on how humans come to learn about their identities in complex, incoherent historical contexts. Bringing these authors together provides insight into the past to address situations where the documentary record is absent or fragmented. Given what we know about the present, and armed with our situated model of the person, how might past historicitics be reconstructed and reimagined as another present? Elsewhere, Pina-Cabral has written about the notions of indeterminacy and underdetermination to shift attention to the fuzzy translations of anthropological analyses and to go beyond the notion of culture. So too we can overcome a linear, evolutionary concept of the past leading inevitably to the present. History in person is made, in conditions not of one’s choosing, as multi-threaded, looping backward and forward (as skills are learned and unlearned) but not in successive phases, like balls lined up in a tube. A next step is to examine the nature of the continuity and discontinuity in the production of personhood in particular contexts across generations.

Over the years, Pina-Cabral has made a series of powerful and unique interventions in anthropological theory. I welcome this piece in the ongoing debate about the place of human cognition in anthropological theory and an appropriate psychological approach to make the most of an ethnographic analysis. And for me, as a fellow Brazilianist, I am most appreciative of the way poor Brazilians, and their curious naming practices, are made visible, and theoretically pertinent, to those scholars who might pass too quickly over them in favor of their exotic counterparts.

B. The author also proposes that the relation between proper names and the construction of personhood is a transformational process, that is to say, an ontogenetic process simultaneously at personal level and at that of cross generational “continued identities” (cf. Pina-Cabral 2010a:306; 2013a:76). Again in a nonrepresentationalist manner, he argues that (personal or collective) identities are plural because they imply constantly renovating processes of “co-presence.” This plurality can be particularly well observed in the analysis of proper names, for name use involves “a constant process of engagement with the panoply of objectifications that shore up sociality over time” (Pina-Cabral 2010a:306). Therefore, the author takes the analysis of the relation between personal names and life course way beyond the traditional focus on the classificatory role of onomastic systems. Typically, the most classical works on the subject in modern anthropology were based on contexts where name changes occurred throughout the life course (e.g., Fortes 1973; Watson 1986). But, in southern Bahia and, more broadly, in most Christian contexts in general, one is not supposed to change one’s proper name once it is attributed (and it stays the same even after death). By focusing on the role of proper names in the process of personal ontogeny, nevertheless, Pina-Cabral shows how they play a central constitutive role over the whole of the life course.

Thus, the present article widens the relevance of the anthropological approach on names, reinforcing its historical and transformational aspects by definitely moving away from an ontological vision of the individual or the group. The proposal here is to overcome a culturalist view of human meaning that sees semiotic processes as closed to the material world. Rather, “basic mind” (intentionality) is seen to contribute to the constitution of relatedness by means of constantly reiterated confrontations (cf. Pina-Cabral 2010b).

The usefulness of this proposal can be “tested,” first of all, in its most basic empiricism. This nonrepresentational perspective on onomastic seriality helps us to illuminate what my own interlocutors in southern Bahia (where I have carried out fieldwork for more than a decade) constantly asserted concerning name seriality, namely, that, despite being creatively original and individualizing, proper names that are part of a series are easier to remember. The reason for this is that such names directly evoke either the parents’ names or those of the siblings (cf. Viegas 2008:82–85). Pina-Cabral proposes an articulation between names and relatedness that originates in a view of personhood as an engagement in company—which he defines as “complex communicational contexts where viewpoints clash.” From this point of view, “serial incompleteness” means that there is a break in the series, but people see that break not as a failure of the serial naming system but as part of it. Breaking the series, thus, is part of a process of “making family,” a process of relatedness that “never postulates family as closed group.” In this way, the analysis of this instance of broken seriality allows Pina-Cabral to exemplify his poststructuralist approach.

A. Pina-Cabral proposes a new theoretical articulation between proper names and family dynamics grounded on radical embodied cognition. In his paper, he expands his former proposal that onomastic seriality is “one of the forms through which one ‘makes family’ in Bahia” (Pina-Cabral 2007:69). As the author had already sustained, onomastic seriality (operating on filiation, siblingship, and namesakes)
lay beside symbolic, scaffolded thinking (propositionality). Basic mind operates for as long as a person remains alive by means of processes of constitutive co-presence. These are inevitable since "the world around us reflects back to us constantly the relations that structured historically our constitution as dividual persons" (Pina-Cabral 2013a:75). The role of the concept of dividual person, therefore, is granted theoretical centrality. This could be even further explored by establishing boundaries with what would be a more post-modern vision of fractal personhood.

Reply

The comments by Mark Harris and Susana de Matos Viega are very welcome. In light of his own work on Amazonian Brazil (Harris 2000, 2010), Harris stresses the importance of understanding naming, personhood, and generation from a historical perspective, suggesting that my piece opens the path to "examine the nature of the continuity and discontinuity in the production of personhood . . . across generations." This is a very insightful comment. As a matter of fact, anthropologists do have to turn their attention again to the concept of generation and the implications of age grouping.

The focus here, as Monica Wilson (1951) stressed half a century ago, must be on company—that is, the diffuse and overlaid modes of intersubjectivity that are the ground on which all sociality rests. In personal ontology, sociality emerges as a form of historicity; that is, persons emerge out of other persons in a common world and thus are marked by processes that similarly affect their coevals (cf. Fabian 1983:38f.). In the course of our ontology, we encounter a world where other humans have left their mark according to connections of meaning that they assumed; our lived world is not a chaotic jumble of perceptions. These syntonies go way beyond explicit (propositional) meaning, for they are inscribed (objectified) in the world that surrounds us and we access them often through our basic minds, without recourse to conscious meaning. Nevertheless, they contribute centrally to validate our disposition to see the actions of others as meaningful, that which Donald Davidson (2001) called "interpretive charity" and is our door into language and propositional thinking (cf. Hutto and Myin 2013).

This means that the type of relatedness that anthropologists normally call "kinship" cannot be studied independently of the very processes of constitution of the persons that are its principal nodes, as Marshall Sahlins (2011a, 2011b) and Maurice Bloch (2012:33) have recently reiterated. We should never assume that collective identity, collective memory, or collective thinking exist in and of themselves independently of the embodied persons that carry them. In short, a focus on personhood can help us overcome the definitional problems with kinship that arrested our ancestors in the 1970s (cf. Needham 1971), as well as the dissatisfaction with the primitivist take on "cultures" and "societies" as numerable entities that arrested us in the 1990s (cf. Ingold 1996; Kuper 1988, 2009).

Furthermore, as Harris remarks, this exercise is at the center of the redefinition of the very discipline of anthropology that is going on right now. As people such as Bateson (1972) have been claiming for a very long time (or more recently Toren 2002), our discipline must find a way of breaking out of the nature/nurture, emic/etic oppositions that have prevented it from dialoguing creatively with the rest of the broadly defined project of science throughout most of the twentieth century. In many ways, it is the responsibility of sociocultural anthropologists that biological anthropologists, evolutionary psychologists, and primatologists should continue to find it so difficult to move beyond overly simplistic models of determination.

In particular, anthropologists of all kinds should take inspiration from the neurological and philosophical reexaminations of cognition that are going on all around us (e.g., Anderson, Richardson, and Chemero 2012). There seems to be a generalized agreement that this is the only way to move beyond the forms of semiotic idealism that have besieged anthropology epistemologically (cf. Toren and Pina-Cabral 2011). Sociocultural anthropology has been stuck for more than a century in a neo-Kantian framework that overemphasizes "differential" in sociocentric terms and, as a result, sees human thinking as raised above materiality. The diametrically opposite approach, however (i.e., the metaphorical attribution to nonhuman entities of the modes of symbolic action characteristic of human sociality, as per many of Latour's followers—e.g., Bennett 2010; Kohn 2013) is equally bound to fail, for it is literally unfounded.

The centrality of the ethnographic gesture in anthropological thinking obliges us to account for human transcendence—as Viveiro de Castro puts it, we must "take it seriously" (cf. Candea 2011). This methodological injunction, however, cannot lead us to adopt forms of ontological relativism that are ultimately self-defeating. In short, in order to safeguard ethnographic empiricism, anthropology requires a form of minimal realism (cf. Lynch 1998). That way, it will be able to combine dynamically human transcendence with human embodiment—no amount of talk of "bodies" will suffice if the basic premises of the representationist conceptions of belief are not questioned. My own encounter with radical embodied cognition (cf. Chemero 2009; Hutto 2008), extended mind (cf. Clark and Chalmers 1998), and enactivism (cf. Thompson 2007), as exemplified in this present essay, aims precisely at achieving such a goal.

Following in the line of his own earlier work on historicity (Harris 2007), Harris makes the point that humans, as persons, are necessarily the products of history conceived as the full inheritance in time (past and future) of the human condition. Therefore, as he points out, the matter of freedom