

Emergent Forms of Life and the Anthropological Voice



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"Anthropology as Cultural Critique" helped to redefine cultural anthropology in the 1980s. Now, in "Emergent Forms of Life and the Anthropological Voice", path-breaking scholar Michael M. J. Fischer moves the discussion to a consideration of the groundwork laid in the 1990s for engagements with the fast-changing worlds of technoscience, telemedia saturation, and the reconstruction of societies after massive trauma. Fischer argues that new methodologies and conceptual tools are necessitated by the fact that cultures of every kind are becoming more complex and differentiated at the same time that globalization and modernization are bringing them into exponentially increased interaction. Anthropology, he explains, now operates in a series of third spaces well beyond the nineteenth- and twentieth-century dualisms of us/them, primitive/civilized, East/West, or North/South. He contends that more useful paradigms - such as informatics, multidimensional scaling, autoimmunity, and visual literacy beyond the frame - derive from the contemporary sciences and media technologies. A vigorous advocate of the anthropological voice and method, Fischer emphasizes the ethical dimension of cultural anthropology. Ethnography, he suggests, is uniquely situated to gather and convey observations fundamental to the creation of new social institutions for an evolving civil society. In "Emergent Forms of Life and the Anthropological Voice", he considers a dazzling array of subjects - among them Iranian and Polish cinema, cyberspace, autobiographical and fictional narrative, and biogenetics - and, in the process, demonstrates a cultural anthropology for a highly networked world. He lays the groundwork for a renewed and powerful twenty-first century anthropology characterized not only by a continued insistence on rigorous empirical fieldwork but also by engagements with other disciplines and dialogue with interlocutors around the globe.

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目录:

[Emergent Forms of Life and the Anthropological Voice_下载链接1](#)

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