

2010 - 2022



FREE ONLINE MAGAZINE FROM VILLAGE EARTH
FEBRUARY 2022

DR VEERENDRA MISHRA
Transgenders

COVER - CASSANDRA, PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK ULYSEAS



©Mark Ulyseas

Orchid, Laos PDR. Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.



SUPPORT LIVE ENCOUNTERS. DONATE NOW AND KEEP THE MAGAZINE LIVE IN 2022

Live Encounters is a not-for-profit free online magazine that was founded in 2009 in Bali, Indonesia. It showcases some of the best writing from around the world. Poets, writers, academics, civil & human/animal rights activists, academics, environmentalists, social workers, photographers and more have contributed their time and knowledge for the benefit of the readers of:

Live Encounters Magazine (2010), Live Encounters Poetry & Writing (2016), Live Encounters Young Poets & Writers (2019) and now, Live Encounters Books (August 2020).

We are appealing for donations to pay for the administrative and technical aspects of the publication. **Please help by donating any amount for this just cause as events are threatening the very future of Live Encounters.**

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om

Mark Ulyseas
Publisher/Editor
markulyseas@liveencounters.net

[Donate](#)

All articles and photographs are the copyright of www.liveencounters.net and its contributors. No part of this publication may be reproduced without the explicit written permission of www.liveencounters.net. Offenders will be criminally prosecuted to the full extent of the law prevailing in their home country and/or elsewhere.



CONTRIBUTORS

DR VEERENDRA MISHRA

DR HOWARD RICHARDS

JILL GOCHER

DR BIBHU PRASAD ROUTRAY

ANHAD MISHRA

MARK ULYSEAS - PHILIP CASEY - REMEMBRANCE

TERRY MCDONAGH - TRIBUTE TO PHILIP CASEY



Dr Veerendra Mishra, Indian Police Service officer (IPS), Assistant Inspector General of Police, Technical Service Branch, Police Headquarters, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh. Previously, he was CEO/Secretary, Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA), Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India. Earlier, he was Assistant Inspector General (CID) with Madhya Pradesh Police. He was awarded the prestigious Hubert Humphrey Fellowship (under Fulbright Scholarship) on the subject of human trafficking during 2012–2013. He is international expert of Anti-Human Trafficking. Besides, he has extensively studied the workings of police—both local police bodies and international bodies such as the United Nations Police (UNPOL). He worked in three UN missions Areas—in Bosnia–Herzegovina, Kosovo, and East Timor. Dr Mishra did his PhD on “Changing Image of Police: An Empirical Study” from Barkatullah University, Bhopal, in 2004. He has authored a book titled Community Policing: Misnomer or Fact (SAGE, 2011), edited another book, Human Trafficking: The Stakeholders’ Perspective (SAGE, 2013) and authored latest book Combating Human Trafficking: Gaps in policy and laws (SAGE, 2015). He also writes fiction; he has written a short-story book (Cracking of Dawn-2009 Selective and Scientific Publication Delhi), contributed stories in the Chicken Soup Soul series, and published a novel titled ‘Treatise From a Deathbed’ (Kitabwale Publications, Delhi, 2019). He also co-produced and co-directed a documentary film titled Do I Have a Choice, which is on the community-based sexual exploitation of Bedia community. He has developed and executed five 10 hours online course on Drugs (1), Senior Citizens (2), Transgenders (1) and Social Defence issues (1) at NISD (National Institute of Social Defence, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India (2021): Developed and delivered a five hours online introductory course on Human Trafficking for Pomeranian University in Słupsk, Poland May, 2021: Guidelines on investigation of Human Trafficking cases by Police to Sardar Vallabhai Patel National Police Academy (December, 2021). Research Study on ‘Missing Children and Linkages with Human Trafficking’ with BPR&D (Bureau Police Research and Development), Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, 2018.

DR VEERENDRA MISHRA

TRANSGENDERS

JOURNEY TOWARDS MARGINALISATION

To understand the current status of transgenders it is important to trace their journey through history. The presence of transgenders can be traced through various civilizations in almost all parts of the world. Interestingly their presence has been found to be respectful in history. The mention of transgenders can be found in almost all mythologies, be it Egyptian, Chinese, Japanese or Indian. Mythologies of these countries are considered to be emanating from the oldest of societies and their cultures. However, why the community, which has been looked upon with awe and reverence in some respect got marginalised is important to understand. It is imperative not just for the sake of understanding but because their marginalisation has led to discrimination of worst form, which in fact is gross violation of human rights.

Dr Veerendra Mishra

Before going through some parts of history, it would be prudent to comprehend who are transgenders. Rather than complicating the issue by using jargon let us try to explain transgenderism in the simplest way. In a binary gender divided society, that is a society where sex is seen in pure two form, that is male and female, the moment child is born, the child is identified as either male or female depending on the visible biological genitals the child is born with. That identity is a life time recognition. The gender role that the child with growth has to play too is ascertained based on sex at birth. Normally, society accepts the behaviour as have been set, as per defined and expected gender role. There is no refute to the universality of the gender signs and signals. It is all pervasive, hence even a little deviance gets noticed by any person. Individuals in society, by virtue of the accepted gender norms are expected to conform to it. So, to be precise, 'sex' is the biological differentiation manifested physically by appearance of genitalia and recognised as male or female. However, 'gender' represents the way a person psychologically recognises self through action and behaviour, which means the role that a person intends to play, either of a male or female. Transgenders are those who explicitly manifest incongruence in their gender role, which technically is called as gender dysphoria. This means a person not being comfortable with the gender role assigned on the basis of sex by birth, psychologically feels being caged in the wrong body. A male may psychologically feel like being a female and vice versa. Transgenders may also have fluid identities. This indicates that transgenders do not conform to gender binary rules.

The Vedic literature in India dating back to 1500 BCE to 500 BCE have reference of transgenders through different nomenclature: *tritiya-prakriti* and *nampumsaka*. In the oldest scriptures there is mention of the glory of Gandharvas who are referred as male, apsaras as female, and kinnars as the neuter. There are many epic stories in Indian mythology where the Lords themselves and other protagonists have taken up playing the role of gender fluid persons. That can be found in Mahabharata and Ramayana too. In fact, the role of transgenders in the war of Mahabharata is critical, and they have been vital in swaying the course of war. They all have been depicted with high esteem. The transgenders of today, in India, claim to be the descendants of those esteemed people, not by birth but by behaviour.

Amongst the Native American, transgenders were referred to as the '*two-spirited people*', and sometimes known as *berdache*. The term *berdache* was used by French explorers in North America, and it was believed by the natives that two spirited people had extra power for having spirit of both man and a woman, so that gift was extraordinary.

In India under the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871, the colonial rulers declared transgenders (eunuchs) as criminal tribes. Here it is interesting to note that transgenders were taken as a caste, though factually a transgender does not belong to any particular caste. This led to extreme marginalisation of the transgenders. The discrimination meted became so extreme over last few centuries that they were left with no option but to beg and prostitute themselves.

The presence of huge evidence of regarding the transgenders being priestess in worshipping Great Mother has been described by Roman historian Plutarch by subscribing Great Mother as an intersexual deity (an Hermaphroditic). Such evidences of transgender priestesses are found in Mesopotamian temple records from third millennium BCE and also in Babylonian records. Even Greek mythology talks about the sex-change, intersexuality and cross-dressing and mentions how their great mythological heroes and gods cross dressed at one time or another like Achilles, Dionysus, Heracles and Athena.

If we find such evidences of respect in history then what could be the reason for sudden marginalisation. This could be attributed to mainly two eras. First, is the period of Islamic rulers, who did large scale castration and objectified the presence of transgenders. They were used as guards to secure their harems, which sheltered their concubines and sex slaves. There are evidences of this tradition of castration being practices to satisfy the carnal pleasures of the rulers. So, their position in society got degraded and hence looked upon more as sex objects.

This further deteriorated with colonisation of countries. Transgenders by then were viewed as homosexuals. And the colonists, professing Christianity, thought homosexuality as blasphemy. This pushed the transgenders to the lowest rung society. Evidence shows that Spaniards while invading Louisiana killed the men who were dressed like female believing them to be hermaphrodites or homosexuals.

In India under the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871, the colonial rulers declared transgenders (eunuchs) as criminal tribes. Here it is interesting to note that transgenders were taken as a caste, though factually a transgender does not belong to any particular caste. This led to extreme marginalisation of the transgenders. The discrimination meted became so extreme over last few centuries that they were left with no option but to beg and prostitute themselves.

Transgenders are considered to be engaged in disreputable behaviour like involvement in sex work and substance misuse. Perhaps the transgender stigma could be because of a combination of various factors like the stigma of being outside the gender binary, practicing sex work and other behaviours deemed disreputable, such as uninhibited display of gender/sexual difference. The other disadvantaged position of the transgenders could also be because of poverty, nomadic status for having left their families and living almost like refugees or being in migration status and other factors.

A lot is required to be done to mainstream the transgenders and negate the marginalisation process which started in the last few centuries under prejudiced rulers. India has taken a big leap by promulgating the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 and Rules 2020.

Studies show that the percentage of population identifying as transgenders is abysmally low. In USA only between .01% to .5% of the population identify themselves as transgenders, whereas in India it ranges from .04% to .28%.

The other challenges they face with growing age, and adulthood are that of Identity, Entitlement rights and even Citizenship. They are highly discriminated against in access to opportunities and resources. They struggle to find jobs. Studies have reflected how they have lost their positions and even jobs for having admitted to being transgenders. The impact of such discriminations are the cause of their compromised physical and mental health. Studies show that the ideation to commit suicide, or an attempt made to commit suicide is at higher rate among transgender than cisgender teens.

A lot is required to be done to mainstream the transgenders and negate the marginalisation process which started in the last few centuries under prejudiced rulers. India has taken a big leap by promulgating the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 and Rules 2020.

Every country should progressively reform their policies and come out with legislations in favour of transgenders.



Photograph courtesy PTI.

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

DR HOWARD RICHARDS RULING OUT SOCIAL DEMOCRACY AS AN OPTION AND A WAY TO RULE IT BACK IN

A decisive misunderstanding prolonging today's mega crisis is the lingering belief that social democracy, as it existed in Europe during the thirty glorious years after World War II, and in a different form in the USA during the four terms of Franklin Roosevelt's presidency, is a viable option in today's world. Although most progressive thinkers today would deny that they suffer from this illusion, I would say (and the reader is free to disagree) that at a deep level it is so widespread that it is taken for granted, and that for this reason well known reform projects –including those associated with Yanis Varoufakis and Jeremy Corbyn in Europe; with Bernie Sanders, AOC, and Robert Reich in the USA; with a growing number of left-leaning presidencies in Latin America; and with the floundering remnants of social democratic movements inspired by leaders like Nelson Mandela and Julius Nyerere in Africa, run a real risk of being non-starters.

Non-starters? This is strong language. Nevertheless, I think I can make a case that it is not an exaggeration by calling only two witnesses, Joseph Schumpeter and Jeffrey Winters; and still have space left to sketch a way to reinvent social democracy in order to rule it back in.

But first a qualification: Under unusual conditions (such as those that prevailed in Europe during the *trente glorieuses*) social democracy is a viable option. Contemporary examples are Norway and Bolivia. Both are in the embarrassing position of enjoying high and stable (Norway) or growing (Bolivia) levels of social justice made possible by capturing rents from fossil fuels, during a period of history when the natural sciences and Greta Thunberg are telling us (truthfully) that fossil fuels ought not be mined, sold, and burned. Nonetheless, Norway and Bolivia are making social democracy work; and in the case of Bolivia also “restoring the kinship worldview” (*Ubuntu* in Africa, *buen vivir* in Latin America, and with many analogues in all the other parts of the world.)



Dr Howard Richards

It follows that governments do not govern. As Jürgen Habermas had argued in *The Legitimation Crisis* in 1973, in modernity the market is the primary institution. The government is secondary. Markets command governments more than governments command markets. Winters further elaborates: Meeting the physical needs of the population, especially when it is a large urban population with no capacity to retreat into local subsistence agriculture, depends on *first satisfying the core objectives of those controlling capital*. Therefore, governments, whatever their ideology may be, in practice devote themselves to attracting investment and to discouraging disinvestment (capital flight). Governments that fail to comply with this structural imperative do not last.

In 1919, at the age of 36, Joseph Schumpeter became Minister of Finance in the newly founded Republic of Austria. The socialist President, Karl Renner, had published in 1904 *Ein Beitrag zur Kritik des bürgerlichen Rechts* (later translated into English as *The Institutions of Private Law and their Social Functions*). Renner had argued that if social democrats could achieve electoral majorities they would be able to transform capitalism while staying within the framework of modernized Roman Law (Common Law in the Anglo-Saxon countries) that constituted the rule of law in modern republics. Similarly, Hjalmar Branting, the early leader of Swedish social democracy, had argued that the achievement of universal suffrage would make democratic socialism inevitable. In 1918 Schumpeter published *Die Krise des Steuerstaats (The Crisis of the Tax State)*, arguing, first, that prior to modern republics, rulers had many sources of income. Their greatest single source of income was rents from land ownership. The modern republic was inseparable from a liberal legal framework, limited government, reliance on taxes for government income, and a market economy. “What matters is that the potential tax yield is limited not only by the supply of the taxable object, less the subsistence minimum of the taxable subject, but also by the nature of the driving forces of the economy.” (p. 115 of the English translation) This somewhat opaque sentence from 2018 predicts the tax competition among nations of 2022. Given the nature of the driving forces of the economy, persons and corporations whose permissive acts (investments) start economic activity are wined and dined and subsidized. Low taxes, access to credit; infrastructure and security provided at public expense, and guarantees that profits made in a country can freely be moved out of it, are among the standard policy tools for getting investors “excited” about investing. (Dani Rodrik, *One Economics, Many Recipes*)

Schumpeter’s tenure as Minister of Finance lasted less than eight months. In his letter of resignation, he explained that he was being asked to perform an impossible task and to deceive the public. A tax state (*Steuerstaat*) could not be a welfare state. In my book co-authored with Joanna Swanger, *The Dilemmas of Social Democracies* (2006) we do case studies of Spain, Sweden, Austria, South Africa, Indonesia, Venezuela, and the evolution of the economic philosophy of the World Bank. They show that under normal circumstances Schumpeter’s view tells it like it is. Renner and Branting were mistaken. The Swedish (Rehn-Meidner) model could govern a high wage and full employment island (Sweden) in a low wage and high unemployment ocean (the world) under unusual circumstances, but when normality came home, illusions became homeless.

In 1996 Jeffrey Winters published *Power in Motion: Capital Mobility and the Indonesian State*. Back in 1936, Keynes had already emphasized two points sometimes called Staggering Facts: the chronic weakness of effective demand, and the chronic weakness of the inducement to invest; and consequently the chronic tendency of the economy to stop, not to go. It stops when investors do not invest; it goes when they do invest. Employment is a function of how much labour-power employers hire. The employers hire just enough workers to produce as much merchandise as they think they can profitably sell. Keynes called investment the *causa causans* of employment. Winters elaborates: “And it is precisely in designing and implementing policies [of the governments hr] that meet the population’s investment and production needs, *by first satisfying the core objectives of those controlling capital* that the structural dimension of investors’ political power finds expression.” (page 3)

It follows that governments do not govern. As Jürgen Habermas had argued in *The Legitimation Crisis* in 1973, in modernity the market is the primary institution. The government is secondary. Markets command governments more than governments command markets. Winters further elaborates: Meeting the physical needs of the population, especially when it is a large urban population with no capacity to retreat into local subsistence agriculture, depends on *first satisfying the core objectives of those controlling capital*. Therefore, governments, whatever their ideology may be, in practice devote themselves to attracting investment and to discouraging disinvestment (capital flight). Governments that fail to comply with this structural imperative do not last.

“When investors choose not to invest, policymakers are powerless to force them.” (Ibid.) This third Staggering Fact, like the first two, justifies the use of the word “structural.” “Social structure” is a concept studied in detail by Doug Porpora and Tony Lawson, to whose works I refer anybody interested in a deep dive into its meaning and consequences. Social structure is more fundamental than legislation. It is presupposed, not created, by economic models. Social structures tend to be taken for granted as natural, and to be ferociously defended as sacred. In modernity the basic structure is named in many ways by liberals, by Marxists, and by others who are neither liberals nor Marxists. One way to name it is: The basic social structure is the allegedly God-given or Nature-given right of a person (and also of a corporation granted the rights of a person) to liberty and to property.

To see anthropology and sociology –and not economics—as the fundamental social sciences, and to see fundamental social science as historical (as both Emile Durkheim and Max Weber, among many others, advocated) is a step toward freeing the human mind from liberal and neoliberal hegemony. A point hinted at above, that the ferocious defence of extreme and oversimplified versions of liberty and property is a knee jerk response of majorities, including many of the victims most damaged by the system, is a symptom of hegemony.

Basic “structural” rights trump needs. When investors choose not to invest, policymakers are powerless to force them because, given the basic social structure, the need for food, for dignity, for employment, the need to save the biosphere, and any need whatever, can be satisfied if and only if, first, property owners freely choose to invest.

Winters goes on to demonstrate the existence in our times of a further extension of a logic that has been implicit in capitalism from the beginning. David Ricardo (1772-1823) thought about it, wondering why capital did not always flow to whatever location offered the highest profits. Ricardo’s answer was that investors feared losing their money if they sent it away to distant places with strange customs and poor law enforcement. Today’s accelerating globalization that Winters writes about presupposes a global world order solving the problem Ricardo worried about.

We now live in the time of what Winters calls the Locational Revolution. Its full effects will be incalculable. They are yet to be felt. In our times, the times of the Locational Revolution, controllers of capital decide which laws to obey when they decide where to locate. Governments compete to please them. Legislators write laws designed to stimulate a nation’s economy. They try make it go, but only controllers of capital can actually make it go.

(I simplify, using the expression “the economy” as it is commonly used, while knowing that, as Hazel Henderson and others have shown, more than half the world’s work is done outside “the economy” that gets so much attention and whose malfunctioning does so much damage.)

I hope the above is a sufficient introduction to reasons for ruling out social democracy as we have known it in the past as an option for the present. It leaves some space to write about how to rule a reinvented social democracy back in. It will be convenient to start with Johan Galtung’s triple analysis of violence: direct violence, structural violence, and cultural violence.

Picking up on an idea from Pierre Bourdieu, Magnus Haavelsrud and Alicia Cabezudo have been developing peace education methods based on the principle that when culture and social structure conflict, social structure tends to change. I do not know whether anyone else is working along similar lines.

Speaking more generally, I recommend –and I detect growing counter-cultures and scientific research programmes moving in the direction I am recommending – seeing cultural violence as more fundamental than structural violence, indeed as its root cause and as the source of its constitutive rules.

Structural violence, in turn, massively creates direct violence (as does massive emotional starvation at birth and in early childhood, as Darcia Narvaez has shown –but, as Daniel Goleman points out in his work on emotional intelligence, the emotional starvation of millions of children is itself largely a consequence of overstressed and overworked parents struggling to get by in today’s global economy).

To see anthropology and sociology –and not economics—as the fundamental social sciences, and to see fundamental social science as historical (as both Emile Durkheim and Max Weber, among many others, advocated) is a step toward freeing the human mind from liberal and neoliberal hegemony. A point hinted at above, that the ferocious defence of extreme and oversimplified versions of liberty and property is a knee jerk response of majorities, including many of the victims most damaged by the system, is a symptom of hegemony.

Culture can be read as the ecological niche of the human species. Culture is much older than social structure –social structure being a concept more at home in the modern *Gesellschaft* than in the traditional *Gemeinschaft*. Social structure can be seen as a key concept for sociology, while culture is the flagship concept of the more comprehensive science of anthropology. Culture links the natural sciences to the social sciences. It links evolutionary biology to social psychology. Lev Vygotsky embedded psychology in culture, history, and biology when he founded the intellectual tradition called Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT).

Now, at a time in history when a hegemonic rule of law cements in place a locational revolution that disempowers governments, a promising educational strategy reframes the laws of economics –previously framed as eternal and universal analogues of Newton’s laws of motion—as cultural constructions built by 18th century European culture from materials provided (mainly) by the modern reception of Roman Law. Modern western liberal culture, like any other culture, can be reconstructed as new generations learn it and change it as they learn it.

We should embrace Martin Luther King Jr.'s concept of one Human Family living in one World House: and Evelin Lindner's Big Love. The typical objectives of social democracies, such as everyone having good health care, housing, and pensions, should be regarded as ends-in-themselves, to be accomplished one way or another.

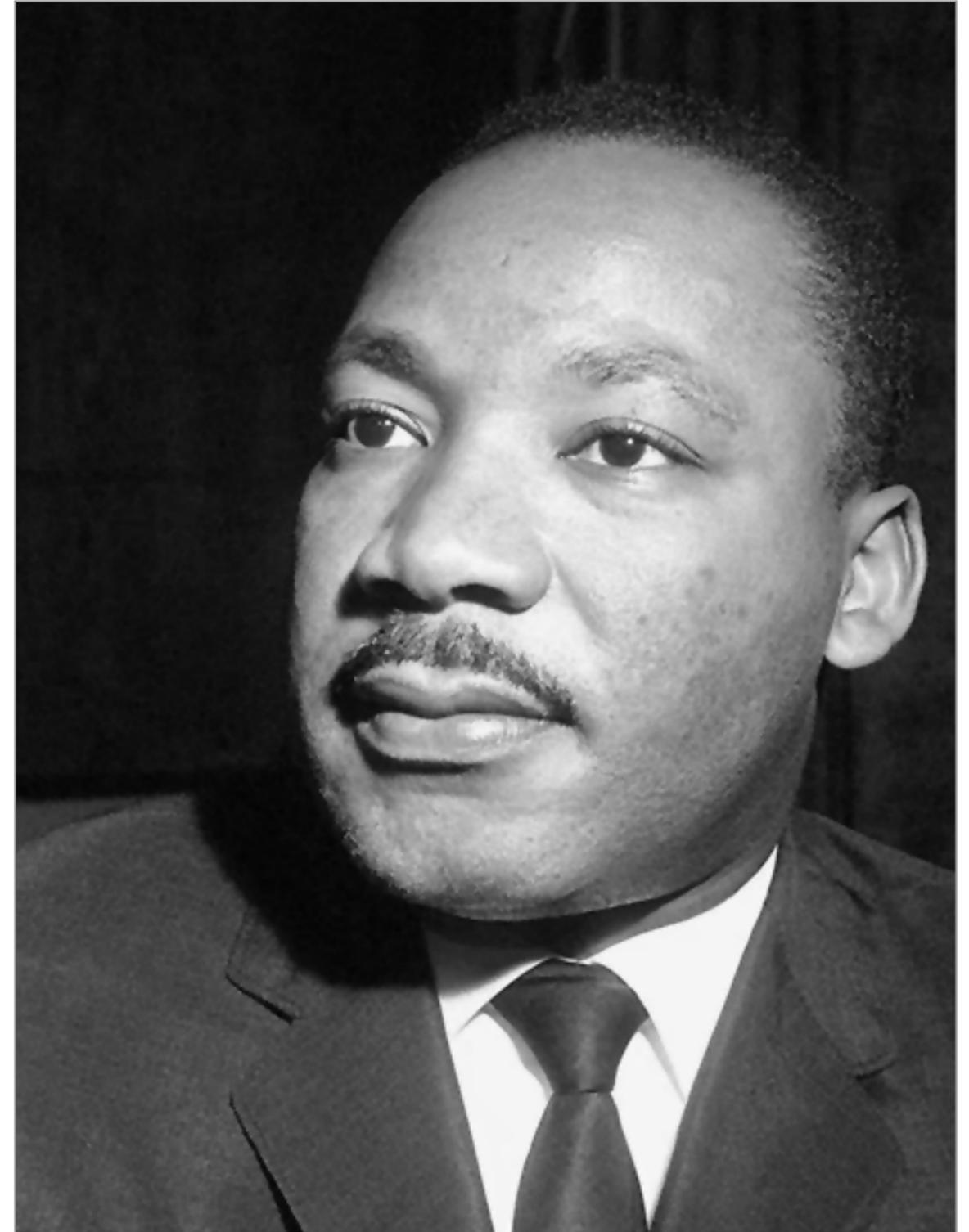
This is happening. It is happening in the light of contemporary natural science and in dialogue with the "defeated epistemologies" of Asia, Africa, and Latin America that are coming to voice and demanding to be heard.

Seeing the culture concept (Google James Boggs, The Culture Concept as Theory, in Context) as primary, and as a powerful force for structural transformation, motivates building cultures of peace today, here and now. It suggests (as Haavelsrud puts it) using education from below to counter oppression from above by governments hell-bent on making big business even more profitable than it already is by intimidating labour even more than it is already intimidated. It encourages governments like Gabriel Boric's new government here in Chile, that are trying to reinvent social democracy after its catastrophic defeat by finance-capital-driven neoliberalism.

Here are two more contemporary trends we have going for us:

One is the unbounded idea. When the workers lost the class struggle, the capitalists lost too. They created a world that nobody wants to live in –and in which nobody could live in much longer even if they wanted to, because it is unsustainable. These realities motivate growing support for movements that are aligning across sectors for the common good. There is more voluntary sharing of wealth. There is more thinking outside the box, forgetting the old dichotomy market vs. government, while realizing that for any given problem that we set out to solve together, the number of possible solutions is in principle unlimited.

Another trend going for us is the ethics boom. As if by instinct operating at a gut level, there is a massive groundswell of awareness that if there is still hope for humanity, that hope requires, as Buckminster Fuller put it, "graduating" to a higher ethical level. Not to a bogus ethics that glorifies sacrificing the needs of the many to the property rights of a few, but to a care ethic, to an ethics of responsibility, human rights, dignity, cognitive justice, inclusion, service, solidarity. Today we should adopt as an ethical starting point Andrew Sayer's proudly mundane principle that the purpose of an economy is to enable people to live well. We should embrace Martin Luther King Jr.'s concept of one Human Family living in one World House: and Evelin Lindner's Big Love. The typical objectives of social democracies, such as everyone having good health care, housing, and pensions, should be regarded as ends-in-themselves, to be accomplished one way or another.



Photograph courtesy (<https://www.ksat.com/news/local/2022/01/17/watch-san-antonios-mlk-day-kickoff-and-virtual-mlk-march/> Pa Images Via Reuters Connect)

Jill Gocher, a Bali based international photographer, has spent her life exploring and enjoying Asian cultures. Her work has appeared in National Geographic, Time, International Herald Tribune, Asia Spa, Discovery, Silver Kris and many more. Her books – Asia's legendary Hotels, Periplus, Bali- Island of Light – Marshall Cavendish, Indonesia – Islands of the Imagination. Periplus, Australia – the land down under – Times Editions, Singapore, Indonesia – the last paradise – Times Editions. She has held exhibitions in Singapore, Kathmandu, and Bali. Photojournalist + Media Consultant, AmazonPage: www.amazon.com/author/jillgocher instagram [jillgocher](https://www.instagram.com/jillgocher)



JILL GOCHER

DEMONS OR DEITIES?

Text & Photographs

The blue faces create confusion for those unaccustomed to Indian ways! See a blue face and Krishna comes to mind. But not in this scenario. These little girls are *Shivaites*.

Although they come complete with the Shiva accoutrements of topknot and horizontal *tilaka*, and although some sport a snake around their neck, these girls are not so holy! There is no dharma on their minds for money is in their hearts. They are here to charm, coerce, cajole money from all and sundry.

As they work the ghats of the holy city of Varanasi they provide a delightful surprise amongst the throngs who make their way to the sacred river.



Even without a blue face, this little Shiva is the proud possessor of a wooden cobra which looks almost frighteningly real if a little dead.

Blue represents strength of character. Here in the holy city of Varanasi, also known as Benares or the older name of Kashi, Shiva reigns supreme.



A pensive mood or is she just seeking the next donor. Restlessness was her main attribute as she scanned the ghats.

With her Shiva topknot covered in flowers, her Rudraksha beads and her wooden cobra this little girl has all the accoutrements except the trident!



Varanasi is one of the world's oldest continually inhabited cities. Legend has it that Lord Shiva founded the city about 5,000 years ago. The city's religious importance continued to grow in the 8th century, when Adi Shankara established the worship of Shiva as an official sect of Varanasi.

The ghats of Varanasi are a glorious jumble of palaces, temples, cupolas and pavilions. In their midst are the burning ghats where hundreds of bodies are burned every day, the smoke from the fires curling upwards to mingle with the spiritual energy that is so strong in this holy city.



It is said that when anyone dies in the city of Shiva, they will experience a blinding flash of illumination that helps them on the path to their next life.

It is not surprising to find these mini Shivas in the deity's own holy city. it just seems fitting and appropriate.



Three little Shivas in a row. Deities or demons, they add another touch of the exotic to India's most exotic city.



Tools of the trade. Some red tika, some tiny Shiva stamps and a tray to hold the money. That's all you need in Varanasi, the city of Shiva.

Dr. Bibhu Prasad Routray held the position of Visiting Professor and Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR) chair, India Studies at Murdoch University, Perth between July-December 2017. He served as a Deputy Director in the National Security Council Secretariat, Government of India and Director of the Institute for Conflict Management (ICM)'s Database & Documentation Centre, Guwahati, Assam. He was a Visiting Fellow at the South Asia programme of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore between 2010 and 2012. Routray specialises in decision-making, governance, counter-terrorism, force modernisation, intelligence reforms, foreign policy and dissent articulation issues in South and South East Asia. His writings, based on his projects and extensive field based research in Indian conflict theatres of the Northeastern states and the left-wing extremism affected areas, have appeared in a wide range of academic as well as policy journals, websites, and magazines. This article republished by permission of www.mantraya.org

BIBHU PRASAD ROUTRAY

ROHINGYA REFUGEE CAMPS IN BANGLADESH: SWEEP OF RADICALIZATION

Abstract

For nearly one million Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, the long wait for repatriation to Myanmar continues to grow longer. While Bangladesh is in no mood to grant them the right to freedom of movement beyond their camps, the unrest in Myanmar virtually rules out the possibility of their return to their homes in the Rakhine state. The impact of protracted lack of access to livelihood avenues and education can be catastrophic for this huge mass of population, which includes about 400,000 children. A steady uptick in the incidents of organized crime, radicalization, and other forms of violence are signs of the dangers that can affect Bangladesh and Myanmar in particular and South and Southeast Asia in general in 2022 if a solution to the crisis is not found.

Introduction

Nearly 745,000 Rohingya were driven out of Myanmar into the overcrowded camps in neighbouring Bangladesh in 2016 and 2017. Over the years, hopes of their repatriation back to their home country have continued to fizzle out. Four years and counting in the congested refugee camps sans basic facilities, right to work and pursue education, and freedom of movement, the refugees have primarily depended on the weekly and monthly subsistence assistance from various aid agencies. Over the years, the search for safety that drove the Rohingya to Bangladesh has gradually turned into desperation, which is now being exploited by criminal and organized crime groups, and also, by the terror outfit, the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA).



Dr Bibhu Prasad Routray

Fast forward to January 2022. In the early hours of 16 January, Bangladesh Armed Police Battalion (APBn) arrested Mohammad Sha Ali from the Noukar Maath area at Rohingya camp-6 in Cox's Bazar's Ukhiya. Sha Ali is the half-brother of ARSA commander Ataullah Abu Amar Jununi. A weapon and an unspecified quantity of narcotics were recovered from him. A Rohingya civilian whom Sha Ali had abducted was rescued.

Killings in Refugee Camps

On 29 September 2021, 48-year old Mohibullah, chief of the Arakan Rohingya Society for Peace and Human Rights (ARSPH), was shot and killed by unidentified gunmen in Kutupalong camp in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. An influential Rohingya leader, he had been documenting the Myanmar military's crimes against the Rohingya and advocating for the refugees' rights in international forums. The ARSPH has been advocating a moderate line of negotiation with the Tatmadaw (Myanmarese military). He had faced death threats in recent years for his work. Bangladesh police have arrested eleven persons for the murder, who reportedly have confessed to their role.[1] Mohibullah's assassination was followed by the killing of seven other Rohingya refugees. On 22 October, unidentified gunmen entered the Darul Ulum Nadwatul Ulama al Islamia madrasa at the Balukhali refugee complex in Cox's Bazar and randomly shot some victims and stabbed others with knives. Several others were wounded. One gunman, whom the Bangladesh police described as a 'Rohingya miscreant' was arrested with a gun, six rounds of ammunition, and a knife.[2]

An Arrest

Fast forward to January 2022. In the early hours of 16 January, Bangladesh Armed Police Battalion (APBn) arrested Mohammad Sha Ali from the Noukar Maath area at Rohingya camp-6 in Cox's Bazar's Ukhiya. Sha Ali is the half-brother of ARSA commander Ataullah Abu Amar Jununi. A weapon and an unspecified quantity of narcotics were recovered from him. A Rohingya civilian whom Sha Ali had abducted was rescued. Preliminary investigations have revealed that Sha Ali holds a Bangladeshi national identity card that mentions his permanent address in Chattogram (Chittagong) city.[3] On 18 January, the ARSA clarified that Sha Ali, a former 'low-key' member of the group, had been relieved of duties two & a half years ago after being diagnosed with heart disease and suspected of cancer.[4]

Surge in ARSA's activities

Sha Ali's arrest comes at a time when the ARSA is reportedly gaining ground in Myanmar. The group has been blamed for a spate of violence in Myanmar that led to the killings of security force personnel in 2016, and which ultimately provided the Tatmadaw to start the ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya.

The ARSA has reportedly extended support to the National Unity Government (NUG), formed in opposition to the February 2021 coup in Myanmar. Previously termed as a terrorist group, ARSA joining hands with the NUG in its armed opposition against the Tatmadaw may have provided the former and its actions some sort of legitimacy. In November 2021, ARSA claimed to have killed Tatmadaw soldiers in three separate encounters in Rakhine.[5] At the same time, incidents of ARSA opening fire on villagers in Maungdaw have emerged along with photos and videos of the group's armed cadres training in an unidentified location in the Rakhine state, in social media posts. The evidence seems to suggest that ARSA is a stronger group today compared to its ragtag existence in 2017.

Contrasting Positions

ARSA's force enablers including the location of its ascent to supremacy, however, are a matter of dispute. In December 2021, Tom Andrews, the United Nations special rapporteur on human rights in Myanmar, told reporters that he had credible information about the ARSA being involved in kidnapping, abusing, and even killing fellow Rohingya at the refugee camps in Bangladesh.[6] The killers of Mohibullah have reportedly identified themselves as ARSA members. Media interviews of several camp inmates too have revealed that the group is active in the camps—spreading fear, enlisting recruits, and eliminating perceived adversaries like Mohibullah. Unlike the ARSPH, which favours the negotiation route for repatriation of Rohingya into Myanmar, ARSA wants to wage an armed assault on the Tatmadaw. Not surprisingly, some of the Rohingya refugees killed in the October attack had informed the Bangladeshi and international authorities that their names were on a hit list drawn by the ARSA. Many other Rohingya activists have gone into hiding. These reports somewhat endorse Tatmadaw's position repeatedly pointing at the refugee camps in Bangladesh as the recruitment and training centres of the ARSA. In fact, reports have emerged that ARSA's intention of using the madrasa at Balukhali refugee complex and the ARSPH's opposition to it led to the killings in October 2021. Dhaka, however, continues to deny the presence of ARSA in the refugee camps. It fears that acknowledgment of ARSA's presence in Bangladesh would further hamper the prospect of repatriation of the Rohingya into Myanmar. Bangladesh's foreign minister A.K. Abdul Momen has contradicted Tom Andrew's statement and categorically dismissed speculations of ARSA finding root in Bangladesh. [7] Bangladeshi response follows a typical pattern. It has always been a denial mode about terrorism in the country, be it the al Qaeda or the Islamic State-inspired activities, or that of the ARSA.

Although Dhaka would like to describe the Rohingya to be temporary guests, the reality is different. The Rohingya will remain in Bangladesh for foreseeable future, till the authorities in Myanmar agree to their repatriation and guarantee their safety. Given this truism, it is necessary for Dhaka and the international community to develop a mechanism that not only allows the former to gain stricter control over the camps, but at the same time, makes provisions for the wellbeing of the inmates considering their vocational, educational, and emotional aspirations.

Camps as trouble spots

Notwithstanding what Dhaka claims, happenings in the sprawling Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar area tell stories of rapidly sinking levels of security for the refugees and increasing levels of organized crime, narcotics trade, and also that of the activities of the ARSA, involving the inmates and also persons inside and out of Bangladesh.

Close to one million Rohingya live in Bangladesh, most of them in about 34 camps, in the Cox's Bazaar area, near the Bangladesh-Myanmar border. Waves of anti-Rohingya violence that took place in Myanmar in 1978, 1991-92, and 2016 have brought these people into the country. At one level, the enormity of the refugee problem, which Bangladesh has been forced to deal with, could be simply going out of its control. On the other, the strict restrictions imposed on the inmates by the Bangladeshi government could be forcing them to take desperate measures.

The refugees are forbidden from seeking employment. Few of them set up shops inside the perimeter of the camps. However, security forces periodically dismantle these petty shops that allow inmates to earn some money. Educational institutions that the Rohingya children can access are a handful. Bangladeshi authorities have shut down private schools set up by the inmates themselves, suspecting that these could be promoting radicalization. The ongoing Covid Protocol has added to the miserable plight of the inmates as it has kept most of the humanitarian workers out of the camps.

While the APBn has restricted access of the inmates to the outside world, by all means, its control over what goes inside the camps is lax. Security forces man the camps during the daytime. As the night falls, most of them go back to their barracks. And then the ARSA and organised criminals take over the narrow streets of the camps. Murder, looting, kidnapping of women and children, and drug and sex-related crimes are reported regularly. The ARSA cadres, inmates allege, continue with their radicalization, recruitment, and fund-raising activities. For scores, life inside the camps is akin to living inside a prison, a shackle that they want to break desperately. While the camps are captive recruitment pools for the ARSA cadres, not joining them isn't a matter of choice for some of the inmates. It is in fact becoming a necessity for many. For others who don't want to join the ARSA, it is a hide and seek game within a radius of 26 kilometres, inside which all camps exist.

Road Ahead

There is no shortcut to ending the Rohingya misery. Rohingya repatriation is not a priority for the Tatmadaw, whose control over Myanmar is shrinking every passing day. Although Dhaka would like to describe the Rohingya to be temporary guests, the reality is different. The Rohingya will remain in Bangladesh for foreseeable future, till the authorities in Myanmar agree to their repatriation and guarantee their safety. Given this truism, it is necessary for Dhaka and the international community to develop a mechanism that not only allows the former to gain stricter control over the camps, but at the same time, makes provisions for the wellbeing of the inmates considering their vocational, educational, and emotional aspirations. It is also necessary for the regional countries especially India to be involved in the process, to enhance Dhaka's capacities in this regard. Radicalization of even a fraction of the inmates would have a significant impact on the entire region. And lastly, denying the presence of ARSA in the camps is no longer a viable strategy for Bangladesh. It is time that the existence of the problem is acknowledged and strategies to address it are chalked out.

[1] "5 ARSA members arrested over Rohingya leader's murder", BD News, 9 October 2021, <https://bdnews24.com/rohingya/2021/10/09/5-arsa-members-arrested-over-rohingya-leader-s-murder>.

[2] "7 killed in Rohingya refugee camp shooting in Bangladesh", India Today, 22 October 2021, <https://www.indiatoday.in/world/story/people-killed-rohingya-refugee-camp-shooting-bangladesh-1867846-2021-10-22>.

[3] Muhammad Ali Jinnat, "Arsa commander's brother carried Bangladeshi ID", Daily Star, 18 January 2022, <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/crime-justice/news/arsa-leaders-brother-has-bangladeshi-id-2941311>.

[4] Tweet by ARSA, from the handle 'ARSA_The Army', 18 January 2022, https://twitter.com/ARSA_Official/status/1483470447778103300.

[5] Press statement by the ARSA, 15 November 2021, https://twitter.com/ARSA_Official/status/1460154007784402945/photo/1.

[6] "UN rapporteur: Rohingya militants kill, abuse refugees in Bangladesh camps", Radio Free Asia, 20 December 2021, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/un-rohingya-12202021171519.html>.

[7] Ibid.

Anhad is a London based business student with a passion for film and tech, and a bachelor's degree in Political Science, as well as four years' experience working his way up the greasy pole of the Bollywood hierarchy. Partly as a result of that experience, he grew fascinated by the opportunities for tech in film business. This is when he founded ArtCab, a mobile application designed to help independent filmmakers find appropriate talent for pre-production workflow and crew-building. Since joining the MA program in Creative Business at National Film and Television School, Anhad has continued to develop his passion for tech in film and other creative industries, especially the role of artificial intelligence and its role in transforming the world around us.

ANHAD MISHRA

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: THE ROAD TO UNIVERSAL UTILITY

The future is already here, it's just not evenly distributed
-William Gibson

Artificial Intelligence will be the new electricity. The parallelism of AI as the new electricity is appropriate in that it conveys the possibility that AI - much like electricity - will become omnipresent and universally accessible, affecting and transforming nearly every domain of the human civilisation.

The resource of artificial intelligence, is not going to be identical. Its promise is going to be much varied, having vastly diverse capabilities and applications. The potential of AI will never be constant but dramatically different, especially in terms of the supplier of the technology. It will never cease to advance, evolve and upgrade; consistently gaining momentum towards human-level intelligence, and maybe someday beyond.

Another critical difference can be found in the use-case of the two technologies. While electricity enables the functioning of other technologies and innovations - a means to an end - AI, in contrast, is an end in itself. AI promises intelligence, the ability to solve complex problems and provide ground-breaking decision-making solutions. In fact, in the field of Artificial General Intelligence (AGI), it is speculated that one day AI will innovate and create its own ideas.



Anhad Mishra

As AI rapidly evolves into a universal utility, it is clear that it will shape the future of humanity in much the same way that electricity did for the contemporary civilisation. In this regard, a majority of the infrastructure has been designed and modelled around the electrical grid, which allows us to benefit from the fruits of electricity and universalise it.

Similarly, a new infrastructure is underway, which will allow us to leverage the future potential of AI. As new businesses and organisations are rapidly capitalising upon the possibilities of AI and integrating the technology in every part of their modus operandi, our political and cultural institutions will soon be forced to adapt to keep up.

The biggest characteristic of AI's road to universality lies in its *unpredictability*. It will remain a highly dynamic force with a much larger potential to cause socio-economic disruption. Intelligence, after all, is the ultimate asset, underlying every human endeavour that exists.

The emerging AI Infrastructure:

Any technological utility requires an enabling infrastructure that allows it to be universally delivered. Artificial Intelligence will be no different. In fact, the recent boom in AI is facilitated by the enormous computing infrastructure that is already in place; millions of laptops, PCs, mobile phones, and data servers have grown rampantly. Further, such distributed computing platforms are dramatically amplifying their effectiveness by new hardware and software specifically tailored to optimise deep learning techniques.

The primary building block of AI infrastructure started with graphics processing units, or GPUs. Taking off in 1990s, GPUs were originally designed to accelerate complex computations required to render high-resolution graphics, employed majorly in high-end video game consoles such as Microsoft Xbox and Sony PlayStation. While a processing chip that powers your laptop consists two to four "cores", a modern GPU can have thousands of cores - it's that powerful. Subsequently, when researchers found that the number-crunching and computations required by AI deep learning applications are vastly similar to those needed to render high-end graphics, GPUs soon became the primary hardware platform for Artificial Intelligence. This knowledge was perhaps the turning point behind the deep learning revolution that took hold in 2012.

In fact, one of the first practical use-cases of Google DeepMind's AI research was a deep learning system that could optimize the cooling systems in Google's in-house data centres. It is reported that DeepMind's deep learning system consists of neural networks trained on the massive amount of data gathered from sensors distributed throughout Google's hosting centres, and have successfully cut the energy used for cooling by up to 40% (Evan, Richard, et al 2016). A recently published study also observes that while the extent of cloud computing done between 2010 and 2018 has increased by 550%, the energy consumption in data centres has only increased by 6% during the same time period (Holzle Urs, 2020)

A largely overlooked enabler of the emerging AI infrastructure is cloud computing. The cloud computing industry took birth in 2006 with the launch of Amazon Web Services, or AWS. The strategy behind AWS was simple: leverage Amazon's expertise in building and organising the gigantic data centres powering its online shopping service by selling flexible and reliable access to computing resources (hosted in similar facilities) to a vast range of other businesses. Since then, the growth of cloud services has been staggering. According to a recent study, 94% of the businesses today, ranging from multinational corporations to small and medium-sized companies use cloud computing (Flexera, 2019).

What is truly remarkable about the advent of cloud computing is the scope of automation it employs. The data centres that host cloud-based servers are tremendously massive, costing more than a billion dollars. And yet, these facilities are heavily automated and employ astonishingly few humans; sophisticated algorithms control and manage most of the activities that goes inside these spaces with precision that is humanly impossible. For example, the enormous amount of electricity consumed by cloud-computing facilities requires a cooling mechanism to offset the heat generated. This is also achieved algorithmically. In fact, one of the first practical use-cases of Google DeepMind's AI research was a deep learning system that could optimize the cooling systems in Google's in-house data centres. It is reported that DeepMind's deep learning system consists of neural networks trained on the massive amount of data gathered from sensors distributed throughout Google's hosting centres, and have successfully cut the energy used for cooling by up to 40% (Evan, Richard, et al 2016). A recently published study also observes that while the extent of cloud computing done between 2010 and 2018 has increased by 550%, the energy consumption in data centres has only increased by 6% during the same time period (Holzle Urs, 2020)

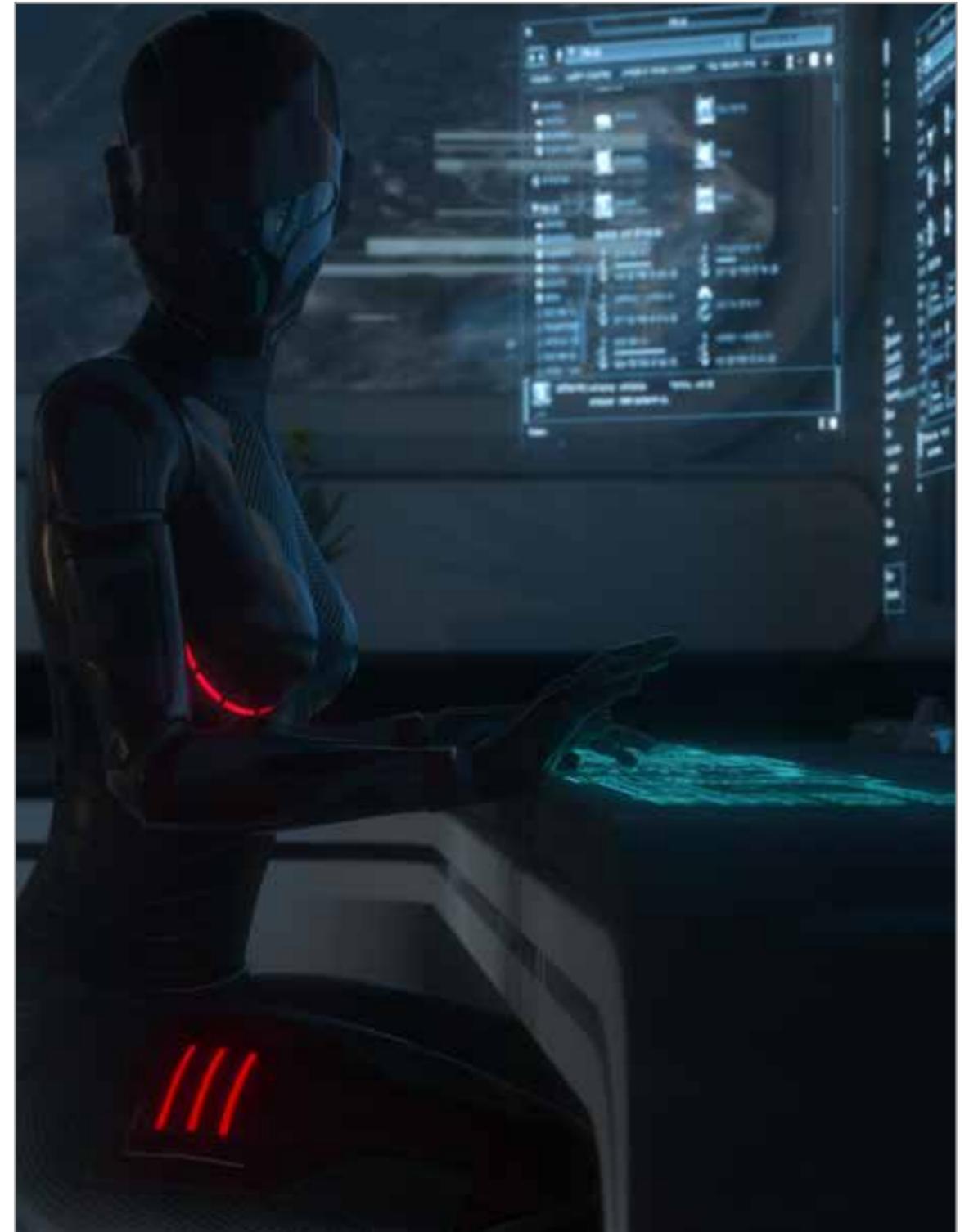
The synergy between AI and cloud computing can be demonstrated in numerous other instances. For example, in 2019, Microsoft invested billion dollars in the AI research company OpenAI, which will be able to utilize the computational resources of Microsoft's Azure cloud services (Vincent, James, 2019). It is evident that only cloud computing can serve the computing power required by OpenAI for its cutting-edge research. Another instance that demonstrates a natural synergy between cloud computing and AI is that every significant research initiatives in AI, spanning from university research labs to growing AI startups, are all relying heavily on this universal resource. Cloud computing is arguably the single most important component in the evolution of AI into a universal utility.

A controversial example includes AWS's Rekognition service, which allows developers to deploy face recognition technology - bringing Amazon under the scrutiny of law enforcement. Furthermore, online courses and training programs enable anyone with foundational mathematical understanding and passion to achieve basic competence in AI and Deep Learning.

The rapid evolution of AI into a mass utility is also being accelerated by new tools that make the technology accessible to non-technical segments of the population. Platforms like Google's TensorFlow and Facebook's PyTorch are important players that are making it easier for people to build deep learning systems, but the truth is that these platforms are still largely used by highly technical experts, often specializing in computer science. New platforms like Google's AutoML, launched in 2018, are largely automating many such technical details and lowering the barrier to entry for non-technical people to use and create deep learning to solve practical problems (Vincent, James, 2019).

There is ferocious competition between cloud computing providers like Amazon and Microsoft, which also ensures innovation. Amazon's deep learning tools and services for its AWS platform are also becoming easier to use, as there is considerable interest to democratize AI. Most cloud services like AWS and Azure not only provide development tools for the technical community, but also offering pre-built deep learning tools that are ready to be used instantly. Amazon, for example, offers bundles for speech recognition and "recommendation engine" that can make powerful suggestions to consumers (Amazon Web Services, 2022). A controversial example includes AWS's Rekognition service, which allows developers to deploy face recognition technology - bringing Amazon under the scrutiny of law enforcement. Furthermore, online courses and training programs enable anyone with foundational mathematical understanding and passion to achieve basic competence in AI and Deep Learning.

The universal adoption of AI will also tremendously benefit from the improved connectivity. The rollout of fifth-generation wireless service (or 5G), will be a decisive factor in this matter. 5G will not only boost mobile data speed by at least 10 times, but will also dramatically increase network capacity (Hoffman, Chris, 2020). The result? A more interconnected world than ever where communication happens almost instantly. Consequently, we can guess that many vital components of our physical infrastructure such as devices, appliances, vehicles, machinery, etc — what is called at "Internet of Things" or IOTs, is also bound to reinvent itself. The rise in interconnectivity in the physical infrastructure will soon serve as a powerful platform for the delivery and application of artificial intelligence. In the near future, most of AI use-cases will be around cloud computing, but with time, artificial intelligence will begin seeping into the physical realm of our highly-connected infrastructures. Devices, machinery, vehicles will begin to become smarter and smarter as they begin incorporating specialized AI chips. It is probably at this point, that the future will arrive.



Photograph by Peter Pieras. <https://pixabay.com/users/d5000-16677078/>

The real value in the field of artificial intelligence, at least for now, lies in data. It is unquestionably the most valuable resource on which AI and deep learning applications are trained and improved. While major cloud providers like Amazon and Microsoft are fiercely competitive regarding the price and capability of their services, the cost of accessing the hardware and software that enables AI will fall. AI services available via cloud will be constantly optimized and upgraded as the major tech players aim to gain dominance by utilizing the latest research findings by leading experts in the field of AI. Subsequently, in the future we can expect even the most advanced AI tool to be commoditized and available at a significantly low cost. This is already happening as companies like Google, Facebook and Baidu have publicly released their deep learning tools and software in open-source format, or in other words, given away for free. Even the leading research organizations like DeepMind and OpenAI publish their research findings on AI openly in leading scientific journals. Fortunately, the AI community is very open and accessible.

And yet, it is not. The one thing that no company is willing to share is: data. This means that the relation between AI and data will be inevitably be lopsided in one direction. All the value generated by AI will be captured by whoever possesses data ownership. However, it is generally a misconception that data ownership only lies with the tech giants. Of course, companies like Google, Facebook and Amazon control a behemoth amount of data, but it is generally limited to areas like web search, social media and online shopping transactions. In these areas, the tech giants will undoubtedly dominate, but a lot more data is captured by other players of the economy and society — governments, hospitals, health insurance, etc. These organizations will also employ cutting-edge AI technology and retain the value extracted from their data. Artificial intelligence and its true utility will therefore be distributed and utilized by entities across our society and economy — these entities not being the obvious tech giants.

To conclude, as AI evolves into a universal utility touching upon every business, household and organization, its impact will be staggering and transformational. The evolution has just started to unfold and the story is expected to play out over the course of decades. The impact of AI will not be uniform either, with some industries being swept by its use in the next few years, while in other cases the disruption will take longer.

References

- Amazon Web Services, 2022. "Deep Learning on AWS," accessed on January 13, 2022, aws.amazon.com/deep-learning/
- Evans Richard, Gao Jim, 2016. "DeepMind AI reduces Google data centre cooling bill by 40%," DeepMind Research Blog, July 20, 2016, <https://deepmind.com/blog/article/deepmind-ai-reduces-google-data-centre-cooling-bill-40>
- Flexera, 2019. "RightScale 2019 State of the Cloud Report from Flexera," resources.flexera.com/web/media/documents/rightscale-2019-state-of-the-cloud-report-from-flexera.pdf, p. 2.
- Hoffman, Chris, 2020. "What is 5G, and how fast will it be?," How-toGeek, January 3, 2020, www.howtogeek.com/340002/what-is-5g-and-how-fast-will-it-be/
- Holzle Urs, 2020. "Data centres are more energy efficient than ever," Google blog, February 27, 2020, www.blog.google/outreach-initiatives/sustainability/data-centers-energy-efficient/.
- Thomas, Rachel, 2018. "Google's AutoML: Cutting Through the Hype," fast.ai blog, July 23, 2018, <https://www.fast.ai/2018/07/23/auto-ml-3/>
- Vincent, James, 2019, "Microsoft invests \$1 billion in OpenAI to pursue holy grail of artificial intelligence," The Verge blog, July 22, 2019, <https://www.theverge.com/2019/7/22/20703578/microsoft-openai-investment-partnership-1-billion-azure-artificial-general-intelligence-agi>

Philip Casey's novels are *The Fabulists*, *The Water Star* and *The Fisher Child*, previously published by Lilliput and Picador and now reissued in new editions by Casey's independent label eMaker Editions. Previously translated into German, *The Fabulists* was translated into Japanese by Noriko Ito and is published by eMaker Editions. He has also published *Tried and Sentenced*, his Selected poems, and a novel for children 9+, *The Coupla*. He is the founder and editor of [Irish Writers Online](http://IrishWritersOnline.com) and www.irishculture.ie and is a member of aosdana.artscouncil.ie

Live Encounters tribute to Philip Casey, celebrated Irish Poet, Novelist and Member of Aosdána, who left for another world on Sunday 4th February 2018 in Dublin. This tribute was published in Live Encounters Poetry & Writing March 2018.

Live Encounters is ever grateful to Philip Casey for granting us an interview and sharing his poems with the readers of the magazine.

This interview was published in Live Encounters Magazine, June 2012.

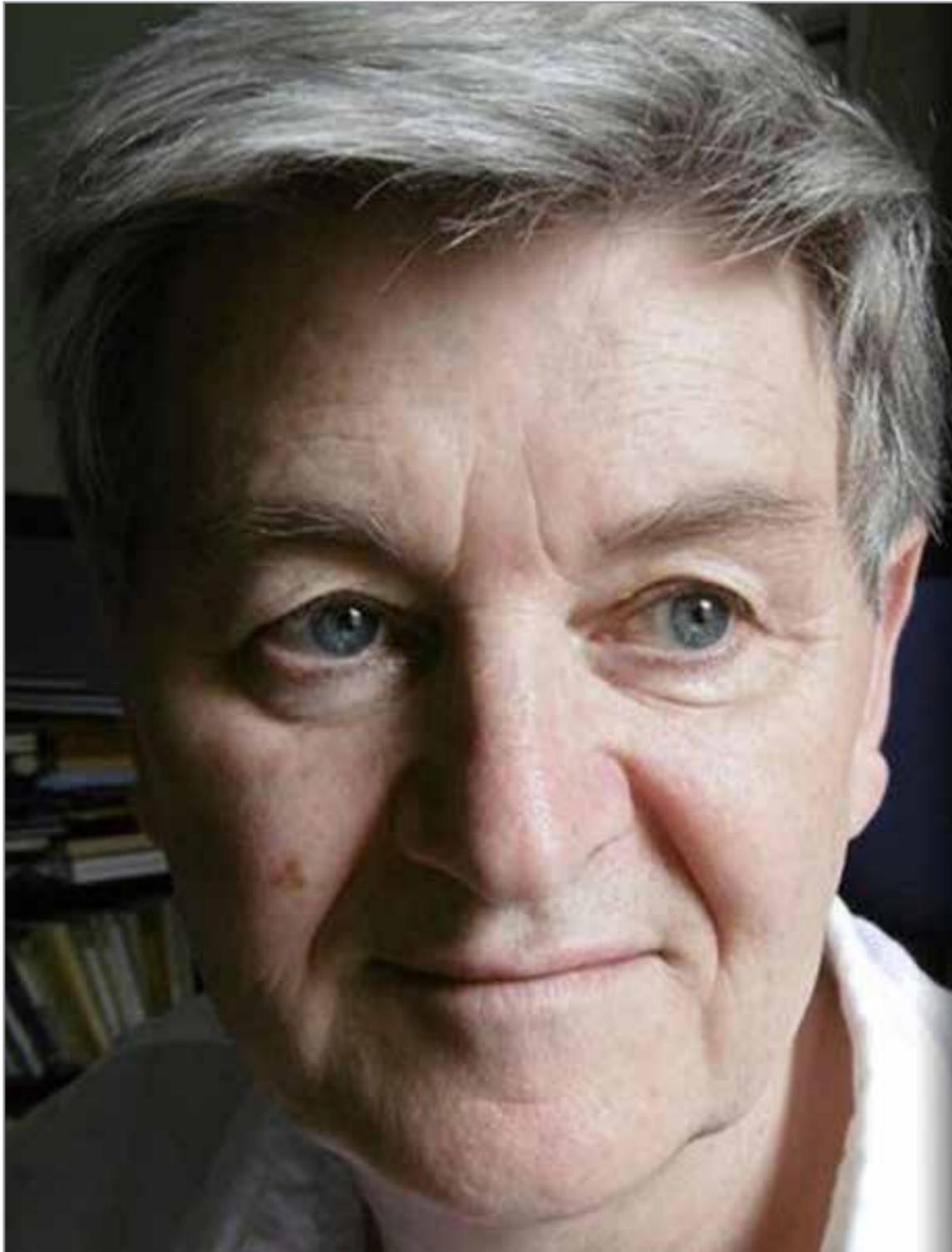
PHILIP CASEY IN AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH MARK ULYSEAS

Well known Irish Poet, Writer, Editor and member of Aosdána, which honours artists whose work has made an outstanding contribution to the Arts in Ireland, talks candidly on his life, work.

"There are people who think writers are elitist loafers and leeches and never do a day's work, and while the Catholic Church was at its most powerful and obscurantist in the 1940s and 1950s, books were banned and writers were hounded from their jobs, a notable case being the novelist and short-story writer John McGahern. Most writers of note had to leave the country.

Today is a different matter, and I think there is a general respect for writing as a profession. I know that writing friends from abroad have commented on the fact that if you declare yourself to be a writer in Ireland, nobody thinks it's strange!"

- Philip Casey



Philip Casey

I was born in London in 1950 to Irish parents, grew up in Co Wexford (South-East Ireland) on my parents' farm, spent a long time in hospital in my teens, and moved to Dublin in 1971. I emigrated to Barcelona in 1974, just as the Franco era was ending, and was at a champagne party the night the Generalissimo died. I returned to Dublin just after the first free elections in Spain in 1974, and after a few years of trying to be respectable, decided I was a round peg in a square hole, and that all I wanted to do was write. I gave up my job, and survived on very little. I was 29, and the following year I published my first book of verse. I've since published four collections in all, and three novels. I've also written a children's novel which I hope will be published over the next year or so, and am presently writing non-fiction.

Could you share with the readers a glimpse of your life and work?

I was born in London in 1950 to Irish parents, grew up in Co Wexford (South-East Ireland) on my parents' farm, spent a long time in hospital in my teens, and moved to Dublin in 1971. I emigrated to Barcelona in 1974, just as the Franco era was ending, and was at a champagne party the night the Generalissimo died. I returned to Dublin just after the first free elections in Spain in 1974, and after a few years of trying to be respectable, decided I was a round peg in a square hole, and that all I wanted to do was write. I gave up my job, and survived on very little. I was 29, and the following year I published my first book of verse. I've since published four collections in all, and three novels. I've also written a children's novel which I hope will be published over the next year or so, and am presently writing non-fiction.

Why do you write?

As a child I told stories to my brothers (my sister was a late arrival) and as a teenager I wrote songs. One night on Irish radio I heard a poetry programme. 'I can do that,' I told myself. To put that in context I was living in the countryside with little access to books, TV wasn't common, and needless to say there was no such thing as the internet. Moreover, I was a late starter in secondary school because of long periods in hospital, and was only vaguely aware of literature until I did. So I've always had the impulse to create. Actually while I was in hospital for the third time in my teens I won my first literary prize – for an essay on Keats.

I always try to avoid writing, especially novels or non-fiction. It's only when I've nowhere else to turn that I give in and write. Perhaps it's a delay tactic to wait until I'm ready to write! On the other hand if I don't write or am prevented from writing by one circumstance or another, I get ill. I'd like to get back to writing poems, but I've written only a handful since my last collection, and there's a novel I want to write after I've finished the present non-fiction work.

In a nutshell I write because I have to and I don't really want to do anything else.

Is there such a thing as a full time poet or writer?

I certainly think of myself as a full-time writer. Of course, like most writers I can spend a long time staring through windows, friends often call unannounced, I'm asked to read a lot of manuscripts, or

books, and there are a million excuses not to write. So it's not like a proper job, 9-5. On the other hand, a writer is always on call, so to speak. And reading and dreaming is a significant part of being a writer – maybe even more so for a poet. The peculiar thing about poetry is that a lifetime's experience can be distilled into a few lines, though I think any poet is lucky if he or she leaves behind one durable poem. To leave more than half a dozen durable poems is to be a great poet.

What is the responsibility of a poet or writer to society?

I think a lot about society, both in Ireland and abroad. I'm very interested in history and politics, and having lived through the dying days of Fascism in Spain, I'm worried about its resurgence in Europe and how so-called austerity is facilitating its success. I'm passionate about creating a world without fossil fuels. I'm optimistic about how technology can help create a better world if it is matched with a generous society. Yet I think it would be a mistake for me to enter politics per se. I hope I can best contribute to society through what I think I do best – my literary work. My current non-fiction is on an aspect of Irish history both in Ireland itself and amongst the Irish diaspora, which I hope will make readers think about how 'the other' is treated in society. How one treats 'the other' is a fundamental measure of any society.

When did you start Irish Writers Online?

I'm not sure exactly when I started [Irish Writers Online](#). The Internet Archive has a record of 20th Century Irish Writers, which is what it was called then, from 1999, but I think I started it a few years earlier. I had learned some basic html, and had made a little website for myself called *The Fabulists*, after my first novel, and I thought as I was promoting my own work, why not promote that of my writer friends too?

Naturally I had to call it something else once the 20th century ended, and so *Irish Writers Online* was born, with its own dedicated website. It is now accessed by lovers of literature, students, academics, writers and media from all over the world, and presently lists concise bio-bibliographies of more than 600 Irish writers. I've lately been adding images and videos where they are available. [Irish Culture Guide](#) is its sister site, and that has over 1,000 descriptive links to websites featuring aspects of Irish Culture. It's not quite as well-known as *Irish Writers Online* but has been gaining slowly in popularity.

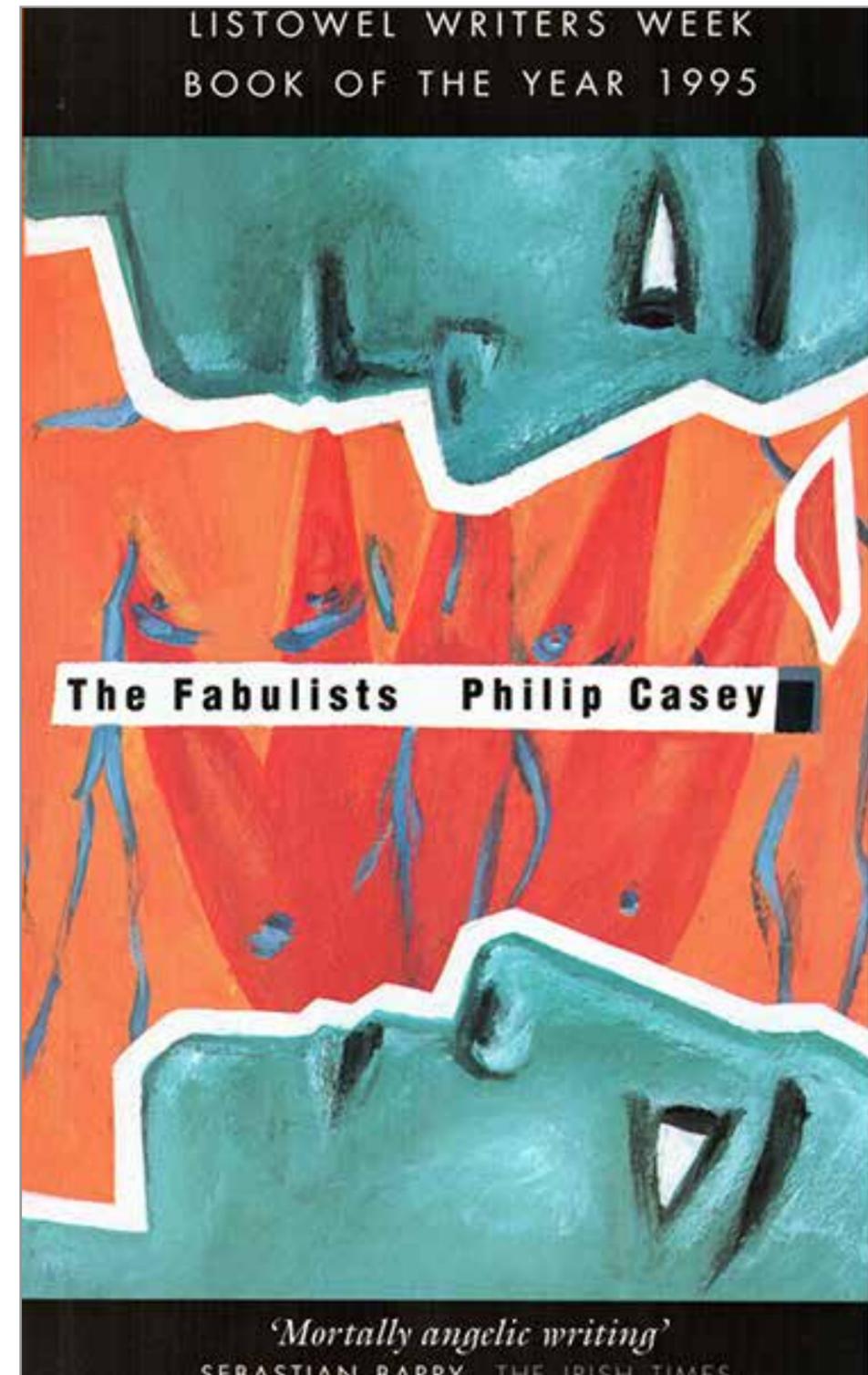
Does the Irish Literary community get funding from either the State or Private donors?

There are various private sponsors such as *Hennessey Brandy*, which co-sponsors with state bodies the *New Irish Writing* series, long established in various Irish newspapers, and most recently in *The Irish Independent*. *The Irish Times*, for example, has also sponsored prizes for both fiction and poetry, as well as the annual theatre awards. There are also prizes *The Frank O'Connor International Short Story Award* which is the richest of its kind in the world, though of course that is open to international writers also. However Irish writer [Edna O'Brien](#) won it in 2011. Then there is [The Michael Harnett Award](#) for poetry, commemorating perhaps the finest Irish poet in both languages. The main funding for literature, however, is from the State in the form of bursaries and support for publication of books and magazines.

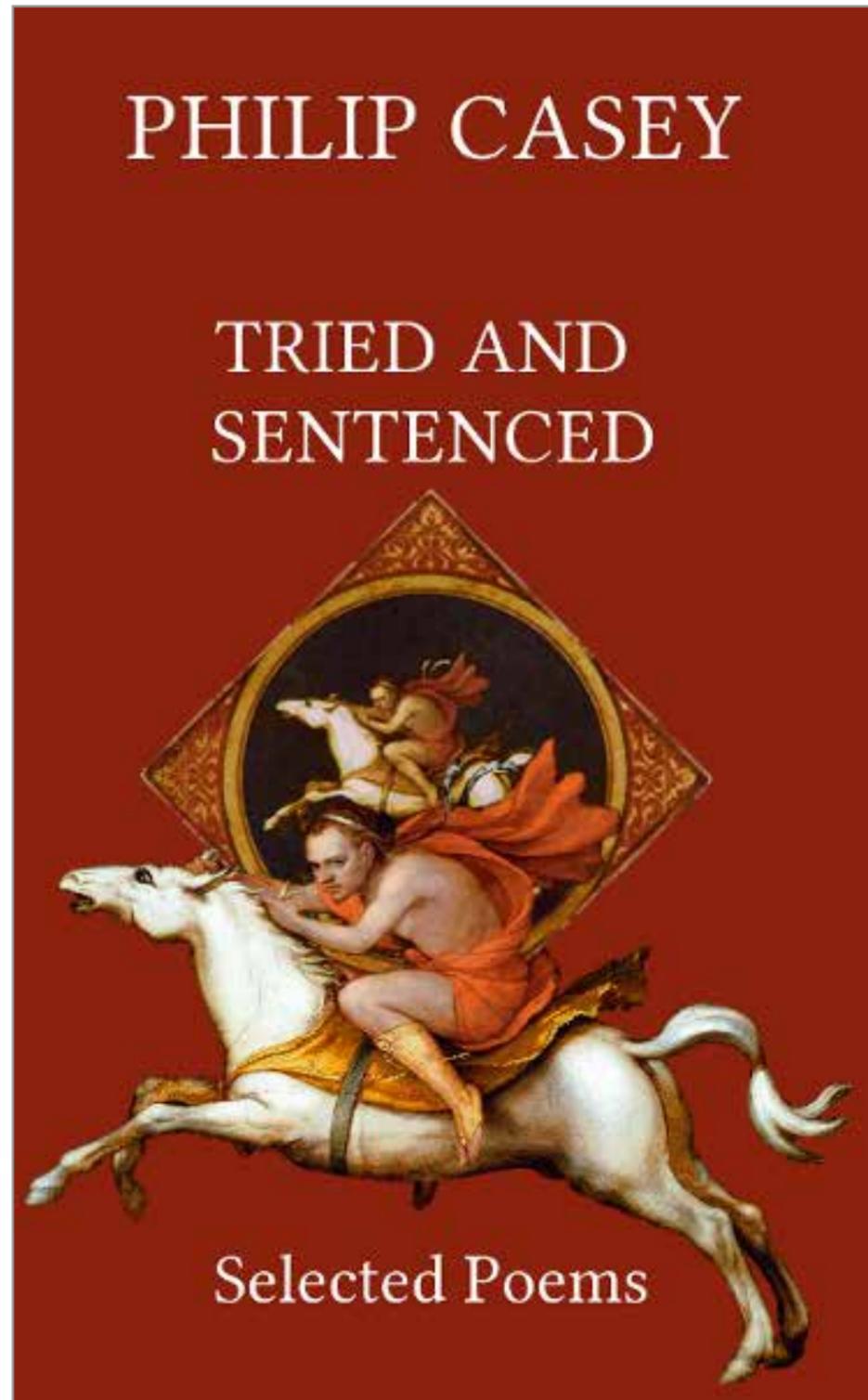
It also funds a unique institution known as [Aosdána](#). The word comes from an ancient Irish term for people of the arts, *aes dána*. It honours those artists whose work has made an outstanding contribution to the arts in Ireland, and encourages and assists members in devoting their energies fully to their art. Those whose income is solely from writing and/or is below a certain threshold, receive a stipend known as the *cnuas*. I'm privileged to be a member of *Aosdána* and can vouch that its monetary support changed my life.

Has the internet helped promote the Irish literary community monetarily? And has the growing popularity of the *Kindle* affected the sale of printed books?

I don't know if I can answer this question directly. Of course it has helped writers in all sorts of ways, from cutting postage costs (most agents and publishers accept email submissions now), facilitating newsletters, to readers buying their books on *Amazon* or Irish web shops or indeed directly from their publishers – you can see a list of both Irish bookshops on the web and Irish publishers at the bottom of the page on Irish Writers Online. Many, not most, Irish writers have their own website, and some, not many, are on Facebook and Twitter. In other words, Irish writers are like writers in most countries in this regard. As for ebooks, I see some writers publishing direct to *Kindle*, but as yet not many. I don't own a *Kindle* and probably won't, as I believe in open formats and I distrust the *Kindle's* proprietary format. I do however sometimes read ebooks, mostly free classics, on my old smart phone and I think as the technology evolves and open formats become better appreciated then writers will be more comfortable with e-publishing.



Available at: <https://www.amazon.com/Fabulists-Philip-Casey/dp/1897959184>



Available at:
<https://www.amazon.com/Tried-Sentenced-Selected-Philip-Casey/dp/0992738423>

We are all caught up in the great wild web and this has given rise to copyright infringement and plagiarism. How has it affected the Irish literary community?

There was some concern and puzzlement about the *Google Books Agreement* a year or two ago, but otherwise I'm not aware of significant copyright infringement or plagiarism. Which is not to say that it doesn't exist. Several Irish writers including myself have made some of our work freely available under a *Creative Commons Licence*, which allows a reader to download the work and distribute it but (in our case) not change it or profit from it. Have a look at *Irish Literary Revival* and my own website and the Creative Commons website for more detail.

Do you think Media (Print and Electronic) in Ireland has helped promote writers and poets? And can they do more for the struggling community?

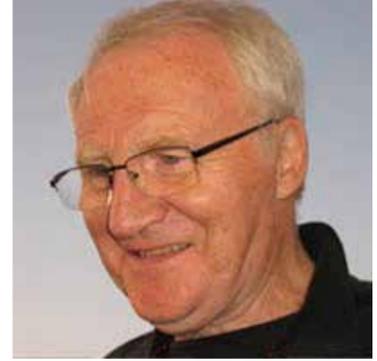
Of course there's always a clamour for more to be done, but I think Ireland is relatively fortunate in that the media, particularly *The Irish Times*, give good coverage of books, and usually publishes a poem every week, and now that the Irish Independent has recently taken on [New Irish Writing](#), it has made up for its previous scant coverage of Irish literary work. The main Irish TV station, RTÉ, no longer has a dedicated books program, alas, but its main arts presenter *John Kelly* is a novelist himself and is sympathetic to literature and covers it when he can, I think. Of course if a writer wins a significant prize, then that's big news.

In your opinion how do people view writers and poets today? Do they view them as catalysts for change?

There are people who think writers are elitist loafers and leeches and never do a day's work, and while the Catholic Church was at its most powerful and obscurantist in the 1940s and 1950s, books were banned and writers were hounded from their jobs, a notable case being the novelist and short-story writer [John Macgahern](#). Most writers of note had to leave the country. Today is a different matter, and I think there is a general respect for writing as a profession. I know that writing friends from abroad have commented on the fact that if you declare yourself to be a writer in Ireland, nobody thinks it's strange!

Live Encounters tribute to Philip Casey, celebrated Irish Poet, Novelist and Member of Aosdána, who left for another world on Sunday 4th February 2018 in Dublin. This tribute was published in Live Encounters Poetry & Writing March 2018.

Terry McDonagh, poet and dramatist, taught creative writing at Hamburg University and was Drama Director at the International School Hamburg. He's published ten poetry collections as well as letters, drama, prose and poetry for young people. His work has been translated into German and Indonesian. 2016: poetry collection, *Lady Cassie Peregrina* – Arlen House. 2017: included in *Fire and Ice 2*, Gill Education for Junior Cycle. 2017: poem, *UCG by Degrees*, included in Galway Poetry Trail on Galway University Campus. 2017: *Director of WestWords*, Irish literature festival in Hamburg. 2018: latest poetry collection, *Fourth Floor Flat – 44 Cantos*, published autumn 2018 by Arlen House. <http://www.terry-mcdonagh.com/>



ON THE PASSING OF PHILIP CASEY POET AND NOVELIST BY TERRY MCDONAGH

I first got to know Philip Casey in 1987 when Patrick Duffy introduced me to him and Ulrike Boskamp, in Hamburg. Philip had been visiting Ulrike in Berlin and they were returning to Dublin via Hamburg. That first meeting grew into a deep friendship that lasted until Philip's death at the age of sixty-seven, on Sunday the 4th of February.

Philip was special in his own unique way. He had his rituals: he'd cross the river Liffey to the market on Saturdays to stock up on organic fruit and vegetables for the week– he loved the market and the market loved him. His cosy red-brick terrace house was a meeting place and source of wisdom for multitudes. The Irish writing fraternity is indebted to him for setting up www.irishwriters.com as an archive of Irish writers. Dignity is a word that always springs to mind. Apart from his talent as a novelist and poet, Philip was a fiercely loyal critic. I owe him a lot.

Philip returned to us in Hamburg a number of times. He read and facilitated workshops at The International School; we staged his one act play, *Cardinal*, with Guelma Lea and Barry Stevenson in the main parts in 1994; he read to rapt audiences in Hamburg – in particular, in the Shamrock – the first Irish pub in Hamburg which was run by the very unusual and creative proprietor, Mike Gillen. Just last year when visiting the International School, I was going through a display of old year-books when Philip's poem, *A Page Falls Open*, caught my eye on the cover of one of the books. I forget which year it was but that's not important.

*'A page falls open
and the reader's name
is there.
It always has been
and will be always.'*

As well as his play, *Cardinal*, he published four collections of poetry; a story for children, *The Coupla* and the now famous Bann River Trilogy of novels: *The Fabulists*, *The Water Star* and *The Fisher Child*. Jean Longster, Joanna's mother said, *The Water Star* was the best novel she had ever read... and she was an avid reader.

His passing was a dignified occasion. The media and his large circle of friends and admirers turned up in style and numbers for his cremation and even the President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins, sent his sympathy and condolence to Karina, John and Peter, his sister and brothers.

Ar dheis De go raibh a anam...may his soul be seated at God's right hand.

2010 - 2021

12
YEARS

Live
encounters

FREE ONLINE MAGAZINE FROM VILLAGE EARTH
FEBRUARY 2022

COVER - CASSANDRA, PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK ULYSEAS