

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-18195-2 - An Anthropology of Ethics
James D. Faubion
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

AN ANTHROPOLOGY OF ETHICS

Through an ambitious and critical revision of Michel Foucault's investigation of ethics, James D. Faubion develops an original program of empirical inquiry into the ethical domain. From an anthropological perspective, Faubion argues that Foucault's specification of the analytical parameters of this domain is the most productive point of departure in conceptualizing its distinctive features. He further argues that Foucault's framework is in need of substantial revision to be of genuinely anthropological scope. In making this revision, Faubion illustrates his program with two extended case studies: one of a Portuguese marquis and the other of a dual subject made up of the author and a millenarian prophetess. The result is a conceptual apparatus that is able to accommodate ethical pluralism and yield an account of the limits of ethical variation, providing a novel resolution of the problem of relativism that has haunted anthropological inquiry into ethics since its inception.

James D. Faubion is Professor of Anthropology and Director of Graduate Studies at Rice University. In addition to ethics, his interests include epistemic authority, kinship, social and cultural theory, aesthetics, heterodoxy and radicalism. He has published widely on research interests, including *The Shadows and Lights of Waco: Millennialism Today* (2001), and two edited volumes of *Essential Works of Michel Foucault* (1998 and 2000).

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-18195-2 - An Anthropology of Ethics
James D. Faubion
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

NEW DEPARTURES IN ANTHROPOLOGY

New Departures in Anthropology is a book series that focuses on emerging themes in social and cultural anthropology. With original perspectives and syntheses, authors introduce new areas of inquiry in anthropology, explore developments that cross disciplinary boundaries, and weigh in on current debates. Every book illustrates theoretical issues with ethnographic material drawn from current research or classic studies, as well as from literature, memoirs, and other genres of reportage. The aim of the series is to produce books that are accessible enough to be used by college students and instructors, but will also stimulate, provoke, and inform anthropologists at all stages of their careers. Written clearly and concisely, books in the series are designed equally for advanced students and a broader range of readers, inside and outside academic anthropology, who want to be brought up to date on the most exciting developments in the discipline.

Series Editorial Board

Jonathan Spencer, University of Edinburgh
Michael Lambek, University of Toronto and London School of Economics

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-18195-2 - An Anthropology of Ethics
James D. Faubion
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

An Anthropology of Ethics



JAMES D. FAUBION
Rice University



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press
 978-0-521-18195-2 - An Anthropology of Ethics
 James D. Faubion
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
 Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore,
 São Paulo, Delhi, Dubai, Tokyo, Mexico City

Cambridge University Press
 The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by
 Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
 Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107004948

© James D. Faubion 2011

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
 and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
 no reproduction of any part may take place without
 the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2011

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication data

Faubion, James D. (James Daniel), 1957–, author.

An Anthropology of Ethics / James D. Faubion.

p. cm. – (New Departures in Anthropology)

ISBN 978-1-107-00494-8 (Hardback) – ISBN 978-0-521-18195-2 (Paperback)

1. Foucault, Michel, 1926–1984. 2. Ethics. I. Title.

B2430.F724.F38 2011

170.92–dc22

2010044489

ISBN 978-1-107-00494-8 Hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-18195-2 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or
 accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to
 in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such
 websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-18195-2 - An Anthropology of Ethics
James D. Faubion
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

To Shirley Faubion Saunders, with love

Contents

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>page</i> x
Part I An anthropology of ethics	1
1 Precedents, parameters, potentials	3
2 Foucault in Athens	25
3 Ethical others	71
Part II Fieldwork in ethics	117
4 An ethics of composure	119
5 An ethics of reckoning	203
Concluding remarks: for programmatic inquiries	268
<i>References</i>	277
<i>Index</i>	295

Acknowledgments

Whether through intellectual or other efforts, several students, colleagues and supporters have done their part in seeing this project to a close – some without knowing it. Thanks are much in order to Michael Adair-Kriz, Ala Allazeh, Gaymon Bennett, Joanne Carpenter, Richard Fisher, Stephen Foster, Eugenia Georges, Ann Gleig, Sarah Graham, Hután Hejazi, Andrea Jain, Jeffrey Kripal, Michael Lambek, Daniel Levine, George Marcus, Elise McCarthy, Fernando Mascarenhas, Elinor Ochs, Valerie Olson, Susan Ossman, Stacey Pereira, Lyn Ragsdale, Lucy Rhymer, Amo Paul Bishop Roden, Alan Rumsey, Suzanne Shanahan, Jonathan Spencer, Carole Speranza, Anthony Stavrianakis, Helen Tartar and Cary Wolfe.

I have an enormous, unredeemable debt of gratitude to James Laidlaw, whose acute, meticulous, supportive and lengthy engagement with an earlier version of what follows has left me astonished ever since.

Special thanks go to Mary Murrell; she knows why.

Special thanks as always to Paul Rabinow and to William Düll, who will find an apology enclosed, should he care to look for it.

Some material used in *An Anthropology of Ethics* has previously appeared in my chapter “From the ethical to the themitical (and back): Groundwork for an anthropology of ethics,” pp. 84–101, in *Ordinary Ethics: Anthropology, Language, and Action*, ed. Michael Lambek, New York: Fordham University Press, 2010, and is reproduced here with kind permission of Fordham University Press.