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Everyone, The Human Actor: Recognising The Non-Indexical Individual



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EVERYONE, THE HUMAN ACTOR:
RECOGNISING THE NON-INDEXICAL INDIVIDUAL

Abstract

This article argues that the individual, as an actor with an identity over and above his or her membership in social groupings and cultural traditions, exists universally as an ontological reality. The recognition of this figure in anthropology is both an empirical and a moral necessity. The article suggests the moniker, *Everyone*, for the transcendent individual figure.

The course of the article, after the introduction of *Everyone*, is to admit the critiques that have appeared in social commentary of such a figure, critiques of cultural, institutional, real-politische and phenomenological kinds. The article suggests ripostes to these critiques, ripostes which would invest *Everyone* with an ontological and a moral existence that is anthropologically persuasive and accord with the ethnographic record. *Everyone* is the individual within the role-player, the actor who has the capacity to 'pass' as member of any social grouping, any cultural tradition.

The article concludes with a discussion concerning the way ahead for anthropology were *Everyone* to become disciplinarily legitimated and be given free passage into social accounting.

The question of *Everyone*

In a celebrated definition, which formed the basis of his interpretive anthropology, Clifford Geertz (1970:57) wrote:

culture is best seen as (...) a set of control mechanisms --plans,
recipes, rules, instructions (what computer engineers call 'programs')--

for the governing of behaviour.

It is the 'agency' of these cultural mechanisms, he went on, which is responsible for reducing the breadth and indeterminateness of the individual human being's inherent capacity to live thousands of lives to the specificity and narrowness of his actual accomplishment in one life. While it may be the case that being human is being individual, Geertz elaborated, nevertheless we become fully individual human beings only 'under the guidance of cultural patterns, historically created systems of meaning in terms of which we give form, order, point and direction to our lives' (Geertz 1970:63).

The broader implications of this view of cultural agency vis-à-vis individual human identity is that to ascertain 'the unity of Man' --the quest with which 'Classical Anthropology' began our disciplinary endeavour-- is to recognise the range, nature, basis and implication of *cultural variety and specificity*. To be human is not to be Everyman but to be a particular kind of man. The anthropologist does not quest after uniformities, Geertz concluded, empirical commonalities in behaviour over time and place --an 'underlying, unchanging normative type'-- whereby differences between individuals and groups might be rendered secondary or eccentric, for this is to presume a metaphysical entity, and to replace living details with 'dead stereotype' (Geertz 1970:63). The interpretive anthropologist seeks and finds human unity in cultural diversity...

Geertz admitted that he was 'more than happy to acknowledge Wittgenstein as [his] master' (2000:xi). Interpretive anthropology was an operationalising of tenets from Wittgenstein's later work concerning 'language-games' and 'forms of life'. In particular, a reading of the relativity and the determining power of forms of life can be found in Geertz's premise, above, that 'the human' manifests itself only in lives lived under the dispensation of particular sets of public symbolic practices and conceptual presuppositions. The interpretive-anthropological quest is not, after Kant, for an accumulating aggregate of knowledge on the singularly human but an extending series of indexical or contextual appreciations: 'human

being' is to be known as various positionings in a multitude of symbolic systems with regard to an assortment of specific local ends (Geertz 2000:xiii).

My intention in this article is to oppose this Geertzian vision with a more 'classical' or 'Kantian' or 'Enlightenment' one. I shall call the vision 'cosmopolitan'. I wish to reinsert into anthropology the figure of Everyman -- 'Everyone', better-- and to explore the possibilities of again supposing that 'the unity of Man' (or 'Humankind') might translate into a knowable singularity. 'Everyone' is the term I would give to that human-individual actor whose intrinsic nature may be described separately from a description of the details of his or her current cultural milieu, social standing, structural emplacement or symbolic categorisation.

Everyone's nature, I contend, may be described anthropologically, and also legally or morally. The human-individual actor devoid of sociocultural attachments is a basis, a beginning, not only for a social-scientific appreciation of the human condition but also an ethical securing of the rights to a human life. *Everyone* is the seat of certain capacities which transcend particular current manifestations of common, normative public practices. Abstracting *Everyone* from the currency of context is to construe a figure which is viable social-scientifically and ethically.

Indeed, I claim that the *Everyone* is the *necessary* figure. It is his or her capacities which are responsible for both social systems and cultural worlds --making them into ongoing environments of human interaction-- and it is an error to tie these capacities only to current manifestations. The reducing which Geertz spoke about --the way cultural worlds reduced the breadth and indeterminateness of the individual human being's inherent capacity to live thousands of lives to the specificity and narrowness of his actual accomplishment in one life-- is not a once-and-for-all occurrence, it need not be a single occurrence (individuals possess multiple, simultaneous and hybrid cultural belongings), and it does not go to the core of individual consciousness (individuals can adopt ironic stances to normative cultural attachments to which they are at the same time 'absolutely' loyal).

Everyone is a Kantian figure inasmuch as it was he who not only formulated anthropology as a modern disciplinary pursuit --an elucidation at once scientific and ethical

of humankind as a singularly knowable phenomenon whose lot might be improved-- but also saw this as part of a 'cosmopolitan' project by which the diversity of particular, lived individual lives ('polis') were to be known and adjudged in the light of global conditions and possibilities ('cosmos'). It was Kant whose 'categorical imperative' entailed the necessity of positing a global individual actor whose consciousness, whose capacities for interpretation and judgement, were not circumscribed by current local conditions, were not tied to any sociocultural indexing or context. Here was a global individual actor in possession of transcendent qualities whose humanity was grounded in a universal form of embodiment. Anthropology should endeavour to know that body, and work towards ensuring the best conditions for its nurturance and fulfilment --so that it might make the best life for itself.

Is *Everyone* and his or her 'cosmopolitan body' a recognisable figure in real life? Does anyone actually live this transcendent, ironic existence? Even if they did so, would it be knowable by others --who are likely to approach that individual body by way of particular, local classifications? Then again, does the figure have to be actually lived for it to be social-scientifically and ethically viable? In this article I want to consider the possibility of 'strong' affirmations to these queries. Yes, *Everyone* is a lived and a recognisable phenomenon. But then *Everyone* is also a viable figure --legitimate, necessary-- irrespective of whether or not it should be habitually recognised and lived. Before advancing my arguments further, however, let me outline other established critiques of the Kantian position --Geertz's Wittgensteinian or Herderian one being by no means alone.

Critique of *Everyone*

Geertz's cultural critique of a transcendent individual can be linked with critique of institutional, realpolitische and phenomenological kinds.

i) The critique from realpolitik

In an article entitled, 'Against the new liberalism: Rawls, Dworkin and the emptying of political life', John Gray (1992) argued that the celebrated text in recent liberal philosophy, John Rawls' A Theory of Justice (1971), proved that such theorising could not treat the political dilemmas of the age: a political life dominated by communitarian identity politics; by renascent particularisms, militant religions and resurgent ethnicities. A Theory of Justice did little more than articulate the prejudices of an Anglo-American academic class which lacked any possible insight into an age characterised by the collapse of the Enlightenment vision that humanity might one day shed traditional allegiances and local identities in favour of a universal civilisation grounded in rational morality and realisations of a generic humanity. History has flouted the Enlightenment project, and on a world-historical scale.

Gray explains: For Rawls, as with the liberal theorists who preceded him (Kant, John Stuart Mill) and those who followed (Brian Barry, Alan Ryan), political philosophy is the propounding of a morality which is *agent-neutral*. That is, it bases itself on the assumption that one can and should treat the individual human subject who is *voided* of all particularistic loyalties and conceptions of good, a voided human subject who might take forward and be himself or herself 'subject to' universal principles of justice or rights. A moral point of view is an agent-neutral point of view inasmuch as it is impartial and impersonal. A liberal state -- national or global-- extends a neutral morality rationally and universally.

But here, Gray continues, is no recognition of, or engagement with, human beings as they are found in the world, amid their diverse histories and communities. Instead, here is an abstract concept of the person voided of any definitive cultural identity or historical inheritance. The neo-Kantian project to derive principles of justice and rights from the nature of the decontextualised person has no metaphysics, no anthropology. Elaborated at a distance from the political life of the real world it represents an absurdity. No principles of justice, rights or arbitration can be secured through treatments of metaphysically neutered selves.

Gray elaborates: the Kantian person is a cipher, without history or culture, denuded of the special attachments which in the real world provide human beings with their particular identities: the contingencies that become essential aspects of identities. The 'common good'

that neo-Kantians espouse as a universal ethic, to be pursued subject to the constraints of an impartial justice, are neither of them realisable because in the real world people see themselves essentially not as individuals with contingent relationships and attachments but as social beings *constituted* by their histories and communities. They assert themselves, via social and cultural movements, as peoples not individuals. Their senses of justice and injustice arise from their membership of proud, oppressed, distinctive communities. It is this which has been instantiated in the great political forces of the age (nationalist, religious, ideological). Human beings individuate themselves, if at all, as members of historic communes not as specimens of generic humanity.

Adopting the bias of contemporary Anglo-American culture, deploying an abstract unhistorical individualism as a global norm, Gray concludes, ignores the realities of historical communities. In search of timeless verities neo-Kantianism delivers a world of individual strangers devoid of diverse and deep cultural belongings. However unpalatable, realpolitik reveals real communities of exclusivities, hierarchies and bigotries, casting shadows of enmity and settling their boundaries by war.

ii) The critique from institutionalism

In his book, The Social Production of Indifference, Michael Herzfeld (1993) sets out conceptually to unravel the 'West' and, in particular, its much-vaunted rationality, by offering a critique of the teleology which would have the state operate independently of its staff as a thing-in-itself: a bureaucracy independent of cultural values.

Indifference to the plight of individuals and groups (a rejection of their common humanity, a denial of their identity and selfhood), however inadvertent, often co-exists with democratic and egalitarian ideals, Herzfeld explains, and the coincidence is instructive. How is it that political entities, state structures, that celebrate the rights of the above (as the cultures and countries of the self-proclaimed civilised 'West' stereotypically do) often seem cruelly selective in applying them and may end up sanctioning everything from petty bureaucratic bloody-mindedness to genocide? The answer lies in the 'willing operators' who

make decisions on the basis of 'the law'. The law as discourse --as a set of symbols, idioms and concepts-- can be put to use for the most totalitarian and the most democratic of applications, and to justify diversities and inconsistencies in bureaucratic behaviour. So ambiguous is political symbolism in practice, that it can carry directly opposed sets of meanings. Indeed, the constancy of rhetorical bureaucratic form, its 'rationality', is a mask, an armour, an enabling condition, a license, for the most capricious and momentary of interpretive applications (for power-grabbing, humiliation and indifference) and for highly labile and situational meanings.

The condition of modernity is marked by increased centralisation and scale. But the symbolic roots of Western bureaucracy are to be found in the first instance outwith bureaucracy, in the familiar and familial of popular culture, of classification and cosmology: the inchoate nature of the state and its apparatuses are glossed with the familiar signs of the body, self and family. Bureaucrats co-opt and then re-present these signs and so instil a primordial core within the nation-state: the symbolic values activated in the expression of the state remain remarkably consistent from lowest levels of social integration to (their reflection in) the highest. In other words, Western claims to bureaucratic rationality can more properly be seen as operationalised in terms of culturally constructed and specific logics: the so-called non-rational aspects of cultural life never really disappear.

The liberal-democratic bureaucracy is thus directly analogous to the ritual system of a religion: social practice is informed by a cosmological model. Bureaucrats and clients thus use alike a version of 'secular theodicy' (Weber) to explain immoral vagaries of bureaucratic process and to exonerate themselves of responsibility and blame in the face of 'the system's' ineluctable, inexorable, fateful forces. Bureaucratic officiates, meanwhile, form an elect whose individual 'sins' do not undermine the perfection of the ideal order they share: they employ a version of a sacralised national order in their making of 'rational' decisions which enables them to subordinate personal identities and fates to an encompassing collective good. Finally, the bureaucracy reaffirms its overriding, moral identity in a routine of everyday, cyclical and calendrical 'rites'.

Or again, the rhetoric of the liberal-democratic state is redolent with kinship metaphors of 'blood' even as it defines itself in terms of immunity to family interest and a commitment to rational management. An ideal kinship is the principle vehicle by which a nation is imagined and managed: the logic of nationalism treats the nation as a family, bridging between body and polity, between blood and culture. Kinship and its extensions furnish a rhetoric of political pollution, while familial and bodily symbols operate as powerful emotive magnets, uniting societies as wholes.

Bureaucratic indifference in the Western nation-state, Herzfeld concludes, is socially produced through the selective deployment of a kin-based discrimination between selves and others. It is a selective rejection of those arbitrarily defined as different, as out of place, and hence outsiders to the community. It uses the relative, indexical, contingent labels and categories of everyday social life to make absolute cultural exclusions on the basis of purported natural and essential differences. It thus provides a moral alibi for inaction (indeed, for treating people 'like dirt') and makes itself tolerable to fellow-insiders by presenting itself in terms that are at once familiar and familial. The purported rationality of a universal citizenry actually manifests itself in highly indexical logics and behaviour.

iii) The critique from phenomenology

In his article, 'Justice a Larger Loyalty', Richard Rorty (1998) revisits Kant's foundational distinction between loyalty and justice. Are loyalty and justice substantively different, even when, for instance, we refrain from being loyal to a family member and hand him over to the police because he is a murderer? For Kant, Rorty explains, the two were radically distinct: justice sprang from reason while loyalty sprang from sentiment. By use of reason we may conceptualise and impose universal and unconditional moral obligations, while loyalty entailed community attachments and other affectional relations and introduced arbitrary distinctions between people. Justice and morality had an ideal purity to them, Kant concluded, which must be protected from contamination by the irrationalities and particularities of loyalty.

For Rorty, and others (Annette Baier, Charles Taylor, Alastair MacIntyre), phenomenological grounds make it difficult to claim differentiation between reason and sentiment. 'Universal validity' is a form of social experience and a matter of socio-historical consensus. One's moral identity is determined by the group(s) with which one associates and is loyal. Moral dilemmas between 'loyalty' and 'justice' result from conflict between different group identities, different selves and 'narrative densities' of world-view. It is not that we have a true 'Kantian' self that can and should obey the call of reason against sentimental attachment and see 'humanity' before him.

Rorty elaborates: We need to recognise that 'moral' (after Marx and Durkheim) is a shorthand for a concrete web of social practices and customs. 'Justice' is a name for attachment to a group larger than our immediate attachments, the name we give to loyalty to a larger group over against a smaller one: the nation or humanity over against the family or community. When we hand over a family member to the police because he is a murderer, this is not the moral victory of reason against sentiment but the solving of conflict between different community attachments. We cannot resolve competing moral claims by calling some 'loyalty' and some 'justice' --the latter representing a universal moral obligation discovered through reason. There is no central, true self that responds to the call of reason by virtue of our being human. The self, as Daniel Dennett phrases it, is simply a centre of narrative gravity, elicited by way of social relations.

An accurate moral philosophy thus begins where people begin: not with a 'thin' or abstract notion of the human but with the 'thick' notion of the everyday experience of local attachments. Only on special occasions do we thin our phenomenological awareness and experience 'the universal' or 'the human'. Morality starts as a relationship of reciprocal trust among a close-knit group: to behave morally is to do what comes naturally in one's dealing with one's fellow members. Hence, one tells detailed and concrete stories of oneself as a local but only a sketchy story of oneself as a 'global citizen'.

To reach global morality, in short, is to enlarge the group: one is a global citizen through loyalty to the species. Morality is never a matter of a reasoned approach to an abstraction like human dignity.

In support of *Everyone*

What can I say in the face of these critiques --cultural, institutional, realpolitische, phenomenological-- to support my contention that *Everyone* remains a viable and key figure of anthropological attention? My argument will take two forms, ontological and moral. The first claims that one does indeed meet the individual actor who is capacitated to move beyond classificatory identities of particular kinds --beyond classificatory identity per se-- and embody a nature that is human. The second claims that recognising this general figure is of great moral import, whatever the strength and ubiquity of particular loyalties and attachments --and, indeed, because of the strength and ubiquity of these.

*i) **Everyone** as existent: The ontological riposte*

The most prominent anthropological recognition and treatment of *Everyone* appears, perhaps, in Victor Turner's (1982) work on communitas and liminality, in particular his extension of van Gennep's conceptualisations to the so-called 'liminoidal'. It can be recalled that van Gennep (1960) began by recognising the pervasiveness of rites of passage. Most ritual occasions could be described as concerning such transitions, and every individual life was characterised by them on a regular basis. Life in society, life lived in terms of everyday classifications of identity, of time and place, was regularly interleaved with experiences that concerned movement between and around such classifications. For Victor Turner, the liminoidal encompassed individuals and experiences that went *beyond* the classificatory as such. Communitas entailed people meeting, knowing one another and themselves, on the basis of a generic humanity. Communitas was non-structural, even anti-structural, in the sense that here were individual actors aspiring to and, for moments or occasions at least,

succeeding in reaching a freedom from customary particularities. In the impulse that led to an individual decision to be a hippy, as monk, a kibbutznik, a punk, could be found a human creativity; and in the capacity to choose an anti-structural lifestyle, a 'sacred poverty', could be found a self-consciousness and a material praxis that went beyond the determinations of particular social constructions.

The movement between van Gennep and Turner, between the liminal and the liminoidal, is a significant one. For the former, what is being emphasised is *the individual being moved* --being changed, processed, re-shaped-- and being moved in *a traditional fashion* --made adult, healthy, clean, and so on. Similar emphases enter the literature in Garfinkel's (1968) elucidation of 'status-degradation ceremonies', or Goffman's (1961) account of the mortification of the self on entry to 'total institutions'. For the liminoidal Turner reserved recognition of a movement that was *individual, active, intentioned, liberating as such*. Here was the individual actor freeing himself or herself from the 'despotism of custom' (in John Stuart Mill's phrase) so as to embrace a human wholeness and potential. Even should the move appear as a mortification --of the flesh, of social status, of a storied past-- then Turner's emphasis was on the voluntary and achieved nature of the change. The renunciation of 'worldly recognition' in favour of a 'sacred poverty' was an achievement not an ascription.

Similar emphases to Turner's then enter the literature in Kenelm Burridge's account of 'metanoia' or a 'change of mind' (1979:215). Individuals might properly be described as 'people of movement', Burridge suggests (1979:184), for the way in which they have the capacity to hold in abeyance conventional verities, refusing the security of fixity and stasis, and focus their energies and attention on the dialectic 'between what is and what might be' (1979:76). They transcend the truth of established moralities, perceiving, intuiting and deducing alternative truths, in the process changing body and mind. Burridge explicitly has in mind shamans, Nuer Leopard-Skin Chiefs, Melanesian sorcerers, Aborigine Men of High Degree, and Hindu Sanyasi. All embody, he concludes (1979:176), the wholeness of the human being as against the partiality of a particular cultural construction of moral

personhood. To Burridge's list might be added those who find themselves experiencing what James Fernandez has called a 'deficit of meaning' in their lives, and a need for revitalization (1995:22). One puts oneself in a position from which one can look back at a stage of one's life, a status, a placement, from which one has displaced oneself --possibly radically. One changes religion, changes marital partner, changes gender, changes nationality, becomes an exile, enters into a life of discipline. These acts of radical rewriting bear witness to a capacity to consider oneself beyond the routines and the constraints of a current existence. Here are human bodies and minds whose being is not limited by the particular character of present attachments and memberships.

A powerful manifestation of *Everyone* as a universally recognisable individual actor is also afforded by the phenomenon of 'passing': one of a range of practices that include fakery, lying, spying and fraud. In these varieties of dissembling can be found, I would contend, key insights into the human --into the presence of the fundamentally human amid the surface conventions and politenesses of social life and the normative forms of cultural difference. Silvia Posocco (2004:152) has defined 'passing' as individuals traversing social identifications purposely and strategically so as to adopt identities other than those conferred on them by enforced social categorizations. Passing can refer to any social taxonomy and dimension of difference, and is particularly common in regard to major markers of social status, power and privilege such as class, gender, race and ethnicity.

Some have treated passing narrowly, rather as with van Gennep's appreciation of the liminal. Judith Butler (1993), for instance, emphasises the involuntariness of this manipulation, since the subversions often occur in such highly normativized and regulated sociocultural terrains. Sara Ahmed (1999), likewise, draws attention to the limits of the technique --some cannot pass, whatever their mimetic abilities-- and suggests it occurs by virtue of the existence of harsh 'scopic regimes' and social taxonomies. I would rather emulate Turner, as it were, and see in passing (as in the liminoidal) a key to the dynamics of social interaction and the architectonics of society as such (cf. Rapport 2001). Passing occurs *by virtue of* individual capacities and will to dissemble, and to ironise identities: to look askance at the distinction

between how people see one and how one would choose to be. Normative, scopical regimes deliver not the conditions of possibility of the occurrence of passing but the conditions of need: the assumption that society conforms to a classificatory shape and that one's categorial placement can be read on the body and is visible in behaviour. It is the classificatory and categorial conventions that the individual who passes sets out to parody or profit from.

Virginia Woolf (1969:223) captures succinctly the ambivalences surrounding passing when she writes:

[O]ne begins letters 'Dear Sir,' ends them 'yours faithfully'; one cannot despise these phrases laid like Roman roads across the tumult of our lives, since they compel us to walk in step like civilized people (...) though one may be humming any nonsense under one's breath at the same time.

Individuals 'walk in step' to social conventions and cultural traditions but they do not necessarily do so blindly or unconsciously, though they may not always do so willingly. Moreover, this walking-in-step does not exhaust them, whether in terms of their energies or their identities. Beyond the conventional they lead tumultuous lives; they seem civilised but they hum nonsense. They *pass themselves off* as civilised, as polite, as conventional, but this does not (begin to) capture the essence and extent of their experience.

Passing would seem to me to cover a range of experiences and a range of degrees. In minor manifestations it would seem to be a daily occurrence. Every time one behaves more politely than one would really like, more harshly than one actually feels, more cerebrally than one's emotions dictate, one passes oneself off as other than one is. I pass myself off as a lover of Israeli salads, say, not to upset my host at a dinner party. Or I pass myself off as a lover of Israeli food on an ongoing basis not to upset my neighbours. Or I pass myself off as Israeli not to estrange a person to whom I am attracted. Or I pass myself off as a veteran of the Israeli War of Independence to impress my credentials on future in-laws. Or I pass myself off as a particular Israeli officer from the War. Traversing this range is to move from ephemeral

to long-lasting, from easy to achieve to difficult, from less consequential, less complex, less tactical, less fraudulent, less illegal perhaps, to more. But whether it is pretending to possess a certain palate or laying claim to a certain nationality, religiosity or past, it would seem to be the case that such actions are commonplace, are ubiquitous in social life, and offer fundamental insights into its very nature. Social life is role-playing. We can become attached to our roles but we need not. It can become difficult to separate our roles from our selves but it need not. The roles we play may take us a distance from the person whom we know or would like ourselves to be or no distance at all. What is to be insisted upon is what a focus on passing reveals: every social relationship, perhaps every moment of social interaction, is tinged with the playing of a role; one passes oneself off as in some way, major or minor, someone one is not. Furthermore, what is it to pass? It is to know who one is, to know what is conventional and what is expected of one (how one is or might be classed), to be able to measure the distance between the two, and, to an extent at least, for a time at least, to overcome that distance in acts of dissembling. Passing reveals the human as a constant presence within the role-player, putting on a front, a face, a set of vestments, such that the classificatory surfaces of social life are maintained –but not at the expense of a human capacity for self-awareness and purposiveness, a human consciousness.

Victor Turner states the case well for our anthropological informants when he writes:

[T]here were never any innocent, unconscious savages, living in a time of unreflective and instinctive harmony. We human beings are all and always sophisticated, conscious, capable of laughter at our own institutions. [cited in Ashley 1990:xix]

What I would turn to now, however, is the extent to which the anthropologist knows the truth about passing through his or her own professional practice, in particular as a fieldworker.

The foundation of anthropology as a science, Hastrup begins (1986:8-14), is that it lays claim to a criterion of authenticity that goes beyond what any one culture takes to be

authentic and presents as authentic: anthropological science attempts to get beyond the local conventions of representation and exchange so as to render a human whole. Anthropology recognises that it is impossible to see from nowhere in particular, and yet, at the same time, it claims the possibility of seeing from anywhere. Anthropological science practises Terence's famous dictum: 'Nothing human is alien to me'. The anthropologist thus expects to insinuate himself or herself into any local situation and from there be able to make sense, to espy the human whole. Hastrup elaborates (1995:2-5): anthropological science breaks the dualism between us and them. The fieldworker and his or her informants meet in a kind of contact zone, a liminal space or tertium quid, between the classificatory cultural worlds of either side. It is out of an experience of this space that notions of the authentically human become visible and credible. One is situated, one's perspective is individual, and yet one sees beyond particular cultures. One is specific in one's biography, one's relations, one's attainments, and yet that contact zone between anthropologist and informant might contain any human beings anywhere.

To phrase it differently, anthropological method is to pass. The anthropological fieldworker learns to engage with local symbolic practices. He or she fits in. In my own case, this has involved learning how to be a farm labourer and builder's mate in an English village, learning how to be a student of criminology and social worker in provincial Newfoundland, learning how to be a new immigrant in an Israeli development town, and learning how to be a hospital porter in a Scottish city. Some might have known me to have been (originally) 'an anthropologist' in these situations, but many did not. What became relevant to local situations of interaction was my ability to pass myself off as member of a local category –and to be granted the license to be a newcomer with whom locals were willing to attempt to make contact. At the same as I learned the roles of farm labourer, hospital porter, new immigrant, and so on –made mistakes, improved my performances, even adapted the roles somewhat to my own preferences—I retained knowledge of the distance between these roles and others I had played and, importantly, my own sense of myself. Moreover, while learning to engage in local symbolic practices, to play cultural roles, is a behavioural matter rather than anything

more empathetic, as Geertz stressed (1973:), is a matter, as Wittgenstein put it (1978), of sharing forms of life rather than opinions, still I would lay authentic claim to a knowledge of my informants beyond the roles that they, too, practised. Inasmuch as I knew myself as a role-player, I knew them too. My key informants were those with whom I made a kind of human contact beyond the normative expectations of the local forms of life we together maintained. Here was Sid the builder whose preferred imaginative space was gate-keeper to a masculine adult world of sex, drink, guns and fists, and beyond that an escape from the village as such. Here was Arthur the portering sub-manager who rather inhabited a world of Scottish nationalism: of Gallic language, Gallic music, Gallic politics and pure-bred (white) Gallic people. And here was Rachel the new immigrant who spent her time cognitively negotiating between her new Israeli home and the efficiency, privacy and modernity of her American roots. In each of these cases it was not that informants escaped the view of something in particular –a particular masculinity (Sid), a particular nationality (Arthur), a particular domicile (Rachel)—but that they transcended the views of particular role-players. And here was a liminal space where we all met. The contact zone between us was a human one: I meet my key informants in a space where we share the capacity to see beyond the classificatory status quo, where we are none of us limited by our behavioural presents. ‘The human’ is found not in a substantive form –a particular set of behaviours—so much as in a capacity, a potential, to be and to see beyond the cultural particularities of specific lives. The anthropologist leads a life of narrow, actual accomplishments, as Geertz stressed. But in his or her capacity as a fieldworker the anthropologist is able potentially to extend this narrowness to include any other set of cultural forms. He or she can adopt the view from anywhere. Enculturation is not something that lessens a capacity for reinvention or radically different role-playing. In the field, meanwhile, the anthropologist who attains the authenticity of a deep immersion meets key informants who are found to share the capacity to be more than the roles they currently play; the anthropologist become aware of their performing parts alongside him or her –parts that could be other.

As Hastrup has it, the anthropologist elicits a certain liminality from his or her informants; at the least, I have suggested, by way of his or her deep immersion the anthropologist recognises the potential for liminality in key informants. This liminality, this transience between indexical, classificatory identities, is revelatory of a human capacity, a human identity, I would argue. Neither the anthropologist nor key informants view from nowhere: all are situated amid their lives –their biographies, relationships, belongings—but this does not limit their capacities potentially to be anywhere else, to go anywhere else and become anyone else. The anthropologist embodies in his or her practice an abiding human capacity and identity to engage with any other human being and to adapt to any local system of indexical, classificatory relations. He or she passes as another, in minor and major ways, and finds the local doing likewise. In every indexical life there remains the potential for a purposive declassification.

In a world of movement the anthropological practice of displacing the self from the security of a natal and native life-world is more evident as a common part of the individual life-course. John Berger describes movement around the globe as ‘the quintessential experience of our time’ (1984:55; cf. Minh-ha 1994:13-14). Emigration, labour migrancy, banishment, exile, tourism, urbanisation and counter-urbanisation, are the central motifs, ‘typical symptoms of a modern condition at once local and universal’ (Nkosi 1994:5). One is careful not to equate migrancy and diaspora with an eschewing of essentialist classifications (cf. Amit 2002); one is aware that the uncertainties wrought by global movement can occasion a revitalisation of all manner of exclusionary cultural fundamentalisms (cf. Hall 1996, Bauman 1998). Nevertheless, the liminality (‘liminoidality’, better) that has been identified above in professional anthropological practice is increasingly reported by ethnographers as an aspect of everyday behaviour –as an ethnomethodology-- in numerous situations of global transience and a growing set of so-called ‘non-places’ (Auge 1995). For many people and in many settings, identification and interaction pass off on the basis of non-localised, non-indexical, non-classificatory logics. The ‘human actor’, it can be argued, is met

on a more routine basis. *Everyone* expresses himself or herself more openly in social spaces, beyond the narrow confines of particular cultural milieux.

ii) *Everyone as necessary: The moral riposte*

According to Brian Barry (2001), it was the Reformation, and the need to reconcile Protestants and Roman Catholics, which occasioned the development of the 'liberal formula' which saw the depoliticisation of religion: a separation of church and state. More broadly, a public sphere was envisaged and instituted --the 'statal', or 'societal' or 'social'-- which represented neutral ground. Religion and culture were privatised with no religious doctrines or authorities or institutions being afforded privileged positions: beliefs were to be treated as any other individual preference. The public sphere was neutral with regard to cultural difference and thereby just, fair to all: here, people of all religions and cultures would meet on equal terms.

'Liberal' principles of justice developed such that the state claimed not to need to know the content of religious and cultural identities in order to deal fairly with its citizenry. In the eyes of the state, its rule of law and system of justice, individual citizens were public actors equal and alike. Their private preferences --religious or cultural-- did not interfere formally with their public rights, nor their public duties. The state --'society'-- recognised citizens as individuals alike. As a moral precept, this came to be famously theorised by Kant as the 'categorical imperative'. One acted morally when one could reason that an action one wished to carry out was universalisable: it could equally well be carried out by any individual, and did not reduce others to one's own means. Individual actors had to be considered as ends in themselves.

Barry's argument is that this treatment of citizens as equal public members, separated from their cultural preferences, regarded as equivalent units or exemplars of humanity, is an institutionalisation not in *denial* of the significant role that the religious and the cultural play in individuals' lives but in *recognition* of it. It is because post-Enlightenment liberalism recognises how important cultural loyalties and world-views are --the common preference of

people to live in cultural communities-- that it has sought to depoliticise it, relegate it to the private sphere, and deal with individual units of humanity undifferentiated according to religion, to gender, age, race or ethnicity, to culinary, sartorial, sexual or sporting taste. Liberal equality before the law was born out of a realpolitische response to difference, in particular to the historical pre-eminence of religion, and an endeavour to take account of it, institutionally in a just way. The paradox is that the non-indexical individual becomes a moral necessity *because* of the strength of cultural ties.

Given the pluralism and sectarianism, the syncretism and creolisation of religious and other cultural affiliations in contemporary societies, the moral argument made by a liberal Enlightenment in the face of religious disputation after the Reformation would seem more relevant not less. The figure of *Everyone* as an individual citizen who is due just treatment independent of, irrespective of, his religious choices and cultural ties would seem to embody an especial moral necessity.

A prominent comparative example to the Kantian categorical imperative would be Max Gluckman's (1967) elucidation of 'the reasonable man' in Barotse jurisprudence. A central concept in the indigenous legal system, this figure serves as a practical standard by which members of the society might be accommodated and judged alike, the point being to posit a kind of moral-legal common denomination independent of individual particularities. Barotse law deals publicly with cases of individual dispute by considering certain *human* groundings: reasonableness was a mark of a common humanity. Gluckman concluded (1967:83) that consideration of such human proclivities and capacities would, in his opinion, represent 'the central figure of all developed systems of law'. Barotse practice had its place in a global juridical canon.

Gluckman's conclusion is a prescient one, given contemporary priorities to consider law on a global scale, and the cosmopolitan project to treat the diversity of particular individual lives under the aegis of global discourses and dispensations: to recognise *Everyone* amid the specificities of particular cultural classifications. Human reasonableness is not necessarily a narrowly Western construction or value.

It is Nietzsche, however, who has taken the Kantian notion of morality beyond and outwith the narrowly cultural to its furthest point. We post-Enlightenment 'moderns' have become 'wandering encyclopaedias', he proposed (1873). Each individual compares and assimilates a world of customs, histories and philosophies, religions and sciences. Ideally, these appropriations live in individual bodies and minds not as dead weight from the past but as resources in present life-projects to effect personal future trajectories. In such a time of global comparison it is as if individuals had no single culture of their own, Nietzsche suggested; or, it is as if individuals were every culture at once, none being wholly foreign.

For Nietzsche there was great beauty to be found in the figure of *Everyone* as a wandering encyclopedia. In public terms he saw it as a portent of general identifications beyond the exclusivities and barbarisms of the communitarian and nationalist. Individuals as wandering encyclopedias were members of an amalgamated humanity: they embodied the aspiration that one might be a 'good European' not merely a 'good German' or 'good Briton' -- and thence that one might be a 'good human' (1986:no.475). In private terms, the individual writing and rewriting himself and herself on an ongoing basis, by way of a personal comparison and appropriation and invention of cultural tradition, was the highest example of individuals fulfilling the unique potential of each embodied lifetime. Nietzsche referred to this as the 'law of self-overcoming' (1973). It was a route to personal moral greatness.

As he elaborated, albeit that there was a shifting and contingent nature to an individual's knowing --it was always the view from somewhere, always in terms of one set of culturo-symbolic forms, and always under the aegis of a fallible, impressionable and mortal embodiment-- still an awareness of this served as a kind of overcoming, of moral betterment. To become self-conscious of the shifting complex of one's embodied experiences in their becoming and to take an ironical stance with regard to cultures' vocabularies of classes and values was, Nietzsche contended, to gain an overview and a sense of process --and personal progress. In this way the individual could hope not only to see and know but also to control: to overcome the body, its sickness and needs, to see through the illusions of symbolic

categories, of forms and names imposed on life (at least to see them as illusions), and hence to re-evaluate, to 'transvalue', one's existence.

For individuals to overcome, transvalue and control their lives in this way Nietzsche set as a possible moral goal. It was an art --'the art of life'-- and it was always going to be something difficult to achieve, but its reward was an appreciation of the rich fullness possible in human life. Working towards an overcoming of the situated self, gaining an ironic awareness of culture, time, diet, body, desire and lifestyle, afforded individuals not only with access to their full, embodied selves (to an integrity which cultural values and social structures thwarted), but also access to a fullness of life which they were now in the best possible position (healthy and hungry) to join with.

The paradox, then, is that the non-indexical individual is a moral necessity because of the human capacity to reinvent new cultural and other identities and world-views --to compare and creolise and appropriate these on an ongoing basis-- and because of the moral worth (and strength and beauty) involved in so doing. Treating cultural difference ironically, and as part of a potential rewriting of self, seeing difference (any difference) as an aspect of the dramatic narrative of an individual or communal life and its processes of self-overcoming, is an act of moral accommodation. The alien is a potential (future or past) part of the self (nothing human is irredeemably alien).

The ultimate conclusion of a liberal moral ethos which began with depoliticising and privatising the religious so that a diversity of individual beliefs and practices could be recognised (and regulated) by the state alike ends with the individual surpassing the classificatory divide of statehood also. Nationality, in a cosmopolitical vision, gives way to global governance and global citizens. The individual's national identifications become, as it were, a matter of private behaviours also. In the public sphere there is a recognition, legal and moral, of the individual as having rights and duties that go beyond national affiliation. The cosmopolitical vision includes ideas of justice and right beyond nation-states and beyond the self-asserted sovereignties of cultural communities. In the words of Paul Feyerabend: "There is no such thing as a "culturally authentic" suppression, or a "culturally authentic" murder.

There is only suppression and murder, and both should be treated as such, with determination if necessary'. The individual who rewrites himself or herself, and, in an Age of Comparison (Nietzsche), picks and chooses, adapts and creates, with a global palette, is legally supported so to do at the expense of supposed national and cultural sovereignties and exclusions. The moral status of the non-indexical individual exists beyond such memberships, guaranteed by way of a global 'citizenship'.

Appropriately, it is in the Holocaust Museum in Washington DC that the following prescription from the Chief British Prosecutor at the Nuremberg Trials, Hartley Shawcross, can be found:

[T]he individual must transcend the state. The state and the law are made for man; that through them he may achieve a higher purpose, a greater dignity.

The moral necessity of the non-indexical individual is that it provides the foundation of *Everyone* as a transcendent figure.

Discussion: '[Do not] freeze people in their social categories. In the end we are all human'
Against cultural, institutional, realpolitische and phenomenological critiques I have posited ontological and moral counter-claims. *Everyone* can be made to appear as a viable figure in its own right, I contend. There are grounds for asserting the moral existence of an individual actor who is more than his or her membership of a current (or any particular) cultural community and his or her placement within a symbolic classificatory system. He or she can find himself or herself distinct from particular institutional workings, from particular group loyalties and political identities.

Everyone also appears as an emancipatory figure. It returns capacities and potentialities to individual actors that, in the Geertzian picture at least, are spent in the process of socialization and cultural placement. In *Everyone*,

the capacity to lead an individual life, to narrow one's focus, one's loyalties, one's relations, one's world-view, to a particular cultural or communitarian set, is not necessarily a once-for-all or even an exclusive attainment or effect. *Everyone* possesses an ongoing and a multiple capacity to lead particular lives, to pass into (and out of) social relations. The capacity is an individual possession and it includes the potential for irony: for critical reflection on one's attainments of the moment, for amending or replacing these attainments, without necessarily exhausting one's appetite for them, one's desire or conviction. In short, it is *Everyone* who possesses the ongoing capacity to belong to, make and remake cultures. It is an embodied capacity which he or she carries with him or her in movement across and between sociocultural spaces, between places and non-places. For *Everyone*, there can be multiple and hybrid cultural belongings at one time and over time --or no such belongings.

After Isaiah Berlin (1958), a liberal formula recognises *Everyone* as exercising freedoms of two fundamental kinds. He or she has 'negative freedom', freedom *to*: to be and to do in an abstract fashion, unconnected to present possibilities or sociocultural arrangements, on the basis of a non-indexical human nature of non-specific behavioural traits and habits. At the same time, *Everyone* has 'positive freedom', freedom *from*: from oppression, exploitation, stereotypification; from communitarian ascription, scapegoating and imprisonment; from being treated as a means to another's end. In other words, the liberal emancipation of *Everyone* is on two fronts. The first recognises him or her as an individual actor with the capacity to pass himself or herself off in an indefinite number of ways. The second safeguards the particular role-playing in which *Everyone* does engage so that it remains a voluntary engagement and does not prejudice the capacity to play (to pass) again. A third front is opened by cosmopolitanism: by the will to realise the liberal formula on a global scale and recognise *Everyone* as a global citizen.

The relative statuses of 'freedom from' and 'freedom to' --of the non-indexical vis-à-vis the role-player, the human universal vis-à-vis the culturally specific-- and the global relationship between the two that anthropology might advocate, was the subject of Ernest

Gellner's later work (as in the epigraph to this Discussion (Gellner 1993a:4)). In particular, in the article, 'Anything goes: The carnival of cheap relativism which threatens to swamp the coming *fin de millenaire*', argues strongly for the non-indexical status of certain human knowledge and the necessity of working towards a non-indexical morality. This is the starting point of any adequate contemporary anthropology, according to Gellner, and to pretend otherwise --that cultural worlds are sovereign in their customary norms-- "is simply an irresponsible affectation" (1995:8):

[C]ognitive relativism is nonsense, moral relativism is tragic. (...) Valid knowledge ignores and does not engender frontiers. One simply cannot understand our shared social condition unless one starts from the indisputable fact that genuine knowledge of nature is possible and has occurred, and has totally transformed the terms of reference in which human societies operate. [Gellner 1995:8]

There are natural limits to the extent to which societies *can* construct their own cultural worlds; it is not true that any world is possible, and within the range of naturally possible worlds, not all are cognitively equal. And there are actual limits to the extent to which societies *do* construct their own cultural worlds, given the contemporary situation of creolisation and syncretism, of overlapping sociocultural units, in rapid change, frequently undergoing fission or fusion; separate cultures do not exist, and there is no consensus regarding what any particular culture is. The 'culturalist' position, such as that proposed by Geertz (and derived from Wittgenstein), and which has now passed into political correctness, is, Gellner concludes, a grotesque exaggeration. The scientific revolution proves that not all concepts are social in nature, that cultural communities do not have terminal authority vis-à-vis the truth, and that communal 'forms of life' or 'lifeworlds' do not trump human rationality.

If science removes the validity of customary norms as underwriters of reality, however, then science also deprives us of a traditional ability to underwrite values in absolute (culturo-religious) terms. Nor does science offer an alternative moral basis: scientific

knowledge of the world is continually changing and cannot be tied rigidly to moral prescriptions as legitimation. Hence, the scientific revolution delivers a 'moral crisis' which is also 'the fruit of our liberation from want and tyranny'; our anthropological duty, as Gellner prescribes it (1995:8), is 'to work out the social options of our affluent and disenchanting condition. We have no choice about this'. Anthropology must consider a morality beyond culture; alongside the existence of trans-cultural and amoral knowledge it might become a fact of cosmopolitan life (Gellner 1993b:54).

It is to be admitted that in other places (e.g. 1998:183-6) Gellner makes it clear that what he calls 'Robinson Crusoe modelling' --in which I imagine he would have included the conception of *Everyone* as an ontological figure-- is in his estimation a normative charter of one particular social tradition rather than a portrait of humanity as such. Individuals able to deploy their rationality to compare and contrast culturo-cognitive worlds and claims from a position of ironic detachment are an historical phenomenon --one, as Max Weber showed, with Protestant roots-- and not, as Kant would have it, an abidingly human practice. Only after the European Reformation and Enlightenment did people stop being docile members of communities, perceiving through conventional classificatory Gestalten, and breaking asunder their cultures' cognitive limits by recognising physical-cum-technological and economic forces beyond the cultural.

One response to Gellner --the pragmatist's-- is to assert that the difference between *Everyone* as a historical and as an ontological phenomenon has become moot: in concrete terms it is irrelevant. The world is increasingly populated by Nietzschean 'wandering encyclopaedias', whether they owe their existence to a Western sociocultural shift or not. Richard Rorty (1986), for instance, adopts this position, arguing for what he dubs 'post-modernist bourgeois liberalism' not on the basis of what necessarily is but of what best works --to accommodate difference and to enable people to lead lives of personal fulfilment and social justice. But to make this admission could also appear to be a dangerous dilution. Cultural fundamentalism of any number of stripes could argue with Rorty's notions of what is 'best' for the individual and society, and what 'successful' and what 'fulfilling'. It is

important, I say, to retain *Everyone* --the Crusoe figure with inherent, embodied capacities-- as an ontological truth.

Furthermore, Gellner does not say that individuals before the Reformation definitely did not possess capacities for irony and unconventionality *as potentialities*, only that that there were not occasions for exercising these. The argument is a difficult one to prove one way or the other, and historical evidence has been used to posit opposite conclusions: that *Everyone's* ironic consciousness is an offshoot of technological innovation (Ortega y Gasset 1956) or literary (Oppenheimer 1989) or of global deterritorialisation (Appadurai 1991); alternatively that so-called docile members of closed communities --unconscious and innocent, in Turner's appellation-- have always been a fiction (Phillips 1993), that individuals have always been involved in the 'creative exploration of culture' (Goody 1977:20), and in 'alter-cultural action' (Handler and Segal 1990).

A final paradox ends this article. The figure of the non-indexical individual actor is an existent one and a necessary one, I have argued, an appropriate starting point in political and moral statecraft and in anthropological theory and description. But how is *Everyone* to be known, and how proven, by others who might be wont to approach him or her by way of particular, local classifications? Culture, as Geertz began, represents a powerful set of control mechanisms: recipes, rules, programmes, Gestalts. Anthony Cohen strikes the right note, I would say, when he writes:

We must make deliberate efforts to acknowledge the subtleties, inflections and varieties of individual consciousness which are concealed by categorical masks [1994:180]

Social and cultural processes, he goes on, always attempt to colonise and occupy individuals' consciousness: to insinuate themselves into individuals' cognitive processes so that they are pressed into the matrices of perception of religious, ethnic, local, occupational groupings and classes, and identify completely with their roles. But anthropology must not exaggerate individuals' vulnerability to these forces or underestimate individuals' resilience. Individuals

routinely resist: there are heroic and mundane battles. Recognising *Everyone* is a matter of subtle ethnography and political emancipation: anthropology contributing to the 'decolonisation of the human subject' (Cohen 1994:192).

Everyone is elusive: he or she evades the descriptive classes of cultural and institutional and realpolitische routines, often. And yet, he or she is in constant existence: 'My distinctness, my being me, is quite unmistakable to me, there can be nothing of which I am more certain', as Hywel Lewis writes (1982:55). Every time I catch myself passing as a particular kind of role-player (who could be other; who could be anyone) and every time I meet others in my anthropological practice whom I find playing roles (and who could equally be other), I encounter *Everyone*, and I would grant him or her free passage.

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