Learning to Write among the Anthropologists; or, A Human Comedy

Though my wandering has only just begun in earnest, it feels to me as if a lifetime. I am just taking those first treacherous steps toward my destination, though I feel as if I have had to claw through a dense tangle just to get here. Not yet midway through the journey of our life, I found myself thrown in that chaparral, the straightforward path thoroughly obscured. I came unto a lion, a leopard, and she-wolf. And thus I began to run forthwith. This then is the story of my coming unto a clearing, guided by my own Swan di Mondova, to whose honor this is my offering. No moment should be taken as an enunciation of a permanent position, nor naïve, if precocious, proclamation; rather, what I put forth here is the account of my fumbling, my falling, my failure, stages on my journey to beginning. This is a meditation on those meanderings, by returning to the moments of their unfolding, ephemeral and fractured as memories in streams of presence. Every assertion is voiced from a fleeting present that evaporates from beneath my feet.

Since my initial foray into scholarly work, I was initiated into a mode of a particular strand of German philosophical thought and its genres of writing. From then onward, nothing in my intellectual life has caused me greater irritation than listening as anthropologists unwittingly and carelessly invoke and distort the queen of the sciences. It offends me thoroughly to sit idly by as the history of philosophy is in large measure ignored or deformed, and the soaring beauty of its masters so entirely mistreated. I discovered the celebrated German tradition early in 2005 as an undergraduate and out of despair at neuroscience’s incapacity—in my inchoate estimation—to address adequately the questions of consciousness and faith. It was Heidegger who at first led me through the quagmire of desperation, followed by Kant, Schelling, and then Novalis. It was with the highest affection that I held my newly discovered procedures, and it was by fluke that I initially added coursework in anthropology to my repertoire. I quickly found a home, however, among my anthropological teachers who fueled my intellectual appetite and allotted me the necessary freedom due a still very much forming curiosity. I encountered, moreover, a new logic of inquiry, which allowed me to take seriously the lived quality of worlds beyond my own, and to think with whatever traditions and texts were of use.

All the while, though, it pained me to read and hear of others so haphazardly undoing the magnificent edifice established in the century-long wake of the Copernican Revolution. I was adamant that if I were to be an anthropologist, it would be of the sort Novalis and my other guides would approve—I wanted nothing more than to somehow both maintain my allegiance to anthropology, welcomed and safe among my new teachers, and develop into an unshakable groundskeeper on the estate of Kant’s philosophical kin.

It would take me a number of years to realize that this was going about things in a misguided fashion, and it would require enormous effort to overcome deeply laid, sentimental, and cultivated attachments. Exposure to the logics of anthropological practice had awakened me to the possibility of a new encounter. Philosophy did not touch lived worlds, it was a solitary business, found in the silence of Heidegger’s Black Forest, the patient olive trees of Plato’s Academy, or blanketed in the warmth of Descartes’ fireplace. It did not spring forth from the soil, from the fact of the ways in which we cannot help but live, with others, in our utterly human condition, nor did it attend to the anxiety of difference, to the cold realities of life. It is against this backdrop that I find myself now, to play with Bernard Cohn’s phrase, a philosopher among anthropologists. I take the quest of my subsequent training as an anthropologist to be oriented toward a reencounter with philosophy, as an ethnographer meets his interlocutors. This essay is a reflection on the voices that ring in my ears as I find myself embarking with trepidation on this perhaps overly presumptuous venture, to remodel habits of thinking and incorporate new ones, so that I might return to old friends on a more solid footing.

Skepticism and the Anthropological Imagination

He is what he has chosen to be: an anthropologist; therefore he must accept the mutilated condition which is the price of his vocation. He has chosen and must accept the consequences of his choice: his place lies with the others, and his role is to understand them. Never can he act in their name, for their very otherness prevents him from thinking or willing in their place: to do so would be tantamount to identifying himself with them. (Lévi-Strauss 1961: 384-85)

Philosophy is actually homesickness,

The drive to be everywhere at home.

[Die Philosophie ist eigentlich Heimweh, Trieb, überall zu Hause zu sein.] (Novalis 1789a, from Das allgemeine Bruillon, Materialien zur Encyclopädie Nr. 857)
To be called to anthropology is to be ripped from the soil. The anthropologist’s home is torn asunder and he toils to find his way with others, his native ground long since faded across the bow. He does so, Lévi-Strauss makes clear, to himself, detaching himself from any prior capacity for political action in his “own” society. He trips and falls, stumbles and climbs back to his feet, only to find himself face down again in the dirt, his eyes locked on the depth of the abyss at the edge of which he has landed. This is his “mutilated condition,” though his doubt and anxiety are not his alone. In fact, he finds it everywhere he goes. If he is to have any “hope to understand the world outside,” he must accept the fate wrought by his own “pure” act. But the threat that his whole project might be detailed is not that different from the skepticism that inheres in everyday life—it is merely that he has chosen to direct himself in his pursuit of knowledge entirely to that end. I remain in awe of this disciplinary chiasmus.

Skepticism has been a favored point of departure throughout the history of philosophy. Likewise it was for me. If Heidegger is correct and understanding concerns a disposition of Being that *Daesin* has, then skepticism ought to be understood as the anxiety that our understanding might, at any time, reveal itself as not just faulty but utterly wrong. It is in this anxiety we live large that the threat of skepticism becomes world-annihilating doubt. I felt at once upon first reading *Treats tropiques* that my concerns mirrored those of Lévi-Strauss, who explored, if contentiously, the “mutilated condition” of our vocation. His text weaves a masterful manifesto into a deeply personal account of his intellectual voyage that continues to inspire my ongoing self-examinations. Faced with pessimism about the epistemic accessibility of ways of Being-in-the-world, we simultaneously abandon the fallacy of complete knowing and strive for it. If Being-with (Eingang) Others is a constituent of the primordial structure of Daesin’s Being (namely, Eingang-in-the-world), and is moreover to be distinguished from Being-alongside (Beieing) things, then anthropology as a discipline dedicated to exploring the nature of the with-World (Mitwelt) populated by others must reflect the very doubts or uncertainties that shape our relations with others in everyday life. There are four horizons of our Being to which I am inclined to attend: between man and the world, between man and animal, between man and other men, and between man and himself. The forms or axes of alienation of my *Fröholmantik* forebears inspire these horizons. It is along these horizons that skepticism appears to us: they represent dispositional attitudes inherent to the Being which I would suggest Dasein has, because of the imposition of limit and the referent to self qua identity and difference. It engenders the onset of skeptical or doubtful anxiety. It is within this boundary of identity and difference that I read in the anxious impetuousness to secure epistemic (in the broad sense) authority manifest in partiality (Strathern 2004b), imparity (Lévi-Strauss 1961), or mere acknowledgement (Evans-Pritchard 1976), as a means of settling our anxieties about limit.

Skepticism was at first translated into the register of anthropological logic for me in the work and mentorship of Veena Das, both in the “intellectual friendships” she maintains and acknowledges with the philosophers Ludwig Wittgenstein and Stanley Cavell, and also through her exegetical reflections on Evans-Pritchard’s foundational ethnographies (Das 1998C, 2007). It is in virtue of calling Das my friend that I stand in relation to Cavell, as the friend of a friend I’ve come only recently to encounter. It was under her tutelage that I encountered skepticism as an anthropologist, and began to consider the possibility of a horizontal encounter between philosophy and anthropology, a conversation among friends.

In his foreword to Das’s *Life and Worlds*, Cavell remarks that his own formative experience with skepticism came in his realization that doubt as to the existence of the other is truly a refusal to accept or acknowledge the other—it does not stem from pure intellectual speculation but from a deep spiritual failure:

> A skeptical process toward other human beings (others like myself, Descartes says) results not in my ignorance of the existence of the other, but in my denial of that existence, my refusal to acknowledge it... that there is a violence that... expresses this wish for the other’s nonexistence, strikes me as a further way to take up Das’s insight of “healing [the consequences of violence] as a kind of relationship with death.” (2007: xiii)

For Das, the experience of the condition of being subject is, following Wittgenstein, the experience of the limit of the world. Asking how one can approach an ethnography of violence, Das reframes the question of anthropological knowing as an attempt to “locate the subject through the experience of such limits” (Das 2007: 4–5). There is a work of limit in social life—a work in this way, of the skeptical moment—which Das finds both in the experience of her “informants”2 and in Evans-Pritchard’s experience thereof during his fieldwork among the Azande. I mean here by limit the sorts of “lived” experience to which Das explicitly attends, distinguishing it from the philosopher’s reflective arrival at the notion of the limit (Das 1988c: 82). As Das describes it, anthropology’s encounter with the skeptical moment moves as follows: “The temptations and threats of skepticism are taken out from the study of the philosopher and reformulated as questions about what it is to live in the face of the unknowability of the world (for my purposes especially the social world)” (1998c: 83–84). The looming “temptation and threat” of skepticism in the face of unknowability is not just a problem for the observer, the ethnographer, or the philosopher. It also conditions our movements in the world (social or otherwise) in virtue of our being the sorts of beings we are. Following the readings offers by Das (1998c) and Chaturvedi (1998) of Evans-Pritchard (1976), we can track the “shadow of skepticism” as a feature of everyday life. The moment of skepticism, when it is generalized as to make life itself suspect, Das contends, begins a “spiritual failure,” the acknowledgment and acceptance of the limits of knowledge—it is in fact a failure in the ethics of acknowledgement (Das 1998c: 192). Evans-Pritchard’s masterly ethnography of witchcraft among the Azande is set up, as Das shows, to mirror the doubts that pervade Azande life regarding even one’s most intimate relations—namely, whether someone is a witch—within the body of anthropological knowledge itself.

Das’s reading of the ruptures or interruptions of the ordinary by accusations of witchcraft is to say that one locates the threat of skepticism itself in ordinary life, that the danger is located in the everyday despite that rupture. She writes that “in these cases we get an intuition of the human as if one of the aspects under which a person could be seen was as a victim of language—as if words could reveal more about us than we are aware of ourselves”
Das 2007: 7; see also Das 1998c). If we understand Evans-Pritchard’s work as a challenge to thinking about causality and the possibility of volitional transference, can it also be read as a response to our anxiety about the limits of our condition and the (un)knowability of others, even those closest to us?

But where does this leave the ethnographic enterprise and the anthropologist, for whom the problem of skepticism also arises and mirrors in practice the sorts of skeptical imputes we find in the movement of our “informants” in the social world? What have we learned from Das in life and in words? is a notion of ethnographic encounter as a moment of waiting—by the author—for a marking of knowledge, by the other. As such our work as anthropologists becomes autobiographical. We might not be aware of our “enacting” of the knowledge of others, and yet it is inscribed upon us. It moves through us, in a sub-conscious (we might even say necessarily unknowable) marking. I want to explore the possibility that such a view opens up for a Romantic understanding of the sort of encounter made possible by the work of art. The understanding I am trying to articulate moves toward the production of knowledge in a way that is not tied to conventional, colloquial, and limiting conceptions of truth and how we access and circulate it. Moreover, how might we cultivate this dispositional ethic?

Life and the Work of Art; or, A Descent into the Ordinary?

It was not until 2010 that I read with equal parts suspicion and curiosity Stanley Cavell’s Tanner Lectures on Human Values at Stanford University, delivered in April 1986 and published two years later in a collection under the subtitle Lines of Skepticism and Romanticism (Cavell 1988). Among the formidable breadth of philosophical engagements that Cavell works through, perhaps the most significant is his contentious and persistent confrontation with the work of Martin Heidegger. By his own account, the lecture is designed as a “topographical” overview of his thinking on the concept of the “ordinary,” its relationship to skepticism, world-making and annihilating, its texture, and the possibility of the feeling of the uncanny (as the title suggests). By world-annihilation, I take Cavell to mean the looming danger that language might fail, that the other might not acknowledge our words. Heidegger, for his part, is a figurehead for what Cavell seems to regard as an alternate perspective to his own understanding of quotidian life. Cavell suggests a “mutua. derivation” of these two positions, insofar as each attends to “the fantastic in what human beings will accustom themselves to . . . as if to be human is forever to be prey to turning your corner of the human race . . . into some new species of the genus of humanity” (Cavell 1988: 154). For the purposes of this essay, I am interested in exploring this “mutual derivation,” and its relevance for thinking about the sort of work in which anthropology as a practice engages.

Cavell’s understanding of the “uncanniness of the ordinary” comes by way of his introduction to skepticism or the “threat of what philosophy has called skepticism, understood . . . as the capacity, even desire, of ordinary language to repudiate itself, specifically to repudiate its power to word the world” (1988: 154). That is, the capacity of language to “word the world” even while it seems to—by its nature—doubt its capacity to do so. Despite their obvious differences, Cavell wants to explore their affinities, reading into them their shared interest in “the surrealism of the habitual.” Heidegger, too, senses a danger: the “shrinking or disintegration of the human in the growing dominion of a particular brand of thinking, a growing violence in our demand to grasp or explain the world” (1988: 159). Despite these affinities, they diverge as Heidegger’s voice speaks in something like an “extraordinary” tone. His interest shows itself to be in the rupture of the habitual, those moments in which we are not living and thinking in an average way, while Cavell himself privileges ordinary language and quotidian life. The imputus, for Cavell, is to rehabit the world in the ordinary. Heidegger and Cavell, the latter tells us, offer “competing response[s] to, or consequence[s] of, skepticism” (1988: 172). The violence of what one might call extraordinary (written in a philosophical idiom of a certain kind) thinking, is its aspiration to “dominance of the earth.” It is a response that one might turn to in the face of anxiety about the foreclosures of other ways of overcoming the threat of skepticism. Cavell talks about mourning or distraction—but this is all to have missed the possibility of returning to the ordinary. The suggestion is that this is to treat commonness, attachment, and at long last, the everyday, as something from which we have to peel away.

What might an anthropologist’s reading bring to bear on this exchange and what use is it to us? I would like to bring Cavell and Heidegger back to the table and to think through a powerful turn of phrase from Veena Das’s Life and Words (2007) as a way of mediating the conversation: the descent into the ordinary. I will treat this more thoroughly in subsequent sections, but for now I will let the phrase stand on its own. Moreover, the relationship between the two philosophers is exceedingly complex and would require a far more sustained examination—my endeavor here is merely to open up this daunting convulsion. Heidegger’s ambition in Being and Time is to return to the question of Being, but to do so means to analyze that being which we are, Dasein, in our attention to the temporality of its Being. Time, we come to find, is the “transcendental horizon” of the ontological question. I say this to make clear Heidegger’s interest in the everyday (Alltags) and everydayness (alltäglich) and to contextualize his claims. Everydayness is, at least for the early Heidegger, a way of understanding “Dasein’s Being as temporality.” It is perhaps self-evidently the way that Dasein is “every day” (“alle Tag”), not as a sum of discrete moments in some imaginary whole, but as a way of being in which Dasein “maintains itself proximally” (Heidegger 1927: 369–71). By proximally, Heidegger means the way we are (Dasein is) when we are determined by the prescriptions of public life. This we attain in our Being-with-one-another, the sorts of becoming average, behaving ordinarily, and giving ourselves over to the “they,” to which Dasein is disposed in Being-with.

The danger then that Cavell reads Heidegger as claiming is the threat of losing the authentic way which Dasein is, without being leveled-down by the shirking of responsibility that happens when Dasein becomes average.

Worlds for Heidegger are those into which Dasein is thrown. They are there already from the start. We can distinguish this from a Husserlian phenomenology, held back, as it were, by the encompassing emphasis on intentionality, inherited in large degree and in turn from the revitalized scholasticism of Brentano. The primordial state of Dasein is already-in-the-world, and it is out of this condition that the experience—we might say,
authentic selfhood—crystalizes. One starts from the relationship to things that are ready-to-hand (Zubehörheit), like the craftsman and his tools. We find ourselves thrown into a world that already is, and we project possibilities.

Dasein acts as One acts. Dasein encounters Others in a way different from his encounter with anything else, though. Others are there with Dasein, there-too. Other, for Heidegger, does not refer to the sort of Others to which the "I" is opposed in our colloquial understanding, but rather as those "among whom one is too" (Heidegger 1927: 118). Average among this (re)public of Dasein(s) gives us the "existential character" of the "they," insofar as the "they" of this public has its own way of Being. Dasein himself "in utilizing public means of transport and in making use of information services such as the newspaper . . . dissolves . . . completely into the kind of Being of 'the Others' . . . they vanish" (1927: 136–27). In this light, Heidegger writes three pages later that "the Self of the everyday Dasein is the they-self [Man-selbst]" sheltered beneath the veil of anonymity. Dasein becomes authentic in its anxiety in the face of this condition, in care. Solicitude, as a species of the genus "care," is Dasein's concern along a horizon of temporality, toward the future, such that Dasein must come to cope with its condition in order to be authentic.

For Heidegger, it is a reaction to the everyday in anxiety that leads to authenticity in our temporal disposition (Being-toward-death). Anticipation, in Heidegger's parlance, "reveals" to Dasein's its having given itself over to the they-self and the possibility of its "being itself" in the free and anxious apprehension of the potential that one day, it will no-longer-be-there (Nicht-nach-Dasein). The everyday is the primordial condition and it is out of it that authenticity springs. Authenticity belongs to those possibilities which are our own-most, hence the inauthenticity of everyday" life. Death, on the other hand, is always one's own, though it can never be experienced, it likewise cannot be taken away from me. There would be no history, Heidegger argues, were Dasein not historical. Dasein has an authentic historicity (Geschichtlichkeit) from which the historian's history (historiography, Historie) tries to loosen us (Heidegger 1927: 374, 396). Our historicity connotes our being historical or unhistorical, and depends on a temporal disposition—the way we are stretched across our own totality despite its unattainability. It reaches from birth (already-always) to death (yet to come but never experienced). We exist in this relation in a state of anxiety. Dasein subsists in an integral coherence of a past and a future. But this past, one's own, is likewise the past of a generation (Heidegger 1927: 385). Dasein takes part in the history of a community—one learns a way of interpreting oneself from our enmeshment in this shared history (Heidegger 1927: 20). Here we find that Dasein has a possible authentic historicity—in the repetition of possibilities that have been handed down, by the Volk among which it finds itself. There is likewise an authentic historicity, in Dasein's temporizing of itself "in the way the future and having been are united in the Present": "historiography becomes a way in which 'today' gets deprived of its character as present; in other words, it becomes a way of hurtfully detaching oneself from the falling publicness of the 'today'" (Heidegger 1927: 397). In this way, authentic historiography and authentic historicity become twisted around each other—as with ontology's relation to the pre-theoretical understanding of Being, historiography presupposes "an existential Interpretation which has as its theme the historicity of Dasein" (Heidegger 1927: 397).

I want to return, then, to Heidegger's everyday, and suggest that it can be recuperated alongside Cavell's inhabitation of the ordinary, through Das's descent. What can anthropology offer the apparent discord at work in the play between extraordinary and ordinary language philosophy? What I take as implied in descent is a movement, a play from one state to another: the anthropologist's curiosity is attuned to lived-worlds, to the way things are, to the ways in which we inhabit, make, and unmake worlds of our own. Heidegger does not hierarchize authenticity and inauthenticity. This is not the philosopher's gesture of exaltation of this way of Being over another, but an attention to and interest in these moves between. Nor does this privilege the rupture over the habitus, anymore than the everyday over the event. Being-with is a kind of Being for Dasein in its fascination with the world around it. This is what drives Heidegger's "question of the 'who'...[such that we are] led to certain structures of Dasein which are equisprimordial with Being-in-the-world" (1927: 113–14). We are in the world, this is to say, in both ways and others, and our sensitivity as anthropologists ought be to this play. What I am advocating is a reading of the exchange between Heidegger and Cavell as suggesting that we attend to the movement of descent. If extraordinary and ordinary language philosophies are two among the possibilities of responses to skepticism, anthropology is sensitive to both for itself, and encounters both as lived experience.

This essay is an attempt to weave together those threads, texts, and voices that have borne fruit for the defining problematique of my anthropological formation. That is, the skeptical stance that inheres in our disposition toward regarding others, the world, and ourselves, and to the ways in which this skepticism is embedded in the way we are in-the-world. I will track the Romantic position as one way of doing anthropology as a response to or consequence of skepticism, as operating in a different register from philosophy, ordinary or extraordinary. Building on the historiographic work of George Stocking and others who have sought to identify the Romantic sensibilities often at play in ethnographic practice, and through an engagement with the early Romanticism's theories of poetry, my ambition is to reconstitute the problem of skepticism. This is above all a tracing of affinities between philosophy and anthropology; between the work of art and the work of the anthropological imagination; between cosmographic attention, truth, and the skeptical tendencies we discover in ourselves in moving through the world as we do, as they have appeared for me along the way.

Transactions between Art and Imagination

What sort of knowing or understanding is it that we enact, then, in the ethnographic encounter and in these practices of thinking and imagining? In the time between my undergraduate training and returning to my alma mater to begin work toward my doctorate, I anxiously confronted a lingering vestige of my former commitments—the burden of which threatened to derail my plans. If anthropology were a science like any other, it seemed to me that it would mean bearing a closed relation to philosophy. Since Greek antiquity, philosophy has usurped monarchical prestige among the collor of sciences, and if anthropology
were just as its peers, then the seriousness with which one could take its products would be judged by the limits imposed on it by its liege. Every achievement, I felt, would have to be evaluated by appeal to original (archai) principles. If it were not, it would mean critically interrogating my conception of the discipline from the ground up, and rethinking what it meant to be an anthropologist (and thereby how an anthropologist might encounter philosophy). The concern ate at me from within and I knew even then that I was not to find suitable redress, it would undermine all the progress I had made. No less than the generative capacity of ethnographic theory (of theory) was at risk.

This painful anxiety remained with me until I began to read with great enthusiasm and affection the remarkable father of American anthropology. My encounter with Franz Boas was serendipitous. Romantic thought (philosophical, anthropological, and otherwise) appeared for me at various stages until this moment, and it was rather late that I realized it as such, let alone as a unifying imperative for which I have such deep sympathy. I had read the German movement's philosophical prince, F. W. J. Schelling, some years before, and by the time I came to graduate school already struggled even longer with Heidegger (whose Peccant thrust I had not considered until far more recently). But it was George Stocking's work in the history of anthropology, and especially my introduction to Boas, that brought together, finally, strands which had until that moment never overlapped in my mind.

In the course of his historiographic accounting of the discipline, Stocking finds two themes as broad "enduring options of intellectual sensibility within the modern anthropological tradition." On the one hand, those associated with the Enlightenment, contaminated as we tend to believe with the sort of history of imperialism's narratives that some have tried to untether (Muth 2003), and on the other, those associated with German Romanticism. Both are among the "small number of frameworks of assumption that have characterized major phases of Western European cultural history" (Stocking 1989: 4-5). The latter are those that Stocking associates with anthropological knowledge centered on the practice of doing ethnography, and in the "interactive and reflexive" mode by which we (anthropologists) work in that vein.

All this is to mirror, without reservation, a dichotomy put forth by Boas in the "Study of Geography" (Boas 1940). My point here is to attend closely to the side of this relationship that has been claimed by Stocking as the Romantic motif or motive in anthropology, by working through precisely what sort of practice (and what sort of encounter) he and Boas intend to evoke and deepen. By Romanticism, we mean here the sort of "loose" amalgamation of sensibilities we find conjoint in the history of ideas, that, despite their contentiousness, seemed to at least maintain some sort of resonance. Perhaps it would be better to pare down the field to which I am attending here—as I have suggested in the heading—by pulling out specifically the sort of "Romantic motif" we find in Boas's cosmographic anthropology. I do this because I hope to make a claim about the sorts of affinities I see between the Romantic qualities of Boas's cosmographical method and the philosophy of art we see in the late Heidegger. What sort of encounter is it that Boas intends to elicit? Are these encounters at all? In what way can they be read against the products of the first section of this chapter on the work of skepticism?

How might we approach the "epistemology of fieldwork" that Boas presents in "The Study of Geography"? (Boas 1904: 437). This paper, given in the course of Boas's turn from geography to ethnology, derives the division of the sciences (Wissenschaften) most completely, and is considered foundational for the development of his ethnographic practice (Stocking 1996). Boas delineates two very different kinds of knowing, one associated with the physicist and the other with the cosmonaut. The first inherits its disciplinary procedures from the law-giving sciences (Geisteswissenschaften), whose aim is principally to determine those natural laws which govern a phenomenon, while the latter, which seeks to understand phenomena, does so on their own terms, and under the auspices of a science of spirit (Geisteswissenschaften). The work of Stocking and Boas has helped to demonstrate that this division is an inheritance of Boas's relation to Humboldt and Herder, among other reformers of the German "academy" (Boas 1904). Boas invokes understanding (Verstehen) and science or the edifice of knowledge (Wissenschaften) in both cases. He goes through pains to maintain the horizontal relationship among the sciences—no one form of knowing is privileged over another. Knowledge, in both forms, stands in relation to "eternal truth," even while one is a "method of thinking" and the other a "way of feeling." It might be worth reminding ourselves here that the skeptical scene entails the failure of acknowledgement as a "spiritual" failure rather than an "intellectual" one, to use Dase's words.

But what is the texture of the "way of feeling," the cosmographic sciences of which ethnology can be one? It is not, we find, the desire to arrange and order phenomena in accordance with the principle of aesthetic impulse. By aesthetic, we take Boas to mean the conditions through which "thinking" works in on the world, those which are given in the logical . . . demands of the human mind. This is in contrast to the "affective impulse," which relates to the world in accordance with interest or attendance, what Boas calls the "personal feeling of man towards the world, towards the phenomena surrounding him" (Boas 1940: 644). This interest, Boas (through Goethe) locates not in the explanation of a phenomenon (a single action or event) but in that it is manifestly true. This theme can be traced in the relationship between Levi-Strauss (through Rimbaud) to another ancestor of contemporary anthropological work, Jean-Jacques Rousseau. As is well-known, Rousseau opposes the taxonomic techniques of botany to something like "attentiveness" or "wondrous beholding" of plants.

Reason permits me, even commands me, to give myself up to every propensity which attracts me . . . My imagination, which rejects sorrowful objects, let my senses give themselves up to the light but delicious impressions of surrounding objects . . . fragrant odors, intense colors, the most elegant shapes seem to vie with each other for the right of capturing our attention . . . yet another thing contributes to turning refined people's attention away from the vegetable realm: the habit of [botany]. (1979: 91-93)

"The cosmographer," the anthropologist perhaps, "holds to the phenomenon which is the object of his study . . . and lovingly tries to penetrate into its secrets" (Boas 1940: 645). The object of inquiry is the object of affection. The cosmographic enterprise does not refute the encompassing singularity of the phenomenon as it "appears to the human mind," as the physicist is inclined to do. It is the natural scientists, the physicist anthropologists,
who divide and arrange particularities in relation to totalities that appear to them. Phenomenal truth, the appearance of the object of our inquiry as singularity in the mind, within the affective field, is what the cosmographic anthropologist holds onto. This, Boas says, is the "subjective" study, because of this named relation to the subject, for whom the phenomenon appears. The cosmographer acknowledges that the phenomenon appears to him in this or that way, and he attends to it in accordance with the affective impulse. There is a spirituality (in the sense of Geist) in the recognition of the fact that the phenomenon in question stands in relation to the scientist (the anthropologist here) and that the scientist claims that relationship, that it is true in appearance in the field of affect, rather than by virtue of its "objective" or "veridical" representation of something outside this singular phenomenal construct. The unity we ascribe to the phenomenon is merely subjective (a unity of transcendental apperception in Kant's language) and thus "approaches the domain of art." But if the study comports itself in the "affect of feeling" it also "must be described in an artistic way in order to satisfy the feeling in which it originated" (Boas 1940: 647).

It is here that we might pause momentarily to consider that there might be two encounters in the ethnographic enterprise which can be called artistic, but which may well properly belong to one gesture: between ethnographer and informant, and ethnographer as author and his audience. We are enthralled by the affective unity of a phenomenon to the subject—we are called to attention by beauty and through beauty in the artistry of encounter, we call attention to a unity in the affective field of the reader. Alfred Gell (2006), it seems to me, has in mind the relationship between thinking and art as well as the artistry of writing ethnography as an encounter for the reader in a way reminiscent of the dichotomy I am trying to parse. I will pay greater attention to this with Heidegger below, but it is worth pointing out here that Boas speaks of two moments, a being drawn into and a work of scientific study which satisfies the original feeling of being drawn in.

I have tried here to follow the "Romantic motif" of the cosmographical sciences in Boas, and have begun to suggest how this might be read against the backdrop of an ethic of acknowledgment and the temptation/threat of skepticism. The more nuanced point I am trying to suggest is that the distinctions we draw in the historiography of anthropology can be mapped onto a set of positions that relate to the problem of skepticism, or more properly, in how we conceive of knowing in each case. For the remainder of this essay I will attempt to treat through a theory of poetry (perhaps criticism) the form of truth that, in Stocking's phrase, "anthropological sensibility" gives to us, and how we might reframe our thinking about the work of ethnographic encounter through the work of art, in an elaboration of the affect of attention we inherit from Boas.

**Romantic Bildung, the Play of Descent, and Imagination in the Ethnographic Encounter**

Perhaps now some sense can be made of my earlier invocation of Dao's descent to resolve a philosophers' dispute, aided by my Romantic resolution. The imperative of the Romantics—the call for the "mixing of all poetries," that "all nature and science should become art, and all art should become science and nature"—has led me back to the beginning. The essential feature of descent is movement, the implication of a persistent fluidity of man and world, not unlike the unending circulmocclusion of the disciplinary chiasmus.

The work of art, at least great works of art, for Heidegger, had a role to play in the making of worlds. It is worth remembering here Veena Dao's question in Life and Words about the condition of the subject as the limit of the world: "The world is not invented by me (as the cliché goes), but then how do I make the world mine?" (2007: 4). Might we extend her question, given her desire to locate the subject vis-à-vis the experience of the limits its conditionality imposes, if we pause to redraw the work of anthropology as the work of art?

Heidegger makes explicit that the truth of art is not in its veridical representation of an object, but rather in that "beings as a whole are brought into unconcealment and held therein" (Heidegger 1935/36). Truth is not just a bringing into unconcealment (aletheia in Greek) of a part of the world, but precisely in the unconcealing of the whole world in its singular appearance. The work of art allows us to encounter the whole world. This is the phenomenological work of showing things as they are, as they appear to us. The work of art is that "beings as a whole, world and earth, in their counterplay attain to unconcealment" (1935/36). Art does not give us truth as a kind of formalized knowing, that is, not in form of "This is the truth of X." Rather, truths inhere in that beauty allows us to attend to and feel the object, thus leading us to uncover the singularity, as a unified whole, present immediately in its appearance (in history). The opposition here between word (Wort) and earth (Erde) for Heidegger is the difference between the "clearing of the paths of the essential guiding directions with which all decision complies" (1935/36), and that which shelters (covers) that work. Earth covers up the world's business of opening possibilities. It is the play of these forces that is initiated by the work of art, and allows for the encounter with the singularity of the world.

The work of art is its presentation, its holding together of these forces so that they conflict, so that they appear to us in conflict. This provocation is to call up the world in its practices and announce the earth in its covering. This bumping against each other of world and earth determines each just enough so that a world is made in that one singular manifestation appears. The beauty of art begs our attention, our attraction, and in so doing, allows us to attend to some being as it appears to us. This is the stake of world-making, in the settling-in-to of world into earth, the happening of the "advent of truth." This occurs in a particular temporality, inasmuch as the work of art is work as inhering in its being composed.

Truth, for Heidegger, it not just in this act of unconcealment (or uncovering, depending on the period) but on any such disclosure. We are led to the formulation relative to the entity encountered, such that "the assertion is true if it uncovers the entity, for, if it is false, it does not uncover the entity at all but 'covers it up' or 'conceals it'" (Tugendhat 1996). The appearance of the world to us, that is insofar as we make a world in our holding it in refrain (that to which we attend in the artistry of encounter, in Boas's parlance), is thereby true by virtue of the work of uncovering. Truth is moreover a happening, the way that the act of understanding (verstehen) is an act out of the Being of Understanding (Verständnis).

This is the affect of the encounter with the limits of the world, given in the experience of the condition of the subject—that is to say, the Romantic encounter as a working of art...
draws out a world and confronts it in its singularity, the cosmographic anthropologist having been drawn to it out of interest. We locate Dase’s subject in this procedure, in attending to this presentation in its singularity. In making a world, in the very limited sense of the anthropological project as a working of art, we attend essentially to a world delineated, thus in its limits. It is in this world, and so constituted, that we locate the subject who appears as that condition of limit. Cashed in Heideggerian terminology, we attempt to uncover the worlds into which Daseins we encounter have been thrown, and attend to their anxiety.

How might we think of the work of anthropology then as a holding in refrain this or that world? I mentioned earlier that there seemed to be two artistic encounters for the ethnographer at work in anthropological discourse. We (the cosmographers) are affected by something and attend to it in our interest. But we also produce something, an encounter for the reader, which as a work of art calls attention to a making of the world; it allows the world, in its unconcealedness, to settle over the earth. Ethnographic writing, I am suggesting, evokes the encounter by artistically composing or settling a world, such that it calls to the reader in beauty, in the field of affect. A world was settled for us in our affective encounter, and now we enable an encounter for another. Heidegger tells us that the “thinker’s questioning” (among other things) functions in this way (Heidegger 1955/56). But this is not the sort of “thinking” that Boas distinguishes from the practice of cosmography in favor of a “way of feeling.” We have arrived, then, again full circle, at the question of what sort of knowing is anthropological knowing, if it can be rightfully called a knowing at all.

In this chapter, understanding, feeling, thinking, and knowing have been invoked to address the ways in which we can conceive of the work of anthropology as a part of what I called the edifice of knowledge (borrowing from the broader sense of Wissenschaft). I have likewise made a claim to the sort of knowledge this is, through divisions that inherited and appropriated, which oppose this sort of knowing to knowledge qua the verification of representation. The last suggestion that I would like to make is that what has also run through my account, perhaps imperceptibly, has been the recurrent sense that something we encounter in our work turns toward the ethnographer. This is to distinguish from interest for interest’s sake—it is not merely attention to phenomena, but that something compacts itself to us, begs our attention. The world turns toward us. “Thinking is thinking when it answers to what is most thought-provoking” (Heidegger 1954). Moreover, thinking concerns itself properly with the “essence” of a sphere—history, art, poetry, language, nature, man, and God—but the entailments of certain kinds of inquiry determine which have access to “essence.” The “sciences qua sciences have no access to this concern, it must be said that they are not thinking” (Heidegger 1954). Here we find a distinction between the production of knowledge per se as the business of the “sciences” and the product of thinking as the essence of a sphere of knowledge. We cannot fundamentally ascertain the essence of a sphere qua that sphere, thus the parsing out of knowledge from the products of thinking.

I offer this in hopes of provoking anthropology’s consideration of what sort of work it is we do. To think of anthropology as a cosmographic enterprise (to return to Boas’s dichotomy) and distinguish it from the sort of sciences of “physics,” in light of Heidegger’s distinction between scientific knowledge and thinking, forces us to reconsider the object of anthropological inquiry and our access. What would it mean for the understanding of anthropology to map Heidegger’s scientific knowledge (of man qua man) onto Boas’s physics, and thinking (of the essence of man) onto cosmography? Earlier I alluded to anthropology’s need to consider how it cultivates such a dispositional ethic. I employ this term quite purposefully to invoke, with some important qualifications, the relationship between science, art, and truth with the German concept of Bildung (loosely education, formation, or cultivation) and Kant’s pragmatic anthropology. As David Cooper (2002: 49, 50–51) rightly points out, Wissenschaft refers to the “disciplined search for knowledge—to history, say, as much as to physics,” even while Heidegger at times applies the term “science” alongside “modern” or “new” in opposition to philosophy and thinking. In his essay on Heidegger’s “The Origin of the Work of Art” and education, Paul Smeyers (2002: 81) articulates a strikingly lucid understanding of the work of art:

Art is a way in which truth comes to “happen” and “be” in the “real” world, a way in which “what is” is, revealed and clearly preserved. The creator discloses the truth-of-all-being within a design and illuminates a new, unfamiliar world beyond the existing realm. . . . Though the human being, more precisely in what humans do and say, remains the place where Being reveals itself, a dimension of passivity is introduced in order to overcome the anthropocentrism of traditional philosophy but still be able to account for authentic existence. The technical term Sinngewoben expresses that the human being is at the mercy of the manner in which Being reveals itself in an epoch in a particular mode.

Smeyers’s argument draws a parallel between the work of education and the work of art, through the “opening up (Aufstellen)” of worlds. Anthropology’s task, it seems to me, runs in much the same order. I have already commented on the place of world-making and the evocation of worlds in anthropological practice, but here my aim is to provide for the possibility that we might recuperate the pragmatic sense of anthropology as the cultivation of an ethic, as Bildung, or the training of ourselves to be open, in the sense of an encounter in which worlds are disclosed, and through which we also learn the work of evocation in our practice of writing. For Kant, pragmatic anthropology was both “a doctrine of knowledge of the human being, systematically formulated,” and more specifically is “considered as a knowledge of the world, which must come after our schooling . . . but only when it contains knowledge of the human being as a citizen of the world” (Kant 1838: 3–4).

But if such a program of anthropology is to be convalesced, it ought to be done—at least for those of us who strive to work in accordance with the Romantic imperative—by substituting a dispositional ethic of openness (what I have called here an artistic encounter), a striving for the Romantic, chaotic holism, for the poorly disguised imperialism of Enlightenment cosmopolitanism. As the early German Romantics instructed, the highest good, the ethics of a Romantic cosmopolitanism, is Bildung itself. Paul Rabinow (2008: 55), following Reinhard Koselleck’s excavation of Bildung from layers deemed inessential to its meaning, points to the definitional “malleability” of the term and asks whether (paralleling Foucault’s work
on “Enlightenment”) its “referred and concept turn on a form of ethos rather than on an epochal designation?” Rabinow is pursuing “a form of Bildung . . . appropriate to a contemporary conduct of life (Weber’s Lebensführung) . . . [and] to the anthropology of the contemporary” (2008: 66). Though Bildung indeed “challenged a large multitude of human possibilities” against the Enlightenment’s appeal to reason, as Rabinow quotes from Koselleck, it was after all in the name of reason, at least in the rhetoric of philosophical discourse, in its cultivation in Bildung that Enlightenment imperialism was propagated. If Bildung can be unrelated from this archaeology, the privileges afforded to reason (Vernunft) in its application, at least within a contemporary Romantic anthropology, must be pared back, lest we fall into the trap of an outnumbered ethic.

But to distinguish this Bildung from the Enlightenment ethics of Kant and Fichte is not to wash away all that had been done in the name of reason, nor to abandon affect in its favor. The aim of Romantic Bildung is the attainment of the whole in beauty, the overcoming of alienation, its return to harmony. Lives and works become in this way works of art. It is merely to choose to reify the status of both sensibility (as with Sturm und Drang) and reason, what Frederick Beiser (2003) has named Früromantik holism, at the same time a “divine egoism” and a defense of universality in the human condition of a form of the two faculties, that of reason and that which allows us to “sense, feel, and desire.” Two further features stand out in Romantic ethics: the centrality of freedom and love/care.

Bildung was of course not unique to its Romantic formulation. Neither was the construction of a defense against the threat of the Enlightenment to the importance of sensibility. In a break from a tradition that reaches back to Greek antiquity, the early Romantics saw Bildung as an essential exercise of individual freedom, rather than an external process tethered to a state or a given ideological position. The Romantics radicalized the Kantian and post-Kantian position, shifting the emphasis to the personal, rather than the moral, register. This was to be the ultimate individualist ethics—tied as much to choice as personal experience. What then of love? Beiser (2003: 30) articulates this far more succinctly than I could: “We realize our common humanity, and we develop our unique individuality, the Romantics often insisted, only through love. It is through love that we unify our opposing powers—that we reconcile our reason and sensibility—because in loving someone I act on the rational principles of duty from, rather than contrary to, inclination.” I would add a small qualifier in light of the task of anthropology. This cultivation, or Bildung, which the ethnographer undergoes, is both fundamentally individual and at the same time contingent on the other. To love here is always to love someone. Self-realization is a process one undergoes in the company of others; it is propagated in the name of the self, through its powers, but a self that, we see in love, is always with others, and which could never be otherwise. Anthropology, for me, then is an act of love, the recognition of a process of formation that notices the marks of the other on one’s self but makes no demands to the world that it ought to abide by the singularity of its manifestation in this self.

What remains in practice for a pragmatic anthropology in light of a Romantic ethics? I do not want to be misunderstood about the cultivation of openness to the lived worlds of the other. It is not only that unconcealment strikes at the heart of truth as the opening of the world, the worlding of the world, but that the context of this opening is made available in a fundamental disposition of openness toward the world. Mark Wrathall has called this the “predicative openness of the world” such that Dasein unconceals the things it encounters in the world, insofar as those things comport themselves to thought, but also that thought is open and responsible to those things (2006: 242, 251–52). The world has already been disclosed, that is to say, in Dasein’s being thrown into it, and thus our project follows through on those disclosures.

This leads me to a final ethnographic vignette. Something has dragged me along, from idealism, to phenomenology, to Romanticism, and from philosophy to anthropology and back, but I had only ever noticed it in the corner of my eye, a fleeting shadow that escaped my straight-on gaze. It is only in writing this essay now that my attention has finally come to rest on the imagination, productive, reproductive, and anthropological. I regret the injustice I will do my companions here, but in the context of the larger scope of this chapter it cannot, I’m afraid, be avoided. It is too essential to exclude and yet too chaotic and immediate to take sufficient distance.

For Kant, the (be)holder of an object requires the united operation of two faculties—the understanding and the imagination—bound by the work of a judgment. Beauty ignites the recognition in the aesthetic judgment that the concept (supplied by the understanding) that has subsumed the manifold of the object (beholden) does not exhaust the object. Rather, beauty is reflected in the “free play” of the faculties such that they come into harmony. This play inspired by the work of beautiful art (the work of genius) is a radical and radically free torrent of thought that erupts alongside the activity of the moral will. Each power inspires the other, each illuminable in its expression, incapable of burning out. Fichte adjusts this position. The primary contention is that the productive imagination is the pure activity of the “I,” prior to any proper conscious or unconscious activity between the “I” and the world, or the “not-I.” We only think we have discovered the world when we encounter it. Fichte overturns Kant’s view that the conditions of the possibility of thought (the categories, the transcendental aesthetic, synthetic a priori judgments more generally) arise from the faculty of the Understanding, though he does not deny their lawfulness. Rather, they arise with the world, with objective reality that is, through the power of the imagination.

Nowals and Schelling, among the most philosophically inclined of the early Romantics, inherit the burden of this discord, and do much in the way of forming a poetic rejoinder to their predecessor tradition. For the early Schelling, in particular the System des Transcendentalen Idealismus, the inherent and infinite dichotomy of “opposed activities”—that is, of self and other—is simultaneously the starting point of transcendental philosophy and the basis of every aesthetic production, and by each individual manifestation of art it is wholly resolved (Schelling 1978: 230). The power of both the self and the not-self that makes possible this resolution, the “poetic gift” which is evident not only in the “primordial intuition,” the absolute beginning of the unfolding of the history of self-consciousness, but also is reiterated in its highest culmination in art as the organon of philosophy, Schelling names the imagination. Nowals ultimately pushes this assessment, asserting in the “Fragmente” that the understanding and the imagination, in their relation and their difference, refer inherently to philosophy and to poetry—that the character of man as homo duplex is his dual vocation as poet and philosopher, each without the
other laying wholly incomplete. They are enacted in their necessary partnership in every instance of “peculiar” holism, of thought (Novalis 1978b).

Fichte’s solution to the problems wrought by Kantian metaphysics was revelatory to Novalis, who dedicated extensive meditative energy on the Wissenschaftslehre after meeting the teacher in Jena. Though Fichte asserted considerable influence on the development of Friedrich Schlegel’s thought (and especially to Iran), Novalis carves out a far more critical position. The principle contention of his Fichte Studien turns Fichte’s notion of a position of the Absolute-Ich outside of reflection (representation). Self-consciousness, for Fichte, is immediate, in the sense of the self presented to itself unmediated (unrepresented), thus as intellectual intuition.14 But Novalis will reassert the mediate quality of intellectual intuition, asserting that one is only ever encountering him-or herself in the mirror, thereby reaffirming the Kantian divide with the supersedible substratum (the realm of the thing in itself). The Absolute-Ich is in the end nothing more than a regulative idea.

I want to dwell on play and descent, pausing here if I may to read some of Novalis’s “Heinrich von Ofterdingen” meditations on the poet through a sensibility I take to originate for myself in Life and Words. I am gripped by the dynamism of descent, the vocabulary afforded to the movement of life as it is lived, as chiasmatic structures in free play: thought and imagination, deduction and induction, event and everyday, poetry and philosophy. Das’s descent implies these turnings, yearnings, longings, foldings, returns, like the endless dance of Day and Night in Novalis’s famous hymns. Poets are those who inspire our dwellings and endeavor to fulfill our heart’s longing for the primal and irretrievable “stars, the springtime, love, fortune, fruitfulness, health, and cheerfulness.” Though they wander, they hold onto tranquil waiting, resting, breathing in the “fragrance of earthly fruits without consuming them” (Novalis 1978b: 314–15). They are visitors, in whom every encounter awakens the possibility of the next, though they must cultivate their talent, the “voice of speech” to birth into the world the courageous depths of others, unlocking and enriching a “simple harmony into endless melodies.” The imagination always seeks out its limit, the edges of the world, the face behind the maiden’s veil. Likewise these boundaries of language thought. It is folly to try to tear them down, to pursue the imagination beyond the horizon and utter what cannot be spoken. Poetry is nothing but the ordinary and peculiar way in which life is, as a matter of fact, lived. Does not everyone, Klingsor asks Henry, employ their mind and their imagination everywhere and always? The world that poetry reveals is the same that was always manifestly there, before our eyes:

Only the universe as person can understand the relation of our world. It is hard to tell whether within the sensory limitations of our bodies we can really augment our world with new worlds, our sense with new senses, or whether every growth of knowledge, every addition to our capacities, only serves for the development of our present world-mind.13 (Novalis 1978b: 379)

What if anthropology is at end a poetry of lived encounter, the cultivation of the free self that thinks with others and attends to that thinking? Perhaps it is the counterpart to philosophy, its companion, in this way equal partners in a friendship of thought. A final word on this from two great contributors to contemporary work on the anthropological imagination. Vincent Crapanzano’s (2004) stunning account of imagination and the hinterland, though resistant to static theory of the work of imagination per se, nonetheless challenges us to engage with horizons that tempt us from beyond, across an ontological divide. To extend my earlier reflections on horizons, as axes of alienation in which the threat of repudiation inheres, I want to suggest that poetry is propagated in accordance with the call of the imagination to overcome, while (negative) philosophy demands we remain with this anxiety on our side of the ontological rift. The ethnographer’s task attends to the encounter of one’s own thoughts and those from others that float across the horizon. Ethnographic judgment—in Michael Jackson’s (2009) words—set off from the ambiguous in-between of self and other, implies “visiting imaginations.” This traveler’s imagination is the poet’s discipline, between stillness and wandering, unalterably thrown and yet earnestly escaped.

Philosophers, too, are there too. They are Dasein, in-the-world, and we encounter them as we encounter Others. We can encounter them, for our purposes, ethnographically. I take seriously, then, the idea that the work of this chapter has been ethnographic, that what I have tried to lay bare are some conversations that help me to think.19 Some of the participants, moreover, in this dialogue have spoken in hushed tones, from unannounced voices, but they too are there, as I found them. What I have presented here I take to be some of my notes from the field in this sense. The Bildung in the title of this section is not merely an epistemic prescription or commitment, but a reflection on my own cultivation thus far. As I set off, now finally prepared to begin my work of cultivation in earnest, along dusty and winding roads yet unknown, I am convinced that space ought be opened up for thinking about encounter as including texts and teachers. I have tried to resist the temptation to think of encounter in a bounded temporality—rather, I think we carry them with us ever forward, even if they ebb and flow in intensity like the coming and going of the tide along the shore.

There is a particular moment in Cavell’s preface to Life and Words that has stayed with me throughout my subsequent education in anthropology: the notion that what Das had achieved was something of a companion to Wittgenstein’s Philosophical Investigations. What does it mean for an ethnographic text to be a companion to a philosophical treatise? There are two temptations I have tried to avoid in this essay: (1) to think of anthropology as the sort of science that would take its direction and essence from philosophy, and (2) to take ethnography to be a sort of philosophical fieldwork. Can we speak not of claims on behalf of disciplines, but instead of constellations that grow out of congeniality, and open up new horizons for each participant? Anthropologists going about their work and training are bound to cultivate a plurality of companionships—every act of scholarship roots its agency in a manifold constellation of actors. I am committed to the egalitarianism of companionship, that thinking from solitude or from within lived worlds populated by others which we take seriously can each contribute with similar authority to a broader and often shared project.
the second sentence is used by members of the All India Bahri Masjid Action Committee to argue for the status quo as it existed before the demolition. The third sentence is the argument of the courts and the administration.

24. I find this metaphor useful since it directs our attention to the problem of evaluation.


27. As is evident, my argument is derived from Foucault's views of governmental power, especially in Security, Territory, Population (2007).

28. The phrase "a rule of law as a law of rules" is from Hassen (2003: 46), quoting Antonin Scalia. Overshadowing agents and action, the rule of law imagines a spectral landscape, characterized by its imitable insularity. This reason for the inversion also generates meaning. In their edited volume, Corbridge and colleagues (2005) consider how people, located in a variety of institutions and networks in rural India, see the State. In the process, they aim to provide a corrective to the technologies of visualization deployed by the State to surveil its populations. The absence of a discussion of the State in relation to legal institutions is telling. Any consideration of this view must take into account how the State both sees and writes itself. In large part, this visualization and writing are linked to the assumed insularity of government and the recursive features of governmental procedure.

29. Beginning from 1990 until the demolition, Ayodhya had turned into a military fortress, and defenses of barbed wire were laced around the fenced spot of the mosque. In 1995, twenty-eight thousand personnel of the Police Arm Constabulary had been stationed in Ayodhya alone (Liberhan Ayodhya Commission 2009: 140).


31. In its order, the Supreme Court quoted the promises the chief minister of UP, Kalyan Singh, made before the national integration council in November 1991. The chief minister had said that until an amicable resolution to the dispute was found, the State government would be responsible for protecting the disputed sites and fully implementing the orders of the court concerning the land acquisition proceedings. The Supreme Court refused to intervene further. Instead, the writ petitions were transferred to the Lucknow bench of the Allahabad High Court (see Mohd. Aslam alias Bhure v. Union of India).


33. The committee was made up of the registrar of the Supreme Court and two professors, one from the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi, and the other from the School of Planning and Architecture, Delhi.

34. The case from England was M. v. Home Office, 1994 (1) AC 177; and the one from Bihar was State of Bihar v. Rani Sanabati Kumari, MANU/SC/5021/1990. In the first case, the term "Crown" was divided into the monarch and the executive, with the latter indicating the supremacy of the Parliament over the monarch as well as the judiciary. The monarch bowed to the executive, while the power of the executive over the judiciary could only be exercised through statute. While judges could not enforce the law against the Crown as monarch (since the monarch can do no wrong), they could enforce the law against the Crown as executive against individuals who represent the Crown. As far as the personal element was concerned, the judgment held that the minister may or may not have been personally guilty of contempt. But this position would be the equivalent of which needed to exist for the court to give relief against the minister in proceedings for judicial review. The Bihar case was evoked to impose a fine on the chief minister, the fine being analogous to sequestering the corporate property of the person in contempt. Accordingly, the chief minister was sentenced to pay a fine of Rs. 1,000.

17. TRISTE ROMANTIK: RUMINATIONS ON AN ETHNOGRAPHIC ENCOUNTER WITH PHILOSOPHY

Andres Brandel

1. The two are, nevertheless, equiprimordial—it is here that Heidegger says Descartes and Hume both go astray.

2. Dase's sense of an "informant" is specific and explicit. For her, the relation to "informants" is dialogical, productive, and dynamic, and in contrast to the sorts of performed questions to which someone provides an answer in the colloquial sense. They are, one might say, the source of questions and answers.

3. The distinction Das draws between "social world" and "world," and whatever relation in which they stand, written as it is, is precisely to what I was alluding earlier as the various horizons of Being for the anthropologist.

4. While we might think of the ordinary in the sense of "everyday life" as deeply relevant to the project of anthropology, I would like to suggest that this relationship ought to be interrogated and perhaps deepened.

5. It is worthwhile here at least to mention the breadth of approaches to reading the trajectory of Heidegger's career. See, for example, the preface to the translation of Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought (2003).


7. We might think of this with German idealist language of a preestablished harmony in the Absolute (I, Spirit, or Being for Schelling, Hegel, and Hölderlin).

8. The German word Man is somewhat ambiguous in translation—it can be rendered "you," "they," or the generalized "One," that is, "someone."

9. Sticking here references Geertz, Clifford and Marcus, and Ruby as exemplars.

10. This quotation appears as Beiser's (2003) epigraph, quoting from Schlegel's notebooks, 1797-1798.

11. Though Heidegger's account of Truth does have some shortcomings (e.g., the lack of a space for critical activity), subsequent faithful correctives have often fallen into similar trouble. Habermas and Gadamer's debate will take up this issue. Nevertheless, I think it offers something worthwhile here, even though it remains to be seen what will become of it in future philosophical discourse.

12. See pp. 186-87 in the English edition of the "Origin of the Work of Art" (Heidegger 1993). References here and throughout are to the German edition, but have been translated in consultation with this English version.

13. Frederick Beiser (2003: 44) has, on behalf of the young Romantics, distinguished between the spirit systématique and the esprit de systèmes. This defense is quite right in my estimation: while systems close off freedom, systematic rigor is not to be avoided.

14. Here I have consulted Robert Lowdon's translation (Kant 2006).

15. Fischer's Anthropological Futures (2009) also attempts to return to this notion of anthropology as cultivation, as pragmatic, though his project and his commitments are substantially different from my own.

16. This emphasis on freedom is found perhaps most properly articulated philosophically in the period of Schelling's Freiheitsbegriff, or writings on Freedom, and especially the Philosophische Untersuchungen über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit and die damit zusammenhängenden Gegenstände (translated as Philosophical Inquiries into the Essence of Human Freedom), which Heidegger famously takes up in his 1916 lecture course.
For Kant, intellectual intuition was reserved for God.

19. "Nur die Person des Weltsals vermag das Verhältnis unserer Welt einzusehen. Es ist schwer zu sagen, ob wir innerhalb der sinnlichen Schranken unseres Körpers wirken unsere Welt mit neuen Welten, unsere Sinn emitt neuen Sinnern vermehren können, oder ob jede Zuwachs unserer Erkenntnisse jede neu erworbene Fähigkeit nur zur Ausbildung unseres gegenwärtigen Weltsinns zu rechnen ist."

19. Todd Oehls’ (2018) subtle articulation of Deleuze and several others as his "dead"—in the sense made available in Palo grammar—I find very much akin to my own thinking in this regard, with respect to the ways in which we carry others with us.

18. MAKING CLAIMS TO TRADITION: POETIC AND POLITICS IN THE WORKS OF YOUNG MAITHIL PAINTERS

Mansi Shekhar Singh

I am deeply indebted to the Ethnic Arts Foundation for providing me access to their collection of paintings as well as letting me reproduce some of them in this essay. I am also grateful to Santosh Kumar Das for generously sharing his stories and experiences as a practicing artist and a teacher at the Mithila Art Institute in Madhubani, India. In writing this essay I recognize just how much I have depended on the artwork of a whole generation of young Maithil artists, some of whom are named herein. Without their dreams, aspirations, and obstacles there would have been nothing much to write about. And lastly, to my friends and colleagues, in particular David Szanton, Deepak Mehta, Pratiksha Baxi, Roma Chatterji, and Veena Das, my heartfelt gratitude for their intellectual and emotional sustenance at every step of the way.

1. The “line infill” technique of the Kayasthas is viewed as the two dominant caste styles in Maithil art. All the other caste groups and communities in the region are said to follow these two techniques of image-making. The Kayastha artists utilize the potentiality of line as a pictorial element for shading the required areas of the image-sign and in the process convey some sense of volume. The term used to refer to the process of shading done with the help of firm but fine lines is kachhri. This term, which comes close to “insealing,” says a lot about the nature of the line utilized is shading as well as the pictorial tool or implement. In contrast to the line infill technique of the Kayastha caste group, the Brahman artists use color as the pictorial means to rescue the figure from the flatness of the image-field. The term khangra, connotes the process of filling in color within the limits defined by the outlines of the image. With the commodification of Maithil art, these distinct traditions of image-making practice have begun to overlap, thereby resulting in what one might call “cross-over” styles.

2. The All India Handicrafts Board was set up in 1952 to advice the central government on the problems confronting the development and progress of handicrafts, including issues of skill formation, production, techniques, and marketing at home and abroad.

3. Within the Hindu caste hierarchy, Maithil Brahman, as a caste group, occupies the highest position in Mithila. Among the different Brahman subgroups, Mahapatras are ranked the lowest due to their role as ritual specialists in the death ceremony. The Karna Kayasthas (or Kayasthas in general), the other dominant caste in the region, do not fit in the traditional four-varna system. As a social group, the Kayasthas occupied important positions in the bureaucracy of the Karanta and Oinwara kings of Mithila. It was during this period (during the thirteenth century) that they reached fairly high in the social hierarchy. Over the years, the term Karna Kayastha has come to imply both caste and profession. Together, the Maithil Brahman and the Karna Kayastha are viewed—and view themselves—as the most pure and ancient embodiment of Maithil culture. The lowest section of Maithil society is constituted by plethora of castes (e.g., Dusad, Chamar, Pasi, Mali, Kumahara, Dom) belonging to Dalit communities. Dalits were traditionally considered “untouchable” due to their lowly and polluting subject positions within Hindu caste hierarchy. To redress the stigmatizing and unequal connotations of untouchability, they were classified as the Scheduled Caste in the Constitution of India. Somewhere between the upper castes and the Dalits lie the Other Backward Classes (OBC) such as Kurmi, Koiri, Dhanuk, Amat, Suri, and Teli. Their ritual status is not always clearly defined. Recently the government of India has accorded them constitutional status.

4. Having been exposed to the European post-Impressionist movement during his student days at Cambridge, Archer at once related with the wall paintings.

5. The photographs of wall and floor paintings in their natural habitat remain the most important evidence of this art as it existed at the turn of the twentieth century. Along with other material artifacts, which are presently archived in the British Library in London, these photographs reveal the richness of Maithil art tradition prior to its commodification in the late 1960s. Furthermore, these artifacts provide an essential background to comprehending the popularity and commercial success of Maithil art in the metropolitan art market today. For a detailed list of the photographs and the paper samples or design patterns constituting Archer’s Mithila (Madhubani) Collection, see Archer (1977: 91-104).

6. The Handicraft and Handloom Export Corporation of India was established in 1956 by the Indian government to explore and develop new markets for handicrafts. Their main tasks included making wholesale orders, publishing and promoting crafts, establishing retail shops abroad, and participating in major international exhibitions.

7. In 2006 I carried out participant observation fieldwork for about six months at Mithila Art Institute, a newly established art school in the heart of Madhubani town in Bihar. The research was part of the Child on the Wing project (sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation) at the Department of Anthropology, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore. Since then I have had repeated engagements and conversations with many of the young artists as well as others closely involved in Maithil art world.

8. During my interviews I came to know that one of the students had actively participated in making the ritual parain diagram inside the nuptial chamber. Interestingly her participation had to do with the art training she had received at the Mithila Art Institute. “This marriage season,” Bibha Das told me with a sense of pride and achievement, “I have helped in painting a number of kothar in my village. All the elderly women in my locality would tell me that I have very good hand [baith]. Getting compliments from them had made me very happy.”

9. This manner of acquiring pictorial skills has been sensitively portrayed in a short documentary film titled Munni (literally, “little girl’). The film maps the everyday life of an eleven-year-old girl growing up to be a painter in Maithil style (Owens, Hess, and Gruff 1981).

10. Following Michel de Certeau in The Practice of Everyday Life, Sarah E. Fraser (2004: 8-9) draws an interesting parallel between painting manuals or treatises and cooking recipe books. In a recipe book the vocabulary to describe activities such as “whip” and “chop” already assumes a certain amount of knowledge about cooking. It provides a retrospective view on the process composed only after a meal has been prepared. Thus it is backward-looking and schematic version of the production process. A technical manual on art, too, does not tell how to actually make a painting. Rather, it is composed of a list of activities a painter would have considered in the production process. Yet, as Fraser notes, it is not a guide to actually executing those steps. A painting manual, like a cookbook, is a postproduction document.

11. In this manner, as Tim Ingold succinctly puts it, “each generation contributes to the next not by handing on a corpus of representations, or information in the strict sense, but rather by introducing novices into contexts which afford selected opportunities for perception and action, and by providing the scaffolding that enables them to make use of these affordances” (2001: 21).