

## SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY

James Laidlaw

Many classic ethnographies in social anthropology have consisted at least in part of descriptions and analyses of diverse forms of moral life. Yet until recently, theoretical debate in the discipline has hardly been concerned with, or affected by, questions of the general understanding or comparative analysis of morality; and occasional attempts to set out an intellectual agenda that might place such questions centrally in the discipline (e.g. Westermarck 1932; Firth 1951, 1953; Reid 1955; Edel and Edel 1959; Fürer-Haimendorf 1967; Gluckman 1972; Wolfram 1982; Pocock 1986; Fiske and Mason 1990; Howell 1997) have had limited impact on the general direction of inquiry and debate. Attempts by non-anthropologists to draw systematic conclusions for the understanding of ethics from ethnographical data and analyses (MacBeath 1952; Ladd 1957; Hareh 1983; Moody-Adams 1997; J. D. Cook 1999) have been similarly unfruitful. During the last two decades, however, something like a concerted field of enquiry has developed in the anthropology of ethics, with a series of conceptual innovations finally directing ethnographic inquiries, which have in turn informed further debate. Progress has depended on some success in transcending two limitations of vision that have hitherto constrained anthropological engagement with ethics: a tendency to equate ethics or morality with the social, conceived in law-like terms, and a particularistic conception of distinct moralities embodied in plural cultures or societies. Ideas from ethnographically minded philosophers have been helpful in developing this anthropological approach.

Conceptions of the social as an order of reality superordinate to "the individual" come in many forms, but Emile Durkheim's formulation has been exceptionally influential. Durkheim (1915/1912, 1953/1906, 1973/1899, 1979/1920) argued that the power of both morality and "the sacred" to compel and constrain human action, manifest in their being simultaneously both obligatory and desirable, derives from the fact that they represent "society": "a moral being qualitatively different from the individuals it comprises," and the source of the latter's better qualities - everything that distinguishes them from amoral bundles of natural appetites. The implicit recognition of this is the explanation for both religion, which is the veneration of society symbolically transfigured, and

development of Buddhism and other organized projects of self-formation, was the site of a decisive step in human thought and practice relating to the self, comparable to that which Mauss identifies, in relation to the person, in Roman law. Mauss misses the significance of these developments, and also those in China, because his narrative is structured by the *l'été* of the morally inviolate legal individual, so the elaborate institutionalized projects for the analysis and refashioning (including the decomposition) of the self developed there are dismissed as historical detritus. But forms of life and techniques of self-fashioning have been widely and pervasively influential, including in Europe, over many hundreds of years. During the last century the mutual influencing and inter-change of ideas and practices intensified as traditions such as Buddhist *vipassana* meditation and yoga were reformulated and commoditized in globalizing movements (Alter 2004; Strauss 2005; J. Cook forthcoming).

Carrithers' proposal for a complement to Mauss's narrative provides the basis for bringing anthropological analysis into dialogue with other accounts of the genealogy of the moral subject, whether Nietzsche's or more recent philosophical-historical and Europe-focused accounts (Taylor 1989; Rose 1990, 1996; Seigel 2005). But little has so far been accomplished here, partly because it has been unusual for anthropologists, including those who have departed more or less radically from the Durkheimian understanding of the moral/social, to paint on such a broad historical and comparative canvas. Instead, where anthropologists have sought to interpret something like Durkheim's insistence on the centrality of the moral in a less reductive way than he did, they have most often declared the irreducible diversity of moral life among what they represent as distinct and separate cultures or societies.

Thus when Edward Evans-Pritchard described societies as "moral systems" (1967) he meant not, as Durkheim had, that the content of morality varies in predictable ways with different social structures, but rather that it is undetermined by any such causal forces. The anthropologist cannot explain the choices and actions people make; the ambition must be to render them intelligible by translating the categories and concepts in which they are made, always in more-or-less explicit contrast with "the West" or "us." Many fine ethnographic studies in this interpretive manner have characterized local societies by their dominant moral values and concepts (Evans-Pritchard 1937, 1956; Lienhardt 1961; Campbell 1964; Beidelman 1971; James 1988; Howell 1997), but whenever attempts have been made to generalize in this vein beyond "local moralities" to regions or cultural areas – with honor and shame in the Mediterranean (Peristiany 1965) or hierarchy and purity and pollution in South Asia (Dumont 1980) – problems have been exposed which cast doubt on the original method (Herzfeld 1980). The assumptions of holism and internal homogeneity, and indeed the very concept of plural "cultures" as natural units existing in the world, awaiting description and comparison, have come increasingly to be rejected in anthropology (for just one influential line of argument, see Strathern 1991).

morality, which is the authority of society manifested in "its imperative rules of conduct." On the one hand, Durkheim's powerful vision appears to recognize the constitutive importance of morality in social life, as a reality not reducible to material interests, but on the other it simply equates morality with the collective; and people following moral rules, like the rest of a social structure, is conceived as the more-or-less mechanical functioning of a natural causal system. Morality is central, but at the same time almost invisible, because there is nothing true of it that is not equally true of society.

Many anthropologists accepted enough of this Durkheimian framework to think that understanding morality was a matter of explaining "why custom binds" (Fortes 1959, 1977), and if successive generations found Durkheim's own account unsatisfactory, and looked to psychoanalysis, hermeneutics, cognitive science, Marxism, or phenomenology for better answers, they have rarely considered that anything distinctive about ethical choice, dilemma, judgment, or conduct, anything that sets the ethical apart from the rest of culture, ideology, discourse, and so on, might be central to the understanding of social life.

When anthropologists explained patterns of peasant insurgency and resistance, for instance, in terms of "moral economy" (Scott 1977), the force of the term "moral" was just that ideas of entitlement that motivate political action are collectivist rather than individual; and cross-cultural comparisons of the "morality" of market exchange turned on equating morality with society and the long term, as opposed to the self-interest, the individual, and the short term (Parry and Bloch 1989). For Marxists, morality was identified sometimes with a ruling ideology (Bloch 1989) and sometimes with proletarian insight into the truth behind such ideology (Tausig 1980); in both cases, indistinguishably, with collectively shared ideas that mandate and motivate collective cohesion.

Durkheim's nephew Marcel Mauss, in his classic 1938 lecture, "The Category of the Person" (1985), provides a Durkheimian counterpart to Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morality* (1994/1887). Like Nietzsche, Mauss describes the stages in the emergence of a distinctively modern moral agent. Mauss's is a more benign narrative, of the social production of the conscious, responsible individual who is the bearer of rights. In line with the Durkheimian opposition between the moral-collective and the natural-individual, Mauss begins by declaring a disjunction between socially constituted categories of person (*personne*), whose history he proposes to reconstruct, and the sense of physical and spiritual individuality of the self (*moi*), which he suggests people have always possessed and, he implies, therefore has no history. Michael Carrithers (1985) rightly insists that this disjunction is invalid and that there is a history to be written of senses of self (*moi*) which is connected with that of the person. He distinguishes *personne*-theories, which conceive of persons in an ordered social collectivity, from *moi*-theories, in which selves are conceived in cosmological and spiritual contexts, interacting as moral agents, and he emphasizes that organized reflection on the self is not a parochial Western concern. Indeed, north India in the fifth century BC, with the

exercise of judgment or practical reason, which he distinguishes insistently from mere acts of choice. Much influential recent anthropological theory, going under the broad designation of "practice theory," has sought to achieve some kind of synthesis between a recognition that human beings are brought to act in the ways they do because of some kind of social or cultural causation on the one hand, and on the other of how they are to some degree autonomous agents (paradigmatic statements include Bourdieu 1990 and Ormer 2006). Lambek has interpreted Aristotle's conception of practical reason as achieving a genuine synthesis between the poles of unthinking habit and self-interested calculation, where practice theory merely oscillates (see Keane 2003). He has suggested that we find distinctive, culturally variable forms of reflective striving for the good embodied in practices, such as spirit possession, which, like ritual in general (Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994), involve "displacements of intentionality," and where, for instance, individuals may make use of culturally authorized media in which to speak in the voice of a conception of the general good.

MacIntyre (1981, 1988) characterizes virtue as the purposeful cultivation of goods that are intrinsic to complex, culturally instituted practices (so "strategic intelligence" in the case of chess, as distinct from the extrinsic wealth or fame one might achieve as a result of success at chess). Thomas Widlok (2004) has suggested that we study ethnographically the way virtues are not bound to "cultures" but manifested wherever the varied practices that embody them are undertaken for their own sake. His analysis of sharing draws analogously to the anthropology of art as skilled performance to show how the distribution of food by San hunters in Namibia can be understood as striving towards a virtue in MacIntyre's sense, one that is at the same time embodied in certain specific practices yet not confined within the boundaries of social or cultural groups. A number of anthropologists have also found helpful MacIntyre's rethinking of the concept of tradition, with Talal Asad (1986) influentially arguing that it is preferable to any conception of plural "cultures." Arund Pandian (2008) has observed that MacIntyre's conception of a tradition, as a set of ongoing arguments embedded and transmitted in practices, relieves us of the false choice of seeing traditions as either unchanging and unquestioned premises on the one hand, or, if not this, somehow inauthentic and "invented"; and he has adapted MacIntyre's conception to interpret aspects of ethical practice in agricultural communities in rural south India as a "fragmented" tradition. MacIntyre makes clear that the arguments that constitute a tradition are not only internal but also with rival traditions, and this gives us a way of understanding positive engagements between hitherto separate traditions, which might as a result either merge or else modify themselves to mimic the other while remaining distinct (Laidlaw forthcoming). These adaptations of ideas from virtue ethics have in common an insistence on the irreducibility of the ethical, in particular its not being comprehensible in terms of the application of social rules and norms or self-interested competition, and a striving to escape the problem situation of ethical relativism.

Yet expressions of cultural and moral "relativism," which plainly only make what sense they do on the basis of such assumptions, have played like a leitmotif through the history of anthropology. Edward Westermarck's magisterial two-volume study on *The Origin and Development of Moral Ideas* (1906) purs forward a simple argument: our moral reactions are rooted in natural emotions, but the content of our moral ideas is arbitrary and accepted largely without reflection. A comparative study that demonstrates this will lead us to question and revise those opinions. The followers of Franz Boas developed the idea of cultures each embodying in their socially approved habits a distinctive moral philosophy (Benedict 1935), and these anthropologists' sympathetic portraits of radically "other" moralities were designed as support of moral reform at home (Mend 1928), a rhetorical form later called "cultural critique" (Marcus and Fischer 1986). This was partly in reaction to evolutionary views correlating stages in the development of technology or socio-political forms with advances in moral maturity (Maret 1911; Furer-Haimendorf 1967), and such views do continue to be advanced (Halpikie 2004). The contradiction involved in seeking to advance non-relative causes and claims by means of assertions of relativism has however caused strain. Nancy Scheper-Hughes is only unusually forthright in asserting both that the primacy of anthropologists' ethical responsibilities should lead them to reject cultural relativism (1995), but also that in order to meet the challenge of exposing ethically objectionable practices (her example being commercial traffic in human organs) "anthropologists must intrude with our cautionary cultural relativism" (2000: 197). Relativism being thought of as a sort of anthropologists' union card has inhibited serious intellectual engagement with ethics.

In much of the above the object of analysis has been conceived of as "local moralities": distinctive moral philosophies embodied in and therefore coextensive with sociocultural entities. Recent writings under the rubric of the anthropology of ethics have begun, by contrast, from the conviction that when people pursue, or act in the light of, conceptions of human excellence or the good, certain distinctive things (including reflective thought) may be going on, that these processes are pervasive and constitutive in human social life, that such diversity as they give rise to may not coincide with what are thought of as societies or cultures, and that prevalent conceptions of society and culture may not readily capture them. To acknowledge and accommodate the prevalence of ethical choice, dilemmas, judgment, and conduct, some fairly thorough rethinking may be required of some central concepts in social theory, such as structure, culture, and agency. Many, though not all, of the authors in this field have been influenced by virtue ethics (including Aristotle, especially as interpreted by Alasdair MacIntyre) and/or by the later writings of Michel Foucault.

Michael Lambek (2000, 2002, 2008), for instance, has insisted on what he calls the "ubiquity" of the ethical: the pervasive significance in human life of reflective striving for the good and cultivation of good dispositions; such dispositions being embodied, but at the same time more than mere habit and requiring the

even consciously registered as it is gone through. Ethics, by contrast, is brought about by circumstances of "moral breakdown," when some event or person "intrudes" into one's everyday life, requiring reflection and conscious decision on whether and how to act. The end of such "ethical moments" is to enable a return to "the unreflective and unreflective dispositions of morality," but this requires the creation of new, even if only very slightly new, dispositions, and therefore an altered moral self. Although he associates this account with Foucault's discussion of "problematization," Zigon's ideas are importantly different. Foucault's ethics-morality distinction does not imply separate subject matters; so he described ethics as "another side of the moral prescriptions, which most of the time is not isolated as such" (2000: 263). Problematization is therefore not an isolated or occasional event or episode; it is an aspect of any ongoing form of life. Foucault reflected that his studies of madness, criminality, and sexuality seemed in retrospect to be variously successful attempts to examine each of these phenomena along the three axes that characterize any "matrix of experience" (2000: 204): as domains of knowledge, as systems of institutionalized rules, and as models of the relation one has to oneself. Where he had erred was in underemphasizing the third of these dimensions. Different forms of morality vary not in whether or how intensely problematization occurs, but in the particular form it takes. Through problematization, as described in Foucault's later lectures and books, the forms of problematization vary considerably, but there is no time at which nothing is problematized. And crucially, the point of the many techniques of the self he described is to fashion the self in terms of a particular current problematization. Foucault postulated no state of untroubled tranquility such as Zigon holds to be "our everyday way of being." The latter idea seems to owe more to Bourdieu's (1990) concepts of "habitus" and "doxa," according to which the crucial determinants of human conduct are unavailable to consciousness, and indeed social systems can only function because and insofar as subjects are systematically ignorant or mistaken about them. Zigon's distinction – which unlike Foucault's and Williams' is a dichotomy between mutually exclusive terms – reduces ethics once again to a merely functional role in the reproduction of a society/culture to which, in "everyday" circumstances, the reflective practice of freedom is at best incidental.

Foucault suggested that techniques of the self have existed in every civilization (2000: 87), and proposed a four-part analytical framework for the comparative study of ethical projects (2000: 263ff). He distinguished the part of the self that is the object of ethical attention (ontology), from the mode in which that attention is directed (deontology), the techniques used to work on the self (aesthetics), and the state of the self the project is directed towards realizing (teleology). If only a few studies (e.g. Laidlaw 1995; Rabinow 1996; Faubion 2001a, c) have made systematic use of this framework, Foucault's highlighting of ethical projects as objects of description has been formative. In addition to studies of religious traditions that have highlighted diverse or changing ethical projects embedded in ostensibly or assertively unchanging moral codes (Asad 1993; Laidlaw 1995; Lester

In his later writings on "the genealogy of ethics," Foucault (1985, 1986, 2000, 2005) explicitly repudiated the idea, with which he had come to be associated, of power as systematic domination, "that leaves no room for freedom." Except at the limit, power relations are always to some extent reciprocal and create possibilities for action on both sides. Indeed, it is only possible properly to speak of power relations insofar as subjects are free (2000: 292). Thus under the single term "subjectivation" (*assujétissement*), Foucault included both interactive processes whereby certain kinds of social subjects are formed in power relations, and practices of self-constitution and self-transformation. This has implications for how one might study systems of morals. Foucault distinguished morality or moral codes – rules that might be imposed, followed, or resisted – from ethics, which are projects for making oneself into a certain kind of person. He argued that from classical antiquity through the rise of Christianity not much changed in the content of prescriptive moral codes (so he rejects the idea that the ancients were "more relaxed" about sex, for example), but ethics, the ways people were enjoined to work on and fashion themselves, changed profoundly: from an aesthetics of existence – an active cultivation of qualities so as to achieve a restrained excellence, in particular in wielding power over others – to a hermeneutics of the subject – a searching, interpretive investigation of one's actions, thoughts, intentions, and desires (1985, 1986, 2005).

Foucault's délimitation of the ethical is not the only one that is of interest to contemporary anthropologists, and nor is his distinction between ethics and morality. Bernard Williams (1985) used the same vocabulary to make an equally useful but different distinction. For him, ethics is any answer to the question, "How ought one to live?" and morality is one particular subset of such answers: those ethical theories (paradigmatically Kantianism, but also, though he did not mention this, Durkheim's theory) that place peculiar stress on notions of obligation, the voluntary, and sentiments of blame (see also Skorupski 1998). So whereas for Foucault "ethics" describes an aspect of morality, for Williams morality is a special case of the broader category of ethics. Both Foucault and Williams were indebted to Nietzsche (1994/1887) in making these different distinctions, and in both cases part of the motivation lay in wishing, as Nietzsche did, to liberate themselves and their readers from the parochialism of equating one kind of value system – in Nietzsche's case specifically self-denying asceticism – with ethics as such. Both distinctions are likely to be of enduring usefulness in an anthropology of ethics that extends beyond the Western traditions to which Foucault and Williams largely confined their attention (Laidlaw 2002), and just because they are different, cross-cutting distinctions, neither should easily rigidify into merely technical jargon, but perhaps in the end different vocabulary will be needed to make these important distinctions.

A further distinction between morality and ethics is proposed by Jarrett Zigon (2007, 2008: 162–6). Zigon characterizes morality as normally taking the form of unconscious habit, such that our conduct is neither thought out beforehand nor

2005; Mahmood 2005; Hirschkind 2006; Mair 2007; J. Cook forthcoming), anthropologists have described techniques of the self in diverse forms of ethical life: Mongols living under Maoist repression choosing human exemplars as reference points in making life decisions (Humphrey 1997); the Urupmin people in Papua New Guinea, recently converted to Pentecostal Christianity, coping with the moral torment of two mutually condemnatory moral codes which they experience as simultaneously applicable to them (Robbins 2004, 2007); and scientists engaged in the reflective cultivation of distinctive kinds of subjectivity, by practicing and as means to achieving distinctive forms of detachment and engagement (Daston and Galison 2007; Candès forthcoming). And Faubion (2001c) has persuasively argued that while kinship systems always involve some degree of subjection, with relationships and statuses appearing as given or naturalized in various ways, they are never this exclusively, and kinship relations are typically also media and means of self-cultivation. Indeed, the apparent relative securities of kinship may appeal all the more forcibly the more the self, as in liberal societies or cosmopolitan situations, is not merely able but positively obliged to "make something of itself."

Such ethical projects exist only insofar as prevalent modes of domination leave room for some reflective practice of freedom. While Foucault insisted that the ubiquity of power indicated that we are always to some extent free (2000, 167), we are certainly not all equally free. And he proposed an image for the possibility, however remote, of the space for ethics being wholly extinguished. A slave who lived under total domination, so that his or her every act could be only as someone else's agent, would have no ethics (2000: 286). While this is not incompatible with Lumbek's stress on the "ubiquity" of ethical judgment, it usefully raises as an ethnographical question the scope and resources people have, in particular contexts, to engage in projects of self-constitution and to exercise ethical judgment. But the notion of degrees of freedom or of scope for choice, while indispensable, is in itself insufficient and even hazardous. It is too easy to think of liberal societies as affording just more freedom of choice than their predecessors or alternatives. As Asad points out, discussing the reconfiguration of law and ethics in colonial Egypt, many new legal restrictions were introduced (state regulation of age of marriage, restrictions on polygamy, registration of marriage and divorce, etc.) and some social relations (such as those with children) became subject to new forms of anxiety and administrative regulation (2003: 226). The liberal notion of "private life" is not just an increase in a homogeneous "room for choice," but a new kind of ethical space, one in which we are not just permitted but enjoined and even legally obliged to exercise freedom and self-government (see also Rose 1999). Anthropology can describe how freedom comes not only in degrees but also in qualitatively different, historically constituted forms (Laidlaw 2002).

Two ethnographic studies have discerned sophisticated ethical projects of self-constitution in apparently authoritarian schools of religious "fundamentalism." These are respectively Faubion's (2001c) study of a follower of the Branch Divinity

sect, conducted in the aftermath of the Waco massacre, and the separately published but collaboratively produced studies by Mahmood (2005) and Hirschkind (2006) of Islamic reformist revivalism in Cairo. Both draw substantially on Foucault's writings on ethics; Mahmood and Hirschkind also on MacIntyre's on tradition. Thus far similar, these studies also pose interesting questions for each other.

Faubion (2001b, following Foucault 2000: 298–9), makes a convincing case for pedagogy as the foundational ethical relationship and although all such relationships begin with subordination and proceed through constraint, he offers as a criterion for genuinely ethical pedagogic relationships that their trajectory be one in which the pupil is led towards autonomy from the teacher. His understanding of the engagement his principal interlocutor has had with Branch Divinity millennialism as constituting ethics turns substantially on his estimation of her achievement of autonomy, in spite of considerable adversity (Faubion 2001a). The importance placed on autonomy in this general argument needs to be clarified and qualified. There are many institutionalized ethical projects whose *telos* is some kind of ascetic ideal of autonomy – eremitical ideals of purity, cutting of worldly ties and affections, and so on, some of which are realizable only with death (Laidlaw 2005) – but nothing of the kind is necessarily intended here. In myriad social contexts, autonomy may be and much more usually is achieved through and not in spite of relations with others (an exceptional study is Reseman 1977/1974). For a student to attain autonomy through a pedagogical relationship does not imply or require ending that relationship, or ending relations of dependence on others. In addition, as virtue ethicists, following Aristotle, have emphasized, periods of intense dependence, including in childhood, sickness, and old age, are a normal part of the human condition. So it is a mistake to build accounts of ethics on the image only of a young adult in perfect health (Hursthouse 1999; MacIntyre 1999). Nevertheless, it is equally true that these periods of dependence are developmentally connected to ideals of autonomy, and Faubion's criterion for genuine pedagogy has at least *prima facie* plausibility.

Yet Mahmood and Hirschkind both emphasize that the projects they describe, although they begin with reflective decisions on the part of those who join these movements, are directed towards making submission an unreflective, embodied disposition, a pre-subjective and pre-conscious "instinct." For many (women especially) success in pursuing these projects will preclude rather than enable their ever joining or being peers of their teachers. If this is so, does their *telos* include the eradication of precisely that practice of freedom which was its precondition? So does this show, as Mahmood and Hirschkind might claim, that Faubion's (and Foucault's) criterion is ethnocentric? Or should we query Mahmood and Hirschkind's claim that the end as well as the beginning of these projects is properly speaking ethical?

J. M. S. Evens' account of "anthropology as ethics" (2008) attempts to realize anew the Durkheimian ambition of showing how the ethical is constitutive of the human condition. Anthropology's attempts to grasp this have been hampered by

what Evens calls a dualist ontology, an intrinsically anti-ethical but pervasive feature of Western culture, which he identifies with the legacy of Greek science. Anthropology can transcend this by being itself an ethical enterprise, which, following Levinas (1998/1991), Evens understands as openness to the other. This theme is developed most particularly through a reading of the meaning of sacrifice in Judaic, Christian, and certain African religious traditions. Thus anthropology, like ethics, is engaging with and taking the perspective of the other: a self-transcending engagement that does not involve a return to how one was (an Exodus rather than an Odyssey); and a sacrifice, insofar as it involves a "self-deconstruction on behalf of the other." Evens concludes with the admirable thought that "the endeavour to learn about another culture needs to be founded, directly and knowingly, on the endeavour to learn from that culture" (2008: 284), although this ambition is not one that anthropology can claim exclusively (Kupperman 1999). And there may be ways of achieving something of this kind, without depending on the problematical concept of "another culture," and without the despite-itself intensely dualist ascetic self-abasement before the other.

For instance, Williams (1993) uses reflection on Greek ideas of responsibility and agency, as embodied in epic and tragedy, to alert us to the fact that our reflective thought, practical judgment, and experience are richer and more subtle than some of our own philosophical theories about responsibility and agency would indicate. Williams employs a genealogical method – in which the form of life studied is not conceived as exclusive of, and contrasted with, the ethical horizon of the analyst (and reader), but as a means by which to reflect upon and enlarge it. This may be contrasted with that deployed in a classic paper by Kenneth Read (1955) on the concept of the person among the Gahuku-Gama of Papua New Guinea. Read's is in many ways an insightful portrait of moral life, but is structured as a contrast between "them" and "us"; our ethics being characterized as "moral universalism," as "exemplified by Christianity." Among "them" obligations are recognized, but only "distributively," by which Read means that obligations only arise, as it were, relationship by relationship. Since there is no notion of the "invariant ethical value" of each individual, and no obligations that bind simply in virtue of this, there is "no moral universalism" and this means, Read assumes, that there is no notion of obligation that is properly speaking moral. Of course, what Read is comparing Gahuku-Gama practice to is not "our" practice but a descriptively poor and prescriptively disabling brand of moral theory that would require us to regard our obligations to our closest family and friends as no greater than those to people we have never met, and would hold that our preference for the former is simply an absence of morality. We could equally well deploy Read's perceptive description of Gahuku-Gama life, in the manner of Williams, to highlight ways in which our reflective practice resembles theirs, and how we conduct ourselves in ways that are more complex and sophisticated than some of our theories tell us we do or should. That would be one non-relativist way to learn from as well as

about "others." Placing ourselves in a genuinely pedagogical relationship to the ethnography would lead, as Faubion suggests pedagogical relationships in general should, to overcoming the heuristic opposition between self and other, making the study of other forms of ethical life itself a form of self-fashioning.

See also Ethical thought in China (Chapter 1); Ethical thought in India (Chapter 2); Aristotle (Chapter 4); The Arabic tradition (Chapter 6); Kant (Chapter 14); Nietzsche (Chapter 18); Freedom and responsibility (Chapter 23); Relativism (Chapter 30); Virtue ethics (Chapter 40).

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#### Further reading

Heintz, M. (ed.) (2009) *The Anthropology of Moralities*, Oxford: Bergahn Books. (A conference collection containing a mixed bag of contributions – not all of them in harmony with the editorial prospectus – exemplifies the range of approaches currently being developed: some brilliant and original proposals are explained and illustrated.)