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MAY 2021

*We the People*  
**A lament for India**  
MARK ULYSEAS



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Lotus in a temple. Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.



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Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om

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Mark Ulyseas has served time in advertising as copywriter and creative director selling people things they didn't need, a ghost writer for some years, columnist of a newspaper, a freelance journalist and photo-grapher. In 2009 he created *Live Encounters Magazine*, in Bali, Indonesia. It is a not for profit (adfree) free online magazine featuring leading academics, writers, poets, activists of all hues etc. from around the world. March 2016 saw the launch of its sister publication *Live Encounters Poetry*, which was relaunched as *Live Encounters Poetry & Writing* in March 2017. In February 2019 the third publication was launched, *LE Children Poetry & Writing* (now renamed *Live Encounters Young Poets & Writers*). In August 2020 the fourth publication, *Live Encounters Books*, was launched. He has edited, designed and produced all of *Live Encounters'* 213 publications (till May 2021). Mark's philosophy is that knowledge must be free and shared freely to empower all towards enlightenment. He is the author of three books: *RAINY – My friend & Philosopher*, *Seductive Avatars of Maya – Anthology of Dystopian Lives* and *In Gethsemane: Transcripts of a Journey*. <https://liveencounters.net/mark-ulyseas/>  
<https://www.amazon.com/Mark-Ulyseas/e/B01FUUQVBG>



## MARK ULYSEAS

### We the People, a lament for India

The grotesque images of mass cremations, litany of news reports of rising deaths and ineptness of those managing the COVID crisis in India is the other face of a country that boasts of being a nuclear, space, software and military power, and the sixth largest economy amongst many other badges of honour.

Despite all the chest beating of a an incredible India, the value of life is worth nothing.

The millions of faithful jostling for space to bathe in the holy Ganga at *Har Ki Pauri* in Haridwar during the recent *Kumbh Mela*, in the midst of a virulent virus sweeping the country, is surreal. The media coverage of people selling oxygen in the black market, people dying in hospitals due to lack of oxygen and the dead body of a woman lying for hours outside a hospital in an auto rikshaw are but side shows compared to the hundreds of thousands that attended election rallies in various States.

The Madras high court observed that the Election Commission of India (ECI) was responsible for the second wave in the country and that its officials should probably be tried on murder charges for allowing political parties to hold massive rallies without following Covid-19 norms. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/madras-high-court-blames-election-commission-for-surge-in-covid-cases-101619488095052.html>

The Supreme Court of India has made it absolutely clear that the judiciary won't be a silent spectator in the current crisis. Indian courts are making sure that the political class is held to account. The high courts in Delhi, Allahabad, Patna, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, Nagpur, Aurangabad, Mumbai, Bangalore and Chennai are hearing petitions about the covid-19 situation in the respective states. <https://www.wionews.com/india-news/indian-courts-pull-up-governments-over-covid-crisis-381504>

It is estimated that over 3.5 million people visited the Kumbh Mela in Haridwar.



Haridwar Kumbh Mela - Devotees continue to throng Haridwar for the Kumbh Mela.  
Pic Courtesy: REUTERS.

In our 75th year of independence we are rushing back to western countries with begging bowl in hand for help to fight the virus, a virus that could have been controlled after the first wave in 2020, if foresight and wisdom prevailed

So who do we blame - the central and state governments, politicians or the bureaucracy?

Perhaps it is our *kismet* that we remain a poor country, a country where hundreds of millions continue to remain in poverty, where the common folk are but fodder for political rivalry, where money is *might* and violence in all forms continues to be a daily *routine*.

Let us forget about those who came before us, who led us out of an era of subjugation, who taught us the need to build our country from the ground up, not just edifices of modernity, but to be self-reliant in all aspects. Why should we remember these visionaries? What is the point of this adulation when we have learnt nothing... When we continue to vote people into power who use money, religion and other forms of *persuasion* to seize control?

The rampaging virus has exposed who we really are – a pitiful people reliant only on hand-outs from the very people we have entrusted to run the bureaucracy and government. We continue to do this because we hope that our children will be fed, that we would have a roof over our heads, medical facilities and free education, and jobs, and above all a sense of security for our families. That we are now at the mercy of the elements, both natural and human, reveals our intrinsic error of judgement.

Our media too has let us down. They continue to take sides in the dance of death, reporting according to their perspective. But death has its own plan and this is *there for us to see* in the moving pictures of the ill, the dying and the overcrowded crematoriums - where bodies of loved ones continue to pile up.

But why are we surprised by this dangerous situation that we have put ourselves in? Why do we falsely assume that our cultural heritage is our strength when every breath our children take *is* our only strength, our hope? Have we deliberately sentenced our children to a life of despicable inequality?



Turnout at PM Modi's BJP rally at Brigade Parade Ground in Kolkata.  
(Photo Credits: PTI) <https://www.indiatoday.in/elections/>

Even in death we have lost our dignity.

What is the value of our lives?

Meanwhile, in another world in our country the prestigious multimillion dollar cricket tournament continues in a bio bubble even as some Indian/foreign players and umpires have exited. The *tamasha* must go on; the masses of dying need this entertainment. It gives us hope that all is well, or that all will be well. The excitement of runs being scored by our favourite player, the thrill of our team winning a match overshadows the smell of death not just in the corridors of hospitals but on the streets and in our homes.

But why are we surprised by this dangerous situation that we have put ourselves in? Why do we falsely assume that our cultural heritage is our strength when every breath our children take *is* our *only* strength, our *hope*? Have we deliberately sentenced our children to a life of despicable inequality?

And why do we blame the leader of our nation for this horrible situation when a few warships of the US Navy's 7th fleet are more powerful than the leader of the world's largest democracy?

the US Navy has announced that it asserted navigational rights and freedoms inside India's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) without seeking India's prior consent. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/asserted-navigational-rights-off-lakshadweep-without-india-s-permission-us-navy-101617954115129.html>

This has been done to us by none other than a friendly power. And it is this very friendly power that withheld the raw materials required urgently by us to manufacture vaccines. It is this friendly power that has now magnanimously released 'aid' to us as we stand outside on the world stage with our begging bowls.

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We are *not* equal among friends.

We are the poor cousins always begging when a calamity strikes. It is as if we have not outgrown our historical subjugation by foreign powers. *To be ruled* is engrained in us. Perhaps it has become a genetic disorder. It is, without doubt, another lesson we have *not* learnt - how to manage our country.

We the people have no shame begging, our nationalism reserved only for elections, sports or for rigorous imposition on our fellow citizens.

We the people are to blame because we are lazy. We vote people into power but overlook the need to oversee their work, to hold them accountable. And for this we pay the price with our lives.

We the people have become the *incredible expendables*.

We the people have the power to change our lives.

We the people can do this not by following a particular faith but by helping one another to rise from the dirt and filth that encrusts our self-worth.

We the people are to blame.

False nationalism and religious fervour cannot make a nation. A nation is made by us, the people. And if we cannot look after ourselves then we have failed as a nation. No amount of statistics and glossy images of achievements can disguise this bitter truth.

Perhaps we have forgotten who we really are and where we have come from because we have imprisoned ourselves in the daily grind of survival and have shrugged off our responsibility to our fellow humans.

False nationalism and religious fervour cannot make a nation. A nation is made by us, the people. And if we cannot look after ourselves then we have failed as a nation. No amount of statistics and glossy images of achievements can disguise this bitter truth.

We the people live in a multifaceted bejewelled civilisation that has survived for millennia. But will it survive us, now?

The following poem envisions our destination. But are we heading there?

*Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high  
Where knowledge is free  
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments  
By narrow domestic walls  
Where words come out from the depth of truth  
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection  
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way  
Into the dreary desert sand of dead habit  
Where the mind is led forward by thee  
Into ever-widening thought and action  
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.*

- Rabindranath Tagore, *Gitanjali*.

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om

Dr Howard Richards (born June 10, 1938) is a philosopher of Social Science who has worked with the concepts of basic cultural structures and constitutive rules. He holds the title of Research Professor of Philosophy at Earlham College, a liberal arts college in Richmond, Indiana, USA, the Quaker School where he taught for thirty years. He officially retired from Earlham College, together with his wife Caroline Higgins in 2007, but retained the title of Research Professor of Philosophy. A member of the Yale class of 1960, he holds a PhD in Philosophy from the University of California, Santa Barbara, a Juris Doctor (J.D.) from the Stanford Law School, an Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) from Oxford University (UK) and a PhD in Educational Planning, with a specialization in applied psychology and moral education from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto, Canada. Dr Richards is a Catholic, a member of Holy Trinity (Santisima Trinidad) parish in Limache, Chile, and a member of the third order of St. Francis, S.F.O [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)

## DR HOWARD RICHARDS TOWARD A CULTURE OF ENCOUNTER

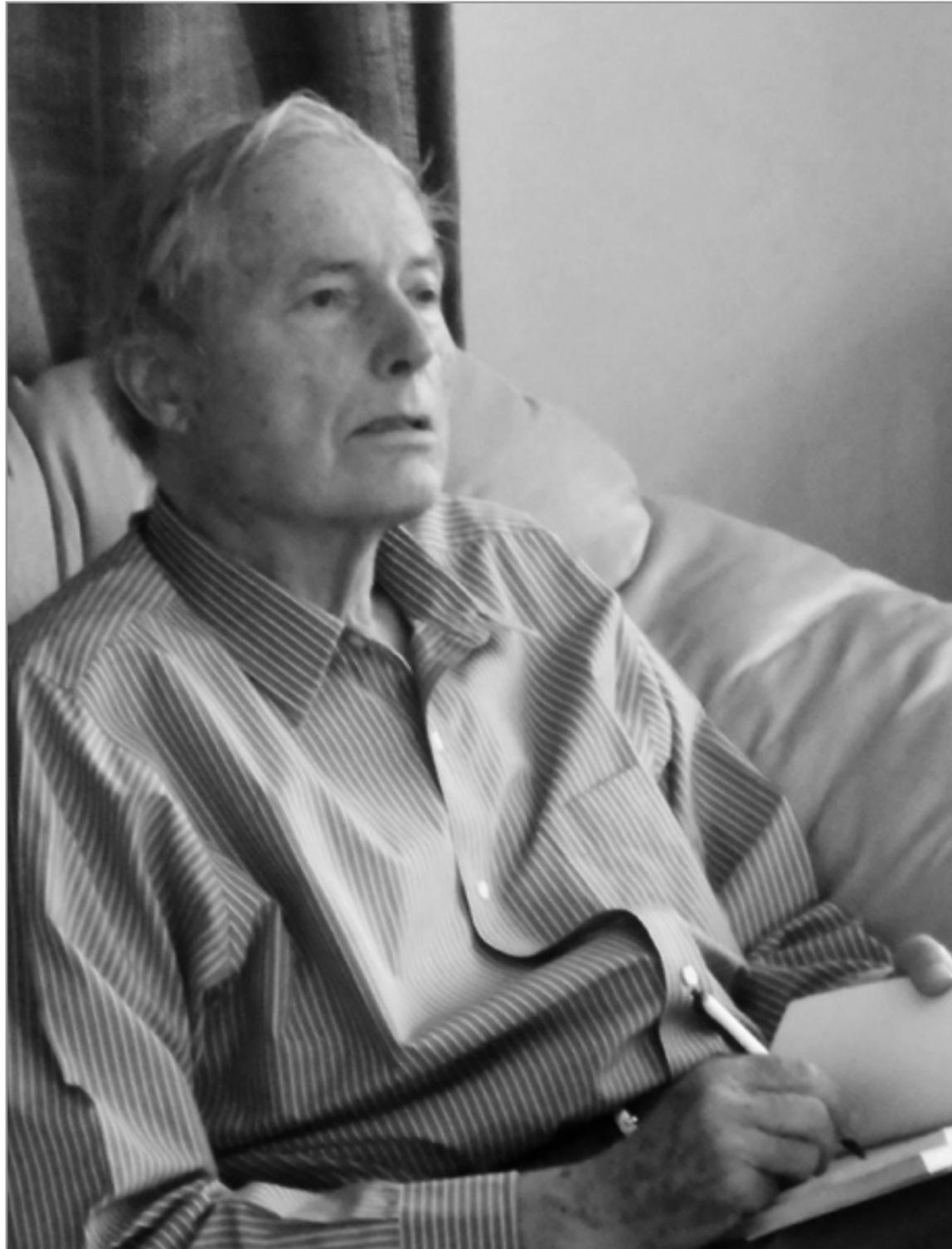
Pope Francis on October 3, 2020, released at a ceremony at the tomb of St. Francis in Assisi his latest encyclical letter *Fratelli Tutti*.

Less than four months previously, Klaus Schwab and his co-author Thierry Malleret launched *Covid-19: The Great Reset* at Davos, under the auspices of the World Economic Forum (WEF).

In some ways their authors might appear to share a common worldview. Schwab's 2020 Manifesto, *The Universal Purpose of a Company*, is studded with phrases borrowed from the social doctrine of the church. Regarding Covid, *The Great Reset* writes that the storm will accelerate disturbing trends that have been building up for a long time. Somewhat similarly, Pope Francis writes that the storm of the pandemic has only made it more urgent that we rethink our styles of life, our relationships, the organization of our societies and the meaning of our existence.

In the World of Pope Francis, "The storm has exposed our vulnerability and uncovered those false and superfluous certainties around which we constructed our daily schedules, our projects, our habits and priorities... Amid this storm the façade of those stereotypes with which we camouflaged our egos, always worrying about appearances, has fallen away, revealing once more the ineluctable and blessed awareness that we are part of one another, that we are brothers and sisters of one another."

In the fury of the storm we come to realize not just with our brains but with our whole beings that our true selves are not wholes but parts. We are kin in living networks for which over the ages no better words have been found than "sister", "brother" and "family". Saint Francis in his Cantic of the Sun sang of brother sun and sister moon, brother fire and sister water.



Dr Howard Richards

The new Pope found Rome filled with homeless and hungry refugees fleeing from wars farther north. His immediate and constant preoccupation was to be sure they were welcomed and fed. It was said that he would not eat himself everyone else in what was left of Rome had had their meal. To guarantee the food supply, Gregory organized agricultural production on lands ceded to the church

“Storms” can be and often are moments of truth; they can be times when we see who we are and who we want to become. Storms can transform our souls and commit us to service. The present pandemic offers many examples.

Other popes have also provided articulate leadership when society has faced existential physical challenges. Consider Pope Gregory the First. Gregory formulated the seven deadly sins still recognized by the Catholic Church and by several protestant denominations.

When Gregory became Pope, the city of Rome had changed rulers repeatedly since 376 when hordes of ungovernable tribal peoples first entered the Empire. Many were dying from recurrent plagues; indeed, Gregory became Pope in 590 when his predecessor, Pelagius II died of the plague. Rome had nominally been reconquered by the Roman Empire, but the seat of the Empire had been moved to Byzantium. The byzantine Emperor Theodosius, occupied by threats closer to home, was unwilling to send troops to reinforce the garrison at Rome.

The new Pope found Rome filled with homeless and hungry refugees fleeing from wars farther north. His immediate and constant preoccupation was to be sure they were welcomed and fed. It was said that he would not eat himself everyone else in what was left of Rome had had their meal. To guarantee the food supply, Gregory organized agricultural production on lands ceded to the church.

As a thought exercise, without underestimating the importance of virtues and joys, I suggest thinking of Pope Gregory’s list of seven deadly sins as a creative adaptation of human culture to its physical, emotional, and spiritual functions. I will write just a very few words regarding each sin, leaving it to the reader to add to them or subtract from them.

Pride: More humility, less violence

Greed: Create surplus for the purpose of sharing it (Acts 20:30-35)

Wrath: Less wrath, less violence, less fear

Envy: Less envy, less violence, more joy

Lust: Less lust, less fear, fewer mouths to feed

Gluttony: Consume only as much as you need, so there will be enough to go around

Sloth: Work is a call to service

Let me compare the similar Worlds of Francis and Gregory to those of Klaus Schwab and Thierry Malleret. I read the latter as striving to transcend orthodox economics, but not yet succeeding.

Covid 19: *The Great Reset* is first described by its authors as “..an attempt to identify and shed light on the changes that are ahead, and to make a modest contribution in terms of delineating what their more desirable and sustainable forms might resemble.” There follow grand claims that appear to be inconsistent with the modest aims just stated;: “...the possibilities for change and the resulting new order are now unlimited and only bound by our imagination.” “You get the point: we should take advantage of this unprecedented opportunity to reimagine our world, in a bid to make it a better and more resilient one, as it emerges on the other side of this crisis.”

What would that better world be like? The authors state a first premise on page 78: “First and foremost, the post-pandemic era will usher in a period of massive wealth redistribution, from the rich to the poor and from capital to labour.” Continuing, they suggest that neoliberalism is over. Solidarity is back. Government intervention for the sake of social welfare is back. Now is the time to enact sustainable environmental policies.

While making dazzling points like “our” opportunity to create a better world has arrived, the WEF authors invariably revert to a cautious “on the other hand.” For example, they say a focus on the environment might gain traction during the pandemic, but on the other hand, when the pandemic fades the focus on the environment might fade too, because.

“1. Governments could decide that it is in the collective best interest to pursue growth ‘at any cost’ in order to cushion the impact on employment.

“2. Companies will be under such pressure to increase revenue that sustainability in general and climate considerations in particular will become secondary.

“3. Low oil prices (if sustained, which is likely) could encourage both consumers and business owners to rely even more on carbon-intensive energy.”

The key idea is “culture of encounter.” While firmly grounded in the theology of an institution older than capitalism, “encounter” strikes chords of contemporary ethics grounded in the writings of many feminists, Martin Buber, Emmanuel Levinas, Jacques Derrida (in his last phase) and many others. In the maelstrom of today’s chaos, the voice of Pope Francis affirms that a culture of encounter brings enduring stability.

Let me suggest that this list 1 to 3 of reasons why formal commitments to saving the environment made during a crisis are likely to be unreliable is one of many passages revealing that it is typical of the WEF to proclaim fraternité and then to default to the mental models of orthodox economics. As Keynes famously wrote, “The difficulty lies, not in the new ideas, but in escaping from the old ones, which ramify, for those brought up as most of us have been, into every corner of our minds.” Economic mental models remain normal for millions of people even when they know that their World is unsustainable because it is incompatible with physical reality.

*Fratelli Tutti* is a message from a Catholic Christian addressed to believers, convinced atheists, non-believers, and people to whom the word “God” means nothing at all. It must be so. Today’s barque of Saint Peter can only contribute to global transformation by reaching out to everyone else, sharing insights, and collaborating.

I must be right when I argue that an unsustainable option, like sacrificing ecology to please shareholders in the short run, is not an option at all. It can only be a temporary illusion. But I need to strengthen my argument for saying that Francis and Schwab think in different Worlds.

To that end, let us consider what follows the passage from *The Great Reset* just quoted. The text proceeds “on the other hand” to give four reasons why, after all, a post-pandemic ecological disaster might not happen. They are:

1. Enlightened leadership.
2. Greater risk awareness.
3. More ecologically conscious behaviour.
4. Activism.

A first way to interpret why the authors say ecocide might not happen would say that workers might accept unemployment, shareholders might accept lower or no profits, buyers might pay more for energy, and everybody might accept the market economy slowing down or stopping, if 1-4 persuaded them to give first priority to saving the biosphere.

A second, more plausible, interpretation is that because 1 – 4 will generate enormous motivation to solve the problems illustrated by 1 -3 above; because they will make the millions of Prince Charleses,

“To speak of a culture of encounter means that we, as a people, should be passionate about meeting others, seeking points of contact; building social friendship becomes an aspiration and a style of life.”( I include with “encounter” a cluster of similar ideas that Pope Francis expresses with similar words: rebirth of a universal aspiration to fraternity, building common horizons that unite us, and the careful and conscientious cultivation of fraternity.)

Greta Thunbergs, and Al Gores already passionately committed to building a green world even more numerous and even more passionate, then even though the authors of *The Great Reset* propose no viable path to making harmony with nature compatible with dignified employment for all and the creation of wealth for society, somebody will.

It is significant that as the market economy has slowed, because of the pandemic, we have seen remarkable improvements in air quality, reversal of global warming, death rates exceeding birth rates, and encouraging numbers for other measures of ecological sustainability. We have seen remarkable human solidarity with volunteers staffing food banks and frontline caregivers risking their lives to save others. We see books, like the two here considered, rethinking the fundamental premises of the global economy now dominant.

Francis and Schwab agree that the World is broken. How can we fix it? “First and foremost,” says the book from the WEF, by a mass redistribution of property, from the rich to the poor, from capital to labour. It is as if the winners of the economic game, the owners of the World, had come to realize that by winning they have lost. They have created a world that cannot sustain them or anyone else.

But as *The Great Reset* proceeds, it becomes clear that the authors do not argue that anything they say is necessarily right or true. They throw out for discussion massive wealth distribution and many other tentative ideas for “resetting” the modern world-system --for economic, financial, societal, geopolitical, environmental, technological, industrial, individual, moral, and mental health resets, among others. The WEF authors do not articulate a key idea that identifies a root cause of today’s multiple problems and prescribes a method for solving them.

Pope Francis does. The key idea is “culture of encounter.” While firmly grounded in the theology of an institution older than capitalism, “encounter” strikes chords of contemporary ethics grounded in the writings of many feminists, Martin Buber, Emmanuel Levinas, Jacques Derrida (in his last phase) and many others. In the maelstrom of today’s chaos, the voice of Pope Francis affirms that a culture of encounter brings enduring stability. “To speak of a culture of encounter means that we, as a people, should be passionate about meeting others, seeking points of contact; building social friendship becomes an aspiration and a style of life.”( I include with “encounter” a cluster of similar ideas that Pope Francis expresses with similar words: rebirth of a universal aspiration to fraternity, building common horizons that unite us, and the careful and conscientious cultivation of fraternity.)

Hence I concur with E.F. Schumacher that the agenda for rebuilding economics requires putting it on humane ethical foundations. Anyone who aspires to be among its artisans should begin with “inner work,” improving his or her own character.

*Fratelli Tutti* also considers another question on which *The Great Reset* (although not some other works by the same authors) is silent: the question what property is.

Concerning private property, *Fratelli Tutti* is dotted with passages like this one: “Business abilities, which are a gift from God, should always be clearly directed to the development of others and to the elimination of poverty, especially to the creation of diversified work opportunities. The right to private property is always accompanied by the primary and prior principle of the subordination of all private property to the universal destination of the earth’s goods, and thus the right of all to their use.” The Pope quotes the Bishops of South Africa: True reconciliation is achieved proactively, “by forming a new society, a society based on service to others, rather than the desire to dominate; a society based on sharing what one has with others, rather than the selfish scramble by each for as much wealth as possible; a society in which being together as human beings is ultimately more important than any lesser group, whether it be family, nation, race or culture.”

Francis’s line above “especially to the creation of diversified work opportunities” does not only mean, *it cannot only mean*, hiring more and more people to produce more and more goods for sale. There will never be enough customers, buying at cost-covering prices, to provide dignified employment for all. And if there were, it would be an ecological disaster. Fortunately, there are innumerable other ways to create diversified work opportunities. Public employment, and the small family owned and operated firms that exist to support a household (not to make profits) are two obvious ingredients for a social recipe that will add up to ending poverty. A third major ingredient is the large firm that does make profits. Profits can and should be channelled to the public purse (and from there to employment) and to fund non-profits (and from there to employment).

There are innumerable other ways to create diversified work opportunities, prudently sharing gifts. (1 Corinthians 4:7) The key to ending poverty is *to want to*. In Gregory’s terms, it is to purify the will of greed and sloth. Pope Francis affirms cultivating authentic relationships with other human beings, growing into cultures of encounter, as a methodology for creating pro-social attitudes. Call it, if you will, a methodology for creating mental health, in a world that is growing every day more insane.

There is, I suggest (while making no claim to originality) a fundamental reason why Schwab and Malleret struggle to reconcile economics with humanity. It is that the bedrock foundation of economics, and consequently its ramifications into every corner of our minds and into every norm of our institutions, is inhumane.

There is, I suggest (while making no claim to originality) a fundamental reason why Schwab and Malleret struggle to reconcile economics with humanity. It is that the bedrock foundation of economics, and consequently its ramifications into every corner of our minds and into every norm of our institutions, is inhumane.

Adam Smith put the matter in colloquial terms when he wrote that to obtain our daily bread, we appeal always to our baker’s self-interest, never to our needs or to his humanity. Recently, André Orléan has spelled out the details in more technical terms, showing that economics rests on the prior existence of a social structure he calls *séparation marchande* (commercial separation). Where pure markets reign, nobody owes anybody a free lunch. The only way to obtain from another what you need is to excite in someone else a desire to sell it to you. In economics, a need is not effective demand. Money plus willingness to spend the money is.

Hence I concur with E.F. Schumacher that the agenda for rebuilding economics requires putting it on humane ethical foundations. Anyone who aspires to be among its artisans should begin with “inner work,” improving his or her own character.

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Caroline Higgins

## DR CAROLINE HIGGINS

### TOWARD A CULTURE OF ENCOUNTER

*Martin Buber, Emmanuel Levinas, Jacques Derrida*  
*And the Question of Otherness*

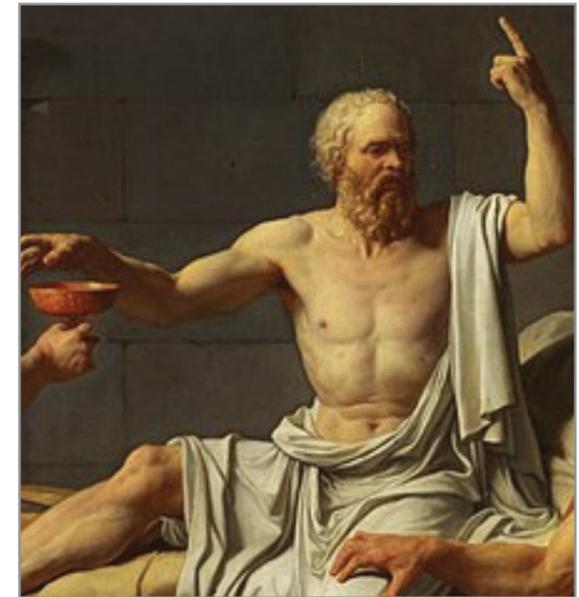
#### 1

#### Socrates

"Tell me, Socrates, can virtue be taught?" So begins one of the most highly esteemed works on values and education ever written, although Socrates fails to answer the question posed or any other question. No matter: by the end of the dialogue (1) the reader is apt to see Socrates' relentless if inconclusive arguments as incomparably richer than the muddled assertions made by persons unpracticed in critical reasoning. But if Socrates was deemed an extraordinary thinker in 380 B.C., the resumed dramatic date of the dialogue, the public had reversed itself by 399 B. C., when the peripatetic philosopher was condemned to death for atheism and unwholesome influence on youth.

Is there a lesson to be learned here? The generations which followed Socrates, for their part, have lionized Socrates and ridiculed the ignorant Athenian democracy which condemned him, although a few, like the American journalist I. F. Stone, have defended the Athenians for surmising that Socrates, with his deceptively modest manner but elite viewpoint, in fact aimed at subverting the city's democratic values, institutions, and folkways (2) Forbearing to decide one way or another, we are left with perplexing questions: When is subversion justifiable? Which values are worth preserving? Where do values originate? Who gets to decide? To what extent does philosophy continue true to foundational principles, or alternatively, how far does it move to reinvent itself in light of the new demands made on it? Has philosophy been discredited? Where do we stand in regard to values today?

Socrates - [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socrates#/media/File:David\\_-\\_The\\_Death\\_of\\_Socrates.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socrates#/media/File:David_-_The_Death_of_Socrates.jpg)



2

### Martin Buber, Emmanuel Levinas, and Jacques Derrida

Among the twentieth century philosophers critiquing Western philosophy after the defeat of fascism, three were especially remorseless. They dethroned rationality from its privileged place in the liberal arts, advancing an alternative position as to human being and the origin of "morality," what Socrates would call "virtues" and others "values."

Martin Buber (1876-1965) in his seminal book, *I and Thou*, (3) identified a precognitive and as it were primordial encounter between two humans which elicits the original and essential response: Do not kill the other. Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995), following Buber, also privileged the relationship between self and other (*l'autre*). Jacques Derrida (1930-2004), radicalized the concept of the Other (*tout autre*), in his later years sometimes anchoring his comments in analyses of stories from Hebrew Scriptures.

While there are important similarities among these writers—indeed, their shared understandings form the subject of this essay—it is important to note that they did not form a school. Buber denied he was a philosopher, asserting that his reflections were centered on the personal. Derrida described himself (perhaps disingenuously) as an historian. Unlike Buber and Levinas, he declared himself an atheist. Levinas thought it important to prove himself as a professional philosopher (rather than, like Buber, a Jewish thinker), and his arguments clearly follow the paths of reasoning we associate with philosophical thinking.

Although they did not form a school they read the same books and as young men studied with the same masters, including Husserl and Heidegger. As children of observant Jews they understood the pull of ancient ideals as well as the persuasiveness of modernity and progressive discourse.

Once Derrida had settled in Paris to pursue a degree in philosophy, he became friends with Levinas. It is unlikely that Derrida knew Buber personally, and he never acknowledged that Buber had influenced him. Yet Buber influenced Levinas who in turn influenced Derrida. (4) One of the ways that we can approach these thinkers, whose lives collectively spanned the twentieth century and more, is to note their discursive intersections, where their works both converge and depart from a similarly situated ontological and ethical problematic.

3

### 1942

Consider the three in 1942:

Martin Buber is now a professor at the Hebrew University in Palestine. He had fled Germany in 1938, after Hitler's rise to power, when Buber was dismissed from his post teaching philosophy at the University of Mannheim. At the Hebrew University he teaches introductory courses in philosophical anthropology and philosophy, and in sociology. Although he had completed *I and Thou* in the late 1920's, a German edition published in the 1930's received little attention. He will become well known when the book appears in English after the war.

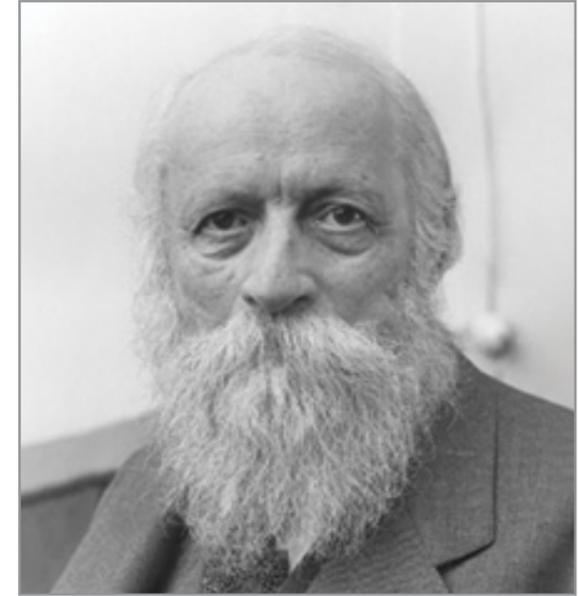
Emmanuel Levinas is a prisoner of war in Hanover, Germany. He had served as a Russian/French translator in the French army before being captured in 1940. His status as a war prisoner saved him from the Jewish camps, although he was almost murdered when released in 1944.

Jacques Derrida is a twelve year old schoolboy living in his native Algeria. On the first day of class he is expelled from the French lycee by order from the Vichy government: Vichy is enforcing the anti-Semitic quotas which drastically limit Jewish children's access to schooling. The child refuses to attend the Jewish lycee set up by the expelled teachers and students, spending his time reading Gide and Rousseau and Sartre while he daydreams of becoming a professional football player.

Later Derrida was to observe that he was twice marginalized, first as a Jew, then as an Algerian. Since French intellectual life is centered in Paris-- and no one expected Algerian Jews to end up there studying and then teaching at *l'Ecole Normale*--he was always the Other, His works must be read in light of his sense of alienation.

It is futile to ask to what extent their war experiences shaped the subsequent views of the three philosophers. They themselves probably couldn't say. What is clear is that privileging ethics over ontology, and deriving values from the Encounter with the Other spoke to the convictions of thousands of people who faulted Western philosophy and more generally Western Civilization for dehumanizing those who could not or would not be assimilated into the hegemonic culture.

Martin Buber - <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Martin-Buber-German-religious-philosopher>



While three European philosophers can hardly take all the credit for a now almost universal revolt against exclusion and hierarchy—against the privileging of White, European rationality over local narratives and practices—they did open up new discursive spaces big enough to include all who wanted to inscribe their own stories and claim their own identities.

4

#### Encounter: I and Thou

Buber completed his best known work, *Ich und Du*, in 1923. It was translated into English as *I and Thou*, a title which subtly conveyed the book's tenor: Since *Thou* is archaic, used only in prayers and poetry from former times, we are appraised of Buber's spiritual orientation. In the body of the text, however, "you" replaces "thou." It is not only or even predominantly a religious book. It crosses boundaries between philosophy, theology, psychology, and social commentary. It is both prose and poetry. Although the book advances an argument, it seems like a book written under the influence of exalted and prophetic passion. Indeed Buber admitted as much when, as an old man, he wrote, "At that time I wrote what I wrote under the spell of an irresistible enthusiasm. And the inspirations of such enthusiasm one may not change any more, not even for the sake of exactness." (5)

For all of these reasons the book achieved an enormous success, especially among students of the humanities. Buber became a world-renowned figure, nominated the Nobel Prize, among other honors. His status as a philosopher is more ambiguous-- he continued to write on literary and humanistic subjects and on Zionism (the idealism of which he shared even as he criticized it)—but he was indifferent to disciplinary norms and expectations. Similarly, although *I and Thou* betrays its author's Jewish orientation, it is not about Judaism or addressed to Jews over others.

Buber claims that "man's" world is two-fold: There is the I-You relationship and the I-It. Each of these pairings establishes a mode of existence, but the I-You can be spoken with one's whole being, whereas "I-It can never be spoken with one's whole being" (p 54) While the I-You establishes a world of relation, I-It does not. "It" does not participate in experience. Rather, it allows itself to be experienced, but is itself not concerned. "It" constructs nothing and nothing happens to it." (p 56)

Humans can relate not only to each other but also to nature, to spiritual beings and to "the Eternal You:"

In every sphere, through everything that becomes present to us, we gaze toward the train of the eternal You: in each we perceive a breadth of it; in every You we address the eternal You, in every sphere, according to its manner (p 57)

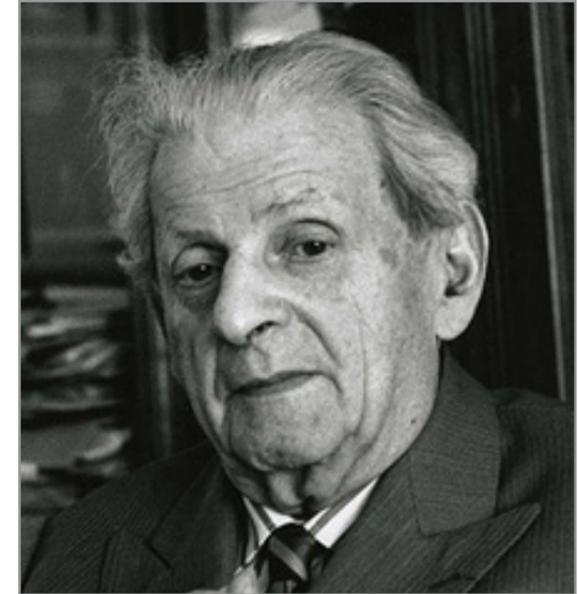
While the "eternal You" seems to be the Godhead, it is notable that Buber claims he knows nothing of God but only of the relations people have with God. He writes:

...whoever says "God" and really means You, addresses, no matter what his delusion, the true You of his life that cannot be restricted by any other and to whom he stands in a relationship that includes all others. But whoever abhors the name and fancies that he is godless—when he addresses with his whole devoted being the You of his life that cannot be restricted by any other, he addresses God. (p 57)

According to Buber, there is an intimate relation among what he terms "presentless, Encounter, and relation. When "You" becomes present, presence comes into being. Without "You," "I" has only the past. What is essential is lived in the present (p 64). The You, however, encounters the I "by grace." It cannot be willed, for the objects willed lie outside relatedness. "The You encounters me," he writes. "But I enter into a direct relationship to it." Indeed, Buber indicates that in order to be, I require a You. "In becoming I, "I say You." (p 62)

And what of the It? Unfortunately, every You is by nature doomed to become It or at least to "enter into thinghood" again and again. The You must become an It when the relation between I and I/you has run its course. (p 84) Men can become accustomed to the I/It world in a utilitarian way, regarding the world as something to be used and experienced. Men can divide their lives into two defined districts: institutions and feelings—the It district and the I district. (p 91) "But the severed It of institutions is submerged in the It World of the economy and the state, both of which see You as "centers of services and aspirations that have to be employed according to their specific capacities. (p76)

Emmanuel Levinas - <https://jewishphilosophyplace.com/2016/01/17/conference-levinas-law-and-literature-antwerp-january-20-22/>



Buber's utter originality is apt to raise questions today as it did when *I and Thou* was published. Is the book a contribution to philosophy? Is it *sui generis*? Perhaps it might be better considered as an extended personal reflection, the fruit of his vast reading, his religious formation, and his tumultuous history. Whichever original philosophical contributions he made tended to be obscured by his rather repetitive prophetic locutions. Yet Buber without apology named relationships, not rationality, as that which constitutes human being. Epistemology and ontology, long the *sin qua non* of Western philosophy, give way to ethics as the ground of human being. The Encounter with the Other, both psychologically and historically, is pre-cognitive. It is essential to the formation of identity. It makes demands of us, at the least openness to the possibility of You, and authenticity in giving oneself over to the I/You relationship.

Many, including Emmanuel Levinas, found much to admire in Buber. At the same time, Levinas expressed some reservations. Buber's ethics insist on establishing and maintaining I/You relationships, but nothing beyond that seems to be required. It is as if ethics has now completed its function. The language of I/You doesn't appear, at least according to this reading, to generate its own ethical grammar. But Buber, very widely read in the postwar period, invited people to reconsider their assumptions about virtue, knowledge, and the relation between the two. He mapped out an ethical terrain available not only to those open to religious claims but also to skeptics who appreciated the porous borders between religion, philosophy, and humanistic learning which Buber adumbrated.

5

### L'autre

In a commentary on a brief work by Martin Buber, Emmanuel Levinas affirmed that the thought of war was always with him. His preoccupation is manifest in his great work, *Totality and Infinity*. The preface begins with a reference to Heraclitus who famously claimed that "War is the father of all;" Levinas discusses this paternity in philosophical terms. What war reveals is "fixed" in the concept of totality, which, he claims, dominates Western philosophy. In a totalizing system "the meaning" of individuals derives from the totality. The present is incessantly sacrificed to a future which is constantly referred to "in order to bring forth its objective meaning." (6) Our common conception of peace as established by force of war is mistaken, but it follows from the totalitarian impulse. A moralilty which claims to aim at peace while at the same time making it impossible is hypocritical.

What is essential to peace is a rupture with the underpinnings of Western morality. What must be introduced is an eschatology of messianic peace to superimpose itself over the ontology of war. But where does such an opposition come from? Neither from the regime of evidence, nor from a teleological system. Indeed, what we are looking for is a relationship with a surplus always exterior to the totality, as though objective totality did not fill out the true measure of being, as though another concept, the concept of infinity, were needed to express this transcendence with regard to totality, non-incompassable within a totality and as primordial as totality. (23)

Now we are in a position to understand the title of the work: "Totality" must be opposed by "infinity" which is beyond history and sacrifices for the future. In infinity, beings exist in relationship, but not on the basis of totality. The relationship with wars and empires is broken. The hypocrisy of our world, attached as it is to "both the philosophers and the prophets" (i. e., both Greek and Hebrew) lies exposed. (24)

How to begin? With the Other. With what is exterior. Or more precisely, with "the infinity which is produced in the relationship of the same with the other" (26) Infinity does not first exist, then reveal itself. Rather, infinity is produced and revealed in me when welcoming the Other.

At this point it is clear that like Buber, Levinas challenges the traditional Western assumption that morality precedes from knowing. Welcoming the Other—the ancient Biblical and also Homeric injunction—and the total giving of oneself is precognitive and also the condition for consciousness and activity. But whereas for Buber the Encounter appears to satisfy the requirement of ethics, which has now replaced ontology as "first philosophy," for Levinas the Encounter engenders an infinite debt to the Other mandating welcoming, hospitality, and the total giving of oneself. (298)

It is the face of the Other which one acknowledges before using reason to arrive at conclusions. The "face of the Other" remains infinitely foreign, but it also gives of itself in language. This is in contrast to the ontological assertion that the Other is an object about whom we make judgments, treating him/her as a finite being in a totalitarian system.

In his later works Levinas connects his philosophy to twentieth century history, arguing that the West's embrace of instrumental reason, with its value-free orientation, displays a "will to domination." It is implicated in the rise of European totalitarianism and the great twentieth century wars.

*Jacques Derrida - <https://literariness.org/2019/04/17/the-philosophy-of-jacques-derrida/>*



As in the case with Buber, Levinas' contributions to philosophical thought are inflected in Biblical tropes. It is sometimes said that Levinas attempted to "translate Hebrew into Greek," i. e., to re-configure Western philosophy by bringing to it a biblical perspective. It is interesting to note that for a decade and more he delivered a Sabbath message every week at the Ecole Normale Israelite Orientale (ENIO), a school for Jewish students in Paris which he directed.

6

### **Tout autre est tout autre**

Finally we arrive at Jacques Derrida, the enfant terrible of our philosophical trio, the one who aroused both wide admiration in learned circles but also enormous anger and resentment. He was named one of the three greatest philosophers of the twentieth century by the New York Times, the others being Wittgenstein and Heidegger. (7) Yet, in 1992, when Cambridge University proposed to give him an honorary degree, a group of well-known thinkers, including John Searle, wrote a letter of protest, attacking Derrida for his putatively specious arguments and impenetrable prose. (8)

Derrida had left his native Algeria in 1949, passing his entrance exams to the l'Ecole Normale on his second try. Once his M. A. was awarded, he became a member of the faculty, remaining there until 1983, when he assumed a position at l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes where he remained until the end of his life. He also taught courses at other universities including Yale and the University of California at Irvine.

His stature as a world thinker was assured in 1967 when he published three books (9) which defined his vocation as a major critic of Western philosophy and civilization, irritating many by his criticisms of ideas and institutions which people generally admire, or, at least, accept without question. Nothing escaped his critical gaze, neither God nor country nor individualism nor conformity, neither law and order nor claims to authenticity and purity. Perhaps his two most infamous qualities were his writing style, which, although it could be described as highly original and brilliant, few could penetrate without great effort; and his innovative methods of arguing against "truth" and "meaning:" there are no fixed meanings, but rather free-floating signifiers whose intelligibility is constantly deferred to other terms which themselves depend on yet other terms.

He followed Heidegger in critiquing the dominant Western philosophical conviction that words refer to things outside the realm of language itself: Derrida labeled the realm beyond words, which language supposedly referenced, "presence." Presence is wrongly taken as an abiding guarantor of truth. We attempt to found a necessary relationship between our words and an always already existing non-verbal reality. The metaphysics of presence, moreover, constructs a set of binaries beginning with presence/absence itself and including the ones that circulate widely today even in popular discourse: rationality/irrationality, man/woman, culture/nature, soul/body, white/black, law/chaos, heaven/hell, sameness/difference, power/impotence. Obviously in such binaries one term is favored over another. As our thoughts are structured around them, so are our institutions and practices. Derrida referred to such thinking as logocentrism: as we can deduce from the binaries, logocentrism is phallogocentric, patriarchal, and militaristic.

Derrida attempts to reveal "presence" hidden in the discursive strategies of important texts, developing a particular way of reading called "deconstruction." Ultimately he aims to show that language usage is unstable and incredibly complex. In his readings texts reveal sub-texts which disrupt the purported intended meaning or structural unity. Yet he does not expect to unmask once and for all the presence, the logocentrism which constitute our erroneous interpretive logic. Against such a universal enterprise he proffers careful readings of particular texts.

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Critics commonly identify two phases in Derrida's professional life, the first centered on ontology and its deconstruction, and the second on ethics. As he himself has observed, however, ethics are imbedded in the earlier works as well as in the latter. Indeed, discerning reads have been quick to see the originality of the philosopher's ethical challenges implicit in a critique of logocentrism. Still, latter works like *Specter of Marx* (10), which argues for a prophetic messianism awaiting a democracy to come, and *The Gift of Death* (11) are overtly

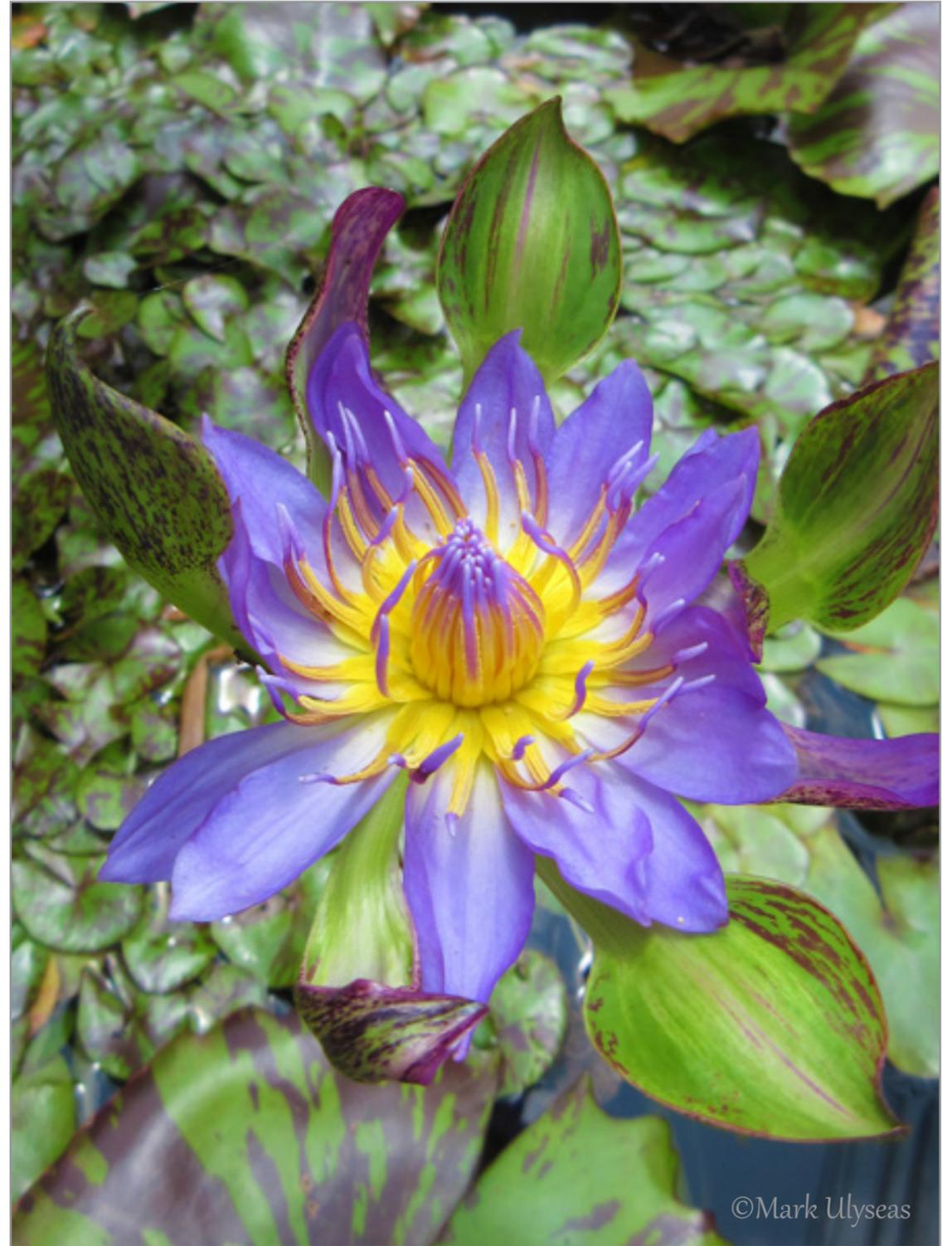
dedicated to interrogating particular texts as to their ethical implications. In that effort he influence of Levinas is everywhere apparent. As he admitted in an interview in 1986, "Faced with a thinking like that of Levinas, I never have an objection. I am ready to subscribe to everything he says." (12)

The Gift of Death is particularly interesting for its focus on “the other” in light of Hebrew Scripture. The Levinasian insistence of welcome and hospitality as grounding ethical practice is assumed, but the addressee—the “other” is reconsidered. “Tout est tout autre” can be taken as a tautology: It can mean “Every (one) is an other”; or, if the second “tout” is an adjective, the term would mean “every (one) is a bit, or totally or somewhat “other.” If we say “totally Other, then we are defining God. Of course, this linguistic ambiguity can be discerned in Levinas’ work. The other, always beyond our understanding, is an instance of Otherness.

That ethics must rest on a precognitive recognition of the obligation the other presents to us as he confronts us face to face, rather than on our human reasoning, is the anchor of Levinas’ ethics, to which Derrida says he subscribes. However, in *The Gift of Death* Derrida draws our attention to the difficulty of inscribing our choices in an ethical system when God is “tout Autre” and therefore unknowable: (“I am who I am,” God says to Abraham, as if to say, “Stop asking: That is all you will get from me”). And yet He commands absolute obedience. Then there is the other difficulty: “Levinas is unable to distinguish between the infinite alterity of God and that of every human. His ethics is already a religion. In both cases the border between the ethical and the religious becomes more than problematic, as do all discourses referring to it.” Indeed, the concept of responsibility now lacks coherence. It continues to function, as does justice, international law, etc., but these discourses “hover around a concept that is nowhere to be found” “And here Derrida permits himself a small moment of pique: Rather than admitting the aporias that beg to be acknowledged openly, people blame as nihilistic or relativist the honest deconstructionist” and “all those who remain concerned in the face of such a display of good conscience.” (p. 84)

Derrida illustrates with a commentary on the narrowly averted sacrifice of Isaac:

The sacrifice of Isaac is an abomination in the eyes of all, and it should continue to be seen for what it is—atrocious, criminal, unforgivable, Kierkegaard insists on that. The ethical point of view must remain valid: Abraham is a murderer. However, is not the spectacle of this murder, which seems untenable in the dense and rhythmic briefness of its theatrical moment, at the same time the most common event in the world? Is it not inscribed in the structure of our existence to the extent of no longer even constituting an event? It will be said that it would be most improbable that the sacrifice of Isaac would be repeated in our day, and it certainly seems that way.



Water lily. Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

We can hardly imagine a father taking his son to be sacrificed on top of the hill on Montmartre. If God did not send a lamb as a substitute or an angel to hold back his arm, there would still be an upright prosecutor, preferably an expert in Middle Eastern violence, to accuse him of infanticide or first-degree murder, and if a psychiatrist ...were to declare that the father was “responsible,” carrying on as if psychoanalysis had done nothing to upset the order of discourse on intention, conscience, good will, etc., the criminal father would have no chance of getting away with it. He might claim that the wholly other had commanded him to do it, and perhaps in secret (how would he know that?) in order to test his faith, but it would make no difference. Everything is organized to insure that this man would be condemned by a civilized society. (But) the same civilized society... “puts to death...or allows to die of hunger and disease tens of millions of children (those relatives or fellow humans that ethics or discourse of the rights of man refer to) without any moral or legal tribunal ever being considered competent to judge such a sacrifice, the sacrifice of the other to avoid being sacrificed oneself... (pp 85-86)

Derrida has more to say about the sacrifice of Isaac, and more generally the challenge of rescuing the concept of human responsibility from a biblical discourse which privileges obedience to God who is Other to us even as our neighbor is other. In a provocative and close reading of several passages from Matthew, he attempts to link Otherness to the themes of salvation, gift, and, perhaps most provocatively, secrecy. In reaching for a conclusion to the discussion he points to a way to reconceptualize God in a manner which accounts for human responsibility and autonomy as well as otherness:

We should stop thinking of God as someone over there, way up there, , and what is more –into the bargain, precisely, more than any satellite orbiting in space, capable of seeing into the most secret of the most interior places. It is perhaps necessary, if we are to follow the traditional Judeo-Christian-Islamic injunction, but also at the risk of turning it against that tradition, to think of God, and the name of God, without such a representation or such idolatrous stereotyping. Then we might say: God is the name of the possibility I have a keeping a secret that is visible from the interior but not from the exterior. As soon as such a structure of conscience exists...there is what I call God (there is ) what I call God in me, he is the absolute “me” or “self,” he is that structure of invisible interiority that is called, in Kierkegaard’s sense, subjectivity.

And he is made manifest, he manifests his non-manifestation when, in the structures of the living or the existent, in the course of phylo- and ontogenetic history, there appears the possibility of secrecy...that is to say, when there appears the desire and power to render absolutely invisible and to constitute within oneself a witness of that invisibility. That is the history of God, of the name of God or the history of secrecy, at the same time secret and without any secrets. (p 108)



Kathleen Mary Fallon most recent work is a three-part project exploring her experiences as the white foster mother of a Torres Strait Islander foster son with disabilities. The project consisted of a feature film, *Call Me Mum*, which was short-listed for the NSW Premier's Prize, an AWGIE and was nominated for four AFI Awards winning Best Female Support Actress Award. The three-part project also includes a novel *Paydirt* (UWAPress, 2007) and a play, *Buyback*, which she directed at the Carlton Courthouse in 2006. Her novel, *Working Hot*, (Sybylla 1989, Vintage/Random House, 2000) won a Victoria Premier's Prize and her opera, *Matricide – the Musical*, which she wrote with the composer Elena Kats-Chernin, was produced by Chamber Made Opera in 1998. She wrote the text for the concert piece, *Laquiem*, for the composer Andrée Greenwell. *Laquiem* was performed at The Studio at the Sydney Opera House. She holds a PhD (UniSA).

## KATHLEEN MARY FALLON THE AUSTRALIAN SOUTH SEA ISLANDERS (ASSI): Towards a Post-colonial Society?

I am five years old. I am at my grandfather's sugar cane farm outside Bundaberg. He's the Golden-syrup Man. I am wandering and wondering in the fields of rasping green cane. Wandering along beside me, on both sides, are stone walls. They are about the same height as I am and somehow they seem kindred. I can't help caressing the warm grey-black orbs about the same size as my head. These are like friends with no eyes, no ears; no faces. I have to imagine them. I am taking a big risk because my mother, the White-sugar Princess, has warned me of the dangers lurking inside the walls. I imagine the yellow eyes of disturbed snakes; the rattle of the liquorice-black elephant beetles is a warning signal.

The Golden-syrup Man told me the walls had been built long ago by 'Kanakas' and I imagined they must have been mythical-magical beings to have constructed such beautiful walls. But what if these 'Kanakas' still lurked somewhere in all that cane? Were these the Boogeymen that the White-sugar Princess threatened me with if I was naughty? She said they were old Black men who walked the countryside with sugar bags over their shoulder in which they carried off naughty children. Was that them whispering in the rasping cane? Over half a century later I am engaged in fieldwork for a PhD trying to hear what they are whispering.

This is, again, the landscape in which I find myself, 'a place where nature and culture contend and combine in history' but this is still an infantile landscape of colonial phantasmagoria and fantasy; a landscape shared with these 'Kanakas'. Is it possible to move out of phantasmagoria and fantasy and create a truly post-colonial landscape and how might this be achieved? Perhaps through knowing the thoughts, emotions and actions – the culture and hidden history – of these 'Kanakas', these 'forgotten people' for, as Ross Gibson says, 'as soon as you experience thoughts, emotions or actions in a tract of land, you find you're in a landscape.' Would this go some way to creating a post-colonial landscape in which their descendants, the Australian South Sea Islanders (ASSI) could also be known and their culture and contribution to the wealth – financial, cultural, social – of Queensland and Australia be acknowledged and respected?



Kathleen Mary Fallon, photograph by Joseph O'Connor.

### This is what they were whispering about: a brief history

In August 1863 Robert Towns 'brought' the first sixty-seven 'Kanakas' to his Townsvale estate, near Beaudesert, to work on his cotton plantation. These 'Kanakas' came from Vanuatu (formerly New Hebrides) and the Loyalty Islands off New Caledonia. (The American Civil War was in progress and products such as cotton and sugar were at a premium.) The cotton didn't do well in southern Queensland but, in the north, sugar did and the 'Kanakas' were sent north to work on the burgeoning sugar industry. It was believed, at the time, that white workers couldn't stand the rigours of a tropical climate. From the mid-nineteenth century until 1904, approximately 62,500 'South Sea Islanders' were 'brought' to Australia mainly from the Solomons and Vanuatu and other Pacific islands as well as from Papua New Guinea, to 'work', as 'indentured labour', on these sugar plantations in the coastal regions of Queensland. By using the words, 'South Sea Islander', 'brought' and 'work', I have avoided the contested terms 'Kanaka', 'blackbirded/kidnapped/recruited' and 'slavery'. These are much debated terms which raise points of disagreement within the ASSI community itself as well as amongst academics. A brief discussion of the hotly contested term, 'Kanaka', highlights some of these complex issues around history, memory and identity.

For some ASSI 'Kanaka' calls up the image of pitiful, enslaved victims in chains and loin cloths, 'blackbirded' by violence and trickery, forced from their islands, transported as human cargo in the filthy holds of sailing ships with inadequate food, ventilation or sanitary facilities, holds in which many died and were unceremoniously dumped at sea. This image is at odds with later generation's pride in their ancestor's resilience and determination to endure and make better lives for their descendants. The Australian South Sea Islanders are keenly aware of the political implications of the ways they are represented. I will use 'Kanaka' here, in quotation marks, to differentiate the old people from their Australian-born descendants who prefer the term Australian South Sea Islander and call themselves, ASSI (pronounced 'ASSE').

This chapter explores some of the strategies used by the ASSI in negotiating these fundamental and paradoxical situations around representation, remembrance and commemoration of their history and identity, and how these strategic negotiations have created, and continue to create, a landscape and unique culture, a culture that I believe can be considered postcolonial. To demonstrate this I focus on two major events in Mackay – the 2011 Recognition Day bus tour of ASSI heritage sites and the production, in 2013, of a 'commemorative pilgrimage' tourist guide to these same sites.

On arrival in Queensland the 'Kanakas' were sold, or delivered as per contract between plantation owners and 'recruiters', to sugar plantations all the way up the Queensland coast, where they then worked remorselessly in harsh and often lethal conditions. As Clive Moore has argued, 'The death rate is a reprehensible 24 per cent of the total number of contracts and an even higher proportion of the individuals involved (around 30 percent).' They were 'contracted' (a thumb print on page of a contract they could not understand) as 'indentured labour' to work for three years after which they were to be returned to their home island. Alternatively, if they chose to remain in Queensland, they were classed as time-expired and could negotiate their pay rate and move more or less freely but were restricted to fieldwork. There was also another class of 'Kanaka', the ticket-holder, who could work and travel anywhere and for any wage they could demand. (The Boogeyman myths probably had their origins in these two groups.)

The pay, rations and clothing for the 'Kanakas' were stipulated in the Polynesian Labourers' Act 1868. Employers were to pay them £6 per year and were obliged to provide daily food rations, additional weekly rations of tobacco, salt and soap and an annual ration of clothing. Wages did rise over time; however, even twenty years later, they still fell well below those of Europeans: 'the total amount paid to Europeans in 1888 ... for wages and supplies (was) at the rate of 9 pounds for every 1 pound paid direct to kanakas,' writes historian Tracey Banivanua-Mar.

The early 'Kanakas' constructed much of the infrastructure – including land clearance, building wells, wharves, roads, bridges – that enabled the sugar wealth of Queensland to grow. Among the first Acts passed after Federation in 1901 was the Immigration Restriction Act, part of the notorious White Australia Policy. Soon after, with the increasing tensions around the issue of 'coloured' labour and white workers' rights, came the Pacific Island Labour Act which banned the importation of Islanders after the end of March 1906. It stipulated that all Islanders had to be 'repatriated' or forcibly deported, by the end of that year. Through ASSI's own activism and agency, however, a Royal Commission was established and the blanket law amended to allow some to remain. By 1906, around seven thousand Islanders were 'repatriated' and approximately two thousand remained. Most of those who remained were from the ticket-holder or time-expired groups.

The Islanders who remained have been subjected to repeated institutional and social discrimination, which has limited employment and economic development within the community. The ASSI are neither Indigenous nor migrant. They have often been ineligible for government benefits that Aborigines, Torres Strait Islanders or migrant groups have been eligible for.

They have fallen through the cracks and the holes in the welfare net and yet they have survived in communities from the Tweed region of New South Wales and all the way up the coast of Queensland to Moa Island in the Torres Strait. According to Clive Moore's estimates, 'there are between twenty thousand and forty thousand' ASSI in Australia today. The numbers are difficult to ascertain because some, with mixed heritage, identify administratively as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander on the Australian Census.

In the 1970s and early 1980s a renaissance of interest in the ASSI occurred in Australia and a flurry of media and academic activity brought this hidden history to public attention. This was partly due to the zeitgeist of the period, including the civil and indigenous rights movements, identity and solidarity politics, and the Black Power movement. The year 1978 saw the first significant coming-out onto the national stage for the ASSI with the airing of a three-part ABC radio documentary, 'The Forgotten People', produced by Matt Peacock for *Broadband*. This series brought the experiences of ASSI to wider public attention. Noel Fatnowna, a Mackay Elder, was extensively interviewed for the series, along with a number of other ASSI. The historian Clive Moore, a Mackay local, edited a book based on the series, which was published by the ABC. This was followed by his seminal study, *Kanaka: A History of Melanesian Mackay* in 1985. In 1989, Fatnowna went on to publish the first major ASSI memoir, *Fragments of a Lost Heritage*. Before this, in 1977, activist Faith Bandler had published the fictionalised biography of her father, *Wacvie*, followed by two other fictionalised biographies of family members over the next few years.

### 1967: The referendum and ASSI identity

Faith Bandler believed in Black Solidarity and in the 1960s worked with Federation for the Advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (FACCASI) towards the 1967 referendum which removed discriminatory clauses relating to Aboriginal peoples from the Constitution and also stipulated that Aboriginal peoples should be counted in the Australian Census. As a result the Federal Government eventually enacted legislation regarding land rights, discriminatory practices, financial assistance and preservation of cultural heritage for Aboriginal peoples but this did not apply to ASSI.

Faith Bandler's experiences amply reveal the issues of identity with which the ASSI struggled, and continue to struggle; from all being blackfellas together suddenly divisions were created by identity politics.

With the success of the referendum and the establishment of organisations such as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Council (ATSIC) in 1990 she found herself excluded from the very organisations she had helped set up – because she identified as ASSI and not as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Following this exclusion she pursued her Islander ancestry by writing her fictionalised biographies and travelling to her father's home island of Ambrym in Vanuatu. Complex issues around identity continue to permeate through the ASSI community. Some, for example, with Aboriginal or Torres Strait heritage are able to claim government support benefits, while those who insist on their ASSI identity are excluded from these benefits.

Again ASSI worked to deal with this new situation and through their tireless efforts achieved recognition from the Federal Government in September 1994 and from the Queensland State Government in August 2000. These governments recognised ASSI as a distinct cultural group and acknowledged past injustices as well as their significant contributions to the social, cultural and economic development of Queensland and Australia. Each year, usually on 23 August, the ASSI celebrate Recognition Day as an important event in their social and cultural lives and the day has become very significant in the revivification of ASSI culture.

### After 1980

What effect did the media interest and cultural activity of the 1970s and early 1980s have on this community and did it redress their sense of being 'the forgotten people' as they had hoped? Some answers to this question can be found in the activities of the ASSI community in the city of Mackay in central Queensland, and their relationship to the landscape and their ancestors.

Mackay has the largest population of ASSI in Queensland. Often referred to as the 'sugar capital' of Australia, the city is on the Pioneer River, approximately one thousand kilometres north of Brisbane. Sugar is the major industry, an industry built in the late nineteenth century by the Islanders' labour. The whole area around Mackay – the endless acres of sugar cane, the scrubby hills, the banks of the creeks and river – hold deep resonance for ASSI who experience the landscape – infused, quite literally, with the blood, sweat and tears of their ancestors – quite differently from non-ASSI and Aboriginal peoples. Given the often violent and repressive past that their ancestors endured, Maria Tumarkin's concept of 'traumascape' offers lucrative interpretive allusions appropriate to the landscape and its sites. According to Tumarkin, traumascape are places ...

marked by traumatic legacies of violence, suffering and loss', where:

the past is never quite over ... spaces where events are experienced and re-experienced over time. Full of visual and sensory triggers, capable of eliciting a whole palette of emotions, traumascapes catalyse and shape remembering and reliving of traumatic events. It is through these places that the past, whether buried or laid bare for all to see, continues to inhabit and refashion the present.

There are 'visual and sensory triggers' of 'Kanakan' presence everywhere in the Mackay area: graves – marked and unmarked – old wooden homes, rock walls, a historic hall, an ancient tree. Through their insistent remembering and persistent memorialising and through continued cultural, social and political labours these sites, which could so easily be silent, grief-filled traumascapes have been nurtured by the ASSI community and become sites of memory – nurturescapes rather than traumascapes – and provide the basis for healing, identity, and re/conciliation.

### **A question of identity**

A question prominent in the 1970s and 1980s, and one still sometimes posed by the dominant, settler society, was: Do the ASSI have a culture? This question is also an issue for the ASSI. Many were told, and some even believed, that they had no culture of their own because they had lost their familial and cultural connections with their home islands. Also, their material culture – blady grass huts, kerosene tin furniture, hessian bag furnishings, cane trash cradles, gardens and so on – were impermanent and have largely disappeared. All they had were their ancestors stories, their oral history, and its association with the landscape. How could they make a culture out of these?

Noel Fatnowna, in his memoir, *Fragments of a Lost Heritage*, angrily and succinctly articulates this no-culture idea when he quotes what had been said to him: ' "You've got no customs, you've got nothing, you've got no brains." ' The belief that ASSI have no culture is echoed in the 2002 documentary featuring Eddie 'Koiki' Mabo's widow, Bonita Mabo, *For Who I Am: Bonita Mabo*. In this documentary she claims, and proclaims, her ASSI identity, which existed in the shadow of the strength of Eddie Mabo's Torres Strait/Murray Islander cultural identity. Because she had lost her association with her home islands and tribal ancestry he'd say to her, 'You don't have a culture.'

Ross Gibson articulates the reasons for, and ramifications of, this belief that ASSI were a no-culture, 'forgotten people':

Most contemporary Australians feel compelled to deny the islanders any ancestry status in a comfortable modern federation ... There is a tendency to ignore all the scrappy memories of past exploitations in Australia, to say that they are now so little in evidence that they have no bearing on the present. But because ... their presence still resonates in descendants and community tales, in photographs and gravestones, and in the lingering dynasties of wealth, they are part of the world we take our living from.

That the 'Kanakas' 'presence still resonates' and that the ASSI have created a culture and identity through the remembrance and memorialisation of their 'presence' is forcefully demonstrated in both events I discuss here. For the first, the 2011 Recognition Day bus tour of heritage sites, in which I participated, I describe my own and other's responses to the tour and examine the memorialisation process for some of these sites. The collaborative and creative work I then did with members of the ASSI community to produce a 'commemorative pilgrimage' tourist guide was the basis for another bus tour in July 2013, which commemorated the 150th anniversary of the first 'Kanakas' arriving at Townsville plantation. These events reveal each site as something of a text, alive with historical connotations and ramifications. The tourist guide and the bus tours were steps not only towards commemoration; they went beyond this, to healing. This is a story of history and trauma, but it is also one of healing, witnessing and collaboration. The sites are themselves artefacts, objects, machines of survival and an encyclopaedia of history and memory alive, still, with stories and the spirit of the old people, the 'Kanakas'.

### **Christianity, melancholia and the post-colonial**

The 2011 Recognition Day bus tour began with a commemorative service in the Farleigh Seventh Day Adventist Church beside the Farleigh Sugar Mill. Christianity has a long and complex relationship with the ASSI. As Gibson says, 'The canefields around Mackay were spirited by a mélange of 'theologies' commingling Melanesian ancestor-worship and several Christian catechisms.' The planters and mill owners often encouraged Christianity for their own political reasons, and yet the old people often embraced it wholeheartedly. Historian Kay Saunders, in 'Workers in Bondage', argues it is too simplistic to relegate the Christianity of the ASSI to the cynicism and expediency of the masters.

‘Christianity provided genuine spiritual and emotional comfort to committed Melanesians ... The one area where Melanesians were made to feel important and worthy of regard was in the sphere of religion.’

Through their political agency, shrewd adaptability and survival strategies, the ASSI made the most of what was available to them. The importance of Christianity today, and its connection to respected ancestors, can be seen in a long and detailed letter-to-the-editor penned by the ASSI Elder, Rowena Trieve, published in Mackay’s *The Daily Mercury* in which she writes of her grandmother, Katie Marlla’s, Christian values. ‘Today, we, her descendants, reap the benefits of that choice. Practical Christianity ... played a significant part in helping us Australian South Sea Islanders to assimilate and integrate.’

I suggest that partly as a result of their Christian values the ASSI as a community have overcome melancholia and are actively engaged in the hard emotional work of mourning and remembrance which has become memorialising; a constant ethical/political activity for them. According to Freud’s ‘Mourning and Melancholia’ the processes of mourning and melancholia are similar – feelings of loss, grief, dejection, lack of interest in the world, inability to love but, with melancholia, there is also a profound loss of self-regard and fear of poverty. With mourning there is an end and it is completed once the subject knows, through reality testing, that the object of mourning is dead whence normal ego activity and connection with the world resumes. The ASSI know, very consciously, what they have lost and that their ancestors are dead and they have mourned them and now remember and honour them. They have also always been poor so poverty is not a fear but a reality they know how to deal with. They are reality-testers par excellence.

This is transformation work indeed, work which is also required of all Australians if we are ever to be truly post-colonial. Gibson suggests that the White Australia Policy can be interpreted, ‘as a melancholic refusal to allow differences into the definition of the society ... a way to avoid the mourning’. ‘The creation of the Commonwealth of Australia had been accompanied by a symbolic act of expulsion – the attempted deportation of Pacific Islanders.’ The words of Marilyn Lake, Faith Bandler’s biographer, could be applied to all ASSI. ‘Faith’s very existence thus represented a defiance of White Australia.’ Gibson applies the concept of social melancholy to the colonial mentality. I would argue that in the events of Mackay’s 2011 Recognition Day and the events of the 150 commemorative year such as the ‘Uncle Cedric Andrew Andrew’s’ booklet and bus tour we see ASSI’s confrontation

with, and refusal of, melancholia; their completed mourning and constant remembering through ritual and commemoration. In their quiet, determined and politically astute way they use the events to promote and progress their cultural and political agenda. In this it is possible to see their ‘struggle to translate racial grief into social claims’ and how they construct ‘social meaning and its subjective impact at the site of racial injury.’ The events considered here will articulate the strategies with which ASSI confront the politics of amnesia, denial and neglect as they re-inscribe their history, ancestors, identity and continued presence into the public historical imagination and the dominant settler narrative; strategies such as the acceptance and mobilisation of what they see as their social and historical obligations to their ancestors and to the broader community through re/conciliatory practices.

### **The 2011 Recognition Day bus tour**

In the early afternoon we boarded a bus and drove along River Street following the Pioneer River. We passed one of the oldest and most significant sites – the ancient Leichhardt Tree – under which the ‘Kanakas’ were assembled, sometimes in chains, to be dispatched to the various plantations. The tree has been desecrated any number of times and the trunk is covered in old and new scars from these attacks. Fresh scar marks were obvious from the most recent axe attack. Perhaps the inexplicable lack of signage at the tree is an attempt to avert such desecration.

We skirted the hills and drove along a dirt road that ran parallel to a line of trees, many of them coconut and mango trees. They shaded one of the many creeks where the ‘Kanakas’ had camped, lived and were often buried. The dirt road took us into Rowallan Park, which is owned and maintained as a Scout and Guide park. It is a significant area for the ASSI as there are a number of large, rock-mound, mass graves of Islanders there and also the last remaining section of what is known as ‘The Kanaka Trail’. The graves have been traditionally constructed with the heads at the west and feet facing east, to watch the rising sun, and there is a palm tree at the feet. The kilometre-long ‘Kanaka Trail’ is retained by stone-pitched reinforcement and is approximated three metres wide and has lasted, intact, through the Islanders expert craftsmanship, for over a century. I returned to Rowallan Park a few days later after organising the visit with the non-ASSI caretaker, Bob Hodda, who generously spent the whole afternoon driving me around the park in his old Nissan flatback. Bob Hodda is in his eighties and has been involved in the scouting movement since his early teens. He has been protecting and maintaining the graves and the track for decades; keeping nature and man at bay.

Rowallan Park, protected as it has been, by the Scout's ownership and Bob Hodda's sensitivity and interest, from being ploughed under and turned into yet another field of sugar cane, is a very special and significant place. However, this small act of preservation only highlights the poignant fact that the same graves and trails would have been everywhere and it is only fortuitous that these few remnants remain.

The Recognition Day bus tour continued through Homebush along a road that ran parallel to the Pioneer River, which was curtained by what looked to me like nothing but mango trees and bushes. Yet there was excitement in the bus as coconut, bush lemon and pawpaw trees were spotted, and more stories emerged. This was the stretch of the river known as The Palms where many had grown up and where grandparents and parents had built homes and gardens. Pleasure was taken in the memories of happy homes and good fishing spots, of sandy beaches and swimming holes before the ASSI were moved to other housing in town and before the Dumbelton Weir, up stream, eroded all the sand.

Then a story was told of the recent reappearance of a long dead ancestor. There are many such stories in circulation. The ancestors aren't dead and gone and forgotten but are a constant, powerful presence from ghostly visitations to profound forces of spiritual and cultural energy.

We drove on to Homebush and turned off the road just before the Cedric Andrew Bridge. Cedric Andrew was the oldest ASSI in the area. He was nearly 102 when he died in 2012 and his stories and memories were the basis for the organiser's commentary. Here we stopped between two brick ruins. On one side was the brick stack from the original Homebush Mill and on the other what remained of a brick chimney from the Mill Office where the 'Kanakas' would line up to collect their pay and rations.

Then we crossed the Cedric Andrew Bridge over Sandy Creek to certainly the most important and revered site – the Homebush Mission Hall – where we alighted from the bus and inspected the charming, old-fashioned, humble hall, with its powerfully resonant political, religious and social history. It continues to be voluntarily maintained by local ASSI and non-ASSI. Built in 1892, on land granted by the Colonial Sugar Refinery, the hall was the location for the first meetings, in 1901, of the Pacific Islanders Association and it was here that they organised their political campaign against forced deportation. After inspecting the hall we were served an afternoon tea of scones and Golden Syrup.

Our last stop was Walkerston Cemetery nestled among endless cane fields. A green, freshly mown verge lies across from the official cemetery, between the road and the railway line along which the cane is carried to the mill. We stopped beside this green patch and were told that it was the site of many unmarked graves of ASSI ancestors who had been buried in 'pagan ground' outside the cemetery.

### Landscape and oral history

As we headed back to Mackay I asked one of the women how visiting all these sites made her feel. Did it make her angry, frustrated, hurt? Her response typifies the ASSI attitude. She said that she was grateful to these old people because they had fought hard to stay in Australia and make a better life for their descendants and that nothing was to be gained in bitterness and negativity. She said she wanted her children to remember the truth of the past but not fill the memory with any hatred. It wouldn't be what the old people wanted.

This long-held re/conciliatory stance is also a considered political and ethical response to the disappointments of the hopes held after the renaissance of interest in the late 1970s and 1980s. How did the ASSI reconsider this stance in the light of these disappointments in which the veracity of, and motivations for, the often traumatic testimonies of kidnapping, violence and slavery, gathered from Elders, were questioned and interpreted as expedient by some academics. Historian Patricia Mercer claimed, 'that their forebears did not come willingly is an essential component of contemporary Melanesians' attitudes to white Australia; so psychologically imperative is it that "blackbirding", if it did not exist, would have to be created.' Likewise, historian Bob Reece attributed the strength of Australian South Sea Islanders' views on kidnapping to political reasons: 'the Kanaka descendants have a strong vested interest in repeating the horror stories (and there are plenty of them) about blackbirding and plantation life. What they are providing is not the raw stuff of history but an interpretation of history appropriate to the political needs of the moment.'

Much to the dismay of the ASSI, these interpretations found their way into a Queensland secondary school text book, *Australian South Sea Islanders: a Curriculum Resource for Secondary Schools Secondary School* as supposedly legitimate historical analyses, pitching history as a contested, texted domain. (This was not a required text and its study was at the discretion of the teacher.) As the curriculum text acknowledged, 'this view angers many Australian South Sea Islanders.'

They object both to the interpretation itself and to the fact that it has been made by non-Pacific-Islander historians.' What didn't find its way into the curriculum was a more sophisticated and humane interpretation of oral history such as the one given by Ross Gibson, who says:

Cultures which do not rely on written records know their environment is their world of meaning, because landmarks hold the prompts to the stories that constitute knowledge. In such cultures only a fool would be careless with narrative, for to have no care about the stories of your setting is to nullify your life in the place that determines your survival.

One of the strategies with which the ASSI have responded to this questioning of their testimonies is by trying to take control of the way they are represented into their own hands. The 2000 *Protocols Guide: Drumming the Story: It's Our Business!* by the Mackay and Districts Australian South Sea Islander Association (MADASSIA) is a detailed response to these disappointments and the astute awareness of the politics of representation that resulted. The overarching statement of the *Protocols* is: 'We value confidentiality and we are generally protective of our private information. Perhaps this is because we have felt that our information has not been handled well in the past.'

### **Trans-generational trauma?**

I would argue that a case can be made that ASSI suffer trans-generational trauma and re-traumatisation. Mrs Trieve's story of her grandmother is testimony. In a documentary, *Stori Blong Yu Mi*, produced by Crossroad Arts, a Mackay arts organisation, Mrs Trieve speaks of the terrible scars from leg shackles around Katie's small ankles, even after half a century. Perhaps these interpretations were felt, by ASSI as a re-traumatisation and, adding to this, perhaps they felt, they had in some unintentional way betrayed their ancestors by divulging their stories, if this way how academics responded.

How should those suffering trans-generational trauma and traumatic retelling be treated? Was an opportunity missed? What was the opportunity that was missed? Work done by theorists such as Shoshana Felman, Dori Laub and Cathy Caruth on testimony and trauma, can be applied here. According to Caruth it would be the opportunity to learn a new way of listening, 'by carrying the impossibility of knowing out of the empirical event itself, trauma opens up and challenges us to a new kind of listening, the witnessing, precisely, of *impossibility*.'

This act of listening requires something not only of the speaker but of the listener as well. Caruth speaks of a 'new mode of seeing and listening ... from *the site of trauma* that could create 'a link between cultures'.

I argue that we need to learn to listen, to witness ASSI witnesses, in this 'new mode'; we need to mobilise the tools of trauma theory and testimony. We need to formulate, and to ask, 'enabling questions that would offer new directions for research'. As Felman remarks, 'What ultimately matters in all processes of witnessing ... is not simply the information, the establishment of the facts, but the experience itself of *living through* testimony, of giving testimony.' Such were the considerations and questionings that were directly pertinent to the creation of the commemorative pilgrimage tourist guide.

### **The making of 'Uncle Cedric Andrew Andrew's Mackay'**

Impressed by the mourning and memorialising work evident in the Recognition Day bus tour I wondered if it were possible to make the political, cultural and social potency of the ASSI's work available to the general public? I wondered if it was possible to somehow formalise a 'new mode of listening and witnessing' in a more material and permanent way?

Despite the many differences and disputes within the ASSI community I believe there is a general consensus on three agenda points. These are the desire for the general public to be aware of the history of the ASSI, and to appreciate and understand their identity and acknowledge the contribution their community has made to the economic and cultural wealth of the country in general and of the Queensland sugar industry in particular. I found myself asking: how could these predicaments be negotiated and how could these agendas be advanced? The answer I came up with was a tourist guide – a commemorative pilgrimage – with photographs, stories and meditations or prayers for a selection of these significant ASSI sites. To advance this idea I wrote a proposal and, following MADASSIA's *Protocols Guide* regarding protocols and permissions, emailed it to a number of local ASSI organisations and prominent individuals. I received only one response and letter of support from Mackay's Australian South Sea Islander Arts and Cultural Development's chairperson, Jeanette Morgan, with backing from the Elder Rowena Trieve. This was one major reason I chose to work with the Mackay community on this commemorative pilgrimage booklet; Mackay had chosen me. Another reason was that Mackay has the largest population of ASSI in Australia.

In October 2012 I flew to Mackay, picked up my campervan, which I'd left there and in which I lived, worked and travelled, and began the consultation, collaboration, writing, editing and photographing process for the booklet. My methodology incorporated trauma theory and the action research model in that 'my intention was to actually change social conditions' and my hope was that the booklet would go some way towards achieve the three primary ASSI agendas discussed above. I had also investigated David Denborough's narrative therapy practices and believed aspects of the methodology could be advantageous in working with the stakeholders and the ASSI community. The approach is based on the belief that the participants have experienced some form of trauma and, particularly, trans-generational trauma. When faced with the practicalities of the situation I found myself in in Mackay it wasn't possible to employ this narrative therapy methodology for every site; nonetheless, it did inform my practice in a variety of ways and I used it as a template. As Denborough says, 'Collective narrative documents can stand as a different form of historical testimony. Importantly, these are double-storied testimonies of history – testimonies of survival and trauma at once.' This 'double-storied' concept is a way ASSI's sensitivity to victim status, for example the 'Kanaka' terminology debate, could be dealt with. The double-story or subtext of a collection of significant site stories would reveal the traumatic aspects of the sites but also the maintenance, respect and care which transform them from traumascapes into sites of memory. Also, including meditations or prayers would conceptualise the sites as sites of pilgrimage rather than simply tourist destinations as well as acknowledging the importance of Christianity to the ASSI community as a way to healing and to reconcile with the violent histories of the past.

The choice of the ten sites was made in collaboration with Jeanette Morgan, as her organisation was to publish the booklet. In a series of meetings, I explained to the stakeholders that the booklet was aimed at tourists and the general population and that there was a word limit of about five hundred words for each story. I told them that I would take notes of our conversations, write up their story and present it back to them for feedback. I asked them, if, in the meantime, they could write a meditation or prayer for the site. Bob Hodda's story about Rowellan Park and Ernie and Gertrude Mye's story about growing up at The Palms are two examples that best illustrate the results of applying my methodologies.

Of Bob Hodda's many stories the one we chose to use in the booklet seemed exemplary. It included his sensitivity to and respect for the sites, his decades long research, his relationship with the local ASSI and specifically with Uncle Cedric Andrew.

The story focused on a visit made to the park by a group of ni-Vanuatu from the scouting movement who performed a traditional consecration ceremony over the graves. This story demonstrated the deep spiritual and cultural importance of the sites. Another reason I wanted to include Bob and the park in the booklet was to give a poignant and powerful example of the relationship between ASSI and some members of the non-ASSI community. Bob wrote this meditation/prayer for the site.

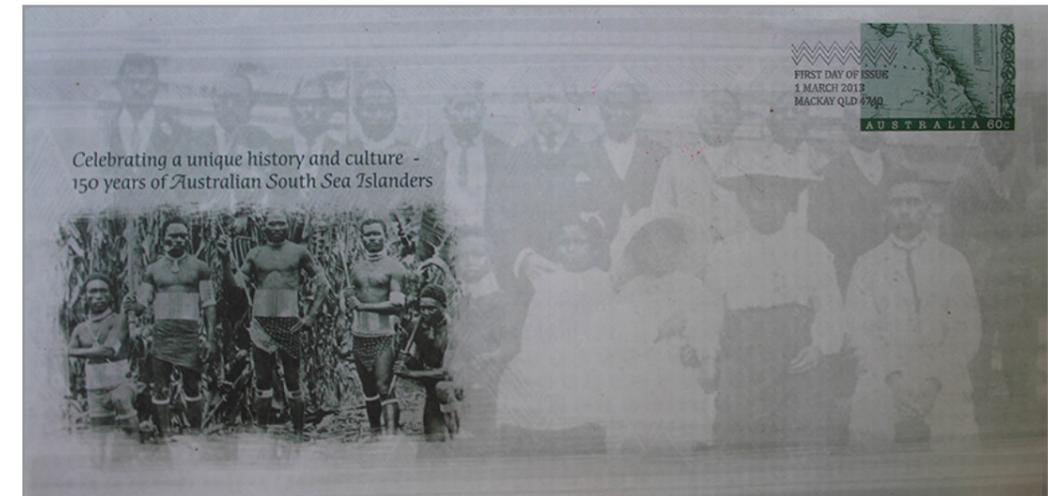
#### **Bob Hodda's meditation-prayer for Rowellan Park**

As custodians of the wealth of knowledge hidden within these boundaries and beyond, we treasure the memories of those who have passed on. We pray for the workers from Vanuatu who lie in these mass graves, proudly kept in the formation as found by us so many years ago, their history sought, their road works and camping grounds noted and well preserved. We also pray for Scouting legends Noel Weder and his sister Mona, who lie in a grave-site on the terrace, keeping watch! We hope and pray that all their spirits are at rest but still they have a presence in this land. We pray that these memories and the stones of remembrance for them all will remain forever in our minds and hearts – God Bless Rowellan Park – may it continue forever!

Ernie and Gertrude Mye's story is the other most successful example of my chosen methodologies. The Myes invited me to their home and told many stories of the old days and life at The Palms. They spoke of the importance to them of the communal atmosphere, the lovely spring water, fruitful gardens, good fishing and food cooked over open fires, the bitterness of their removal from the river and the insights into the socio-economic reasons for the removal, the continued relationship with the site, the ongoing spirituality of connection with ancestors and beliefs and also of Uncle Cedric's input.

#### **Ernie and Gertrude Mye's meditation-prayer for 'All Along the Pioneer River'**

As we sit around the crackling fire, telling the most interesting stories of those old days, we can hear the rippling tide coming in, the fish swirling and playing, curlews singing out on the banks of the river and the wind whistling through the trees. We thank God for what was beautiful and good and for that peace of mind. He is always with us. He is the key of everything today. Amen.



In both stories Uncle Cedric Andrew's name and his Elder status were articulated. This was by design on my part, as the booklet was to be dedicated to him – *Uncle Cedric Andrew Andrew's Mackay: 10 significant sites for the Australian South Sea Islanders*. There were a number of reasons for this. Primarily it was because I was in Mackay on 16 October 2012 when this much-respected Elder died. His knowledge informed much of the self-published book, *Fields of Sorrow: an oral history of descendants of the South Sea Islanders* (Kanakas) (The title painfully ironic in the context of the 'Field of Dreams' sugar trail in the nearby township of Sarina.) We felt it would be appropriate to dedicate the booklet to him given his deep connection with the Mackay region and his passion to pass on his cultural and historical knowledge to the whole community.

The decision meant focusing on Uncle Cedric rather than working with individual stakeholders which had proved difficult logistically given both their, and my, time constraints and also, given their history of story sharing with academics, some understandable distrust. It also opened up a range of other sources: Uncle Cedric's published work such as *Fields of Sorrow* and other documents he had contributed to held in the Heritage Room of the Mackay Regional Library, newspaper articles in which he was quoted and the reminiscences of those who had known and admired him. It also meant accessing private records such as the large plastic box containing Rowena Trieve archives.

It also meant one person I had to discuss the booklet with, and seek information from, was his daughter, Cristine Andrew. Cristine still lives in the family home her father built, and is determined to maintain his work and memory, work which they had done together. I visited her at home in Homebush and she generously offered to take me on a tour of the area in her car. During the drive story after story emerged. It was this tour that underpinned the stories and meditation-prayers for most of the remaining sites documented in the booklet.

Needless to say I wish the process of material gathering and writing had been more face-to-face with stakeholders rather than gained from secondary sources and a number of the meditation-prayers were, necessarily, quite generic. However, Jeanette Morgan, and Rowena Trieve read, edited and approved my draft copy with Rowena Trieve writing a statement of endorsement for the back cover.

The Mackay Regional Council designed and printed two hundred copies of the booklet, which were distributed to over fifty ASSI and non-ASSI locals one Sunday in July 2013 to accompany a bus tour of the sites.

The Mackay Regional Council designed and printed two hundred copies of the booklet, which were distributed to over fifty ASSI and non-ASSI locals one Sunday in July 2013 to accompany a bus tour of the sites. This was one of the events organised for the 150-year commemorations and the feedback from the participants was positive and emotive. The most common comment from non-ASSI Mackay residents, some in tears, was that they had had no idea these sites existed nor were they aware of their importance to the ASSI community. Perhaps, through the affect of their response, the participants would agree with Ross Gibson's insights into landscape and country, insights which are ingrained in ASSI culture. Gibson says, 'country is thus shaped by persistent obligations, memories and patterns of growth and re-growth. Governed by this system of physical and metaphysical interdependence, the country lives like something with a memory, a force of the past prevailing in the landscape still.

### Conclusion

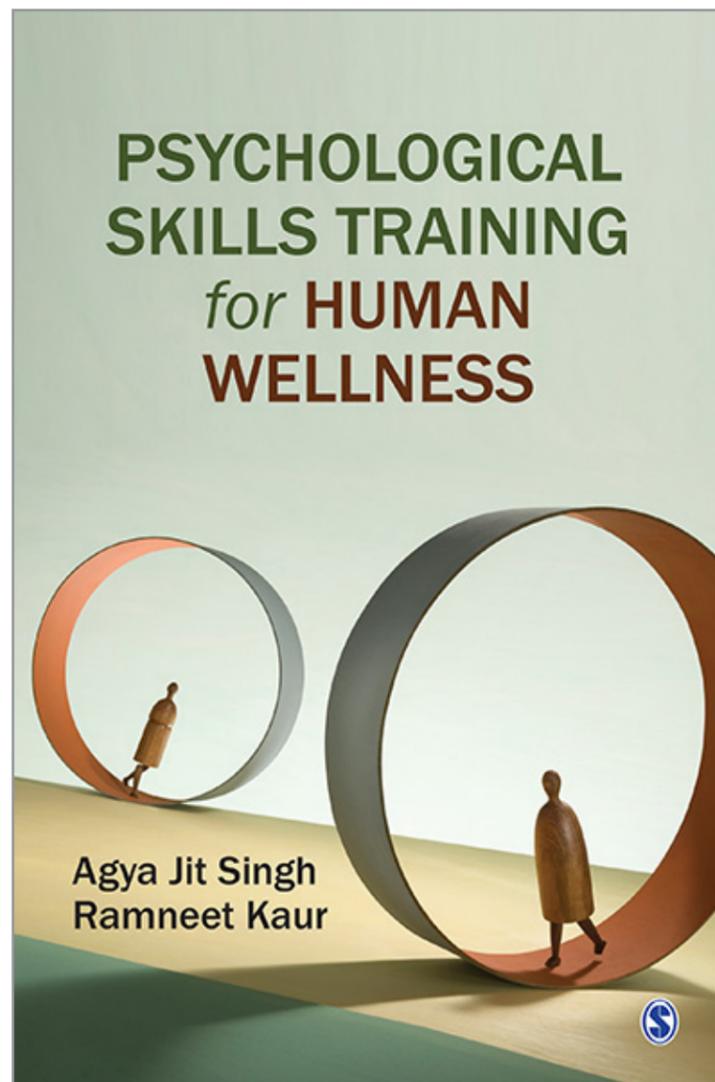
Perhaps if the conceptual tools of trauma, memory, place and narrative theory from the 1990s and 2000s had been available to the historians of the 1970s and 1980s, and they had been willing to employ them, a more sophisticated engagement with ASSI cultural and social sensitivities and aspirations might have resulted. Thus avoiding the disappointments of the hopes they held, after the renaissance of interest, for their emergence from being 'the forgotten people' and also avoiding, what I have argued was a re-traumatisation of the community. This is certainly an argument for a more hybrid approach in the social sciences which might have generated the political imagination necessary to dismiss the phantasmagoria, phantoms and imagos – the Golden-Syrup Man, the White-sugar Princess, the Boogeyman – to the murk of the colonial Fantasyland from which they emanate. I have listened, and heard, what the 'Kanakas' and the ASSI are whispering and I have realised that much can be learned from their obligation, memory, mourning, remembrance and survival work; much that could go towards creating Australia as a truly post-colonial socie



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## DR. AGYAJIT SINGH & DR. RAMNEET KAUR

PSYCHOLOGICAL SKILLS TRAINING  
FOR HUMAN WELLNESS  
PUBLISHED BY SAGE INDIA

In this book there is a discussion about psychological skills that help human beings to lead happy, stress-free, and enjoyable life. These are the techniques that an individual must adopt treading the journey of life to have a happy and healthy life. Psychologists are trying to devise and teach these techniques to individuals through counseling and other methods. The purpose is to make them physically and mentally fit as well as emotionally and socially adjusted so that they can develop a well-rounded personality. Learning these mental training skills has become an essential part of modern life as life has been becoming intricate in the current era and stress is increasing in our lives. These skills help in coping with the stress of life, build positive energy, develop motivation, help in conflict resolution, etc., and make the life of an individual peaceful and more productive.

SAGE India, January 2021, Rs 1,295 (Hardcover), 328 pages,  
9789353886684. Book available at :  
<https://stealadeal.sagepub.in/psychological-skills-training-for-human-wellness-agya-jit-singh-9789353886684.html>

This book goes deep into the psychological skills training that constitutes training the mind. Psychological skills training includes learning diverse techniques such as coping with the stress of life, keeping calm under difficult situations, resilience, persistence, self-motivation, self-confidence, strong moral character, leadership, time management, and communication skills. Psychological skills also include stress management techniques, regulation of psychic energy, setting positive goals, emotional arousal control, applying mental imagery techniques, and many more. All these skills must be learned, acquired, and practiced in daily life, to make our life very effective and productive.

### **Psychological skills training**

Psychological skills training is the systematic and organized practice of strategies, techniques, and methods designed to enhance an individual's performance, by enhancing their psychological skills. This training includes teaching and learning behavioral or psychological skills, such as managing stress and leading tension-free life, sustaining focus, and handling emotions. These programs are conducted by a trained psychologist. Psychological skills training is a scientific training process that can help in maintaining a balanced and calm state of mind under adverse competitive and stressful situations and can help in enhancing the performance of an individual.

Psychological skills training is a kind of mental training for maintaining mental health, to keep both body and mind fit to lead a healthy and productive life. It helps an individual to be adjusted and to achieve success in daily life. It is meant for increasing enjoyment, and achieving greater self-satisfaction. Psychologists have devised some strategies and techniques which include behavior modification, cognitive techniques, rational emotive therapy, and goal setting skills, attention control, progressive relaxation exercises, and systematic desensitization psychotherapy. The way we need to regularly practice physical exercises to keep ourselves physically fit to maintain physical health, similarly we need to practice these psychological skills such as focusing and sustaining concentration, regulating arousal levels, enhancing confidence and maintaining motivation, etc., to keep ourselves to mentally fit and maintain mental health.

Psychological skills training involves providing training to individuals so that they can learn how to regulate their emotions under undesirable conditions and how to maintain their composure under adverse situations. During this kind of training, relaxation techniques are taught which help an individual in maintaining a balanced state of mind in the face of competition and can help in enhancing the performance of an individual.

This kind of training is very useful in professional life where individuals face many challenges and competition. Different training programs can vary and have different skills to offer like communication, goal setting and planning, self-improvement, empathy, conflict resolution, and time management.

Psychological training means learning, practicing, and developing mental skills. The purpose of this training is to inculcate good character and develop habits like sociability, emotional maturity, and making them smart. They also include social skills that help the individuals in getting along with each other. Developing social skills is very important to be effective and successful in professional life also. They help in developing job satisfaction among employees and improve their productivity.

For school students, developing social skills is an educative process that helps them to prepare for future life. These attributes include such as assertiveness, collaboration, creativity, dependability, diligence, friendliness, generosity, inquisitiveness, intellectual orientation, optimism, organization, self-discipline, and stability. These personality traits are pertinent which must be inculcated among the school children. Teachers play a pivotal role in developing these skills in school students as they are handling and encountering them in and outside the classroom in their schools.

### **Application of psychological skills**

In the modern era of technological advancement, there is a pivotal need to learn and teach these skills. It is pertinent in the current times that everyone must possess psychological tools that make this modern life comfortable, pleasurable, and worth living. Modern life has become very intricate and is full of strains and stresses, anxiety, frustrations, maladjustments, disgust, and grief. Psychologists are trying their best to make human life happy, healthy, and prosperous by offering some strategies for coping up with the stress of daily life. Psychology is not only confined to study human behavior, but it also helps to create psychological well-being and human wellness with their research endeavors in the area of mental health and positive psychology.

In every human profession, the productivity of work is desired, and the efficiency of work can be increased by the knowledge of applied principles of human behavior. The information regarding behavioral skills and social competencies is the need of the hour. Of course, these skills are acquired through exposure to varied types of life experiences. Psychologists working in health psychology and positive psychology have devised certain techniques which are quite helpful in acquiring these skills and they are very helpful in our daily life.

These skills include imagery, which is considered a master skill. Besides it, there are many other skills like stress management, emotional arousal regulation, managing psychic energy, and psycho-regulative techniques. Others in the list include motivation, goal setting, developing self-confidence, attention, and concentration skills which enhance effectiveness and bring success at every step in our life. Hence, we must learn and imbibe these skills to make them a part of our daily life.

Psychological skills are beneficial in all walks of life, both professional and personal life. These skills play an important role in the fields of education, health care, sports, organizations & marketing, police, and prison administration as well as in-home care activities. After getting training about these skills, they should be practiced in life. For example, imagery is useful for mental rehearsal; managing psychic energy gives more vigor and energy in initiating any activity in life. Of course, motivation is required in the completion of any task and its accomplishment depends upon the goal-setting skill which is also related to the fulfillment of our objectives and aims of our chalk-out program as well as achieving the pursuit of excellence.

After studying all the relevant psychological skills which are very important for our modern life-style, it is suggested that psychologists should conduct more research work on these skills to come out with empirical findings to know the efficacy of these skills to reach a logical conclusion. They should also think of many more behavioral skills and concepts which are required in our present time; especially in these days of crisis of coronavirus disease, (COVID- 19) when people are going through bad days of isolation and mental pain.

All those who have become victim of this disease must learn these psychological skills and apply them in their regular routine life to combat this illness. Psychologists can play a significant role in ameliorating the effects of this disease by helping people to manage stress and control anxiety and to face disappointments and frustrations boldly.

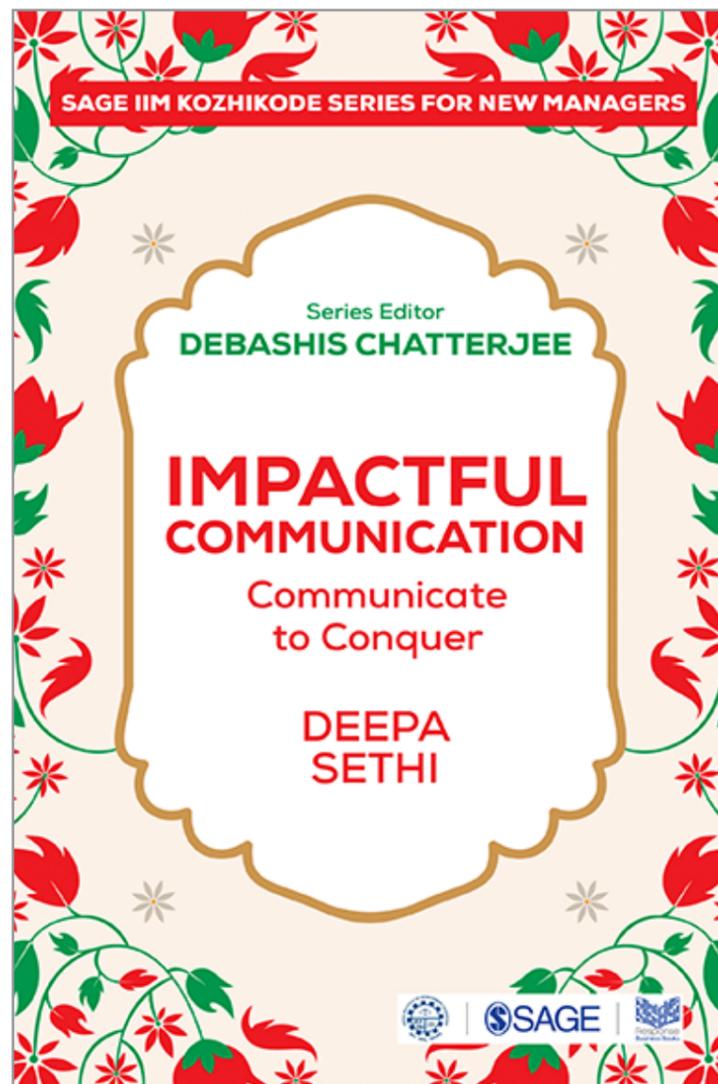
They should come out with practical guidelines on how to live with it and defeat the outcome of this disease. They should suggest some mental exercises for making their life comfortable and pleasurable, e.g., breathing and relaxation exercises, self-talk, visualization, meditation, and yoga. They should organize short-term workshops and training programs for teaching some of these skills, according to the nature of the problem which the people are facing.

These days, training in psychological skills has attracted the attention of psychologists, behavioral scientists, and educational administrators. Much research work in this area has started now by the researchers to find out the new parameters of psychological skills in the field of positive psychology.

Our mind plays a seminal role in our life. Our life is the reflection seen through the eyes of our mind. Our eyes do not see what our mind does not know. Our mind governs our life. The strength of mind is essential for the success in all spheres of life. This book portrays the significance of psychological skills training in increasing the strength of mind and how it can contribute to human wellness which is the need of the hour.



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SAGE Response, March 2021, Rs 450 (Paperback), 228 pages,  
9789353886981 Book available at :  
<https://stealadeal.sagepub.in/impactful-communication-deepa-sethi-9789353886981.html>

## PROFESSOR DEEPA SETHI

### IMPACTFUL COMMUNICATION: COMMUNICATE TO CONQUER PUBLISHED BY SAGE

The pandemic has proved that we rarely get the chance to select certainty. We have slowly got accustomed to the 'new normal.' Almost everything has changed. Amongst the few things that has not changed, is the significance of impactful communication. It will remain crucial as a paradigm shift in this VUCA world with regard to building relationships in personal and social life as well as at the workplace. Technology has, undoubtedly facilitated us in many ways, but it has also brought down the number of real conversations we have with people. We should remember that the bonds we develop in the present decide the future of our organization. Communication has to be a dialogue spiced with empathy and compassion to nurture bonds for a lifetime. In my book, 'Impactful Communication: Communicate to Conquer,' I have looked at the various nuances of impactful communication for sustaining relationships in both personal and professional life. In the subsequent paragraphs, I offer some insights from the book.

#### Active Listening

Impactful communication begins by being an active listener. Listen to absorb, to understand. Do not listen to react or to reply. Follow the 70:30 formula where you listen 70% of the time during a conversation, and speak only 30% of it. The outcome, you become the best of communicators. Remember, your speaking skills might turn you into a public speaker, nevertheless your listening makes you best at mindful communication. Listening is a choice, an art, and a gift, develop it. While you are listening, focusing not only on each and every word but also understanding the aim with which each word is spoken, lays the foundation of mindful communication. While speaking, observing closely—first, your thoughts, words and tone—completes the cycle of mindful communication. You communicate the best when your head, heart and body work in unison. Just like the pillars of a building keep it erect after the foundation is laid, mindfulness is the pillar that keeps your head, heart and body erect. Head has an aim, which leads the heart to have awareness of the present and the body gives approval through body language, eye contact and tone.

### What's Wrong with Our Listening?

The problem with our listening is that most of the time, we are into non-listening behaviours, which include pseudo listening, selective listening, insensitive listening, ambushing, stage hogging, defensive listening and insulated listening. As a result, we multitask—watching news on television while cutting vegetables, receiving phone calls while answering to emails, discussing home issues with spouse while watering the plants. Many a times, we are listening but without being in the moment. Mindful listening is when you are able to experience and relate to the speaker. Follow some simple steps to become a mindful listener.

1. **Concentrate:** Focus on the speaker completely. Cut all the surrounding sounds. Silent your phone for all calls and notifications. Be in the present. Come out of the past, stop thinking about the future while listening.
2. **Don't speak:** While listening, just listen. Even if you are eager to say something, don't interrupt. Offer what you have once the speaker has completed. This requires endurance but is not impossible.
3. **Acknowledge:** You don't need to accept or confirm what you are listening, just an acknowledgement is enough. Acknowledgement happens through warmth in your body language and facial expressions.

### Effective Communication is Simple!

Cut the clutter from your communication. Keep it simple; simplicity is perpetual. The greatest leaders around the globe use the simplest of words while communicating. Correctness, completeness, conciseness, clarity, concreteness are very essential to a communication; nonetheless equally vital are courtesy and consideration. Remember, whether it is spoken or written, communication cannot follow the rule of 'One size fits all.' Customize and personalize your choice of words and tone and see the difference.

### Nonverbal Matters

People may forget your looks; people may forget the gifts you gave them. But they will remember you for a lifetime for the way you treated them! Your behaviour is your signature and it includes both verbal and nonverbal behaviour. Just like your listening matters, your effectiveness in presenting yourself with dignity, poise and grace, matters.

Nonverbal communication carries more message than your verbal communication. The 'what' is to be said through words but the 'how' accounts for the non-verbal, which includes body language, voice modulation, eye contact, dressing style, behaviour to name a few. Combined with words, non-verbal communication makes your message stronger and clearer. You can use it to stress, support and cheer up your communication with others. When you communicate, you want others to understand what you intended when you communicated. Not only is it significant to mind your non-verbal communication, but it is also crucial for you to understand the non-verbal communication of your receiver. Listen to the nonverbal in order to adapt the you-attitude in communication.

### Be a Story-teller!

Stories have been woven in the very fabric of our life. They are loved by everyone across age groups and across genders. They etch in our memories permanently. Have dialogue with people! Monologue is not communication. Content is the cake; delivery is the icing. Both are equally important. Delve into the content, craft a narrative around it, and share it as a story teller. You will be reminisced for the content and delivery both! An effective story with a perfect narration is the right combination. While effective story stems out of authentic experiences, perfect narration is the outcome of suitable choice of words and appropriate non-verbal cues. The most effective stories are those which your receivers are able to relate with.

### Importance of Self-Esteem and Self-Confidence in Communication

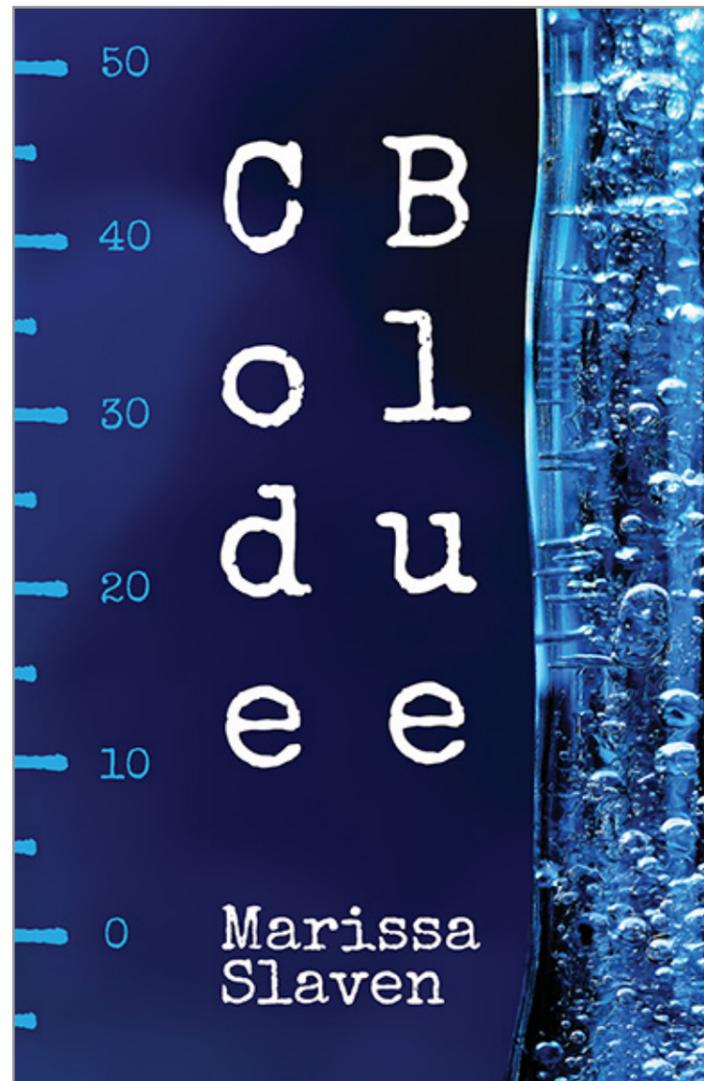
Self-esteem is the image you have of yourself. The way you behave with yourself is vital to existence. Self-esteem impacts your communication and energizes you. Self-esteem develops gradually over a period of time. Call yourself a loser for four consecutive days before a group of people, and you will find them calling you the same on the fifth day. Although it is good to identify your shortcomings and work on improving them, equally important it is to find pride in your achievements, no matter how small. A healthy pride empowers you to walk with head held high and speak with exuberance. Remember, external circumstances have the potential to harm your self-esteem, but no external motivator can build your self-esteem. High self-esteem leads to self-confidence. Self-confidence is the quality to believe in yourself, irrespective of your areas of improvement or what others might think about you. When you are self-confident, you control your life and do not permit external influences to destroy it. You are filled with positivity and optimism which is very evident in the way you communicate. A self-confident 'you' listens to absorb, articulates clearly, and acknowledges differences.



Marissa Slaven was born and raised in Montreal by parents who taught her that it was her responsibility to do her part to make the world a better place. She has been helping people in her role as a palliative care physician for twenty-five years and she continues to get great satisfaction from this work. She is the mother of three grown children and two dogs. She was inspired by her daughter to write *Code Blue*, an eco-fiction thriller, where a teenage girl and her friends battle climate change. Marissa took courses at Humber college where she honed her writing skills. In the process of writing the novel, Marissa taught herself about the climate crisis. She recently completed *Code Red*, the sequel to *Code Blue*, and is working on a non-fiction account of her great-uncle's involvement in the Spanish Civil War.



Mary Woodbury, a graduate of Purdue University, runs Dragonfly.eco, a site that explores ecology in literature, including works about climate change. She writes fiction under pen name Clara Hume. Her latest work, *Bird Song: A Novella* is a twist on Greek mythology, a climate change parable, a coming-of-age story, and a tale of weirdness. Mary lives in Nova Scotia and enjoys hiking, writing, and reading.



**Code Blue** by Marissa Slaven coming soon from <https://stormbirdpress.com/>

## MARY WOODBURY

Review of  
MARISSA SLAVEN'S  
**CODE BLUE**

<https://stormbirdpress.com/>

### Why this Climate Scientist is my new hero.

In *Code Blue*, a YA speculative eco-fiction thriller mystery, inspirational and likeable heroine Atlantic (Tic) Brewer is a climate scientist student trying to save the world: not because she is brave, can shoot arrows or jump off trains, but because she is smart.

Set in the not-so-distant future, when rising temperatures and sea levels have dramatically reshaped our world, author Marissa Slaven has created a powerful page-turner that keeps you hanging on every word. Styled very uniquely and structured with exam questions about climate change in a futuristic world, *Code Blue* acts as a panacea to teens and young adults faced with a global phenomenon—the sudden onset of natural disasters such as we have experienced around the world: floods or fires or a pandemic—that contributes to stress, depression, and anxiety combined with a sense of disempowerment, helplessness or resignation. But rather than lose hope, Tic and her friends find multiple actions and solutions to address this complex problem in a clear and engaging dialogue that is far from eco-preachy.

Tic is a very accessible character that leaves readers space to believe that the girl helping to save the world from climate change could be them. She's not a super-genius, but she does have an automatic reflex to help others, which originates from her deceased fathers' commitment to making life meaningful. Slaven hasn't overlooked any of the challenges faced by many young people who on a personal level still worry about their immediate futures: Can I get into the college I want? How will a changing climate change our home, our lives?

Before attending the North East Science Academy, Tic went to a small high school where she didn't have a lot of friends. Life is incredibly tough for her, but her sense of empowered optimism and emotional resilience shines as bright as a beacon.

Tic goes through the same growing pains as any modern-day teen or young adult—romantic uncertainty, concerns about family, and having to deal with loss and grief. And, in a contemporary society, this young woman also faces big worries about global warming—only, in her time, it's much worse than now.

Through Tic's struggles to figure things out in the apocalyptic place surrounding her, she offers an important message to today's young adults who wish to lead the way into a more positive future.

The year the story takes place is not specified, a clever omission that doesn't detract from the urgency of a changing climate but gives hope to readers that our planet can still be life supporting in 20 to 40 years from now until deep into our future.

Many parallels and overlapping themes exist between the author's palliative care work and the novel. As the world has recently had to accept and adapt to a life-altering pandemic, in *Code Blue* the world has accepted that the "Change" is both very real and a profoundly serious threat to humanity.

Faced with an ever-worsening climate situation, the characters are most often centered around preservation of dignity and love, and rather than lose hope they work together to try to achieve the best possible outcome for all of humanity.

*Code Blue* is the type of story we all need right now. Whether the issue is climate change, or something else altogether, like socio-political issues (*1984* or *The Handmaid's Tale*), stories like this connect us to our worries in a deep visceral way. Certainly, facts and statistics are important, but so much of what motivates people to action occurs at an emotional level. *Code Blue* maneuvers our biggest environmental crisis into a palpable understanding of the human condition within planetary risk, and does that so well.

In a most uplifting and refreshing way, *Code Blue* appeals to all ages, including adults like me. Perhaps we all find parts of ourselves in Tic Brewer.

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