Introduction: Toward a Critical Moral Anthropology

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To deal usefully with the relationship between morality and the social sciences one must first realize that modern social science arose to a considerable extent in the process of emancipating itself from the traditional moral teachings.
> Albert Hirschman, "Morality and the Social Sciences: A Durable Tension," 1981

If the moral domain corresponds to what people treat as the ultimate terms of their existence, of their lives together, of their fates, then moral concerns are concerns with the integrity of cultural life, with the nature, significance, potential, and viability of the life that culture makes possible and makes necessary.
> Steven Parish, *Moral Knowing in a Hindu Sacred City*, 1994

The attempt to coin the expression "moral anthropology" seems immediately and irremediably doomed from the start by its Kantian paternity. Indeed, it is often considered that the author of the *Metaphysics of Morals* invented this phrase to define his project of "applied moral philosophy" as an empirical counterpoint to his theoretical *metaphysica pura*: "Moral anthropology, he writes, is morality applied to human beings" (Louden 2003: 7). Although Kant never formulated a comprehensive description of this part of his practical philosophy – "the second part of morals," as he designates it – one can understand, through the lectures he gave, that it is definitely a normative enterprise which aims at contributing to the fulfillment of the moral laws he has characterized. In this sense, anthropology is a tool for the implementation of morals in relation to human beings. But it does not deal with individuals or cultures, as one would expect; rather, it concerns the "human species" as a whole and its accomplishment through moral progress. It is universalistic in essence.

Understood in this way, Kant's anthropology has little to do with Boas's relativist anthropology, and one can assume that very few of those who think of themselves as anthropologists would view their practice in the filiation of the master of Koenisgberg. Yet, dismissing the moral dimension of anthropology in its Kantian sense might be less facile, since from Mead's *Coming of Age* to Lévi-Strauss's *Race et Histoire*, to recent public anthropology, the discipline has constantly been involved in producing assessments and assertions which associate theoretical knowledge and empirical findings with concerns about judging conducts, reforming society, and improving the human condition – even when these normative postures were not explicitly formulated. The Kantian legacy is indeed more deeply enshrined in the discipline than most of its members would probably admit.

However, when proposing the expression "moral anthropology," what I have in mind is a radically different project – if not an anti-Kantian, at least a non-Kantian one. It could rather be regarded as a Durkheimian or Weberian scientific program – despite how different these authors may seem in this respect. In the preface to the first edition of *The Division of Labor in Society*, Émile Durkheim, presenting his general intention to study "moral life according to the methods of the positive sciences," pleads for a descriptive rather than the usual prescriptive approach: "We do not wish to deduce morality from science, but to constitute the science of morality, which is very different. Moral facts are phenomena like any others" (1984 [1893]: xxv). Indeed, the French sociologist, who died before completing his great book on *La Morale*, had a view about the "rules for action" and the "laws that explain them" which we may not share, but we can probably still adhere to his idea that morality is an object that can be regarded as any other. In his essay on *Objectivity in Social Science and Social Policy*, Max Weber (1949 [1904]: 52), describing the intellectual ambition of the new journal he was launching, establishes even more clearly the distinction between the normative approach in the social science, which he rejects, and the analytical approach of values and evaluations, which he claims. "It can never be the task of an empirical science to provide binding norms and ideals from which directives for immediate practical activity can be derived," he affirms, adding a clarification: "What is the implication of this proposition? It is certainly not that value-judgments are to be withdrawn from scientific discussion because in the last analysis they rest on certain ideals and are therefore 'subjective' in origin." For the author of *The Protestant Ethic*, assessing the validity of values is merely "a matter of faith," whereas making sense of judgments is fully an object of science. "Criticism is not to be suspended in the presence of value-judgments, insists Weber. The problem is rather: what is the meaning and purpose of the scientific criticism of ideals and value-judgments?" It is the project of this volume to deploy this distinction by studying morals through issues, themes, regions of the world, and periods of history from a critical perspective.

The Trouble with Morals

A moral anthropology, in this sense, does not support particular values or promote certain judgments more than political anthropology would favor a given partisan position or recommend a specific public policy. It does not defend the rights of peoples to define and implement their particular values or, conversely, the overarching authority

of universal human rights. It neither condemns so-called genital mutilation and forced marriage nor denounces as imperialist the efforts deployed by feminists to combat them. It takes these moral tensions and debates as its objects of study and considers seriously the moral positions of all sides. A moral anthropology has no moralizing project. This preliminary statement may seem perfectly superfluous or, even worse, irremediably naive. After all, is it not the foundational principle of any social science to analyze rather than evaluate, to understand instead of judging? And at the same time, do we not know that perfect objectivity is illusory and that its claim is destined to be immediately refuted by a thorough epistemological analysis? Yet, it is worth reasserting and discussing this apparently obvious position, since the expression "moral anthropology" is problematic in two different ways.

The first problem is semantic. It concerns the meaning and connotation of the adjective "moral," which is ineluctably and inextricably descriptive and prescriptive, in common sense as well as in scholarly use. It is as if the phrase "moral anthropology" implied not only an anthropology of the good but also a do-gooder's anthropology, not only an endeavor to analyze moral issues but also a moral engagement in the world with the ultimate intention to make it better. This is certainly worth noticing: the adjective "moral" is in itself distinctively and overwhelmingly normative, an ambiguity which makes it unique. Medical or linguistic anthropologies do not pose similar difficulties of interpretation and everyone understands that the former deals with bodies, ailments, and medicines, and the latter concerns communication, codes, and languages – although neither of them is completely impervious to normative positions. By contrast, it is much more difficult to comprehend and accept that moral anthropology is simply the study of moral sentiments, judgments, and practices. Probably the legacy of moral philosophy, which is definitely normative in its endeavor to answer questions such as what a virtuous act is, what a good life should be, what one should do under certain circumstances, weighs heavily in this regard. By its genealogical – and indeed moral – proximity with philosophy, anthropology tends to be viewed, even by its members, as a discipline dedicated to ameliorating the human condition.

The second problem is historical. It is not simply that anthropology is regarded as morally committed: it is that anthropologists have often acted as moral agents. They have adopted moral views and defended moral causes. This is true from a theoretical perspective, as well as from a practical outlook. Going back to the origins of the discipline, contradictory as they are, evolutionism and culturalism share the same postulate that anthropology has a moral message to convey, respectively, about the hierarchy or, conversely, the incommensurability of values. Considering the relationships anthropologists had with colonization in the case of Europe or with imperialism in the case of the United States, as well as, symmetrically and more recently, their stance against the oppression of peoples or in favor of human rights, suggests that their axiological neutrality has often been an ideal or even an illusion rather than a faithful representation of their activity. Histories of the discipline often retain the scandals that have marked its development, such as involvement with the military or the intelligence, which is often represented as the "dark side" of anthropology, but they have been less attentive to its "bright side," that of the denunciation of evil in the world and of the defense of the wretched and the dominated, which is no less revealing of their taking sides on moral grounds and no less problematic precisely because they generally remain unquestioned.

For these semantic as well as historical reasons, one would certainly be tempted to renounce the formulation "moral anthropology." After all, would it not be preferable to speak of anthropology of moralities in the same way as one refers to the anthropology of religion or the anthropology of science? This is for that matter a designation proposed by most authors, such as John Barker (2007) or Monica Heinz (2009), echoing previous similar appellations by Signe Howell (1997), these various collections of papers having in common the consideration of moralities as local moral worlds (Zigon 2008) to use the expression coined by Arthur Kleinman (2006) with a somewhat distinct intention. I consider most disputes over appellations to be futile and would not want to involve myself in a quarrel on terminology: in the end, everyone would certainly agree that no formulation is entirely satisfactory and perhaps even that, far from being an obstacle, this dissatisfaction has the merit to leave interrogations and potentialities open. Still, I would like to defend in this introduction and to illustrate in this volume the payoff of speaking of moral anthropology rather than of the anthropology of moralities. The distinction I suggest here is not lexical – labels are not important – but theoretical: meanings are what count. There are two major reasons, in my view, to use the adjective rather than the noun. One has to do with the delimitation of the object, the other one with the reflexivity of the discipline.

First, what the word "morality" designates is too narrow for the object of our inquiry. There is no necessity to confine moral anthropology to local configurations of norms, values, and emotions: the domain under study and the issues that are raised go far beyond local moralities; they include but exceed them. And there is no need to limit its scope to moralities as discrete entities separated from the other spheres of human activities: moral questions are embedded in the substance of the social; it is not sufficient to analyze moral codes or ethical dilemmas as if they could be isolated from political, religious, economic, or social issues. Moral anthropology deals with how moral questions are posed and addressed or, symmetrically, how nonmoral questions are rephrased as moral. It explores the moral categories via which we apprehend the world and identifies the moral communities that we construe, examines the moral signification of action and the moral labor of agents, analyzes moral issues and moral debates at an individual or collective level. It concerns the creation of moral vocabularies, the circulation of moral values, the production of moral subjects and the regulation of society through moral injunctions. The object of a moral anthropology is the moral making of the world. This definition has a practical consequence, to which this book attests. Most authors convened in the present conversation around a moral anthropology would not qualify themselves as anthropologists of moralities or describe their domain of interest as anthropology of moralities. They would rather assert that they work on moral questions, which they might sometimes prefer to characterize as ethical, just as they do on political, religious, medical, scientific issues, and therefore would not restrict themselves to the particular realm of morality. Actually, I must confess this also happens to be my own relationship with moral objects. It is my conviction that this outsiders' perspective, which is often a side view, shifting our usual vision of moral facts and questioning what we take for granted about them, is crucial for the development of a moral anthropology.

Second, considering "morality" as the object of anthropology may lead to the anthropologist as subject being obscured or neglected. Moral anthropology encompasses the delicate topic of the moral implication of the social scientist: it is reflexive as much as descriptive. If the social sciences have an epistemological uniqueness, since the

fact that human beings study other human beings implies that complete detachment is unattainable and that some involvement is necessarily present, it is even more accurate when we tackle moral questions. All human activities are grounded on moral assumptions – often so much taken for granted that they are not perceived as such any more – and research on human activities is no exception. Although they profess cultural relativism, anthropologists have not been exempt from various forms of moral universalism, whether they criticize racial discrimination here or female circumcision there, capitalist exploitation or male domination, inequality or torture. We are not neutral agents when we deal with social problems. Whether we recognize it or not, there is always a moral positioning in the objects we choose, the place we occupy in the field, the way we interpret facts, the form of writing we elaborate. Our investigations of Walmart or Wall Street, our framework of cultural anthropology or evolutionary biology, our choice of addressing academic or public audiences involve moral commitments, which go far beyond their formal presentations as deontological prescriptions verified by institutional review boards. Being aware of it and working on it is therefore an epistemological necessity. Indeed, the reflexive posture I plead for should include a broader questioning of our recent interest in moral issues. Two or three decades ago, anthropologists did not work on violence and suffering, trauma and mourning, prisons and camps, victims of wars and disasters, humanitarianism and human rights. These realities existed but received little attention from the discipline. Other objects, whether kinship or myths, witchcraft or rituals, peasantry or development, were seen as more relevant for the understanding of human societies. This transformation of our gaze and of our lexicon has been accompanied by frequently more engaged positioning. Such a remarkable evolution raises the question of why we were unaware of or indifferent to the tragic of the world before and, symmetrically, why we became so passionately involved in it in recent years. It also elicits an interrogation about what was gained, and what was lost, in this evolution, or, to say it differently, about how our apprehension of the human condition was reconfigured. The moral turn of anthropology is thus an object of reflection per se for a moral anthropology.

Up to this point, I have used the words "moral" and "moralities" as if they could be taken for granted, and I have occasionally referred to "ethical" and "ethics" as if these pairs of terms were interchangeable. Prima facie, affirming the obvious signification of the words "moral" and "moralities" and their equivalence with the terms "ethical" and "ethics" may seem arguable. It is not unfounded, though.

On the one hand, most people immediately understand what morality means and what a moral act is without needing definitions. Adapting ordinary language theory, we could therefore acknowledge that the adjective "moral" designates what is viewed as good, or right, or just, or altruistic, and although the qualifications in this series represent distinct values, they are frequently not distinguished by common sense. Indeed, whereas, during the past 25 centuries, moral philosophers have attempted to circumscribe "morality" in general or, alternatively, in relation to specific contents, to discuss whether the category of "good" should not be replaced by more precise categories such as "generous" or "truthful," and to stress the differences between "norms" viewed as conventions and "values" regarded as principles, social scientists generally avoid starting with these a priori assumptions and explore instead what people do and say in everyday action and ordinary language to make sense of it a posteriori (Das 2010). Rather than defining what is "morality" and verifying whether people's deeds and

judgments correspond to the definition, they tend to apprehend morality in acts and discourses, to understand what men and women do which they consider to be moral or good or right or generous (Lambek 2010). Actually, such a position can be found in certain contemporary philosophies, notably pragmatism. I take this approach to be a common ground for most anthropologists interested in moral questions, including in the present volume. Consequently, I will not provide a definition of what is meant by "morality" and "moral," not just because philosophers are still disputing it, but because for social scientists there is a benefit from proceeding in this inductive way.

On the other hand, the distinction between morality and ethics is far from being universally or univocally accepted. Whereas philosophers traditionally affirm that morality refers to culturally bound values and ethics designates a branch of their discipline, thus implicitly assuming a hierarchy between the two concepts, many recent philosophical works do not establish any difference, using the two words indistinctly. Similarly, social scientists do not share a common language and, for instance, speak of Christian morality as well as of Protestant ethic, without making the difference explicit. Anthropologists themselves diverge on this point, depending on the philosophical tradition in which they are inscribed, some insisting on the distinction between the two concepts, others attaching no importance to it. Rather than choosing between these positions myself, which would ultimately proceed from an arbitrary decision, whatever justification I would supply, it seems more interesting to understand what is at stake in this choice. Morality has increasingly been an object of inquiry for the social sciences during the past quarter of a century, and anthropologists have focused their attention on moral norms and values that govern collective and individual behavior, thus following Abraham Edel's insistent proposition (1962) and D. F. Pocock's reiterated invitation (1986). Authors who have recently called for an anthropology of ethics have distanced themselves from this approach by emphasizing ethical practices resulting from social agency. By doing so, they make two distinct although related claims. The first one concerns the recognition of ethical subjectivities in societies often viewed as traditional precisely on the assumption that they are dominated by moral norms which determine conducts, therefore leaving no initiative to individuals (Laidlaw 2002). The second one deals with the processes of ethical subjectivation engaged by social agents through technologies of the self since classical antiquity (Faubion 2011). In these two claims, postulates are the same, but stakes differ somewhat: the former revalorizes other societies (presenting their members as free ethical agents) while the latter requalifies more familiar horizons (convening a genealogy of ethics). Thus, depending on the intellectual project, morals and ethics, or morality and ethic, are declared commutable or regarded as distinct. Of these divergences, the present volume wittingly keeps the trace. By conjoining these various perspectives, I intend to leave this trace visible as a testimony to the diversity of the domain but also to the strategic uses of these terms.

PHILOSOPHICAL AFFINITIES

Indeed the field of morality and ethics is not a theoretically homogeneous realm. Not surprisingly, it is divided along theoretical lines corresponding to philosophical traditions, which have already begun to become apparent in the previous discussion. At the risk of simplifying a rich literature, two main bodies of research may be identified.

The first approach – chronologically – derives from Durkheim. It is based on the three principles defined in his lecture on "The Determination of Moral Facts": "all morality appears to us as a system of rules of conduct"; "moral rules are invested with a special authority by virtue of which they are obeyed simply because they command"; "to become the agents of an act it must interest our sensibility to a certain extent and appear to us as, in some way, desirable" (1974 [1906]: 35–36). In other words, morality is duty plus desire: we are not only obliged to do the good, we are also inclined to do it. Either explicitly or implicitly, this perspective has long been dominant in most of the studies of morality, especially in so-called traditional societies. In his "essay in comparative ethics," K. E. Read draws a parallel between Christian morality and the morality of the Gahuku-Gama of Papua New Guinea, presented as a "particular ethical pattern amenable to logical and systematic explanation" (1955: 233–234). In his tentative "descriptive ethics," John Ladd proposes a philosophical analysis of the "moral code" of the Navajo Indians, which corresponds to the "collection of moral rules and principles relating to what ought or ought not to be done" (1957: 1, 9). Remarkably, ethics and morality both refer to the system of norms and obligations that underlie judgments and regulate conducts in a given society.

The second approach – more recent – finds its inspiration in Michel Foucault. It is expressed in the profound distinction established between the moral and the ethical, in particular in the introduction of *The Use of Pleasure* where three dimensions of morality are discussed: it is a "set of values and rules of action that are recommended to individuals through the intermediate of prescriptive agencies such as the family, educational institutions, churches"; it is also "the real behaviors of individuals in relation to the rules and values that are recommended to them"; it is finally "the manner in which one ought to form oneself as an ethical subject acting in reference to the prescriptive elements that make up the code" (1990 [1984]: 25–26). What Foucault is interested in is not the first two dimensions, the "moral code" or the "moral behavior," but the last one, the "ethical conduct" and the process he calls, paraphrasing Durkheim, "the determination of the ethical substance." This ethical subjectivation has nourished an important current of research, most notably around Talal Asad's work on the genealogy of religions (1993). Instead of viewing religion as a cultural system somewhat exterior to individuals, these authors explore it through the disciplinary exercises and reflexive practices which produce ethical subjects, as Saba Mahmood (2005) does with Muslim piety movements in Egypt.

The two anthropological paradigms I have briefly characterized can easily be related to two philosophical genealogies: the Durkheimian lineage has a Kantian genealogy, that of the deontological ethics, recently revisited by Thomas Nagel and Thomas Scanlon; the Foucauldian lineage has an Aristotelian genealogy, that of virtue ethics, rediscovered in the past half-century by Elizabeth Anscombe, Bernard Williams, and Alasdair MacIntyre. According to the former, an action is judged in relation to the respect of rules or principles to which the agent can refer. According to the latter, an action is assessed in function of the virtuous disposition that underlies the appropriate psychology of the agent. Anthropologists inscribed in the first paradigm view morality as the set of values and norms that determine what agents are supposed to do and not to do. Ethnographers adopting the second paradigm regard ethics as the subjective work produced by agents to conduct themselves in accordance with their inquiry about what a good life is. The former tend to see morality as exterior to individuals and imposed on them as a social superego: it is a given. The latter are inclined to analyze

ethics as an inner state nourished by virtue and nourishing action: it is a process. Hence the differentiated empirical approaches, in search of moral codes analyzed in general terms, or of ethical debates apprehended through particular situations.

This tension is expressed by Joel Robbins (2007) as the opposition between the reproduction of a moral order and the recognition of an ethical freedom: are human beings doomed to conform themselves to rules or are they able to determine the right action by themselves? During the past decade, a shift in focus has been patent in anthropology, from the previously dominant approach of moral codes toward the analysis of the formation of ethical subjects, sometimes with explicit discussion of "virtues" (Widlok 2004) or, in a different perspective, of "care" (Garcia 2010). Far from being univocal, these works use various concepts, such as the "moral breakdown" of Orthodox Muscovites (Zigon 2007), the "moral selfhood" of Indonesian Muslims (Simon 2009), the "moral reasoning" of the inhabitants of New Ireland (Sykes 2009), or the "moral sentiments" of the Yap of Micronesia (Throop 2010) – a further evidence, in passing, of the lack of empirical significance of the distinction between ethics and morality, for most authors, who use the adjective "moral" even when they tend to adopt the paradigm of the "ethical" subject.

The reference to the philosophical affinities of these anthropological works on morality and ethics should not, however, be misinterpreted or overemphasized. By describing intellectual landscapes and drawing conceptual lines I do not want to give the impression that ethnographers working on morality or ethics pledge allegiance to particular schools of thought. Actually many of these studies do not discuss or even mention Durkheim or Foucault, Kant or Aristotle. This should not be a surprise. After all, it is the strength – and sometimes also the weakness – of the inductive method deployed by anthropologists to be more attentive to the complexity and subtlety of local arrangements of the social than scrupulously faithful to any grand theory that would possibly account for it. The richness of their monographs and the intricacy of the corresponding empirical material generally dismiss or even refute any simple inscription of their theoretical interpretation into a particular philosophy, as if human action and social life resisted being defined by one theory or another. This is certainly a lesson to be remembered.

Moral philosophy is often represented as a trilogy of paradigms. To the deontological ethics and virtue ethics upon which I have already commented, one adds the consequentialist ethics, which assesses conducts according to their consequences rather than their conformity with preexisting rules or their resulting from a specific disposition of the agent. However, in "real world" situations that anthropologists examine, when they attempt to comprehend the moral arguments expressed by individuals to justify their actions or the ethical practices performed by them in the course of their everyday life, it is seldom possible to sort out the deontological, virtuous, and consequentialist threads. For instance, in the case of the disputed and courageous decision made by Doctors Without Borders to remain in Baghdad at the onset of the 2003 war against Iraq (Fassin 2007), the three were intimately entangled, revealing the multiple logics at work among humanitarian workers: they regard themselves as defending superior secularized moral values, such as the sacredness of life and the exaltation of compassion; yet, their activity involves an ethical sense of commitment and solidarity, which leads them to confront their own limits in terms of acceptance of risk as well as of their relations to others; finally, although their decisions seem to be

mainly the result of general principles and personal dispositions, they also appear to be motivated by more or less rigorous assessment of the effects produced by their intervention. The heated tensions during the debates within the organization implicitly referred to the three paradigms even if the position of each member was never entirely stabilized on any of them. Indeed, they were moral as well as political.

To account for these proximities between the moral and the political, one can have recourse to another lexicon, more familiar to social scientists. The confrontation of different positions in a process of decision may be interpreted in Weber's terms as the conflict between an ethics of conviction – exemplified by the attitude of the Christian who "does the right thing and leaves the outcome in the hands of God" – and an ethics of responsibility – corresponding to the affirmation that "one must answer for the foreseeable consequences of one's action" (2008 [1919]: 198). The former, which is grounded on principles or dispositions, is therefore related to deontological or virtue ethics. The latter, which acknowledges the complications necessarily involved in the exercise of power, clearly adopts a consequentialist approach. It is noteworthy, though, that the recent blossoming of anthropological works on morality and ethics has apparently overlooked this third philosophical thread, thus neglecting the articulation of the moral and the political. Yet, the question "Should one do the right thing or act in function of the foreseeable consequences?" is crucial to the practice of politics, whether it concerns remote societies or closer horizons.

In an attempt to constitute their objects, the analyses of local moralities and of ethical subjectivities seem to have specified the moral and the ethical to the point that they often became somewhat separated from the political, as if norms and values could be isolated from power relations, or sensibilities and emotions from collective histories. Recently, this dualism and its consequences – the distinction of morality and ethics, the shift from the former to the latter, and the relative neglect of politics – have been criticized on two convergent grounds. First, as Harri Englund (2008) discusses in the case of poverty alleviation programs in Malawi, the study of global inequalities and international solidarity as well as of local configurations and village expectations shows that morality should not be restricted to a set of rules, and that obligations and dependencies should not be replaced by ethical dilemmas and individual decisions. Second, as Paul Anderson (2011) argues about the piety movement in Egypt, self-formation does not account entirely for the meaning of these practices, which are also oriented toward the achievement of a nonsecular sociality in opposition to the commodity economy. These critiques converge in questioning the contours of morality and ethics and inquiring into their connections with the ideological and the political. In fact, this should not be viewed as a contradiction since, using the terminology of Foucault's last lectures (2010 [2008]), one has to admit that the moral impulse is part of the governing of others, as the ethical formation is crucial to the governing of the self, therefore calling more attention to the political.

The starting point of the reflection in this respect is the remarkable emergence of moral and ethical issues in the public sphere over the past decades: not only humanitarianism, as previously evoked, but also bioethics, business ethics, the moralization of finance, care for the poor, the deployment of transitional justice, the expansion of human rights, the introduction of the responsibility to protect, and, symmetrically, the denunciation of inequality, exclusion, violence, corruption, greed, intolerance, oppression. All these terms and the corresponding realities have become part of our

political language – of our way of interpreting the world and justifying our private or public actions through moral judgments and moral sentiments. The presence of a moral vocabulary in political discourses is definitely not new and one could even argue that politics, especially in democracies, has always included moral arguments about good government and public good, fairness and trust, as well as moral condemnations of all sorts of evils. Yet, the current moralization of politics as a global phenomenon imposing its moral obviousness should be regarded as an object of inquiry in its own right. The study of the production, circulation, and appropriation of norms and values, sensibilities, and emotions in contemporary societies – what one can designate as their moral economies (Fassin 2009) – is all the more important for a moral anthropology since it concerns what we most easily take for granted, sometimes even viewing it in terms of moral progress. These changing moral configurations deserve particular thought, especially when they combine opposite and even contradictory judgments and sentiments: it is thus remarkable that approaches to social problems as diverse as asylum, immigration, poverty, epidemics, addictions, prostitution, and orphanhood associate the moral languages of order and care, of coercion and empathy (Fassin 2011). That this dialectic of repression and compassion lie at the heart of contemporary politics must elicit questioning from a moral anthropological outlook.

OPENING TERRITORIES

Research in the anthropology of moralities and ethics has been outstandingly productive in recent years and this volume should be viewed as a tribute to this dynamism. But it is also conceived as an endeavor to expand the domain beyond its current frontiers by integrating objects and reflections not usually regarded as being part of it. That the contributors may have accepted this intellectual venture is remarkable.

The first part, "Legacies," includes thinkers and topics that have profoundly shaped the anthropological apprehension of moral and ethical issues. It may seem surprising that the four authors presented are two sociologists (Durkheim and Weber), a philosopher (Foucault), and a historian (E. P. Thompson) – with no anthropologist. There is always an element of arbitrariness in the choice of founding fathers and one could have proposed, among others, Westermarck for his monumental *The Origins and Development of the Moral Ideas* (1917), or Malinowski for his short *Crime and Custom in Savage Society* (1926), but in spite of their innovative character, these works have not significantly influenced the way we think about morality and ethics in the social sciences. As previously indicated, Durkheim and Foucault have respectively defined what is viewed as moral facts and ethical subjects, whereas Weber's discussion of values, ethos, and ethics has shaped our understanding of morals. The addition of E. P. Thompson's moral economy may seem more arguable, but it represents an exploration of the borders of morality and its articulation with politics, as it became clear in the way the concept was used by anthropologists working on structural inequalities and social movements. Two points seem crucial to what moral anthropology has inherited. The first one concerns the long-lasting debate between relativism and universalism, which has haunted the discipline and rendered its members suspicious to many critics: to account for

this dispute, one should differentiate not only cultural and moral relativism, but also the contextualization of values and sensibilities observed in other societies and their justification; for lack of these two clarifications, many confusions have been made possible. The second one deals with the history of ethical and moral questions faced by anthropologists in their relations with the authorities as well as with the natives: ignored for decades, these questions have become more prevalent within the discipline, as a result of controversies about activities described as compromising, of criticisms pronounced by the subjects under study, and of the increasing pressure of institutional review boards; a moral anthropology must definitely encompass an ethics of anthropology.

The second part, "Approaches," proposes a series of outlooks on moralities and ethics through various analytical tools. Despite their centrality to any description of morality, values have probably received less attention from anthropologists than from philosophers; yet they pose important theoretical questions, in terms of the interpretation of the role of culture in the shaping of moral values and, reciprocally, the role of morality in the making of cultural values, as well as in terms of conflicts between values inherited from various cultures, and therefore the hierarchies and compromises to which they give rise. In opposition to what has been often regarded as a temptation by most philosophers to prefer simple, abstract, formal, and sometimes highly improbable situations and dilemmas, ordinary ethics has been claimed by some anthropologists as the site of expression of ethical issues in everyday life and through common sense; ethical discourses and ethical practices are constitutive elements of human existence and should therefore be acknowledged as such. A major interrogation for moral philosophers has long concerned the precedence of emotion or reason in the production of moral action: are we moved by pure compassion or do we decide after an internal deliberation? While the theory of moral sentiments provides one answer, highlighting the importance of empathy in the engendering of a moral sense, the concept of moral reasoning suggests an alternative, with the deployment of debates and contradictions. It is noteworthy that anthropologists have shifted this discussion on emotion and reason, which is typical of modern philosophy, to so-called traditional societies. This inquiry into subjectivity and agency has recent developments, both conceptual, with the focus on virtues, and methodological, with the emphasis on narratives, although this distinction should be questioned since the former often emanate from the latter.

The third part, "Localities," comprises studies of various topics that are deeply morally invested and inscribes them in the social context which makes them meaningful. Piety can be viewed as a religious category but it is also a moral one, or rather, if we consider it not from the perspective of religious morality, which would be imposed on individuals, but from the perspective of ethical subjectivation, which agents would deliberately make their own, it can be regarded as a category of practice: certain Egyptian Muslim groups have made it essential to their being in the world; understanding the signification they give it provides a completely different view on Islam. Care has been claimed, initially by feminists, as a concept that could serve as an alternative to that of justice, which they viewed as a dominantly masculine outlook on society; this sort of intimate attention and compassionate dedication to others is gendered, which does not imply of course that it should be seen as a feminine attribute and restricted to women; it can be contrasted with the much less studied disposition

to disregard, which is compellingly illustrated in the case of persons abandoned by their families in Brazil. Mourning corresponds to a psychological state resulting from loss; however, ethnography demonstrates that it is simultaneously social and moral; not only is its bodily or ritualized expression culturally shaped, but also its signification varies according to the context; thus in China, it assumed a definitely political and moral dimension when grieving of certain deaths became repressed by the regime and appeared to be, symmetrically, a form of protest against it. Poverty has long been an object of moral concern, classically translated in the practice of philanthropy; the novelty of the contemporary world is precisely that it is also contemporaneous, in the sense that at a global level there is a coeval presence of the wealthy and the poor, which therefore poses moral questions of obligation of the former toward the latter at the same time as questions of expectations of the second toward the first, as shown in the case of Malawi's programs against poverty. Inequality is obviously a related issue, yet it poses potentially different moral questions, which do not have to do with compassion or even solidarity, but of justice and fairness; its approach raises a theoretical point, however, since inequality supposes an agreement about criteria to recognize and measure it, which does not exist in societies where certain goods or groups are considered incommensurable; in parallel, an empirical problem is difficult to solve when contradictory practices of justice and drives toward inequity coexist; contemporary Russia is exemplary of these theoretical and empirical complications. Sexuality appears to be a distinctive object since it is generally invested both morally and ethically; on the one hand, the moralization of sexuality is an enduring social concern embedded in religious prescriptions; on the other hand, the subjectivation of sexuality has more recently been apprehended as an important element of the ethical formation of the self; the case of Nepal offers an unexpected and sometimes paradoxical illustration of this duality and its consequences.

The fourth part, "Worlds," explores various domains of activity, with relations more or less visible to morality and ethics. Religion is certainly the realm most obviously in the proximity of morality, but the articulation of the two is complex, variable in time and space, claimed and controversial at the same time; depending on the sociological tradition one is inscribed in, one may insist on the role of ritual practices or value formation. Charity also offers an interesting case for cross-cultural comparison of practices of giving, the present participle introducing a substantial difference with the classical anthropological approach of the gift; it is an act of generosity with no counter-gift, except precisely in terms of the moral satisfaction it brings to the donor; this asymmetry has ethical as well as political consequences, especially in international relations. Medicine is not solely a technical activity based on biological and biochemical knowledge; it also implies a moral intervention grounded on values and expressing sensibilities, with claims of altruism by professionals and expectations about the role the sick should play in the management of their illness; and it simultaneously raises ethical issues, as controversies about clinical trials in the developing world or about global organ trafficking have recently shown. Science itself involves values and sensibilities, and even apparently purely cognitive activities carried on in a laboratory such as objectification or quantification are invested with moral intentions historically construed as ways to attain truth; ethical issues definitely become crucial when knowledge leaves the protected space of experimentation to be applied in the real world, whether it is for drugs, weapons, or

industrial innovations. Finance has long been socially invisible, but the multiplication of increasingly serious crises, the tragic human consequences of inconsistent choices, the accusations of greediness against bankers, traders, and company executives and their lack of accountability have generated strong public moral condemnation and repeated demands for ethical rules; however, the financial realm is governed by specific rules, norms, and values which can be analyzed like any moral economy. Law, finally, appears to be so closely related to morality that some have affirmed that it was the formal translation into codes of informal norms and values; actually, the relation between law and morality is more complex; ethnographical accounts reveal in particular how legal texts and procedures may be used as resources for moral claims or, on the contrary, violated when the use of force becomes a way to annihilate moral expectations of rights.

The fifth part, "Politics," explores the interface between morality and politics and, more precisely, the issues raised and problems posed by the growing articulation of the moral and the political. Humanitarianism is the example that comes to mind and rather than considering it as separate from politics, as some argue, it seems more accurate to analyze how politics is reformulated through humanitarianism; the place occupied by humanitarian organizations in the global public sphere and the appropriation of their language by states and even the military to qualify wars as humanitarian attests to the success of the moral enterprise as well as its ambiguity, which often engenders discomfort among concerned agents. Human rights may appear as a parallel path followed by the moral stance in the political domain; although it has a long genealogy, its history as a driving force in politics is more recent; moreover, its contestation as either imperialist or double standard, in other words in excess or by default, has come to be the central scientific and ideological site of the debate between universalism and relativism. Indeed both humanitarianism and human rights are inscribed in a common moral Western tradition, but whereas the former mainly relies on moral sentiments, moral principles primarily underlie the latter. By contrast with these politics of the good, war and violence are often assimilated with the side of evil. Yet, closer analysis demonstrates that such a Manichaean view is difficult to hold. Warfare, long ignored by anthropologists, has received much more attention in the past decades and its moral dimension has been approached through questions of the legitimization of military intervention as just, the disqualification of certain practices, such as the use of child soldiers, the demonization of certain resistance movements, designated as terrorism; in each case, moral arguments were produced; noticeably social scientists themselves have participated in this moral discourse via their critique of war. Violence, in a similar way, has been the object of recent interest of anthropologists, again giving rise to normative stances, more frequently when it is committed by agents easily characterized as dominants than when it occurs among those regarded as the dominated; not only does the qualification of an act as violent always engage a form of moral reprobation, but also the issues of the expansion of the object, such as with the reformulation of poverty and inequality as structural violence, and of the homogeneity of its expression, as implied in the idea of a continuum of violence from sexual abuse to genocide, involve profound moral interrogations. Punishment offers a moral counterpoint, since it is assumed that it represents the justice dispensed for violations of the social norm; however, the limits with vengeance are not clear and the

psychic economy of pulsions associated with chastisement is far from transparent; indeed the civilizing of punishment, with the disappearing of its spectacle, generally associated with modernity, is often contradicted by actual facts in societies that appear to be increasingly intolerant and punitive. Borders are often exclusively thought of as delimitations of territories; yet, with the growing anxieties about immigration and identities, they have become sites of intense moralization, both symbolically in the public sphere and concretely in the work of border officers, awakening the debate between cosmopolitanism and nationalism.

The sixth and final part, "Dialogues," results from an endeavor to arouse interest in and to facilitate conversations with neighboring disciplines. Moral philosophy comes first, of course, since, as has been argued earlier, the moral questioning of anthropologists has been nourished by concepts and theories inherited from moral philosophers. Yet, its current reorientation via the philosophy of language brings new interrogations, in connection with the recent developments of evolutionary biology, cognitive anthropology, moral psychology, neuroethics, and neuroimaging. The two larger fields of the sciences of society and the sciences of the mind have long deployed their paradigms – one mostly grounded in observation, the other principally in experimentation – on parallel paths, largely ignoring and occasionally discrediting each other. Although these paradigms are objectively competing interpretations of what human beings think and do, it seems timely to engage a dialogue based on a better understanding of what is assumed in each field. The recent development of new approaches of morality and ethics in anthropology and sociology, on the one hand, and in cognitive and evolutionary disciplines, on the other hand, invite one to exchanges and debates. A critical discussion of some of the premises of the sciences of the mind, such as the hard-wired structure of morality, the universality of moral grammars, the moral progress of mankind as a result of evolution or the precedence of moral emotions over reasoning – some of them disputed within these disciplines – can be engaged only on the basis of in-depth comprehension and mutual recognition.

CONCLUSION

Moral anthropology does not exist as such. Should it? Inviting this diverse range of authors to assemble their texts in a collective volume is obviously the beginning of an answer. But is it worth it? The only response to this question is that the proof is in the pudding or the evidence in the volume itself. Actually it is not my intention – nor is it that of the authors of the 34 chapters, as far as I know – to claim a new field or subfield in anthropology. It is more modestly to pose new questions on human life and to allow new possibilities of answering them. The success of the enterprise can be assessed only in function of its heuristics. For those who have already been involved in it for some time, as well as for those who temporarily joined it on the occasion of this book, it practically signifies exploring new territories. It is our intuition that questioning moral and ethical issues in contemporary societies and in our own scientific practice may be as significant for our discipline as has been, in recent decades, questioning political, racial, or gender issues, that is, unveiling invisible stakes and seeing the world differently.

But this endeavor implies a critical approach to morality and ethics, as would be the case for any object studied by the social sciences. Critique is not criticism. What it means here is four things, corresponding respectively to theoretical, methodological, epistemological, and political dimensions. First, critique signifies not taking for granted the moral values and ethical principles that constitute our common sense of morality and ethics. Not only do we know they are not always shared across societies or groups, but we also recognize they have not even always been ours. Actually the very idea of morality and ethics is culturally and historically inscribed. The point is not so much the sense of relativity to which this awareness leads as the new interrogations it authorizes. In particular, when we become conscious of the fact that the moral and ethical order we consider obvious, or natural, or simply good, could have been different, then we can start asking ourselves what has been gained and what has been lost in this process of making it what it is. Of course, this game language is a simplification and rather than mere additions and subtractions we generally have more complex reconfigurations, as for example with the major shift that has occurred concerning the value of life, from what can be sacrificed for a cause to what should be protected as sacred. Second, critique implies that in the social world morality and ethics are generally not given a priori but interpreted a posteriori by the agents as well as the anthropologist. Certainly they can be found explicitly and formally in religious doctrines or in the philosophical corpus or even as sets of rules that specific authorities pronounce, and people may even refer to them. Yet, from a pragmatic perspective, the moral and the ethical are revealed in the course of action rather than on the occasion of formal dilemmas. Hence the futility of providing a definition of morality and ethics and of attempting to verify its adequacy with actual discourses and practices. To the question concerning what he or she means by moral and ethical, the ethnographer answers through his or her interpretation of the way in which the agents make sense of their actions. Indeed the very categories of morality and ethics are seldom mobilized by individuals even when their conduct seems governed by what they think of as being good, virtuous, fair, or right in a specific situation and context. A major consequence of this comprehension of morality and ethics is the recognition that they are not pure objects discernible in the social world but are most of the time intricately linked with other domains, in particular the political. Third, critique involves the anthropologist as subject, that is, as an individual actively engaged in moral commitments and ethical positions, which he or she does not necessarily acknowledge. One should not forget that the social sciences were born in an effort to distance the intellectual gaze from normative positioning. Epistemological rigor remains therefore indispensable, especially since moral engagement is sometimes obvious, but at other times not. In both cases, reflexivity is neither an exercise of ego analysis for its own sake nor a dismissal of the possibility of a grounded analysis, but on the contrary the condition of an objective analysis of moral and ethical issues. Fourth, critique supposes an interrogation about the reasons, justifications, and consequences of the deployment of morality and ethics as a language to describe, interpret, and act in the contemporary world. Certainly this language is not entirely new, but its recent deployment questions the signification of this ethical turn. It is necessary to apprehend the economic and social issues it reformulates or eclipses, particularly in terms of inequality and power, and the alternative perspectives it delegitimizes, whether they invoke justice or conflict. There is always, ultimately, a politics of morality.

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