The Primacy of the Ethical: Propositions for a Militant Anthropology

Nancy Scheper-Hughes

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The Primacy of the Ethical

Propositions for a Militant Anthropology[1]

by Nancy Scheper-Hughes

In bracketing certain "Western" Enlightenment truths we hold and defend as self-evident at home in order to engage theoretically a multiplicity of alternative truths encoded in our reified notion of culture, anthropologists may be "suspending the ethical" in our dealings with the "other." Cultural relativism, read as moral relativism, is no longer appropriate to the world in which we live, and anthropology, if it is to be worth anything at all, must be ethically grounded. This paper is an attempt to imagine what forms a politically committed and morally engaged anthropology might take.

NANCY SCHEPER-HUGHES is Professor of Anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley (Berkeley, Calif. 94720, U.S.A.). Born in 1944, she was educated at Berkeley (Ph.D., 1976). She has taught at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, at Southern Methodist University, at the University of Cape Town, and at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris. Her research interests include the application of critical theory to medicine and psychiatry, the anthropology of the body, illness, and suffering, the political economy of the emotions, and violence and terror. Among her publications are *Saints, Scholars, and Schizophrenics: Mental Illness in Rural Ireland* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1979), the edited volume *Child Survival: Anthropological Perspectives on the Treatment and Maltreatment of Children* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1987), and *Death Without Weeping* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992). The present paper was submitted in final form 25 x 94.

1. This paper was originally presented as a keynote address at the Israel Anthropological Association Meetings, Tel Aviv University, on March 23, 1994, where the conference theme was "Politically Committed Anthropology." On my return to South Africa I presented the paper to my colleagues at the Department of Social Anthropology, University of Cape Town, on May 13, 1994, where it achieved a certain notoriety and generated a strong response, aspects of which have worked their way into this revision. In November 1994 parts of this paper were read at the AAA symposium "Rethinking the Cultural: Beyond Intellectual Imperialisms and Parochialisms of the Past" (see Winkler 1994:A18). I am grateful to my Israeli, South African, and North American colleagues for their contributions and criticisms. Finally, at a crucial moment in my failed attempts to "make sense" of the "useless suffering" of the multitudes of Northeast Brazilian angel-babies, T. M. S. Evens introduced me to certain key writings of Emmanuel Levinas (1986). Although I originally rejected these with the vehemence of the unreflexive cultural relativist, Levinas's notion of a "pre-cultural" moral repugnance toward unnecessary human suffering came back to haunt me with a vengeance, along with the specter of three-year-old Mercea, who died abandoned by both her mother and her anthropologist during Brazilian Carnival celebrations in 1989.

For much of this century cultural anthropology has been concerned with divergent rationalities, with explaining how and why various cultural others thought, reasoned, and lived-in-the-world as they did. Classical anthropological thinking and practice are best exemplified, perhaps, in the great witchcraft and rationality debates of decades past.[2] Ideally, modernist cultural anthropology liberated "truth" from its unexamined Eurocentric and Orientalist presuppositions. But the world, the objects of our study, and consequently, the uses of anthropology have changed considerably. Exploring the cultural logic of witchcraft is one thing. Documenting, as I am now, the burning or "necklacing" of accused witches, political collaborators, and other ne'er-do-wells in beleaguered South African townships—where a daily toll of "charred bodies" is a standard feature of news reports—is another.[3] A more womanly-hearted anthropology might be concerned not only with how humans think but with how they behave toward each other, thus engaging directly with questions of ethics and power.

In South African squatter camps as in the AIDS sanatoria of Cuba and in the parched lands of Northeast Brazil, I have stumbled on a central dilemma and challenge to cultural anthropology, one that has tripped up many a fieldworker before me (for example, Renato Rosaldo [1989:1–21] in his encounters with Ilongot headhunters): In bracketing certain "Western" Enlightenment truths we hold and defend as self-evident at home in order to engage theoretically with a multiplicity of alternative truths encoded in our reified notion of culture, anthropologists may be "suspending the ethical" (Buber 1952:147–56) in our dealings with the "other," especially those whose vulnerable bodies and fragile lives are at stake. Moreover, what stake can anthropologists expect to have in current political debates in rapidly "democratizing" nations in Eastern Europe, Latin America, and Africa where newly drafted constitutions and bills of rights—and those of Brazil and South Africa are exem-

2. Excellent reviews of these debates in anthropology can be found in Mohanty (1989), Hollis and Lukes (1982), Wilson (1985), and Tambiah (1990).

3. Here is how the death of suspected police collaborators and witches is described in the local white newspaper in Cape Town (my emphasis): "Dozen *Bodies* Removed from Guguletu in Weekend Casualties"; "The *charred bodies* of seven people, including a 50 year old woman and her teenage daughter, were found in Thokoza hostel and Katlehong on Friday. . . . The burned and blackened *bodies* of two young men were found at the Mandela squatter camp in Thokoza and another body at Katlehong railway station" (*Cape Times*, September 1993); "Another 40 *bodies* found on the East Rand"; finally, "*Charred bodies* of two witches found in Nyanga" (*Argus*, January 21, 1994). The women accused of witchcraft had been bound together with rope and were "badly burnt." While white deaths "counted"—as, for example, in the extensive and personal coverage of the white victims of the St. James Church "massacre" in Cape Town in late July 1994—the black victims of township violence were merely "counted," recorded as body counts.

plary—speak to a growing global consensus ("Western," "bourgeois," "hegemonic," if you will) defending the rights of women, children, sexual minorities, the accused, and the sick against "traditional and customary law," cultural claims increasingly viewed as hostile, oppressive, and exploitative?

Framing the Issue and Calling the Bluff

In the introduction to *Death Without Weeping* (1992*b*: 21) I suggest that cultural relativism, read as moral relativism, is no longer appropriate to the world in which we live and that anthropology, if it is to be worth anything at all, must be ethically grounded: "If we cannot begin to think about social institutions and practices in moral or ethical terms, then anthropology strikes me as quite weak and useless." The specific instance I treat at length in *Death Without Weeping* concerns the moral thinking and social practices of poor shantytown women toward some of their small, hungry babies viewed as "wanting" to die or "needing" to die, as filling the role of "generative scapegoats" (Girard 1987) and dying, like Jesus, so that others might live.

More recently, I have dealt with the impact of the AIDS epidemic on moral thinking, public policy, and the "politics of truth" in the United States, Brazil, and Cuba (Scheper-Hughes 1993, 1994*a*). I suggest that more could have been done to prevent the spread of the epidemic if such standard public health measures and practices as routine testing with partner notification had not been rejected in the United States and, more generally, in the West (through the WHO global AIDS program) as politically unpalatable. I point to a lapse in moral courage by those empowered to protect the well-being of the social body and in the writings of medical anthropologists, among whom "critical" thinking seems to be suspended in the time of AIDS. Finally, in South Africa I ran headlong into a dispute with local "discipline" and "security" committees in a black squatter camp of the Western Cape, where the threat of the "necklace" and public floggings were used to keep especially young bodies in line.

In each case I have had to pause and reconsider the traditional role of the anthropologist as neutral, dispassionate, cool and rational, objective observer of the human condition: the anthropologist as "fearless spectator," to evoke Charles McCabe's (un)felicitous phrase. And I am tempted to call anthropology's bluff, to expose its artificial moral relativism and to try to imagine what forms a politically committed and morally engaged anthropology might take.

Anthropologist and *Companheira*

My transformation from "objective" anthropologist to politically and morally engaged *companheira* was, however, the result not so much of a tortured process of critical self-reflexivity as of the insistence of some of "my" anthropological subjects. On the day that I was about to leave the field in Northeast Brazil in 1982 a fight broke out between my research assistant, "Little Irene," and several women of the shantytown of the Alto do Cruzeiro (aptly named Crucifix Hill) that was to change irrevocably the course of my life and work as an anthropologist. The women—all of them shantytown mothers—were waiting outside the creche and social center of the squatters' association where I was gathering the sad reproductive histories that would eventually result in the publication of *Death Without Weeping* a decade later.

When I emerged to see what the commotion was about, the women were prepared to turn their anger against me. Why had I refused to work with them when they had been so willing to work with me? Didn't I care about them personally any more—their lives, their suffering, their struggle? This was a reference to my previous history in the community when, during the mid-1960s, I lived and worked in the Alto do Cruzeiro as a politically committed community organizer, helping to found UPAC, the squatters' association, and attending to the community's perennial quest for clean water, garbage collection, street lights, and paved streets, alongside the fight for fair wages, rudimentary medical and dental services, protection from police brutality and death squad violence, and, perhaps most important, proper and dignified burials.

Why was I now, 20 years later, so—how could they put it?—so passive, so indifferent, so seemingly resigned to the destruction of the association by right-wing political attacks, to the closing of the creche, and to the end of the festas and celebrations of everyday lives and everyday saints that I had once thrown myself into with such abandon. I explained, once again, what anthropology was and that I was there to observe, to document, to understand, and later to write about their lives and their pain as fully, as truthfully, and as sensitively as I could.

That was all well and good, replied the women, but what else was I going to do while I was with them? Shouldn't we hold squatters' association meetings again, now that grassroots organizations had been "unbanned" by the newly democratizing government? Couldn't the old "cultural circles" and Paulo Freirean literacy groups that we once had be revived? Many Alto men and women had lost the basics of reading and writing that they had learned years before. And what about the creche building itself? It was in a bad state of disrepair, its roof tiles broken, its bricks beginning to crumble. Shouldn't we organize a collective work force, a *mutirão*, as we did in the old days, to get the building back in shape?

I backed away saying, "This work is cut out for you. My work is different now. I cannot be an anthropologist and a *companheira* at the same time." I shared my reservations about the propriety of a North American's taking an active role in the life of a poor Brazilian community. This was "colonialist," I patiently explained, trying to summarize the arguments of Edward Said, Talal Asad,

and others that had gained such currency in anthropological circles. But my arguments fell on deaf ears. "Oh, Nanci," they protested, "Doutor Claudio [the owner of the local sugar mill, Cuaranji] is colonialist, not us." And they gave me an ultimatum: the next time I came back to the Alto do Cruzeiro it would be on their terms, that is, as a *companheira*, "accompanying" them as I had before in the struggle and not just sitting idly by taking field notes. "What is this anthropology to us, anyway?"

And so, each time I returned between 1987 and 1992—for four more fieldwork trips in all—I assumed the local *cargo* of anthropologist-*companheira*, dividing my time (and my loyalties) between anthropology and political work as it was assigned to me by the activist women and men of the Alto, even when it meant being drawn (and not always happily) into local campaigns on behalf of the Socialist Workers' Party candidate for president, Lula, during the heated election campaigns of 1989 or being asked to support a mill workers' and cane cutters' general strike the year before. My reluctance to do so was born out of my own natural anthropological inclination to want—as Adlai Stevenson once put it—just to sit back in the shade with a glass of wine in my hand and watch the dancers.

But the more my *companheiras* gently but firmly pulled me away from the "private" world of the wretched huts of the shantytown, where I felt most comfortable, and toward the "public" world of the municipio of Bom Jesus da Mata, into the marketplace, the mayor's office and the judge's chambers, the police station and the public morgue, the mills and the rural union meetings, the more my understandings of the community were enriched and my theoretical horizons were expanded. True, I lost the chameleon-like ambidexterity of the politically uncommitted (or, at least, the noncommital) anthropologist, and as I veered decidedly toward "left-handedness" I had to deal with real political foes who, on more than one occasion, sent local thugs after me, requiring me to leave our field site until the "heat" was off. Now I had to accept that there were places where I was not welcome in Bom Jesus da Mata and local homes—both grand and small—that were irrevocably closed to me and consequently to anthropology. There were embarrassing incidents, such as the time I was accosted in the main town square just as a busload of people returning from Recife spilled onto the sidewalk. Fabiano, the dominant plantation family's partisan journalist, red-faced and angry, knocked me off balance and yelled drunkenly, "Nanci, Nanci, *querida*, watch out! Why are you messing around with a bunch of worthless anarchists and a Commie-faggot priest?" "Tsk! Tsk!" commented local middle-class residents as they scurried past, heads down, with their shopping bundles under their arms.

I wondered what my late mentor, Hortense Powdermaker, would have said, recalling her enormous pride in her ability to negotiate her way skillfully between and around the "color line" in Sunflower County, Mississippi, in the 1930s, managing to maintain open and courteous relations with both the white aristocracy and the black sharecropper families (see Powdermaker 1939). But the times and anthropology had changed. It now seemed that there was little virtue to false neutrality in the face of the broad political and moral dramas of life and death, good and evil, that were being played out in the everyday lives of the people of Alto do Cruzeiro, as in Sunflower County in the 1930s and in the squatter camps surrounding Cape Town and in Jerusalem and "its" occupied territories today. What makes anthropology and anthropologists exempt from the human responsibility to take an ethical (and even a political) stand on the working out of historical events as we are privileged to witness them?

The plot and the dilemmas thickened as I moved from Northeast Brazil into the even more politically charged climate of South Africa during 1993–94.

Who's the Killer?

At a special showing of the once-banned antiapartheid film *A Dry White Season* at the University of Cape Town in August 1993, I was unprepared for a spontaneous audience reaction: muted but audible boos and hisses accompanied the scene of the 1976 Soweto schoolchildren's uprising against forced instruction in Afrikaans. "Why would a liberal audience of Capetonians react so negatively to the scene of black township youth defending their rights?" I asked a new colleague the next day. I had recently arrived in South Africa to take up a new post, and, still suffering from the dislocation, I desperately needed a running interpretation of the subtexts of everyday life. "I suppose some people are sick and tired of violent schoolchildren on rampage," the colleague replied. The answer surprised me, and I tucked it away in a fieldnote.

Before the month was out, however, I had seen my fill of newspaper and TV media images of local township schoolchildren burning textbooks, toyi-toyi-ing [the high-spirited revolutionary marching dance of Southern Africa] while chanting for death to the "settlers" and "torching" the cars of suspected government "agents" who dared to enter the black townships during the teachers' strike called "Operation Barcelona" (an allusion to the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona and the torches carried by their lead runners). In townships torches were also a symbol of liberty but were used more ominously to keep out "settlers" and to burn out suspected collaborators and other "bad eggs" whose shacks were torched or whose bodies were set afire with "necklaces" of petrol-filled tires wrapped around their necks. We learned our lesson when our car was denied entry to the New Crossroads squatter camp outside Cape Town on the day we had hoped to attend an ecumenical peace service announced by Archbishop Tutu.

Later, however, my work brought me into contact with the rural squatters of Chris Hani camp, a new community of recently arrived African migrants from the

black homeland of Transkei. The camp suddenly appeared in 1992 on the hilly landscape of Franschhoek, a white-dominated grape-farm, vineyard, and tourist community in the Western Cape, as blacks took advantage of a new liberal spirit and presence on the Franschhoek town council. (Franschhoek was the site of Vincent Crapanzano's celebrated book *Waiting: The Whites of South Africa,* published in 1985.) The incident to which I now turn concerns three young thieves whose "necklacing" was narrowly averted by the intervention of ANC and PAC (Pan African Congress) politicized youth, who drew me into their action as a way of diverting attention from themselves. Though I was fearful of being lured into a potentially dangerous trap, the even more fearful condition of the "disciplined" young thieves overdetermined a "human" and engaged rather than a distanced and "objective" anthropological response.

The incident involved the theft of 400 rands (about $125) from a shabeen owner by three teenaged boys. Caught red-handed, the thieves were immediately surrounded by a mob demanding their death by necklacing. The sentence was overruled, however, by a small group of youths, citing the ANC Bill of Rights, which condemns the death penalty. Necklacing was replaced by 100 strokes with a sjambock (a large bullwhip), further reduced to 50. The floggings were performed collectively by several older men of the squatter-camp community. Sidney Kumalo, my 18-year-old field assistant, just recently returned from his month of Xhosa initiation, isolation, and disciplined hunger in the bushes near Khayelitsha township, confronted me for the first time as a reborn, remade man: "There is something you need to know about our codes of discipline. You must see the boys for yourself," he said, and I accompanied him and his small group of comrades with trepidation and a heavy heart. Squatter-camp business is public business, and within minutes the word would spread from shack to shack that the new "white woman" was in the camp again and nosing around the "prisoners." Recording for whom? they would wonder.

"We all deserve a lashing," I had recently written in a despairing letter to friends. "The sadism of society demands it." But the sight of the raw and bleeding backs of the young thieves made me want to eat those words. Kept in isolation and denied food and water as a continuation of the discipline imposed by the community, the boys were not a pretty sight. They could not bend their legs, sit down, or walk without wincing, and three days after the whipping they were still unable to urinate or defecate without difficulty. The smallest, Michael B., scowled with pain and revenge. "I'll kill them," he kept repeating of his tormentors. The community did not want anyone (especially not me) to see the boys for fear of police involvement and had refused them medical attention. Their parents were nowhere in sight, fearful that their shacks might be burned were they to show any concern for their children. The following was transcribed from a tape-recorded interview with the boys, with Sidney serving as translator/interpreter:

Sidney: You see they stole 400 rands from one of the people's houses. So they bought brandy and weapons, pangas [machetes] but when they were caught they gave 200 rand back. Due to certain codes of conduct they were punished this way. At first the community called for burnings, then it got set up at 100 lashes. Before the punishment was set people were waving pangas and said that they are going to get burned because they are thieves. So the boys were here just waiting to get killed.

NS-H: Why wouldn't they run away?

Sidney: They couldn't because they were surrounded by the whole community and the people had these pangas and sticks. They didn't have any chance to run away.

NS-H: Do the people ever think to wait until things are more calm to take action?

Sidney: No, no, no! If they catch them now, within five minutes this whole place is full of people. It's very quick. But this is not the traditional way. In the homelands [Transkei] where I come from, I don't have the right to judge. Only an old man with a lot of experience can stand up and speak out and give up the punishment. But here it is too simple. If I don't like that one or that one I can just say, "Give him 80 lashes." Other people who like him better may come up with a smaller number, and so on. It's very harsh.

NS-H: Would they really kill you for stealing 400 rands?

Sidney: Let me ask the boys themselves. . . . Yes, they say the punishment was that they must get burned . . . but some of us had sympathy with them and we said, "No, just give them the lashes."

NS-H: Who wanted to protect them?

Sidney: Some of their friends. And a lot of the young people here in the PAC and the ANC youth committees are against the discipline codes. The ANC does not want us to use the lash on ourselves like a Boer farmer.

NS-H: What about their relatives?

Sidney: If their relatives speak out, the people here will think, "oh, so you put them up to this, you sent them there [to steal]." So the parents don't have any chance to defend their children. And from my experience, if a parent speaks up for a son, the people can come and burn down your shack. They are very strict in this discipline.

NS-H: Has anyone ever been "burned" in this community?

Sidney: No, not yet. And that's what makes it difficult for them to kill. No one has been killed yet. And we are afraid, we youth committee people, of what will happen here after they take that step once.

NS-H: Ask Michael what he learned from this experience.

Sidney (interpreting for Michael): At this moment he don't think he will steal again, but the only thing that's going through his mind over and over is revenge. But I told him that if he takes revenge he'll be punished all over again. But right now he can't think about anything but revenge, except he doesn't have the power to do it.

NS-H: Since the whole community made the decision to whip him, he would have to take revenge against everyone!

Sidney: Yeah, but he knows who were the people who did this to him, the ones who whipped him, because they don't cover their faces. He knows all their faces of those who did this.

NS-H: Does he have a job?

Sidney: Nothing permanent. He only works casually on the farms helping with the harvests.

NS-H: Is he initiated?

Sidney: No, none of them has been initiated. Here in the camp there are even grown men who have not been initiated! They may have built their own house, have a child, but still they don't have any rights.

NS-H: Why don't they go through the initiation?

Sidney: The difficulty is money. In the old days you would just go to the kraal and get a goat or a sheep, but today you must spend a lot of money. You get presents but that only pays back a small part of the money that is spent. Another thing, the clothes you wore before the initiation, you must give them away, for now you are starting a new life. Even the room you stay in, these newspapers on the wall, you must take them down and start all over. So you see, everything goes back to money and these guys don't have any.

On the following Saturday I brought a young "colored" medical student from the University of Cape Town to examine the boys, who were still under house arrest. Rose decided that Michael, the smallest and most injured of the boys, needed more extensive treatment for general infection and possible kidney damage. She departed for Cape Town that evening, but her visit to the camp had aroused anxiety and suspicion. The next morning Sidney and I took Michael by combi-taxi to the regional hospital in Paarl, where the boy was put on a course of intravenous antibiotics. The young Afrikaner doctor noted that he was severely dehydrated, anemic, and malnourished and recommended keeping him hospitalized for a few days. That night I received an anonymous phone call at "The Anchor Bed and Breakfast," my safe little harbor in rural Franschhoek. "Stay away from Chris Hani camp," the heavily accented brown-Afrikaner voice warned. "People there are angry that you interfered with their 'discipline.' Your safety cannot be guaranteed."

The next time I returned to Chris Hani camp, several days had passed, and I went to attend the funeral of a young comrade who had died of tuberculosis, the new scourge of squatter-camp life. His young widow was beside herself. I slipped into the back of the hastily constructed "chapel," a lean-to of scrap metal and wood covered by a large tarpaulin, painted red, green, and black in the ANC colors. After the service we left in procession, accompanied by strains of the "Umkhonto we Sizwe" military rag, recorded with background sounds of rifle and cannon shots. At the grave site the men took up shovels to bury their fallen comrade collectively. Then Duncan, a close friend of the deceased, suddenly came alive and led the ANC youth in a militant toyi-toyi, stamping his feet and chanting in English, while staring fixedly in my direction, "Who's the killer? Who's the killer? Who's the killer?"

The following Sunday a community meeting was held to discuss the question of justice and security at Chris Hani. The intervention in the incident of the three youths had provoked a crisis and the security committee had quit the night before, and there had been bloodshed in the camp. Residents were asked their opinions: Should the security guard be reconstituted, or should the community allow the regular (white) police to patrol the community? One by one people stepped forward to express their views. Everyone wanted the local security system, but they wanted the rules and regulations to be clearer:

Who are the security, anyway? People come to our door and give us orders and we do not know if they are really our security or not.

In the heat of the moment everyone calls for punishment, but after it is carried out, everyone wants to criticize.

What about the fairness of the punishments given? It shouldn't be that people with stronger families get off easier than single people, but that often happens.

What does the ANC say about discipline?

> The ANC is against the necklace.
>
> Shall we build a jail here?
>
> Can't we just wait for the elections in April and see what happens then?

Finally, I was called up to speak, and my knees were weak as I approached the microphone (Sidney and Temba served as translators):

> Forgive me, for I am a stranger here and have no authority to speak except as you ask me to. I am a member of the ANC ["Long live! Long live!" responded the crowd] and I understand why you reject the police and why you want to have your own system of justice. I interfered not to be partial to three boys who wronged the community but because I felt sorry for their mothers, who were ashamed of what their sons had done but who were afraid to help them. [Here the older women nodded their heads in agreement.] And I was afraid that Michael had a serious infection and could die without antibiotics. Many people are asking for alternatives to whippings and burnings; some of the young people and many women think it might be better to put thieves to work for the community: digging ditches, cleaning up garbage, sewage, and hauling water.

A committee was formed representing all groups in the camp—old and young, men and women, sports groups, political parties, security members themselves—to draw up alternatives for popular justice. In the interim there would be no more whippings. Squatter-camp leaders asked for help from the Community Peace Foundation of the University of the Western Cape, and two representatives of that foundation attended subsequent meetings to help the community draft less punitive rules and alternative punishments. After elections in April, civic association leaders began negotiations with the local police about sharing responsibility for keeping order at Chris Hani.

Michael, who could not get over his anger and desire for revenge, was advised to leave the squatter camp and was helped in locating a new home. The other two thieves accepted their punishment and were reintegrated into the community. Following Sidney's lead, several other youths went into the bush to undergo Xhosa initiation. The last time I saw one of the thieves he was slathered in white clay and smiling broadly. He boasted that his circumcision "cut" had hurt him worse than his flogging.

When I left Chris Hani, a few older men scolded me for having exceeded my role as a visitor and a guest, but the women invited me to a farewell beer party where I was asked to show the slides I had taken of the boys after their whipping. Seated at the front of the room, the women murmured their disapproval. The older men, somewhat abashed, stood to the back of the room close to the door. "Don't worry," said Mrs. Kumalo, as I gave her favorite son a final hug, "*You'll* be able to come back." But was that a threat, an irony, or a critique?

Waiting: The Anthropologist as Spectator

In juxtaposing "militancy" and "the ethical" in this paper I wish to question two sacred cows that have prevented anthropologists from participating in the struggle: the proud, even haughty distance from political engagement and its accompanying, indeed, its justifying ethic of moral and cultural relativism. The latter has returned with a vengeance in the still fashionable rhetoric of postmodernism, an excuse for political and moral dalliance if ever there was one.

In his book on white South Africans of the Western Cape, Crapanzano (1984:44) invoked the generative metaphor of "waiting" to describe the intellectual and moral paralysis of rural white farmers, both Boer and English, on the eve of the inevitable unraveling of apartheid:

> Waiting means to be oriented in time in a special way. . . . It is a sort of holding action—a lingering. (In its extreme forms waiting can lead to paralysis.) . . . The world in its immediacy slips away. It is de-realized. It is without élan, vitality, creative force. It is numb, muted, dead. . . . [Waiting] is marked by contingency—the perhaps—and all the anxiety [and all the . . . powerlessness, helplessness, vulnerability, and infantile rage] that comes with the experience of contingency. [Waiting] is a passive activity. One can never actively seek the object of waiting . . . ultimately its arrival or nonarrival is beyond our control.

These phrases irked my white South African colleagues at the University of Cape Town to a point of near-murderous rage (see Coetzee 1985, Skalník n.d., Bothma 1991). They appeared to cast aspersions on all white South Africans and to ignore the role of those courageous whites who had joined the political struggle that eventually brought the apartheid state to its knees. But, while their anger was understandable, their actions during the tumultuous year of political transition might be described in terms of the metaphor of waiting. This is not surprising, for watchful waiting is what *all* anthropologists are best-trained to do. Above and outside the political fray is where most anthropologists cautiously position themselves.

In the Department of Social Anthropology at the University of Cape Town, "business" proceeded as usual. The content of anthropology was presented in the Anglo-American tradition of modern social anthropology, with little attention—except for an incessant preoccupation with falling "standards" and with diagnoses of the presumed "lack" and "deficiencies" of the incoming black students—to the dramatic shift in the composition of the student body as black Africans, Indians, Ma-

lay Muslims, and "Cape Coloured" students began in much greater numbers to take their places in the front-row seats of large lecture halls. "Race," "ethnicity," "tribe," "culture," and "identity" were dutifully deconstructed and de-essentialized in Anthropology 101, where they were taught as historically invented and fictive concepts (see Boonzaier and Sharp 1988). Meanwhile, throughout the year South African Xhosas and Zulus (manipulated by a government-orchestrated "third force") daily slaughtered each other in and around worker hostels in the name of "tribe," "ethnicity," and "culture." The relativizing, deconstructionist exercise seemed irrelevant to the material history of oppressed and oppressor "tribes" in South Africa and to the recovery of "spoiled identities" and "spoiled ethnicities" ("Colored," "Zulu," and "Afrikaner" among them) in the politically negotiated process of new-nation building.

And tea was still served, with predictable regularity, at ten, twelve-thirty, and three in the appropriately dowdy tearoom, the same space where Monica Wilson once held court. Departmental "founding father" A. R. Radcliffe-Brown's rough-hewn initialed mailbox still perches jauntily on a side table, a sacred icon to the less-than-sacred history of anthropology at the University of Cape Town (see Phillips 1994:21–29, 270–74). As the tea itself, served up with a sharp, intimidating, exclusive, and only rarely self-mocking humor, is a reminder that the old order is hanging on to the bitter end, tearoom topics are carefully circumscribed: cricket, film, and popular culture are acceptable, as are anecdotes about foibles of odd and eccentric South African or European anthropologists, living or dead. Anxieties and fears about the political transition are (understandably) commonly expressed. However, any seemingly naive and optimistic reference to the "new" South Africa can result in a dramatic exodus from the tearoom. "What do you expect?" commented an ANC constitutional lawyer and former professor of human rights, now a member of the new Parliament. "Academics are useless. They are far too willing to serve any master." The involvement of one tradition (English) of South African anthropology in the service of colonialism and, of another (Afrikaner) in the implementation of the mundanely evil details of grand apartheid is illustrative.

However, in the complicated and dangerous history of contemporary South African politics, *noninvolvement* had its virtues, and it could be seen as an evasive microstrategy of resistance. One South African anthropologist, David Webster, who made his resistance rather more public, was murdered for his involvement in the political struggle against apartheid. At the time of his assassination David Webster was a lecturer in social anthropology at the University of the Witwatersrand. On May 1, 1989, as he walked to the back of his van to let out his dogs, a white sedan with darkened windows sped down the road, a shotgun appeared through the back window and at close range and shot a hole through Webster's chest. Senior police officers took steps to inhibit the investigation into Webster's death, and the inquest ended without reaching any definitive conclusions. But the judge in the inquest said that "the truth was not told on who killed Webster because many of the suspect witnesses were professional liars who made their living in deception" (Mkhondo 1993:84–85). Given this horrendous social and political reality, leaving South Africa, my anthropological colleagues would say, was easy; the decision to stay behind was more difficult and fraught with sometimes life-preserving compromise.[4]

But in the necessary settling of accounts now taking place in South Africa,[5] a radical self-critique[6] is a necessary precondition for recasting anthropology as a tool for human liberation in the new South Africa. Without this, anthropology in South Africa will survive only as the quaint hobby of privileged postcolonials.

Moral Accountability and Anthropology in Extreme Situations

The idea of an active, politically committed, morally engaged anthropology strikes many anthropologists as unsavory, tainted, even frightening. This is less so in parts of Latin America, India, and Europe (Italy and France, for example), where the anthropological project is at once ethnographic, epistemologic, and political and

4. For example, Monica Wilson bowed to pressure from the ruling South African National Party's apartheid government and removed what the government viewed as an offensive chapter on black South African resistance movements from the second volume of her and Leonard Thompson's *History of South Africa, 1870–1966* (1982), published in Cape Town by D. Phillip. The edition published in 1971 in New York as the *Oxford History of South Africa* included that chapter. Many South African radical intellectuals were extremely critical of this publishing decision.

5. The new parliament of South Africa has established a Commission of Truth and Reconciliation to enable South Africa and South Africans to come to terms with their past. Just before leaving Cape Town in July 1994 I received a memo from the Ministry of Justice and from Minister Dullah Omar, MP, addressed to the chair of the Department of Social Anthropology. The memo outlined the steps to be taken by the official commission, and it invited the department along with all other "public organizations and religious bodies" to submit comments, suggestions, and proposals regarding the commission's work. My thoughts on the topic were also stimulated by an IDASA (Institute for Democratic Alternatives in South Africa)-sponsored conference entitled "Justice in Transition—Dealing with the Past" that I was privileged to attended in Cape Town on February 25–27, 1994.

6. What "colonialist" social anthropology did not do in the "old" South Africa was open its doors to the training of black South African anthropologists in great numbers who might have been able to put our discipline in the service of human liberation there. Insofar as social anthropology did not seek to make itself an intellectual and moral home for black South Africans, the discipline was consequently impoverished. There are some exceptions. Today there is one African social anthropologist, Harriet Nugubane (who was trained in Britain), who is serving as an elected official, a member of the new parliament, where she represents her homeland, Kwazulu, and the Inkatha Freedom Party. Mamphele Ramphele is an African anthropologist (as well as a physician) who is a deputy vice chancellor at the University of Cape Town, where she received her doctorate in anthropology.

where anthropologists do communicate broadly with "the polis" and "the public."

Many colleagues reacted with anger when I first began to speak and to write about the routinization and medicalization of hunger among Brazilian sugarcane cutters and about the mortal selective neglect and unnecessary deaths of their young children, in which layers of bad faith and complicity joined the oppressed and their oppressors in a macabre dance of death. The bad faith existed on many levels: among doctors and pharmacists who allowed their knowledge and skills to be abused; among local politicians who presented themselves as community benefactors while knowing full well what they were doing in distributing tranquilizers and appetite stimulants to hungry people from the overstocked drawers of municipal file cabinets; among the sick poor themselves, who even while critical of the medical mistreatment they received continued to hold out for a medical-technical solution to their political and economic troubles; and, finally, among medical anthropologists whose fascination with metaphors, signs, and symbols can blind us to the banal materiality of human suffering and prevent us from developing a political discourse on those hungry populations of the Third World that generously provide us with our livelihoods.

What was I after, after all? Chronic hunger, of the sort that I was describing in rural Brazil, was not unusual, I was told at a faculty seminar at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, in 1983. Many, perhaps the majority, of Indonesian villagers the critic had been studying were surviving on a similarly meager and deficient diet as the Northeast Brazilian cane cutters. Why had I made *that*—the mundane concreteness of chronic hunger and its eroding effects on the human spirit—the driving force and focus of my Brazilian work? "Is this an anthropology of evil?" asked the late Paul Riesman as a formal discussant in a AAA-sponsored symposium in response to my analysis of the "bad faith" which allowed clinic doctors, as well as rural workers themselves, to overlook the starvation that lay just beneath the skin of their own and their babies' "nervousness," "irritability," and "delirium" and permitted the doctors to medicate even the smallest toddler's hunger with painkillers, phenobarbital, antibiotics, and sleeping pills. Riesman (cited in Scheper-Hughes 1988:456 n. 4) concluded:

> It seems to me that when we act in critical situations of the sort that Scheper-Hughes describes for Northeast Brazil, *we leave anthropology behind.* We leave it behind because we abandon what I believe to be a fundamental axiom of the creed we share, namely that all humans are equal in the sight of anthropology. Though Scheper-Hughes does not put it this way, the struggle she is urging anthropologists to join is a struggle against evil. Once we identify an evil, I think we give up trying to understand the situation as a human reality. Instead we see it as in some sense inhuman, and all we then try to understand is how best to combat it. At this point we [leave anthropology behind] and we enter the political process.

But why is it assumed that when anthropologists enter the struggle we must inevitably bow out of anthropology? Since when is *evil* exempt from human reality? Why do anthropologists so steadfastly refuse to stare back at it, to speak truth to its power? What are we passively *waiting* for? One listener threw up his hands in mock confusion in response to a paper on the political economy of mother love and infant death in the Brazilian shantytown that I delivered at the University of Chicago in 1987." Why are we being served this?" he asked. "How are we supposed to *feel*? . . . *And what in the world are we supposed to do?*"

The Politics of Representation

As writers and producers of demanding images and texts, what *do* we want from our readers? To shock? To evoke pity? To create new forms of narrative, an "aesthetic" of misery, an anthropology of suffering, an anthropological theodicy? And what of the people whose suffering and fearful accommodations to it are transformed into a public spectacle? What is our obligation to them?

Those of us who make our living observing and recording the misery of the world have a particular obligation to reflect critically on the impact of the harsh images of human suffering that we foist on the public. I think of the brutal images of fleeing Haitian boat people and the emotionally devastated family around the bedside of a dying AIDS patient with which the business magnate Benetton has assaulted us, for reasons that remain altogether unclear, and of the daily media images of horror in Bosnia, Somalia, the Middle East, and the townships of South Africa and of Sebastião Salgado's images of hunger and death in the Brazilian Northeast. To what end are we given and do we represent these images as long as the misery and the suffering continue unabated? The experience of Northeast Brazil and South Africa indicates that the more frequent and ubiquitous the images of sickness, political terror, starvation and death, burnings and hangings, the more people living the terror accept the brutality as routine, normal, even expected. The shock reaction is readily extinguished, and people everywhere seem to have an enormous capacity to absorb the hideous and go on with life and with the terror, violence, and misery as usual.

As Michael Taussig (1992) has noted, citing Walter Benjamin's analysis of the history of European fascism, it is almost impossible to be continually conscious of the state of emergency in which one lives. Sooner or later one makes one's accommodations to it. The images meant to evoke shock and panic evoke only blank stares, a shrug of the shoulders, a nod—acceptance as routine and *normal* of the extraordinary state of siege under which so many live. Humans have any uncanny ability to hold terror and misery at arm's length, especially

when they occur in their own community and are right before their eyes. Anthropologists do so themselves when they apply their theoretical abstractions and rhetorical figures of speech to the horrors of political violence—both wars of repression and wars of liberation—so that the suffering is aestheticized (turned into theater, viewed as "performance") and thereby minimized and denied. The new cadre of "barefoot anthropologists" that I envision must become alarmists and shock troopers—the producers of politically complicated and morally demanding texts and images capable of sinking through the layers of acceptance, complicity, and bad faith that allow the suffering and the deaths to continue without even the pained cry of recognition of Conrad's (1910) evil protagonist, Kurtz: "*The horror! the horror!*"

Anthropology without Borders: The Postmodern Critique

Ethnography has had a rough time of it lately. In the brave new world of reflexive postmodernists, when anthropologists arrive in the field everything local is said to dissolve into merged media images, transgressed boundaries, promiscuously mobile multinational industry and workers, and transnational-corporate desires and commodity fetishism. This imagined postmodern, borderless world (Appadurai 1991) is, in fact, a Camelot of free trade that echoes the marketplace rhetoric of global capitalism, a making of the world and social science safe for "low-intensity democracy" backed by World Bank capital. The flight from the local in hot pursuit of a transnational, borderless anthropology implies a parallel flight from local engagements, local commitments, and local accountability. Once the circuits of power are seen as capillary, diffuse, global, and difficult to trace to their sources, the idea of resistance becomes meaningless. It can be either nothing or anything at all. (Have we lost our senses altogether?)

The idea of an anthropology without borders, although it has a progressive ring to it, ignores the reality of the very real borders that confront and oppress "our" anthropological subjects and encroach on our liberty as well. (The obstacles that the U.S. government puts in the way of North Americans wishing to conduct research in Cuba or establish ties with Cuban scholars are just one case in point.) These borders are as real as the passports and passbooks, the sandbagged bunkers, the armed roadblocks and barricades, and the "no-go zones" that separate hostile peoples, territories, and states. The borders confront us with the indisputable reality of electric fences, razor wire, nail-studded hand grenades, AK47's; where these are lacking, as in South African townships and squatter camps, stones and torches will do.

Having recently returned from South Africa, where both black and white tribes, Zulus and Afrikaners, were demanding enclosed and militarily defended homelands, it is difficult to relate to the whimsical postmodernist language extolling borderless worlds. The anthropology that most Cape Town Xhosa, Venda, Zulu, Afrikaner, and Moslem students want is *not* the anthropology of deconstruction and the social imaginary but the anthropology of the *really real,* in which the stakes are high, values are certain, and ethnicity (if not essentialized) is certainly essential. Here, writing against culture[7] would be writing against them, against *their* grain, against their emergent need, in a newly forming and, one hopes, democratic state, for collective self-definition and historical legitimacy—for a place in the sun.

Anthropology, it seems to me, must be there to provide the kind of deeply textured, fine-tuned narratives describing the specificity of lives lived in small and isolated places in distant homelands, in the "native yards" of sprawling townships, or in the Afrikaner farm communities of the Stellenbosch and the Boland. And we need, more than ever, to locate and train indigenous local anthropologists and organic intellectuals to work with us and to help us redefine and transform ourselves and our vexed craft.

Many younger anthropologists today, sensitized by the writings of Michel Foucault on power/knowledge, have come to think of anthropological fieldwork as a kind of invasive, disciplinary "panopticon" and the anthropological interview as similar to the medieval inquisitional confession through which church examiners extracted "truth" from their native and "heretical" peasant parishioners. One hears of anthropological observation as a hostile act that reduces our "subjects" to mere "objects" of our discriminating, incriminating, scientific gaze. Consequently, some postmodern anthropologists have given up the practice of descriptive ethnography altogether.

I am weary of these postmodernist critiques, and, given the perilous times in which we and our subjects live, I am inclined toward compromise, the practice of a "good enough" ethnography (1992*b*:28). While the anthropologist is always a necessarily flawed and biased

7. Here I have taken Lila Abu-Lughod's "writing against culture" notion out of context, and I want to suggest that her reflections on the "abuses" of the culture concept are not incompatible with the views put forward in this paper. Culture has been invoked in many inappropriate contexts as a kind of fetish. Paul Farmer (1994) notes in his recent reflections on the structure of violence that the idea of culture has often been used to obscure the social relations, political economy, and formal institutions of violence that promote and produce human suffering. Cultures do not, of course, only generate meaning in the Geertzian sense but produce legitimations for institutionalized inequality and justifications for exploitation and domination. The culture concept has been used to exaggerate and to mystify the differences between anthropologists and their subjects, as in the implicit suggestion that because they are "from different *cultures,* they are [also therefore] of different *worlds,* and of different *times*" (Farmer 1994:24). This "denial of coevalness" is deeply ingrained in our discipline, exemplified each time we speak with awe of the impenetrable opacity of culture or of the incommensurability of cultural systems of thought, meaning, and practice. Here culture may actually be a disguise for an incipient or an underlying racism, a pseudo-speciation of humans into discrete types, orders, and kinds—the bell jar rather than the bell curve approach to reifying difference.

instrument of cultural translation, like every other craftsperson we can do the best we can with the limited resources we have at hand: our ability to listen and to observe carefully and with empathy and compassion. I still believe that we are best doing what we do best as ethnographers, as natural historians of people until very recently thought to have no history. And so I think of some of my anthropological subjects—in Brazil Biu, Dona Amor, little Mercea, little angel-baby that she is now; in South Africa, Sidney Kumalo and the three boys rescued in the nick of time from a mortal flogging—for whom anthropology is not a "hostile gaze" but rather an opportunity for self-expression. Seeing, listening, touching, recording can be, if done with care and sensitivity, acts of solidarity. Above all, they are the work of recognition. Not to look, not to touch, not to record can be the hostile act, an act of indifference and of turning away.

If I did not believe that ethnography could be used as a tool for critical reflection and for human liberation, what kind of perverse cynicism would keep me returning again and again to disturb the waters of Bom Jesus da Mata or to study the contradictory medical and political detention of Cubans in the Havana AIDS sanatorium? Or, more recently, to study the underbelly of political violence and terror in the makeshift mortuary chapels of Chris Hani squatter camp (Scheper-Hughes 1994*b*)? What draws me back to these people and places is not their exoticism and their "otherness" but the pursuit of those small spaces of convergence, recognition, and empathy that we share. Not everything dissolves into the vapor of absolute cultural difference and radical otherness. There are ways in which my Brazilian, Cuban, Irish, and South African interlocutors and I are not so radically "other" to each other. Like the peasants of Ireland and Northeast Brazil, I too instinctively make the sign of the cross when I sense danger or misfortune approaching. And like Mrs. Kumalo and so many other middle-aged women of Chris Hani squatter camp, I too wait up (till dawn if necessary) for the scrape-scrape sound of my son and daughters as, one by one, following their own life plans, they turn their keys in the latch and announce their arrival one more day from an unsafe and booby-trapped outside world.

The Primacy of the Ethical

The work of anthropology demands an explicit ethical orientation to "the other." In the past—and with good reason—this was interpreted as a respectful distance, a hesitancy, and a reluctance to name wrongs, to judge, to intervene, or to prescribe change, even in the face of considerable human misery. In existential philosophical terms, anthropology, like theology, implied a leap of faith to an unknown, opaque other-than-myself, before whom a kind of reverence and awe was required. The practice of anthropology was guided by a complex form of modern pessimism rooted in anthropology's tortured relationship to the colonial world and its ruthless destruction of native lands and peoples. Because of its origins as a mediator in the clash of colonial cultures and civilizations, anthropological thinking was, in a sense, radically "conservative" with respect to its "natural" suspiciousness of all projects promoting change, development, modernization, and the like. We knew how often such interventions were used against traditional, nonsecular, and communal people who stood in the way of Western cultural and economic expansion. Therefore, it was understood that anthropological work, if it was to be in the nature of an ethical project, had to be primarily transformative of the self, while putting few or no demands on "the other." The artificial and (at times) counterintuitive notion of cultural (and moral and political) relativism evolved as the sacred oath of anthropological fieldwork. As the physicians' injunction was to "do no harm," the anthropologists' injunction was (like the three monkeys of ancient China) to "see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil" in reporting from the field.

While the first generations of cultural anthropologists were concerned with relativizing thought and reason, I have suggested that a more "womanly" anthropology might be concerned not only with how humans think but with how they behave toward each other. This would engage anthropology directly with questions of ethics. The problem remains in searching for a standard or divergent ethical standards that take into account (but do not privilege) our own "Western" cultural presuppositions.

In the shantytown of Alto do Cruzeiro in Northeast Brazil I encountered a situation in which some mothers appear to have "suspended the ethical"—compassion, empathic love, and care—in relation to some of their weak and sickly children, allowing them to die of neglect in the face of overwhelming difficulties. In the South African squatter camps of the Western Cape I stumbled upon another instance: the expressed sentiment that one less young thief or police "collaborator" makes good sense in terms of social and community hygiene. At times the shantytown or the squatter camp resembles nothing so much as a battlefield, a prison camp, or an emergency room in a crowded inner-city hospital, where an ethic of triage replaces an ethical regard for the equal value of every life. The survivor's "logic" that guides shantytown mothers' actions toward some of their weak babies is understandable. The fragility and "dangerousness" of the mother-infant relationship is an immediate and visible index of chronic scarcity, hunger, and other unmet needs. And the revolutionary logic that sees in the pressured but self-serving acts of a young police collaborator the sorcery of a scarcely human witch or devil is also understandable. But the moral and ethical issues must still give reason to pause and to doubt. How often the oppressed turn into their own oppressors or, worse still, into the oppressors of others!

Anthropologists who are privileged to witness human events close up and over time, who are privy to community secrets that are generally hidden from the view of outsiders or from historical scrutiny until much later—after the collective graves have been discovered and the body counts made—have, I believe, an ethical obligation

to identify the ills in a spirit of solidarity and to follow what Gilligan (1982) has called a "womanly" ethic of care and responsibility. If anthropologists deny themselves the power (because it implies a privileged position) to identify an ill or a wrong and choose to ignore (because it is not pretty) the extent to which dominated people sometimes play the role of their own executioners, they collaborate with the relations of power and silence that allow the destruction to continue.

To speak of the "primacy of the ethical" is to suggest certain transcendent, transparent, and essential, if not "precultural," first principles. Historically anthropologists have understood morality as contingent on and embedded within specific cultural assumptions about human life. But there is another philosophical position that posits "the ethical" as existing prior to culture because, as Emmanuel Levinas (1987:100) writes, in presupposing all meaning, ethics makes culture possible: "Mortality does not belong to culture: [it] enables one to judge it." Here I will tentatively and hesitantly suggest that responsibility, accountability, answerability to "the other"—the ethical as I would define it—is precultural to the extent that our human existence as social beings presupposes the presence of the other. The extreme relativist position assumes that thought, emotion, and reflexivity come into existence with words and words come into being with culture. But the generative prestructure of language presupposes, as Sartre (1956) has written, a given relationship with another subject, one that exists prior to words in the silent, preverbal "taking stock" of each other's existence. Though I veer dangerously toward what some might construe as a latent sociobiology, I cannot escape the following observation: that we are thrown into existence at all presupposes a given, implicit moral relationship to an original (m)other and she to me. "Basic strangeness"—as the psychoanalyst Maria Piers labeled the profound shock of mis-recognition reported by a great many mothers in their first encounters with a newborn—is perhaps the prototype of all other alienated self-other relations, including that of the anthropologist and her overly exoticized others. Just as many women may fail to recognize a human kinship with the newborn and see it as a strange, exotic, other—a bird, a crocodile, a changeling, one to be returned to sky or water rather than adopted or claimed—so the anthropologist can view her subjects as unspeakably other, belonging to another time, another world altogether. If it is to be in the nature of an ethical project, the work of anthropology requires a different set of relationships. In minimalist terms this might be described as the difference between the anthropologist as "spectator" and the anthropologist as "witness."

Witnessing: Toward a Barefoot Anthropology

In the act of writing culture what emerges is always a highly subjective, partial, and fragmentary but also deeply personal record of human lives based on eyewitness accounts and testimony. If "observation" links anthropology to the natural sciences, "witnessing" links anthropology to moral philosophy. Observation, the anthropologist as "fearless spectator," is a passive act which positions the anthropologist above and outside human events as a "neutral" and "objective" (i.e., uncommitted) seeing I/eye. Witnessing, the anthropologist as *companheira,* is in the active voice, and it positions the anthropologist inside human events as a responsive, reflexive, and morally committed being, one who will "take sides" and make judgments, though this flies in the face of the anthropological nonengagement with either ethics or politics. Of course, noninvolvement was, in itself, an "ethical"and moral position.

The fearless spectator is accountable to "science"; the witness is accountable to history. Anthropologists as witnesses are accountable for what they see and what they fail to see, how they act and how they fail to act in critical situations. In this regard, Orin Starn's poignant essay "Missing the Revolution: Anthropologists and the War in Peru" (1992) indirectly makes "my" case. Anthropologists, no less than any other professionals, should be held accountable for how we have used and how we have failed to use anthropology as a critical tool at crucial historical moments. It is the the act of "witnessing" that lends our work its moral, at times almost theological, character. In *Death Without Weeping* I observed how participant-observation has a way of drawing ethnographers into spaces of human life where they might really prefer not to go at all and, once there, do not know how to escape except through writing, which willy-nilly draws others there as well, making them party to the witnessing.

I have an image, taken from John Berger (1967), of the ethnographer/witness as the "clerk of the records." The village clerk listens, observes, and records the minutiae of human lives. The clerk can be counted on to remember key events in the personal lives and in the life history of the community and to keep confidences, knowing when to speak and when to keep silent. The ethnographer/witness as clerk is a minor historian of the ordinary lives of people often presumed to have no history. Privileged to be present at births and deaths and other life cycle events, the clerk can readily call to mind the fragile web of human relations that bind people together into a collectivity and identify those external and internal relations that destroy them as a community. In the shantytowns and squatter camps of Brazil and South Africa there are a great many lives and even more deaths to keep track of, numbering the bones of a people often thought of as hardly worth counting at all. The answer to the critique of anthropology is not a retreat from ethnography but rather an ethnography that is personally engaged and politically committed. If my writings have promoted a certain malaise or discomfort with respect to their sometimes counterintuitive claims, then they have done the work of anthropology, "the difficult science": to afflict our comfortable assumptions about what it means to be human, a woman, a mother.

I want to ask what anthropology might become if it existed on two fronts: as a field of knowledge (as a "discipline") and as a field of action, a force field, or a site

of struggle. Anthropological writing can be a site of resistance. This resembles what the radical Italian psychiatrist Franco Basaglia (1987) called becoming a "negative worker." The negative worker is a species of class traitor—a doctor, a teacher, a lawyer, psychologist, a social worker, a manager, a social scientist, even—who colludes with the powerless to identify their needs against the interests of the bourgeois institution: the university, the hospital, the factory. Negative workers are hospital-based psychiatrists who side with their resistant or "noncompliant" mental patients, grade-school teachers who side with their "hyperactive" students, social workers who side with their welfare "cheats," and so forth.

Anthropologists, too, can be negative workers. We can practice an anthropology-with-one's-feet-on-the-ground, a committed, grounded, even a "barefoot" anthropology. We can write books that go against the grain by avoiding impenetrable prose (whether postmodernist or Lacanian) so as to be accessible to the people we say we represent. We can disrupt *expected* academic roles and statuses in the spirit of the Brazilian "carnavalesque." We can make ourselves available not just as friends or as "patrons" in the old colonialist sense but as *comrades* (with all the demands and responsibilities that this word implies) to the people who are the subjects of our writings, whose lives and miseries provide us with a livelihood. We can—as Michel De Certeau (1984) suggests—exchange gifts based on our labors, use book royalties to support radical actions, and seek to avoid the deadening treadmill of academic achievement and in this way subvert the process that puts our work at the service of the scientific, academic factory.

We can distance ourselves from old and unreal loyalties, as Virginia Woolf (1938) described them: loyalties to old schools, old churches, old ceremonies, and old countries. Freedom from unreal loyalties means ridding oneself of pride of family, nation, religion, pride of sex and gender, and all the other dangerous loyalties that spring from them. In doing so we can position ourselves, as Robert Redfield once put it, squarely on the side of humanity. We can be anthropologists, comrades, and *companheiras*.

Comments

VINCENT CRAPANZANO
Comparative Literature, CUNY Graduate Center, 33 W. 42nd St., New York, N.Y. 10036-8099, U.S.A.
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The two papers under consideration assume a discipline—*an* anthropology—that permits their juxtaposition, their arguments, the containment of their conflicts. But is this disciplinary unity a necessary, a realistic assumption—one that can be justified on objective, on moral or political, grounds? on the grounds of academic health? Why should we assume that cultural—social—anthropology has any unity other than through an administratively driven economy of knowledge? Why should we assume that unity is desirable? There are many often contradictory practices of anthropology, including the pedagogic, and many divergent goals, methodologies, interpretive strategies, and explanatory procedures. I would argue that the reduction of anthropology to a single practice is neither realistic nor morally or politically commendable. This is particularly true today with the development of anthropologies around the world and the consequent increase in distinct orientations that, threatening to our hegemonic assumptions, may well produce a backlash justified on bogus scientific grounds.

Anthropology should be conceived, I believe, as a creatively agonistic arena whose centering and boundaries are always in question. Stabilization suggests that forces beyond its immediate ken are at play. I am not denying anthropology its turf. I am asking for the critical consideration of that turf, its formation, its definition, and the practices and transgressions it facilitates and those it does not. We should look at anthropology with the same critical edge that we look at our chosen subjects of ethnographic research.

What distresses me about these papers is their failure to look with ethnographic rigor at the field which, *as they argue,* they constitute. They are polemical. For D'Andrade the enemy is those who hold a moral model of anthropology and are therefore willing to sacrifice objectivity for moral engagement. For Scheper-Hughes the enemy is those who refuse moral and political engagement. Despite their differences, they are united by a distrust if not a rejection of relativism, which they identify at times with postmodernism. In their papers postmodernism is an empty category that serves a defining (a latently unifying) function. Projectively predetermined, it offers no real challenge to its critics' assumptions.

I don't have the foggiest idea what D'Andrade or Scheper-Hughes or many anthropologists who bandy "postmodernism" about mean by it. I don't know to whom they are referring. I don't know what commonalties they find, if indeed they find any, in the writings of Foucault, Derrida, Lacan, Baudrillard, Andrew Ross, or the contributors to *Writing Culture.* In our political climate relativism can neither be dismissed nor accepted easily. Certainly it cannot be reduced to the promiscuous surface plays that have been identified with a postmodernist sensibility, if only because there are many types of relativism, including the moral and the heuristic, which is probably an essential though transitory component of any interpretive practice.

This projective dismissal of postmodernism reminds me of other, equally empty dismissals that have characterized American anthropology's struggle for internal hegemonic orientation—think of the rejections of structuralism and of psychological, symbolic, and interpretive anthropology over the past few decades. I've heard serious anthropologists call these approaches "intellectual" with all of the vituperative antiintellectualism of

a Jesse Helms. Of course, I've heard "intellectuals" name-call too. Is our discipline(s) so fragile that it requires such mindless rhetoric? Can't we accept a challenge, however absurd we may at first find it? Ought we not to treat postmodernism as a *social fact* like any other? We should ask why so few anthropologists enter into critical, public conversation with advocates of positions they find questionable.

Obviously I cannot resolve the differences between D'Andrade and Scheper-Hughes and the several epistemologies they invoke. D'Andrade's insistence on the objective fact as prevailing over the moral and political entanglements produced by engagement is noble. Were it only true! It takes neither a Marx nor a Foucault to remind us that the objective cannot be separated from the plays of personal and collective power. In his attempt to separate the scientific from the moral D'Andrade recognizes this. It's clear that we should do our best to separate the two, but can we? I ask this question with regard to its social and psychological feasibility and its epistemological possibility. Personal experience leads me to answer the first negatively. I admit my ever-increasing pessimism. I would also answer the second negatively, and not simply because our research involves active engagement with our subjects. (Even the most invisible anthropologist is, despite himself, an active presence.) If, as I have suggested in *Hermes' Dilemma and Hamlet's Desire* (1994), categories of social and psychological understanding are derivative of the complex indexical dramas that characterize ordinary social interaction, including that between anthropologist and informant, then it follows that our human sciences are morally grounded and have to be recognized as such. To argue for the separation of moral and scientific models is not necessarily to argue against the moral grounding of scientific epistemology.

We have to develop an epistemology for our discipline(s) which is appropriate to its practice. We cannot buy into irrelevant or only partially relevant models of science that have clout because they have been successful in other domains. It seems obvious that most but by no means all anthropological research precludes correction through replication. Are we to dimiss all but the replicable? Better that we accept it, acknowledging self-critically its limitations and acknowledging the limitations, the determinants, of our self-criticism.

I stress these determinants because there is always the possibility that in the name of critical self-reflexivity a rigid and morally insensitive stance may be warranted. There is danger in Scheper-Hughes's argument that anthropologists should become morally and politically engaged in their informants' struggles and throw out an interfering moral relativism. This danger is not necessarily a fault, for in any moral positioning there is always the danger of knowing better and being wrong. We have to temper our moral convictions with at least a temporary relativist stance in order to understand as best we can. Such a stance, I hasten to add, does not preclude commitment. In the ethnographic encounter the moral has to result from mutually open, courageous, and honest debate. We cannot accept the demands of the people we work with naively any more than we can expect their naive acceptance. We have to grant them their ability to see through us. The moral, however rationalized, is always the result of a complex play of desire and power. We can never become *companheiros* and *companheiras*. We are always outsiders—and there lies our power, as dangerous as it may be, and the source of our interpellation and responsiveness. We cannot deny our expertise—the fact, the conviction, of at times knowing better—any more than we can deny our informants' expertise—their conviction, the fact, of their knowing better. We have to resist easy slogans like "the struggle against oppression." In their abstraction, though they may flatter and excite, they counter effective engagement. We have—and here we must acknowledge D'Andrade's call for objective knowledge, as flawed as it may be—to modulate our desire and the lure of power with "hard" fact. There can, I suppose, be no morality without truth. Truth, knowledge, and objectivity are not, however, precluded by moral and political engagement. One can perhaps be more objective in assuming a moral and political stance than in denying one in the name of scientific disinterest, for in disinterest power and desire are suppressed but no less effective.

JONATHAN FRIEDMAN
Department of Social Anthropology, Lund University, Box 114, 221 00 Lund, Sweden (jonathan.friedman@soc.lu.se). 1 1 95

These two statements ought not, in my view, to be understood and discussed as opposing positions with respect to anthropology: science versus morality. Rather, their foci dovetail or overlap at certain central points. I therefore feel obliged to deal with them separately and then return to them in a concluding paragraph.

I feel a great deal of sympathy with Scheper-Hughes's very personal account of political engagement. The kind of ethnography that delves into the lives of people and is not afraid to take up issues relating oppression and social crisis to their transfiguration in the horrors and interpersonal violence of the everyday is a critical necessity for a responsible anthropology. I must also confess that I was quite shocked at the reactions by other anthropologists to what she refers to as the "routinization of and medicalization of hunger." Have I understood the situation correctly, or has something been left out—an attitude, a way of presenting the material? Surely it is not "leaving anthropology behind" to engage in this kind of analysis.

Scheper-Hughes identifies herself as most strongly against a particular version of what she calls "postmodern" anthropology without borders which, in claiming that the local is globalized, can abandon the local in favor of a kind of new diffusionism. Her point is well taken and ought to be considered carefully. The new global self-identified hybrids belong to a well-placed conference-attending intellectual minority but not to

the underclass "street," where transcultural identity is largely irrelevant. There is, of course, a fragmentation of the nation-state, and the increase of ethnic diasporas is part of the process of ethnic, indigenous, "racial" identification as a global systemic phenomenon but not of the jolly and "creative" sort depicted by advocates of the globalization approach. While certain jet-setters experience an absence of boundaries, large parts of the world are undergoing the inverse process of balkanization (Friedman 1992:vii and chaps. 11 and 12).

Now, I am myself engaged in the politics of indigenous peoples and would not for a moment deny the necessity of such work. The world is full of people making careers on moral stances, known today as political correctness, however, and therefore I feel a certain ambivalence about the primacy of the ethical as a self-designation rather than an argument. Part of the problem lies in statements such as the program of action calling for collusion with the powerless against "the interests of the bourgeois institution: the university, the hospital, the factory." This is more than a general call to moral action. The world is totally categorized into the powerless, the powerful, and the lackeys of the powerful. But the "evil" to be attacked is surely more complex and more ubiquitous than described here. And, of course, not all power, as Foucault himself suggested, is evil. The vision is vaguely marxist in inspiration but diluted as well as transformed into descriptive categories, good guys and bad guys. I cannot tell from such a short piece whether this is naive in the extreme or simply a rhetorical device, but we ought not to forget that terror and corruption are perpetuated throughout the world system on all sides of the multiple political divides and that the leaders of the powerless have become very powerful and nasty in their own right. If the people we support turn out to be the worst kind of exploiters themselves, then our ethics is part of a colossal and, I dare say, systemic self-delusion. Scheper-Hughes's argument for the primacy of the "ethical" as transcendent and "precultural" is important but dangerous. The existential relation between infant and (m)other may ground sociality as lived experience, but it is simultaneously replete with not only love but desire, aggression, and narcissistic demands. What is founded here may be her "witnessing" as opposed to the distance of the "spectator," but no moral position, unfortunately, is implied. Ethical first principles must be part of an open arena of struggle, because their primacy is not at all apparent.

Scheper-Hughes's engagement and call for engagement are vitally important and ought to be inspiring for those not totally engaged in anthropology for the sake of careers. Her use of ethnography to this end is also critically important insofar as she aims at depicting and analyzing the structures of human experience rather than merely the products generated in such experience. As she insists, we ought to understand the state of emergency in which we live. But engagement demands analysis of the way the world works, and here I feel that the perspective is not necessarily wrong but weak.

I think we should welcome the lucidity of D'Andrade's excellent discussion. He takes a strict position, dividing models oriented to discovering how the world works from those oriented to distributing "praise and blame." The first part of the article is a riposte to the widespread attack on science and the notion of objectivity as a legitimating ideology. This ideology of objective science is characterized as a hegemonic discourse and the job of engaged, "moral" anthropologists as revealing the power behind the discourse. He argues that scientific models are not and need not be fused or otherwise combined with moral models and that moral models and the politics that they inform can only profit by separating moral and scientific activities. Among the obvious problems that he does not address is the apparent conflation of description and hypothesis. The former may, of course, be part of a moral model: for example, "He helps his friends" might be extended by "to gain power over them." How much of this is description? What does "help" signify here? He also tends to conflate moral models and moral purpose; certainly what he refers to as scientific models can be directed toward moral ends. Finally, there is the problem of the nature of the scientific model itself—accepting for now his use of the word "model."

It can be argued that the scientific model is simultaneously a moral model, one that entails that rational investigation and scientific falsification are not only useful but important for understanding and therefore changing the state of the world. Insofar as the scientific model is an imperative in which rules of public accountability to a scientific community play a central role in assessing the validity of statements about the world, we have a clearly moral positioning that is, I suggest, rooted in a social practice. Science is feasible only where there is a scientific public sphere, that is, where members of that sphere share a set of assumptions governing the way in which they communicate. Such communication involves (1) the separation of subject from propositions about the world and (2) the falsifiability of any such propositions—the implied replacement of sets of propositions by other propositions deemed of superior explanatory power. This is, of course, a normative condition that is not realized in most cases because of the intervention of socially distorting relations of power and prestige, but the norm itself has been powerful, and in those fields in which intellectual norms have been strong, as in certain of the natural sciences, the model of "progress" has been a true possibility. In other words, the scientific model is a moral model or at least grounded in an ideological matrix, that of Western modernism, which is itself grounded in a social context. Criticizing the ideological biases of science and its practitioners may well take the form of strictly scientific praxis, and scientific praxis itself can be placed under the same kind of scrutiny, as has occurred in the post-Popperian debates on the real nature of falsification.

Perhaps the core of the problem rests in the way the nature of science is described: "anthropology's claim to moral authority rests on knowing empirical truths about the world." The problem with this representation of the nature of scientific or "objective" truth is that it is described as inhering in a kind of knowledge as product,

but this implies that there are really established truths that cannot be falsified. This is a conflation of hypothetical propositions about the world and the world itself. The purist, Popperian model says nothing about the content of propositions other than demanding that they be formulated in such a way as to be falsifiable by empirical experiment or reference.

D'Andrade would avoid replacing the content of scientific logic with the logic of moral models. This would be equivalent to eliminating the power of scientific rationality constantly to renew itself—its primary function as producer of knowledge. But there is a slip-up in the confusion of propositions about the world with the process of replacement itself, even if normatively defined. Thus there are no scientific statements as such, that is, statements that can be identified in terms of their contents. They need only be falsifiable and take the form of hypotheses. Scheper-Hughes says little about the content of science and more about the kinds of questions that ought to be addressed, that is, about the use of scientific rationality in understanding the real problems of people in the world. If there is a problem in her argument it is that by not being explicit about the question of scientific rationality she might appear to conflate the critique of certain presuppositions in scientific discourses with the critique of rationality itself. This is marginal, I think, to her main argument, but it allows D'Andrade to make his point. It is one thing to say that a critical approach aims at revealing the "interested" ideological components of discourses as well as strategies, including, of course, our own science. There is nothing particularly unscientific about this. It is something entirely different to say that science is, by definition, a form of capitalist ideology, an instrument of class domination that ought to be replaced by a different logic, for example, for ferreting out witches or restoring cosmic balance.

MARVIN HARRIS
Department of Anthropology, University of Florida, Gainesville, Fla. 32611, U.S.A. 30 XI 94

I share D'Andrade's general commitment to science-oriented anthropology. There are aspects of his argument, however, that I cannot endorse. Specifically, I find it difficult to accept the key dichotomies of objective versus subjective and science versus morality. If I concentrate on these unsatisfactory aspects of his argument, it is only because I lack the space to comment on the many points with which I agree.

For D'Andrade, "objective" is defined as "telling about the thing being described," while "subjective" is defined as "how the agent doing the description reacts to the object." This is a misleading contrast (even allowing for the fact that D'Andrade states that "objective accounts must also be testable and replicable"). The difference between objective and subjective lies in the methods used in the descriptions—methods that in the one case are public, replicable, testable, etc., and in the other case private, idiosyncratic, and untestable. The current fascination with the observer's thoughts and feelings is subjective because it involves private, idiosyncratic, and untestable operations, not because it provides information about the observer's reaction to the observed. Indeed, as one of anthropology's leading methodologists, D'Andrade is certainly aware that objectivity actually does require some account of the relationship between the describing observer and the phenomena described in order to satisfy the rule that observers specify what they have done to gain the knowledge that they claim to possess. I dwell on this point because postmodernists need to be disabused of the notion that science-oriented anthropologists are against putting the observer in the picture. What I am against are subjective accounts (as defined above), no matter whether they are about the observer or the observed. (Of course, I'm not against novel-writing as long as the author does not attempt to make it the one and only form of ethnography.) In scientific ethnography, putting the observer in the picture requires that we know such items as where and when the observer was in the field, who the informants were, what language was used, and what events took place that might have affected the research such as a personal illness or the actions of hostile authorities.

I turn to the second dichotomy. In arguing for the strict separation of moral-subjective from scientific-objective "models," D'Andrade needlessly concedes the moral high ground to the science-bashing camp. He does this by denying that one can "blend together objectivity and morality in a single model." I agree that scientific inquiry must be carried out in a manner that protects its findings from political-moral bias to the greatest possible degree. But this does not mean that scientific inquiry should be (or can be) conducted in a political-moral vacuum. First of all, there is strong empirical support for the position that morality in the form of culturally constructed values and preferences influences the definition and selection of researchable projects. What we choose to study or not to study in the name of anthropology is a politico-moral decision. When structural-functionalism held sway, many Africanists chose to ignore conflict and the whole imperialist context. The recent commitment to the study of gender roles and ethnicity to the neglect of class stratification is also a politico-moral choice. Given limited research funding, allocation of research effort is a zero-sum game in which the commitment to one kind of study means the neglect of alternative projects and problematics.

Morality blends with science in another way. Moral decisions need to be based on the best available knowledge of what the world is like. D'Andrade's resistance to a blended model prevents him from contesting the attempt by science-bashers to condemn science as an obstacle to the making of correct politico-moral decisions. But the shoe is on the other foot. It is a lack of scientific knowledge that places our politico-moral decisions in greatest jeopardy. (By "scientific knowledge" I mean knowledge gained through publicly accessible, replicable, and testable operations resulting in parsimo-

nious, generalizable, and predictive/retrodictive theories.) To claim the political-moral high ground one must have reliable knowledge. We have to know what the world is like, who is doing or has done what to whom, who and what are responsible for the suffering and injustice we condemn and seek to remedy. If this be so, then science-minded anthropologists may plausibly claim that their model is not only moral but morally superior to those that reject science as a source of reliable knowledge about the human condition. Fantasies, intuitions, interpretations, and reflections may make for good poems and novels, but if you want to know what to do about the AIDS time bomb in Africa or landlessness in Mexico, neglect of objective data is reprehensible.

Let me underscore the point that the blended model applies only to the extent that the blending takes place without violating the distinctive rules of scientific-objective inquiry. Distorting the data-gathering process in order to make the findings concur with a desired political-moral outcome must be vigilantly excluded. It is in this sense and only in this sense that D'Andrade's call for the rigid separation of moral and scientific models is an ineluctable imperative.

Of course, as D'Andrade is careful to say, merely following the rules of scientific inquiry does not guarantee the achievement of reliable knowledge. Scientists make mistakes, and some even cook their data. But given its many successes (in anthropology as well as in the harder sciences), science is the best available system for providing a factual foundation for politico-moral decision making (Reyna 1994). Antiscience paradigms such as ethnopoetics, interpretationism, hermeneutics, and phenomenology provide no such foundation and therefore cannot be regarded as morally superior to cognitive science or cultural materialist or other neopositivist paradigms.

Because D'Andrade concedes the moral high ground to the antiscience camp, CA's innovative and praiseworthy attempt to juxtapose his proscience position with the antiscientism of Scheper-Hughes's article falls rather flat. For D'Andrade the weakness of Scheper-Hughes's position is that she registers her indignation and takes sides. As a materialist and neopositivist I have no such fault to find. I have always mixed science-oriented and political-moral engagement (for example, see the pamphlet I wrote about Mozambique "in order to discharge what I consider[ed] to be a moral obligation" not to confine my writing to "such neutral or purely technical subjects as would lead to no involvement in politically controversial issues" (Harris 1958:1). Scheper-Hughes and other promoters of "critical anthropology" seem unaware of the fact that their ballyhooed substitute for an imagined morally neutral positivism has roots that go back at least as far as E. B. Tylor and his identification of anthropology as "essentially a reformer's science . . . active at once in aiding progress and in removing hindrance" (quoted in Lowie 1938:83). They seem unaware that science-minded anthropologists have a long history of contributing to the struggle against racism, anti-Semitism, colonialism, and, yes, even sexism and, like it or not, to military and civilian intelligence gathering during World War II and to the anti–Vietman War movement (especially through the invention and spread of the teach-in)—and all this before the generation of critical anthropologists had gotten out of grad school. So there is nothing very new, let alone startling, in Scheper-Hughes's declaration that "if we cannot begin to think about social institutions and practices in moral or ethical terms, then anthropology strikes me as quite weak and useless." But she neglects to add that if we cannot begin to think about social institutions and practices in scientific-objective terms, then anthropology will be even weaker.

For myself the weakness of Scheper-Hughes's treatment of *nervos* and necklacing is not that she indignantly and passionately takes sides but that she does not present enough objective evidence for others to decide who or what is responsible for these atrocities. Her theory that hunger in Brazil is medicalized to mask the source of rural suffering sounds plausible, but it calls for rigorous tests. To strengthen her condemnation of those who prescribe tranquilizers instead of food, more evidence is needed. Thus the credibility of the moral judgments made by Scheper-Hughes cannot be dissociated from her apparent indifference to the question of methodology.

Unlike the majority of postmodernists whom she felicitously excoriates for their relativism and obscurantism, Scheper-Hughes intends to "speak truth to power." But I cannot see how she expects to do this and at the same time accept the Foucauldian mantra that "the objectivity of science and of medicine is always a phantom objectivity." I would argue to the contrary: without science, morality is always a phantom morality. Without science, critical anthropology will dissolve into the postmodernist mainstream in which radical skepticism, relativism, and nihilism are the order of the day (Gross and Levitt 1994, Rosenau 1992). Indeed, Foucault himself, whom Noam Chomsky once described as "totally amoral" (quoted in Miller 1992:237), well exemplifies this danger.

ADAM KUPER
Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, N.J. 08540, U.S.A. 21 XI 94

Scheper-Hughes presents a lively self-portrait of the ethnographer as activist, negotiating about life-and-death matters in a Cape squatter camp or mobilising women's groups in Brazilian slums. The effect of this self-portrait is heightened by the contrast she draws between herself and her former colleagues at the University of Cape Town, who are represented as genteel colonials, drinking tea, talking about trifles, withdrawing from the struggle. Together, these images are made to represent what the ethnographer should and should not do in the field.

Let me begin with this caricature of her colleagues.

Scheper-Hughes mentions only in a footnote two women who were leading members of the Cape Town department through the eighties: Harriet Ngubane was a leading member of the Inkatha Freedom Party and is now a member of Parliament; Mamphela Ramphela was closely associated with the Black Power movement and is now a senior member of the university administration. How could they have operated happily and productively in the milieu she sketches? In fact, like most South African social scientists at the English-speaking universities, her colleagues were committed opponents of apartheid and generally sympathetic to the African National Congress (though ANC intellectuals did not blindly support township radicals). Some supported other popular movements or were liberals rather than radicals.

Moreover, in addition to drinking tea and moaning about the students, some of her former colleagues also did research. Scheper-Hughes does not cite a single study that emanated from the Cape Town department in the past decade. There were a number, some of considerable power, that among other things documented the poverty of the resettlement areas, the corruption and violence of local apartheid authorities, the deprivation of children in workers' hostels, etc. (for a review of the literature, together with some contextualisation, see Gordon and Spiegel 1993). The English-speaking anthropologists were, indeed, sometimes reproached for allowing a political agenda to steer their scholarship.

In short, her ethnography of the South African anthropological scene is unreliable, insulting to individual scholars, and, coming from a serious scholar, little short of outrageous.

What, then, of the self-portrait of the activist-ethnographer? I shall limit my remarks to Scheper-Hughes in South Africa, where admittedly she was operating without the advantages that she enjoyed in Brazil of long experience in the field or command of the language. Judging from her account of South African anthropology, she was not even familiar with the scholarly literature. It is also left unclear whether she actually did any field research. She evidently chose, above all, to be an activist—but an activist inevitably somewhat handicapped in her grasp of the complexities of local situations. She gives no hint that she appreciated the delicacy of her position as she marched into the arena, but activism *before* research is a chancy business.

Consider her representation of the politics of summary execution in the squatter camps. According to her account, the local ANC leadership bravely holds out against the lynch mob, and she gives them her support. (And quite rightly; the ethnographer should certainly close her notebook to save lives.) But she does not explain why on this occasion the local activists took such a humane line, since in many other situations local ANC leaders were right out there with tyres and matches. Would she have supported these more incendiary activists? Or would she have thrown herself into the struggle to stop the kangaroo courts and their summary executions—even if that might have meant aligning herself with perhaps less attractive allies? She also reports that she found young ANC and PAC activists working in alliance, but this was a very unusual situation. What would she have done if they had been working against one another, or if she had come into a war zone where ANC and Inkatha fighters confronted each other? Chosen sides?

The broader problem is that not all activists are active in ways we should like. What would Scheper-Hughes say, for instance, to a Catholic missionary/ethnographer who puts evangelical purposes before science? Or are we to assume that the term "activist" is properly used only for those who toe some particular progressive line?

In short, Scheper-Hughes presents a situation in which it is easy to know what the right choice is. However, most ethnographic situations are less dramatic and most political choices rather more complicated. As D'Andrade points out, it is not always obvious that the oppressed constitute a clearly defined class with an unambiguous shared interest. It is perhaps worth remarking that the voters in the Western Cape—including those in Franschhoek—rejected the ANC by a substantial majority in the April 1994 elections, so the ANC was not self-evidently the party of the majority in this region.

But even where the choices seem to be clear, there is a real problem as to how and when a foreigner, let alone the foreigner who has been accepted as an ethnographer, may properly intervene. Should the ethnographer in India act directly against the caste system? Moreover, in some places intervention may be virtually impossible. Should anthropologists only work in countries where they will be permitted to be political activists? There is also, of course, the danger that the foreign anthropologist—free to depart—can put informants at risk. I would have grave doubts about urging a political innocent, trying to understand foreign ways, to intervene on the side of the good.

Finally, there are many situations in which political activism will inevitably close off various avenues of information and cloud judgment. Whatever its moral justification, activism does not generally go hand-in-hand with good research. If there is a trade-off between ethnographic enquiry and political activism, should we always—usually? ever?—choose activism? There are often many local activists and rather few ethnographers.

The problem does not arise in quite this way if one believes that objective research is impossible. However, if one takes a relativist position, then commitment becomes problematic in another way. But according to D'Andrade, the new hegemonic American cultural anthropology is content with two contradictory arguments. Objective research is an illusion, and yet we can somehow know for certain where justice lies. As D'Andrade indicates, the fashionable professors have dressed the marxism of the sixties in drag, clothing it incongruously in the language of relativism (cf. Kuper 1994). (He quotes Scheper-Hughes as an instance, though in the present paper she apparently recognises the inconsistency and criticises the anthropological postmodernists.

In this paper she is preaching something closer to the Frankfurt School theory of the sixties.)

It is certainly interesting that this incoherent epistemology still has such a grip on American cultural anthropology, and it would be worth having D'Andrade's opinion on how it has succeeded. However, he may be too pessimistic about its influence. The new American orthodoxy has in general fallen flat outside the United States. For reassurance I would recommend a visit to a conference of the European Association of Social Anthropologists or a switch from reading *Cultural Anthropology* and *Ethos* to reading CURRENT ANTHROPOLOGY, *Man,* and *Social Anthropology.*

In his frustration, D'Andrade proposes as an alternative a pure research programme uncontaminated by morality or politics. At the beginning of the century, Weber noted that while one may—perhaps should—ask questions that are motivated by moral and political concerns, the research that is done to answer these questions should nonetheless be as objective and thorough as possible. And while Weber insisted that social scientists must try to grasp the motives and ruling ideas that shape the behaviour of actors, he tried to demonstrate that this did not necessarily lead to subjectivity, solipsism, or projection.

LAURA NADER
Department of Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley, Calif. 94720, U.S.A. 19 XII 94

D'Andrade argues here for building knowledge by means of what some call positivist, objective science, while Scheper-Hughes constructs an impassioned and frenetically paced statement about a militant anthropology, one that puts its players to work on the ethnography of misery. The papers are a contrast between white-coat and barefoot anthropology. Yet D'Andrade and Scheper-Hughes are both writing about the adequacy of anthropology, a concern which has inspired past anthropologists and a number of my own publications as well (Nader 1972, 1976, 1989).

It takes patience to sort out these position statements, in the first case extrapolating from a handful of performing anthropologists while in the other relying primarily on autobiographical field experiences of the kind many of us (including D'Andrade) have had, but the sorting out may well be worth our while. There is a good deal at stake—the integrity of the discipline and the reputation of anthropologists, as well as the practical value of knowing what we know and often the very lives of people amongst whom we work. But rather than argue objectivity versus subjectivity or moral models versus positivism I think the focus of argument should be on *adequacy,* indeed, scientific adequacy. I have been an anthropologist long enough to know that "moral models" were not invented by D'Andrade's five—indeed, long enough to know that "moral models" not only come from the left but also are inherent in some of the conservative, positivist anthropology of both an earlier age and more recently. Conservative political correctness was hidden in words such as "progress," "development," and "aid." Indeed, positivist science itself had a "moral model" in objectivity versus subjectivity, which meant among other things that positivist science often ignored the emotional bias of the researcher in choosing the research question.

If we are comparing ourselves to "real scientists" we might remember that physicists always calibrate their instruments. Reflexive anthropology, when its purpose is reflection rather than performance, is an attempt to calibrate the instrument—in this instance the recording anthropologist. And "real scientists" such as physicists spoke up about nuclear weapons, sometimes at the cost of security clearance, and are working diligently at this moment to develop means of ridding our planet of nuclear arms. Anthropologists were not present at Wounded Knee, and those who have spoken out at the horror of what we might have been part of have usually been relegated to the margins of the field.

While I agree that "moral models" can be irritating, especially when they are someone else's moral models and especially when they are holier-than-thou, I prefer moral models that are visible. Then I can ask someone like Scheper-Hughes, "How come you think you know what's best?" Or, more likely, "How come, if you are interested in misery, you don't study up more, go to the source rather than the victims?" Or "Do you really think that a postmodern, reflexive anthropology is any better at predicting the revolution in Peru than the structural-functionalists were in predicting the Red movement in the United States?" I can also ask her if she remembers Kathleen Gough, who so often put her career last in her activism, all the while contributing first-rate anthropology, or John Davis (1992), who has written about the two anthropologies—"the comfortable . . . and the painful." Some anthropologists in the Amazon today are risking their lives for people in misery while doing excellent ethnography. "Why don't you make common cause?" I might ask. Maybe moral models are not the real agenda.

In this regard it is interesting to reread Richard Handler's interview with Clifford Geertz (1991). Geertz is very plain-spoken in responding to the question "Against what were you revolutionizing?" Selected responses include "a four-field approach," "Chicago was the main dispersal point for British social anthropology," [Boas] "didn't think much," "the notion that anthropology comes mainly out of the British utilitarians . . . and the other, . . . that the only ancestors of anthropologists are other anthropologists" (p. 609). "My own opposition to Lévi-Strauss is my general opposition to rationalism . . . but . . . he made anthropology an intellectual discipline. He made it theoretical, intellectual, philosophical. . . . He got it out of the craft mold. He got it out of the empiricist data-collecting business and introduced a note of French intellectuality" (p. 609). "The amount of time I've spent in a wholly anthropological environment is minuscule" (p. 609). "I came out of a nonscientific background, and I never did buy this stuff" (p. 607). "We wanted to get culture, however de-

fined, back in the picture" (p. 608). That was the agenda not only for Geertz but for many of his followers, some of whom are discussed by D'Andrade. It was a conscious erasure of anthropology as a discipline that the Clyde Kluckhohn I knew, after his disillusionment with Social Relations, would not have been a part of, and the Geertz followers did not read much anthropology either.

Now younger anthropologists like Paul Farmer (1994) combine the best in the scientific/medical tradition with anthropology. Farmer has recently observed that it is time to put the "socio-" back into socio-cultural anthropology as he simultaneously documents the "chilling misuses of the culture concept." The lack of rigorous attention to the structural violence that Farmer discusses is an inadequate anthropology not repaired, by the way, by militancy.

D'Andrade is correct that the current moral model is ethnocentric and that equality and freedom characterize Euro-American culture more than any other. He is also correct that the Gramscian model is inadequate to all tasks and that the current trendy work is "a good model for intellectual battle within the university." And who could disagree with Scheper-Hughes that anthropology should be ethically based?

What I have repeatedly argued for is for the best anthropology we can collectively muster, and I am persuaded that no single school is capable of the best single-handedly. We need quantitative and qualitative models, we need humanism and some kind of science, we need good writers and good thinkers. But we do need an anthropology with a deep respect for integrative thinking and for empiricism also. Anthropologists like Farmer and others on the front line do not debate whether biology should or should not be in anthropology—it is there in their real world. Anthropologists in the Amazon do not debate whether ecology is anthropology or not—it is necessary to their job of understanding the world. Perhaps the reason that I can be optimistic is that I also read and listen to the work of anthropologists outside of elite departments of anthropology and find their work increasingly approaching the best our profession has to offer.

J. TIM O'MEARA
Department of Anthropology, University of Melbourne, Parkville, Victoria 3052, Australia (omeara%anthropology@pc.unimelb.edu.au). 23 XI 94

As an applied anthropologist I heartily welcome Scheper-Hughes's call for anthropologists to do some good in the world, but like D'Andrade I get nervous when people support their arguments by claiming a special "epistemology" for discovering "truths" about the world. The more private that epistemology and the more righteous those "truths" are proclaimed to be, the more nervous I become. My unease peaks when "truth" starts appearing in quote marks—implying, I fear, that what is taken to be false by the pedestrian standards of observation and logical inference available to us all may nevertheless be advanced as "true" by the supposedly loftier standard of "reflection" or some other form of revelation available only to a self-selected few.

As a blanket assertion that the ideas, values, and practices of all social groups are equally "valid," cultural relativism has always been a dubious moral philosophy. Personal reflection is an appropriate means for deciding whether we should apply that moral philosophy in any particular circumstance, and support for or opposition to its application is properly mounted on moral grounds. The critical question here is not whether it is ethical for anthropologists to try to help people in the course of their work (of course it is, and many have) or whether scientific objectivity requires anthropologists to *be* personally aloof from the people they study (of course it does not, and most have not, regardless of how they write). The critical question is whether empirical truth is to bend before "ethical propositions."

D'Andrade argues that "anthropology's claim to moral authority rests on knowing *empirical* truths about the world." Scheper-Hughes argues that if anthropology is to be worth anything at all, it must be "ethically grounded." Whether these two arguments are complementary (as they should be) or contradictory depends on what Scheper-Hughes means by the vague term "ethically grounded." In arguing that anthropologists should give ethical propositions "primacy" over scientific objectivity, does she mean that if private reflection reveals one's political goals to be righteous enough, then a false empirical proposition may be styled as "true"? Herbert Spencer thought himself a great humanitarian, believing that "survival of the fittest" was the fastest road to achieve the goal of social improvement. Are we now to take his faulty empirical premises concerning biological inheritance and social learning as "true" because they were "ethically grounded"? Jackson proposes a "different notion of truth than that to which a scientistic anthropology aspires . . . a notion of truth based less upon epistemological certainties than upon moral, aesthetic, and political values" (1989:167). According to his "pragmatist notion of truth," he concludes that "if illusions have real and useful consequences then they are truths" (1989:167, 115; see O'Meara 1990). Scheper-Hughes seems to imply as much but does not make herself entirely clear on this vital matter. I urge her to do so now.

Let me complement D'Andrade's logical argument by stating the matter in the stark, moralizing terms favored by critical theorists: I hold that epistemological relativism is *evil*. It is an instrument of subjugation, not of liberation. No matter how righteous the cause, it is dangerous as well as false to claim a special "way of knowing" about the physical world that produces "knowledge" which is immune to empirical testing and logical contradiction. Well-meaning people should stop handling that venomous snake—which they apparently do not understand and certainly cannot control—before it turns fascist and bites us all.

Hitler's propagandist, Joseph Goebbels, would have been delighted to hear respected academics arguing that adherence to relevant data and sound logic is a form of

"mystification." Neofascists must be delighted now with the credence given a warning against generalizations in terms of such generalizations as that the "discourse of 'objectivity' . . . is inevitably a language of power" and "all professional discourses by nature assert hierarchy" (Abu-Lughod 1991:150–51, cited by D'Andrade). They must be equally delighted with the prominence given to another self-contradictory logic which urges us to embrace epistemological relativism but reject the cultural relativism that it implies. Scheper-Hughes would have us reject cultural relativism because it provides a warrant for claiming that apartheid is just as "valid" as any other type of social relation. Fair enough. But by that logic and morality, should we not also reject epistemological relativism because it provides a warrant for claiming that the Holocaust is just a Zionist myth?

Critics take "objective knowledge" to mean "certain knowledge" gathered by a "value-free" scientist, which Popper pointed out over 30 years ago is a "naive and misguided idea of scientific objectivity" (1992[1961]:72). Instead, Popper argues that "scientific objectivity is not a matter for the individual scientist but rather the social result of mutual criticism." Empirical science does not produce *certain* knowledge—it being utterly impossible to free research completely from the distorting effects of reseachers' interests and understandings (that was demonstrated 250 years ago by the great empiricist, David Hume, not by latter-day critical theorists). But must we therefore throw the gates wide open to distortion by answering every question according to how it serves our moral and political interests? Since there is no certain empirical knowledge, I cannot say with absolute deductive certainty that there are no alternative epistemologies for learning about the physical world we inhibit, but I can say with conviction that to make such claims is dangerous and immoral.

Contrary to widespread belief, scientific objectivity does not divide the world into a value-free "objective domain" of rocks, trees, endocrine secretion, and the like, and a separate, value-laden "subjective domain" of goals, motives, feelings, and the like—the first to be known by "objective principles of elucidation," "explanation," and "epistemology" and the second by a different set of "subjective principles" (Rappaport 1984:432–33). These are myths based on the antiquated notion that, unlike endocrine secretions, people's thoughts and feelings inhabit a mysterious nonphysical domain which is perforce immune to objective study. The myth that scientific objectivity would require anthropologists to remain "value-free" and aloof from the people they study follows from that error. Moral relativism does not follow from scientific objectivity, as Scheper-Hughes and others seem to believe, so their attack on moral relativism does not require an attack on objectivism.

As a *pragmatic* matter, becoming an emotional or political participant in the lives of the people we study may sometimes open new doors and help reveal new insights to us, but, as Scheper-Hughes found, other doors may then be closed to us. Thus, if the goal is to help the downtrodden of the earth, it is a pragmatic as well as a moral question whether we should become street partisans—knowing that the internal workings of the power elite will then be hidden from our view forever.

The scientist's commitment to objectivity is "ethically grounded." According to that ethic, attempting to distort matters of fact to fit personal feelings or prejudices is *immoral;* hence D'Andrade's acute observation that anthropology's claim to moral authority rests on knowing empirical truths. According to the ethic of objectivity, anyone may present observations and logical arguments to support or undermine an empirical claim, and the truth or falsity of the claim is to be evaluated on those grounds regardless of the authority of contending parties. Arguments from authority (moral or otherwise) are anathema to the egalitarian ethic of scientific objectivity—and vice versa.

In 1613 Galileo published his support for Copernican theory. He summarized his defense against the resulting charge of heresy by arguing that "in discussions of physical problems we ought to begin not from the authority of scriptural passages, but from sense-experiences and necessary demonstrations" (Galilei 1979[1615]:23). Pope Paul V gave primacy to ethical propositions over scientific objectivity, however, and ordered Galileo to stop holding and teaching the Copernican theory because it was shown to be false by the alternative epistemology of biblical revelation. In 1632 Galileo contravened that order by publishing his famous *Dialogue,* but the books were seized and further publication halted. Under threat of immediate persecution, Galileo was forced to submit. Fortunately for us, Galileo's writings and his ideal of scientific objectivity survived that inquisition.

Scheper-Hughes claims that "the objectivity of science . . . is a mask that conceals more than it reveals" (1992:29). That claim is itself a mystification of social relations, designed to mobilise political action by exciting the moral outrage of people who, like the critics themselves, are militantly ignorant of the fundamentally democratic nature of scientific objectivity and oblivious to the vital protection against demagogy that it affords us all. If demagogy and mystification are truly the enemy today, then scientific objectivity should be embraced as an ally, not spurned as a foe.

AIHWA ONG
Department of Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley, Calif. 94720, U.S.A. 2 I 95

Scheper-Hughes and D'Andrade agree that anthropology should be moral; their basic difference is over whether there is objectivity. D'Andrade wants anthropology to be moral but to keep objective and subjective goals separate so that moral assessments can be arrived at from a dispassionate distance and after a careful weighing of facts. Scheper-Hughes argues that there is no objectivity that stands outside a moral position. This is because

power operates through hegemonic constructions of social reality, making commonsensical, routine, and "natural" the immoral arrangements that perpetuate social inequalities such as the widespread neglect of children, women, the poor, and the disenfranchised. She argues that anthropologists are also susceptible to such hegemonic commonsensical views of the world and that their normal(ized) reactions have been to take the detached pose of objectivity, even indifference, and call it "objectivity." In contrast, D'Andrade thinks that there is a difference between empirical knowledge (out there) and a moral position (adopted by the anthropologist). He seems to avoid the issue that all models devised to collect and evaluate empirical evidence are ultimately based on implicit moral criteria, recognizing this only when he talks about stories as a form of generalization.

Such disagreements have been with Western scholars for much of the 20th century. What makes the current debate significant is the alternative claims for defining anthropology (as part of the social sciences or the humanities?). A fundamental problem is confusion over the use of terminology and failure to situate claims in specific historical-cultural contexts. It is amusing that D'Andrade calls Scheper-Hughes and others advocating anthropological ethics "postmodernist," whereas Scheper-Hughes uses that appellation for anthropologists who, in her view, choose to study transnational processes. This comedy of mis(sed)labeling is further compounded by both authors' conflating, after their own fashion, the concepts of hegemony and ideology, reducing one or both to "mystification" (D'Andrade) or "false consciousness" (Scheper-Hughes). Nevertheless, both authors make important points. By and large, I agree with D'Andrade's argument for empirical research but wish that he would see that research is designed within and inseparable from power relations that, among other things, set moral terms. I agree with Scheper-Hughes's view that anthropology is ultimately about ethics, but I am uncomfortable with her sense of political righteousness. I think that, taken to the extreme, both positions are very dangerous, if not for anthropologists, then for the people they work with.

The disagreement between Scheper-Hughes and D'Andrade strikes me as very familiar, very Western, and very ethnocentric. Neither's position is situated within a broader, cross-cultural, global context. Both use universalizing terms such as objectivity, power, and morality without pausing to consider whether other cultures might take different positions on these subjects. An anthropological hegemony seems to be at work here (see Ong n.d.), as the cultural others on whose behalf we anthropologists are making objective descriptions or taking moral stands are silenced or ignored except as obstacles and bit players in yet another Western debate over making knowledges about those same others.

In a nutshell, there are many oppressions, as D'Andrade asserts, and also many moralities in the world. There are two key questions for anthropologists: (1) Do we have a moral obligation to understand how power relations work? Both would answer yes, but D'Andrade would conduct "empirical research" before making any moral judgment, while Scheper-Hughes combines the exposure of hidden forms of injustice with "speaking truth to power." (2) How should the anthropologist's morality interact with the morality of cultural others? Neither directly addresses this issue here. (Scheper-Hughes does deal with this subject in *Death Without Weeping* [1992], recounting her struggles with the moralities of the Catholic faith and the "womanly solidarity" she claims to share with local mothers.) D'Andrade hints that he will take a varied, situational approach depending on empirical findings and a weighing of pros and cons (determined by himself), while Scheper-Hughes proposes a kind of Christian morality that is at once individualistic—in sense of "the authorially centered, Western, epistemological 'I'" (Hall 1988:67)—and sweeping in its universalizing claims. Let me briefly comment on the political implications of the two approaches.

Many Asian societies hold that there is no truth outside morality (Scheper-Hughes's position). D'Andrade warns against ethnocentricism in applying a Western notion of morality and seems to find refuge in an empiricism that he believes would avoid the pitfalls of making "wrong" moral judgments in ethnographic situations. This position enables him to maintain a superior objectivist Western relation to cultural others. Scheper-Hughes's approach is more courageous and complicated. She claims that, despite cultural differences, all human societies share a "precultural" morality based on the primary dyadic relationship between mother and child. This ideology of human universalism (a form of sociobiology?) makes it morally obligatory for her to intervene in and struggle with the morality of cultural others. She does not consider that her self-identification as a Western feminist—an apparently fixed subject position constituted within a particular ideological discourse—is open to a range of subsequent interpellations. What are the political implications of an anthropologist's firm moral position in the face of the actual play of negotiation, contradiction, and interchange with other moralities? How does her postfieldwork discourse on ethical anthropology reposition her in relation to other Western ideologies produced from a variety of other positions?

Modern Chinese morality is a combination of Confucian traditions and Western Enlightenment notions of progress. The state defines the composition of this ideology, but a large number of Chinese people share a "relational ethics" whereby morality is constructed in terms of interdependency and the exchange of feelings, goods, and services (Yang 1994). It is in many ways a morality that powerfully constrains the individual for the good of the collective. Power is generally viewed not as oppressive but as enabling. It is a responsibility to secure the overall good of society, of the largest number of people, of the nation-state. Such a political ethics often entails making painful choices in which some people will be hurt as the cost of safeguarding the interests of the majority. For the anthropologist the point should be first to understand how this cultural system works in its po-

litical context and second to determine what justifiable moral action to take in this different moral universe.

This issue finds its clearest exposition in the explosive debate over human rights. In China, state ideology and popular consciousness express strong resistance to the privileging of individual rights against the good of the collective. During my 1993 visit to the southern cities in which market reforms were in full flood, people talked about the Tiananmen crackdown as justifiable and moral because these disruptions could have overturned the government and thrown China into chaos, thus derailing the development desperately needed to make China a strong, healthy country. People who fought for human rights were considered selfish because they sought to obstruct the development that would enable the most Chinese to benefit not only materially but also in terms of the freer society made possible by economic prosperity and political stability. Furthermore, human rights activists were considered immoral because their activities were seen as weakening China's bargaining position in global trade.

From a Western moral perspective this repudiation of individual rights is repugnant. Safeguarding the interests of the wider society cannot justify throwing prodemocracy activists in jail or quickly dispatching common criminals in order to acquire their organs for transplantation into the bodies of good citizens. Western anthropologists may hold different moral views about freedom of speech or the rights of prisoners, but in what sense can we impose our notion of morality on other cultures? To put things in rather stark terms, when society is faced with difficult moral dilemmas—the good of society or the good of a few individuals—whose morality comes into play? Writing on this topic elsewhere (Ong n.d.), I suggest the answer is not a return to cultural relativism and its implied apolitical detachment. Indeed, we can no longer afford a simple cultural relativism but must acknowledge the making of other worlds in their own terms, outside of Western political domination. One is forced to recognize that Western modernist values (including full-fledged democracy) can have limited application to non-Western countries. At the same time, emergent world powers like China can enact other forms of cultural hegemony that inspire both fear and resistance. What this entails for an ethical anthropology is not aligning itself with the totalizing claims of any single culture, society, or nation or appealing to some "precultural" sociality as the template for a universal morality. Instead, I see the task of anthropology as developing a mobile sensitivity to cultural difference that nevertheless insists on defending minimal modern human rights (freedom from hunger and torture and the right to survive as a people). The world has come through hundreds of years of struggle between Enlightenment ideas and social oppression, between cultural domination and human emancipation for us to insist on basic human guarantees for all peoples in the late 20th century. If it is to remain relevant into the next century, anthropology must develop its own relational ethics to societies and peoples everywhere, guided by the "weak" human universal of emancipation.

As an anthropologist acutely conscious of geopolitical forces and cultural differences and one who has conducted research on transnational capitalism, migrant workers, war refugees, and overseas Chinese, I am dismayed at Scheper-Hughes's view that the study of transnational forces represents "a flight from local engagements, local commitments, and local accountability." Indeed, as a number of new anthropological studies have shown, the transnational perspective has increased our understanding of the moral dilemmas of postcolonial subjects (Lurhman n.d.; Ong 1995, n.d; Ong and Peletz 1995), the resilient and resistant cultures of diasporic populations (Gilroy 1987, 1993), the nation-building efforts of displaced populations (Basch, Schiller, and Blanc-Szanton 1993), the cultural politics of Asia-Pacific societies (Dominguez and Wu n.d.), and the political effects of commodity culture and the emancipatory promise of transnationalism (Hall 1991, Adams n.d.). In other words, the study of transnationalism is imperative if anthropology is to remain at the forefront of cultural analysis. Refusal to engage and understand how global forces affect our everyday lives is an intellectually untenable position for anthropologists.

In other words, an ethical anthropology is not limited to working only in a single locality or being in a position to rescue dying babies and tortured prisoners. This courageous intervention is very commendable when the local conditions allow it. Indeed, an ethical anthropology must be more aware of the local effects of geopolitics, transnational capitalism, and rescue anthropology. In much of the Third World, the North American anthropologist is often viewed as a powerful person, one who, rightly or wrongly, is backed by substantial resources, the U.S. government, or even the CIA. Of course, the female anthropologist is in a special position to help—by giving voice to silenced women, helping to build creches, or participating in union struggles. Nevertheless, such actions also reinforce her personal power as a white woman as well as the very structure of geopolitical power she seeks to subvert. What are the wider political implications of such ethnographies when the central moral character often appears to be the anthropologist herself? Isn't the kind of moralizing strategy Scheper-Hughes proposes a deployment of intellectual power that depends on "liberating" the poor and hungry of the Third World? Isn't it the kind of modernist anthropology (dating to the colonial period) that has to be rethought in our postmodern world, where old divisions have been subverted, redrawn, or collapsed and we are all multiply positioned in a range of ideological formations and where the West-Rest relationship has yet to be reworked?

PAUL RABINOW
Department of Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley, Calif. 94720, U.S.A. 29 XII 94

For the past five years I have been studying scientists and science. There are a number of reasons for this choice, but the one most relevant here is that it seemed

to me important—as a citizen of the world and an anthropologist—to understand in some detail what was going on in the world of molecular biology and genetics. It seemed important for two major reasons. First, the subject matter was interesting in and of itself; I was curious about these fields (and bored by the debates about lurking eugenics and imminent therapeutic miracles two steps removed from the actual material) and decided that learning something new was a good thing to do. I was, in short, expressing and exercising my curiosity. Second, the field in which aspects of molecular biology and genetics were taking shape was a field, or a multitude of sites, heavily saturated with power relations of all sorts. Power relations are productive, and much was being produced. Michel Foucault draws a distinction between different types of power relations: exploitation, domination, and subjection. It was clear that massive amounts of money were being invested by various states, by large multinational pharmaceutical firms, and by venture capitalists. That money and the truths it would produce would surely be used in a range of fashions which would further consolidate existing inequalities both within the countries where these processes were undertaken and between the North and the South. As many critics of the Human Genome Project had pointed out, money was being made and hierarchy further consolidated. Finally, less explored and of more interest to me, there would surely be a variety of new types of subject formations. Not only would people be forming cultural categories around the production of these new truths but a burgeoning variety of practices was emerging. These new practices included new subject positions for scientists (how does one conjoin the traditional Mertonian norms which are alive and well in the scientists' cultural formations with those of venture capitalists, pharmaceutical production methods, massive data bases of genetic information, ever-accelerating conditions of competition, etc.?). I was curious about what was emerging—new truths, new hybrids, new forms of power and identity. These emergences and events posed the challenge of a new or at least modified subject position for anthropology as well. For some time now, I have been calling this work the anthropology of reason. Inventing it and practicing it usually requires wearing shoes. It requires attention to the present. It has little room for denunciation and sweeping claims of stasis. It abjures the professoriat's victim culture (the barbarians are at the cafe). It flees ressentiment and nostalgia. It is not postmodern.

Reflective curiosity (the term is from Hans Blumenberg's [1985] magisterial *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*) seemed to me an essential virtue and a public value as well. Ethically and politically I felt compelled to learn enough molecular biology to be able to converse with the scientists. Ethics, politics, and epistemology are certainly not the same thing, nor are they so hygienically separated and privatized as some might wish. Once one undertakes any activity, one is occupying or inventing a subject position; the self-formative practices involved are, in my understanding, the ethical ones. These ethical practices contrast with the sweeping, static principles of moralism which apply everywhere and nowhere. Subjects are always enmeshed in power relations and hence in one form of politics or another. Independently—but nonetheless connected—these subjects, in fields of power, produce knowledges of various kinds which then circulate, increasingly in transnational flows (guided by capital formations, states, media networks, and the kinds of things that Arjun Appadurai has provided us the tools to understand). Reason is a thing of the world, a social practice.

I spent several years part-time doing fieldwork at the Cetus Corporation, near Berkeley, studying the invention of the polymerase chain reaction, a technique to isolate and then amplify specific sequences of DNA millions of times in a short period of time. In my forthcoming book *Biotechnology Emergent* I argue that the polymerase chain reaction is perhaps the most important biotechnology to date because, among other things, it has turned genetic scarcity into bounty. Working closely with the scientists was salutary on many levels not least of which was that it moved me beyond the endless and empty debates of the sort that D'Andrade rehearses. These scientists were passionately, existentially concerned with questions of the place of their science in the world, their own lives, etc. They were less doctrinaire about these issues than the major spokespersons for or against the Genome Project or *The Bell Curve.* Perhaps that means they don't count as intellectuals. For me, as an anthropologist of reason, it was exhilarating to watch and to discuss with them. It gradually dawned on me that one of the reasons I was getting such good access to these busy men and women was that they wanted to discuss what they were doing. I offered one of the few opportunities in America's compartmentalized, stressed, and angry culture for them to explain what they were doing, how they came to do it, what they thought about their lives, and the dangers and potentials of genetic engineering, genetic therapy, and the like. This was fieldwork among equals—not that we were identical in our skills or our location; they were molecular biologists and biochemists and I was an anthropologist of the interpretive social science school. We were all members of the larger cosmopolitan milieu. They were curious about my work as I was about theirs. There was no transcendent witnessing or moralizing, only immanent subjects caught in complex webs of power and knowledge leading through many intermediary steps eventually to the Bedouins and Cairenes so-well studied by Lila Abu-Lughod. If this be postmodernism (and I firmly believe it isn't), so be it—nothing to denounce yet, no underlying malevolent genies, no universal claims about "the world," just emerging objects, subjects, hybrids, networks. Both D'Andrade and Scheper-Hughes would be disappointed. Ethics, politics, and knowledge were everywhere intertwined (but not identical), changing, and everyone was wearing shoes.

I was fortunate enough to receive an NSF Professional Training Grant to go to the central human genome mapping center in France, the Centre d'Etude du Polymorphisme Humain (CEPH), in Paris. There I was trained in the use of a range of technologies, including the use

of yeast artificial chromosomes, for genome mapping. The CEPH is run by Jean Dausset, a Nobel Prize winner, and Daniel Cohen, an extremely dynamic would-be Nobel Prize winner 30 years his junior. Dausset has always been interested in the relations of science and ethics, having founded one of the first international groups devoted to the question. Cohen, fully aware that there were uncharted domains full of potential dangers in genome mapping and even more so in its sequels, was eager to have an interlocutor close at hand. France has a National Ethics Committee which hands down pronouncements on a variety of topics from embryo research to the use of artificial procreation. These pronouncements are usually of great generality. Cohen was interested in something more fine-grained, processual, less judgmental. A nominalist without knowing it, he invented the name "philosophical observatory" for the slot he was seeking to fill and waited for someone to occupy it. I found Cohen's label appealing, having liked Pierre Bourdieu's phrase of "fieldwork in philosophy" as a characterization of the kind of anthropology I do. I nominated myself for the position, and Cohen and Dausset graciously invited me in.

I arrived just after the CEPH had announced the first physical map of the human genome, a stunning triumph over the much-better-financed American effort. What to do next? Intense debate and struggle ensued over what scientific goals to pursue, what technical means were available or on the horizon which would make abstract scientific goals such as "isolate multifactorial disease genes" a plausible route to take, how these undertakings would be financed in an era when the nation-state (especially of countries in Europe still mired in a prolonged recession) would no longer be the central financier and regulator of research. Research, like capitalism, was entering an accelerated phase of transnational expansion and uncertain and perilous invention of institutional arrangements. Again, both capitalism and science were in fiercely competitive moments of invention. The end of the period of state-financed and state-regulated science which had emerged after the Second World War was nigh—not that the state was to disappear, but its near-hegemony in these arenas was coming to an end. So too was biology as local craft. I spent day after day listening to debates about whether cDNA display was the technology to bet on: whether the long polymerase chain reaction would make yeast artificial chromosome cloning obsolete or whether new vectors such as some of the old phage viruses would prove less chimerical than the artificial yeast chromosomes; what to make of the fact that not only was the single-gene paradigm inadequate for polygenetic conditions (at the very least vastly different types of statistical modeling would be required) but increasingly single-gene maladies were turning up with the "single" genes located on several different chromosomes or containing totally unexpected internal tandem repeats (the same gene being found in different forms and in different places); which kind of business and scientific alliances would be the most efficient and the most ethical. I had long discussions with two cancer specialists over technologies for displaying hundreds of genes (in different tissues) at the same time as well as the differences between the monisms of Spinoza and Plato; with a specialist in a rare muscular dystrophy over whether there was such a thing as a genetic self; with an Argentinian molecular biologist visiting the CEPH who wanted to start a genome mapping project of *T. cruzi*, a parasite found in Latin America which causes massive problems, over whether anthropology was an experimental science (I thought not but the biologist was surprisingly adamant that it was); with several of the women scientists about the role of sexism and diversity in French science (they thought the NIH forms requiring statements about minority representation hysterically funny).

No moralism, no denunciation, no pity: lots of knowledge, politics, and ethics (I leave aesthetics aside here for simplicity's sake). I suppose it was neither sufficiently "far away" for some nor transparently "the world" for others. I don't care. It slaked my curiosity only to reawaken it even more, day after day. It enables me to read the latest announcement of "the gene for X" with more appreciation for what it does and does not imply, freeing me from dependence on the science writers of the *New York Times* who announce every discovery in molecular biology with the phrase "could well lead to a cure for cancer or AIDS." It enables me to talk with some authority to my students about such matters. I see no evidence that these labs and their science aren't as "really real" as shantytowns. Power and knowledge are interconnected—for things to be interconnected they must be partially separate as well. Watching new configurations emerge is exhilarating and scary. At the end of my stay, Daniel Cohen told me that it had been extremely useful to him to have me there during this intense period of work, travel, and cogitation about how science was to survive, about how the South could be integrated into this rapid change (he was helping to establish a genome center in Tunisia), about juggling the constraints and enabling capacities of state money versus pharmaceutical contracts or venture capital risks and entanglements. "But Daniel," I said, "all I ever did was ask you what you were doing and watch you do it." True, after some time I began offering my opinions on certain things; gave a talk to 500 geneticists and molecular biologists on the Enlightenment philosopher Pierre-Louis Moreau de Maupertuis's projects for international projects to be financed by princes for the good of humanity; wondered who owned the DNA used in discovering disease genes (humanity, the state, the doctors, the scientists, the patients, the families, the financiers?), where the threshold of patenting should be (coding sequences, therapeutic molecules?); shared my distrust of academic moralism; agreed that it was the best of times and the worst of times.

No, Professor D'Andrade, the relations of truth, power, and ethics have not been unchanged for the past 200 years. Moralism, it is true, is millennial, and there are careers to be made in braying its truisms when other faculties fail. But for those—like yourself—with real

projects and important research to carry forward, why waste your precious time on it? No, Professor Scheper-Hughes, barefoot is not the only way to go. However, as you have so eloquently and movingly shown us, it is one way to go. We live in a world (not "the world") in which there are specific dangers and potentials, a world in which there are many different things to do and things to learn and one equally full of stupidity, terror, and Babbittry—a curious place, one in which, it seems to me, the question "What is Enlightenment?" still has its importance.

Reply

ROY G. D'ANDRADE
La Jolla, Calif., U.S.A. 19 I 95

In response to Crapanzano I would like to point out that his complaint that the two papers are "polemical" contradicts the very thesis he propounds—that "truth, knowledge, and objectivity are not . . . precluded by moral and political engagement." (If Scheper-Hughes or I do it, it is "polemical," but if he does it, it is "moral engagement"?) Crapanzano is also distressed by what he calls the "projective dismissal of postmodernism" in both papers. He says, "We should ask why so few anthropologists enter into critical, public conversations with advocates of positions they find questionable." Since this is exactly what Scheper-Hughes and I are doing, Crapanzano must be complaining that we are not talking about what he wants us to talk about. Yet when we do talk about postmodernism Crapanzano says he does not have the "foggiest idea" what either of us means by it. For me, the central ideas of postmodernism are a dismissal of metanarratives, a rejection of objectivity and science, an emphasis on power, a concern with representations, discourse, and text as central objects for analysis, and a relativistic stance with respect to knowledge but a moralistic stance with respect to Western colonialism. Postmodernist ideas have been blended into the current moral model, but most postmodernists distrust the metanarrative of oppression that is central to this model, as Crapanzano's remarks on Scheper-Hughes's paper illustrate.

Crapanzano says that there can be "no morality without truth" and that we need to "modulate our desire and the lure of power with 'hard' fact." I agree. But Crapanzano also says that "the objective cannot be separated from the plays of personal and collective power." This generalization sounds very worldly-wise and knowing, but is it really true? Most of us learn to make exactly this separation as a part of normal socialization. It may be difficult to describe someone one does not like in objective terms, but it is not beyond most mortals. Crapanzano states that "personal experience" has led him to believe that the objective cannot be separated from plays of power. But what experience? The writings of social scientists and anthropologists, including his own, are full of generalizations, many of which are reasonably objective. How did *these* generalizations escape the play of power? Crapanzano's statement is really a political argument dressed up as "wise-words," making the implicit statement that it is foolish to strive for objectivity and science.

Harris takes up the issue of how "objectivity" is to be defined, arguing that it is *method* which makes a statement "objective." According to Harris, if the methods used are public, replicable, and testable, then the statements they generate will be objective. It is true that these methods are used to *test* if an observation is objective, but it is not methods which *make* an observation objective. What makes an observation objective is that it describes a phenomenon that exists independent of the observer's feelings or thoughts about it. Objectivity in my sense is not sufficient for building adequate models of the world, but it is *necessary*. An excellent critical analysis of the moralist and postmodernist attacks by Rosaldo, Tyler, Rabinow, Rorty, and others on objectivity and science can be found in Reyna (1994).

More important, Harris appears to reject the separation of moral and objective models I propose. Instead, he proposes a "blended model." If by "blending" here he means that the empirical models used by anthropologists should have morally evaluative terms in them, I disagree for all the reasons I stated. However, if he means that anthropologists can do good work while having the strongest moral stakes in the model they are building, I would certainly agree. Indeed, on this point Harris has misunderstood me; I do not propose that anthropology should be carried out in a moral vacuum, and I do not think that "the weakness of Scheper-Hughes's position is that she registers her indignation and takes sides." I like Scheper-Hughes's indignation, and on many issues I am on her side. My complaint is that she does not keep her indignation separate from her observations and mixes them together in her stories and in her theoretical model of "oppression."

Kuper's commentary on Scheper-Hughes's paper bears on the issues I raised in my paper about the use of anecdotes. Scheper-Hughes does not state explicitly the generalization that the academic anthropologists at Cape Town are colonialists who are indifferent to social conflict in South Africa. Instead she presents vignettes in which business proceeds as usual, ethnicity is deconstructed in classrooms, and tea is served with regularity. Kuper takes Scheper-Hughes to task for this, finding her implicit generalizations inaccurate and insulting. He also finds her anecdote about the "triple necklacing" to be an unrepresentative picture of political relationships in South Africa. Stories are a perfect way to blend the objective and the subjective. Sometimes it is hard to tell who has been fooled most, the listener or the teller. Remember Ronald Reagan's stories?

Kuper, who has written about the postmodernist program and its ties to political correctness (Kuper 1994), tracing the roots of American anthropological postmodernist movement through Boas, Parsons, and Geertz to

the present configuration expressed by Marcus, Rabinow, Herzfeld, Abu-Lughod, and others (see also Kuper 1993), asks how the current moral model in its postmodern vestment came to obtain such a grip on American cultural anthropology. I believe the success of this model in the United States is due to the confluence of a number of historical factors, including the near-extinction of tribal cultures, the collapse of the structuralist/interpretivist cultural agenda, the coming of age of an academic generation schooled in the antiestablishment attitudes of the late sixties, the politicization of literary studies, and the notoriously moralistic character of Americans. My own question is—when will it lose its grip?

Perhaps it could have been different. At one time during the early eighties I believed that an empirically oriented poststructuralist cultural anthropology was possible, and I became involved in the creation of a society within the American Anthropological Association that would support such an enterprise. David Schneider, Roy Rappaport, Paul Kay, Annette Weiner, and others who founded the Society for Cultural Anthropology were generally supportive of an empirical agenda. However, the younger anthropologists, such as George Marcus, were antagonistic to science and interested in forming an intellectual alliance with the postmodernist movement in literature. Apparently they felt the anthropology they inherited had failed, and so they turned to intellectual figures outside anthropology for ideas and issues. Ironically, over the past few years the moral agenda in anthropology has become more popular than the interest in writing, and the moralists have begun to turn against the esthetes—as Scheper-Hughes's attack on postmodernism illustrates. American anthropology turned to literature for a language to talk about representations, but it ended up with a political doctrine. In any case, it is somewhat reassuring to hear from Kuper that the new American orthodoxy has not spread outside the United States.

Nader makes the argument that it is the scientific adequacy of the work that counts, not whether the models involved are moral or objective. However, the argument of my paper is that if one wants to do scientifically adequate work, moral models are a great hindrance and objective models are a great help. Nader also discusses the "conscious erasure of anthropology as discipline" by Geertz and others. I believe there is considerable truth to this; certainly the attack on the empirical craft aspect of anthropology has been devastating in cultural anthropology. And it is true that many of the most "cultural" anthropologists want nothing to do with biological anthropology or archaeology. I think this is based more on a wish to take over anthropology and reformulate it as "cultural studies" than a wish to erase the field, but in the end it may come down to the same thing. On a more optimistic note, Nader points to a new young generation that does not bother with the old controversies about what is or isn't anthropology and whether biology is or isn't a part of it but just gets on with the business of research. This too is reassuring.

Rabinow's comments are primarily about his recent work among biologists. He appears to have moved away from critical and postmodern anthropology. Apparently he no longer believes in the fusion of morality and anthropology. Contrary to what Rabinow says, I am not disappointed or surprised by what he found at the Cetus Corporation or at CEPH; the world he describes is reasonably familiar to many academics. Nor is it surprising that he found "ethics, politics, and knowledge" to be "everywhere intertwined." But it would be surprising indeed if these biologists did not keep their ethical models and research *models* separate. A last point: I do not know why Rabinow says that I believe that the relations of truth, power, and ethics have not changed for the past 200 years—I don't think anything of the kind.

Friedman says that the "conflation of description and hypothesis" is a problem for any attempt to keep moral and empirical models separate. However, whatever this problem of conflation may be, I do not see its bearing on the issue of the separation of moral and empirical models. He also raises the issue that the "scientific model" has its own morality—the morality of getting the facts right, using relevant procedures, etc. This is certainly true. But it would be a mistake in logic to say that because science has its "morality" it is *nothing but* morality. In the main I agree with Friedman's characterization of the importance of the public sphere of science and his conclusion that "engagement demands analysis of the way the world works."

O'Meara's commentary is a strong defense of science. He stresses that science is egalitarian, democratic, and a vital protection against demagogy. For O'Meara the attacks of critical anthropology on science are not just unfortunate; they are immoral. He points to the danger inherent in the moralists' notions that they have a special way of knowing what is right, leading them to believe that they have the right to attack and destroy those they believe are wrong. American anthropology has sometimes been susceptible to this kind of moralistic fascism. Currently, sociobiologists such as Napoleon Chagnon are attacked at meetings of the AAA simply because of their beliefs. These political attacks are motivated by a desire to keep people who have "bad" ideas and who write "bad" things from doing research. As O'Meara says about this special kind of knowing, "Well-meaning people should stop handling that venomous snake—which they apparently do not understand and certainly cannot control—before it turns fascist and bites us all." I agree.

Ong begins, "Scheper-Hughes and D'Andrade agree that anthropology should be moral." Not so; I don't believe anthropology should be moral. I said that "anthropologists should work to develop more coherent, clearly articulated moral models." So should physicists, agronomists, and dentists. Because these disciplines create knowledge that is relevant to people, practitioners in these fields need to think out what their knowledge says about how humans can live a good life. For this they need a variety of models that explicate the moral implications of their knowledge, not a new religion. It is pre-

tentious for anthropologists to talk about anthropology as if they were talking about a sacred doctrine. We are not reincarnations of the Buddha. Our moral sensibilities are not much better than anyone else's. A "moral anthropology" is not likely to be an improvement on the beatitudes. In my view, anthropology should not set itself the task of proclaiming morality; rather, its practitioners should try to act in ways that are ethical and develop models that help them think out the moral implications of their knowledge and practice.

Ong says that I avoid the issue that "all models devised to collect and evaluate empirical evidence are ultimately based on implicit moral criteria." Not so; I argue that the evaluation of empirical evidence is *not* based on subjective criteria like morality. Ong, in fact, is asserting the opposite. But on what grounds? How does she know that the evaluation of empirical evidence is always based on moral criteria? Has she counted cases and found that in every case in which someone evaluated empirical evidence moral criteria were being used? I think not. Then what evidence does she have that this assertion is true? This is another case of political rhetoric dressed up as "wise-words."

Ong says "it is amusing that D'Andrade calls Scheper-Hughes and others advocating anthropological ethics 'postmodernist,' whereas Scheper-Hughes uses that appellation for anthropologists who, in her view, choose to study transnational processes. This comedy of mis(sed)labeling is further compounded by both authors' conflating, after their own fashion, the concepts of hegemony and ideology, reducing one or both to 'mystification' (D'Andrade) or 'false consciousness' (Scheper-Hughes)." The tone is unfortunate, and the facts are wrong. I believe the two models do have a historical relationship, which I describe in terms of postmodernism's giving the moral model "a more resplendent vocabulary and greater epistemological bite." But I did not call Scheper-Hughes a postmodernist because I don't consider her one (she believes strongly in a particular metanarrative), although she has used postmodernist arguments in her attacks on science. Nor, in this apparent comedy of errors, did I "conflate the concepts of hegemony and ideology, reducing one or both to 'mystification.'" I claim that the current moral *model* treats hegemony as if it were the result of ideology and mystification. Why would Ong think that I *believe* the moral model? I argue at length that the current moral model is *not* an adequate model and that hegemony *cannot* be maintained on the basis of ideology alone.

Ong accuses Scheper-Hughes and me of "an anthropological hegemony" as the "cultural others on whose behalf we anthropologists are making objective descriptions or taking moral stands are silenced or ignored except as obstacles and bit players in yet another Western debate." When my paper was accepted by CURRENT ANTHROPOLOGY I had a number of fantasies about what various commentators might say, but it never occurred to me that this debate would be called "hegemonic." Ong goes on to say that I find refuge in an empiricism that I believe "would avoid the pitfalls of making 'wrong' moral judgments in ethnographic situations" and that this position enables me "to maintain a superior objectivist Western relation to cultural others." I know what I am being called, but what did I say? The cliché terms "silencing," "hegemony," "ethnocentric," and "superiority" form the standard ritualized denuciation of the moral model.

Ong goes on to defend the study of transnational forces because they increase "our understanding of the moral dilemmas of postcolonial subjects." It is as if the only thing that justified studying something were its moral implications. This fixation on being moral results in a squabble with Scheper-Hughes about whether it is more moral to study transnationalism than it is to be involved in local engagements. The end point of the exercise is a denunciation of Scheper-Hughes—"Of course, the female anthropologist is in a special position to help. . . . Nevertheless, such actions also reinforce her personal power as a white woman as well as the very structure of geopolitical power she seeks to subvert." This is a good example both of the poisonous atmosphere created by the moral model and of the phobia about power expressed within that model. In general, Ong's comments are those of someone who has strongly internalized the moral model and is not careful about applying it.

With respect to Scheper-Hughes's paper, I have little to add that I have not already said with respect to her other work. A terrible thing about much human tragedy is that there is no simple evil, no clear responsible agent, no simple remedy. According to the ethnographic material presented in *Death Without Weeping*, the infants in the municipio of Bom Jesus da Mata die because their mothers are too poor to provide for them, because their mothers do not breast-feed, because their mothers do not use contraceptives and average 12 pregnancies over their life span, because the Catholic church tells these women that they must not use contraceptives and that babies die because it is God's will, because the distribution of wealth within the economic system is crushingly unequal, because the political system has little interest in helping these women and their children, and because the medical system fails to provide proper advice and care. My argument is that while Scheper-Hughes describes the situation of these women in rich detail, her use of the moral model of oppression oversimplifies and misrepresents the causal relations involved, leading her to put the onus on the "power structure" and moral failings such as "complicity" and "bad faith." This moral stance leads her away from a search for realistic solutions toward an approach in which "witnessing," with its quasi-religious overtones, becomes an end in itself. I doubt that "witnessing" is sufficient to help either these Brazilian women or the "necklaced" unfortunates of South Africa.

So—what will happen in anthropology? Isn't it time to get rid of this moral model? It has little empirical use and is good mainly for denunciations. A number of the commentators suggest that we should be getting on with finding out how the human world really works. It is a

gift of history that we have the opportunity to take part in the construction of a young science. A hundred years or so from now the opportunity will be gone. Physics and chemistry are old sciences with not much left to do. They are beautiful structures but almost entirely fixed. In anthropology and the other social sciences there is still plenty of room for exploration and building.

NANCY SCHEPER-HUGHES
Berkeley, Calif., U.S.A. 17 I 95

Some of my critics are very angry, some are simply amused (or bemused), and a few are sympathetic to the approach I am trying to map out while recognizing it as an incomplete and rudimentary project. Three of the responses have been solicited from within my own department of anthropology at UC Berkeley (Ong, Nader, and Rabinow), forcing us to rehearse in public some of our family quarrels.

I'll begin with the "big" question: "moral" versus "objective" anthropology. Several of the respondents (Harris, Nader, O'Meara, Friedman) note that the current debate is an old one dressed up in new language. Until recently the objectivist/empiricist and subjectivist/interpretive approaches were seen in terms of epistemological differences conforming to what Thomas Kuhn called "paradigms" and what Michel Foucault called "epistemes" or different shapes of thought/knowledge/power. Objectivist and interpretive frameworks were seen as constituting different convictions about what could be considered useful or respectable data, about research and funding priorities, about the forms that data and theories should take, about the kind of language researchers should use—in short, about how social scientists should go about their business and how research findings should be used or applied to public policy and to everyday life.

Drawing on anthropological metaphors, the "worldviews" underlying the two approaches were seen as "foreign cultures," each one self-contained and autonomous and possessing its own inner logic and standards of truth seeking. Viewed in these uncompromising terms, it would be impossible to invalidate the method of one from the perspective of the other. To appropriate Evans-Pritchard's statement on Azande witchcraft, "In this web of belief every strand depends on every other strand, and a Zande [here read an objectivist or an interpretivist] cannot get out of its meshes because it is the only world he knows. The web is not an external structure. . . . It is the [very] texture of his thought and *he cannot think that his thought is wrong*" (1937:193–94).

Much of the original debate turned on the question whether "facts" in the world were *uncovered* or *produced* in the context of research. The objectivist position, as advanced by D'Andrade, assumes that rigorous empirical research can lead to a truthful and accurate representation of the objects or events under study. The critical-interpretive approach, advanced, in different forms, by Rabinow, Abu-Lughod, Rosaldo, and me (among others), calls into question the epistemological and the political/moral status of the "facts" and "realities" under study. What matters to us is the means through which research data are acquired, the various meanings the findings have, and the relations between the knowledge generated and the maintenance of dominant ideologies and power relations.

However, like the Cartesian mind/body dualism, the objectivity/moralist dilemma, artificially juxtaposed in these two papers written for very different purposes, is a false dichotomy. As Crapanzano and other commentators note, the two papers are polemical and distort areas of possible convergence. On the one hand, as Ong points out, anthropology has *always* entailed a moral task, though the premises and concerns have changed considerably since Boas vigorously fought scientific racism by means of *better* science. Though today we are still, sadly, fighting scientific racism (see *The Bell Curve*), we are more likely to do so by unmasking the transparent political agendas that so often masquerade as scientific evidence than by piling up more and more quantitative "data." On the other hand, those who question the truth claims of objectivist science do not deny that there are discoverable "facts" in the world. Some things are incontestably "factual," and these need to be studied empirically. As I wrote in the introduction to *Death Without Weeping*, either 150 or 350 children died of hunger, diarrheal disease, and dehydration in the Brazilian shantytown of Alto do Cruzeiro in a given year, and the researcher has a strong scientific and a moral imperative to get it right. Surely my critics know that I am deeply committed to finding better ways of getting at crucial but elusive data, including the global epidemiology of HIV/AIDS (see Scheper-Hughes 1994*a*) and the incidence of "necklacings" in South Africa (1994*b*), to tracking the "disappeared" and documenting the lives and deaths of endangered street children in Brazil (Scheper-Hughes and Hoffman 1994), and so on. In Third World countries there are a great many lives and deaths to count among populations generally thought of as not worth keeping track of at all. But crucial empirical work of this kind need not be *empiricist*—that is, it need not entail a philosophical commitment to Enlightenment notions of reason and truth. Empirical work can be guided by critical-interpretive concerns about the inevitable partiality of truths and about the various meanings that "facts" and "events" have in the existential, cultural, and political sense.

Documenting chronic hunger in Northeast Brazil is a case in point. Although often concealed as nervous "disease," the bare facts of chronic starvation are plain enough in the shantytowns of Brazil, where hunger narratives, caloric intakes, and photo documentation should suffice (see chaps. 4 and 5 in *Death Without Weeping*). Meanwhile, empirical evidence of the routine medicalization of hunger in the clinics of Northeast Brazil is published in *Death Without Weeping* (see esp. pp. 199–212) and is available for any other researcher to refute or verify through more study. Although Harris and other North Americans (e.g., J. Richmond 1988, Mull

and Mull 1994) have simply denied that clinical medicine could be so blatantly abused, my documentation of the medicalization of even toddler starvation is accepted in Brazil, where the situation is already well known to critical scholars (see Cavalcanti 1986, Cardoso 1987, Duarte 1986) and seen as a particularly sad aspect of social and medical reality for the urban poor. The blanket skepticism I have met among U.S. critics may be seen as an illustration of the scientific "taboo on hunger" described many years ago by the Brazilian nutritionist Josué de Castro (1952) in his classic *Geography of Hunger*.

My point here is that a politically engaged anthropology could not make the mistake of overlooking the enormous significance of chronic hunger in driving the everyday lives of the poor of Northeast Brazil, just as it could not ignore the massacres and disappearances of vulnerable people that often occur (though one would hardly know it) right in front of the anthropologist's unsteady gaze. Starn (1992:152–80) takes to task those traditional Andeanist anthropologists whose selective blindness to the ongoing war in Peru allowed them to go about business as usual, blithely concerned "with ecology and ritual, with depicting remoteness rather than discerning links" (Farmer 1994:20), and therefore complicit in the structures of violence and space of death that the ongoing war left in its wake. Similarly, Clifford Geertz's celebrated Balinese "cockfight" scenario was developed within the larger context of a national political emergency that resulted in the massacre of almost three-quarters of a million Indonesians, though it took Geertz three decades to mention the killings that had engulfed his Javanese field site (Geertz 1995:5–12), now forever associated in our minds with those semiotic fighting roosters. Anthropologists should, I believe, be held accountable for what they see and what they fail to see, how they act or fail to act in critical situations.

This brings me to the most vexing part of the paper and to Kuper's visceral reactions to it: the fleeting images I leave of an un-self-reflexive postcolonial anthropology in South Africa today. Kuper's response goes to the heart of the matter and concerns the future of anthropology: the political morality and social ethics of the profession as a whole, criticism and who may or may not engage in it, the uses and abuses of social anthropology, including responsibility for the recruitment and training of Third World anthropologists, and so on. One must take Kuper's prickly response to my comments as informed by his perception of a reactivated war between British social and American cultural anthropology (see Kuper 1994) caused by what he sees as American anthropology's "nativistic" assaults on traditional social anthropology in the forms of critical reflexivity, the "writing-cultures" project, feminism, multiculturalism, and the postcolonial, subaltern critiques of conventional (i.e., objective, politically neutral, distanced, nonreflexive) anthropology. For my part, I do not believe that anthropology can survive in the new South Africa unless it is radically transformed so as to become a true intellectual home for black South Africans, an indigenous anthropology rather than a distant echo of Cambridge.

While outrageous, my brief comments on some aspects of contemporary social anthropology in Cape Town (as conforming to Crapanzano's metaphor of suspended animation or "waiting") were not meant to exempt other similar traditions of anthropology (see, e.g., my more pointed critique of "conventional" North American medical anthropology [Scheper-Hughes 1990]). My close-at-hand understanding of the academic experiences of some of the very few black South African anthropologists in South Africa hardly conforms to the "happy" situation that Kuper imagines. For a critical assessment by a black South African of the colonial biases in the classical tradition of British social anthropology as practiced in Southern Africa, readers may consult the review article by Bernard Magubane (1971) and the acrimonious responses it generated at that time. In a more balanced and judiciously self-critical treatment of South African anthropology, Gordon and Spiegel (1993) note the contributions of the anthropological exposé writings of the 1970s and 1980s against the cruel effects of the apartheid-mandated migrant-worker hostels, pass laws, and Group Areas Act, while they also acknowledge the extent to which the apartheid state traumatized the practice of anthropology in South Africa, inhibiting, to a certain extent, its democratic and humanistic practice and goals.

As for what guise I was operating under while in Cape Town (ethnographer or activist?), I arrived in July 1993 to fill, though only briefly, the position of "professor and chair" (in the European academic sense) of the department of social anthropology at the University of Cape Town, following somewhat awkwardly in the large footsteps of A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, Isaac Shapera, Monica Wilson, and, most recently, Martin West. In addition to my rather extensive teaching duties, I used a modest grant from the UCT research office to conduct exploratory research on the role of violence in the democratic transition in Cape Town and in its rural surrounds, including Franschhoek, where I revisited the small farming and tourist community first studied by Crapanzano (1985). I observed the political transition as it was experienced not only by white farmers and business people but also by colored professionals and farm laborers and by black rural workers living in a newly formed squatter camp. As an "ethnographer of the democratic transition" I also observed the responses and reactions of my anthropological colleagues to that year's heightened anxiety and hope, attended mass meetings, political funerals, and formal town council meetings in Cape Town and in Franschhoek, followed the Amy Biehl murder trial and the Heidelberg pub massacre and its aftermath (see Scheper-Hughes 1994*d*), and compared state-administered justice in municipal courts with the daily enactments of popular justice and people's courts in Chris Hani squatter camp (see Scheper-Hughes 1994*b*, *c*; n.d.). While my writings on South Africa have proceeded on the spot without the benefit of long experi-

ence in the field, I felt I could make a contribution by applying my well-seasoned anthropology to the task of responding to some of the lies and half-truths daily perpetrated by the South African and international media, especially as these bore on stereotypes of South Africa's "dangerous young lions," the so-called lost generation of African youth. Because of my linguistic deficiencies (lacking Afrikaans and Xosa), I was dependent on politicized African youths, most of whom were competent English-speakers, to facilitate my research. This turned out to be quite fortunate, as it was just such youths as these, both PAC- and ANC-aligned, who were so often slandered by the press and even by some anthropologists, who, like Kuper, recirculate hideous images of "kangaroo courts" (in reference to well-established people's courts) and "local ANC leaders . . . right out there with tyres and matches" (while the ANC has always and unequivocally condemned the "necklace" to which some renegade youths and older people resorted during the emergency period in miscarriages of revolutionary justice against accused police informers and other local ne'er-do-wells).

Anthropologists have, I believe, a responsibility to be public intellectuals, and I could not disagree more with Kuper's (1994:551) insular view that "ethnographers should write [principally] for [other] anthropologists." Similarly, in response to Crapanzano's defense of the postmodern as an inescapable social fact of our times, I would only point to the regrettable situation we have reached when an entire symposium of the 1994 American Anthropological Association meetings entitled "Receptions of Violence: Reactive After-Texts, After-Images, and the Post-Ethnographic Site" can concern itself with reader "reactions" to anthropological writings on violence and political terror, from rape in Bosnia to the dirty tricks of the Argentina dirty war, focusing on the effects these responses have on the comfort level of anthropologists. I think we must question the meaningfulness of the postmodern, self-absorbed reflexive turn. (No doubt Crapanzano will reply that there is nothing "postmodern" about the postethnographic site!)

And so, in the final analysis, I am inclined to agree with Kuper and Nader that using oneself as an exemplar (or merely as a rhetorical device) is rather ill-mannered and absurd. I might have pointed to many other exemplary figures, and among them Paul Farmer certainly comes to mind as embodying the ideal of the politically engaged "barefoot" anthropologist. Meanwhile, Friedman, Harris, Ong, Nader, O'Meara, and Rabinow all note that there are many different paths to morally engaged and politically committed anthropology, some of them "well-heeled." Rabinow's critical reflection on the cultures of science and biotechnology at a time when such is largely absent from those highly privileged and self-confident fields, Ong's locally engaged transnational imagination, and Nader's various projects on the anthropology of modern life have all participated in transforming the practice of contemporary anthropology. The list could be much longer, of course. Perhaps my essay, then, is not so much revolutionary as retrospective. I wonder whether we haven't already reached the end of modern, realist, objectivist anthropology and whether a more frankly engaged, partisan, and morally accountable profession hasn't already taken its place.

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