Introduction: Reconsidering detachment

Matei Candea, Joanna Cook, Catherine Trundle and Thomas Yarrow

This volume urges a reconsideration of the productive potential of disconnection, distance and detachment, as ethical, methodological and philosophical commitments. In so doing, we write against the grain of a strong tendency in contemporary social theory and public life. Engagement has, in a wide range of contexts, become a definitive and unquestionable social good, one that encompasses or abuts with a number of other seductive cultural tropes, such as participation, democracy, voice, equality, diversity and empowerment. Conversely, detachment has come to symbolize a range of social harms: authoritarianism and hierarchy, being out of touch, bureaucratic coldness and unresponsiveness, a lack of empathy, and passivity and inaction. Yet as this book will argue, in a wide range of settings detachment is still socially, ethically and politically valued, and the relationship between detachment and engagement is not simple or singular.

The volume developed as a result of an on-going and collaborative enquiry into detachment by the editors. Beginning with a discussion over a glass of wine on a sunny afternoon in December 2008, we reflected on the diverse ways in which we each separately encountered detachment in our work. In examining the disciplinary relationship between archaeology and anthropology, Yarrow found that it is precisely the disconnection and difference between the ways in which these disciplines produce knowledge that sets up the possibility for productive engagement (Yarrow and Garrow 2010). Following Candea's fieldwork in a research station in the Kalahari

desert, where behavioural biologists observe the daily lives of meerkats, he was struck by the peculiar non-interactive relations researchers established with the wild meerkats they studied through what they called 'habituation' (Candea 2010; 2013a). This was no ideological pretense of objective distance, but an embodied practice of detached relationality – a detachment which in turn required volunteers to detach themselves from parts of themselves (Candea 2013)[1].

In her work on *vipassana* meditation, Cook (2010) explored the ways in which Thai monastics engage with specific ascetic introspection techniques in order to cultivate forms of detachment that are consistent with Buddhist teachings. Thai Buddhist monastics work to cultivate experiential insight into the tenets of impermanence, suffering and non-self through meditative discipline. Trundle (2014) found that for the migrant charity givers in Italy she studied, empathy and compassion did not rest simply on processes of connection – on mimicry, transference and imagination, as many scholars has theorised. Rather crucial to their works was a recognition of disconnection, the boundaries that could not be crossed and a failure to appreciate the true nature of recipients' suffering, that created the ethical, structural and affective drive to give. These initial conversations gave rise to a series of interconnected workshops and a conference on the theme of detachment, following our collective sense that similar issues seemed to find resonance in these diverse ethnographic contexts. This volume emerges as the culmination of these conversations and conferences.

Thinking about detachment provides fresh entry points into a range of empirical contexts. But our aim here is more than simply collecting a set of vignettes. We wish

to put detachment center stage as a conceptual problem. Taking detachment seriously does not equate to rejection of relational theories and approaches. Nor does it entail a nostalgic return to older analytics of pure distanced knowledge or solitary disconnected agents. Nor are we calling for a suspension of critical reflection on the potential dangers and limits of tropes and practices of detachment. What we are asking however, is that detachment be allowed the same ethnographic and conceptual air-time as its opposites. In so doing, the chapters in this volume bring to the foreground the many ways in which detachment and engagement are interwoven; the ways in which they limit, complement and enable each other. A focus on detachment forces us to ask ethnographic questions about the temporality of relations, their intensity, what makes them stick. Is each particular form of detachment a negation, a concealment, an interruption? And conversely, are relations forms that endure and cannot be purposefully unmade, like Umberto Eco's persistent strands of memory (1988)? Are they vectors that pass, energies that must be continually channeled, or are they deciduous pledges whose maintenance requires daily care?

Our aim in this book, in sum, is to bring detachment back to the forefront of theorizing in the social sciences and humanities. Our contention is that social theory has tended to naturalize the idea that relations are prior to the entities they connect. Questioning this understanding, we attempt to open-up an analytic vocabulary that allows for a more nuanced understanding of the terms in which entities are defined and related. Thus our approach entails an analytic leveling, proposing that neither relations nor entities come first (Candea 2010; Yarrow and Jones 2014) . We suggest that this provides a better platform from which to consider the ethnographic senses in

which people themselves afford ethical or epistemic priority to practices associated with relating and detaching

The final section of this introduction returns to these questions through an attempt at a typology of detachments which will also serve as a guide to the chapters in the volume. First however, we will briefly trace the rise and fall of one particular modernist version of detachment, which has borne the brunt of academic and popular critique in recent years. This sets the scene for an attempt to recover detachment as an object of study beyond the resulting dichotomies. In the following section we will describe how our own approach builds on and extends the work of other scholars, who in different ways contribute to an understanding of detachment as a theoretical and empirical focus of enquiry.

On Modernist Detachment and its critique

A key argument of this book is that detachment comes in many shapes and sizes. However, one particular version of detachment has loomed over public and academic discourse in what is commonly known as 'the West' since at least the 19th century. Alternatively invoked as an unmitigated virtue or as an equally unmitigated sin, the spectre of 'western modernist detachment' has haunted public discourse and social theory and made it hard to think of detachment in any but the most dichotomous and morally charged terms. This section briefly reviews part of the story that leads this particular version of detachment to hold such a prominent place in social theory.

One key strand of the modernist ideal of detachment is epistemological and is frequently traced to the nineteenth century when, in a range of primarily European and American contexts, notions about the desirability of distanced perspectives became increasingly foundational to the pursuit of knowledge. The demarcation of science from other fields of human endeavor, and of scientific practitioners from politicians or the 'common man' was a long-drawn out process which saw its first significant episodes at least two centuries previously (e.g. Shapin and Schaffer 1985). However the 19th century saw an intensification of this process as well as an increasing leeching out of discourses of scientific detachment into other realms. Daston and Galison (2007) have described how a range of previously distinct ideologies and dispositions were reconfigured as instances of a singular epistemic ideal of objectivity, entailing a particular understanding of the importance of detachment. Where scientific truth was located in relation to an objective bedrock reality, the subjectivity of the researcher became an obstacle to knowledge. Thus detachment became a central regulatory ideal, pertaining to the need for processes and dispositions to enable the management and separation of the individual scientist's subjective emotions, feelings, and thoughts from the objective data that was produced. If in practice the ideal of objectivity took a range of forms, including ideas about the need for emotional detachment, automatic procedure and methods of quantification, these were configured during the middle of the nineteenth century as instances of a singular over-arching ideal. Such notions of scientific objectivity entailed a commitment to epistemic forms that necessitated distance from the world through specific forms of critical distance from oneself.

During this period, the bifurcation of notions of subjectivity and objectivity related to an increasing bifurcation between science and the arts as concerned with subjectivity and objectivity respectively. If subjectivity was a problem for the scientist in his or her pursuit of the detached knowledge constituted as a 'view from nowhere' (Daston and Galison 2007), it was, for the artist, a source of creativity to be cultivated and celebrated.

The elaboration of a broader modernist/romantic split took in this key distinction, and read it through a range of attendant concerns about the rise of industry and estrangement from nature (Williams 1975), the modernizing drive of nationalism and the loss of regional folklore (McDonald 1989), the civilizing mission of Empire and the disappearing wisdom of the Other (Rabinow 1975; Said 1978; Stoler 2002). These and other versions of what Latour (1991) termed the Great Divide (between us and them, nature and culture, science and politics, heart and mind, etc.) profoundly marked the intellectual cast of the 19th century, and left us with a set of linked dichotomies which persist to this day.

Crucially, however, these dichotomies from which the obviousness of 'modern detachment' seem to emerge so clearly, are an effect of contemporary rhetorics, mediated by simplifying hindsight. A closer historical examination reveals a more complex set of patterns. Thus for instance, the bifurcation of subjectivity and objectivity did not map straightforwardly onto an opposition between engagement and detachment. Amanda Anderson (2001) notes how, during the same period, changes in literary writing also converged around a set of ideals that celebrated the detached viewpoint. For modernist writers, from the Victorian period onwards, the concern to

cultivate detached dispositions, took a range of forms, including the elimination of tendencies to judge and interpret, the suppression of the local and idiosyncratic in favour of the universal, the cultivation of realist forms of representation, and an aspiration to a version of literary truth that was grounded in critical distance from the writer's own perspective. Victorian writers debated with competing ideals and virtues when considering what they identified as the power and limits of detachment; debates that were themselves constitutive of the project of modernity. Anderson demonstrates how George Eliot, John Stuart Mill, Charlotte Bronte, Charles Dickens, Matthew Arnold and Oscar Wilde all, in different ways, grapple with morally weighted understandings of detachment. Theirs was a distinctly modern preoccupation with the ambivalences and virtues of practices of detachment – the extent to which such practices might result in forms of distortion and insensitivity, or alternatively lead to desirable forms of cultivation and virtue. As an aspiration and ideal Victorian novelists played-off various forms of detachment against one another, casting some as progressive and liberating, while presenting others as dangerous and corrupting. Even for romantic critics such as Ruskin and Morris, faith in detachment understood as critical distance from one's own perspective, sustained criticism of the debilitating and alienating effects of modern rationality particularly in the guise of modern industrial production.

In literature as in science, then, modernist ideals of detachment arose in relation to a range of empirically very different practices, sustained as apparent instances of the same thing. Crucially, in relation to both scientific and literary practice, such ideals were subject to debate and critique which generally took a narrow rather than fundamental form: the scientist was critical of their own or others' ability to sustain in

practice their own detachment from the world they observed, but did not question the ideal of detachment per se. Indeed the narrow critique (that this or that person was not sufficiently objective, or not in this instance) arose from and upheld a broader ideal (the epistemic importance of keeping subject and object distinct).

Thus modernist ideals of detachment were, from the outset precariously achieved, internally contradictory and contested. However, contemporary (nineteenth century) critiques of this over-arching orientation participated in the elaboration of a master contrast between modernist detachment and romantic engagement which has solidified with hindsight.

Crucially for our purposes, the rise of the social sciences was fundamental in the solidification of this association between modernity and detachment. In particular, nineteenth century sociology and anthropology, themselves in the process of detaching from cognate disciplines as proper stand-alone scientific fields (Durkheim 1964 [1895]), contributed to the shoring up of such distinctions by their obsession with pinning down the essence of 'modernity'. Thus evolutionary anthropologists traced, with Morgan, the progressive disengagement of the modern nuclear family from the web of primitive kinship, "by means of which [Man] raised himself from a state of promiscuous intercourse to final civilization" (Morgan 1870, 1877, Kuper 2005), while Engels' re-reading of this same narrative as one leading to the rise of private property and the state (Engels 1983 [1884]) fed into Marx's philosophical-historical documentation and lamentation of the multifaceted phenomenon of alienation. As the 19th century gave way to the 20th, sociologists seeking to grasp the phenomenon of modernity circled around detachment with increasing inevitability:

from the rise of modern *gesellschaft* as against traditional *gemeinschaft* (Tönnies 1957 [1887]), through the curse of modern *anomie* (Durkheim 1997 [1893]), Simmel's (1976 [1903]) account of the adoption of a blasé attitude developed as a psychological defense mechanism against the sensual bombardments of modernity and metropolitan life, to Weber's influential characterizations of modern bureaucracy and disenchantment (1978 [1922]). The association between modernity and detachment became a trope ripe for continual reinvention and re-elaboration. Foucault's work on self-production and asceticism of modernity is one late instance: 'To be modern is not to accept oneself as one is in the flux of the passing moments; it is to take oneself as object of a complex and difficult elaboration' (Foucault 1979: 166). Bruno Latour's "We have never been modern" (1991), with its concern for the pairing of 'purification' and 'translation is another - to which we will return below, is another.

Detachment dissolved

> "Just as we are a long way from drawing all the conclusions from the phrase "God is dead," we are very far from understanding every implication of the phrase "The pure observer is dead." (Sloterdjik 2012:17)

In sum, the 19th and early 20th centuries saw the increasing formalization of 'modernist detachment', as an object of both celebration and critique –as both a highly valued ideal (for some) and as a condition of reality with which one had to contend.

The novelty of the late 20th century turn against detachment was not then the fact of its critique of modernist detachment as an ideal – late 20th century critics could draw (and often did) on a long tradition of romantic and other rejections of ideals of detachment. Rather, the novelty was the singleminded focus on documenting the inexistence and impossibility of modernist detachment. We find ourselves writing today in a conceptual atmosphere in which detachment is not so much critiqued as dissolved. This is an atmosphere in which it might seem, for instance, that "[t]here is *no way to imagine* a pure nature unmediated by politics" (Choy 2011:11, emphasis added). This type of restriction of the postmodern imagination is the phenomenon we are attempting to pinpoint in this section.

If attempts to characterize 'the literature' are always problematically violent to its complexity (Mol 2002), then an attempt to characterize something as broad and shifting as 'the current intellectual landscape in and beyond academia' all the more so. Clearly what follows is a partial run through an incredibly complex field. Admittedly far from exhaustive, it is motivated by an effort to illustrate and define the ways in which detachment has been systematically – though far from completely – eclipsed as an empirical and conceptual focus. In the next section we will examine a number of authors who, writing against the grain, have been calling attention to detachment in different ways. But let us first try to sketch out what this 'grain' feels like.

Whether one locates this shift in a post-colonial desire to highlight the connection between modern knowledge and colonial power, in post-structural impulse to deconstruct notions of textual autonomy and logocentric truth, or in the efforts of

feminists and queer theorists to re-introduce corporeal, gendered bodies as a locus of thought, a key trope of contemporary social theory which has now passed into dogma, is that purported detachment can and ought to be revealed as really relational, engaged, and entangled. The challenge to detachment emerged less in the form of a request to value engagement, and more in an authoritative demonstration that detachment is illusory. This related to an ethical call to recognize the fallacy of detachment as a matter of both fact and principle.

It would be unfair to suggest that this intellectual development was merely a matter of conceptual faddism. The suspicion of detachment had a number of serious and legitimate grounds. A number of events throughout the 20th century had strenuously chipped away at the promise that a new age of scientific and technological progress, efficiency and development grounded in detached, 'rational' and 'objective' knowledge production. Two world wars demonstrated the destructive potential of new technological systems of killing. World War One and the new weaponry utilized saw over 5000 combat deaths a day, an almost ten fold increase on the last major European war, the Napoleonic Wars (Clodfelter 2002). The bureaucratically efficient means by which Jews and other minorities were exterminated in Nazi gas chambers revealed the difficulty in separating 'rational' scientific modes of human classification, chemistry, and the detached, dehumanizing division of labour that came to manage the killing of bodies in Nazi-occupied Europe. Moreover, the codes of human ethics that emerged within bioscience in the wake of the Nuremburg 'Doctors' Trial' signaled a shifting morality of knowledge production, in which the detached pursuit of 'pure' scientific knowledge could no longer be divorced from the human

consequences, costs or benefits, and experiences of those experimentally involved or socially implicated (Pellegrino 1997).

Correspondingly, the nuclear arms race, which saw the emergence of an entirely new spectre of global-wide destruction, dawned in August 1945 with the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In the bomb's cold-war wake, prominent scientists such as Einstein and Oppenheimer began to publicly question whether ongoing progress in nuclear physics was of benefit to humanity, suggesting that social decisions, ethical considerations, and political realities could and indeed should undergird scientific advancement in the future (Schweber 2008). This marked the beginning of a shifting relationship between science and its publics, one that has become increasingly based on the principles of 'engagement', with many scientists now attempting to educate, consult with, inform and listen to public groups and 'stakeholders' (Porter et al. 2013).

In the second half of the twentieth century, the increasing concern with and visibility of science's alignment to capitalism and industry gave a new language in which to express doubts about the detached nature of scientific discovery and truth. Industrial scientists had assured publics in many countries that products such as tobacco, lead and thalidomide were safe years after doubts began to arise of their human safety (Rosner 2013; Trundle, Singh and Broer 2014,). The chemico-nuclear disasters of Chernobyl, Three Mile Island, Love Canal, Bhopal (and more recently Fukushima) all further served to undermine the trustworthiness of the industrial-regulatory-science nexus to impartially protect human health (Levine 1982; Walsh 1988, Das 1996; Petryna 2002). In such a context, social movements emerged in the 1970s and 1980s

seeking a more democratically engaged, partnership-based mode of involvement between publics, citizen groups, and those who governed them, and demanding to be actively involved in decisions regarding health investment, treatment, and testing (Kroll-Smith, Brown and Gunter 2000). Some groups, such as Deaf community advocates, gay rights groups, and mental health support groups, contested the very forms of disease categorization and the medicalization of disorder proposed by medical experts, declaring science to be inherently bound up with projects of cultural normalization (Conrad 2008). Meanwhile, environmentalism and ecology argued for more engaged scientific, social, political, economic and technological realms that could account for the ecological effects of human ways of life. "Ecology's critique of science and technology…suggests that ethical neutrality with respect to the results of scientific enterprise is not justified. The ecological position … challenges the idea that any form of human knowledge can be separated from its consequences" (Aronowitz 1988: 21).

As we noted above, the polysemy of detachment had enabled it to stand as an ideal for a diverse and even contradictory range of modernist projects. Unsurprisingly the same polysemy also enabled detachment to stand as a problematic Other for a similarly broad range of late-20th century endeavours. Thus the social movements above were in complex and partial communication with critiques of detachment coming from radically different sources. New religious and spiritual movements offered followers new avenues for direct engagement, whether it was with God, society, politics, justice, or personal empowerment (Guitierrez 1988; Heelas 1992; Pfeiffer, Gimbel-Sherr and Augusto 2008; Mair this volume).

In sum, the 20th century was marked by the multiplication of historical contexts in which a range of troubling ideologies and practices were found lying beneath claims to epistemic distance and detachment. It is against this background and interwoven with it, that pointed critiques across a broad spectrum of theories and contexts have sought to show the illusory nature of the very idea of detachment, suggesting the de facto impossibility of sustaining disconnection from one's own subjectivity and self-interest. Thus, radical feminist thinkers pointed out that the methods of objectivity and detachment driving systems of power, politics, bureaucracy, scientific knowledge and capitalist developments were obscuring a culturally and historically constituted patriarchy that in fact gave such systems their legitimacy. Building on this critique to propose a feminist method of knowledge production, Donna Haraway famously argued for a mode of thought that "does not pretend to disengagement: to be from everywhere and so nowhere, to be free from interpretation, from being represented, to [be] fully self contained or fully formalizable. Rational knowledge is a process of ongoing critical interpretation between fields of interpreters and decoders. Rational knowledge is a power-sensitive conversation" (ibid).

From this perspective the political implications of modernist claims to detachment have been spelt out from a range of theoretical and disciplinary perspectives and in relation to diverse substantive contexts. The technical detachment of development agencies has been revealed as an 'anti-politics machine' (Ferguson 1994), constituting 'the third world' as an object of intervention the Europeans claim to know precisely in their distance from it (Esteva 1992; Hobart 1993; Crush 1995). Deconstructive approaches likewise sought to question detached claims to historical truth, and the universalising objectivised visions of 'heritage', foregrounding the inherent relativity

of all interpretation, and hence the 'illusory' nature of elite claims to know the past (Lowenthal 1985; Smith 2006). Challenging the seeming self-evidence of human exceptionalism, post-humanist scholars uncovered the practical and conceptual technologies which allow clear distinctions to be made (and to be taken for granted) between humans and other animals – chief amongst them the contention that humans have no 'objective' access to animal minds (Haraway 1997; Crist 2002; Milton 2005; Despret 2004 – see Candea 2013).

Recent celebratory orientations to the concept of 'engagement', likewise invest the term with a broader explanatory value and in part draws its force from the versions of modernist detachment it is imagined to negate. For example, in a recent discussion the sociologist and philosopher Richard Sennett suggests that 'The craftsman represents the special human condition of being engaged' (Sennett 2009: 20). Elaborating how craft practice engenders an ongoing dialogue between people and materials, he suggests that these expose the limits of Cartesian distinctions between mind and world, thinking and doing. Likewise, when Ingold (2000) discusses skilled practice as a process that indissolubly engages people, materials, tools and environments, the wider theoretical significance of the insight lies in its negation of modernist forms of detachment, including between mind and body, organism and world. While such Cartesian understandings start 'from the postulate of an original detachment of the intelligent subject, who has then to construct (or reconstruct) the world in his or her mind, prior to bodily engagement with it', (2001: 417) his own discussion works as a reversal of this logic: 'postulating an original condition of engagement, of being in the world, we suppose that the practitioner has then to *detach* himself from the current of his activity in order to reflect upon it." (417).

In social scientific methodology itself, the detachment between observer and observed came strongly under attack, from those who sought to make explicit the political implications of this methodological and theoretical framing, and to foreground the relativity of academics' own claims to know (Said 1978, Fabian 1980, Clifford and Marcus 1986). A tactic of "epistemological collapse" relying on experimental writing which revoked the distance between theory and ethnography, informant and anthropologist, was one of the immediate responses to this crisis (Munasinghe 2006:179). But as Munasinghe notes, the crisis of representation primarily resulted in an entanglement between 'data and 'theory' *within* academic discourse (ibid). A far more potent challenge came with the realization that social scientific concepts (such as nation, society, or culture…) circulated and did important work in the world social scientists were seeking to describe (Ibid, 174). Detachment increasingly seemed not simply unpalateable, but impossible. As Annelise Riles astutely observes:

> "a once productive distance ethnographers maintained, implicitly or explicitly, purposefully or not, between ourselves and our objects of our study, between the things studied (the data) and the frames we used to study them (the analysis), between theorizing and describing, has now definitively collapsed." (Riles 2006:3)

Interwoven in complex ways with these conceptual and historical developments in the second half of the twentieth century was a rising language of 'accountability'. Such a language demanded a more 'engaged' approach from organizations, businesses and government, an approach which ideally could meet the needs of 'clients', 'customers',

'citizens' and 'consumers' in ways that previously detached modes of bureaucratic or economic action had failed to deliver (du Gay 2000). Blending the language of neoliberal capitalism, New Management, and democratic ideals, new norms of 'responsiveness' emerged within public sectors, policy spheres and economic life (Strathern 2000, Shore 2008). These new approaches demanded of organisations regular inspections, target-setting, a focus on outcomes, new systems of audit, and the increased recognition and role of 'users' in organisational action. In Britain, for example, Tony Blair (Prime Minster from 1997-2007) sought to legislatively encourage more direct citizen participation in service provisions in the early 2000s (Taylor and Kelly 2006).

In parallel technological developments in media and communication have served to foster what is commonly deemed more participatory, engaged modes by which information and knowledge can circulate, be shared, and be constructed, and a more participatory mode of virtual democratic life (e.g. Shirky 2009). Collaborative knowledge building tools such as Wikipedia, the emergence of comments sections on news sites through which readers engage and add their opinions and experiences, crowdfunding websites, web protest campaigns, and internet groups formed around common interests or perspectives, have all decentered previously seemingly detached authorities of knowledge, power and production. Such an approach to knowledge is also visible within the sphere of education in which there is now a push away from longstanding methods of knowledge transmission towards new modes of 'active learning', engaged teaching methods, and learning outside the 'disconnected' classroom and within 'real life', such as the growth of internships and work-based or community service learning methods (Beck and Maida 2013). Sociologist Frank

Furedi suggests that as relativistic understandings of truth have increasingly undermined the authority of higher education academics take refuge in attempts to appear 'relevant', 'accessible' and 'in touch' with popular opinion. (Furedi 2004). In sum, technological shifts at the end of the 20th century both underwrote the seeming obviousness of metaphors of connectivity, and enabled new practices of connection.

Correspondingly, the 'cultural turn' has coincided with the valorisation of connection, relationship and engagement as analytic frameworks for thinking about ethics and knowledge production in the humanities and social sciences. Marilyn Strathern (2014) has recently commented on an intensification of interest in relations in social anthropology, suggesting that this in part responds to the collapse of analytic faith in the systems and structures once thought to contain them ('culture', 'society' and the like). No longer as specific, concrete instances of these social, cultural or economic processes, relations appear as prime movers of sociality in their own right. She notes that, at least in this abstract form, 'the concept of relation often seems to carry a positive value. By and large, it is a good thing to have found them!' (ibid).

In sum what we are arguing is that, a profound but largely imperceptible shift took place in broad swathes of popular and academic discourse in the latter half of the 20th century. While an earlier sense of a loaded alternative between engagement and detachment persisted as rhetorics, the moral universe this harked back to in 19th and 20th century Europe and America had quietly given way to a more radical sense that relationship and engagement, for better or worse, are all there is. Ethical and intellectual dilemmas were increasingly posed not so much about relations, but within

them. Detachment, it seemed, was increasingly if not exclusively conceivable only as a quality encompassed by and hence secondary to the logic of relations.

Reconsidering detachment

As we noted at the opening of the previous section, the whirlwind tour above is not offered as a final diagnostic. Rather it is an impressionistic illustration of our sense that we find ourselves writing in a conceptual moment which is overdetermined by the priority of the relational over the non-relational on simultaneously epistemic, ethical and ontological planes. In proposing this diagnosis, we are unambiguously *not* dismissing legitimate concerns about the politics and ethics of detachment in particular contexts; nor are we calling for the 'ruination' (Navaro-Yashin 2009) of the many and varied theoretical approaches touched on above. We are simply mapping the increasing restriction of the conceptual and ethnographic space allowed for the study of detachment as an actual or potential phenomenon.

There are signs, however, that we may be experiencing a more widespread dissatisfaction with this relationalist narrowing of the frame. Thus, in recent years, other versions of the above narrative have emerged, painted on different temporal and disciplinary canvases – see for instance Meillassoux's critique of 'correlationism' in philosophy since Kant (2008), Sloterdijk's investigation into the conceptual 'murder' of the detached subject of knowledge (2012 – see Robbins, this volume) or Albert Piette's concerned letter to anthropologists "Against Relationalism" (2014; on Piette's earlier work on 'the minor mode' which prefigures some of these concerns, see Humphrey, this volume). Each of these, rather like our own account above, takes the

form of a sweeping review, by nature leaving some things out, collapsing crucial distinctions, but articulating a central sense that something has been lost.

While these diagnoses have appeared largely in parallel to our own, there are a number of authors whose work fed more directly into our initial elaboration of this project. As in the previous section, we cannot possibly list here – let alone give a satisfactory account of) – all the various works which have in various ways acted as a catalyst for this project[2]. We will have to strategically narrow our sights to two key approaches which are particularly clearly represented in the chapters that follow. The first was the turn to ethics, both in anthropology (e.g. Laidlaw 2002, 2013, Lambek 2010, Faubion 2011), and in other disciplines (Daston and Galison 2007, Anderson 2001). The influence here was simultaneously ethnographic, methodological and theoretical. It is not simply that anthropologists and historians interested in ethics and self-formation had, as a matter of course, studied people who aimed at certain forms of detachment (from the world or from themselves). Just as important was the fact that in the process, they had begun to call more or less explicitly for a moratorium on a certain version of the critical reflex seemed to reduce people's own accounts of what they were doing, to a kind of false-consciousness to (see for instance Laidlaw 2002 on the limits of anthropological accounts of 'agency'; Daston and Galison on the need to suspend critique in order to take seriously objectivity as an ethical goal 2007).

Amanda Anderson (2001), writing in a similar vein, has warned against the scholarly pitfall theorizing detachment as an 'either/or'. Practices in cultivated distance that claim a pure or completed objectivity are, she argues, evidence of a frustrated idealism, the counter argument to which is that no such absolute detachment, whether

it be in objectivity, separation or distance, is ever truly achievable. In her own words, such 'critics show themselves unable to imagine critical distance as a temporary vantage, unstable achievement, or regulative ideal: it's all or nothing' (Anderson 2001: 32). Her critique of both scholarly trends is that they miss the ways in which detachment may be important for people as a practice or as an intention. This interest in ethics, which runs strongly through a number of the contributions to this volume, is one way of getting at the crucial distinction between detachment as ideology and detachment as perfectible – and thus ethnographically accessible – practice.

The second conceptual tradition to which we are strongly indebted has its roots in the anthropology of kinship – a field which through its many incarnations and reconfigurations, has always been centrally concerned with the documentation of connections and disconnections. A recent instance can be found in Rupert Stasch's exquisitely detailed ethnography of the Korowai, which, informed by the classic sociology of Simmel as much as by the recent musings on alterity of anthropologists such as Viveiros De Castro, brings to the foreground the otherness which lies at the heart of kinship and social relations for the Korowai (Stasch 2009). But the line of analysis which most directly informed our own work was the distinctive recombination of thinking about kinship and knowledge associated with the work of Marilyn Strathern.

Strathern's work is often portrayed – perhaps not unfairly – as belonging squarely to the relational turn of the late 20th century which we have sketched in the previous section; it is to her work after all, that anthropology owes one of the most far-reaching articulations of the relationality of persons, for instance (1988). However, Strathern's

work simultaneously and recursively brought 'the relation' itself into ethnographic focus as a particular artifact of Euroamerican knowledge-making (1992; 1995; 1996). Making the relation visible in this way, bringing it into the foreground, necessarily raises the question of what the background might be. It is thus not coincidental that Strathern is one of the anthropologists who has most thematised the effects of division, cuts, breaks and negative strategies – from the anthropological tactics of comparison, contextualization and 'bifurcation' (1987; 2004) through to indigenous forms such as Melanesian dividuality (1988) or Euroamerican concerns with cutting endless networks through claims of ownership (cutting the network). In this way, arguably, Strathern's work already prefigures the moment which some have recently sought to characterize as 'post-relational' (Pedersen 2013). Strathernian relations are, in a manner of speaking, connections that cut themselves. Across multiple contexts and arguments, the point of her analysis was not to celebrate relativity and connection, but to open up a conceptual space in which connections and disconnections could be traced, according to the logic of different ethnographic circumstances.

In this connection, it is worth reading Strathern alongside and in contrast to another theorist who looms large over our thinking and over many of the chapters in this book, namely Bruno Latour. Self-consciously seeking to supersede the post-modern critique outlined in the previous section, Bruno Latour's influential 'We have never been modern' (1991) put connections and disconnections on an even keel – almost. Latour argued that modernist attempts to detach, cut, disentangle and 'purify' (nature from culture, humans from non-humans, Them from Us, science from politics, and so on.) were only possible because of the increasing accumulation of 'translations'

between these different realms, making hybrids, quasi-objects and networks proliferate: that is the strength of what Latour terms the 'Modern Constitution'. Insofar as it resists the temptation to reveal practices of engagement and translation as the real underpinning and of detachment and purification as mere illusion or false consciousness (1991:40), but rather treats both moves as empirically real, Latour's symmetric anthropology nearly manages to put the two on an even footing. Indeed a number of the contributors to the present volume draw inspiration from his analyses in this respect. However, in the end, we would argue (pace for instance Jensen and Winthereik, this volume) that the Latourian argument implies an analytic asymmetry in its orientation to practices of relating and of separating. While Latour puts relating and separating on the same analytical plane, this is itself an act of *relation.* Purification and translation are both real moves, yes, but the cardinal sin of the moderns was to keep the two moves *separate*, whereas the duty of the 'amodern' analyst is to *relate* them.

"If we understand modernity in terms of the official Constitution that has to make a total distinction between humans and nonhumans on the one hand and between purification and mediation on the other, then no anthropology of the modern world is possible. But if we *link together* in one single picture the work of purification and the work of mediation *that gives it meaning*, we discover, retrospectively that we have never been modern." (1991:91, emphasis added)

Both Latour and Strathern's work inhabit a space on the edge of the relational: both point to the ways in which disconnection, cuts and distinctions, accompany, undergird, permit or arise from relations and connections. Unlike Latour, however,

whose own language and method is itself thoroughly relational (and the rhetorical indebtedness of Actor-Network Theory to the language of accountability is telling – cf Latour 2005), Strathern cleaved heuristically to the classic anthropological form of the contrastive comparison, the erection of radical distinctions between Them and Us (see Candea 2010; Tsing 2010). While Latour ultimately trumped his recognition of disconnections through a relational method[3], Strathern's work (1996) can be seen as establishing a real and effective symmetry between the two: every cut is revealed as also a relation, every relation is also a disengagement from something else.

These two broad sources of theoretical insight – the anthropology of ethics and Strathern's work on the relation – were diversely influential on the four of us, and on the contributors to this volume. They are, it has to be said, uneasy companions and point, often implicitly rather than explicitly, to a very different range and type of disconnections, detachments and cuts. We will return to some of the tensions between them, which inhabit a number of the chapters in this volume, in the next section. What both have in common with each other and with our project, however, is the more general anthropological concern with the primacy of the ethnographic. This similarity of commitment (take your ethnography seriously), and multiplicity of substantive meanings and implications of 'detachment', influenced the form of our initial call to arms: 'take detachment seriously as an ethnographic object (whatever it might turn out to be)!'.

Given how indebted the relational turn has been to the rejection and mistrust of the relatively ill-defined, or at least shifting, target of 'modernist detachment', this open-ended strategy has proved to be extremely productive. Paying close ethnographic

attention to specific instances of detachment (both nominally 'modernist' and 'non-modernist') necessarily explodes the monolithic image of the 'failed ideal' of modernist detachment. Ethnography does this both by highlighting the situated and multiple nature of the ideal, and by locating this alongside other ways of living and valuing detachment.

What is detachment? A typology

There are some limits to this purely ethnographic strategy however. Shortly after the conference from which most of the chapters in this volume are drawn, one of the audience members, philosopher Hallvard Lillehammer, forwarded a somewhat tongue-in cheek list he had compiled of 60 different ways in which detachment had been invoked by participants (see below). The friendly rebuke embedded in this Borgesian catalogue was clear: detachment as we were using it, could be anything and everything. Stolidly, one of us replied that where the philosopher saw a failure to define one's key analytical category, the anthropologist saw the result of a successful campaign to turn detachment into an ethnographic category. Focusing attention on detachment in this sense will quite naturally result in the multiplication of instances, and in the concomitant stretching and reconfiguring of the categorical starting point.

1.Detachment as objectivity

2.Detachmment as impartiality

3.Detachment as explanatory reductionism

4.Detachment as disinterestedness

5.Detachment as lack of prejudice

6.Detachment as 'blinding' (in 'blind trials')

7.Detachment as technology-mindedness

8.Detachment as high-mindedness (remoteness from everyday life)

9.Detachment as refusal to be co-opted

10.Detachmment as ethos of bureaucratic office/personality

11.Detachment as removal of parts from a whole where other parts stay in place

12.Detachment as interest created by 'external' incentives (e.g. research funding)

13. Detachment as not caring

14.Detachment as bracketing an issue or analysis to avoid openness to criticism

15.Detachment as the closing off of/turning away from something in pursuit of an end

16.Detachment as a pathology/disorder (e.g. social phobia)

17.Detachment as a bulwark against moral zealotry and managerial enthusiasm

18.Detachment as inter-patience/disengaged participation (the integrated, but non-interfering observer)

19.Detachment as forgetting

20.Detachment as non-differentiation

21.Detachment as industrial mechanization

22.Detachment as distancing

23.Detachment as autonomy/freedom

24.Detachment as cognition/judgement (as opposed to affect)

25.Detachment as invisibility/absence

26.Detachment as untouchability

27.Detachment as excess of scale for being intuitively grasped

28.Detachment as rationality

29.Detachment as division/separation (e.g. of soul from body)

30.Detachment as exclusion/expulsion

31.Detachment as disgust/repugnance

32.Detachment as removal from public view

33.Detachment as mediation

34.Detachment as separation (e.g. of property)

35.Detachment as discipline/order/security

36.Detachment as abstraction (e.g. of concepts)

37.Detachment as a sign of the sacred

38.Detachment as disbelief

39.Detachment as observation

40.Detachment as death

41.Detachment as safe distance (e.g. from spirits)

42.Detachment as the untying of a knot

43.Detachment as sacrifice/giving up something

44.Detachment as using a substitute rather than the real thing

45.Detachment as balancing

46.Detachment as oppression

47.Detachmment as liberation through confession

48.Detachment as irony

49.Detachment as spiritual renunciation

50.Detachment as anti-spiritual renunciation (e.g. cutting off from religious practices)

51.Detachment as meditation/prayer

52.Detachment as equanimity

53.Detachment as living without property ('the carefree life')

54.Detachment as freedom from strain/having a balanced mind

55.Detachment as seeing without acting

56.Detachment as fasting to death

57.'External' detachment: NOT [A is related to B]

58.'Internal' detachment: A is [NOT related to B]

59. Stronger, third, reading: A is related to [NOT B]

60.Detachment as mutual accommodation/co-operation.

Lillehammer, Pers. Comm.

A popular anthropological tradition would urge us to stop there, to rest content with the act of documenting the empirical multiplicity and ubiquity of detachment. But our aim is also, more profoundly, to highlight the ways in which, as conceptual abstractions, the foundational status of the terms sociality, relationality and engagement naturalises a relational view of the world that then acts to render detachment as a specific and secondary quality.

In that context, leaving 'detachment' as a general placeholder that could mean anything and everything creates a kind of analytical collapse. At this level of abstraction it is rather easy to conclude that detachment itself is 'just another relation'. The smoothness of this seemingly obvious conclusion flattens crucial ethnographic differences and also masks the fact that in the process, relations have once again been naturalized as the 'real' ground of reality. To make conceptual space for detachment, to give it analytical purchase, requires that we descend from this level of abstraction to something like a typology of kinds of detachment.

Any such typology necessarily entails a simplification of the ethnographic realities it describes. But typology is much like other kinds of detachment: it would be absurd to reject it completely just because it cannot be perfect. In response to Lillehammer's provocation, we espouse typology in this section, not as a revelation of a fixed underlying order, or as a place to rest, but as an ongoing perfectible practice.

Drawing on the classic structuralist technique of the table of crossed binaries (see table 1), we could begin by highlighting two fundamental distinctions cut across invocations of detachment in the chapters that follow. The first is the distinction between completed detachment (detachment as a state) and ongoing detachment (detachment as a process or activity). The second is the distinction between accounts which are in the first person (detachment from the actor's point of view) and those given from a third party perspective (detachment between any two entities described 'from the outside').

The distinction between state and process is fairly straightforward. In some cases detachment is something which is being done. We see this as a cutting or a drawing away, as when organs are detached from a body, as in Maryon McDonald's chapter on surgeons and anatomy classes, or the separation between producers and their product, as in Hannah Knox and Penny Harvey's chapter on Engineers in Peru. It is also visible in the disconnections drawn between humans and the animals they tend, as exemplified in Kim Crowder's chapter on British pig farmers, or in the reflective distance created between persons and their own thoughts, illustrated in Joanna Cook's chapter on mindfulness therapy in Britain.

In other cases detachment is a state in which a thing or person finds itself as the outcome of such a process: a state of being unattached to some other thing or person, as in the detachment of the person from the office within new systems of university audit culture, as Corsin-Jimenez described in his chapter, a chapter that seeks conceptual purchase from juxtaposing varied forms of interface and effect, from Baroque aesthetics, to digital software and modern university life. Or, as in Casper Jensen and Brit Winthereik's chapter, which examines an international development project in Vietnam aimed at building a long house and micro-enterprises, in which the local 'community', the project and the aid workers find themselves detached from each other in various ways.

One of the questions which runs through a number of these papers is precisely what the relation if any between state and process might be: is a stable state ever achievable (and if so for how long?), or is detachment necessarily an ongoing (and thus ever-incomplete) process? And if the latter, is detachment as a stable state then to be understood as a fiction of which the process is the real counterpart, or is it an ideal which enables and is constitutive of the process?[4].

This last question brings us straight to the second distinction, which cuts across the one above, between first-person and third-party descriptions. Speaking of detachment as a process or a state commits us to saying very little about the entities involved. Both states and processes of detachment can be predicated to any entity on any scale, and they can happen both within and between entities. In these pages we find detached (state) or detaching (process) knowledges (Corsin-Jimenez), roads (Knox and Harvey), communities, fieldsites and houses (Jensen and Winthereik), body parts

(McDonald), beliefs and relationships (Robbins), as well as of course human persons. These various descriptions of detachments (and relations) within and between entities we are referring to as third-party descriptions. Insofar as none of the chapters focus solely on the author's own detachment from their material (although a number of the papers do touch on this theme), all of them include 'third-party' accounts of detachment in this sense.

So what is meant by first-person detachment? A number of our contributors are concerned with investigating detachment in a specific sense which, as we noted above, owes much to the anthropology of ethics, namely as a subject of reflexive commitment or ongoing conscious practice by human persons. This is what we would call 'first-person' detachment. Detachment, in this first-person sense, is not simply a state of non-connection that any entity might be in, but a stance or a perspective on one's own action. This is clearest perhaps in Caroline Humphrey's chapter on Mongolian weddings, in which wedding leaders maintain a stance of "active detachment" from their own subject position, and who can oscillate back and forth between the bride and groom groups' vantage points through rituals and songs. Correspondingly, Joel Robbins' chapter reflects on how a Christian ethos of detachment might offer anthropologists studying Christianity a technique through which to overcome distance and recognize shared commitments with their participants.

Whether or not a detached *stance* is considered to be possible or only desired or hoped-for, it is clearly the 'first-person' equivalent of what we have described above

as a *state*. By contrast, the first-person equivalent of detachment as *process* is that staple of the anthropology of ethics: self-conscious perfectible practice, or to put it more simply and with a nod to Foucault, an *ascetic*. In sum, we could map these two crossed binaries as in table 1.

	Third-party	First-person
Completed	Detachment as State	Detachment as Stance
Ongoing	Detachment as Process	Detachment as Ascetic

Added to these distinctions, two of our contributors, James Laidlaw and Jonathan Mair, draw their own typology of detachment, both inspired in slightly different ways by the work of Jon Elster. In relation to North Indian Jainism and Inner Mongolian Buddhism respectively, they draw a distinction between internal and external detachment, modeled on Elster's Hegelian distinction between internal and external negation. Internal and external here des not refer to perspective as in the distinction between third-party and first person, but rather to the logical relation between terms. In Laidlaw's rendition, external detachment is the thinly specified negation of any kind of relation between two terms – "Not (A is related to B)", whereas internal detachment marks the more thickly specified state of being in a non-relation – "A is not-related to B". If the former merely indexes an absence of relation, specifying only the terms which are not supposed to be related, in the latter case, the substance of what it means to be 'not-related' matters: detachment becomes fleshed out as a particular kind of attitude or stance, and gains particular ethical substance and

positive content. To this, Laidlaw adds a third, more radical possibility of 'intransitive' detachment, where no term B is specified – A is simply not related, even to A.

This distinction cuts across our four-part scheme to interesting effect. Thus, with our earlier distinctions in mind, it is notable that the ethnographic instance of this radical detachment in Laidlaw's text is presented as the intended outcome of a process (of fasting to death). In other words, as a state (let alone as a stance), as Laidlaw makes clear, intransitive detachment would be unsustainable by living beings – as an object of ascesis, however, it becomes fully understandable.

In Laidlaw's work these three types of detachment are all in what we have termed the first-person mode (as stance or ascetic): they are distinctions drawn between the different ethical content of different kinds of non-relations between persons, and they come with specific interactional and affective valences which Laidlaw describes in vibrant detail. However, one might map this distinction on third-party detachments which require less specific ethical content. It is hard to imagine, by contrast, what 'intransitive' detachment as a state would look like 'ethnographically' – this requires rather a metaphysical postulate.

This work of typologising reveals what a cursory read might perhaps obscure: the often profoundly different logics at stake in the following discussions of detachment. The third-party/first person distinction points to an important fork in the road, which we also mentioned above. Writing of detachment as a stance or as an ascetic relies implicitly or explicitly on the distinctiveness of an account focused on human persons

with an ability to take a perspective, and with characteristics such as intentionality and reflexivity – what one might call, loosely, a humanist approach. By contrast, third-party accounts of detachment as a state or process allows an agnostic account which, while it can easily recoup the internalist account above, can also significantly challenge its underpinnings. For instance, a number of our contributors (Jensen and Winthereik, Corsin-Jimenez, Knox and Harvey) write in communication with analytical traditions such as Actor-Network Theory, or the anthropology of partible personhood, which aim precisely to craft a language of analysis which troubles the humanist distinction between persons and things. More profoundly, both of these traditions, in different ways, seek to evade the very distinction between internal and external relations, challenging accounts of a world made up of stable entities which *then* relate to one another. This does not sit neatly with accounts of detachment for which the primacy and distinctiveness of the human subject is a prerequisite.

Some of the most exciting work in this collection, however, lies precisely at the cross-roads between detachment as process, state, stance and ascetic, such as when personal aspirations to detachment are worked through practices of material cutting and separation (McDonald, Crowder this volume, see also Yarrow and Jones 2014, Candea 2010), or when ascesis requires the operation of detachments and cuts within the person, such as a distance from one's own thoughts and emotional reactions, as in Cook's chapter, or when third-party-accounts in an actor-network theory vein become in turn the medium for the analysts' own reflection on detachment (Jensen and Winthereik).

Another important fork in the road concerns what now emerge as a number of potential interpretations of this volume's central call to reconsider detachment as a real phenomenon to be taken seriously, by opposition to detachment as an often illusory or ideological 'stable state' – the classic focus of critiques of objectivity, as we have noted above. There are two potential arguments entwined here and it matters which alternative one chooses. For to argue that entities are never fully detached (state) but are detaching (process) is not always the same as arguing that persons are not detached in any ultimate sense (state), but that they sincerely wish, hope or commit to being so (stance). In some cases (scientific objectivity seems a case in point) a detached stance is an impossible, or at least fleeting and always partial achievement, however continuous one's ascesis. In others it is a fairly unproblematic structural position one occupies without seemingly much need for ascesis at all (Humphrey). Sometimes, the first-person *ascesis* of detachment might rely on processes which 'from the outside' are profoundly relational (Cook 2008). Or conversely, as with classic discussions of romantic attitudes to the countryside amongst an increasingly urbanized population (Williams 1975), a profoundly engaged stance might be premised precisely on being in an increasingly detached state.

In sum, this very tentative typological exercise begins to outline the answer to the two challenges we started from in this section. First, the challenge that detachment means anything and everything. Without letting go of the generative multiplicity of ethnographic contexts and situations, we have identified some points of tension and key questions around which accounts of detachment coalesce, and a number of regularities in the way detachment is invoked in the papers that follow. As for the second, and more serious challenge, that detachment is just another kind of relation?

Once there are *kinds* of detachment and *kinds* of relation[5], the statement begins to call for specification and loses its neat reductive structure. This simultaneously opens up new lines of empirical enquiry and requires and facilitates new conceptual experiments.

Organization of the book

This book is organized into three sections: professionalism and expertise, ritual and religion, and detaching and situating knowledge. These are of course not the only areas of contemporary life in which practices of detachment are ethnographically present and analytically interesting. Collectively, however, they cover a wide range of practices of detachment, and offer us a window into key areas of human action in which detachment is particularly good to think with, both for the interlocutors of these studies and for the anthropologists who study them.

The first section on professionalism and expertise focuses on three different types of experts – pig farmers, road engineers, and medical students and transplant surgeons – in order to examine how detachment operates to both enable and curtail action, relationality, ethics, and the production of knowledge. The road engineers in Peru to whom Hannah Knox and Penny Harvey introduce us utilize varied modes of detachment – with local people, with natural materials, with politics and with the project – in order to enact the role of a responsible and responsive expert. The pigmen described by Kim Crowder use a praxis of detachment in order to foster and cut relations and affective connections with animals who must be vitally sustained and cared for, and then killed and commodified. Meanwhile, Maryon McDonald

introduces us to the world of medical students who dissect bodies, and surgeons who transplant organs. Here detachment is both a fleshy task of cutting and recomposing bodies, and an uneasy ethical and emotional stance that requires careful negotiation, cultivation and sometimes negation. As Veena Das points out in her commentary for this section, the fragility of death, vulnerability, sacrifice and 'the finitude of human existence' are ever-present here, challenging assumptions that detachment is simply a stance of cold disinterest.

Section Two takes us to the realms of ritual and religion. Here Joel Robbins juxtaposes two interrelated dilemmas, one epistemological and one ethnographic, that locate an ethos of detachment within Christianity. Just as an anthropologist studying Christianity must deal with the question of his or her own dis/belief and its impact on 'being in the field', the Urapmin of Papua New Guinea, in converting to charismatic Christianity, must detach from, but also manage, relations with natural spirits. James Laidlaw shifts our ethnographic focus to Shvetambar Jainism in north India, demonstrating how, through annual rituals, alms-giving and fasting practices, diverse types of detachment are achieved based on internal or external modes of negation. In Mongolian Buriads wedding rituals Caroline Humphrey argues that detachment should not be equated with separation (a connection broken), but in this case implies a strategic and cultivated 'third 'place', a distancing from any…situated perspectives'. Michael Carrithers offers a commentary of the three chapters that reflects on the detached stance of the writers as scholars, and then reflects these insights back to the ethnographic world of Buriads, Jains and Pentecostals.

In section three we turn to practices of knowledge. Alberto Corsín Jiménez takes a 17 century painting by Velázquez, an artist who pioneered a new mode of re-description relying upon forms of suspension, displacement and detachment. Corsín Jiménez then juxtaposes these insights onto an analysis of modern forms of audit, bureaucracy and digital life in order to locate baroque modes of displacements or enhancements. Casper Bruun Jensen and Brit Ross Winthereik reflect upon an ecotourism development project in Vietnam, asking what an actor network theory approach to detachment might reveal. They show how detachment and engagement are entangled, that 'they transform over time and emerge in new constellations'. Joanna Cook's chapter ethnographically charts the practices associated with Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy in Britain. Here detachment emerges as a double figure: both a troubling mental affliction associated with the ills of modern life, and simultaneously as a solution to the above, cultivated as an internal ethos designed to foster healthy modes of engagements with life and the self. In a similar vein, Jon Mair's chapter demonstrates how Inner Mongolian Buddhists utilize discourses of humility and ignorance that actively encourage an 'effortful pursuit of an ethic of detachment'. In her commentary, Marilyn Strathern uses two vantage points to gain purchase on this section; Melanesian kinship forms reveal that detachment does not mean separation from social life, while relations in the British colonial Empire cultivated necessary modes of aloofness. Both vantages, Strathern argues, point to the ways in which we might think about the diverse subject positions that stem from the detachments we see in these four chapters, and the types of knowledge about how one must act in relation to self and others.

The chapters of this book situate detachment in diverse actions, ideological positions, modes of relationality and subjective projects. Collectively they demonstrate the shifting terrains of detachment, its dynamic relationships to modes of engagement, and the ways in which, for many groups and actors, detachment operates as a valued and productive type of knowledge or action.

References

Anderson, Amanda

2001 The Powers of Distance: Cosmopolitanism and the Cultivation of Detachment. Princeton, Princeton University Press.

Aronowitz, Stanley

1988 Science as power: discourse and ideology in modern society. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Beck, Sam and Carl Maida

2013 Introduction: Towards engaged anthropology. *In* Towards engaged anthropology. Beck, Sam and Carl Maida, eds. Pp. 15-35 New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Candea, Matei

2010. "I fell in love with Carlos the meerkat": Engagement and detachment in human-animal relations. American Ethnologist 37: 241-258.

2013a Suspending Belief: Epoché in Animal Behavior Science. American Anthropologist 115(3):423–436.

2013b Habituating Meerkats and Redescribing Animal Behaviour Science. Theory, Culture and Society 30(7-8):105-128.

Conrad, Peter

2007 The Medicalization of Society: On the Transformation of Human Conditions into Medical Disorders. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Cook, Joanna

2008 Alms, money and reciprocity: Buddhist nuns as mediators of generalized exchange in Thailand. Anthropology in Action Special Edition: Gift Exchange in Modern Society 15(3):8-21.

2010 Meditation in Modern Buddhism: Renunciation and Change in Thai Monastic Life. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Crist, E.

1999 Images of animals: anthropomorphism and animal mind. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Crush, J.

1995 Power of Development. London and New York, Routledge.

Das, Veena

1996 Critical events: an anthropological perspective on contemporary India. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Daston, L. and P. Galison

2007 Objectivity. Brooklyn, NY: Zone Books.

Despret Vinciane

2004 The body we care for: Figures of anthropo-zoo-genesis. Body & Society 10(2-3):111-134.

Du Gay, Paul

2000 In Praise of Bureaucracy. Weber – Organisation – Ethics. London: Sage Publishing.

Durkheim, Emile

 1964. The rules of sociological method. New York: Free Press.

Durkheim, Émile.

1997 [1893] The Division of Labour in Society [Trans. W. D. Halls] New York: Free Press.

Clodfelter, Michael

2002 Warfare and Armed Conflicts: A Statistical Reference to Casualty and Other Figures, 1500–2000 2nd Ed. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company.

Engels, Friedrich

1983[1884] The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State. London: Pathfinder Press.

Eco, U.

1988 An Ars Oblivionaris? Forget it. PMLA 103:254-261.

Esteva, G.

1992 Development. The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power. W. Sachs. London: Zed Books.

Faubion, J. D.

2011 An Anthropology of Ethics. Cambridge ; New York, Cambridge University Press.

Ferguson, James

1994 The Anti-Politics Machine: "Development", Depoliticisation, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press.

Foucault, Michel

1979 What is Enlightenment? *In* Interpretive Social Science: A Second Look. Paul Rabinow and William M. Sullivan, eds. Pp. 157-175. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Gershon, I.

2010 The breakup 2.0: disconnecting over new media. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.

Guitierrez, Gustavo

1988 A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation. Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books.

Haraway, Donna

 1988 Situated Knowledge: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective. Feminist Studies 14(3):575-599.

Heelas, Paul

1992 The sacralisation of the self and new age capitalism. *In* Social Change and Contemporary Britain. N. Abercrombie and A Warde, eds. Pp. 139-166. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Henare Amiria, Martin Holbraad and Sari Wastell

2006 Thinking Through Things: Theorising Artefacts Ethnographically. London: Routledge Press.

Hobart, M.

1993 An Anthropological Critique of Development: The Growth of Ignorance. London and New York: Routledge.

Ingold, Tim

2000 The Perception of the Environment: Essays in livelihood, dwelling and skill. London: Routledge.

Kohn, Eduardo

2007 How Dogs dream: Amazonian Natures and the politics of Trans-species engagement. American Ethnologist 34(1):3-24.

2013 How Forests Think: Toward an anthropology beyond the human. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Kroll-Smith, Steve, Phil Brown and Valerie J. Gunter

2000 Introduction: environments and disease in a postnatural world. In Illness and the environment: a reader in contested medicine. Steve Kroll-Smith, Phil Brown and Valerie J. Gunter, eds. Pp. 1-8. New York: New York University Press.

Kuper, Adam

2005 The reinvention of primitive society: transformations of a myth. London: Routledge.

Laidlaw, James

 2002 For an Anthropology of Ethics and Freedom. (The Malinowski Memorial Lecture, 2001). Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute 8(2):311-332.

2014 The subject of virtue: an anthropology of ethics and freedom. New York, Cambridge University Press.

Lambek, Michael

2010. Ordinary ethics: anthropology, language, and action. New York, Fordham University Press.

Latour, Bruno

1991 We Have Never Been Modern. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

2005 Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor Network Theory. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

2004 Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam? From matters of fact to matters of concern. Critical Inquiry 30(2):225-248

Levine, A. G.

1982 Love Canal: Science, politics, and people. Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.

Lowenthal, D.

1985 The Past is a Foreign Country. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

McDonalnd, Maryon

1989 "We are Not French!": Language, Culture, and Identity in Brittany. London: Routledge.

Meillassoux Quentin

2008 After Finitude: An Essay On The Necessity Of Contingency [trans. Ray Brassier] New York: Continuum.

Mol, Annemarie

1999 Ontological Politics: A Word and Some Questions. In Actor Network Theory and After. John Law, and J. Hassard, eds. Pp. 74-89. Oxford: Blackwell.

Mol, Annemarie

2002a The Body Multiple: Ontology in Medical Practice, Durham NC and London: Duke University Press.

2002b Cutting surgeons, walking patients: Some complexities involved in comparing. *In* Complexities: social studies of knowledge practices. J. Law and A. Mol, eds. Pp. 218-257. Durham: Duke University Press**.**

Morgan, Lewis Henry

 1870 Systems of consanguinity and affinity of the human family, Smithsonian contributions to knowledge vol xvii, art 2. Washington: Smithsonian Institution.

1877 Ancient society. New York: H. Holt and company.

Pellegrino, E.

1997 The Nazi Doctors and Nuremberg: Some Moral Lessons Revisited. Annals of Internal Medicine 127(4):307–308.

Pedersen, Morten

2012 Proposing the Motion. Critique of Anthropology 32(1):59-65

2013 The Fetish of Connectivity. *In* Objects and Materials. A Routledge Companion. G. Evans, E. Silva and N. Thoburn, eds. Pp. 197-207. London: Routledge.

Petryna, Adriana

 2002 Life exposed: biological citizens after Chernobyl. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Pfeiffer, James, Kenneth Gimbel-Sherr and Orvalho Augusto

2008 The holy spirit in the household: Pentecostalism, gender, and neoliberalism in Mozambique. American Anthropology 109(4):688-700

Porter, James, Clare Williams, Steven Wainwright and Alan Cribb

2013 On being a (modern) scientist: risks of public engagement in the UK interspecies embryo debate. New Genetics and Society 31(4):408-423.

Rabinow, Paul

1975. Symbolic Domination: Cultural Form and Historical Change in Morocco, University of Chicago Press.

Reed, A. D. E.

2003 Papua New Guinea's last place: experiences of constraint in a postcolonial prison. New York: Berghahn Books.

Riles, Annelise

2006 Introduction: In Response In Documents: artifacts of modern knowledge. Annelise Riles, ed. Pp 1-38. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Rosner, David

2013 Lead Wars: The politics of science and the fate of America's children. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Sennett, Richard

2009 The Craftsman. St Ives: Penguin.

Said, Edward

1978 Orientalism. New York: Vintage Books.

Shapin, S., et al.

1985 Leviathan and the air-pump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the experimental life: including a translation of Thomas Hobbes, Dialogus physicus de natura aeris by Simon Schaffer. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Schweber, Silvan S.

2008 Einstein and Oppenheimer: the meaning of genius. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Shirky, Clay

2009 Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing Without Organizations. New York and London: Penguin Books.

Shore, Cris

2008 Audit Culture and Illiberal Governance: Universities and the Politics of Accountability. Anthropological Theory 8(3):278–298.

Shryock, A.

1997 Nationalism and the genealogical imagination: oral history and textual authority in tribal Jordan. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Simmel, Georg

1976[1904] The Metropolis and Mental Life in The Sociology of Georg Simmel. New
York: Free Press.

Simpson, B.

1997 On Gifts, Payments and Disputes: Divorce and Changing Family Structures in
Contemporary Britain. Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute 3(4):731-745

Sloterdijk, Peter

2012 The art of philosophy: wisdom as a practice. New York: Columbia University
Press.

Smith, L.

2006 The Uses of Heritage. London and New York, Routledge

Strathern, Marilyn

1987 Out of Context: The Persuasive Fictions of Anthropology. Current
Anthropology 28(3): 251-281.

1988 The Gender of the Gift: Problems with Women and Problems with Society in
Melanesia. Berkeley: University of California Press.

1992 After Nature: English Kinship in the Late Twentieth Century. Cambridge:
Cambridge University Press.

1995 The Relation: Issues in Complexity and Scale. Chicago: Prickly Pear Press.

1996 Cutting the Network. The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute 2(3):
517- 535.

2000 Introduction: New Accountabilities. *In* Audit Cultures: Anthropological Studies in Accountability, Ethics and the Academy. Marilyn Strathern, ed. Pp.1–18. New York and London: Routledge.

2004 Partial Connections. Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press

2011 Binary license. Common Knowledge. 17(1):87-103

Stasch, Rupert

 2003 Society of Others: Kinship and Mourning in a West Papuan Place. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Stoler, Ann L.

2002 Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule. Berkeley: California University Press.

Taylor, Ian and Josie Kelly

2006 Professionals, Discretion and Public Sector Reform in the UK: Re-visiting Lipsky. International Journal of Public Sector Management 19(7):629–642.

Tönnies, Ferdinand

1957[1887] Community and Society. [Trans, Charles Price Loomis] East Lansing: Michigan State University Press.

Trundle Catherine, Ilina Singh and Christian Broer

2014 Fighting to be Heard: Contested Diagnoses. In Social Issues in Diagnosis: An Introduction for Students and Clinicians. Annemarie Jutel and Kevin Dew, eds. Pp. 165-182. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Trundle, Catherine

2014 American in Tuscany: Charity, Compassion and Belonging. Oxford and New York: Berghahn Books.

Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo

2003 And. Manchester Papers in Social Anthropology 7. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Walsh, E.

1988 Democracy in the shadows: Citizen mobilization in the wake of the accident at Three Mile Island. New York: Greenwood.

Weber, Max

1978[1922]. Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Williams, Raymond

1975 [1973] The Country and the City. Oxford University Press

Yarrow, Thomas and S. Jones

2014 'Stone is stone': engagement and detachment in the craft of conservation masonry. Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute 20(2):256-275.

Garrow, D and Thomas Yarrow

2010 Archaeology and Anthropology: understanding similarity, exploring difference. Oxford: Oxbow.

[1] Although setting this detached relationship up actually took some fairly hands-on intervention (Candea 2013a) and indeed allowed a range of other experimental manipulations to take place (Candea 2013b).

[2] Some of these include Mol (2002b), Kohn (2007), Gershon (2010), Simpson (1997), Shryock (1997), Reed (2003).

[3] Latour's most recent work on modes of existence, with its metaphysics of gaps and micro-transcendences, is closer to a genuinely symmetrical account.

[4] It might be worth noting in this context, that the very term detachment contains a relationalist bias of its own, insofar as it implies the outcome of a process. The implication then is that *de*tachment −if it is ever achieved− is what comes after the relation. Detachment in this sense is inherently a 'post-relational' term (Pedersen 2013) rather than a non-relational or radically anti-relational one. Consider by contrast the radical anti-relationalism of a philosopher such as Quentin Meillassoux (2008), for whom what is at stake is not just the possibility of getting out of, breaking or cutting relations *a posteriori*, but the possibility of imagining a reality *before* relations.

[5] For an excellent account of 'kinds' of relations, see Strathern (2011)