

## Chapter 6 Charity

Take up the White Man's burden –  
The savage wars of peace –  
Fill full the mouth of Famine  
And bid the sickness cease  
Rudyard Kipling  
*The White Man's Burden*, 1898<sup>1</sup>

This chapter, based primarily on research in Ireland, examines the charitable impulse as it relates to people's lives in Malangali. A direct material link can be easily traced from the coins Dubliners drop in collection buckets to the money organizations such as Concern spend in places like Malangali. This flow of money is not itself particularly interesting. What stimulates this chapter are the cultural flows associated with charity for Africa – the connections between why people donate in Dublin and what happens in Malangali, and the ways what happens in Malangali inform how people in Dublin understand their world.

I begin with a scene from Grafton Street, Dublin, in August 1997. The bustling brick street, heart of the city's shopping district, was closed to vehicles as usual. Near Trinity College at the top of the street a portly man sat on a stool with a large covered container in his hands. Sandwich boards nearby showed pictures of starving Africans under the logo of an Irish charity called Goal.

The man called, loudly, "Help the starving people in the Third World. Help the

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<sup>1</sup> "[T]hough [*The White Man's Burden*] outraged American liberals, the poem was enthusiastically received by Theodore Roosevelt and the large section of the population that supported him" (Brooks and Faulkner 1996: 307).

starving people in the Third World. Help the starving people in the Third World.”

Nobody stopped to read the explanatory posters. From time to time, individual passers-by reached into their pockets and dropped some coins into the container, barely breaking their strides. Throughout the day, and periodically throughout the year, people sit on the stool, their call echoing through downtown Dublin: “Help the starving people in the Third World. Help the starving people in the Third World. Help...”

This chapter and the one that follows, *Power*, depart from typical studies of African village life to a greater extent than the preceding pages. The ethnographic lens pans wide to include the historical, political, and economic factors that influence life in rural Africa, as has become common in contemporary American anthropology.

Embracing an emerging trend in anthropology (Marcus 1995, Hastrup and Olwig 1996, Gupta and Ferguson 1997a), these two chapters zoom in to people and places far removed from the primary research area. In many cases, the people who appear in these chapters do not see themselves in any way connected with events in Malangali. I contend that people in Malangali are linked in important ways with the passers-by on Grafton Street as well as the man collecting their coins and the people administering their charitable money. Previous chapters have examined the interrelation between how aid agency personnel and Malangali residents conceive of many issues affecting rural lives and livelihoods. With these issues firmly in mind, the dissertation embarks on a journey to Dublin to more fully examine the effects of Malangali’s relationship with a “globalizing”

world.<sup>2</sup>

The relationship between the people on Grafton Street and the development agencies they feel represent them is more complicated than a simple clanking of coins in a bucket. People contribute – or don't contribute – for many reasons, reasons at the very heart of why such agencies work in Africa at all. I suggest that the reasons behind individual charitable donations have repercussions in the kinds of efforts the aid agencies undertake. Sometimes, however, the agencies' perceptions diverge from those common among their public. In such cases, the agencies must either attempt to educate the public about their new understandings, or continue raising funds with images with which the public is already comfortable. Concern does both, engaging in a public debate about Africa and development that is reflected in answers to the research surveys. The shopper dropping money in the bucket for Goal, the worshiper contributing to the collection plate for Trocaire, and the family who have instructed their bank to make monthly deductions for Concern are, in real ways, consumers of the idea of African development.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> In addition to the African fieldwork, this chapter is based on a month's research in Ireland during August 1997 sponsored by the Council on the Study of Race, Inequality, and Politics of the Yale Institute for Social and Policy Studies. 65 people approached at random in Heuston Railroad Station completed a formal "Survey about charity for Africa." I spoke at some length with many of these people, as well as dozens of others in the train station, on Grafton Street, in pubs, and at other locations around Dublin. The people contacted may or may not be representative of the Irish population at large. By approaching people waiting for trains to or from southern and western Ireland (Connelly Station serves the north), I spoke with a geographically and economically diverse group of people. However, the survey respondents included a disproportionate number of teachers, and fewer business professionals than expected. The people who declined to answer the survey tended to be male, especially older men. In some cases I noted the comments non-respondents made about the survey topic, which contribute to the discussion of this chapter. Interviews with Concern personnel and former staff, a MP from suburban Dublin, and others involved with Irish charities and overseas aid also inform this discussion.

<sup>3</sup> Concern, Trocaire, and Goal are the three major Irish charities working overseas. Trocaire is Church-based. Concern has strong Church connections, especially among its leadership, but is not overtly ecumenical. Goal has no specific religious connection. All three charities raise funds for similar types of projects in poor countries, especially for Africa. Oxfam, Save the Children, and many other international charities also have a fund-

Is it a stretch to claim that average citizens of the wealthy world are development consumers, a claim that the rest of the dissertation ascribes to residents of rural Africa? Perhaps. The aspect of consumption by the ordinary Irish citizen is certainly different than that of the Malangali resident. In Ireland, as elsewhere in Europe, Japan, and North America, individuals consume the *ideal* of something called development, while in Africa people interact as consumers of concrete manifestations of the development ideal, as well as of the ideal itself. (Whether such an ideal is a discernable entity is discussed in Chapter 9.) While Africans must make constant choices about how they will interact with the many development imperatives that they face on a daily basis, consumers on the donor end of the development process face a much more limited range of options: which organization, what amount, perhaps what special purpose to donate to, or whether to contribute nothing at all. What they buy, and what development agencies throughout the wealthy world try to sell them, are salves for their guilty consciences. The marketing and consumption of this guilt is what creates development programs in Malangali and throughout Africa.

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raising presence in Ireland.

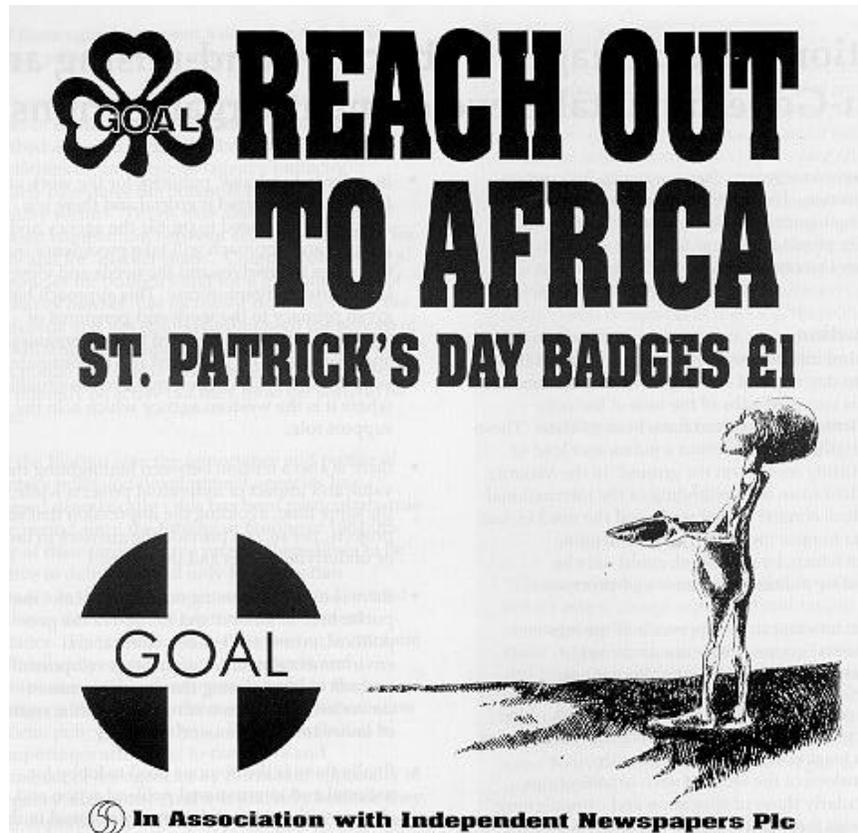


Figure 6.1: Reach Out to Africa (from Regan 1996: 15)

**CONCERN**  
 1 Upper Camden St.,  
 Dublin 2  
 Tel. (01) 681237

*will enable Concern to provide emergency care and food for a severely malnourished child in Ethiopia for one week.*

*will enable a Concern health worker to immunise a child in Bangladesh - protecting it against the 6 main child killer diseases.*

I enclose my donation of £

Name: Mr. / Mrs. / Miss / Ms \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Please tick if you require a receipt

Concern is a non denominational voluntary organisation devoted to the relief, assistance and advancement of peoples in need in less developed areas of the world.

Figure 6.2: Help Save Lives

## Charity

Charity is an anomalous aspect of human behavior that is understudied in the social sciences. Charitable giving as exemplified by private donations to Concern would seem to run counter to self-interest, making it unlikely in most visions of *homo economicus*. Moreover, giving to overseas aid has little benefit for the larger social group, making it unlikely in many anthropological views of behavior in the interest of one's social unit. The suggestion that people give to charities out of belief in religious or moral codes simply begs the question: what convinces individuals that it is important to them to give away portions of their material wealth for no apparent benefit to themselves or their group? In this chapter I demonstrate that charitable giving – whether of cash or personal services – has a definite rationality for many people, that it addresses human needs that cannot be resolved in any other way. These needs exist outside of normal economic patterns. They arise from the personal acceptance of moral/ religious codes, from the educational/ marketing efforts of charitable organizations, and from individual conflicts about living comfortably among people exposed to media images of others' distressing problems. Charity represents the consumption by people of certain ideas of what problems exist and how they might be addressed. Charitable giving represents the purchase by individuals of peace of mind, of a reconciliation between moral compunction and the limited capacity of any individual to set to rights the injustices they see in the world.

The anthropological view of gift-giving largely follows Marcel Mauss' seminal work *The Gift* (Mauss 1990). Mauss posited that gifts are part of a total social system, in which relations of honor, prestige, obligation, and reciprocity are expressed through the acts of

giving and receiving. The most profligate displays, such as the pot latch, become occasions on which material wealth is traded for respect and power. More modest gifts also imply the creation and maintenance of social relationships. Consider the example of two men. The purchase of a round of drinks by the first may assert a cordiality between the two that is agreed when the free drink is accepted, then cemented when the subsequent round is purchased by the original recipient. In this example, both men have paid for two drinks, both have consumed two drinks, but the social acts of giving and receiving have elevated the occasion beyond mere economic exchange. When gift exchange is unequal, when one party gives more than the other can return, status relationships are established, with the benefactor holding claims to the loyalty or services of the beneficiary. Such views of gift-giving underlie contemporary ethnographies such as Gan Wang's 1999 portrait of Shanghai and Kathy Rupp's of Tokyo (1998); an ethnography about the system in Tanzania where government officials perform government services for citizens in exchange for cash or other favors – and where many people do not see this as problematic – would likely employ similar ideas. Relationships and obligations tied to gift exchange, Mauss demonstrated, can extend throughout a society, and across generations. Giving is an instrumental act in this view; even if the actors conceive of the gift as stemming purely from generosity or affection, social analysis can always find some benefit that will accrue to the benefactor.

Mauss is quick to incorporate alms-giving into his functional theory of gifts.

Generosity scores points with gods or spirits, thus buying super-natural benevolence in this world or worlds to follow. Christianity and Islam both exhort their followers to give alms

as a way of demonstrating their goodness and their faith in God. In contrast, James Douglas (1983: 80) demonstrates that giving need not be self-interested in all cases, that charity for some is simply part of how they understand morality, arising from Biblical passages explaining that it is right and necessary for the strong to help the weak. The truly devout do not need promises of happiness in the afterlife. For them it is enough that the Bible or Koran, the word of God as they understand it, proclaims generosity to be an aspect of godliness. Ostrower identifies membership within a community defined by religion, rather than the religious doctrine itself, as a prime motivator for Jewish donors to give to particular causes (1995: 56). In Dublin today, as elsewhere, a mixture of religious motivations undoubtedly adheres. For many charity is a religious obligation because it is spelled out in the Bible and in church as the right thing to do, for some it is a community obligation, while for others it is the right thing to do because God is keeping track of how you live your life.

A few important essays review philosophical and theological perspectives on charity (Bremner 1994; J. Douglas 1983; Schneewind 1996; Davis 1996) and as a practice having interesting historical manifestations (Owen 1964; Consantelos 1991; Constantelos 1992; Luddy 1995; Roberts 1996). These writings demonstrate the ways philanthropy has been conceived and enacted at various times and places, most especially in Europe. Until recent times the record reflects mostly the charitable acts of wealthy and powerful men, along with a few famous acts of self-abnegation among those who later became canonized, such as Francis of Assisi. Whether altruistic giving was not encouraged among the less prosperous, not common, or simply not recorded, I have not encountered research that

would illuminate such ordinary generosity. Clearly by the 19<sup>th</sup> century individuals who were not among the high elite were involved in philanthropic acts, as detailed by Luddy for Ireland and Owen for England. However, as the life work of Dickens makes plain, services made available to the poor through private donations were generally shabby, inadequate efforts, often with the interest of getting the poor out of sight and off the streets. Ryan (1996) credits a transformation in public consciousness about the plight of the poor and the necessity to care for them to Thomas Dewey, Jane Addams and their compatriots in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Their writings and actions appealed to high notions of morality that combined religious obligation with concepts of democracy and civilization that rang true for the rich and moderately affluent of the day.

A direct genealogy can be drawn from these late 19<sup>th</sup> century social thinkers to today's international charities, as well as to the creation of government programs to aid the poor domestically and abroad. The history of the philosophical justifications for philanthropy does not, though, explain why individuals feel motivated to make charitable donations. Most people do not read or engage in intricate discussions of the morality of generosity, much less debates about altruism versus self-interest. They simply make the decision to give or not, and in what amounts, based on their assessments of the value of their donations to themselves and to others. Frank (1996) argues that much self-interest motivates decisions to give away wealth. Donors might give to a youth center that will benefit them by making their neighborhood safer; might give to public television to keep their favorite news program coming into their home every day; might give to an environmental group to protect the air they breathe; might give to cancer research

knowing they are at high genetic risk for the disease. Tax policy inspires many donations, including income write-offs and bequests that people leave when they die that make their accumulated wealth stretch as far as it can, but that do not reduce their standards of living (see Henderson 1992: 71-81). Further, people may wish to be seen as generous, whether for prestige, to draw business, to gain access to networks, or to gain political access – such as the Tanzanian businessman I met in 1998 who is paying for the planting of trees all around one regional capital, with speculation rampant that he either wants government favors or is himself planning to run for the legislature.

Philanthropy often bears connotations of large donations by extremely wealthy individuals. In this conception, it can differ from ordinary charitable giving in kind of donation and reasons for giving as well as in size. Ostrower, in a detailed study of philanthropy among New York elite, points out that giving can occur in the absence of either generosity or a desire to help (1995: 8). She writes:

Within the sphere of philanthropy, elites carve out a distinctive niche for themselves and maintain a separate set of relationships with prestigious recipient organizations. This permits them, in turn, to retain a special sense of identification between these institutions and their class, even as the organizations themselves have changed (1995: 11).

Elite philanthropic donations often support perceived bastions of elite culture, such as an opera or museum or private school. Donations to more publically accessible institutions, such as hospitals or universities, may take the form of buildings or professorships prominently endowed with the name of the benefactor. (One wealthy American family's name may be Mudd, for example, but they will be remembered by generations of college students around the country for libraries and facilities built of solid brick.) Ostrower shows

that the seats on foundation boards that are offered to substantial donors confirm membership in the ranks of the elite, providing a confirmation of goodness and importance.

**Foundations**           The wealthiest of elite philanthropies today resemble NGOs in their international reach and the programs they support, but often have more autonomy than organizations like Concern. Foundations such as those started by Ford and Rockefeller were started for reasons similar to the mixture of altruism and self-interest discussed above, but today are independent distributors of wealth with no control by their (long dead) founders, and often little input from the founders' heirs. These organizations are not directly beholden to government or donor objectives, so are free to determine how best to meet their mandate, which is to spend money for the common good. Of course, the directors of the foundations tend to see the world and its problems through eyes similar to those of private donors and government officials, but they have no obligation to undertake programs with specific quantifiable goals. The big philanthropies fund long term projects, such as international agricultural research, that NGOs cannot fund, and governments often choose not to. As Peter Hall argues, the agendas these philanthropies advance can be "a major force in shaping both the moral consensus on which public policy is based and the perception from which the definition and solution of problems proceeds" (Hall 1988: 64). Further, the programs pursued by the philanthropies often advance the political or economic interests of the elite from the wealthy world. E. Richard Brown (1980), discussing a Rockefeller medical initiative in China in the early part of the twentieth century, argues that the program "was so intertwined with the

interests of American capitalism as to be indistinguishable” :

[I]mproving the health of the Chinese people was a secondary goal... [T]heir primary goal... was chiefly... to lead China to modernization, to develop a culture and economy that would make her more useful to Western nations... [T]heir humanitarianism was shaped by their ethnocentrism, their class interests, and their support for the imperialist objectives of their own country. (p. 138-9)

In the same volume, Berman demonstrates the pre-war interest and activity of philanthropies in promoting educational policies in Africa that would ensure a segregated supply of semi-skilled labor for international industry; after the war, program emphasis shifted to training an African elite who would be friendly and philosophically inclined toward the interests of North Atlantic politics and capital. Rockefeller-funded agricultural research institutions today often preference the agendas of multinational agribusiness interests rather than those of small farmers in places like Tanzania, despite their avowed agenda in support of farmers in the non-industrial world (Mooney 1997, Ross 1998). Ross argues that the "Malthusian thinking" he holds to guide international agricultural policy through the guidance of organizations such as the Rockefeller-funded Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research institutions, which "has blinded us to the idea that there could be any other realistic scenario..., is rapidly concentrating power over global food production in the hands of a relatively small number of agro-industrial corporations" such as Monsanto, Cargill, and DuPont that stand to yield enormous profits from capital-intensive biotechnology (1998: 218-9). Such convergence represents less a cynical attempt to promote commercial interests (or to increase the value of the foundation's portfolio) than a tendency for such policies to arise out of the particular viewpoints through which foundation policymakers are predisposed to see the world's problems and

their solutions. The work the philanthropies do overseas is professionalized social service with particular ideological predispositions, not driven by an altruistic desire on the part of living individuals to give away their personal wealth but on a legal corporate mandate to do so.

**Governments**        Beneath much charitable giving is a tension between the roles of state and citizen. Democratic states compel people to part with their wealth through taxation, and are mandated by their citizens in turn to address commonly felt needs. Among those needs are often included care of the poor, education, care of the sick, and protection of the environmental commons – the same needs commonly addressed by charities. When it comes to overseas aid, the issue is confounded by active government involvement in foreign countries on the one hand, and information available to citizens of the wealthy world about destitution abroad on the other. The discrepancy, between what people think they are buying with their tax money and the stories of misery they see on the evening news displaying exactly what they have not bought, is not well understood, at least by the people interviewed for this study. (Some feel the problems are too large for governments to handle, others that small charities are better able to pinpoint their activity toward immediate problems.) Government aid, then, instead of being charity, is a deliberate use of taxpayer funds for specific political goals. These goals, laid forth by Brian Atwood in the epigram that introduces this dissertation, include maintaining security alliances and promoting economic interests (such as the interests of domestic farmers, agribusiness, export industries, and banks), as well as the hope by politicians to generate domestic voter support by seeming to be generous humanitarians through the modest use

of resources not their own. Such cynical self-interest is not the focus of this chapter. Instead, I focus on how, through public and personal codes of morality and guilt, giving to international charity has for many become the right thing to do.

### **Need**

Few would dispute that development agencies exist to fulfill needs, but the locus of those needs is usually placed in the Third World. The description of these needs – economic, environmental, health, etc. – form the base of most studies development, as discussed in Chapter 1. Discussions of aid efforts usually assume that organizations active overseas are organic acultural entities. Why such organizations exist, and why they take some forms but not others, are in fact anthropological questions on a par with any other issue of social organization. The rise of overseas charities in Ireland, Concern in particular, offers the opportunity to examine the cultural aspects of the development endeavor.

Ireland is unique among European countries in certain experiences that served as prelude to the contemporary development era. This history may incline the Irish toward a more charitable disposition than other people with a similar European heritage, though in a way that accentuates rather than distorts the international bases of overseas aid. The Irish potato famine looms large in the historical background, serving as the backbone of fund-raising appeals and the subtext of many individuals' reactions to grim pictures from African refugee camps. Sean O'Casey's play *Juno and the Paycock*, which draws sell-out crowds to the national Abbey Theater in frequent reprises, contributes to a more recent collective memorial of the squalid poverty in which many Irish citizens lived until well

into the twentieth century. The prosperity of the late 1990s, stimulated by special tax breaks to draw the computer industry to Dublin and by decades of direct E.U. support, is appreciated as the result of a long struggle against oppression and want. Ironically, many people overlook the enormous subsidies that enabled today's prosperity and argue that Ireland provides an example of how a country can "pull itself up by its own bootstraps." As one survey respondent who does not contribute to charities phrased it, "We had nothing 50 years ago but we educated ourselves, now look at us." Whether they give or not, the Irish experience of being cast as a "racially" inferior group subject to British colonial exploitation leaves many people especially sensitive to such issues internationally. Adds another respondent, "Irish can relate to poverty."

Catholicism also plays a formative part in contemporary Irish understandings of their relationship with people in the Third World. Exclusive of the six counties of Ulster, the vast majority of Irish residents have at least a casual identity with the Catholic church. For many people, church teachings lie at the heart of personal identity and worldview. The church used to have as many as 4,000 Irish missionaries working in Africa, so most people at least knew of someone from their region with a personal involvement. Though the missionary project has been scaled back with the general decline of young people entering the religious orders, the church remains a central place for fund-raising and the dissemination of knowledge about Africa. The agency Trocaire has always been church-based, raising money for various activities in Third World countries, especially in Africa. Some survey respondents identified missionary activities as among the primary charity efforts overseas, placing the preaching of gospel along with provision of food, homes for

children, and medical help in the pantheon of needs their donations help address. One housewife,<sup>4</sup> when asked what should be done about the problems she identified in Africa (unrest, turmoil, and unwillingness to share), said, “I suppose God is the answer to that. We can pray, and help when we can, and hope that people in power will know to do the right things.”

Monica Barnes, a Member of Parliament from suburban Dublin, remembers a national campaign that she participated in as a primary school student in the public schools. “You’ve heard about ‘A Penny for the Black Babies?’” she asked me. “You got a card with a picture of a black baby. You put one penny on each rosary bead to make a circle round the baby. I think there were thirty pennies. After you completed the circle, you gave it to your teacher, you’ve bought a black baby! This is how we were taught to think in those days, in the government schools. It was all about the patronizing missionaries saving souls in Africa.”

The “Black Babies” campaign faded away, but its legacy survives to this day. I first heard the term from Concern staff in Tanzania, who said that people they talked with at home would sometimes thank them “for saving the black babies.” Goal continues to raise funds with disturbing images of starving African children, paired with hopeful accounts of the work that individual donations will make possible.<sup>5</sup> Concern, whose employees see it

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<sup>4</sup> In contrast to the egalitarianist political proclivities of the Concern staff discussed in the previous chapter, many Irish women identified themselves as housewives on the survey, and some people were hostile to the trend of women working outside the home.

<sup>5</sup> At the time of the research in Ireland for this dissertation, Goal was embroiled in a controversy about questionable bookkeeping practices, including double-billing the E.U. and the Irish government co-funders for the same line-items. A former Concern Tanzania country director who had been hired by Goal to professionalize its operations was responsible for breaking the scandal when he was unable to make the

as a more responsible organization, has recently disavowed the use of such shock images in their on-going campaigns. In interviews today, officials in Dublin raise the “Black Babies” campaign specifically as the sort of imagery they want to avoid. In this they are responding to an effort organized by the European Assembly of NGOs and promoted in Ireland by Comhlámh, the Association of Returned Development Workers (Regan 1996). Yet Concern officials are equivocal about the shift away from images of desperation. Such images, I am told, convey “the particular situations where you have a catastrophe,” and they elicit donations. The shock pictures have therefore been removed from the reception area and outside windows of Concern’s Dublin headquarters, but they remain visible in the back offices of the Marketing department. Some survey respondents make monthly donations to organizations that promise to use their funds for a particular “adopted” Third World child, who then writes annual letters of gratitude. The notion of “buying” a black baby has fallen out of style, but the impression that an individual donor can serve as personal savior of a desperate dark-skinned child continues to underlie both fund-raising campaigns and private donations.

The image in Figure 6.2 is the front of a donation envelope that Concern distributes in its reception area and at locations throughout Ireland. The grainy photo shows two children who appear healthy on close inspection,<sup>6</sup> but an idle glance easily

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organization internally change its practices. This story dominated the *Irish Times* coverage of African development issues during July 1997, but had mostly faded from view by the time the surveys for this chapter were conducted in August.

<sup>6</sup> The photo is not clear enough to tell for certain, but a few Malangali residents who saw the envelope agree that the child pictured is probably Anita, whose mother cooked for Concern staff in the village for many years and whose father was a well-paid driver. Anita has always been an adorable and photogenic little girl. Malnutrition has never been one of her problems.

recalls the graphic images of starvation Concern used just a few years ago, such as those in “The Personal Touch” brochure discussed in Chapter 2. The envelope’s text reinforces the notion that the children’s thin clothing may be hiding even thinner bodies. “Help Save Lives... provide emergency care and food for a severely malnourished child... immunise a child... protecting it [sic] against... killer diseases.” Two questions arise from images such as this envelope. One, why do people respond to such appeals and perhaps not to less simplistic campaigns? And two, what has led to the creation of an organization that feels comfortable with this envelope as a representative image of its *raison d’être*?

Concern has a complicated organizational structure that spreads people and functions around the world, but work is basically divided into four departments that maintain separate organization charts: Overseas, Personnel, Finance, and Marketing. Overseas is the operational arm, including the staff and administration of Malangali as well as projects from Haiti to Laos. Personnel coordinates expatriate staffing for the Overseas division and other Dublin staffing requirements. Finance manages project budgets after proposals have passed through design approval by Overseas, as well as coordinating all other accounting needs. The fourth department, Marketing, interacts with the other three, but focuses on informing and eliciting donations from the public. The Marketing department is responsible for the organization’s public image, for a substantial portion of the information that ordinary Irish citizens have about Africa, and for raising the funds

that seed emergency aid and long-term projects like those in Malangali.<sup>7</sup>

The challenge of this chapter is to demonstrate *how* people in Ireland are consumers of development, a task made almost too simple by the existence of the aid organization's Marketing department. Concern sells the notion that "your donation can help save lives," and people buy the notion when they slip money into the brown envelope provided. The sales pitch and the cash transaction are much like the marketing campaigns of Coca-Cola or Levi's jeans. More relevant, though, is that as Coca-Cola and Levi's would cease to exist if people did not buy their products, Concern and organizations like it would vanish if people stopped supporting what they do. The Marketing department is not just a sales force, but also a conduit through which the aid organization engages in its own social reproduction.

**Consciousness**                      One function of the Marketing department is "development education," informing the Irish public about issues of importance in areas where Concern is active. The department produces newsletters that delve into areas such as debt, health, and land mines (Concern is active in Cambodia and Laos). Other brochures describe in a few thousand words Concern activities by country, with fliers available in the Dublin reception area in August 1997 about Tanzania, Mozambique, Uganda, and famine in Ethiopia. These printed materials go to schools and libraries throughout Ireland, but were not specifically mentioned by any survey respondents.

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<sup>7</sup> Malangali projects were started in 1985 with money from the Concern general fund from private donations. The projects really got underway when "co-funding" proposals were approved by the EU, British ODA, and Comic Relief, relegating funds from individual donations to only 10% of total support. Most of Concern's operations rely on major funding from governmental organizations, including USAID, but survey respondents in Ireland seemed unaware of this. The relationship between these governmental funders and the people of Malangali is considered in the next chapter.

Teachers, current students, and young adults were more likely to mention the “Concern Debates,” a national debating competition that Concern sponsors every year that deals with issues of importance to the countries in which Concern operates. The topics change year to year, and Concern sends out educational packets to the schools to assist students with their preparation. These packets have included the book based on the apocryphal Lutevele family in Malangali that was mentioned in Chapter 5 (Concern and E.C. 1990), with accompanying Teachers’ Guide and video cassette (discussed in Chapter 2). I was surprised by how many people in Ireland responded to the survey by mentioning the issues in Concern’s recent education efforts. Specifically, debt relief was raised many times, while complex environmental issues such as deforestation were not mentioned at all, despite research showing high environmentalist awareness seven years earlier (ACDC 1990). As discussed in Chapter 3, *Forest*, Concern’s efforts in Malangali around the peak of public environmentalist consciousness marked by Earth Day 1990 were largely geared toward reforestation issues. Now the organization has scaled back such activities in Tanzania and its other project sites. The environment has dropped off the public’s radar screen in large part because organizations such as Concern no longer raise it in debate, and the organization no longer raises the environment in debate because it is no longer a major institutional priority. Although the organization continues to engage in forestry activities in some areas, such projects are among those that happen with funds donors trust that the aid organization will put to some good use.

While in Malangali I had a few occasions to buy tree seedlings, and I was surprised how many trees I could plant with a few dollars. Seedlings raised in Concern’s central

nursery were especially cheap, as little as 20/= (three cents) each. I imagined a campaign in which Concern offered donors the chance to plant fifty, a hundred, even a few thousand trees in places like Malangali, so they could have a feeling that their money was invested in something solid and useful. When I mentioned this to Michael O'Brien of the Marketing department, he said that such a campaign had been tried. Obviously it was not a tremendous success, or it would have been repeated. Did the bland public reaction to the tree-planting campaign also contribute to the organization's withdrawal from such activities? The relationship is more than circumstantial.

The brevity of the one month research trip to Ireland gave me a chance to take special note of the short time-span during which events occupy prominence in today's media-saturated consciousness. In late June of 1997, boxer Mike Tyson bit a chunk from Evander Holyfield's ear, reportedly becoming a major topic of conversation in Dublin. A couple of weeks later designer Versace was murdered in Miami, and the subsequent manhunt supplanted Tyson as the focus of international attention for several days. Yet when I mentioned Versace's murderer to my Dublin roommates in August, the name that had dominated newspaper and television coverage the previous month had already slipped from mind. As mentioned above, when I first arrived in Dublin several people brought up the controversy surrounding the charity Goal. By the end of the month most people assumed that the problems had been corrected. "They weren't keeping the books right," one man in a pub explained to me. "They were spending the money in the right places, but they were careless in the accounting." In fact the problems at Goal were pervasive and on-going, but people assumed they had been resolved because they dropped out of the

newspapers and Goal continued its marketing without interruption. The man who detailed the mismanagement at Goal is the same man who informed me about the death of Princess Diana, which happened a few hours before our interview. During my last 48 hours in Ireland – a country that’s favorite sport had been pillorying Diana and her life in the fast lane – the nation gave itself over to eulogizing her as a saint. Willingness to be manipulated and reliance on the media for collective memories and selective amnesia were never made more stark.

If, as I argue elsewhere (Benjamin 1997), what is known in the Information Age is what is current, then what *was* known is assumed to be *passé*. The environment was a hot topic in 1990, but was the subject of only one television news story that I saw during the entire month in Ireland.<sup>8</sup> Dubliners in August 1997 did not see television specials on the destruction of the Amazon rainforest, “deforestation” in Africa, or pesticide poisoning among Bengali tea laborers. Such programs were on British TV during the year 1988-89 that I lived in Scotland, or were produced by British TV and aired in the US shortly thereafter. (It is remotely possible that not all these programs were available to viewers in the Republic of Ireland.) Today people think the problems were solved around the time of the Rio conference, or are no longer so severe. When I raised environmental issues in conversation, people were familiar with some of the problems, but only one young woman I met in a pub, who has volunteered as a Greenpeace fundraiser, mentioned such concerns

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<sup>8</sup> Rupert Murdoch’s Sky News and the British networks provide the bulk of news content available to Irish TV viewers. The BBC reported one day on the continuing legal issues of an attempted Greenpeace blockade of an oil platform in the North Sea. By contrast, the twentieth anniversary of Elvis Presley’s death was covered daily on all networks for more than a week.

independently.

That several survey respondents brought up debt among “the major problems facing Africans today” is, then, a phenomenon of some significance. People mention debt because organizations like Concern are talking about debt, and they overlook the environment because Concern and other organizations have stopped talking about the environment.<sup>9</sup> A mechanical connection links organizational awareness to public awareness: journalists’ search for news. Concern press releases and brochures seed media interest, and the organization’s respectable credentials confer authority on its point of view. Most Irish citizens are sympathetic to the work Concern does and assume, as will be discussed below, that they have the expertise that comes with years of overseas activity. Journalists are members of this public. That the aid organization might promote a point of view out of self interest is not considered, since the work they do is assumed to be entirely magnanimous. Thus whether through media campaigns, schools, or direct outreach to citizen groups, the agenda that Concern promotes seeps into the national debate for as long as they continue to promote it. Although I did not notice any media attention specifically to debt issues other than a few op-ed pieces in the Irish Times, debt was specifically mentioned both by survey respondents and Concern officials at the Dublin headquarters. I believe the link is causal.

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<sup>9</sup> African debt became an important topic in internationalist circles in the late 1980s, a few years after the Latin American debt crisis rocked the banking world beginning in 1982. Susan George’s 1988 publication of *A Fate Worse Than Debt* was extremely important in raising the profile of the issue on the European and American stage. Debt relief never became an issue that ignited activists on the level inspired by environmentalists, but the level of public interest did not fade to the extent of popular environmentalism. I suggest that awareness of the problem existed at a low level in the understandings of development planners, and became more of a priority in their public appeals when the public began finding environmental campaigns less compelling.

Establishing that the donor public pays attention to what the aid agency suggests they focus on (inasmuch as they pay attention to overseas issues at all) does not establish how the agency decides where to focus. I suggest that their choices are only moderately influenced by their experiences in places like Malangali. Other factors of great importance are thought trends current in development debates, and also the thought trends current among donors. The latter is not a pure tautology in which the organization tells donors what is important and the donors in turn tell the organization what they want. The circle is broken at two points. First, much of the donor thought that the development agency tries to satisfy is in fact that of the co-funders, agencies that are run by individuals themselves embedded in the conversations of development specialists. Second, the development agency responds to *general* public sentiment with *specific* approaches that address those needs.

When the public was concerned about environmental issues around 1990, Concern was among agencies that responded by offering specific programs aimed at environmental stabilization and restoration. The forestry program in Malangali showed that they were involved in projects seen as combating both deforestation and global warming. On the other hand, the switch from agriculture programs that included a fertilizer component to an explicitly organic approach was not an attempt to placate or to lead public sentiment in Ireland; the personnel designing the agriculture projects in Malangali were moved by the same topical considerations that were leading the British Isles to mandate catalytic converters and finally got New Yorkers to start separating their trash for recycling. The conversion of project thrust toward environmentalist

considerations was not cynical. It occurred without forethought, no more than an attempt to incorporate thought trends that suddenly seemed new and important. But today, says Michael O'Brien of the Marketing department, "There's no will for environmentalism. Poverty alleviation has been segregated from environmental protection. With globalization, it is market needs, and national governments are responding to those markets rather than the people they are supposed to be serving." Simultaneously, O'Brien identifies "a shift now, a growing disenchantment with the traditional use of aid, that by pouring money at something you are going to solve it." So Concern gives to their public explanations of the endemic problems caused by debt, which are intended to demonstrate that there are still issues that cannot be addressed by mere market reform. At the same time, though, they try to revamp their projects toward a market ideology. Tree seedlings are no longer free, the water program is expected to raise the funds to maintain itself, and micro-lending comes under serious consideration. Are these program shifts attempts to satisfy the marketing needs of the organization's fund-raising arm? No, they reflect what program designers think are the hot ideas in contemporary thought, which not coincidentally overlap in many particulars with the understandings of the citizen donors.

The above meditation leaves the people of Malangali entirely out of the equation. This is because the Malangali residents are tangential to this aspect of development thought. The Lutevele family is a perfect example; the depiction of them in the secondary school primer (discussed in Chapters 2 and 5) is an invented composite crafted to satisfy the needs of development education staff for a "typical" Tanzanian family. When a new

regional administrator tells me the water program “should” be able to perpetuate its own maintenance, he does so after only one brief guided excursion to Malangali. Suggesting that Malangali residents *per se* are tangential is only to state the obvious: very few people in the design or funding process have any first-hand contact with any person born in the division.

**Expertise** In Chapter 2 I mentioned the acceptance by Malangali residents of Concern as an organization bearing expertise, although I posit that the material resources the organization brings are even more important in establishing local legitimacy. In the next chapter, *Power*, I expand on the theme of expertise with a discussion of the perception the development agency’s local personnel have of themselves as experts. Here I propose that this agreement by most parties in Malangali that accords Concern authority because it brings expertise is bolstered by an additional level of confidence – in Europe – in the knowledge base of the organization. Europeans, whether individual donors or heads of state, accept the aid organization as expert on situations of poverty in rural Africa. Without this confidence on the part of its sponsors, none of the activities in which Concern engages could occur. In this section I examine how and why people in the donor countries grant such authority to their development agents.

The question of how is most directly answered by looking at the agency’s efforts at self-promotion. Here the Marketing department’s twin functions of fund-raising and development education are most closely intertwined. The brochures Concern distributes about current issues include sections explaining how the organization is at the forefront of action to solve the problems. Materials for the schools are perhaps even more brazenly

self-glorifying; the primer about the Lutevele family casts Concern in the role of hero rescuing people from misery with a few simple, superior insights. Agency personnel appear in radio and television interviews, stage events such as benefit concerts with informational components, and at all times cultivate carefully the organization's image as active and knowledgeable.<sup>10</sup> Relentless self-promotion is not itself adequate to insure public acceptance, however, or Ross Perot would be president of the US. People must have reasons to take (grandiose) claims at face value.

The basis of Concern's claims to authoritative knowledge is similar to my own assertions about my legitimacy as a commentator on their activities. They are *there*. Concern has personnel in urgent situations in many remote countries, decades of experience responding to emergencies, and extended histories of involvement in countries in which they administer long-term development programs. In a small country like Ireland, many people know someone who has worked with Concern (at least 3 random interviewees mentioned a relative or friend who had worked with the organization in some capacity). Almost everyone has heard interviews with volunteers or seen television footage of Concern's activities abroad. Far from accidental, these events are carefully staged. Concern is far from the most manipulative aid agency – I have heard first-hand stories of refugee camps scoured for the most emaciated babies, the most squalid conditions, that other organizations then place before camera crews eager for

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<sup>10</sup> During the recent controversy about Goal, the Concern directorate declined public interviews in which they might have to criticize the activities of an organization they abhor. They reasoned that the appearance of infighting would be detrimental to all Irish aid organizations, and only by reticence would they avoid being darkened by the shadow of Goal's incompetence.

sensationalism – but they are active participants. During the Rwandan refugee crisis Concern was instrumental in bringing Irish president Mary Robinson to Tanzania with her entourage of reporters and chroniclers. In this same crisis an Iringa region development volunteer was transplanted to the camps, where she was then hooked into granting interviews for Irish drive-time radio. Concern is present in coverage of emergencies even by the New York Times. In Ireland, Concern offices are often contacted when the national media needs information for stories about Third World situations, and the organization is usually given credit for the expertise it provides.

The organization also takes legitimacy from association with celebrity. This peculiarly late 20<sup>th</sup> century phenomenon is one I can only gloss over here, but is worth noting. Aside from President Robinson and a host of other prominent Irish politicians, the organization brings in celebrities to endorse its activities. Americans are familiar with charities like Save the Children using professional actors to appeal for donations. I did not see any similar appeals in Ireland, and only heard about things like a Mary Black benefit concert. One of the most impressive images of recent years, though, has an American twist. During Bill Clinton's visit to Ireland in December 1995, an attractive young Concern employee wearing a Concern T-shirt approached him during a photo-op. Clinton gave her a hug and a twenty-dollar bill. The photo in the next day's *Irish Independent* conferred on the organization the approval of the most powerful man in the world, and of a country that has enormous resonance in Irish iconography. The image remained pinned to Concern's Iringa bulletin board for the remainder of my Tanzanian fieldwork.

To demonstrate that the effects of celebrity endorsements, marketing campaigns, and “being there” combining to enforce a near-universal acceptance of the organization’s expertise, we must look at what Irish citizens say about the charities to which they may donate. The following quotations are selected from the written answers people gave to my survey questions in Heuston Station.<sup>11</sup>

Man: I believe foreign aid donations do help improve the quality of life.

Young Man: [Africans] must learn to fend for themselves through education, but that needs funds and teachers... Myself and my mother make donations mostly for famines and natural disaster areas.

Young Woman: My contributions are used to aid development projects and provide development workers to assist with projects.

Older Woman: A lot of people should sit round a table and figure out what needs to be done [about problems facing Africans today] and what can be achieved, rather than any one person. It needs to start at the top. Hopefully [my] money went to the right people that needed it, rather than middlemen or the people collecting it. So I hope they used it properly.

Young Woman: There should be more information available to other countries about the problems. More volunteers brought in to help implement the courses or to help.

Man: I can only hope that [my donation] is used in a practical way.

Older Woman: Governments should do more for [Africans]. Help starving people.

Young Man: Thousands have been saved from starvation, death, through the generosity of many people. [They need] more financial aid from wealthy countries.

Middle-aged Man: Teams of people should be sent to teach [Africans] how to make the most of the resources they may have.

Young Woman: [The charities] give immediate help in crises but mainly they

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<sup>11</sup> The quotations from survey respondents are presented verbatim, with spelling errors corrected and words shown in their American variants. Age groups such as “young man” are noted where respondents replied to the survey’s optional request for age, gender, and occupation information.

educate the people (natives) to help themselves and improve their own lifestyles and standards of living... That to me is what charity is about – giving what you can – it does make a difference.

Woman: The problems should be analyzed, restructured. People with enough resources to participate even a small bit should be contacted and asked to do so.

Older Man: So many tribal situations, [Africans] need to be brought together under one world umbrella to sort out how they'll look after themselves. More international help – money and more professional people – some paid help. People with expertise going over, more business-minded people so that the money is directed correctly.

We will return to the question of perceived African ignorance after examining the notion of European knowledgeability. The quotations above are representative of the opinions expressed to me by men and women around Dublin. Again and again people mentioned the educational function of organizations like Concern. “They have to be educated before they can do anything for themselves,” agreed an elderly couple that donates to church charities. A young teacher thinks her contributions to Trocaire and Concern “help them to help themselves.” Nobody developed the idea of how the Europeans – the volunteers, the professional people, the governments mentioned above – could know “what needs to be done.” One woman suggests that organizations like Concern, to which she gives every month, should go “to universities and [get] more people to stay out for a few years.” Her assumption is apparently that higher education gives Irish graduates the knowledge “to train the people out there to do the work.” Along with most other people I interviewed, she implicitly trusts that the Personnel department at Concern will select (European) staff with the qualifications necessary to go out among Africans and “help them” and do “the right thing.”

The basis of this trust is not too deep. People are skeptical that problems in Africa *can* be addressed effectively. People repeatedly listed war, civil unrest, corruption, famine, drought, and starvation among the major problems facing Africans today. The images of starvation they saw from Ethiopia in 1984 gave way to images of starvation in Somalia in 1992, then to pictures of massacre in Rwanda in 1994. No countervailing images of the usual conditions of most Africans has replaced the desperation of these crises. Instead, each new crisis supplements the last, building an impression that the continent is on a steady decline from bad to worse. Those who give to Irish charities are not optimistic that their contributions are more than a finger in the dyke. Yet they cling to the notion that their experts – teachers, engineers, doctors, development workers – are on the scene doing whatever is humanly possible. While some Irish citizens are tired of donating to what they see as a hopeless cause, many others are proud that their small country is making visible efforts to combat intractable problems. The problems may be too big for the Irish to solve, but by sending their energetic progeny, they are doing their best.

Why the nation's decision makers accept the knowledge claims of development agencies is slightly less transparent. During this research I have interviewed a range of government officials, including the head of the Irish Embassy in Tanzania (who does not hold ambassadorial rank), Deputy Barnes, and several people working for Irish Aid in Tanzania. (Irish Aid has several of its own bilateral projects in Tanzania, completely separate from the Concern sites.) All of these people have spent time in Africa, so have had exposure to the complexities of development programs. The most cynical are those working in official bilateral projects, who share the range of questions about the

development endeavor that is typical among expatriates in the field. Even they, however, do not question the rationale that they work in Africa because they have superior knowledge to share. Pauline Conway, the Irish charge d'affaires, thinks Concern or the Irish Aid staff know what they are talking about, but not as a result of their celebrity appeals or marketing efforts. Rather, she gets her information from her personal network in Dar es Salaam. She meets socially and in professional settings with senior Concern management, Irish Aid, and APSO staff, who provide confident reports about the direction their aid efforts are taking in the field. MPs and government ministers in Dublin are in similar networks that put them on a first name basis with the Irish aid directorate, including Concern's Aengus Finucane. These networks provide occasions for managers to distill their reports from the field into authoritative statements based on "being there." Though their access to less-than-glowing documentation and a wider range of witnesses than available to most citizens could make them skeptical about the aid endeavor, it does not cause a great shift away from the general policy of continued aid and continued support for organizations like Concern. Most decision makers are actually probably almost as ignorant of conditions in Africa<sup>12</sup> as is the Irish electorate in general, and also as accepting of the development organizations' claims to expertise.

It strikes me that the Irish perspective on development assistance emphasizes a completely different aspect of the development endeavor than do Malangali residents. Irish residents often mention the material aspects of aid efforts, including providing food,

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<sup>12</sup> One could argue that officials were willing to be interviewed for this study because of the possibility that this research could contribute to an expanded knowledge base.

medicine, piped water, and infrastructure, but they repeatedly emphasize the role of education. In Malangali the relative weight given to education and material things is reversed. Malangali residents often mentioned things they learned from Concern efforts, such as agricultural methods, fruit-tree grafting, and tree planting, but repeatedly stress the material resources the project distributed. Neither group was likely to discuss aid or Malangali economic conditions in the context of constraints such as structural adjustment and global economic imbalances. (A few people mentioned such factors in both groups.) Malangali residents see in aid the financial resources that the agency can bring to improving their living conditions. Irish residents see in aid the opportunity to raise people from conditions of ignorance that contribute to their poverty. Malangali residents in effect say, "We know what our problem is. It is that we have nothing." Irish residents are more likely to posit, "We know what their problem is. It is that they know nothing."

**Ignorance**            One Irish grandmother explained that she gives to missionaries and Goal because of "the need – the poverty, ignorance, misery. [They] feed the poor, look after the sick, help families, education. The list is endless, really. Internal wars due to politics... They weren't really ready for self government, were they?" This assessment that Africans are ignorant undergirds the majority of survey responses in Heuston Station. People have two distinct analyses of this problem, however. Some people express "lack of education" as a function of economic hardship and constricted opportunity. Others are more inclined to see Africans as incompetent, lacking education because they are not really capable of it. The tension individuals express between rectifying inequality and accommodating latent racist assumptions is echoed in the aid organizations to which they

contribute.<sup>13</sup>

In this suggestion I corroborate findings of two surveys by the Advisory Council on Development Cooperation (ACDC 1985 and 1990). In their 1985 survey, 61% of respondents ranked as important or very important causes of Third World poverty the

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<sup>13</sup> Allegations of latent racism must be treated carefully; it is easier to allege racism than to document it, and harder yet to understand its effects. Here I present some preliminary interpretations on a topic about which admittedly I have little expertise. Although I cannot comment authoritatively about European attitudes toward race, these ideas may be relevant to understanding why people give money and time to international organizations that aid people who many donors do not see as their equals. Suggesting that racism underlies the assumptions of many actors in the development drama is by no means to assert evil intent. Rather, the point of discussing this topic is to remove the shroud that allows it to exist without being acknowledged. Such latent assumptions are part of the social fabric, the weave of which must be inspected in an honest ethnographic account.

Sincere compassion can co-exist with assumptions of superiority. Most elementary school teachers, for example, enter their profession out of genuine love for the children whom they know are their intellectual inferiors. Virulent bigotry as seen in Nazi Germany (and among some segments there today) is often a product of fear, making it a different breed of bias that sees other groups as a threat to economic or social well-being. Racism as we know it in the United States has elements analogous to both schoolteacher and Nazi: after an initial period in which Africans were imported as indentured servants, they were dehumanized, cast as an inferior species that neither needed nor deserved "the rights of man." When abolition and reconstruction legally rehumanized Americans of African descent, many people of European descent responded to the specter of their own diminution with violence and hatred. Violence was of course endemic to the experience of American slavery, but it could be justified among "Christians" through the same logic that enables farmers to brand cows and slaughter pigs. Even abolitionists were divided about the actual equality of the slaves they sought to free; for many it was the conditions of slavery that were inhumane, not the premise of white superiority. The racism of fear as seen in contemporary Germany and the United States in the debates over immigration, a racism that mixes notions of group superiority and stability with threatened loss of jobs to people who might actually prove themselves superior, is categorically different than the tacit racial assumptions underlying charitable giving.

In Ireland I was told "there is no racialism because there are no blacks." A minor wave of refugees from tense African countries is washing into Dublin, meeting a minor tide of overt hostility. Such hostility seems limited to a few pockets resentful that the new immigrants are quickly placed in government housing for which citizens have been on long waiting lists, or to people who object to tax money being spent on outsiders. Most people hold no such animosity, though they are conscious of difference. One young female friend who avows an attraction to the black athletes she sees on TV and knows much about my work nevertheless felt unabashed telling "nigger" jokes in the pub, to the amusement of most assembled. While I was the only person at my gym who became friends with the three Kenyan students who were members, nobody seemed particularly perturbed by their daily presence. (We did get some strange looks when carrying on Swahili conversations while puffing away on the Stair Masters.) Nobody made audible comments when we walked around Dublin together, nobody hinted at racial antagonism in private conversations, and nobody gave blatantly derogatory answers to the survey questions. People did give us wide berths during perambulations with the Kenyans, did stare as we passed, and did make comments about racial difference. I am left to posit from experience that most Irish residents see Africans as different, as a curiosity; from the surveys I am left to suggest that a significant proportion understand in this difference to reside at least some element of African moral or intellectual inferiority.

proposition that “The people of the Third World are basically too easy going and incompetent.” 52% gave the same response to this question in the 1990 survey. Two things stand out from these numbers. First, this response is the least popular among the choices the Council provided. Second, at least half of Ireland’s residents are consistently willing to admit such a biased perception of Third World people. Interestingly, few people mentioned such perceptions in the open-ended questions the Council added in 1990. That is, while only 1% mentioned that people are “lazy” or “won’t work” when asked, “Why do you think that most Third World people are poor?”, fully half agreed with the proposition when it was raised directly. My survey was entirely open-ended, and generated a similarly small number of overtly racist comments – much less than casual pub conversations revealed. (This could be because people are conscious of the way they present themselves in formal surveys.) Still, an assumption of African incompetence can be reasonably inferred from many of the comments people made about African ignorance. One man who contributes to religious charities brought up both European expertise and African laziness when he suggested “the UN putting some charter in place to help them [the Africans] realize their own workfulness and better ways of managing their own natural resources.” Nor is it wrong to infer, when an engineer says his contributions to Goal and Trocaire “provide direction, help and guidance in the education of peoples to provide for themselves,” that he builds on the assumption that without such help people are incapable of meeting their own needs.

Even people with no apparent racist bias still assume that “lack of education” lies at the core of Africans’ problems. One young man who contributed to Goal and Trocaire

“because of the mass poverty and inequality that [are] going throughout Africa” sees a major problem as “being taken advantage of by Western countries.” Yet the solution to these problems is, he says, “they must learn to fend for themselves through education,” which needs funds and teachers. A middle-aged banker who donates to Concern and Trocaire echoes these sentiments, saying “education, self-sufficiency and racism” are the major problems facing Africans. She continues, “Education and training in self support systems is the answer, together with on-going aid from better economies.” In other words, although Africans may find themselves in their current predicaments because of factors external to them, it is their ignorance of how to exist in the contemporary world that makes it impossible for them to prosper. “The answer,” given by egalitarian and racially biased donors alike, is to “help them to solve their own problems through education.”

I personally agree with this analysis to some extent. The key to prosperity in the modern world, I argue in Chapter 9, is mastery of the skills that people are willing to pay for, and the skills of value are usually accessible only through education. The Heuston Station respondents do not, however, explain how education toward self-sufficiency will enable Africans to prosper in the global economy. Nor do they explain how the Western countries, or even the “corrupt governments” that many hold responsible for today’s poverty are absolved of rectifying the situation in a meaningful way. This failure to address real problems through an analysis that includes causation as well as an introspective approach to solutions is, I propose, the direct result of the social positioning of overseas aid within the structures of governance and conscience in the wealthy world. Individuals who contribute to aid programs can have their consciences absolved via this

transaction because aid agencies and governments encourage such thinking. The message people receive from campaigns such as those by Goal and Concern is to think, but not think too hard – to trust that the aid agency is involved in helping people stabilize from the imbalances that hobble them. Respondents can therefore simultaneously place the locus of African problems on “large international debts *and* relying on aid too much,” (emphasis added) while proposing education for self reliance as a way to overcome the consequences of these massive dilemmas.

The use of the phrase “education for self-reliance” is purposeful. It refers to a Tanzania government goal from the Nyerere era (Buchert 1994: 90-120) that itself echoed in part the 1927-33 efforts of William Mumford, the English headmaster of the Malangali Secondary School, who sought to use schooling to “preserve the tribe and the natural evolution of indigenous traditions and customs” (Buchert 1994: 31). European charity in Malangali has often been directed toward variations on this goal for seventy years, since the founding of the school. During these seven decades African “ignorance” has consistently been acted upon by European aid, yet the problems facing Malangali residents have by most accounts gotten steadily worse. I assert that the crux of Africans’ material poverty lies not so much in their ignorance as in a system that allows us to make minor assaults on this “ignorance” while overlooking the larger social imbalances that continue shaping their lives (see footnote on page 177 for statistics on the paucity of educational opportunities in Tanzania). Addressing these larger imbalances would be hard, expensive, and require real commitment.

The notion of “charity” involves several reversals. People see can see their

donations as generous when they are in fact usually miserly. They can feel themselves working toward solutions when they are in fact reinforcing the status quo that creates the problems. They think they are participating when they are actually avoiding responsibility. They are offered hope while they diagnose hopelessness. Within the space created by charitable efforts against ignorance, my research indicates we in the wealthy world construct a conceptual framework that allows us to rest easily with the inequities we know exist in the world.

Racial difference interacts with the charitable project in subtle but important ways. Intrinsic to the bias that more than half of ACDC survey respondents expressed that Third World people are too easy going and incompetent, phenotype joins with geography to demarcate an “us” and a “them.” American reactions to overseas crises exhibit this division. The Marshall Plan’s massive efforts on behalf of Europeans after WWII contrast sharply with the feeble programs we have sponsored in Africa. Throughout most of the past 50 years our efforts in Africa have been aimed at least as much at preventing the Soviets from gaining influence on the continent as they have been at actually making life better for Africans. The 1990s have shown that the differentiation of a European “us” and a black African “them” is still integral to government policy and public perceptions. George Bush sent American troops into Somalia in response to humanitarian concerns generated by CNN pictures, not in the interest of resolving the political problems that led to starvation in the Somali countryside.<sup>14</sup> The Somali situation, in which images of

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<sup>14</sup> I am also of the opinion that Bush sent troops into a tense situation without a clear mission immediately after his electoral defeat as a way to set up the incoming Clinton administration for an embarrassing military failure. British correspondent Richard Dowden, quoted in Moeller (1999: 144) asks: “Why was the decision taken to go

African “warlords” were interpreted as irrepressible resurgence of tribal savagery was juxtaposed against the civil war in Yugoslavia. In Yugoslavia the protagonists and the victims were all European, all “us.” The crisis therefore generated much more introspection and much more action. While it was acceptable to Americans to abandon black Somalis, and then Rwandans, to their ancient ways, it was unacceptable to allow Europeans to massacre and starve each other.

**Sacrifice**                    The response to Yugoslavia was years of diplomacy, commitment of armed troops and substantial resources. The response to Ethiopia, Somalia, and Rwanda was pity. The aid that resulted from these disparate African tragedies flowed, I argue, from a different well-spring than generated the actions in Yugoslavia. Of Yugoslavia Americans expressed horror that civilized people – we were reminded of the paeans to the Olde Europe we romanced during the 1984 Sarejevo Olympics – could commit such atrocities against each other in the modern age. Rwanda elicited instead a reaction that Africans were demonstrating an almost inevitable return to their natural state of savagery. Roger Rosenblatt, for example, on *The MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour* said there are “people naturally who from time to time set aside what they have called their souls and recalled their under-developed evolutionary state and murder one another in great numbers just for the hell of it” (quoted in Moeller 1999: 283). The *Chicago Tribune* and *USA Today* spoke of an “orgy of bloodletting,” the *L.A. Times* called it “tribal war... the latest round of mass murder by

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in three months after the peak of the famine? August 1992 was the worst month for deaths but the decision to move was not taken until late November.” Specifically, Bush lost the election on November 3, and decided to send in troops on November 25. Not coincidentally, he left office while this military intervention was being hailed as “noble, workable, and just” (Clarence Page, quoted in Moeller 1999: 146), but it became a “fiasco” only months later, when Bush had already flown off into the Texan sunset.

Hutu and Tutsi tribes,” and syndicated columnist Georgie Anne Geyer wrote of “the carnage in Rwanda, where tall tribesmen massacre short tribesmen with a savagery not even seen in colonial times” (all quoted in Moeller 1999: 287). Commentators questioned military intervention in both Rwanda and Yugoslavia because of the costs and the risks to European and American personnel; in the course of debate over whether a peace-keeping force could suffer the chance loss of professional soldiers, genocides occurred by men armed with machetes and machine guns. Yugoslavia eventually generated social outrage that was strong enough to motivate international action; Rwanda merely generated gruesome images of rivers filled with bodies. Where was the social outrage about this inaction? In the United States, the outrage focused on the loss of 18 soldiers during the ill-defined mission to Somalia. We avoided participation in Rwandan peace-keeping because people had asked what we were doing sending *our* boys into Africa – and the answer was that our boys lost their lives because of *them*.

Losing white lives for black Africans does not conform to images of the correct interactions between us and them. The role of Europeans in Africa is to save them, to help them in their helplessness, not to die for them. When Africans die it is sad, it may even inspire charitable donations, but there are limits to what we are willing to donate. Tom Ashbrook, writing in the Boston Globe, wrote, “U.S. officials now talk about the ‘mom test’ in deciding where U.S. troops should be deployed. Will it be a mission that the soldier’s parents can accept as worthy of their child’s sacrifice? It is a hard test to pass” (quoted in Moeller 1999: 295). In the US this attitude holds echoes of Vietnam, when 50,000 Americans died for an ungrateful colored them. While WWII, in which we

helped rescue our European cousins from the march of tyranny, rings valiant in our folklore, Vietnam is a national nightmare best remembered as *Apocalypse Now*.<sup>15</sup> Francis Ford Coppola's film, not coincidentally, is a reworking of the primal African jungle tale, *Heart of Darkness*, about the savage horror awakened in a European by his immersion in the continent. Africa even more than Asia is scary, savage, unknown, not to be trusted – at the very same time it is weak, ignorant, incompetent, to be pitied. These contradictions co-exist in the murky brew of knowledge and mystery that permeate the scientific and mystical media about the continent to which people are exposed. We “know” from Concern's educational materials, for example, that Tanzanians receive only 82% of daily calorie needs, and that Malangali has 16,500 acres planted in maize and 1,900 acres of beans (Concern/ E.C. 1990). (These figures are, of course, highly suspect representations of the local agricultural and nutritional situation.) We don't know, from *Gorillas in the Mist*, how Africans can be inhuman enough to kill regal primates, much less Dian Fossey. That which we can tame by knowledge and by directed action, such as aid programs in areas removed from turmoil, is subject for our resources and expertise. That which we do not understand, such as “tribal war,” is best left untouched. One man in Heuston Station summed up the limits of many people's willing introspection about Africa. After first agreeing to complete the survey, he returned the form to me after reading the questions. “That's too much to think about,” he said, “I can't think about all

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<sup>15</sup> Of course, World War II involved Allied troops in a campaign in Africa, but only as an assault on Axis regiments. Mostly unknown are the stories of Africans drafted from places like Malangali and sent to British units abroad. During my research in Malangali I encountered one old man who had served in India, another who drove Jeeps in occupied Japan.

that now.”

Having gazed impressionistically at the limits of European willingness to contemplate African complexities, we return to the Irish research to discuss how this relates to what people say. Of the 65 survey respondents, 72% say they have contributed to charity for Africa at some point. (This widespread generosity corresponds to Concern’s figure that during the height of the 1984-85 Ethiopian famine their donations were equivalent to £2 per Irish citizen per year.) People’s responses to the question “Why did you contribute” were mostly of two types. One set of answers spoke of the conditions that their donations were intended to combat: “to assist in the relief of famine/ disaster,” “to offer financial support in the hope of improving [the] situation there,” “interested in world poverty,” “people out there really need the money,” “concern for the children of underprivileged countries.”<sup>16</sup> The other set of answers lays out what I suggest is a contemporary reformulation of the white man’s burden. These responses look inward, seeking to deal with personal moral codes of responsibility toward self and others.

? [I] felt it was my duty as a person who lives comfortably to give to others who are poorer, particularly children.

? To give some support; show consideration/ understanding.

? I wanted to.

? Because I don’t like to see children suffer.

? I have a lot, I feel it’s important to share with others, it’s the right thing to do.

? I felt concern when I saw the T.V. coverage.

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<sup>16</sup> Some of the answers did not specify the reasons behind the donations. These people answered “to help,” “to help others,” “to help less fortunate people,” “just wanted to help a little.”

- ? To ease my conscience.
- ? Concern.
- ? Guilt.
- ? Compassion.
- ? Hopefully to make a difference.
- ? [I] believed [the donation] could do some good.
- ? Because I feel it is totally unfair that the minority of world population have most of the wealth and [the] majority of people equal to us live in absolute poverty, mainly because of the greed of Western society.
- ? [I] felt sorry for these people.
- ? Prayer or mass for yourself in return for what you give.

These answers suggest that donations to African charities are at least as much about self as about others. The images of starving Africans, especially of starving children, disrupt middle class comfort. The images intrude on our lives, reminding us of how tenuous are our own claims to deserving the lives we lead. We know something should be done about the misery to which we are exposed, but the act of investigating the alternatives only increases exposure and discomfort. For many, the act of giving produces an anesthetic effect. The solutions provided by the aid organizations involve money, so by giving money we purchase the right to think we are helping solve problems. With £7 we can care for a dying Ethiopian child for a week, and for only £5 we can protect the life of a child in Bangladesh. Though we know the money will be used up quickly, the sensation that we have done something to relieve the misery afflicting others makes it possible for many to continue enjoying lives of relative privilege. The visions we can

create for ourselves as caring people are reflected in the very names of the organizations to which we contribute: Care, Concern, Save the Children. For some people the sensation of generosity and compassion can be satiated with a few coins in the crier's bucket on Grafton Street, while for others monthly bank deductions are necessary to feel they are making a difference. I suggest that for all the prime motivating factor behind reaching into our pockets is to feel good about ourselves afterwards.

If the motivation behind charity for Africa is introspective concern, guilt, and compassion, what then of the Africans to whom we give? Differences emerge between individual donors, as well as between Irish and Americans. A few Irish respondents said they "only give to home charities," or that local donations "suit my needs;" conversations with many Americans over the years suggest that we are much more likely to direct our charitable contributions to domestic causes, and more suspect of the value of international giving. For many people, though, appeals for Africa resonate with special potency. Africa is seen as the most wretched continent, the most helpless and therefore the most in need of help from the wealthy world. Says Howard Dalzell, director of Concern's Overseas operations, "Giving is especially focused on Africa. We find it much more difficult to get money for Asia than for Africa." People are willing to contribute despite an almost total lack of knowledge of the politics, societies, or even geography of the continent.

(Respondents sometimes referred to Africa as a country, or as the location of North Korea or Haiti.) It is the dark continent, a void onto which we project images gleaned randomly from imagination, media, and "development education."

We project images of helpless, incapable, impoverished people waiting for

handouts with arms outstretched, bowls empty. The potent images of starving children reflect a greater inclination to see all of the continent's residents as childlike. These juvenile "underdeveloped" people wait not only for aid from the mature, "developed" world, but also our gifts of the knowledge that will help them too become adult global citizens. Whether that last objective can ever be fulfilled is, I think, a matter of some doubt for most donors and agency personnel. But we see it as our responsibility to try, to lift the veil of darkness that keeps Africans impoverished. The goal of "civilizing the natives" is modified, but not obliterated. Many of the people who donate to missionary activities do so in the belief that the charities "bring them into a religion," and many other people expressed in conversation an understanding of Africans as tribal people living lives usually in great isolation from any of the forces of modernity.<sup>17</sup> Despite a pervasive inclination to view Africans as the primitive other, we also feel it necessary to give them the opportunity, figuratively, to come down from the trees.

From donor responses, then, I perceive a modern resurrection of the concept of the White Man's Burden, the notion that it is the responsibility of the wealthy (white) world to rescue darker souls from chaos and savagery – and that such a goal is ultimately futile. Kipling's verse that begins this chapter continues:

And when your goal is nearest  
The end for others sought,  
Watch Sloth and heathen Folly  
Bring all your hope to nought.

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<sup>17</sup> Try this at home: turn your television to the Discovery channel and wait for discussion of humans in Africa. Did the camera focus on "traditional Maasai warriors" in the Serengeti? Odds are good that it did, as did the MTV documentary of a trip by several London Gen-Xers to Africa that aired during the Irish research.

It is inconceivable to the majority of people with whom I talked in Ireland that Africans today have the capacity to manage their own affairs. Many believe that such capability might exist at some point in the future, but only after an extensive period of handholding by industrialized peoples. Any inclination to look to ourselves for a deeper understanding of causative factors of contemporary misery is in large part obviated by the information from development agencies.

Most development agency personnel accept at some level the interpretations they espouse. Expatriate field personnel often become entwined in the immediacy of effecting local change, without the reflective space to polish a critical perspective on the aspects of the development endeavor that so often bother them on a gut level. My observations also follow Hancock (1989), who asserts that the bureaucrats in development agencies reach a comfortable complacency with the premises of their projects. The staff of the Iringa regional office had little contact with the people of the project areas they supervised, and with the notable exception of Reg Cotterill made few efforts to overcome that. National staff, based in Dar, had even less contact; the country director made two trips to Malangali (one of his 3 active projects) in 15 months, and never became communicative in Swahili. As our camera pulls away from Malangali, the people whom the projects are supposed to help slip farther out of focus. By the time we have panned to the Dublin office, the people in the background could be any dark-skinned rural resident. In Dublin the focus is on the fact of activity, making the people mere allegorical representations of themselves. In a wide-ranging conversation with Hugh Byrne, number two in the Overseas department, we talked about the premises behind the design of the Malangali projects,

and changes in development thinking that are influencing Concern today. Hugh's emphasis was on the applicability of project design principles. Our different perspectives during our conversation about the implications of Concern's Wider Impact Study and the social effects of 10 years of Concern interaction in Malangali placed us in a conversation where we hardly seemed to be talking about the same people. He was eager to discuss the positive and negative aspects of various theories behind the Malangali projects. We had a heated discussion about free-market premises entering contemporary development discourse; he advanced the perspective that programs need to promote market intervention, while I argued about the market imbalances that prevent Malangali residents from engaging in trade at anything but a severe disadvantage. Strikingly, he suggested that another 60 years of development activity would not lead to the sort of prosperity in Malangali that we associate with the "developed" world. He put into words an assumption that I think underlies the thinking of most Europeans about Africa, that 60 years from now rural Africans will continue to be small-scale peasant farmers, that the job of the development agency is to help them become less desperate, more secure in this mode of livelihood. When I pushed, asking about electricity and higher access to higher education, he replied that such goals were beyond the scope of our present ability to contemplate.

Aid agencies fill the void of discomfort with known problems in Africa. The agencies arise from the cultures that create them, with all the attendant historical baggage of peoples schooled in Kipling's poem and 100 years of ever-widening economic inequality between Africans and Europeans. Because Europeans have sent our agents of

development to Africa for more than a century, and because these agents return bearing ever gloomier tales of the impossibility of overcoming the misery people experience on the “dark continent,” most of us comfort ourselves with the knowledge that what is being done is all that can be done.

Malangali residents are not so content in this assumption, but they do not have the access to the information about global structures that would enable them to formulate alternative visions. As demonstrated in the previous four chapters, they try in many ways to alter their economic conditions, but are constantly limited by the constraints of material poverty and a world that makes opportunity scarce for them. So although Europeans are generally content with the slim reed of hope offered by development agencies marketing themselves amid a sea of despair, Malangali residents are quicker to evaluate development programs and cast aside those elements that offer little. “While despair is all very well for those who can afford it,” writes Basil Davidson (1992: 320), “despair comes too dear for those who can’t.” Europeans can indulge in Kiplingesque musings about the good works we do in Africa going to waste, can send the occasional donation to help the black babies and consider it charity. It comes as a surprise to none when, in the long run, the children of Malangali are hardly better off despite all the attention given to charitable efforts to “save” them.