

CONTEXTUALIZING CRITICAL ANTHROPOLOGY:
A Metacritique

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ABSTRACT

Critical Anthropology as a theoretical project of man's self-enlightenment, i.e. his acquaintance with his true potential, is based on certain apodictic premises which are absolved from critical investigation. The most important one is the a priori presence of the human phenomenon in the form of a universal 'we' that is also the epistemological center of all knowledge and consciousness. In the texts of Foucault and Derrida this premise is situated within the cultural milieu of anthropocentrism, which represents a continuation of the centuries old metaphysical discourse of the Occident. The ramifications of this thesis for the theory of Critical Anthropology are examined in the concluding paragraphs.

RÉSUMÉ

La critique Anthropologique, en tant que projet théorique de l'épanouissement des connaissances de l'humanité, c'est à dire, de sa familiarisation avec son plein potentiel, est fondée sur certaines assomptions apodictiques qui sont absolvées d'examen critiques.

La plus importante de celles-ci est la présence, à priori, du phénomène humain dans la forme d'un 'Nous' universel qui forme le centre épistémologique de toutes connaissances et conscience. Dans les textes de Foucault et de Derrida, cette assumption est située dans le milieu culturel de l'anthropocentrisme, qui représente une continuation du discours métaphisique Occidental. Les implications de cette thèse concernant la théorie critique en Anthropologie sont examinées dans les derniers paragraphes du texte.

"We study men, that is we reflect on ourselves studying others..."

Stanley Diamond, In Search of the Primitive.

"But who, we?"

Jacques Derrida, The Ends of Man.

INTRODUCTION

Every scientific theory or, more generally, every science begins with a set of apodictic truths and principles which are held to be self-evident and are absolved from critical investigation. These are the first principles or axioms of a science that make up the discursive-logical foundation for its propositions, hypotheses, predictions, etc. Structurally, they are a function of the specific world-model that the respective science sees as 'objective reality' and within whose co-ordinates it operates as a meaningful and plausible discipline. At the outset, then, the world that a scientist encounters in the role of its inquisitor is presented to him in a dichotomous form: some things 'out there' can be questioned while others cannot. That is, while science does indeed attempt to attain knowledge about the real nature of things and processes in the objective world, the cultural, historical or philosophical-discursive origins of that world-model are rarely problematized.

Presumably, it is there not to be doubted but to be explained and, maybe even more importantly, mastered. This disciplinary model is not the result of some conscious act on the part of the scientific practitioner nor the scientific community but is an inherent structural feature of the scientific discourse as such. By virtue of its being an inquiry into the truth about certain things, every science is inevitably linked to a particular discursive

framework within which the criteria for truthfulness as well as the 'objective facts' have already been established with apodictic import. This does not mean, however, that scientific knowledge is static that is to say, tied to one world-model only. This framework is, in fact, in a constant process of transformation, which implies changes in the structure of science as well. But, regardless of the actual content of these changes, the basic formal premise of the scientific praxis remains unaltered: in order to 'make sense', every science must, in each moment of its historical existence, recognize a world of facts as its 'objective reality' and ultimate referential framework.

Despite their fundamental role in the construction of scientific knowledge, the facts and principles that constitute the logical and conceptual infrastructure of a science have frequently been unjustly marginalized.

Ordinarily they have been confined to the more exclusive domains of the philosophy and sociology of knowledge, as if they were of no concern to those who were actively engaged in the process of producing scientific knowledge. The turn toward reflexivity (most notably in sociology and anthropology), represents one of the few attempts to remedy this paradox and to look at the foundations of scientific knowledge from the standpoint of those who are its immediate producers. Still, reflexivity as a project has its own limitations, the most significant one being its inability to deal with its own infrastructural premises. This was also the case in anthropology where the so-called critical anthropologists managed to sensitize the anthropological community to an array of problems concerning the ideological foundations of the discipline's theory and practice, but stopped short of a truly self-critical programme which would deal with the presuppositions of the newborn theory of Critical Anthropology. The goal of this short text is to help complete the work already started, and to elucidate the premises of Critical Anthropology in the same way that Critical Anthropology has helped us learn more about the foundations of other anthropological theories. Inevitably, then, it is also an exercise in metacritique.

DEFINING CRITICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

One of the more peculiar problems confronting the analyst of Critical Anthropology is that this field lacks the relatively definable theoretical physiognomy characteristic of most other anthropological subfields or 'schools of thought' (e.g. ethnomethodology,

ethnolinguistics, medical anthropology, symbolic anthropology, etc.). At the most general level, there are at least two distinct models of Critical Anthropology which must be distinguished from one another. In the first of these, Critical Anthropology is understood as a critique of anthropology (i.e. as an intradisciplinary project designed to perform the task of a corrective in the process of theory building). More specifically, its aim is to critically analyze anthropological knowledge and its specific theoretical paradigms from within. Critical Anthropology in this sense is a disciplinary paradigm for reflexivity which implies a perennial questioning of the anthropological discourse -- its ideological, philosophical and ethical foundations, political filiations, logical structures, practical significance, heuristic usefulness, etc. In its second sense, the term "Critical Anthropology" has been used to denote a range of theoretical projects which have employed the critical method in the framing of their own propositions and postulates about man, culture, civilization and other topics which generally fall under the disciplinary jurisdiction of anthropology.

The central premises of the latter, 'theoretical', paradigm of Critical Anthropology provide the subject-matter of this essay. With all its inherent diversity and the practical impossibility of addressing all of the critical-anthropological projects in one sweep, our first task is to somehow define this field and specify which of the critical anthropological theories we will be dealing with. In this essay I will focus on what I consider to be the most productive, if not the most representative, 'sample' of Critical Anthropology, namely the works of the prominent critical anthropologists of the sixties -- Stanley Diamond, Eric Wolf, and Bob Scholte. It is in their writings that the general and rather amorphous project of 'Critical Consciousness' was first articulated as a relatively coherent theoretical project and it is with these authors (along with Kathleen Gough, Dell Hymes, Talal Asad, and others) that Critical Anthropology was first recognized as a legitimate sub-discipline within the larger framework of the science of "man."

Thematically, I will address what I see as the central topos in these writings, namely the noble idea(1) of human self-enlightenment to which anthropology is considered to be of instrumental importance. The birth of this idea and its formulation as an academic-anthropological programme was very much the result of the confluence of two relatively independent factors. One could be called the 'socio-cultural aspect', and is contained in the specific Zeitgeist of the sixties in Europe and North America. Its revolutionary pulse was particularly deeply felt in the realm of

social and humanist thought. At that time, social scientists and humanists engaged in an attempt to restructure the social order and replace its defunct ideologies with a new 'authentic' consciousness. Thus, in sociology, for example, the sixties brought about the final deposal of what had hitherto been the undisputed theoretical champion, Talcott Parsons' structural-functionalism. It was in the critical writings of Mills, Dahrendorf, Wrong and others that this theoretical model was effectively deconstructed as the extended hand of the status-quo ideology which, it was argued, was obsolete and, more importantly, deceptive. In philosophy, one of the most conspicuous developments of the time was the rediscovery of the opus of the early 'humanist' Marx. This provided fruitful soil for a number of collective philosophical projects such as the 'New Left', 'Praxis philosophy', etc. What these authors sought, among other things, was to salvage 'real socialist values' from the perverted models of socialist society that had been built around the example of the Soviet political system. Similar concerns for the resurrection of authentic values were key factors in the shaping of new psychoanalytic approaches (e.g. Fromm) which sought to salvage the 'sane Man' (and also the sane society) from his alienated and pathological versions, etc. In sum, the return to the 'authentic man' and his liberation from the pathologies and alienations of modern society, capitalist and socialist alike, was one of the central themes of the 'cultural revolution' of the sixties. What that also meant was that the stage had already been prepared for anthropology to make its contribution to the general cause. The writings of Diamond et al. can thus be seen as an effort to cover a field which was, on the one hand, a new territory but, on the other, a territory which, by definition, belonged to the academic discipline of anthropology. After all, who was better equipped to lead the search for the 'Real Man' than a representative of the science of humanity itself?

The second factor contributing to the framing of the project of human self-enlightenment was the legacy of the critical thought within American anthropology. One of its most important claims since the turn of the century had been that anthropology was essentially a form of transcendental knowledge which generated an awareness of cultural particularity as well as the relativity of one's cognitive and ethical systems. This, in turn, was to provide the gateway to a more universal consciousness and, more importantly, toward a universal human praxis which was not limited by any particular culture. Franz Boas, who laid the groundwork for so much of modern anthropology, is also to be credited for this theoretical innovation. It was he who claimed, as early as 1907,

that anthropology "may help us recognize the possibility of lines of progress which do not happen to be in accord with the dominant ideas of our times" (in Stocking, 1974:281). From Ruth Benedict's contention that "the knowledge we need of our own cultural processes can be most economically arrived at by a detour" (1934:60) to Marcus' and Fischer's idea of "matching the familiar against the unfamiliar" (1986:166), anthropological literature abounds with variations on this central theme of cultural transcendence or the attainment of a more encompassing perspective which is free from ethnocentric bias and ideological prejudice in all its forms.

It was not until the revolutionary sixties, however, and the new birth of humanity -- or at least what was thought to be the new birth of humanity -- that this critical perspective was formulated into a theoretical project in its own right. The critical anthropologists of this period formulated an unambiguous epistemological and conceptual base upon which the transcendence of one's own cultural milieu was to be possible. In concordance with the humanist spirit of the time this discursive base was found in the concept of the 'authentic man'. Critical anthropologists believed that the 'authentic man' was the 'universal man' who was not susceptible to any cultural particularization. He was, so to speak, a meta-cultural concept, the true anthropos who would reveal himself to us through an ethnographic inquiry into the culturally other. The ethnographic encounter supposedly uproots us from our habitual ways of thinking and doing and thereby enables us to see the common human element in both 'their' and 'our' thoughts and actions. In the last instance, then, it enables us to find out who we really are, we as universal and authentic human beings. And that is -- in an inevitably simplified form -- the central thesis of the project of self-enlightenment.

In the works of Stanley Diamond this search for the authentic man, for the authentic 'us', is tantamount to the search for the primitive:

The search for the primitive is the attempt to define a primary human potential ... In order to understand ourselves and heal ourselves in this age of abstract horror, we must regain the sense of the totality and the immediacy of human experience. In order to determine where we are, we must learn, syllable by syllable, where we have been (1974:119).

Obviously, Diamond finds the study of ourselves to be the primary concern of anthropology. This, in effect, puts the anthropologist in an exclusive and unquestionably privileged position which enables him to be the torchbearer of human self-enlightenment. From the critical anthropologist's point of view, anthropologists are, by definition, a major step ahead of all other scientists -- social or natural -- since the knowledge they produce is not neutral scientific knowledge about a selected object of the phenomenal world but knowledge about the very subject of all consciousness, about the one who asks the question in the first place. We are a puzzle to ourselves; hence, anthropology serves as an effective antidote against such black holes in our knowledge. And it must be critical, Diamond says, if we are to go beyond what we now are and gain insight into our true potential.

Eric Wolf also offers a vision of universal humanity and of universal culture to which we can gain access through anthropological knowledge. Hence his statement (or warning, rather) that "if anthropology has been defined as a science of man, then a science of man it must be or perish" (1964:94). Naturally, the universal presence of man is as self-evident for Wolf, as it is for Diamond:

We have asserted and demonstrated the unity of man in the articulation of the cultural process; to deny these links with our past and present is to put blinders on our vision, to retreat to a narrower adaptation, to turn our backs on what we may yet become (1964:96).

In this scenario, which stipulates the universality of the human phenomenon, anthropology inevitably becomes a worldly affair. Wolf thus claims that the anthropological point of view is "that of a world culture, struggling to be born". Consequently, the anthropologist "both represents its embryonic possibilities and works to create it" (1964:96).

Here is an epistle for an anthropological profession that is engaged in the practical transformation of the world through self-enlightenment. Both Wolf and Diamond see anthropology as an enterprise that has been endowed with an epochal mission, where it is an indispensable tool in the making of a better world -- one which will be free of the pathologies and misconceptions endemic to this civilization or this particular culture.

Another version of the same ideal is found in the writings of the late Bob Scholte. In his contribution to the now classic volume on

Critical Anthropology, Dell Hymes' Reinventing Anthropology (1969), he presents the argument for a critical and self-reflective anthropology in the form of what he sees as a hermeneutic circle:

The comparative understanding of others contributes to self-awareness; self-understanding, in turn, allows for self-reflection and (partial) self-emancipation; the emancipatory interest, finally, makes the understanding of others possible. Though this process by no means guarantees nor even implies a total transcendence or a transcultural science, its very circularity, perspectivism, and intentionality make a reflexive, critical, and progressive anthropology more likely and, I would add, in keeping with anthropological principles themselves (1969:448).

Much like Wolf and Diamond before him, Scholte here contends that the ultimate goal of anthropology is not limited by its narrow scientific-cognitive interests only, but is really to serve all of humanity by providing it with perhaps the most fundamental knowledge of all -- the knowledge of itself. The creation of an emancipatory anthropological praxis is therefore to be looked at in the "context of a radical and political emancipation of [nothing short of] concrete humanity" (1969:448).

Limitations of space prevent us from going into a detailed analysis of the contents of these authors' texts. Let us hope, therefore, that the few paragraphs quoted here will satisfy our purposes. Needless to say, it is not argued here that all of Diamond's work (nor Wolf's, nor Scholte's for that matter) can be subsumed under one heading. Prolific writers as they have been, their oeuvres comprise a wide variety of themes and subjects, from political economy to poetry. But, on the other hand, one could hardly deny the fact that the project of self-enlightenment has been an important component if not the thematic pillar of all of their texts.

Let us, therefore, look more closely at the logical and conceptual structure of the self-enlightenment argument and let us also try to be true to the critical perspective by locating it within its proper cultural and intellectual setting.

HUMAN SELF-ENLIGHTENMENT DECONSTRUCTED

I have argued that every science starts with a particular model of reality which has its apodictic facts and then tries to work its way up from that axiomatic foundation. Critical Anthropology is no exception to this rule. Indeed, this is a corollary of the fact that the discipline is built around the model of 'truth' rather than 'method', to paraphrase the classic scheme of Hans-Georg Gadamer. Its critical method is, in reality, a function of the specific truth(s) which it strives to promote. It critically transcends the limits of our own culture not just for the sake of critical questioning and self-doubt as such, but more importantly, so that it can enlighten us all about a higher truth which, it believes, can be attained through such cognitive practice. This a priori postulation links Critical Anthropology qua theory to a specific set of facts and principles which must not be questioned but are assumed to be self-evident. The project of human emancipation through self-enlightenment, which we have seen to be the constitutive component of Critical Anthropology, is a function of at least three such premises: (I) the universal presence of the phenomenon called humanity; (II) the exclusive capacity of this phenomenon to reflect upon the world that surrounds it and; (III) its even more exclusive capacity to reflect upon its own self (the subject of knowledge which knows itself). These facts are the self-evident truths of anthropology in general and, more specifically, of Critical Anthropology.

One does not have to engage in deep philosophical thinking, however, in order to see that what seem to be the self-evident truths for one particular science or scientific theory do not have to be the self-evident truths for all. In fact, it is the ethnological experience proper which teaches us that facts and putative truths are relative only, that they lose their rigour and import once they have been uprooted from the particular culture and ways of life in which they had been sustained. This does not mean a return to the radical relativism of Melville Herskovits nor a denial of the universality of culture. It is merely a recognition of the cultural diversity upon which anthropological research is founded. The first premise of our critical investigation, therefore, is that Critical Anthropology, as a theoretical project, recognizes the presence of certain facts, is also the product of a certain culture within which those facts have been corroborated and established beyond reasonable doubt. This means no more than that it operates within a definable discursive horizon which rests on certain self-evident truths. It is a horizon within which certain propositions, regardless

of their scientific or everyday language context, are possible and others simply are not. (The actual scope of this horizon and the question of whether it encompasses the whole of Western culture or, perhaps, represents only one 'subculture' within it, is not the issue here; that matter is of secondary importance and does not in any way alter my basic proposition.)

We have seen that the apodictic premise of Critical Anthropology, of its discursive framework rather, is the presence of the human in the exclusive and historically unprecedented role of the subject of knowledge capable of self-transparency. While this notion has for most of us (anthropologists and non-anthropologists alike) the self-explanatory weight of a 'natural fact' comparable, for example, to the law of gravity, there are those who take a different, if not directly opposed, view. The fact that these writers are known as philosophers, a title that has acquired a demeaning status in the supposedly 'concrete' world of anthropology and social science, does not in the least devalue their conclusions. Indeed, as I will try to show, their claims are most pertinent to the science of humanity. Moreover, their research into the inner fabric of our own culture is essentially parallel to the ethnographer's inquiry into the world of the culturally other.

The particular philosophical tradition whose resources I will draw upon is an assembly of highly idiosyncratic authors whose one and perhaps only common interest has been the critical deconstruction of the metaphysical foundations of Western culture. To be sure, its spiritual progenitor was Friedrich Nietzsche, and among its other representatives one could also mention the names of Heidegger, Foucault, Lyotard, Derrida and others. In this text I will be more concerned with the writings of Foucault and Derrida because their critical analyses, although departing from different vantage points, represent two sides of the same coin, namely the deconstruction of 'man' as the metaphysical foundation of consciousness in the age of modernity (or post-enlightenment).

The same critical spirit with which Nietzsche blasphemously questioned the privileged position of God ("What if God was our biggest lie?") is also woven into those writings of Derrida and Foucault in which they dismantle the concept of 'man' as, probably, the biggest lie of our day. One must, however, give due credit to Martin Heidegger who provided the intellectual bridge between Nietzsche and these writers by launching the first wholesale attack upon humanism as metaphysics:

Every humanism is either grounded in a metaphysics or is itself made to be the ground of one. Every determination of the essence of man that already presupposes an interpretation of being without asking about the truth of Being, whether knowingly or not, is metaphysical. The result is that what is peculiar to all metaphysics, specifically to the way the essence of man is determined, is that it is 'humanistic'. Accordingly, every humanism remains metaphysical (1977:202).

Although critical of what he interprets as Heidegger's new metaphysics of Being, Jacques Derrida finds the thesis which stipulates the interrelatedness of metaphysics and the concept of anthropos essentially correct. For Derrida 'man' is one element in the general metaphysics of "presencing". He is the most immediate expression and a logical consequence of the Cartesian Cogito, which, once it had ascertained that it 'was', had to objectify its presence in the world by grounding itself in a concrete phenomenon. The solution was found in the phenomenon of mankind and the effective invention of the synonymity of the 'we' of the process of consciousness with human beings, the objectively present phenomenon. That was to become the first principle of self-knowledge in modernity; we were 'out there' and at the same time 'here', we humans, that is. We study other people, but in fact we study ourselves since 'we' and the 'other' are one and the same phenomenon. Derrida's criticism of this position in the philosophical writings of Hegel and Husserl is equally pertinent to the central topic of this discussion:

There is an uninterrupted metaphysical familiarity with that which, so naturally, links the we of the philosopher [or anthropologist] to 'we, men', to the we in the horizon of humanity. Although the theme of history is quite present in the discourse of the period, there is little practice of the history of concepts. For example, the history of the concept of man is never examined (1982:116).

What Hegel, Husserl and many others failed to do, Foucault tried to make up for. In his book, The Order of Things, he sets out to illuminate the historical and cultural origins of the concept of 'man', as well as the intellectual and socio-cultural ramifications of this invention:

Before the eighteenth century man did not exist ... He is a quite recent creature, which the demiurge of knowledge fabricated with his own hands less than two hundred years ago: but he has grown old so quickly that it has been only too easy to imagine that he had been waiting for thousands of years in the darkness for that moment of illumination in which he would finally be known (1970:308).

It is important to note here that Foucault is not saying that the 'human domain', as we perceive of it today from our perspective of an already anthropocentrically structured consciousness, came to existence solely on the premise of 'man's' prior invention, -- as a sequel to it, that is. He makes an unambiguous point of the fact that there was (human) labour, (human) life and (human) language prior to the invention of man and that there were also systematic inquiries into these regions of thought and practice -- most notably, economics, medicine/biology and grammar. But he also draws an important line of distinction: in the 'pre-human' discursive formations, or historical epochs, these domains were not accorded a subject, at least not in the form of 'man'.

Of course it is possible to object that general grammar, natural history, and the analysis of wealth were all, in a sense, ways of recognizing the existence of man -- but there is a distinction to be made. There is no doubt that the natural sciences dealt with man as with a species or a genus: the controversy about the problem of races in the eighteenth century testifies to that. Again, general grammar and economics made use of such notions as need and desire, or memory or imagination. But there was no epistemological consciousness of man as such. The classical aposteme is articulated along lines that do not isolate, in any way, a specific domain proper to man (1970:308-9, emphasis added).

What both Foucault and Derrida are saying is that 'man' is a cultural concept before all and a metaphysical one at that. His installment in the history of Western thought was not at all the result of the efforts to overcome some hiatus in human knowledge nor did it really resolve any major problem of the time. On the contrary, it was something of a fortuitous event, an accident almost.

There was no real reason, so to speak, for 'man' to emerge other than to become a convenient frame of reference for metaphysical thought. With this epistemological centering he was also promoted to the rank of a phenomenon which, unlike any other, was present in the dual role of the subject-object of knowledge. He was able to think himself. This premise was further elaborated with great success in the newly-emergent human sciences and gamut of their subdisciplines which were all designed to enrich man with objective knowledge of himself. As Foucault correctly observes, 'man' was the a priori of these sciences; without the delineation of the provinces proper to the human phenomenon as the subject of all consciousness (e.g. psyche, culture, etc.) there quite certainly would have never been any anthropology, sociology or psychology as the disciplines of man's self-revelation.

This self-analytic circularity, which Scholte claims is a case of the hermeneutic circle, is really a metaphysical circle, as it presupposes something to be a self-evident fact despite its being unknown. There is a lucid critique of this kind of argumentation in Ernst Tugendadt's analysis of the theory of reflection, which is essentially a logical corollary of an anthropocentric epistemology:

Self-consciousness is supposed to be consciousness of an 'I'. But, we are told, something is an I only when it has the structure of the identity of knowing what is known. Now if, according to the theory of reflection, self-consciousness is achieved in turning back on itself, then the identity of knowing with what is known is first established in this turning back. On the other hand, the subject upon which the act turns back is already supposed to be an I. Thus, on the one hand, in turning back the act is supposed to represent the I; on the other hand, according to the concept of the I, it is first constituted in this act ... This results in a circle. In starting with a subject that is already available, the theory of reflection presupposes something that is supposed to be actually constituted only in relation to itself (in Habermas, 1984:394).

This a priori assumed self, which is the ground for the theory of reflection, is the same human self that Foucault and Derrida criticize as the foundation of the metaphysical discourse of humanity. It is that self which supposedly encounters its mirror image in the objective world and then goes out to see what it is

really all about. But, more importantly, it is the self which has been the very foundation of a whole culture -- the culture of post-enlightenment or 'modernity'. Put in historical perspective, it is a continuation of the centuries-old discourse of the Occident whose metaphysical premises have remained unaltered. It is that type of discourse which has always been marked and de facto determined by the presence of different founding principles -- from Aristotle's "sensible substance" to "materia", "God", "cogito", etc. The epoch of modernity is marked by the presence of one such principle, namely 'man', as the founding subject of all knowledge in it, as its final frame of reference whose status is not to be questioned but constantly illuminated anew in its infinite forms. It is this epistemological centrality of man and the numerous intellectual practices which it generated that prompted Foucault to describe the entire epoch of post-enlightenment as the age of an anthropocentric culture: "Anthropology as an analytic of man has ... played a constituent role in modern thought and to a large extent we are still not free from it" (1970:340). Our present discourse thus continues to be built around 'man's' apodictic presence as the one who speaks, understands, defines, translates ... and, finally, as the one who searches for himself.

CONCLUSION

The question that was asked at the beginning of this paper was that of the discursive-logical foundation of Critical Anthropology. Having come this far, we can say that this foundation is a reflection, a constitutive element of the anthropocentric culture of modernity. The relation between it and Critical Anthropology thus goes far beyond mere historical concurrence. Anthropology in general and Critical Anthropology in particular have been the quintessence of this culture, the straightforward corroboration of its founding principles. For Critical Anthropology, as the search for that pristine 'human potential', for that man/woman which is in all of us and is universally present in the world, is the immediate ramification of the cultural system which takes the epistemological centrality of man/woman as its first axiom. Critical Anthropology, as the search for that universal human, is at the same time an endorsement and confirmation of humanity's presence in the world as well as the living proof that the ideal of knowing it is plausible as a scientific project. In addition to this, the critical anthropologist, by claiming a privileged position from which to

enlighten us all as to what we are about, is the incarnation of the dual role of the metaphysical concept of 'man'. By definition, the person who inquires into the essence of his/her own being and who uses that knowledge to emancipate him/herself or realize his/her full potential is the critical anthropologist.

Whether these goals are to be achieved through a return to the primitive, which is "where we have once been" as Diamond tells us, or through the finalization of an "impending world culture" (which is where we yet have to be), is really an issue of secondary importance. What does count is that critical anthropologists are in agreement over the need for a science which will be a direct encounter with humanity's 'true self', a science which will enable us to live up to the noble ideals contained in the very notion of humanity. And that is the metaphysics of anthropocentrism in its rawest and purest form.

The other conclusion that we can draw is that Critical Anthropology is really a model of controlled or arrested critique. What I mean by this is that its critical momentum never carries it beyond the limits imposed by its own theoretical infrastructure. While critical of cultural particularity as such and, more concretely, of the ethnocentric biases of the Occidental mind, it never sees itself and its own conceptual logical presuppositions as a cultural product. On the contrary, it firmly stipulates the anthropocentric principle of humanity's assumed presence in the form of a universal and de facto metacultural 'we' and then, a posteriori, tries to illuminate (the truth about) this phenomenon. Humanity's existence is never a problem for Critical Anthropology, it is only the obstacles which hamper the realization of its full potential that are problematic. One major paradox born of such a position is that Critical Anthropology becomes an accomplice to ethnocentrism and cultural imperialism, those same intellectual crimes that it so loudly decries. By assuming that all discourse and all knowledge have their origin in humanity and that without humanity as its origin there is no discourse, Critical Anthropology is only demonstrating how oblivious it is to the fact that the very concept of the human, as it has been appropriated in the anthropological discourse, is the product of a specific culture only. As Derrida and especially Foucault have shown, the apodictic universality of man in the form of 'us' as the epistemological center of all knowledge, is an ethnocentric notion par excellence. And by subsuming all other non-anthropocentric forms of discourse under the one common code of humanity, critical anthropologists are merely using the standards

of their own cultural system as the paradigm for the world as a whole.

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