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Anthropology and Alterity

Responding to the Other

Edited by
Bernhard Leistle



Anthropology and Alterity

Alterity or otherness is a central notion in cultural anthropology and philosophy, as well as in other disciplines. While anthropology, with its aim of understanding cultural difference, tends to depart from otherness as an empirical fact, there have been vigorous attempts in contemporary philosophy, particularly in phenomenology, to answer the fundamental question: What is the Other? This book brings the two approaches to otherness—the hermeneutical pragmatics of anthropology, and the radical reflection of philosophy—together, with the goal of enriching one through the other. The philosophy of the German phenomenologist Bernhard Waldenfels, up to now little known to anthropologists, has a central position in this undertaking. Waldenfels' concept of a responsiveness to the Other offers to cultural anthropology the possibility of a philosophical engagement with the Other that does not contradict the project of making sense of concrete empirical others. The book illustrates the fertility of this new approach to alterity through a broad spectrum of themes, ranging from reflections on theory formation, via discussions of race and human-animal relations, to personal meditations on experiences of alterity.

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Note on Terminology and Translation

There is considerable variation in the literature in the spelling and meaning of the terms Other, other, and otherness; a short note on how these terms are being used in a book in which they are supposed to fulfill conceptual function seems appropriate.

“Other” has been capitalized when it is meant in the sense of an abstract noun, designating everything that is non-self, but stands in relation to self. Examples are phrases like: “the radical Other,” or “self and Other.”

Whenever “other” is concretized to refer to an individual entity, as in “others,” i.e., other persons, or is used in an adjective sense, as in the phrase “the Other as *other*,” it begins with a small letter. The same applies to “otherness” whose abstract character is expressed in its form, by the suffix “-ness,” and therefore doesn’t have to be highlighted by artificial means.

In quotations, the usage of the quoted author has been preserved.

Within the abstract category of Other, I differentiate between a “radical Other” and an “empirical Other.” While the “radical Other” designates a purely conceptual sphere of otherness, the “empirical Other” refers to the entry of the Other into orders of sense and meaning. The empirical Other can be individualized, named, counted, etc., but the concept is still used in an abstract sense, hence the capitalization.

I have proposed to use radical Other and alien as synonymous to each other. This proposal is related to the decision of generally translating the German word *fremd* by the English word “alien.” (This applies to the chapters by Waldenfels and Fuchs, both of whom were originally written in German.) The term *fremd*, or *Fremdheit* (“alienness”), not only occupies a central place in the philosophy of Bernhard Waldenfels, it also appears frequently in everyday German. Even in its colloquial sense, *fremd* has none of the negative connotations that accompany the English “alien,” but its basic meaning of something that shows itself by withdrawing from the perceiving self is, in my opinion, better preserved by “alien” than by any other English alternative. I hope that this terminological choice will be accepted by readers and that they will be able to read “alien” and “alienness” in the more analytical or technical sense in which these terms are intended.

In a semantic field like that of “otherness,” complete disambiguation is difficult to achieve, perhaps even impossible, when several authors are involved. It is possible that readers might not agree with a classification as “Other” or “other” in individual cases (not counting, for now, genuine oversights). I would regard such disagreement as an indication that this book has achieved one of its objectives: to reflect on the Other (and the alien) as a conceptual category of central importance to anthropology.



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Anthropology and Alterity— Responding to the Other

Introduction

Bernhard Leistle

About This Book

Responding to an Other which challenges, seduces, persecutes—this is the common theme of the essays put together in this volume. Most of the texts are revised versions of papers presented at the conference “Anthropology and Otherness,” held at Carleton University, Ottawa, from November 1 to November 3, 2013.¹ The general objective of this meeting had been to bring recent developments in the philosophical discourse on otherness and anthropological approaches to the Other in communication with each other. Over the last three decades, the so-called “question of the Other” was one of the most intensely debated topics in continental philosophy, in particular phenomenology. A key contributor in the discussion about the philosophical status of the Other was the German phenomenologist Bernhard Waldenfels, whose concept of responsivity has provided the present collection with its guiding idea. Indeed, it was the specific intention behind the organization of the conference to introduce Waldenfels’ work to a broader anthropological audience. Waldenfels’ oeuvre consists of more than 25 books written in German and hundreds of essays in several languages; up to now, however, only three of his books have appeared in English (Waldenfels 1996, 2007, 2011) and his philosophical approach to otherness has, in marked contrast to that of his colleagues Derrida and Levinas, not been taken note of widely in anthropology. Edited with the conviction that Waldenfels’ phenomenology of the alien and his concept of responsivity harbors great potential for all aspects of anthropology, the present volume intends to change this situation.

The Radical and the Empirical Other

But what exactly is the question of the Other and why should anthropology or other empirical sciences be concerned with it? A more detailed, even though still cursory, answer to this question can be found in Chapter 1 of this book, but here I want to state the problem in simple yet, for introductory purposes, sufficiently accurate terms.

The question of the Other concerns the problem of determining the status of the Other in philosophical discourse. Every form of discourse, or of thought, action and experience for that matter, makes thematic; it says what it is about by naming it, thereby constituting what is named as an object that can be further inquired into and about which knowledge, however defined, can be gained. Indeed, it is inconceivable to think of anything existing for us that has not become thematic in one way or another. This inconceivability has received a positive articulation in the phenomenological concept of the intentionality of consciousness according to which consciousness is inevitably consciousness *of something*.

Philosophy is the discipline of thinking radically, in the sense of a thought that goes to the roots of things,² or, as Husserl famously proclaimed for phenomenology, “back to the things themselves.” But when it applies itself to the Other in this manner, an interesting paradox arises: when the Other is made the object of discourse, or of knowledge in general, what defines it as itself is necessarily destroyed. What is essential to the Other is its otherness; for the Other to be itself it must appear to me as genuinely, i.e., radically other. When my consciousness creates the Other as a perceptual object, when I assign a meaning to this Other, or, even more obviously, I name the Other as such and such a being, the Other ceases to be truly other; it acquires an aspect of “mineness”; it is appropriated by me, even if only by becoming part of my experiencing. It follows from this that a “radical Other,” the Other itself (that is: the Other as other, in its otherness) must be approached as something that cannot be made thematic, cannot be named or objectified in whatever form, for to do so is to deny to the Other what defines it as itself. This is, somewhat crudely put, the point of departure for philosophers who, like, for example, Levinas and Waldenfels, take the problem of radical alterity seriously.

While this might explain the recent philosophical concern with the Other, it doesn’t answer the question why anthropology should be bothered by the idea of a radical Other. A first step in this direction can be taken by considering Clifford Geertz’ characterization of ethnography as “strange science”:

It is a strange science whose most telling assertions are its most tremulously based, in which to get somewhere with the matter at hand is to intensify the suspicion, both your own and that of others, that you are not quite getting it right. But that, along with plaguing subtle people with obtuse questions, is what being an ethnographer is like

(Geertz 1973:29).

In his typical light-handed and slightly ironic manner, Geertz suggests here that there is something that inevitably escapes the anthropologist’s efforts at understanding and producing knowledge. What is more, he seems to imply that this elusive something is central to the definition of the anthropological—in Geertz’s understanding, ethnographic—project. The better it gets, the

more it approaches its hermeneutic goals of “thick” description and interpretation, the more obvious ethnography communicates that its efforts are incomplete and partial. In other words: in the very center of the production of anthropological knowledge we find something that cannot be transformed into an object of such knowledge; radical otherness lies therefore at the heart of anthropology.

In a sense, a recognition of this “present absence” at the core of the discipline is already discernible in the first formulation of modern anthropology’s objective:

This goal is, briefly, to grasp the native’s point of view, his relation to life, to realise his vision of his world. We have to study man, and we must study what concerns him most intimately, that is, the hold which life has on him. In each culture, the values are slightly different; people aspire after different aims, follow different impulses, yearn after a different form of happiness. In each culture, we find different institutions in which man pursues his life-interest, different customs by which he satisfies his aspirations, different codes of law and morality which reward his virtues or punish his defections.

(Malinowski [1922] 1961:25)

The culturally Other is to be understood from within; his life is to be interpreted and evaluated using the other’s own standards, not that of the anthropologist or his home society. These standards, however, as Malinowski elaborates, are different from ours and they inform the other’s perspective right down to the level of personal aspirations and sentiments. As a scientific project, anthropology is thus to understand the Other as it understands itself; the subject matter of anthropology is the Other as other. To be certain, this is not how Malinowski intended his definition of the discipline to be read. In his mind, formed by the natural sciences, there was no doubt that the ethnographer could step out of his own cultural world and into that of the other while at the same time remaining distant from both and comparing between them. But contemporary anthropologists have long been robbed of such self-assurance, which even in Malinowski’s case was an illusion, as was demonstrated by the contents of his *Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term*. Seen from today’s perspective, Malinowski’s continued relevance for the discipline doesn’t lie in the definition of a scientific method but in the formulation of the productive tensions that lie at the heart of anthropology and keep it alive.

This tension results from the opposition between the Other in a philosophically radical sense, that is, another which cannot be experienced, interpreted and represented without denying its otherness, and an *empirical Other* in the ethnographic sense whose understanding and rendering constitutes the subject matter of anthropology as a scientific project. Indeed, anthropology seems to be caught in a paradoxical position, aptly expressed

by Geertz in calling it a “strange science,” and summarized by Waldenfels as the “paradox of the science of the alien” (Waldenfels 1997:95ff.). As the final goal of the ethnographic project we find not a complete understanding of its domain, but a realization of the radical alterity of the culturally Other. At the same time, however, this realization can only be achieved via the detour of a confrontation with empirical others whom the anthropologist encounters during fieldwork. Only by an existential effort to make sense of the behaviors, experiences, institutions of these concrete others, an effort which ultimately proves its own impossibility, can anthropology approach, yet never reach, its true objective: a relationship to the Other as the Other.

The opposition between the radical and the empirical Other has led to and continues to inspire many heated debates within anthropology and beyond its boundaries. In my view, it would be possible to write a history of the discipline using the accentuation of one or the other pole as ordering scheme. The development of anthropology over the last hundred or so years could then be portrayed as an oscillation between the project of “gaining knowledge” about the Other as an object of some sort of scientific inquiry and a relationship to radical alterity. Different approaches could be distinguished from each other by the ways in which they stress the importance of one or the other pole, but ultimately every form of anthropological practice would have to be regarded as an intertwining of both: even the most positivist styles of anthropology would be unable to completely suppress the otherness of the Other, and conversely, even in its most self-reflective expressions anthropology would have to contain some proposition as to how to make sense of the Other.

Inability to think of the relation between empirical and radical otherness in non-dichotomous terms has produced a permanent sense of crisis among practitioners of anthropology as well as critics from other disciplines. In a recent collection on the current state of the discipline titled *The End of Anthropology*, the anthropologist Holger Jebens concluded his review of the “crisis of anthropology” with a call to return to the Other:

After anthropology’s ‘turning back on itself’, after its engagement with its own history, method and texts, I think it would be worthwhile to shift one’s gaze onto the Other again, not as, in Knauff’s words, a ‘retreat into neo-empiricism’ or a ‘tendency to take reactionary refuge by simply presenting more and more specifics, but in order to reclaim the ability lost, according to Kapferer, to ‘criticise on the basis of in-depth knowledge of other forms of existence’.

(Jebens 2011:27)

It is exactly this proposition of a renewed orientation towards the empirical Other that critics of anthropological practice mean when they accuse anthropology of carrying on with “business as usual.” As a particularly outspoken example of such criticism, consider the following passage from a book by

the literary scholars Scott Michaelsen and David Johnson with the telling title *Anthropology's Wake*:

Cultural anthropology's others will never be left in a position that promises or permits the unpredictability of a relation to alterity. In anthropology, inevitably, the anthropologist's "experience" of the other produces a meaning that necessarily misses the chance of others and alterity.

These are grave consequences: Cultural anthropology's promise has always been the possibility of something other than ourselves, yet anthropology relentlessly forecloses such a possibility. Anthropology's promise, then, will only be reimaginable at its gravesite. Anthropology's stake in a future different from a mere repetition of the past will involve, from here onward, rethinking to the limit both anthropology's object and the "subject" of anthropology."

(Michaelsen and Johnson 2008:3)

The question here is not to decide which of these remedies—return to the empirical Other, or radical reflection on anthropology's foundations—provides a cure to the anthropological malaise. Rather, it is crucial to understand that they don't present mutually exclusive positions. It is true that anthropology is in need of a "rethinking to the limit" of its relationship to the Other as other, as claimed by Michaelsen and Johnson. It is equally true that this rethinking can only take place in and through an anthropology that is alive and whose point of departure consists in some form of making sense of empirical others. In other words, "progress" in anthropology, if there is such a thing, consists in putting empirical and radical Other into a productive relation to each other. To achieve this, a theory is called for that is capable of integrating empirical and radical alterity within one conceptual framework. The present collection, in particular in its emphasis on the concept of responsibility derived from Waldenfels, intends to be a step in this direction.³

The Other in Anthropology

While it is true that for most of its history anthropology has been concerned predominantly with achieving specialist knowledge about other cultures, that is, has focused on the empirically Other, it would be inaccurate to say that its practitioners have never developed any awareness of their discipline's relation to radical alterity. Quite to the contrary, if we follow Geertz's statement or think about Malinowski's tribulations, we are led to believe that the feeling of "not getting it right" is a strong, perhaps dominant motivating force in the production of anthropology.

Beginning in the 1970s and through the 1980s, however, anthropology went through a phase of heightened explicit awareness of its problematic, because ultimately paradoxical, relationship to otherness. This development had its origins already in the 1950s and 1960s when many of the colonial

states in which anthropologists customarily conducted their research became independent, often after long and violent struggles. In the postcolonial context, anthropology faced increasing resistance from its research subjects: the others didn't subject themselves anymore to being studied and represented by people they associated with the colonial power. The Other "talked back," demanding the right to speak with his or her own voice. A Western-style educated elite criticized anthropology for its active contribution to colonial oppression by providing "intelligence" about the colonized peoples with the ultimate objective to make them governable. Although many anthropologists took an anti-colonialist stance individually, these criticisms were well founded systemically and thus not to be refuted in total. Anthropology came to be seen more and more as a Western, rather than a neutral, scientific project, as serving the power interests of a particular group of people, not as providing "innocent" knowledge about exotic people. It is against the background of this challenge by anthropology's others that the discipline undertook its turn towards reflecting on its foundations and practices.

Anthropological self-reflexivity first focused on fieldwork, on the personal involvement of the individual researcher and the constitutive role of interpersonal encounters and relationships (see, for example: Bowen 1964; Malinowski 1967; Rabinow 1977; Crapanzano 1980), but ultimately turned towards the problem of ethnographic representation. What was the basis for the anthropologist's claim to represent the Other, to accurately portray a reality that is by definition alien to him or her?

Important as this question was and continues to be for anthropology, it must be stated firmly that ethnographic representation and writing are but one aspect of anthropology's relation to otherness. A "solution" of the problem of the Other, in the sense of an overcoming of a conceptual contradiction, is not expected to come from this direction alone. To identify the Other with its representation means once more to reduce it to a function of the self, in this case the self of the writing anthropologist. The ethnographic portrayal would be situated exclusively in a sphere of ownness: personal idiosyncrasies of the anthropologist interweave with signifying structures like literary and rhetorical tropes from his or her home culture to form a representation which ultimately need not have anything to do with the reality of the Other as other (see Said 1978). If this were the case, anthropology would indeed be a lost cause, a project best to be abandoned. Radical otherness, however, means to insist on the fundamental ability of the Other to *elude* the appropriative tendencies of the self; an other that would be completely and once and for all possessed by the self would be no Other in the radical sense. To the contrary, the Other retains its otherness by placing a demand on the self, by disturbing it in its self-righteousness and self-satisfaction, by forcing it to question itself ethically (this ethical resistance is a major theme in the philosophy of Emanuel Levinas, see Chapter 1). It is in the sense of such self-questioning demanded by the Other that we have to understand the philosopher Stephen Galt Crowell when he says that "the notion of radical

alterity has engendered anthropology's crisis of representation and its desire to articulate a strong notion of cultural difference" (Crowell 1998:19). Traces of other voices are necessarily present even in the most "authoritative" "positivist" ethnographic texts. Anthropology's Other is never completely invented—which doesn't mean that he or she cannot be distorted beyond recognition and with harmful consequences.

It must be admitted that the work commonly cited as the key event in anthropology's turn toward the problem of representing the Other, James Clifford's and George Marcus' edited collection *Writing Culture*, takes a differentiated standpoint. At the end of his introduction, Clifford rejects the assumption that a concern with epistemological issues, i.e., the alterity of the represented Other, and the scientific goal of approaching culturally others to understand their way of life, are by definition mutually exclusive (Clifford 1986:24–25). He acknowledges the one-sidedness of a focus on practices of writing and representation, but defends it on heuristic grounds: "Our focus was . . . on textual theory as well as textual form: a defensible, productive focus." (Clifford 1986:20).

Clifford was right about this and continues to be proven so by the continuing fame of the collection in the discipline: writing is essential to what anthropologists are doing, and representation a crucial aspect of anthropology's relation to the Other. It is from an artificially, although admittedly artfully, reduced perspective that *Writing Culture* approaches the problem of radical alterity. This again becomes obvious in the introduction when Clifford discusses the notion of ethnographic texts as fictions in the more general and etymologically correct sense of "something made" (see also Geertz 1973:16). He objects, however, to the tendency to completely dismiss the conventional sense of the fictional as invention, product of imagination, as this would amount to stating the truism that all truths are constructed. He asserts that "the essays collected here keep the oxymoron sharp." (Clifford 1986:6). In my opinion this can be read as a commitment to a preservation of the otherness of the Other, as can be the following elaboration:

In this view, more Nietzschean than realist or hermeneutic, all constructed truths are made possible by powerful "lies" of exclusion and rhetoric. Even the best ethnographic texts—serious, true fictions—are systems, or economies, of truth. Power and history work through them, in ways their authors cannot fully control.

(Clifford 1986:7)

The output of "systems" and "economies," truth is always partial ("Partial Truths" is the title of Clifford's introduction), both in the sense of being incomplete and in that of serving particular interests. The Other represented in such economies of truth can never be the Other as it understands itself; it escapes the net of signification that is thrown over it. Moreover, the representing self is not in full control of what it produces; the ethnographic text

is shaped by power and history, powerful forces of alterity, alienating the self from its own intentions.

The crisis of ethnographic representation thus forces us to acknowledge the otherness of the Other, but the anthropological discourse failed to address the problem explicitly; it remained on a level where radical alterity is indicated but not reflected, not thought through consequentially. A radically Other must challenge the very idea of selfhood and ownness as closed autonomous spheres. A conception that reduces the Other in anthropology to its ethnographic representation can never do justice to the Other as other (see also Waldenfels, this volume); this, however, is demanded by the essential role played by radical alterity in the anthropological project.

What is at stake here can also be illustrated by another hallmark study of this period of the discipline's history, Johannes Fabian's *Time and the Other* (1983). In a 2006 article with the title "The Other Revisited," Fabian clarifies in retrospect his perspective on otherness. After presenting himself as "someone who has been credited with, and sometimes accused of, contributing to a certain discourse on alterity that is now current in anthropology as well as in cultural studies and post-colonial theory" (Fabian 2006:139), he proceeds to delimit his objective: "The aim of the book was *not* to develop a theoretical concept of the Other (or to give an anthropological twist to a philosophical concept)." (143) Rather, he continues, his argument concerned the way in which anthropology represented the Other as belonging to another time, what Fabian refers to as "allochronic discourse." While the anthropologist and his or her interlocutors experience each other as contemporaries or "coevals" during their encounter in fieldwork, the subsequent ethnographic account denies this "coevalness," presenting the Other as object and in the past. Justified and pertinent as this criticism might be regarding the anthropological discourse of Fabian's time, and possibly even now, it still has to be maintained that it reintroduces through the backdoor what it throws out through the front entrance: an autonomous self that is defined as a process of transforming otherness into ownness. In Fabian's case this becomes particularly obvious as he juxtaposes the business of representation and the distortion effected by it to a fieldwork experience characterized by simultaneity, equality and reciprocity. The juxtaposition of experience and representation suggests that there might be other, non-allochronic ways of representing the Other, ways that preserve the mutuality of fieldwork. Like the transposition of the Other into the past, however, its preservation in the present presumes a selfhood that is already constituted, in full control of itself and not dependent on the Other for its self-fashioning.⁴

Writing in the year 2006 and reflecting on the "crisis of representation," Fabian finds that "the issues and problems raised by the concept of anthropology's other are as difficult, complex, and numerous now as they were then" (Fabian 2006:139). Indeed, the anthropological debates that reached their climax in the 1980s cannot be regarded as concluded and lying in the past; the problems they addressed cannot be resolved since they define

anthropology itself. The tension of its relation to otherness is the moving force behind the project of anthropology. Once the Other is disclosed, it cannot be bottled up again like a genie; it keeps bugging us.

Therefore, it doesn't come as a big surprise that alterity has made it onto the list of key concepts in social and cultural anthropology (see, for example, Rapport 2014, "Alterity"). The "question of the Other" (cf. Todorov 1999) has also acquired particular prominence in postcolonialism. Although the recognition of the otherness of the Other is one of its key themes, and many important contributions have come from this direction, postcolonial scholarship ultimately falls short of formulating a productive relationship between the radical and the empirical Other, as is called for in anthropology. The emphasis is generally placed again on practices of representing the Other as means of appropriating him, in the best of cases by "making sense of," "understanding" and "explaining" the Other, in the worst by "distorting," "discriminating," "othering." Anthropology's role is described as that of a producer of an "objectified imagery of otherness" (Rapport 2014:11). It thus becomes part of the wider project of Western modernity, which can be defined, amongst other things, as a specific way of relation to the Other. The otherness of the Other is intolerable to the Western mindset; it must be overcome in scientific understanding, treated inferior in moral terms, subordinated politically and economically (see also the chapters by DiNovelli-Lang and Mire in this volume). In Rapport we read the following summary of the postcolonial assessment of the Western relationship to the Other:

The stress time and again is that Western creations of difference and images of otherness are products of a process of exclusion. The exclusivist ideology which assumes the superiority of self vis-à-vis others, is a very good strategy through which to disempower others.

(Rapport 2014:14)

If these generalizations about what is of course a very wide and heterogeneous intellectual field are accurate (as generalizations), then postcolonialism, like the "postmodernism" of the literary turn marked by *Writing Culture*, misses the otherness of the Other. Justified and even necessary as the postcolonial critiques may be in a situation marked by power imbalances and inequalities, they don't reach the ground of the self-Other relation, and consequentially run the danger of committing the same sins of appropriation that they criticize so passionately (see also Victor Li's critical discussion of the work of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in this volume). For if the existence of the (postcolonial) Other is assumed to exhaust itself in the representations fashioned by a (Western) self, this still amounts to a denial of the otherness of the Other, even if the practice of representation is evaluated negatively. Conversely, it reaffirms the autonomy of a selfhood that is capable of such appropriation of the Other, a "subjectivity" that is often claimed as one of the defining elements of Western modernity.

One other domain of anthropological discourse in which the Other has gained a certain currency is the current concern with questions of ontology. Drawing on the work of philosophers like Merleau-Ponty (1968, [1945] 2012) and Heidegger ([1927] 2010) and anthropologists like Viveiros de Castro (1992, 1998); Ingold (2011) and Descola (2013), proponents of the so-called “ontological turn” argue for a shift in emphasis from how humans *know* the world and represent it to themselves and to each other, towards questions of how they *live* in the world, or, simpler and yet more technically, how they *are* in the world—a shift, in other words, from epistemology as the study of knowledge, to ontology as the study of being. One of the most fundamental issues of the application of the concept of ontology in anthropology is to decide whether ontology is to be understood in a universalistic or a pluralistic sense. Unlike philosophers who by trade favor the first understanding, anthropologists tend towards ontological pluralism, describing different modes of cultural existence in terms of different ontologies. A “genuine ontological approach” in anthropology is “one that does not privilege epistemology or the study of other peoples’ representations of what we *know* to be the real world, acknowledging rather the existence of multiple worlds” (Venkatesan et al. 2010:153).

This quote was taken from the introduction to a debate on whether “ontology is just another word for culture.” For the present purposes it is not so important how the question was settled in the context of the debate, but rather, that both positions have been argued with explicit reference to otherness. Here is Matei Candea speaking in favor of the proposition:

They are words for each other because, amidst all their differences, there is one difference which relates them. The difference which relates culture and ontology is the difference they both point to. Ontology and culture are both words that point to an other—and it is in this sense that they point to one another. In other words, ontology is another word for bringing home to anthropologists the fact of difference, of alterity.

(175)

His opponent Martin Holbraad seems to agree with him, at least in this respect. After characterizing anthropology through its “peculiar investment in what has quite trendily come to be known as ‘alterity’” (180), Holbraad proceeds to portray ontology as the pinnacle of this investment in alterity:

I for one know of no theoretical position in anthropology that departs from the basic assumption that the differences in which anthropologists are interested (‘alterity’) are differences in the way people ‘see the world’—no position, that is, other than the ontological one.

(Venkatesan et al. 2010:181)

Like the postcolonial discourse, the ontological turn in anthropology has contributed a lot to an increased sensitivity to the problem of the Other in

anthropology; neither of them, however, is able to address its basic conundrum, since both fail to acknowledge the fundamental paradox of a radical alterity, an otherness of the Other. Ontological anthropology even goes one step further in formulating the paradox of otherness when it speaks of multiple ontologies, “our” ontology and “their” ontology. But by driving the difference further into the depths of human existence, it exacerbates the logical conflict between self and Other, rather than overcoming it. The other ontology is still claimed by *me*, the anthropologist, *as* the ontology of the other; and if it is true that my cultural existence is only one among many but possesses ontological value, then my claiming of the other’s ontology contains a value judgement, an implicit claim to ontological superiority.⁵ A radical alterity, a relation to the Other as other, is not possible within an ontological framework; on the other hand, such a relation has to be accepted as necessarily present and foundational for anthropology, as we have seen. This is echoed by the philosopher Stephen Galt Crowell, who writes with explicit reference to anthropology:

The goal announced in the phrase, “giving permission to diversity and difference”, is best achieved precisely by resisting the temptation to locate that origin in the world of the Other (an alternative “reality”), and by showing that an attestable concept of radical alterity can arise only in the ethical encounter where the Other is given *as* Other. Ontologically, there *is* no (radically) Other.

(Crowell 1998:17)

Responding to the Other

How then can a relation to the Other as other, to a radical alterity, be thought of in anthropology without leading to the inevitable rejection of anthropology’s goal as a science of “understanding,” “making sense of,” “knowing” the Other? The philosophy of Bernhard Waldenfels proposes as an answer to this question that the relation to the Other on the primordial level is not one of signification or objectification, but of *responsivity*. We don’t talk about the Other, we don’t reflect on it, we don’t even perceive it through the body and the senses, at least we don’t when discourse, reflection and perception are understood in the sense in which they are normally used. All of these forms of relating to something negate the Other in its otherness, necessarily reducing it to something that already belongs to a selfhood and its correlating sphere of ownness. The Other thought of, talked about, experienced, is the Other *as* thought, talked about, experienced by me. To be absolutely clear here: Waldenfels doesn’t deny the necessary nature of this process of appropriating. In order for the phenomenon of sense to appear in experience, it is indispensable that a form of consciousness relates to something *as* something, that it takes something in a particular sense. This fundamental structural law, referred to as intentionality in phenomenology, holds regardless of

the specific level of experiencing, whether the mode of consciousness involved is regarded as reflective, discursive or perceptual. To put it bluntly: without the order of intentionality no sense, and without sense no experience. What Waldenfels asserts is that the rules and orders of experience and communication are not the *fundamental* processes through which we relate to the Other; all of these processes of sense constitution and meaning making must in turn be regarded as grounded in processes of responding. We relate to the Other as *what we respond to*.

In responding we are thus faced with a fundamentally asymmetrical relationship: we can never capture what we respond to, no matter what answer we give, whether it corresponds to what is asked from us, or whether it leaves the question unanswered. In our relation to the Other, we are always in delay: what we respond to is already gone when we reach for it. At the same time, we can't anticipate when we are called to respond: a scream in the night, a telephone call, an accident; sudden events don't announce themselves and then unfold—they *happen to us*. They compel us to respond through our perception, cognition and behavior. To hear a call means to already have heard it, and to have heard it means to have to respond to it. Responding is *inevitable, compulsory*: even the refusal to give an answer to a question is still a response. Responding begins elsewhere; in no way does the respondent control what he responds to. In other words: responding begins in the sphere of otherness, and what we respond to is a radical Other, or alien;⁶ it eludes the grasp of the self which nevertheless is constituted in the act of responding.

The radically Other places a demand on us from which we cannot escape and yet our answer is always too late to capture what gave rise to it. At the same time, however, reality, what we experience and accept as real, emerges through *what* we answer. To give a very simple, everyday example: when someone calls me in the street, every form of my behavior immediately acquires a responsive character. Whether I answer the call verbally or gesturally, or whether I pretend to not have heard the call,⁷ I am responding to an event that has already begun elsewhere and over which I don't have control. But what I give as an answer is certainly not insignificant; quite to the contrary, my answer gives the situation its specific significance, defines it as "call for help," "request for information," "threat," "provocation," "flirtation," etcetera.

If the definition of the situation contained in my answer to the call of the Other is accepted by him (or, more precisely, is responded to by him accordingly), a reality that is experienced as objective by both of us will arise, for example, "a stranger asks me for directions." On this basis we will be able to interact and communicate following an order that seems to exist independent of our encounter. The more I and the other share the same cultural, linguistic, social background, the more we belong to the same "lifeworld" or have the same "habitus," the greater the probability that our encounter will unfold smoothly, without ruptures. Our "culture" assists us in this

endeavor by endowing us with pre-established types of situations, sets of rules and orders of meaning. When these orders pass the test of social interaction, they come to be seen as inscribed into nature, as reflecting reality as it is (cf. Schütz and Luckmann 1973).

In this respect, Waldenfels' notion of responsivity is compatible with semiotic and performative theories of culture which have gained great prominence in anthropology over the last decades (see Goffman 1959; Geertz 1973; Schieffelin 1985, 1996; Turner 1987; Schechner 1988, and many more). What he adds to and beyond these theories is his insistence on a relation to radical alterity that underlies and grounds phenomena of order and meaning. Questions asked and answers given are necessarily informed by cultural meanings, systems of communication and rules of behavior. But the ordered exchange of *question* and *answer* rests on a relation between *demand* and *response* that is not contained in any order. Quite to the contrary, the process of responding to an alien demand is the origin of any kind of order. Responding in this sense is *creative*: "I" as a self that is "friendly," "fearful," "confident," "polite," "gullible," or whatever, is produced in the particular response I give to the stranger's call, the self doesn't pre-exist the response. Conversely, the place from which the call reaches me is only defined in my response as of such and such a kind: "a stranger," "a man," "a woman," "a beggar," "a tourist," "a threat," "a nice guy." In the moment I assign any kind of significance, whether perceptually, gesturally or discursively, to the Other and our encounter, an order of sense emerges and everything in it, I, the Other, the interaction between us, gains a particular significance. But this order only comes to pass through a process of responding that is not included in it, or in any pre-existing order.

Responding ultimately takes place in an *in-between-sphere*; it follows neither rules nor regulations and is therefore the origin of all change and transformation in human existence. Anything that is genuinely new must consist in a radical departure from what was before; as new it cannot conform to rules already in operation—it must be radically Other in this sense. But likewise the new cannot be subsumed under the order it eventually brings into being.⁸ As the place or point of view from which a different order is proclaimed, the new can never be part of that order. For change and innovation to be possible, a realm must be acknowledged which is neither determined nor determinative; it is this realm that Waldenfels' notion of responding to the Other aspires to circumscribe.

What we respond to and how we respond is not determined by rules or regulations, but that doesn't mean that our responses are completely free or arbitrary. Quite to the contrary, the answers we give to a demand or a challenge are always in relation to existing orders, as confirming such orders, or deviating from them, or even overturning them. The radically Other escapes the order as what we respond to and so becomes the source of our creativity and our inventiveness. But what we respond, the answer we give, is in necessary relation to existing orders *and* at the origin of emerging orders. In

responding we inevitably make use of *or* reject a repertoire of answers presented to us by our culture, and we position ourselves with respect to our personal history of responding, what is commonly called our “character” or “personality.” Our present response inevitably puts itself in a relation to these psychological and sociocultural contexts, without ever being completely enclosed in them. Responding to the Other takes place in a sphere between determination and free will, displaying an ambiguity that suspends both categories. When Waldenfels says, *we invent what we respond but not what we respond to*, this needs to be qualified by adding that our factual ability to invent responses is always relative to past and emerging inventions.

In what sense then are we justified to credit Waldenfels’ concept of responsivity with overcoming the aporia between the radical and the empirical Other? Every exchange of demand and response, as we have seen, presents itself in two aspects: (1) a *question* or *request* which is correlated to an answer which either fulfills the intention of the request, or leaves it unfulfilled (for example: “What is the time?” “3 p.m.”; “I don’t know”); and (2) a *call* or *appeal* which is responded to in a realm not regulated by conventions or orders, and which is the original form of relating between self and Other. Waldenfels refers to this duplication of aspects as *responsive difference* (in contradistinction to the phenomenological “significant difference” according to which everything appears *as* something in consciousness). What is of crucial importance for our present purpose is that the dual aspects of responsivity are necessarily intertwined with each other. Responding in the strict sense of the term is related to radical alterity by moving beyond the realm of signification, transcending the universe of perceptual, cognitive, discursive sense; at the same time, as answering, it emerges out of and falls back into that universe by assigning significance and creating an order. Both aspects are inseparable from each other: the Other identified, named, discriminated always indicates an Other that has already passed and cannot be caught up with. *Empirical and radical Other are two sides of the same coin.*

This conception which, to my knowledge, can with this degree of clarity and elaboration only be found in the philosophy of Waldenfels, has an extraordinary potential for anthropological theory and practice, a potential that I have called paradigmatic at a previous occasion (Leistle 2015). It enables anthropologists not only to reflect on the foundations of their ethnographic accounts by approaching them from the perspective of a responsive difference between what they respond to and the answers they give in form of their representations. Moreover, the notion of responsivity provides anthropologists with a more solid—in the sense of: more thoroughly reflected—foundation for going on with their craft, the understanding, interpretation and translation of the culturally Other. For on the plane of theory and analysis, the concept of responsivity can be extended to others and other cultures: if the anthropological self and his or her own culture arises out of a response to a radical alterity which self and culture cannot contain, the

same must hold true for the selves of others and their cultures. In other words: others, too, respond to the Other and the answers they give will be characterized by a style that can on the one hand be described empirically and which, on the other hand, will point towards a relationship to radical alterity. To put it succinctly: an empirical anthropology of otherness will shift its focus towards the responsivity of others.

Perspectives for an Anthropology of Otherness

All of this is of course not absolutely new to anthropologists. Otherness and the Other have sometimes been explicit elements of attempts to define the discipline;⁹ and every anthropologist who has conducted intensive fieldwork, often called a ritual of initiation into the discipline, has come up at one point or another against the question of the Other, has felt Geertz's suspicion of "not getting it right." It is precisely this elusiveness at the center of the project that makes otherness an important notion for anthropology: the demand of the Other is keenly felt, but insofar as it is a radical otherness that raises its head all answers to it will be provisory and partial. This is the reason why there are so few explicit discussions of the concept of otherness in anthropology, in comparison with the multitude of treatises and debates on the notion of culture, which in the latter case even include demands for its demise. The relation to the Other remains the blind spot from which anthropology moves towards the cultural world, the standpoint from which the project of the "interpretation of cultures" can be embarked on. Again, this is not supposed to mean that the importance of the Other has not been pointed out by individual anthropologists, and that some of these efforts have been widely read in the discipline.¹⁰ But mostly they have been just that: individual voices, rather than a concerted effort. Where the relation to the Other has been an element of a "turn" in the discipline, as in the "literary turn" that accompanied the "crisis of representation," or in the recent "ontological turn," it was in the context of other, more dominant concerns. The present collection of essays puts the focus on otherness in its own right. In this sense they are to be read as responses to the demand of the Other in anthropology. It would be presumptuous to expect that they mark the beginning of a "turn to the Other," or a "responsive turn" (a questionable success in consideration of the many turns of the discipline in recent years); but it is hoped that the contributions assembled here make a convincing case for the centrality of the Other in all domains of anthropological practice.

Chapter 1 continues the work of contextualization begun in this introduction. The conception of radical otherness in contemporary philosophy has emerged predominantly from within phenomenology and the essay sketches *one* possible genealogy of this emergence. It is selective, not exhaustive, and attempts to show how the contributions by Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Levinas and Waldenfels relate to each other through their varying interpretation of phenomenological key motifs, in particular intentionality. The intention of

the chapter is to provide to the non-specialist reader an introduction to the phenomenology of the Other, especially to further acquaint her or him with the work of Waldenfels and its position in the phenomenological tradition. While the book's introduction placed emphasis on the notion of responsivity, here the concept of the alien as the extra-ordinary, that is as excess in relation to an order (of self, of culture, of reason) is discussed. Both philosophical context and further introduction to Waldenfels' thought should make the reading of his own essay more accessible.

In Chapter 2, entitled "Paradoxes of Representing the Alien in Ethnography," Bernhard Waldenfels embarks on an in-depth analysis of the concept of representation and its use in anthropology. He points out that "representation" can be understood in four interrelated but different ways: as "idea," "presentation," "presentation," and "substitution," and that these four meanings have often been used indiscriminately in the debates around the "crisis of representation." Despite his criticism of "over-complexity" in the anthropological discussions, Waldenfels feels the need to protect anthropology from some forms of self-criticism. Although the radically Other, or alien, cannot be captured perfectly and completely in any representation, for Waldenfels that doesn't mean that representation can simply be identified with repression. "Radical alienness," he insists, "can only be grasped indirectly as an extra-ordinary that at all times presupposes the existence of orders" (105). To do justice to its relationship to the Other, anthropology has to begin to think of itself in terms of responsivity and to find indirect ways of speaking, a kind of "double speech" which he already sees implicated in anthropology's core method of "participant observation." In Waldenfels' essay, anthropology doesn't emerge as the contemptible project of cognitive colonization, as that it is presented by some critics, but as a practice that is confronted with alienness in an exemplary fashion.

Chapter 3 opens up the field of relations to the Other in its full empirical complexity and heterogeneity: Vincent Crapanzano's contribution starts out with a critique of what he refers to as the tendency towards abstraction in contemporary theories of alterity. All too often, the relations between self and Other are considered separately from the concrete modes of social and cultural existence, classification, narration and morality that inform them. This bears the danger of confounding understandings peculiar to one's own culture with the "unmediated essence" of a self-Other dyad. Against this, Crapanzano holds a triadic conception in which the relation between self and Other is necessarily mediated by a Third: "Can we speak of the other without considering a *tertium quid*, a lure, which brings about engagement?" (122), he asks. In other words, like the self and in relation to it, the Other is always already entangled in culture and must be studied in its cultural specificity and relativity. In the second part of his essay, Crapanzano carries out an exemplary study of such entanglement: he analyzes the different conceptions of a concrete relation to the Other, that of friendship, in Plato, Aristotle and Montaigne, showing that the notion of subjectivity only gains

importance for our understanding of friendship with the advent of modernity. Crapanzano thus reminds us that we, too, and the culture we call our own, result from a continuous process of responding to the Other. Ultimately, this must also include our philosophical preoccupations with otherness.

The function of the “primitive Other,” that is of our representations of the people contrasted with “modern” “Western” civilization in postmodern and postcolonial theory and practice, is the topic of Victor Li’s chapter. Referring to theorists like Lyotard, Baudrillard and Spivak, Li discusses examples of the abstraction of the Other warned against by Crapanzano. Despite the positive evaluation of the “primitive” and the demand to respect the otherness of the Other, postmodern discourse typically reduces the Other to a rhetorical function in a project of extending Western modes of thinking. This even applies to Spivak in whose writings Li identifies a tendency to declare the “subaltern,” her version of the “primitive Other,” as inaccessible and inexpressible. The subaltern becomes the absolutely Other, thereby confirming the Western conception of the self as a closed-off, autonomous subjectivity. A discussion of the self-presentation of the recently opened Musée du Quai Branly demonstrates that this stance of “anti-primitivist primitivism” is not restricted to academic discourse but informs social practice at large. Engaging Waldenfels’ philosophy directly, Li concludes with a call to rethink the role of the “primitive Other” in theory from a perspective of an entanglement of ownness and alienness: “Theory is already a “half-alien word,” already other to itself, while the primitive or subaltern other is already theorizing, already speaking and engaging with theory” (171).

Danielle DiNovelli-Lang’s chapter entitled “The Other Otter” can be read as continuation and concretization of Li’s concerns. The figure of the Other as “savage” which has been so prevalent in Western thought and theory is here coupled with the problem of human self-definition in relation to the animal sphere. Drawing on and combining insights from both postcolonialism and posthumanism, DiNovelli-Lang cautions against the tendency to play one of these distinctions against the other, as when peoples whose cultural worlds seem to allow for a greater permeability between humans and animals are again portrayed as closer to animality, that is, as a new kind of “savage.” As an alternative figure of otherness, DiNovelli-Lang introduces the *Kooshdakhaa*, the legendary hybrid between otter and human that plays an important role in the mythology of the Tlingit people. The *Kooshdakhaa*, she argues, ultimately evades the problematic intersection of universal definitions of the human and definitions of particular kinds of humans by challenging our capacity to understanding: “The lesson/legend of the *Kooshdakhaa* is the story . . . of the other who knows what we cannot” (182). Cultivating a sense for the radical otherness of the *Kooshdakhaa*, and of animals, is the only way to break out of the circles of ethnocentrism and logocentrism in which Western (post)modernity entangles itself. In her discussion of the complex and absurd situation of the exploding otter

population in Southeast Alaska, DiNovelli-Lang provides an example of what such an approach to the Other might look like: real-life otter and *Kooshdakh* blend into each other, demanding a response from us.

Touching on related themes of colonial and postcolonial othering, albeit in the domain of race, Amina Mire's chapter critically examines the lasting fascination with whiteness of skin. Establishing parallels between the current preoccupation in the West with violence against individuals with albinism and vitiligo in Africa, the anxieties of American slaveholders about "white slaves," and the burgeoning sales of high-tech skin-whitening products in Africa and Asia, Mire is able to show how the theme of whiteness continues to haunt the representation and experience of non-whites. Disparate as they may be in time and in space, in all of these contexts the white skin appears as the marker of civilization, strength and purity, while the brown or black skin is presented as deficient and in need of repair. The pervasive othering of the Other along racial lines that is so characteristic for Western modernity doesn't seem to allow any room for a genuine self-presentation of the Other as other; "black" and "brown" inevitably define themselves in relation to a hegemonic "white," thus as "non-white." Nevertheless, Mire's study also gives testimony to an ongoing challenge, a demand coming from the Other: all forceful, psychologically and physically violent efforts to create an absolute boundary between "white" and "non-white" have failed, de-masking the idea of "racial purity" as a construct and, ultimately delusional, fantasy. The otherness of the Other can be overcome neither through absolute exclusion, nor through complete assimilation.

Chapter 7 completes the interdisciplinary canon with Thomas Fuchs' essay "The Self and the Alien." A phenomenological psychiatrist, Fuchs uses basic motifs of Waldenfels' phenomenology of the alien to stake out a theory of the personal self as a process of responding to alien demands. The self needs to incorporate alienness in itself and yet can do so only imperfectly, excluding unrealized possibilities with every moment of its realization as self. This fundamental non-coincidence of self with itself is the structural foundation for the vulnerability to illness, a vulnerability which becomes acute in liminal phases of transition, such as adolescence. Fuchs discusses three clinical disorders whose onset often occurs during adolescence: borderline personality disorder, anorexia nervosa and schizophrenia. All of these become intelligible as a failure to accept the intertwining of selfhood and alienness at the basis of personal identity; they are distinguished from each other as different kinds of incapacities.

Although written from a psychiatric perspective, Fuchs' paper has considerable relevance for an anthropology of otherness. Besides the applicability of his responsive conception of the self to other cultural contexts, Fuchs points towards an affinity between psychiatry and anthropology when he refers to psychopathology as a "special science of the alien." Here the door swings open for a discussion of these two projects and institutions within the framework of responsiveness.

An ethnographic example of the inseparability of radical otherness and empirical otherness in a particular cultural context is provided by Christopher Stephan's chapter. Charismatic Christians in the contemporary US interpret the otherness of the other person as indications of the radical alterity of God. The often-noted observation that the other's religious experiences may be incomprehensible to oneself is taken as a confirmation of the inscrutability of His ways. Every believer has their own individualized relationship to Him but, although intimate and personal, this relationship can never exhaust God's essence. This essence is in its totality inaccessible by definition, and manifestations of the other's relationship to God thus provide the "sacred self" (Csordas 1994) with a different aspect of the deity. Multiplication of such aspects through experience leads to the deepening of one's relation to God, but can never end in complete understanding. Self, other and God finally come to be seen as intertwined with each other: each implies the other without ever coinciding with them. Stephan's chapter demonstrates convincingly that the nexus of radical and empirical otherness possesses concrete ethnographic reality, particularly in religious groups, for which such intertwining might be characteristic, perhaps even definitional.

The concrete ways of responding to the Other are culturally relative; or, perhaps more precisely, cultures are "responsive repertoires." Chapter 9, Jason Throop's essay "Pain and Otherness, the Otherness of Pain," leads us into yet another culturally specific nexus of self and Other, oneness and alienness. The Micronesian healers he studied, specialists in bonesetting and massage, claim to be able to touch their patients' pain. An investigation into the structure of intersubjectivity inspired by Husserl shows, however, that the other's experience is never immediately accessible. All the more, this is true for pain, which is the subjective experience par excellence, inaccessible and inexpressible. The looming impasse can be avoided by taking into account the otherness of one's own pain in relation to the self: while excessively subjectifying, pain also breaks the structures of subjectivity; pain eludes control by the self; it disturbs, challenges, overwhelms. In pain a radical otherness, an alienness of one's own body announces itself. It is because of the permeability of the embodied self to the alien that the healer can sense her patient's pain, not as an object but as an alternative possibility of her own existence. Like in Stephan's paper, but in a very different cultural setting and domain of practice, the empirical otherness of the other person is connected to a sphere of radical alterity.

Even the place in which one dwells, which one inhabits as home, is permeated by forces of radical otherness that cannot be banned once and for all. People's representations of the invisible, dark, subterranean dimensions of landscapes and houses are responses to the call of the Other in one's own home. Frances Slaney's chapter "Otherness and the Underground: Buried Treasure in the Sierra Tarahumara" describes the very different responses of two ethnic groups to the same physical environment. While the indigenous Tarahumara regard the subterranean realm as populated by dangerous

ancestor spirits and their objects, and therefore as best avoided, Mexican newcomers to the region, called “blancos,” relate to the underground as a potential source of material riches. These differing responses to inhabited space have their correlates in divergent histories: through their conception of the underground as treasure chest, the blancos renew the colonial claim of the Spanish conquerors, whom they regard as forebears. The Tarahumara, by contrast, express their sense of ontological entanglement with the landscape they inhabit through the idea of being haunted by discontented ancestors. Thus, we seem to be confronted with ontological incommensurability. Slaney’s careful ethnographic descriptions show, however, that both forms of relating to the underground in the Sierra Tarahumara have to be understood as modes of responding to the Other, and, as such modes, are linked to a sphere which neither life-world can include.

Marieka Sax’s chapter brings us from Mexico to Peru. Applying a Waldenfelsian framework, Sax discusses how inhabitants of the Andean town of Kañaris conceive of and respond to forces of otherness that permeate their life-world. On the one hand, the Other is part of the cultural horizon of the people of Kañaris, finding expression in different kinds of “place-based spirits” which can afflict humans with misfortune and disease. By invoking these spirits in the diagnosis and therapy of certain afflictions, ritual experts are able to effect cure or, at least, to endow suffering with sense and meaning. On the other hand, the Other shows its dimension of radical otherness in situations in which local interpretations fail to provide satisfactory explanations of events. This occurred in the case of Andres, a schoolteacher who lost his young daughter due to an undiagnosed illness. Although Andres consulted biomedical specialists as well as ritual experts, neither system of knowledge and practice could prevent or explain the death of his child, leaving him suspended between belief and disbelief in both modes of thinking. It is in the analysis of such liminal states and interstitial events, Sax argues, that the concept of alienness demonstrates its anthropological usefulness.

Chapter 12, written by myself, explores the interpretive potential of the concept of responsivity through a reading of Daniel Paul Schreber’s *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness*. The text, which contains descriptions of the author’s acute psychotic illness, is approached as an effort to find a creative response to alien demands which besiege the subject, threatening to overwhelm and annihilate it. Imploring a universal “Order of the World” to which even God is bound, Schreber can be seen to struggle for order in his own experience. In my interpretation I discuss three different, yet existentially interconnected levels of responding and ordering: the order of the embodied self, where Schreber’s hallucinations and compulsions express his inability to respond productively; the order of social and psychiatric discourse to which Schreber’s text responds in form of indirect, yet critical reflections; and the order of reason, which Schreber appeals to in the form of legal documents that are included as an integral element into his *Memoirs*. Among the many

interpretations of this classical psychiatric text, I argue, only a reading in terms of responsivity allows us to integrate all the heterogeneous components into one account. At the same time, Waldenfels' phenomenology alerts us to the alienness of the text itself, to its ultimate resistance against any claim to complete understanding.

The collection is closed by Robert Desjarlais' meditations on how "Photography Tears the Subject From Itself." Evoking the alienness of the Other, rather than addressing it discursively, Desjarlais' text consists of a series of autoethnographic diary entries revolving around the author's fascination with a photograph he had taken years ago. The image of an—apparently—blind man in a—perhaps North African cloak, who begs—so it seems—for money at the doors of *Sacré-Coeur* in Paris, continues to perturb the photographer/anthropologist. It haunts him, persecutes him, up to a point where he feels compelled to go on a quest to find the man in the photograph. Entry by entry, the journal describes a progressively stronger identification between the photographer and the photographed. The image places an alien demand on the anthropologist's self, a demand that threatens the self with disintegration. The alienness of the image cannot be incorporated into the order of experience; it remains elusive, ultimately resisting interpretation. While full of insightful reflections and original comments on the role of visual media in anthropology and their relation to verbal representation, Desjarlais' text is first and foremost a poetic meditation on the responsive relationship between anthropology and the Other which precedes and underlies all efforts aimed at comprehension.

Notes

- 1 The only exceptions are Thomas Fuchs' chapter, which was solicited from the author, and Bernhard Waldenfels' contribution, which is the translation of an essay originally written in German and published in 1999.
- 2 "Radical" derives from the Latin *radix*, meaning "root."
- 3 Tullio Maranhão's edited number of the German journal *Paideuma* (No. 44, 1998) can be regarded as a precursor to the present volume. While it explores the possible contribution of a philosophy of radical alterity epitomized in the work of Emmanuel Levinas, the collection stops short of formulating a productive relationship between empirical and radical Other, leaving off with a question: "The subversion carried out by Levinas and others is not a symmetrical reversion of self and other, placing the other where self had traditionally been. The Other of radical alterity is not at the center but comes to self from a position of height, and has a face which, more than a visual sign, is a command addressed to self entailing self's obligation not to harm his or her other, reminding self of his or her responsibility for the Other. Such an asymmetry does not have a sociopolitical nature. It is not a matter of power relation. Is there an intersection between the empirical and the radical Other?" (Maranhão 1998:12) I believe that the philosophy of Waldenfels possesses a unique potential to provide the "missing link" searched for by Maranhão (see also Chapter 1 of this volume).
- 4 In his "The Other Revisited," Fabian denies that he has argued for overcoming the alterity of the Other, or had assumed that such overcoming was possible. In this regard, however, it is legitimate to differentiate between what an author has

consciously intended to say and what his text says by way of implication. Interestingly, Fabian qualifies his position in the later essay by introducing the distinction between Latin “alius” and “alter,” which corresponds to that made here between radical and empirical otherness (Fabian 2006:147).

- 5 A related critique can be found in Vigh and Sausdal (2014).
- 6 The English translation of the German term *fremd* presents considerable difficulties. Although somewhat strange for English speakers, “alien” offers the closest approximation to the meaning of *fremd* in German, which Waldenfels, following Edmund Husserl, defines as the accessibility of something which is inaccessible (see Chapter 1). “Alien” has consequently been chosen as the preferred rendering of *fremd* in the sense of Waldenfels. In this introduction, however, which aims at an exposition of the topic with as little jargon as possible, the more common usage of “Other” has been retained. A general rule can be stated: “alien” refers to Waldenfels’ concept of the radical Other.
- 7 One might want to object here that it is quite possible that I haven’t heard the call and that this is the reason for my not giving an answer. Such an assumption, however, is irrelevant for the encounter between me and the Other since it is necessarily been made from an observer’s standpoint and therefore from outside the situation of the encounter. What establishes the relation between me and the Other is his or her call and my hearing the call. Should I genuinely not have heard the call, no relationship has come into being. Freud’s notion of a “pathology of everyday life” teaches us moreover, to not mistake the explicit consciousness of perceiving something with hearing a call in the sense implied here.
- 8 In an interesting aside, Tzvetan Todorov remarks about Christopher Columbus: “Columbus himself is not a modern man, and this fact is pertinent to the course of the discovery, as though the man who was to give birth to a new world could not yet belong to it.” (Todorov 1999:12)
- 9 See, for example, John Beattie’s classical introduction to anthropology entitled *Other Cultures*, or the more recent attempt by the German anthropologist Karl-Heinz Kohl (1993) to establish a relational definition of ethnology as the “science of the culturally alien” (*Wissenschaft vom kulturell Fremden*). Of particular relevance in the present context is Marc Augé’s attempt to ground the project of a “generalized anthropology” in a relation to otherness that is not just a privilege of the anthropologist, but is extended to the culturally Other, thus encompassing others’ others (Augé 1998).
- 10 Consider, for example, Michael Taussig’s *Mimesis and Alterity* or, James Fernandez’ notion of the “inchoate” (Fernandez 1986). Tom Csordas’ essay “Asymptote of the Ineffable. Embodiment, Alterity, and the Theory of Religion” (2004) deserves separate mentioning. This essay can be read as a complement to the perspective on otherness developed here, as it arrives at comparable conclusions but without developing explicitly a notion of responsivity. While disclosing a number of interesting applications for the notion of radical otherness in the field of religion, Csordas’ text also demonstrates how a conceptualization of the relation to the Other might provide greater clarity to the discussion.

References

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