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Further:

A rejoinder

R E J O I N D E R

Responses always clarify one's own thinking. The commentaries on my discussion of "Prophecy and the near future" in this *AE* Forum go considerably beyond that. They engage generously and enthusiastically with a rather idiosyncratic text and introduce new slants on the problems it considers. Some point to a need for more backing up, consolidation, and lateral extension before moving onward (Jonathan Friedman and Robert Thornton); others to the potential for making immediate connections to existing literatures (Joel Robbins, Vincent Crapanzano, and Richard Wilk); and others to locations in the intellectual and practical world that are already way out into the "near future" domain in ways I had not addressed (Hirokazu Miyazaki, Caitlin Zaloom, Wilk, and parts of Thornton). All offer examples of something I had hoped for, namely, that my framing of what otherwise—as several respondents noted—might be referred to as the present "neoliberal" or "millennial capitalist" era could open a space for connecting intellectual trajectories that other modes of theoretical debate might not. They suggest that what may seem to be parallel lines of thought within the discipline of anthropology can, in fact, lean toward and inform one another more closely and critically, as Robbins, in particular, points out. The classic cut-and-thrust debate format is little in evidence here but, rather, the bringing of specific initiatives, concepts, populations, and misgivings into sharper focus and clearer relationship.

The commentaries offer many specific and stimulating suggestions. I leave them to the end of this rejoinder, as a program of reading for the future. In advance of that whole new exploration, I use the perceived overlaps and gaps specified in the responses to force into sharper relief some inexplicit aspects of my original argument. I think everyone, including myself, would agree with Zaloom that the "near future" temporal frames, unhitched from a necessary attachment to the immediate and long terms, are teeming with activity. Each response mentions a whole array of initiatives and ways of life that take some sort of planning, or planning not to plan (Wilk), seriously; and several respondents open up the crucial issue of how

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this time frame is rampantly plural: how its conceptualizations are differentiated, defined, nested, experienced, and synchronized (or disturbed) in relation to one another. So the tensions among us, as participants in this forum, are not about temporal heterogeneity or about the importance of subjects such as Siphon, Al-Qaeda, financial traders, or identity movements to both anthropology and life in “a globalized world” (Friedman). Rather, they have something to do with theoretical framing, and the analytical power of concepts, that we bring to bear on a scene that is not only before us but also inside and around us.

Where do we find more or less steady touchstones and landmarks? I sense three forces here, pulling in somewhat different directions, despite considerable overlaps. The first finds intellectual anchor in large-scale history; it is loath to shortchange a more serious and comprehensive engagement with theory and with the world at large than I endeavored to achieve (Friedman and Thornton). The second seems to fully inhabit the space opened up here, finding a renewed attention to “reasoning” and its modes and temporalities either liberating for new thought (Crapanzano and Robbins) or already somewhat familiar (Wilk). The third is slightly out of sync, finding the view of time itself to be, in a way, anachronistic to the worlds its exponents know (Zaloom, Miyazaki, and, in some ways, also Wilk). Those espousing this view find the monetarist and evangelical temporalities I depict not to be as coherent or maybe even as powerful as I have presented them, indeed, seeing them as rhetorics and perhaps already on the wane (Wilk and Zaloom). The “new kind of economic subject [that] is emerging” (Zaloom) flourishes in a more corporeal or experiential matrix, encouraging attention to biology (Zaloom), “a gritty engagement with everyday experience” (Wilk), and “tension between faith and reason” (Miyazaki). Indeed, subjectivity in one mode or another is the orienting concept here. So the underlying themes I sense here are history, reasoning (in both social and cognitive senses), and subjectivity. They do not structure full-fledged theories in these responses, but they torque them toward intellectual landmarks of enormous orienting power and seem to me to account for their cautions, enthusiasms, and skepticisms about my forum article.

Several respondents, however, also recognize a certain open-endedness in the article. From my reading of their comments, I think this may have to do with my allusion to, but navigation among, the major theoretical landmarks I refer to above. I have found in my own work that, when taken as full-fledged theoretical armatures, each of them can be quite misleading or myopic about phenomena I know about or feel confident that our discipline has already illuminated. That one or another of the respondents finds such hitches in my account only encourages me to pursue this line of thought further, giving enough space to these “not quite right” allusions to see how fundamental or superfluous they may now

be. In my own view, they emanate largely from unnecessary retentions from older formulations and could probably be jettisoned with little loss to these three basic inspirations. For brevity, I take examples from two ends of the spectrum, because I have appreciative affinities for as well as critical observations about both and want them to speak more to each other.

At one end is Friedman’s formulation of a historical approach, in which there is a residual dualism that I have found to be an obstacle. For example, “identification produces opposites,” and “self-identification in opposition to the larger world” fosters “inversion [when] the real becomes imaginary and the imagined real” (Friedman this issue). I struggled with dualism in my work on monetary transactions (Guyer 2004). I struggled in the forum article with the dualism of temporal thinking into the short and the long run. In most of my own work, I have found the points of “interpenetration,” in fact, not to be best thought of as resistance, creolization, hybridization, or articulation in any vaguely dual sense; they are grounds for a whole new social and cultural subjectivity and creativity. So, although I am fully in sympathy with attention to a “larger history,” its conventional terms have become a problem. Opposition is an ideological position and a situational reality, not an analytical resource, for the world we live in.

At the other end is Zaloom’s study of neuroeconomics and the new temporalities of the human brain. Again, it is a crucial topic, although one that I do not know well enough to discuss in an informed way (see Connolly 2002). But the history she depicts here seems truncated and ambiguous (doubtless in part because of brevity). The neuroeconomists may have surged into the study of near futures in self-declared opposition to the monetarists and rational-choice theorists, but one does not have to be a conspiracy theorist to see them as a new phase in the one-two knock-out process of displacing the ethical and collective dimensions of human imagination, the ways people imagine themselves to be implicated in each other’s futures. First, rational choice narrowed reasoning down to the individual and to choice among defined alternatives; now choice itself seems to be narrowed to a certain stimulus–response, in experiments on precisely those individuals (undergraduates) whose burdens of responsibilities and potentially agonizing trade-offs may be the lowest they will ever be in life. Zaloom mentions, but hardly develops yet, the historical process here. One reason that I wanted to replace *neoliberalism* with *monetarism* in my forum article was to indicate that this is precisely not just an ideology but also a massive created edifice of specific research and implementation measures in the financial world that has already shaped people’s sensibilities and perceptions, if not to the point of a naturalistic acceptance of them as somehow generically human, then at least to the kind of lulled and muted self-referentiality that anthropology has always worked to challenge.

I develop this point a little further because I fell into it myself and it partly explains why I chose to address *monetarism* (a theory and professional practice) rather than *neoliberalism* (an ideology). Milton Friedman's project was an encompassing lifetime effort in all kinds of domains, from household savings to monetary history—both of which are mentioned in his Nobel Prize award in 1976. The new work on savings builds directly on his and is directly related to an elaboration of the financial institutions in the post-WWII era that created the particular economic life cycle we professionals exist in. Having imbibed a notion of “the” life cycle and the developmental cycle of domestic groups, I was surprised to find how little any kind of life cycle was reflected in household budget statistics in Ghana (see Guyer 2004:ch. 8). Looking back at the literature, I felt rather ashamed to have to remind myself that the authors of classic English household studies (Prais and Houthakker 1955) had argued precisely that, for the English case, the “binge spending” of those in the working class (see Wilk) related to their exclusion from the financial institutions and income security that manage the life cycle of professionals (across a spectrum of income) rather than having to do with class in the sense of ownership of the means of production, class culture, or, still less, a default version of untrammelled human nature. Ghana has a different sociology as well as different financial institutions and, thereby, different patterns to the economic life course.

Having been duly humbled by the importance of financial institutions myself, and having subsequently strongly incorporated their history into my own work, I would emphasize Zaloom's “political” and Friedman's historical interpretation of the present-day gap being bridged between individual psychology and existing “capitalist rhythms.” The perception of such a gap creates a new opening for reshaping subjectivities, which, in turn, is tied to the complex institutional nexus for mitigating the risks of life—of course, for a fee. The “new kind of economic subject . . . who operates under the constraints of her or his biology” (Zaloom) is not so much “emerging” (as Zaloom's political referent suggests she sees in more constructivist terms than this word implies) as being cultivated in ground that has already been cleared and relandscaped. The only rival and perhaps equally powerful intervention to this view of neuroeconomic subjectivity in the for-profit financial and consumer sectors in the present-day United States might be in the insurgent not-for-profit sector, which is creating new associations and organizations at the rate of about 100,000 per annum, presumably along with consonant subjectivities. Friedman's and Thornton's histories have an important place here, from the shape of “the economy” all the way down to the monetary amounts to which neuroeconomists' subjects—and all of us—respond and that are now constituted into “prices” by a composition of fees and memberships as well as “market forces” or “commodity fetishism” (Guyer 2006).

So I see the current terms for a historical approach as shortchanging original modalities of being and creating and the subjectivity approach as remaining ambiguous about historical and geographical location in the world. I have tried to write into this space, here and in *Marginal Gains* (2004). And I recognize similar thinking in several other responses that are oriented toward reasoning. As Miyazaki writes, “faith in reason”—in this broad sense of thought about “co-futures” (Crapanzano)—does need grounding and explication, and it is admittedly not yet a theory in any classic sense. But it may throw other unnecessary theoretical entailments into relief.

One other (in my own view) unnecessary entailment that comes up in several places in the responses is use of the term *bourgeois* to refer to a concern with reasoning over the near future. I very much doubt that everything referred to by the shorthand term *bourgeois* derives from class position or, indeed, any other conventionally defined location. People the world over try to build or buy a house, often over some stretch of a carefully thought out “near future.” Where law and finance shape the entire economy, one has no choice but to do this through the financial institutions and the legal system. In Nigeria, where neither of these institutional complexes works very well, and where incomes, prices, and currency exchange rates are destabilized by “globalization,” people buy the locks for the doors first; they purchase materials as they can afford them but in spurts that allow for immediate use (rather than storage) and protection in situ. Perhaps they obtain a good deal on rejects in the world market in bathroom porcelain, when a new shipment comes in from China via Dubai, and have the fixtures held by the dealer if they have kept in that person's good social graces; and they build complete rooms around themselves, to live in and lock when absent, while planning the rest of the structure. Does it help to think of this precision planning as “bourgeois”? Or conversely, are all people whose futures are enabled and disciplined by the banks also “bourgeois”? The profusion of modes of reasoning in the world's near future is a challenge to all such old analytics that have gradually moved from acuity to metonymy to vagueness.

These conceptual elisions are one main focus of my thinking as I address the fascinating issues raised and literatures suggested in the forum responses. They demonstrate how a new focus on the near future needs to bring in ethics (Robbins) and possibly resituate them historically in relation to pre-Enlightenment and late-Victorian convergences of religious and economic thought (Thornton). One can ask whether we are too simplistically metonymic about near-future temporalities, assuming arbitrage to be necessarily about the immediate (Miyazaki), the precarious and the marginal to be necessarily tragic (Wilk), the “everyday” to have a necessary affinity with “sustainability” (Wilk), or the idea of a future to be shared at all (Crapanzano and Wilk) rather than “teeming” with varied activities (Zaloom) of different temporalities. Friedman reminds us that one's

own biographical reference points are eyewitness accounts (*aperçus*, as Crapanzano notes), offering landmarks but not authoritative maps; Thornton suggests how they need to be triangulated through key points in other centuries (Gottfried Leibniz and William Stanley Jevons) and other places (South Africa). Ideas for new mixes also surge up from the juxtaposition of the commentaries: that the neuroeconomists might try working in the world of Siphon or Osama Bin Laden or the “lilies of the field” (Wilk) before thinking of their inferences as “biology,” in general. Or perhaps there are parallels and deviations to be noted between neuroeconomics, on the one hand, and a project on ethics in aging societies (Robbins) or the generational specificity of financial traders (Crapanzano), on the other hand. One might add a gender dimension: How would those middle-aged women taking care of children and parents at the same time, and struggling with credit-card debt (see Williams 2004), respond to the choices indicated in Zaloom’s account? Obviously, also, Devji’s analysis of jihad needs to be read alongside Leibniz and Jevons as well as Tim LaHaye. The value investors, growth investors (Crapanzano), and Japanese arbitragers (Miyazaki) could be looked at together more closely, using Zaloom’s (2007) new work as well as that of others on finance (Ho 2005; Maurer 2006), and Wilk’s “binge economies” could be examined carefully alongside 401(k) pension programs and policy gaps into which the next generation are thrust (Zaloom). It is very encouraging to imagine such fertile cautions, connections, visions, and inspirations (e.g., Eugène Minkowski, Umberto Eco, and Francesco Alberoni) springing up.

One final point: I am increasingly convinced that text is powerful, as Crapanzano alludes and as Jack Goody (2000) started to argue a long time ago. John Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress from This World to That Which Is to Come*, published during John Locke’s lifetime, has been translated into over a hundred languages and may well be as influential as Locke in its own way. To study theories in their own right, in their own terms, is not necessarily to neglect the realities on the ground that anthropology has historically focused on and that several respondents recommend. To study the text, and the philosophy based on texts, “ground truthed” to ethnography of all the various “old schools” and in all kinds of new situations, is to train one’s imagination to apprehend “reasoning” in all its variety (see Das 2006). As economics has narrowed rationality down to choice, and now to biological response, it has seemed to me (see Guyer 2000) that anthropology, together with some branches of other disciplines, needs to engage with the ever-wider range of situated modes of human so-

cial reasoning about “co-futures” (Crapanzano) that are not reducible in this way. It is perhaps this open possibility—as Miyazaki picks out and Robbins extends—that makes the free-floating nature of the contemporary near future such an important challenge and so worth the thought that all the respondents and other commentators have devoted to it in this forum.

[*future, reason, theory*]

Notes

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