

Brazilian Serialities

Personhood and Radical Embodied Cognition

by João de Pina-Cabral

This paper investigates the relationship between personhood and family in light of the impact that radical embodied cognition has had in anthropological theory over the past years. The paper is based on a study of onomastic seriality among siblings and cohabiting cousins in Brazil, where it became clear that interruption of the series is more common than full compliance. Since name attribution is a central aspect of launching early personal ontogeny, the paper argues that this kind of interrupted seriality amounts to a narrative strategy of triangulation that fosters the creative imagining of familial persons. The paper attempts to deepen our understanding of the modes of operation of personhood by diverging from the established representationist theories of cognition that remain dominant in anthropological circles.

Recently, revisiting Monica Wilson's (1951) Nyakyusa ethnographies, I was strongly alerted to the myriad modes in which human imagination in history can produce company while, at the same time, company is that which produces humans. The apparent circularity in this process should not disturb us, as it is temporally staggered. The person is born as a member of the human species but is not born fully human to the extent that it is only in the course of personal ontogeny that we enter into propositional thinking and acquire a reflexive awareness of ourselves as human (see Pina-Cabral 2014a, 2014b).

Humans share with other animals the capacity to engage in intentional thinking; our very life processes are dependent on the continued operation of "basic mind" (cf. Hutto and Myin 2013). But in order to become fully human, we have to be enticed into humanity by other humans who had already been enticed by others before them, and so on and so forth, back to the gradual and discreet origins of the human species. Supporters of radical embodied cognition have been arguing convincingly for a while that "nonverbal responding, quite generally, only involves the having of intentional—but not propositional—attitudes" (Hutto 2008:xiii; cf. also Chemero 2009; Varela, Thompson, and Rosch 1991). The central propositional attitudes of belief and desire can be acquired only by participating in what they call "unscripted conversational exchanges" (Hutto 2008:136). They propose that while basic mind is nonrepresentational, it is the origin and source of personhood. But humans are driven out of infant

solipsism during early ontogeny and come to acquire in the course of social engagement a scaffolded mind (Hutto and Myin 2013). We do so by engaging in company—that is, complex communicational contexts where viewpoints clash and where we are subject to a diverse series of unscripted narratives and explanations, centrally involving the manipulation of pronouns and personal names.

The entry into propositional thinking is a kind of scaffolding of mind, and it is not limited to the learning of language. In fact, the mere learning of language forms does not account fully for the process of learning of meaning within language. It is by experimenting with language in contexts of company—and, especially, when we start experimenting with the tasks that other people carry out in front of us, after our ninth month (Trevarthen 1990, 1993)—that we come to work out the more abstract associations of meaning that are implicit in adult language use. As Bowerman (1982) has shown, "only gradually do children begin to discern relationships and regularities among linguistic forms that they have not previously recognized as related, and to integrate these forms into more abstract, patterned systems" (320). This, of course, applies to personal names and to the way in which children come to learn how to use their own names and those of the people who surround them and the complex implications of having names of different nature and using them in different ways (cf. Pina-Cabral 2005, 2013a).

The constitution of a personal arena of presence and action (i.e., an ego, a self, a *moi*; cf. Johnston 2010; Trevarthen 1993) is a basic condition for the competent use of human natural languages, including personal pronouns. There would be no speech acts if there were no grammatical persons to position themselves within them. But this is an effect of active engagement in sociality during early ontogeny. As Judith Butler (2012) noted, for there to be a first person, there has to have

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been a previous process of differentiation, an “ego relatedness”: “primary relations precede the formation of what we call an ‘ego’ and even the ‘ego’ is understood primarily as consisting of modes of ‘ego relatedness’” (113). People are called into language from the outside, so the third person is in some sense (a very Freudian sense, as it turns out) the first entry into language, because it is the first entry into selfhood. However, since basic mind continues to operate for as long as we are alive, our arenas of presence and action (our selves) will ever remain mysteriously evanescent—a theme that philosophers and poets have explored throughout the ages. In the process of becoming persons, we stop being individual; we become “dividual” (cf. Pina-Cabral 2013a, 2013b; Strathern 1988:11–14). It is in this sense that Monica Wilson’s (1957:226) Nyakyusa informants famously stated that kinsmen were “members of one another” (cf. in Sahllins 2011a).

Personal names are one of the principal means of establishing the externality of personhood, which in turn is a condition for speech acts to be constituted in terms of personal pronouns. As constitutive modes of objectifying personhood, personal names play a central role in the process of early ontogeny, as well as throughout the rest of life (cf. Pina-Cabral 2010b). This is why they function more like third-person pronouns than the first and second personal pronouns. Long ago, Émile Benveniste (1966) demonstrated that the first-person and second-person pronouns operate differently from the third-person pronoun (he/she) in that they are “empty,” as he put it: “their role is to provide the instrument for a conversion . . . of language into speech” (254). While “I” and “you” are positional indicators, “he/she” are substitutes for objects of speech (as in, “Peter ate the apple. *He* loved it.”). “I” and “you” are positional; they do not demand a reference external to the speech act. To the contrary, “he/she” stand for something that is external. There is, indeed, a profound truth to this observation, for it has implications in the matter of early personal ontogeny. We must not assume that there is any anteriority to the first or second persons, for if we did, we would be falling into the trap of separating language use (speech) from the historical process of the constitution of the speaking person. We have to understand that the “substitution” that the third person operates, to use Benveniste’s terms, is the original process that allows for the constitution of the other two: as we have come to know, subjectivity follows on intersubjectivity, not the other way round (see Trevarthen 1980).

There would be no speech acts if there were no persons to position themselves within them. The third person, in some sense, is the door into language because it is his/her presence that leads the person into selfhood. For there to be a first-person ego, there has to have been a previous process of differentiation, an ego relatedness, since “participation” within contexts of dwelling is the original condition.¹ People are

called into language from the outside, so the third person is a previous requirement for the use of the other two persons and their respective personal pronouns (cf. Butler 2012). Thus, each human being starts his or her personal ontogeny—his or her path of being—inside human contagion. We discover our own personal singularity from within intersubjectivity—and this is why the very word “intersubjectivity” is equivocal, since it seems to suggest that subjectivity would be anterior to it, which is not the case.²

In the justly famous chapter on naming in *The Savage Mind*, Lévi-Strauss (1966) argues that he is “trying to show that, in any society—even if people think they are acting freely—their choice and use of proper names reflects a way of slicing up the social and moral universe, of categorizing individuals, and of translating how each culture conceives of the reciprocal relations between human beings and their various domestic animals” (155). In the wake of recent developments in the theory of kinship (cf. Sahllins 2011a, 2011b), I propose a distinct outlook on naming, where the exercise of creative freedom is seen as the very mode through which persons are formed in sociality. Rather than slicing up the social and moral universe by placing previously defined individuals within previously determined categories, proper naming is seen here as a way in which historically and biologically grounded persons (i.e., persons in ontogeny) are brought into being as reflexive persons. Phylogenesis and ontogeny are seen as history, therefore.³ What I most disagree with in Lévi-Strauss’s theory of naming is that it places societies as analytically separate from personhood. To the contrary, I see social processes as constituting themselves by accumulation in history, not as a response to separately existing systems of symbols but within personal ontogeny. Living persons are, so to speak, the ground of sociality.

In this paper, I attempt to bring radical embodied cognition to reflect on anthropological theories of personhood by addressing the theoretical challenges posed by onomastic seriality among siblings and cohabiting cousins—a form of proper name attribution very prevalent in the coastal regions of the state of Bahia in Brazil, where I carried out fieldwork between 2004 and 2012. The essay links the notion of seriality with a conception of personhood that sees it as emerging from sociality historically and, in that sense, prolongs a debate that has been significant in anthropology for some time (Ingold 1995; Toren 1990, 1993). In this paper, by radically rejecting the representationist formulations that have dominated our discipline since the days of Durkheim, I adopt a distinct view of personhood and of cognition from

been calling “participation.” I am convinced that, in essence, my argument does not conflict with her interesting insights.

2. The argument in the previous three paragraphs is further developed in Pina-Cabral (2014a).

3. By relation to phylogenesis, see Ingold (1986, 1991, 1995); by relation to ontogeny, see Toren (1990, 1993, 1999, 2002, 2012).

1. Confusingly, Vasunari Reddy (2008:26ff.) calls “second person” the process that anthropologists, in the wake of Lévy-Bruhl, have long

that espoused, for example, by Maurice Bloch (2012) in his recent book on the anthropology of cognition. My position is originally indebted to the reading of Wittgenstein by the Oxford poststructuralists and Rodney Needham (e.g., 1987) in particular, and it is akin to the arguments in favor of overcoming the Cartesian gap that have emerged of late from within psychology and other disciplines (cf. Reddy 2008: 24–25).

Personhood and Naming

In the early 1990s, while carrying out fieldwork among the Eurasian population of Macao, I developed an analytic interest in the workings of personhood and the way they can be highlighted through studying the equivoques characteristic of transcultural interaction (Pina-Cabral 2002a). The debates concerning personhood and individualism that were all the rage in anthropology back then promised to open up a new perspective, where the sociocentric proclivities of our predecessors might be creatively challenged (Marriott 1976; Strathern 1988 vs. Cohen 1994; Macfarlane 1978).

Therefore, in 2004, when I moved to the study of Brazil—more particularly, to the mangrove regions of the southern coast of Bahia—I decided to focus on modes of personal naming as my main area of ethnographic attention. I have since then published extensively on the topic.⁴ Nevertheless, perhaps because I could see it was such a fascinating analytical challenge, I have so far stayed shy of discussing one of my first ethnographic surprises: among the low-income population of the provincial town I studied (Valença), personal names were often surprisingly creative. The historically dominant practice among Portuguese and Spanish speakers of naming children by means of a rather short list of time-honored saints' names (Pina-Cabral 2012b) was less favored here than a mode of inventing names by articulating onomastic particles, which presented itself both as more creative and more evocative. To cut a long story short, there was a taste for attributing names serially. In this paper, I will argue that onomastic seriality is particularly illuminating when we want to explore the way in which familial persons are constituted.

The word “series” refers to a category, the terms of which form a sequence, being related to each other by means of a formula of derivation. I am particularly interested in open-ended series, for they subject themselves to the sort of imaginative disposition that Rodney Needham (1975, 1978, 1987) long ago designated by the word “polythetic.” Now, if we adopt a view of personhood as constructed within sociality, the propositional act of naming someone or of naming oneself can be seen as an act of imagination (cf. Toren 2012). In this paper, I want to explore the way in which Brazilian

practices of onomastic seriality operate as instances of creative imagination.⁵

Processes of sociality occur among other species; nonhuman species also have complex forms of communication based on intentionality. What there is not in other species is reflexive subjects, engaged in propositional thinking: in short, persons with scaffolded minds. We become persons when we are in sociality with other humans who are already engaged in their own history of personhood. The process of entering into personhood is not something that is consciously enacted each time, for each one of us. Intersubjectivity is not a choice; it happens. Humans entice other humans into personhood because they are prone to include babies in their lived worlds. It is all rather inevitable once a baby is among humans and is being cared for during the long period of maturation that the human species demands (Trevarthen 1980).

Plurally cohabiting the world—company—is the indispensable condition for personhood. As Colwyn Trevarthen has demonstrated: “Babies are interested in stories long before they speak. . . . Children from the age of six months onwards . . . are starting to be part of culture. They want a rich environment, with lots of different kinds of people doing different things, not totally unfamiliar. It is to build a kind of working community, with jobs.”⁶ The arousal of subjectivity in the person—that is, the oncoming of propositional thinking (Hutto 2008; Trevarthen 1993)—happens through an engagement with a plurality of human beings, a kind of triangulation. Each one of us, therefore, carries a prehistory: there is in our personhood a historicity, an immanent pastness (see Martins 1974). Paradoxically, the pastness of personhood cannot be bounded by personal ontogeny in the sense that if the person emerges from attachments that predate the person's constitution, then, while the child is new, the “other” is not. And, as Donald Winnicott (1971) came to understand long ago, it is never only one other. Dividuality results directly from the process of ontogeny.

In short, since there is a foundational alterity in personhood, the notion that there is a clean beginning to it makes no sense. Not only do persons emerge from the embrace of earlier persons in child-rearing, but they also see themselves as causally linked to earlier persons (that which anthropologists usually refer to as “filiation”; see Shapiro 2008). Such a process is not a generalized condition; rather, it is grounded on specific human relations whose history is unique in the case of each one of us: our personal history of ontogeny. While the history of each one's existence as a determinable person is immersed in the long history of sociality, none of us

5. I owe my original inspiration on naming largely to the thought of Donald Davidson (e.g., 2001) and Emanuel Lévinas (e.g., 1971).

6. Extract of oral communication in <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/earlyyears/prebirththreetothree/nationalguidance/conversations/colwyn-trevarthen.asp> (accessed November 30, 2014). Cf. Trevarthen (1998).

4. Cf. Pina-Cabral (2002a, 2005, 2010a, 2010b, 2012a, 2012b, 2013a).

can be reduced to a simple manifestation of an overarching totality—our namers are particular others, not a generic other (Pina-Cabral 2013a).

To borrow Maurice Bloch's (2012) words, "there exist no human beings in general but only specific human beings who are made different by their culture" (33). But I would rather have preferred to say, with Christina Toren (cf. 1990), made different by their specific personal history, their ontogeny. Personhood, then, involves at least three different aspects:⁷

α) The physical human person in ontogeny—indeed, a truly individual phenomenon.

β) The "arena of presence and action," as Johnston has called it (2010)—a dividual and partible phenomenon, not only in Melanesia and India (Marriott 1976; Strathern 1988) but also everywhere else (Pina-Cabral 2013a).

γ) The historically constructed narratives of personhood that pervade the environment within which personal ontogeny occurs—here individuality and dividuality are combined in very many different ways, depending on what anthropologists normally call "culture."

This is the reason why separating simply between "individual" and "individualism," as Nigel Rapport proposes (2010), is not enough to solve the matter of personhood, since even our formulation of personhood γ above could raise problems, for it might be interpreted as implying that people have concepts in their heads that their culture gave them as concepts and that they share with the other members of their culture as concepts, having learned them as concepts. And yet, the process of integrating meanings within language (the scaffolding of mind) is a fully personal one. The representationist approach is false: the cognitive processes of each one of us are indeterminate and cannot be repeated. Quine (1960) argued this quite convincingly a long time ago, but that is even clearer now in terms of our present knowledge of neurophysiology (cf. Anderson, Richardson, and Chemero 2012). The "Nuer notion of the person" is nothing but the identification by the ethnographer of a statistical recurrence among the Nuer in the ways they cope with personhood: it is the fact that, in order to circulate in a Nuer world, one must assume a determinable but open-ended set of associations and recurrences that amount to broad parameters of what persons are in that particular human historical setting. We have been alerted to this for a very long time—it was, after all, the central quandary that engaged Robert Feleppa (1988) in his book on the philosophical problems that face the comparative study of culture—but most of us took a long time to come round to admit that we needed to face the problem of representation

head-on. We have been too slow to take the conclusions required by the shedding off of what Sartre (1936) called a "naïve metaphysics of image" (3).

It is important not to jump to the conclusion that person α would be "universal," person β would be "individual," and person γ would be "cultural." This would be to assume both a mind-body polarity and a representationist model of mind—analytical dispositions that radical embodied cognition rejects. We should be clear, therefore, that α (the material person in ontogeny), β (the reflexive person), and γ (the culturally shared frameworks of personhood) are all both universal and historically specific. The notion that human inherence in history is divided into neatly separable cultural worlds/ontologies is a sociocentric mirage that has produced much misunderstanding and hindered our anthropological theorizing very seriously over the years (see Pina-Cabral 2014a). But so is the notion that one might be able to have any grasp of personhood γ (e.g., the Nuer notion of person) aside from its instantiation in actual human persons ($\alpha + \beta + \gamma$). It would be like suggesting that there are cultures whose identity lies outside of history, the complex history of human interaction—a form of semiotic idealism. Only physical (α), reflexive, and interactive (β) persons can come together in culturally identifiable modes of being person (γ). In short, there are no generic Nuers. This being said, we must conclude that since learning to use personal pronouns and receiving a personal name are central processes in launching personal ontogeny, persons are called into being in narrative processes, both metaphorically and literally.

Hyvian's Proper Name

In Portuguese-speaking contexts, the person is objectified within speech by means of a conjugation of three modes of naming that we will simplify here by using the English terms "proper name," "surname," and "nickname" (Pina-Cabral 2012b). Although each of these forms of naming bears different implications, in this paper I will be dealing mostly with proper names (*nomes próprios*). This is relevant for my argument concerning personhood since, in the European traditions—as the very use of the adjective "proper" suggests—proper names are the mode of naming that more closely qualifies the person in his or her singularity (Pina-Cabral 2012a). When asked to refer reflexively about their own self, people are prone to use proper names rather than surnames. This is significant, for it connects with a historically rooted tradition that sees intimacy and personhood as essentially spiritual.⁸ That is, Euro-American speakers are prone to associate their personal singularity with their conscious awareness of themselves. Thus, when I introspect, it is more appropriate for me to refer to myself as João than as Pina-Cabral. João is assumed to be the name of my soul, the es-

7. I refer here to "aspect" in the sense that Wittgenstein (1958) gave the word when he used the famous example of Jastrow's duckrabbit (1958:ii–xi, 193–229) and that Needham (1983) further developed in *Against the Tranquility of Axioms*.

8. See Givens's (2009) history of the Christian soul, where this matter is debated at length.

sence of my personhood; Pina-Cabral is a collective noun, a more formal qualifier.

It is not, therefore, by chance that Mauss's (1938) discussion of the notion of personhood first emerged in a review that he published in the *Année Sociologique* of Lévy-Bruhl's (1974 [1923]:129–130) book on the *âme primitive*, long before he went to London to deliver his classical essay on the topic. As in so many other cases, anthropological de-ethnocentrication challenged one of the most profound tenets of the European intellectual tradition.⁹

In the European tradition, surnames operate more in the categorizing manner that Lévi-Strauss described above than proper names.¹⁰ Contrary to surnames, personal names are more prone to reflect the sort of constitutive contagion between persons that Lévy-Bruhl (1949) used to refer to as “participation” or that Sahlins (2011a, 2011b) has recently identified by the expression “co-presence.” Onomastic seriality does not form groups of persons; rather, it creates chains of persons. It is characteristically open-ended, and it places people within networks of relations by means of triangulation.

Moreover, there is nothing specifically Brazilian about proper name seriality. The use of generational particles in proper names among Chinese upper-class families during the Ming and Qing Dynasties are a well-known instance (Alleton 1993); another one is the custom of naming children with the first letter of their grandparents' proper names, as remains a habit among Ashkenazy Jews in Europe, Israel, or the United States; also among the *batellier* families of the canals of northern France, similar onomastic systems are reported to have occurred (Wateau 1989).

The practice of creating intergenerational namesakes might be seen as a form of seriality, but I have chosen to deal with it separately elsewhere, as it has a distinct set of implications when approached comparatively (Pina-Cabral 2010b). In the present paper, I will deal with a mode of naming that, in Brazil, is associated both with a hankering for consumerist modernity and with the sort of large cohorts of siblings and cousins that have characterized the urban and periurban modes of living of low-income populations up to the present date. Brazilian colleagues have suggested that, with the decrease in family size presently occurring, this fashion of naming will fade. This could turn out to be the case, but I have no evidence to point in that direction. Since name seriality is as common among siblings as among cohabiting cousins, the reduction in the number of children a woman has should not affect the process.

9. But the tendency to return to old ways did not simply vanish. For example, there is a peculiar recurrence to the bafflement caused by Chinese notions of soul/spirit in twentieth-century ethnographers (see Pina-Cabral 2002a).

10. As a matter of fact, in *The Savage Mind*, Lévi-Strauss (1966:186) already identifies the importance of the difference between serial and group naming that will engage us in this paper.

For example, I recorded a group of siblings called Marilson, Moacir, Maila, and Mailani; another called Leia, Lúcio, and Leane; and another called Edson, Edilson, and Edmilson. There is seriality in the fact that the siblings' names bear the same particle—usually but not always at the beginning of the name, linking it up to a parental or grandparental name. But there is seriality also in names such as Antonádia, which conjugates the names of both parents (Antônio and Nádia), or Ildailze, which conjugates the names of both grandmothers. There is also a kind of grammar of constitution. So “-son,” “-ar,” and “-io” are male suffixes, and “-ani/ane,” “-aila,” and “-ele/eli” are female suffixes. This kind of grammar, however, will never come to be a precise science, as what drives the whole process is precisely a desire to be *diferente*, a concept that in popular Brazil has very positive connotations.

I will now report on a banal instance of first name use in which I participated in Brazil. On first arriving at a gym, I introduced myself to the gym attendant, a jovial, handsome woman of about 25 years. Following general Brazilian practice, I merely used my first name: “*Meu nome é João.*” In turn, she replied with her name, but I failed to grasp it. She smiled when I asked her to repeat it, thus signaling that she fully expected me to ask. She replied in a practiced fashion: “Hy-vi-an, with an *h* and a *y*.”

By now familiar with Brazilian naming practices, I immediately made a whole series of surmises based on that name. Briefly, then, I first surmised that this was a proper name and not a surname; second, it was what Brazilians classify a *nome diferente*, an uncommon name; third, the fact of it being uncommon pleased her, even as it made her have to spell it out to all newcomers; fourth, the constitution of the name pointed to it being a serial name; and fifth, her parents belonged to the recently urbanized lower middle class, and the fact that she readily presented herself by that name and not by a fashionable abbreviation or hypocoristic meant that she too belonged to that status group.

A few days later, when I got to know her better, I asked her, “So, do you have a sister with a similar name [*nome parecido*]?” She smiled again, acknowledging that she was pleased that I had guessed, and proceeded to provide me with a lengthy explanation. In fact, in spite of being interrupted by other clients, she returned twice to the side of my stepping machine in order to finish the story. Debating her name was something that she felt valued her and that could be done legitimately in public.

“Yes, I have a twin sister called Hysis,” she replied. As it turns out, she also had a *irmã de criação* (a foster sister) whom her parents named Haldane, also with an *h* (which Brazilians generally pronounce as a throatal *r*). In fact, all these names make reference to the mother's name, Helena. The father, in turn, is called Wilson, and the two brothers are called Winston and Wiverton, both with *w*. Finally, her younger sister is called Laura, failing to comply with the seriality. This too was something that I was fully expecting. Having encountered numberless cases of sibling name se-

rality throughout Brazil over the years, I had come to see that serial incompleteness is the norm, not the exception.

Briefly, then, how does Hyvian read her name and those of the people whose names are tied to hers? As I gathered, she is pleased with the connotations of these names. In fact, she stressed in her explanation that they remit to a cosmopolitan world that she and her parents value. In this way, their personhood is tied to forms of living to which they aspire within today's global order. Her brother Winston, she explained (wrongly as it turns out), has the name of an American president, and the other names in the series, Wiverton, Wilson, and Haldane, are also American (and again it is not relevant whether she was right or wrong). As it turns out, the very letters *w* and *y* do not exist in the Portuguese alphabet and openly connote Anglo-American (gringo) foreignness.

That her name should be "different," in fact, is valued because, as many people explained to me over the years in Brazil, it picks them out from the crowd; according to them, it means that their name does not "copy" anyone else's, that they are themselves alone. This connects strongly to the value of "self-affirmation" (*auto-afirmação*) that Luíz Fernando Dias Duarte has identified as central to contemporary Brazilian living (Duarte and Gomes 2008).

That differentness should be such an openly acknowledged value in no way implies that Brazilians are any less conventional than other peoples around the world. It does not even imply that they do not repeat names, for name repetition is also a notable feature of local personal naming systems. Thus, people will often give their male firstborn the exact full name of the father, grandfather, or uncle, adding a particle indicating the relation (e.g., *Junior*, *Filho*, *Neto*, *Sobrinho*). Further still, they are also prone to give the names of celebrities to their children: actresses, singers, football players, American presidents, and so on. A woman explained to me proudly that her children's names "were all connected" (i.e., they formed a series), as they all related to soap operas: one was given the name of a character, the other of an actor, and the third of a well-known socialite who is the wife of yet a third soap opera actor.

The fact that Hyvian's name is part of a series is an aspect of her name both to her and to anyone who is familiar with Brazilian naming practices. It is part of the name's meaning. Because it is so, it fosters in Hyvian a sense of sharing an important part of her personhood with the people whose names connect with hers—both intergenerationally (her mother) and intragenerationally (her sisters). She emphatically acknowledged this by relation to her twin sister, Hysis, whom she claims to "love very much." She also explicitly commented that she likes the fact that the two names bring them together while at the same time differentiate them as separate persons. Listening to her explain this, I could see that her sense of personal connection with the whole series constitutes an important source of personal security, which

is foundational of her own sense of being herself—of her "arena of presence and action," as Mark Johnston (2010:139–141) would have it. Being secure in her personhood and being secure in her familial insertion are cumulative and mutually reinforcing.

This, however, could have been challenged by the fact that one of her sisters is called Laura. Are we to assume that this person feels somehow left out of family life or, alternatively, somehow raised above the monotony of the rest? This was a question that haunted me since I first hit on the notion that breaking the series is of the essence of Brazilian onomastic seriality.

One of the first series of names I recorded was Adailton, Ademar, Adriano, Lucas, Adriele, and Adriana. I asked Adriano, a boy of about 16 years of age, why his brother was called Lucas, to which he replied that it was when his mother became a "believer" (*crente*), a member of a neo-Pentecostal church. Did his brother mind being called that? I asked. But Adriano could not understand at all what I could possibly be asking.

Similarly, Hyvian just shrugged her shoulders when I asked about Laura. Finally, one day, I met two educated sisters at a dinner party at a friend's house in Valença. One of them was part of a series of *Eu*'s, the father having been called Eugênio; the other was the exception, Indianara. I asked my question again, and, being married to a Frenchman and having lived a long time in Europe, she saw what I was getting at. But she claimed never to have thought that it might have been a bad thing. She claimed that, now that I made her think about it, she could see that she did not dislike having a different name, as it made her feel somehow special. In any case, she claimed, all her siblings had related names and this meant their family identity was very strong, which pleased her.

In the case of Osvaldo, Osivaldo, Osvaldino, and Ananias Jr., the serial *O* refers to the mother, while the last son somehow reinforces the associative link by referring to the father. But in cases like Lucas and so many others I encountered, the dislocated name is a simple, matter-of-fact response to a biographical accident. The breaking of seriality is a way of leaving seriality open—as Needham (1975) would have it, of making the family polythetic. The process is systemic only to the extent that it is systematically incomplete.

What this means is that the cross-references among people that onomastic seriality proposes never rise above the persons they constitute; they do not form collective abstracted schemes. In this way, one is reminded of Tim Ingold's (2007) distinction between rhythm and metronymic time setting. Brazilian serialities are what he calls "resonances," that is, modes of "rhythmic harmonization of mutual attention" (Ingold 2007:163). When I encounter a name such as Hyvian, Edivaldo, Osvaldino, or Adilson, I can safely presume that it rhymes with other names in that family; thus, the name promotes familial harmonization. But, as there are

always the Lauras, Lucas, Indianaras, and Ananias that break the series, the process never postulates family as closed group. It safeguards the singularity of personhood in the face of its serial plurality, its dividuality. It prevents family from reducing personhood. It produces “family resemblance,” literally in the way that Wittgenstein (1958) meant to attribute to the expression.

Connotation

Strictly speaking, seriality is merely a formal process. However, to the extent that the sound that produces the seriality is usually picked from a member of the generation above, it necessarily connotes that person or that person’s assumed qualities. To the extent that seriality functions as homage (*homenagem*, another central concept in Brazilian family life) it necessarily implies connotation. This can be observed also in cases that, at first, may not even appear to be serial but then, once one identifies the connotation, are shown to be so. There is, for instance, in Valença a medical doctor, the first letters of whose children’s names form the acronym “FAMILIA.” Another such case is a colleague of mine who explained that she and her sisters had serial names. Being familiar with their names, however, I could not see why that was so, until she explained, “Don’t you see? They are all different names.” By “different” she meant uncommon, but uncommon in a way that she considered to be a source of value.

Connotation and seriality seem to be inseparable in at least two ways. First, the people I interviewed in Bahia insisted endlessly that the name they chose for their child must “sound good.” To a person like myself, brought up in Saussurean linguistics, such a statement can be read only as a metaphor; it is entirely destitute of literal meaning. But, when I asked them to explain what they meant, they insisted on the literal interpretation. For them, the actual sound bears goodness. A mother once explained to us that her son’s name is Cauã because this is a soft, beautiful sound and she does not want him to grow into a hard man. This we interpreted to be an angry comment against the man who had fathered her child. She seemed to be totally unaware that, for other people, the Amerindian name Cauã may actually sound rough or brutal.

Second, there is what the people call “meaning”: names bear value; they promote the named person in some sort of connotative fashion. The fact is that seriality promotes connotation in a metonymical way, not a metaphorical one, not specularly but through contagion (Pina-Cabral 2013a). People are dividual to the extent that they are co-present with other people. However, once they achieve singularity, through serial transformation, they become once again plural. As Marilyn Strathern (1988:14–18) would have us see, these are not processes of duality, where two persons confront each other in specular mode. Rather, they are processes where plurality is created by varying a common principle.

In order to show how that occurs in real life, I will now present here a translated extract of a conversation between a female research assistant and a young mother at the public maternity of Valença in 2006.

Q: Is Karine your cousin?

A: Yes, and Kelly is her younger sister. They are children of my paternal aunt, Luzimeire. Then there is my uncle Luís, whose children are called Kleber and Klaus; they are older than my sister Katherine.

Q: And is that all with the same letter [K]?

A: Yes, all five: Kleber, Klaus, Katharine, Kelly, and Karine. I’m the only one out. . . . I am the only one of the cousins who escaped.

Q: You are the youngest one, right? Why is yours with an A?

A: My [maternal] grandfather wanted to call me Erica, but Karine did not allow it because she said it was ugly or something. I don’t know; in any case she would not allow it. So they decided for Adriana.

Q: But the ones with K, who was it that decided?

A: My father’s family. I was the one that broke out. He looked hard for one for me . . . Katiúscia, Kátia. . . . “Let us try a K,” he would say. But then . . . there was a fashion for a singer named Adriana [Calcanhoto]. My mother was in love with her and her grandfather also. So, when people asked the baby’s name, even before I was born, they started saying, “It will be Adriana.” So it stuck.

Q: And why the K?

A: Oh, it started with Katherine. It was the grandmother, because of an actress. They still have an old magazine with her name [Katherine Hepburn]. Klaus, Katherine, Kleber, Kelly.

Q: And Klaus?

A: Well, that was my grandfather with uncle Luís: they decided that. Also because of a movie actor.

Q: So it was all because of actors?

A: Also because of the meaning. My mother knew the meaning; I think it is because it is Russian. And for my own child is the same; the name has to “come to the head.” My mother insisted: “Call her Mariana, joining Mário [the child’s father] with Adriana.” But I said, “No, I don’t like it.”

Here we can observe three processes of seriality. The first one is the intragenerational seriality in *K* of a group of cousins who are brought up in close proximity. Why *K* is something that even the grandmother that fell under the spell of Katherine Hepburn might find hard to explain. Nevertheless, this does not reduce the connotative logic of the reference. The second is the intergenerational seriality of the names Luís and Luzimeire (itself a compound of Luís and Meiri) and of Mariana, a compound of Mário and Adriana. The third is the way in which the breaking of the series—as it happens, by ego’s own name—is interpreted as something that values her while not diminishing or threatening the series. Being “different,” as she insists, is something that gives her value, but, most of all, it is something that does not diminish the impact of the seriality of *K*. By the time they reached five names with *K*, the family members had had enough; the point had been made; there was no need to continue. By adopting a new naming mode for Adriana—and linking her to another famous star—they did not break away from anything; they merely added another process of value creation to the value already accrued. They changed the rhythm without spoiling the music.

Value is created in a cumulative, constructivist fashion. So, ultimately, I came to see that broken seriality was the norm, not unbroken seriality. For example, when the doctor whose children’s names formed the acronym FAMILIA reached the sixth child—who should have been called with a name starting with I—his wife’s health was in jeopardy. So, they agreed to tie up the mother’s ovarian tubes and jumped to the final *A*.

To go back to Ingold’s metaphor, in a Beethoven string quartet, as much as in a jazz set, the rhythm of a musical piece can be suddenly changed halfway through the music in such a way that it does not destroy the enjoyment of the music; rather it lifts the listener up to greater fruition. There is, as it were, a change in scale that fosters the musical enjoyment by pointing to the possibility of an encompassing rhythm. Breaking the seriality with a nationalistic name (Indianara), with an evangelist’s name (Lucas), or with the namesake of the father changes scale and, thus, instead of watering down the participation implicit in the serial names, shifts it to a higher level, a more inclusive one. Similarly, jumping to the last letter before the series is completed—as in the acronym FAMIL-A—and thus safeguarding the mother’s health is again a statement of familial promotion. The failure to complete all the letters in the word, rather

than making all of them less familiar persons, promotes their familial co-presence by a change in rhythm, as it were. This change in rhythm is, in fact, a mode of building meaning beyond the mere signification of names as words; it is a form of scaffolding meaning.

Conclusion

As we have shown, personal naming practices, with their rich potential for connotation, are essential for the child’s constitution of its sense of personhood—its arena of presence and action. Initially, the child experiences itself and the carer as being the same before the world—that is “identification.” The child is encouraged by the fact that the carers themselves are also prone to this same process of mutuality (they too are prone to shared intentionality; Tomasello 2008). As Donald Winnicott (1971) argued, it is when other carers—third parties in the theater of personal ontogeny—come into contact with the child, and with its initial closest carer, that it experiences for the first time that terrible sense of betrayal, of aloneness, which Emmanuel Lévinas (1996) has theorized. In short, this is how it happens: if I am one with *A* and one with *B*, and *A* and *B* give out evidence of not being the same, then surely I have to be *C*. Memory of crossed identifications is what produces personhood: the aloneness of being *C*, of being singularly identified in the world. It is, therefore, by finding ourselves in linguistic contexts where the three persons are at play that, through triangulation, we come to discover ourselves as a third person, and that is, in turn, a condition for our engagement in first- and second-person interactions. This is the process of triangulation that leads us from intentionality to propositionality, from solipsism to reflexive, scaffolded thinking.

For it to occur, we have to engage in language and, furthermore, to construct meaning out of language by an active engagement with the goings-on of social life (“the jobs,” in Trevarthen’s words quoted above). Narrative practices are intrinsic to each person’s personhood, different as these are from historical context to historical context (person γ). All humans, therefore, tell themselves stories about their own selves, so to speak, but these stories are not universal. To the contrary, they are deeply immersed in the localized historical processes that gave rise to sociality wherever they find themselves. The triangulation that is fostered by family name seriality is one mode of telling that story and, at the same time, of instituting social participation. The *H* in the names Hyvian and Hysis, in that it connotes their mother, Helena, is one such constitutive narrative. But it does not limit itself to the mother-child relation; precisely, it triangulates by bringing about a plurality of rhythms, and that is where Laura, Wilson, Winston, Haldane, and Wiverton come in.

What this means is that personhood is familial (cf. Pina-Cabral 2003). That is, if the person is constituted in the way

described above, the original experience of being a person is marked by links that the person will carry throughout his or her whole life, in the sense that no one can cast away the constitutive implications of the initial processes of self-constitution (his or her primary solidarities; cf. Pina-Cabral 2002*b*).

The triangulations implicit in one's naming—even when one's name changes in the course of one's life—are forever inscribed in our constitutive imagination of ourselves: the narrative we tell of ourselves, our arena of presence and action, personhood β . In ontogeny, therefore, at one moment, I am one with Helena, then one with Hysis, then I come onto myself as Hyvian. But, just at the same time, I realize that Winston, Laura, and Haldane all feel they are, in some sense, together. Being together in a dialectic of mutuality is continuously reenacted and reinforced by living together in an ever-complexifying chain of triangulations. Singularity emerges from plurality; the scaffolded mind emerges from an experience of “mutuality of being,” as Sahlins (2011*a*) puts it somewhat redundantly (see Pina-Cabral 2013*b*). This is a process of being together while being different, of having the same perspective on the world and yet inhabiting different places. The aspects of personal constitution (of person α , person β , and person γ) all occur within narrative interaction, and they are processes not of repetition but of invention, not of mimesis but of contagion. Persons are, therefore, imagined, and name attribution is a central part of that.

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ing at its best. It is most welcome. Following Pina-Cabral, the practice of naming in families and the making of personhood in Brazil are knowable only by long-term fieldworkers. The implications of this ethnographic knowledge are drawn out by appealing to a multidisciplinary theoretical arena. Here, this ground is not just comparative anthropology but also psychology and philosophy. Once established, Pina-Cabral can engage critically those other disciplines without diminishing the significance of either fieldwork or informant experiences and local meanings. The general value of a well-developed ethnographic analysis is clearly laid to all scholars, not just anthropologists.

With this kind of approach, Pina-Cabral can subvert the notion of the human as generic, that a person can be lifted out of his or her world, or “company,” as he so pleasingly puts it. He can then properly argue against representationist theories of cognition, which are prevalent in anthropology. One might expect these explanations not to pay much attention to the frivolities of naming as outlined by Pina-Cabral. So the fact that Brazilian naming is serial, and patterns are deliberately broken, rather than corporate, would be unimportant to representationists. Yet naming is not arbitrary: the singularity of personhood is the key, not the slicing up of basic similarity following the classificatory impulse. The example of naming here raises the possibility that other classificatory schemes, where freedom and imagination are also strongly present, contain particular culturally specific patterning.

To be sure, freedom and imagination, and their development in a person, are critical to Pina-Cabral's project here. Yet these terms could be further developed. The patterning he examines depends on the creativity of parents in finding names and the exploration of the world by children. Naming is just one element in the making of self-conscious individuals in the Brazilian contexts here. Since we are talking about ontogeny, the personal development of children in social life, an analytical space for themes such as constraint and authority could be carved out to complement the stress on creative imagining of familial persons. Social processes do not just accumulate in the person as a historical being; they can be shifted around by powerful experiences such as poverty and abuse. Or, how far can the image of learning as scaffolded be taken? Might some supports be weaker than others? If singularity matters, these differences are relevant: not all singularities are equal. This is, however, to step beyond the experience-deep perspective so well elaborated here.

Although the main focus is on personhood as a historical activity, I think there are significant implications for a more conventional historical approach. The radical embodied cognition perspective avoids making a categorical distinction between the making of individuals and the making of society. Dorothy Holland and Jean Lave (2001) have written recently about “history in person” and their vision of the translation from conflict, violence, and struggles to the production of the innermost part of our being. Their focus is

Comments

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“Brazilian Serialities” reveals the original and provocative potential of ethnographic research and anthropological think-

on how humans come to learn about their identities in complex, incoherent historical contexts. Bringing these authors together provides insight into the past to address situations where the documentary record is absent or fragmented. Given what we know about the present, and armed with our situated model of the person, how might past historicities be reconstructed and reimagined as another present? Elsewhere, Pina-Cabral has written about the notions of indeterminacy and underdetermination to shift attention to the fuzzy translations of anthropological analyses and to go beyond the notion of culture. So too we can overcome a linear, evolutionary concept of the past leading inevitably to the present. History in person is made, in conditions not of one's choosing, as multi-threaded, looping backward and forward (as skills are learned and unlearned) but not in successive phases, like balls lined up in a tube. A next step is to examine the nature of the continuity and discontinuity in the production of personhood in particular contexts across generations.

Over the years, Pina-Cabral has made a series of powerful and unique interventions in anthropological theory. I welcome this piece in the ongoing debate about the place of human cognition in anthropological theory and an appropriate psychological approach to make the most of an ethnographic analysis. And for me, as a fellow Brazilianist, I am most appreciative of the way poor Brazilians, and their curious naming practices, are made visible, and theoretically pertinent, to those scholars who might pass too quickly over them in favor of their exotic counterparts.

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Setting itself against a "semiotic theory of representation," Pina-Cabral's article comes in sequence to a series of analytical proposals that mark a poststructuralist turn in the anthropology of personal names and personhood (Pina-Cabral 2010a:305). The author analyzes his ethnographic material on "proper names" in coastal Bahia (Brazil) from the perspective of a historical sociality of personhood. My comment will address two of the focal points in his paper: (A) proper names are part of a dynamics of relatedness and (B) proper names are part of ontogenetic processes that act in the constitution of personhood in the life course.

A. Pina-Cabral proposes a new theoretical articulation between proper names and family dynamics grounded on radical embodied cognition. In his paper, he expands his former proposal that onomastic seriality is "one of the forms through which one 'makes family' in Bahia" (Pina-Cabral 2007:69). As the author had already sustained, onomastic seriality (operating on filiation, siblingship, and namesakes)

contributes to the constitution of relatedness by means of constantly reiterated confrontations (cf. Pina-Cabral 2010b).

The usefulness of this proposal can be "tested," first of all, in its most basic empiricism. This nonrepresentational perspective on onomastic seriality helps us to illuminate what my own interlocutors in southern Bahia (where I have carried out fieldwork for more than a decade) constantly asserted concerning name seriality, namely, that, despite being creatively original and individualizing, proper names that are part of a series are easier to remember. The reason for this is that such names directly evoke either the parents' names or those of the siblings (cf. Viegas 2008:82–85). Pina-Cabral proposes an articulation between names and relatedness that originates in a view of personhood as an engagement in company—which he defines as "complex communicational contexts where viewpoints clash." From this point of view, "serial incompleteness" means that there is a break in the series, but people see that break not as a failure of the serial naming system but as part of it. Breaking the series, thus, is part of a process of "making family," a process of relatedness that "never postulates family as closed group." In this way, the analysis of this instance of broken seriality allows Pina-Cabral to exemplify his poststructuralist approach.

B. The author also proposes that the relation between proper names and the construction of personhood is a transformational process, that is to say, an ontogenetic process simultaneously at personal level and at that of cross generational "continued identities" (cf. Pina-Cabral 2010a:306; 2013a:76). Again in a nonrepresentationalist manner, he argues that (personal or collective) identities are plural because they imply constantly renovating processes of "co-presence." This plurality can be particularly well observed in the analysis of proper names, for name use involves "a constant process of engagement with the panoply of objectifications that shore up sociality over time" (Pina-Cabral 2010a:306). Therefore, the author takes the analysis of the relation between personal names and life course way beyond the traditional focus on the classificatory role of onomastic systems. Typically, the most classical works on the subject in modern anthropology were based on contexts where name changes occurred throughout the life course (e.g., Fortes 1973; Watson 1986). But, in southern Bahia and, more broadly, in most Christian contexts in general, one is not supposed to change one's proper name once it is attributed (and it stays the same even after death). By focusing on the role of proper names in the process of personal ontogeny, nevertheless, Pina-Cabral shows how they play a central constitutive role over the whole of the life course.

Thus, the present article widens the relevance of the anthropological approach on names, reinforcing its historical and transformational aspects by definitely moving away from an ontological vision of the individual or the group. The proposal here is to overcome a culturalist view of human meaning that sees semiotic processes as closed to the material world. Rather, "basic mind" (intentionality) is seen to

lay beside symbolic, scaffolded thinking (propositionality). Basic mind operates for as long as a person remains alive by means of processes of constitutive co-presence. These are inevitable since “the world around us reflects back to us constantly the relations that structured historically our constitution as dividual persons” (Pina-Cabral 2013a:75). The role of the concept of dividual person, therefore, is granted theoretical centrality. This could be even further explored by establishing boundaries with what would be a more post-modern vision of fractal personhood.

Reply

The comments by Mark Harris and Susana de Matos Viegas are very welcome. In light of his own work on Amazonian Brazil (Harris 2000, 2010), Harris stresses the importance of understanding naming, personhood, and generation from a historical perspective, suggesting that my piece opens the path to “examine the nature of the continuity and discontinuity in the production of personhood . . . across generations.” This is a very insightful comment. As a matter of fact, anthropologists do have to turn their attention again to the concept of generation and the implications of age grouping.

The focus here, as Monica Wilson (1951) stressed half a century ago, must be on company—that is, the diffuse and overlaid modes of intersubjectivity that are the ground on which all sociality rests. In personal ontogeny, sociality emerges as a form of historicity; that is, persons emerge out of other persons in a common world and thus are marked by processes that similarly affect their coevals (cf. Fabian 1983:38ff.). In the course of our ontogeny, we encounter a world where other humans have left their mark according to connections of meaning that they assumed; our lived world is not a chaotic jumble of perceptions. These syntonies go way beyond explicit (propositional) meaning, for they are inscribed (objectified) in the world that surrounds us and we access them often through our basic minds, without recourse to conscious meaning. Nevertheless, they contribute centrally to validate our disposition to see the actions of others as meaningful, that which Donald Davidson (2001) called “interpretive charity” and is our door into language and propositional thinking (cf. Hutto and Myin 2013).

This means that the type of relatedness that anthropologists normally call “kinship” cannot be studied independently of the very processes of constitution of the persons that are its principal nodes, as Marshall Sahlins (2011a, 2011b) and Maurice Bloch (2012:33) have recently reiterated. We should never assume that collective identity, collective memory, or collective thinking exist in and of themselves independently of the embodied persons that carry them. In short, a focus on personhood can help us overcome

the definitional problems with kinship that arrested our ancestors in the 1970s (cf. Needham 1971), as well as the dissatisfaction with the primitivist take on “cultures” and “societies” as numerable entities that arrested us in the 1990s (cf. Ingold 1996; Kuper 1988, 2009).

Furthermore, as Harris remarks, this exercise is at the center of the redefinition of the very discipline of anthropology that is going on right now. As people such as Bateson (1972) have been claiming for a very long time (or more recently Toren 2002), our discipline must find a way of breaking out of the nature/nurture, emic/etic oppositions that have prevented it from dialoguing creatively with the rest of the broadly defined project of science throughout most of the twentieth century. In many ways, it is the responsibility of sociocultural anthropologists that biological anthropologists, evolutionary psychologists, and primatologists should continue to find it so difficult to move beyond overly simplistic models of determination.

In particular, anthropologists of all kinds should take inspiration from the neurological and philosophical reexaminations of cognition that are going on all around us (e.g., Anderson, Richardson, and Chemero 2012). There seems to be a generalized agreement that this is the only way to move beyond the forms of semiotic idealism that have besieged anthropology epistemologically (cf. Toren and Pina-Cabral 2011). Sociocultural anthropology has been stuck for more than a century in a neo-Kantian framework that overemphasises “difference” in sociocentric terms and, as a result, sees human thinking as raised above materiality. The diametrically opposite approach, however (i.e., the metaphorical attribution to nonhuman entities of the modes of symbolic action characteristic of human sociality, as per many of Latour’s followers—e.g., Bennett 2010; Kohn 2013) is equally bound to fail, for it is literally unfounded.

The centrality of the ethnographic gesture in anthropological thinking obliges us to account for human transcendence—as Viveiro de Castro puts it, we must “take it seriously” (cf. Candea 2011). This methodological injunction, however, cannot lead us to adopt forms of ontological relativism that are ultimately self-defeating. In short, in order to safeguard ethnographic empiricism, anthropology requires a form of minimal realism (cf. Lynch 1998). That way, it will be able to combine dynamically human transcendence with human embodiment—no amount of talk of “bodies” will suffice if the basic premises of the representationist conceptions of belief are not questioned. My own encounter with radical embodied cognition (cf. Chemero 2009; Hutto 2008), extended mind (cf. Clark and Chalmers 1998), and enactivism (cf. Thompson 2007), as exemplified in this present essay, aims precisely at achieving such a goal.

Following in the line of his own earlier work on historicity (Harris 2007), Harris makes the point that humans, as persons, are necessarily the products of history conceived as the full inherence in time (past and future) of the human condition. Therefore, as he points out, the matter of freedom

of choice is indeed highly relevant. Naming practices are “good to think with” in this aspect. The role of names differs in distinct sociohistoric contexts and according to different modes of naming. Names may contribute toward objectifying personhood (as in modern bureaucratic systems, where the person has one fixed set of names), or may make it relational (as in technonyms, or in naming systems where names are private to specific interpersonal relations) or yet as a transformational device (as in nicknames, or name change at life cycle rituals). Whichever way, the process of naming is always an encounter of imagination with conformity, of freedom with constraint, of self-determination with determination by and of others. Twentieth-century anthropology inherited from the belle époque the disposition to see people as subordinated, constrained, or molded by the formatting effect of “society”—seeing “cultures” as separate, itemizable entities. We must move beyond these forms of sociocentrism, as they obviate the matter of personal freedom and imagination as much as the necessarily material nature of all sociality. The fact of mind being extended is relevant not only in that persons have a body but also in the more radical aspect that they are a body.

In turn, in her comments, Viegas corroborates how seriality is an important aspect of personal constitution in southern Bahia, arguing for an approach that sees personal relatedness as dynamic. Based on her own fieldwork (Viegas 2007), she stresses the aspect of memory. Her informants explicitly explained name seriality as a form of mapping the world of relations. This is a centrally important idea, since it shows how names effect forms of objectivation that constitute a scaffolding of the relational world.

Viegas stresses how my argument depends on notions of extended mind (cf. Prinz and Clark 2004) and radical embodied cognition in order to break with our already exhausted neo-Kantian understandings of belief. As a matter of fact, we have for too long chosen to disregard the implications for anthropological theory and ethnographic practice of the poststructuralist critique of people such as Needham (1983), Ardener (2006), or Feleppa (1988). Their readings of Wittgenstein or Quine were simply considered by the postmodern generation in the 1990s as too outlandish to be taken seriously. This was a serious error. Consequently, sociocultural anthropologists have failed to be influenced in epistemological matters by the “anomalous monism” of Donald Davidson (2001) or, in ethical and ontological matters, by the reading that Husserl and Lévinas made of Lévy-Bruhl (1957). The price for that has been that, faced with the exhaustion of sociocentric thinking (taken to its most sophisticated limit in the work of Pierre Bourdieu), anthropologists have not been able to move beyond the patently exhausted primitivist project that they inherited from the belle époque.

It is my contention that, in this matter, the so-called ontological turn is yet another form of defeatist agnosticism shored up by forms of nostalgic primitivism. Somehow anthropologists have managed to avert their attention from the

poor quality of Deleuze’s anthropology (his philosophy was up to date, but his anthropology was retrograde). My own argument—which I have developed at length in a series of papers written for *HAU* concerning the notion of “world” (cf. Pina-Cabral 2014a, 2014b)—is that if we are to propose an anthropological project for the twenty-first century, we need to go beyond the exclusive fascination with meaning, narrative, and discourse that closes sociality within the bounds of propositionality (we have to expand the matter of consciousness, as Damásio [2000] proposed already a long time ago). For that, however, we have to radically revise our approach to personhood and cognition in line with the new approaches that are emerging all around us in our neighboring disciplines. My own paper hopes to be a contribution toward that move.

—João de Pina-Cabral

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