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Afterword

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In Derrida's writings about boundaries, he suggests that a boundary, whether narrow or expanded, never does anything more than determine the limits of the possible. In doing so Derrida offers a way of understanding both the potentialities and constraints of human thought and action. But to what extent should we take such declarations at face value and how might we think about narrow or expanded boundaries in terms of anthropology's fieldwork practices, primary areas of research and modes of representation? At the very least there seems to be some confusion at play within Derrida's theoretical formulation of the difference between a *boundary* and a *limit*. For whereas a *limit* demarks the furthest extent of human action and is an absolute beyond which no person or entity can pass, *boundaries* always have the potential to be transgressed, seen across, thought beyond or else acted upon in ways that transform or expand them. In other words we need to recognise that because boundaries are subject to human action in a way that limits are not, boundaries are subject to ongoing negotiation and are continually at risk of being surpassed. To understand boundaries we need to make sure to put people's thoughts, bodies and actions in there. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the life of the West Indian writer CLR James, who was both a professional cricket player and Marxist historian. James's book *Beyond a Boundary* explores many different kinds of boundaries, including those of education, class, race and nation but it also betrays a cricketer's knowledge that every ball about to be bowled has the potential to be hit beyond the boundary rope for six. Thus for James boundaries, be that of class, race or otherwise, are not absolute limits and do not necessarily represent or determine the furthest extent of the possible. Instead, boundaries are alive to people in a particular way, constantly tempting the batsman and enchanting the crowd. And they can always be hit across and transcended so as to mock the bowler, excite the spectators or change the course of the game. Because success is not always possible, and might even be unlikely, failure is a regular accompaniment to cricket and research alike. As such the collection of papers assembled here in Expanding Boundaries, might help us to identify and think more closely about those aspects of anthropological practice and game playing that act as boundaries to PhD research but which nevertheless remain open to intervention (for example disciplinary and institutional conventions that can be pushed, expanded or exceeded) and those which are limits and need to be respected and recognised as such (for example the impossibility of looking inside another person's mind to see the world from the "native's point of view").

It comes as no surprise to PhD students and others that the discipline of anthropology is precisely that: a discipline, and therefore that its practitioners, institutions and literature often combine to reinforce certain theoretical positions, discursive conventions and institutional concerns. Such amalgamations of interest help define what is and is not currently considered to be good fieldwork or good anthropology. But it is useful to bear in mind that the boundaries that emerge as a consequence of this process are not *limits* and as such can be called into question, trespassed or

otherwise challenged. Indeed as Edmund Leach declared *"All of us are criminals born by instinct. All creativity whether it is of the artist, of the scholar or even of the politician, contains within it a deep-rooted hostility to the system as it is"* (Leach 1977: 19). For Leach, a primary characteristic of children, adults and scholars who engage in creative thought and action is that they are continually testing out and undermining the established rules, conventions and boundaries and in doing so create new ones. This is not to naively assert that boundaries are a bad thing, for as Leach suggests they are often catalysts and opportunities for creative thought and are crucial for learning about and dwelling in the world. Instead it is to highlight that boundaries are neither fixed nor pre-given and that what is entrenched and essential to one generation or system might be contingent and even irrelevant to another. The very act of attempting to cross a boundary, even if it results in failure, represents what Sartre would deem a *"surpassing of the world"* (1996:18) whereby a person realises that habits, conventions, institutions and human nature are not fixed and unchanging but open to transformation and intervention. For Sartre this opens up the possibility for those small movements and actions in which a person comes to the realisation that things do not have to be this way and can live in, act towards and imagine the world in another way, namely: *"the small movement which makes of a totally conditioned social being someone who does not render back completely what his conditioning gave him"* (Sartre 1974:45).

This suggests that the history of anthropology—including its habitual focus on social relations, cultural practices and so forth—need not define what it could be in the present or might become in the future, and we might want to ask what small movements and actions are available when researching and representing the contemporary world? Just because anthropology has hitherto been concerned with certain theoretical and practical approaches does not mean that these offer any precise or privileged way of understanding human beings, and so following Rodney Needham's classic work on polythetic kinship terms and classifications, we might be best advised to think of anthropology as an assemblage of ideas and practices that possess certain family resemblances, none of which are essential, and which might include different methods and approaches that are not conventionally understood as anthropological. The idea of anthropology as a broad polythetic practice that encompasses various theoretical perspectives, fieldwork methods and styles of representation is especially relevant when we take account of the fact that rather than a single point of origin, anthropology obviously has many different precursors including missionary activity, colonial administration, trade and travel reports and so forth. In Britain, anthropology as both a theoretical and practical endeavour is often traced to the Torres Straits Expedition in 1898 that included Alfred Cort Haddon and WHR Rivers as part of a multidisciplinary team investigating colour perception and kinship. And although there was still a way to go before the idea of fieldwork emerged in the classic Malinowskian sense, Haddon and Rivers' idea of going to a society, conducting research and engaging in first-hand observations and interactions was a radical departure from anthropology's early armchair incarnations. However, this is not the only history of the discipline that can be told, insofar as we can think of *anthropologies* in the plural, including the British, German, French, American, Brazilian, Indian, Chinese and Japanese versions of anthropology which all have their own intellectual trajectories and traditions as well as their own interests, obsessions and foundational myths.

One of the earliest conceptions of anthropology as its own distinct discipline can be traced back to Kant's annual course on anthropology that he taught continuously for twenty-three years from 1772 until 1796. Anthropology was at this time a completely new field of study and Kant's course and subsequent book, *Anthropology: From a Pragmatic Point of View* (1798) was one of the very first attempts at a systematic, anthropological approach to understanding humanity. Kant defined anthropology as the study and "doctrine of knowledge of the human being, systematically formulated [which] can exist either in a physiological or in a pragmatic point of view – Physiological knowledge of the human being concerns the investigation of what nature makes of the human being; pragmatic, the investigation of what he as a free-acting being makes of himself" (Kant 2006: xx). Kant develops this definition throughout his course in order to understand the practical basis for human actions and beliefs in light of our status as unfinished beings who possess incomplete knowledge about each other and the world. Thus rather than exploring the metaphysical and philosophical grounds for perception, knowledge and understanding, as contained in *Critique of Pure Reason,* Kant is more interested in examining how humans act and what they do in their lives before going on to consider what they might become and make of themselves. Although related to Kant's philosophical project, anthropology was conceived of as its own discipline and was based in detailed empirical observations of everyday activity and practice but also the knowledge that could be garnered about human beings from other sources such as literature, history, plays, poetry and not least early travel accounts of other ways of being. Thus for Kant, anthropology is neither a metaphysical inquiry nor a fieldwork discipline but a sustained examination of how phylogeny and nature shape the possibilities for human thought, action and expression, including how human beings, as free-acting agents, act in society as part of their ontogenetic and moral development. In defining the *human* in this way, Kant systematically considers the five senses of sight, sound, touch, taste and smell; the different cognitive faculties, including imagination, fantasy and memory; the differences between ethnicities and sexes; and wider moral and political questions including the temperament of different nations.

Interestingly, Kant's lectures on anthropology were far better attended than his classes in philosophy, open to the public and among the most popular of his career. Manfred Kuehn observes how Kant's course in anthropology grew out of a "fundamental concern of the European Enlightenment, being conceived as an alternative to the theological understanding of the nature of man, and born of the belief that the proper study of mankind is man, not God" (Kuehn 2006: vii). This meant Kant's conception of a pragmatic anthropology required "an empirical as well as a rational methodology" (Wilson 2006: 24). However, besides being a theoretical, empirical and descriptive discipline, Kant also thought of anthropology as a means for people's moral and cultural improvement, including his students and the wider public. As such Kant's aim "was twofold: (1) a theoretical investigation of the source of all practical philosophy, its phenomena, and its laws, and (2) a doctrine that was itself practical in teaching the rudiments of prudence, wisdom, or knowledge of the world" (Kuehn 2006: viii).

In his *Introduction to Logic,* Kant offers a clear summary of his ideas in the form of four questions:

What can I know?

What should I do?
What can I hope for?
What is a Human Being?

In response Kant suggests:

What can I know? is answered in the realm of *metaphysics*
What should I do? is answered in the realm of *ethics*
What can I hope for? is answered in the realm of *religion*
What is a Human Being? is answered in the realm of *anthropology*

Kant subsequently argued that in fact all four questions can be answered in, or pertain to, anthropology, if understood from a pragmatic point of view because "in reality [...] all these might be reckoned under anthropology, since the first three questions refer to the last" (Kant 1963: 15). Indeed it has been argued that "no other issue in Kant's thought is as pervasive and persistent as that of human nature" (Jacobs and Kain 2003:1) and such was the extent of Kant's interest in anthropology that it is "difficult to find a text [of his] completely free of anthropological observation" (Jacobs and Kain 2003:1). In offering an anthropological response to the question *What is a Human Being?* Kant is required to establish the epistemological and evidential basis for understanding people's perceptions, morals and activities, which he argues necessitates the detailed observation of human action from a pragmatic perspective. his empirical observations of people's actions provides Kant with sufficient primary material with which to begin formulating a notion of human nature that is not determined by fixed essences but as something constantly enacted in practice and thus open to agency, intervention and change.

Given Kant's focus on human nature, it is instructive that Michel Foucault wrote and successfully defended his doctoral thesis on Kant's *Anthropology: From a Pragmatic Point of View* in 1961, and also translated the text into French for publication in 1964. The influence of Kantian anthropology on Foucault's own reading of human nature is already significant in his dissertation, not least in the way Foucault concurs with Kant on the necessity of understanding humanity from an empirical and practical perspective and his development of Kant's original insights into how any empirical understanding human nature is necessarily bound up with the use of language, human finitude and the limits of knowledge. Kant remained a constant interest to Foucault and shortly before his death in 1984, he presented a study of Kant's short work *"Answering the Question: What is Enlightenment?" (1784)* in the form of a public lecture given at the *College de France* (later published as "The Art of Telling the Truth" (1994)). Kant's original piece was written for the Berlin Monthly in response to a question posed previously in the journal concerning the role of religion, authority and human thought in relation to the new intellectual shifts brought about by the enlightenment. Kant begins by focusing on man's lack of enlightenment and attempt to emerge "from his self−incurred immaturity" before concluding "if it is now asked whether we at present live in an enlightened age, the answer is: No, but we do live in an age of enlightenment". In doing so, Kant argues that becoming enlightened is an activity that embodies knowledge, reflexivity and a particular kind of thinking subject, and as such he presents human nature as part of historical process in which humankind retains a capacity to change itself. In considering humanity's potential emancipation from its existing circumstances of being, Foucault highlights how Kant

offers a new understanding of human nature as open to intervention, action and agency rather than simply being a fixed property, and suggests that Kant is asking a radically different kind of question, namely "the question of the present, the question of what is happening now; What is happening today? What is happening now? And what is this "now" within which all of us find ourselves; and who defines the moment at which I am writing?" (1994: 139). Kant's take on human nature as open to human action can be summarised as an inquiry into an "ontology of the present, and ontology of ourselves" (Foucault 1994: 148), which was later taken up by Marx, Nietzsche, Hegel, Weber, the Frankfurt school and Foucault himself but had already found its expression in Kant's *Anthropology: From a Pragmatic Point of View.*

Anthropology for Kant provides a practical point of comparison with which to understand human thought and action but can also offer a moral critique of the deeds and hypocrisies of powerful nations, including the west's cultural imperialism and political activities by critically analysing practices such as colonialism, economic exploitation and the slave trade as being contrary to the good of the whole of humanity. In advocating for a discipline that can address the lived conditions and moral welfare of the whole human species, Keith Hart (2009) argues that Kant's anthropology contains within it a political critique of the brutal inequalities that existed at the time between peoples and nations, while also offering a telling presentiment of the looming problems of globalisation to come. Accordingly, when understood alongside his lectures on *Physical Geography* it becomes apparent that a major concern of Kant's was how to distribute increasing numbers of persons—who each needed to be accorded equal rights and respect—on the surfaces of a globe that is finite. David Harvey even goes as far to suggest that Kant held that the combination of "geographical and anthropological knowledges provide the necessary conditions of all practical knowledge of our world" (Harvey 2000: 531), while Hart observes how Kant's attempt to offer a moral and pragmatic basis for the interaction between human beings in a newly emergent, rapidly changing world was soon to be overwhelmed by the forces of industrial capitalism and the nation-state. Consequently, Kantian anthropology was submerged to the extent that "anthropologists have ignored it entirely [which] was a mistake" (Hart 2009:2): a telling oversight of a text that was twenty-five years in the making and one of the earliest attempts to develop a systematic anthropological understanding of human beings.

Kant himself never ventured more than 40 miles from his home town of Königsberg during his lifetime, which was quite normal during pre-industrial, horse-drawn times. Königsberg was a busy port which in Kant's words "has a good location for marine trade, both through rivers, with the interior land and with countries of different languages and customs close and far away, such a city can be a fit place for the acquisition of knowledge of human nature as well as knowledge of the world even without travel" (Kant, quoted in Kuehn 2001: 58). But even if Kant thought that the world could come to him through the activities of the port rather than venturing out himself, the fact remains that his anthropology was primarily a way of observing and thinking about the world rather than a fieldwork based practice. *Anthropology: From a Pragmatic Point of View* is also a book of its time and contains ideas and claims about human conduct and other peoples that are not merely naive and unfounded but irrational, prejudicial and perhaps even insane. However, it is simultaneously a book ahead of its time and in setting the stage for a discipline that can encompass the universality of *anthropos* and diversity of *ethnos,* Kant's consideration of

anthropology from a pragmatic perspective still has much to offer contemporary anthropology.

A similar problem of knowledge—including its limits, boundaries and how to acquire an understanding of commonalities and discrepancies that exist between peoples living in diverse settings—is a fundamental concern of many of articles contained in this special issue of *Anthropology Matters: Expanding Boundaries.* Hayder Al-Mohammad and Ruth Goldstein, for example, offer two very different approaches to ways of knowing in the field. Al-Mohammad considers the epistemological and methodological limits of fieldwork and pays particular attention to the grounds for obtaining knowledge of, and through, the body. One of Al-Mohammad's primary objectives is to identify both the basis and limits of claiming embodied knowledge, for example through currently popular methods such as apprenticeship and mimesis, and highlights a series of intractable problems that cannot be overcome by simply refining or changing the methodological approach. Rather than disingenuously attempt to mask these problems, Al-Mohammad argues that there is much more to be gained by recognising such insufficiencies—an acknowledgement that in itself constitutes a type of knowledge about human beings and their capacities—and thereby suggests that a better understanding of human finitude and the limits of our potential for knowing might be used by anthropologists to think more creatively about the processes of research and representation.

The problem of embodied knowledge is dealt with very differently by Ruth Goldstein in her ethnographic exploration of language, movement and bodily practice in Mali. Goldstein considers how interrelated social activities, such as dancing, drumming and storytelling, combine to transmit various kinds of knowledge and information, including history, cultural beliefs and current events, for people who do not read and write. Thus for NGOs and other agencies attempting to make effective social interventions—be that in relation to general health-care information or a specific issue such as female circumcision—it is necessary to understand how language in Mali is intertwined with action and movement. For her own part, Goldstein recounts how her own learning of the language entailed much more than studying, speaking or thinking in it. Instead as Michael Polanyi observed language is something that cannot be reduced to semantics and meaning as is also inhabited and dwelt in, or in Goldstein's terms "I had to "know" in it. I had to dance".

Jennifer O'Brien is similarly concerned with how communicative practices are embedded in specific kinds of social and cultural settings, in this case rural Uganda, where she was approached by a local NGO to assist with a new education programme aimed at young people and their understanding of HIV transmission. O'Brien takes us through the research process by providing us with a series of vignettes that each open up a new window into the different social, moral and practical implications of research with human subjects. In each of these vignettes we get to see a different research approach in action, including Jennifer's various attempts to identify the most appropriate methods and simultaneously position herself as a researcher and community member, as well as negotiate the self doubt and reflections on failure that arise in the field. In the end a simple wooden game, bought for fun and amusement, inadvertently creates a context for research that other approaches could not.

Suzanne Hall's article takes us to the Walworth Road, a main thoroughfare in the heart of South London, where Hall focuses on the social and spatial interactions among small independent shop owners and customers along a mile length of the street. Cities are often characterised and represented as urgent, uncompromising places of complexity and diversity, in which social density and the pace of life take precedence over aspects of urban life that are equally viable. In her approach to the Walworth Road, Suzanne comes to an understanding of street life that requires learning a "slower process of looking" that finds its material expression not only in the use of a camera but perhaps more importantly in taking the time to draw. Together, photography and drawing capture the different rhythms of the street including the combination of fixity and transience that help define the road. Thus rather than simply being used as tools for documentation, the tension and dialogue created through the use of these different modes of looking reveal a "a process of thinking or analysis" rather than suggesting a singular or definitive conclusion.

The process of representation and mapping, both in cartography and text, was brilliantly alluded to in Borges's short story *Of Exactitude in Science* that later came to life in another form in order to underpin Baudrillard's work on *simulation*. As Sarah Rae Osterhoudt argues, Borges's stories provide a rich and fertile ground for thinking about and attempting to understand human beings, and highlights how they explore questions of identity, memory, language, commensuration and human relationships that are equally central to fieldwork and ethnography. An equivalent example in anthropolgy where ethnography and literary expression come together, Osterhoudt observes, is Edmund Leach whose lost his fieldwork notes as a result of an enemy action and as a consequence was free to write a different kind of ethnography in the *"The Political Systems of Highland Burma"*. Recalling Leach's own decree that anthropologists are basically 'bad novelists', Osterhoudt thus looks to Borges to offer the insights into realms of human experience that are researched by anthropologists in the field. The characters invented by Borges continuously navigate new physical and intellectual landscapes but also offer a perspective on human thinking and being that anthropologists are sometimes methodologically unprepared or unwilling to engage with. In support of Osterhoudt's argument we might also look to Rodney Needham's suggestion that in order to achieve something of the "humane significance" of art, anthropologists should try to write with the introspective insight and perspicacity associated with the modernist novel (quoted in Rapport 2007).

The issue of trust is central to most fieldwork contexts but perhaps never more so when conducting fieldwork under conditions of instability and uncertainty. Johanna Söderström's article focuses on the issue of trust and considers the advantages, or otherwise, of using focus groups as a research tool in post conflict Liberia. Her work attempts to provide insights into the emergent democratic culture in Liberia from the standpoint of ex-combatants. For effective research a context of trust has to created in which the personal and collective experiences of ex-combatants can be employed in order to offer a better understanding of major social and political events, such as Liberia's recent elections in 2005, from the perspective of those most affected rather than the endorsement of international observers and institutions. Söderström thereby attempts to offer a more grounded account of Liberia's recent history by those most affected by it and a far more complex picture of recent events and the current situation emerges when focussing on the lived outcomes of an election that was deemed by observers to be a success.

Anthropology may be a modernist, enlightenment project that classifies and maps persons as part of the same political and epistemological quest to map and classify the world, but it is also a world discipline that has many different ways of engaging with the question of what it means to be human. The range of subjects and approaches contained within these articles highlights how the intellectual and disciplinary boundaries of anthropology might be recast in order to allow a multiplicity of approaches in terms of subject matter, research methods and styles of representation. The motivation to do so is no doubt a consequence of the diversity of social and cultural contexts that the assembled authors have found themselves working in and the attempt to find practical and socially appropriate ways of understanding the different ways of being found there. Because anthropological fieldwork does not take place under controlled conditions—but by necessity involves a process of continuous improvisation in the midst other people's social-lives—it is interesting to note how many of the articles in this collection take the anthropologist into unanticipated social contexts and areas of human activity that require a fluid and flexible approach rather than a commitment to certain theoretical presuppositions or methods: i.e. a willingness to expand the boundaries of research and representation while recognising limits of the possible.

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