

(157). Die Herausforderungen sind enorm und “gegen Bevölkerungszunahme und zunehmende wirtschaftliche Erschließung sind sowohl Schutzgesetze als auch religiöse Verehrung machtlos” (162). Es ist eine schlimme und tragische Umweltgeschichte, wie der Rezensent sie bereits während seiner Studienzeit in Varanasi, dem Wahlkreis von Modi, und seiner Lehrtätigkeit in Indien (1975–86) erlebte – eine Geschichte, die Imhasly des Öftern und 2015 als “Waste Side Story” erneut erzählt und treffend analysiert.

Im Kapitel “Sport: Bizeps und Bhagavad Gita” schlägt Imhasly den Bogen von Vivekanandas und Ramakrishnas Sport- und Charakterverständnis zu den heutigen sportlichen Leistungen und sportpolitischen Szenen. Indiens Nationalsport Cricket gehört zu den lukrativsten Sportveranstaltungen der Welt. Andere Sportarten erhalten wenig unterstützende Sponsorengelder und “wie überall fordern die Politiker ihren Tribut. Viele Verbandskassen dienen dem Waschen staatlicher Subventionsgelder und ihrer Umleitung in Wahlkampffonds und private Taschen” (168). Hochinteressant ist es, zu sehen, wie sich die Sportmentalität in den verschiedenen Regionen entwickelte: z. B. wider alle Erwartungen ist Fußball der Nationalsport nur im Bundesstaat Mizoram; im matriarchalischen Manipur sind es Frauen, die im Fußball erfolgreicher als die Männer sind, und Mary Kom aus Manipur ist im Boxkampf fünffache Weltmeisterin. “Nichts spiegelt den gesellschaftlichen Aufbruch so deutlich wie die nationale Sportszene. Soziale Bevormundung und staatliche Gängelung werden kritisiert wie nie zuvor” (176).

So harmlos der Titel “Kultur: In der Mythologie verankert” klingt, es ist eine Warnung vor einer religionspolitisch populistischen Zeitbombe. Nationalisten verharmlosen und verzerren die religiös-literarischen Traditionen. Die Auseinandersetzungen und Diskussionen in den Epen berührten durch Jahrhunderte das religiös-soziale Gewissen der Inder. Es gab und gibt verschiedene Versionen des Mahabharata- und Ramayana-Epos. Sie enthalten der jeweiligen Zeit und Regionen entsprechend voneinander abweichende Richtlinien und Verhaltensnormen für Völkergruppen und besitzen oft bis heute ihre Gültigkeit. Imhasly macht zu Recht darauf aufmerksam, dass die nationalistischen Hindutva-Bewegungen heute landesweit das alleinige Recht zu deren Interpretation in Anspruch nehmen möchten. Seine Analyse ist nicht nur klar und eindeutig, sondern zeigt auch mit welcher Raffinesse Präsident Modi mit religiös-mythologischen Vergleichen, Anspielungen und Symbolen aus den Epen sich für ein nationales Hindu-Reich einsetzt. Die Aktualisierung der Mythen eröffnet nicht nur für die Politik neue Perspektiven, sondern auch für die Medienwelt.

Das informative wie leserfreundliche Buch enthält sinnvollerweise einen kurzen Anhang: ein prägnantes Glossar wichtiger Begriffe; allgemeine – manchmal, z. B. zum Kapitel Sport, etwas ungenaue – Literaturhinweise; eine gute Übersicht wichtiger Basisdaten und eine Karte der Bundesstaaten und angrenzenden Länder.

Bernard Imhasly betont einleitend und abschließend, dass er *ein* Länderporträt Indiens, das noch viele andere Aspekte und Blickpunkte sinnvollerweise zulasse, vor-

stelle. Sein Länderporträt wurde mit dem Internationalen Tourismus-Börse Buch Award 2014 in Berlin zu Recht ausgezeichnet. “Indien”, das auch als E-Book erhältlich ist, eignet sich als Pflichtlektüre für Studierende der Indologie und des indischen Kulturraumes, um Land und Leben des indischen Kulturraumes kennen und verstehen zu lernen. Das lebensnah erzählte und kritisch diskutierte Länderporträt verdient baldmöglichst eine englische Ausgabe. Othmar Gächter

Jackson, Michael, and Albert Piette (eds.): *What is Existential Anthropology?* New York: Berghahn Books, 2015. 248 pp. ISBN 978-1-78238-636-0. Price: \$ 95.00

The edited volume sets out to bring together the approaches to the study of human beings that Michael Jackson and Albert Piette independently, and apparently unbeknownst of the work of the other, have presented under the headings of *existential anthropology* and *anthropologie existentielle*. The volume consists of an introduction co-authored by Piette and Jackson and eight independent chapters. Aside from one chapter from each of the editors the remaining six chapters are written by a number of prominent anthropologists (Devaka Premawardhana, Michael Lambek, Mattijs van de Port, Hans Lucht, Sónia Silva, Laurent Denizeau). One of the things that initially struck this reviewer going through the list of contributors, was that few of these are known for work that in any way approximates the heavy reliance on the existential phenomenological tradition championed by both Jackson and Piette. It was thus a surprise to find a paper from, for example, Lambek in this collection – Lambek himself even admits to being quite surprised at the invitation to contribute (59). However, as Lambek’s contribution shows, along with several of the other contributions, being invited outside one’s terminological comfort zones often results in the unearthing of new layers of significance in one’s work. Hence, what first stomped this reviewer – the philosophically disparate collective of writers whose thoughts and analyses go into this book – turned out to be a principal force of the book; adding not only ethnographic but just as much theoretical diversity.

As mentioned above, Jackson and Piette have each worked on what they independently termed existential anthropology. However, their versions of existential anthropology are far from easily aligned (Laurent Denizeau’s concluding chapter; “Considering Human Existence: An Existential Reading of Michael Jackson and Albert Piette,” provides a clear and apt account of this difficult relationship). Their co-written introduction, hence, serves the purpose both of bringing together their respective versions of existential anthropology and of, at the same time, positioning their “common” existential outlook *vis-à-vis* other dominant currents in anthropology; *in casu* the poststructuralist, Bourdieusian undercurrent and the recent ontological turn personified notably by Latour in the introduction. The two authors are very clear, and, as it seems, largely in agreement regarding these critical points and the most basic ambition of an existential anthropology, namely, that it should address the irony of

contemporary anthropology that all too often is guilty for the “glaring omission” of living and breathing human beings in its analyses due to theoretical trends that focus rather on the trans-individual *ethnos* than on the singular *anthropos*; rather on culture, structure, power, economic forces than on the lived experience of the creatures who find themselves, for better or worse, in such super-individual conditions (4). However, disagreement as to the depth of the analytical ambition of existential anthropology is traceable between the lines of the introduction and comes explicitly to the fore between the two authors’ respective chapters.

Whereas Jackson, as he puts it in an earlier programmatic exposé (*Existential Anthropology*, New York 2005), is less interested in “new interpretive vocabularies” than in the anthropologist’s “ability to sustain interaction and conversation with others, in their place, on their terms, under troubling and trying circumstances,” Piette is expressly interested in the development of a new interpretive vocabulary; or more precisely, he wants to add to the Heideggerian vocabulary of so-called “existentials” his own *a priori* existential categories (notably the categories of the “minor modes of being” which form the existential backdrop of intentional activity (183). The theoretical clarity of the introduction somewhat suffers from not having reconciled, or at least explicitly related these almost polar views of the analytical ambition of existential anthropology. The result is the sense of a not elucidated alternation between these poles throughout the introduction. Symptomatically, we hear, on the one hand, that existential anthropology can be defined “without reference to philosophy” (3), while, on the other hand, we hear that existential anthropology, in its refusal to “reduce the human to a specific assemblage of social, cultural, psychological, historical, and biological characteristics ... presumes a ‘fundamental ontology’ whose focus is on what is there before the human is constructed in terms of a particular worldview, be this a local cosmology, theory of mind, or scientific model” (25) – which to this reviewer’s mind brings existential anthropology right into the very *heartland* of philosophy. According to this last description, we should now “think of [existential] anthropology not simply in terms of social, political, economic, or cultural anthropology but as an anthropology *tout court*,” (25) whereby existential anthropology comes very close to what the early 20th-century German philosophical tradition with Scheler, Plessner and Gehlen has termed philosophical anthropology. And where Jackson in earlier writings (*Lifeworlds*, Chicago 2013) has proposed an ethnographically based philosophical anthropology (i.e., an anthropology *tout court*), he has, to my knowledge, always been very wary of the kind of transcendentalism that lurks in such notions as the Heideggerian *fundamental ontology* invoked in the passage quoted above.

Given this looming theoretical disagreement in the background of the general project, it seems reasonable to ask whether the book actually does provide answers to the question, which its very title poses; namely, what is existential anthropology? The short answer is; yes it does – but not in the sense that it programmatically draws up *the*

grand theoretical architectonic of existential anthropology. Rather, it presents a wide register of existential sensitivities that spans the ontic or *radical empiricist* (with Jackson following William James) at one extreme to the properly *existential-ontological* focus (with Piette following Heidegger) at the other extreme. And distributed within this scope we find the individual chapters that to varying degrees combine ontic, ethnographic analyses with the ontological-existential hypotheses. Sadly, I cannot go into the individual chapters provided by Premawardhana, Lambek, van de Port, Lucht, Silva, and Denizeau in any depth that does justice to their respective engagements with existential anthropology. I shall instead foreground a theme that curiously is shared by several of the contributors; namely that of mobility. Especially in Premawardhana’s and Silva’s chapters the experience-near analyses of mobility and migration gives rise to not only politically and ethically critical points, but at the same time to properly ontological considerations of the *existential* conditions of human life (in Piette’s Heideggerian sense of the term).

The book under review, “What Is Existential Anthropology?” is – not despite but because of the theoretical tensions between Jackson and Piette – a highly recommendable collection of essays. The explicit and implicit “Auseinandersetzung” between the founding fathers of existential anthropology qualifies the question raised by the title of the book and indicates a wider range of possibilities for existential anthropological analysis than either of the works published individually by the two frontrunners have hitherto accomplished.

Rasmus Dyring

Jebens, Holger (ed.): *Storibuk Pairundu. Tales and Legends from the Kewa* (Southern Highlands, Papua New Guinea). Collected by Alex Yapua Ari. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 2015. 356 pp. ISBN 978-3-496-01549-9. Price: € 49.00

Ethnologists as well as linguists stress the importance of texts for studying either the culture of the people they have been researching or the grammar of the language the people speak, or the interdependencies of culture and grammar. As to the field linguist, one could define a good description as complete when the trilogy of grammar, dictionary, and texts is available; with respect to the ethnographer, texts show how ethnographic knowledge comes into being, as was the case, for instance, in the exemplary ethnographies of Malinowski on the Trobriand Islanders or Strauss and Tischner on the Mbowamb in Central New Guinea. While nowadays linguists documenting endangered languages (re)discover the dignity of texts (and dictionaries), Jebens states that in recent times “anthropologists and missionaries appear to have lost interest not only in collecting stories, but also in documenting vernacular languages” (8). Though a good number of previous works on the Kewa language as well as on Kewa ethnography and ethnolinguistics are evaluated, this loss is tangible through the absence of “original texts” (8) in the publications of Jebens’ predecessors.