basic ethical legitimacy and declared goals are justifiable and can be universalised.

The aid system is, on the other hand, based on a fundamental asymmetric power relationship. The historical background to its very foundation was that some parts of the world were rich, prosperous and powerful after the Second World War and other parts of the world were poor and powerless. It has been dominated by Western powers and Western concepts of development; of human rights; and of what constitutes the good life. The aid system was established in that very same period of world history where many countries for the first time assessed the development of their societies with concepts and ideologies originating in the West and spreading from the West. It is reasonable to suggest that this particular combination of a justifiable ethical foundation and the dominance of a certain rhetoric about development on the one hand and the systemic imbalance in power built into the institutional structures of this international system on the other hand, have had important consequences for the contexts of research and therefore also for practical ethics. The establishment of the aid epoch and the aid system reflected the existence of a gap between poor and rich countries, and, more fundamentally, a gap between Western civilisation and the rest. We tend to think about the centuries before our own as *the* centuries of Western expansion. But it is probably after the Second World War that the West and Western development ideas have had the most profound impact on the rest of the world. Development aid and theories about development comprise a system based upon central and fundamental concepts (expressing important values

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about what is the good life, what should development be etc.), that fundamentally reflect Western experiences. This does not mean that we easily can talk about a Western civilisation or that the concepts central to present-day foreign aid are only Western in origin, but some important changes did originate here – particularly those relevant in a development aid context: the complex transformation called the Industrial Revolution and the ideas that individuals have certain rights *vis-à-vis* the state. The aid system, compared to other forms of cultural diffusion like Hollywood films, the Beatles and Dallas, is rather unimportant but still it has helped to further this expansion in important conceptual areas. The development aid language formed the premises of the general postwar discourse on development. In different periods dogmas of different Western development strategies have been adopted along with a belief in their self-evident, universalistic truths, and the West (and the research community) has taken on the task of proving and explicating this historical revelation by propagating development strategies to the world at large. No act or perspective or study can transcend this reality of power distribution in the relationships between civilisations and in the global discourse on development strategies.

Research activities have been part and parcel of this asymmetric power relation. The researchers from the 'North', as we are conventionally called, are therefore not simply a segment of the dominating class (in Bourdieu's terms), but, more importantly, a segment of the dominating civilisation in this relationship. As long as he or she studies aspects of development and development aid, the individual researcher cannot escape this historical and institutional context. One can live or bear this contextual fate enthusiastically, thoughtlessly, realistically or hesitatingly, but these are individual moral-ideological questions, and therefore irrelevant for a discussion of ethical issues for the research community as a whole. I think, however, it is ethically important for researchers to try to identify the particularities and normative content of the aid rhetoric and also to disclose power mechanisms within the aid system, and thereby try to maintain individual autonomy and promote the search for truth.

How one defines and distinguishes 'us' from 'them' is, of course, essential to ethical discourse and behaviour. The question and concept of otherness are fundamental to international relations, and hence, due to the interdependency and inequality in today's world, the appreciation of alterity is a central ethical issue within our research field. We are constantly bombarded by over-simple generalisations about 'Western civilisation', 'Asian values', 'African cultures', 'Islamic

culture' and their opposites; the dominating perspective of the development aid relation where 'we' are the mirror of 'the other's' future in one way or the other, and where the undeveloped world is defined by what it is not. Such readings of development processes and history of civilisations are intellectually shallow and have ethical implications. They add on the one hand to the divisiveness of the world and on the other hand to the authoritarian notion that 'we' share some common 'Western values' or 'Norwegian values'. Just as the grand dichotomy between Asian and European culture and values oversimplifies the development processes, so have also the grand developmentalist strategies about 'trickle down', 'basic needs' etc. confounded the understanding of international relations and the complexities in historical developments. One fundamental but implicit normative foundation of much development thinking and development research is a failure to recognise value diversity in different societies, but more importantly in this connection, also within one's own society and even within the research community. It is important to realise that these values are not reflections of different cultures, only, but a product of different and particular historical experiences. Since people have an 'innate' propensity to distinguish between insiders and outsiders they also will develop stereotypes about 'the other'. These stereotypes do not necessarily imply cultural differences or ethnicity, but may also be phenomena like nationhood and nationalism, religion, sex, age, level of development etc. The aid system has conceptualised the world and distinguished between 'us' and 'them' in a particular way, since the general problem of representation takes on a particular reductionist form in different contexts. In order to maintain optimal autonomy it is therefore important for development research to try to identify hegemonic representations.

My proposition is that development research has been influenced by apparently two very different traditions. On the one hand the positivist appeal of science has had a strong position within development studies. The establishment of the development aid system saw the virtual institutionalisation of this ideal and its canonisation *vis-à-vis* the rest of the world. The great aim of this science was that of dealing with moral values, institutions and all social phenomena through the same methods as in natural sciences. The theories were nomothetic and the ambition was to formulate development strategies with universalistic ambitions. These strategies revealed a kind of cosmic conspiracy for the good of Man. They claimed to have discovered the different forces or powers of history, and now these should be engineered in a certain way so as to achieve rational development. Implicitly human history

up to this particular discovery had been like a movement of a figure in a clockwork. Another very different but co-existing and intermingled idea can be likened to the humanitarianism of the last century. This modern humanitarianism was also thought of as a true science of society and its ultimate purpose in the 1950s and in the following decades, as it had been in the nineteenth century, was the welfare of society and the improvement of its social condition. It institutionalised compassion for the poor and the undeveloped. This type of humanitarianism and a positivist social science are reciprocally related in their purposes. They both draw strength from the idea of development as evolution – an idea which particularly in the development aid system has been pervasive – and from the notion that universal truths exist, true for all men and women, everywhere, at all times,[8] and that these truths can be expressed in universal rules. The way this compassion and nomothetic universalism have gone hand in hand has had important implications for our topic: Since *the* answer was known, or could be known, the moral task became to tell the world about the discoveries made by this research.

In a broad historical perspective the most striking feature of the representations of 'the other' in the aid era is the implicit and sometimes explicit negation of the exoticism of the ninteenth century and of the more recent cultural relativism and cultural fundamentalism. Gone were now the days when standard texts in history could dismiss all events outside greater Europe because they exercised little direct influence on Western development. Gone were also the days when anthropologists after the spectacle of the Western states in brutal colonial aggression and in war with one another, questioned the basis for the implicit judgements of the inferiority of non-European ideas and ways of life.[9] In the era of development aid the non-European world was not dismissed. It became important, in the sense that it formed the opposite of 'us' and it was an arena for development and donor action. The world was conceptually divided into two parts; developed countries and developing countries, and 'the other' embraced all countries in Africa, Asia (except Japan) and Latin America. The developing countries were basically similar in the sense that the same development strategy and the same development goals were applicable to all societies, and that they by implication were conceived as being without compelling identities, institutions, ecological constraints, traditions or values. Countries as different as Saudi Arabia and Gabon, Nepal and Argentine, China and El Salvador were put into one semantic rucksack. The picture gallery that was illuminated by aid

strategies and development strategies naturally became marked by homogeneity.

The 'developing other' was conceived, not necessarily without variation and individuality (although that also has been the case), but with such differences as fitted into and could be handled within the dominating developmental scheme or social engineering project. The motive in this picture was, whatever country was mentioned, the same: development. The style of painting was almost always identical in the form of some dominating concepts. The concept 'developing countries', as a common denominator, allowed us to distinguish be-tween categories of developing countries according to size of GNP, standards of education, the degree of economic differentiation, etc. These distinctions underlined the usefulness of an abstract, and uni-versal socio-economic criterion, as the relevant dividing line. On the one hand these strategies have often argued that the development pro-cess is complex and that there exist no easy, straightforward answers. On the other hand, they have commonly ended up with one develop-ment strategy, one basic prescription, for all or most developing countries. These strategies were not based upon the assumption that we are all different, but on the idea that fundamentally like-minded people in different countries are different in the sense that they live in different development contexts. The way the world was conceptual-ised and dichotomised discriminated against issues like differences in religion, culture, history, political traditions and institutions. The di-chotomisation between 'us' and 'them' has been drawn as a binary opposition; as a relational property of a particular international social system; as a conceptualisation of 'us' and 'the other' reflecting and situated in a specific historical relation between the West and the non-Western world.

The image of the non-European world as 'developing countries' discriminated not only against the relevance of cultural and religious differences, but also against varying ecological constraints and possi-bilities and the impact of particular histories. It is worth noting that, in contrast to some (but far from all) colonial reports, neither climate, oriental fatalism, backwardness etc. nor their like have played any im-portant part in the representations of the aid epoch. The identity and heterogeneity of all the countries and peoples in Africa, Asia and Latin America were conquered by the perspective of the development aid relation and the development aid perspective. The problems of poverty, gender, ecological deterioration were described as if they were the result of basically similar causes and could be solved with

more or less identical policies. The result was a world of 'the other' where a lot seemed to revolve around the role of development aid.

The 'other' was represented without his otherness. Their histories were depersonalised by an interpretative transformation into a development aid language and an aid relation that we perhaps do not fully understand the implications of but which helps to maintain a certain conceptual control of the world and the donors' place in it. As the past always is conquered by the present to a greater or lesser extent,[10] the non-European peoples were conquered by the development aid perspective. Conceptualised within this perspective, they became known to us but without the understanding that comes with face to face confrontation on an equal footing, and as a distant homogenised recipient of our affluence. Delivered by media and sometimes by science, these representations have had a claim to neutrality in the great number of magazines and popular articles on the developing world in the aid epoch. This domain unfolds as a social order and the perspective vegetates on the authority of a neutralised they, summed up in the authoritarian and absurd phrase so often encountered within the development aid system: the tradition to call a speaker from Mali, Zambia, India or China a 'voice from the South'. The dominance of this phrase within the aid system (even research conferences are peopled with these absurd human beings called 'voices from the South') is an expression of the power of stereotypes: No longer can we see them; they are faceless, though no less authoritative, but authoritative within our own scheme of things.

This 'other' is entirely different within the perspective of 'clash of civilizations' and the way the distinction between 'us' and 'them' is also drawn in a radically different way.[11] Gone is the socio-economic criterion, gone is the universal developmental scheme as the basis for distinguishing between 'us' and 'the other'. Within this alternative perspective the 'West' emerges as a much more value-sharing civilisation than what it actually is. Studies of values in Muslim countries, in Asia and Europe do not support or sustain the thesis of a grand dichotomy (or a 'clash of civilizations') nor do they support or sustain an idea that differences can only be explained by the 'cultural' argument. This 'other' becomes a stereotyped representative of his 'culture', his 'religion', etc.

What is ethically important is to rescue 'the other' from these dominating and suppressing stereotypes and to try to present them more in their totality (which is never possible, of course) as a product of personal histories, social background, psychology, history, global economic trends etc., thereby also rescuing ourselves and the donor

communities from the authoritarian notion of 'sameness' regarding fundamental ethical values.

To criticise stereotypes is not a political task, since the political language is based on stereotypes. It is, however, a critical and *ethical* task for researchers to identify their ideological content and conceptual consequences. To do this is not the same as being opposed to aid projects as such or to hegemonic concepts. Neither does it imply that one is against the advance of Western values in the world. I think that the development research community as a whole has an ethical responsibility to counteract the particular way development thinking and development strategies have tended to suppress the otherness of 'the other' (the developing countries) and the value of pluralism in the developed world, because only by doing this will development research be able to analyse the complexities of the development processes and enhance the ability to observe the possibility that lives can be lived in an entirely different way but can be just as intelligible as our own.

Conclusion

Most of us will hope that our research will play a positive role in social development. What else, it may be asked, are the social sciences all about if they cannot help – in the end – to change life for the better (but there is no agreement about what this betterment is, and there will never be) and perhaps also influence major institutions? But in the process of seeking to influence the powerful agencies of aid, development research may itself become influenced adversely by the values of power and affluence to be found in these agencies. They themselves may become identified with the systemic status quo and internalise the dominant conceptual framework. Moreover, no one can claim to be immune from hegemonic intellectual and ideological trends of the present, even those sitting in the 'ivory tower'. The idea that the research community should discuss and eventually agree on what is the best development ethics is, I think, a threat to what constitutes the distinctiveness of the research system. Research must strive to become autonomous and researchers must strive to understand the complexities of social life in a more profound way than what aid workers, politicians or media people normally are in a position to do.

To discuss the distinctiveness of the research system, to acknowledge how some value options are closed by being a researcher and to realise the limits of our understanding, is more demanding but less arrogant than research claiming to have discovered the true or right

development path, or researchers acting as politicians. This aim is as normative but more self-critical and less moralistic than research advocating a certain ethically justified development strategy. It may stimulate much-needed debate among social scientists dealing with development, based on core ethical values distinguishing a research system from other systems in society, and not on its user value in the market place. It is realistic, in the sense that it accepts that it is unrealistic and perhaps not even advisable to try to liberate research from those social and cultural forces that impede the research system's distinctiveness and threaten value pluralism within the research community, but it is precisely this structural situation that makes it necessary again and again to reassert this distinctiveness. It focuses, as the contemporary debate on development and ethics usually does not, upon the ways in which specific contextual predicaments embody the existence of particular ethical situations for the development research community as a whole.

Notes

1. This story can be found in Herodotus (transl. 1954): 219–20.
2. See, for example, Tvedt (1987a, 1987b and 1988).
3. The great Norse saga writer Snorri Sturluson (1179–1241) conceived in *Den Yngre Edda*, written about 800 years ago, the world as separated into three parts, and the Asian part was the best and the people there were the most knowledgeable.
4. Some political theorists argue that political realism implies that ethical considerations have no place in politics at all. My argument is that politicians may also be motivated by ethical considerations, but that these ethical values will tend to be different from those values that constitute the activity of social science.
5. For example: The role of research is, in a critical manner, to consider for example those theoretical or empirical arguments that identify the same society (the liberal-democratic Western states) as the apex of social evolution and at the same time as the system responsible for environmental degradation.
6. In foreign aid circles and also in the development research community the standpoint that it is fruitful to regard foreign aid as some form of Westernisation of the world, is often dismissed as too critical, too radical, as one-sided or even as immoral, since it is conventionally interpreted as being a critique against the aid project as such. For a historical analysis of the role of the West, see the influential books by McNeill (1963) and Roberts (1980).
7. See, for example, Hardin (1993).
8. For a very interesting discussion of these issues, see Berlin (1990).
9. See, for example, the influential book by Benedict (1934).
10. For a well-written discussion on the relationship between the present and the interpretation of the past, see, for example, Lowentahl (1985).
11. See the very influential article and later book by Huntington (1993 and 1996).

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Summary

Terje Tvedt, 'Some Notes on Development Research and Ethics', *Forum for Development Studies*, 1998:2, pp. 211– 227.

This article argues that it is often difficult to see the difference between what is called development research and politics and between research and other aid-related activities. Values traditionally held in high esteem among researchers are being eroded not only by the close relations between research and government and aid agencies, but especially by the research community's inability to draw clear distinctions between what is research and what is not research. It identifies two areas of particular ethical concern for the development research community as a whole.