

INTRODUCTION

Reconceptualizing the Discipline



Bruce Kapferer and Marina Gold

We must force into the conscience of moralities an awareness of their own presumption—until they finally are collectively clear about the fact that it is *immoral* to say “What’s right for one man is fair to another.”

—Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*
Part VII—Aphorism # 221

The general question raised in this short collection concerns the importance of the anthropology of morality to the discipline of anthropology. The moral (or ethical) turn in anthropology—if it may be glossed as such—is a return to some of the foundational defining orientations of the subject. It comes with potentially major methodological (theoretical, conceptual, and practical) importance for anthropology as a whole and its more pragmatic, often wide-ranging involvement in humanitarian and social matters usually of a liberal reformist, if not radical, political nature. In other words, the current focus on the anthropology of morality (and ethics) is far more than developing a new ethnographic topic, or revamping an old one, or even establishing a new sub-branch of the “anthropology of . . .” kind in the ever-expanding incorporative bureaucratizing net of the discipline epitomized by the organization of the AAA. Instead, the anthropology

of morality (and the questions of ethics with which it is entangled) demands critical attention, for it is little short of an effort, certainly among some of the key proponents, to define (or effectively redefine) the discipline and to set its course for the future.

The current “moral turn” is not the first and will probably not be the last, although the present direction has some alarming implications. In 1959 May and Abraham Edel timidly explored the possible connections between anthropology and moral philosophy in *Anthropology and Ethics*, a work that remained largely inconsequential for anthropology until more recent interest in moralities surged. They focused mostly on making conceptual distinctions between larger ethical questions (ethics wide) and concrete ethical systems in situ (ethics narrow). In 1997 Signe Howell put together an edited collection called *Ethnography of Moralities* that aimed to explore moralities ethnographically from a methodological perspective. She purposefully avoided making the definition of morality her central concern, recognizing the impossibility of defining morality in an absolute sense. In 2009, however, Monica Heintz’s edited collection *The Anthropology of Moralities* extended its focus beyond methodological issues emerging from studying moralities in different contexts to consider the epistemology of moralities. The more recent expression of moral interest—or interest in morality—represented by Fassin’s (2012) *A Companion to Moral Anthropology* revisits the connection between anthropology and moral philosophy and focuses on definitions of the good, the moral, and value, where “the object of moral anthropology is the moral making of the world” (Fassin 2012, 4). Fassin’s objective, however, is more ambitious still: to reformulate the discipline of anthropology and interrogate the delimitations of its object of study. By means of a Foucauldian-influenced Durkheimian perspective, moral anthropology is proposed as a new episteme, with a totalizing compass that draws different

orientations to focus on current issues of human suffering, violence, human rights, or humanitarian crises. This leads moral anthropology to appear as a politically critical and self-reflexive anthropology, engaging the discipline both theoretically and practically. However, we aim to discuss the risks of reducing the radical critical potential of anthropology and the resulting consequence of making anthropology instrumental in furthering Western hegemony. This is a difficulty that Fassin himself recognizes but that the different approaches in moral anthropology do not manage to overcome.

Three central issues emerge in moral anthropological studies as the starting points for analysis: relativism vs universalism, the importance of freedom and individualism in forming and acting upon moral precepts, and the centrality of social interactions in the formation of ethical life (see Heintz 2009; Keane 2013, 2015). Moral anthropologists vary slightly in their approaches. Whereas James Laidlaw presents the anthropology of ethics as a tool for “the enrichment of the core conceptual vocabulary and practice of anthropology” (2014, 1), Joel Robbins (2009, 2012, 2016), an influential proponent, sees the moral turn as being something akin to Thomas Kuhn’s (1970 [1962]) discussion of paradigm change in science. This is not only an overstatement but also a failure to recognize sufficiently the political and economic forces of which the moral turn is an expression.

Anthropology has never had an overarching paradigm either of orientation or agreed theory. This was so from its beginnings as an academic subject in the nineteenth century up to the immediate World War II years. After the war the field began to expand, leading to the extraordinarily diverse subject that it has become today—in conceptual orientation and topics of interest encompassing the arts, humanities and the sciences, with subfields of visual, physical and biological, linguistic, medical, social, and cultural anthropology. In the early period—until as recently

as the 1990s in the broad fields of cultural and social anthropology (those that are the main reference of the moral turn)—anthropology was characterized by rivalrous “schools” of orientation that often centered on specific departments and espoused particular perspectives (or mix of orientations) variously described as functionalist, structuralist, culturalist, materialist, and so on. For a time some theoretical or general conceptual perspectives achieved a degree of preeminence—for example, the *L'Année* school founded by Durkheim in 1898 and Mauss in France and with some variation in England, or the culturalist tradition of Boas in America. In fact, shades of the rivalries between the various perspectives in the early days of the discipline persist to this day. Although they were perhaps exemplary of a subject as a pre-science in the Kuhnian sense, they did not give rise to the formation of an overall integrative paradigm. We would hazard that by and large the different schools of thought have dissolved or dissipated into the mass of topics and orientations of a virtually all-inclusive subject (anthropology as a catch-all) that focuses on most areas of human endeavor and practice bridging the arts, humanities, and the sciences.

Anthropology—or, rather, social and cultural anthropology—the chief reference of the moral turners, is more a-paradigmatic than paradigm directed in the sense that Kuhn described for the physical and biological sciences. More to the point, anthropology achieved its importance (a degree of recognition by other disciplines) through its challenge to overarching paradigms or ruling theoretical or conceptual orientations rather than its acceptance or confirmation of them. Twentieth-century anthropology often contested such ruling theoretical positions as that of evolutionism or those that were overly determinist or essentialist (i.e., asserted a fundamental and universal human nature). The kind of challenge anthropology once presented (epitomized in Malinowski's use of his Trobriand evidence to contest major theoretical positions)—and

here we note the radical point of the concepts of society and especially culture in anthropology—has arguably declined or retreated. It could be said that anthropology has in many senses become more domesticated to dominant biological, economic, political and psychological approaches.

The comparative anthropological project based on long-term ethnographic research, shaped by Malinowskian anthropology, has been central to the discipline's commitment to the production of knowledge that frequently challenges or problematizes taken-for-granted (paradigmatic) assumptions. The firm establishment of an overarching paradigm is difficult in a subject that comprises a virtually open field of analytical and theoretical possibilities, especially given the diversity of disciplinary approaches that inhabit its subject space. Furthermore, the acceptance of an overarching paradigm is complicated by anthropology's ethnographic commitment that is oriented to the production of theory from the ground of practice (or social action). This commitment involves a suspension of judgment (a particular bracketing) whereby authority, at least temporarily, is given to the practice and its logic (a dimension of the morality of practice) *vis à vis* metropolitan, dominant, or ruling theoretical assumptions or suppositions (see Holbraad this volume).

Anthropology (especially sociocultural anthropology), we contend, is not theory driven. It does not begin with theory; rather, it suspends particular theoretical commitments subject to the ethnographic exploration of the nature of the phenomenon about which abstract theoretical statements of potentially more general application or importance can be made. Anthropology is a practice of conceptual and theoretical emergence—an arena or open space for realizations of human potential and the building of frameworks (eventually paradigms perhaps) for their more general recognition and understanding. As an open space of emergence, anthropology is in constant

critical crisis that is congenitally subversive of overarching paradigms and certainly narrow reductive assumptions as to what the nature of human being is. There is a tension in anthropology—a feature that it does share with much science—to question particular paradigms of human understanding and to do this through the ethnographic; that is, to paraphrase Levi-Strauss, ethnography is what anthropologists think with when assessing established perspectives and investigating new possibilities.

The anthropology of moralities manifests dimensions of the a-paradigmatic spirit of anthropology. It is a field that, in its common focus on morality, is marked by disagreement. The adherence to a Durkheimian perspective by Didier Fassin (2008, 2012), a major inspiration of the moral anthropological project, is contested by the Foucauldians (e.g., Laidlaw 2002; Zigon 2007, 2010), who go beyond Durkheim into the domain of a subjectivizing (and individualistic relativizing) postmodernism. Associated with this is an expansion of the influence of phenomenology, of both an ego-centered (strongly subjectivist sort) and more sociocentric kind (e.g., the later Husserl, Schutz), the latter tending to give way to the former. However, we add, the current phenomenologizing trends (exemplified, e.g., in different ways by Michael Lambek and Veena Das) have been involved in asserting positions (and to some extent an individualist, Western-centered philosophical hegemony) rather than engaging a phenomenological perspective exploratively, which we think was more the case initially in anthropology. Phenomenology is now made into a theory rather than a method.

There are various approaches to the recent development of an anthropology of morality, represented in Fassin's (2012) edited companion to moral anthropology and independently elsewhere, but little that is outstandingly novel. So much appears to be a reinvention of the wheel, so to say, which is not to be negative, although it does question the claims of those proponents for introducing

a new radically innovative perspective (or paradigm). Important new moral perspectives such as Veena Das's (2015) stress on everyday events or Zigon's (2007) focus on what he refers to as situations of moral breakdown pursue orientations that had already been developed and upon which they may have usefully extended rather than effectively ignored.

The situational analysis approach of Max Gluckman's Manchester School is one instance (see Werbner 1984; Kapferer 2010; Evens and Handelman 2008). Gluckman (see, e.g., 1940), although a staunch Durkheimian (but strongly influenced by Marx), sought to modify the structural functionalism of the time. His method of "situational analysis" focused on everyday events of crisis in which ordinary expectations for action were thrown into question and taken-for-granted values opened to interpretation with potentially system-changing effects. Gluckman's method stressed the heterogeneities of value in practice and the conflicts and tensions in interpretation and judgment. It was developed from Evans-Pritchard's (1937, 1940a, 1940b) Azande and Nuer ethnographies, in which ideas and values are contextually shaped (the logic of the situation). The method aimed at extending the importance of Malinowski's stress on in-depth ethnography (a notion well in advance of Geertz's "thick description") to the understanding of complex contemporary worlds and the conflicting and contradictory forces influencing and brought into play through individual action. A key focus of Gluckman was on anthropology as the study of social action as moral action, grounding Durkheim's abstractionism, of course a feature too of social phenomenology (see Schutz 1962; Berger and Luckmann 1967, 1995). Gluckman understood the normative values of the social to be in continual processes of construction and situated differentiation best grasped in the breach (at moments of conflict) than in the taken-for-granted routine or in abstract or normative reflections on everyday practice. This is well demonstrated in

his work on law and the sociomoral dilemmas surrounding witchcraft accusations. Gluckman's perspective broke with the overly normative orientations of anthropology of his time. Not content with describing and illustrating the force of the moral order or with showing how social practice expressed dominant overarching values, Gluckman and his colleagues concentrated on the foundation of how value is produced and formulated in practical terms through individuals' actions as they encountered sociomoral dilemmas and conflicts in value expectations.

More positively, the significance of the moral turn is less in its methodological recommendations than in its re-insistence that social and cultural anthropology be centered in the study of human being: on the contexts of their practices and perhaps, above all, on the construction of values, the orientation of practice within such values (that of the observers as well as the observed), and those values' existential implications. The key position of value-related practice in anthropology inescapably involves a concern with moral forces, but not necessarily in any moralistic sense. Sociocultural anthropology has in the main been relativistic, at least in the first instance; that is, the sociomoral orders of other systems have, by and large, been considered in themselves prior to submitting them to more universalistic assessment (or engaging them to question certain universalisms or else adjust these). Anthropology, given its concern with the diversities of human value and practice on a global scale, has been directed to examine the degree to which assumptions from one sociomoral universe might skew understanding in another—hence the key place of comparison in sociocultural anthropology and the concern to set particular contexts in the more global understanding of similar and different practices elsewhere (see Kapferer 2015; Kapferer and Theodossopoulos 2016). We add that anthropology early on was conscious of its birth in the circumstances of Western imperialism and, often despite itself, developed

a critical understanding that contested imperial authority. Anthropology became more fully conscious of this later in the context of mid-twentieth-century wars of colonial resistance (see Wolf 2010). Its enduring self-critique has been, arguably no doubt, in the forefront of attacks on the hegemonic prejudices of Western value involved not just in its own endeavors but more generally in the humanities and social and biological sciences. This is clear in the work of Levi-Strauss, among numerous others, whose aim was to elevate the importance of other systems of knowledge and practice that had been marginalized and suppressed by Western power and the overriding authority that it ascribed to its ruling values. Important critiques of anthropology by anthropologists (e.g., Asad 1973) build on a critical self-awareness in anthropology of its role as a bearer of not only the unwarranted superiority of occidental value but also the problematic engagement of such value in the construction of difference and of the Other.

Anthropologists are, in the main—or were—particularly sensitive to the historical circumstances of their intellectual beginnings made especially poignant by Said's (1978) orientalism critique. Much of the debate in anthropology is revolving around individualist assumptions, a concentration on the dynamics of choice, a subjectivist orientation (that in certain respects has arisen in a new guise in the new moral anthropology) *vis à vis* more socio-centered, structural perspectives. Ingrained within this debate is a concern with the distortions of Western-centered value assumptions in the comparative understanding of human social action and thought. The work of Louis Dumont (1980, 1992) (and reactions to his approach) expresses such debate. We note that Dumont is often charged with orientalism, but a reading of his work might detect a strong attack on the orientalism of much comparative sociological understanding.

Anthropologists, it is suggested here, have been enduringly concerned not only with the implications and

consequences of sociomoral value and action within the realities of their investigation but also with the methodological implications of the values embedded in the way they go about their work, as the Scheper-Hughes/D'Andrade debate exemplified (see Gold this volume). Most anthropologists eschew a value-free objectivism, and few would doubt that the conceptualizations and theories that they might apply to the realities of their studies are without sociomoral value assumptions. This is at the root of major debates in anthropology (e.g., the formalist/substantivist debate in economic anthropology). Why then the moral turn in anthropology? What accounts for the re-insistence of the central position of morality in anthropology?

Broadly, we hazard, although moral anthropology is a continuation (or extension) of already well-established arguments in anthropology, it is a reaction (perhaps unconscious) to structural changes in the discipline that have dissipated or fractured a sense of a coherent and relatively distinct project. This is an effect both of the great expansion in the number of practicing anthropologists combined with the growth of subdisciplinary areas within anthropology. As a result of the latter particularly, anthropology has been emptied of much of its erstwhile distinction, becoming more a subbranch of other disciplines in the sense of being defined by their perspectives and paradigms. Concepts of culture and society, or that of the social, over which there has been hot debate, have been reduced in their once-analytical significance. They have often become loose descriptors. Being an anthropologist has value as a statement of identity, but it has lost much of the methodological and theoretical worth it had begun to achieve in the course of establishing itself as an academic discipline.

The opening up of the discipline to other paradigms and perspectives whose prime focus is not on human being itself—although undoubtedly leading to fruitful

lines of analytical thought—has, albeit arguably, made anthropology more a vehicle for ruling thought rather than its challenge. Such challenge was once a function of the priority anthropology gave to human practices and their motivating or underlying values over the authority given to abstract conceptualization or theory (see Kapferer 2014). The moral turn in anthropology can be seen as a return to the concerns and methodological issues that gave anthropology a relatively distinct coherence and in which human being and the diversity of its nature in practice was always at the center (see Bell this volume). The critical reflection on Durkheim by some proponents of moral anthropology (see Bloch 1975, 1983; Robbins 2016) might underscore this.

Moral Anthropology as a Diminishing of Radical Critical Potential

The anthropology of morality can, somewhat paradoxically, be conceived as vital to the very processes behind its emergence; that is, it is part of forces that have overcome what could be described as anthropology's particular resistant discourse (or its immanent possibility), one that committed itself to an understanding of particular practices and their logics (i.e., their value orientations and the social and political constraints affecting them). Thus, a feature of the work of many moral anthropologists (e.g., those who strive to take a dominant role—Lambek, Das, Laidlaw, etc.) is that they tend to subordinate their discussion to conceptual and theoretical concerns that are part of the dynamics or the status quo of commanding orders (see Ifeka this volume). In many senses they are bound to the terms of Western liberal and moral philosophy very much implicated in currently renewed efforts for the imperializing hegemony of Western value. They do not challenge the discourse so much as accept its overarching

terms or, more to the point, reinforce its universalizing claims and the power structures it so often underpins. The terms of Western liberal philosophy, the significance of its arguments certainly not to be disregarded, is given great impetus in anthropological discussion, as Evens (this volume, see also Holbraad) discusses. As such, the anthropology of morality manifests a moralism underneath, a repressed or suppressed moralism despite declarations against it, that extends from the Western imperialism of the past (and its ideological roots in Western Christianity secularized into an engine of modernity or the dynamics of contemporaneity). One feature of this is its ethnocentrism and its implicit furtherance of Western value dominance, even as this may be denied (see Kirtsoglou and Theodossopoulos this volume).

But here we contend that the moral turn in anthropology is clearly part of a more general humanitarian discourse. We hazard that it is less driven by intellectual or scholarly motives internal to the discipline than it is by ideological forces of a global nature that encompass anthropology (see Kalb this volume). Humanitarian discourse (its very great positivities notwithstanding, e.g., its cries against the inequities of poverty, the abjection and suffering of war, the inhumanities of state oppression) is a global ideology produced in the very forces of the political economy of globalization, whose disastrous effects it counterbalances but with which it is often complicit, good intentions aside (see Taylor this volume). Humanitarianism and the concern with ethics are ideologically integral to the political economy of contemporary globalization, which offset the frequently disastrous effects of new directions in the transitions and transformations of techno-capitalism (that create new forms of abjection in war and poverty, e.g., as they may also reinforce earlier, even more traditional modes of oppression). Humanitarian discourse and ethics ameliorate the forces of inhumanity, but they may also, often unintentionally, become the

very instruments that facilitate the forces whose effects they are openly declared to offset (see Rigi this volume).

Neoliberalism, processes of state transformation, new excesses of capitalism (the new corporatism associated with digitalization and the internet), connected with socioeconomic abjection in the West and growing distress and inequalities in the South (associated with the refugee crisis, e.g.) are connected with a greater intensity in humanitarian discourse and concern with ethics and its component notions such as freedom and equality¹ (see also Bastin this volume). These are not merely ideological or practical efforts to deal with the disasters of transitional or transformational processes (or the spirit of transparency in the progressive egalitarianism of the age) but, we suggest, are dynamically and ideologically integral to the forces they appear to combat. The current concern with ethics is an extension of biopolitics and is part of a discourse of political control and regulation, as many in this collection have argued (see especially Friedman).

There is a tendency among the proponents of a new moral anthropology to overintellectualize their cause, which they conceive as a problem for anthropology somehow separate from wider political economic processes. James Laidlaw's (2014) important intervention on the matter of morality and ethics is a case in point. He steers the course away from the anthropology of the recent past that was strongly oriented to a critique of the status quo (the anthropology of the 1960s). Laidlaw points to the questionable nature of its reductionist materialism, concerns with agency, obsessions with power and resistance, and so on. However, in doing so, Laidlaw avoids many of the critical aspects of the world in which anthropology is thoroughly enmeshed and insufficiently recognizes that the moral and ethical philosophical and existential matters he and others discuss are conditioned by the political and economic forces of history. Laidlaw's approach returns anthropology to an intellectualism of which many

of the scholars he attacked at the start of his argument are sharply critical. Here the argument comes back to the issue of paradigms that began this brief introduction. Kuhn, of course, saw paradigm changes in science as being connected to the larger political and economic circumstances and cosmologies of human life and orientation. It seems to us that many of the proponents of the new moral anthropology and ethical turn direct their attention away from such matters.

In 1937 Edmund Husserl published his *Crisis of the European Sciences*. It was significant for many reasons, not least because Husserl aimed to correct a certain overego-centered (or individualistic) dimension of his phenomenological method and a subversion of his own concern with comprehending how human beings came to form their existential circumstances and act within them. Husserl wrote during the apotheosis of Nazi Germany. The disaster of this was all too apparent to him, and he saw it as being connected to the overriding domination of science and technology as providing the true method for human understanding. The nature of human knowledge was both dehumanized in itself and driven towards a disastrous (for human being) orientation to human realities. Husserl's *Crisis* has relevance for the discussions of moral anthropology not least because many adopt a phenomenological course (often Heideggerian, if not Husserlian) that is strongly individualistic (self-reflective) in manner, even psychological, though it is far from the kind Husserl attacked. But the feature we highlight is that moral anthropology has emerged out of a political and economic climate in which science and technology reign supreme and might be said to be thoroughly engaged in transforming modern realities.

It is through metaphors and understandings drawn from dominant scientific and technological orientations to the world that—arguably, we admit—increasingly dehumanized approaches to human-created realities are emerging. Earlier human-centered or socio-centered

approaches in the humanities and the social sciences are being cast aside sometimes, we believe, a little too enthusiastically. Some (DeLanda 2002, 2013; Latour 2004, 2013) announce a new metaphysics grounded in science (failing to discern that science itself is often oriented along the human-centered paths apparent in the very metaphysics that it overtly discards; see Rubenstein 2008; Schrempf 2012, 2016). Posthumanism is being celebrated in certain quarters, human being becoming decentered as it were in processes of re-forming the humanities and the social sciences. Perhaps moral anthropology can be seen, as we have already indicated, as a reaction to aspects of these reorientations. If so, however, it should turn more than it has so far done specifically in the reconceptualization of its key problematic to the political and socioeconomic circumstances in which it has been spawned.

The Papers: The Sequence of Argument and Discussion

The papers in this volume address moral anthropology from three main angles: orientations, implications, and situation. Section I, Orientations, explores how political and socioeconomic circumstances have conditioned the scope and impact of moral anthropology. This section provides important critique of moral anthropology's approach to central definitions—morality/ethics, good/evil, action/theory—thus introducing themes that are explored in detail throughout the book.

The papers by Holbraad and Bell engage with the major contributors in moral anthropology and identify the main issues emerging from this turn: the ethnocentrism resulting from placing ethics and morality as the starting point and core of the object of study as well as the pre-eminence given to freedom as a constitutive category of morality. Moral anthropology, argues Holbraad, in trying to avoid

passing judgement, does not settle the question of moralism. He argues for the priority of the ethnographic—the situation—and contends that morality, value, and, indeed, the constraints of choice and the resistance of structural (moral) determinisms or dictates are integral to the ethnographic situation and must emerge from it.

Bell addresses the issue raised by Holbraad regarding “What is the good?” (a notion that dates at least from Aristotle’s *Ethics*) and delves into an analysis of the role of ethics and morality in the making of humanity. Bell does this by identifying the dangers of moral anthropology’s totalizing capacity. She points to moral anthropology’s claims to redefining the discipline methodologically: in asserting that a moral positioning in our objects of study needs to be reflexively considered, moral anthropology starts from “a normative moral position” itself. Bell identifies the problematic distinctions between morals and ethics, initially raised by Holbraad and explored at length by Evens in the following paper.

Terry Evens tackles the complexity behind the meaning of terms such as *ethics*, *morality*, and *value*, inherently connected to ideas of *the good*, arguing that “what constitutes the good is palpably an open rather than closed question, and that therefore the essential nature of ethics and morality is likewise open.” For Evens, ethics emerges from an understanding of selfhood as the locus of the reflexive relationship between self and other, examined further by Kirtsoglou and Theodossopoulos in the context of Greece. Therefore selfhood “describes the essential condition of ethics” because the self is essentially social. Evens makes the important point that ethical preferences have an essential ambiguity that can be suppressed when moralisms, given their status as rules, determine ethical preferences through a dualist lens of good and evil.

Don Kalb’s provocative conclusion to the first section considers the neoliberal context behind the emergence of moral anthropology. He identifies moral anthropology’s

attempt to redefine the discipline at a time of turbulent crisis in a world “hungry for ethics” and its intention to interact with moral philosophy as a mechanism to engage with the “big ethical issues in the world rather than proverbial village concerns.” This, Kalb suggests, is a consequence of the penetration of technological orders into the social—epitomized by robotic killing machines and hyper-intelligent algorithms. He argues that ethical visions and practices need to be understood in the context of class formation, a product of politics and power. However, politics and power are placed on a secondary plane by moral anthropology, which, according to Fassin, favors “politics within.”

The essays in Section II, *Situating Morality Ethnographically*, contextualize and develop further the critique set out in more abstract terms in Section I. Both Taylor and Gold may be understood as raising the importance of suspending moral judgment, at least initially, in the anthropological ethnographic exercise. They indicate the way in which the moral values of the anthropologist can not only distort ethnographic understanding but also might paradoxically weaken the potential of anthropological critique (as well as the role of specific moralities and moralisms in the systematic dehumanization of human populations). Taylor’s account of his role as anthropologist and as witness of the Rwandan genocide explores the distinctions between anthropological analysis and critique and committed political engagement. He is concerned with how value dominates anthropology, particularly in politically sensitive debates, thereby undermining the capacity for anthropology to deliver relevant critique.

Gold’s paper shares dimensions of Taylor’s concern as she explores the relation between value and power. She starts with the moral issues raised by the 1955 Schepers-Hughes/D’Andrade debate, taking these forward into a consideration of the AAA boycott of Israeli academics in 2015. Gold highlights the historically based factors

integral to moral/ethical concerns and the moral conflicts and confusions that arise when critique and activism are merged, in which the positive concerns of both can be defeated.

The conflation of activism, humanitarian principles, and solidarity has been key in recent events in Greece—given the debt crisis and the subsequent arrival of large numbers of refugees. Kirtsoglou and Theodossopoulos explore how humanitarian discourse handles the notion of “what is good” through a discussion of empathy and sympathy in austerity-stricken Greece, especially during the refugee crisis. This timely analysis elucidates the implications of moralizing language as it extends beyond academic debates into fields of policy and action. Humanitarianism is an important source of inspiration for moral anthropology, often unintentionally generating asymmetries through its engagement with neoliberal morality.

Neoliberal morality, it must be remembered, has strong Christian influences. Ifeka further discusses the implications of moral anthropology when applied to concrete ethnographic cases, revealing the ambiguities of moral anthropology debates in practice with a discussion of animism in London. She focuses on the influence of Christianity underpinning the notion of the moral in Western liberal thought, which gets imported into other locations with different constitutions of personhood. She attacks moral anthropology and development practitioners alike for producing standardized bourgeois models of civic “man” with a global god. Ultimately, she asks of moral anthropology how it would “explain recent manifestations of subaltern animist sociality in London—a world center of finance capital accumulation by dispossession—where ritualized killings and sacrificial acts are deemed by the law and national media to be crimes of murder?”

Many of the authors in this collection argue that moral anthropology does not sufficiently acknowledge the extent to which it is a product of its own situation. The essays of

Section III, *Moral Anthropology: An Anti-Politics Machine*, further elaborate the hidden politics in moral anthropology raised in Section I and the implications for a critical anthropology. Particular attention is placed on the emergence of moral anthropology in the contemporary Western discourse of neoliberalism.

Rigi presents a historical analysis of the connection between moral anthropology and neoliberalism. He argues that a critique of moral anthropology requires an interrogation of general principles of currently prevalent ethics. This interrogation, however, cannot be undertaken from within current ethical principles, as they are enabled by neoliberalism. Moral anthropology, he argues, is the neoliberal-induced globalisation of ethics, and proponents of this branch of anthropology have not sufficiently problematized the very reason for its rise: “an entrepreneurial enterprise in tune with neoliberal commoditisation of the academic world.”

Such commoditisation is also at the core of Bastin’s analysis. However, he focuses on the economy of value within which moral anthropology emerges, questioning whether moral anthropology indeed produces an ethics of truth or, rather, is connected to the economic system of values encapsulated in the sense of necessity and is a result of the herd instinct of slave morality. He identifies moral anthropology as a symptom of a larger crisis, a surrendering to the market, and a feature of the discipline’s engagement in “late capitalism”—a condition of neoliberalism and a result of the rise of the corporate state.

Friedman’s closing paper notes the constraints of political correctness among intellectuals and aims to further unmask the antipolitics of moral anthropology. He considers the successive “turns” in anthropology as expressions of a trajectory that is not linear but rather dependent on the larger context in which intellectual discourses emerge, transform, and disappear. His argument situates the emergence of moral anthropology and the way

it generates particular representational configurations. Important in his analysis—given the predominance in the moral anthropologists’ writings—is the role of freedom as the “neoliberal turn.”

This volume aims to critique moral anthropology’s efforts to redefine the project of anthropology as a discipline. All the essays examine how the current fashion for moral anthropology may undermine the critical potentials of anthropology and, in certain instances, counter even the radical critical aims of some of the most ardent followers of moral anthropology to address various dehumanizing processes at what seems for many to be a critical moment in global history. The authors of the essays in this volume share the deeply human concerns of anthropology and of many in the current wave of moral anthropology generally. However, the point is to at least raise some doubts regarding the current direction and the way it may defuse rather than enhance the critical potential of anthropology and its concern for human beings everywhere. We hope at the very least that this volume will contribute to further opening the debate that the anthropologists of moralities have begun. The intention of this collection is, as Nietzsche suggests in the opening quote, to “force into the conscience of moralities an awareness of their own presumption,” to aim to reposition anthropology not in the center of the status quo but in a more marginal position, from whence it can level a more radical critique.

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Notes

1. Quite apart from the virtues in abstract of such egalitarian ideology as the importance of human freedom and the capacity of individuals to make choices concerning their existential circumstances, the discourse of freedom is central in political ideologies (often of an imperial expansionist kind). Freedom—and individual freedom—is a major instrument of legitimation in the maintenance of the status quo and not infrequently in programs that produce the forces of human anguish born of inequality, poverty, many forms of oppression, and war. We note that the discourse of freedom is vital in some anthropological discourse on morality.

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