The GDAT Debate: No. 7

ADVOCACY IN ANTHROPOLOGY

Chris Fuller
and
Jane Parish

vs

Robert Layton
and
Michael Rowlands

Edited by

Peter Wade

Group for Debates in Anthropological Theory

Advocacy is a personal commitment for anthropologists, not an institutional imperative for anthropology

The seventh annual GDAT debate, held in the University of Manchester on 28th October 1995

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INTRODUCTION

The stimulus for this debate is rooted in the conviction—unevenly held, to be sure—that anthropology is a practice rooted in, rather than set apart from, the social life it seeks to understand. Yet there is a feeling that those roots have become weak and tenuous, that the everyday business of anthropology is so distant from those roots that it does little to respond to the social and political problems that characterise the everyday business of the social lives we study. Keith Hart and Anna Grimshaw have written of the crisis of the intellectuals.[1] The virtual space of the small-triple-a electronic mailing list has hosted many pleas from postgraduate students and academic staff for a more politically engaged anthropology.[2] As I am sure many teaching staff will testify, undergraduate students are frequently sceptical of what they sometimes see as the abstractions of academic anthropology and want to know 'what is the point of it all'. Lest we think that this uneasiness is peculiar to anthropology, we should recall that, according to some, sociology has been undergoing its own crisis.[3] Some of this may be specific to Britain or perhaps the English-speaking world, or particular to this time, as Angela Cheater points out in her contribution to the discussion in this debate. In France, to take a common example, intellectuals often play a more prominent role in public life. Mike Rowlands, in his contribution, argues that anthropology started out as a highly committed practice, from an institutional and personal point of view.

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[1] A. Grimshaw and K. Hart, *Anthropology and the crisis of the intellectuals*, Cambridge, Prickly Pear Press, 1993. Reprinted in *Critique of Anthropology* 14(3): 227-261, 1994 with responses from D. Schneider, P. Geschiere and K.B. Sacks in volumes 14(4): 419-424, 14(4): 425-427 and 15(1): 103-105. See also K. Hart, "Swimming into the human current", *Times Higher Educational Supplement*, 18 May 1990, pp. 13-14; A. Ahmed and C. Shore, *The future of anthropology: its relevance to the contemporary world*, London, Athlone, 1995.

[2] The small-triple-a is an organisation which 'seeks to expand communication between academic professionals in the field of anthropology and the wider community' (from the List Description written by the list owners and distributed by mailbase@mailbase.ac.uk).

[3] See, for example, D. Walker, "All quiet on the home front", *Times Higher*, 17 March 1995, pp. 20-21. A. Giddens writes "In defence of sociology" in *New Statesman and Society*, 7 April 1995, pp. 18-20. See also I.L. Horowitz, *The decomposition of sociology*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993.

Some of the answer to this problem lies, in my view, in the recognition of the reflexivity[4] of social science, emphasised by one staunch defender of the relevance of sociology, Anthony Giddens. He points out that some of the findings of social research gradually filter back into the context from which they initially derived: non-academic people's ideas about marriage, unemployment and a host of other everyday social realities are shaped to some extent by what sociologists have had to say about these things. This 'double hermeneutic' is what makes social research so different from natural science: it is people studying people; the 'observer effect', so to speak, is not just an interference to be controlled, it is an inherent part of the reflexivity between observer and observed when these two have the same ontological status.[5] Thus any academic representation is inherently engaged, although some are more distantly so than others. This is one plank in the position argued by Bob Layton in this debate. Social representations are, of course, subject to criticism and counter-representation and the academic representations of sociology or anthropology are no exception: Bob and Mike Rowlands argue that such criticism rightly takes place mainly within the institutional confines of an academic community, although clearly such a community's boundaries are permeable. One of the questions that I wanted this debate to address was: how permeable? Or to put it another way: in the cycle of reflexivity, what social distance separates academic from non-academic practice?

The openness of the academic anthropological community to non-academic input and critique—or the social distance between these two—is clearly different in some important ways from that of the academic sociological community. Anthropologists tend to be more remote from the social lives they study, distanced by geography, literacy, language and the institutional inequalities of communications and educational infrastructure. In saying this, two qualifications are necessary. First, an increasing number of European anthropologists are doing research 'at home' which makes their work more directly accountable, albeit still at several removes. Second, we must guard against the dangers of Eurocentrism, because anthropologists in, say, Latin America have a rather different

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[4] There are two aspects to reflexivity: the anthropologist reflecting on the production of knowledge and the people under study reflecting on the knowledge produced. I refer here to the second.

[5] See, for example, A. Giddens, "Social sciences and philosophy: recent trends in social theory" in *Social theory and modern society* by A. Giddens, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1987, p. 65ff.

experience. In Colombia, for example, people qualify as fully-fledged anthropologists after what we would call an undergraduate degree—although in Colombia this involves a short and a longer period of fieldwork, plus a substantial dissertation. They then work in a wide variety of jobs, much of the time directly engaged with the multiple social problems and political conflicts in their country. Academic anthropologists in Colombia are also often directly involved with the political struggles of the people they study. At the very least, their writings are quite often open to debate by the people they write about. To a small but significant extent, 'the people they write about' themselves have some university education, not infrequently in anthropology or related disciplines. Now, Marilyn Strathern has argued that the knowledge produced by anthropologists (whether outsider or insider, so to speak) cannot feed back into indigenous societies in the same way that it can into Western societies. This is because, while people in Western societies share with their social researchers certain assumptions about social ontology (e.g., that things called society, culture, history or persons exist in a given form), non-Western peoples do not necessarily share these assumptions. Thus the knowledge produced about such peoples does not feed back into increasing self-knowledge for them.[6] However, I think it is clear that such knowledge does change the political context in which those societies operate and may also change the way that some people in such societies represent themselves.[7]

Bearing these qualifications in mind, it is still evident that the inherent reflexivity of anthropological practice can assume a highly attentuated form and, in my view, it is this that the motion for the debate sought to address. Are there things anthropologists can do—mechanisms to be put in place, fora to be established—which could enhance this reflexivity? At a grand scale, global inequalities in the production and control of knowledge constitute an obstacle to reflexivity at this level. Anthropologists are clearly not in a very good position to influence such inequalities directly, although there has been some discussion about the role of the Internet in subverting them and thus about the role anthropologists might play in this network. At a smaller scale, the small-triple-a organisation is one

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[6] M. Strathern, "The limits of auto-anthropology" in *Anthropology at home*, ed. A. Jackson, London, Tavistock, 1987.

[7] See, for example, J. Jackson, "Culture, genuine and spurious", *American Ethnologist* 22(2), 3-27, 1995.

attempt in the direction of increasing reflexivity and its electronic discussion list shows the problems involved: are traditional forms of academic elitism being reproduced in new technological forms? Do anthropologists really have much to say to non-anthropologists? Other organisations such as Anthropology in Action also try to create an arena in which anthropologists can engage politically and speed up, so to speak, the cycle of reflexivity.

As I said during the debate, thought also needs to be given to the institutional practices of academic anthropology and the academy in general. Although recent government quality control initiatives have intensified this in Britain, it is not only in this country that academic careers are measured principally—although not exclusively—by writings in journals or authorship of books directed mainly at other academics, whether trainee or qualified. This is an institutional obstacle to the possibility of reflexive social research and it is one which could be tempered by some institutional response: after all, the people who sit on the committees to decide on promotion, jobs, grants and research ratings within the discipline include many anthropologists. It is not beyond the bounds of possibility that the Association of Social Anthropologists or the Royal Anthropological Institute could voice some collective opinion on the way in which the quality of an academic individual or department could be judged, giving more weight to activities which could be said to promote the reflexivity of social knowledge. That would ease the decision—which I and I'm sure many other academics have had to make—about whether to work on a paper aimed at one of the major research journals or try to publish in the country where you do your research, knowing the latter will look less 'weighty' on the C.V.

Any form of political engagement is, by its very nature, contestable and arguable. Advocacy, as one particular mode of engagement or reflexive academic practice, shares this nature. A host of problems arises related to the specific interests being advocated, the divided interests within any 'community' on behalf of which one might be speaking, the difficulty of siding oneself with a group of people who represent themselves with, say, essentialist reifications of their identity and history which, as an anthropologist, one may wish to deconstruct.[8] These are all important questions, but they are all

[8] For a discussion of some of these points, see R. Paine, ed. *Advocacy and anthropology: first encounters*, St. John's, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1985. K. Hastrup and P. Elsass, "Anthropological advocacy: a contradiction in terms", *Current*

inherent in political action of any kind: who and how to represent, how to tell 'the truth' about people. Indeed, these questions are also present even in the least reflexive academic anthropological practice, the annals of which are full of 'purely academic' debates about precisely these issues. With direct advocacy, one comes up against the sharp end of these problems, but that is not a good reason for not engaging. In all cases, one has to legitimate one's actions with reference to a community of critics; with advocacy, that community is a broader one and the canons of legitimation perhaps more varied, but again that is not a convincing reason from not engaging.

Hastrup and Elsass argue that anthropological advocacy is a 'contradiction in terms' because anthropology is about revealing diverse viewpoints, whereas advocacy is about choosing and defending only one viewpoint. They argue that revealing such diversity to the people—the Arhuaco indians of Colombia—who were asking Hastrup and Elsass to intercede on their behalf could eventually help them to represent themselves more effectively. I would argue, first, that such a revelation is itself an important political act and, second, that even if one did choose to defend only one viewpoint—understanding advocacy in this narrow but precise sense—this would be done as a reasoned, strategic political act, not as a statement about some ultimate truth. In that sense, I do not think anthropological advocacy is a contradiction in terms.

Anthropology 31(3), 301-311, 1990. P. Wade, "The cultural politics of blackness in Colombia", *American Ethnologist* 22(2), 341-357, 1995. J. Weiner, "Anthropologists, historians and the secret of social knowledge", *Anthropology Today* 11(5), 3-7, 1995. See also A. Ahmed and C. Shore, *The future of anthropology: its relevance to the contemporary world*, London, Athlone, 1995.

PART 1—THE PRESENTATIONS

For the motion (1)

CHRIS FULLER

I assume we can all agree that advocacy by anthropologists involves them acting as spokesmen or spokeswomen for particular groups of people, about whom they have some expert knowledge, in order to help to present the case of those groups vis-à-vis some other groups or agencies. In order to act as advocates, anthropologists must plainly have such expert knowledge, typically derived from fieldwork among the relevant group, and normally they also have a commitment to the group and support the case that is being advanced. In theory, an anthropologist, like a lawyer, could act as advocate for a case that he or she did not support, but I assume that this is rare, so that I can ignore it here, although Bob Layton will mention an Australian dispute in which anthropologists acted as opposing advocates for different Aboriginal groups and a mining company.

I also assume we all agree that modern anthropology necessarily rests on a premise about the moral equality of all human beings. Hence, for example, racism as an ideology which holds that some humans are morally inferior to others is incompatible with the practice of anthropology—in fieldwork, writing or teaching. Anthropological advocacy must therefore also be based on a premise of moral equality, so that, for example, it can be deployed on behalf of the victims of racism, but not of racist oppressors without perverting that premise. Indeed and more generally, advocacy will always be on behalf of the oppressed rather than the oppressors, and the principal justification for it is that an expert anthropologist may be able to redress the balance of power between oppressor and oppressed. The first problem, which Jane Parish will cover in more detail, is that the identity of the oppressed—the ‘goodies’ being screwed by ‘baddies’—is frequently unclear, so that advocacy on their behalf is often highly problematic. Examples of this, where conflicting interests exist, are numerous; Hastrup and Elsass, for example, point out that it is easy to fall victim to stereotypes of goodies and baddies, so that indigenous tribal people are assumed to be in the right, whereas impoverished immigrants trying to scratch a

living from tribal lands are in the wrong.[9] The second problem is the well-known problem of unintended and unpredictable outcomes: the familiar bugbear of development programmes, including those furnished with plenty of anthropological expertise. In the context of development, successful advocacy on behalf of one oppressed group may, for example, allow its members to exploit another group which has now become relatively weaker, or allow one section within a group (such as men) to exploit another section (such as women). Alternatively, advocacy may just have totally unpredictable effects far away, and I shall now provide an example of this.

The River Narmada dam project, initially aided by the World Bank, is a well-publicised developmental disaster in western India, which has led to the displacement of huge numbers of people, mostly tribals and poor peasants, as well as a massive movement on their behalf in which anthropologists have played an advocacy role. Partly because of the Narmada dam controversy, the World Bank has now insisted that when people are displaced from their homes by its development programmes, new houses of at least equal standard must be provided. In the south Indian city of Madurai, a thousand miles south of the Narmada, the Bank recently paid for a project to renovate storm-water drains on which people had built their illegal squatter huts. These huts had blocked the drains and had caused floods during the monsoon rains, in which many people were drowned a few years ago. After the project was completed and the squatters had been rehoused, the Bank raised queries about whether the new houses were actually as good as their old huts, which infuriated the Indian official in charge of the project. As he rightly said, if local people came to know about the Bank's rules, even more landless people would start to squat on the drains all over again, in order to get new houses which might well be better than their huts and for which they would definitely have a legal title. Illegal squatting would be encouraged and yet more people might be drowned in future floods. The official's fury is not in itself an argument against advocacy on behalf of those dispossessed by the Narmada dam, but it is an illustration of the point that the consequences of such advocacy can have totally unpredictable and negative outcomes elsewhere. I have chosen this example precisely because it highlights unpredictability, whereas it might be argued that new forms of oppression by a beneficiary group against other

[9] K. Hastrup and P. Elsass. 1990. "Anthropological advocacy: a contradiction in terms". *Current Anthropology* 31(3), 301-311, 1991.

groups or sections within the group should be predictable with adequate analysis. Unpredictability, however, best exemplifies the general point that advocacy must commonly be pursued in a context of conflicting interests, which is further complicated when the outcome cannot be detected or foreseen at all. Thus advocacy on behalf of the oppressed may sound like a good and simple principle, but in practice it rarely is.

The response to this argument will be that in life in general the application of moral principles is normally unclear; nevertheless, decisions must be taken and moral equivocation is not an option. Further, all anthropological knowledge has political implications and applications, and anthropologists should be explicit about them and strive to use their knowledge beneficially. Anthropologists must therefore take the best decisions that they can, while also accepting that they may get it wrong. An important argument for making advocacy an institutional imperative for anthropologists is that they would then be required to make explicit moral choices on behalf of the oppressed and to use their expertise on behalf of the latter to the best of their ability.

But this argument raises another problem. Is a moral choice on behalf of the oppressed compatible with the practice of fieldwork or the principles on which it must be based? Let me here refer to my own experience of fieldwork in south India. Many ideologies apart from modern racism rest on a premise of moral inequality; one clear-cut example is the hierarchical ideology of caste. Thus anyone who does fieldwork in India is normally working with many people who continue to take it for granted that they are better—morally, culturally, intellectually, spiritually—than other people. This was certainly true of the villagers in Kerala where I first did fieldwork in 1971-2 and of the Brahman temple priests in Madurai with whom I have mainly worked since 1976. One of my clearest memories from fieldwork in Kerala concerns a strike by low-caste landless labourers demanding higher wages from their high-caste landlord employers. One evening during the strike, standing on the balcony of my house owned by one of the landlords, I remember watching a woman striker and her child going from shop to shop asking for food or credit, and being refused at every one. I did nothing to help that woman and her child, and beyond slipping the strikers a small amount of money surreptitiously, I did nothing to try to stop the landlords winning the strike, which they mainly did by the simple and brutal expedient of starving the labourers into submission. For

me, and no doubt for all of you, the oppressors and oppressed in strikes of this sort are self-evident, and standing mutely to the side made me feel upset and guilty. But I still think I was right to do nothing; in practice, I could have done nothing to help the labourers win the strike, and any attempt to do so would certainly have wrecked my relationships with the high-caste landlords and probably have led to my expulsion from the village. Even when conflict is muted, rather than open as in a strike, extreme levels of oppression are still normal in villages in India, and in many other parts of the world too. My situation in Kerala was therefore quite typical of the anthropologist's in India and many other places as well. In such cases, I contend that the fieldworker normally has to stand aside, because advocacy in favour of the oppressed would usually, if not always, be completely incompatible with the successful conduct of ethnographic research.

The priests in Madurai with whom I have worked perpetrate a variety of minor frauds on worshippers, but they are not really in a position to oppress anyone. Like many Brahmans, however, they generally take their own superiority for granted. In other words, like the high-caste landlords in Kerala, they certainly do not share the premise of moral equality on which anthropology is based, and in order to do fieldwork among them, deliberately thinking and acting outside that premise has always been necessary. Even if not in identical ways, I assume that many of you have had similar experiences in your own fieldwork when studying people whose taken-for-granted assumptions are radically different. Fieldwork, unlike advocacy, regularly obliges anthropologists to try to empathise with and understand people whose worldview is strongly antithetical to our own cherished principles. Bob Layton will, I think, argue that the ethnographic data we collect has to be treated as the cultural or intellectual property of our informants, so that we have a responsibility to deploy our knowledge on behalf of those to whom it originally and rightly belongs. In a complex, large-scale society with a shared culture like India, the question of cultural property is problematic; thus, for example, much of what the priests in Madurai have taught me belongs to an ancient Brahmanical tradition over which they have no monopoly. Even if we leave that problem aside, however, my opponent's argument about cultural property would appear to oblige me to advocate the case of the Brahman priests, whose claim on our moral sympathy is certainly dubious.

Nonetheless, my fieldwork among Brahman priests involves me in obligations to them, which are as inescapable as those that other ethnographers might have to people whose cause we might be more willing to advocate. The baddies, as well as the goodies, are our informants and we have responsibilities towards them—such as respecting their confidences and not acting to damage their lives—which we should not try to escape. Our job is to represent, as truthfully and impartially as possible, the society and culture of people whose worldview is morally unacceptable to us, as well as those whose worldview is congenial. To use our anthropological knowledge to act as advocates against those who have helped us to acquire it would be dishonest towards individuals who have trusted us; no doubt, there are circumstances in which such dishonesty is morally right, but I would contend that they are uncommon. To make advocacy an institutional imperative for anthropologists would therefore mean, even if advocacy were separated from fieldwork itself, that many of us might be required to betray the trust of those with whom we had worked. It would compromise fundamentally the ethical rules which ought to govern fieldwork and would therefore undermine the discipline itself.

At least in the modern west, a main purpose of anthropology is to make us and our students—and hopefully other people outside the profession—aware that the rest is not always like the west, because many of the principles taken for granted by us are not shared by others. The premise of moral equality is basic to anthropology, but one of the strengths of the discipline derives from the fact that so many of us have lived in societies where a premise of inequality is the norm, so that in this respect, as in so many others, we have had our own values relativised and questioned. Equality, of course, is only one of the values that fieldwork may put in question; there are many others too. Were advocacy to become an institutional imperative, there is a serious risk that this relativising experience would be devalued. Advocacy on behalf of the oppressed might come to be assessed as more worthwhile than understanding the oppressors as well as the oppressed, and more worthwhile than questioning the values upon which advocacy itself must rest.

Advocacy, like other forms of applied knowledge, is, I believe, best practised in an environment which gives highest priority to the pursuit of knowledge irrespective of whether it is applicable or inapplicable. Anthropologists who consider that they have a personal commitment to advocacy -which all of us are likely to have in some

circumstances -will discharge that commitment best if they have to do it within an intellectual and institutional climate in which the principles on which it depends are constantly being questioned. They will do it worse if the commitment becomes an institutional imperative, so that the discipline of anthropology ceases to value as its primary objective the attempt to understand those whose cause we would never wish to advocate, as well as those whose cause we might.

Against the motion (1)

ROBERT LAYTON

Advocacy means supporting or pleading for another. The term advocate can be used in a specific sense to describe someone whose profession is advocacy in a court of law. It is also used in a general sense to describe anyone who pleads, intercedes or speaks for, or on behalf of, another. I will argue that both are, to different degrees, imperative for the proper practice of anthropology.

There is no indigenous minority in Britain whose status is comparable to that of the indigenous peoples of Australia or North America, and British anthropology has therefore escaped the direct confrontation with the subjects of its study which has been unavoidable in Australia and the United States. But despite being shielded from such confrontation, we have experienced the debate over whether Functionalist theory and practice implicitly supported British Colonialism.[10] The issues are as important here as elsewhere, even if we are less practised at dealing with them.

I shall distinguish two levels at which advocacy can be practised namely, in ethnography and in theory.

Advocacy and ethnography

[10] T. Asad, ed., *Anthropology and the colonial encounter*. London, Ithaca Press, 1973. R. Grillo, "Applied anthropology in the 1980s: retrospect and prospect", in *Social anthropology and development policy*, eds. R. Grillo and A. Rew, London, Tavistock, pp. 1-36, 1985.

Participant observation is a co-operative enterprise which involves the anthropologist and subject community in a long and often demanding effort to arrive at intersubjective understanding. We, the anthropologists, impose ourselves upon those communities. Yet the goal of our field research is to understand *their* values, *their* ideas, *their* sentiments and experiences. While we may feel the assessment we make of this material is ours; the customs, the values and ideas, the oral histories remain the cultural property of the community which has co-operated with us. Why do communities co-operate with us? No-one has (to my knowledge) ever addressed a meeting of the ASA in the terms used by Sandra Onus, a representative of the National Aboriginal Consultative Committee, when she spoke to the Australia-New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science, saying: 'It has been and still is the feeling amongst my people that archaeologists are a bloody nuisance only good for sticking their noses and tools where they are not wanted, "just like most white men"'.[11] Even if our informants/co-workers or instructors have less opportunity to address us in this fashion, we must ask ourselves, why have we been given access to this cultural property? There are undoubtedly several possible answers. One will be that, as a professional translator of culture, the anthropologist is placed, by the character of their profession, in a unique position to speak for the people studied beyond the confines of their community.

Aboriginal land claims provide a simple and specific example of the narrow sense of advocacy. The anthropologist's task in a land claim is to translate traditional concepts of attachment to the land into the legal terminology of the Land Rights Act.[12] Often, in the course of working on a land claim, I have been given information it might have taken many more months to obtain if my presence in the community had offered no tangible benefit to the people I worked with. Sometimes that information was given to me in confidence, to increase my understanding of the basis for the claim. On other occasions it was given in order that it appear in my report. Last year, while working on the Hodgson Downs Land Claim, I was invited to watch the close of a ceremony. Aware of the damage anthropologists had done in the past by publishing photographs of ceremonies, I did

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[11] S. Onus, "Archaeologists and Aborigines", *Australian Archaeology*, 3, 2, 1975.

[12] R. Layton, "Anthropology and the Aboriginal Land Rights Act in northern Australia", in *Social anthropology and development policy*, eds. R. Grillo and A. Rew, London, Tavistock, pp. 148-167, 1985. See also R. Layton, "Representing people's place in the landscape of northern Australia", in Proceedings of the 1995 ASA Conference on Representation, eds. A. James, J. Hockey and A. Dawson (forthcoming).

not take my camera. One of the elders directing the ceremony turned to me and asked, 'Where's your camera?' 'Can I take photos?' I responded in surprise. 'Of course you can. That's your job', he said. A photograph was included in the Anthropologists' Report.[13] Where we are given privileged access to material, to enable us to speak for a community, we accept an obligation to do so. There will be other occasions when we are bound to secrecy, even in land claims.

The nature of our subject frequently leads us to work with small, often relatively weak communities whose customs are unfamiliar to outsiders. Generally, we do not undertake such work because we have been asked to act as advocates in the narrow, legal sense. Yet, wherever people allow us access to their traditions because they want outsiders to understand them better, we accept an obligation to act as advocates at the same time that we accept the information given to us. Kamala Ganesh, for example, worked with the women of a sub-caste living in an ancient fortress in a southern Indian town. The women are not allowed to leave the fortress and to many outsiders this constituted an intolerable form of oppression. Ganesh found, to the contrary, that the women saw themselves as 'bearers of the classical tradition of womanhood celebrated in myth and literature'.[14] Alex de Waal spoke for people's tenacity in the face of famine, showing that maintaining social relationships is more important than keeping one's stomach full.[15]

This is the kind of advocacy anthropology has practised since Malinowski published *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*.[16] Wherever isolated or underprivileged groups seek advocacy in the narrower, legal sense of the word, anthropology should, in my view, be ready and able to take a step further and provide it.

Advocacy and theory

The origins of anthropology in the Enlightenment explain both its potential for advocacy and its limitations. Once people believed themselves free to decide for themselves what was, or was not, reasonable social behaviour according to natural rather than divine

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[13] R. Layton and Bauman, "Hodgson Downs Land Claim: anthropologists' report". Unpublished report for Darwin Northern Land Council.

[14] K. Ganesh, "Breaching the wall of difference: fieldwork and a personal journey to Srivaikuntam, Tamil Nadu", in *Gendered fields: women, men and ethnography*, eds. D. Bell, P. Caplan and W.J. Karim, London, Routledge, 1993, p. 137.

[15] A. de Waal, *Famine that kills: Darfur, Sudan, 1984-1985*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1989.

[16] B. Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, London, Routledge, 1922.

law, it became possible to ask both how actual societies might be improved, and how present societies had diverged from the natural, or original human condition. Hobbes and Rousseau made the familiar feudal societies of their time appear unnatural by opposing them to the original or natural condition. But when Hobbes wrote that native Americans still existed in a state of war of each against all; when Rousseau wrote of the Eighteenth-Century Carib selling you his bed in the morning, and asking for it back in the evening when he realised he would need it again, were they speaking *for* other ways of being human, or misusing information about others to pursue a political agenda within their own society?[17]

Hobbes and Rousseau questioned the divine validation of contemporary European society by opposing it to another condition, the anarchy or nobility of the supposed original human condition. Functionalism and socioecology in turn questioned the self-evident, given character of the 'natural human condition' by showing that it, too, was contrived. Even as anthropology enabled this understanding, however, it was compelled to use the existing categories of Western discourse. The 'violence' of anthropology occurs at the moment that the cultural space of an exotic culture is 'shaped and reoriented by the glance of the foreigner'.[18] Derrida follows Lévi-Strauss in regarding writing as a form of oppression, in which the exotic is appropriated, and reconstituted within our own system of cognitive oppositions.[19] If the history of anthropology is a history of misrepresenting others to help us understand the shortcomings of our own culture, then we cannot claim the role of advocate.

Realisation that anthropology had been implicated both in sustaining colonial regimes in Africa, and in the United States' aggression in Southeast Asia prompted Marxist anthropologists to call for a conscious engagement with the oppressive effect of Western relationships with the Third World.[20] Post-modernists have tended to argue the contrary view, that the West's claim to be able to present a unified account of humanity has been irrevocably called

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[17] T. Hobbes, *Leviathan, or the matter, form, and power of a commonwealth, ecclesiastical and civil*, London, Dent, 1970 [1651], p. 65. J-J. Rousseau, *The social contract and discourses*, ed. G.D.H. Cole, London, Dent, 1963 [1755], p. 163.

[18] J. Derrida, *Of grammatology*, trans. G.C. Spivak, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976, p. 113.

[19] J. Derrida, *Writing and difference*, trans. A. Bass, London, Routledge, 1978. C. Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes tropiques*, trans. J and D. Weightman, London, Cape, 1973.

[20] See, for example, E. Wolf, *Europe and the people without history*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1982.

into question by the inescapable involvement of academics in oppression. 'There is no master narrative that can reconcile the tragic and comic plots of global cultural history'.[21]

I wish to propose a third position. Gombrich's analysis of style and illusion in art made many of the points Derrida and Foucault later made with regard to written discourse. Just as Gombrich argued that it makes no sense to try and interpret an artistic motif unless one has learnt how to classify and locate it within its stylistic tradition, so Foucault and Derrida argued that each book must be related to a tradition of writing.[22] Foucault put 'the history of the referent', i.e., the objects to which discourse refers, to one side and Derrida regarded changes in meaning as the outcome of random 'play' within language. Gombrich, on the other hand, was interested in how the artist solved the problem of representing the world when 'the amount of information reaching us from the visible world is incalculably large, and the artist's medium is inevitably restricted and granular'.[23] He concluded that styles are devised to convey particular messages about the world: 'to say of a drawing that it is a correct view of Tivoli ... means that those who understand the notation will derive *no false information* from the drawing'.[24] Just as an artistic style tends to reduce the innumerable details of visual perception to regular forms, so written styles tend to reduce the richness of experience to categorical distinctions. The question, 'is this an accurate view of the Nuer?' remains as valid as 'is this an accurate view of Tivoli?'

Since, however, all styles are chosen for a purpose, it is legitimate to ask what that purpose is. Is Evans-Pritchard's technique of rendering the Nuer as timeless and uniform representatives of a homogenous culture merely a political act?[25] Surely it is a consequence of the way in which the theory of structural functionalism minimises the significance of personal action. Style is used to depict material brought into focus by theory.

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[21] J. Clifford, "Introduction", in *Writing culture: the poetics and politics of ethnography*, eds. J. Clifford and G.E. Marcus, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1988, p. 15.

[22] E. Gombrich, *Art and illusion*, London, Phaidon, 1960. M. Foucault, *The archaeology of knowledge*, London, Tavistock, 1972, p. 24. J. Derrida, *Of grammatology*, trans. G.C. Spivak, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976, p. 50-60.

[23] M. Foucault, *op. cit.*, p. 47. J. Derrida, *ibid.* E. Gombrich, *op. cit.*, p. 182.

[24] E. Gombrich, *op. cit*., p. 78, his emphasis.

[25] E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1940. R. Rosaldo, "From the door of his tent: the fieldworker and the inquisitor", in *Writing culture: the poetics and politics of ethnography*, eds. J. Clifford and G.E. Marcus, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1986, p. 91.

But this is not the end of the matter. Linnaeus believed species were little changed since their creation by God. Variation within a species was considered to be nothing more than evidence for the effect of soil and climate on a pre-determined 'type'. Darwin's theory of natural selection refocused scientists' attention on variation within populations. Variation now provided crucial evidence for the almost imperceptibly slow process which led to the origin of new species. The two theories could be said to demand different styles of writing. While it is inadequate to dismiss the Linnaean approach as nothing more than an exercise in political domination, it has an inescapable political dimension. His classification remains invaluable as a means of studying biological variation at any moment in time, yet the view that human populations are a manifestation of a given 'type' also justifies racism. Equally, Darwin's theory seems to advocate competition and individualism in human social life. When we debate whether these are legitimate inferences we are confronted both with the political dimension of theory *and* the adequacy of theory as a representation of its objects. Modernism has denied one aspect and Postmodernism the other.

Any theory that is capable of practical application will have political implications. This does not mean that theories are necessarily nothing but political ideologies.[26] It does mean that we can never overlook the political dimension of our theories. We should strive to 'represent' our ethnography through theories (or styles of writing) which represent in greatest detail of predicament of the people with whom we have worked. In developing theories which enable us to represent as fully as possible the impact of the West upon the Third World, the character of non-Western concepts of land tenure, the threat of both famine and famine relief to social life, we will also be playing the role of advocate.

This will undoubtedly bring us into conflict with others who espouse different theories. The crux of the Finniss River Land Claim was that different anthropological theories represented different Aboriginal communities as traditional owners of the land.[27] Jimmy Weiner's contribution to the most recent issue of *Anthropology Today* shows how anthropology and history provide competing representations of culture and tradition which have direct

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[26] R. Layton, "Introduction", in *Conflict in the archaeology of living traditions*, ed. R. Layton, London, Unwin, pp. 1-21, 1989.

[27] R. Layton, "Anthropology and the Aboriginal Land Rights Act in northern Australia", in *Social anthropology and development policy*, eds. R. Grillo and A. Rew, London, Tavistock, pp. 148-167, 1985.

consequences for the advocacy of a land claim in South Australia.[28] But if our theories cannot be put to practical effect, what use are they? My own experience of working on land claims is that being asked to defend one's interpretations in public both sharpens the mind and develops one's theoretical insights.

For the motion (2)

JANE PARISH

We are all engaged in decision making explicitly or otherwise. Decisions are part of and result in effects many of which are unintended which have repercussions long after the event. Today, I want to look at the issue of decision making, communication and knowledge arguing that institutional ordering and advocacy is a contradictory process which is inimical to today's intellectual challenge and the fluid social worlds in which anthropologists work.

Anthropology is, possibly, founded on certain moral principles. But advocacy in its strongest sense, argues Cornell, implies a morality which is a special form of communication that is not a system of behaviour rules, nor a system of positive standards, but a market of approval and disapproval.[29] So how can an institutional perspective engage with these notions?

Well, institutional approval involves the sorting, filtering and purifying of data. But, what is the point at which the perspective of the institution imposes itself. For example, accepting that our discipline today supports a line of racial equality, would the collective voice of the discipline support advocacy in the following cultural contexts or alternatively regard them as outside of an organisational anthropological remit?

[a] The war in Rwanda. We might feel falls firmly within the anthropological field, but as a discipline taking a critical stance, what exactly do we want to say? What sort of decisions do we want to make about these atrocities? Are we able to translate our communal

[28] J. Weiner, "Anthropologists, historians and the secret of social knowledge", *Anthropology Today*, 11(5), 3-7, 1995.

[29] D. Cornell, "Rethinking the time of feminism", in *Feminist contentions: a philosophical exchange*, eds. S. Benhabib et al, London, Routledge, 1995.

concerns into action and if so, what are the mechanisms involved in such a process? Are our judgements based on calculated, rational decisions and what information do we choose to select and ignore in the decision-making process? Alternatively, if we choose to accept Kierkegaard's proposal that the moment of decision is always madness, does the moment indeed always escape us? At what cost do we clench the fleeting in our grasp?

[b] The trial of O.J. Simpson. This is a second example of racism—or is it? As Freedland wrote in *The Guardian* the day after the trial verdict: 'The fear now is that America's courts are becoming not places of cool justice, but of hot politics. Decisions depend not on guilt or innocence, but on consequences, past grievances and demographics'. As a white anthropologist, should I pay particularly attention to this warning? And as a discipline that is at least partially built on a colonial past, can we purport to advocate any sort of impartial justice at all?

In this example, the jury indeed accepted the defence team's claim that O.J. was a victim of the institutionalised racism of a country and a police department. Indeed, J. Cochran went on to compare the racist detective Mark Fuhrman to Adolf Hitler. But should the race issue have hijacked the trial, so that the brutal murder of a woman and her friend became marginalised?

[c] This leads me to my third example of the difficulties facing institutional engagement: the growing uneasiness felt by women and homosexuals at the lyrics employed by black rappers (often gang members) depicting women as, for example, 'bitches to be fucked' and homosexuals as 'faggots to be shot'. Again, armed with notions of equalities, whose rights do we address and prioritise? And if the strength of the discipline comes from the ability of anthropologists to engage in diverse local contexts from a variety of often conflicting perspectives, does not institutionalised advocacy run the risk of undermining competing knowledges in the pursuit of competing self-understandings? Perhaps the politics of, for example, racism are such that advocacy cannot be reduced to notions of public legislation or appeals to abstract notions of right and wrong. For, in an overwhelming mesh of cultural contexts, it becomes less clear cut as to who is to benefit from institutional approval or disapproval. A discipline cannot adapt quickly to differentials and referentials between perspective, scale and detail or say much about the sort of

action to be taken between the offering of 'global' platitudes and 'localised' concern without specifying its own 'location'.

These contexts illustrate how cultural contexts embrace contradictory messages which can become bogged down in controversy and depict how a set of complex issues appropriate concepts borrowed from a whole range of disciplines. But these positions are also representative of a further intricate relationship between the discipline and the anthropologists who work in it. If I choose to comment on O.J.'s guilt, am I by virtue of this speaking as an anthropologist or as a concerned individual? Or, alternatively, if I choose to take direct action upon shops selling what I regard as offensive recordings, am I doing this as an anthropologist or as a feminist and are the two mutually compatible? More importantly, these tangled issues also raise the question of decision making and the taking of responsibility which becomes increasingly unclear 'in a paradox of consequences'. Will those holding positions of power within the discipline take responsibility for their decision making or, as is usually the case, disclaim any institutional responsibility for the decisions that I make as a junior anthropologist on probation at a peripheral institution? In other words will the buck be passed on and is the ability to pass the buck only a privilege of the powerful?

Thus, increasingly, institutional imperatives become those of making certain that information flows within the discipline leave no room for misunderstandings about the issues to be addressed or the action in which to participate. In other words, advocacy becomes formalised. This would probably, as Cooper argues, involve the transformation of information into a type of knowledge that entails the elimination of uncertainty and unpredictability in institutionalised formula.[30] The suppression of the unanticipated becomes paramount and as Heidegger wrote part of 'a language that is an indispensable but a masterless means of communication that may be used as one pleases, as indifferent as a means of public transport, as a street car which everyone rides in'.[31] So, as Cooper describes, an institutional accentuation serves to expel the uncertainties endemic to academic life and flatten them.

In this context, advocacy becomes the creation of knowledge which can be transmitted with least effort. Or, in other words, the commensurable. Increasingly, institutional demands for advocacy are

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[30] R. Cooper, "Information, communication and organisation: a post-structural revision", *Journal of Mind and Behaviour*, 8(3), 395-417, 1987.

[31] Cited in R. Cooper, *op. cit.*, p. 397.

becoming linked to wider systems of information technologies. Naturally, some universities are better placed between options to take advantage of this 'global facility' than others.[32] Interestingly, the types of knowledge performed hold for an array of exciting possibilities. But the present economic and political climate seems to suppress diversity 'at home' in favour of a commonly held definition of a specific type of knowledge that equals commensurable and especially useful information. In this scenario, incommensurability is synonymous with ambiguity and uncertainty is indistinguishable from ignorance. Everything is administered according to a principle of 'pre-formance, i.e. performance ... organisation will increasingly become the pre-formation of relevant information'.[33] And who decides what is relevant? Information becomes not that which is communicated between actors, or even possessed by the mass of them, but that which is programmed as to whether certain connections can be made between comparable concepts: for example, is money being spent correctly on projects with clear targets, goals and activities? For what is already established is general, unitary and therefore comprehensive to all: a counter-culture involving contradictions, paradoxes and rival claims is missing.

This becomes particularly problematic when institutional advocacy takes over without sufficient time or reflection pre-constituted objects of knowledge. Produced from pre-determined designs of objectification on the part of those propagating their own scale models of social division and identity, this effects in turn 'the information and objects (objectives) that are produced'.[34] In a framework of grants for useful policies, disciplines prepare objects (or what Cooper refers to as objectives of knowledge) which are never just utilitarian services or products, but the actual preparation of objects by means of which the discipline can be certain of itself. Objectives shape contexts; shape knowledge. Institutional advocacy is now specifically producing, rather than reflecting upon, the localised conditions by which a society or group can see itself, but at what cost to the dimensions that are ignored? For it is not simply the case that the needs of the market can be separated from the intellectual foundations of the academy. Rather, the changing

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[32] M. Strathern, ed., *Shifting contexts: transformations in anthropological knowledge*, London, Routledge, 1995. A. Cheater, "Globalisation and the new technologies of knowing: anthropological calculus or chaos?" in *Shifting contexts: transformations in anthropological knowledge*, ed. M. Strathern, London, Routledge, pp. 117-130, 1995.

[33] R. Cooper, *op. cit.*, p. 398.

[34] R. Cooper, *op. cit.*, p. 407.

knowledge now produced by the latter internally articulates market demands such as to produce a functional knowledge.[35]

This brings me to my final point, borrowed from Bauman, concerning the roles of legislators and interpreters. We are, he argues, all engaged in decision making, particularly in a pluralist world. We use multiple frames of reference: comparable and competing positions which are not to be reconciled. Decision making has consequences which cannot be predicted because each decision creates more, rather than less, choice and uncertainty. But, perhaps, he suggests, this is where the intellectual is located, not as figure, but grounded against a shifting territory 'open to conquest, invasion and legal claims as all territories are'.[36] Here she interprets different standpoints in relation to one another where there are so many opinions and differences and competing beliefs, but lacks the certainty or resources to act—hence her interdependence on and complex relationship with experts. It is here that the intellectual puts aside matters of taste, judgement or truth. This is the strategy that abandons appeals to universal truth claims while recognising that political action as communication should be directed at understanding how universals are built—'those premises that function as authorising grounds are constituted through exclusions such that, exposed, the universal appears to be a contingent and contestable presumption'.[37] This position contrasts readily with a time when intellectuals believed that they alone possessed the Enlightenment knowledge capable of expressing truth via final vocabularies. Are such foundationalist claims today outdated? I think so, although I do not want to descend at this stage into arguments about relativism or referentials. Perhaps, and to end on a negative note, the only morality remaining is a personal conviction in the worth of one's own work at least within the constraining framework I have outlined above.

Against the motion (2)

MICHAEL ROWLANDS

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[35] See M. Strathern, ed., *Shifting contexts: transformations in anthropological knowledge*, London, Routledge, 1995.

[36] Z. Bauman, *Interpreters and legislators*, London, Routledge, 1991, p. 19.

[37] J. Butler, "Contingent foundations", in *Feminist contentions: a philosophical exchange*, eds. S. Benhabib et al, London, Routledge, 1995.

Advocacy in anthropology is nothing new. It was formed in the origins of the discipline and is constitutive of it. Advocacy, that is, defined as a political commitment to the interests of the people we live and work with. In the home of the Manchester School does this really need to be defended?

My argument will be that in the very foundations of anthropology in Britain there was a commitment to the advocacy of the rights of the peoples studied by anthropologists. It is neither a recent matter nor one of individual will, but was constitutive of the subject going back to the 1840s, with the activities of missionary societies, the Anti-Slavery League and the establishment of what came to be the Royal Anthropological Institute. The numbers of anthropologists involved were minuscule and debates were highly personalised. Nevertheless, anthropologists up to the 1960s were responding to and created by conditions that shaped the growth of anthropology. I will argue that this drive and passion in the subject was to a large extent dissipated in the 1960s with the expansion of anthropology as an academic, university-based discipline and its search for, and failure to establish, epistemological certitude. The last decade has seen trenchant critiques of overly abstract, objectivising or analysing tendencies in the discipline. A relativising, critical tendency in anthropology has the danger of inculcating a disabling sense of the limits of its own method. The result is signs of an imploded discipline that has justified itself through the expertise of its method, but that presently fails to address practically every significant issue in contemporary global politics. Anthropology in the post Cold War world of the 1990s would do well to retrieve its earlier sense of commitment that was compromised either by arid academic debate or by being harnessed to a notion of the practical, in the form of development studies.

Let me first dispute the separation of the personal from the institutional as a relevant issue in past anthropological commitment to advocacy. Between 1900 and the 1920s, anthropologists in Britain were driven by the need to create a role for themselves in the emerging colonial world; they were motivated by a genuine desire to help and were desperate for state recognition. The transition from evolutionary to functionalist anthropology took place in an institutional setting concerned with establishing the significance of anthropology for the study of social change. There was no simplistic radical versus conservative personal politics driving particular

personal ambitions. Anthropology was, by and large, not a university-based subject. It had to be paid for, so to speak, by arguing for the unique contribution it could make to the colonial situation and as, broadly speaking, most practitioners were of a liberal disposition, it was advocated that this should be done by 'speaking on behalf of the native'. The study of 'tribes' as logical, coherent, organised wholes was contrasted with 'modern-industrial' societies as two types of interacting and clashing social systems on which anthropologists were uniquely placed to advise.

As is well known the study of conflict in societies in transition—as institutionalised advocacy—was foundational to the creation of social anthropology. 'The very existence of social anthropology in the colonial period constitutes a source of potential radical criticism of the colonial order itself' is how Wendy James described the anthropologist as reluctant imperialist.[38] But the form of the criticism had to be indirect. In Africa in the 1930s and 1940s, anthropology was institutionalised via the research institutes set up to advise the colonial service—principally the East African Institute, the Rhodes Livingstone Institute and the International African Institute.[39] The last was set up and funded by the Rockefeller foundation and its first five-year plan was modelled on an article Malinowski had published in *Africa* in 1929 entitled "Practical Anthropology".[40] The study of culture contact and social change was to be the primary objective of the Institute through independent scientific research combining practical and theoretical approaches.

There is no doubt that personal attitudes were important in this. Daryll Forde, a cagey conservative who took over the International African Institute after World War II, saw his function as principally managerial and adapting the Institute to the research needs of the Colonial Social Science Research Council. M.G. Smith's fieldwork in Hausaland (e.g., on government in Zazzau) or the Ardeners' work on plantations and labour in Cameroon were marked by the imperative of careful, detailed ethnography.[41] Yet it was Smith who

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[38] W. James, "The anthropologist as reluctant imperialist", in *Anthropology and the colonial encounter*, ed. T. Asad, New York, Humanities Press, 1973, p. 42.

[39] The original title of the institution, founded in 1926, was the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures.

[40] B. Malinowski, "Practical anthropology", *Africa* 2, 22-38, 1929.

[41] M.G. Smith, *Government in Zazzau, 1800-1950*, Oxford, Oxford University Press for the International African Institute, 1960. E. Ardener, *Plantation and village in the Cameroons: some economic and social studies*, London, Oxford University Press for the Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1960.

described his fieldwork as a contribution to the 'break up of colonial complacency'—i.e., as an attack on the functionalism that had ideologically sustained the study of social change and indirect rule policies.[42]

To talk of personal commitment in Manchester of course evokes the spirit of Max Gluckman and the formation of the Rhodes Livingstone Institute. The setting was very different: an East Africa of mines, labour migration and incipient industrialisation. The four directors of the Institute—Godfrey Wilson, Max Gluckman, Elizabeth Colson and Clyde Mitchell—varied in their radicalism, but Wilson as an anarchist and pacifist in the war and Gluckman as his left-wing protegé and successor both provoked agitator theories of anthropology as critics of colonial policies. The reluctance of mining authorities to allow Wilson to study labour relations in the copper mines was because 'his methods might cause discontent and unrest besides undermining the African respect for the European mineworkers'.[43] Gluckman banned for 15 years from Barotseland, Chris Slaughter banned from West Africa, Peter Worseley banned from working in Central Africa, Victor Turner as a Communist Party member before converting to Catholicism—all are good anthropology culture heroes, but they were drawn to the field by the setting and commitment of the RLI to independent research.

The work of the anthropologist was sometimes vilified in the press in what was then Northern Rhodesia—for example, Wilson in 1940 after his report of the death of 17 miners in strikes on the Copperbelt. There was nothing particularly hidden about either the criticism or the responses. All this no doubt could be taken as the particular consequences of particular personal views—for example, Wilson's insistence on scientific independence in research: 'Financed by colonial governments and more reluctantly by the copper companies, and their associates, nevertheless the Institute was servant of neither'.[44]

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[42] S. Feuchtwang, "The colonial formation of British social anthropology" in *Anthropology and the colonial encounter*, ed. T. Asad, New York, Humanities Press, 1973, p. 73.

[43] Cited in R. Brown, "Anthropology and colonial rule: the case of Godfrey Wilson and the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, Northern Rhodesia", in *Anthropology and the colonial encounter*, ed. T. Asad, New York, Humanities Press, 1973, p. 191.

[44] R. Brown, "Anthropology and colonial rule: the case of Godfrey Wilson and the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, Northern Rhodesia", in *Anthropology and the colonial encounter*, ed. T. Asad, New York, Humanities Press, 1973, p. 197.

This research independence in the periphery—radical commitment to advocating critique of colonial government policies and their consequences—also encouraged fundamental critiques of anthropological writings on social change. It promoted the theoretical questioning of the taken for granted transformation of traditional tribes into modern societies as the obvious object of anthropological study. It was equally complemented by the writing of careful and detailed traditional ethnographies that were reconstructions in the classic manner.[45]

However, it was also about institutionalisation in another form. Gluckman felt stuck in Central Africa. On his part, there was envy and disrespect, I suspect, for Evans Pritchard in particular. There was his insistence on scientific officers at the RLI being be trained in the UK and on the need to set up Manchester as a sort of fourth pole to counter the Oxford, Cambridge and LSE anthropology departments. It is consistent with the need to institutionalise a radical critique within an academic setting.

There is no need to labour the point that an institutional imperative and personal commitment have always been complicated matters in anthropology. Nor that the many critics—mostly in the 1970s and 1980s—of anthropology's involvement in colonial policies were themselves making politically correct moves within the academic community. But the 1960s expansion of anthropology as an academic discipline was a turning point. In Africa, American social science had moved in and the impact of modernisation theory sidelined the role of the anthropologist and the study of the local. Instead, it was decolonisation and the macro issues of how to unblock constraints to modernise that brought political scientists and economists in droves on to the academic scene, marginalising anthropology's commitment to understand social change under colonialism.

The response of anthropology, in Britain in particular, was a turn to the academy. It also led to a phenomenal increase in the number of anthropologists. The political agenda in the 1960s and 1970s became one of how to establish anthropology in the academic community. In the 1970s and 1980s, anthropologists were no longer addressing colonial administrators as they did in the 1950s. They addressed linguists, students of religion and philosophers in debates

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[45] For example, E. Colson and M. Gluckman's edited collection, *Seven Tribes of British central Africa*, Oxford, Oxford University Press for the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, 1951.

about rationality, translation and the like. Even the flurry around a Marxist anthropology was compromised by its academicism, since Godelier was as much concerned with rivalling Lévi-Strauss as setting a political agenda for anthropology. In other words, I would quite agree there was a turning away from the idea of advocacy in anthropology, regardless of the political position of particular anthropologists. The motion of the debate applies to this period.

Talal Asad's *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter* is probably one of the best known products of this period, concerned with the role of anthropology as interlocutor of Third World/Western inequalities.[46] However, it has been the rise of Cultural Studies and of postcolonial literatures of various kinds that has compromised anthropology and laid it most open to accusations of conservatism, complicity and the like. It is ironic that Stuart Hall and the creation of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham was in fact stimulated by anthropological writings on the Caribbean through the influence of C.L.R. James. In the 1970s and 1980s, advocacy was taken up and developed as Cultural Studies which now challenges anthropology for academic space in the form of postcolonial studies, debates on hybridity and the location of culture. Anthropology's answer has been to stress ethnography and expertise, certainly its major strengths, but scarcely an answer to these criticisms.

I would argue, therefore, that in the 1990s anthropology has the opportunity to re-grasp its central role as an independent, critical discipline that converges with its traditional, global aspirations. Let me cite two examples of critical anthropological work in the 1990s which exemplify what an engaged, vocational anthropology means and would allow it to break out of the academicism that smothers its sense of engagement with real worlds and peoples.

First, I refer to Paul Richards' work on youth, insurgency and resources in the rainforest in Sierra Leone and Liberia. The background is the ending of the Cold War and the widespread argument that with the freeing of international relations from a magnetic axis between Washington and Moscow, the rest of the world was free to assume new orientations. The post Cold War 'global disorder' thesis argues that many postcolonial states, that had been artificially strengthened by the Cold War, were now in sharp decline. The fate of some was to collapse entirely—for example,

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[46] T. Asad, ed., *Anthropology and the colonial encounter*. New York, Humanities Press, 1973.

Liberia and Somalia. Others survived in attentuated form, undermined by conflict, maladministration, declining commodity prices and reduced aid support. What happens, it has been claimed, in cases where the state withdraws, creating formless anarchy and ugly civil war, is that the superficially modernised and teeming cities of coastal West Africa inherit an 'animist' predisposition to crime and bizarre acts of violence. Unrestrained by strong family structures or the deep commitment to world religions, the sub-Saharan youths were 'loose molecules in an unstable mixture, ready to explode'.[47]

These influential ideas, widely referred to as 'the new barbarism', share a key idea: that anti-state violence and war are driven by forces beyond the rational comprehension of the belligerants. This 'new racism' is countered by Richards who argues that violence in Sierra Leone, for example, far from constituting anarchy, is in fact highly structured and predictable in its distribution and impact. We can better understand the war in Liberia and Sierra Leone as guided by a new rationality of the allocation of resources—i.e., the smuggling of diamonds, arms and drugs—and a new political rationality—the way state decline has impacted on the education, aspirations and employment of the young. We also need to understand why the belligerants pay a great deal of attention to the ludic and dramaturgical aspects of the conflict. The staging and acting out of a series of violent masquerades is intended to resonate with local and international cultural interpretations of Africa. It is also about why the intentions of the young and their expression of antagonism towards a failed modernity leads to attacks on food convoys and aid workers, the killing of priests and expatriates as well as attacks on elders and those who have failed them. Advocacy here, as the commitment to understanding and representing their values, sentiments and experiences, produces precisely an alternative picture of the situation in that part of coastal West Africa which contrasts with the popular perception of chaos and anarchy that stimulates the building of fortress Europe and North America.

My second example is drawn from the critique of humanitarian aid in Africa by Alex de Waal.[48] His advocacy of aid-free zones is equally linked to a perception of the post-1989 Cold War world. In a situation of declining states, the weakening of the

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[47] P. Richards, *Fighting for the rainforest: war, youth and resources in Sierra Leone*, London, James Currey, forthcoming.

[48] See, for example, A. de Waal, *Facing genocide: the Nuba of Sudan*, London, Africa Rights, 1995. "Genocide in Rwanda", *Anthropology Today* 10(3), 1-2, 1994.

social contract between state and people is replaced by humanitarian aid. But instead of the long term commitment to development of the 1980s, this aid is short term and provided by publicity-conscious NGOs. The effect in Rwanda—where it was estimated over 150 NGOs were operating at one time in the crisis and not one had any measurable effect on health or mortality rates in the camps—is to destroy the relationship between political power and local population: the phenomenon of strong state intervention that secures the loyalty of local populations. His argument that, historically, famines arise where the social contract has been eroded or is in decline has strong prescriptible implications. It empowers the researcher to intervene because not to do so would be criminal.

This is advocacy in the 1990s. I would argue that the evidence is everywhere that anthropology has to address a significantly changing world. Postmodernist critiques were useful in clearing away older paradigms, but in themselves were incapable of creating anything new. Anthropology has stood and should stand again for the maintenance of a critical integrity that held commitment as a priority. I believe anthropology should retain claims to moral authority based on knowledges that are open to social and moral evaluation. I do not mean by this that the Association of Social Anthropologists or the Royal Anthropological Institute be asked to set up a committee or that a departmental thought police should be established that sits in judgement on research. Anticipation rather than prediction should be our concern, with the possibility of recognising that we will get things wrong and of being accountable for that in some way. For this reason, we must not collude in attempts to marginalise our forms of knowledge and doubt—as advised by some. Some anthropologists may enjoy their own sense of marginality, but they take up this position at the expense of their ability to challenge the conditions of peoples whose exclusion is not chosen, but is a consequence of their oppression.

PART 2—THE DEBATE[49]

Peter Wade: A whole variety of issues has been raised so far. On the one hand, the kind of position that Chris and Jane are taking, focuses on the complexity involved in trying to put any kind of advocacy into practice: that of distinguishing who is to be advocated and what are the conflicting sets of interests. On the other hand, there is the problem of the process of formalising advocacy and the possibility of a kind of Weberian bureaucratisation that might take place as a result. So it might be worth thinking about different ways of 'institutionalising' some form of political engagement, because what we are talking about here is the role of intellectuals in society in general—rather than just anthropologists vis-a-vis the people who study—and trying to create ways in which anthropologists or intellectuals can do more than just talk to each other. That seems to me to be the broadest issue behind the particulars of this debate. There might be other ways of institutionalising advocacy, for example, through the kind of technology that the Internet represents.

The position that Bob and Mike are taking seems to me to say, well, writing or representation is in itself is a political act, and that therefore as a anthropologist or as an intellectual, through your representations, you're automatically engaging. This, I must say, strikes me as a slight conservative position, because it's basically saying that we don't really need to do anything other than what we are already doing. So I'm not sure that I see that as a very powerful defence of the idea of institutionalising advocacy. Anyway, I will open the floor now.

Dick Werbner (University of Manchester): I don't want to say simply that Mike Rowlands won my heart because he appealed to the Manchester School and said so many good things about the political commitment of Manchester anthropologists, but I must admit that, lest what I go on to say be taken to conceal a real sympathy with what Mike is saying. This is partly on the basis that there have been anthropologists who have been very deeply committed to advocating

[49] In editing oral contributions transcribed from tape, I have reduced the length somewhat by cutting superfluous statements and repetition. The overall meaning has not, I hope, been significantly affected [Ed.].

the causes of the people with whom they worked and who have been aware that there are problems that they cannot avoid because they impress themselves on the anthropologist very directly. I have the feeling in too much of what came before Mike Rowlands that we were addressing anthropology as usual, in a very cosy pluralistic world where all of us are free to disengage or engage without any deep pressure from the crisis of the world around us and I think this is a cop-out. Rather than being a conservative act, as Peter Wade has referred to the writing of anthropology as presented by Mike and Bob, I think it's essential that we face the fact that we are in a world with major crises, where people are undergoing traumas, where the anthropology of the present is not a safe and easy anthropology, and unless we are in some way advocates of people who are under these pressures, then we are not anthropologists as there have been anthropologists in the past, deeply committed to criticism, deeply committed to the people whose causes concern them. So I would put the question first to Jane and to Chris: How do you see the possibility of writing and studying anthropology in a world where there are crisis and traumas and where it is very evident that the people we are studying are not merely exploited, but subject to gross dislocation and oppression?

Jeanette Edwards (University of Keele): I would like Bob and Mike to comment a bit further about the examples that Mike used of the work of Paul Richards and Alex de Waal. In fact, you could use those two examples to show how personal commitment to anthropology—a personal commitment to their particular fieldwork and their particular people that they are working with—was mobilised much more than an institutional commitment. The reason I ask this is that I think if we do leave things to the institution, then we are probably on a very sticky wicket. If we look at the way in which we are very poor at advocating in our own back yard: I'm thinking now—I pick up on a point of Jane's—of the exploitation of part-time labour, of students, to further people in their own academic careers. There is a great deal of exploitation on our own back doorstep and I wonder whether, if we do rely on the institution, we in fact lose the personal commitment shown in the examples you gave of Paul Richards and Alex de Waal—and I could add Rayna Rapp and Marilyn Strathern and many other people—which is due to a personal commitment rather than an institutional backup.

Mike Rowlands: I selected those two cases simply because I know and am involved in a sense with both of them. I don't deny there are many others. I think the question is: Why should one subscribe to Paul Richards or Alex de Waal making claims or statements about situations which are often difficult, remote and in a sense impossible to evaluate on one's own terms? You have to assume that they belong to some kind of scholarly community in which critical evaluation takes place. That's why I made the point about Habermas: it's a question of debate, and debate is not sort of an annual event held by anthropologists on occasions like this. It should be a continuous process; there should be nothing else in anthropology except debate.

The whole point is that we have to be able to bring to account someone like Paul Richards or Alex de Waal or any of the others. We have to know why they are saying these things, why they are representing things in certain ways; we have to be able to be clear as to the conditions under which they are saying these things. The degree of indeterminacy and unpredictability in what they are saying can be assessed and evaluated. Now in the case of Alex de Waal, he is not simply talking as Alex de Waal, he is talking as the director of an independent research institute called African Rights which has a very credible record of publishing very large reports on precisely the sort of situations which I think would not have been produced in an academic university setting. So I think he is forced to set up his own institutional forum within which that kind of criticism can take place. But we need something [of an institutional nature].

Melissa Demian (University of Cambridge): For me what this debate is about, or what I want it to be about is: What is the product of anthropological work? I say this because this summer, while I was writing my research proposal, I encountered not one but two anthropologists who had left the discipline, very consciously and deliberately—they had not retired. When I talked to one of them about it, she said it was because, in her perception, anthropology had become essentially parasitic and that it produced nothing but more anthropologists.

With that in mind, I had to think very critically about why I wanted to do anthropology and how in fact it could be made to do

something besides replicate itself, like a virus. I think that the hybrid produced by anthropology and activism or advocacy does not simplify our discipline, but makes it far more complex by dint of our engagement in real life affairs and that to disengage ourselves is simply falling back upon the traditional privileges of academia and its monastic roots. I wonder if we really have a choice, institutionally or individually, to continue to take advantage of this privilege, because, as has been said, we do live in increasingly fragmented and crisis-ridden world. I wonder if the choice is even there or if to abdicate responsibility for the people we work with isn't a form of intellectual bankruptcy and would indeed be simply what I think is perceived as the parasitism of the academy.

Pnina Werbner (University of Keele): I want to address what seems to me a spurious kind of opposition that seems to be emerging between personal or individual advocacy on the one hand and so-called institutional advocacy on the other. What is opposed here is somehow the personal commitment of one person or another, because they happen to be in a particular context in which personal commitment was called for, as against the ASA [Association of Social Anthropologists] or some institutional group making a joint decision to protest against a particular iniquity in the world. I think that this is to misread the debate and to simplify it much too much. We are talking about a community of scholars and about a discipline and the question is whether we, in the discipline of anthropology, have to have a commitment to advocacy or whether we can just pick and choose as we like. This is really what is at stake, not whether we should form committees and create formal agendas that will probably be unsuccessful, although on occasion they may be needed.

Keith Hart (University of Cambridge): I'm enjoying this conversation. I'm not quite sure whether it focuses on one question or many. However, there is an aspect of advocacy which troubles me. It's the connotation of litigation, of a social process that divides into opposing sides and this seems to me to come close to what may be a major political issue in our day. We have essentially had a history of wars and revolutions and parties, opposed classes and so on. There have been some political thinkers and activists who have sought to overcome division, most notably in our day Mandela and the

experiment in South Africa, which is of extraordinary importance to us all and yet which seems to mobilise us less today than it did when anti-apartheid offered a straightforward means for people to engage at long distance in a struggle which seemed to have two clear cut sides. It's very difficult to take sides in South Africa today. I have recently been trying to get involved with the wars and crisis in Africa, such as in Angola which is a human tragedy of enormous scale, and again I've found myself initially taking sides. I went in through the MPLA and the ANC and the whole conception of the conflict in southern Africa around white racism and Cold War politics. But it transformed into something else, into an attempt to find the consensual politics that could bridge the gap between rich, distant people and people whose legs were being blown off every day by millions of land mines, which have been sown in these countries and made in our country.

So it seems to me that advocacy is not the point, that advocacy belongs to an old politics in which it is possible to conceive of who are the oppressors and the oppressed. Fanon and Ghandi both pointed out that the oppressor is oppressed. The victimiser is as victimised as the victim. But what's wrong is the process of opposition and coercion itself, and it does seem to me that we have examples today which point us to possibilities for politics other than taking sides. It maybe that anthropologists in seeking to establish their political credentials may be latching onto a politics which has had its day.

Peter Gow (University of Manchester): I'd like to ask Mike Rowlands what exactly it means when you talk about politics after the Cold War. That's something that's very easy to say, but it's very difficult to know what it means: it's rather contentless. Somebody who spoke just now talked of an increasingly divided and chaotic world, which I don't think is how a lot of people experience the current situation. I certainly don't think most people in the former Soviet block experience the world as increasingly chaotic and divided (I think they probably actually much prefer the world they are living in now than the world they were living in before).

But one of the things that has ended with the end of the Cold War is a kind of arena in which advocacy could really take place. It seems to me that there is now no specific arena in which people have power. Of the two major arenas which were associated with the superpower blocks, one of them has collapsed completely and the

legitimacy of the claims of the other one are seriously in dispute—the United States of America no longer seems to be the friend of freedom, for example.

The case of Peru is a specific example of this which raised a serious dilemma for me. I worked in Peruvian Amazonia and I became very concerned in quite a simplistic way about advocacy for the people I did fieldwork with. But this was essentially advocacy against Sendero Luminoso (the Maoist guerrilla movement). I spent a lot of time thinking about how one could advocate the case of an indigenous minority people against a Maoist guerrilla movement which does not recognise the legitimacy of anyone except themselves. There was a campaign (called Peru Network or something) that rather feebly attempted to put pressure on the Peruvian government which, at the time, was trying to do everything possible to exterminate Sendero Luminoso. I wondered: Why are we pressurising the Peruvian government to do what they themselves knew was entirely necessary. In that particular case, the only effective political organisation was in fact the British and German Sendero support groups which provided the only means of contact with these people. I think this raises the issue that advocacy can only operate in a political situation when there is an arena in which people are able to listen. I don't think we can necessarily assume that this will be true nor do we have to assume that the lack of that now is a disaster.

Mike Rowlands: Responding to the point about the end of Cold War, chaos and instability: I was referring to a very widespread understanding of what has happened since 1989, which is now disseminated through Pentagon journals like the *Atlantic Monthly* or through the Foreign Office in its various dispatches and which emphasises all the time, particularly in terms of what somebody's called the weak state thesis, that, with the collapse of the axis between Moscow and Washington, there has been the development of an increasingly unstable and unmanageable world. I think this is extremely dangerous talk and not based on any empirical foundation at all, but it supports in many ways a lot of current discussion about migration, asylum seekers, refugees particularly in Europe and particularly in Britain. This is an instance which one has to engage with and all I'm saying is that one needs an arena in which that can take place.

On the point about advocacy, I agree that advocacy is not a particularly good term, because, as Keith Hart said, it implies that you either know or you don't know something, that it is an either/or situation, and yet all the situations I'm aware of are incredible messy and difficult. It's a matter of trying to grapple with something which effectively is not open to analysis in that kind of simple, straightforward way. I simply want to recognise that debate or discussion is the essential criterion by which one may be able to achieve some kind of sense of how to do that, within what one might call an anthropological community. Whether that is the right forum, whether that's the right basis of it, is a moot point. In my case in West Africa I think there is a justification for that [community] as a setting. I think there is also a very strong justification for comparison. Sendero, for example, should be compared as a movement to the RUF in Sierra Leone. There are very strong parallels, not just in ideology, but particularly in terms of the role of youth, the role of violence and the way in which the marginalisation of aspirations and expectations are common in both. There is something very important there which is not being revealed by current interpretations which tend to see it in revolutionary terms or in more macro political-ideological terms. Anthropologists with their ethnographic expertise would be able to gain a purchase on that. They have, I think: Richards has been extremely successful with the RUF. I'm impressed by that.

Chris Fuller: I presume the motion is now irrelevant, but it does seem to me that Mike has effectively abandoned any attempt to argue in favour of advocacy. He simply seems to be arguing now that anthropologists should engage in a kind of critical debate within some coherent institutional framework. It is difficult to see how anybody could disagree with that.

There is a point that I think is not being put as explicitly as it ought to be—and this relates much more to Dick Werbner's original question. In so far as the present crises within India are part of the new world order, there's no doubt that there are two principal problems that the country now faces. One is to do with economic liberalisation, which is a kind of classic problem which everybody, so to speak, understands. The other is the crisis of secularism and the rise of religious fundamentalism, militancy, etc. To the best of my

knowledge at least, all current anthropologists working in the country are engaged in one way or another in these issues—it's unavoidable. But there is a serious debate about what *is* the issue and how exactly it should be addressed. Those of us who happen, like myself, to have worked for a long time with Brahmin priests and the religious elite have had the distressing experience of seeing people who used to be really quite liberal and tolerant become Hindu fundamentalists. Now it seems to me that, in so far as I have a responsibility here, it is to try to understand the mind of the Hindu fundamentalist: that's the kind of contribution that somebody in my position would make. But the question is: advocacy for whom? This is plainly not advocacy on behalf of the priests who have become fundamentalists. If advocacy simply seems to be, as Mike suggests, a generalised commitment to doing our job properly, then who could disagree with it? But if advocacy is to be advocating the case of somebody in particular, it seems to me that many of us cannot possibly do that if we are simultaneously trying to carry out a kind of responsible anthropology. Advocacy and intellectual responsibility are in many cases contradictory.

Bob Layton: I would like to raise the observation at this point that the motion only says that advocacy should be an institutional commitment and I'd like to take this moment to reply to Pete Wade's accusation that all Mike and I had said was that simply writing about something as an anthropologist was a form of advocacy. What we are both arguing, I believe—Mike can speak for himself—is that advocacy derives naturally from the practice of anthropology, that it's an integral part of the process of representing other people's views. That is not to say that everyone must, of necessity, advocate views that they don't agree with simply because they happen to work with Brahmin priests.

Peter Wade: People are criticising the terms of the motion and this is standard procedure in these debates. The reason that I set it up as I did is because obviously no one's going to disagree that anybody can be an advocate if they want to. The problem is that in academia, as it is presently structured, there is a very powerful tendency, an institutionalised tendency, for anthropologists to talk to each other. In order to progress in your career, in order to get a reputation as an

anthropologist, you have to publish in journals which are read by anthropologists; you have to use a certain sort of language which is only intelligible often to other anthropologists or other intellectuals. So the question is: Is it possible to change that institutional bias so that your career is just as good if you publish things that aren't read by anthropologists?

Brian Alleyne (University of Cambridge): It may be late in the day to say this, but I just wanted to dissent from what I see as a sort of consensus on it being an increasingly messy world. This business about what happened in 1989 and afterwards: it may be an increasingly messy world from certain perspectives, and it may very well be a world that's increasingly difficult to govern and to run from the perspective of certain people. But from other people's perspective, it's pretty much business as usual. Where I come from, which is in the Caribbean, a process started in the early 80s of adjustment, which is probably connected to the Cold War, but it also ran in a different time frame, so it's very difficult for me to grasp and to agree with this focus—which I find stunningly Eurocentric—on the events post 1989 and post Cold War. It's been a tough world for a lot of us, and it remains a tough world, and I think that the issues we might want to discuss here are partly confused by this unhealthy attachment to the notion of the world being increasingly messy.

David Wilson (Queen's University): I've got a question for Mike and Bob: it's quite a straightforward one and it concerns, perhaps, one of the most famous cases of advocacy in British anthropology. This was Colin Turnbull's book, *The Mountain People,* where he was studying amongst the Ik, a people who were suffering great hardship, famine, their society was on the verge of collapse. He recommended in his book that they be removed from their traditional homeland and distributed elsewhere throughout Kenya. As I am sure you will know, Barth in a famous response took Turnbull publicly to account and accused him of recommending the ethnocide of the Ik. I wonder where the opponents of the motion stand on this. Do they think that Turnbull's recommendation was a perfectly acceptable example of advocacy, or do they support Barth's critique that it was morally reprehensible for an anthropologist to make statements of this sort? If they subscribe to the latter view, then how would they

deal with the monitoring or the policing of anthropological advocacy as a profession?

Bob Layton: I think that this goes back to the point which has been raised several times that we make decisions in an uncertain world. I think that, as a kind of grounding of what I want to say, we have to live with that. The world is an uncertain place; people are making decisions all the time without knowing the outcome of what they are saying. At that level, you could say that Turnbull made a recommendation that in the event turned out to be entirely inappropriate. That would be a fair comment, but I don't think that would be a criticism in itself of advocacy; you could argue that Barth was also participating in advocacy. As a result of a public debate about the role of anthropology in practical matters, such as taking people out of nature reserves because of a deluded idea that you can restore the world to a natural condition where there are no other people, the Ik found themselves in a very difficult position. But I think that the anthropological advocacy, the public debate, the putting of views in public that had implications for policy, raised people's consciousness about the Ik and I don't think in itself did anthropology any harm. The actual particular policy that Turnbull advocated was clearly misguided, but I don't think that is an issue of principle.

Michael Rowlands: Turnbull's role was reprehensible. The question is: How did he have the power to be reprehensible, and in what context could that be avoided in the future? I ask you therefore for an answer to that. I don't think being a detached observer is the alternative.

Aneesa Kassam (University of Durham): About Turnbull: Bernd Heine, a linguist, went to study the Ik later and found actually that Turnbull had worked with people who were very marginal and did not represent the whole of the Ik. But in any case, the Ik are one of the smallest ethnic groups, yet they're known in anthropology, while the people I work with, the Aromo, 25-30 million people, are hardly known. So Turnbull's work did have an effect.[50]

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[50] B. Heine, "The mountain people: some notes on the Ik of north-eastern Uganda", *Africa* 55(1), 3-16, 1985. [Dr Kassam asked me to add that the Aromo have, in fact, been the subject of research by Paul Baxter. (Ed.)]

What I also wanted to say, following on what Michael Rowland's point, is that anthropology has become a profession and is no longer, if it ever was, a vocation. We have become too preoccupied with the imperatives to publish or perish; we are parasites on the people we study and we actually make our living on what we bring back from the field. I attended the ASA conference two years ago, having just arrived from Kenya, and I couldn't seen the people there: there was so many theories being discussed, the people were no longer there. I think we have to go back to the people and voice their problems.

Fiona Magowan (University of Manchester): I've a question for Chris and Jane. It's to do with the status of knowledge, and also taking up Pete Wade's point about the Internet system. At the minute there is a workshop on the principles of social justice in Australia and we have access to the constitution and recommendations of the Australian Council for Reconciliation. We have been asked to make judgements on those and it is an open workshop for anybody across Australia, and indeed across the world, who wants to take part. My question is: Are we to ignore that, considering that we now have access to countries across the world who also have access to this knowledge, as do the indigenous people who will also be linked up? In the Australian case, when books were published in the 1930s, the Aborigines didn't know what was going to happen to that material. Today, the books have been removed from schools, some of the secret material has been removed from those books, children are not allowed to know. Now we have the opposite situation where people are going to be allowed to have access to all sorts of knowledge and so there's a problem about how that knowledge is going to be controlled—a problem with secrecy. How are we as anthropologists supposed to deal with this? Are we to turn a blind eye to it, as Chris Fuller felt it was right in his case not to involve himself with the low caste labourers in a particular difficult situation. What should our position be on this?

Jane Parish: I haven't got a problem with involving myself with that at all. What I do have a problem with is that knowledge is increasingly being defined in a particular way, i.e., whether it's useful or not.

Also, going back to the previous speaker, I resent this notion that as an anthropologist—I did my work in West Africa—that I am somehow a parasite. I think that's patronising. Where I did my fieldwork, the paramount Chief had been at Oxford University, there were people who did want to speak to me, there were people who didn't, there were people who wanted me to do certain things, there were people who just wanted me to listen, there were people who didn't want to speak to me at all: they could make those choices and so could I.

Going back to the point about knowledge, I think the role of the anthropologist is to look at and estimate these different types of knowledge. For me, knowledge is not that which is useful, but that which transforms. As I said in my paper, it's about looking at different perspectives and how these perspectives and connections come together. It also might be about displacement, looking at how over the Internet I am being displaced or marginalised as an anthropologist or how the Internet is actually constituting me as an anthropologist. I don't have a problem with that. The problem is that, increasingly in this country, I find that any notion of advocacy is towards sameness, so that I am increasingly limited on the political decisions that I can make or the choices I can make. I am limited by the need to produce rather than reflect, i.e., produce in certain journals and produce certain things. My fieldwork is about gods in West Africa and I am sure many anthropological journals would find that very acceptable, but I think they would find it less acceptable for me to talk about O.J. Simpson, because that's the province of cultural studies. I think that increasingly we have to look at the interests that are guiding us: maybe they are not in anthropology at all, maybe they are outside market forces, I don't know. But unless we begin to engage with what *is* an institutional advocacy, we are just going nowhere. My point is: what actually makes this up?

Tim Ingold (University of Manchester): I think I want to defend academic anthropology. I have been reminded today of the way in which people wrote about social change in the old days of structural functionalism. There would be a book about how people did things and had always done things and then there would be a chapter tacked on the end which was about social change and the recent history and politics of the area. What worries me about advocacy, in the way in which sometimes it is spoken about, is that it is seen as something

that's tacked on to anthropology. By defining advocacy as being the way in which an anthropologist is engaged with people in the course of research, it seems to suggest that for all the rest we can forget about that engagement.

What I'm trying to say is that if we take engagement to be something that is constitutive of our disciplinary endeavour as academics, rather than something that's added on, then it's very difficult to characterise that kind of engagement as advocacy. We would have to characterise it in some other kind of way, and I think that would be the basis of my opposition to the idea of advocacy as an institutional imperative. I think engagement is an imperative, and I should think it's an imperative in any kind of academic enquiry whatever, anthropology or anything else. But that sense of engagement, simply based on the fact that we are scholars living in a world and have responsibilities towards the inhabitants of that world, including the people we work among and of course students—who also ought to be mentioned and for whom we also write—can't be thought of as an extra activity that is added on. So much talk about advocacy in anthropology, even in ASA conferences, consists of saying: Well, I did this study and I produced all these academic results, and, oh, by the way, I also did a bit of advocacy. That doesn't seem to be quite [enough]. I don't know whether any of the speakers really portrayed that view, but I've picked it up sometimes and I don't think that's right.

Michael Rowlands: If by engagement one implies commitment and this is constitutive of the subject, you simply have to say: are there certain situations that you can imagine in which that engagement might lead to advocacy? [There are some situations one can imagine] in which that might be the case.[51] It might be so obvious that it requires that kind of commitment and action. I think that's all we need to accept.

Chris Fuller: Nobody's ever disputed that.

[51] The recording cassette was turned over at this point. I have filled in the gap as appropriately as possible [Ed.].

Michael Rowlands: Then you have to accept that in some constitutive sense within a discipline of engagement that the possibility of advocacy is part of that institutional arena—which is the purpose of this motion. You've just opposed the motion!

Bob Layton: I know Tim Ingold is very good at refining the meaning of words beyond limits that most of us would suspect were possible. But he is fighting against the Oxford English Dictionary in trying to change the definition of advocacy....

Chris Fuller: One point is the defence of a kind of academic anthropology which I thought Tim Ingold was about to do, but then he got into some semantics instead. There is a disagreement, it seems to me, which may exist about what academic anthropology must imply. I'm prepared to accept, as anybody would, that there are many kinds of academic publications by anthropologists which are addressed only to other anthropologists: highly technical discussions of kinship terminology and so on clearly form a purely professional, technical literature. Kinship is a very good example. Why are anthropologists so obsessed by kinship? Because the people they study are so obsessed by kinship. Therefore, to suggest that a great deal of the material we write has no obvious political impact or significance or hasn't come out of some kind of engagement would be absurd. It does, but it comes out an engagement with the obsession so many people have with arranging the marriage of their children as opposed to something else.

Moreover, I think it is something of an optical illusion to suppose that anthropologists only write literature for each other, because most of us will only tend to know about that literature in general terms. The kind of journals which we all read are the general anthropology journals, but the stuff that is produced in relation to specific contexts and specific areas is less likely to be in the journals which are generally read. Therefore, unless somebody can actually produce some evidence, I'm disinclined to accept the argument that all most anthropologists ever do is write highly technical articles addressed to each other.

Finally, if advocacy becomes institutionalised such that it becomes a disciplinary priority, then it is bound to have a distorting effect on intellectual inquiry. This sort of inquiry works better—for

whatever end—if it is not guided by some predetermined idea of what is the appropriate political stance that people should take. It is the old problem of applied anthropology. If you have some particular position that has to be defended, then this begins to distort the way in the which the inquiry proceeds. The kind of political engagement that Mike Rowlands has continually referred to is actually better achieved if it does not become institutionalised as a disciplinary priority.

Riccardo Vitale (University of Cambridge): The debate is interesting, but I'm failing to grasp the point of it all. There are obviously different approaches to anthropology and I have my own. I agree with Brian Alleyne and Melissa Demian: I haven't been particularly shattered by the fall of the Soviet Union and the Berlin Wall. In 1989, I was 19 years old and my political ideology developed after that. I agree with Brian—it's business as usual, resources are limited and unequally distributed. I did go into anthropology with a lot of questions in my head and I did see it, as Melissa said, as a very parasitic, self-feeding institution. That led me into deciding that I wanted to be militant and dogmatic, neglecting a part of myself which is the artistic part. I see that there are some anthropologists who eventually deliver fancy papers for the entertainment of the petit bourgeoisie; there are others who deliver fancy papers and actually do break into new knowledges and boundaries and eventually do contribute to a new cultural background. And there's a third kind of anthropologist, to which I think I belong, which is militant, dogmatic, Communist, etc. Thank you.

Angela Cheater (University of Waikato and University of Manchester): I speak as a sort of semi-outsider and semi-insider. I too have been struck, like some of the self-proclaimed outsiders, at the Eurocentric nature of this debate and there are two issues I'd like to raise. The first is that we are dealing with a generation gap in the discipline. What I have heard on behalf of advocacy seems to have come from the young and possibly impatient members of the discipline who are in some cases self-confessedly marginalised and presumably would like to change that quickly. It seems to me there will always be an age gap in the discipline between those who want

to move things ahead quickly and those of us who, having gotten there slowly and who are slowing down every year as we go, have more patience. Political advocacy in particular can be seen to be short cut into brokerage, into influence, into a bigger say in the discipline, into being taken seriously in ways that we might otherwise have to spend many years working at.

But what worries me more is the specific point I wanted to make. Are we not talking about merely a stage of professionalisation within a specific discipline, in a specific locality, at a specific time? We've already seen that ethics has been institutionalised. It's no longer a matter of personal judgement as to whether my behaviour is ethical or not. You all have a right, if not to decide, at least to have a professional opinion that ranks equivalent to mine in this respect. Surely morality is next on the list, after ethics. I'm a little hesitant to accept portrayals of anthropology as being unanimously committed from the word go to moral equality. That is not the experience of many of us within the discipline, as individual proponents of it, and it's certainly not the experience of some people who have been studied by anthropologists. I'm reminded of a recent article which dealt with the Hitlerian past of Austro-German anthropology—not that long ago, approximately 50 or 60 years ago—as collaborationist, as institutionalised.

So, quite clearly, there are dangers and there are obviously cultural divergences between anthropologists of different nationalities as to how professionalisation is achieved. These points that I've tried to raise as an outsider have to do with what is going on within the profession in the UK in 1995, with the internal politics of the discipline, rather than with the larger, and possibly semantic, issues that the motion ostensibly addresses, which is perhaps why some of us are confused about who was opposing it and who wasn't.

Borut Telban (University of Manchester): I'd just like to add to what Angela Cheater said. I have been thinking all the time about truth, morality and ethics. I asked myself whether they were universal. In the village where I was in Papua New Guinea, people often lied to each other and achieved better relationships because they lied to each other. So if we admit that there are many Eurocentric studies and many new fashionable studies which are especially prominent in America, does it mean that Eurocentric advocacy would become imperative for anthropology and isn't this just another imposition of power?

Peter Wade: Do the panellists have any final comments they wish to make?

Chris Fuller: My case rests.

Jane Parish: I think the idea about the internal dynamics of the discipline are precisely those that I've been trying to put across today. If we ignore those dynamics and if we ignore the interchange between those dynamics and external forces—where one begins and the other ends, I no longer know—I would worry about any institutional imperatives for the future. I don't have a problem with institutional advocacy as such, but I do have a problem with it, because, as Chris was saying, it leads to a pecking order and it leads to large amounts of work being pushed further and further down that hierarchy because that work doesn't produce a 'useful' type of knowledge.

Bob Layton: What emerges is that speakers on both sides of the motion are agreed that anthropology is about representing our experiences in the field and that we should represent as truthfully as possible the unpalatable as well as the palatable. We might not want to advocate, in the narrow sense of the word, unpalatable views that we've experienced. We are agreed that it is our job to make the West aware of exotic world views. We need to understand the oppressors as well as the oppressed. One of the objections that has been raised several times is the idea that we can never be certain of the outcome of our advocacy. I believe that we should not let that inhibit us, primarily because I believe advocacy is about public debate about the implications of anthropology in the real world. I think that kind of debate is healthy both within the discipline and between anthropologists and outsiders, whether or not that's in a court of law.

I'll just come back to Peter Wade's point that it is not a very strong argument to say that writing is itself a form of representation and advocacy. Both Mike and I are saying that, because in that weak sense representation is integral to anthropology, it is therefore legitimate to argue that we should take that further step where appropriate and advocate in the narrower sense the views of the people with whom we've been working and the practical implications of our theories for future action. I would also say that while this demands a personal as well as an institutional commitment,

the personal commitment is built upon the institutional commitment and not the other way around.

Michael Rowlands: I think Bob has probably said most of the things [that need saying]. I would simply emphasise that the issue for me is about anthropology—which may well be Eurocentric—in this domain forming a moral-ethical community. It is an academic community; that's its past, that's what it is now. But it is also about critical integrity and what form that takes. That, I think, is what should be debated.

Peter Wade: We seem to have two slightly different motions. One, whether or not anthropologists should be more or less engaged; the other, whether or not that engagement should take place in an institutionalised form. I would encourage you to vote on the first of those, rather than the second, although exactly how institutionalisation might take place is obviously a critical issue. If it does involve the kind of hierarchies, pecking orders, formalisations and homogenisations that Jane implies, then that would be a bad thing. But I think there must be other ways of institutionalising or encouraging political engagement that don't involve that sort of negative effect.

After a vote, the motion was carried with 25 votes in favour and 24 votes against. There were 2 abstentions.

POSTSCRIPTS[52]

Chris Fuller

During the debate, the fairly narrow and specific definition of the term 'advocacy' used by Bob Layton and myself was displaced by a rather wider meaning, more or less equivalent to 'moral commitment' or 'engagement'. In my opinion, this turned the discussion into a sometimes woolly expression of distaste for detached academicism. Most of us probably share that distaste and certainly I do. Thus, for instance, I consider myself to have a moral commitment to and an engagement with the Brahman priests whom I have studied, even though, as they know perfectly well, I do not share many of their basic principles and prejudices, which nowadays too often include a detestation of Muslims. Anthropologists certainly should develop an engagement with the people with whom they work, but it is also vitally important that they are able to develop an engagement with people whose cause they could never advocate. Confusing advocacy with engagement obscures the important point at issue in the original motion.

Jane Parish

The organisational 'iron cage' suggested above need not become a permanent fixture. There are alternative networks. However, the speakers today seem unwilling to address the internal dynamics of our discipline at 'home'. Miller writes that anthropology must resist the avant-garde calls to incommensurability and he appeals to the commensurable foundations upon which, he argues, anthropological practices rest.[53] Anthropological attention to contextual rupture—the different situations in which knowledge is consumed—is the definitive mark, Miller suggests, of the discipline. I would argue that the changes that are taking place within anthropology are inseparable from the changing definitions about, for example, what knowledge is and what it is for. To ignore these connections is tantamount to disaster.

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[52] After the debate, I invited the speakers to add a paragraph or two, if they so wished, to their original contribution. Chris Fuller and Jane Parish chose to add a postscript.

[53] D. Miller, ed., *Worlds apart: modernity through the prism of the local*, London, Routledge, 1995.