

A Word About René Devisch

I wish to start by congratulating Professor René Devisch for earning this honorary doctorate and for his contributions to knowledge as well as the numerous cross-cultural bonds of friendship that he has knit into such a beautiful iridescent and multi-coloured tapestry.

1. The reaction to his address is precisely what one would expect upon hearing a true life story. It is a fitting testimony to the consideration and respect he deserves. There is no point in approving or disapproving of a person's manner of breathing, walking and living.

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2. One can be struck by ethnology's about-turn, which compels anthropologists to observe themselves, and then proceed to self-analysis before observing their subjects from a distance with the methodic and persevering eye of a detached observer. At last, we have met the challenge of liberating anthropologists from the old straitjacket, wherein they prided themselves on being members of the only

field of knowledge that subjects everybody, including the anthropologists themselves, all at once, to scrutiny, and who enjoy the privilege of reflexivity.

3. I admit that anthropologists should not be viewed as miracle workers either. We must not expect them to be crusaders. I would even argue that the avoidance of politics may not signal lack of interest in the world. Anthropologists can assist in reframing politics by taking its practices or gesticulations from the clouds and repatriating them to their place of birth: the transformation of the person into a human being, into living flesh.