Lambek, Michael, ed., *Ordinary Ethics: Anthropology, Language, and Action*, New York: Fordham University Press, 2010, 458 pages.

Chacon, Richard J., and Rubén G. Mendoza, eds., *The Ethics of Anthropology and Amerindian Research: Reporting on Environmental Degradation and Warfare*, New York: Springer, 2012, 521 pages.

Reviewer: David Z. Scheffel
Thompson Rivers University

In recent years anthropologists have taken up the study of ethics in increasing numbers, and these two edited volumes present an interesting sample of the various topics addressed. The older work, *Ordinary Ethics: Anthropology, Language, and Action*, edited and introduced by Michael Lambek, contains 20 essays presented at a workshop held at the University of Toronto in 2008. The contributions are arranged into seven thematic sections—theoretical frameworks, the ethics of speaking, responsibility and agency, punishment and personal dignity, ethics and formality, ethical subjects, and ethical life—and cover a vast ethnographic and topical territory. What ties them together is the attention each author was asked to pay to "ordinary ethics." This concept is elucidated in the introduction, which also serves as an elegantly written but, for readers lacking a firm foundation in moral philosophy, a rather challenging orientation to the intersections of anthropology and philosophy that Lambek and colleagues explore in this reader. Central to this project is the proposition that ethics ought to be studied within the realms of ordinary speech and action, following the Aristotelian insistence on seeing ethics as "a dimension of action" (14) rather than as a formal set of rules and obligations. According to Lambek, since anthropology provides insight into "the diverse practices that passionately engage people in particular settings" (22)—be they kula in the Trobriand Islands, art and ceremony in Bali, witchcraft among the Azande or headhunting for the Ilongot—it is well-positioned as a source of universally valid insights into the ways in which people everywhere use daily speech and social interaction as the stuff of "ordinary ethics."

Lambek elaborates these guiding principles in the first chapter of the section devoted to theory, where he extends Roy Rappaport's interpretation of ritual as canonization of order to other spheres of social life, notably speech. Unlike the "sacred" and thus highly formalized ritual action, "profane" speech and acts of everyday life come across as commonplace and therefore ordinary. Nevertheless, Lambek argues, they serve the same function as ritual insofar as they guide human conduct into predictable channels according to certain ethical principles.

Most of the essays make a more or less explicit contribution to this elucidation of the ethical from the ordinary, humdrum and commonplace stuff of daily human interaction. They do so by touching on and often engagingly describing situations from a variety of ethnographic settings, such as speech patterns in Papua New Guinea (Alan Rumsey), pollution beliefs in Taiwan (Charles Stafford), changing cosmologies among Australian Aborigines (Francesca Merlan), the relationship between aesthetics and ethics among the Hopi (Justin Richland), personhood in Colombian Amazonia (Carlos Sulkin), the ethics of sex workers in London (Sophie Day), business ethics in Sri Lanka (Nireka Weeratunge), Muslim-Hindu love affairs and marriage in India (Veena Das), the ritual commemoration of former enemies in Vietnam (Heonik Kwon) and several more.

Given the vast ethnographic scope of the book, a single reviewer cannot appreciate or critically evaluate the contribution made by each individual author. Yet, there are some surprising gaps in the supporting literature that ought to be mentioned. In his essay, "Abu Ghraib and the Problem of Evil," Steven Caton claims that "it bears repeating that modern philosophy and anthropology have all but abandoned [evil] as an analytical construct" (166), but back in the 1980s—though that's perhaps not "modern" enough?—there was actually an attempt to formulate a distinctive "anthropology of evil" (Parkin 1985). Caton's even more comprehensive assertion that the problem of evil has been largely ignored after Kant, "with the possible exception of Nietzsche or Hannah Arendt" (166), is difficult to accept in view of Claude Lanzmann's Shoah (1985) and the recent explosion of historical research concerned with the perpetration of the Holocaust in Ukrainian and Polish territories (Bartov 2011). These sources address the topic that interests Caton—the participation of ordinary men and women in the execution of "situational evil" (183)—though not in an explicitly philosophical way. A second surprising omission is Norbert Elias's (2000) path-breaking work from Shirley Yeung's analysis of American etiquette manuals, especially in view of both arriving at more or less the same conclusion about etiquette's important contribution to "ethical self-cultivation and improvement" (236).

In this context of links and connections it merits making a few remarks about the situation of the "ordinary ethics" project proposed and demonstrated in this volume within anthropology at large. Several contributors reflect upon or draw a distinction between formal/declaratory/imperative/Kantian morality as opposed to informal/ordinary/implicit/Aristotelian ethics. Jack Sidnell invokes the langue vs. parole dichotomy in his "Ordinary Ethics of Everyday Talk." Francesca Merlan subsumes the overarching "Law" of ritual conduct and relations between humans and the environment in aboriginal Australia under morality, and sees its implicit recognition in daily speech and action as an aspect of ethics, whereby "independence and competence at being oneself are learned from others—but in a certain way, not only in the dramatic and more authoritarian contexts of ritual but, more commonly, in everyday life, through watching and copying" (222). Naisargi Dave in her "Between Queer Ethics and Sexual Morality" credits Foucault's distinction between normative morality and lived ethics, and Alan Rumsey ("Ethics, Language, and Human Sociality") invokes Bourdieu's famous "implicit pedagogy" as a prototype for "ordinary ethics." Quoting from *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Rumsey repeats Bourdieu's assertion that "implicit pedagogy" is "capable of instilling a whole cosmology, an ethic, a metaphysic, a political philosophy through injunctions as insignificant as 'stand up straight' or 'don't hold your knife in your left hand'" (119). Lambek may very well be right in postulating Marcel Mauss's *The Gift* as a sort of anthropological Ur-text for the elucidation of ordinary ethics, but a more comprehensive overview of the various post-Maussian anthropological and sociological strands of thought dealing with the place of

the mundane/ordinary/informal/implicit/vernacular in the maintenance of normative systems would have been useful. In addition to Bourdieu and Foucault, surely James Scott's emphasis on "practical knowledge" (1998) and Claude Lévi-Strauss—whose delineation of "savage thinking" inspired Scott—ought to be mentioned as godfathers of the approach advocated in this work.

One topic that is almost entirely missing from *Ordinary Ethics* is the fate of ethics under conditions of radical change. Provided that we follow Lambek's proposition to view ethics as resembling the ritual order in providing canonical guidance through the maze of behavioural alternatives one encounters in the process of ordinary living, what happens to the "implicit pedagogy" of daily do's and don'ts when there is a rupture between the ideological superstructure and its implicit reflection at the level of ordinary folks? How do people cope with such ruptures and how does the complex of ordinary ethics adjust to them? What I have in mind are revolutions, civil wars and other instances of sudden conceptual chaos that leave people disoriented and grasping for a compass. Though it doesn't address this question explicitly, the second book under review, *The Ethics of Anthropology and Amerindian Research*, explores the consequences of radical change and rupture for the conduct of anthropological research and, more specifically, for the "ordinary ethics" of its practitioners. Like *Ordinary Ethics*, this book had its genesis in a workshop, namely a session at the 2009 meeting of the American Anthropological Association. Its purpose was to discuss the ethical ramifications of research on American indigenous societies that contradicted the political climate within and outside the AAA and how to respond to what the participants saw as a growing tide of "political correctness" within the ranks of American anthropologists.

As the subtitle indicates, the issue of "reporting on environmental degradation and warfare" is a central theme addressed in this book. The dedication to Napoleon Chagnon "for his indefatigable and lifelong commitment to accurately reporting Amerindian ways of life and the plight of native people," foreshadows a certain ideological slant that is enunciated in the editors' introduction. Here the reader is given a sampling of the stuff that makes up the bulk of the work: the conviction that much of contemporary scholarship on Amerindian societies regurgitates utopian stereotypes about ecological sustainability, primeval egalitarianism and aboriginal pacifism and rejects contrary evidence for fear of adverse professional and social consequences. Chacon and Mendoza go as far as postulating attempts to suppress data on environmental degradation and warfare and violence among pre-contact and early-contact Amerindians, a campaign in which the AAA seems to have been complicit through its endorsement of a "culture of accusation" and character assassination aimed at unwavering defenders of scholarly integrity, such as the aforementioned Napoleon Chagnon (11).

The 23 authors, for the most part archaeologists and cultural anthropologists, with one exception all attached to U.S. institutions, seek to undermine the stereotypes of the Ecological and Pacifist Amerindian through case studies that span South, Central and North America with the exception of Canada. For the most part, the contributions are based on original research that demonstrates unsustainable economic activities and the ubiquity of warfare and violence under aboriginal conditions. Cognizant of the political repercussions, the authors ponder the questions of whether and how potentially explosive findings ought to be publicized and how to mitigate adverse consequences for the status of indigenous people.

Some of the research presented here is truly fascinating and the ethical implications it involves rather complex. Consider the dilemma faced by the archaeologists Christopher Schmidt and Rachel Lockhart Sharkey following the discovery of mutilated skeletons in burial sites in southern Indiana that date to 3,500–5,000 B.P. The skeletons show unmistakable signs of decapitation and limb and tongue removal, which makes for interesting comparison with other sites throughout the Eastern Woodlands. The findings are of great scientific value and they ought to be published, but the authors, aware of the furious reaction to previous attempts at debunking the pacifist stereotype—such as publications documenting instances of Anasazi cannibalism—fear that adverse publicity might result in the repatriation of excavated human remains before the conclusion of proper analysis. After all, "certain native groups, who may not be thrilled by excavation and osteology in the first place, may not care for the depiction of their ancestors as people who killed and mutilated young men, who removed a head and a tongue from an adolescent, who decapitated a woman and who collected and curated human limbs" (32).

In his short contribution, "The Studied Avoidance of War as an Instrument of Political Evolution," Robert Carneiro claims that "in this age of political correctness, palatability has too often become a touchstone applied when the status of a scientific theory is to be determined" (361), and he warns that, "if our aim is to comprehend the past as it actually happened, we make a serious error if we try to sugar coat that past" (365). This process of "sugar coating" is very well described by Arthur Demarest and Brent Woodfill, who sketch the appropriation of Q'eqchi' Maya culture by a host of politically motivated groups and advocates. Invoking Foucault's Panopticon, the authors assert that the Maya "are observed, 'reported upon', encouraged, sponsored and thus redefined by their observers" (137). In this process of "redefining," traditions deemed unpalatable—in Carneiro's sense—have been "edited" or simply excised. One such tradition is the sacrifice of animals (and possibly humans in the more remote past), a custom that's incompatible "with the cultural sensibilities of the UN, North America and Europe—the financiers of their activities" (137).

Several of the contributors are of aboriginal extraction—one of the editors, Rubén Mendoza, is of Yaqui ancestry—and it is interesting to read their reactions to some of the more controversial claims made in this book. Responding to the re-evaluation of the role of violence and warfare among Amerindians, Brooke Bauer, a Catawba scholar, asserts that "the denial or suppression of Amerindian militaristic history hurts modern-day Native Americans (particularly youth), because it prevents them from tapping into a long history of indigenous lifeways. Ignoring or erasing our military legacy fails to honor the warriors who shed blood in defense of native cultures and native lands" (76). The native perspective on cooperation, consultation and representation is expanded on in an insightful exchange about "Ancestral Pueblos and Modern Diatribes" between Mendoza and Antonio Chavarria, the Amerindian Curator of Ethnology at the Museum of Indian Arts and Culture in Santa Fe.

The main conclusions about the ethical ramifications of the research presented in this book are summarized in the last chapter which is, at 40 pages, too long and repetitive. The

overarching concern of the authors is summed up in the claim that "the failure to report indigenous practices that foment environmental degradation and native warfare is patently unethical. As scholars, we advocate a renewed commitment to strive for accuracy and transparency in our writings" (486). Without such, the editors fear our knowledge of the world will be seriously distorted. Ecologists and land-use planners ought to take into consideration pre-contact impact of native people on natural resources to design realistic conservation strategies, including the setting aside of wilderness preserves and park lands. Similarly, incomplete data about pre-contact violence and warfare hamper the reconstruction of aboriginal demography and social structure. It also—and this is a point raised repeatedly—diminishes Amerindian "agency" in defending territories against encroachment, including European colonization. Thus, the editors fear, the suppression of unpalatable data will be detrimental to "the cultivation of authentic forms of native self-identity and esteem" (483).

This is an important book that raises profound questions about the future of anthropology. Clearly, the authors have a view of scholarship as a quest for truth without quotation marks and they have little use for relativism, aboriginalism and other forms of pragmatism that have sought to "problematize" that quest. That perhaps explains the curious omission of Canadian material from the scope of this otherwise very comprehensive work. The editors quote Bruce Trigger and Robert McGhee to express openness to indigenous perspectives as a complement to, but not substitute for, the scientific method; yet, the only explicit reference to the state of Canadian anthropology is made in connection with the diminished credibility of the discipline before courts of law. Moving from Adam Kuper's warning about the danger of anthropology becoming "the academic wing of the indigenous rights movement" and "our ethnographies ... worthless except as propaganda" (489) to the *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia* case, the editors see in it a "dramatic illustration" of the loss of credibility of anthropological witnesses (490). Whatever conclusions one may draw from the concerns expressed in this book, it is a valuable testament to the continued vibrancy of American anthropology and the willingness of its practitioners to discuss openly matters of great importance and urgency.

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Graeber, David, *Debt: The First 5,000 Years*, New York: Melville House, 2011, 534 pages.

Reviewer: Karl Schmid
York University

David Graeber's *Debt: The First 5,000 Years* is an unusual book, emerging in 2011 in the midst of the Great Recession and European debt crisis and going on to become an international best seller. It may be the most read public anthropology book of the 21st century, written by a self-proclaimed anarchist and possible "house theorist" of the Occupy Movement (Meaney 2011). Capitalists apparently cannot get enough of it. When has the *Globe and Mail's Report on Business Magazine* (Morris 2011) ever placed an anthropology book on its "best business reads" of the year? Gillian Tett, an anthropology Ph.D. turned assistant editor of the *Financial Times*, told me that central bankers were perusing it. It will be difficult for Graeber or anyone else to top this book for the attention it received due to excellent timing. From informal polling, it might also top the chart of books that are begun but never finished and for good reason. One review was sardonically titled "Debt: The First 500 pages" and even Graeber's extensive notes ring in at 60 pages (Beggs 2012).

As a difficult book to categorize, it is perhaps reminiscent of Jared Diamond's *Guns, Germs, and Steel* (1999) or James C. Scott's *The Art of Not Being Governed* (2009), in that it is a work of vast scope and implication. While Diamond replaced one form of determinism about European ascendency for another in a very inviting and accessible way, Scott provided a richly contextualized "anarchist history" of state-making that is not intended to generate public interest. Graeber's probe into one of humankind's most insidious and treacherous economic inventions is somewhat less accessible than Diamond's book, but Graeber comprehensively exposes the cultural logics of debt, which may prove more influential in the end. Scholars may eventually provide innumerable micro-critiques for his interpretations of sub-specialty arguments ranging from the intricacies of monetary theory to medieval history. In the interest of doing some justice to the broad implications of the book, I identify five significant contributions and, in doing so, traverse most of his 12 chapters, five of which cover Graeber's vast historical periods.

The foundational theory of the book is located in Chapters 3 and 5. Graeber writes that "almost everyone continues to assume that in its fundamental nature, social life is based on that principle of reciprocity, and therefore that all human interaction can best be understood as a kind of exchange" (91). Anthropologists have long been teaching Marshall Sahlin's typology of balanced, generalized and negative reciprocity but, for those who have found these to be awkward or contradictory (negative reciprocity in particular), Graeber offers an alternative: humans operate morally through three different forms of economic relations, which he categorizes as baseline communism, exchange and hierarchy. Only exchange has as its basis the idea of reciprocity. Baseline communism involves economic relations with others based on needs and abilities and is not founded on nor requires reciprocity. In the category of hierarchy, Graeber places oppressive relations of dominance and anonymous, formalized charity. Although there may be things exchanged between parties in hierarchical relationships, what is transacted symbolizes the inequality itself. The place