PRACTISING ETHICS: FROM GENERAL ANTROPOLOGY TO THE ANTROPOLOGY OF CHILDHOOD AND BACK AGAIN

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PRACTISING ETHICS: FROM GENERAL ANTROPOLOGY TO THE ANTROPOLOGY OF CHILDHOOD AND BACK AGAIN

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Abstract – This paper considers how anthropology approaches ethical issues, by studying the dilemmas which arise in fieldwork and the limitations of ethical codes and committees. It aims to shed light on how the anthropology of childhood and children can contribute to ethical discussions. A critical analysis of the ethical approach promoted in some childhood studies research shows that ethics should not be seen simply as an instrumental methodological tool. On the contrary, an analysis of epistemological issues grounded in the anthropology of childhood and children allows us to revisit a set of questions about ethics in general anthropology.

Keywords – ethics, anthropology of childhood and children, childhood studies, methods, epistemology

INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS ETHICS in anthropology? According to Bonte (1991: 83), there are three categories of ethical problems. The first category is epistemological, concerning the tension between relativism and positivism, and is to be resolved "through scholarly debate". The second category is political, relating to how research findings are presented, and should be resolved "through civic or moral choices". A third category "arises from the personal nature of the anthropologist's engagement in the field, which is intrinsic to the very conditions of exercising the discipline (participatory observation) and is considered almost a rite of passage". According to Bonte, the first two categories do not necessarily call for "the intervention of professional authorities", unlike the third – which is also, to some extent, epistemological.

Although it goes without saying that these three ethical issues or levels are intrinsically linked, this article will focus particularly on the third category: that is, how ethics are actually practised. Debates generally focus on codes and charters, and on working with single adults. We will go beyond this, exploring how this question can be approached jointly by general anthropology and the anthropology of children and childhood, and how these approaches can complement each other[1].

We will consider the following questions: To what extent can we speak of a specifically anthropological ethics? How are practice(s) and principle(s) connected? What are the links between ethics and method(s), notably in childhood studies? What can the anthropology of childhood teach us about ethics in anthropology?

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[1] Although it goes without saying that the anthropology of childhood and the anthropology of children are inextricable, for simplicity the term "anthropology of childhood" will be used in this article.

In more cross-disciplinary terms, we will examine the role of temporality and the ethnographic relationship in ethical debates. First, we will analyse how anthropological ethics enter into fieldwork practices that are based on the construction of the ethnographic relationship; this will allow us to reflect on the status of ethical conflicts and dilemmas, as well as the role of case-studies as ethical models. We will then examine childhood studies and its almost exclusively methodological way of approaching ethical questions; we will discuss the benefits, contradictions and problems of this approach. To conclude, we will analyse some of the specifics of fieldwork practices in the anthropology of childhood, demonstrating how they can contribute to a reconsideration of ethics in anthropology.

OUTLINING AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL ETHICS OF FIELDWORK

Is practical ethics just a way of practising ethics?

Is the proliferation of codes and authorities, at various levels of the scientific research process, a good thing? According to Hilgers (2008: 179), this process has a heuristic merit: "the codification of the system of norms, which had so far remained implicit in research practices, allowed it to be solidified and revealed disparities and deviations." But it raises other questions. Should codes and authorities be created to cut across disciplines and fields? How can anthropology make its voice heard?

Although some argue that ethical reflections should focus on the ethnographic "method"[2], rather than the discipline which happens to be employing it (such as sociology or anthropology, for example), others believe that there is an ethics which is wholly or partially specific to anthropology. In any case, it seems questionable, or even impossible in anthropology, to disassociate ethical questions from methodological one[3], as some advise doing (Sakoyan 2008). It seems even more impossible to disregard their entanglement in theoretical and epistemological questions if we advocate the creation of an "ethics specific to anthropology" (Desclaux & Sarradon-Eck 2008), drawing on:

- Place: in ethical committees, in the field, and in a "plural and multiform 'moral space'", encompassing the field itself, scientific conferences, virtual and other spaces;

- Time: the "creation of a framework[4] allowing us to ensure certain research conditions from the start, and encouraging a dynamic of exchange and adjustment based on the subjects' perceptions, depending on the specifics of the study" (Desclaux 2008: 12) and a collective sharing of the ethical process;

- The form of ethical work: "a base-line ethical system" and work on ethical dilemmas (Desclaux 2008: 14).

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[2] The history of varying definitions and usages of the terms "ethnography" and "ethnographic" across disciplines and national traditions could be discussed at great length, and are beyond the scope of the present article.

[3] On this point, see issues 50 and 51 of the *Journal des Anthropologues* (1993) and furthermore 136-137 (2014).

[4] See also Benveniste & Selim (2014: 29-30) on the nature and importance of the "framework of anthropological investigation".

This view is shared by Fassin (2008: 10) who affirms: "the closely interdependent nature of epistemology, ethics, and ultimately politics." Laplantine (2011: 67) goes even further: "Epistemology is a consequence of ethics, and not the reverse. Ethics leads to and accompanies epistemology."

A specific type of relationship forms the framework for the pursuit of knowledge, and by extension, the ethical questions it raises. This is the "ethnographic relationship, understood as the written production of anthropological knowledge based on research in the field, [which] is now recognised as a historical and political act; a method of seeking knowledge which is epistemologically founded on experiencing encounters and forming relationships" (Fogel & Rivoal 2009). But, to be absolutely clear, this about more than "simple dialogical interactions" (Fogel & Rivoal 2009). Thus, although the ethnographic relationship is heavily influenced by the researcher's "emotional and personal involvement" and his or her engagement in the learning process, it is also shaped by a range of other determining factors. These include the researcher's integration (notably through kinship); each society or community's relationship with otherness; variables such as sex, origins, age, marital status and, I would add, phenotype and physical characteristics; and even the process of assigning places and roles (Fogel & Rivoal 2009).

Since the reflexive turn in anthropology, these questions have fuelled numerous debates. A key consideration is thus subjectivity which, although it is understood in diverse ways[5], is widely accepted for its heuristic dimension, which is central to anthropology today. Thus, Bensa (2008*b*: 326) advocates a "policy of intersubjectivity"[6]: "The intimate clash between moral conscience and the scientific project is never so strong as when we decide to examine the power relations which permeate research studies, or when we take the risk of speaking in the first person in a scholarly universe which often sees silence about oneself as a smokescreen of objectivity."[7] In turn, Caratini (2004: 34) invites us to take the reflexive undertaking to its logical conclusion, by publishing fieldwork journals discussing the role of the subjective and personal aspect of fieldwork in the production of knowledge.

To access this subjectivity, it is useful to assess the transformations of the self which permeate anthropology and which, in some cases, result in "going native" (Powdermaker 1967). These transformations affect various fields (Godelier 2007; Caratini 2004; Favret-Saada 1977, 2009; Berliner 2013; Naepels 2012) including ethics (Bensa 2008*a*: 24). These transformations of the self take the form of a "private shift,

[5] It is worth noting that, in most cases, the body is disassociated from the subject.

[6] Here, it is useful to hear another suggestion from a psychoanalytic perspective: "the framework in which the exchange takes place cannot be decided in theory, from the outside, based on an external authority or some form of supposed scientific rationality. Deciding it in advance is both anti-scientific and amoral. It is for the parties involved in the study to decide it together. Yet this takes time, gives rise to anxieties, and can only occur through trial and error." The author calls this process "interobjectivation", to which she adds Lacan's notion of "extimacy", "to refer to that which is nearest to us while remaining radically exterior to us" (Zask 2014: 265-266).

[7] Here we must go beyond axiological neutrality (Fassin & Bensa 2008).

the abandonment of social and imaginary support for the construction of the self in favour of other points of reference, which are no longer inherited but are instead acquired by decentring the subject" (Bensa 2008*a*: 25). This is the "cognitive I" which Godelier (2007) speaks of.

It should by now be clear that ethical reflection often underlies the reflexive process, or is intertwined with methodological and epistemological questioning. These are sometimes shared collectively, without necessarily coming to any consensus or recognisably corresponding to existing codes. The highly individual and personal nature of this process, and its resulting invisibility, probably explains why anthropologists have difficulty making their voices heard in ethical bodies (Desclaux 2008).

It should be noted that, in the context of these debates about the position of anthropologists (their engagement, involvement, reflexivity, subjectivity, and intersubjectivity), the polysemous notion of conscience is very rarely used. This is despite the fact that it refers to the subjective element of experience which is employed in understanding the world, others, and oneself. Correspondingly, the ethnographic relationship only exists when it is embodied, a fact which is overlooked both by studies of the epistemology of the anthropological discipline and by studies of the body, as we will shortly see. This analysis may be surprising, since the "mode of anthropological knowledge […] is not made up of the abstraction of general ideas, but in thick description (and also in the surface of what is perceptible)" (Laplantine 2012: 25).

So are there no ethics in anthropology except in practice? Furthermore, does this mean that the practice of ethics in anthropology is necessarily opposed to the establishment of theoretical principles? Although it may seem easy to agree on overarching ethical principles, this consensus could potentially lead such principles to dissolve and variations to emerge. Hilgers (2008: 191) recalls this happening in the case of the AAA charter: "The over-legislation of practices brings about a loss of the moral ambition that the charter should intrinsically bear, an ambition which is particularly difficult to take on given the post-modern strand which seems to dominate American anthropology today."

Some invite us to reconsider or move beyond the often overstated opposition between principles and practices. This opposition between "normative ethics" and "pragmatic ethics" is very well illustrated in relation to consent forms by Gning (2014: 247). "Formal ethics" (the participant's signature) are compared to "relational, contextual ethics"; however, this should not lead us to believe that there exist on the one hand "principles which are necessarily abstract, empty, disembodied", and on the other "practices without principles" (Gning 2014: 249). Similarly, Hilgers (2008: 192) writes that, "whether in everyday questions encountered on the job, or in the overarching directions of the discipline, practices reflect ethics which are ultimately rooted in moral principles".

It seems that the principles themselves (e.g. consent) pose less of a problem than

translating them into action (e.g. the signature giving consent). However, ethical practice employs certain fundamental principles or values – such as the principles of trust and exchange which are prerequisites for the signature giving consent – upon which the ethnographic relationship is based. Some believe that these fall into the category of initial principles, which are defined as abstract (e.g. consent). It is therefore in the space between the two that difficulties arise.

Others argue that it is necessary to shift the focus of ethical investigation beyond ethical codes and committees, in recognition of the eminently political character which is common to all actors, stages and sites in anthropological research (Desclaux & Sarradon-Eck 2008: 16). This analysis leads us to consider the consequences of engagement and/or involvement in "worrying about responsibility" (Fassin 2005). Sakoyan (2008: 4) calls this "ethics *in the field*" and "ethics *with the data*", underlining its relational dimension, the anthropologist's position, and his or her role in the production of knowledge in society.

In any case, many anthropologists note a tendency to bury our heads in the sand. For Massé (2000), for example, there are two key challenges: teaching ethics, and expressing a collective ethics in anthropology. Most proposals insist on the importance of context. The significance of context in anthropology is well-established (Bensa 2006), so it is not insignificant that it is frequently referred to when ethical questions arise. Vidal (2003: 63) thus defends "contextualised ethics", understood "as 'a set of actions' and not just as 'arrangements of language and words' [Sèves 1997: 207])". Hilgers (2008) also writes of "contextual ethics", while I myself have described "pragmatic and processual" ethics (Razy 2018). Bibeau (2000: 27) advocates a creolised ethics combining the anthropology of moral systems and the anthropology of ethics; he retraces its history and the ways in which it is put into practice. Weiss (1998: 160)[8] proposes applying "an ethics of ethics", as "a universal grammar, or directory, of different ethical systems, along with a practical code to mediate between them". Massé (2009) argues for an anthropology of moral systems coupled with an anthropology of ethics.

Scheper-Hughes (1995: 419) advocates a militant anthropology, which refuses any suspension of ethics, arguing that "responsibility, accountability, answerability to 'the other' – the ethical as I would define it – is precultural to the extent that our human existence as social beings presupposes the presence of the other". Finally, Massé (2003: 21) borrows the notion of "specified principlism" from Degrazia (1992), in order to escape binaries he judges to be fruitless:

> *We will escape the binary opposition between a fundamentalist principlism, which advocates the mechanical imposition of universal values, and a radical relativism. Instead, we will argue for the relevance of an approach founded on key guiding values and ethical discussion, an approach which retains certain constructive elements of a specified principlism, which is sensitive to sociocultural contexts and bound to an ethics of discussion. Principles are thus not seen as the*

[8] In this respect, the perspective of "home-grown" researchers (Diawara 1985), studying their own society, is essential.

'absolute determinants of action' (Massé 2003: 22).

Although context is of primary importance as a determinant, it is in lived situations that ethical questions most frequently arise:

> *The vectors of anthropological knowledge are first and foremost interactions. On every occasion, these interactions – through body language, gestures, recurring topics, repartees, humour, moods – express the complete truth of the subjects in the situation (Bensa 2008b: 325).*

In this sense, it is indeed important to prioritise "situational ethics" or "ethical situations", which is reminiscent of the "situational analysis" of the Manchester School (Singleton 2008: 28). But what are the situations in question?

Ethical dilemmas or conflicts: a privileged beginning?

When we speak about ethics in anthropology, reference is often made to ethical conflicts or dilemmas. Although these arise during encounters or confrontations, they are primarily internal; and, some argue, they are already at work in the society, group or community being studied. Anthropologists are therefore just as interested in the ethical dilemmas they witness as those where they themselves are in the foreground. The first question which emerges thus concerns the subjects of the situation. But who are they? Some note that the research landscape has become more complex; numerous actors are now involved in fieldwork and the production of knowledge, besides the anthropologist (Fassin 2008: 301). This development is undeniable, but is it not better understood as a diversification of actors? Haven't anthropologists always been faced with a multiplicity of actors and groups, with sometimes diverging interests? Whatever the case, we can most often recognise ethical dilemmas through the discomfort they make us feel:

> *Certain reactions, considered normal locally, managed to surprise or even shock me. However, it turned out to be entirely possible to either get used to them – even if it meant suspending all moral judgement of my hosts, in a radical banishment of ethnocentrism – or make them partly my own, particularly in the field of kinship relationships, story analysis, and ceremonial exchanges (Bensa 2008a: 22)*[9].

Now let's take some very different examples of ethical dilemmas. We will first identify these examples and then, vitally, make an "effort to elucidate" how the ethics are formulated (Fassin 2008: 133). Studies focusing on ethics, or on fieldwork more broadly, produce various types of ethical dilemma. In some cases, the life of the anthropologist and/or their hosts may be in danger (Bourgois 2007; Pollock 2007; Agier 1997) – for example, in studies focusing on armed conflicts, illicit practices or health (Desclaux & Sarradon-Eck 2008: 10). In other cases, the danger is "just" moral; for example, when the anthropologist encounters a "misappropriation" of financial

[9] On this subject, Dousset (2014: 256-257) writes: "If the anthropologist adapts their practice (and ethics) to the value system of their hosts, they will be judged by their peers as having 'gone native', becoming an 'activist', or being 'subjective' or 'unscientific'… If, on the contrary, they 'decide' to remain loyal to their own value system, they will be judged by their hosts (and some other anthropologists, particularly from the culturalist movement) as being 'disinterested', 'egotistical', 'careerist', 'neo-colonial', 'positivist', 'pseudo-objective'…"

aid in a development project (Laurent 2008: 60-64). Fassin (2008: 307) suggests a grid which can be used to understand conflicts. He explains the grid using the example of a project in South Africa, identifying "four types of conflict between the French and South African teams: conflicts of authority, of loyalty, of responsibility, and of legitimacy". He thus offers a political reading of the situation.

The stage where research results are shared, and where texts are read and used, can also be a source of ethical dilemmas, which are sometimes impossible to resolve retrospectively. Dousset (2014: 256-257) describes an Australian example where "the anthropologist's work was used by the authorities in order to refuse to recognise a community as a native society". Hancart-Petitet (2008: 12) came to consider this process of reproducing findings "not as a final stage, but as a continuous part of the act of research" which should be gradually documented and analysed. She goes on to question whether, had she taken this position earlier, she would have been better equipped to deal with the ethical dilemmas which she faced in the field.

How can we discuss ethical dilemmas, while reaffirming that to explain is not necessarily to justify (Massé 2000)? Is it possible to envisage a systematic approach to these ethical dilemmas, rather than the common approach which is personal, temporary and, moreover, often applied retrospectively? If we believe Pharo (2006: 408) on this subject, no "general methodology for resolving ethical conflicts" exists. However, it should be noted that there are spaces where ethical dilemmas in anthropology are set out and debated. Here, once again, the AAA sets the tone, with its *CoE Briefing Papers on Fieldwork Dilemmas* and its *Committee on Ethics Briefing Papers on Common Dilemmas Faced by Anthropologists Conducting Research in Field Situations*. There is even a column in the AAA newsletter called *Ethical Dilemmas*; alternatively, there is a blog and a book (Cassel & Jacobs 1987) discussing fieldwork situations[10]. Finally, dilemmas in the professional domain and dilemmas involving funders are not forgotten.

From all these emerges a sort of case-law. This establishes principles which based on examples of particular situations; these case studies become paradigmatic and serve as the basis for developing a taxonomy without abandoning ethical principles (Jonsen & Toulmin 1988: 19). According to Cefaï (2010: 499), this is "the invention of a deontological ethics" based on "a case-law of problematic situations". This approach can prove fruitful, as long as the solutions it proposes are not prescriptive; instead, each of them must remain just one among many possibilities, depending on the parameters linked to the unique situation in a particular fieldwork site, with particular relationships and a particular context.

At the heart of all ethical dilemmas and our treatment of them, we find questions of negotiation (Pollock 2007; Fassin 2008; Gning 2014) and its corollary, anticipation

[10] For example: whether to report a murder to the local authorities; whether to denounce professional practices which are having dire effects; whether to denounce illegal or disastrous organizational practices; whether to denounce practices which cause injury, break the law, or transgress local rules; whether to intervene and whether to act.

(Desclaux & Sarradon-Eck 2008: 15). Here, again, the decisive factors are contextualisation and reflection on the framework of the ethnographic relationship. Several authors therefore highlight the different temporalities at work – the temporality of anthropology versus the temporality of ethics – and concentrate on the "after-the-fact" approach to ethics (Desclaux & Sarradon-Eck 2008; Sakoyan 2008; Fassin 2008). Here I will add that ethical dilemmas can arise in relation to past deeds or words, sometimes even before anything happens or any word is uttered. These dilemmas can also arise when an event is announced; in real time during the anthropologist's involvement in the event; and/or when the pronouncement itself is made. Any reflexive analysis must take all of these dimensions into account.

Through ethical reasoning based on particular examples and case studies, it becomes possible to anticipate certain dilemmas – always allowing for the particularities of each situation and the context of each fieldwork site. However, the difficulty of replicating the ethnographic relationship leaves us open to unforeseen ethical dilemmas; this makes any systematisation impossible, and thus leads us to privilege a questioning approach.

In addition, the case-law approach often concentrates on "borderline cases", "made into examples so paradigmatic that they become caricatures" (Gallenga 2014: 126). This risks bypassing much of what makes up the everyday life of anthropologists, who are most often confronted by "small" ethical dilemmas. I will thus suppose that there is a continuum, rather than a hierarchy, of ethical dilemmas, and so argue that we should examine not just "borderline cases", but also apparently trivial cases – those which actually make up the everyday life of anthropologists and their hosts. How do these questions manifest in studies involving children?

ETHICAL QUESTIONS AND CHILDREN: THE METHOD BEYOND THE METHOD

An appropriate methodology or an adaptation of methodology?

In the 1990s, the beginning of "child-centred, participatory ethnographic research" (Cheney 2011) required some adaptations: "As a whole, childhood is under-represented and under-theorized and anthropologists need to alter their conventional ways and methods of studying children" (Scheper-Hughes & Sargent 1998: 15). Now that the spotlight has been shone on these children, how can we access their voices and their supposed agency[11] – and thus guarantee that some ethics are applied to research with children, within the paradigm of childhood studies? The answer to that question is methodological and, at first glance, it appears to raise a contradiction. Numerous researchers promote the use of specific methodological tools or positions when working with children, while simultaneously claiming, more or less explicitly, that the difference between children and adults is just a social construct (Alderson & Goodey 1996; Christensen & Prout 2002).

[11] The term agency is assumed without really being defined in terms of its nature, degree, or effects (Bluebond-Langner & Korbin 2007). Its usefulness and its limitations are the subject of much debate (Honwana & De Boeck 2005; Razy & Rodet 2011; Evers, Notermans & Van Ommering 2011; Lancy 2012; Pache Huber & Ossipow 2012).

The "specific techniques" used by researchers consist largely of adapting to children's timetables and their capacity for concentration (Montgomery 2009: 47). Some take this further, promoting an interdisciplinary approach whose watchwords are "active listening" and "interpenetrating language", in order to access the voices of children who are endowed with "agency" (Pufall & Unsworth 2004: 6-9).

It should be noted that these methods[12], which are often presented as innovations (see Clark & Moss 2001 on the mosaic approach; Christensen & Prout 2002; Graham *et al*. 2013), are blended, participative or collaborative techniques[13], which take their inspiration directly from the field of development[14]. According to Christensen & James (2008*b*), they play the role of "communicative intermediaries", and according to Cheney (2011), this "child-centred, participatory ethnographic research" allows us to "decolonise research" in history, Africanist anthropology, and childhood studies[15]. Other methods take inspiration from psychology and educational sciences, such as "creative methods" (Greene & Hogan 2010: 14; Crivello *et al*. 2013) which give free rein to children's imaginations.

Veale (2010: 254) combines these different sources of inspiration with her techniques of "community mapping and drama, storytelling and drawing" (over a six-week survey). She considers these to be qualitative methods, and says that "they have the advantage over many traditional methods of engaging participants in knowledge production, and involving their participation in the interpretation and analysis of that knowledge".

Finally, some researchers may allow children to take over their research, such as voice recorders or fieldwork journals, or they may have them keep their own journals for the study (Emond 2010: 132-134).

Advantages and disadvantages of the methods and methodologies used

But what is the use of these specific, and often numerous, methods? According to some, "there is an advantage to using more than one method of data collection since this may provide the opportunity for triangulation of data (Brannen 1992) and variety can in itself stimulate and maintain the interest of participants" (Thomas & O'Kane 1998). For others, this is a good way of resolving ethical problems (O'Kane & Thomas 1998) or, at the very least, of responding to concerns about children's participation in research (Montgomery 2009: 47; Alderson & Morrow 2011: 14). Veale (2010: 270) raises the ethical challenges posed by research with children, particularly where methodologies are based on participation. Others go further, claiming that

[12] O'Kane (2008) summarises these methods. Danic *et al*. (2006) illustrate methods embedded in not only a qualitative approach, but also a quantitative one, based on the fieldwork of three researchers from different disciplines within the social sciences.

[13] *Cf*. "The decision-making pocket chart, the pots and beans activity and the diamond ranking" (Alderson & Morrow 2011: 60-61, 127).

[14] This brings to mind the Participatory Rural Appraisal (O'Kane 2008: 128; Thomas & O' Kane 1998; James *et al*. 1998) or the data chain model (Cheney 2011).

[15] For a summary of these methods, see O'Kane (2008). See also (Mahon *et al*. 1996).

these methods are transformative, in that they produce social change (Cheney 2011: 176; Boyden & Ennew 1997).

Although these specific methods are constantly spreading and multiplying, they have also been subject to criticism. For Christensen & James (2008*a*: 2), "there is nothing particular or indeed peculiar to children that makes the use of any techniques imperative". As they show, the methods used must be suited to the people involved, the social and cultural context, and the research questions, and must "mediate communication with children who cannot verbalize their views and understandings" (Christensen & James 2008*a*: 3, 8)[16]. However, we can find contradictions even within the work of a single author. For example, Emond (2010: 127) insists on the real necessity of using a reflexive approach in ethnographic studies conducted with children, while also maintaining that, "despite the challenges of conducting ethnographic research with children, it is in many ways not different from 'doing' research with adult participants".

As has been said above, using multiple methods in combination, which can be perceived positively, does not eliminate the risk that triangulation will become a doctrine rather than a practice, highlighted by Greene & Hogan (2010: 16). Likewise, the use of multiple methods as a means of sustaining participants' curiosity poses epistemological questions, particularly in the case of participant observation. When participant observation is embedded in an anthropological approach, the goal is to integrate oneself into the community or group, and therefore cease to arouse curiosity, in order to establish a routine in one's relationships and exchanges. So what is the epistemological status of participant observation when it is used occasionally, as one technique amongst many in a package of multiple methods?

It should be noted that most researchers seem to think nothing of building relationships and trust through these mixed methods[17], and few seem to consider the reflexivity of children and researchers[18]. To my knowledge, researchers rarely consider starting from the basis of the children's own existing practices, which would seem the most appropriate approach in anthropology: "In the study, it was noted that the approach was similar to a game traditionally played by Rwandan children" (Veale 2010: 259). As we have seen, researchers invent or adapt methods which they assume are appropriate or appealing to children, particularly those that make use of elements such as games or drawings.

Ethics, methods and methodologies: a question of perspective?

At the heart of these methodological questions lies the question of diversity, which often appears to be an ethical imperative. "Diversity has ethical as well as methodological implications, particularly with regard to the danger that sampling

[16] See also Davis *et al*. (2008) or Alderson (2008: 278).

[17] Some exceptions should be noted, including the chapter which is entirely dedicated to these questions in Danic *et al*. (2006: 95- 119).

[18] Once again, the proposals of the ERIC project paved the way for such a reflection: https://childethics.com/

and method choices may exclude the viewpoints of certain groups" (Hill 2010: 65). A useful approach to the ethical questions posed by the methodological propositions presented above is offered by the words of Alderson & Morrow (2011: 47): "If social research ethics is to review complex details seriously, it has to take greater account of relationships, power and emotions."

On the subject of acting (dramas), Veale notes that it is vital to prepare for the return to reality after the play, although there are no standardised analytical procedures for doing so. Veale thus echoes Yardley's view that "debriefing is ethically important" (Veale 2010: 267). Several authors point out that most attention is focused on the anthropologist's arrival in the field, notably with "information packs" (Hill 2010; O'Kane 2008: 133), even though ethical consideration should be given to all phases of the study, particularly the anthropologist's departure and the period following fieldwork. "How do children who may already feel rejected or betrayed react when the friendly researcher departs with the data and makes no further contact? Who benefits in the long term?" (Alderson & Morrow 2011: 24). For Emond (2010: 131), a real effort must be made on this issue: it is "vital that the ending of the project, and our relationship, were as planned and structured as the earlier parts of the work."

Children's participation raises questions. Spyrou (2011: 155) distinguishes cases where the children are co-researchers from those where they themselves are the researchers (see also Alderson (2008) on children as "young researchers"). On this topic, Spyrou echoes the criticisms of James (2007*a*), who does not see it as a definitive solution[19]. Roberts (2008: 273) goes further, calling into question the fundamental legitimacy of children's participation and methods aimed at achieving it: "While it is likely that research on Children which includes children and young people will considerably strengthen some aspects of the research, we cannot take it for granted that participation in research and the development of increasingly sophisticated research methods to facilitate children's participation are always in their interests"[20]. Greene & Hogan (2010: 17) also highlight the increase in methods that they call "snapshot or smash and grab approaches to collecting data", implicitly indicating their ethically dubious status. More prosaically, Spyrou (2011: 157) mentions the constraints of time and budget, which have implications for research ethics: "The quick and easy way is not necessarily the most ethical way; the ethical way necessitates time for reflection." (Spyrou 2011: 162)

Once again, the issue emerges of whether there are particular methods and ethics which should be used specifically in research with children, which Alderson & Goodey (1996) question. To establish an ethical symmetry between children and adults is, in some sense, to oppose the differentiating approach proposed by child-centred ethics. Christensen & Prout explain the former position as follows: "By this

[19] See also Spyrou's summary (2011).

[20] It goes without saying that the notion of the child's "interests", and moreover of "the child's best interests", merits further discussion (*cf.* Guillermet 2010).

we mean that the researcher takes as his or her *starting* point the view that the ethical relationship principles between researcher and informant is the same whether he or she conducts research with adults or with children" (Christensen & Prout 2002: 482). This means that no distinct ethical principles exist: all ethical principles relating to adults also apply to children; and if there are differences, these should emerge from lived situations in the field, rather than being assumed (Christensen & Prout 2002: 482). This is also what Alderson and Morrow maintain at the end of their book devoted to ethics in research with children: "most of this book about children also applies to all other research participants, especially disadvantaged ones." (Alderson & Morrow 2011: 142)[21]

If there is anything specific about working with children, it does not lie with the children themselves, but in the relationships of domination between adults and children (Alderson 1995) – which, according to O'Kane (2008), are comparable to those experienced by women or minorities. It is thus different in degree rather than in kind. Spyrou (2011: 161) agrees: "Though power differences are present in all research encounters, these differences can be more pronounced in child-adult research where age differences (in addition to all other social differences) are also present, as well as socially sanctioned adult responsibilities towards children that inevitably shape the encounter". From these propositions, it therefore seems that the construction of ethical practice is gradual, and must never be assumed (Christensen & Prout 2002).

The various places, roles and positions of the researcher in ethnographic fieldwork also pose epistemological and ethical questions. Relationships built in the field are often presented as the result of the researcher's individual will, rather than the product of interactions. This contributes to the reproduction of power relations between children and adults, which are otherwise criticised. As pointed out by Emond (2010: 127), there is little discussion in the literature of children's perceptions of the researcher, or of the effects of research.

Fine (1987) lists four possible roles which adults can have for children: supervisor, leader, observer or friend. The researcher may choose the *least-adult role* (Mandell 1991), that of *friend*, thus becoming an "atypical, less powerful adult" (Corsaro 2003; Fine & Sandstrom 1988; Corsaro & Molinari 2008)[22]. In most cases, the difference between children and adults is presented as insurmountable; sometimes, it is considered possible to partially overcome it (Laerke 1998). Such perspectives seem to dismiss children's imagination, and the role-plays in which they engage in numerous societies. It also disregards the changing and progressive nature of relationships in the field: adults and children alike are aware of the researcher's attributes and the reasons for his or her presence, and then forget them; they then remember them and put them aside again, by turns.

On this point, we often read that the subjects of our fieldwork studies end up

[21] See also Greene & Hogan (2010: 18).

[22] See also James (2007*b*) for a discussion of the researcher's various roles.

forgetting why we are there, and/or that they understand little or nothing of the research objectives. This potentially or implicitly justifies ethical distance from the information given. In order to forget something, one must first have known it. Numerous clues mean that the anthropologist's reasons for being there are regularly brought back to the surface, as is the meaning accorded to his or her presence; but again, one must be attentive in order to perceive these and analyse them. Moreover, for anthropologists, it is not an insurmountable challenge to explain the reasons for their presence to their hosts, based on the principles of anthropology. Furthermore, the key catalyst of the ethnographic relationship itself is how the objective emerges over the course of fieldwork and how the researcher explains it, or rather their ongoing exchanges and explanations.

The sociologist Emond (2010: 124-126) was ordered by the children she was studying to come and live with them if she wanted to understand their life; she thus realises that "the role of the researcher is therefore negotiated rather than imposed" (Emond 2010: 136). The dynamic character of ethnographic fieldwork quickly gives us the sense that not everything can be predicted or controlled for, and that the negotiable elements are always accompanied by aspects which the researcher cannot master (Favret-Saada 1977), except through retrospective analysis; these play out through the researcher's interactions. The ethnographic relationship occurs, and thus anthropological knowledge is produced, in the gaps created when researchers renounce their claim to omnipotence – which is probably harder to do when we are faced with children.

So what can the anthropology of children bring to these questions?

SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF AN ETHICS BASED ON THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF CHILDHOOD

The ambivalent status of children and the liminality of childhood

It should be noted that, across many societies and historical periods, children are often subject to what Pufall & Unsworth (2004: 1-2) call a "social ambivalence", combining fear and idealisation. Children's statuses, places and attributes are thus shaped by the oscillation between these two poles, or the intensification of one of the two.

Many studies underline this ambivalence, which is intrinsically linked to representations of children. These representations are widely documented by anthropology, and more particularly by the anthropology of childhood, across all five continents. Whether it is "unusual births" in Europe (Belmont 1971) or *nit ku bon* children in Senegal (Rabain 1994), to take just two examples, the liminal position of the child is often thought of as an exception in the individual's life cycle[23]. This is true

[23] Boehm *et al.* (2011) remind us that, despite the variability in emic definitions of childhood and youth, these are categories which are usually distinguished from the category of adulthood. This distinction is based largely on the fact that "children, possibly everywhere, have discursive and symbolic links to time, because they are seen as people in the process of becoming and because it is through children that a community's reproduction is actualized (Cole & Durham 2008)" (Boehm *et al.*

even when childhood and adulthood are thought of as a continuum, as in the pre-modern conception of the child as a miniature adult (Ariès 1973).

This liminal period is understood in diverse ways; it consists of successive stages, and it lasts for varying lengths of time; and it carries dangers for the children themselves and for their families. Some hypothesise that this ambivalence is intensified by the modern view of the child as an incomplete being, vulnerable and in need of protection (Ariès 1973). This view is spreading through the promotion of a globalised notion of childhood (Guillermet 2010); it is particularly actively disseminated by international organizations and NGOs devoted to childhood, which consider the child primarily as a victim whose rights must be respected (*cf*. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, CRC). A growing number of studies, particularly in anthropology, are adding nuance to this image of the child (Evers *et al*. 2011), and new moral questions are emerging concerning the overlap between policies of protection and policies of repression in childhood.

Situations of intense social change or crisis (such as poverty, famine, war, epidemic, or displacement) are conducive to the emergence of child figures which condense socially and culturally antagonistic statuses, places and attributes. This is because they shift the boundaries of social ambivalence towards children, and blur those which may exist between children and adults, elders and juniors.

There is no shortage of examples in the literature which illustrate and analyse the living conditions of children who are defined as "vulnerable" (a social category) and "innocent" (a moral category) (Fassin 2010). These occur primarily in studies of the "cultural politics of childhood" (Scheper-Hughes & Sargent 1998) whose can be found in the nineteenth century (Stephens 1995; Scheper-Hughes & Sargent 1998; Segalen 2010). Fassin (2010: 230) tries to unpick its mechanisms by examining three figures in South Africa: the child suffering from AIDS; the child who has been a victim of rape; and the orphaned child. However, he shows how fragile the status of victim is: "the ill child becomes a burden on society; the raped child, in turn, reveals him or herself to be the author of violence; and the orphan child is transformed into a potential criminal."

There is one figure epitomises the characters of the "executioner" and the "victim" at the same time: the child soldier. Simultaneously and in one single individual, this figure evokes characteristics of childhood and adulthood: he suffers and makes others suffer; he is both the victim and the agent of violence, at the same time. However, this figure is not simply a product of the twentieth century, nor is it unique to any one continent; on the contrary, Jézéquel (2006) identifies it as a subject of some historical continuity across time and space, thus reinforcing its exemplary nature.

This liminal and ambivalent status – without being unique to children – is therefore a very widespread recurring characteristic of childhood. For every anthropologist, it thus influences both their society of origin and the societies in

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2011: 2).

which they work, albeit in different ways. Consequently, these characteristics shape anthropologists' views of and relationships with children in the field. The figure of the child crystallises emotions, feelings and passions throughout the process of knowledge production, and so brings the anthropologist face to face with themselves – the child they have within them, as well as the adult they have become, in both their own eyes and the eyes of others. Anthropologists, given their training, are not much inclined to let themselves be held hostage by the "emotional mobilisation" upon which the "politics of compassion" is based (Fassin 2010). However, when they are involved in the everyday lives of children and their families over a long period, anthropologists find themselves faced with numerous unparalleled ethical conflicts. These conflicts – which are paradigmatic, due to the status of the child and the liminality of childhood – seem to me to have the potential to lead to developments in our thinking about ethics in general anthropology.

Participant observation with children

Ethical studies, guides and charters focused on working with children make little reference to participant observation. In fact, this privileged means of accessing knowledge in anthropology seems to challenge the ethics which governs predefined research protocols or targeted, temporary interventions – particularly where informed consent is concerned (Graham *et al*. 2013: 139). When participant observation is mentioned, it is generally as a tool to be used very intermittently, and observation usually overrides participation. It is used mostly to confirm results which already have been obtained, or to give them a qualitative gloss (Suremain 2012).

However, ethical questions are brought into sharp focus as soon as ethnography does anything more than simply conduct interviews (Fainzang 1994; Godelier 2007) or uses participant observation as more than simply an instrumentalised means of gaining participants' trust (Graham *et al*. 2013), a supplementary tool, or simply one research technique amongst others – however useful it may prove (Carnevale *et al*. 2008).

In this context, the project of knowledge undertaken by reflexive anthropology is truly founded on participation (Favret-Saada 1990) – a "desire for participation" which rests on empathy, imitation, and play (Berliner 2013). Using an argument based largely on cognitive sciences and the work of Favret-Saada, Halloy (2007: 91-94) emphasises that empathy can be an "acceptable means of producing ethnographic knowledge" when it is accompanied by a double reflexivity.

Is it possible to conduct participant observation and construct symmetrical relationships[24] with children? The answers to these questions emerge implicitly in debates between researchers analysing relationships of power and domination between adults and children, or examining the researcher's status, place and role in the field (Waksler 1986; Mandell 1991; Laerke 1998; Christensen 2004; Danic *et al*.

[24] Here I am paraphrasing Christensen & Prout's (2002) principle of "ethical symmetry".

2006; Christensen & James 2008*b*; Lignier 2008).

Opinion is divided on the limitations which children's alterity imposes in the field. According to some, it is possible to reduce this alterity by assuming the role of *least-adult* (Mandell 1991) or enacting "generational performances" (Hejoaka & Zotian 2016). For others, it cannot be reduced, but it can be negotiated (Laerke 1998; Mayall 2008) through strategies such as assuming one role rather than another (*supervisor*, *leader*, *observer* or *friend*) and/or taking a "physically distant position" (Fine 1987; Danic *et al*. 2006).

The strategic or tactical dimension of how the researcher positions themselves is in part the product of retrospective reconstruction, although that is not always clearly stated. At first glance, this seems to contradict the principles of participant observation, where the spontaneity of interactions, their embedding over time, and empathy all play a key role. The reflexive approach is certainly laudable, or even indispensable. However, ethical questions are raised by the prescriptive and thus replicable character of the researcher's choices or tactics with respect to their statuses, places and roles in the field, and by the lack of consideration for the child's perspective and position in the production of the ethnographic relationship and in the dynamic of the "system of places" (Favret-Saada 1977). Curiously, these strategic or tactical choices are not considered in an ethical framework, although they are viewed as specific methodologies for working with children. This is the sign indicating that participant observation is being instrumentalised, and used as an unacknowledged technique.

For some researchers, the elements of children's intrinsic alterity analysed above (ambivalence and liminality) are reasons to undertake a paradigmatic questioning of the motives of participant observation, an unavoidable element of ethical work. This is precisely how general anthropology can find food for thought: by giving renewed consideration to the questions raised by participant observation, based on the analysis of continuities and ruptures between ethnographic fieldwork conducted with children and that conducted with adults[25].

Our bodies, others' bodies

When we talk about participant observation, we are talking about the body. The question of the body (and its corollary in Africanist studies, the person) has been at the heart of the ethnological and anthropological project from its very beginning, particularly in the field of religion. But the body has achieved definitive recognition over the last twenty years: it has been revisited from a range of very varied perspectives, each questioning in its own way the boundary between nature and culture, between the individual and society, between the universal and the particular. Here, we will borrow from these studies the polysemic notion of *embodiment* (Csordas 1990) and the polemical questions of the subject and of

[25] This direction of travel is at odds with Christensen's (1999) view that the key issue is understanding children's *cultures of communication*, just as we would in any other setting.

emotions. There is a plethora of literature on the question[26]. Johnson (2002) reminds us that Csordas leaves unresolved the question of a possible reconciliation between the phenomenological approach and the semiological approach. In turn, Johnson offers a way of reconciling the two approaches (the body produced and the body as producer); this entails emphasising the notions of agency and improvisation in Bourdieu's concept of incorporated practices, and adding Marx's notion of triangulating conscience, production and social life. This idea, applied to ethnographic subjects, would obviously benefit from being applied equally to ethnographers. As fascinating and vital as these studies are, it must be noted that the wider issue is the body in ethnography[27], and that the ethnographic body is seen as a ghost at best, when it is not simply absent – and the reflexive turn is no longer even questioned. And yet, if there is a place and a time where the ethnographer can struggle to forget that he or she has a body, it is in the field. Whether ethnographers are reminded of this by their bodies themselves, or whether it is their hosts who remind them, the ethnographer's body is an acting, experiencing, feeling, thinking body, and the anthropologist is not purely a mind.

Furthermore, although the ethnographer's person is necessarily "affected" when bonds are formed in the field, as he or she enters into a "system of places" (Favret-Saada 1977), his or her body is also equally affected; it is the intermediary through which the fieldwork is conducted (Caratini 2004; Naepels 2012). Favret-Saada (1990) takes a holistic view of the subject, which does not dissociate reason and emotion, and which talks about unrepresented feelings. We can combine this perspective with Bloch's formulation of "non-verbalised, procedural knowledge" (1995: 145). Bloch also writes that "cognitive sciences lead us to think that the essence of cognitive activity escapes discursive and reflexive awareness" (*ibid*.). Warnier (2009: 151) goes further when he invokes "the complex constituted of the subject, their body, and the objectives of their actions".

What happens to the ethnographer? They discover rural and urban settings alike, near and far, and gradually familiarise themselves with an unfamiliar environment – the vegetation, animals, insects, climates, habitat, and auditory and olfactory surroundings. Sometimes they are ill, and adopt new bodily techniques for communication, bodily care, food, positions, and conditions of waking and sleep. They participate in rituals and in both verbal and non-verbal exchanges with their hosts. These are many of the bodily approaches taken by ethnographers in the field.

To be clear, this is not about succumbing to the circular introspection and narcissism which are characteristic of a certain post-modern critique of

[26] See Johnson (2002) for a review of various sources (including Marx, Foucault and Bourdieu) from which the notions of the body and *embodiment* are drawn, and for commentary on the implications of their uses. On the links between the body and the subject, see Warnier (1999).

[27] It should be noted that childhood studies emphasized the necessity of hearing children's voices, which is certainly laudable, but is only part of the picture. Children's bodies are a great forgotten issue, as has already been pointed out by Scheper-Hughes & Sargent (1998: 14): "their physical bodies are also absent, except as sites of physical discipline, genital initiation, or sexual molestation."

anthropology. Rather, it is about questioning the place and role of the body – particularly in terms of non-verbal communication and emotions – and of bodily interactions in the anthropological project, which is founded on the ethnographic relationship constructed through participant observation.

This dimension of ethnographic fieldwork and the body's role as a medium for the production of knowledge have provoked little interest to date (see, in particular, Stoller 1997; Caratini 2004; Jackson 1998; Johnson 2002; Csordas 2007; Halloy 2007; Ingold 2008). There has also been little interest in the ethical questions that are unavoidably raised by this fieldwork practice, or in the role of the body in constructing the ethnographic relationship.

What about when it comes to children? What do ethnographers and children make of the empirical reality of their respective bodies? What place does the ethnographer's body occupy within the strategies implemented, or within the tendency to let children assign the ethnographer a place in the field? Are there limits to physical contact? How should we deal with emotions? More broadly, what is the nature of knowledge produced through bodies and their interactions?

Where studies of children (including childhood studies, sociology and anthropology) include reflections on the researcher's body, these are most often indirect and not very in-depth[28]. It tends to be considered through the prism of relationships of power and domination between adults and children, elders and juniors; or through the analysis of strategies or tactics related to the researcher's status, place and role in the field, as discussed above. Ethical questions more specifically concerning the involvement of bodies are generally not touched upon.

Thus, the bodies of different actors are conceptualised as vehicles for various socially and culturally defined physical qualities (such as size, strength or sexual physical attributes) and as vectors of associated moral qualities (certain attributes, access to sexuality, or authority). The objective body contributes to a certain naturalisation of relations of power and domination, from which researchers and children may or may not be able to free themselves, depending on one's point of view.

In passing, it should be noted that if we assume it is impossible to go beyond this naturalisation of the body, we are effectively dismissing children's capacity for adaptation and imagination which they demonstrate in numerous societies – for example, during role-play – as well as the anthropologist's skill in exercising his or her craft. On this subject, Caratini (2004: 30-31) asserts that an anthropologist in the field "returns to his or her childhood" by "returning to the first level of integration, the space-time from which feelings emerge even before they have been transformed into emotions or judgements; that is, the body". Thus, the "chameleon-man" (or

[28] Lignier (2008) focuses particularly on the role of the body's status (stature and physical strength) and sexual identity, authority, responsibility and cultural competences in participant observation conducted with children. Although he touches on legal and moral questions, he only looks at ethical questions indirectly.

chameleon-woman) which Berliner (2013) speaks of may (re)become a child, particularly when he or she (re)learns childlike bodily techniques or enters into the world of children. This situation also raises ethical questions about the children themselves, their family, or the institutions around them. Reciprocal reflexive work, which requires the involvement of subject-bodies, thus merits further attention.

Finally, a little-discussed factor is the emotions broadcast by bodies and the way they are addressed in ethics. In many fieldwork studies of children, bodily interactions are just as significant as verbal interactions, if not more so (Rabain 1994; Gottlieb 2004; Razy 2007).

When we study children, it is true that specific questions emerge, particularly due to the very nature of interactions (including the very closest), the representations of both social and cultural alterity (child versus adult) of the actors who are present (the children, the ethnographer, the children's families), and even the status of these actors. However, this does not mean that general questions do not arise in the same terms as in fieldwork studies of adults (Christensen & James 2008*a*; Montgomery 2009). "While any ethical issues are salient in doing research with participants of any age, some issues present themselves differently, or more sharply when the participants are children" (O'Kane 2008: 126). Through the unavoidable problems it raises, fieldwork with children has a magnifying effect, shedding light on wider, frequently ignored ethical questions in anthropology.

CONCLUSION

Of course, a large number of ethical questions which arise in anthropology also occur in social sciences more generally. However, certain particularities nevertheless persist, due to anthropology's fundamental approach and the methods it uses to produce and analyse data. We have demonstrated and illustrated this, particularly by recalling how the ethnographic relationship in anthropology is constituted. We then examined ethical conflicts or dilemmas, as well as the case-law approach which they often lead to, and thus reflected on the binary opposition between principle and practice. In order to examine ethics in working with children, we took a detour into childhood studies, which showed that the link between ethics and methodology could not ignore underlying epistemological questions. The difference between techniques and approaches, and the tension between the specificity of children and the distinct character of all humankind which cuts across all studies, thus became clear.

What can reflections on the anthropology of childhood bring to debates about ethics? Some will see children simply as one sort of minority or other subaltern group, and will see the specific questions posed by working with them as a reflection of power relations which are already expressed elsewhere. This argument is partly valid – but only partly. In fact, focusing on the anthropology of childhood allows us to notice things which – thanks to the status of children and childhood, the practice of participant observation, and the involvement of the body – allow us to question ethics in anthropology more widely.

In cross-disciplinary terms, two strong determinants of ethics in anthropology have emerged, which the anthropology of childhood allows us to revisit afresh, because they are intensified in fieldwork with children. First, the framework provided by the ethnographic relationship – understood in all its thickness and complexity – references recurring questions related to embodied participant observation, engagement and involvement, and to subjectivity and reflexivity. Second, the framework of temporality comes to the fore at various levels, expressing itself through: the epistemological difficulty of anticipating all ethical dilemmas; the diverse temporalities considered and experienced by various actors in research; the diverse temporalities of the worlds which the actors are part of; the importance of routine; and, finally, the understanding of ethics as a process which begins before the anthropologist's arrival in the field, and continues far beyond their departure.

As well as these cross-disciplinary issues, targeted questioning raises the thorny issue of the point of contact between individual and collective work in ethical terms, which various national and international authorities offer to resolve.

As necessary and laudable as these ethical debates and efforts may be, we should not lose sight of the political dimensions implicit within them. We may join Benveniste and Selim in wondering who really benefits from this "concern about ethics":

> *In fact, everything is unfolding as if we were trying to respond to a situation where past methods of domination are long gone, by seeking to resume global domination through new ideological apparatus, now found in ethics. Ethics, which is supposed to create equality between actors where they are found, instead ends up building walls and consolidating hierarchical statuses (Benveniste & Selim 2014: 28).*

Questioning the ethics of anthropological research critically, reflexively and from a distance is the only protection against reproducing relationships of domination, with roots in a history which we claim to have left behind, under the guise of respect and equity. Furthermore, evaluating the ethical and political questions posed by all anthropological work with children – ambivalent subjects of all sorts of financial and ideological interests – sheds light on the superficial ethical processes that we encounter, and offers new reflections on anthropology[29].

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Résumé – *La pratique de l'éthique : de l'anthropologie générale à l'anthropologie de l'enfance et retour*. Ce texte prend pour cadre la manière dont les questions d'éthique sont communément abordées en anthropologie à partir des dilemmes issus de la pratique du terrain et les interrogations sur les limites des codes et comités éthiques. Il ambitionne de montrer les apports de l'anthropologie de l'enfance et des enfants à la réflexion. Pour ce faire, un détour par l'analyse critique de l'approche de l'éthique mise en œuvre dans des travaux des *Childhood Studies* est effectué ; il vise à interroger le risque de réduction de l'éthique à un dispositif méthodologique instrumental. À l'inverse, la mise en lumière de questions épistémologiques cruciales soulevées par la réflexion sur l'éthique en anthropologie de l'enfance et des enfants amène à revisiter certaines questions d'éthique en anthropologie générale.

Mots-clés – éthique, anthropologie de l'enfance et des enfants, childhood studies, méthodes, épistémologie

Resumen *– La práctica de la ética: de la antropología general a la antropología de la infancia y vuelta*. Este artículo se enmarca dentro del cuestionamiento antropológico más común de la ética, a partir de los dilemas que surgen del trabajo de campo y de las preguntas sobre los limites de los códigos y comités éticos. Este texto aspira destacar los aportes de la antropología de la infancia y de los niños en la reflexión general sobre la ética. Con ese fin, es necesario volver al análisis crítico de la aproximación de la ética de los trabajos en los *Childhood Studies*. Este artículo tiene como objetivo interrogar el riesgo de la reducción de la ética a un dispositivo metodológico instrumental. Al contrario, poner de relieve los cuestionamientos epistemológicos centrales llevados a cabo por la reflexión sobre la ética en la antropología de la infancia y de los niños, permite replantear ciertas preguntas de ética en la antropología general.

Palabras claves – ética, antropología de la infancia y de los niños, childhood studies, métodos, epistemología