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The Ground Between: Anthropologists Engage Philosophy by Das Veena, Michael Jackson, Arthur Kleinman, & Bhrigupati Singh, eds.

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Das, Veena, Michael Jackson, Arthur Kleinman, and Bhrigupati Singh, eds. *The Ground Between: Anthropologists Engage Philosophy*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014. viii + 351 pages. Paperback, \$26.95.

In *The Ground Between: Anthropologists Engage Philosophy*, the editors bring together established anthropologists to elicit nuanced illustrations of the ways in which philosophy is applied, stretched, or even reimagined by experienced practitioners. The editors seek to answer the question, “How do philosophical concepts figure in the making of anthropological knowledge, and what constitutes philosophy for us non-philosophers in this sense?” (p. 20-1). Because the authors ground their discussion of philosophy in particular experiences, whether that be in the field, in the process of writing ethnography, or reflecting back on work written decades earlier, the reader gets a sense of how each author is engaged with philosophical concepts.

As an anthology, this work spans geographical location and scholarly approach but remains united in its concentration on the interplay between the two disciplines. Broadly speaking, different chapters address issues of ethics, the nature of habit, and the relationship between being and thinking. Each author articulates a different perspective on the place of philosophy. Michael Jackson, reflecting on the unexplored discursive relationship between ethnography and philosophy, views philosophy “not as a method for forming concepts but as a strategy for distancing ourselves from the world of immediate experience—social as well as sensory—in order to gain some kind of perspective or purchase on it” (p. 28), in some ways seeing anthropology and philosophy as complementary. By contrast, Didier Fassin endorses “a form of respectful and loyal treason [that] is justified every time it produces something interestingly new in the process of translation from one discipline to another” (p. 52), suggesting that neither the anthropologist nor the philosopher must reproduce the other’s mentation with fidelity, but rather that the generative possibility of combining the two stems from the mismatch between the real and the ideal. Not content to see the flow between philosophy and anthropology as unidirectional, João Biehl states, “Through ethnographic rendering, people’s own theorizing of their conditions may leak into, animate, and challenge present-day regimes of veridiction, including philosophical universals and anthropological subjugation to philosophy” (p. 96). Lest we become enthralled by the minutiae of these distinctions, Arthur Kleinman reminds the reader, “Social theory is important. It is important not just because of the insight it provides but because it illuminates the practical implications of empirical studies. It helps to redirect them and make them coherent, transforming them into practical actions that repair and remake the world in new ways, working against the grain of conventional thinking” (p. 124).

Reading the introduction, I was a tad intimidated by the goals of the editors, as I am not nearly as versed in philosophy as I am in anthropology and lack what seemed a requisite familiarity with a wide range of philosophers. Trusting the editors, I plunged ahead. In some areas, I feel like I did not truly grasp the details of arguments being made, hindered as I was by my lack of knowledge. Conversely, the book introduced me to new philosophical concepts and applied them in ways that made them accessible. I could easily see connections to my own work and experiences and am now eager to explore these philosophers on my own. Although perhaps comprehensible to advanced anthropology undergraduates, this book is best suited to graduate students and other scholars who have more familiarity with both the literature and the process of anthropology. On the other hand, philosophy undergraduates who are familiar with the classics might appreciate the demonstration of how anthropologists use philosophy, since the authors give concrete examples of anthropology in action, requiring less knowledge of anthropological

canon. This book is a valuable contribution to the literature particularly because it avoids generalized arguments about the relationships between the disciplines but focuses instead on the actual engagement of anthropologists with philosophy.

The authors do a consistently good job of blending original research with primary source material to present a holistic picture of the interplay between the disciplines. Vincent Crapanzano does a masterful job elucidating epistemological philosophies through a series of ethnographic vignettes. On the whole, I found the anthology challenging in places but enjoyable and thought provoking. The diversity of writing styles and approaches to anthropology keep the reader's attention while also making it possible to excerpt chapters for assigned reading.

Michael M. J. Fischer asks, "What would it mean for anthropology to be the empirical means of doing philosophy?" (p. 188). Most of the authors conclude that the exchange between anthropology and philosophy is fecund ground for a new understanding of lived experience. Michael Pruett challenges the reader to not limit herself to Western philosophy, stating, "Perhaps our goal on the contrary should be to revitalize these categories by taking indigenous theories about them [categories like ritual and cosmology] seriously and exploring the phenomena and practices associated with them accordingly" (p. 232). Anthropology and philosophy are not at odds with one another. Instead they ebb and flow into each other, influenced by individual practitioners. *The Ground Between: Anthropologists Engage Philosophy* illustrates this point beautifully.

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