

On the future of the Lorenzo Cañas Bottos family

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Abstract. This brief paper asks how Lorenzo Cañas Bottos could bring himself to write comments on Nigel Rapport, after his *Key Concepts in Social and Cultural Anthropology*, with Joanna Overing! The title of my paper may be a bit misleading, but I present two futures for Argentine families, which start out similar, relating their conceptions of society to British anthropology.

The man opposite has a pen all pink

Which he uses to write what people think!

I confess: sometimes I do Internet searches regarding people I used to speak with. I did one for anthropologist Lorenzo Cañas Botto. And I found that in 2019 he was a commentator for the journal *Current Anthropology* on an article by Nigel Rapport. “Lorenzo, how could you bring yourself to do that?” I want to ask. Are you aware of this material by Rapport and Joanna Overing?

In a well-known example provided by Foucault (1973), a Chinese encyclopedia suggests the following division of animals: a) belonging to the Emperor, b) embalmed, c) tame, d) sucking pigs, e) sirens, f) fabulous, g) stray dogs, h) included in the present classification, i) frenzied, j) innumerable, k) drawn with a very fine camel-hair brush, l) et cetera, m) having just broken the water pitcher, n) that from a long way off look like flies. (2000: 84)

Foucault? What about Borges? Perhaps you understand the situation better than I do. (I have not yet seen the second edition of their book, but “our” university library has seemingly endless copies of the first.)

I imagine two Argentine families in a Western European country who start out with similar dispositions. But one family interacts with some groups of well-placed natives and find that various notable Argentines are not acknowledged and they develop a theory of why: people in this society are not interested in Argentines of that level. They conclude that if they are to flourish in this society, they must be below that in their work or somehow, amazingly above it. They sensibly focus on occupying the former position: “Child, don’t waste your time with that.” Members of the other Argentine family are told such things as “What a fine craftsman Borges was. I was expecting your writing to be better.” They conclude: for us Argentines to flourish in this society, we must reach very high standards in our work. The two families develop different solutions to the problems of life and each seems stupid to the other!

Presumably the phenomenon has been noticed before, but the theme fits well with the British tradition of anthropology: each has a different conception of the roles available in a structure.

References. Cañas Bottos, Lorenzo. (2019) [Comments on Nigel Rapport's "Anthropology through Levinas \(further Reflections\): On Humanity, Being, Culture, Violation, Sociality, and Morality"](#). *Current Anthropology*. vol. 60 (1).

Rapport, N. and Overing, J. 2000. *Key Concepts in Social and Cultural Anthropology*. London: Routledge.