

INTRODUCTION



People have many sides, but I will focus here on two. Each of us is a biological organism with a historical personality that together make us a unique individual. But we cannot live outside society, which shapes us in unfathomable ways. Human beings must learn to be self-reliant (not self-interested) in small and large ways: no-one will brush your teeth for you or save you from being run over while crossing the street. We each must also learn to belong to others, merging personal identity in a plethora of social relations and categories. Modern ideology insists that being individual and mutual is problematic. The culture of capitalist societies anticipates a conflict between them. Yet they are inseparable aspects of human nature.

We embark on two life journeys – one out into the world, the other inward to the self. Society is mysterious to us because it dwells inside us, mostly inaccessible to thought. Writing brings the two into a mutual understanding that we can share. Lived society may become exposed to introspection in this way. Fragments of experience could then be combined into a whole, a world as singular as the self. There are as many worlds as individual journeys.¹ If there is only one world out there, each of us changes it whenever we move.

We like to imagine ourselves as competent actors with a singular identity. But it often feels that we are broken. We are out of touch in a world that is running away from us.² We feel disabled and lonely. We are parts, not wholes.

1. See 'Online Worlds and Virtual Reality' in Chapter 15, especially M. Heidegger.

2. E. Leach, *A Runaway World?* (1968).

What does it take to become fully human? Perhaps we will all eventually find our way to humanity. Now we are only part-human. We are deformed by class divisions and condemned to see the world through the cracked mirror of race.³

Self in the World

How did this come about? Why is human integrity so hard to achieve? Why do so many of us often feel lost in a vast and implacable universe? I wrote this book to find provisional answers, by examining my own experience and reflecting on what I have learned of the world. My guiding principle is that self and world, local and global, life and ideas, personal and impersonal, real and virtual are not as separate as they often seem. But it takes serious practical and intellectual effort to see how they are connected and to make them work for each of us.

I come from Manchester and took up socialism as a teenager. The two years I spent studying Ghana's street economy brought out another aspect of my upbringing. I found that I had considerable knowledge of markets and money. The 'informal economy' was a free market zone, operating outside the law.⁴ I felt at home in it. This experience launched a dialogue within me, between the social and individual dimensions of human personality. My childhood offered support for both sides. Boys in the street and schoolyard combined gang behaviour with competitive individualism. A premium on conformity was matched by self-reliance and bravado. The neoliberal turn after 1980 convinced me that working-class solidarity had gone forever. But I discovered something similar in France – a republican tradition of taking to the streets in political protest (*manifestation*).⁵

The tension between belonging to a collective and individualism is a central theme of this book. After a long period as a Marxist, I immersed myself in classical liberalism.⁶ Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century advocates of democratic revolution thought free movement would be the catalyst for a new society. Individual freedom could only be won through social engineering based on scientific knowledge. Their liberalism was at once individual and social. These have since become disconnected and need to be reunited. If I want to move freely in the world, I must find places whose public institutions support

3. See 'Resisting Alienation' in Chapter 3.

4. Hart, Appendix 1973, 2006c, 2015d.

5. Such as the *gilets jaunes* (yellow vests) protests of 2018–19.

6. Poets (Milton to Blake and Shelley) and philosophers (Locke, Rousseau, Smith, Jefferson, Kant).

free association. Learning how to combine liberalism and social democracy, freedom and equality, is a revolutionary project.

I trace my reinvention in midlife to spending two years in Jamaica during the late 1980s. Caribbean people, whose history has denied them the security of viewing the world from one place, developed a ‘cubist’ perspective on it, allowing participants to place themselves in the picture at multiple points.⁷ The North Atlantic region is the crucible of modern world history; but it is not the world.

Self in the World is not an autobiography, but a reflection on the human condition in our times by one person. Individual freedom depends on being able to move; but nomadism also requires fixed points. Stability and movement are both essential to human life.⁸ I am an anthropologist by profession, an amateur economist by inclination. I devour movies, novels, sport and all kinds of music. Most anthropologists discover the world by finding out what people do and think where they live.⁹ I rely mainly on lifelong learning through reading, writing and varied world experience that includes eclectic immersion in high and low culture. I combine auto-ethnography¹⁰ with world history and humanist philosophy. I teach what I have learned and learn from teaching.

Anthropology and the Humanities

Modern anthropology was born in the eighteenth century as one aspect of the drive to overthrow the Old Regime and instal democracy. Agrarian civilization was on its last legs and its class structure had no credible foundation. Rule by and for the people had to be based on what everyone had in common, their human nature. But what was that and how could nature and history, personal freedom and civic duty be reconciled? Democracy would require citizens to re-educate themselves in order to uphold it. The self, psychology, novels, newspapers and much else made their appearance then.

Anthropology has regressed since. In the nineteenth century, it became an explanation and support for Europeans taking over the world, ultimately a racist apologia for empire. But its method assumed that world history was unfinished. The senseless slaughter of 1914–18 required and found a new

7. J. Berger, *Success and Failure of Picasso* (1965).

8. See Chapter 13.

9. ‘Ethnography’ is literally writing about a people.

10. ‘A form of qualitative research where an author uses self-reflection and writing to explore personal experience and connect this autobiography to wider cultural, political, and social understandings’. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Autoethnography>.

paradigm for the last century. We should join the people where they live in order to find out what they do, think and want. This is one half of what anthropology must become, but the other half – contemplating humanity’s destiny on and beyond this planet – vanished from view. The anti-colonial revolution put paid to anthropology as the study of ‘primitive’ peoples, but most anthropologists have since clung to the narrow localism and ahistorical vision of ‘fieldwork-based ethnography’. This focus had some fit with a world society composed of myopic nation states; but its aim was description, not prescription. Anthropologists struggled to catch up with global events that they did not understand nor could shape.

Universities focused on the task of bureaucratizing national capitalism have run out of steam. Having been tied to them hitherto, anthropologists will need to find other homes. The modernist project of compartmentalizing knowledge fights our pressing need to understand human beings who belong to humanity as a whole. Anthropology was never a ‘discipline’. No-one could pull its range of interests together unless they were an unschooled human being in the first place. ‘Anthropology’ could be an umbrella term for several disciplines to pool their efforts while seeking to bridge the gap between formal education and wider public interests that are increasingly global.

In 2009, I met some younger anthropologists on Twitter who shared my dismay over how the leading professional organizations, especially the American Anthropological Association, had failed to keep up with the global and democratic potential of the internet. We formed the Open Anthropology Cooperative, which, in the next decade, acquired over twenty thousand members from around the world.¹¹ The membership generated many discussion groups, archives and other resources while promoting interaction across barriers of culture, social status and geography. The administrators found that calling ourselves ‘open’ did not mean that we could dispense with rules or avoid the threats posed by trolls, spammers and bots. We often descended into a half-hearted managerialism.

We never turned to anthropology for solutions to these problems. It was not intended to change the world; but it didn’t help us to think about living in it either. When I started this book, I didn’t set out to ignore contemporary academic anthropology apart from my own writings. It just happened that way. When I needed an example, I took it from my experience, reading outside my profession or popular culture. For intellectual inspiration I usually turned to books written before the modern discipline was invented. Yet in the course of writing this book, I began to focus on how anthropology might evolve beyond its present limitations by becoming a popular rather than aca-

11. Hart, Appendix 2015h. See Chapter 15.

demic pursuit. Above all, I hope that readers – with and without exposure to academic anthropology – will find here the means of reflecting on issues that matter to them.

If we wish to make a personal connection with the world, we must try to engage with the human condition as a whole. This was supposed to be anthropology's purpose, but is no longer. Being human is not something we inherit through our DNA. We have to work at becoming human, individually and collectively. *Becoming* is life, movement and process. Whatever stops developing has *become* – it is a state, a dead thing like this book. But it can live on in the minds of new readers. A focus on 'becoming human' – on emergence – favours a historical method. All the humanities are relevant: literature, the arts, history, ethnography, dialogical philosophy, rhetoric, religion and case law. But science must be their ally, not a threat. We need to know what is real and how things work.¹²

I have something to say here about how we might develop new social forms conducive to humanity's survival and progress. Improving education and the organization of knowledge is indispensable to that. The two sides of 'self' and 'world' inform each other here. We each need to place ourselves in history. Being human is not just about accounting for our own actions.

This book has some affinity with the romantic educational novel (*Bildungsroman*). It is about how I came to think the way I do, but also about the people, places and times I encountered along the way – a story of my formation. Life and ideas shape each other reflexively. Thought and action are intertwined and their social synthesis is communication. All the book's sections combine both, but the balance between them shifts. Writing about oneself is a humanist genre. Conventionally, the author describes their life as someone who rejects supernatural, natural and social conditioning. The scope for purposeful action is severely limited, however. We are exposed to natural disasters, social revolutions, wars and economic depressions. We depend on machines that few understand and on rules and ideas that we do not make ourselves. We offer token resistance to disabling pollution and environmental threats. The media reports disasters every day, inviting us to feel lucky that we missed that earthquake, air crash, massacre or flood.

The humanities once showed us our common history. They did this by delving deeply into particular persons, places, events and relationships. Religion has always connected thinking and feeling persons to the object world they share with everyone. Students now sign up for the social sciences, hoping to learn how to improve society. But they soon become confused and disillusioned. How does each of us relate to a world that seems to lack natural and social order? Personal connection to world society is currently unthinkable.

12. Hence the human sciences. See Chapter 20.

But unless we can each identify with it, how will humanity solve problems that we know are global in scope?

The Book's Organization

I spent my youth immersed in ancient languages and literature. Reading old books that made a difference is more rewarding than wading through untested ephemera. We learned that great human discoveries are made over many generations. This contrasts with the current mania for private property in ideas. Thought moves across time and space through stories and conversation. I know that a multitude have contributed to my working memory. This book is a rather egocentric exercise; but I am not its only begetter. I must introduce readers to the predecessors who have influenced me most.

My target audience is young students before they have been programmed by years of specialist higher education. I want them to understand, through my personal development, that learning is not just dead books or lectures imposed from above, but something we can acquire by teaching ourselves and learning from our friends at any stage of life. I discovered as a teacher that young people when starting out are more open-minded than students closed down by specialization. I hope too that curious members of the public will also find food for reflection here.

The Preface and this Introduction provide snapshots of the author and this book. Part I, 'Ancestors', surveys my main literary influences. It addresses three classes of authors in succession: writers about the self, anthropology and the anti-colonial intellectuals. I have worked in twenty-four countries on four continents. Part II, 'Self', is the story of this nomadic life, told as a chronological sequence in nine chapters. It is the longest section of the book. Part III, 'World', identifies themes that have shaped my understanding of humanity as a whole. These are: movement and its antithesis, inequality; the digital revolution; how economy can connect the local and global; and Africa's growing significance for the twenty-first-century world. Part IV, 'Lifelong Learning', brings self and world together as an extended education. Here I discuss my British origins; excursions into transnational history; money as a school for bridging life's extremes; and the relationship between learning, remembering and sharing. In the Afterword, I ask 'What question is this the answer to?' I reflect there on how and why I came to write this book.

Throughout it, I combine intellectual reflection with personal stories. The balance between ideas and life varies, as do the organization and style of each part. The front and back matter are written in a self-consciously non-academic way. Each of Parts I ('Ancestors') and III ('World') forms a set of related themes that draw heavily, but not exclusively, on my own and others'

serious writing. They will appeal to more academically inclined readers and do not need to be read in a linear sequence. Part Two ('Self') is my life story and best read as a sequence. Part Four ('Lifelong Learning') consists of very different, experimental essays. The formal boundaries I observe in Parts I and III are mostly absent here.

I hope that the language of all parts is accessible and uncluttered, but a reader's engagement in any particular part is likely to fluctuate. Combining personal and impersonal aspects of a life in society usually requires different levels of formality, language and intellectual style. The book as a whole is an assemblage rather than a synthesis. Readers' attention to different parts and aspects of the book will vary depending on their background. I have included an unusual number of literary references. This is because I read a lot and, as a teacher, want to give those of you who are interested the chance to follow up. But some sections of the book can easily be read like a novel or documentary.

I summarize Part I more fully here since the book starts with my intellectual influences rather than with my life story. It comes first, but need not be read first or indeed at all. Some readers who care about the future of writing, anthropology or development may be more interested in this than in the story of my life. In Chapter 1, I list some of the authors who made writing about myself possible. They are: Michel de Montaigne (sixteenth-century); Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Benjamin Franklin and Edward Gibbon (all eighteenth-century); William Wordsworth and Henry Adams (from the long nineteenth century); Vladimir Nabokov and Chinua Achebe (twentieth-century). 'Writing the self' is different for each of these pioneers who were forced to reinvent the genre in order to express their own unique lives and historical circumstances. This book started out as a trade autobiography. But I needed to relate my explorations of the world to what I have experienced personally.

Chapter 2 draws attention to 'forgotten founders' of anthropology, only one of whom is recognized as a founder by today's academic anthropologists; but he is woefully misunderstood. Three are from the long eighteenth century. Giambattista Vico was a Neapolitan legal academic who taught Latin eloquence. His book, *Principi di Scienza Nuova* (*The New Science*) was wholly original, but Vico lacked position and resources and it was only taken up a century later. Immanuel Kant published the first introduction to anthropology in 1798.¹³ It was intended to help his students monitor and organize their later life and was a bestseller. Rousseau founded what I call 'the anthropology of unequal society'.¹⁴ The French maestro Claude Lévi-Strauss acknowledged

13. I. Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1798).

14. See Chapters 2 and 3.

Rousseau as his master;¹⁵ but Rousseau and Kant have largely dropped out of academic histories of anthropology.

The other two span from the late nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth. W.H.R. Rivers was president of the British associations for both psychology and anthropology. His experience as a psychiatrist treating shell-shock victims in the First World War led him to synthesize his two sides as a public figure. He died prematurely in 1922. The ‘functionalist revolution’ of Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown¹⁶ downplayed Rivers’s immense contribution. Living for two decades in Paris has led me to appreciate Emile Durkheim’s nephew, Marcel Mauss, as the most important of anthropology’s modern founders. He is well recognized by the Anglophone profession, but usually for the wrong reasons.

Chapter 3, on some intellectuals of the anti-colonial revolution, came later in my education. When the world turned in 1989–94 (the Soviet collapse, one-world capitalism, the rise of China and India and the internet going public), I asked what the other side in the overthrow of European empires might offer global anthropology. Its leaders had to imagine a post-racist world, then persuade the masses both to fight for it and to educate themselves to play an active part. Peoples coerced earlier into a world society made by and for Western imperialism now sought their own independent relationship to it. This was the most important political development of the last century. Anthropologists of that nationalist era did not draw on these social movements for their own vision. But we should. I was eventually drawn to study Pan-Africanism. Manchester played a significant part in its development. Three figures stand out: the American W.E.B. Du Bois, and two from the Caribbean, C.L.R. James, whom I think of as my mentor, and Frantz Fanon (1925–61), a psychiatrist who died tragically young. Turning to India and South Africa (now my second home), the greatest of these leaders, with most to teach us now, was Mohandas K. Gandhi (1869–1948); but he has lately fallen into some disrepute.

Part II starts with my early childhood in Manchester. I then jumped on the educational escalator to Manchester Grammar School and Cambridge University, where I abandoned classical languages and literature for social anthropology. Two years of fieldwork in a West African slum changed me more than any other single influence. I then combined teaching anthropology in Britain and the United States with part-time employment as a development consultant. My time in America was both liberating and harrowing

15. C. Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques* (1955). See T. Lührman, ‘Our Master, Our Brother’ (1990) on his debt to Rousseau.

16. B. Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922); A. Radcliffe-Brown, *The Andaman Islanders* (1922).

for reasons explored in the final chapter on health. I returned to Cambridge and secondment in Jamaica allowed me to synthesize the different phases of my life when the world was turning in 1989–94. I moved to Paris in the late 1990s, took up writing and globetrotting and began an involvement with South Africa that lasts until now.

Part III considers some aspects of our world at this moment of history. The discussion embraces a scale far wider than my own life. But, where possible, I show how I have experienced what I describe. Where are we in history and what is wrong with it? The dominant social form of the last century was national capitalism, the attempt to regulate commerce in the interest of citizens. If capitalism is socially disorganized, its modern twin – the nation state – strengthens local social cohesion at the expense of a world society capable of addressing our common human needs and interests. Globalization has occurred several times in world history. The forces driving it now have undermined national capitalism. But inequality flourishes in our world today and is now entrenched everywhere.

In Chapter 13, I explain how legal, physical and cultural separation of unequal people has become universal. The antidote to this global ‘apartheid’ is freedom of movement. We should consider movement to be a human right, like other freedoms, subject to laws. Chapter 14 examines the digital revolution in communications from a personal point of view. It offers universal means to spread universal ideas. To be human is to depend on impersonal social conditions. By harnessing the most advanced technologies of our era, the digital revolution has enhanced the potential for economic democracy. The main threat to this is the growing power of transnational corporations. The chapter concludes with reflections on the sources of their power.

The idea of economy goes to the heart of my attempts to connect self and world. In Chapter 15, I review my own journey in economic investigation, taking in the informal economy and later the economic potential of virtual reality. The study of money shows how personal and impersonal dimensions of society are intertwined. I have recently focused on ‘human economy’. It rests on two principles: human lives should be at the centre of economy and local affairs connected to humanity as a whole. In Chapter 16, I focus on the implications of Africa’s current demographic explosion for the balance of world population and the world market. A similar explosion fuelled the age of European empires. This one could have more significant consequences for humanity and world society.

Part IV attempts a partial synthesis of self in the world and the idea of life-long learning. If I had to give one reason for doing anything that channels my energies over time, it would be that I hope to learn from doing it. This book is the strongest example of that principle. Chapter 17 asks how British post-war history has shaped me, especially its politics and higher education system.

Despite being an expatriate since before the millennium, I think and write a lot about how to fix the mess my country is in. Chapter 18 exhumes some undisciplined explorations into transnational history whose motivation was to blow up the nationalist history I had been fed from childhood. Chapter 19 addresses the topic of money that has occupied me most for three decades. I suggest that money is a means of communication that combines practically the two sides of us all, our own person and the widest reaches of our social universe. Money is – or should be – how we learn to be more fully human. Chapter 20, on learning, remembering and sharing, reverts to autobiographical mode and draws some provisional conclusions.

I have compiled this book from memory and from sources written by myself and others without any disciplinary focus. In middle age I learned how to inject some life into speech and prose shaped by formal education and to gain access to my unconscious mind. Everyone's memory becomes specialized with age, and mine accumulates images, facts and stories suitable for writing and teaching purposes.

Notes and References

Apart from Part II, my life story, the other three parts have many references to written sources. My system is a compromise between a book aimed at general readers and beginning students and one with an apparatus for professional academics. I have borrowed heavily from what I wrote before. My own papers that are accessible online are listed in an Appendix, with my name and only a year and a letter in the footnotes. All literary items mentioned in the text are listed with full details at the book's end. Each is included in a footnote on the same page, listing author, title and original year of publication, with shorter descriptions to follow. Books and articles listed only in footnotes are generally not included in the References.

The End of Something

I take a broader view of money than its current identification with finance.¹⁷ The dominant form of society in the last century is now ending. Society is losing its national form and has not yet found a more inclusive one. After the financial crisis of 2008, leading governments sought to stave off economic collapse by using taxpayers' money to rescue the banks. Now the ability of central banks to use money as a tool of economic management is

17. See Chapter 19.

nearly exhausted; capital markets and national paper currencies have become unsustainable. The world is in the grip of a growing debt crisis fuelled by easy money. This is a turning point. Its denouement could be global depression, world war, fascism or democratic revolution.

The social form that dominated the last century, ‘national capitalism’, is a synthesis of industrial capitalism and nation states – the attempt to manage money, markets and accumulation through central bureaucracies representing the interests of citizens. G.W.F. Hegel articulated this programme in the 1820s;¹⁸ it was launched by political and technological revolutions of the 1860s and early 1870s; a subsequent phase of European imperialism lasted until the First World War. Nation states then became the norm, especially after 1945 with the collapse of European empires. The social organization of money is unravelling fast.¹⁹

The 1860s saw a transport and communications revolution (steamships, continental railways and the telegraph) that decisively opened up the world economy. A series of political revolutions gave the leading powers of the next century the institutional means of organizing industrial capitalism. These included the American Civil War, the abolition of serfdom in Russia, Italy’s Risorgimento and Japan’s Meiji Restoration. Queen Victoria became Empress of India after a decade of democratic reforms at home. German unification led to the Franco-Prussian War, the Paris Commune and the French Third Republic. Karl Marx published *Capital* in 1867 and the First International was formed in 1864. Despite the appearance of global integration then, international trade still accounted for under 1 per cent of most national economies.²⁰

Capitalism has always rested on an unequal contract between owners of money and those who make and buy their products. This contract depends on an effective threat of punishment if workers withhold their labour or buyers fail to pay up. The owners cannot make that threat alone: they need the support of governments, laws, prisons, police, even armies. By the mid-nineteenth century, the machine revolution was pulling unprecedented numbers of people into the cities, where they added a new dimension to problems of crowd control. The political revolutions of the 1860s were based on an explicit alliance between capitalists and the military landlord class to form states capable of managing industrial workforces and taming criminal gangs who controlled large swathes of the main cities.²¹

18. G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of Right* (1821).

19. Hart, Appendix 2000a, 2015f.

20. W.A. Lewis, *The Evolution of the International Economic Order* (1978).

21. Martin Scorsese’s film (2002) takes its name and the 1863 setting from H. Asbury, *Gangs of New York* (1927).

After the Second World War, a world revolution installed developmental states in Western industrial democracies, the Soviet Bloc and newly independent countries. These aimed to reduce inequality by expanding public services and workers' incomes, while controlling capital flows. Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher inaugurated a counter-revolution against all this whose main purpose was to replace political controls by 'free markets' that were only free for capital. This market fundamentalism has now spawned two variants.²² The globalism of the transnational corporations confronts xenophobic nationalism, autocracy and protectionism.

National capitalism failed because money escaped from the political controls imposed after 1945. The causes include neoliberal policies and ideology; the reduced powers and legitimacy of nation states; the lawless global money circuit; the breakdown of the post-war international order; the replacement of citizenship by identity politics; financial imperialism; escalating inequality; debt and austerity; the rise of the corporations; the digital revolution and globalization; autocratic rulers and xenophobic nationalism. Humanity is sleepwalking into a disaster.

I don't have solutions for this mess, but I hope, through my example of lifelong learning, to help some readers become more aware of their own place in our current human predicament.

22. Hart, Appendix 2018a. See Chapters 14 and 15.