

# Keith Hart's Anthropology: Auto-Ethnography, World History and Humanist Philosophy

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This special issue features two book launches of Keith Hart's *Self in the World: Connecting Life's Extremes* (Oxford and New York, Berghahn Books, 2022), held on May 10, 2022, at the London School of Economics, and on June 13, 2022, at Delhi's South Asian University. Commentary from the Delhi launch by Mallika Shakya, Arjun Appadurai, Yasmeen Arif and Supriya Singh is followed by an open discussion. A review from the LSE launch by John Tresch (first published in *History of Anthropology Review*) and a summary of his book by the author conclude this presentation.

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## Book Launch at South Asian University, Delhi, 13 June 2022

### A Spirit of Learning, a Life of Uncertainty: Pushing Out Anthropology's Frontiers, by Mallika Shakya

Good afternoon. [1] I would like to welcome you all to South Asian University in Delhi, a relatively young university running since 2011 as an inter-governmental collaboration among the eight South Asian nations. Since so many of our present and past students are here, let me begin with what I think is the central voice in this book. Keith writes about himself as a young boy, obsessed with getting into Cambridge University and learning how to be a skilled examination-passer. Later he saw that the attraction of that citadel of scholarship was not its spires and rituals, but a spirit of learning that is abstract and invisible. The spirit of that young boy reverberates in this book.

Keith remained true to the pursuit of knowledge throughout the ebbs and flows of his life, choosing to move between many academic establishments. All of them benefited greatly from his presence; but, with the exception of 15 years teaching at Cambridge in mid-life, he never set his anchor anywhere else. Instead, he embraced a life of uncertainty. It is thanks to this precarious living for several decades that he could give us theories that pushed the frontiers of anthropology into fields such as Africa, informality, money, and human economy, to name a few.

I met Keith in 2005 while attending a World Bank panel on informality in Washington DC. He spoke after a consultant from McKinsey & Company claimed that only 65 per cent of value added tax (VAT) was collected in Turkey, largely because a large informal economy paid poorly. If collection could be increased to 90 per cent, VAT could be reduced by five per cent, to the benefit of foreign corporations who currently paid most of it. Keith can be combative, but now he gave a calm, scholarly response, explaining how he conceived of informality as a subaltern refusal to be confined by unfair regulations, thereby expressing a human spirit of resilience. The privileged few have long treated the common people at best with suspicion and at worst as criminals. Maybe we should all say this; but it is hard to walk the talk. I knew that Keith took that difficult call, and more important, that his life offered an example for all of us that we can refuse complicity with oppression.

On the book cover, Sherry Ortner is spot on to remind us of Keith's "unorthodox academic career". This liberated him from the normal pieties to defy the norms of academic anthropology. In this book, he turns his own life into the "field". There he offers a radical method that embraces anarchy and chaos while finding a writing voice that is meticulously rigorous and lyrical.

I read it while sunbathing on a monastic beach of the river Ganga. I felt the contrast between Keith's attempt to place himself in the world and an anthropology that has not yet shaken off its professional claim to be the "scientific ethnography" of others, while suppressing most references to the self. The "field" does not have to be distant and apart; it is increasingly enmeshed in the world that each of us makes for ourselves. Moreover, anthropology can and should be about the oneness of humanity, rather than trapped in a narrow focus on its local divisions.

Keith has not read Rabindranath Tagore's *Home and the World* (1914), but his classic novella *The Broken Nest* (1901) brought to my mind Charu and Amal. They learned about themselves and others in a complex relationship that combined rebellion with desire. Amal interrogated his own writing voice and his rival's. He contrasted a self-referential public autobiography with a memoir meant to establish a personal connection between the author and his readers.

Keith is surely in the second camp. He takes inspiration for his authorial voice from popular culture, evoking especially the rock singer, Tom Petty, "leader of the Heartbreakers [who] died of a broken heart" while he was writing his book. Their affinity lies in his having been

...a music fan as much as he was a musician, aware that the style that had made him successful was based at least in part on borrowing and paying homage, synthesizing the sound of artists he loved into something entirely his own.

Tom Petty fought the corporate private property system and won twice, a fight that Keith identifies with.

Keith claims to have learned most from C.L.R. James and M.K. Gandhi, while his writing is rooted in the pioneering anthropology of Immanuel Kant and Marcel Mauss. Montaigne, Nabokov and Achebe are among his precursors in writing the self. He recognizes Rousseau's audacity in his *Confessions* (Rousseau 1982) where he sets out to reveal himself as "concealing no crimes and adding no virtues". Keith never loses sight of this duality:

We each have a big voice and a little voice. The first tells us that we are a hero, star, genius; and the second says, you're a fraud and they will soon find you out. This second voice keeps us sane, but without the first we would never attempt great things (Hart 2022: 18).

I have shared much with Keith over the years. What impresses me is his search for meaning where order and chaos, intimacy and grandeur meet, and of course "self in the world". He asks, "How do we bridge the gap between a puny self and a vast unknowable universe?" Keith finds in Vladimir Nabokov's *Speak, Memory: An autobiography revisited* (1951) an echo of what he has written himself here:

We need to scale the world down and scale up the self, so that the two can meet meaningfully. This is not just about individuals and society, but the time and space coordinates we find ourselves in – bridging the big and

little things that make up our lives. Ritual and prayer once connected people to an object world personified as God. Works of fiction – plays, novels, movies – now perform a similar role. The world or history is reduced in scale to a stage, paperback or screen, allowing each of us to enter it subjectively on our own terms (Hart 2022: 25-26).

This heterodoxy makes the book unique. After my long exposure to Keith's teacherly nudging and self-deprecating jokes, I now realize that there is a scholarly ancestry for a particular sense of humour and irony that is Keith's, where the wise scholar allows us access to the exam-passing young boy who would catch the stars. This brilliant move allows him to insert himself meticulously into the theories that he cites while mapping out the high- and low-brow knowledge he has acquired in a nomadic life whose main principle is learning.

I have often shared this with my students — what makes us scholars is shared as much when chatting over beer and coffee as in printed books and formal lectures. We should never forget, however, how learning differs between world-class universities and schools like this one. Our provenance is precarious; we are only a decade old, full of ambition and energy; but short on vital resources. Our students can only read the best-known books without being able to see their intellectual models as flawed human beings. Keith did us all a great service by writing up the pub chat as scholarship.

## A Tolstoian Approach to Tackling Contingency, by Arjun Appadurai

Thank you, Mallika. [2] You have organized a marvellous event because the person at the centre of it, my dear old friend Keith Hart, is himself something of a marvel. He never fails to bring his remarkable energies to all his ventures, relations and travels, to his students, colleagues and friends – all categories not new or strange to Keith.

I have some things to say about what Keith has accomplished in this wonderful book. I will not dwell on the specifics, although it is very well-written and detailed, but offer some general thoughts. All readers of the book will know what I am referring to. First, *Self in the World*, from the beginning to the end, is remarkably generous – to other people and other places that he is familiar with and to other times and ways of looking at the world that are not his own. This generosity is not just about being nice; it allows him to engage with an enormous diversity of places, histories, disciplines and approaches. That struck me time and again when reading the book. Next, I want to say a couple of things more, in the short time available to me, about what I think Keith was trying to do and in fact did in writing this amazing book.

First, his stories – because I think of it in that way – do what the best anthropological studies of ritual do. Not the routine studies of ritual, but the best of them illuminate their social context. They use ritual as a kind of flash- or spotlight to illuminate the wider environment. Likewise, Keith's remarkable life encounters throw light on the world he traverses. I will say more about that world in a moment. The great gift of the book is that it keeps moving across

the author's various terrains. Through the events of his experience – the alchemy is mysterious – we encounter contexts, places, institutions and people that somehow come alive and are more understandable than they might otherwise have been.

The other way I see the stories that Keith has told here concerns what the world is he moves in and how. Here what struck me most about the many vivid details – the book is a kind of Tolstoian exercise – is that they can lead you to forget the big arc – the many arcs running through the book that he has so beautifully captured. These reveal Keith's inspired mode of thinking and conceptualizing his own stories and his chosen discipline, anthropology.

His spatial movement takes him from a childhood in Manchester via Cambridge on journeys to Africa, America, the Caribbean and now to Europe and Africa again – through the North Atlantic quadrilateral formed by the slave trade which he identifies as his life situation. These spatial movements, as portrayed in the book, somehow – I say “somehow” because it is quite magical – also become windows on temporal scales, from the smallest and most immediate to the biggest and most global.

Keith brings three things together in a rare combination. One is his own life that he set out at first to assemble in an autobiography. He could have done a decent job by cutting and pasting passages that dealt only with this. But he does not do that. Two other things are going on all the time. His journey goes all the way back to the grand matters of evolution, of our history as a species, of agriculture, cities and the state, which he knows better than almost any living anthropologist. That scale is constantly in tension with the scale of the immediately local.

We read in highly specific detail of him watching cricket somewhere in England or watching movies with his daughter. Just when you think, Aha! Now we are going to hear about his family life, Keith is off again (boom!) chasing some very large-scale questions. This is not done artificially. I am trying to capture here that Keith repeatedly – not just once, with an obvious beginning, middle and end – takes off from some concrete details of his life and existential journey and zooms into a remarkable scale of time and space. Then, just when you think that you are going to get the big Hegelian picture, he zooms down to somewhere equally specific, leaving you unsure what the big story is. Then he takes off again... and does this often.

The book is written in such beautiful prose, highly accessible short sentences, an editor's dream and therefore a reader's delight. There are very many big ideas about which Keith has written at length here: to name a few, money, migration, connection, revolution, race and the internet. These are just six of the 10-15 big things that he tackles – I am groping for metaphors – like Mohammed Ali, he floats like a butterfly, stings like a bee. Then he is off again. There is no dwelling or trying to hold all things in place for a while. Each of these massive topics is illuminated by his erudition, his range and not least his wit.

Most important, when thinking about this book today after reading it for the last few weeks, is Keith's alertness to *contingency* in his own tumultuous life. This is evident from the first

page to the last. The world in all its complexity, about which Keith has written a great deal elsewhere, takes on the qualities of a story, not a theory or system which he could easily do in other circumstances. He does not give into that. Keith asks himself: What question is this book the answer to? For me, the closest I could get to answering it is this. In a world that is intrinsically contingent, where necessity is only an illusion we have of the past, how can we resist the temptation to hold it still and take a photograph of it? Keith refuses to do that. This refusal is a great lesson for me and, I imagine, for everyone in our field and the fields nearby.

## A Teacher Who Brings Everything Together and Makes It Come Alive, by Yasmeen Arif

When Mallika asked me to speak on Keith's book, [3] I was hesitant since I do not think I have the wisdom of Arjun or the experience of Supriya. In a library of extraordinary books, this one would stand out. Its philosophy is expressed mainly in the style of its writing – every sentence is made up of few words; each paragraph might be followed by another that had very little connection to the first. Yet they all come together in a neat, illogical sequence of an unplanned journey that was always guided by a singular aspiration. He says somewhere at the beginning that this book is partly autoethnographic – not a typical autobiography, but more the story to date of a man who has led an encyclopaedic life, whose mind can barely be put together between the covers of a conventional book. As he says in gest, “My brain's so fast, coffee slows me down. I stay off drugs other than booze because my brain is mind-bending enough already” (Hart 2022: 155).

This gives a sense of what this book will turn out to be. It is quite possible that people lead lives like his, but they seldom write books like it. It will not take long to read the table of contents to see how he has laid it out. I started reading it only four days ago and put it down last night. It is typical to describe a book as a rollercoaster when it takes readers through a lifetime of ups and downs, the ordinary and the extraordinary. But this one is a ride where we need to keep an eye not just on the alarming curves, but on the expressions of the passengers' faces as we speed from sheer horror to extreme delight, often interspersed with tears that we do not know we are shedding.

The momentum takes us through childhood and his family of origin to his daughters, his peers, his mentors, his losses in illness and death. Innumerable anecdotes accumulate of a life spread over cities, slums and universities, across Manchester and Cambridge, Ghana, Geneva, Paris, Durban, Chicago, Detroit and back to Paris. In the introduction he even tells you how to read the book. Some parts should be read in sequence, others not. But for me it felt that I was listening to him... maybe in a classroom, over dinner or a drink. There were classes that I would have liked to attend, for example on his major literary influences – Montaigne, Rousseau, Gibbon, Nabokov and Achebe – or on his chosen predecessors in anthropology that I would have eagerly agreed with – especially Vico, Rousseau again and Kant's views on world anthropology. He writes about Fanon, C.L.R. James, Du Bois and Gandhi, who have influenced his understanding of colonized selves and worlds. Each is

meant to teach us, not through the burden of ponderous scholarship, but with a crystal clear and deeply personal understanding of how each book, each moment in life led to another towards the economics of humanity in a consistent and persistent path. Before I come to that, I want to share how this brilliant mix of personal and pedagogic styles comes together.

My favourite anthropology teacher as an undergraduate was Audrey Richards. She came from an old colonial family and was very distinguished. She encouraged me to study cities in Africa and once granted me a personal tutorial. When I got married, she gave us a jam thermometer – “every marriage needs a little sweetness”. She told my wife, “If you see something you really like, buy four of them”. We had no money at the time. For the tutorial she asked me to write an essay which I then had to read out (this was Cambridge). She interrupted me a lot and kept asking for less abstraction, more detail. I had to write it again. I decided to write the most pedestrian piece I could. After reading it out, Audrey said, “Now that we know you can walk, Mr Hart, we can discuss your aspiration to fly”. Tough love always goes straight to my heart (Hart 2022: xi-xii).

This is a paragraph familiar in academic autobiographies; but we do not expect it to be followed by this one immediately.

I dedicate this book to Friedrich Engels, as well as to my daughters and aunt, because I finished it in his bicentenary year. He wrote a book on Manchester (Engels 1845) in his mid-twenties, gave Karl Marx first-hand knowledge of the industrial working class, co-wrote the *German Ideology* and *Communist Manifesto* (both Marx and Engels 1848), tolerated Marx’s defects, built him up as supreme leader and kept the movement going after his death (Engels 1880). He enjoyed his wealth as the scion of a German transnational firm...and considered marriage a bourgeois institution. He lived in Manchester faithfully with Mary Burns and, after her death, her sister Lizzie, both illiterate Irish working-class women with radical political views (McCrea 2015). Engels’ reworking of L.H. Morgan’s *Ancient Society* (1877) became a lynchpin of modern feminism in the 1960s and 70s (Engels 1884).

This is a teacher who brings everything together in a classroom and makes it come alive. Next another paragraph that might be my favourite:

I stood on a street corner in Chicago, with the wind whistling up my arse. It felt that there was no-one in a thousand miles who knew or cared much for me. Despite the disasters, I had found liberty in America. I had a chance to spread my wings. The idea of freedom runs deep in the United States and is synonymous with movement. I would never have grasped the meaning and sources of “freedom” if I had stayed in the Old World, where the past weighs so heavily. Conformity is the complement of American freedom. Culture builds ties that a fragmented society cannot. I embraced aspects of the common life, especially sports. But I didn’t know what made those strange people tick or how I could become one of them (Hart 2022: 117).

I met Keith only once – when he came to speak at the sociology department in Delhi University in the mid-2010s. Afterwards, we shared a car ride for an hour when I learnt his most enduring formulation – that money, markets and humanity can be spoken of in the same sentence. It put to rest my struggles in trying to bridge the distance between the academic ideological silos keeping things apart that need to be connected. I remember us agreeing with Keynes that money like blood needs to circulate to keep society alive. Keith has pursued and made sense of this simple and powerful idea of the economy as a function that can and must lie outside institutions. We know the informal economy as his original contribution – weaving the fabric of a sustained life, sometimes illegally, but always dialectically with and against bureaucracy and politics. Yet, I would underline that he brings to the front stage an anthropology that is always about making sense of the world, of humanity and how each of us lives in it as persons in particular contexts.

Keith has studied this economy of life through the history of imperialism, colonialism and development regimes, as well as in Africa's markets and slums, in racetracks and betting shops, in criminal networks of give and take, in the corridors of many departments and universities, in policy documents and international bank agendas and, in good measure, the lyrics of his favourite singers. In a world that is now beset with boundaries and exclusions, to see the potential of unifying rather than fragmenting themes is a relief. As Cornel West said recently, with all the wokeness we see around us now (I would add often encouraged by anthropologists), we are all likely to become insomniacs. I will end with Keith's words that help put to rest that relentless insomnia, fuelled by false solidarities, bringing home the importance of living a singular life sustained by planetary thought.

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 with others. 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. If there is only one world out there, each of us changes it whenever we move (Hart 2022: 1).

Thank you, Keith. I hope that one day I may write a small book inspired by this one.

## **“Money Helps Us Learn How to Be More Fully Human”, by Supriya Singh**

I first met Keith in Pretoria after reading him for years. [4] One of the stories he told me then was how he had financed the luxuries of an academic life through betting. That little nugget stayed with me because I did not tell him that I was married to a man who lost heavily as a gambler. I had never met anyone who talked of betting as a positive influence in his life. It was good to flesh out Keith's story by reading this book because that evening only gave me a glimpse of his life.



Anthropologists tell stories about others, but they seldom place themselves in the context of their own life. It was wonderful for Keith to do just that. As Yasmeen and Arjun put it very well, it is an absolute gift to have an anthropologist who can write, since most of them put you to sleep. They have wonderful things to write about, but they use long, convoluted sentences and you cannot tell what they want to say. As Keith points out, he writes as he talks and talks as he writes. Thank you so much for that. Telling your own story and not just other people's is a gift. Keith asks every reader to take just what they want from his book, depending on their own situation. That is my plan too.

I read of your growing up as if it were exotic anthropology – Manchester, football, classics. I grew up in Delhi in a refugee family. At school we read about daffodils, and I had never seen one in my life. I studied in a convent. I was delighted to happen on Tagore. I did not know Sanskrit, had a bit of Hindi and did not have Punjabi. Basham's *The Wonder That Was India* was our bible. My framework was formed by English literature's view of India and by my father's version of Sikhism as a very humane and egalitarian religion. I took that outlook with me to read sociology at the Delhi School of Economics. Professor Srinivas put us right, I remember, by telling us that Sikhism too has a barber caste. I learned there to interrogate all the ideologies that people throw at you.

For me, the most riveting part of your story was the raw account of your mental illness. Again, that connects with my life because our family knows bipolar disorder well. But the people in my life who experienced it – my father and two late sisters – suffered from it, but never talked about their illness. I was of course terrified that I would get it; and I have read a lot about it. One sister recognized its presence in her, but I never found out from her what the experience was like. I was amazed that you remember so much of your long immersion in that bipolar illness. I thought people usually blank it all out. The most amazing part is that you were bipolar and on lithium, yet you managed to lead a professional and creative life. Yes, your middle years were quiet and silent, but the decades before and after were very productive. It was quite a discovery for me that it could be like that; that bipolar does not always descend into mediocrity.

As Yasmeen put it, there is always a dialectic between the personal, the academic and the philosophical in writing and speech. What took my breath away was when you suggested an intimate link between kinship and slavery in West Africa. I have been studying domestic abuse and economic exploitation for the last few years. Women have told me that they felt they were a slave in their family. That is always there and never spoken of. Most of us, me included, see the flow of money remittances as a "currency of care". But the stories I heard made me see them also as a possible source of abuse. Sociologists and anthropologists are capable of writing and speaking abstractly about control and power; but they seldom refer to coercion and abuse in the home. Yet maltreatment of the elderly and violence against women and children are commonplace there.

Reflecting on these personal connections gives me great pleasure. Keith has always been open about the blessings and pains of his life. Literature often takes us further along these

lines. Keith, you wrote that you cried for your own inadequacy as a writer when you read Chinua Achebe in the field. It made me wish I had read Chinua Achebe at the Delhi School of Economics, instead of reading about African kinship. You write about both and tell stories that illustrate your advocacy for making a better world – all in real life. That is something more of us must do. I know that after studying domestic economic abuse, I am no longer satisfied with just writing for academic journals; few people read them and the people I want to get through to certainly do not. I now spend most of my time making presentations across the country (both in Australia and abroad) telling how we should talk about money.

This is how I connect with Keith's work on money (Hart 2000). He says that money is capable not only of making the world more personal, but of making the impersonal dimensions of life in society more knowingly part of our intimate selves. Together with language, but more so, money is a universal means of communication. It is perhaps the most potent. Money is not only a currency of care or abuse. As Keith says in this book, money helps us learn how to be more fully human (Hart 2022: Chapter 19). I found all the above strands there. The writing is simple, raw and deeply personal, yet also globally human. Connecting life's extremes is the most important issue of our times. For having woven these threads together, I thank you, Keith.

## Open Discussion: Interventions and Responses

**Arjun Appadurai:** I know that Mauss plays a big role in your ideas about the human economy and much else. I would ask you though to speculate, Keith, as you often do so well, on this question. If Durkheim was right – and I think he was – that for the Australian Aborigines, the social was God and as such an external impulse for moral order, the good, the true etc., why is it that, in the great journey of humankind, that impulse towards a benevolent world force, when we take the long view, has largely been captured by the forces of violence, greed and extraction? A great human impulse has been completely hijacked. Since we are not believers in the afterlife, what should we make of this terrible situation?

**Keith Hart:** Please forgive me if I go on about religion, Arjun, since it now takes up more of my thoughts than before and I do not often get to air them in public. For example, I collaborated in and edited to completion Roy Rappaport's *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity* (1999); I have written about "Money as a form of religious life" (Hart 2010); I gave the Otto Hirschfeld lecture on "Religion and economy" at Humboldt University; I have published a manifesto, "Human economy as a religious project" (Hart 2020); I am writing a book on Marcel Mauss's relevance for our world; and he was the Durkheimian specialist on comparative religion; *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (Durkheim 1912) is the book of the founders that still, I believe, has the most power to help us rethink the world.

I distinguish between studying what religion does for individuals or sects and figuring out if it is now wholly owned by the forces of evil, for which there is much empirical evidence. Classical keywords upholding the energy and truth of the first liberal revolutions have been

co-opted and corrupted by capitalist monopolies and their political stooges. The public now reasonably finds them empty of meaning. Thomas Jefferson pointed out long ago that commercial monopolists are pseudo-aristocrats who favour autocracy and monarchy while pretending to pursue democracy. We have to do something about that, but not by abandoning the liberal project and its social democratic twin. Arjun, you have long lived mostly in India, the US and now Germany. My main places have on balance been more secular – Britain, the US before the religious right took over, Ghana, Jamaica, France and South Africa. The variation in European religiosity is huge – in France only 5% belong to a religious organization, in Germany it is 50%. The war between Catholics and Protestants was still strong in Manchester when I was a kid. This issue must be approached with some historical specificity.

In my foreword for Rappaport's *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity* (Hart 1999), I claimed that it belonged with Durkheim's (1912) book on religion. I took Durkheim and Mauss' (1903) essay, "Primitive classification", on how social classification shapes the categories of understanding, as a model for exploring the social influences on scientific thought in history (Hart 2004). Whoever *The Elementary Forms*' authors were, the book keeps on giving for me. Rappaport's book had 14 chapters, 11 of them an exhaustive treatment of ritual, which he took to be the ground where religion is made, and three exploring new religions compatible with scientific laws and based on a unifying vision inside life (ecology), not outside it (cosmology). With exceptionally wide disciplinary, historical and geographical sources, he asked how we might make universal religions, better than their predecessors. He demonized the false religion of money, finance and economics. I do not, but that did not stop us working together.

The keywords of contemporary civilization come in interactive sets that move with history, not as standalone words conceived of in static moral terms. Science originally *was not* mystical beliefs – religion, superstition, stories – uninspected traditions referring human existence to a supernatural cause; it was not 'myth'. After 5,000 years of agrarian civilization, modern societies must discover forms of secular knowledge; a century ago the political drive sustaining science was largely anti-clerical. In a world where Christianity, Islam and other fundamentalisms flourish, this crusade is still necessary.

Yet, in the last century, for most Western intellectuals that battle appeared to have been won. What science is not has shifted ground to embrace the set of oppositions that organize the academic division of labour. The negation of science is now often the creative arts – literature, poetry, the critical imagination – reflecting the division between natural science and the humanities (matter and spirit) that has spawned, as a hybrid experiment, the "social sciences". Religion was once the main link between rulers and the masses, a spurious one perhaps that allowed ordinary people to feel some affinity with power. Now religion has lost that role in the leading societies, and this may be our biggest problem today. It is surely necessary to rethink the set of categories rather than adhere to reductive ideas in isolation.

Crudely put, science makes a rational object of the world, whereas art is a means of

subjective self-expression. The best artists are also scientists and vice versa. Religion is a subject-object relationship – intimate dimensions of our inner being feel tied to the object world that we share with the rest of humanity, sometimes personified as God. *The Elementary Forms* claims that we know our own everyday lives well enough; but we are aware of being vulnerable to extraordinary forces that we do not know – not least death itself – and we would like to have a meaningful relationship with them. Religion, according to Durkheim, provides connections through ritual and beliefs performed both collectively and privately in sacred (not profane) places. Roy Rappaport and I have no use for that dualism. What believers take from religion helps to stabilize the contingency, volatility and uncertainty of ordinary life. The greatest unknown we face is living in society; we worship that and call it God. For Rappaport, religion first appeared in human evolution along with language. Speech provided fertile ground for *The Lie*; and religion allowed humanity to hold some things as true, at least for a time.

The main political event after two world wars, was the demise of European colonial empires. Peoples coerced into racist world society now made their own relationship to a better one (but it is still not good enough). Their anti-colonial leaders had to think up post-imperial futures for their countries and the world, while persuading the peasant masses to fight for them. Such a future does not yet exist; but its achievement requires religion, not only politics. India helps us to think through these issues. Gandhi is no longer regarded as a saint in many circles. Ambedkar, Nehru and Jinnah believed themselves to be superior politicians and sometimes thought of Gandhi as being out of date, too religious. Later commentators like Perry Anderson (2012) consider this religious streak to have been a weakness. Ajit Dasgupta, however, in *Gandhi's Economic Thought* (Dasgupta 1994), considered Gandhi's main predecessor as an economist to have been the Buddha.

Gandhi insisted that home rule (*swaraj*) was self-rule (Hart 2015). His method for achieving self-rule was *satyagraha*, 'insistence on truth'. His autobiography, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (1927) is a revealing source for his politics and ethics. The pursuit of truth is related to non-violence (*ahimsa*). The political arts by themselves cannot mobilize the masses to fight for a new society. The idea of soul was central for Gandhi and at first for the Pan-Africanist, W.E.B. Du Bois (*The Souls of Black Folk*, 1903). They moved between personal and global expressions of soul ('self in the world'). Gandhi's religious politics were humanist. He thought that each of us is a unique personality and belongs to humanity. Many divisions, categories and associations mediate these extremes. We feel isolated and vulnerable in a world driven by remote impersonal forces known only to experts. Yet modern cultures tell us that we are personalities with significance. How to bridge the gap? Like Rousseau, Gandhi knew that mass society could overwhelm human agency. He chose the village as the site of India's renaissance because of its scale and most Indians lived there then.

Gandhi's philosophy aimed to build up the spiritual resources of individuals – everyone's, not just his own. He synthesized Buddhist economics and Victorian romanticism – Thoreau, Tolstoy and Ruskin. There is a strong affinity between Protestantism and Buddhism: both are

middle class in origin. No wonder the Hindu fanatics wanted to kill him and many secular intellectuals disparage him now. Do divisions of race, class, nationality, religion, gender, time and place mediate the poles or exaggerate them? What size and type of society enables rather than disables its members? The Enlightenment focused on education and that has become my main theme since publication of *Self in the World*. Individuals must teach themselves to discover concrete reasons in their own lives for fighting shared battles. Politburos and professors cannot do that. This is why Marcel Mauss chose to teach ethnographers in his last decades. Religion and education are both essential to the task; and neither have fared well in capitalist states. We should not allow a determinist vision of the past to occlude that possibility. I learned that formula from you today, Arjun.

**First floor intervention** [A complex comment/question about the future of money summarized here]: Is blockchain the key to money's next stage?

**Keith Hart:** For those who do not know, blockchain is a computerized record of each transaction involving a cryptocurrency (hence "crypto") such as Bitcoin and Ethereum, which are the best-known. The point is to establish the veracity of the transactors without invoking a legal authority like a bank. Opinion is divided over whether blockchain is more effective than normal bookkeeping. But its great merit for most participants is its supposed lack of political supervision.

There was a world revolution after 1945 when the Western and Soviet blocs, with the newly independent former colonies, committed to developmental states whose economic purposes included more equal distribution of wealth and income, raising the purchasing power of ordinary families, expanding provision of the public services they needed, controlling capital flows and fixing exchange rates. A counter-revolution against this system in 1979–80 was led by Reagan and Thatcher. Its focus was reduced state intervention and free markets as the driver of economic growth, especially freeing capital to go anywhere in the world without hindrance. In fact, the three decades after 1945 saw record world economic growth and the last four decades have been relatively stagnant. The digital revolution in communications made global money flows much easier. This second period became known as "neoliberal globalization".

Crypto emerged soon after the neoliberal counter-revolution with only faltering success at first. When the leading central banks proved incapable of managing the cheap money boom in asset and credit markets, crypto became more attractive. It seems certain that the global financial boom from the 1980s is now over and the price of most investment assets have already fallen quite drastically. Both interdependent money systems share a belief in reducing or even banishing politics and law from finance. This goes along with faith in technology's unproven ability to replace the functions of political organization.

My answer to the original question appeals to historical precedent. There has never been a social revolution, involving money or anything else, that consisted of a leap between two unrelated or even opposed principles. Rather, elements that existed before and after a

rupture in the social fabric – a mixture of the old and the new, not the replacement of A by B – are always combined over a prolonged period, with ebbs and flows in both directions.

As David Graeber (2010) points out in his great book, *Debt: The Last 5,000 Years*, the dominant money form has long oscillated between currency (usually precious metals or bullion) and credit (loans between persons and organizations). A Milan banker turned up one day at the Champagne fairs with just a stool, a small table, some paper and a pen; he then issued letters of credit to French traders who were planning to do business in northern Italy. This saved them having to carry bullion that could easily be stolen or lost. Both coins and paper co-existed in varying proportion for centuries; but in the 18th century, Scottish bankers abandoned bullion and did all their international business on paper. When the British Empire introduced £5 notes and base metal coinage around the time of the industrial revolution, it soon imposed an international gold standard for foreign trade. In the mid-19th century, central banks learned to regulate national monopoly currencies by securing deposits from private banks and controlling the interest rate. As a result, the dominant money form in Western industrial countries became bank credit, but it was still anchored on the gold standard – until the latter collapsed in the last century, a process completed when the US took the dollar off gold in 1971.

The future of money will likely be some merger of central bank money, private bank credit and cryptocurrencies within a political framework whose contours are being worked out now while we discuss the issue, without knowing who the real players are. I have always thought that crypto is a criminal pyramid scheme run by a few unaccountable billionaires pretending to run a blameless democracy beyond the law at huge energy cost. Finance in the US is just as corrupt and is unwilling to regulate crypto. But this is changing. I once argued that politics and markets are both indispensable to money (Hart 1986). If politics is excluded, it goes underground as criminality. The world economy is now out of control which suits the plutocracy – daily turnover of foreign exchange alone runs at \$6 trillion, not counting all the bootleg money that never appears on the books. Try regulating that.

**Second floor intervention:** Keith's book is a manifesto for humanism – for a humanist anthropology and a humanist socialism. He thinks that the potential of money and markets is indispensable to both; it is not a fashionable idea these days. What are the prospects for such a vision on an expanded scale?

**Keith Hart:** I have said that we are not yet human. We are part-human, deformed by the distortions of race, class, gender, nationality and traditional religion. Humanity is not in our DNA; it is something we have to become individually and collectively. A “human economy” rests on two principles: 1. Any economic analysis or description must reflect the interests of the human beings who operate it in a form accessible to them. 2. The idea of humanity is hard to grasp and realize; but unless we face our common human predicament now, I wouldn't bet heavily on there being another century after this one.

Between these two premises, we should always start with the local, since that is where

human meaning is most vivid. We must then adopt as a principle of discovery and work the need to extend local knowledge towards a wider frame, certainly one larger than our own nation state. What we do everyday matters and it is never too early to start thinking about our place in the world. If the old humanism does not help us understand how we experience today's world, we should not ditch the idea of humanity altogether, in favour of being a cyborg instead.

My practical question is this. What is or should be the relationship between grassroots initiatives and the vast bureaucracies that organize modern society? Many activists want nothing to do with these corporations, cities, states, international organizations and financial networks. They see them as the problem not the solution. But bureaucracy can achieve for the public what individuals and small groups never could by themselves. I haven't yet come across a grassroots organization that can launch a communications satellite or cable; yet we all want to live by them now, do we not? What I dislike about run-of-the mill (auto-)biographies is their adherence to the old humanism – all we need to know is what they have experienced personally. I tried to get beyond that in my book and call it “Humanism 2.0”.

To become human, we must not limit our horizons just to our intimate lives. We live according to laws that we did not make ourselves using machines that we do not understand in a world that seems to be running out of control. We must try to make the impersonal forces that shape our existence belong to us, even if we will never know them fully. The important unknown for most people is “What happens after I die?” Meeting those of like mind to talk politics in closed clubs is “Humanism 1.0”; it will not get us very far. It would be better to try to humanize the great bureaucracies that we need to solve the world's pressing questions. A new humanism will only develop if we combine small-scale initiatives with large-scale organizations capable of meeting the threats facing life on this planet now.

**Third floor intervention:** You oppose being human to a self. But in India today my existence as a human being is denied every day. What can you tell me about that?

**Keith Hart:** I said that to be more fully human, we must recognize that each of us is an individual who lives in society, a self in the world. Unequal societies claim that this is impossible; but the two sides must reinforce each other. It is not easy to achieve this. Actual societies are full of people who like nothing more than to put others down. For their own purposes, the British imperialists insisted that the Indian caste system was the most unequal in the world. From where I started out in Britain, I would dispute this claim and Gandhi certainly did. My book aims to encourage readers to make more of themselves. This requires us to commit to lifetime self-learning. I list some who helped me to do so – writers of the self, anthropology's modern founders and, above all, the anti-colonial intellectuals who imagined society after empire, persuaded the masses to fight for one and encouraged them to find out what matters personally to each of them. Men like Gandhi, C.L.R. James and Fanon showed that the victims of empire did not lack the willpower to seek political redemption. Their counterpart in the field of education – the last century's Rousseau – was the Brazilian, Paulo

Freire. His most significant books are *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) and *Pedagogy of Freedom* (1998).

Freire saw education as emancipation for the downtrodden. Both teachers and students had to overcome profound obstacles to learning. The first must abandon the “banking system” of education that sees students as empty accounts filled by teachers with the means to see them through the rest of their life. Equally, the oppressed must confront programming that makes them the passive cause of their own fate. Teachers should expose and explain the conditions pupils face in society, to help them become agents of radical change. Above all, teachers and students need to learn from each other. Education is not a one-way process, but a dialogue to which both sides bring knowledge. Students should learn to be critical, curious and autonomous. Teachers “should exemplify the universal ethics of the human person... These are indispensable for human living and human social intercourse [since] humanity’s ontological vocation calls us out of and beyond ourselves”. I can’t think of a better definition of anthropology’s mission (Hart 2022: 259-60).

I partially understand what it means to be a relatively powerless individual in Modi’s India. But, as we say in Manchester, if you are not good for yourself, you are no good for others.

**Yasmeen Arif:** All I have do is learn how to win at betting on the horses and then use the money to go and live somewhere else.

## Book Launch at the London School of Economics, 10 May, 2022

### An Anthropologist’s *Bildungsroman*, Manifesto and Auto-Theory, by John Tresch

The title of anthropologist Keith Hart’s entertaining and unpredictable new book, *Self in the World: Connecting Life’s Extremes*, is a good case of truth in advertising: readers get a lot of views of the world, and a fair bit of Hart’s self. [5] He follows the commandment, cited towards the end, to “only connect”. As E. M. Forster had in mind with that slogan (Forster 1910), the book connects prose and passion, inner life and outer life – but also a vast scattering of disciplines and locations. Above all, it reflects on the possibilities for using the methods, theories, and epistemic ethics of anthropology to connect the immediate and personal with the abstract, global, and world-historical.

Hart’s voluminous writings on the informal economy, West African agriculture, and money in the making of world systems have earned him a significant place in the history of anthropology. Monuments include Hart 1973, 1982, 2000, and much more besides. The present book – at once manifesto, memoir, and *Bildungsroman* – offers historians of anthropology a unique take on some of the discipline’s key texts and figures, while mobilizing its history and methods to reposition and reinvigorate it. Hart’s personal and historical narratives are aimed at multiple audiences, even as he makes detailed technical



interventions, not least in development theory and in rethinking Africa beyond the limits of the nation state. His arguments circle back repeatedly to the past and the potentials of anthropology, the enduring home for a contemporary nomad.

*Self in the World* is Hart's plea for an anthropology that is relevant to the biggest contemporary problems and to the enduring philosophical questions of justice and human potential. It calls for an approach that meets people "where they live in order to find out what they do, think, and want", helping them to envision and bring about a better world by "contemplating humanity's destiny on and beyond this planet" (4). Returning to Durkheim's ([1914] 2005) notion of *homo duplex*, the book argues for and embodies the idea that the great challenge humans face (and that anthropology should be ideally suited to help with) is to reconcile the conflicting demands of the two sides of our nature – as individuals and as members of a collective. The challenge is even greater and more urgent when the collective in question is a highly connected, conflicted, and unequal world society, with deep (and often poorly understood) historical sedimentation and constantly renewed crises.

The book contains many jaw-dropping moments. These come from the author's depth of insight on the brutal logic of globalized apartheid, for instance, or the role of modern universities as bureaucracies for managing national capitalism. Readers may also be surprised by vivid recollections of cityscapes and encounters from Manchester and Cambridge to Paris, Durban, and Detroit, and raw confessions concerning his partnership with small-time crooks during fieldwork in Ghana, and the breakdowns he suffered between the late 1970s and early 90s while climbing the academic ladder on both sides of the Atlantic. Hilarious, sometimes devastating stories are recounted with wit alongside piercing summaries of intellectual works, historical episodes, and speculative, utopian hopes.

In "Ancestors", Hart introduces his precursors in writing the self: Montaigne, Rousseau, Franklin (who does not come off too well), Gibbon, Wordsworth, Henry Adams, Nabokov, and Achebe. These feed into another curious canon of anthropological founders: Vico, Rousseau (again), Kant, Rivers, and Mauss. One effect of this double canon is to affirm the continuity between anthropological theory of the twentieth century (a highly self-referential field) and broader traditions of philosophy and social thought. Writing in opposition to recent academic distrust toward the enlightenment, Hart insists on the radical force of eighteenth-century ideals of democratic rule, rejection of arbitrary authority, and a cosmopolitan global society as sketched in Kant's *Perpetual Peace* (1795). But he also dispels any illusion that those ideals have been widely or unequivocally achieved. He therefore features the "anti-colonial intellectuals" whose thought also shaped him: Du Bois, the Hegelian who identified "the colour line" as the defining trait of modernity; Gandhi, who physically enacted the rejection of unjust, racist rule; Fanon, who saw the potential for collective redemption in the victims of colonial capitalist racism; and James, the Trinidadian theorist of cricket and revolution and author of *The Black Jacobins* (1938), with whom Hart spent time just before his death in 1989 and whose book, *American Civilization* ([1950] 1993), he and Anna Grimshaw edited for publication.

These sources, sketching an expanded anthropological canon, contribute to one of the book's central dialectics. Democracy, autonomy, and well-reasoned egalitarianism are splendid, humane goals – but seen from the perspective of the colonized and marginalized, and from the subaltern side of the colour line, they ring hollow. Rather than give up on these ideals, however, we need a realistic, grounded view of ways to reach them. This must begin with depictions of life as it is lived, including all the hypocrisy, failure, and deliberate exploitation in its current arrangements.

The book's formal and stylistic mobility takes it beyond both autobiography and theory, suggesting comparison with experiments in a genre recently labelled “auto-theory” and pursued by Chris Kraus and Maggie Nelson (whose first-person experiments in *Argonauts* might be juxtaposed with those in Malinowski's *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*). In such works, academic and theoretical debates are worked out through personal experience and social observation, resonating with the feminist conviction that “the personal is political” (Poletti 2016; Nelson 2015). Like these authors, and like Teju Cole and sometime Mancunian W. G. Sebald, in Hart's book private, microsocial ambiguity unfolds against the backdrop of the well-ordered cruelties of empire (Cole 2012; Sebald [1992] 2016).

The book offers Hart's own ways of connecting present realities to hoped-for ideals as examples that anyone can follow; indeed, for him, anthropology at its best links local experience to world history and global systems. Giving particular emphasis to perspectives from Africa and the Black Atlantic, he proposes a methodological pluralism – combining views from many angles – as a way to bring the whole together. *Self in the World* follows up on *The Memory Bank* (Hart 2000) in its vigorous plea to redeem *money* as a way of reckoning one's relations to the rest of the planet. This rehabilitated conception of money as a social and individual force in its many forms drives his vision of “the human economy – the whole range of everyday making, trading, buying, selling, speculating, owning, using, and losing, reorganized to allow everyone to become fuller, even whole human beings.

Anthropologists help by working out and communicating the cubist continuum of *self-home-city-nation-world* which keeps individual humans and their ideas in motion. This also means experimenting with writing forms and new media, as Hart has done along with Anna Grimshaw in the Prickly Pear pamphlet series (later rebaptized Prickly Paradigm by Marshall Sahlins and Matthew Engelke), the Open Anthropology Cooperative, and Berghahn's Human Economy series. Through a kaleidoscopic narrative of his own movements across continents, the book puts Hart close to the pulse of world society since the middle of the last century.

The longest section of the book, “Self”, repays the price of entry with tales of a Manchester childhood, Accra fieldwork, and later stops. We feel the squeeze of the three-up, three-down terrace house, pressured by the aspirations of his father, the telephone engineer known to his sisters as “Saint Stanley”, and of his mother and grandmother – the last a “working class Tory and snob” and a special mentor. “Little Keithy from Old Trafford” hoards pear drops and slips into Manchester Grammar – but toughens up his facial expressions when meeting other street kids on his passage from home to school. He spends his spare time reading,

singing, playing ball games outside and cards at home, later drinking, smoking, and betting with the lads.

He wins a golden ticket to collegiate paradise: Cambridge. There he rides out the shock of its feudal arrangements – little lords archly shepherded by porters and bedders – first by mastering languages, myths, and military tales in classics, then by a switch to social anthropology, irresistibly drawn by what he only somewhat jokingly sees as anthropology's lack of intellectual standards: anthropologists “could study anything in the world” (80). He makes a good living from betting on the horses while earning the patronage of Jack Goody, Meyer Fortes, and Edmund Leach.

Hart's fieldwork among rural Ghanaian migrants to the capital, Accra, unfolds as a series of disasters and recoveries. There is an incredible passage, with echoes of *Breaking Bad*, when he realizes that he will only survive the lawless economy he is discovering by joining it. He teams up with pickpockets and burglars, receives stolen goods, sets up as a moneylender, and works his way through the minefield of favours, threats, long cycles of credit and debt, kin obligations, and police harassment that thrive below the view of official economics, prepared by Manchester street life and Cambridge betting scams. Such material, at least in the first person, had no place in the official anthropology of the time. Today, after reflexive anthropology, *Writing Culture*, and ethnographies of life at the margins, it would make for a provocative monograph alongside works like Alice Goffman's *On the Run* (2014).

After Ghana, in the 1970s Hart turned to post-colonial development as a policy adviser, working in the Cayman Islands, Papua New Guinea, and Hong Kong, where he dealt “with criminal elites, their slum counterparts and development practitioners” (105). A review of West African agriculture for USAID was published as Hart (1982). These experiences shaped his devastating perception of the current world system. Rules are habitually ignored, bent, suspended, or simply do not exist; criminal informality comes to define the *entire world economy*, from local grift, to cronies' state capture, to hedge funds and the secret labyrinths of offshore, extra-national accounting. His view of Britain's current imperial nostalgia and constitutional frailty is bracing.

Despite Hart's clear view of post-colonial failures and foreign predations, he offers a hopeful vision of Africa as humanity's future. With the world's fastest growing population, he believes the continent is ripe for new regional alliances capable of fuelling a world-changing revolution. The book traces the dizzying route Hart has followed through teaching, betting, consulting, writing and publishing, marriage and children, to wind up in places like Durban and Aberdeen, and family life in Paris with Swiss anthropologist Sophie Chevalier. After surviving fifteen years of crashes this book is Hart's way of processing a lifetime of experience as a self in the world.

Full disclosure: I met Keith when he served as advisor for an essay I wrote on Gregory Bateson. He had met him once in Michigan, introduced by Roy Rappaport, but Bateson's patrician prophet schtick “got up his nose”. We became friends in Paris while I was writing a

PhD dealing with socialism and mechanization before Marx. We shared rambling chats in sidewalk cafes and watched B-movie matinees, gangster flicks, and teen comedies, both of us moved by movie mythology and the detritus of pop culture. Over coffee, beers, and meals I received an apprenticeship in world history, *la présence africaine*, economic anthropology, academic gossip, and speculative futures. (Thanks Keith, and thanks, too, Sophie.) These informal settings also gave me a sense of Keith in the classroom – how he can convey, to any student ready to hear it, that there is an incredible, often horrendous, millennia-old drama going on around you, and it is up to you not only to understand your place in it, but to get into the game and play your hand, to steer it toward a better place.

*Self in the World: Connecting Life's Extremes* synthesizes Hart's manifold projects, driven by a sense of urgency across countries and continents. He shares the rewards of constant learning and revising what one knows, including the nightmare history that our anaesthetized understanding too often lets us forget. The book dramatizes Hart's own journey, "running down a dream" (266) with a compelling sense of expectation, striving, loss, and hope. It draws together the world that made him and goes a long way toward realizing the world he wants to make. Take the gamble and join him for the ride.

## Summary of *Self in the World*, by Keith Hart

This summary is intended for readers who missed both launches and have an interest in the history of anthropology. I start here with a quote from the first *Prickly Pear Pamphlet* (Grimshaw and Hart 1993), later reproduced in *The Hit Man's Dilemma*:

Edmund Leach, in his prescient BBC lectures *A Runaway World?* (1968), identified a world in movement than that was marked by the interconnectedness of people and things. This provoked the mood of optimism and fear that characterized the 1960s, when established structures seemed to be breaking down. The reality of change could not be understood through conventional cultural categories predicated on stable order. Moral categories based on habits of separation and division could only make the world's movement seem alien and frightening. An ethos of scientific detachment reinforced by binary ideas (right/wrong, true/false) lay at the core of society's malaise. Leach called for an intellectual practice based on movement and engagement, connection and dialectic. In short, he was calling for the reinsertion of ideas into life.

The solution to our problems cannot be found through increased specialization, through the discovery of new areas of social life to colonize with the aid of old professional paradigms or through a return to literary scholarship disguised as a new dialogical form. It requires new patterns of social engagement extending beyond the universities to the widest reaches of world society. This in turn depends on placing ourselves in a position first of acknowledging how people everywhere are pushing back the boundaries of the old society and second of being open to universality, most versions of which have been driven underground by national capitalism and would be buried forever if the present corporate privatization of the

cultural commons as intellectual property is allowed to succeed (Hart 2005:101-2).

*Self in the World: Connecting Life's Extremes* is my attempt to take up Leach's challenge half a century later. My starting point is Émile Durkheim's idea of *homo duplex* (Durkheim 1914). 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. Durkheim privileged the social as our means for stabilizing the volatility of everyday life experience. I have mentioned above the role of religion in all this.

My Zulu friend Lindiwe knows her own life better than anyone else. Her solutions to many problems are multi-stranded and pragmatic. But she has no answers for questions that affect her yet lie beyond her experience. Why is there no longer any work for the men in the mines? Why are schools a disaster for our children? Why has a Black government increased poverty and inequality while blaming, not rich White and Indian citizens, but African immigrants? We must help her to find answers that connect to her life, but potentially reach much further. This is a huge issue for political education. But it should start by extending what she already knows into areas that lie beyond her direct experience now.

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 when crossing the street carelessly. We must each 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 like to imagine ourselves as competent actors with a singular identity. But it often feels that we are broken. We seem to be out of touch in a world that is running away from us (Leach). We feel disabled and lonely. We are parts, not wholes. What does it take to become more fully human? Perhaps we will all eventually find our way to humanity. But now we are only part-human. We are deformed by class divisions and condemned to see the world through the cracked mirror of race and nationalism.

How did this come about? Why is human integrity so hard to achieve? Why do so many 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, moral and intellectual effort to see how they are connected and to make them work together for each of us....

This book 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. 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 remote people do and think where they live. I rely mainly on lifelong learning through reading, writing and varied experience of the world that includes eclectic immersion in high and low culture. I combine auto-ethnography with world history and humanist philosophy. I teach what I have learned and learn from teaching (Hart 2022:1-3).

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 has in common, their human nature. But what was that and how could nature and history, personal freedom and civic duty be reconciled? To uphold it, democracy would require citizens to re-educate themselves. The self, psychology, novels, mass circulation newspapers and revolutionary theory 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 and we should retain that premise. The senseless slaughter of 1914–18 required and found a new anthropological paradigm for the last, nationalist century. We should join the people where they live 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 since have 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 is description, not prescription. Anthropologists struggle to catch up with global events that they and their students do not understand and cannot influence.

Universities that focus on bureaucratizing national capitalism have run out of steam. Having been tied to them professionally hitherto, anthropologists will need to find other homes as well as in a reformed academy. The modernist project of breaking up knowledge into specialist compartments negates our pressing need to understand persons who belong to humanity. 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” (we could do better than a five-syllable Greek word exclusively used by academics – maybe “the human sciences”) could be an umbrella term for several disciplines to pool their e×orts while seeking to bridge the gap between formal education and wider public interests that are increasingly global in scope.

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 it 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.

I have something to say 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 this task. The two sides of self and world should inform each other. We each need to place ourselves in history. Being human is not just about accounting for our personal actions. My 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 the two 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, revolutions, wars and economic collapse. 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 report disasters every day as news, 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 might each of us relate to a world that seems to lack natural and social order? Personal connection to world society is currently unthinkable. But unless most of us can identify with it, how will humanity solve problems that we know are global in scope?

The book's preface and introduction provide snapshots of the author and of what follows. Part I, 'Ancestors', surveys my main literary influences. It addresses three classes of authors: writers about the self, pioneers of modern 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. It is the longest section of the four. Part III, 'World', identifies themes that have shaped my understanding of humanity as a whole. These are: inequality and its antithesis, movement; the digital revolution in communications; how economy can connect local and global; and Africa's growing significance for this century. Part IV, 'Lifelong Learning', brings self and world together as continuing 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 how and why I came to write this book. I reflect on R.G. Collingwood's "logic of question and answer". I have not stopped hoping for general readers, but towards the end I aimed at an accessible text for beginner students in the humanities and social disciplines. I also decided to make my ideas about anthropology's future more explicit. But I worried that its dire public reputation would be a sales handicap. That purpose became more prominent anyway. I made a surprising discovery, that this was the only book I wanted to write (for now), the book of my life – my own story, but also the one book that I must get right.

Readers will decide the book's fate. Recalling Giambattista Vico's sad experience of being discovered only after his death, I imagined a Mexican author who, 200 years from now, will find a reflection of himself in my book and spread my fame, falsely believing that the ideas he has found are mine, not his own. I can settle for being a bit player in the long human conversation. I dream of becoming a classical source, but I know that success in that is a lottery.

Collingwood is a congenial companion for the last stage of my journey. But he was a logician, and I am not. I find it pointless to ask whether the end result is the "right" answer to what I had in mind when I started out. I prefer the analogy of climbing a mountain. We can see the top from the bottom and get a great view from the top. In between, all we see is one foot stepping in front of the other. Any large work of the mind is like this, whatever vision we once had and might have when we are finished. Most of the actual work is tedious; any guiding perspective goes missing. I do, however, have an answer for "What relation is there between what I have done and what I tried to do?" I agree that it sometimes pays to step back and ask "What question was this supposed to be the answer to?" I have done that a dozen times here. What we start with is a prospectus, a plausible fiction. No one could know how the finished article will turn out, even less why.

A reader triangulates text and author with what is already stored in their memory. Collingwood wanted to displace the 'realists' in his field. Realism means something else to me. Meyer Fortes, after I fell into the swamp of my middle years, told me that I was the last person he expected to go mad. "A rationalist yes, Keith; but I never met anyone as down-to-earth as you – you are a realist". Here was a man with an LSE doctorate in psychology and a New York psychiatrist wife; but he did not know that realism is a kind of idealism, just as vulnerable as any other to the vagaries of life. The big question of my life – the WTF moment – was how I could have sacrificed my family life for an academic career. Until then I thought I had all the answers; finding out that I did not was a brutal shock. The rational realist in me made that mistake and life bit me hard where it hurts.

Collingwood and I have a magical relationship, similar to one with my daughters, "the magical twins", born on the same day twenty-eight years apart. He died at 53 of multiple strokes in Coniston, the Lake District, the same year that I was born. We spent our summer holidays there when I was very young. I began to walk in the garden of Mrs Battie's Coniston guest house on my first birthday and have a photo to prove it. I do not believe in the



transmigration of souls; but magical thinking is an aid to writing for me. I also know what science is – knowing how to get something right again and again within an acceptable margin of error, until it does not work anymore and we must try something else. I do not mix up magic and science; they overlap, but they occupy different compartments for me. Writing this book showed me that eclecticism is not good enough. Anthropology must re-join the humanities with some conviction. Its sojourn as an impersonal social science was an aberration of the last century, the deadliest humanity has ever known.

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