

Inside the Psychologist's Studio

Paul Ekman¹ interviewed by Robert W. Levenson²

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Robert Levenson: You attended the University of Chicago as a 15-year-old, jumping directly from 10th grade in South Orange, New Jersey, to one of the top colleges in the country. What was that experience like for you, and how much influence did the Chicago years have on the kind of scholar, scientist, and person you became?

Paul Ekman: In many ways, it ruined me for academia, because I have never (other than at St. John's, where I've recently lectured) found any other place where books were idolized and where the emphasis really was on scholarship. In most of our great universities, the emphasis, at least in the behavioral, physical, and biological sciences, is on research. But scholarship is different, and cuts across all disciplines. So, I love the University of Chicago, and I feel like I owe my whole life to them, and I donate money to them every year because of that.

Levenson: And, recently, you were honored by them . . .

Ekman: Yes, they gave me a Doctor of Humane Letters. Then I wondered, what were the inhumane letters? I started thinking, should I say B sounded very humane? But Z? Anyhow, there was a 3-day celebration. And they gave me a list of all the people who had received such degrees. They prided themselves on never giving an honorary degree to either a politician—the Queen of England was turned down—or a donor. It was only for scholarship.

So, actually, it meant an enormous amount. And, as these things usually work, it was a particular person in the psychology department who was really taken with my work, who pushed for them to give me this for some years. Tom Trabasso, whom many of you may know, just died in the past few days. Very regrettable.

Levenson: It was actually a very heady time there. There was the Great Books Program, with Mortimer Adler's influence, and your class was quite a remarkable group of people, all chosen on the basis of a University of Chicago-developed IQ test.

Ekman: Yes.

Levenson: It didn't really matter what your grades were in high school?

Ekman: No, they didn't care. My high school principal said, "When they read the letter that I'm writing, you've got no

chance." I visited him when I got my Ph.D. I went and gave him a copy of my first book. By that point he said, "I always knew you had it in you."

My classmates at the University of Chicago were incredible: Susan Sontag sat next to me for 3 years. Mike Nichols and Elaine May, Shelly Berman, and two people who became congressmen. It was a make-or-break place, because the milieu was, you couldn't do anything unless you could do it better than anyone in the world. Well, how many of us can do something better than anybody in the world? So we had a very high suicide rate.

I've always believed that many of the people I have most respected, turns out, at some point, they were at the University of Chicago. So it was an amazing place—full of misfits. We were all misfits. That's why we were there. We couldn't get along with school, and we couldn't get along with our parents. So it was the reform school. My parents were always showing me the reform schools advertised in the *New York Times Magazine*—military schools. That's what they were trying to put me in, but fortunately, I got to Chicago.

Levenson: From Chicago, you went to Adelphi University, and you have said that, at the time, nonverbal communication was considered to be a dead end by the psychological establishment. Yet you began to develop what would become a life-long pursuit of that topic. How did that come about, and what in the world were you thinking?

Ekman: Well, I applied to 24 graduate schools, 23 of which turned me down, because I honestly said that I wanted to become a private practitioner of psychotherapy. Nobody told me that you're supposed to lie and conceal that. And so, everybody turned me down, except Adelphi, which wanted to train practitioners. I'm the black sheep. I'm the only one, I think, with one other exception, they graduated who didn't go into private practice.

But it was wonderful clinical training. And both doing and observing psychotherapy, I became convinced that there was an awful lot in the face and the body apart from the words, and if we were to really understand the process, we needed to be able to measure it. Little did I know how long it would take.

And clinicians thought this was wonderful. Adelphi was basically staffed by people who weren't academics. There was one academic, a Skinnerian. I was originally a Skinnerian researcher on nonverbal behavior, if you can imagine that, because that was the only tradition I learned.

At NIMH [the National Institute of Mental Health]—which ended up supporting me for more than 40 years—I was largely

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supported by the clinicians. When an emotion panel was formed for the first time, I was turned down, because I wasn't doing what was then considered mainstream emotion research. But clinicians knew that there was important information in gesture and expression, and here was a guy who was willing to study it. You didn't have to have already done the study or have pilot studies to demonstrate feasibility. I lived on soft money for 14 years; all I had to do was write up a good, interesting, high-risk idea, in those days, and they would fund me.

Levenson: You probably know that I love orchids.

Ekman: Oh, yes, I know that. It's one of the strange things about you, Robert.

Levenson: Putting aside my strangeness for a moment, orchids are impossibly beautiful plants that grow in impossibly difficult environments. You grew up in a family environment where pressure was put on you to become a physician. You attended a very clinically oriented graduate program at Adelphi, where the emphasis was on training psychotherapists. You spent your entire professional career as a psychologist in a department of psychiatry. Yet, despite these impossibly difficult environments, your scientific career flourished. So, what kind of an orchid are you?

Ekman: Well, I have thought a good deal in the past 5 or 6 years, as I've been working on a memoir, on why I ended up spending an entire life in a medical school. This is usually not a very good place, particularly for a clinical psychologist, but it's not as bad for an academic. Still, it was odd to be doing basic research in a psychiatry department.

In some sense, I think I was defying my father, who was a pediatrician, by not doing what he wanted me to do, which was to become a pediatrician. But I sort of beat him at his own game and became a faculty member and got the highest award they give at that university from a medical school. So I was both a rebel and a conformist. Not that I thought of any of this at the time.

I also wanted to live in San Francisco. I mentioned *Pinocchio* in an earlier APS [American Psychological Society] session on animation. When I saw that movie, I was so impressed with *Pleasure Island*; I wanted to live in *Pleasure Island*, like *Pinocchio* did. Around the same time, my family took me to San Francisco for a 4-day vacation. I was 10 years old. And I thought, "This is *Pleasure Island*!"—Fisherman's Wharf, the cable cars, Omar Khayyam's, the Golden Gate Park. I said, "This is where I'm going to live." And 13 years later, when I had my Ph.D., I came to San Francisco, and I have never left. Because, to me, geography was more important than career. This was the place I wanted to live, and UCSF [University of California, San Francisco] was the only game in town. And they said to me, "We'll never hire you, but we'll always take our percentage of your money," which is what they did. And I got my academic appointment by total fluke.

So I was in this strange place for psychology, for basic research psychologists, but I lived in San Francisco.

Now, it turned out to be very fortunate, because the kind of research I did didn't break off into small, bite-sized pieces for

master's and doctoral dissertations. Most studies I did took 5 to 10 years to complete. Because there were no teaching obligations at UCSF—none—you had to beg to teach. I begged to teach. At one point, after a lot of begging, they gave me 1 hour out of the 4-year medical-school curriculum. But, you know, teaching was a very high-status thing, and we had too many faculty.

So I had a lot of time. I could spend half of every year out of the country, which I did for a number of years doing cross-cultural work. Thus, without intention, without planning (I can take no credit), it turned out to be a great environment for me, and for the kind of work that I ended up being drawn to do.

Levenson: I think if you had been in some kind of perfectly supporting, warm environment, you would have turned out very differently.

Ekman: Well, Berkeley's IPAR [Institute of Personality Assessment and Research], whose current incarnation you head, tried to hire me. When Nevitt Sanford left, I was their first choice to take his position. But the department couldn't agree. The psychology department at Berkeley ended up losing that position. But I think it turned out to be very fortunate.

In the late 60s, I got invited by the students at UCLA [University of California, Los Angeles]—I don't know how they heard about me—to give a talk at the psychology department. And afterwards, Harold Kelley came up to me and said, "Well, that was very interesting, but what does that have to do with psychology?" And I said, "That's not my problem. But it's very interesting that what is important to you is whether it's related to psychology. I'm out to understand a phenomenon. And I don't care whether it's psychology or semiotics or ethology or anthropology. To me, it's an interesting problem to describe, classify, and try to understand what people do with their face and body when they talk to each other, and that's what I'm after."

Now, that's phenomenon driven. That approach became very unpopular in the 90s in psychology, where you're supposed to be theory driven. Not that there's anything wrong with being theory driven, but there's nothing wrong with being drawn by trying to understand a phenomenon, particularly in the early stages of research. Description is crucial. For example, it took us 8 years to find a way to describe the face.

Levenson: One of your wonderful qualities is that you are very generous in terms of giving credit to people and ideas that have influenced you. I thought we could take a look at some of the people and ideas that I know have had a big influence on you. Let's start with Darwin.

Ekman: When I started my cross-cultural work, I hadn't read Darwin's work, but I expected to prove him wrong. I was a child of my times. I believed everything important about social behavior was learned. And it wasn't until after I got involved in the New Guinea work that I realized Darwin was right, and then I read his book [*The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*]. It had an enormous influence on me, and it still has enormous influence. I spent a couple of years preparing the

edition of this book that I edited, which was published in 1998. I had one dream in which I had a long conversation with Darwin. And Duchenne was also very important to me. I went through his archives, too, in Paris, and I met the modern descendents of Duchenne and found out all the gossip about why . . . Who was Freud's teacher in Paris?

Levenson: Charcot?

Ekman: Charcot was a rival who beat Duchenne and really forced him out of Paris. Duchenne taught at the Beaux-Arts, and he taught artists. He taught them how to do anatomically correct faces. Just an amazing man.

Now, part of it also is having such a stormy and dysfunctional relationship with my own father. I spent a large part of my career honoring the fathers, both the dead ones and the alive ones, like Tomkins.

Levenson: I've known you for a long time. When I first came to the Human Interaction Laboratory in 1981, pictures of Silvan Tomkins were prominently displayed on the wall. I heard you talk about him often, but I never got to meet him. I always wished that I had.

Ekman: Well, I met Silvan in 1964. Carroll Ammons was then the editor of *Perception and Motor Skills*, where I submitted a paper that no one else would publish. In those days—I don't know if it's still true—you had to pay for the publication. It was like a vanity journal. But it published serious stuff.

So, Ammons wrote back to me and said, "I've just accepted a paper from Silvan Tomkins, and you have written a paper about the body. He's written one about the face. You two guys ought to meet each other." And that's how we met.

Now, I knew of Silvan, because he was famous for his work on the TAT [Thematic Apperception Test] and a very early book on computer modeling. He was never my formal teacher, but he decisively changed my career in three ways. One, his work encouraged my focus on the face. Two, he taught me not to be afraid to think about what you're doing. As a Skinnerian, you don't think about what you're doing. You just do it. You start with your observations and see what accounts you can build. But you don't get too attached to them.

And three, again and again he just showed me how much he could get out of expressions. I thought that the information is really there. And if he can do it, I've got to develop a scientific tool to measure it so that anybody can get what he's getting.

So he really changed the direction of my career. For many years, I talked to him every week, and would see him every 2 or 3 months. Either he would come to California or I would go there.

But in the last 10 years of his life, we really had a falling out, which was serious. The end-of-career problem for academics is not an easy one. It's inevitable that, as your career draws to a close, your intellectual offspring are going to become more prominent than you. And you should rejoice in that, rather than feel competitive with that.

Silvan told me that I was his sibling. I said, "No, you're my good father." "No, I'm your sibling, and I'm competitive with

you." Well, that, of course, brought our friendship to an end because, in the space of 10 years, I published six books and he published zero, and I published many articles. So I got cited. The only person who was citing him was me; but that wasn't enough.

There was one article, not written by me, but by the *Smithsonian* magazine, that said that the two influences on my life, quoting me, have been Tomkins and Darwin. And Silvan said to me, in all seriousness, "Did you have to mention Darwin?" He was a good example—he and Charlie Osgood, who I got very friendly with also—of what not to do in the last phase of your life. You need to avoid that pitfall and rejoice in the careers of your intellectual offspring.

I want to say something else that you didn't ask me a question about—maybe you were going to. But I had both good judgment and good luck in my choice of collaborators.

Levenson: Tell us something about the collaborators from the different periods of your career.

Ekman: Wally Friesen and I worked together 25 years. We met in the U.S. Army. Because I got my Ph.D. before I was 26, I got drafted. I don't know many people my age that got drafted into the Army. I was defending the people's faith in democracy, they told me. But it was the Army that changed me from clinician to researcher. Because I found in the Army that by doing research, I could change how the Army did things. I could change how they handled discharge. I could change how they ran their prisons.

Up until then—this sounds very naive, but you have to remember, I was in my early 20s—I thought the way to change the world was with psychotherapy. What I discovered in the Army was with research—with applied research—you can bring about institutional change. Never have I had such an impact on practical issues as I had in the Army.

But Wally was a dropout from graduate school, and I met him in the Army. A few years later, after we were both discharged, he came and worked with me for 25 years, which is a very long time.

Levenson: And he worked with Roger Barker at Kansas.

Ekman: Yes, he worked with Roger Barker, and he brought to my thinking the ecological psychology way of thinking, and also the emphasis on and the importance of natural observation. Wally is living in Kentucky now. I see him about once a year, and we e-mail about once a month. And he is back to doing research—really interesting stuff.

Maureen O'Sullivan, who is sitting here, and I have collaborated on deception research for many years. Mark Frank was a postdoc at the same time as Dacher Keltner. Erica Rosenberg was my last Ph.D. student.

John Gottman and I never collaborated, but I have enormous respect for his work. And he was the one who told me that Bob Levenson wanted to come out and do a sabbatical, and that I should say yes. I said, "I never say yes to strangers." He said, "No, trust me. I know about relationships, and you and Bob are really going to get along." So I'm very grateful to John for that.

I have mostly had collaborators who were a generation or two younger, and who brought to the table a different set of skills than mine, and who I liked as friends. Collaboration is never without its bumps, so you should collaborate only with people that you really like, that you would like to spend time socially with, and that will get you through the bumps. The few times I've engaged in collaborations merely because it was an interesting opportunity, it really hasn't been worth it.

These were long-term collaborations. Mark Frank, who is now at Rutgers [since moved to Buffalo], is running a large project on deception and demeanor, for which I do some consulting. I see quite a lot of Mark, because most of my work today is in the deception area, not the emotion area.

Levenson: Just to get the time line. You collaborated with Wally for 25 years? How about Maureen?

Ekman: I collaborated with Wally from 1963 to 1988, and my collaboration with Maureen began in 1972 and is still continuing. [Other collaborations that should be noted are those with Richard Davidson and with Klaus Scherer.]

Levenson: How about Karl Heider?

Ekman: Karl Heider. What a favor Karl did, and what serendipity! I don't like to think that, but I finally have come to accept that serendipity played a decisive role in my life. Well, my ex-wife, Diana Russell, and Karl's then-wife, . . .

Levenson: This is really "Inside Baseball."

Ekman: . . . Eleanor Rosch, were roommates together at Harvard. And Diana went with me on the second trip to New Guinea, where we really got the strong evidence for universals. Diana wrote to Eleanor and said, "We've got this strong evidence of universality." Well, Karl, who I hadn't met, had been working with the Dani in a much more isolated area than I was in, and those people don't even have words for emotion.

There are some people—I'm not among them—in the emotion field who think that emotions are words, and if you don't have words, there aren't emotions. But that was not my view. Words are a representation.

So Karl said, "I'm about to go back to the Dani, and I'd like to use your materials and show that you're wrong." Well, what more could you ever want, really, than someone who's trying to prove you wrong and who's willing to spend a couple of weeks learning how to do the research? Then, of course, he came up with exactly the same findings. So it was so important.

And then you and I worked with him in Sumatra some years later.

Levenson: I have a good picture in my home from that period. Is this from the first New Guinea trip?

Ekman: This is 1967. This is the only picture of me in New Guinea.

Levenson: You were quite the stud.

[LAUGHTER]

Ekman: You should have seen me in my younger days.

Levenson: And, then, this is from our Sumatra trip. We smuggled our laboratory equipment in to do a psychophysio-

logical study with the Minangkabau in Bukittinggi. So this is you and me 20 years ago.

Ekman: 1985. I told you that Indonesia's the kind of place where they put people with long hair in jail. And so, as the ultimate sacrifice, you trimmed, radically trimmed.

Levenson: I lost my strength, too!

[LAUGHTER]

Levenson: The Dalai Lama was another influence in your life I would like you to talk a bit about. I always saw you as being the ultimate secularist. And then this encounter with the Dalai Lama happened, and it really changed you.

Ekman: Well, again, a piece of serendipity. Richie Davidson had had a long-standing interest in Tibetan Buddhism, and he had gone to some meetings that had been organized to bring the Dalai Lama into contact with Western scientists. The Dalai Lama has a fascination with contemporary science. His next book [*The Universe in a Single Atom*], which is coming out this fall, is about his interest in science—why he was interested and what he learned from Western science.

So Richie told me that if you ever get invited to one of these meetings, you get to bring one observer who can sit and watch the whole thing. Well, my then-16-year-old daughter, Eve, had spent a summer in Nepal, 2 weeks of which was in a Tibetan refugee camp. When she came back, she was an activist. That's Eve from my last book, *Emotions Revealed*—she is very talented at moving her face. We sit there sometimes in restaurants doing things with our faces.

[LAUGHTER]

Ekman: So I thought, what a gas it would be to be able to bring Eve. So I said to Richie, "If there's ever a topic relevant to me, get me invited." I had no interest in the Dalai Lama or Buddhism. But I wanted to do a favor for my daughter.

The topic was destructive emotions. I probably would have been invited anyhow. It was a 5-day meeting, and my assignment was to present a Darwinian view of emotion. Eve was there for the entire 5 days. I am not a Buddhist, nor a meditator. But I think the Buddhist monks are sort of the Mozarts of the mind. That is, they developed practices for increasing momentary consciousness during emotion. My last psychotherapy supervisor, Frank Gorman at Langley Porter in '57, said to me that if you can increase the gap between impulse and action, you will have achieved everything for your patients.

The Buddhists talk about the spark before the flame. They have practices, which at least for some people, I believe, allow that. It's very hard, because nature didn't intend for consciousness to muck around with our emotions. On the other hand, you don't have much of a chance of regulating your emotions, let alone choosing whether or not you're going to be emotional, unless you're aware, during or before the episode.

And these people have practices and exercises for doing this. In the third day of the meeting, the Dalai Lama said, looking directly at me (I know because the whole thing was filmed, and I watched the film), "Is this all going to be a bunch of talk, good

karma, or is there going to be any action? Is anyone going to do something about this?" I said, "Well, how long will it take? Suppose the governor of California said, 'I'm going to give you, for every state employee, *X* amount of hours to improve their emotional life.' What's the minimum amount necessary for a noticeable difference to them and the people they work with?" And he and two other Lamas said, 40 to 45 hours.

So I organized the project, raised the money privately, and then handed it over to Margaret Kemeny at UCSF to lead. Data collection is now complete. We'll find out using both hard and soft measures of emotion and physiology whether we produced a noticeable difference with 45 hours of training. That took a couple of years out of my life. But I remained interested in the contrast in beliefs, particularly about the role of emotion, the issue of compassion, and the issue of anger.

The Dalai Lama has agreed to another meeting with me, one on one, for 2 days to explore emotions. It could be the heart of a new book. It's a question in my mind, do I really want to undertake a 15th book at this point in my life? [This meeting subsequently occurred, in April 2006, and a book presenting the dialogue, tentatively titled *Uniting a Divided World*, is in preparation.] The Dalai Lama brings a perspective that's been out of touch with the Western world and Western thinking for more than a thousand years, so it's very interesting. He also had a large impact on me personally, which I have yet to understand.



Meeting with the Dalai Lama (from left: Mary Ann Mason, the Dalai Lama, Paul Ekman).

Levenson: I remember, you came back from this experience quite a different person.

Ekman: Some of it has stayed. My wife would say I'm not as good as when I first came back, but better than I was before.

Levenson: This is one of my favorite pictures—it's a picture of you; your wife, Mary Ann; and the Dalai Lama. [picture displayed]

Ekman: She's a pretty woman. She's the dean of the graduate division at Berkeley, which is the largest graduate school—90 Ph.D. programs—in the world. A very hard-working person.

Levenson: I couldn't find a picture of Tom, your stepson.

Ekman: Just graduated law school last week. My wife's a lawyer, my son's a lawyer, my mother was a lawyer. I pray to my daughter, "Don't become a lawyer."

Levenson: She doesn't seem to be going in that direction at all. But she has the genes. She has the face genes, she has the photography genes, she has the political and social-action genes, she has the fearless gene. She's really quite a force.

Ekman: And she has the overcommitment genes.

Levenson: You mentioned the number of books you've written. You have been in the public eye for a long time, and I think you have really lived the ideal of giving science away to the public. And this year, your influence on popular culture reached new heights. This first excerpt appeared on the television show "Law and Order: Criminal Intent."

[Video plays]

Female detective: That's probably why Dr. Sims called you. You see, she ordered up some lab tests for Mariah for internal bleeding.

Suspect: But I never talked to her.

Male detective: That's a microfrown. [detective points to suspect's brow area] You know, the little muscle between your eyes. You see, the face constantly gives off microexpressions—you know, little muscle twitches that reveal your true emotions. That was a microfrown, that's a tell for . . . lying.

Suspect: You're funny.

Male detective: He doesn't really think I'm funny, because that wasn't a smile of enjoyment. If it were, then the muscle in the corner of your eye—it's called *orbicularis oculi*—it would have raised up. That was an anxious smile.

Suspect (speaking with hostility and looking angry): Read this expression.

[LAUGHTER]

[Video ends]

Ekman: Good place to stop, Robert.

Levenson: I think it's worth noting that this is the only time, in my lifetime at least, when someone has said "*orbicularis oculi*" on television. But this segment is based on two of

your findings, one concerning clues to deceit and the other concerning the difference between the Duchenne and non-Duchenne smile.

Ekman: I was not involved with this at all. I had no contact with them. In the past year, probably because of Malcolm Gladwell's article in *The New Yorker*, my work has gotten a lot of public attention. Ian McEwan, in two of his novels, describes my work by name, and it's relevant to the plot of the novel. At the same time, on the "Hollywood Squares," Pamela Anderson was asked, "Paul Ekman has found seven emotions are universal. What are they?" She only got five. And you and I had a cartoon about our findings about voluntary facial actions initiating emotion. Two guys in a bar . . .

Levenson: Something about smiling . . .

Ekman: Yeah, yeah.

Levenson: Now, this other excerpt came from "Law and Order: Special Victims Unit" a month later.

[Video plays]

Suspect (who claims to be a psychic): I'm seeing a rift. I'm sensing someone has caused you a lot of pain. It's a man. It's someone very important in your life. But . . . I don't see that he's really been there for you.

Detective Olivia Benson (trying to trap him by pretending to know what he's talking about): Oh, he's been busy at work.

Suspect: I'm sorry, but I see him with other women.

Benson: Oh, my God. How do you know that?

Suspect: It's your father, isn't it?

Benson: No, it's not my father.

Suspect: Well, there is a problem with your husband.

Benson: What about him?

Suspect: You don't have one.

Captain Donald Cragen (observing the interview from another room): Well, that experiment failed miserably.

Benson: Am I crazy, or was this guy actually psychic?

Dr. George Huang: No, he's been trained in FACS: Facial Action Coding System.

[AUDIENCE LAUGHS]

Detective Elliot Stabler: He's gone to psychic university?

Detective Odafin "Fin" Tutuola: Transferred from clown college?

Huang (showing Web page with Ekman's face with overlay of facial muscles): There are 43 distinct facial movements. A psychologist named Paul Ekman catalogued 3,000 possible combinations making up the entire spectrum of human emotion.

Cragen: Why?

Huang: To see if someone is lying. FACS breaks facial movements down into action units. AU 1 is raising the frontalis par medialis.

Tutuola: That's not even English.

Huang: His inner eyebrow. It's a sign of distress.

Benson: I didn't think I gave anything away.

Huang: FACS teaches you how to pick up on fleeting microexpressions that most people don't even see.

Cragen: Turns you into a human lie detector.

Huang: It's being taught at the FBI and CIA.

Stabler: So how'd this numbnuts learn it?

Huang: The CD-ROM is sold over the Internet.

[Video ends]

Ekman: I had nothing to do with that. That's the first time I've ever seen that.

Levenson: I know. It was covered in the *Observer*, I think. But of course not the video, just the stills. It's quite amazing, isn't it?

Ekman: It is amazing!

Levenson: What do you think seeing that?

Ekman: I'm ambivalent about it. On the one hand, I'm spending a lot of my time trying to develop tools like that CD-ROM for learning how to spot microexpressions that can be used by people in the real world. A large number of embassies and consulates have these CD-ROMs that I produced, and many foreign-service officers get trained with it. I'm glad that the work is getting out that way.

On the other hand, in the television excerpt, some things were said that were wrong. Dealing with the media, you always take a serious risk that they're going to say some things that are wrong. For example, FACS is not what you use for that purpose.

I'm working right now on a CD to train people to recognize someone who's about to attack you physically. I think we'll have some success with that. It's not basic research. It's trying to take what we've learned and apply it to social problems. And what got me interested in psychology in the very first place was the Robber's Cave experiment, the authoritarian personality, the Michigan studies on intergroup conflict, Allport's book on prejudice. I thought these were the problems that were central to the world, and psychology was a science that could solve them.

So, in that sense, I'm returning to those roots after many years in the basic-research world.

Levenson: Your book *Telling Lies* has been hugely influential in all sorts of applied and governmental settings. It provides a wonderful framework for thinking about deception, helping you evaluate what we can and cannot do.

Ekman: It was never reviewed by *Contemporary Psychology*.

Levenson: Fortunately, that's not one of our APS journals.

Ekman: My book *Emotions Revealed* also was never reviewed by *Contemporary Psychology*. If you write a book that the layperson can understand, it appears that there is a strong chance that it's not going to get reviewed. If it gets reviewed in the *New York Times*, it's very unlikely it's going to get reviewed in *Contemporary Psychology*.

Levenson: And *Emotions Revealed* is a real change for you. It really focuses on how you can control and change your emotional life.

Ekman: It's also dealing with the front end. I was always working on the response side, or the rear end, of emotion, and that book has quite a bit, a few chapters, on how emotions are brought about.

Levenson: Well, speaking of rear ends, James Lipton, my hero, always ends his interviews on "Inside the Actors Studio" by asking 10 questions, each of which is intended to bring forth a brief and pithy answer. I'd like to end our interview today with a slightly revised and abbreviated version of these questions, which I think is appropriate for this particular episode of "Inside the Psychologist's Studio." What is your favorite part about being a scientist?

Ekman: Learning stuff that I didn't know before. Discovery, rather than proof.

Levenson: Okay. What is your least favorite part about being a scientist?

Ekman: Human-subjects committees.

[LAUGHTER]

Ekman: I don't think I would have gone into psychology if they'd been there at the start. They weren't. The first 15 years I did research, there were no human-subjects committees.

Levenson: What turns you on creatively, spiritually, or emotionally?

Ekman: Just challenges. Something I don't understand. The process of struggling to see whether I can figure it out. Some things I've never been able to figure out. I never could figure out how to get the information out of posture. I know it's there. I spent a couple of years trying. I never did it. And the tongue, I think the tongue is a very important expressive instrument. But you can't get to see it all the time, and so I never found out about the tongue and posture—my failures.

Levenson: Which of your discoveries do you love the most?

Ekman: It's really hard to say. What I had the most fun, fear, and excitement about was the process of doing the work in New Guinea, and not being an anthropologist, not having ever worked in a culture other than my own, and spending time with people who I thought might eat me.

[LAUGHTER]

Ekman: And it was an enormous challenge. Much of the time, I thought it was going to be a complete failure. And it was just extraordinarily exciting.

Levenson: What has been the most rewarding aspect of your life outside of science?

Ekman: Children. I was late having children. For the past 25 years, I haven't worked on weekends, and I haven't worked at night. I spent my time with my kids. And they are more important than any scientific work I do.

Levenson: And this is the last question, also modified somewhat from the original "Lipton" version. If heaven exists, what would you like to hear God say when you arrive at the pearly gates? And I'll give you an alternative. If heaven does not exist, what would you like your family, friends, and colleagues to say about you after you're gone?

Ekman: Boy, those are really tough questions, Robert. I think, if God exists and I got to the pearly gates, I think God would say, "Why didn't you realize, why didn't you have the sense to realize, that there is a creation like God?" Because I really don't have any religious belief in that sense.

And after I've gone, that I left a trace in the water.

Levenson: Thank you.