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THE END OF ANTHROPOLOGY – AN ENDLESS DEBATE*

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My first encounter with peoples who at the time were regarded as the classical 'object' of anthropological studies dates back more than thirty years. It was in 1975 when my later wife and I landed on the airstrip of Wamena, the major settlement of the Baliem valley in the part of the highlands of New Guinea under Indonesian control. When we disembarked from our airplane, an old and rusty DC 3 from the time of the Second World War, we saw ourselves surrounded by a group of Dani men their hair greased with pig fat and strings of white cowry shells about around their necks, and wearing nothing but long yellow gourds to hide their genitals. They stared at us no less curiously than we were about them. The contrast could not have been sharper: modern Western technology on the one hand, and almost completely naked human beings on the other. A few years earlier, not more than a hundred miles from the Baliem valley, the Eipomek a population of approximately 600 people who lived in their valley without having had any contact with so-called white civilisation had been 'discovered' by a missionary air patrol. One week previously in Jayapura, the one-time capital of the former colony of Dutch New Guinea, we had met a German cameraman who was a member of a research team of more than thirty geographers, botanists, medical scientists, human ethologists, linguists, and, of course, also a number of anthropologists, who had settled down among the Eipomek to study them and their natural habitat with all their scientific toolkits, a horrible sight when looked at from the vantage point of our present-day ethical concerns. However, this may have been one of the last research endeavours of its kind. Today, at least, there is no spot on the globe where a population may still be found living in such complete isolation from all the influences of global culture as the Eipomek did at that time.

Since then the autochthonous populations of the West New Guinea highlands have been subject to considerable changes. The Indonesian government, which has only been occupying this part of the former Dutch East Indies since 1963, has done its best to 'civilise' them. Schools have been built in the remotest corners of their territories to teach them the language of their new nation. The *transmigrasi* programme of the Indonesian government has enticed settlers from Java, Bali and Sumatra into the fertile fields of the New Guinea highlands. The resistance with which some Dani and other ethnic

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groups have opposed this kind of interior colonisation, especially after the neighbouring former Trust Territory of Papua and New Guinea had become an independent state, was suppressed with crude violence. The Javanese policemen persecuted those who still went naked in the larger settlements and put them into detention camps. Along the same policy lines, they did everything to abolish the big pig feasts and other traditional ceremonies that Indonesian government officials regarded as an obstacle to economic progress. Nevertheless, if I had the opportunity to revisit the Baliem valley today, the first visual impression might well be much the same as it was when I first went there. Of course, Wamena is now a flourishing town with more than 12,000 inhabitants, government houses, restaurants and hotels. But the Dani men who welcome the foreigners at the large airport that has replaced the old small landing strip still look much the same having freed themselves from trousers and T-shirts to dress again in their yellow penis gourds and traditional body ornaments. And now the policemen no longer intervene. The tourist industry has become an important source of income to the Baliem valley's inhabitants, to both the 'natives' and the newcomers from Java. Tourists want to see the exotic, and the government officials have to abide by their wishes. I doubt that even the new anti-pornography law, which was passed by the Indonesian parliament in October 2008 and aims to suppress the 'indecent' habit of 'going naked' in some of the country's remote regions, will be able to force the 'natives' back into pants and shirts. Commercial interests are stronger than Muslim lawmakers in the Indonesian capital, some 2,500 miles away from West New Guinea. For revitalising old customs, tourism seems to be the best possible ally. Yet to revitalise something suggests that it must have died previously. While the visible surface may be the same, in being reinstated, the traditional dress has altered its meaning. The nakedness of these alleged primitives has become an attraction for tourists. Contemporary Dani have become citations, disguising themselves as what they supposedly once were.

Talk of the decline of the classical object of anthropological studies is nothing new. Holger Jebens has put together an impressive list of quotations from leading representatives of the discipline, such as Bronislaw Malinowski, Margaret Mead and Claude Lévi-Strauss, who were haunted by the notion that the last 'primitive peoples' were dying out right in front of their eyes. This nightmare is in fact older than academic anthropology itself. A similar statement can be found in the work of one of its most important predecessors, the Jesuit Pater Joseph François Lafitau, who between 1712 and 1717 spent almost five years among the Mohawk in the former French colony of Nouvelle France. As he wrote in the introduction to his "Mœurs des sauvages amériquains, comparées aux mœurs des premiers temps" (1724), through their contact with Europeans they had lost so many of their old habits and customs that he decided to describe them as they should have been from the time of their ancestors and as they were before all these changes took place (Lafitau 1724:25f.). When, therefore, more than a century and a half later, Adolf Bastian, the founding father of German anthropology, spoke of the 'conflagration of civilisation' which would wipe out the last 'primitive peoples' still

existing on our planet, it was merely an echo of these and other complaints. As Jebens and Mark Münzel remark, anthropologists often tend to identify with the supposed fate of the object of their research.

Probably the first member of this 'tribe in decline' (Münzel) who used the title "The end of anthropology?" to express his fears about the future of the discipline was Peter Worsley. In a paper he prepared for the Sociology and Anthropology Working Group of the Sixth World Congress of Sociology in 1966, he expressed his conviction that anthropologists had to cede their field of study to political scientists, economists and sociologists because the small-scale societies that had been the mainstay of classical ethnographic research were disappearing almost everywhere (Worsley 1970). Only as these societies' historians would anthropologists be able to survive. Underlying this pessimistic view was the notion that with the political independence of the former colonies anthropology had not only lost its *raison d'être*, it would also fade away with the rapid integration of small and economically backward local societies into flourishing new nations. Yet, Worsley, like many other anthropologists of his time, underestimated the agency of these societies and the resilience they have shown in the face of changing historical conditions. According to the holistic anthropological view at that time, these societies' 'traditional' cultures were adapted to their natural habitat to such a degree that intensification of contact with the outside world would make them tumble down like a house of cards. Tradition and modernity seemed to stand in an insurmountable opposition to one another. There was no alternative: becoming modernised would invariably mean that they had to abandon all their former means of production, social structures, values, norms, practices and beliefs. In fact, of course, the societies to which anthropology has traditionally dedicated itself were generally anything but fossilised isolates. They proved to be astonishingly flexible, retaining what they thought to be indispensable, and appropriating what they thought useful. In fact, as the example of the Dani of the Baliem valley shows, these same societies survived not only the age of decolonisation. Today, in much the same vein, they are facing and adapting to the challenges of globalisation, and they have proved no less adept at using modern means of communication than the researchers who study them, while at the same time retaining central aspects of their cultural traditions.

The current crisis in anthropology thus has little to do with its object of study, which has always been engaged in processes of change, but rather with the discipline itself. Following the so-called 'writing culture debate', anthropology's customary approaches and forms of representation have been subjected to a trenchant critique that destabilised the field's very foundations. What we have come to refer to as 'othering' today is viewed as the field's great fall from grace. With their critiques of their predecessors' authoritative styles, today's anthropologists have also undermined their own authority. The postcolonial debate has contributed further to anthropology's disempowerment. The view from outside has given way to the view from within, as the 'natives' now raise their own voices to express 'the native's point of view'. At the same time, cultural

studies is outstripping anthropology, while sociology, political science and globalisation theory are encroaching upon its classical domains. Under such circumstances, what is the point of continuing with the anthropological project? Have we finally reached the end of anthropology? Has its world – as Clifford Geertz suggested in the title of one of his last essays – finally fallen to pieces (Geertz 2000)? Or is the dissolution of its classical fields of study opening up new domains, in which its classical methods can once again prove their worth?

These were some of the provocative questions asked in the letter we sent to a number of anthropologists to invite them to the 2008 Jensen Memorial Lectures at the Frankfurt Frobenius-Institut, entitled "The end of anthropology?" All of them have, during the last three decades, contributed substantially to the development of anthropology in their homelands anthropologies, whether they have been teaching at Austrian, British, Dutch, French, German, Italian, North American, Norwegian, South African or Swedish universities. And most of them, too, are regarded today as internationally leading representatives of the discipline. Our letter met with a surprisingly good response. Only one of the anthropologists whom we asked to read a paper turned down our invitation. And as the contributions to this collection show, there was nobody who did not take our questions seriously as a point of departure for reflecting on the current state of the discipline.

Adam Kuper and Patricia Spyer provide their responses via a detour through their own on-going research. According to Kuper, classical anthropology was always based on a fiction: the notion of the 'primitive society' opposed to and defined by the self-image of 'progressive' industrial societies of the West. Yet, in fact, what has always been regarded as a distinguishing feature of small-scale societies, i.e., a kinship-based social organisation, played a no less important role in nineteenth-century British industrial society. Using the categories developed in one of anthropology's most prominent subfields, Kuper shows how widespread first cousin marriage was among the English upper- and middle-classes as a means of creating effective social and economic networks. Paradoxically, this social strategy used by the British royal family, the Rothschild dynasty, the Darwins and the Wedgwoods, began to wane in Europe just as evolutionist anthropologists were incorporating cousin marriage into the contemporary image of 'primitive society'. Although classical anthropology may have been based on 'figments of Western imagination' (Kuper), it provided us with concepts and tools that enable us to gain new insights if applied to our own society.

By taking some examples from her recent ethnographic fieldwork in the North Moluccas, Spyer shows how the long debate on 'othering' has missed its point. Under the fragmented, globalising conditions of today's world, 'otherness' often rests hidden beneath the surface of the seemingly familiar. Instead of explaining it away, as anthropologists have usually done, they should 'take seriously that which one cannot accept'. Given such a stance, which consists of 'listening to' rather than aiming at an immediate understanding, subduing and taming of the Other, anthropologists possess a kind of

openness that transforms each ethnographic encounter into a personal engagement and enables them to make truly new discoveries that often remain beyond the purview of other disciplines.

The relationship of anthropology to its neighbouring disciplines is a topic that is intensively discussed or at least touched on in almost all the contributions. What sociology, political science and development studies were to anthropology at beginning of the late 1960s, postcolonial studies, cultural studies and literary criticism have become to the discipline since the last decade of the twentieth century. Edward Said sparked the confrontation with his seminal work "Orientalism", which, although it was not directed against anthropology, strongly influenced the discipline and triggered a process of self-reflection that led to the writing culture debate of the 1980s and early 1990s. This was undoubtedly a very important movement that allowed its practitioners to free themselves from the naïve empiricism of their predecessors. When George Marcus, Dick Cushman, James Clifford and Michael Fischer published their attacks on 'ethnographic realism' and demanded new 'experimental forms of representation', anthropology's grand theories found themselves in a state of decline. Yet the hope for new theoretical paradigms that would help the discipline overcome this vacuum ultimately proved to be in vain. In anthropology and in its neighbouring disciplines too, postmodernism and deconstructivism replaced the old master-narratives. Referring to Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Jean-François Lyotard or Edward Said in the introductory chapters of anthropological treatises became as fashionable as a generation earlier it had been to quote Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud. They were the new mandarins to whom anthropology, too, had to kowtow. The 'writing culture movement' lingered on for almost two decades. And it had disastrous side-effects. The discipline's self-criticism, justified though it may have been with regard to its past, paralysed the production of first-hand anthropological knowledge. Ethnographers became so intimidated by their own hidden prejudices that nothing seemed more difficult than writing down a simple ethnographic sentence. The critique from within was complemented by the critique from without, often from self-appointed spokespersons of the 'natives' as well as from representatives of the emerging postcolonial and subaltern studies. One early example is the fervent discussion on the 'invention of tradition' that broke out among Pacific historians and anthropologists in the late 1980s, which culminated in the fierce attack by the Hawaiian political activist Haunani-Kay Trask, who stated that, 'for Hawaii, anthropologists in general [...] are part of a colonising horde because they take away from us the power to define who and what we are, and how we should behave politically and culturally' (1991:162). But this was only a prelude to what was to come. In any event, the legitimacy of outsiders' anthropological investigations was seriously put into question.

Especially in the states that had grown out of former British settler colonies such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States, ethnic groups declared their reservations and territories to be off-limits to those professional anthropologists who were reluctant to share their hosts' views of their own cultural heritage. The native

authorities granted permissions for research only to those ethnographers who committed themselves to handing over the products of their research before publishing their results. Professional associations adopted ethical codes that complied with these and other legitimate demands of the ethnographers' hosts. There is no reason to complain about this development, especially if one takes into account how thoughtlessly, not to say ruthlessly, anthropologists once behaved in respect of the interests of the people from whom they had gained their knowledge. Current research must bear the consequences of past sins. Working among the autochthonous minority populations of the former settler states therefore became complicated, indeed sometimes extremely difficult even for anthropologists who belonged to the majority society. Some of these ethnic groups produced their own well-educated anthropologists, who took on the task of maintaining the cultural legacies of their ancestors. But in the former so-called third-world countries, too, ethnographic research ceased to be a privilege of its 'white' practitioners, who today have to compete with local anthropologists as well trained in the discipline's methods and theories as themselves. But is anthropology 'at home' really the same as classical anthropology? Of course, native anthropologists have the big advantage of their command of the language and of sharing the cultural view of the people they study. On the other hand, they do not look at their own society as the classical ethnographer has always done, that is, as a 'professional stranger'. This means that they have yet to develop that alienating perspective, often connected to the painful effect of self-alienation, to which anthropology owes its most important insights. According to Vincent Crapanzano, it is exactly this 'straddling' position on the edge that risks being lost 'as anthropologists devote more and more attention to their own cultures' (Crapanzano).[1]

The shift to anthropology at home was accompanied by the emergence of new disciplines such as cultural, postcolonial and subaltern studies, to which the discipline had to cede many of its root concepts, fields and topics that had grown out of its own history (John Comaroff). Though strongly contested within the discipline itself because of its essentialising aspects, 'culture' is one of these concepts, perhaps even the most important one. Geertz provided the catchword in his metaphor 'culture as text', which literary critics took literally, thereby following the path he had opened up to them: if the works of anthropologists are nothing but constructions of texts about texts, then it should be the legitimate task of literary scholars to analyse them. They adopted the history of anthropology as their domain, focussing on the textual strategies and ambiguous exoticism hidden in the writings of its classical epoch. A blurring of the boundaries between the disciplines took place. Cultural studies combined anthropological approaches with literary theory, the politics of identity and the cultural critique of the Frankfurt school. Postcolonial and subaltern studies protested against 'hegemonic discourses' and gave

[1] On cultural difference, critique and the 'in-betweenness' of the anthropologist, see also the contributions by Crapanzano, Godelier, and Jebens in the present collection.

their voice to the marginalised – something anthropologists felt they had always done, if, perhaps, usually in a rather paternalistic way. But in fact, as Crapanzano notes, postcolonial intellectuals find themselves in a dilemma very similar to that of anthropologists by virtue of the fact that they speak for the powerless in a language 'that is not even their own but that of the former coloniser – one that is philologically weighted by domination'. Indeed, there seems to be no big difference in the ways in which ethnicity, class, race, gender and all the other fashionable postmodern key concepts are currently being used in the writings of postcolonial writers, whether intellectuals, literary critics or anthropologists.

Bearing the consequences of the loss of their classical object of study, anthropologists began looking for new fields of research, especially within their own societies, which today they must share not only with cultural studies, but also with sociology, economics and religious studies. This has produced a confusing situation. As Comaroff remarks, 'we have no real subject matter of our own any longer'. Anthropology lost its brand because its subject matter 'diffused itself into anything, everything, anywhere and, hence, nobody or nothing or nowhere in particular'. But in Comaroff's view, retreating back into the study of the local, into literarily ambitious descriptions of foreign societies or even into the revitalisation of obsolete key concepts is no alternative. It is small comfort that sociology, too, finds itself in a state of crisis, although the way in which it is proposed to solve this has rather ambiguous effects on anthropology. Suffering from the decline of its classical theoretical and methodological approaches, sociologists have tried to import new ones from other disciplines. One of these newly adopted devices is the method of ethnographic fieldwork, formerly one of the distinguishing features, indeed even the central trademark of our discipline. Obviously, it is ironic that sociologists are adopting this approach at the same time as some anthropologists have come to distance themselves from 'participant observation' as too limited an approach and to replace it with 'multi-sited ethnography', which they assert to be much better suited to examining the impact of the world system, the capitalist market regime, the state and the mass media regarding the interplay between the global and the local.[2] In this case, too, we can observe a blurring of the boundaries between the disciplines. Multi-sited ethnography as advocated by George Marcus (1995) is an explicitly multidisciplinary endeavour, embracing media studies, science and technology studies, and culture, gender and subaltern studies as well.

The shift away from the classical principles of participant observation, however, may have other reasons too. As Signe Howell states, the reluctance to spend a considerable span of time in a faraway place with all the discomfort this entails, to learn a foreign language, to acquire an intimate knowledge of local practices, ideas and values and to

2 On 'multi-sited ethnography', see also the contributions by Crapanzano, Godelier, and Jebens in the present collection.

renounce all the amenities of urban life corresponds to the loss of the 'general desire to explore the unknown' (Howell). Since Malinowski and Lévi-Strauss, we know that it was a critical stance towards the prevailing norms and values of their own society that moved anthropologists to engage in the ethnographic adventure. To endure the hardships of 'primitive life' seemed to be a possible antidote to what Sigmund Freud had referred to as "Civilisation and its discontents". Seen from such a point of view, ethnographic fieldwork as practice represented a kind of cultural critique. Yet this romantic bent, still highly esteemed by the generation that was part of the student and the hippie movement, has faded. Today's younger anthropologists feel better at home, especially since doing fieldwork outside the Western hemisphere has been stigmatised as politically incorrect by some postmodernists: 'the fifth column within our own ranks', as Howell calls them. According to their more pragmatic orientations, students tend to turn to limited research topics in their own country which can be explored in a calculable timeframe. The example Howell gives of the Norwegian PhD students who study the life ways of immigrants without learning a single immigrant language is no exception. Crapanzano points to similar cases of parochialism in the writings of American anthropologists who master no other language but their own, even ignoring the studies of their colleagues in countries in which they themselves have done research.

Howell touches on another point that is rarely mentioned in reflections on the current state of scientific disciplines, which may be, at the same time, an excuse for the pragmatic behaviour she criticises, i.e., the external pressures and constraints that the universities and funding organisations impose on research. What Howell writes in this regard with reference to Norway and the United Kingdom applies to other European countries too. Funding is policy-oriented, research projects have to serve practical goals, multidisciplinary approaches are preferred and scientists should indicate the results of their investigations even before they begin their work. Therefore, it has become almost impossible today to obtain funds for that kind of single-handed, disinterested research in distant, unknown places which has played such an important role in the history of anthropology and has provided new insights into the nature of human society. The omnipresent audit-culture and its constant stream of evaluations shape the contemporary academy: the extended period of time it takes to conduct ethnographic fieldwork, to analyse the data collected and to publish them in the form of a monograph – Edward Evans-Pritchard once talked of an average time span of ten years (1971:76) – would not stand up to the critical examination of bureaucratic steering committees.

André Gingrich also stresses the extent to which the interior structures of the national university and funding organisations determine the production of anthropological knowledge, but he treats these and other questions from a more optimistic point of view. According to Gingrich, it would be better to speak of the end of national anthropologies than to predict the demise of the anthropological project as such. From the early twentieth century, anthropology developed different national traditions and schools, some of which remained strongly connected to colonialism, while others were

put into the service of nationalist ideologies. Today, these particular national traditions are converging on an international level. As Gingrich shows, anthropology is in a state of transition 'into an emerging future of transnational and global research'. What some of its practitioners interpret as symptoms of crisis, causing anxiety and pain, are necessary steps to free anthropology from its colonial legacy and its political abuses by hegemonic powers. Feminist, postmodern and postcolonial critiques have not only created the conditions to overcome national meta-narratives, they have also provided the means to cope with the challenges of global transformations. In this regard, anthropology seems to be better equipped for the future than its neighbouring disciplines in the humanities and the social sciences. But there still exist some obstacles to a truly global and transnational research approach. One of the problems Gingrich mentions is the unequal distribution of research funding between the affluent countries of the Western hemisphere and the postcolonial states. Therefore, he advocates a funding policy that supports transnational partnerships and cooperation. Anything but sceptical of the mutual exchange of theoretical and methodological approaches between the disciplines, Gingrich takes it as a proof of anthropology's importance that not only ethnographic fieldwork but also many of its key concepts are being adopted today by other social sciences.

Can we really talk of a decline of anthropology if we take into consideration the enormous growth of the discipline since the end of the Second World War? Just half a century ago, there were almost no anthropological departments outside Europe, North America and the area of what became the British Commonwealth. Today, however, anthropology is present in almost all countries of the world, and the number of its practitioners and students is steadily increasing. At the same time, a considerable enlargement of its traditional fields of study can be observed. Ulf Hannerz takes the still ongoing success story of anthropology as the starting point of his argumentation. In his view, there is no reason to question the future of the discipline. Only a general change in the production of knowledge by a restructuring of the university system could threaten its existence. But then, all its neighbouring disciplines would be confronted with a similar fate too. If there is a problem, it consists in anthropology's public image. In an age in which neoliberal thinking is also invading the academy, with all its modalities of assessment, evaluations and rankings, anthropology has to compete with other disciplines which often possess better marketing strategies. Therefore, Hannerz argues, anthropology should free itself from its outdated image as an exotic or antiquarian endeavour and create a new, strong brand to show what anthropologists always have done and are continuing to do: study human diversity. This primary concern is connected with the important ethical task of deepening respect for the different ways in which human beings organise their lives and of recognising 'people's rights to be who they are and do as they choose, within some limits of social justice and concern for the corresponding rights for others' (Hannerz). The decline of cultural diversity has often been predicted, but all such prophecies have failed. As long as diversity prevails, the future as well as the legitimacy of the anthropological project cannot be put into question.

Maurice Godelier argues in the same vein by stressing that today anthropology has become more important than ever. For him, the deconstructive movement was only a brief episode in the recent history of the discipline that now lies far behind us. Ultimately, it was a failure because, for Godelier, it rested on false presuppositions. By criticising the discipline's classical monographs as 'narrative fictions', the exponents of the writing culture debate transferred the obscure theoretical positions of Jacques Derrida and Paul de Man onto ethnographic accounts. It may be true for a literary work that there is no 'reality' beyond the text to which it refers, but scientific texts are neither dramas nor novels. The Trobriand Islanders, Nuer and Tikopia really existed at the times that Malinowski, Evans-Pritchard and Raymond Firth visited them, and what these authors wrote about their social and economic practices was anything but pure 'hallucination', as later studies have proved. And these peoples still exist today, although their societies have undergone many changes, just as they had done before their first ethnographers came. It would therefore be a fallacy to assert that the discipline has lost its object merely because indigenous ways of living have changed and because their descendants can be found today, not only in their homelands but also as migrants in large Western metropolises. And it is yet another fallacy to suppose that anthropology has no other object but allegedly 'primitive' or 'pre-industrial' societies, since even in the past the discipline managed to go beyond the narrow scope that was defined initially by the ideology of evolutionism. Like Hannerz, Godelier emphasises that the study of cultural diversity remains anthropology's most important task, and, like Spyer, he also tries to rehabilitate the concept of otherness, the essentialist use of which has been contested with good reason by the exponents of postmodern anthropology, but which seems to be justified if applied in a relative and not an absolute sense. In order to use this concept as a heuristic device, the anthropologist has to acquire a consciousness of his own otherness as a professional researcher, which means acquiring an awareness of his cognitive ego that is different from both his social and his intimate ego. In the present-day world, in which 'a multitude of local societies' are reacting to the pressures of globalisation by trying 'to re-affirm or re-invent their cultural and political identities', no other discipline seems better equipped 'to understand and explain the existence of facts, attitudes and representations that have never been part of our own way of living and thinking' (Godelier).

The last contribution to this collection engages in a general reflection on the talk of the end as a literary device in the history of anthropology. Obviously, it is no accident that it has an especially strong tradition in the German branch of the discipline, in which, still very much in the spirit of its roots in the Romantic Age, the notion of the birth, becoming, growth and decay of cultures played such an important role. Mark Münzel draws parallels with the uses of metaphors such as 'the fiery destruction of traditions', 'the grave', 'the vanishing race' or 'the burning library', once so popular in anthropological discourse, in literary works of the same epoch. Narratives of the end are therefore not to be understood as simple descriptions of reality, but rather as literary

parables that express the views and sentiments of their authors. Since these metaphors occur in both genres of discourse, they seem to refer to a certain pessimistic worldview that 'the anthropologist as an author' shares with the writers of fictitious texts. Ultimately, this means that the fascination which talk of the end evoked and still evokes among anthropologists has its roots in their own society. It is an expression of the discontentedness with civilisation just mentioned that moved many of its most prominent practitioners to embark on it as a career.

Yet the 'the end of anthropology' – the title we have chosen for this collection – refers not only to the demise of the discipline. As Crapanzano points out, the 'end' may also be understood to refer to 'the goal of anthropology'. Ultimately, none of the contributors to this collection would assert that anthropology has come or is coming to an end; there are even some doubts whether it is actually in a state of crisis. They would all, however, agree with Gingrich's analysis that it is currently passing through a 'process of transition' caused by external as well as internal factors. The contributors discuss some of the new directions the discipline will take in the future, but they also ask what will remain or what is worth retaining from the classical epoch of anthropology. As different as these perspectives may be, there seems to be at least one common denominator. Anthropology embodies a unique view of human affairs, a view that grew out of its past, glorious or inglorious as this may have been. Alienation – 'that distressing by-product of intelligence' (Susan Sontag 1970:189) – has always been an important impetus in the history of the discipline. The ethnographic encounter seemed to be a refuge from the pressures and constraints of the anthropologists' own societies. Feeling at home neither in their own societies nor in those studied, they acquired a distance that made the familiar unfamiliar, that allowed them to see things from a new angle, here just like there. This attitude, acquired by crossing the borders between different cultures, is the discipline's most important historical achievement. Kuper and Spyer show that this has not lost its significance, regardless of whether it is applied to one's own or to a foreign culture. Comaroff speaks of the necessity of a 'critical estrangement of the lived world, itself founded on a double gesture – on the deconstruction of its surfaces and the radical relativisation of its horizons'. And Crapanzano states clearly that 'the anthropological stance rests on real or artificial alterity and distance. It gives anthropology its particular angle on both the society under study and the anthropologist's'. As long as the differences, the study of which is anthropology's privileged task and 'brand' (Hannerz), continue to exist, this stance will linger on. Therefore, we can conclude that the 'end of anthropology', in the double sense of the term, lies in its past.

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