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What Kind of Being Is *Anthrōpos*? The Anthropology of the Contemporary

Paul Rabinow in Conversation With Reiner Keller

Key words: anthropology; present, contemporary; Dewey; Foucault; Weber; experimentation; biotech; science studies; collaboration; enlightenment

Abstract: American Anthropologist Paul RABINOW, known worldwide for his work on French philosopher Michel FOUCAULT as well as for his theoretical, conceptual and empirical work on emerging biosociality, has recently developed an *anthropology of the contemporary* that conceives of anthropology as a practice of studying how current relations of knowledge, thought, and care are given form within shifting relations of power. He argues that currently the dominant knowledge production practices, institutions, and venues for understanding things human in the 21st century are inadequate institutionally and epistemologically. In response, he has designed modes of experimentation and collaboration consisting in focused conceptual work and the exploration of new forms of case-based inquiry. The challenge is to produce knowledge in such a way that the work enhances us ethically, scientifically, politically, and ontologically. What concepts, venues, and forms are most pertinent for building a reflective relation to the present? The following interview invites to reflect on the "demands of the day" in current anthropological and social sciences research.

Table of Contents

Biographical Note[1]

Paul RABINOW received his B.A. (1965), M.A. (1967), and Ph.D. (1970) in anthropology from the University of Chicago. In 1965-1966 he studied at the École Pratique des Hautes Études in Paris. He is currently professor of anthropology at the University of California at Berkeley where he has taught since 1978. RABINOW received a Guggenheim Fellowship (1980); was a visiting Fulbright Professor at the National Museum in Rio de Janeiro (1987); taught at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales in Paris (1986) as well as the École Normale Supérieure (1997), and was a visiting Fulbright Professor at the University of Iceland (1999). He has held fellowships from the National

1 The biographical note is (except for some minor modifications by Reiner KELLER) from http://anthropology.berkeley.edu/people/paul-m-rabinow [Accessed: September 4, 2015].

Endowment for the Humanities and National Science Foundation Professional Development Fellowships (for training in molecular biology). He is co-founder of the Berkeley Program in French Cultural Studies and was named *Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres* by the French Government in 1998. In 2000, he received the University of Chicago Alumni Association Professional Achievement Award. He was awarded the visiting *Chaire Internationale de Recherche Blaise Pascal* at the *École Normale Supérieure* for 2001-2, STICERD Distinguished Visiting Professor at BIOS Centre for the Study of Bioscience, Biomedicine, Biotechnology and Society, London School of Economics (2004), Sir James Frazer Lecturer (Cambridge) 2008 and Mosse Distinguished Lecture (Berlin) 2010. [1]

Paul RABINOW has developed a distinctive approach to an anthropology of the contemporary that moves methodologically beyond modernity as an object of study or as a metric to order all inquiries. If anthropology is understood as being composed of *anthropos* and *logos*, then anthropology can be taken up as a practice of studying how the mutually productive relations of knowledge, thought, and care are given form within shifting relations of power. He argues that currently the dominant knowledge production practices, institutions, and venues for understanding things human in the 21st century are inadequate institutionally and epistemologically. In response, RABINOW has designed modes of experimentation and collaboration consisting in focused conceptual work and the explorations of new forms of case-based inquiry. The challenge is to produce knowledge in such a way that the work enhances us ethically, scientifically, politically, and ontologically. What concepts, venues, and forms are most pertinent for building a reflective relation to the present? How should a comparative study (*logos*) of present forms of life, labor, and language (*anthropos*) be mediated? How should they be curated? What are the reflected modes and forms for conducting life: the *bios technika*—the arts and techniques of living? In short, what is a worthwhile philosophical and anthropological practice today? The equipment for such inquiry is presented at bios-technika.net. Ongoing work may be found online at: ARC | Anthropology of the Contemporary Research Collaboratory and Lacuna Stories. [2]

The following interview took place in Paul RABINOW's office at Kroeber Hall, Berkeley, during two sessions in October 2013. Anthony STAVRIANAKIS (École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales; Laboratoire Interdisciplinaire d'Études sur les Réflexivités, Paris), Jessica HUBATSCH and Tobias LEHMANN (both Augsburg University) kindly helped editing. The present version was authorized by Paul RABINOW in September 2015. [3]

1. "Life" in Biotech

Reiner KELLER: I would like to begin by asking you about your research on biotechnology, which was a starting point for your conceptual work on anthropological inquiry today and more precisely the anthropology of the contemporary that you have been developing with some younger colleagues during the last decade (RABINOW & BENNETT, 2012a; RABINOW & DAN-COHEN, 2006 [2004]; RABINOW & STAVRIANAKIS, 2013, 2014). Could you please explain a little bit about the history and coming into being of these projects?

Paul RABINOW**:** Certainly. I had been working, actually for quite some time, on the biotechnology industry on the one hand and large human genome sequencing projects in comparative perspective on the other hand. I was interested in biotechnology for two reasons: My book "French Modern" (RABINOW, 1989) was a nominalist anthropological book and took the supposedly universal category of "society" and nominalized it by showing, through inquiry, that it was constituted as a modern category over the course of 150 years to take the particular discursive and political form that it has taken. So I was trying to decide on what to do next. In the light of this inquiry, one of Georges CANGUILHEM's students, François DELAPORTE, basically suggested that maybe I should take up "life." This was also a time in the San Francisco Bay Area in which the biotechnology industry was being developed and coming into fruition: "So why not?" It seemed to me that there were two components to observe. First of all it was a space of research and knowledge production and a form of life, which was adjacent to the university. I already thought, quite ferociously, that the university was not a thoroughly satisfying form of life on the one hand. On the other hand I was and still am a kind of enlightenment type who believes in the growth of knowledge in some complicated way. The biotech industry seemed to provide a site for both sides of this project. The object, "life," was changing in terms of the concept and the referent: first via the biotechnology industry and then second via the sequencing projects, and third via synthetic biology. [4]

Reiner KELLER: This seems to be a rather different field than that of your former research on Morocco and France (RABINOW, 1975, 1977). How did you manage to enter these areas?

Paul RABINOW: I found it extremely easy to work in the biotech world because of not an entirely chance encounter with Tom WHITE, whom I discus in my first book on the invention of the polymerase chain reaction (PCR) at the Cetus corporation.[2] This invention, a very, very important technological invention, which won a Nobel Prize, took place in that company and transformed the object of DNA from scarcity to abundance. And all of the modern research in molecular biology and genomics completely depends on PCR. So it was fortunate, but it also was part of this larger political question of the life sciences, then socio-biology, then a bit later evolutionary psychology and the rest—which I think are not very good science. So rather than having empty discussions about that it

2 Cetus Corporation was a biotechnology company founded in Berkeley, California in 1971. It worked on pharmaceutical drugs and Deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) amplification techniques.

seemed to be important to go see as an anthropologist what they could actually do with DNA and couldn't do with DNA. That was step one. [5]

Step two was—briefly said—the Human Genome Project;[3] it was the entry of molecular biology into big science. Physics, of course had become big science earlier around the atom bomb and the nuclear industry. So biology was now moving through these technological changes from an artisan culture to an industrial culture, and a particular kind of industrial culture. So the sequencing projects were very interesting in that form and I tried to work in the United States on it, but I found that the academic part of this work was very hard to do because the university people were much more closed and hostile than the industry people. And contrary to all the prejudices of the left-wing academics, the industry was much more open than the academy, so I just kept working in biotech. But then I went to France, and eventually to Iceland and I studied a different organization of mapping the same genome (PALSSON & RABINOW, 1999; RABINOW, 1999). The French had a different form of life, a different *technē tou biou*—an art of ordering and conducting life[4]—in terms of the way that research was organized, why they were doing it, how they financed it, as well as it's relation to the state. The head of this project, Daniel COHEN, said he wanted a philosophic observer. He didn't know what that meant and I didn't know what that meant, but I was happy to be that person. So that's a longer story, but the ethics people in the United States turned down all my grants because they said the Genome Project is the same everywhere, because the DNA is the same everywhere. At some level the DNA is the same everywhere, but the Genome Projects are not the same everywhere. [6]

So, I did that and then I was kind of bored and thought that's enough of that and I had several offers from people to write other books in biotech, which I turned down. But my old friends who had done the polymerase chain reaction had suddenly inherited, from their parent company, the entire sequence of the human genome, which wasn't fully public yet, $300,000,000 and a strategy to map disease; not so much disease genes, but something called SNPs—single nucleotide polymorphisms. This seemed like, if what these people were saying is correct, that this is the way life works in its pathological and normal state. They had all the material and scientific conditions that would enable them to show, or not show, that the genetic bases of the common diseases could be captured and described. This seemed like an experiment worth pursuing. [7]

3 International scientific research project for determining the sequence of chemical base pairs of human DNA and mapping the genes of the human genome. Funded by the US government, it ran from 1990 to 2003.

4 *technē tou biou*, Greek, definition: "The art of ordering life; producing, in its critical dimension, a worthwhile manner of living."

Usage: "*Technē tou biou* is both what one attends to anthropologically in the world as well as what one must attend to in order to conduct anthropological work. Given the argument that the foundational functions of nature and culture, as well as history, have been eclipsed, attention to *technē tou biou* is required to understand the interconnected ethical and veridicational stakes of work on the contemporary" (http://contemporary.lacunastories.com/content/terms-engagement#TECHNETOUBIOU, accessed: September 9, 2015).

2. Experimenting with the Life Sciences

Reiner KELLER: Doing experiments is everyday routine in the biotech world. But in one of your recent books, you are talking about yourself as an experimentalist, a role Michel FOUCAULT claimed for himself too, a long time ago.

Paul RABINOW: Yes, indeed, but not exactly in the same sense as me. As you know, he worked on historical data, but I was here and now, with the scientists. So I wanted to do a further experiment to see whether or not one could write, do the work, do the research and write a book before we knew the answer. That is to say: where their experiment and our experiment were still open. This was a kind of beginning of the specification of collaborative research and also a Luhmannian first and second order research as a part of how you do this stuff (LUHMANN, 1995). Because I felt very strongly that if anthropology was going to continue in the 21st century it had to change its mode of production, and therefore it's mode of being. Otherwise, if the ordinary graduate student takes seven to twelve years to write a thesis and then maybe another ten years, or five years if they're really quick to write a book, they're old historians because the ethnographic present was finished and, certainly in these domains of science ten or twelve years is a very long time. I thought if I don't do this experiment, who will? [8]

I was teaching a course on knowledge and power and there were some bright undergraduates, and I asked if one of them wanted to do this project with me. Talia DAN-COHEN said yes. She thought I meant she would be my research assistant and she found out that isn't what I had in mind at all. We went to Alameda to where the Celera Corporation[5] was and we interviewed the people. So it was a kind of ideal situation: I knew the science, I knew the technology, I knew the people, and I knew what they were trying to do. We would go and do these interviews where we actually got the technicians and the scientists and the managers to talk at some length about what they were doing. [9]

Reiner KELLER: Did this research follow a "classical" science & technology studies outline?

Paul RABINOW: Not at all, because, as opposed to science studies, we allowed them to talk. In that book "A Machine to Make a Future" (RABINOW & DAN-COHEN, 2006 [2004]), there's more talk—the scientists describe their mode of life and their project. It's both an historical, archival record of what was going on at that conjunction without them knowing whether they were going to succeed or not. They thought they would, but in fact they didn't, etc. So there was a bit of acceleration in the process and coming back from Alameda, which is not far away from here, there was always traffic. We would sit in the car and Talia would tell me what she was observing during these sessions and then of course we had the recordings, which we showed to the people we were interviewing and we put a book together quickly. Even though it's been ignored it's actually the only document of its kind which is both an historical intervention and an intervention

5 Celera Corporation in Alameda, California, founded in 1998, produces instruments and technologies related to genetic sequencing. It entered in strong competition with the public funded Human Genome Project in mapping the human genome.

that chronicles the history of a very important moment of hundreds of billions of dollars of investment in the sequencing of the genome in the name of health. So if life and health—in some larger biopolitical frame—was what this was all about, then either they were right or they were wrong. It turns out they were largely wrong. This opened up a new horizon of what life was, if it wasn't significantly genetic, except for some very fringe cases. [10]

It also showed that collaborative research could do something in a year that probably wouldn't qualify as a Ph.D. thesis, but probably should. This changed the rules of the game. I had a series at Princeton University Press and they would publish the book (RABINOW & DAN-COHEN, 2006 [2004]). It took them longer to publish the book than for us to write it. That was the next stage and I said "Fine, I'm really fed up with this." [11]

Then along comes, through a set of accidents, the Synthetic Biology Project[6] which was a very ambitious project of a group of microbiologists and bioengineers from UC Berkeley, University of California San Francisco (which is the medical school), Harvard and MIT. Plus an African-American school in Texas, which was a completely racist inclusion and they were never very much involved. The government said to the initiators of the Center that they would give them twenty million dollars if they had an ethicist because everything had to be ethical. Before this I had been teaching a course for three years with a molecular biologist named Roger BRENT on genomics and citizenship in which we were experimenting with C.P. SNOW's "two cultures" (2001 [1959]) framework. So the molecular biology people had to read FOUCAULT and the FOUCAULT people had to learn enough molecular biology to pass a midterm in which they were asked technical biological questions. [12]

3. The Practice of Collaboration and the "Labinar"[7]

Reiner KELLER: This is where you introduce the idea of collaboration instead of cooperation.

Paul RABINOW: Absolutely. I became the candidate in the Synthetic Biology Project for the ethics division. The former Genome Projects were linked to an idea of the form of cooperation, but not collaboration between the ethical establishment and biomedical establishment. That is to say, the ethicist was outside and downstream of the techno-scientific advances and the role of the ethicist was to study the consequences. I had criticisms of that and in any case I wasn't interested in doing such work. I wanted to try something else, so I flew to

6 Paul RABINOW here refers to the synthetic biology engineering research project *Synberc*, where he has been involved from 2006-2010. *Synberc* is "a multi-university research center established in 2006 with a grant from the National Science Foundation [NSF] to help lay the foundation for synthetic biology. Our mission is threefold: 1) to develop the foundational understanding and technology needed to increase the speed, scale, and precision with which we design and build biological solutions; 2) to train a new cadre of engineers who will specialize in synthetic biology; and 3) to engage policymakers and the public about the responsible advance of synthetic biology" (http://www.synberc.org/, accessed January 9, 2016; see RABINOW & STAVRIANAKIS, 2013).

7 Labinar = Lab[oratory & Sem]inar.

Washington and talked with people from the National Science Foundation and said, "I want to do collaboration, and not cooperation, and I want this to be real time and I don't want it to be about downstream consequences. I want to work in real-time, in the present, eventually the actual, with the molecular biologists and to see what happens." The people of the National Science Foundation in Washington said: "We don't know what you're talking about, but fine." The people here said: "We don't know what you're talking about, but for twenty million dollars for a start, and eventually much more, we'll sign anything." They were of good will, on all sides, and they were actually friendly. This was the root of this new form of practice that first Gaymon BENETT and I, and then Anthony STAVRIANAKIS and Gaymon and I, and then others developed. I was a principal investigator, not an outside observer. I was inside this machine. In principle, I was equal to the other principal investigators, but of course I wasn't. This became an experiment in a kind of Deweyian way, about discordance, ethical discordance between the top molecular biologists and engineers of the world and a kind of quirky anthropologist who was interested in ethics.[8] People think the project didn't work, I think it was a successful experiment because it taught us a lot. It had advantages to me—for the first time in my career I had sufficient money to support students and we could buy machines and travel a little bit and do what we wanted to do. By big science standards it wasn't a lot of money, but by little anthropology standards, it's more than I ever had. That was that experiment out of which the idea collaboration was put to the test. [13]

Reiner KELLER: But how would you describe this concept of "collaboration"?

Paul RABINOW: Collaboration means that one is working at the same time on a common problem, which is to some degree specified, but not known. This differs from cooperation in which the problem is already fairly well specified and you bring in specialists to contribute, but remain separate to the understanding or the implementation of a solution to a problem. When the problem was new, since no one has done this kind of molecular biology before, or bioengineering, the question was, in the 21st century, could one do collaboration? And the collaboration part had two main components as far as Washington and these guys were concerned: First of all, ethics, in some loose, humanitarian sense. Second, and more important for them, it meant biosecurity. This goes back to "what is life?," because the project of synthetic biology was to re-engineer living organisms, or parts of organisms, and if one could prove and do this successfully, there would be high security implications. Hence, the people in Washington, and some of the people involved in the project, were both intrigued and concerned about the fact that this was very low-tech on some level, certainly compared to nuclear engineering and you could ultimately buy most of this equipment on eBay. The sequencing data was available publicly and the internet meant that people around the world could have some form of access to at least the data that was required. This did seem to be an issue in which some new thinking, of a

8 Experiment in a Deweyian way means: For DEWEY (1938, 2004 [1916]), there is a close relation between experiment, experimentation and experience. Experimentation occurs, if actors confront new situations, use new concepts and instruments in order to deal with them ("to solve them"). One can conceive of the interaction between anthropological researcher and biomolecular researcher as such a situation of experimentation.

collaborative sort, needed to take place. To a significant degree that didn't happen, on the one hand. On the other hand, it did happen very much for anthropology in this room (311 Kroeber Hall, UC Berkeley), where Gaymon, then Anthony and I developed what we called, first a laboratory, which was a haven from the refusals and discordance and the blockage which we were experiencing. Then it turned out to be very productive space. Gaymon and I started off with a diagnostic piece of equipment, which is a conceptually very elaborate piece of work, which is on the web (RABINOW & BENNETT, 2012b; RABINOW & STAVRIANAKIS, 2013). And we found that working together every day was again like working with Talia. Could we do something in a different mode of practice which was more efficient and productive? The answer was yes. If you didn't get involved in local politics and if you worked every day, like you would in other industries and if one person wasn't thinking, the other person might be thinking and you just didn't let anything interrupt it, it turned out to be a very productive way of doing things. [14]

We also found we felt very good doing it. We thought this was an ethical and flourishing way in a very nasty environment. However elite Berkeley is, and it's much better than most places, still there was a lot of isolation and negligence and nastiness and backbiting and gossip and rumor and all the academic stuff that we're all familiar with. So we closed the door and to some degree, at least for a few hours a day, it would go away. And the more we did this the less we cared about what they were saying and the more we realized that the point of this "Wissenschaft als Beruf [Science as a Vocation]" (WEBER, 2013 [1917]; see also WEBER, 1946 [1917]) was what we were interested in doing and were in fact doing. But not only in the Weberian sense of a heroic German man who was suffering nervous breakdowns, but maybe a little more of a "gai savoir" mode of French thinkers, rather than Friedrich NIETZSCHE, who wasn't too happy either.[9] [15]

Reiner KELLER: In such moments, the anthropological laboratory became the "Labinar"?

Paul RABINOW: Yes, alongside this were the experiments with what we called a "Labinar." Because we found the collaboration was very productive in terms of our scientific inquiry and our flourishing as practitioners of *Wissensarbeitsforschung* (I've coined the term in German words—the subject of much humor)[10] (RABINOW, 2003): Why shouldn't we start pedagogical projects that take seriously the fact that most of the graduate students everywhere, but certainly at elite places in America were not very happy, and not very productive. They were very smart, but something was missing in the pedagogical system and the environments in which they were working. So the idea of the Labinar, very briefly, was collaborative, that is to say people could not work on their own project. This wasn't cooperation, they had to work in groups on a problem or a problematization which could be related to what their thesis work was, but not

9 "Le gai savoir" is the French title of German philosopher Friedrich NIETZSCHE's book "Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft" (2001 [1882/1887]).

10 "Wissensarbeit" refers to scientific knowledge making as concrete work; "Forschung" means "research." The invented term could be translated as "research on the work of knowledge making."

identical to it. This freed them from a mode of subjectivation in which it was still their career base and the inherent competition with everyone around them, suffering all the time that they weren't as good as they wanted to be, and nasty about everyone else who they were competitive with. [16]

There was a form of minimal democratic practice in which people would learn that if they worked collaboratively, together, this was not a peasant society in which there was limited good, this was the growth of capacities without intensification of nefarious power relations. Some people, at least quite a few, left feeling as though they had flourished, like they had experienced something flourishing for the first time in their graduate student life. Some people felt various exhilarations that "this is what I want to do with my life" and that "this is good." So, those all worked together and then Anthony STAVRIANAKIS and I in particular began increasingly to conceptualize this flourishing idea. The other place in the United States that had some similar sounding projects was Arizona State University (ASU), which was working on nanotechnology and society and real-time technology assessment. They paid for Anthony to work with them. They were developing a method. We are Foucauldians and Deweyians and Weberians: we didn't have a theory and we didn't have a method. We had a practice. [17]

Anthony then went to work in a lab in Switzerland, in Basel, using their methodology on whether or not ethical considerations and reflexivity could be increased within the productive capacities of a lab. Then he had a series of discussions over several years with the head of that project, Erik FISHER, who was a philosopher in his previous life and who increasingly became less of a philosopher and more of a policy oriented academic. The other two metrics of efficiency or prosperity—we had prosperity, amelioration and flourishing, but efficiency comes in as well—became real conflict points between Anthony and Erik. Anthony's thesis is about that; on whether or not *Wissenschaft als Beruf* should merely produce technical criticism in the sense of Max WEBER and Niklas LUHMANN and whether or not anthropology or the qualitative human sciences should not be simply subservient to the instrumental goals of the industrial sciences. Whether they are recognized or not, they are equals, and in fact may be superior. The subsequent question was how to proceed in collaboration when we found ourselves blocked both with respect to the bioscientists and others in the social sciences who were contributing to a deficient form of collaboration. Furthermore, we needed to reflect on the power differentials between the human sciences and biosciences and of the range of ethical and scientific moves that are available when the exercise of power in the relations between the sciences becomes nefarious. [18]

As we proceeded we found, in a Peter SLOTERDIJK fashion,[11] that we were in a long tradition. Whether with SENECA, or ARISTOTLE or DIDEROT, we returned to the idea that, first of all, one could know many things, and secondly, knowing today meant being in these kind of heterogeneous assemblages in which the

11 Contemporary German philosopher Peter SLOTERDIJK, from his very first book on "Critique of Cynical Reason"(1988 [1983]) is well known for referring back to ancient philosophers and to situate himself in such traditions.

primary goal was knowledge, but which were also a way of life. That's the project, I had. Now that project basically finished with five books in five years—that phase is completed. I'm putting some more energy into the Labinar and I don't know what I'm going to do next. I've been working a little bit more on Gerhard RICHTER and modernism[12] and what comes after modernism, but I think this idea of *Wissenschaft als Beruf* and *Wissensarbeitsforschung* of an ethical sort, obviously that's still central for me. And here I am. [19]

4. The Pathos of *Wissenschaft als Beruf*

Reiner KELLER: If I may just add one or two questions on this fieldwork experience and these reflections. One thing, which is I think very interesting, is this idea which is in the book title, "Designing Human Practices: An Experiment with Synthetic Biology" (RABINOW & BENNETT, 2012a). It's an experiment with the other sciences. The idea is to transform the traditional hierarchy between hard sciences and social sciences or humanities; to say that you consider yourself equal or maybe superior, if you are experimenting with them. So talking about human practices in this regard is very different from the usual talk about social consequences of science and technology, and is different too, from the idea of the anthropology of technology and science studies with its more ironic mode of telling the outside public what they are doing inside laboratories.

Paul RABINOW: Absolutely, and thank you. That's all correct. So let's start at the end. Anthony and I have made explicit in "Designs on the Contemporary" (RABINOW & STAVRIANAKIS 2014) something which I had learned a long time ago from my philosophy teacher, Richard McKEON at Chicago University: There are different modes of narrating histories and events. We identified four: irony, tragedy, comedy and pathos. In the French tradition, pathos is dominant, in the German tradition tragedy is dominant, in the English tradition irony is dominant—so science studies are largely ironic, and therefore modernist. Bruno LATOUR's writings are nothing but irony. That he's not a modernist is for another discussion. But the pathos dimension, which is both a question of the normal and the pathological, but also the theatrical and of the *mise en scène*, meant that these projects were never going to be as successful as they claimed to be, so there was a pathos about that. But that's OK, including in our own project, as long as one operated in a mode in which one understood that pathos was part of what *Wissenschaft als Beruf* consisted in. And it always stood in contrast to the biosciences' mode, which was in our eyes comic, not just in the bad sense of comic, but in the sense that they were achieving things which then fell apart and which were then temporarily resolved, but only temporarily. [20]

The background, as I can recount it here, was that there was also the buildup of this with the other, earlier projects, at Celera and the CEPH (Centre d'Étude de Polymorphisme) in France where I was invited in to be a philosophic observer. So, this didn't come out of nowhere. In France it is important to understand that the National Bioethics Committee was like the Ethical Legal Social Implications

12 Paul RABINOW is currently working on a book on contemporary German painter Gerhard RICHTER. See RABINOW and STAVRIANAKIS (2014, Chapter 5) for a published analysis on Gerhard RICHTER.

(ELSI) model at the American Bioethics Committee.[13] That's not what the Genome sequencing people wanted. A head of this project was Daniel COHEN, but his co-worker was a Nobel Prize winner, Jean DAUSSET and they worked with the Muscular Dystrophy groups and they raised their money in a different fashion. They raised it on television which the French establishment thought was ridiculous and would never work, and now it's been twenty years and very successful, although they haven't cured the dystrophies. They found some genes, but they haven't cured the dystrophies. [21]

But that's called knowledge and science, right? And there's pathos there, but it's not tragic and it's not ironic. We were engaged in it all the way through. Now that's what we were struggling towards—more resolution at the end of the Synthetic Biology Project. I think Anthony and Gaymon have suffered more than I have, partially because I'm an old dog and have been through more than they have. And they're too nice. But nonetheless, this is the idea which I now see in many other anthropological projects, that the conceptual apparatus and the mode of practice and the commitment to *Wissenschaft als Beruf* has a pathetic mode, which is heightened by the bad economic conditions. The only reason to do this stuff at this point, in our neck of the woods is if you really want to do it, and this is what you find satisfying and worthwhile in life, because there's no guarantee of the usual plush job and the suburban house and the Volvo and the two dogs and the four kids and the rest. [22]

It's actually heightened the conditions under which a collaborative and ethical and human science could be worth something. And, I think we've gone through some stages and I think on the table now is what else could come next. The challenge which we're at least beginning to think about is how to make this transnational via, in part, the internet, which we've so far partially failed at. But it must be the case that there are some ways of connecting people in Berkeley, in London, in Paris and Berlin and Copenhagen and wherever that grows both out of the participant observation in the research, in the inquiry and the participant

13 Today, the acronym ELSI stands for the organized reflection on ethical, legal and social implications of new technologies (like nano-, energy- or biotechnologies). It originated in the context of Human Genome research:

"The Ethical, Legal, and Social Implications (ELSI) program was founded in 1990 as an integral part of the Human Genome Project. The mission of the ELSI program was to identify and address issues raised by genomic research that would affect individuals, families, and society. A percentage of the Human Genome Project budget at the National Institutes of Health and the U.S. Department of Energy was devoted to ELSI research. The ELSI program focused on the possible consequences of genomic research in four main areas:

- Privacy and fairness in the use of genetic information, including the potential for genetic discrimination in employment and insurance.
- The integration of new genetic technologies, such as genetic testing, into the practice of clinical medicine.
- Ethical issues surrounding the design and conduct of genetic research with people, including the process of informed consent.
- The education of healthcare professionals, policy makers, students, and the public about genetics and the complex issues that result from genomic research" (http://ghr.nlm.nih.gov/handbook/hgp/elsi andhttp://bioethics.gov/about, accessed: January 8, 2016).

observation in the Labinars—and that's what this term we're beginning to try to articulate ... Maybe our paths cross there. [23]

Reiner KELLER: Why did you choose the title "Designing Human Practices" for your book with Gaymon BENNETT (2012a)? I am especially interested in the "human practices" part.

Paul RABINOW: OK, that was pretty random. In the Synthetic Biology Center there were four thrusts before we got there: parts, devices, chassis, and the fourth one was ethics. So instead of buying in to that, because then they would be comfortable that we were separate, we thought, we're building an additive hierarchy, from biological parts to devices to systems, while actually human practices organizes and runs through the whole thing, which they never believed. But, there it is. [24]

5. "Was heißt Aufklärung?"[14]

Reiner KELLER: And if I got it right, you try to navigate away from a simple critical stance, which is always against what's happening there, as well as a naïve positivist one, who believes everything.

Paul RABINOW: Right, this is the project of "Was *ist* Aufklärung?" ("What is Enlightenment" (KANT, 2009 [1784]). There's some confusion about this and I prefer the other title "*Was heißt Aufklärung?*" ("What *means* enlightenment?") because the German word *ist* implies that it actually *is* something *definite*, or at least could be read that way, whereas *heißt* refers to "the meaning of." Although Immanuel KANT wrote *ist,* but that's too bad for KANT. So why don't we use the latter sense? Yes, I'm definitely committed to some form of enlightenment, both in a much older sense, an 18th century sense, and in a 21st century sense.[15] Otherwise it's just instrumental. So it's critical, but not in the traditional ways. One of the big challenges is trying to find modes of criticism as practice which are not denunciatory. Luc BOLTANSKI (1990) certainly talks about this. Now why not denunciatory? For a number of reasons—one, because, as NIETZSCHE (2005 [1908], pp.80-82) said, *ressentiment* is bad for the soul, it gives you upset stomachs and migraines, and gets you nowhere, so let's be more joyous about it.[16] [25]

14 Translation: "What means enlightenment?" Today, the German word *Aufklärung* has a series of connotations, depending of context. It might refer to military procedures, police work on crime, sexual education for children, a historical period, a movement of philosophical thinkers, an attitude, etc. The above given title refers back to Immanuel KANT's essay from 1784 "Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung? [Response to the question: What is enlightenment]," but replaces "is" by "means." Philosophical discussion on whether KANT referred to a period or to a process abound. Michel FOUCAULT (1984), in one of his last articles "What is Enlightenment?," discusses KANT and argues, that "enlightenment" is not a period, as the French common terms "les lumières" or "siècle des lumières [century of enlightenment]" suggest, which refer to a large part of the 18th century; nor a particular and now finished process, but an "ethos," an attitude and proceeding towards phenomena, which has to be renewed, taken over ever and ever again.

15 "18th century sense" refers to the classical historical movement of "scientific knowledge making" and "rationality" against hegemonic religious world views. "21th century sense" refers basically, following FOUCAULT's argument on enlightenment as ethos, to RABINOW's and others' current work on contemporary forms of enlightenment.

16 This refers to NIETZSCHE's text "Ecce Homo," originally published in 1908, which has been translated as part of NIETZSCHE (2005).

And secondly, without being sort of foolish about the conditions of capitalism and the rest, which I'm not, I hope, nonetheless, if we don't have any place but to stand on the side and be negative, then we should do political work. But if we're doing *Wissensarbeitsforschung*, then we have an obligation to develop modes of criticism which know what they're talking about. So I know enough molecular biology now that when people make certain types of claims, as a citizen, and as an anthropologist, I can respond to that. [26]

I don't know what the venue for the practice of enlightenment is today. I don't believe it's what many of my colleagues believe, which is having a blog or demonstrations. I do some of that, but I don't think that works. So what is the venue? One of the main basic challenges now is, in the 21st century, given these other technologies and possibilities and capacities, what kind of venue could one invent and protect that might have some efficacy, but at the very least would be a space of *eudaimonia*—flourishing[17]—in some neo-stoic sense, rather than anything else, because that's all I can do. So I think I'm critical in the sense that I'm very much not naïve—I know what's going on out there—but mere denunciation is worn out and furthermore it's bad for you. So what else do you do? That's what I think we're working on. [27]

Reiner KELLER: So it's a kind of working on today's conditions or possibilities of *Aufklärung,* linked to the fields of innovation?

Paul RABINOW: Yes, that's what interests me, but it could be other things, of course. But that's what interests me. If you look at most of the students I've worked with recently, that's what they're working on. So, avian flu in China, the new humanitarianism in conflict situations and we could make a whole list. People always say "Oh, why aren't you working on victims?" Well you could. But I'm a white heterosexual male and working by and large on powerful men. Well, that's problematic for a lot of these people, who are hypocrites in my view, to a significant degree. But, fine, go work on other topics and see if this works. I'm sure it would and John DEWEY shows you it did, when he worked with Jane ADDAMS in Chicago, on the Hull-House projects, so why not?[18] I'm doing what I'm doing and this is who I am. You want to do something else? I'm a pluralist—go do it, but show me something. Just show me how to do it. I don't know how to do it with migrant workers. Somebody else can show me how to do it with migrant

17 *eudaemonia*, Greek, definition: "The *condition* of being well; flourishing."

Usage: "Used as a central term in steering (in the Platonic sense) the practice of participant-observation during fieldwork and the work which follows. As a metric, flourishing enables the posing of questions outside instrumental rationality, which dominate both the bio- and social sciences. A fundamental distinction between prosperity, amelioration, and flourishing reintroduces the challenge of the worth of inquiry and its products" (http://contemporary.lacunastories.com/content/terms-engagement#EUDAEMONIA, accessed: January 9, 2016).

18 John DEWEY, during his time in Chicago, worked closely with Jane ADDAMS and the Hull House movement. Much of his theory and experiments in education are heavily influenced by this. Hull House provided, among other activities, "kindergarten and day care facilities for the children of working mothers; an employment bureau; an art gallery; libraries; English and citizenship classes; and theater, music and art classes" (http://www.hullhousemuseum.org/about-jane-addams/, accessed January 9, 2016).

workers. That's the challenge of where anthropology should go. Rather than knowing in advance who they are and what they do, and why they're victims. [28]

6. Max WEBER, John DEWEY and Michel FOUCAULT

Reiner KELLER: I'm picking up on these fields of innovation in order to go a step further toward the theoretical backgrounds of thinkers you're engaged with. You explain in one of the books (RABINOW & STAVRIANAKIS, 2013, p.8) that FOUCAULT's idea of the history of the present—it's OK, and lots of people are doing it—but for anthropological inquiry today it does not really fit what you call, following WEBER (1946 [1917], p.156), the "demands of the day." Surely you care about the history of the present, but you are giving it other twists or are moving it into another direction.

Paul RABINOW: Yes, the simplest way of describing that is, that the *telos*, or the point of history of the present which FOUCAULT said almost nothing about, but it's there, is to show that structures and habits that are held to be either natural or unchangeable, are themselves contingent. They're the products of long, historical developments etc. But if you're working in fields of genome sequencing, everyone knows it is contingent. I mean, you're proving nothing to say that it's contingent because it didn't exist before. It seems to me, our job and our challenge is to be close to what's emerging and to know, in some detail about what's going on. Both, because we're curious and it's inherently interesting and furthermore, that the anthropology of the contemporary, it's an anthropology of the near future. And the near future is not just a question, it is still a becoming, in Gilles DELEUZE's terms (1995, p.171). Therefore showing that it is contingent is meaningless. And the criticism of denunciation is kind of weak. What else could one be doing if this is the domain you're interested in? Now, other people are studying prisons and of course the prison system in America is horrible and so it's appropriate that there's a different form of criticism there. But criticizing the Human Genome Project and postgenomics in that mode is, to me, to make sure you don't understand what's actually happening and to be firing away at false targets. If, in fact they turn out to be eugenic oriented, then we should be worried about that, but you haven't found anything like that. One of my students, an African-American, has worked in companies that have been looking for ethnic genes. They've all failed. So, that's good. They may not be happy about it, but we're happy about it. [29]

Reiner KELLER: In conceiving this perspective on the anthropology of the contemporary you're framing it or starting it with three thinkers from the more or less classical past, meaning there's the Weberian part which refers, as far as I've understood it, to the question of how to construct a new perspective, a new view. There's the Deweyian part that's more a reflection on inquiry, as opposed to method orientated modernist approaches, and the Foucauldian elements that are much more about the creation of the space of problematization or maybe some tools or concepts in order to explore a domain. You also refer to classical philosophers, like SENECA and others, in order to elaborate this. Could you comment on these three?

Paul RABINOW: WEBER is seen as the founder of sociology, but he was very explicit that he was not a sociologist and he said that in a number of places. He was a professor of law and political economy and was interested in the big questions of capitalism and civilizational change in a macro-comparative dimension. That's my background from the University of Chicago and Clifford GEERTZ. I still think, even more so a century later that the transnational, global, comparative frame to knowledge production, critique and hope is still absolutely in place. [30]

The German professors at the University of Chicago thought that the Western civilization came to an end in 1914, which is a good argument. So then, where are we? Then there's that side of WEBER. And also there is the side of WEBER which, at least in France and here in the US, is misinterpreted. His claim about the Protestant ethic and capitalism is that this was an elective affinity; it was kind of an accident. Whether he's right or wrong, people have been arguing about it for a century, which means he saw a problem. And that problem is something about the particularity and the generality of universal processes. Rationalization processes, economic processes and cultural processes brought together into a loose assemblage. He also thought there was a crisis of meaning. So he says in *Wissenschaft als Beruf* that the ever increasing specialization of the sciences leads to an inverse ratio with the broad question of meaning (WEBER, 1946 [1917], p.142). [31]

I agree with that, although I'm not an old German man, but a kind of alienated cosmopolitan American Jew, so the world didn't come to an end. There was a lot of slaughter, and to some degree maybe it did come to an end—that world. But the problem space of what to do with this ever increasing specialization on the one hand and then the spread of capitalism and science unmoored from its original conditions of articulation still seems to me the general problematic which we should be thinking about. In small ways that's what I've done. My advisor, Cliff GEERTZ*,* in bigger ways did a lot of that. So that's what I get from WEBER, and WEBER was also very clear that he has no theory. He basically never wrote a book, so the question of genres and styles, which is one of my interests, is rigid in WEBER. Talcott PARSONS turned him into a sociologist and published books, but those weren't WEBER.[19] [32]

Then he's cast in France as a right-wing thinker until recently. But Marianne WEBER's biography (LENGERMANN & NIEBRUGGE-BRANTLEY, 1998) shows that she was a socialist feminist, so it's a little bit easy, and stupid and wrong. I'm attracted to thinkers you can't classify so easily as right or left and that, you know, is to my detriment. Certainly here. So, very broadly that's WEBER. [33]

Reiner KELLER: Then you wrote about relationships between DEWEY and FOUCAULT. DEWEY seems to be very important with his arguments on inquiry.

19 American sociologist Talcott PARSONS, after having completed his Ph.D. at German Heidelberg University in 1927, translated several of Max WEBER's texts into English and introduced a particular, but very influential reading of WEBER to US-American sociology via his own work in systems theory, especially his early book "The Structure of Social Action" (1937).

Paul RABINOW: DEWEY was this joyous American for a while, although by the end he was a little less joyous, who worked his way out of European metaphysics. WEBER was still a Neo-Kantian. DEWEY's early writings, which are from the period of the last decade of the 19th century and the first decade of 20th century, and in particular the "Essays in Experimental Logic" (2004 [1916]), are a very very interesting set of conceptual developments about how you can avoid taking up the wrong problems, which has parallels in Hans BLUMENBERG's (1983) idea of not re-occupying the same old problem spaces. BLUMENBERG does it in one way, but DEWEY does it in another way, particularly in relation to the sciences and to democracy. I found that very attractive and when I went to college, DEWEY was referred to a lot, but we never read much DEWEY. So it was only later on, or more recently, that I started reading DEWEY, particularly the "Essays in Experimental Logic" and his "Logic: The Theory of Inquiry" (1938). But what he means by logic is a mode of inquiry, an experimental mode of inquiry in which the inquirer changes norms and standards as the problem demands and they change as older dimensions of a problem are solved, or not solved and new forms of the problem are articulated. That seems very exciting to me. There's a kind of mode of subjectivation, and a kind of *Aufklärung* which is anti-metaphysical, which is engaged in the world, which is democratic in some sense. But mainly, it is this range of concepts about what inquiry is that I found very helpful. Because, as you know, FOUCAULT is always extremely reluctant to say anything too explicit about anything, whereas DEWEY, being a good American, was trying to be as explicit as he could and went over and over and over again, on the one hand. [34]

On the other hand, he was not a fool. So particularly in "Reconstruction in Philosophy" (DEWEY, 1948 [1920]), which had two editions like many of DEWEY's books, in the original edition he thought like ELSI and the French ethics and the German ethics establishments, that it was possible to bring these two ends together, that we're in a technological age, that science was advancing and basically a good thing, but the unchecked rise of technology, per se, was dangerous. By the time he wrote the second version of it, after the two World Wars, he was much less optimistic about reconstruction. It was about time, but OK, good. [35]

Reiner KELLER: So why and what about FOUCAULT then?

Paul RABINOW: FOUCAULT was himself a kind of *Aufklärer* [enlightener], but not in an easy sense, also not in a "Dialectic of Enlightenment" sense either (HORKHEIMER & ADORNO, 2002 [1944/1947]), because that assumed there was a single trajectory of history. Now WEBER didn't believe that, if you read WEBER carefully. The analysis of the Protestant ethic was about a particular process, showing that it was contingent and could be different, that's why he studied all these other civilizations and that's why we're so unhappy. [36]

FOUCAULT is closer to that. Obviously, he was a deeply pessimistic guy on the one hand, on the other hand it never stopped him. So getting away from metaphysics and getting away from theory and getting away from foundational

ethics. Philosophy as cloister, only talking to philosophers, was something he always rebelled against: viscerally, humanly, in his skin. And therefore, at that level he was kind of an historical anthropologist, but not a professional. [37]

So this is this other piece of the armature, which is also an Enlightenment ideal; I think that WEBER and DEWEY and FOUCAULT are all amateurs. That is to say they were knowledgeable, they were serious, they knew a lot, but they weren't specialists. So this question of "what is an intellectual?" is one that could be rooted, to some degree, in neither the specific intellectual, nor universal intellectual. So with respect to FOUCAULT's famous interview (1980) where he articulated this distinction, people assume he's one or the other: he's neither. So what was he doing? It's a kind of a philosophic intellectual who is an amateur, but not one who sits in the study and observes the world without the world changing him. In some small way that's what I'm trying to do as well and make that a style of pedagogy and writing. Because there's a pedagogical dimension and a form dimension in pedagogy and a form dimension in writing. So the form question, in WEBER, who wrote no books, in DEWEY, who wrote endlessly about inquiry and never did any and in FOUCAULT, who did the history of the present but towards the end, the last three years—partially, I think, influenced by his visits to and stays over here at the University of California in Berkeley—wanted to find a different way of life. These have been, among others, major influences on me. [38]

7. Present, Actual, Contemporary

Reiner KELLER: In your recent writings, the mode of writing is very "genealogical" and narrative in a certain way so it's kind of a reflection on what you have been doing: the different directions, options, decisions, maybe the dead ends and the others. It's a different kind of writing anthropology or thinking than in a monographic book with a consistent and coherent "beginning to end" outline.

Paul RABINOW: Right, and also given our mode of practice: Three of those books, or really four of those books are joint books. Anthony comes in the door, says "good morning," very polite, and he sits there and we just go to work. We set out to meet the "demands of the day." We wrote those books together. In the last one (RABINOW & STAVRIANAKIS, 2014) he wrote most of the part on Salman RUSHDIE and I wrote most of the part on Gerhard RICHTER, but we talked about it a lot. The other stuff in the book we wrote together, so it's a kind of a style that's reflexive and second order, but it's not just about one writer. The "author"—you remember FOUCAULT's question (1998 [1969])—is also a collaborative subject. If it has a unity and a tone, it's to some degree based in that mode of practice which is not rewarded in the academy but there are no more rewards they can give me. They can take things away. [39]

I tell everyone that working with me is dangerous, because careers are still individual. These books, I will get all the credit and the blame, they'll get some of the blame, but they won't quite get the full credit for all the work they actually did because of all the usual nonsense out there. I worry about that a lot, but, you know, it's informed consent, which I don't believe in, but I do my little speech and

we proceed. And then, hopefully, in some sense, like stages of life, they should go on and out and do something else. I do have a very large body of students who are doing really good work. Last year there was this kind of "*Festschrift*" at the anthropology meetings which was very impressive.[20] The tone of the presentations was, "I learned some things from this guy and in Berkeley and now look what I'm doing." They each had a kind of family resemblance and a kind of broad connectivity. I'm not trying to create disciples; I'm trying to create free thinkers. To some significant degree I think I've succeeded and that's very gratifying and that's what keeps me going. [40]

Reiner KELLER: I would like now to enter the discussion about the anthropology of the contemporary, which means maybe starting with the differences, or the links between the present, the actual and the contemporary and then move further on into your conceptual equipment.

Paul RABINOW: Anthropology is a practice that's existential and experiential, as opposed to some other disciplines. So we always operate at some level in what Anthony and I have called the present, or maybe even in the tradition of Alfred SCHÜTZ or other ethnomethodologists. In and of itself, if one doesn't have a metaphysics or philosophy of history, a fixed anthropology or any of those things, it's messy, it's buzzing confusion, many different things are going on etc. And DEWEY (2004 [1916]) in the "Essays in Experimental Logic" is very good about this. [41]

However when we begin to conduct a scientific inquiry, the goal is actually to work out of the present into a state in which, through inquiry, through conceptual work, through some form of verificational activity and reflection on experience, one has reduced and refined this buzzing confusion and the infinite number of things that one could encounter out there to something that has a different status. That status we call the actual. It's still present in a temporal sense, but it's not present in the unreflected, unrefined, infinitely large original sense. You could say this is a kind of Schützian move. It probably comes as much, in my case, from a kind of Hegelian move that there's transformation of a dialectic sort and Anthony and I have had a lot of amusement about KANT having a non-dialectical transformation of experience. Non-dialectical in the sense that it doesn't necessarily lead towards a *telos*. But at some level this is a fairly simple concept. [42]

Reiner KELLER: But what does it mean to move from the present through the actual towards the contemporary?

Paul RABINOW: It is often highlighted in anthropology as opposed to some other disciplines, even in history, that it starts with experience. It starts with it in the sense that you go somewhere and have to learn how to cope. Of course you would never go there if you didn't have concepts, inquiry, funding, a field project and whatever. So it's never simple experience of that sort. Still, there is some distinctiveness about this procedure, so we're using the actual to point out that it

20 Paul RABINOW refers to the session "Onward. A Panel in Honor of Paul Rabinow" during the 2012 meeting of the American Anthropological Association (see https://aaa.confex.com/aaa/2012/webprogram/Session5427.html, accessed January 10, 2016).

is something that is not simply given, but earned. It's earned through a disciplined process of inquiry, reflection and conceptualization of what one has undergone. It's also a temporal term. It entails that one has done some work. So, in the *Wissensarbeitsforschung*, the *Arbeit* [work] part is surely part of this movement from the present to the actual. In another register it could be related to what DELEUZE (2002) and FOUCAULT (1984) called *actualité* in the sense that they don't mean by that everything, they mean something significant that's taking place. Which by the way they don't specify very much. And it's partially because it's taken for granted, and partially because they don't do this kind of work. [43]

Then, it seems to us, that there is a further step from what you do with what you've turned into the actual. And the actual turns out, at least in the way we're practicing it, to form configurations. It's not just single objects which you're being clarified about, but it's actually configurations: relational, dynamic wholes in a sense, not totalizing wholes, but configurations of groupings of objects and practices and meanings and affects. By seizing that conceptually and earning it through the rigorous process of inquiry and reflection one can then have some sense of what the actual configurations are, or the next stages. What are the configurations of the actual? Very briefly, that's what we've done. And it's fine to stop there, but then the question arises: Well, what relation does one have to that if one is not attempting to build a theory? If one does not engage in a mode of denunciation, if one is not an empiricist and if one is not a post-modern. That's at least one of the ways in which the contemporary comes in. So to some degree, building on FOUCAULT's (1984) insight that the modern is an ethos, a way of relating to the actual, then the contemporary has some analogies with that. So that's one part. [44]

The other part is that the contemporary has the characteristic of being a stylization of old and new elements. That is to say, it is cast within and against modernism. It's not avant-gardist because it doesn't valorize either the old or the new. It seeks to grasp the forms that old and new elements are being given, because we believe that the modernist rejection of the past and the dream of creation *ex nihilo* has produced many problems, and has run its course. That being said, returning back beyond it to the 19th century is not possible, so the stylization is an important parameter of the practice of the contemporary. It's then also helpful, in the early days of this, to look for people who are doing something like that themselves, that's why the painter Gerhard RICHTER is attractive to me, but there are many others you could imagine. [45]

8. The Answer is No

Reiner KELLER: OK, but what is your interest or "truth claim" in arriving at the "contemporary"? What do you suggest this move is or should be for?

Paul RABINOW: Well, what I just explained is the second part, and then, regarding your question, the third part is the following: Going back to DEWEY. DEWEY (1941) says that once you've got an inquiry and you come up with what he calls propositions—which are not strictly propositions, but rather warranted discernible claims about the actual—then what judgments do you make about them? Those judgments could be ethical, they could be political, they could be aesthetic, they could be veridictional etc. But you can only make them once you're gone through the other process. That seems to be a contemporary challenge, in a way that's not so far from WEBER, except that we would like to make it not Neo-Kantian, in the sense that for a Neo-Kantian the value judgments are subjective. But rather this is part of a later stage of inquiry, both for those one is inquiring and collaborating with, or cooperating with or observing, and for a mode of anthropological practice in which the sum reason of why you do all this stuff, you know. Why would you go to the South Sudan unless there was something there you wanted to know, but also why did you want to know it? You wanted to know it because it was something cognitively, veridictionally interesting but also something significant about the contemporary world is going on to which you're trying to figure out a satisfying relationship. [46]

So those are the broad contours and the reason it's anthropology is that first, it's this kind of practice and second, it's in the way we're doing it, it's about *anthrōpos*. You asked previously about a philosophy of anthropology. Well, *anthrōpos* is in question, and *anthrōpos* has been in question in multiple ways for a long time and we seem to be in a period, and have been for a long time, in which truth claims and other claims, but particularly truth claims are multiplying about what is this being, *anthrōpos*? So the contemporary doesn't so much attempt to resolve that as to show the configurations, and to relate to those configurations in which these *logoi* about *anthrōpos* are being articulated in good and detailed ways. So, very broadly speaking, that's the idea. It's not modernist, but it's not anti-modernist. It's not historicist, but it's certainly historical. It's not subjective, but it's not objectivist. A range of linking and refusing at the same time so there's a kind of tempered dialectic involved in it except it's not leading anywhere unfortunately, or fortunately, as the case may be. The 19th century is over, right? For better and worse. [47]

Reiner KELLER: So you're proposing different conceptual elements or tools for proceeding in this kind of inquiry and there are lots of them. I think we can't enter into all of them here. I would just mention the idea of problematization, the idea of flourishing, which is on the side of the inquirer as well as on the side of the object of inquiry, I think. Then you're talking about FOUCAULT's ethical fourfold (including ethical substance, mode of subjectivation, *telos* and ethical exercise, see RABINOW & STAVRIANAKIS, 2014, p.48) and you're using the notion or the

term interpretative analytics. Could you explain the most basic elements of this in a very shorthand fashion and relate it to the cases you're dealing with in the last book?

Paul RABINOW: The answer is no. Let me try something. Like a lot of things in FOUCAULT, he throws out these big suggestions, problematization is one of them. And when you read it, it sounds "fine" and the original Labinar we had, with 15 bright students, was about problematization. That's been a number of years now. It's increasingly unclear what a problematization is although its significance seems ever greater to me. As the topological domain in which inquiry takes place that's significant. [48]

These are not simply objective conditions: Capitalism is now in this stage, or gender relations are in that stage, or something of that sort. They may be part of what's going on, but the broader problematization of global capital, of the internet, of the new sciences and gender relations, work relations etc. are actually not necessarily in and of themselves coherent in a totalizing way. But they can't be ignored either. The challenge then, is to figure out ways of finding and articulating and identifying and inquiring into and clarifying problems that are drawn from this cloud and maze and fog of problematization, but are not reducible to it. This produces simultaneously some humility in what you're doing but also raises it up from the particularities of this case, that case or the other cases. Maybe we're making some progress in specifying more about what the conditions of a contemporary problematization today are about, which involves producing numbers of inquiries that produce actual configurations. That's a longer story. There's that. [49]

In order to do that you also need what we call equipment, which is a term that I first used in "French Modern" (RABINOW, 1989) as a central part of the nominalist account of the articulation of society, and culminating in what the French call "*Le plan d'équipment national*" which was how you would plan and organize life. Equipment in that sense means roads, playgrounds, sewer systems and housing projects etc. [50]

FOUCAULT (2005, pp.3015-330) picked up the Greek word *paraskeuē*[21] as a slightly different sense of equipment which is more related to the practice of the philosopher and the citizen, which is the work on the self in these conditions which overflow and overrun one's capacity to control them or govern them. As he explains particularly in Roman philosophy, but also for the Greeks, SENECA or somebody would reflect at the end of the day on what had happened and the mistakes he had made. These are both writing practices and reflective practices and concept building which gradually can be ready at hand for use such that when you encounter inevitable breakdown and blockages and what have you,

21 *paraskeuē*, Greek, definition: "A term of late antique philosophy, which can be translated both as equipment and preparedness. The term refers to ethical maxims that one kept ready-at-hand in order to confront life's vicissitudes."

Usage: "These vicissitudes and their correlative paraskeue ranged from managing small dilemmas of daily life, to ultimate confrontations with the inevitability of death. The ultimate aim is to exercise these paraskeue in a manner that allows them to become incorporated into one's ethical disposition" (http://contemporary.lacunastories.com/content/terms-engagement#PARASKEUE, accessed: January 11, 2016).

you're not unequipped to respond to them. So the challenge in a way has been to bridge this more micro and cosmological sense of the *paraskeuē* to this modernist sense of equipment as the elements and objects of planning. So we've worked on that, and there are various answers to what that looks like. [51]

9. Flourishing

Reiner KELLER: I would just like to add two further questions. One is about flourishing, the idea of flourishing as a kind of metric, and then on the case studies you're dealing with in the last book, which are probably not yet known to the readers: Salman RUSHDIE and Gerhard RICHTER. But maybe we could first talk about the idea of flourishing.

Paul RABINOW: The idea is something like the following: A question for all known civilizations until modernity was: What is the good life and how do you live it? So at one level, although everyone professes confusion and obscurity, this is a question every civilization poses—Chinese, Islamic, Hindu etc. and in some way all tribal societies: What's the point of living? In its philosophic elaborations these are long standing questions. Certainly in the West, but also in these other traditions, the answer is always that the accumulation of riches, or power, is never sufficient to achieve the good life, which is translated as "flourishing" or "happiness" in the 18th century. Happiness is a bourgeois idea. When we use the Greek concept of *eudaimonia* it doesn't mean happiness—again the house, the Volvo and two dogs. It means something else: a kind of growth of capacities, some degree of resolution of living with the life one's made. Even under extreme conditions; EPICTETUS was born as a slave (OLDFATHER, 1928). So it's not just a ruling class ideology, it's a way of *anthrōpos* asking: What kind of being is *anthrōpos*? *Anthrōpos* is the kind of being that, if he/she is capable of it, seeks to live a life worth living. To which, being the king might be an answer, but it's most likely not an answer. Then, through a long trajectory through Christianity it took other forms and then it of course was shattered by the Modern, which said the point of thinking and of knowing is instrumental. Control, mastery, prosperity, enrichments, and that in fact, knowledge is separate from the knower. Whereas one doesn't want to go back after everything I've said to sort of sitting in the Philosophy Department and trying to figure out the conditions of the subject. Nonetheless, why are people doing what they're doing? If the only answers are "I'm going to cure AIDS" and then they haven't cured AIDS, or "I'm going to get rich" and then they're not as rich as the next guy in Silicon Valley and furthermore they're on their third marriage and they're not happy and their kids don't like them and the rest of it: then what? [52]

So this is a version of the *Wissenschaft als Beruf* question, but placed in a longer trajectory and made contemporary. Why did WEBER keep doing what he was doing? It wasn't making him happy, but at some level it's what he needed to do. He was meeting the "demands of the day" as he understood them. That's what we're driving at. At some level it's very simple and on some other level it's been thoroughly obliterated or spiritualized as a leisure time activity on Sunday or Thursday or Friday or whenever you go pray, whereas we are trying to rethink it

as an inherent part of the practice of knowing. And as a form of life that's committed to curiosity and inquiry and ethics of one form or another. I'm not too surprised that we encountered such refusal among the molecular biologists, but a little more surprised that we encountered as much refusals we do among the anthropologists. That's diagnostic of how screwed up things are. That these very simple, obvious questions "Why are you doing what you're doing?" have been lost and since most of the people we're addressing are not doing what they're doing out of sheer necessity of the minimal conditions of survival, one would have thought at some point, they would have asked themselves these questions. Some of my colleagues hate to teach. Well then, why are you doing it? I don't hate to teach, I don't love every aspect of it, but teaching seems part of what's good about this kind of existence and there are days where I think "Jesus, they're paying me to go talk to these youths, ignorant and unwashed California kids and they actually learn something, and I learn something." So that's all. The term is *eudaimonia*, which, as you know, Anthony and I have played with in "Demands of the Day" (RABINOW & STAVRIANAKIS, 2013). It comes from SOCRATES, but it could be a Freudian trope where there's a voice of your better self, saying: "Do you want to do that? Is this good for me? Am I enjoying myself or am I growing?" And it could be external, but it could be internal also. It seems to me that's ethics. At least a central part of ethics. [53]

Reiner KELLER: So it's much more about asking this question and starting a kind of reflection, rather than, as in the concept of alienation, which always supposes a general truth about the "unalienated condition," of what is the good? Such concepts of critique proceed from a standpoint that knows already. For you it's much more about the process of reflecting.

Paul RABINOW: Yes, it's a lifelong practice. [54]

Reiner KELLER: You will not say "this is the good life," but the addressed other should think about what it means to her- or himself.

Paul RABINOW: To oneself, to her- or himself be true, yes. Whatever that means, but it means something and that's kind of the project. In a life of *Wissenschaft* [science], that's the other part of it. This might well look different than some other modes of existence, if you're in the army or the church, or whatever. But we're knowledge seekers, what does that look like? The ever accumulating bodies of meaningless data? No. But, well that's what some do. I've had the privilege of doing something a little different than them. Partially, because I'm stubborn and refuse certain things. Partially, because anthropology probably had more space for that, and probably still does have more than some other disciplines. This goes back, I think, to the existential part. That you go off to South Sudan: who the hell knows anything about South Sudan? So the anthropologist comes back and tells us something. I don't know whether or not to believe her or him. But then what? It changes the stakes of the proportions between these things. [55]

Reiner KELLER: The cases you're dealing with in the last book, it's the case of two artists, one writer, and a painter. So it's very far from the field where we

started from. From the synthetic biology research, the Human Genome Projects and from all these fields. So you're dealing with two cases. In some way there are discursive materials. There's a time schedule, there are practices involved in the RICHTER thing or the writing practice in RUSHDIE. It is about inventing new practices and meanings—parting from the history of the present to the present as situations and assemblages where invention of the future takes place, as a conflictual issue. Because the "new" not only emerges in scientific laboratories, but in cultural production as well. RUSHDIE and RICHTER are very individual cases, but the analysis you present addresses these more general questions. Could you just, at the end of this conversation, say a little bit about this recent work, about these cases?

Paul RABINOW: Well, first of all it's not participant observation for a change, it's just sort of been a sideline for one reason or another and maybe it's related to DELEUZE's claim that FOUCAULT always operates on two levels—what is sayable and what is seeable. At that level there are things that Gerhard RICHTER or others, Paul KLEE, does for me that no amount of discourse, per se, can do. The arts that draw me are, actually, mainly music, but that's very hard to write about. Painting of a certain sort is a way of rendering visible something which is surrounded by *énoncés* and discourse specialists, but it also escapes from them. It's related, but a different domain. One of the things that interests me about RICHTER is: He seems to have understood that you need both. So he surrounded himself with critics all the way through, but coming from East Germany, he's been consistently skeptical of ideological formations of either the right or the left. Painting to him, seemed to be a path toward some form of *eudaimonia*. He's very knowledgeable about the historical conditions of rendering visible things, the world. Because he always claims that particularly in his abstract paintings, which he calls *Bild,* that he's actually rendering visual something that could be seen if you start to look for it. It's not just an abstraction, it's actually abstract, "*abstraktes Bild*," and that's intriguing to me because it always seemed to be obviously the case that veridictional claims and discursive claims were only part of life. That's what drew me first to Paul KLEE, and his work in the Bauhaus,[22] which was a different kind of situation and then later to RICHTER. Maybe the Bauhaus failed and RICHTER is not situated in the same kind of collaborative environment. And yet he's keeping something alive in a way that seems impressive to me. And it's contemporary in that he's quite clear about both refusing the idea that you can't go back to romanticism, while of course not going back to romanticism or waiting ten years before he paints something about the BAADER-MEINHOF executions, or suicides at the end, and finding a form for that. When there's something visible, which is historical, which is old and new, which is a different form, which can't be reduced simply to a political statement, but it's not apolitical—that is what attracts me about RICHTER. Pierre BOULEZ is another figure of this sort, and no doubt there are some others, but there are surprisingly few. In a haphazard way, I've looked for others without much success and I don't know what that means, because the stars of the critics are not necessarily doing what we're talking about. And it's driven by the market etc.

22 Swiss artist Paul KLEE joined German art school Bauhaus from 1920-1931 (see http://bauhaus-online.de/en/atlas/personen/paul-klee, accessed January 11, 2016).

RICHTER must be a very very very rich man because he's also managed to work the market, but I'm sure his painting can't be reduced to that. He's still working out of a problematization, a German problematization of the Nazis, and East Germany, and West Germany, in that kind of sequence. In that sense, local is too small a word, but it's one way of doing something that's still located in a historical process. So why shouldn't there be others? I think Anthony, who worked on the RUSHDIE case, was drawn to it as a kind of reaction against anthropological *bien pensants,* somehow very eager to condemn this writer and not very eager to condemn the tyrannical regime who was trying to kill him, whereas many of them would be (or at least would have been then) the first ones who would be in prison in Iran. This kind of gap of moral sensibility is something that bothers both of us. It's kind of developed out of that and then the cartoons in Denmark and what have you. He can speak for himself, but that's a longer story. RUSHDIE kind of failed to resolve that, although he did stay alive, which is good. Opposed to KHOMEINI, who didn't stay alive. That's the direction we want to take.

Reiner KELLER: Thank you very much. [56]

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