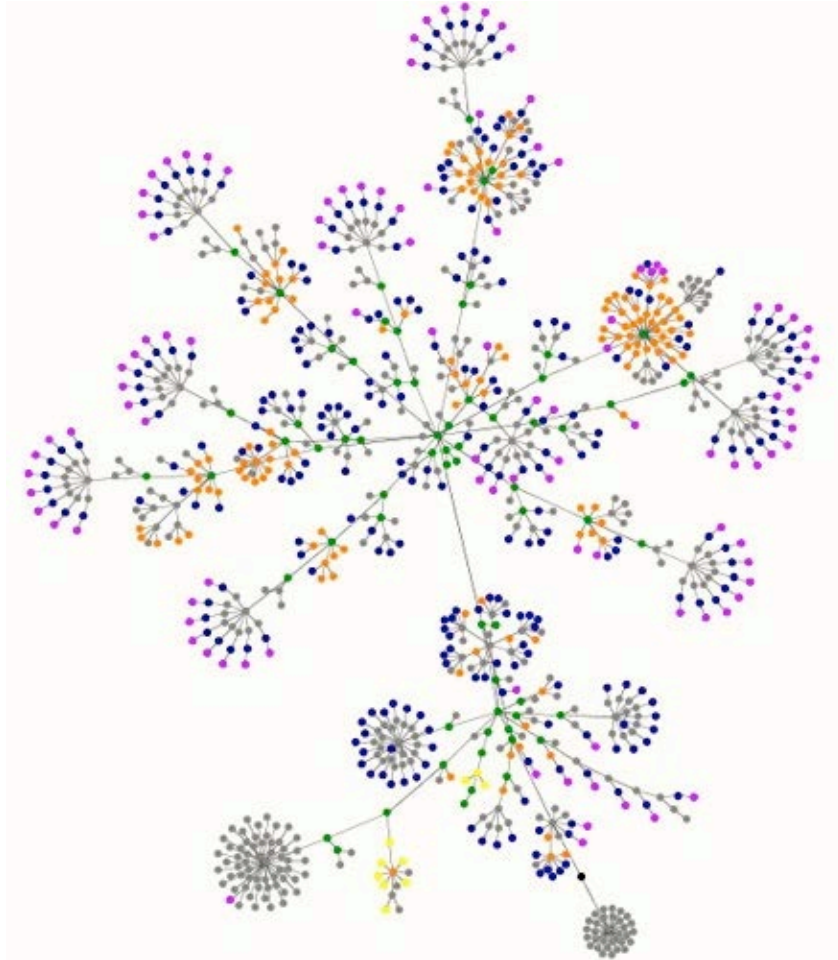


ENCOUNTER WITH SOCIOLOGY



Sarah Harrison and Alan Macfarlane

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Preface to the series

There have been many autobiographical accounts of the creative process. These tend to concentrate on one level, and within that one aspect, the cerebral, intellectual working of a single thinker or artist's mind. Yet if we are really to understand what the conditions are for a really creative and fulfilling life we need to understand the process at five levels.

At the widest, there is the level of civilizations, some of which encourage personal creativity, while others dampen it. Then there are institutions such as a university, which encourage the individual or stifle him or her. Then there are personal networks; all thinkers work with others whether they acknowledge it or not. Then there is the level of the individual, his or her character and mind. Finally there is an element of chance or random variation.

I have long been interested in these inter-acting levels and since 1982 I have been filming people talking about their life and work. In these interviews, characteristically lasting one to two hours, I have paid particular attention to the family life, childhood, education and friendships which influence us. I have let people tell their own stories without a set of explicit questions to answer. This has led them to reflect on what it was in their lives which led them to be able to do their most interesting and rewarding work. They reveal the complex chains which sometimes lead to that moment when they discovered or made something new in the world.

I started for some years mainly in the disciplines I knew, anthropology, history and sociology. But after 2006 I broadened the project out to cover almost all fields of intellectual and artistic work. I have now made over 200 interviews, all of them available on the web. Future volumes based on these interviews are outlined at the end of this volume.

How to view the films

The films are up on the Internet, currently in three places.

Alan Macfarlane's website, www.alanmacfarlane.com

The Streaming Media Service in Cambridge:

<http://sms.cam.ac.uk/collection/1092396>

On both of these, the full summary of the interviews are available.

Most of the interviews are also up on the 'Ayabaya' channel of Youtube.

The films can be seen from within a free PDF version of this book by pressing on the image. You will need to download an Adobe Acrobat PDF reader (free) from the web if you do not have it. If you right click on the film, other options open up. The free PDF version can be obtained by going to Dspace at Cambridge and typing Macfarlane Encounter followed by the name of the book, for example 'computing' or 'economics'.

Technical information

Unless otherwise specified, all the interviewing and filming was done by Alan Macfarlane, mostly in his rooms in King's College, Cambridge.

The detailed summaries, with time codes to make it easier to find roughly where a passage of special interest is to be found, were made by Sarah Harrison, who also edited and prepared the films for the web.

The cameras improved with time, but there are occasions when both the early cameras and microphones were less than satisfactory. We have had to wait for the technology to catch up.

Introduction

When I first arrived at Oxford to study history in 1960 I failed my Latin exam. My College sent me for extra tuition to a post-graduate student, David McLellan. I little knew that some fifty years later I would interview him. By then he was retired and internationally known as a leading authority on Karl Marx. Thus began my long-term encounter with sociology.

The London School of Economics in 1966, where I came for a conversion course into anthropology, was a renowned centre for sociology. There in seminars and conversations I encountered several sociologists, including Ronald Dore.

When I came to teach in the Department of Social Anthropology in Cambridge in 1975 I found that we worked closely with the neighbouring Social and Political Sciences Department. So I taught a joint course with Geoffrey Hawthorn and we became friends. I also met Garry Runciman who was based mainly in Trinity College but whose books were used in our undergraduate teaching courses.

In the later 1970's I met Peter Worsley, and his works on millenarianism and the Third World became central to my teaching. Although his interview in 1989 was done on an early camera and the sound and lighting is not good, it is such a rich and interesting interview, setting the pattern for a number of the later ones, that I have decided to include it here.

Later I read the work of Richard Sennett and Michael Mann and was delighted to have a chance to interview them towards the end of my teaching career.

I have put links to films of a number of other sociologists at the end of the book.

Peter Worsley



25 February 1989

<http://downloads.sms.cam.ac.uk/1139306/1724452.mp4>

Peter Worsley, *The Trumpet Shall Sound* (1968)

From Wikipedia - 25.8.2014

Peter Maurice Worsley (6 May 1924 - 15 March 2013) was a noted British sociologist and social anthropologist. He was a major figure in both anthropology and sociology, and is noted for introducing the term *third world* into English. He not only made theoretical and ethnographic contributions, but also was regarded as a key founding member of the New Left.

Born in Birkenhead, Worsley started reading English at Emmanuel College, Cambridge but his studies were interrupted by World War II. He served in the British Army as an officer in Africa and India. During this time he developed his interest in anthropology. After the war he worked on mass education in Tanganyika and then went to study under Max Gluckman at the University of Manchester. He received his PhD from the Australian National University in Canberra.

He lectured in sociology at the University of Hull and then went on to become the first Professor of Sociology at the University of Manchester in 1964.

Interview Summary

Interviewed by Alan Macfarlane, filmed by Sarah Harrison, at his home on 25th February 1989, using a video 8 camera.

[Later additions in 2004 by Peter Worsley in square brackets, and in notes at the end]

Part 1: From childhood to Australia

Birth, childhood, school

0:00:28 Born in 1924. Parents and early life. Merseyside. Lower middle class background [we lived in middle-class Wallasey, but father's business was in proletarian Birkenhead, so I knew a divided society) misery around, old blind men selling matches, proletarians, class injustice, the Orwellian world, a growing sense of injustice

Sent to a Catholic school, father a [very tolerant] Catholic

0:02:30 Catholic discipline at school; physical punishment; Jesuits, storing up merit in heaven, thinks extremely immoral, [see note 1 at end] made me unhappy and physically sick, then went to another marvellous [Protestant, liberal] school and stimulating. So became early aware of two cultures.

0:04:20 became head boy at Wallasey Grammar school in 1940/1, always aware of democracy and inequality and the rights of minorities because of Catholic background, and sensitized to other cultures. [see note 3 at end]

First part of University education and the army

0:05:10 went to University, partly due to inspiring masters in English and history, ruined for natural sciences [see note 2 at end]. Went to Cambridge to read English [because of my wonderful English teacher] – a Leavisite in 1942. Social criticism of Leavisites by Eliot, Lawrence and Raymond Williams

0:07:00 the effects of Stalingrad siege. The Red Army stood between us and conquest. A huge influence on me. So it was not

long before I joined the Communist Party in Cambridge [since discovered that the Cambridge University Socialist Club had c.1000 members – the biggest in Cambridge]. Not in the spy generation. We were young people who had anti-fascist enthusiasm. Very respectable and patriotic.

0:08:17 Went into army, straight into Officer's Training School in Wales, the Royal Artillery. Surrounded by older and more mature people [see note 4 at end]. Got into trouble in guard duty, [because I'd never done it before].

0:10:20 The time of Alamein. The blitz over [so need for AckAck]. Converted into the infantry. Volunteers were needed for East and West Africa and chose East Africa. Marvellous out there [after the austerity of wartime England and the blackout]. Egypt a revolting experience, mind blowing poverty. We are very racist – realized through experience in Egypt and India. We blamed them for their poverty, an attitude which continues to this day.

0:11:40 I was a Red, I went to India and made contact with the Indian Communist Party as did people like John Saville. [Communists in the forces in Italy] were selling the Daily Worker to the troops [on trains]. There was an elected Forces Parliament in Cairo and the Communists won one quarter of the votes.

0:13:17 I was entranced with Black Africa and learnt Swahili. Got interested in African languages and culture and got to know the African troops through language. [Taught myself Nandi].

0:14:30 Went to Orissa in India, nearly went to Malaya [one week later, we would have been in invasion], where I would with others have been butchered by the Japanese. But the war ended, which I heard from jungle drums [returning to camp one night].

0:15:00 Back to East Africa, taking African troops back to their villages. [A wonderful, happy time. Saw a lot of East Africa, from Sudan to S.Tanganjika. The demobilized soldiers were, of course, full of joy!] So I determined to be an anthropologist. I read a lot of anthropology.

Second undergraduate education: anthropology

0:16:21 When I returned I wanted to change course at Emmanuel College. I asked, timorously, for sociology [but was told they hadn't any, but I could do anthropology – which was what I

actually wanted! Welborne told me 90% of ex-Army changed courses!], so I did anthropology.

0:17:04 Anthropology was in a shocking state generally. Prof. Hutton on caste and Nagas, mostly about soul stuff, head-hunters etc. for hours on end. The material culture very funny. Bushnell and practicals on ways of making fire (fire drills) and spear throwers being hurled around in Downing Street. Godfrey Lienhardt was the Examiner and prompted my answers. Hippo killing spear.

0:19:15 Physical anthropology and Archaeology – don't believe they are linked to anthropology, irrelevant. Much of my time dis-education.

0:20:02 Anthropological studies proper. I found a hoard of books, but they were like dirty or banned books behind an iron grill [in Prof. Hutton's room!], [e.g. Rhodes Livingstone Institute publications]. One needed special permission to read them. "Modern" anthropology hardly born.

0:20:29 Hutton on Freud, his mannerisms, 'damn nonsense'. Reo Fortune appointed, a breath of fresh air, but the bizarreness of Reo.

0:21:50 Went to Heffers, learnt a little about lineage systems. Reo, powerful insights and both serious and crazy.

0:22:40 G.I. Jones really pedestrian ex-government official, though good on land tenure. Another dis-education.

0:23:06 H.S.Bennett told him not to go to Leavis' lecture in the 1940's. That period dreary in the extreme, arbitrarily leaving out huge chunks of literature. Bad English literature and bad anthropology. Only one's fellow students were exciting.

0:24:11 Fellow students included Jack Goody, Frank Girling (in C.P.), Ramkrishna Mukherjee. They were married and rather remote and did not see much of them.

0:25:07 Kathleen Gough – adorable and intelligent, but remote as two years above

0:25:50 Evans-Pritchard used to come over, the only ray of light. He gave a course for colonial officers, marvellous, talking about African Political Systems. Also H.A.R.Gibb (non-anthropologist) on Islam was marvellous and learnt a lot

0:26:45 Graham Clark the archaeologist, wrote interestingly, but his lectures were dreary in the extreme, he had come from Libya and very boring. I'm anti-archaeology. It can be interesting in the

wide sweep, e.g. Gordon Childe and Glyn Daniel (who was my tutor for a while).

0:27:35 Jack Trevor was my first tutor. He knew some social anthropology. Not a very effective teaching system.

0:28:03 I resent the arrogant upper-class and elitist assumption that Cambridge and Oxford are the centre of the world, much as I loved being there. I had two lousy dis-educations. They are good places to leave.

Africa

0:28:33 The ground-nut scheme in Africa was being launched. [I thought this sounded like a good program and went to Unilever House for interview. High powered scientists recommended pulling out bush and planting ground nuts.] I was hired to teach 'Basic English', the Africans were to be given decent education and health. A modification of IA Richards. Description of scheme and project. Why it failed. The equipment tried out in Berkshire, where the soil is different. The equipment soon collapsed.

0:31:19 Description of the Kongwa region, the Africans. The peanuts burnt up by the sun, a huge waste. To impress visitors, ground nuts were imported from South Africa.

A farce. Clergymen ran social programs. I abandoned language teaching. We ended up reproducing the colonial cultural division of labour, equipping whites to control African labour.

0:32:34 I was visited by the C.I.D. – my mail was opened regularly and they pulverized left-wing mail. There was one law for 'politicos', another for racketeers [for example a senior engineer in charge of the Training School, fired for embezzlement].

Return to England and contacts with Max Gluckman

0:34:00 went home, no job, no money, except what I had saved, aged 22. I still wanted to be an anthropologist, but there were no opportunities. [Whilst in Tanganyika, I had written] to the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute and asked if there were any posts. [light getting poor] I had been to South Africa at the end of the time there and been to Johannesburg where I met Ruth First and, like others, fell wildly in love with her.

0:35:51 Coming back through the streets [from a Communist Party meeting] with an Indian we were jeered at by louts. C.P

(Communist Party) meetings were curious. [Ruth showed me my first shanty-towns].

0:37:02 Went for an interview at the Colonial Office. Max Gluckman (M.G.) was one of the assessors. The job was to study race relations in Rhodesia. My answer untactful and I didn't get job. But two weeks later a letter from M.G. to say that he had been appointed to Chair at Manchester and would I care to put in for Assistant Research Lectureship. I got a job on the basis of work in Africa. At week-ends I wrote on Hehe grammar. I had also done some recording on 'wire' recorder of music and language.

0:39:07 I went to Manchester and gave some lectures on Bantu languages. Victor Turner was there, and later R. Frankenberg, Freddie Bailey. Max said that 'you've one great defect, that you were not trained at Cambridge and know no anthropology'. I had never read any Fortes, Evans-Pritchard etc. So read Fortes and being a Marxist I could not buy it. I was a primitive Marxist and economic determinist.

0:41:09 That is how I wrote my critique of Meyer, which won the Curl Prize. I don't agree with my piece now, Meyer was an idealist, mystical.

0:42:04 Life was luxurious in those days. The ESRC was not whipping people to finish their theses, people had time to think. So in six weeks I wrote the piece and turned it into an M.A. and got the Curl Prize.

0:43:04 I met Fortes in London, he introduced the award ritual at the R.A.I. 'I don't agree with this, he said'. However, we agreed to differ. Afterwards most positive relations with Meyer and we never discussed the Tallensi. Applied to Cambridge, but Jack Goody got the job.

0:44:00 Stayed with Max and applied again to Rhodes-Livingstone and got the job. A Research post in the Institute. But M.I.5 stopped me getting the post. [poor colour on film]. I was doomed. 6 years in Africa, but the end of the road. The R-L subject to much political interference.

0:45:17 Max himself was under a cloud because he had introduced the inauspiciously sounding 'Three Year Plan'. Max was never a red, but a radical liberal. Mary his wife was a member of the C.P. Much of the political orientation was Mary's.

0:46:05 Max was a fine anti-colonial, his hour of glory was when he took on the [Kenya] governor [Sir Philip Mitchell] on the Mau Mau and defended the Mau Mau. Supreme courage. He talked on the radio about it. He was very popular on the radio [indeed a celebrity]. Anthropology was a subject on the 3rd programme. He exposed the torture in the camps. I was very actively involved in anti-colonial movements, all to my undoing. It blocked me.

Australia: preparations for New Guinea

0:47:48 I was told [by Max] that I had better go to Australia. Nadel had just been appointed at Canberra. Firth interviewed me and I and Ken Burridge got scholarships. On the ship, news came over the radio that Menzies was having a referendum on outlawing the communist party. Much to everyone's surprise it was rejected [but only by 100,000 votes]. I was planning to go to the Central Highlands of New Guinea. I read all the reports etc of the [Australian equivalent of the] Colonial Office. It was run by the strange Freddy Rose [an ex-meteorologist] Freddy went up to Groote Eylandt to get near the aborigines. It was a seaplane base from England to Sydney. Rose studied the aboriginal kinship system.

0:50:51 These were bad times. I wrote an article on this ['What CP policy should be' in the *Communist Review*, (see my contribution to the Stanley Diamond *festschrift*), and was invited to present my arguments at the CP National Executive!] What happened with McCarthy in the U.S. happened everywhere in the 1950's. It was awful and we thought they were going to arrest all the Communists. I buried my C.P. literature in the garden. It was provoked by a Soviet defection.

0:52:07 The first European to New Guinea was a Russian [of Petrov, a "diplomat"]. I had taught myself Russian, while travelling into Manchester and could read Soviet anthropology. I had some connections with Soviet Anthropologists, one of them poisoned by the secret police [in Dar es Salaam]. A nice story about how one had chosen his fieldwork. I got some early Russian writings on New Guinea. And I was not jailed, though Freddy Rose was on trial at the Royal Commission on Espionage. Nothing was proved.

0:54:57 The Australian Communists were lovely people, but living underground. Later I was in trouble and I would not admit I

was a communist. I do not see why I should, because of Habeas Corpus. I would defend my denial and refused to make a statement. Freddy was fired and went off to Tasmania. He ended up in East Berlin and wrote a most exhaustive study of kinship among the Groote Eylandt Aborigines. A historical landmark.

0:57:48 I bought enough food for a year and prepared for a year in the Highlands of PNG and a day before I was going went for my entry permit and was refused.

0:58:39 I thought 'to Hell. If I'm ruined, then I'll pull the temple down' and I went public. All Hell broke out – the front page of the *Sydney Morning Herald* etc. Parliament Debates. Many attacked me. I and others had set up a student association. Ten of us. It took up my case and lined up with all other Universities. It was pretty hellish, hounded by the paparazzi. A miserable time, on the phone all the time. Sheila in a bad way with it.

Part 2: Australia onwards (60 mins)

Fieldwork among Australian aborigines: Groote Eylandt

0:01:00 Attempted entrapment. No support from the Department. Some sympathetic and nice people like Richard Storry the Japanese specialist at ANU. Nadel washed his hands of it, wouldn't do anything. Firth found me a dreadful embarrassment. We were poverty stricken, forced to live in the University Hostel. I was hired for interviewing on a project and my boss Jean Craig was furious with me [because my political scandal might prejudice her project]. I had little support from senior colleagues.

0:03:00 Freddy Rose suggested that I study Australian Aborigines and go to Groote Eylandt. Fred Gray's life and career and his setting up of an Aboriginal reserve with financial support from the Government.

0:04:50 work in Groote Eylandt; remonstrance at beating of boys and ordered off, but did not leave

0:06:15 converted from Africanist, overnight an Australian aboriginal specialist; the complicated kinship systems an intellectual magnet – so difficult.

0:06:30 Stanner my supervisor – cracked the kinship system I think. Discussion of Aboriginal kinship systems and theories about, including Rose, Gray and others. Four and eight section systems.

0:08:17 young men's marriage systems and the mechanisms for keeping young men inferior; riven with structural inequalities of age and gender

0:09:15 I worked through the language and spent some ten months in the field, ghastly difficult topic

0:10:28 women as pawns etc., the logic of algebra cannot work; no available women, have to manipulate kinship terms. Not pure algebra.

0:11:20 Others showed the politics of bestowal. The argument goes on. The sociological work of David Turner still seems to me algebra - four or five different accounts might need to be reconciled! Josselin de Jong tried. I was interested in all dimensions of the lives of the 450 people there – very rich.

0:13:10 I read the Berndts' work; they record just a small part of one of the ritual cycles, only a segment; incredibly complex. An order of complexity similar to Griaule on the Dogon, even though a hunter-gatherer people. Incredibly sophisticated and I couldn't penetrate into that, as the Aboriginal ritual specialists were at the Mission and I could not go there as a Red.

0:14:50 various negative things about the CMS; puritanical, useless etc., story of having to dress up when missionaries visited. They had no interest in the aborigines

0:15:26 an exception is the absolutely marvellous recent book, which could only have been written after the deep immersion of a missionary, Dr. Julie Waddy, a 2 volume work on plants and animals - superb. No anthropologist could do this.

0:16:30 I pioneered that field. It came about through a school test when I asked children to draw the island and was amazed at the trails which they could see [and called 'roads'] and I could not – so I started to ask about plants and animals and to write articles. I got very excited and read the work of Vygotski and was blown away. I thought this is the answer, the classification system

0:18:20 the social structure helps to classify, intra-myth connections, how animals occur in myths, the four frames [see the chapter in my book *Knowledges* (1997)]. Edmund Leach used the original article in his teaching.

The Hungarian Revolution and the New Left

0:20: I blew up at the Hungarian Revolution. I was going out there on a motorbike when it happened. I couldn't stand it. It set up new resistance within the CP, led to the *Reasoner*, the *New Reasoner* and finally the *New Left Review*. I was a founding member of the NLR

0:21: Hungary was the first great shock. Stalin was not unmasked to me before then. I withdrew from academic talks in Budapest; I got a telegram in reply to mine expressing appreciation. The horrors only became patent later.

0:23: we revolted with the Hungarians, we started to ask questions, what was wrong with Marxism and the Soviet Union?

0:24: the change from the original New Left movement and the *New Left Review* today; became a 'Mandarin' journal under Perry Anderson. Perry not far short of genius, but converted NLR into an arid and esoteric journal. It was part of a movement and used to be sold in all sorts of places and discussed everywhere.

0:25: it was linked to the start of CND with which we immediately identified; the New Left became the biggest protest movement since the Chartists

The journal at first attracted people like Richard Hoggart, Raymond Williams and covered arts, films and others. Later E.P.Thompson said it was converted into an arcane and specialist and highly Marxist journal. EPT exploded.

0:27: the disappearance of the CP (Communist Party) in England, which scarcely now exists. Asked about Orwell and Koestler. I'd read them and I would have been more sympathetic, but E.P.Thompson very hostile to both of them and influenced me. I deferred to the immense charisma and power of EPT, an amazing guy, so we never gave them much attention. We thought of them as unspeakable right-wingers, and they were of another generation.

0:29: What was the central doubt about communism after Hungary? That the entire state of society and the role of the party was in doubt, the brutal Stalinism. We were blinded to this before Hungary. I have become more humble since. We made a total re-examination of our own culture and of Marxism and the development of the (rival) concept of 'socialist humanism'. My main role was as a commentator on colonial affairs, especially

Africa. I wrote an article on Mau Mau which later converged with writing on cargo cultures. I tried to explain MM, the brutal rituals of induction and the horror of the Kikuyu themselves [at the taboos which Mau Mau deliberately broke in their initiation rituals].

0:31: I also wrote an article against Albert Schweitzer, not a saint. This brought the house down on my head. AS a bloody old colonialist, though dedicated. This takes us to 1966-7

[rest for a few minutes – break of 4 seconds]

0:32: Further reflections on Stalingrad and the feelings about loyalty to Russia. There was nothing to stop the Germans except the Red Army. It showed us that the Soviet Union was real and that we had been fed a load of myths about how weak it was, the people would rise up against Stalin etc. Hence my loyalty to the people who had saved us.

0:34: return from Australia, with a Ph.D., looking for a job. I was not very proud of my Ph.D., because of the conditions of writing, a new baby and written in five months. My wife in the field and very stoical, worked with the people and always busy but not directly involved in my work. Awful climate in the monsoon. The living conditions described. The aboriginals were in the open. I was given a room in the bungalow and hence living in a quasi-colonial relationship. Went out often for sheer sociability or when significant things happened.

0:37: my daughter is a 'classificatory' member of the West Wind clan, Deborah, and has a territory [by virtue of my own 'brother'-like relationship to my chief informant]. I have never been back and still wonder whether I would even now be allowed in.

Return to Manchester and Max Gluckman

0:39: I got back and looked for jobs. I had gone out as the protégé of Max Gluckman. MG's intellectual power. He could turn anthropology to anything and had ten ideas before breakfast. He started up sociology of Britain, e.g. Tom Lupton, Allcorn and others. The intellectual centre was Max, he infused people with a strategy for looking for certain clues, though he did not provide the answers. This was different from sociological work but the tradition he developed did not persist.

0:41: Max could turn his mind to current social and political issues, e.g. in his very popular radio broadcasts which ordinary listeners found illuminating and exciting. Imagine, best sellers about the Zande etc, Max made them exciting, they could see common problems and the rational ways in which people in other cultures faced universal human problems. The classic anthropological message. A superb lecturer and teacher, even on themes, (e.g. when Srinivas came) – which were far from his expertise.

0:43: another who had the same gift was Victor Turner. At Brandeis VT gave a lecture in a Mexicanist department on pilgrimages etc. Often his lectures went on for 2-3 hours, difficult to stop, entrancing, often went on into the night. When he talked to Mexican experts they said it made them look at their familiar topics they had been studying for decades in a new way.

0:44: Max was authoritarian but democratic, surrounded by a group of apostles, we spent all our time together, worked in his garden, constant face to face inter-action, made us inter-act, a constant flow of people were coming from the field like Turner, Ian Cunnison, Bill Watson, we had a sense of collectively working on joint problems.

0:45: I remember sitting in on a Srinivas seminar on what turned out as the Coorg book – I knew nothing about India, but we all contributed. The senior people treated us as intellectual equals; Max was very supportive and encouraging.

The Trumpet Shall Sound and other works

0:46: Reflections on *The Trumpet Shall Sound*. I went back and I'd written my Ph.D. and published a little. I was still frustrated about New Guinea but I'd collected a lot of material and discussed it in that book together with the latest findings of Peter Lawrence and Ken Burridge.

0:47: One week-end Max, like yeast, played his stimulating role. He had become interested in movements of protest among colonial peoples. He arranged a special week-end, not on the Mau Mau. Eric Hobsbawm came to talk about the materials which later became *Primitive Rebels*, Norman Cohn on medieval movements and me on cargo cults. One of the most exciting week-ends I remember, marvellous, out of which came three cracking books.

0:49: Eric Hobsbawm in those days had a bit of a blockage about writing, though known to be a genius and a polymath. Not many articles. He started to write this book and never looked back. E.H. was incredible and marvellous and gets better as he goes on, e.g. *The Invention of Tradition* is a mind-blowing and funny book and iconoclastic. Also, like me, a jazz man. I myself (like EH) nearly became jazz critic for the *New Statesman*! He, Perry Anderson and others like Christopher Hill were my great heroes among living Marxists.

0:50: I later wrote *The Third World* and Christopher Hill reviewed it enthusiastically in the *Guardian*, commenting that I was really a historian as well as anthropologist and intellectual sociologist. My historical interest stemmed from a wonderful history master at school. Life does not start at University, it starts at school. My great debt is to that master, also influenced by others. But my real trio of greats is Edward T, Perry Anderson and Eric Hobsbawm. Which is the greatest? Perry is still young...

0:51: I decided I would not continue to write just about one area, as E-Pritchard had done on the Nuer, so I would not go on about Groote Eylandt. Max G. was approached by a young leftish publishing firm, McGibbon and Kee, to write a book about the Mau Mau. He said no, but referred them to me and that is how 'Trumpet' came about.

0:53: It is a book about colonial resistance, the disintegration of colonialism, on the eve of the 'Winds of Change' in Africa in particular. Millenarianism was the dominant form of political action on the part of ordinary people in places like Melanesia, a very different phenomenon from revolution in Russia or China. We had to try to come to terms with it.

0:54. An auto-criticism of 'Trumpet'. It was too heavily political economy. This can be seen when compared to Peter Lawrence. I started with pol. econ., Peter with the Melanesian world-view. This is how I come to see it now. The amazingly different impacts of colonialism. How does one explain these different responses? All kinds of response. Not dictated by the colonialists themselves.

0:56: the inherent logic of political economy is threaded through my book, the Melanesian perceptions are there but not so obvious; I should have planted them at the start.

0:57: a similar auto-critique of my work on the Tallensi, which over-emphasized the material dimensions of life and ignored the

lineage ideologies etc. It was a base-superstructure model which is inadequate.

0:58: Alan talks of the recent Sahlins lecture at the British Academy which fits with this re-assessment of local resistance, the McCartney Mission account of the Chinese Emperor being the classic statement. Yes, the heliocentric arrogance and contempt for the West of the Chinese is classic. The core-periphery models are nonsense and can be answered by one word: Iran. How does c-p explain the Ayatollahs? We have got to start talking about Islam.

0:59: I wrote the 'Trumpet'. It was very successful. Reviewed by Geoffrey Gorer in the *Observer* as a wonderful book, and other very good reviews. I myself became a reviewer for the *Guardian* and did numerous reviews and became quite well known (and earned quite a lot of money).

Part 3: Mature years and sociology (50 mins)

Sociology and the Third World

0:01: I always wanted to write for a popular audience. One of my ambitions, which has never been realized, is to write a book that will be sold on station bookstalls. I thought I had done it when I came back from China and wrote a book on it, but it was not so successful.

0:02: I applied to Cambridge, but there were no posts in those day. There was very slow expansion. Max said that with my political reputation I would never get a job in anthropology. So I thought of other possibilities, including studying schizophrenia at the Maudsley. Max said I should switch to sociology, which was just beginning to take off. I got the first job I applied for, at Hull, against strong competition. I don't know why I was picked, though two days before the interview I did a BBC interview on 3rd Program on Cargo Cults. I then tried to read a lot of sociology.

0:03: I also used a lot of anthropology and gradually we built up a very popular course. The social sciences exploded after the Robbins Report. We ended up with a huge department. I finished there in 1964. I was there for eight years. Quite prestigious. I was Head of Department.

0:04: Max managed to get a Chair in Sociology at Manchester a year before I left it all and after a year I was appointed to that new Manchester Chair and went there. The expansion of sociology was exponential. This caused great problems with Max who saw sociology as an ancillary part of his empire and tried to restrict it. It turned into a nasty territorial battle, which we won and then the Department was split. There were 10 new Universities a year. I was offered many other Chairs.

0:07: Teodor Shanin came a little later. In 1965 I was recruited onto the British Economic Commission on Tanzania, and got interested in co-operatives, the predecessors of Ujamaa. So I got interested in co-operatives in the 3rd World and this drew the attention of Teodor. An amusing story of their first meeting and Teodor's personality.

0:10: Teodor taught me more about peasants in two hours than I had ever learnt. I became a patron of Teodor and together we worked on peasant studies, including promoting the work of Polish scholars like Galeski. Teodor got the second Chair at Manchester. A larger than life man, a great guy.

0:11: *The Third World* was written at the end of my time at Hull. The Press lost the first copy of the index, which I had to completely re-do. It was published just after my arrival in Manchester and was well-reviewed and made *me the* 'Third World' person in the Anglophone world, (though the French had invented the concept). I travelled all over the world with the book – there were 8 editions in Mexico alone. Mainly in South America it took off. It was never translated into French. There are still huge barriers with France.

0:14: One thing I resented about the NLR was that they worshipped everything on the South Bank in Paris. Only very recently has there been a French translation of 'Trumpet', nothing else, not ever invited to France or Germany. The term 'Third World' was coined by Alfred Sauvy in 1952, taken up in France and probably I learnt about through the contacts of NLR.

0:15: our motto was 'neither Moscow nor Washington' (Trotsky), and this idea fitted well, but more positive. CND and the Third World worked together, a new entity was forming. The publishers put in the sub-title 'A vibrant new force in international affairs'. It was indeed a new, and important, force. A new force in the world.

0:16: It was written in a burst of steam, in a couple of summer vacations. White heat. Philip Larkin described it as a passionate book. I do not like to write unless I have something to say. Unlike today, when people have to write – publish or perish – and hence churn out an exponentially increasing amount of rubbish.

0:17: I now feel the germs of a new book, a kind of sexual itch of another book coming up inside me.

0:18: reflecting on *The Third World*, I couldn't re-write it as the great non-aligned movement has died back, though it still persists. Now there is the non-aligned group in the UN. The Americans cannot control the UN any more. But then it was a political force.

0:20: Nyerere and new leaders were just realizing the problems of taking over the emerging countries, in particular the power of the multi-nationals. The African countries found they could not do anything. In many areas the situation is getting worse. They began to see the problem as a global one – the first UNCTAD conference, predominantly a resistance to the economic power and hegemony of the West.

The Three Worlds, South America and World Systems

0:22: I waited a long time to find out about Latin America, and also felt [that the 'Third World', by virtually ignoring Latin America, was not good enough an intellectual job. My chapter on nationalism was not very good. I gradually equipped myself to write another book, helped by Brian Roberts and Teodor and finally wrote it after 14 years.

0:23: I was sentenced to be Dean at Manchester for two years, the final degradation. Sterility, though I quite enjoyed it. I got a year off and decided to go to Ecuador and learnt Spanish and Portuguese. It opened up a new world. A rich intellectual tradition, Chile etc., the time before the dictators. Mexico with its revolutionary heritage.

0:24: I encountered Gunder Frank and swallowed him at first. But as I looked around at the traffic filled cities etc. I began to wonder if this was really 'underdevelopment'. I started to study industrial things. But I remained deep down in my fibres an anthropologist. I'm never happy with purely sociological totalities and I'm most interested in cultural things.

0:25: I was brought back to culture by people like Marshall Sahlins, the big influence of 'Culture and Practical Reason', which has never been answered by Marxists who cannot take M.S. to pieces. I read early Geertz etc. But I think Geertz mystifies and absolutized culture and reifies it and is unsatisfactory. So I persisted and wrote *Three Worlds*.

0:27: A critique of 'World System Theory'. Of course there is a world system, from at least 1885 on, but I fell out with it on a particular occasion in Berlin. [better light]

Wallerstein and Frank were on the platform and we were discussing 'One World or Three'. Gundar was very rude and I was piqued. So I went home and read Wallerstein comma by comma and decided to write a critique and it was published by the Socialist Register. Zero response from Immanuel. Wallerstein is much better than Gunder Frank's polar model. Revolution is no longer an option. Comments on Wallerstein.

0:30: I visited Hong Kong and was shattered by the transformation in 16 years. I went back recently. Is HK a 3rd World country any more? Clearly not. The 'Little Tigers' are clearly not 3rd World, so impressive, though vulnerable. But the end of the 3rd World a bit premature and I began to read about a new international division of labour, Newly Industrialized Countries (NICs). Dependency was exaggerated.

0:32: It is a sleight of hand that the 3rd world has disappeared, a recent visit to Peru shows that there is still a 3rd world. Peru is broken backed and with tremendous problems. [nice close ups and good light]

0:33: Black Africa is going backwards in conventional terms, a 6% decrease in exports etc. Dropped off as a basket case by the west, we don't care a damn. The World Bank has divided countries into poor, middling poor, very poor, degrees of poverty. These are our perception, they also see themselves as 3rd World.

0:34: I do not believe in any immanentist models, e.g. like those of Nigel Harris.

Anthropology, culture and knowledge

0:35: Alan asks about Wallerstein, how much was your critique determined by your being an anthropologist? Absolutely, a brilliant man, but I was by then moving back towards

anthropology. For instance, Hong Kong cannot be understood without understanding its Chineseness, culture.

0:36: China is very different in its communist ideology from Russia. Ideologies and social structures do not correspond 1:1, cultures and histories exist and have to be taken into account. Most political scientists and economists have no understanding of this or realize the relevance of this, not in their intellectual universe.

0:37: I now want to write a book about other knowledges, influenced by Dr. Waddy [since done – *Knowledges*]. I want to take the Australian Aboriginal knowledge system, their elaborateness, also others like the Micronesian navigators. This is related to the wider theme about how other cultures work, e.g. Chineseness, Iranian Islam etc.

0:39: the Chinese quarrel with the Soviet Union is not just about Marxist ideology, but to do with Russians and Chinese society and culture.

0:40: Alan asks about the abandoning of base/superstructure model and the turn to Weber. Views about Weber, what is attractive about him, he raises interesting questions. Weber a great genius. Better than Marx who stressed production too much.

0:42: Alan asks about the move from economic determinism towards ideas, aesthetic. Why? Most significant was the death of Marxism, the disastrous pluralism and faction-fighting of the Marxisms, the clash between Promethean and determinist. This exploded into savage wars and undermined by Stalin, Pol Pot, Sendero Luminoso and other horrors.

0:45: Now the Salman Rushdie affair and the re-emergence of Islam, regenerated, not the original Islam, the Koran re-interpreted, it had not put the mullahs at the top. But it is an example of the persistence of historically rooted cultures themes. A huge change in the world.

0:47: Asked what most proud of. Story of Bertrand Russell – three women. But I think it was ‘Trumpet Shall Sound’ and my other books. Also, as a political animal, though sickened by subsequent history, of my early work for NLR, the New Left, CND etc.

0:48: What would you have liked to have done which you did not? What avenues did you not go down? Further work in Australia. I quite enjoy public bureaucracy. I could have done

industry and business. Also something practical in the 3rd World. We are so involved in our own culture, we lose interest in the rest. I have noticed that anthropologists who go to the field then return and, having had children, mortgages etc, suddenly become interested in their own place which “must be studied”. They argue that it is imperative to study the West. This is false consciousness. 0:51: Have you ever been bored? Yes, in the Army at times. Otherwise not.

Some added notes by Peter Worsley on the above (written in 2004).

Note 1: The Jesuit teachers awarded ‘red bills’, written in Latin (and headed *Ad maiorem Dei Gloria*), for good work and behaviour, e.g. homework. They had a numerical value (e.g. 6). This was the carrot. The stick was, literally, a whalebone ferrule – you were hit on the hand, say, 6 times for offences – very painful. In theory, you could evade the punishment by ‘cashing in’ a red bill. But in fact, there was indeterminacy – you never knew whether they’d accept it or not! This disgusted me – both the brutality, and the notion of ‘exchanging’ (cancelling) ‘sins’ by merit stored up in red bills. (I thought you should be sanctioned for bad deeds (though not via a ferrule!) and rewarded for good ones. See how this institution affected me – I’m still going on about it 70 years later!

Note 2: When I transferred schools, I was 3 years ahead in Latin and way behind in maths. This shaped my entire academic trajectory (even now). At the RC school (St. Francis Xavier’s) we were constantly made to attend ‘sodalities’ (religious society meetings at the end of the school-day (and to bring pennies for various religious causes).

Note 3: An important factor was the sectarian division on Merseyside into Roman Catholic and Protestant. People kept off the street during rival ‘processions’ – bricks might be thrown (we were told). I became Head Boy at Wallasey Grammar School in 1940/1, but, despite this eminence, as I was a Catholic, wasn’t allowed to attend morning Assembly, which had some religious content. So the Catholic and Jewish boys waited in a room off the

main hall (where we did our homework and told dirty jokes – I can still remember one of them!), but were let out into the Hall to hear the end part of the Assembly which deal with (non-religious) notices – sports, etc.

Note 4: In wartime, you were not called up for about a year, but had to join the training corps (and attend training sessions). You then passed ‘Certificate A’, and Cert B. This gave you automatic entry into Officer Training. I came over from Cambridge, to join guys who were years older, married, and sometimes working class (& so unhappy in this middle-class environment).

Ronald Dore



31 March 2003

<http://downloads.sms.cam.ac.uk/1115849/1115856.mp4>

Ronald Dore, *Flexible Rigidities* (1986)

Extracted from Wikipedia - 25 August 2014

Ronald P. Dore FBA (born 1925) is a British sociologist specializing in Japanese economy and society and the comparative study of types of capitalism. He is an associate of the Centre for Economic Performance at the London School of Economics and is a fellow of the British Academy, the Japan Academy, and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. The citation for his eminent scholar award from the Academy of International Business describes him as "an outstanding scholar whose deep understanding of the empirical phenomena he studies and ability to build on it to develop theoretical contributions are highly respected not only by sociologists but also by economists, anthropologists, historians, and comparative business systems scholars".

The son of a train driver, Dore went to Poole Grammar School. With the outbreak of the Japanese war, he was one of the "Dulwich boys", so-called because of their lodgings at Dulwich College, 30 sixth form students chosen to study languages at The School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) to boost the ranks of military translators. Although he had chosen Turkish as his first, and Chinese as his second choice language, he arrived at SOAS to discover that he had been enrolled in the Japanese course. After injuring himself before he could take part in active service, he returned to the UK to teach Japanese, and complete his external degree at London University. His first trip to Japan was in 1950, arriving in Kobe.

Having learned Japanese during the war, Dore graduated with a degree in Japanese from London University in 1947. Dore began research in SOAS. He has also worked at the University of British Columbia, the Institute of Development Studies at Sussex University, the Technical Change Centre at Sussex, the Institute for Economic growth in Delhi, Imperial College in London, Harvard University, and Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Interview Summary

Ronald Dore interviewed by Alan Macfarlane 31st March 2003

0:00:05 Introduction; parents; father worked for Southern Railways first as a cleaner then finally as a train driver; bright child, went to Poole Grammar School; mother was particularly keen on having a good education; while in the sixth form Japanese war began and board of education recruiting students for languages: Turkish, Persian, Chinese and Japanese; encouraged to apply; accepted and chose Turkish with second choice Chinese; on arrival at School of Oriental and African Studies, found I was on the Japanese course with thirty others; billeted with Dulwich College who arranged a few extra lessons, otherwise dedicated to learning Japanese

0:08:28 Were not taught anything formally about Japanese culture; learning to write characters was fun but acquiring fluency in grammatical structure not easy; this course did not lead to a degree; when we finished and went to the army I tripped and got a swollen knee and taken to hospital; got behind and others sent off to India in 1944; while waiting to be sent abroad brought back to S.O.A.S. to teach Japanese until demobilized in 1947; during that time took an external degree in Japanese; first student to take degree in modern Japanese studies; teachers included a newspaper correspondent married to an English woman, Frank Daniels who had taught English in Japan was Professor, and his Japanese wife; Otto van der Sprenkel marked my essays

0:13:11 Got a travelling scholarship on basis of final exam and applied for a Japanese visa; in summer 1947 went to Cambridge to catalogue libraries of Sir Ernest Mason Satow and W.G. Aston, two pioneers of Japanese studies; decided to study schools and education in Tokugawa Japan

0:15:00 Finally got to Japan beginning of 1950; from diary note first impression of Kobe harbour; went ashore 21st March, day of Spring Festival; streets decorated with Japanese flags, symptom that Japanese recovering self-confidence; to those on left the flag

was a symbol of militancy; became a subject of much debate until very recently

0:18:20 Had gone to work on Tokugawa education, a thesis already started in England; also wanted to become a lecturer in Japanese institutions; Frank Daniels had designed the course which he had thought of in terms of Japanese folk-lore; 1949 took course at L.S.E from Tom Marshall in social institutions and from Norman Hotov?? in social psychology, so had some notion of sociology; in Japan registered in sociology department as a graduate student; there conceived of doing a social survey of the ward in which living; had been smuggled into Japan as cultural advisor to British Embassy, a job which later became head of British Council; lived there for six months before a student visa available; George Fraser head of mission had asked what I intended to do, can't do a "Middletown" alone, but why not? This first put idea in mind; went to see a couple of American sociologists, Herb Passon and John Bennett; asked for hypothesis

0:23:45 Memories of Masao Maruyama; Maruyama "industry" since his death; he had tuberculosis after the war and had operation which deflated one lung; was in the army and in Hiroshima when the atom bomb dropped; destined to become professor of political science at Tokyo

0:29:40 Kawashima Takiochi, on sociology of law, very influential at that time, and Kato Shuichi, a good friend; 1960 at an American inspired conference on modernisation just after riots in Tokyo over extension of security treaty; Kawashima, Maruyama and Kato there and I argued that security treaty was a good thing as it prevented Japan from rearming; Maruyama had long term perspective and was the great left-wing leader at the time

0:34:00 Japanese behaviour during war in China; barbarous period; individual cruelty but perhaps less than China suggests; Nanking account by German head of Siemens; picture of war primarily from Tokyo war crimes trials and Chinese version exaggerated awfulness of Japanese behaviour; Russo-Japanese war less awful behaviour but in Great East Asian war wanted to

destroy the Western world that had rejected them; contrast between colonial regime in Taiwan and Korea striking; Taiwanese more or less accepted Japanese dominance but resistance in Korea

0:39:35 Don't know what people mean when they say it is impossible to understand Japanese; don't find it more difficult to intuit what Japanese are really thinking than do in Britain, having learnt the language well and talking with Japanese over time; great diversity of people as in Britain

0:42:11 Keys to the culture impossible to give; can only advise that you soak yourself in Japan; enormous difference between Japanese as pictured by Soseki Natsume and now, much greater than in English fiction; transformations since 1950's was one of gradual entrenchment of patterns of institutions – government, education, corporate institutions; the Thatcherite-Reagonite changes only started in the 1990's and hasn't got very far

0:48:08 Convergence between Western capitalism and Japan may happen but depends on American economy; if the dollar plunges then people who are trying to change the pattern of Japanese economics along American lines will lose credibility; fewer and fewer economic transactions conducted face to face diminishes the role of trust and legal enforcement of contract; internal evolution but the dominant force is imitation, following the admired American model; inspiration of modernizers was dynamism of Silicone Valley and the enormous profits of American corporations; admired the perceived transparency of American corporations; collapse of Silicone Valley and Enron and Worldcom have undermined this belief

0:53:00 Mixed model in China in which American model is dominating but there is a common underlying ethical culture; also life-time employment model in ex-State organizations in China and heavy public ownership of industry; much will depend on strategic relationship between China and U.S.A.; plausible scenario which puts China and U.S.A. in conflict in the same way as U.S.A. and Russia were; China has enormous intellectual resources; is expanding its science and technology universities;

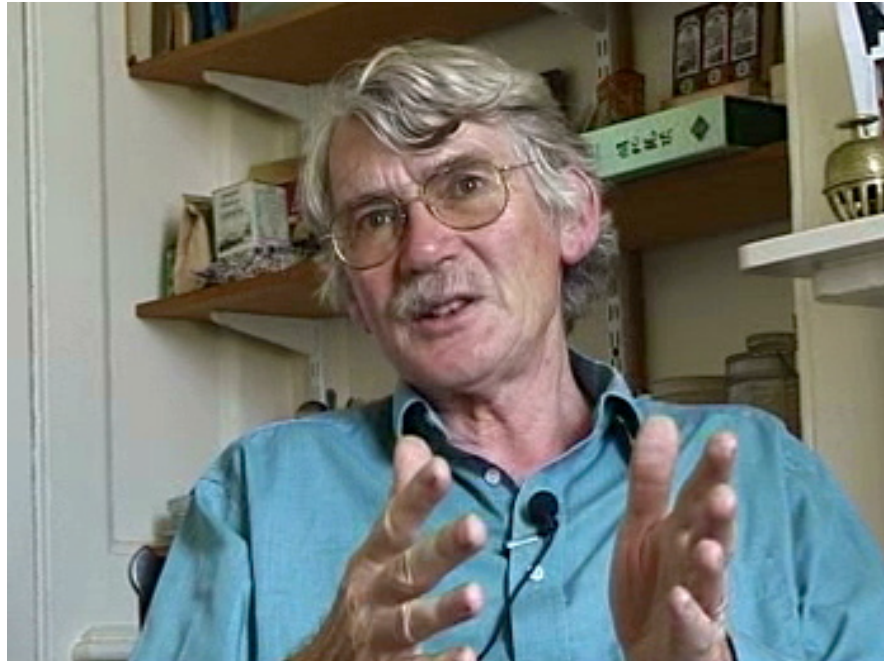
Chinese resentment that U.S.A. can fly spy planes outside Chinese territorial waters but Chinese can't get near the U.S. coast, this imbalance produces a similar feeling to that felt in Japan by Washington and London naval treaties before the war; current aim of American policy to prevent any other rival power makes it more likely that electronic warfare will escalate; China does have the possibility with its intellectual resources of making the Pentagon think it is a serious rival; tension between U.S.A. and China will put Japan in a very difficult position; in Japan a majority of top businessmen would have no hesitation in throwing in their lot with the U.S. and continuing the present security arrangement, but there is resentment too; among the minority there is still a feeling of kinship with China

1:01:05 Of own books think the most original was 'Diploma Disease'; theme of book is the bureaucratisation of society and mechanisms for social selection become entirely focused on educational institutions; started through going to Sri Lanka and observing that only half of the annual crop of graduates could ever get a job. They were taking the jobs previously done by A level students etc.; more scholarly work was 'British Factory – Japanese Factory'; most readable was 'Shinohata'

1:08:38 Memories of Ernest Gellner; had just joined L.S.E. in 1949 and went to his lectures on political philosophy; became colleagues in 1960 at the L.S.E.; enlightenment thinker is a good description of him; wrote in haste but inspirationally; best book was the one on nationalism

1:15:45 Work of David Glass influenced me at the beginning and got me interested in population studies; thought most highly of Max Weber's work; David Riesman also very interesting, particularly 'Lonely Crowd' which influenced my thinking on Japanese society; Homans also insightful, and have great respect for Gary Runciman

Michael Mann



18th July 2005

<http://downloads.sms.cam.ac.uk/1125838/1125846.mp4>

Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power* (4 volumes), 1986 onwards.

Extracted from Wikipedia 25 August 2014

Michael Mann (born 1942) is a British-born professor of Sociology at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) and Visiting Research Professor at Queen's University Belfast. Mann holds dual British and United States citizenships. He received his B.A. in Modern History from the University of Oxford in 1963 and his D.Phil. in Sociology from the same institution in 1971. Mann is currently visiting Professor at the University of Cambridge.

Mann has been a professor of Sociology at UCLA since 1987; he was lecturer in Sociology at the University of Essex after graduation. Then became reader in Sociology at the London School of Economics and Political Science from 1977 to 1987. Mann was also a member of the Advisory Editors Council of the *Social Evolution & History* journal.

In 1984, Mann published *The Autonomous Power of the State: its Origins, Mechanisms, and Results* in the European Journal of Sociology. This work is the foundation for the study of the despotic and bureaucratic of the modern state.

Mann's most famous works include the monumental *The Sources of Social Power* (four volumes) and *The Dark Side of Democracy*, spanning the entire 20th century. He also published *Incoherent Empire*, where he attacks the United States' 'War on Terror' as a clumsy experiment in neo-imperialism.

The last two volumes of *The Sources of Social Power* - *Global Empires and Revolution 1890-1945* and *Globalizations 1945-2011*, were published by CUP in 2012 and 2013 respectively.

Interview summary

Interview of Michael Mann by Alan Macfarlane 18th July 2005

0:05:07 Introduction; born August 1942 in Manchester but moved to Northumberland when I was five; father a salesman for an asbestos company; at ten moved back to Rochdale; went to Manchester Grammar School; middle child with elder sister and younger brother; influenced by father with whom I discussed and argued; first political experience was as Liberal in Rochdale, like father; mother loving and warm; unhappy when I told her at thirteen that I was an atheist; father highly intelligent, books in the house, and encouraged education for the boys

3:20:00 At school, better at arts subjects than sciences; history was main interest but influenced by father to read law at Oxford; did one term of law and switched to history; went to University College in 1960; at Oxford did a lot of politics, first in the Liberal Club and then the Labour Club; didn't work terribly hard except in the last year and got a second class degree; not terribly stimulated by the Oxford history course; impressed by Isaiah Berlin, but the course seemed old-fashioned; most interested in special subject which was the French Revolution; now working on empires and was taught by David Fieldhouse whose books I am now reading, but at nineteen he left me cold; I had no thought of doing research although wanted to stay another year in Oxford because of girlfriend, Jill Ditchburn; so did the diploma in Public and Social Administration; married at twenty-two; Jill Mann who became Professor of English Literature at Cambridge; I was going to be a probation officer but in the department of Social Administration, Halsey offered him empirical research for General Foods Corporation which would lead to PhD in Sociology; accepted; had done sociology course in the diploma, and Peter Collison who taught me stimulated me most

8:40:14 The factory moved from Birmingham to Banbury, a well-studied place; did before and after interviews of workers and

managers; first survey had to be done within six months of start of PhD; knowing very little had to draw up questionnaire and work out how to analyse interviews; also had to learn about computer techniques which were just moving from counter sorters to paper tape data; very much self-taught and struggling to get things done; hard work; mixture of industrial relations and family and community; my dissertation was first referred; examined by Jean Floud and Norman Denis; experience of viva; by then had moved to Cambridge as a research officer in the department of Applied Economics working with John Goldthorpe and Robert Blackburn; in that year produced small book 'Consciousness and Action in the Western Working Class'; description of the book; moved on to do some empirical research on the Peterborough labour market with Bob Blackburn; team of interviewers interviewed about 900 workers in six different companies; at the same time rewriting thesis; Goldthorpe moved to Oxford and took over as my supervisor from Peter Collison and Alan Fox; heard that Goldthorpe insisted that Jean Floud be removed as examiner so got PhD; learnt a lot about sociology from Goldthorpe

16:24:00 Spent four years in Cambridge; political views changing and became convinced that problem of cold war didn't have much to do with capitalism or socialism, but rivalry between great powers; offered assistant lectureship in Cambridge in what became S.P.S; very first publication was an article in American Sociological Review; secondary analysis of a lot of survey data in Britain and U.S. about the extent to which lower class people accepted the inequalities in society; developed notion of pragmatic acceptance of reality; at interview for job showed the article which I'd got that day; did not take the job as persuaded to go to Essex University by David Lockwood; stayed from 1970 to 1977; at interview asked if I would teach interdisciplinary course on the Enlightenment; also taught classical sociological theory which I continue to do today; Essex good, students questioning, thought that sociology might provide the answer to questions on the meaning of life; stimulating colleagues and time for self-development; 1972 wrote paper for myself contrasting Marx and Weber with idea of writing a book on this with some empirical case studies, one on Roman Empire, one on feudalism and one contemporary; gradually turned into 'The

Sources of Social Power'; took the further step of separating the military from the political;

gradually case studies became bigger with linking historical passages; got too big and separated it into two volumes

26:01:20 During this time wife still in Cambridge and commuting life put strain on marriage; broke up in about 1975; went to L.S.E. in 1977 as Reader in Research Methods; puzzles me how I got the job with few publications; in Colchester had been politically active in the Labour party, trying to keep the right and left of the party together; wrote a Fabian pamphlet at that time; moved to Lambeth; one replacement at Essex was Nicky Hart and we overlapped for one term; she was wife of Keith Hart, then at Yale, but she became my second wife; she had daughter Louise, then aged two, and we have two other children, Gareth and Laura; had nice family life in Dedham, Essex, from where I commuted to London

31:33:00 At L.S.E. the big experience for me was not really within the sociology department; not a happy department due to Donald McCrae and Terence Morris who had forced Ernest Gellner out; intolerant of new ideas; people of own age had unofficial seminars which Ernest Gellner, John Hall and I ran called 'Patterns of History'; invited those we wanted to hear and would have a meal together afterwards; invited such persons as Colin Renfrew, Keith Hopkins etc.; at this time John, Ernest and I were all writing books of broad theoretical history at this time; almost the best experience I have had though there has been a comparable one at U.C.L.A.; at L.S.E. from 1977-87; in 1985 got together with someone in the International Relations department and was going to do a course in globalization but blocked by McCrae and Morris; blocked for promotion at about the same time; told I could apply independently from department which I did; got a chair, but before this had been hired by U.C.L.A.; first volume of 'Sources of Social Power' came out in 1986; had decided to separate it into two volumes about 1984; first volume went from prehistoric time to before the Industrial Revolution; thought the book might sink without trace so contacted everybody I knew in America and asked to give talks; by the time the lecture tour happened the book was very successful but Americans assumed I was looking for a job;

U.C.L.A. and University of Virginia offered both Nicki and I full time positions; took U.C.L.A. offer and have been there ever since

38:55:12 At U.C.L.A. have had comparable experience to Gellner and Hall seminar; Bob Brenner, Perry Anderson and I are the leading people; we invite people we want to hear from all over the world; have a theme each year and it is interdisciplinary; although I consider myself a sociologist, have never been happy to be trapped inside a discipline; in 1994 I went to Madrid for a year; at that time a little unhappy in California, mainly about the education of our children; after Madrid had a sabbatical in England and looked for jobs here; Nicki started a job at University of East London chairing the department and I was offered jobs by Essex and L.S.E.; Nicki was unhappy in her job so we decided to move back to California; 1998 took American citizenship so have dual nationality; Los Angeles a stimulating and interesting place

42:29:17 Having produced volume 1 of 'Sources of Social Power', volume 2 followed in 1993 which went to 1914; volume 3 remains unfinished; in Spain decided to work on chapter on fascism; this turned into two books, the first 'Fascists' (2004) and the second, 'The Dark Side of Democracy' (2005) explaining ethnic cleansing; I am waiting to see what reaction is; in 2002 began to write a book on Bush American foreign policy, 'Incoherent Empire', which was almost entirely written before the invasion of Iraq; came out September 2003; description of book; invited to be Pitt Professor in Cambridge and decided to give lectures on modern empires; first one on why the Europeans are so imperialistic; the second asks did the British Empire do anyone any good? The third was a comparison of Japan and the U.S. in Asia and fourth on the American Empire today; am expanding these mainly by looking at American foreign policy from the beginning; this period in Cambridge has allowed me to research and write; the result will be published end of 2006

47:04:10 Working methods; things have changed with computers; at U.C.L.A. can order books from the library by computer and have them delivered to my office; I do an enormous amount of

pillaging of books for factual material; have taken extensive notes; have just discovered a new technique of library raiding from book reviews in journals on the web; all my notes are in my laptop; had a basic methodology in my raiding which was that I would carry on reading until I was only changing the details; looking at Japanese Empire and trying to see if it was a series of accidents or a probability

51:39:20 Writing a book usually takes time, six years rather than six months; material for 'Incoherent Empire' came largely from the web; try and begin to write at quite an early stage as a way of organising the notes, then rewrite and rewrite; don't write at any particular time of day; my wife is a morning person and I have been influenced by that; used to be a 9-5 worker; tragedy of a relatively successful academic is the older you get the harder you work; still play tennis and have just taken up golf; used to do gardening; when I was a traditional sociologist I used to read history books as a diversion, now this is a part of my work

54:12:00 Global history; owe most to Max Weber and then to Karl Marx; remember being impressed by Owen Lattimore, William McNeil, Eisenstadt; world history difficult to do and would never recommend young people to start doing what I am doing; have to do get an idea of what detailed research is first and later take a comparative view; I haven't done any collaborative work since that with Bob Blackburn and am a bit of a loner so not aware of enormous influences

57:25:17 After the book on empires, still determined to write volume 3 of 'Sources of Social Power' to bring it up to date; maybe there will be a volume 4 on theory; Gary Runciman, Perry Anderson and Wallerstein

Richard Sennett



3rd and 24th April 2009

<http://downloads.sms.cam.ac.uk/1130356/1130363.mp4>

Richard Sennett & Jonathan Cobb, *The Hidden Injuries of Class*
(1972)

Extracted from Wikipedia - 25th August 2015

Richard Sennett (born 1 January 1943) is the Centennial Professor of [Sociology](#) at the [London School of Economics](#) and University Professor of the [Humanities](#) at [New York University](#). Sennett has studied social ties in cities, and the effects of urban living on individuals in the modern world.

Sennett's scholarly writing centers on the development of cities, the nature of work in modern society, and the sociology of culture. *Families Against the City*, his earliest book, examines the relation between family and work in 19th Century Chicago. A subsequent quartet of books explores urban life more largely: *The Uses of Disorder*, an essay about identity formation in cities; *The Fall of Public Man*, a history of public culture and public space, particularly in London, Paris, and New York in the 18th and 19th Centuries; *The Conscience of the Eye*, a study of how Renaissance urban design passed into modern city planning, and *Flesh and Stone*, an overview of the design of cities from ancient to modern times.

Another quartet of books is devoted to labor. *The Hidden Injuries of Class* is a study of class consciousness among working-class families in Boston; *The Corrosion of Character* explores how new forms of work are changing people's communal and personal experience; *Respect* probes the relation of work and reforms of the welfare system. *The Culture of the New Capitalism* provides an overview of these changes. *Authority* is an essay in political theory; it addresses the tools of interpretation by which people recast raw power into either legitimate or illegitimate authority.

In the public realm, Sennett founded, and directed for a decade, the New York Institute of the Humanities at New York University. Sennett then chaired a United Nations commission on urban development and design. As president of the American Council on Work, Sennett led a forum, sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation, for researchers trying to understand the changing pattern of American labor. Most recently he helped create, and has chaired, the Cities Programme at the London School of Economics.

Interview summary

Richard Sennett interviewed by Alan Macfarlane 3rd and 24th April 2009

0:09:07 Born 1943 in Chicago; grandparents, all Russian, and on both sides were mixed marriages of Russian Orthodox and Russian Jewish; middle class people; grandparents fled St Petersburg after the Revolution; paternal grandparents stayed in Canada for a while; maternal grandparents went to Chicago; maternal grandfather had trained as a mathematician; because of his religiously mixed background lessened the possibility of an academic career in Russia; in the US worked for the General Electric Corporation as an inventor; he worked on the mechanism for the answering machine and if he had been able to patent it he would have been a rich man; parents came from a similar cultural background but were both Communist Party members; they separated when I was about seven months old so I was brought up by my mother; only got to know about my father's family much later; we lived in a housing estate called Cabrini-Green which I have written about in a book, 'Respect'; my mother was a social worker but also working under cover for the Communist Party; after the Second World War the Party in the US felt that its last best hope for a kind of revolutionary base were African Americans who had moved up from the south to work in the war industries; the Party assumed they would see themselves as a ground-down industrial proletariat but for them they were upwardly mobile; the effect of the Hitler-Stalin pact in 1939 shook communists in the US though they had not been shaken by the show trials; began to look for an alternative version of communism and mother was half in and half out of the Party; financially, we fluctuated wildly; my maternal grandfather was quite well off but my mother had become a pariah to him; we were very poor when I was young until my grandfather began to soften and my mother agreed to take help; we were lower middle-class; the only British analogue to Cabrini-Green collapsed within five years

9:37:00 Mother was a very rigid ideologue under a sweet, motherly surface; the world I grew up in compares with the last half of Ralph Ellison's 'The Invisible Man' which is about black and white intelligentsia, a very peculiar and unrepresentative slice of America; the Jewish heritage did not pass on to my mother; I have a couple of half-siblings, my father's children; I left home when I was fifteen; my family life was quite wonderful in one way, but I was also glad to get out of this world; once I was able to support myself as a musician, I left; my childhood was really marked for me by music which I started when I was five, first with the piano and then the cello; I had a gift for it and progressed quite rapidly; I was spending a lot of time practising with great pleasure; I was the only musical person in my family; I was playing with a Bach cantata group; we had a grant from the Presbyterian Church to drive round parts of the mid-West, outside cities, and play Bach cantatas on Sunday mornings; we went to all sorts of places; we made a swing through the iron mining districts of Minnesota, playing in little churches where people had never heard live classical music, and the exhausted miners sleeping while we were playing; wonderful for us, and an incredible experience for me; we used English translations, and the words speak very simply and directly to people; I also played a little in Chicago and New York; I enrolled in the University of Chicago in order to study with a wonderful cellist, Frank Miller, who had been Casal's principal cellist in his orchestra; worked with him for a couple of years and then went to New York at eighteen, to study at Julliard for a workshop with Pierre Monteux; this is a career line for cellists to become conductors, and I thought I would do that too; I started having hand problems when I was in this conducting workshop; I was still performing when I could get work despite a tendon problem; I had an operation which went wrong and ended my musical career overnight; I had to decide whether to remain in conducting without actually being able to play or do something else; I knew the son of David Riesman, who is a composer; Riesman suggested that I come to Harvard and try something other than music; shows the difference between the early sixties in academia and where we are now; that is how I became a sociologist; I knew nothing about it except Riesman at the time; I think a lot of my sociology is built around the model of both the acquisition of skill in music, and even more, the way in which musicians work with each other is a

kind of model of sociability - not just cooperation, but patterns of authority; for me, my childhood has not disappeared in my sociology; in the last ten years I have had more surgery and have been able to play again, and I realize how much my childhood has been able to guide the sociological models; compared my background in music with a student of Adorno, who apparently hated to perform - the performative aspect of social life is almost absent in Adorno; for me practice, and the shaping of practice has always been the centre of what I have done in sociology

25:20:20 When I listen to my own repertoire I am a dreadful listener; with pieces I don't know or have learned in the last decade I tend to be a better listener; as a sociologist, my trade is learning to listen actively, and maybe that was shaped by music too; I write in silence and concentrate on what I am doing, but can understand that music could be a stimulus to writing

28:14:24 First school was a Catholic school run by nuns of the Order of the Blessed Virgin; it had corporal punishment, which was particularly difficult for black parents who thought these were southern racists who had come to get them; mother tried to explain the ways of the Catholic church and their belief in original sin; that aside, it was an incredible school and all of us did really well; the nuns were not interested in understanding racism, but they wanted us to achieve; if we didn't, it was because we were sinful and slothful; school had no resources but the children did very well; I have a lot of respect for the Catholic church and as an adult I have sympathy for liberal Catholics who are caught between what is now a very degraded institution and the actual faith that Catholics in a parish will have; I have never become a Catholic but have a feel for the ritual elements; I never had any faith, but became a non-believer in left-wing politics of a sectarian sort that my mother was caught up in; I was a real believer in the new left in its non-sectarian, rather relaxed way of dealing with politics; never had any religious conviction although we had a wonderful collection of icons and also Jewish religious stuff about the house; on Monday I had a conversation with the Archbishop of Canterbury, sponsored by the Guardian, on capitalism; it was a strange occasion because to me there is an ethical problem in what capitalism has done to people's lives; to him it is a problem of virtue rather than ethics; we

rather bored our audience because we got into the difference between ethics and virtue; Rowan Williams is quite a remarkable man who has a real belief in sin, but it is not a language I could ever believe in

36:29:13 Feel that Richard Dawkins has the wrong end of the stick; what he should be really asking about is the strong correlation between religious belief and the practice of violence; seems to me the reason for atheism would not be that beliefs are wrong, we all have them, but the kind of magical thinking that goes on in religion is so correlated to the notion of destroying or causing suffering to people who don't share that belief, that it is in my view something that humanity has to outgrow; much better to find other magical practices which don't lead to violence; I can understand as a scientist, particularly in terms of evolution, how galling it must be for Dawkins that creationism and intelligent design has taken hold; can't get rid of irrational beliefs but need to deal with the nature of the belief if it predisposes believers to violence; once asked Dawkins whether he could be tempted by Zen Buddhism; Islam and Christianity are full of evidence of injustice, as is Israel now; perhaps we should flip Pascal's wager, that the safest position is to deny the existence of God and if you are wrong you have made a catastrophically bad bet but will probably have done your fellow human beings a great service by being a resolute atheist rather than an agnostic

41:57:08 Was at the Catholic school from six until ten when we moved briefly to Minneapolis where my mother worked as a social worker; I stayed there for four years and then started touring; went back to Chicago to University of Chicago; I was interested in politics though at that time McCarthyism was still warm; was what was termed a 'red diaper baby'; we were cautioned about what we talked about; I can only remember being interested in music; I was a very sociable little kid and I have remained so all my life; I never had the usual sufferings that people had in school; I have talked to many musicians about this and what was true for me was often true for them; there is something very sociable about music; I had some suffering, I did not see my father but had lots of surrogate fathers, but on the whole had a really wonderful childhood; the fact of being an adult at the age of fifteen was great; when I lived in New

York aged seventeen I rented a flat with others over a bar that by day served stevedores and at night was a transvestite bar run by the mafia; we could hear the juke box all night and for three musicians it was heaven for us; we could practice until four in the morning in complete freedom; when I listen to what happens to my British students who grew up in rigid secondary schools, competing all the time, heavily supervised - a totally foucauldian scopic regime, a terrible way to have an adolescence

Second Part, 24th April 2009

0:09:07 Discussion on why Beatrice Webb's "one fact one card" is a disastrous method of working; accumulating information and remembering; taped interviews and learning how to listen

12:59:05 Wrote 'The Hidden Injuries of Class' to show how, despite perceptions that US is a classless society, social distinctions of class are very marked in America; focuses on the resentment felt by the working-class against the middle-class; we experimented with all sorts of ways of interviewing people; that book was the touchstone for me of my own politics; it was well received here, and published by Cambridge University Press; in the States, Lionel Trilling wrote a quite negative review, but invited me to lunch to explain why he had done so; we had a long discussion on what the new left never learnt from the old left which was that the whole rhetoric of class conflict had to end, and he was depressed to see somebody from the new left speaking it again; it was typical of the reaction I got from older people; although Britain must be the extreme of class, since living here in the last twelve years have not found the working-class cringe, deference, that you do find in the States; in France and Germany, class counts but not so strongly as in Britain

22:25:18 'The Fall of Public Man'; ideas of Hannah Arendt and Jurgen Habermas; own idea of a public realm that is dramaturgically based on behaviour between strangers, where people act out in front of others; argument of the book was that the ability of people to communicate with strangers has decreased in the course of modernization, with a reign of intimacy of like speaking to like; has an effect on public space but is also a

consequence of how space is organized; the book is looking at stage as street and has a lot of architecture in it because I think spatial relations and conditions play an enormous role in the way in which strangers deal with each other; I had a tremendous response to that book which continues; subject has always interested me; I knew Hannah Arendt who told me I was probably wrong, but to do it; she was an amazing person and so was her husband; I got to know her when she had just finished 'Eichmann and Jerusalem' where she had hard things to say about the Jewish councils in the organization of the death camps; she was being condemned as a self-hating Jew; what impressed me about her was her absolute courage; she loathed psycho-analysis, didn't like anthropology much, but I enjoyed intellectual arguments with her; she loathed people who worshipped her, she had terrible relations with people like Isaiah Berlin - partly because of Zionism, partly because of his prudence; all her life she remained a German exile, Isaiah Berlin was a member of the establishment in Britain

33:22:00 'Flesh and Stone' is a book that is close to me but nobody knows, a history of the material culture of cities from Ancient Greeks to the present; 'The Craftsman' is a whole new intellectual chapter of my life and will be part of a set of three books about practise, or 'performativity' - example of the problem that we get into language codes and do ourselves terrible harm with it; what treating sociology as literature forces people to think about whether a sentence has signification; Foucault, even Derrida, and Elias write, as in 'The Civilizing Process', scintillating prose which reflects an excitement and energy; find the coterie language now used very worrying; find that so long as we speak in code we have no idea of the connotations or import of what we say or hear; by writing simply, something we may understand deeply can be made comprehensible to someone who doesn't understand it

41:08:04 Thought Lewis Mumford was a dreadful romantic about cities; I only met him once when his mind was going; he was a believer in garden cities and loathed the work of Jane Jacobs; the unplanned was anathema to him; the urbanism that I have studied is about unforeseen encounter, uncontrollable relationships in the city; I never believed that relations between blacks and whites in American cities were bound to follow a certain form; that is what

interests me, so Mumford and I couldn't be more different; he set himself up as a defender of the Fabian city idea against the anarchists, Jane Jacobs, David Harvey and myself; there was no need to do that but he had a kind of Fabian condescension that you feel in that generation of socialists; the person that he was most like was Peter Mandelson; urbanism is a problematic enterprise because it either tends to collapse into regulatory practise or it gets wild and practical; the latter gives much more life; because I had written 'The Fall of Public Man' through which I developed a satisfying engagement with architecture, in the 1980s I was asked by UNESCO to start a committee of urban studies to look at how some of the issues of public space play out internationally; we ran this committee for many years and basically it was a forum for people in Latin America, Asia and Western Europe to exchange ideas; as a result of that, when there was a change of regime at the LSE, John Ashworth set up an urban studies programme and asked me to run it; I have been doing so for the last twelve years; I am no longer concerned with the teaching aspect but I am chairman of Urban Age, a chat shop where people engaged in practical projects get a chance to talk with and criticise each other; for me it has been a great pleasure because I am interested in craftsmanship and material culture

Geoffrey Hawthorn



23rd April 2009

[http://
downloads.sms.cam.ac.uk/1120434/1120441.mp4](http://downloads.sms.cam.ac.uk/1120434/1120441.mp4)

Geoffrey Hawthorn, *Plausible Worlds* (1993)

Interview Summary

Interviewed by Alan Macfarlane 23rd April 2009

0:09:07 Born in Slough in 1941; single parent family with no money; spent a lot of time with grandmother as mother found it difficult to cope; ended up in a local authority prefab and was living there when I was at secondary school; went to the local grammar school; I know nothing about my paternal side and only found out who my father was when I was in my fifties; my mother's family was downwardly mobile; my maternal great-grandfather was head postmaster in Bristol, his son was quite successful and became editor of a Bristol newspaper; they were Catholics; my grandmother worked as a telephonist among other things; she married through the Catholic church a man who was one of eleven children, son of a farmer from near Frome in Somerset; of those children, six were girls and five, boys; five of the girls became nuns, the sixth became governess to a Catholic family; the eldest boy inherited the farm and the other boys had to seek their fortune; my grandfather became a butcher's assistant in Bristol; I met him a few times although they separated before I was born; a vigorous man but not a hero as he cut off his little finger to disqualify himself when war broke out in 1914; he was clearly a clever man but angry and frustrated, and drank; the family suffered enormously from that in the late twenties; my mother was neurotic but very clever; she got a scholarship to the girls high school in Bath where they were living, but her father would not allow her to take it up; he would not allow her to bring back young men and would become violent; she migrated; at the beginning of the depression work was difficult to find but there were quite a large number of jobs in the expanding pharmaceutical and white-goods industries on the bypasses west of London; she ended up in Slough and got a job as a secretary and produced me; my grandmother did not know quite what to do with herself and she came to look after me; she had to earn money and the only way she could do so was as a residential domestic servant, which she did not like; the advantage was that she could take me with her; I would just sit in the corner wherever we were; the disadvantage was that she was always falling out with her employers; I can remember some of the characters she worked for,

and they were pretty ghastly; I remember when I was about five or six, her resigning on the spot, and us being on the pavement with a suitcase and nowhere to go; we would get on a bus or train and get off somewhere so she could look for work; occasionally I would go back and live with my mother if she was somewhere that she could have me, but she was generally living in bed-sits; eventually she got onto a housing list and that is why we went to live in a prefab in [what John Betjeman called 'the sordid western suburbs' of Windsor]; my mother married and I had a stepfather during those years; that was a truly working-class world; he had grown up in west London where he had become a garage mechanic; he had had a successful war, in the sense that he had enjoyed it; he was a mechanic on air-sea rescue boats and was involved in the American move up through Italy, I think very involved in the extensive smuggling rackets; he didn't really know what to do when he came back and never settled; he married my mother in 1950; he and his brother paid their way by washing cars but it turned out there was another racket of stealing cars; in the same week that I went to Oxford he went to Wormwood Scrubs and that is the last I saw of him; my mother then lived on her own until she died ten years ago in local authority housing, a very sad unsatisfactory life for her; the one thing that she did feel as a result of her own experience was that education was important; it was very easy for me; there were two emblematic moments, one was in the Thomas Grey Primary School in Slough when I was nine; a Mrs Auden came up to me and said I was not good at anything but reading; mother was furious but I said she was right; much later she was tickled to find that there was a job called Reader, when I got one; the second moment was at Windsor Grammar School - a tremendously important place for me; in the 1950s the universities were not expanding at all and a large number of clever students went into school-teaching; the quality of teaching in that school, at its best, was terrific; they took an interest in you, took you seriously and introduced you to intellectual discipline in various ways; I flourished there on the reading side, but I was not good at science although I was very interested in biology, in the natural world; I thought I might do biology with chemistry; it was a school that wouldn't put you in for 'O' level unless it knew you were going to do well; there were rehearsals including one for practical chemistry where we were supposed to produce some purple crystals; the rest of the form did

so but I did not; the chemistry master, whom I respected, said I was the stupidest person he had ever met; this left me with the only option of arts 'A' levels

11:17:10 I wanted to go to the LSE as I had heard about the social sciences in a vague way and read some prospectuses; the BSc Econ at the LSE seemed attractive; then we had a new Headmaster who changed the uniform so it was identical to St Paul's, put the school's rugby results in the Times and said that everybody in the Upper Sixth had to go in for an Oxbridge scholarship; as a result I got an open scholarship to Oxford; I was not entirely happy, but I went and it was academically a complete disaster

12:37:05 All the way through my childhood and adolescence reading was the escape; I never knew quite where I would be living so went to eleven or twelve different primary schools; it wasn't easy to establish friends so I was a solitary child though I don't remember being unhappy; one of the reasons that I became an academic was that books were my life; in early adolescence I was introduced to the school's natural history society by a master who became tremendously important to me; the introduction to the natural world was another escape; where we lived was the area deemed for the most deprived of council tenants - when at Oxford I would go back and fill in social security forms for neighbours who couldn't write; this area was on the edge of town near the countryside where I could cycle when I wasn't reading; the master, Raymond South, got permission for himself and a few boys from the school to wander in private areas of the Royal Parks; one of these is an extraordinary area, which is still closed, an ancient hunting forest established by William I which has never been touched since, there are rides through it but otherwise it is a virgin oak forest; it was a wonderful place to get lost in and I got completely absorbed by the birds, flowers, fungi; remember going on an expedition with Professor Hora from Reading, gathering fungi for him to identify; I was very proud to come back with a fungus that was new to Britain; the two escapes for me were reading and then natural history; by sixteen-seventeen there were girls, then university

17:50:09 I remember reading very intensively and rereading, particularly nineteenth and twentieth century poetry; I loved the language, music and imagery; for a child who was a dreamer it was wonderful; I thought of doing English at university but I had a puritan, utilitarian streak, and didn't know what I would do with it; the poet I loved was Gerard Manley Hopkins, and I read a lot of modern novels, particularly European novels; growing up in the way that I did didn't produce any great affection in me for England; I liked the English imagination and countryside but I didn't like much else so was drawn to Europe; French was the foreign language at school so I liked its literature, and would read other literature in translation

20:16:05 There was no escape into religion; I don't think I have much religious sensibility; it has been a defect of my intellectual life that I hear the importance of it in other people, I read about it, but I have great difficulty feeling it; my mother had left the Catholic church and was moving left through the Protestant denominations; when I was eighteen she was a member of the Elim Foursquare Fundamentalists, an extraordinary church in Slough; the congregation consisted of three sets of people - people like my mother, the dispossessed, a large contingent of Welsh who loved the singing, and Sikhs who had left Sikhism; this was difficult because the first two were deeply racist; the total immersion baptism was a regular trauma for my mother; I would go to a service with her occasionally where there would be speaking in tongues, and there was a lot of true or simulated ecstasy; my most direct experience of religion otherwise had been a rather unfortunate local Pastor who came into to give us religious instruction in grammar school, and would tell us that Darwin was mistaken; so what was presented to me was not appealing

24:29:08 Am interested in the sociology of religion, and now in mysticism; am just writing a review of a biography of Max Weber and one of the arguments is how important mysticism was to him; intellectually I am an atheist, but socially a tolerant agnostic; I can recognise religious feeling and need, and I am curious about it; attending memorial services shows me that we have no other way of collectively expressing our feelings, of collectively acknowledging a life; I am moved by the services which surprises me

28:39:18 I don't like Dawkin's views but also I don't like the public manifestations of Catholicism [and certainly have no truck, as Graham Hough put it, with 'what goes on at the smoky end']; I have become increasingly sceptical of the use of intellectual positions to deny other peoples lives; I have come to appreciate the radical cultural contingency of things, so that things that are done in the name of any belief I react against; I have become much more pragmatic, and more sensitive to the non-rational in human life; in that dispute as in other ideological disputes I find myself not merely disinterested but angry

30:56:06 Oxford was in some ways a disaster; I took an open scholarship in geography, the subject I was best at in school; went to Jesus College; realized very quickly that this was a mistake as there was nothing of intellectual interest in the subject for me; the really intellectual part of it was geomorphology but human geography was superficial; I realized that I wanted to look more deeply at social things and the wish to do social sciences at LSE was still there; I asked to change to PPP but at that time they only took twenty-eight people a year and were full; I then asked if I could change to PPE and the College refused; at that time quite a number of the geography scholars had changed out of geography, and the last one to graduate had got a fourth; I then decided to leave assuming my open scholarship carried an automatic state scholarship, and go to the LSE; they said I needed a letter from them to transfer a state scholarship and refused to give me one, so I was caught; the quality of teaching in geography was quite appalling and I am still very angry about it; the Professor was a man called Gilbert who had written very little, but had written a book called 'Brighton:† Old Ocean's Bauble'; we all thought this very odd as Brighton is not on an ocean; in his lectures, in passing, he mentioned that Salazar, the dictator of Portugal and then in power, was the most enlightened ruler in Europe because he was the only one to have employed professional geographers to carve his country up into administrative regions; it was not hard to get a good degree but the question was how to pass my time in Oxford; I got involved in left-wing politics, not because I was particularly left-wing but because it was intellectually exciting; I was saved by Gunter Hirsch who came from a long line of rabbis in Worms; he had fled

Germany in 1938 and ended up in Cornwall where he had got a job as a farm labourer; he found he could not stand the hard winter of 1940-41 and left Cornwall hoping to get to London; could only afford to get as far as Didcot and got a lift to Oxford; he got a warm job as boilerman in the Agricultural Economics Research Institute; in 1944-45 Colin Clark realized that he knew an enormous amount about European land law as he had been a lawyer; brought him upstairs, invented a job for him as University Demonstrator in Rural Social Organization, and he became an academic; he did not have many students but my Tutor at Jesus put me on to him; I explained my predicament and he agreed to talk with me on a fortnightly basis; he would suggest a whole range of literature and we would just talk about it; he glowed in my eyes because he had been to some of Max Weber's last lectures in at the start of the 1920s; he had a broad European education and opened my eyes to all sorts of things; he made it clear to me that I wasn't going mad and what I wanted to do was reasonable; after Oxford, in 1962, I didn't quite know what to do or where to go; quite a lot of people had gone on to do the diploma in anthropology, so I went and had a conversation with the anthropologist, John Beattie; he asked me if I wanted to study small groups of non-literate people who were depressed and diseased, and who in my lifetime would have ceased to exist; put like that, I did not; I had a picture in my mind of the Tchukche of north-eastern Siberia, whom I had read about, and already had a plan to work with them; Beattie had never heard of them and thought the Russians would have killed them all; thus I did not do anthropology; Gunter suggested I go to the LSE; he persuaded my local authority to pay for another year; I spent a year doing a qualifying exam and then started a PhD; I had a sociology plan because the new universities had been announced and they were going to set their face against the traditional subjects; they were to start in 1964-5 and I thought that if I did graduate work I could then teach as I wanted to be an academic; in Spring 1962 I had read a profile of Alan Little who taught sociology at the LSE with whom I identified; he was assigned as my supervisor but after three weeks he suggested I applied for a job in sociology at the new Essex University; I applied for an assistant lectureship and got it, so went to teach at Essex at twenty-three with no qualifications whatsoever for the job

44:00:05 At the LSE, Ernest Gellner made an impression on me; David Glass was very remote but I had a certain respect for him; Donald MacRae made one remark which stayed with me, that sociology meets its match when it has to deal with religion; I could see exactly why; it stayed with me because I thought it true but also because it put its finger on a weakness of my own, that I didn't understand religion; at the time I took him to be saying that sociologists can forget that religion is founded on a faith; sociology has its origins in the regressive rationalism of the eighteen-century, so people not best fitted to understand religion; I think now what he may have been saying something that I only came really to understand later in life, that sociology was in danger of being a reductive subject - it would take beliefs and emotions and reduce them to other phenomena; when I read Durkheim's 'Elementary Forms', I thought it a clever book, but I could nevertheless see what MacRae might have meant; just in the last month I have come to understand Weber's interest in mysticism and can now see what he may have been driving at

48:29:03 Starting at Essex was utterly terrifying; I was the first non-professorial appointment so I was on every committee to plan everything; the first year teaching, on the social structure of modern Britain, didn't worry me very much because at LSE I had done some extra-mural teaching on the subject; I had taught in Brixton with West Indian immigrants; that was a good education for me because these people did not have an academic interest in the subject but wanted to know how Britain worked; there were four members of the sociology department at Essex - the Professor, Peter Townsend, Herminio Martins, Paul Thompson, Ernest Rudd, and me; the department started a master's course in the first year; the week before it started, Townsend came to me and said that Rudd wouldn't teach the methods course, would I; I had been to a methods course at LSE which was wonderful, run by Claus Moser, Ernest Gellner and Ronald Dore; I had to teach it and can remember that first class; all these students had done social science as undergraduates so feared they knew more than I on the subject; it was fun until 1968 and the revolution when I found myself in the middle; I thought the University authorities were behaving obtusely in reaction to a student protest, and it was better managed elsewhere, such as Sussex; on the other hand the revolutionaries'

demands were ludicrous and fantastic; because I had the ear of both sides and was sympathetic to views on civil rights, Vietnam, but also to progressive forms of university governance; found myself having to chair meetings trying to bring the two sides together; also chaired meeting between students and the townspeople of Colchester; later in life I read something by David Daiches who was at Sussex in those years talking about their educational philosophy which was to concentrate on the modern world but not be subject to the tyranny of the present; I didn't put it that way to myself at the time but realize that was exactly what I felt at Essex; it had decided to teach sociology, politics and economics, but not history or philosophy, or English literature; I thought that this was going too far, that the curriculum together with the force of these events of 1968 suggested that this place was subject to the tyranny of the present; I was also politically lonely and emotionally lonely; the Sociology Department was huge by then with twenty-eight people, twenty-seven of whom were married; I was getting rather fed-up with being introduced to people at dinner parties, and in fact I met my first wife in London when I was on leave from Essex; I decided to leave and come back to an older university; there were jobs in Oxford and Cambridge for which I applied; the Oxford interview was first, and the sociology job was tied to my old college; as I had made myself unpopular in the past there, I was told that all the University people had voted for me, all the College people against; was offered the job at Cambridge; the interview was in the Old Schools, February 1970; there was a power cut in the middle of the interview and candles were found for the rest of the interview; remember that Meyer Fortes was on the committee, asked most of the questions, but also answered them all himself; Leach gave the impression of being asleep then asked how I thought men were different from animals; the job was a university lectureship in sociology (statistics), to teach methods; I didn't really want to do this but I wanted to get out of Essex; John Barnes very politely asked if I knew anything about statistics, which I said I didn't; in the darkness I stumbled out of the room followed by an administrator who asked me how much I was being paid at Essex, and told me I was being grossly overpaid; I think in the darkness they must have made a mistake, but anyway I got the job

Second Part

0:09:07 Came to Cambridge in October 1970; John Barnes had been elected to the Chair of Sociology in 1968 and the idea was that Social and Political Sciences as a Tripos would largely consist of bits drawn from elsewhere - political thought from history, some of the more comparative sociological things from anthropology, bits of social psychology from management and engineering; there were things that were not available in the University so three lectureships were established in 1969 to provide those - one was to teach methods, which was the lectureship in sociology that I took, one was developmental psychology which Martin Richards took, and one was comparative sociology which Malcolm Ruel took; there were two or three posts in sociology in the economics faculty where the subject had been introduced in the 1960s - Tony Giddens and Ray Jobling were lecturers there; John Barnes became and remains a very close friend; I think him to be a very good anthropologist; there were two difficulties, one was that he was more of an anthropologist than a sociologist; he was not very interested in modernity but sociology is largely about that; remember there was a paper on the sociology of economic life where people talked largely about industry, labour and management; John gave a lecture on peasants which perhaps symbolised the nearest he could come; secondly, he did not really want to take much responsibility and didn't like administration, so it fell to others; not entirely unfortunate for me; in the early years of SPS we had external chairmen who could be very powerful, like Moses Finley, and a lot of the leg work was then done by the junior staff who were the academic secretaries as the chairman only appeared every other Tuesday afternoon; John Barnes was, however, a true liberal, a very decent man; the ideology of SPS was much more left-wing; nevertheless, being a liberal, he suited SPS very well as it would have been very difficult if we had had someone who imposed a particular vision of the social sciences; my wider view of SPS is that it was a notionally radical entity created in the most deeply conservative of circumstances; it was a set of compromises where everybody from genetics to theology wanted to have a say, as a result of which no one intellectual voice was primary; I think that in many ways that was a good thing; my experience of the social sciences is that when they start

institutionally trying to define themselves, excluding other things, then a rigid theoreticism and methodological obsession takes hold; I think the environment of Cambridge and John's character kept SPS plural; quite inadvertently it sustained its conservative inspiration

8:31:00 I am a tremendous admirer of Jack Goody; I love the range and intellectual openness, his almost matter-of-fact originality, that he will take cooking or flowers to be self-evidently as serious a subject as kinship; he is so prolific; he was better than most other heads of the anthropology department had been at exciting young people; his own anthropology was possibly not of the deepest but his encouragement of others, and the creation in Adams Road and in Free School Lane of a welcoming atmosphere, seemed to me terrific; I am sure that Ernest Gellner was much more deeply reflective, Leach in his own tortured way, much more brilliant, Marilyn Strathern is very intense, but Jack has a set of qualities which none of them had; just his presence seems to me to have been crucial to the subject of anthropology in the 1970s and 80s, but that is just looking from the outside; looking at anthropology with John Beattie's remark in mind, the subject has a genius for reinventing itself, unlike sociology which has drifted into some sort of sterile backwater, at least for the moment; it was particularly vivid in Cambridge because Jack was so good at energizing the subject; John Barnes had the same liberality but not the same energy

12:57:05 There was nobody else around who could have done what Tony Giddens did; tremendous confidence, managerial energy, will and determination to get something done; I was very nervous about doing what he did when he did it as I didn't think we had the resources; he took the view that he had to introduce a part 1 and try to extend the number of students because that was the only way to get more money; meanwhile the load on the staff was terribly heavy; we disagreed about that; also thought that in contrast to Barnes and Goody, Tony wasn't a very liberal character; it still seems to me that Cambridge flourishes because it tolerates intellectual heterogeneity; it hires clever people and lets them do what they want to do; for Tony the corollary of giving a faculty an institutional identity was disciplinary distinctiveness; what that

meant was that a particular vision of sociology was given pre-eminence over politics and social psychology, and there was no connection with anthropology because he wasn't interested in it; I didn't think that it was right for this place, but at the same time I can see its practical point; it made the University sit up, made the schools acknowledge its existence, but I think quite a high price was paid for it; what Tony did bringing it together in this way caused the later explosion that led into separating departments as there were too many of us who were not happy to be corralled in this way

16:29:22 I realize that I have had a problem with sociology all the time; when I came into sociology I was attracted by ethnographies of British society; a book by Brian Jackson and Denis Marsden 'Education and the Working Class', was published in 1962, and that book spoke to me for obvious reasons; Young and Willmott's work on family etc., and by others, a lot of whom had been trained as anthropologists, seemed to me terrific and that sociology was going to say what life was like in Britain; sociology had two other sets of ambitions, one was to be a generalizing science, and Tony had something of that; the other was to agonise about a distinctive method; one of the reasons I have always admired historians and anthropologists is that they seem much less preoccupied by method; I had been employed to teach it and completely lost my faith in it; I think that the subject got distracted by these two dispositions - obsession with method and the desire to be a synthetic science - and lost its ethnographic impulse; where are the ethnographies of modern Britain? - they exist in novels, and some work by anthropologists or social historians like Raphael Samuel; I am as guilty as anybody because I did not go out and do it; Cambridge is a very abstracted university and inclines people much more to theory; in a subject where there is a temptation to very high levels of excessively generalising abstraction, and this has been a bad environment for sociology; this is just one view and many people would say I never really was a sociologist anyway, and perhaps I wasn't; this great hope of the sixties, nowhere is it on the intellectual front line; psychology has moved into the study of neurology, philosophy has broadened out and has become interesting again, anthropology keeps finding new life in itself, the study of history keeps renewing itself, English has broadened into

cultural studies - these subjects are alive, where has sociology gone?
- nowhere really; at Harvard, where I was offered a job in sociology for a second time, the department was more or less collapsing; it was for a similar reason as Harvard had tried to maintain a more ancient conception of the subject, with a group of clever, heterogeneous individuals, but the professionals were moving in and wanted more methodologists and theorists, and the subject was being killed

23:24:11 I used to enjoy book reviewing, partly because I enjoy reading; Daniel Bell once lamented that his natural length for pieces was 17,000 words which nobody wanted; my natural length is about 2,500 words which was one of the reasons that I likes reviewing; it offers the same pleasure and discipline that supervising does - the thing I have loved most about my job is supervising; it forces one to get a subject, unpack it, to make it clear without becoming crude, and have an argument about something, all in the space of fifty minutes and I have always most enjoyed talking to undergraduates; lecturing I enjoy less, though I liked getting the material together but I was very nervous; I found it very difficult often to persuade myself that I had enough to say that was interesting and worth taking fifty minutes of an audience's time; it is different from a supervision as one is constantly monitoring whether the interest is there; in a lecture, unless you are very good at playing to the audience, it is more difficult as I am not confident enough; remember Quentin Skinner saying to me that one has to persuade the audience that this is the most important thing that they are hearing at this particular moment, and there is nowhere else they should be, and they will believe you; I have never been able quite to do this; as far as my work is concerned, teaching has dictated a lot of it; I had an interest in population and in social theory; the interest in population came at the end of Oxford; I had been so impressed by publications of the Institute of Community Studies that I wrote to Michael Young; he wrote back that the whole question of population was interesting, the question of fertility similarly, and couldn't be left to demographers, so I got interested in that; my first book was about fertility; it had a certain success and got me invited to Harvard as a visiting professor; that set me off on one line of work; the second thing was the history of social theory; I wanted to understand how sociology had come into

being, and Essex had provided the opportunity because the social theorists there thought nothing worthwhile had been written before 1937, and could I teach on the early period, which I did; I carried on doing so here; they came to converge later; at Harvard I was given a course on population in the Third World which I had not thought about; I concentrated on India and China partly because the Khanna study had recently been published by Harvard and had been criticised by Mamdani; I had a job partly in sociology and partly in public health; I realized that to try to understand the dynamics of fertility one had to understand the social circumstances; looking at India and China from the thirties to the sixties (I was at Harvard in the early 1970s), one had to understand the economic circumstances and in order to understand those one had to understand the political circumstances; I became interested in the politics of these countries; meanwhile, the history of social theory was quite separate from this and led me to the view that the development of a distinctive social theory from the eighteenth century invention of the idea of society, the presumption that what had for a couple of thousand years been taken to be question in politics and law were questions in something now called sociology, was perhaps too strong; these two things converged; got a sense of the practical importance of politics through starting with population, and a sense of the more general intellectual importance of politics from looking at the history of theory; these two things together inclined me more to politics; then the question was how to do it; I didn't do political theory because partly a lot of it was going on here and there was plenty of teaching in it; I was curious about Third World politics, made particularly so when I went to India after Harvard; I had friends who were working in the administration in Delhi; this was in 1976 during Mrs Gandhi's emergency and what was going on in the Planning Commission was a fierce argument about whether India should take the Chinese path or the Japanese path; I was already pretty convinced that the Chinese path was not a path for India, both for international political reasons but also because India was as it was; I was more intrigued by the Japanese path and then I realized that there was a country that had adopted the Japanese path, though wouldn't admit it for reasons of history, and that was Korea; I got very interested in South Korea and its politics; then I got interested in failure, why had other places not been like this; I didn't have a feel for Africa

but did for South America; thus there was a whole trajectory of work which took me through into the 1990s; meanwhile I was still wondering about questions of theory; the important influence then was Bernard Williams and he and I became close friends; initially it was a friendship that didn't have much to do with our intellectual lives; we had plans to do things together - we thought of writing a book on the philosophy of the social sciences and Michael Young asked us in the 1980s if we would write a manifesto for the new Social Democratic Party; rather glad we didn't, but we had endless happy conversations about both; I suddenly realized that there was a possibility of being intensely reflective, often at a very abstract level, while at the same time having a very strong human sense of the limitations of theory; that is what Bernard embodied for me, the importance of how far you could take theory, and where theory stopped; he used to have a saying about moral arguments that one could have a thought too many, that you could be too rational about things, and the importance of contingency, emotion etc.; he would generalize at a very high level on the importance of particularity; that was an enormous influence on me; I didn't like the strongly generalizing impulse in social theory and so I wrote a book about contingency and did it through writing about counterfactuals, just trying to knock the dignity of general laws off their pedestal; I am not sure it was a very successful book but that was the impulse

37:31:13 The next part of the story, again driven by teaching in Cambridge, was that I turned away from third world politics, not because I had lost interest, but because I was becoming more interested in international politics; population required an understanding of economy, economy required an understanding of domestic politics, and that required an understanding of international politics; this was accelerated by a pure contingency which was that I got a personal Chair and the question was what do I call myself; John Dunn insisted that I shouldn't call myself professor of politics, but I was no longer a sociologist; decided on 'international politics' but then realized that if I called myself Professor of International Politics I needed to know something about the subject; simultaneously with this the educational structure of SPS was changing and there was going to be more dedicated politics teaching in part 2; by this time I was

having to organize the second year course and take a lead in teaching; decided that as I was Professor of International Politics it would have to be a course in that subject; I then went home and hurriedly read some textbooks; Cambridge is wonderfully indulgent; whether it will continue to be, I don't know, but I have been so lucky as every fancy that has taken me, Cambridge seems to have said yes to; at the beginning of these text books was reference to† Thucydides' description of the Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta; I was sheltering from the rain in a shop doorway when Emma Rothschild also took shelter; she asked what I was doing and encouraged me to read Thucydides; I read him and it was a complete transformation, I thought it was an extraordinary book, that at last I was reading something that wrote about politics as they should be written about; then I thought it could be the basis of an undergraduate course; most second year courses are survey courses; thinking of this new part 2 in politics, realized that they have a first year where they do too much too quickly, they don't any longer read whole books at A level, so perhaps one should take a radical view of how to educate them in the second year; I was then in the position to do so, and instead of doing a survey course in the Michaelmas term, they should all just read Thucydides; they were in a state of shock because firstly the whole reason they were doing the course was to understand what was happening in Iraq tomorrow, and secondly it was one whole, old, book; it turned out to be an enormous pedagogical success and the course became very popular; they loved the book, thought about it, wrote well about it; that made me realise what an important book it was; that is where I am at now; I taught it until I retired and I am now writing a book about Thucydides

45:18:22 Cambridge has been a good place for me; I used to look at people who had been here all the time and thought that perhaps their experience had been a little too confined; to go away and come back has much to be said for it; SPS in the middle years was not easy and there was a moment in the late eighties when I would have gone to Harvard; the reason why I did not was because of my wife who is South American; it was a very cold winter at Harvard and she did not want to experience more of them and there were family reasons too; I came back to Cambridge and was very glad I did because things got better; as we all know it is a wonderful place

to pursue what one wants to pursue; there is always somebody to talk to; I constantly wonder at people's eagerness to hear a thought; thinking now I feel it was an astonishing piece of luck to be here, and astonishing that this institution exists

48:12:18 On working, I tell myself to set aside part of the day, but I work in fits and starts; one of the best things that I have written I wrote in one night, starting at seven and finishing at seven; other things have been great agonies; bits of 'Plausible Worlds', on counterfactuals, a subject that was in some ways beyond me, were very agonized and it shows in the prose; it differs very much with the difficulty of what I am writing but I do love producing the sentences; although I did do it erratically, when I am doing it is one of the greatest satisfactions; what I regret about academic life, not too paradoxically, is that one has to read so much that one can't do justice to the way things are written; one guts and fillets books, and I am good at that; I realize that I have the time actually to read books but I have mistreated them, so a lot of what I have read and written about I am not sure I have digested properly when I look back; until recently I have very much liked working on word processors but I feel that they are not very good for one's sentences, although they are for the structure, so have gone back to using an old fountain pen; writing for me is a physically very involving thing and very aural, the music of sentences matters to me and goes back to my early love of poetry; I love the English language

51:48:13 What I realize at the end of this interview is that I have, to a degree, done something I was very determined not to do beforehand, that is tell the story as though it is a rational progression; in retrospect that is the way it can seem but I wouldn't have claimed to know where I was going

David McLellan



17th December 2012

<http://downloads.sms.cam.ac.uk/1407133/1407136.mp4>

David McLellan, *Karl Marx: His Life and Thought* (1973)

Extracted from Wikipedia - 25 August 2014

David McLellan (born 1940) is a British scholar of Marx and Marxism. He was educated at Merchant Taylors' School and St. John's College, Oxford University.

McLellan is currently visiting Professor of Political Theory at Goldsmiths' College, University of London. He was previously Professor of Political Theory at the Department of Politics and International Relations at the University of Kent.

He has been Visiting Professor at the State University of New York, Guest Fellow in Politics at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, and has lectured widely in North America and Europe.

He has published many important works on Karl Marx and edited and translated his works.

Interview Summary

Interviewed by Alan Macfarlane 17th December 2012

0:05:07 Born in Hertford 1940; my mother came from a non-conformist, fairly well-off family in High Roding on the Cambridge-Essex border; her mother came from a similar family who had a chain of ironmongery shops in Liverpool; my grandfather was a quantity surveyor; my mother's maiden name was Bush, and her mother's was Eagle; my mother was one of eight children; her father married twice; he fell in love with the Liverpool lady and went up to ask for her hand in marriage; her father said that as she was his youngest daughter he needed her to stay to look after him in his old age; rebuffed, my grandfather went back to Hertford and married another woman; she died after bearing him four children and he then went up to Liverpool and asked again for the hand of his first love; her father relented, they were married and had another four children, my mother being one of them; I think that sort of background influenced me, both the non-conformity and their Liberal politics; my mother used to take me, my brother and sister, to the Congregational church quite regularly every Sunday, so I was exposed to that form of Christianity from an early age and I think it had a profound and enduring influence on me which has not abated over time; that was my mother's major influence, apart from being a very sturdy, strong, unflappable kind of character; she died at ninety-six, coping with a couple of difficult years before her death very impressively; she had trained as a primary school teacher and worked for two or three years before she got married; thereafter she just kept the house; she did not read much beyond Reader's Digest, apart from the Bible, which she read a lot; she never pushed me academically

5:35:17 My father's family was Scots, and the McLellan clan belonged to the South-West of Scotland; his home town was Newton Stewart which is on the border between

Kirkcudbrightshire and Wigtownshire; I can trace his family back to the late 1600s, and their profession was carters; they had a cottage in Newton Stewart which had outhouses for stabling, and that is still there and belongs to me now; this house was built in 1776 and all my ancestors ran this small carting business; for one reason or another they went out of business and my grandfather was just a land labourer with no land of his own; eventually he emigrated to England with his wife and children, including my father, and settled in Hertford; he ended up working for the council mending roads, so very poor; my father was one of six children but had an innate gift for classics; he won a place at the grammar school and then a scholarship to University College, London, and made an academic career for himself; he taught classics, but Latin was his main love; I don't think he ever published anything but he rose to be Reader in Classics at University College; he was not the sort of person who invited any sort of intimacy, so rather distant; I can't remember him pushing me at all; I was just very assiduous at school, and in a way I didn't need any pushing; at that time exams just seemed to happen; I got a scholarship to Merchant Taylors' as a day boy, and I was very good in most subjects and did well at 'A' level; somebody must have suggested that I apply for a closed scholarship at St John's, Oxford, which were linked to Merchant Taylor's, where I eventually went; that seemed to be the way things were without any particular planning on my part, or my father's part; he may have had it in the back of his mind all along, but certainly didn't convey as much to me; he was naturally very pleased that his son was following his own footsteps, until I eventually abandoned classics for a quite different field

11:38:20 I think my earliest memory was being a very small child on Morecambe beach during the War; we were not exactly evacuated there but we moved there to escape the bombs nearer London; remember being on the beach and losing my teddy bear; remember being very upset about this because when we went back to look for it, the waves had come and washed it away; I did have one experience when I was six or seven, when we had gone as a family to Bexhill and Sandown on the south coast, and I contracted poliomyelitis; there was an epidemic at the time and it is water-born; I was shipped off to an isolation hospital at St

Leonards-on-Sea; fortunately my polio was very mild and I was only kept there for about a month, and discharged with no permanent effects, but I was in a ward of adult men where I was the only child; a lot of these men were in pain, crying out at night, and also the animosity that some of them felt towards me as I was getting a lot of attention and presents, and nobody was paying any attention to them; I can't tell whether that left a permanent scar on my personality but it is a very vivid memory

14:50:21 I don't remember going to a kindergarten, but went to the ordinary State primary school at the age of five; I can remember feeling unhappy there, feeling ill, and being bullied; one reason why I must not have liked the school, and this is a vivid memory at about five, is having played truant for a whole day; I think I pretended to go to school, and walk up and down the road and round about, and eventually I was found out; my mother wrote a letter to the teacher that I was supposed to give her, but I didn't do so; instead of destroying the letter I kept it in my pocket and my mother found it; my vivid memory was my parents standing me in the fireplace, one on one side, one on the other, and both of them saying simultaneously, "David, we cannot trust you, can we"; I was very embarrassed by this episode and thus it sticks in my mind; after that, when we moved down to Oxhey, near London, I went to a Preparatory school from about the age of eight to thirteen; it was just about half a mile's walk from our house; I think it was called Kingfisher; it is difficult, even in retrospect, to say whether it was a good school; I think it had some good teachers in it; it had a very good Latin teacher which was fortunate for me, who was the son of W.W. Jacobs who wrote these mystery stories such as 'The Monkey's Paw'; there were some bad teachers as well; I remember a French teacher who used to get drunk most of the time, sit on the desk, and tell us lewd stories about his girlfriend; he didn't last that long but should never have been hired in the first place; no, I don't think it was a very good school, but I was happy there and made friends, and I was good at school; I did have hobbies; I was quite keen on archery, but between eight and ten my passion was collecting the tops of cigarette packets, not the cards; in those days they were multifarious and highly coloured; I would spend the time when walking on the pavement with my eye perpetually in the gutter

looking for empty cigarette packets; I would stick them in album after album; I don't know why this particularly fascinated me, but it did; I would sometime swap them, but not much; there were not many people who were interested in this kind of hobby; unfortunately I no longer have the albums as there was a bad fire in my house about five or six years ago, and the room where they were was gutted; I am short-sighted and astigmatic and I got my first glasses when I was eight; I can remember having these glasses and going into the public library and finding it difficult to adjust my vision because of them; I did not like them at all; I did not like games much, particularly as the preferred game at Merchant Taylors' was rugby football which I think is a violent and barbarous sort of pursuit; I was not very stocky so used to be put on the wing as I was a good runner, then these other hefty boys would bang me over, I really didn't like that; the only sport that I did like at school, latter on, was tennis, which was gentle and civilised

22:03:11 I did the common entrance exam and got a scholarship to Merchant Taylor's; I think that my father would not have been able to afford the fees; I started there at the age of thirteen; I liked the academic side of it because I was very good at it, and it is nice to be top of the form; we used to be ranked in seating so the top boy would be back left of the class, and the real dunce was right under the teacher's nose; I an another lad called Hans Price used to alternate positions at the top; I was good at every subject except for mathematics and physics, though I had been good at the former early on; the sporting side, which bulked quite large, as it does in those sorts of schools; the thing I really hated was the Combined Cadet Force; you had to appear every Friday dressed in army uniform with big boots and blancoed belt, then after school, spend a couple of hours marching up and down, learning to strip a Bren gun, and that sort of thing; I abhorred that; I wasn't pacifist, I just hated the authoritarian atmosphere, and thought the whole thing boring and rebarbative; on reflection now I suppose I should have had more pacifist ideas about this, but it wasn't that at all; it was just the whole ethos that I didn't like; I did three 'A' levels - Latin, Greek and Ancient History, though I must have done science 'O' levels; I remember the Headmaster, a man called Hugh Elder, because he used to take some of us classics' boys; he was

quite a religious man and used to go through the New Testament in Greek with us; I remember being quite impressed his talking to us about Paul's Epistle to the Romans, for example; this is not classical Greek at all, and not an easy Greek, its demotic stuff, but that left a good impression on me; and also the teacher of English because he was extremely histrionic and when reading Shakespeare in class, he would take a part himself; I have a vivid memory of him taking the part of King Lear and howling away at the end; it was very impressive because he had a marvelous deep voice; I remember being in a school play which was 'Hamlet', and I was a churlish priest who refuses to bury Ophelia; towards the end of my Prep school I remember being in a small opera; it might have been a version of Gilbert and Sullivan, but I had quite a major part in this; it was just at the time when my voice was breaking; I had a very good voice before it broke, and won singing competitions in my school; on this occasion, my voice broke halfway through the practices and the teacher said I was hopeless; as it was too late to find anyone else I was told to go on stage with the book and just read it out; that for a young boy at that age was very embarrassing

28:22:15 Alas, music has never been a big part of my life, though I wish it had been; my father was not musical; my mother was pretty musical, played the piano, and sang in massed choirs; she would take me to the Albert Hall where all the choirs of Hertfordshire came to sing the 'Messiah' or 'Elijah'; I liked that very much, but it is largely because it has got words so I know what it is supposed to convey; I do loyally go to concerts where friends of mine are playing; actually my granddaughters are quite musical and I go along to their concerts, but alas when they start playing an orchestral piece, something without words, most of the time, unless I am familiar with it, my mind begins to wander after a couple of minutes, and I start thinking about something completely different; I listen to talk radio at home and never listen to music there; the only time I listen to music is when driving, but it is the sort of thing you get on Classic FM; I think the one art form that really does fascinate me is architecture, partly because you can admire it anywhere, and partly the historical questions, the social background of a building, that I find interesting; also something three-dimensional I can often find aesthetically

pleasing; looking at King's College from here I can scarcely take my eyes off it

31:59:01 I don't think I was Confirmed as I don't think the sacrament exists in the Congregational Church; I thought the teaching of religion at school was abysmal, wishy-washy, liberal, don't really believe in anything kind of way; at the age of fifteen-sixteen, because of going to this Congregational church every Sunday, and sometimes on Sunday evening, the Congregationalists put a great emphasis on preaching, so the centre-piece of these services was the sermon; they were very good at it, and that preaching and the Bible readings, made a very strong impression on me; the vocational, moral side I thought was right, and was where I felt I belonged; I didn't think that I would end up as a preacher then; what I wanted to do at that time, and had virtually made up my mind to do, was to give away anything that I might have and go and help people in Africa; I was so decided about this that I made it clear that I did not want to take up my place in Oxford because I thought there were better things to do; I went to see the head of the Congregational Missionary Society in London; he said that I would be much more useful in missionary activities after getting an Oxford degree; I was persuaded by him

36:20:03 I went to St John's in 1958; my tutors were Sherwin-White for history, Donald Russell taught me Latin and Greek; I got a first in Part I; I remember the lectures of Isaiah Berlin, who was later my DPhil supervisor, and people used to flock to these lectures because they were so famous; his lectures were clear and pulled together various strands of history and social background; I remember the vivacity; he was an essayist rather than a writer of books; there was a man called Griffiths at Jesus who lectured very well on one of my selected topics, Juvenal; I wasn't an historian but I knew Keith Thomas; my two closest friends, who had both been at Merchant Taylors', Cormac Rigby and Brian Harrison, were both pupils of Keith Thomas so I heard a lot about him from them; I wanted to become a Jesuit so had a two year gap after graduating, and went to France, tried to become a Jesuit, then came back to Oxford to do a DPhil; I only ever had a long conversation with Keith at Brian Harrison's house, when he asked

me whether I wanted to write in a rival series to Fontana Modern Masters, on Immanuel Kant; I didn't think I was the right person to do so as I didn't much like Kant; I was never involved in politics at Oxford; I used to go to the Union quite regularly and listen to the debates which were mostly fairly political; during my first year I was not very sociable, probably slightly shy, so apart from going to tea with some of my friends I spent a lot of time working; this only stopped when I became a Catholic in my second year, and that became my window on the world and I began to join various Catholic societies, particularly one which was very engaged in Third World countries, giving technical assistance and that sort of thing; it was called Ad Lucem, and had been founded in Belgium but had a group in Oxford; one of the things that I liked about it was that it was full of foreigners which was a real eye-opener to me as I had had a very sheltered childhood; I did play a bit of tennis there, but that was all; I didn't have a girlfriend in my first year; I then fell in love with a German girl, but very platonically as at that time I wanted to become a Jesuit; I became a Catholic possibly by chance; I was a committed Christian and in Oxford there were many brands on offer, and we used to talk a lot about religion; I looked for a Congregational church and couldn't see one; one of my friends was very evangelical and took me to the City Church on the High, but I found it too loud for my liking; Cormac Rigby was a very strong Catholic and used to go to Mass at St Aldates at 7.15 every morning; I began to go with him, and that kind of thing just grows on you; partly because of the liturgy at that time, which was in Latin, it appealed to me; then for fairly intellectual reasons I thought that if you wanted to practice Christianity then it was better to go back to a founding form, rather than to one that had picked pieces from it, or a national church; I, like a lot of young people, was looking for something that was all-encompassing, a kind of way of looking at the world which was not an answer to everything, but was comprehensive; Catholicism did seem to me to be comprehensive; I was very interested in Thomism, Thomas Aquinas, and that kind of thing; all that seemed to me to have the answers to a whole lot of questions; I don't think the presence of Father Michael Hollings affected me directly; he was a man I very much admired, and to some extent got to know reasonably well; later on, the example of the way in which he conducted his life

and dealt with the students, and his very practical charity, not just in Oxford but also in London, with his soup-kitchen church set-up, impressed me; the man who instructed me was his Assistant Chaplain, Yve Noel, who was a Belgium priest, and was much more buttoned-up, though I quite liked him; I am not sure at what point I decided to become a Jesuit, whether before or after I actually became a Catholic, but this was a continuation of my attempt to understand the meaning of life when I was fifteen or sixteen; I was looking for something that was a total dedication, a complete renunciation of the things of this world, and being at the service of other people as well as God; I became a Catholic in the first term of my second year, and for the next three years I was intending to become a Jesuit; I remember helping some of your colleagues, as well as Cormac Rigby, whose Latin was not brilliant, and Glyn Worsnip, who later became a comedian, and I also helped you

51:32:21 When I got my degree I decided to go to France because my parents strongly objected to my wish to become a Jesuit; I wanted to conciliate them in some way so agreed to go to France for a year to think it over; I got a job as a teacher of English conversation in a very posh Jesuit school; in France, those who wanted to go to the Grandes Ecoles would do a year's preparation after leaving school; the boys who came to this school, which was just outside Versailles, were being groomed for the entrance examination; I was there to engage them in some English conversation; I divided my time between there and Paris; the school side I found very difficult because these boys were almost my age, and those who were destined for the Naval Academy were not interested in English; only those who wanted to do business or agriculture seemed to be interested; the only way that I could get their interest was to talk about politics; most of them came from very traditional conservative, Catholic, right-wing families; they hated De Gaulle, very pro Pétain and Vichy, and told me that the reason that the French lost the war was because the English ran away and scuttled at Dunkirk; I felt quite strongly about these matters, so we did then manage to get a bit of English conversation going; I still felt that I wanted to become a Jesuit, and after that year went back to England and joined the Jesuit novitiate; it was in a huge Victorian pile, built by a man who had

made his money out of beer, near Grantham in Lincolnshire, called Harlaxton Manor; the novitiate was in the servants' quarters and part of the rest of the house was occupied by some very old Jesuits who were being looked after in these magnificent rooms; the essence of the training which lasts for two years is not intellectual; there is a lot of praying and a famous thirty-day retreat which St Ignatius Loyola instituted for all his followers; there was also a lot of manual labour, peeling potatoes and digging the garden, and that kind of thing, and a lot of learning about the history of the Jesuits and their attitude to various things; there were lectures given by the Novice Master, who seemed to me to be not an intellectual man at all; he had been Prefect of Discipline at Stonyhurst, the Catholic Public school in Lancashire, and I thought that role just about suited him; there was not a lot of training; initially I took to it as I am quite obstinate and had made up my mind to do it, and stuck to it through thick and thin until the truth stared me in the face; the Jesuits have changed a lot since then, but then they recruited children from northern Catholic grammar schools on the whole, who came straight into the Novitiate; three of us were graduates, one in his thirties from America, a very gifted man though quite an egotist, but we three stuck out a bit like a sore thumb and we actually left almost at the same time because it was so inflexible and unimaginative; I remember reading before I went into the Novitiate, a book by a man who had been a Jesuit before the First World War, and had left during the war to fight; his account of the Novitiate over fifty years earlier showed that it hadn't changed at all; I think that after getting a university degree it is difficult to adapt; my decision to leave was very sudden; I remember sitting in the library, looking out of the window, it was snowing, and thinking to myself that I didn't need to be there and that there was an alternative; as soon as I felt that I decided to leave; I think my decision are often like that; I remember thinking when my marriage broke up, the same kind of thing; I think it is part of my obstinacy and a certain amount of inflexibility, that I can't imagine things being otherwise until they have got to be otherwise; that makes for something that is very sudden and not a gradual process at all; I think that if it had been different then, and more like it is now, I might still be there; it is not impossible

Second Part

0:05:07 After making my decision I think I must have contacted my father, because he came to bring me certain things to go out with, and about three weeks after that I left; together with one of my colleagues who had a degree, we went and stayed in a hotel in Grantham before catching a train down to London; I remember an incident in this hotel, that is, when we wrote home which we were allowed to do once a week, we had to leave the letters unsealed so that the Novice Master could read them; I had written one or two letters, and I gave them to the porter in the hotel asking him to post them; he turned them over and noted they were unsealed; I don't think I realized the sense of loss at the time; I felt the same as I later thought when my marriage failed and I got divorced; I didn't realize at the time the shock and disappointment, but it was, and similarly with the Jesuits; I thought it was partly because I wanted to pursue my studies and do a DPhil, and I got a place at Oxford to do that, but because I had got six months between then and starting at Oxford in September, I thought I would go to Germany because of the topic that I wanted to study - Marx and so forth; I stayed in a tiny little flat in Frankfurt, learnt German and went to a few lectures, and met people like Adorno, so it was interesting in that way; but I think, looking back on it, I was quite depressed during that time; I wasn't very sociable; I would spend as much time as possible sleeping which is a good indication of somebody who is depressed; it was not a happy time for me, and was due to the shock and disappointment of having had to revise all my ambitions which I had held for three or four years, which is quite a long time at that sort of age; I think it took me about eighteen months to get over that

3:46:14 Before I went to the Jesuits I spent a year in France and really wanted to study something there that was typically French; I thought I would look at existentialism but realized that it did not have a very solid form; the Summer before I had been on a National Union of Students' trip to Moscow; the reason I had been was that my friend, Brian Harrison, had been on just such a trip the year before, and had encouraged me to go; I hitch-hiked all

the way to the Russian border, climbed on the train, and had various escapades because I didn't have a proper visa; anyway, got there in the end and found it interesting, and these people were talking about Marxism; I had never heard about Marxism before and wondered what they were talking about; it seemed to be important to them, and the fact that two Jesuits had written very good books on Marxism, one Jean-Yves Calvez, about Marx, and the other by Henri Chambre, which was more about the Soviet Union and China, and that kind of Marxism; anyway, French Jesuits had obviously got interested in the topic, and I was interested in left-wing attitudes to the world because the Ad Lucem people were left-liberal in their politics; the young French Catholics struck me at that time as sort of golden people because they had a very strong religious belief and they united this, which Catholics in England at that time simply did not do, with various social and political goals; I got interested in politics through them and decided to look at Marxism; I started to read bits and pieces and some of the bits of Marx that I read, particularly 'The German Ideology', where in a hundred pages he lays out what he called the materialist conception of history, of history moving in stages with an economic foundation, and this picture of the unrolling of history made a very profound impression on me; I thought it really made sense to me, it put history into a kind of perspective, with a thread running through, and a kind of explanation; therefore I thought that when I went back to Oxford I should pursue the matter; while I was in Germany I was writing to people in Oxford and trying to get a place; in those days, I think that if you got a place you got a scholarship, a State Studentship, which was possible to live on; when I was back in England I went round Oxford asking various people if they would supervise me; Alasdair MacIntyre was one, Pelchinsky was another, and then I went to see Isaiah Berlin; he had various suggestions that I didn't like, then he said that there was a man called Sydney Hook who wrote a book about Marx and his young Hegelian colleagues in the early 1840s of whom the best known is Feuerbach; Berlin thought this book was one-sided and suggested that I try and write a better book; I thought this a good idea so that was what I decided to do; the reason I wanted to do this was that I was very interested in theories about religion, particularly from a political-sociological point of view, and the whole notion of secularization;

you can see Marx's relation to these young Hegelian colleagues as a successive series of rejecting first one, because he is too philosophical, and then another because he was too political, another was too sociological, thus getting right down to the materialist, economic, bit, the foundations of society, then you could start; that's the sort of secularizing process, and it was that sort of thing which interested me to see if I could get to the bottom of it; that is the topic I landed up with, and spent the next three years writing about in my thesis, supervised by Berlin; I hesitate to use the word supervised; Berlin was a very generous man but he didn't pay a lot of attention to the minute detail in a PhD thesis; I remember that the one chapter that he was really interested in was the relationship of Marx to a man called Moses Hess; Hess was an early Socialist and also an early Zionist; I went to see his grave not long ago, he is buried in Israel; as a proto-Zionist Berlin was very interested in him, and read this chapter very carefully, making notes; the rest of the thesis he would sort of read it; what he would do was to invite me to lunch in All Souls once or twice a term and talk to me about Freud, for example, which was nothing to do with my thesis, but he was a very attractive and generous man; when I applied for my first job he wrote a reference saying that McLellan was one of his best pupils; I subsequently learnt that he wrote the same letter for everybody, which I think is rather nice

12:55:09 In brief, my thesis was this, Marx produced his theory out of arguing with this successive band of young Hegelians; Sydney Hook's book said that Marx just saw through these people and sloughed them off; I wanted to show that Marx borrowed a lot from them, and they heavily influenced the way in which his thoughts evolved, and he had quite a strong intellectual debt to them which had not previously been recognised; I have never abandoned Catholicism so it was not a case of substituting one ideology for another; if you are asking if Marxism appealed to be because of its all-embracing attempt to explain matters, I think that the answer is partly yes, but I am not in sympathy that there is some kind of parallel between Marx's way of looking at the world as an Old Testament Prophet, thus Marxism is a substitute for religion or a pseudo religion, largely because it is downgrading Marx's thought for which I have a lot of respect; that kind of

attitude doesn't do him justice at all; with the view that what attracted me to that sort of thing, I think that the aspect of something all-embracing and encompassing, not explaining everything, but a broad sort of theory, yes it did; I still am attracted to Marx for that reason, though perhaps a bit less than then because I don't think it is so all encompassing, nor indeed do I think that Marx thought it was; Marx's later disciples, particularly Engels, the Bolshevik experience, and Soviet Marxism were often of that sort, which I don't think it was Marx's actual view

16:50:09 I got a job as a lecturer in politics at the University of Kent; these were the days when getting jobs like that was easy; I was asked to apply for this job by the newly appointed professor of politics, whom I did not know; as far as I remember there were not any other applicants; this was the time when numbers of new universities had been founded and they hadn't got anybody to teach in them as the supply of PhD graduates was only small; as I remember it, during my first term somebody came down from Blackwells and referred me to a series of texts on political theory that they had started, for example Hobbes's 'Leviathan' with Oakeshott's introduction, and did I have any ideas; I suggested the early Marx, and I did that; then Blackwells were treating me badly, and I had a colleague at Kent who had a literary agent, Michael Sissons of A.D. Peters; Sissons was one of the first people to see that money could be made from academic books and was recruiting academics; my friend suggested that I get his help; Sissons said that as the Blackwells contract was so far advanced he could only try to make it better; he asked me if I had anything else and I suggested my DPhil thesis, and he found Macmillan to take it just like that; at that time there were not a lot of people who were writing about Marx so I was able to carve out a kind of field, that is why some of these books made quite a strong impression in a way that they wouldn't if they were published now; there was also a very ready market at that time in all countries for books on Marx, and that went on into the middle 1970s; I had masses of students coming into my course on Marx, there were 40 or 50 students in that short period between 1968 and 1975; thereafter, they shrunk from 50 to about 10; during the golden period I got invitations to lecture in America and Australia,

not France as I think they are quite insular about such things; it was also easy to write to a university and offer a lecture, and so do a tour that would be financed in this way; I went to America quite often; I once got a very good offer from the University of Phoenix in Arizona as a distinguished professor, at an enormous salary, but I didn't take it, partly because I don't like Phoenix, but mainly because I had small children and was divorced, so I couldn't have taken them with me; that was a much more important reason; my former wife came from Amiens and I was in Canterbury, so I could go and see them every fortnight, and they would come and stay with me during holidays

24:49:11 On my working methods, I don't think that ideas come suddenly to me, partly because of the nature of my work; a lot of it is expository and putting ideas together, comparing them maybe, but that is not the kind of work that some huge revelation can come; what I tend to do is to read quite a lot first, taking notes along the themes; for example, I wrote a book on ideology for the Open University Press, working out how to present it first, reading other people's work on the subject, making notes, then I would decide the structure, then I would do them chapter by chapter; I would make a thorough list of what I needed to read to deal with a particular chapter; I have never worked at a desk in my life, so would lie on a sofa with a writing pad propped up on my knees and scribble away making notes while reading from a pile of books beside me; I don't do it at a desk as I just think it is more comfortable lying down; thinking about a given chapter, I would decide on the themes which I wanted to deal with, a. to f., for example, and they would each take four or five pages; then I would go through the notes, and opposite each note, put a., b., c. etc; then I would go through all the 'a' 's to start with, read them through and think about them; I might make a little schema of how I wanted to deal with those three or four pages, and then I would write it; but I think, or hope, that I must have done quite a lot of thinking before I started writing because I very rarely change anything I have written; I know most of my colleagues will say they have written a book three times in longhand, draft after draft; publishers no longer seem to ask for any revisions, but I do find that difficult because I construct my writing in a certain way and it is part of a whole; I write with a pen

29:52:13 Selecting three of the books I have written to take to a desert island, the first that would spring to mind would be my intellectual biography of Simone Weil because I think she is such an extraordinarily rich thinker, richer than Marx in some ways because she is wider; I would probably take the history of Marxism in the twentieth century, called 'Marxism after Marx', partly because it is quite wide-ranging, from Engels up to the present, and partly because it is quite fat; I have also done a lot of editions of Marx's works, and if one of those could be counted I would probably take that edition of the early writings of Marx because I think they are rich in the kind of humanism that they are propounding; when I started writing about Marx the picture people had of him was of somebody very closely tied the kind of dogmatic metaphysical materialism that came with Engels and was later taken up by the Soviet Union, so he was looked at either as an out-of-date, boring, economist, and/or somebody who propounded a kind of materialism which was rather simplistic; I don't think that is too much of a caricature of what most people would have said about him; I think I contributed to showing that Marx had a much richer origin of his thoughts, particularly in the early writings I have mentioned, where he could be portrayed as somebody who was a philosopher, a humanist, and had a theory of human nature and what made human beings flourish, that was up with the best of them, and fitted ill with some of the later interpretations of Marx; also by trying to show that some of the historical interpretations of Marx were much subtler than he had been given credit for, because people used to think of him as a very strong kind of determinist, and I wanted to show that his historical approach was a much subtler one than that; sometimes in particular instances, in the '1848 Revolutions', but also in his general theory

34:00:02 I have been going to China for the last twenty years; it does not throw any light on my reflections about Marx particularly, except to the extent that certain traditions of thought, certain countries or organizations, can quote Marx in ways that seem rather surprising; I think that Marxism itself, as you get it from Marx, is not a very good approach for analysing non-capitalist societies; 'Das Kapital' is a critique of political economy

which he saw as the ideology of capitalist society, and on that I think he is very good, but when it comes to even non-Soviet Marxists, people who are hostile to the Soviet Union, their Marxism is a feeble guide; the same thing is true for China; Mao had enormous trouble trying to marry Marxism with Chinese culture, but it is in that somewhat alien climate that Marxism is parachuted in; Mao did quite a good job in some of his writings on contradiction in trying to adapt Marx's views about the dialectic in historical progress to Chinese circumstances, it is not an easy thing to do; I can't think of any Chinese people who are thinking successfully about their country's progress in Marxist terms, so I think it's a very difficult thing to do; I don't think you can blame Marx for the Great Leap Forward or the Cultural Revolution; the problem for the whole history of Chinese Marxism is the attempt to create a socialist or communist society in what is basically a peasant society where you don't have a proletarian, working-class, base, which is one of the reasons why the Party floats above a lot of these things because they didn't have a base for which to be responsible because the working-class weren't there

39:04:03 I think I may have stopped writing things that are big and serious partly because I think the book on Simone Weil which I wrote a long time ago, as a major intellectual project she is such a striking thinker that she is almost an impossible act to follow; it is partly that I am occupied doing non-academic things such as looking after grand-children and all sorts of volunteer jobs which I really like doing, and seeing friends and travelling round the world; I used to enjoy writing, the actual craft of writing well and clearly, but it doesn't actually tempt me now to do so; it is strange isn't it, but I think that's a stage that I have passed beyond really; I am still a Catholic and in a way it means everything to me

41:40:06 Postscript. Simone Weil tried to marry her religious metaphysics with her theories about society, and I was interested in attempts to do that and wanted to follow through these attempts for people who tried to marry their political views with religious views, and specifically with Christianity; I gave a series of lectures in America on this theme; the simple question that I was interested in is the sort of people who say, if you are a Christian

you must be a socialist, or maybe a conservative, though unlikely to be a liberal, anyway it is that kind of question, the way that people try to justify their political positions by appealing to certain religious values or positions or indeed metaphysics of one sort or another; its partly because I have been long interested in politics, and active in politics, having tried to stand as a city councilor, at the same time as being a very strong Catholic; so of course I necessarily think of these things together; I know that some people say that religion should not be mixed with politics but I think that a thoroughly erroneous position; maybe what I said was too blanket; I don't mean that there are not certain areas in which politics should be kept separate from religion; a contemporary example is all this stuff about gay marriage; I think the Government has really mishandled it by trying to tell the Church of England what it should and shouldn't do; there I think we do need a certain separation, but I think that as far as people do have composite views on such things, as I certainly do, it is very difficult to compartmentalize different parts of your personality and intellectual outlook, and I think deleterious as well - they fertilize each other, or should

[Added note by D.C. after the interview: “ I should perhaps add that in the early 1990s I studied to become a solicitor as I have always admired people who changed career in mid-life. I wanted to become an advocate for the poor and oppressed, and being a solicitor gives one some clout. To this end, I did an undergraduate law degree at my University (while working-full-time as a Professor), got a First Class LLB, and went on to do a postgraduate Legal Practice Course at the South Bank University. I fell at the last hurdle as I did not have time to do Articles and resigned my self to working as a volunteer for the Citizens Advice Bureau”.]

Garry Runciman



16th April 2014

<http://downloads.sms.cam.ac.uk/1729998/1730001.mp4>

W.G. Runciman, *Relative Deprivation and Social Justice* (1966)

Extracted from Wikipedia 25 August 2014

Walter Garrison Runciman, 3rd Viscount Runciman of Doxford, CBE, FBA (born 10 November 1934), usually known informally as Garry Runciman, is a leading British historical sociologist.

Runciman has been a Senior Research Fellow at Trinity College, Cambridge since 1971, researching in the field of comparative and historical sociology. He is a Cambridge Apostle. His principal research interest is the application of neo-Darwinian evolutionary theory to cultural and social selection.

He holds honorary degrees from King's College London and the Universities of Edinburgh, Oxford, and York. He is also an Honorary Foreign Member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and an Honorary Bencher of Inner Temple. He was elected to the British Academy in 1975 and served as its President from 2001 to 2005.

Runciman chaired the British Government's Royal Commission on Criminal Justice which continued Sir John May's inquiry into the convictions of the Maguire Seven and encompassed further miscarriages of justice. As a result the Criminal Appeal Act 1995 established the Criminal Cases Review Commission as an executive Non-Departmental Public Body.

Runciman's first major publication was *Relative Deprivation and Social Justice: a Study of Attitudes to Social Inequality in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Routledge, 1966), reprinted by Gregg Revivals in 1993. Since then, he has published *A Critique of Max Weber's Philosophy of Social Science* (Cambridge University Press, 1972), *A Treatise on Social Theory* (Cambridge University Press, Vol. 1 1983, Vol. 2 1989, Vol. 3 1997), and *The Social Animal* (HarperCollins, 1998).

Interview Summary

Interviewed by Alan Macfarlane 16th April 2014

0:05:07 Born in London in 1934; have one memory of great-grandfather, an old man in a deep chair wearing spats; he was one of the many children of a Methodist lay-preaching coastguard on the North-East coast; he ran away to sea aged twelve, made good, and died in his ninetieth year a millionaire ship-owner; he had one son who went into politics and was a Liberal member of Asquith's cabinet; to the extent that he now figures in history books is because of his ill-fated mission when he was called out of retirement by Neville Chamberlain in 1938 to go and soften up Beneš about appeasing Hitler by letting him have the Sudetenland; that was, of course, overtaken by events which are well-documented; my father was just young enough not to be in the First World War; he was an amateur pilot and the founder of an auxiliary Air Force squadron; when the Second World War came he would have expected to lead it into the Battle of Britain but by that time he had been made the head of B.O.A.C. which meant that he was a reserved occupation running the civil airlines; by the time that came to an end he was too old to fly; I don't know to what extent my life or persona was influenced by any of them but that is the background from which I come; motto is "By Sea" because my great-grandfather effectively bought a baronetcy; he was a Liberal member and I assume made contributions to party funds; I think that my family is one of only two where his son, my grandfather, after my great-grandfather had been made a Peer, was elevated to a rank above his own father in his father's lifetime; my grandmother told me once of a conversation she had with King George V in which the King said he thought it was a bit off her father-in-law having taken a peerage, which then were all hereditary, without consulting his own son who still had hopes of holding high office in the House of Commons; my grandmother said that she thought her father-in-law genuinely believed he would live to 100, and the King replied that that was the least he could do

4:57:05 My mother was half French, half American; they were Huguenot French and the family name was Garrison; somebody

in the family known as the Commodore parallels my own great-grandfather; those were the days in which fortunes were made in ways that were sometimes less ethical; Commodore Garrison made the mistake when Vanderbilt was out of the country in Europe of trying to double-cross him in some deal involving the Staten Island ferry or some such; a letter survives in the New York Public Library in which Vanderbilt got back from Europe, rumbled what was going on, and wrote a two line letter to Commodore Garrison saying "Sir, in my absence in Europe you attempted to ruin me. I will ruin you.."; Commodore Garrison headed straight out to San Francisco where he got himself elected as the reform Mayor, and proceeded to stitch up the ferries across San Francisco Bay and made a large fortune in California, none of which survived down to my mother's generation because her father went bankrupt in the early years of the twentieth century; her mother took her and her two sisters back to France and never saw her husband again; I don't know to what extent the American side was influential but it was because of it that my mother and I spent most of the Second World War in the United States; I do have a very clear memory of the ship taking us across the Atlantic, and of the moment when these mothers and children were assembled when there was an announcement over the tannoy that the ship in front of us had been torpedoed off the American coast; I was young enough to remember not being in the least alarmed by this news, but we all had to wear life-jackets until the ship arrived safely in New York; I have one recollection of an air raid in Bristol just before we left and feeling rather indignant at being dragged away from a window where I was watching all the searchlights, into a cellar; it never occurred to me that these German planes would drop a bomb on us; I don't think I have any earlier memories; I have no siblings; my father was very conventional in his opinions and rather unimaginative; my mother was much more imaginative; I always felt that she was to some extent an ally in my not conforming to my father's views about what sort of person his only son ought to be; my father had been married before to the novelist Rosamond Lehmann; he must have been thirty when he met my mother in England; they married in 1932; I never met Rosamond Lehmann though I would have been curious to do so

10:23:17 I went to a day school in Manhattan; when we came back in 1945 my father had arranged for me to go to an "unreconstructed" English Preparatory school called Highfield which I loathed; the irony is that his father during the First World War had sent him to a school which also still exists called Summerfields which he disliked so much that he vowed that if he ever had a son he would not send him there; I made the same vow about Highfield and I am amazed that it still survives; the headmaster in those days was Canon of the Established Church, a red-faced, corpulent, pince-nez'd cleric who for one category of misdemeanour you would be beaten in the morning by his walking stick, and for a lesser category you would be spanked with a slipper on your bare bottom; he had a wife and children and I am sure he was a man of total repute, but a parental complaint would have probably put him behind bars nowadays; I was ten when we got back from America, and I still had an American accent which was not a very helpful attribute; my reaction on getting an invitation as an alumnus to celebrate it's hundredth year was that I would be delighted if I could bring a can of petrol and a box of matches with me; the headmaster, whose nickname was "Bug", appears in a memoir by Ludovic Kennedy who was at the same school; he wrote a letter when he was asked back saying he would never wish to have anything to do with the school again; he then found that when he was a young Sub-Lieutenant on the Dover patrol in 1940 that he got another invitation through the school secretary, a nice elderly lady, very unfairly nicknamed "Witch" by the boys, who had rather a crush on Ludo; he thought he'd look in as he was on leave and couldn't think why he was so frostily greeted by Bug until he remembered the offensive letter he had written the year before; I was there until I was thirteen; I was not particularly athletic but envied those who were; I don't remember having any particular hobbies; I used to spend much of my holidays in the country, sometimes with my paternal grandmother with whom I had rather a good relationship; looking back, what I regret about it was that I was just at the age of being a self-centred, schoolboy prig, and she would love to have talked about how badly Lloyd George had treated my grandfather, politics and so forth, and I just wanted to talk about me; it was such a wasted opportunity; if I had been just a few years older I would have been so interested to hear her

recollections; she lived into her mid-eighties; she and my grandfather were the first two people to sit in the House of Commons together; she was no feminist; she had been at Girton in the 1880s, got a first class degree but, of course, you couldn't then take it; of course, once she was married no thought of a career occurred to her; she went into Parliament purely to keep a safe seat warm for my grandfather until the next election; she regarded that as part of her duty to him and nothing to do with making a career for herself; she died in the year of Suez, 1956, so I was then of an age to have talked with her; by then I had done two years National Service, not very grown-up, but grown-up enough that I could have got much more sitting and talking to her than I did

16:39:00 It was taken to be a matter of course that I would go to Eton; it was thought probable, and turned out to be right, that I would get an entrance scholarship; I never thought of any other alternative and no other alternative was put to me; on the whole I rather liked it; there is a sort of schoolboys' governing body called the Eton Society, known as Pop; I was elected into it and ended as the most senior person, the President, so to that extent I was a successful schoolboy, but it doesn't mean very much; there was no hazing or bullying; as far as I was aware there was very little homosexuality, I would be astonished to be told that in the house I was at there was ever a case of it; I was conscious of the fact, which indeed was the only reason that I might have ever wished to have gone somewhere else, of the very narrow social catchment area; we were all a bunch of privileged rich kids, and I came later to wish I hadn't been so confined during my teens to the companionship of boys, and only boys, of my own class; I don't think that it was directly related to my first book 'Relative Deprivation and Social Justice'; it was taken as a matter of course that if you were clever you would do both Latin and Greek; I was taught in the sixth form by Richard Martineau whom I liked very much, and subsequently after he retired taught classics at Magdalene, Cambridge; I have sometimes thought what a waste, why didn't I learn something useful, but I have to say it was genuinely educative to be well taught the classics, and I have sometimes been grateful for it in my later academic life; I doubt that it would have made any difference to my later work if I had

done some science at Eton; I remember John Gurdon as a red-headed schoolboy at Eton, who was told by his science master that he was too stupid to do science, and has ended up with a Nobel Prize in medicine with an institute in Cambridge named after him; we were all aware at the time that science was not very well taught at the school, and it was very rare for clever boys to go on to pursue a university career in natural science; maths is different as it always was in the curriculum both at Oxford and Cambridge; I enjoyed games; in my last year, if enough people came down with 'flu I would be hauled into the squash team, of which the captain was Michael Holroyd, subsequently the biographer, who was quite seriously good; as in all these things there are heights beyond heights, and I don't think Holroyd was ever at the amateur championship level which Nigel Broomfield, whom I also remember, was; I was a respectable but relatively unsuccessful games player; I think the history teaching was good; Robert Birley arrived as headmaster, and I have to say he was one of those more likely to put off seventeen year olds for his enthusiasm for the greatness of the 'Divine Comedy', but it was something of a privilege to be taught by somebody as well qualified as that; I was not interested in being political, but there was something called the Political Society which invited speakers down; there is a story that Ernest Bevin agreed to come and talk, began by telling them about the organization of the trades unions in Britain, broke off to say he could see he was boring them and proceeded to ad lib on the techniques you needed to retain the attention of a hostile audience in a political meeting; I was secretary of the society for one half and had to write letters asking people to speak; I wrote one to Richard Crossman who agreed to come, then I got a letter the day before he was due to arrive saying he would like to stay the night and be given a tour of the school in the morning; I took the letter rather nervously to the Provost's wife who I could see was furious at the presumption of the Labour politician thinking he could ask a favour to stay at the Provost's Lodge; he did give a very interesting talk on what it was like to be a Wykehamist joining the Labour Party, and the hostility of the trade union M.P.'s to people like himself; equally interesting was Jim Callaghan who agreed to an invitation, was a great success, telling these privileged teenagers that he had absolutely no objection to the school, but that it was people like

us who were getting the benefit of this education and not his constituents in South Wales; he was roundly cheered for that; years later I found myself sitting next to him at a big city dinner and I reminisced to him about this which delighted him, and he wrote me a charming letter saying it showed how careful we should be when addressing the young which we seldom are

27:22:11 I was not Confirmed; my family were so low-church; my great-grandfather was a Methodist, my grandparents had none of their five children either baptised or confirmed; I was neither baptised nor confirmed; my mother was a lapsed Catholic and she had been sent to a convent school called Mayfield in England during the First World War, although her mother brought her up in France; at the age of eighteen she thought religion a load of nonsense and never went to Mass; at the very end of her life I asked whether she wanted to see a priest for last rites, but she had no interest in doing so; I have often wondered since, when thinking of the dreadful Canon headmaster, how many schoolteachers who ostensibly subscribed to the tenets of the faith actually believe in it themselves; quite clearly most of the people whom I was taught by at Eton went through the motions of things called Sunday questions, about the problem of evil on which the conventional answer was some version of a Christian answer; it was all there in the ethos, but again, of the parents who came down to the confirmation of their children it was purely a social rite; I used to wonder whether the chaplains themselves believed all this stuff, but it was part of the standard curriculum, we took it as a matter of course, but I never got religion; I have always thought that nobody has an explanation as to why anything exists or any of us are here at all; I'm not in the least surprised that religion in some sense is a cultural universal; human beings do wonder what it is all about; the quotation in this context that comes to mind is Marcus Aurelius, that it is obvious that gods exist because we experience their power; that seems a very sensible reaction to the world we find ourselves in, but how you get from there to the tenets of the Christian religion I found quite extraordinary; Richard Dawkins puts people off taking what he says seriously; clearly he has an understandable aversion to idiotic doctrines which get propagated in the name of religion; I enjoy the rituals and if I go to a funeral I always rather hope that it will

be in the standard Church of England form, the words are familiar and it has resonances

32:52:24 Trinity was taken for granted as my father and grandfather had both been there; it was assumed that I would get there on a scholarship, which I did; it was also assumed, which I should perhaps have stood out against but my tutor was that lovely man, John Morrison, who spent decades of his life getting Greek trireme reconstructed and in working order, who was horrified at the thought that having arrived in Cambridge on a Entrance Scholarship in classics that I should read anything else; in those days it was the unreformed Part 1 Classical Tripos, two years in which I got a first class distinction; that meant nothing other than the fact that I had been trained, which I had before I left Eton, to turn twelve lines of Shakespeare, sight unseen, into twenty lines of Sophoclean iambics; an extraordinary skill to inculcate into anybody, and its educative value I must say I think is minimal; luckily, in the Cambridge system I could change and I did Part 2 history in one year; I did very well in that but not least by the fact that there was a special subject taught by an Australian called Alec Macdonald which was taken by very few people; he told me afterwards that he had been so impressed by the paper I wrote that he asked the examiners whether it was in order to offer an alpha plus; I subsequently discovered that I did nothing like as well on any of the other papers, but to that extent getting a starred first in Part 2 history was due to the fact that I brought to it the skills and background knowledge which I'd acquired by doing Latin and Greek; I didn't work very hard until the third year as an undergraduate; my supervisor in history was Michael Vyvyan who had been in the Foreign Office; he published little or nothing; in those days quite a lot of the best teaching Dons didn't publish; I would say that I was very well taught by Michael Vyvyan; I never engaged in acting or music; I was brought up to know how to shoot and fish but I have never rode to hounds; my father and grandfather both shot pheasant on the family estate in Northumberland as a matter of course; I learnt to do it after the war, but then there was a real purpose, rationing and all that; I would go out with my father and we would come back at the end of the day with five or six brace of pheasants to be hung in the larder and eaten; I went on shooting until quite late in my middle

years but I really came to dislike it when it became, as it is now, a rich man's sport which has absolutely nothing to do with shooting your own food, and I haven't done it for years; several of my lifelong friends I met in those years; as an only child then National Service, most of which I was in the Suez Canal zone, looking back, certainly compared to the present generation, we were curiously innocent; I bought into the conventional thing that girls were for when you grew up, and if you were lucky you would meet Miss Right and live happily ever after; that was certainly the impression which I think genuinely, unlike what I was saying about the Christian religion, was conveyed by housemasters and their wives; I think that didn't really change for people like me until the sixties; we were to that extent retarded, curiously innocent of what Edmund Wilson, talking about Proust, calls the inferno of the passions

41:25:01 I did National Service between school and university; again, it was taken as a matter of course that I would go into an elite regiment, in other words the Brigade of Guards; my father never suggested to me that I might want to learn to fly, he having been an aviator, nor did it occur to me to think of that; he got in touch with a family friend who had been with the Grenadiers all through the Second World War and come out with D.S.Os, I was perfunctorily interviewed by somebody who came down to Eton, and again I accepted this as a matter of course; these were the days before the treaty had been signed when we evacuated the Canal zone, and the attempt to get back in 1956 simply was not thought of; because I was a rather incompetent soldier I was packed off to the brigade headquarters where my principal duty was to play chess with the brigade major, who later became General Sir David Fraser, who consistently beat me; if I had been older I would have made quite sure that even if I could have beaten him I didn't, but as it was I tried desperately and never succeeded in the long afternoons when we had nothing to do; so it was not a period of mingling with a broad swathe of people; as far as I can remember from the early days of taking a holiday with my parents in England or the Continent - one holiday at ten or eleven we went visiting a succession of English cathedrals - going to Paris, going to art exhibitions, all that was taken as completely a matter of course; when I got a little bit of leave from Suez I

went to Cairo and elsewhere in the Middle East and was extremely interested in seeing those places, looking at the museums and mosques, climbing the great pyramid, all those obvious things; I don't think it ever occurred to me at that stage that I might have an academic career which would give me a rather more serious interest in other societies and civilizations; I was lucky that my uncle Steven, the world famous historian of the Crusades, gave me some introductions to people in the Middle East at that time; I can remember being given a personal tour of Jerusalem by Stewart Perowne as a result of this introduction; I enjoyed that sort of thing enormously; I don't think my uncle interested me in history; he was an elusive person; he could be very entertaining company but I never felt that I had a close relationship with him, and he was very difficult to get to talk about himself, both because he wished to be extremely discrete about his private life, but also I think he genuinely disliked being expected to take himself seriously; he told me once that the only reason that he started writing history was because he would have liked to have been a novelist and knew he didn't have the talent, and so he took to writing true stories; he was of course a narrative historian who had no time whatever for Braudel and the salt trade coming up from Sudan or whatever it was; but it is typical of him that when I quoted that back to him many years later he denied that he ever said it

47:01:00 After my undergraduate degree I was lucky to get a Commonwealth Fellowship from the Harkness Foundation; they went back to the 1930s when there really was a special relationship, and twelve people a year could go for two years to the American university of your choice to do whatever you liked; that gave me the opportunity, which looking back on I think was foolhardy; I decided to go to Harvard and spent the first year writing a dissertation for a Trinity Fellowship, again using my classical background on two of Plato's Dialogues, with the firm intention that if I got the fellowship to abandon the classics altogether and become a sociologist which I had decided to do after finishing Part 2 history; if there was one person who influenced me it was Peter Laslett who encouraged me in this; he

was at Trinity though I was never formally taught by him but he gave some informal seminars on the history of political thought; I was one of the small group who attended those and that was how I got to know him; that suggested to me that if I was going to have the prospect of an academic career I would want to do it researching and teaching in something "relevant"; at that time he was still known only as the editor of Locke and had acquired a reputation that he retained for his edition of Locke's Second Treatise; I knew him from then on, and it is an extraordinary story how against the opposition of the Cambridge history faculty this innovative and spectacularly successful research group was set up by him and others, and produced works like the reconstruction of population by Wrigley and Schofield, which was one of the great achievements of twentieth century social science- The Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure; I gave the address at Peter's memorial service in Trinity and was asked by John Elliott the Regius Professor at Oxford who had been at Trinity to send him a copy; he thought I had captured Peter very well but that he was the most exasperating of men; it is true that in many ways Peter was his own worst enemy because he had a kind of naive unselfconsciousness about what he wanted to say and when he wanted to say it; I remember talking about him to Hugh Trevor-Roper who thought he was a very silly man, but he was a GOOD THING, including to myself as a mentor, and I was always grateful to him

52:32:13 During the first year in Harvard, writing the fellowship dissertation for Trinity, during the second term the late Will Owen, who was then the foremost classical philosopher, was giving a seminar bearing directly on what I was trying to write about; I have sometimes wondered whether without that I would have succeeded; I have subsequently discovered one of my referees was Gilbert Ryle, and it was very much Ryle's approach, which Owen succeeded to, to the Platonic Dialogues which found its way into my dissertation; it was subsequently published without my having done any further work on it, but I was undeservedly lucky that my game plan came off; I then spent the next year, the first part of it at Columbia, which was then the heyday of Robert K. Merton and Paul F. Lazarsfeld, significant for anyone doing sociology at that time; I spent the next semester

in Berkeley, California, attending seminars given by people like Reinhard Bendix, Marty Lipsit, and somebody from whom I learnt quantitative methods called Hannan Seldon who was a brilliant teacher of those kinds of techniques which were they coming onto the curriculum of main-stream sociology; I arrived back in England qualified to my own satisfaction to undertake a major research project which I was able to do thanks to the backing of Michael Young, then running the Institute of Community Studies; I did get the Trinity Fellowship and sooner than I would have expected, otherwise I would have been nail-biting; I suddenly got a telegram from John Morrison, my Tutor, congratulating me on having been elected to a fellowship after only one year's research; the fellowship was for four years but the whole point about it was that you could do whatever you liked; I came across the work of Max Weber when I was in America; this was when Weber was very much on the top of the curriculum as interpreted by people like Talcott Parsons - I would now say seriously misinterpreted - and Reinhard Bendix; it always seemed to me that the verdict of Raymond Aron who had been writing about Weber before the Second World War when he was totally unknown in Anglophone circles, that Max Weber isn't only the greatest twentieth century sociologist, he is the one; there is something unrivalled in scope, influence, depth of scholarship, and the fact that much of what he said has been overtaken is part of the way it goes, is if anything to his credit; I have never found him difficult to comprehend, writing about him which I have continued to do; it is because various aspects of what he has said are still directly to the point in contemporary debates, both about substance and method; of course the iconic status of his famous essay on 'The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism' still retains; I can't think of any parallel to it; there are of course seminal articles we can all point to in spheres of our own particular interest, but that article must be the most responded to of any academic article, outside Einstein in the natural sciences, ever written; I think he was basically right in the way that Marx was basically wrong about how to approach the whole agenda of comparative and historical sociology; at its simplest, Marx, for all the deserved influence of the fundamental insight in the importance of the economic base, never saw as Weber did that political relationships have their own history; if you accept as I do

that basic to comparative and historical sociology is an understanding of the different ways power is exercised within societies of different kinds, down the ages and across the world, not to recognize that the political and the ideological are as powerful independent influences, sometimes, as the economic influences in classical Marxism always are, is a fundamental difference between the two; as Weber on one occasion said of himself that he was much more of a materialist; it would be quite unfair to him to suggest that he didn't recognise the force of the basic Marxist paradigm; his prophecy of the decline of religion is a matter of continual debate; sociology is not a predictive science and never will be, so prophecy is perhaps not the right word, inspired guesses is sometimes right; sociologists are never going to be able to predict the future of society any more than biologists can predict the future of species; Weber's comparative works on India and China are such an enormous field; I have to say that in my own case I was never as well-read as I needed to be in the sociology or anthropology of religion in terms of trying to find a way of comparing and contrasting the different ways in which societies of different kinds function and evolve; you have to come to terms with the influence of religion, but it is almost impossibly difficult to do that without getting involved in largely unproductive definitional disagreements about what constitutes religion as oppose to magic, secular religion - is Confucianism a religion, and so on; what you have to do is what Weber did, to actually look and see what these various doctrines actually mean in terms of how behaviour is influenced within the societies in which they are dominant; to that extent, although specialists say, as Weber himself knew that he would, that he made mistakes; nevertheless, I think that the way he set about it is fundamentally well-conceived; I think that he did share the assumptions of his place and time which can be fairly summed up as Eurocentric, but when he looked round the world in the early years of the twentieth century it was impossible to deny which way the relationships of power - geopolitical, economic, international - were actually running at that time; the days were long past, as he knew as well as anybody, that Europe was a barbarian outpost on one flank of the Eurasian land mass, far behind societies elsewhere; so there was a question to be answered about the rise of the West precisely because of the earlier achievements of other

societies; I think it was almost unavoidable for somebody of his time to begin by approaching it that way; interestingly, if you read Jared Diamond there is something of the same assumption in a more updated form which underlies his concern to answer his New Guinean informant about why aren't we bringing cargo to the white men, why is it the other way round; that question is as relevant as ever in today's world; I have never actually talked to Jack Goody about his views but it seems to me that he is absolutely right; I assume that he can authenticate all the claims he makes for what was going on in India and China that Weber either didn't know about or underplayed, but I don't think it reverses the fundamental assumption that looking round the world, who dominates whom; I don't think he ever did give Japan the attention that with hindsight he would undoubtedly agree he should have; I have only visited Japan twice but I was very struck the first time I went there; I came back by way of Hong Kong, and talking to Hong Kong Chinese - I have never been to the People's Republic - about the Japanese; it was like talking to a fellow European; Ron Dore, a sociologist that I know and like and hugely admire, a leading expert on Tokugawa and contemporary Japan, certainly shares the view that the Japanese are very unlike any other society you might be tempted to liken them to, including our own western societies; in the same way we will never know what Weber would have said about the rise of National Socialism in Germany, and some people say that he would have been unsound about that, there is no point in speculating what he would have to say had he foreseen what the history of Japan would be during the twentieth century; Weber died in 1920 during the influenza epidemic after the First World War; Weber is in a class of his own as far as I am concerned though one can't deny the influence of Marx, and to some extent, Durkheim, in terms of setting the agenda for the study of religion, although it always seemed to me that Evans-Pritchard was right in saying that it was Durkheim and not the "savage" who elevated society into a god; I think that was a very telling criticism; nevertheless I would have that there would be general agreement that "we" owe to Durkheim insights about the nature and workings of religion and collective systems of belief; those are the three great figures

1:11:39:13 I had the opportunity to do a deal with my father on the one hand and, in due course, my College on the other that once I had qualified myself sufficiently to become a non-executive director of the family's shipping business, that I could also have a part-time academic position; first of all it was as a part-time visiting reader in sociology at the new University of Sussex; anyway, I have been able to combine an academic career and a commercial career on my own terms in a way that again is purely fortuitous, it's luck; I will never know if my academic work is better or worse as a result, but I've never regretted it from the point of view of personal interest and satisfaction, being able to combine the two; all those days are now over, but in practice it time spent on each varied with circumstances; I was appointed by the College to a Senior Research Fellowship, without tenure but renewable if I could go on over five years producing which independent referees told the College Council they ought to support; I also did other things in public life, including chairing a Royal Commission on the criminal justice system, being a regulator of financial services, which again pure luck as far as I can see, but it gave me some very interesting times, including seeing at first-hand in a way that I couldn't possibly have done by getting a research grant from a foundation to research into the workings of the City or the criminal justice system; I have often wondered whether it affected the conclusions I advanced in my academic writings about the workings of the world

1:15:11:13 The Commission on Criminal Justice was set up in the aftermath of the acquittal of the Birmingham six; I got a telephone call out of the blue from the then Solicitor General, whom I knew, who then arrived with a locked briefcase on a chain, fished into it and said the Government would like me to Chair the commission with the following terms of reference; he didn't say why I had been chosen and for all I know other people had been chosen first and turned it down; I was then as a hereditary in the House of Lords on the cross benches, I had no political affiliation, I had no vested interest of any kind in the workings of the law, I did have some experience by then of relations with the Government on public bodies; when I got over my initial surprise I asked for a fortnight to think about it and having got the clearance from the people who should know that I might be doing this for two years,

I said yes; the most widely known result was the establishment, as we had recommended, of the setting-up of an independent body to review possible miscarriages of justice and refer them back to the Court of Appeal; what I did come to realize, not to my surprise, if you are asked to make recommendations about changes to a large, complex, inherited set of institutions and the associated ideological and practical assumptions that go with them, there is absolutely no point in recommending something which you know in practice no government would be able, even if it wished to, to implement; the one other jurisdiction that I took my commission to see, in Scotland, and there are features of the Scottish criminal justice system which in our view are superior to the system in England and Wales, couldn't be implemented without rewriting the history of the institutions concerned; the moment you start thinking through even relatively minor alterations to the way in which criminal trials are conducted one sees the difficulties; I hope that our recommendations taken together have had the effect of moving the criminal justice system in England and Wales slightly away from the highly adversarial system, which it still is, not in the direction of the continental European system, which would be undesirable, but in ways which makes the risks either of miscarriages of justice or of jurors letting off people who are palpably guilty, slightly less; it is one of those counter-factual speculations I will never know, nor will anybody else, those of our recommendations which were accepted by Government did have that effect; what I do remember was being rung up some months after by the BBC suggesting that I went on television to say how frustrating it was that the Government had done nothing about the recommendations of the commission; I pointed out that more of the recommendations had been accepted from Royal Commissions than I had chaired than from any other since the Second World War, and I enjoyed the long pause which followed

1:22:05:14 The book that gave me my reputation, 'Relative Deprivation and Social Justice', was an attempt to bring to bear what I had learnt in America under the name of reference group theory; basically it is a social psychological insight and I learnt it really from Robert K. Merton; his ideas were very congenial to me, what he called theories of the middle range; Merton like

many other American sociologists was never prepared to come out and say that Talcott Parsons was an emperor without clothes, which I think he was; the only person who said that was George Homans, his colleague at Harvard, a splendid robust Yankee behaviourist sociologist; Parsons survived many other attacks including a devastating critique by the philosopher Max Black published in 1960; but by that time he was so well established at Harvard that it was unthinkable that he should be de-throned; I found Merton's approach very sympathetic and that book was an attempt to apply ideas which I had got from him, that if you want to understand the attitudes that "ordinary people" have towards the inequalities of power of any kind in the societies in which they live, what is absolutely crucial is to understand their own frames of reference and comparison; I started with no preconceived ideas; when I got the funding, thanks to Michael Young, to do a national sample survey I had absolutely no idea what I would find out; what I did find out has been influential beyond my highest expectations; Edmund Leach denounced in the 'New Statesman' saying that it was no wonder that the Russians thought sociology a bourgeois absurdity; I am sorry that he hasn't lived to see, as I have, it over-praised as a classic, great work of twentieth century sociology, although it isn't those things; I have one other which is the work I have been doing for the last twenty years or so which really came from realizing that the idea of evolution as a fundamental process of change applies no less to human cultures and societies than it does to animal species; we are beginning to realize in the behavioural sciences, particularly in the United States, that the evolutionary process is fundamental in psychology and sociology - in a different way, but nevertheless it is recognisably the same fundamental insight about the nature of variation and selection of information which affects behaviour in the phenotype; to the extent that I am still trying to propagate that and to use it and to publish, that I would say is the second; on the trilogy of sociological works, I regret that I was preoccupied; I didn't need to write a preliminary volume about methodology; it was trying to make the very simple point made in parallel for quite separate reasons by Quentin Skinner in trying to change the way in which the history of ideas is done, that you have to ask what your chosen authority is doing in putting forward the conclusions that you are being asked to accept; it still amazes me

that seems that a rudimentary distinction between trying to find out what happened, why it happened, and how it happened in different societies, is an exercise quite separate from saying what it was like for the people whose experiences they are, which is in turn quite different from saying whether what is going on is good or bad; the three get indistinguishably muddled up with each other in far too many writings under the name of sociology; I do find it puzzling that progress in the subject is still retarded in ways in which I would have thought would have been outdated decades ago

1:29:21:09 On evolutionary theory, I think that you have to start by recognising that the origins of an innovation are never any guide to its effect on the future; if what you are trying to do is to understand how large-scale change, cultural or institutional, comes about in societies of different kinds, you have to treat the triggers as quasi-random because you will understand nothing about the long term effects by looking at the causal antecedents of the novel practice or belief or custom which sets it off; it almost seems to be a specialism of historians of science and technology that it is very often the case that the most remarkable and ultimately influential innovation is either ignored or misused for a long time after it was initially discovered; as I have come to see it, if you want to explain social and cultural change, you have to get used to seeing those things exactly as a biologist sees as tsunamis, if you like, something independent of what you are trying to understand which comes in and very often completely diverts the evolutionary trajectory, by which I mean the way in which the process of variation and selection is determining, if you are a sociologist, the institutions and the associated beliefs which you are trying to explain

1:34:20:20 My son is a historian of political thought and now holds a chair in politics at Cambridge; I am not aware that my family has influenced my work; my wife has had a career of her own for which she was made a dame a few years ago, but she has never thought of herself as an academic; I can't remember when she last read seriously anything that I published, and I don't think my son David reads what I publish; the significance of the idea that culture evolves, is shown in a volume of the Proceedings of

the Royal Society, published in 2012 after a conference where I was the only sociologist, chairing a session in a room of hundreds of people, the big-shots of this development; I think it is now very difficult for anybody to argue that culture defined as information affecting phenotype acquired by social learning and imitation both in human and some other species works in a way that is strongly analogous but not reducible to natural selection; it is much more controversial; if you say that to some anthropologists or sociologists the prejudice for understandable reasons - they still think in terms of social Darwinism which is set of doctrines not only long discredited but positively refuted by precisely developments in evolutionary theory which post-date the heyday of this misleading set of doctrines which were not due to Darwin himself; there is a huge backlog of misunderstanding and prejudice which still has to be overcome, but it is being overcome, I think, particularly in the United States

Other interviews and talks

M.N. Srinivas

Filmed by the Audio Visual Aids Unit in Cambridge in May 1982.
Srinivas reflects on his research and teaching in India.

<http://downloads.sms.cam.ac.uk/1130578/1130586.mp4>

Ronald Frankenberg

An interview with Ronald Frankenberg by Alan Macfarlane on 5th July 1983. Frankenberg talks about his training and his work in a Welsh border village. Defective sound and picture.

<http://downloads.sms.cam.ac.uk/1116760/1116767.mp4>

Andre Beteille

Interviewed in Cambridge on 1st June 1986 by Alan Macfarlane.
Filmed by Julian Jacobs. [Low grade picture off u-Matic]

<http://downloads.sms.cam.ac.uk/1113102/1113109.mp4>

Ernest Gellner

Public lecture given in October 1989, reflecting on the year he had just spent in the Soviet Union.

<http://downloads.sms.cam.ac.uk/1117154/1117162.mp4>

Michael Banton

Interviews on 24th August 2001 by Alan Macfarlane [poor sound
due to defective microphone]

<http://downloads.sms.cam.ac.uk/1112199/1112206.mp4>

Tien Ju-Kang

Interviewed by Alan Macfarlane in Kunming in 2005

<http://downloads.sms.cam.ac.uk/1132851/1132859.mp4>

Stuart Hall

Conversation between Stuart Hall and Pnina Werbner in March 2006. Filmed and edited by Haim Bresheeth.

<http://downloads.sms.cam.ac.uk/1119965/1119973.mp4>

Other possible volumes

Sciences

Biology, zoology and ethology: Patrick Bateson, Gabriel Horn, Robert Hinde, Michael Bate, Alison Richard, John Gurdon, Horace Barlow, Ken Edwards, Barry Keverne, Vittorio Luzzati, Azim Surani [2 volumes]

Physiology and medicine: Andrew Huxley, Richard Keynes, Yung Wai (Charlie) Loke

Chemistry and biochemistry: Sydney Brenner, Dan Brown, Hal Dixon, Aaron Klug, Frederick Sanger, John Sulston, John Meurig Thomas, John Walker, David King [2 volumes]

Astronomy and cosmology: Antony Hewish, Martin Rees, Neil Turok, Owen Gingrich, Edwin Salpeter

Physics and mathematics: Richard Friend, Dan McKenzie, Brian Pippard, John Polkinghorne, Herbert Huppert, Julian Hunt, Professor John Coates, Sir Peter Swinnerton-Dyer, Jeremy Sanders, Haroon Ahmed, John Simpson [2 volumes]

Computing and technology: Andy Hopper, Ken Moody, Jean Bacon, Hermann Hauser, Keith van Rijsbergen, Ben Shneiderman, Maurice Wilkes

Arts and humanities

Anthropology: currently there are 84 people whose interviews and/or lectures are up on the web. [probably about 10 volumes]

History: 19 historians on the web [probably about 4 volumes]

Sociology: Michael Banton, John Barnes, Andre Beteille, Ronald Dore, Ronald Frankenberg, Stuart Hall, Geoffrey Hawthorn, Michael Mann, David McLellan, Garry Runciman, Richard Sennett, M.N. Srinivas, Peter Worsley. [2 volumes]

Economists: Partha Dasgupta, Wynne Godley, Geoff Harcourt, James Mirrlees, Robert Rowthorn, Richard Smethurst

Literature: Peter Avery, Gillian Beer, Frank Kermode, Christopher Ricks, George Steiner, Toshi Takamiya

Explorers: Ursula Graham Bower, Owen Lattimore, David Snellgrove, John Cross

Musicians and artists: Stephen Cleobury, John Rutter, Antony Gormley, David Willcocks
Demographers: Luigi Cavalli-Sforza, Akira Hayami, James Lee, Osamu Saito, Richard Smith, Tony Wrigley
Theologians and philosophers: Don Cupitt, Simon Blackburn
Law and politics: Tom Bingham, John Machin, Nicholas Phillips, Rosemary Polack, William Waldegrave, Richard Wilson
Ethnographic film-makers: Karl Heider, Paul Hockings, Gary Kildea, Liang Bibo, David Macdougall
Others: Charles Chadwyck-Healey (publisher), Martin Jacques (journalist), Laurence Picken (ethno-musicologist), Colin Renfrew (archaeologist), Don Cupitt (theologian), Simon Blackburn (philosopher), Allan Brigham (road sweeper and Cambridge guide)
Teachers: Andrew Morgan (school – history), David Alban, (school – English), James Campbell (undergraduate – history), Keith Thomas (postgraduate – history), Christoph von Furer-Haimendorf (postgraduate – anthropology)

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