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THE THEMITICAL IN THE ETHICAL

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The anthropology of ethics that I seek to develop has many precedents. Those that are theological, those that are grounded in an aprioristic rather than an empirical (and so unresolved) concept of human nature and those that pursue the reduction of ethics to or its dissolution into alleged psychological or biological interests or instincts or needs are of little relevance. Or to be more precise: it does not follow but instead diverges from them. Its central precedent resides in the second and third volumes of Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality* and in several of the interviews that Foucault saw published while he was engaging in the thinking and the research that resulted in those volumes. I have already sought to defend Foucault's approach to the ethical domain against critiques that would construe it as aestheticist or individualistic (Faubion 2001c). I see no point in seeking to defend it further. Nor do I aim to add further commentary, whether laudatory or deprecatory, to the corpus that Foucault's approach has already inspired. I do not aim to fashion either a Foucauldean or an anti-Foucauldean anthropology of ethics. As I pointed out in my earlier effort, Foucault's specification of the analytical parameters of the ethical domain is in need of revision and supplementation. I undertake at once to revise and to supplement it in the first part of what follows.

Not the least of the virtues of Foucault's approach is its analytical and methodological parsimony. It is exquisitely Occamist, conforming assiduously to the principle that one should not presume any more of the domain under one's investigation than is absolutely necessary. Just such conformity is all the more obligatory when the domain at issue is that of human action and human affairs. Parsimony does not, however, result in poverty. As I have previously argued, Foucault's approach is not identical to but still compatible with a systems-theoretic framework grounded in the distinction between an organized process capable of reproducing or rearticulating its organization in something longer than the shortest of short runs and the environment or environments in which it does so (Faubion 2001c: 98-100; cf. Luhmann 1990: 8-9). Any such process is thus not merely systematic but also "autopoietic" and capable of "autopoiesis"--these latter two terms deriving from the Greek for "self" and "making" or "creation." The environment of the autopoietic system may for its part provide not merely resources but also any number of what Niklas Luhmann refers to as "irritants" (Luhmann 1998: 62), other autopoietic systems perhaps among them. Though it belongs, if anywhere, then only to the implicit background of the volumes of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault was deeply familiar with at least one version of a systems-theoretic framework through the tutelage of his mentor, the historian of biology Georges Canguilhem. The history of biology is less mechanistic and more vitalistic for Canguilhem than for the classic Darwinist (Rabinow 1994). It is a history not merely of the adaptive match between an organism and its niche, but first and foremost of the maladaptive mismatch between the demands of the organism and the demands of its environments. Summarily, but in what also appears to be something of an endorsement, Foucault himself thus characterizes Canguilhem's view of the history of life as the history of "that which is capable of error" (Foucault 1998: 476; cf. Canguilhem 1989).

A commitment to vitalism might worry us. Yet, Foucault asserts that Canguilhem's vitalism is merely "methodological" and what he seems to mean is that, Occamist in its own right, it resists relying on the presumption that vital structures and their dynamics are in all cases simple enough to be susceptible to the structural-functional resolutions that have dominated biological analysis from Aristotle to the neo-Darwinisms of the present day. Whatever other biologists might think, investigators of human action and human affairs should thus be able to appreciate a system-theoretical framework that is less teleological, less mechanistic, and less in danger of presuming the very conclusions that it purports to prove than the sort of (quasi-Darwinist) frameworks that they might find in A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, Talcott Parsons or--at least in the most abstract of his typically abstract turns of mind--even Luhmann himself. Such a framework is of course not that of the logic of ethics, but rather that of the structural and processual hallmarks of ethics as a distinctive orientation of action. Whether or not Foucault might have cared to endorse it, just such a framework, in which neither the autopoietic system nor its environment can be conceived as closed (or, more technically, as definable), will fill a good portion of what will literally appear as the fine print of the chapters that follow. I will also cast in fine print a variety of other technical and scholarly considerations that readers whose inclinations are as pedantic as my own will likely find of interest, but that readers of the educated lay sort will likely care to ignore.

At no point will readers find me attempting to derive from the facts of autopoietic systems and their environments or, for that matter, from any other facts, any imperatives whatever of a properly ethical order. The Naturalistic Fallacy that G. E. Moore (1903: 9-15) and many others would accuse me of committing were I to do so probably is a fallacy, though whether this is so remains something of a matter of philosophical dispute (e.g. Searle 1967; Hare 1967). If to commit it is indeed to err, then doing so is broadly and widely human and certainly doesn't exclude the commissioner from the ethical domain. Yet, Occamist rigor once again advises against embracing an inferential license that is neither essential nor uncontroversial. Hence, in accord with Foucault's precedent in *The History of Sexuality*, my project here is not "normative." In other words, I neither begin nor conclude with some collection of directives of judgment and conduct that would constitute what is usually called an "ethics" or a "moral philosophy." If of necessity I exercise introspection throughout the project, and if the ethical system that I have internalized--that is, my own, recognizably Western--is as good an example of an ethical system as any other, I nevertheless do not rest with introspection alone. This is the primary methodological respect in which an anthropology of ethics as I understand it departs from the typical moral philosophy. As will become apparent, it by no means precludes but nevertheless qualifies my appeal to philosophical precedent. Moral and ethical philosophers count as much among my natives as they count among my advisors. My project--like many other anthropological projects--deploys the data of introspection and the data of empirical investigation dialectically, in the sense that the former guide and must guide the formulation of my working postulates of what constitutes the ethical domain just as the latter must correct, enlarge, and enrich what intuitively I presume the ethical domain to be. It is, in short, a project of interpretation--with one important qualification. It belongs to the Geisteswissenschaften, but always under the control of what is ultimately a cybernetic or more broadly information-theoretic metric, a metric of both corrective and explanatory force and function.

As a project of (qualified) interpretation, it addresses among other things ethical discourses, and addresses them as distinctive semiotic fields that invite such treatment as the philosophical analyst of concepts as well as the anthropological analyst of symbols might offer. If possible at all, ethical inference is possible only intra-discursively, unless precise semantic equivalences can be established across discourses. An anthropology of ethics that left matters just at that, however, would risk substituting a "discursive relativism" for an older "cultural relativism" that fell short of generating an explanation of anything at all even when it was still possible to believe that cultures were integrated wholes of insular specificity as veritably and irreducibly individual as any of the individuals whose cultures they were. A systems-theoretical framework is one of the devices to which I have resort in aspiring not to beg many of the questions that a discursively relativistic framework would continue to beg as much as a culturally relativistic framework did before it or does still. Such questions include those that arise in noting the striking similarities among persons of similar class and status everywhere. They include those that arise in noting that, for all its variety, the ethical imagination seems not to vary endlessly and that its basic schematics are considerably fewer than the relativist would predict. They include the question of what ethical discourse distinctively communicates and what ethical action distinctively effects. They include the most fundamental of questions: Why ethics? Why is there this thing that we call "ethics" at all? It is difficult to see how either the discursive or the cultural relativist could even begin effectively to pose such questions, much less avoid triviality in answering them.

Jointly and severally, these questions point to precedents beyond that of Foucault alone. Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals* (1956) is an inescapable if troubled one. The sociology of religion after Nietzsche remains a particularly plentiful source. The most imposing of its precedents lies with Max Weber's exploration of the "elective affinities" (or lack of affinities) between various religiously sanctioned directives of conduct and the structural-functional imperatives of various means and modes of economic production, with special reference to industrial capitalism. That exploration yields not merely the diagnosis of Calvinist discipline secularized to serve the god of profit that is the centerpiece of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1958a). It also yields a diagnosis of the existential core of the world religions, the grand dichotomy between mysticism and asceticism and the norm of calculability as the regulative principle of a technically rationalist modernity (1958a: 24). Among its successors are

Robert Bellah's analysis in *Tokugawa Religion* of Ishida Baigan's eclectic recalibration of Confucian, Daoist and Shinto doctrines in order to allow them to accommodate the legitimacy of the merchant's life and practices (Bellah 1957). A notable parallel is Jacques Le Goff's analysis of the gradual theological accommodation of the charging and collection of interest in Medieval Christian Europe (1980). Peter Brown has pursued an array of Weberian themes in his many contributions to the social and cultural history of late antiquity and early Christianity (Brown 2003, 1995, 1982, 1980).

In anthropology, Clifford Geertz treads some of the territory that Weber did not reach in his research into the correlates of class, status and religious sensibilities in Java, elsewhere in Indonesia and in Morocco (Geertz 1960, 1963, 1968). As James Laidlaw (2002), Joel Robbins (2004) and Jarrett Zigon (2007) have all argued, Durkheim's effective reduction of morality to social norms has done as much to foreclose as to stimulate an anthropology of ethics. Yet, it has not foreclosed it quite as thoroughly as they jointly suggest. Philosopher Alexander Macbeath draws on Durkheimian anthropology in his *Experiments in Living* (1952) and, if perhaps not as self-consciously as Durkheim before him, may well commit the Naturalistic Fallacy along his way. Mary Douglas' discernment of the correlations between modalities of social organization and modalities of cosmology in *Natural Symbols* is hardly less large than Macbeath's in its reach, but it is logically more cautious, as is her later work on class standing, the perception of risk and danger and the assignation of blame (Douglas 1970, Douglas and Wildavsky 1982). A large number of American anthropologists in both the Boasian and the psychoanalytic traditions have contributed to the ethnographic documentation of ethical variation, though rarely with the theoretical direction that the Weberian or Durkheimian programs both provide in their way (see Graeber 2001: 3-5).

The ethical domain is also very much a part of contemporary anthropological horizons, and not merely because anthropologists continue to worry over their own professional ethics or because a number of them suffuse their own research and writing with the ethical position that they personally hold most dear. Unsurprisingly, the best of recent contributions to an anthropology of ethics tend to acknowledge Foucault as at least one forerunner. Talal Asad's *Genealogies of Religion* (1993) is among these, as are Heather Paxson's exploration of reproduction and mothering in Greece (2004), Saba Mahmood's study of a women's pietistic movement in Egypt (2005) and certain of the essays that Michael Fischer includes in his *Emergent Forms of Life and the Anthropological Voice* (2003; see also Howell 1997; Humphries 1997). I have made three previous forays of my own. The first juxtaposed Foucault, Aristotle and Luhmann in considering the principles and possibilities of a general program in the anthropology of ethics (Faubion 2001c). The second, more empirically grounded, made up part of the investigation of the works and days of a Branch Davidian claimant to prophetic authority (Faubion 2001b: 115-159). The third addressed the claims, the duties and the existential hallmarks of kinship (Faubion 2001a; cf. Faubion and Hamilton 2007).

The extant anthropology of ethics--my own past interventions into it included--does not, however, quite articulate or give full analytical attention to a distinction that I now think intrinsic to what, following Foucault, I think of as the ethical domain and so crucial to any approach to the anthropology of ordinary ethics. At the very least, I think the distinction in question is diagnostically stable and diagnostically useful and that, surviving Occamist scrutiny, it should be part of the explicit diagnostic infrastructure of an anthropology of ethics. That distinction has its ground in an important and related series of cognitive, affective, semiotic and structural differences between the more ecological and dynamic and the more homeostatic aspects of ethical autopoiesis. My fashioning of it has certain elements in common with Jarrett Zigon's recently circulating intuition that ethics is peculiarly visible in moments of "moral breakdown" (Zigon 2007), but ultimately differs from his own distinction between the ethical and the moral both semantically and diagnostically. Above all and counter to what Zigon suggests, I resist both semantically and diagnostically any construal of the dynamic and the homeostatic dimensions of the ethical field as contraries. My own distinction is more closely related but still not equivalent to the distinction that has reemerged in the Anglo-American analytical tradition of philosophy in the past couple of decades between an "ethics" centered on the concept of virtue and the rest of "moral philosophy" (see e.g. MacIntyre 1984; Nussbaum 1992).

Recent philosophical usage is a partial echo of Hegel's earlier distinction between *Sittlichkeit* and *Moralität*. The distinction is often translated into English as the distinction between "ethics" or "ethical substance" or "ethical life" and "morality" (Hegel 1952). Within Hegel's philosophy of right, it functions to mark the contrast between the embodiment, the taking into one's bones, of the (only valid) corpus of (universal) principles of proper conduct from that corpus itself. It is in its own right a partial echo of a tradition extending back to antiquity that distinguishes the exercise of practical reason and decision-making from the corpus of precepts or principles to which that exercise would have to conform in order to "be right" or "for the good." Hegel's distinction for its part still presumes that the domain of rectitude and goodness must include some perfectly general set of principles of conduct--categorical imperatives or commandments--that establish its bylaws. It is thus a distinction of insufficient anthropological generality, since it excludes traditions that engage or respond to questions of rectitude and goodness either by appeal to analogous situational precedents or to often more timelessly conceived exemplars. The former traditions include that of casuistry, now denigrated but still alive and (more or less) well in case law. The latter traditions are widespread, the precise stuff of legend the world over. Though Plato was a great critic of it (see Robb 1994), pedagogical appeal to exemplars indeed remained an important part of the formulation of practical judgment and codification in antiquity. The *Iliad* (1951) and Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Greeks and Romans* (2001) are among other things guidebooks of the heroic way, as is the New Testament for those devoted to the ethics of the *imitatio Christi*. Rather more in the fashion of the Old Testament, the Greek and Latin historians, comedians and satirists offer more complex collections, in which bad examples often grab the stage from their nobler counterparts.

It must be admitted and is worth noting in any case that, however it might substantively be made, the distinction between "ethics" and "morals" or "ethics" and "morality" at the sheer level of terminology has little etymological warrant. "Ethics" derives from the Greek *êthika* (neuter plural of the adjectival *êthikos*), a term for an inquiry into or treatise concerning *êthos*, which means "custom" or "usage" but also "disposition" or "character." *Êthos* is a synonym of the Latin *mos*, from which Cicero will first derive and coin the adjective *moralis*, translated indifferently as "ethical" or "moral." The nominal form of a more common adjective in Latin--*honestum*--is typically glossed into English as "morality," but can also be glossed as "virtue" or "good repute." There are many grounds, then, for the confusion of "ethics" and "morals." They range from the variances of philosophical usage to the complexities of the domain of the good and the right itself. Nor does philology per se afford any rescue.

Rendering the distinction I have in mind, I turn once again to Aristotle, who does not term his enterprise in *Nicomachean Ethics* "êthika" (an editor's titular intervention), but instead an inquiry into *to anthrôpinon agathon*, "the human good" or, as several translators have somewhat infelicitously preferred, "the good for man." In his introductory remarks in that work, however, Aristotle makes an incisive and, for my purposes, particularly relevant distinction between (what I am calling) ethics and the "architectonic" (Aristotle 1934: 4-5 [NE 1093b.ii.4-6]) or "science" for which ethics is propaedeutic. The term he assigns to that architectonic is *politikê*. One usually finds the term glossed into English as "politics," which serves if nothing else to make for a contrast of a very stark sort. Few if any of us would confuse "ethics" with "politics" today. Yet, *politikê* does not mean "politics" as we have come to know it. It rather denoted--and for many scholars of political theory, still does denote--the care and maintenance of the *polis*, of the Greek city-state that was for Aristotle the teleological culmination of the development of civilized human life and within which alone human life could be fully worth living (and then fully only for wealthy, free adult men). Aristotle is not modern, or at least not modern in the sense that he does not even seem to imagine that collective human life might be fashioned out of whole cloth, in the manner of a long line of nineteenth- and twentieth-century urban planners and designers, from Sir Ebenezer Howard (architect of the garden city) to Le Corbusier (cf. Rabinow 1989). Though the site of the rule of laws of man's own making, the *polis* still has for Aristotle an inextricable natural history. Its teleology thus allows of direct comparison to that of the oak, whose full flower has its necessary point of departure in the acorn in which its potential already wholly resides. *Politikê* is thus like *oikonomikê*, the architectonic of the *oikos* or estate. It is a managerial science. In system-theoretic terms, its principles and practices are those of system-maintenance. Its ends must be prevailingly homeostatic, since the *polis*,

for an Aristotle who proves once again to be something other than modern, is already perfect and so permits of no further improvement.

Politikê has ethics as one of its cardinal concerns because the maintenance of the polis requires the existence of citizens equipped intellectually with the judgment to govern it and characterologically with the dispositions affinate to the civilization it realizes. In a definitional effort to avoid the unhappy consequences that Plato had revealed to follow from the Socratic understanding of the exercise of virtue by way of analogy with the plying of a craft, Aristotle insists that ethics is not concerned with poiesis, with “making” or “creating,” but instead with *praxis*, with “doing.” If every ethical practitioner has something of a natural history, moreover, he is not in Aristotle’s considered judgment born with his agency fully realized any more than the oak is already in full flower in and as its acorn. Aristotle is explicit: the virtues that are the dispositional ground of ethical agency do not reside in human beings by nature, but can and must be cultivated only in and through their very practice. Grown men--again, for Aristotle, the fully realized ethical agent could only be an adult male--might be left largely to their own exercises. Children, however, require ethical pedagogues--the wisest of them, presumably, always having a copy of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (after “Nicomakhos,” the name of both Aristotle’s father and of his son) or the *Eudemian Ethics* (after Eudemos, one of his pupils) nearby.

Hence, politikê might rest largely in the order of the homeostatic, or more simply, in being. In this precise respect, it is on a par with what I would myself formerly have designated as “morality.” Discussion and commentary at a workshop on ordinary ethics of which Michael Lambek graciously invited me to Toronto in 2008 to be part has convinced me, however, that yet another stipulative foray into the semantics of “ethics” versus those of “morality” is likely to become entangled--and sooner rather than later--in the thick and inconsistent morass of the forays that have preceded it. I see no other alternative as a consequence than to resort to coinage. I propose accordingly to designate the homeostatic dimension of the ethical domain as its “themitical” dimension--after the Greek *themitos*, “allowed by the laws of the gods and of men, righteous,” as Liddell and Scott’s venerable *English-Greek Lexicon* has it. The themitical dimension of the ethical field is hardly without its own dynamics, of course, but they belong largely to the order of reproduction. The broader ethical field, however, must always also have one foot at least in the dynamics of production, of becoming. This is Foucault’s particular illumination of that field, but it comes in some measure at the expense of doing full justice to the themitical itself. So, I would add, with all due immodesty, even that illumination is in need of refinement and elaboration in order to sharpen and broaden its anthropological reach.

Some (perhaps many) readers may find the first part of what follows, in which I undertake that refinement and elaboration, all too reminiscent of some nineteenth-century quest for sweeping taxonomies and universal-historical schemata. I am reluctant to affirm the resemblance, but do admit that these chapters are generalist in their design and so stand in contrast to the prevailing particularisms of so much of current sociocultural research. I approve of most such particularisms. I think that many of them in many instances can admit of no responsible alternative. Obviously, I also think that generalities are sometimes in order. They are in order when they serve to clarify and facilitate the analysis of both the limits and the variations of those domains of human ideation and practice that press toward being collective necessities and so toward (near-)universal collective distribution, as the ethical domain does. In any event, such is my argument. Contrary to many of my nineteenth-century predecessors, however, I do not put that argument forward with any presumption that it might or should stand forever--or even briefly--as the only, the consummate, the definitive anthropology of ethics. I presume that the anthropology of ethics consists of an array of diagnostics, of which the one I construct is precisely that--one. Thus the subtitle of the book: not “the anthropology of ethics” but “an [I repeat: an] anthropology of ethics.” I would insist only that any anthropologically worthy version of a diagnostics of the ethical domain must address most if not all of the matters of methodological design, axiomatic parsimony and analytical scale that I myself feel obliged to consider. I offer my results as additions to the anthropological toolkit and each tool labeled with a simple and what to my mind is a quite contemporary instruction: use as needed.

Less ambiguously timely is my effort to clarify the parameters of the ethical domain at a time when I am far from alone in observing that talk of ethics is at once not often very clear and very often in the air, within anthropology but, as I have already noted, just as much outside of it. In the course of that effort, I also develop tools with which to sharpen conceptually a term notion that is a contemporary commonplace--within anthropology and outside of it--and perhaps because a commonplace all too often taken semantically and analytically for granted. The commonplace at issue is that of identity. I confess to having had almost enough of ethnographic inquiries into and too often uncritically essentialist valorizations (in anthropology and outside of it) of this, that or the next identity. In what follows, however, I do not seek to overthrow a commonplace that even in having become something of an Idol of the Anthropological Tribe still has a genuine conceptual function. As a concept, identity needs some demystifying, but once demystified proves to denote a dimension of practice and the organization of practice that no other term, no other concept we currently have appears to register quite as well. It proves specifically to be irreducible to the more classic sociological concepts of status and role. Even anthropologists need the occasional idol, after all.

Even more timely, I would submit, is my broader effort to develop a diagnostics capable of a clear-sighted approach to and an elucidation of the consequences of what I will call (at the risk of resorting to another anthropological commonplace) ethical "complexity." Such complexity consists in its simplest form if and when one ethical subject (or more technically, the occupant of one ethically marked subject-position) finds himself or herself or itself to be yet a second ethical subject (or the occupant of yet a second ethically marked subject-position). Such complexity is hardly only a present-day affair, but it is among the cardinal stimuli both of present-day ethical uncertainties and present-day ethical preoccupations. It merits attending. For reasons--often perfectly good and understandable reasons--that I will educe at length in the first part of the book, Foucault's own diagnostics of the ethical field is weak in its address of complexity and so in need of particular adjustments in two respects. First, it does not formally provide a place for the subject of two (or more) ethical commissions. Second and again formally, its treatment of the complexity of the relations and the dynamics of the relations between ethical subjects and their ethical (and extra-ethical) others is largely limited to what might be called the parrhesiastic and governmentalistic dimensions of such relations. His last lectures at the Collège de France indeed suggest that he was seeking the governmental conditions of the existence of and the technologies of the formation and practice of a parrhesiastic ethics--the reflexive practice of freely speaking the truth. Such adjustments as I will make to the Foucauldean diagnostics respect that quest at the same time that they distance themselves from its specificity. They may not be as elegant as possible, but I would hope that they amount to more than mere cosmetic repairs.

If generalist in its propositions, the first part of this book is not indifferent to matters of the applicability of its diagnostics to particular cases. I am not a trained classicist and not (thus) a philologist, but I have a long-standing and reasonably educated interest in Greek and Roman antiquity and can read much of the Greek that was recorded from the later archaic period forward and have often indulged it in my work to date. Anthropologists had a more regular interest in antiquity in (once again) the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when they could depend with some confidence that the great majority of their readership had been tutored in the classics and would have at least a passing familiarity with the gods, goddesses and myths that could be found in them. Contrary to my predecessors, I have no concern with pronouncing whether the ancient Greeks were primitive (as such armchair practitioners as Edward Tyler and, even more emphatically, James Frazer held it to be) or modern (as the roving Louis Henry Morgan held it to be--just for the record). I am well aware that most readers now are likely to find the denizens of classical Athens as foreign and unfamiliar as the denizens of Yap or interior Amazonia, but I return to them here because the philosophically inclined are, after all, the very denizens that inspire Foucault's own development of a diagnostics of the ethical domain. Like the philosophically inclined ever since, they have their particularities and so their anthropological limits and in revisiting those particularities and those limits I often find the sources of the particularities and the limits of Foucault's diagnostics itself. In the process, I make use of the ancient corpus but also of a considerable body of classical scholarship. Occasionally, I can't resist passing judgment on one or another anthropologically-inclined classicist's ethical presumptuousness or too facile appeal to one or another well-worn

bit of outdated anthropological wisdom. Philosophers and classicists are likely to pass judgment on the facile anthropologist as well, which is of course entirely their prerogative.

In the second part of this book I turn in earnest to applications and so to fieldwork in ethics proper, which methodologically need not be but here largely is the pursuit and sociocultural contextualization of life histories. Some of the fieldwork is entirely my own. Hence, I pay a retrospective visit to the primary subject of my *Shadows and Lights of Waco*, Amo Paul Bishop Roden. I do so not to repeat the portrait of Ms. Roden's ethics that constitutes the third chapter of that book, however much I will resort to it. I do so instead to illustrate and confirm the possibility that the ethical subject can be a composite subject of an indefinite number of players and places. In the case at hand, however, that number is precisely two and consists of the anthropologist and his primary subject as a pair.

Some of the fieldwork is only partly my own. Hence, in my rendering of the works and days and thoughts of Fernando Mascarenhas, I rely on the extensive record of written exchanges and face-to-face meetings that transpired between Fernando (as he has insisted I call him) and George Marcus, which have come into print as *Ocasião: The Marquis and the Anthropologist, A Collaboration* (Marcus and Mascarenhas 2005). Marcus and Fernando first made their acquaintance during a conference on the anthropology of elites that Fernando hosted at his palace on the outskirts of Lisbon. Several months later, the project that led to *Ocasião* began to gather steam, much of it at first over email. Not long after that, Marcus and I began discussing Fernando, matters of European nobility, the sociocultural significance of the noble house and so on and continued to do so even as *Ocasião* was in its final stages. In the interim, I accompanied Marcus twice to Lisbon: first, to participate in a series of interviews with Fernando and some dozen other members of the Portuguese nobility; second, to attend a conference that gathered together some forty members of the same nobility, held once again at Fernando's palace. I subsequently returned alone to Lisbon to conduct a series of interviews with him concerning those matters of his biography and his ethical development that did not find clear or only found partial articulation in his collaboration with Marcus. As will be seen, for reasons both personal and sociocultural, Fernando is an unusually self-aware ethical actor and thinker. His "Sermon to [his] Successor," which I translated into English with him and which appears as an appendix to *Ocasião*, is a brief but genuine ethical treatise. His is a special but still illustrative case of contemporary ethical complexity. He is a Marquis, but is so in a state that no longer officially recognizes noble privilege. He is thus also a common man, though a commoner of considerable material and social means. The two do not always quite coincide. In just this sense, Fernando might be regarded as a composite ethical subject residing in a single mindful body. It is a matter of research how many others among us are of the same legion--but many of us may turn out to have more in common with a Portuguese marquis than at first we might think we do.

We may also have more in common than we think with many of the peoples that have long been the subjects (or objects) of the anthropological gaze, among whom recent researchers have encountered not merely the ethical but ethical complexity of a very familiar sort. Ethical complexity thus proves to be anthropically ubiquitous, though the sources of it, the look and feel of it and the environments that autopoietically sustain it vary greatly from one place to the next. In order to underscore the point, I turn and in some cases in my conclusion to those researchers and the works they have produced. I consider their conclusions, but also their methodological convergences and divergences. I do so not with an interest in repainting them in my own colors. I do so instead with two other interests in mind. I wonder what alternatives the anthropology of ethics might already hold. I wonder, too, what research at present suggests about what the future of an anthropology of ethics might yield.