



The other revisited

Critical afterthoughts

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Abstract

The article is based on a lecture contributing to a series titled 'Speaking of Others'. It briefly reviews the concept's history in anthropology but the main focus is on a re-examination of the author's contribution in his *Time and the Other*. The aim of an account of its prehistory and the current state of the question is to reaffirm the 'other' as a productive, critical idea in the face of inflationary talk about other, others, and othering.

Key Words

alterity • anthropology • memory • representation • time

To the memory of Edward Said

When I propose to 'revisit the Other' in this article¹ I do this as someone who has been credited with, and sometimes accused of, contributing to a certain discourse on alterity that is now current in anthropology as well as in cultural studies and post-colonial theory. Most of the thoughts I will have to offer, therefore, are afterthoughts. It could be said that I am returning to familiar ground. True – but only to find out that the issues and problems raised by the concept of anthropology's other are as difficult, complex, and numerous now as they were then. Eventually I decided on four limitations for my reflections: First, to stick to cultural or social anthropology in its Anglo-American variety; except for a few references I will not discuss the writings of our French colleagues. Second, although it will not be possible altogether to ignore philosophical ideas regarding others or otherness, I will discuss them only as they arise within my discipline. Third, because the theoretical reflections I may have to offer are inspired by ethnography, that is, attempts to produce and represent knowledge of other(s), I shall keep the focus on my own empirical work within anthropology. Finally, I shall be retrospective, concerned more with taking stock rather than with proposing new directions.

A GLANCE AT BEGINNINGS: THE 'OTHER' IN ANTHROPOLOGY

There were times in anthropology when speaking of 'others' went, as it were, without saying. Those times are gone. In order to understand what happened one should take

a look at beginnings. As far as I remember, the other, the term and presumably a concept behind it, began its career in Anglo-American anthropology rather inconspicuously. It did not enter the scene with a blast; one could say it sneaked up on anthropology. As a designation of anthropology's object, 'other' (adjective or noun, capitalized or not, singular or plural, with or without quotation marks) did not seem to require more than a common-sense understanding; the term was handy because it was so general and its very vagueness allowed us to keep talking about topics of research while avoiding expressions that had become unsavory as a result of (then) recent decolonization. Savages, primitives, tribal peoples and the like were disguised as others.

These are my recollections; I am not aware of a comprehensive historical study to back them up with. The period of beginnings I have in mind stretched roughly between the early 1960s when 'other' appeared in the title of John Beattie's *Other Cultures* (1964) and the early 1980s when we find it in James Boon's *Other Tribes, Other Scribes* (1982). My observations regarding the all-purpose meaning of the term are confirmed by Edmund Leach, writing in the middle of that period:

We started by emphasizing how different are 'the others' and made them not only different but remote and inferior. Sentimentally we then took the opposite track and argued that all human beings are alike . . . but that didn't work either, 'the others' remained obstinately other. But now we have come to see that the essential problem is one of translation. (1973: 772)²

Surprisingly enough – given Geertz's penchant for hermeneutics (and the concern of hermeneutics with alterity) – 'other' did not figure in the index of his *Interpretation of Cultures* (1973). Nor is it mentioned there among the 'mega-concepts with which contemporary social science is afflicted – legitimacy, modernization, integration, conflict, charisma, structure' (Geertz, 1973: 23).³ Well into the 1970s, speaking of other(s) in anthropology, where it was done, may have been indicative of nothing more than the discipline's awareness of a wider intellectual trend, characterized by Susan Sontag as follows:

Modern thought is pledged to a kind of applied Hegelianism: seeking its Self in the Other. Europe seeks itself in the exotic . . . among preliterate peoples . . . The 'other' is experienced as a harsh purification of 'self'. (Sontag, 1970 [1966]: 185)⁴

As one would expect, the index of *Writing Culture* (Clifford and Marcus, 1986) – widely considered a milestone on the road to post-modern anthropology – does have entries on otherness and other. They direct us, first, to Clifford's Introduction. There we find a statement indicating that our discipline had by then moved from simply using otherness as a disguise or cover toward facing it as a philosophical problem:

Ethnography in the service of anthropology once looked out at clearly defined others, defined as primitive, or tribal, or non-Western, or pre-literate, or nonhistorical . . . Now ethnography encounters others in relation to itself, while seeing itself as other . . . It has become clear that every version of an 'other', wherever found, is also the construction of a 'self'. (Clifford, 1986: 23)

Then there is reference to George Marcus's essay in the volume. He addresses the issue in a footnote as follows:

It is the traditional subject matter of anthropology – the primitive or alien other – that primarily repels, or, rather, undercuts the full potential of anthropology's relevance in a widespread intellectual trend, which it has long anticipated. The figure of the primitive or alien other is no longer as compelling . . . Global homogenization is more credible than ever before, and though the challenge to discover and represent cultural diversity is strong, doing so in terms of spatio-temporal cultural preserves of otherness seems outmoded. Rather the strongest forms of difference are now defined within our own capitalist cultural realm. (Marcus, 1986: 167 note 68)

Again, this echoes earlier observations as well as Clifford's statement, but it also adds another twist with the suggestion that not only the terms that otherness disguised but the disguise itself had become outmoded and that anthropology had better drop its fascination with exotic otherness if it was to survive as a global player.⁵

Looked at from an angle provided by some exemplary statements from anthropology's recent history, other and otherness may appear as notions that came and went. Did they cause or, at least, were they indicative of, a theoretical debate and reorientation? Did 'speaking of others' change the discipline's practices of research? And how does anthropological talk of others relate to the floating and inflationary use of other, otherness, othering, and, not to forget, the umbrella term alterity, in the social sciences and humanities? I have neither the competence nor the courage to offer even a sketch of a critical history which answering these questions would require.⁶ What I would like to do instead is, first, a sort of case study, a report on how and why *this* anthropologist came to 'speak of others'. This will be followed by some remarks intended to clarify my position in view of criticism in, and apparent similarities with, the work of other writers.

THE ROAD TO THE OTHER IN *TIME AND THE OTHER*

The attempt I have made to trace the beginning of talk about other/others in anthropology proved difficult and its results are inconclusive. It was all the more disconcerting to find out that tracking down term and concept in my own work was anything but easy. Here is the story as best I can reconstruct it from memory and casual checking of half-forgotten early writings.

I came to my training in American anthropology with a solid and, some have observed, obstinate cultural background in theology and philosophy, both of which I studied in Austria and Germany. Put on the spot, I would have to declare that the position I took away from my readings in Europe was that of a Marxist – if learning from Marx's early writings justifies, and a heavy dose of phenomenology and hermeneutics does not invalidate, such a label. A vaguely Husserlian idea of *der Andere*, the 'Other', was part of my intellectual baggage, and it was only to be expected that it would inform the critical attitude I developed toward the predominantly 'scientific', that is positivist and system-oriented, modernist paradigm – Talcott Parsons tempered by Max Weber – that reigned in those days at the University of Chicago where I got my degree.

Soon after fulfilling my duties, as it were, with a dissertation on a charismatic religious movement, I felt the need, or had the temerity, to formulate an alternative approach in an essay titled 'Language, History, and Anthropology' (1971, reprinted in 1991: ch.1). The argument, developed through reflection on recent empirical work I had done in the Congo, was that anthropological research of the kind we call field work is carried out through communicative interaction mediated by language and that whatever objectivity we can hope to attain must be founded in intersubjectivity. Support for the two theses I formulated came from Wilhelm von Humboldt's philosophy of language, Jürgen Habermas's (then) recent critique of positivism in the social sciences (1967), and in the new approach to a language-centered ethnography developed by Dell Hymes (1964). Phenomenology is only mentioned once, just barely, and references to phenomenological writings are made only indirectly by citing Radnitzky (1968, 1970), whose book was at the time the only short and handy introduction to 'continental schools of metascience' in English.

I did not use 'other' or related terms (except in a quotation from Humboldt) in that article but the epistemological position I took opened, as it were, a semantic space to be filled by that term later. What counted then, and still counts now, is that it was not a generalized or exotic other I envisaged but an other as interlocutor: alterity as a prerequisite for the kind of knowledge production we call ethnography. This was a step away from a scientific conception of anthropology as natural history but it was only a first step. It postulated a kind of alterity that is required by, or implicit in, any theory of intersubjectivity (and this may have been the phenomenological element in my critique, a stance that moved Ian Jarvie, a Popperian and, incidentally, the editor of the journal that published the article, to accuse me of being the leader of a 'phenomenological putsch' in anthropology).⁷

If discovering the epistemological other was a first step, the next one was to face alterity as it had historically emerged in the discursive practices of representing anthropological knowledge. How deeply ingrained the image of anthropology as the provider of, let us call it, contrastive otherness had become was brought home to me by an invitation to contribute some exotic ethnographic stuff – not expressed in these words but almost – to a special issue of the journal *Social Research* on 'Death in American Experience'. I resented the role assigned to me and embarked on a critique of conceptions I thought lay behind the assignment, which the editor (Arien Mack) was gracious enough to accept. This essay, 'How Others Die – Reflections on the Anthropology of Death' (1972, reprinted in 1991: ch. 9 and anthologized in Robben, 2004: 49–61), not only had capitalized 'Others' in its title but restated the idea of an 'epistemological conception of "the other"' (Fabian, 1991: 177–8)⁸ and anticipated much of *Time and the Other*, for instance, in statements such as the following about

attempts to identify contemporary reactions to death, especially those that appear irrational, overly ritual and picturesque, as survivals of 'archaic' forms . . . Primitive and folkloric death-customs may then be located in a nostalgic past, which is yet another way of relegating reactions to death to 'the others', or at least the other that has survived in us. (Fabian, 1991: 179)

The concluding sentences of this essay formulate an insight that I would like to quote because I believe it contains a challenge that we still have to meet:

There simply is no way of getting directly at ‘the others’. Anthropologists and other analysts of modern reactions to death must find or construct a meta-level of interpretation if they are to share their findings. In the late nineteenth century, this may have been the idea of a natural science of man in search of universal laws of progress to be verified by ethnographic ‘data’ whose ‘objective’ otherness was not seriously doubted. Today we seem to be left with the task of constructing a social hermeneutic, an interpretation of social reality (no matter whether it is primitive or modern) which conceives of itself as part of the processes it attempts to understand. Lévi-Strauss was right: the anthropology of death is a form of dying, or of conquering death – which, in the end, may be the same. (Fabian, 1991: 190)

It is now time for some remarks on *Time and the Other* (Fabian, 1983 and second edn, 2002b). The aim of the book was *not* to develop a theoretical concept of the Other (or to give an anthropological twist to a philosophical concept). Nor was the other proposed as a sort of methodological device – as if I had deployed the concept in order to see where it would get me. Though it was a short book it told a complicated story. It is not difficult, however, to state the major points of the argument. The beginning was a simple observation: As a discipline of practices of making and representing knowledge, anthropology is marked by a contradiction. Anthropology has its empirical foundation in ethnographic research, inquiries which even hard-nosed practitioners (the kind who liked to think of their field as a scientific laboratory) carry out as communicative interaction. The sharing of time that such interaction requires demands that ethnographers recognize the people whom they study as their coevals. However – and this is where the contradiction arises – when the same ethnographers represent their knowledge in teaching and writing they do this in terms of a discourse that consistently places those who are talked about in a time other than that of the one who talks. I called the effect of such strategies a ‘denial of coevalness’ and qualified the resulting discourse as ‘allochronic’. The contradiction was stated succinctly in the Preface as follows:

The Other’s empirical presence turns into his theoretical absence, a conjuring trick which is worked with an array of devices that have the common intent and function to keep the Other outside the time of anthropology. (Fabian, 2002b: xli)⁹

The rest of the book was devoted to a critical analysis with the help of whatever theoretical support I found in historiography, linguistics, literary criticism, and philosophy. What was perhaps distinctive about my undertaking was that it anchored critique in anthropology’s ways with time, something I called a ‘political cosmology’.

I have no regrets about *Time and the Other*. It was necessary to throw the wrench into the wheels of allochronic discourse. But what about ‘collateral damage’ that this critique of anthropology may have caused? Never mind that it irritated those honest fellow anthropologists who saw their discipline, if not endangered, then unjustly maligned (after all, one may be honest *and* wrong-headed). But what about ‘savage’, ‘primitive’, ‘traditional’, and all the other others that I took to be evidence for unwarranted allochronism? Radical critique should not make us forget that, like Rousseau’s and Lévi-Strauss’s *sauvage*, most of them were at one time also part of discourses that were critical

of blind faith in reason or civilization and of mindless celebration of modernity. 'Radical' means going to the roots, not ignoring them.

With these remarks, I believe, I am expressing agreement rather than disagreement with a more recent critic of *Time and the Other*, Marc Augé (1994a: espec. 76f, and 1994b), who fears that my emphasis on denial of coevalness stays within the frame I am trying to break down and that I fail to appreciate the real issues, modernity and contemporaneity. I can think of two responses. First, if Augé, writing after *Time and the Other*, could be read as simply taking another step in reflecting on the other in anthropology – if his critique were but an argument that reflection has to go farther – there could be hardly an argument. The real question is: Does the argument he has with me invalidate the argument of *Time and the Other*? That comes down to the question: How valid is the further step he takes (arguing for contemporaneity) when he seems to invalidate the first step (denouncing denial of coevalness)? Of course, there is also the possibility that the things we are concerned with may really have little to do with one another (analogous to what I say about Levinas, see later in the article). Second, I could point out that emphasis on coevalness in *Time and the Other* did lead me to concern with contemporaneity in the sense propagated by Augé. Evidence may be found in my struggles with the concept of popular culture (summarized in Fabian, 1998; see also the following section).

THE OTHER AFTER TIME AND THE OTHER

Even if I believed that a book could change a discipline it would be disingenuous to say this about mine. Modesty comes easy in this case because I fully subscribe to that maxim of soccer philosophy which says that after the match is before the match. *Time and the Other* definitely was not the end of the game as some early readers feared, neither for the discipline nor for myself if my ethnographic and theoretical writing during the past two decades can count as an indication. In the retrospective and somewhat autobiographic stance I am taking here I now would like to continue the story of speaking of the other in anthropology and pass in review some of the more recent twists of the plot.

Presence and representation

As a symptom or a cause, as the case may be, *Writing Culture* was a landmark of a 'crisis of representation' that hit anthropology at about the same time as it raged in other social sciences, the humanities, and cultural studies. The debates that ensued struggled with complex problems, most of which regarded the politics of literary conventions used in representing anthropological knowledge. At issue was not so much the truth value of anthropological discourse but the question to what extent generally, and how specifically, ethnography both expressed and enacted power relations. Proposals ranged from 'experimenting with genres' – repairing the means – to pronouncements about the end of representation – abandoning the end. In response to an essay by Edward Said, in which he argued that only a change in power relations between an imperial West and its anthropological other – its interlocutors, as he put it – could lead to a way out of our crisis of representation (1989), I took the position that '[p]erhaps it is possible to continue the debate . . . if one locates the problem with representations not as a difference between reality and its images but as a tension between re-presentation and *presence*'

(1990c: 755, reprinted in 1991: 208). Ultimately, anthropology's task is to give presence to those who, if at all, are spoken of only *in absentia*. I am now nowhere near to understanding all the implications of this, nor do I know how to resolve the quandary that such an ambition puts us into: If we were to succeed in making others present, would that not put us out of business as their representers/representatives?¹⁰

We can distinguish between a production and representation side of ethnographic knowledge: while co-presence is a condition of inquiry it makes limited sense to think of it as a requirement of representation. Writing that gives, as it is said, the other a voice and engages in and acknowledges co-authorship, even presenting texts written by those whom we study or transcribed from recordings made in the field – all this is still representation and makes us, if anything, more worried about what we are doing than we were before we abandoned naive scientism. In other words, we are not likely to make ourselves superfluous by good ethnography.

Remembering the other

I have not let these worries paralyze me. On the contrary, research into ways, among other things, in which culture is made present through performance, in which the past is made present through memory and the present is remembered, all this based on studies of African contemporaneity under the heading of 'popular culture', have kept me writing ethnographies and these have led to more thought about alterity.¹¹ One has been an insight I came close to in the essay on 'Presence and Representation', though it was scarcely more than a hunch at the time. I observed that, for the ethnographer, there is a kind of experiencing the other 'that may grow with time and, at any rate, needs time to grow' (1990c: 769, 1991: 221). In fact, a similar idea had occurred to me in *Time and the Other* where I said that in order to be knowingly in each other's presence we must somehow share each other's past. Tentative and cryptic as this may have been, eventually it made me realize how important a role remembering plays in the kind of speaking of others we call ethnography. This idea began to take shape when I worked on a study of reports on the exploration of Central Africa, first discussed in an article called 'Remembering the Other' (1999, reprinted in Fabian, 2002a: ch. 9; see also Fabian, 2000). Essentially it was a continuation of the argument regarding coevalness as a condition of communicative research, now with a focus on recognition. What made this concept productive was that it led me to think about ethnographic inquiry as *re*-cognition, as cognizing *and* remembering.

With that, questions regarding the other enter the orbit of thought and talk about memory, a mega-concept if there ever was one, which could be a mixed blessing. Still, it has helped me to realize just how much memory and remembering are involved in every step of ethnography from field research to documentation, interpretation, and presenting our findings. Here I can do no more than mention this interesting aspect,¹² but something should be said briefly about the theoretical gain to be had from pairing memory and alterity.

Sooner or later thinking about memory gets us to consider identity, individual as well as collective, psychological as well as cultural.¹³ Not only that, if it is true that recognizing others also means remembering them, then we should see relationships between self and other as a struggle for recognition, inter-personal as well as political. Invoking struggle for recognition means invoking Hegel and this allows us to reformulate the

contradiction between coevalness and allochronic discourse explored in *Time and the Other* as one reason (there are many others) to think of ethnography dialectically. Only then, as I put it elsewhere, ‘will self and other be drawn into a process of mutual recognition based on the kind of knowledge that changes the knower and that by the same token re-constitutes his or her identity’ (Fabian, 1999: 68, reprinted 2002a: 177). Of course, the point is that in such a relationship both parties must be recognized as knowers as well as known.

Let’s assume that what I called an epistemological conception of an other is now firmly established and let us hope that the other as an ideological construct has been recognized for what it is – anthropology will still be involved in struggles for mutual recognition. Our practices of knowledge making will always also be enactments of relations of power. It is important that we do not lose sight of the historical specificity of such relations but also that we do not sociologize alterity by making of others strangers or aliens, a confusion for which phenomenologists and psychologists may already have been responsible before it afflicted anthropologists.¹⁴

On the point of historic specificity of conceptualizing others, one decisive element of difference between previous philosophical concerns with otherness and the introduction of the concept into social science, literary criticism, cultural studies and so on has been the historicization-cum-politicization of the other (the colony, the Orient). *That* other is not opposed to a self. To assume that all talk about otherness is (ultimately) about identity would amount to re-philosophizing otherness. Self-assertion through domination, exploitation, or even ‘stylization’ (the invented Orient), or what I called devices of temporal distantiation (the invented Primitive) – to call these practices and conceptualizations acts of identity-affirmation would be analogous to examples of insane social scientific positivity, such as declaring South Africa under apartheid a pluralist society, or proposing to analyze concentration camps as social systems.

What I meant with the warning against sociologizing others is this: As ethnographers we experience others as our interlocutors; to experience them as strangers is not a logical or psychological and certainly not a political requirement of ethnography. Of course I do not want to dismiss sociological theory of the stranger as exemplified in Simmel’s famous essay (1908), but I do have reservations about recent efforts in cultural studies to make of anthropology a science of ‘experiencing strangers’ (an awkward gloss for *Fremderfahrung*), impressive as they may be as readings of the recent history of our discipline (Därmann and Jamme, 2002).

AFTERTHOUGHTS

Alterity inside, outside, between, and *tout court*

Recently I was reminded that Latin distinguishes between *alius* and *alter*.¹⁵ Not that this clarifies much; both terms have several possible, and possibly overlapping, meanings, hence the difference between them is not clear. But when I compare the entries in my Latin-German dictionary I sense support for my insisting (in discussions I had about anthropology as *Fremdenwissenschaft*) that being a stranger or ‘exotic’ (visibly different) is not a necessary attribute of alterity.

Perhaps it helps to ponder the following: One of the likely misunderstandings of my critique of ‘denial of coevalness’ is that it is an attempt to ‘overcome’ otherness, alterity.

The confusion arises when what I called allochronism is equated with creating alterity (see later). The failure of anthropological discourse has been a failure to recognize the epistemological significance of alterity. Here is a possible way to argue this: Recognizing an other = *alius* as other = *alter* is a condition of communication and interaction, hence of participating in social-cultural practices (or whatever sociological categories, from group to society, apply); or of sharing a *Lebenswelt*. Without alterity no culture, no *Lebenswelt*. Even in phenomenological thought, I assume, this concept makes sense only if *Lebenswelt* exists in the plural (compare this with anthropology's 'discovery' of culture in the plural). If there were no more than one *Lebenswelt* one would have no need for this concept. The unresolved problem is the relationship between the recognition of alterity that is part of (perhaps constitutive of) one *Lebenswelt* and the kind of alterity that allows us to recognize (in the case of anthropology: identify, describe, understand, represent) other *Lebenswelten*. What, to condense this, is the relationship between alterity within/inside and alterity without/outside, or between?

This may be the crucial point where philosophical reflection alone comes to its limits because history and politics intervene. 'Plurality' is a purely formal attribute; substantially, every conceivable realization of plurality is due to history (to events), processes of differentiation (resulting in 'structures'), as well as conflicts over differential access to resources and power; the list is incomplete, of course. Anthropology's role (and ambition) has been to address 'alterity without' in such a way that alterity outside can, first, be faced as alterity between and ultimately as alterity *tout court*.

On Levinas's *Le temps et l'autre*

The answer to a question I have learned to anticipate is: No, my work was not influenced by knowledge of Levinas's *Le temps et l'autre* (or of other writings of his which, I must confess, had escaped my attention). But other questions may be asked: Beyond the titles being identical, are there other resemblances or convergences?¹⁶ I finally read *Le temps et l'autre* some years ago and found indeed similarities that are accounted for by a shared intellectual background (Hegel, phenomenology). Beyond that, and in spite of a flattering comparison made by an African philosopher (Bongmba, 2001), I see differences that may be more important. Without being able to go into detail here I would like to state them, taking off from the following statement:

Emmanuel Levinas has argued that Western philosophy has consistently denied the alterity of the other, i.e. the other *as* other. As a result Western philosophy is 'essentially a philosophy of being', and hence of 'immanence and of autonomy, or atheism'.¹⁷

How does Levinas's indictment of western philosophy compare to what I called denial of coevalness? The obvious difference is one of intent and scope. I do not aim my critique at 'western philosophy' but at anthropological discourse. The thesis is therefore narrower in two respects: It is limited to a discipline that thinks of itself as an empirical science and it is addressed not only to theoretical 'thinking' but to a discourse consisting of theories *and* specific practices within a discipline. This is crucial to the argument in *Time and the Other* which, it bears repeating, is about a contradiction between empirical research and the representation of findings.

On the other hand, there may also be convergence. When I argue that alterity is constitutive of the project/object of anthropology this could also mean that denial of coevalness *is* denial of otherness in the Levinasian sense. Without otherness there would not be a problem of coevalness. Like Levinas I probably want to overcome a philosophy of immanence and autonomy, or, as I would prefer to put it, of identity. Except that my target of critique is not so much a philosophy as an ideology of identity. Therefore there is no contradiction when I criticize anthropology for constructing in its allochronic discourse on an other with the help of conceptual and rhetorical devices that deny coevalness to that other.

We part ways when Levinas moves from an other who is *transcendental* as a condition without which we could not conceive of a thinking/acting as self,¹⁸ to a *transcendent* Other – God. When I plead for recognizing the other my concern is not with overcoming ‘atheism’. If I understand Levinas’s ultimate concern correctly then, all convergence notwithstanding, there is no agreement between us. It is another question whether the position I take as an anthropologist and the one Levinas developed as a philosopher or theologian can coexist peacefully. As someone whom anthropology enabled to outgrow theology, I have my doubts.

CONCLUSION: OTHER, OTHERS, OTHERING: CONCEPTS AFLOAT AND INFLATED

A concept’s proliferation may be indicative of its fertility. Yet sometimes I get a feeling that, I imagine, must be somehow like what my parents’ generation experienced when they lost their savings during ‘the inflation’, as they put it. Speaking of the other without backing up what one has to say with some kind of value becomes like printing money; perhaps this accounts for the term’s/concept’s inflation. Will the thought and argument we put into exploring ‘the Other’ become worthless? Perhaps it is time to get out of the game. And should one hesitate to jump ship just because this might look undignified?

Thinking about reasons for continuing the struggle with alterity in an inflationary intellectual economy, I am trying to remember what brought me to the topic to begin with. It was not the philosophical problem of self and other, not even in the soft version that Susan Sontag long ago called ‘applied Hegelianism’ (1970: 185). It was the realization that we (the West, whoever wants to be included in that We, or, for historical and political reasons belongs to that We) seem to require alterity for sustenance in our efforts to assert or understand ourselves. What, to stay with the image of an inflation, would be the gold that gives the conceptual paper money circulating in discourses about the other its value? As far as anthropology is concerned, the short answer is: Speaking about others needs to be backed up by speaking with others. We will do this as long as we do ethnography.

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Notes

- 1 Revised from notes for a Wolfson College Lecture, delivered at Wolfson College, Oxford, on 1 March 2005. I thank my hosts for this invitation.
- 2 I took this quotation from Talal Asad's contribution to *Writing Culture* (Asad, 1986: 142).
- 3 Other and otherness made it into the index and appear in a few (somewhat acerbic) remarks here and there in his more recent collection of essays (Geertz, 2000).
- 4 I found this only recently, quoted in an unpublished paper by E. Wilmsen, hereby acknowledged.
- 5 What I called 'another twist' was one only in the context of the statements just quoted. That talk of otherness was somehow indicative of its disappearance as a human experience due to globalization was not a novel insight. In terms similar to those used by Marcus, it was stated explicitly by Beatty in his introduction to *Other Cultures* (see 1964: 3–4).
- 6 A history of the term and concept 'other' in anthropology remains to be written – a project that would be monumental, especially if closely related work (to name but two examples: Hartog, 1980 and Todorov, 1982) were to be included in the discussion.
- 7 See Jarvie's 'Epistle to the Anthropologists' (1975), and also our earlier polemic exchange caused by what I felt was a sociologization of alterity (the anthropologist in the role of the stranger) which he proposed as a solution to the problem of 'ethical integrity in participant observation' (1969, 1971).
- 8 With a reference to an article by Donald C. Campbell (1969), an eminent psychologist with phenomenological leanings and a colleague at Northwestern University who encouraged my youthful critical fervor.
- 9 I quote from the second edition, which reproduces the text of the first without changes but has a substantial foreword by a young historian of anthropology who gives an excellent summary as well as a first assessment of the book's impact (Bunzl, 2002). The first part of the quoted passage is almost identical with a statement in Edward Said's *Orientalism*: 'In discussions of the Orient, the Orient is all absence, whereas one feels the Orientalist and what he says as presence; yet we must not forget that the Orientalist's presence is enabled by the Orient's effective absence' (1979: 208).
- 10 See also the elegant formulation given for this quandary by J.-P. Dumont (1986: 359), cited in 'Presence and Representation'.
- 11 See Fabian on popular historiography (1990a), on performance and popular theater (1990b), on popular historical painting (1996), and on anthropology and popular culture (1998), all of them based on research in the Shaba region of the former Zaire, now Democratic Republic of the Congo. The textual material presented in these studies has taken on a new kind of presence by being deposited in a virtual archive publicly accessible on the Internet (www2.fmg.uva.nl/lpca; accessed March 2006). See also my conjectures regarding the possible effect of such virtual presence for ethnographic writing (Fabian, 2002c).
- 12 For a more comprehensive statement see Fabian (in press), a paper presented in a workshop on 'Ethnographic Practice in the Present', organized by Helena Wulff and George E. Marcus at the September 2004 conference of the Association of European Social Anthropologists in Vienna.

- 13 Even the most cursory look at recent literature on memory will confirm this. Especially in Germany, connections between identity and memory have been debated around the concept 'culture of memory' (*Erinnerungskultur*). Examples include A. Assmann (1999), A. Assmann and Friese (1998) and J. Assmann (1992).
- 14 See on this the essay on Freud, Husserl, and Lacan by Därmann (Därmann and Jamme, 2002: 277–320).
- 15 The occasion was a remark by a philosopher quoted in a review of a congress or symposium in a German paper. I forgot to take a note and cannot properly acknowledge the source of this reminder of a well-known distinction.
- 16 Those who would like to know how it came about that my book had the same title as Emmanuel Levinas's essay I refer to an earlier statement (Fabian, 1991: 227–8 note). A new edition of the French original (Levinas [1946] 1979) appeared after *Time and the Other* was written (which then still had its working title, 'Anthropology and the Politics of Time'). The English translation, also titled *Time and the Other*, came out four years after the publication of my book (Levinas, 1987).
- 17 This programmatic statement came with the invitation to the Wolfson Lecture.
- 18 For an exploration of self-making in anthropology see a collection of essays edited by Battaglia (1995).

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