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PROFESSOR GANESH N DEVY
The City:
Inside the Mind and Outside

FLINDERS LANE, MELBOURNE, ARTWORK BY WOLFGANG WIDMOSER



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Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om

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PROFESSOR GANESH N DEVY

THE CITY:

INSIDE THE MIND AND OUTSIDE

The most remarkable foundation of the city as a sociological institution is that it is profoundly 'anti-national'. One is not describing here the city as a traitor, or as 'a criminal in the eyes the given national code of law.' What is meant here is that the historical process of the formation of nations –the nation as a political institution—has been very different from the historical process of the formation of the city as a sociological institution. The nation is an expression of the human race to bring many under a single and well defined space. The city, on the other hand, is the expression of the desire to bring one into many chronological orders.

"God made country, man made the city," was perhaps the most popular line in the intellectual discourse of the eighteenth century, particularly after the heart rending scenes of migration fore-grounded by the literary works like Oliver Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village* fired poetry and paintings born out of what the contemporary German philosophers termed the *esamplastic imagination*. The entire 'Romantic' generation of philosophers, painters and poets of France, Germany, Spain, Italy and England shunned the idea of having to create urban settlements. The copious paint brush of Turner, for instance, did not have a single stroke to spare for an urban dwelling or street, though the children there were as innocent as the ones in the villages. If William Blake did speak of those children, as did Charles Lamb, it was to frighten the reader off the specter of the sinful existence that a city has in store for the rural migrants. Rousseau's call for a return to Nature, though too late in the economic history of the colonial west, was found alluring by the pre-Marxists, the Romantics, the Symbolists and even the Pre-Raphaelites for a whole century. The idea of a city, despite its theatre and the tantalizing possibility of not only philandering but actually 'making it' by accepting the status of a 'perpetual picaro', took a fairly long time to rise out of its stigmatized status as a den of sins.

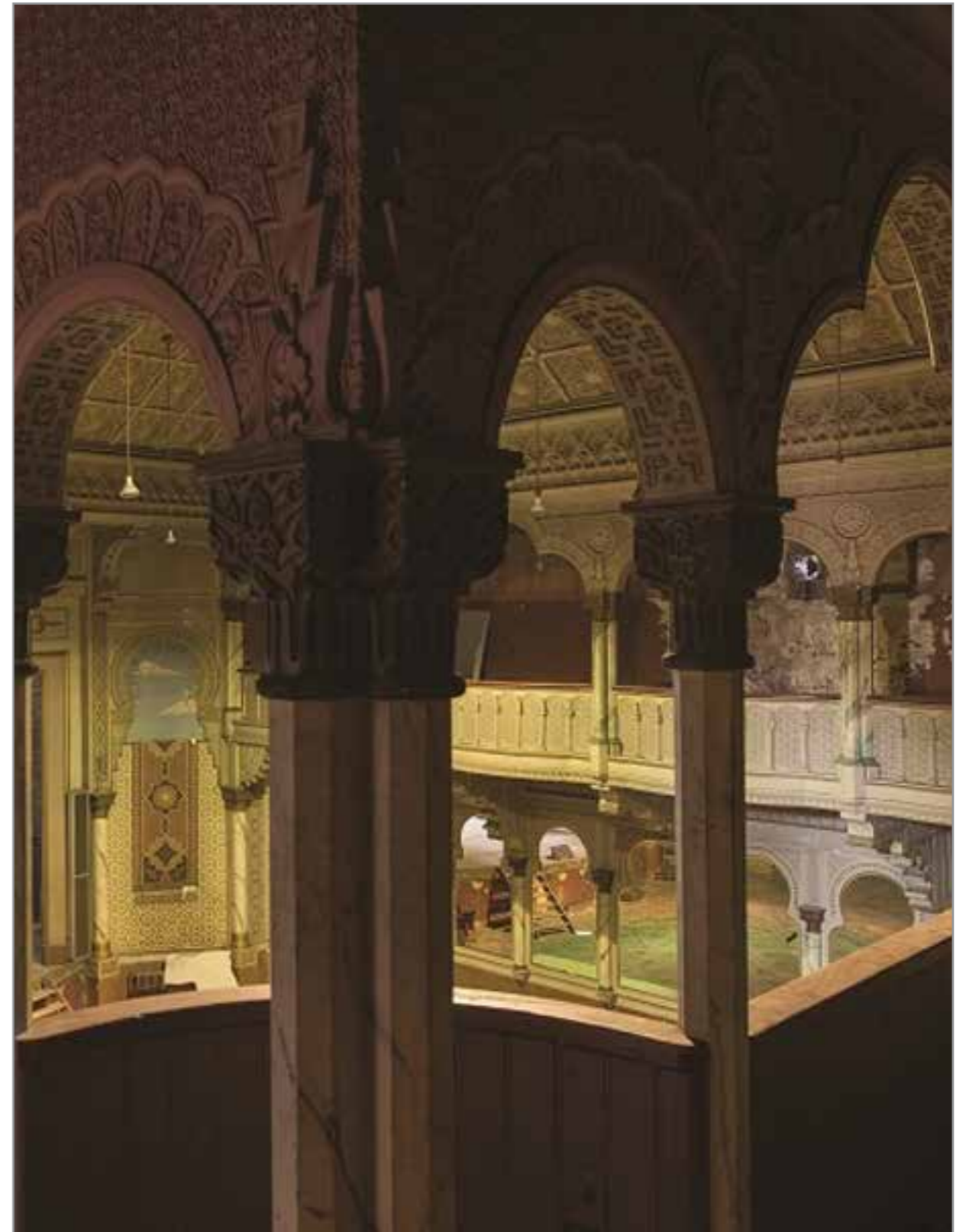
Professor Ganesh N Devy

One has to understand that the Italian cities had perhaps to build themselves as –anti-fortresses to the Papal charm. The Diamond Palace at Brussels and the sun-dial in Bologna have a similar genesis.

The adolescent heroes of Charles Dickens, the fascinating heroines of Flaubert and indeed the savage drama at the heart of the *Beggars Opera*, all point to how harshly the city was considered by the social ethics of the first two centuries of the Industrial Revolution. And indeed, those were the cities whose entrances were adorned by the docks crowded by the amorous sailors, crammed with ever narrowing lanes made heavy by houses rising to full three stories of height, obscuring the clear view of the cathedral or church, with back-doors opening into deep-cut gutters, covered but with manholes that made night journeys of burglars and criminals look like an adventure. The city as understood in those times, in short, was squalor. To make a city beautiful, long winding paths to the country had to be dug up by cutting small hills. These long paths, initially built for horse carts and hansoms alone, and the bridges built to span the port side rivers allowing the thoroughfare between the citizen girls and the voyaging sailors, brought to the European cities for the first time a look, albeit a false look, of being seamless. Otherwise, of course, the cities giving rise to what Karl Marx called ‘the capital’ were condemned to be prisons created by the landless and rootless for themselves in an attempt to become the merchants of avarice.

Of course, there was a saving grace in the form of the Royal silver line added to the low-market city shape, such as the Versailles and Buckingham Palace, for instance. But, really speaking, they belonged to the medieval period. Their beauties were born in Baroque or Gothic nurseries, their sinews built of arches and pillars coined in the idiom of Faith, just as the mosques in Spain and the forts in India were created on the foundation of theology rather than a pure unambiguous statement of pride and power as a present day Twin Tower in NY is.

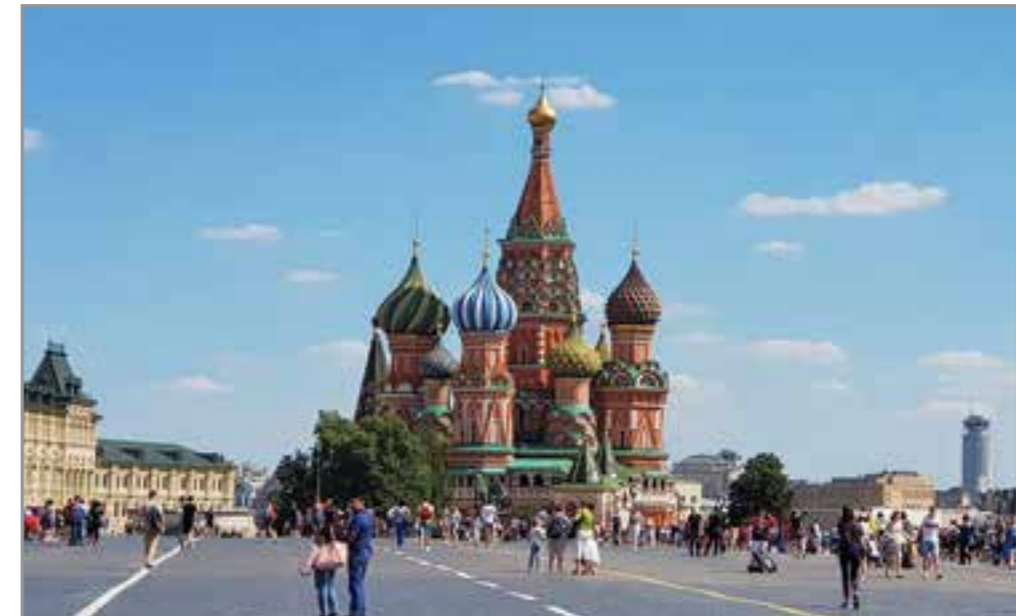
It is not, of course, that the palaces were placed out of the cities; rather it was that the cities were spaced away from the royal enclosures, at least in the case of Paris, London, and Vienna. Rome was a bit too old to have received this unique urban planning feature, and it had already lost the city throb to the grand old Vatican. In Italy, of course, many other things happened in an anachronistic manner. Cities like Siena had already brought the entire citizenry within the fold of its peculiar royal splendor, drawn more out of the natural element than out of a divine sanction (as the political systems in other European countries liked to formulate). One has to understand that the Italian cities had perhaps to build themselves as –anti-fortresses to the Papal charm. The Diamond Palace at Brussels and the sun-dial in Bologna have a similar genesis.



View through the Moorish columns on the balcony, into the theatre. Images © Marie-France Plissart.
<https://www.brusselstimes.com/214919/unveiling-the-diamond-palace-brussels-hidden-art-nouveau-gem>



Photograph: <https://pixabay.com/photos/moscow-church-russian-architecture-2105607/>



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Quite opposed to this, the world famous Las Rambles avenue of Barcelona, throbbing with licentiousness and energy such as only the Spanish language can express, was already established two centuries before the Industrial Revolution got under way, and even remotely dreamt of disturbing the pastoral glow and warmth of Spain. As a price, perhaps, the post-Revolution Barcelona had to keep tearing itself from the hustle-bustle, and keep climbing above the mean sea level as far as it can. In a sharp contrast to the English, French and the Dutch cities, the American cities are built differently. Even if the linguistic idiom forming the basis of their creation is drawn from European languages, the 'imaginary' fuelling their growth is deeply rooted in what the expression The American Dream symbolizes. They are racing as if it were to challenge the idea of horizons. Limits, what shit! They seem to say.

The force and the ferocity of the idea of city as the hub of civilization as forged in the self-absorbed and aspiring American city provides today the moving inspiration for a Hong Kong and Dubai. They are built as if the human civilization did not begin at all until the automobile came into existence. There is also another variety of the urban 'grandeur' interpreted literally as meaning big and bold. That is to be seen east of the now non-existing wall of Berlin. One is not, of course, thinking of the grand Chancery building or the Berlin University. They were very much a product of the surpluses produced by the Austro-Hungarian Empire. But the central quarters of Moscow, and similarly of Beijing, have on show this grandeur. It occupies too much space. The quadrangles and court yards of their own agrarian past – in China's case made tranquil by the Buddhist philosophy, came to be re-presented there after the revolutions in terms of "The Lord Alone Is True", even the statues placed in these vast spaces were created quite clearly to intimidate and to silence the viewers. One never had the courage to ask 'who, where and why?' While trying to keep them in view within a single pair of eyes – as one could does while looking at the *pietra dure* of the Medici style, or just the amazing Michelangelo jobs.

Though the ancient past is a bit too forgotten unless it belongs to the affluent nations, Timbuktu too should be a model one needs to bring in the discussion of intelligent cities. Damascus and Kabul are the other names. Alexandria, of course, needs a major place in the list, both for its intelligence as a city as well as its irrevocable place in the history of the ancient as well as the modern world. We know very little of Manchu Pichhu, at least not as much as Pablo Neruda did, and the mythical Troy is not really accessible to us in terms of the usable ideas for creating and nurturing cities, even if it could set on sail a thousand ships of warriors at one time.

So varied are the philosophical, ideological, artistic and cultural roots of the cities spread over the world that it is just impossible to offer a single definition of what a city really means, except that it is a place that holds too many in too small a space.

Relatively, more accessible are the ideas that were shaped in the colonial times. Kolkata and Mumbai, and their numerous younger and feeble siblings, quickly learnt that the Cantonment as the heart of the city must be kept outside the city, for security and authority. Though Sydney and Perth, easily far more intelligent than Chicago, they somehow carry clearly the mark of being the frontier cities coming up, in their case, the wide ethnic world of the southern hemisphere. Both Boston – still a lovely memory of the homelands across the ocean—and Washington, a city burdened with the responsibility of disciplining and civilizing the world, manage to look at the first glance a little untypical of the American idea of ‘monstrosity’ as a museum of beauty, they soon reveal their identities to the second time visitor.

So varied are the philosophical, ideological, artistic and cultural roots of the cities spread over the world that it is just impossible to offer a single definition of what a city really means, except that it is a place that holds too many in too small a space. But the hinterlands in many African countries, in Latin America, in Goa or Kerala show that the law of too many in a continuous space is not enough for the definition of city. These areas have hundreds of miles of non-ending rows of houses all along the drive ways and yet the local people do their cartography in terms of ‘adjacent villages’, not as a city. The density of population per square kilometer or mile, too, is not so much of a useful definition. For thousands of pilgrimage places, the variable density as well as the constant density of population p.s.m. can be much higher than that in the very heart of the most populated city like Tokyo, Mumbai or New York. These, or any other quantitative measures such the per capita consumption of energy, food, consumable goods, bank savings, borrowings, schools available, medical facilities, or jobs/unemployment levels, do not seem to serve the purpose as the exceptions one cite far outnumber the norm sought to be set.

I heard in a recent conference held at Evian in France that a city is essentially a transportation hub. The argument was put forward quite energetically. I did not present the case of the Ambala camp or Panvel in Maharashtra that far outdo the neighboring Chandigarh and Pune, respectively, in term so of the ‘transport density’ but are not acceptable as cities at par with their more distinguished neighbors. The subtle relationship between Zurich and Geneva in Europe, or between Montreal and Vancouver, or for that matter between Agra Road and Delhi need to be considered with all nuances to understand why ‘transportation’ density can never be the measure for a location being a city or not.



Photograph: <https://pixabay.com/photos/crowded-street-mumbai-bombay-crowd-390840/>



Every primer of Anthropology will tell us that even among the most traditional among traditional societies, and among the smallest among the small indigenous groups, the tension between modernity and tradition plays itself out in precisely as numerous ways as in larger places and populations.

If these quantitative parameters are not so good to define the unique formation that a city is, what would be the best alternative to finding its defining features? If the special scales do not yield results, can the temporal scales help? Perhaps they may, but in a limited way.

If we propose that a city is a place that brings the past and the future in a union, makes both permeable, manages to evolve an idiom of translating one to the other, we may be able to bring many of the world's numerous cities under this single definition. These, for instance, can include Delhi, Shanghai, Vienna, Paris, Madrid, Venice, Tehran, Lhasa, Antwerp, Edinburgh, London, and a long list of such others. Indeed, it has been the greatest among the accomplishments that the city as a medium of history has to its score that it allows modernity to flow out the local tradition, that it enables modernity to be grafted successfully on to the tradition.

The only problem with this definition is that the combat and collaboration between tradition and modernity can be witnessed taking place with the same degree of intimacy and animosity in the smallest of the human habitation. Every primer of Anthropology will tell us that even among the most traditional among traditional societies, and among the smallest among the small indigenous groups, the tension between modernity and tradition plays itself out in precisely as numerous ways as in larger places and populations.

Perhaps, rather than pointing to the dialectic between the traditional and the modern, it may be closer home to maintain that the city has a greater capacity to hold the two together without one destroying the other completely. One may even say that the city holds within itself many times, that it is not just a diachronic companion to the human soul, but a poly-chronic sustainer of the human spirit of quest. When a city blocks one or many levels of time existing within it, it slowly starts dying as a city. The ones that insist on keeping all of their 'traditions' entirely 'unsullied and pure' start ossifying and end up being ossified on their own volition.

Not all cities in the past have gone down only because of being surrounded by or destroyed by what the Latin term describes as 'barbaric vernaculars.' Most spell out the demise by closing their minds. The two most known examples of this and celebrated in imaginative literature are the ancient Troy and the twentieth century Oran as in Albert Camus' *The Plague*.

Photograph: <https://pixabay.com/photos/lhasa-potala-palace-fountain-night-1749357/>

Seen from a purely pedestrian point of view, a given city invariably forms a part of one or the other nation. Any city is bound to have its political affiliation and in that sense it belongs to nation. But while cities thrive on their ability to host diversities, nations prosper because they succeed in bringing people under a common or shared code of political and legal norms.

They first closed its gates to all possibilities of ‘combat’ as indication of the destruction; the second sealed its borders as a cure for its inner infection. London, prior to the great fire was getting close to this condition; but decided to open up after the calamity – though the significance of the shifting of the theatre space has yet to be fully stated—and London laid the foundation of its status as the perpetual City. Similarly, it is the vicinity of Long Island to it, a place where the refugees could find a safe haven that should be seen as the great source of the New York Tradition. But these instances are merely from the perspective of social or spatial composition.

It is those cities that allow many Times to live together within its spaces that alone ensure their sustainability. A city, in other words, has to be chronologically eclectic. Such eclecticism enables it to provide spiritual solace to a larger sociological, ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversity, particularly so since the city is a non-theological formulation. This should also provide us clues to measuring city-fatigue or city-stress. The stress arising out transportation mismanagement can, perhaps, be cured by innovating transport technologies; but the city-stress caused by elimination of one or several levels of time from its life styles, habitation patterns, speech rhythms, visual forms, can hardly be reduced or cured by any innovation in technologies. Why television has not succeeded in reducing that stress in any city is a question that urban architects must closely study. Similarly, what was it in the city of Dublin that compelled all outward migrants to maintain their links with the city, while a similar behavior is not seen in relation to either Manhattan that looks mono-chronic or Madurai that looks, but at the other end of the spectrum, equally mono-chronic, is something that we need to understand well.

A city becomes sustainable only if it learns to live in many times with an equal degree of ease. In India, the phenomenal and completely unpredicted growth of Delhi is a result of Delhi’s ability to be historical, contemporary and futuristic at one and the same time. On the other hand, a mighty medieval capital like Champaner went down like nine pins because it remained obsessed with the present alone. It blocked itself from the past that sat aloof on top of the Pavagadh hill, and the future that was spreading out in the plains of Ahmedabad. In contrast, when Ahmedabad replaced Champaner, it survived as a thriving city for four centuries even when dynasties came up and went down, different industries and livelihood patterns came up and went down. Put very simple, the cities without sympathy for the past and a sensitive and friendly eye for the future, really, have no present as well.

The most remarkable foundation of the city as a sociological institution is that it is profoundly ‘anti-national’. One is not describing here the city as a traitor, or as ‘a criminal in the eyes the given national code of law.’ What is meant here is that the historical process of the formation of nations –the nation as a political institution—has been very different from the historical process of the formation of the city as a sociological institution. The nation is an expression of the human race to bring many under a single and well defined space. The city, on the other hand, is the expression of the desire to bring one into many chronological orders.

Seen from a purely pedestrian point of view, a given city invariably forms a part of one or the other nation. Any city is bound to have its political affiliation and in that sense it belongs to nation. But while cities thrive on their ability to host diversities, nations prosper because they succeed in bringing people under a common or shared code of political and legal norms.

Perhaps, the human race has an innate (genetic) inclination towards fostering diversity. Therefore, the nation as a political institution has been relatively short-lived than the city as a civil institution. In history we have numerous examples of specific national identities having gone down, whereas the cities within those nations have continued to exist, survive and even thrive. This has been the world’s experience during the worst of the wars. In some cases, when the houses, buildings, markets and temples in a city have been plundered and destroyed in a war, the city itself—its sense of being itself—has remained undestroyed. Thus, one need not look at the city as a sub-set of a nation, though the political maps as of now beckon us to do. Similarly, the city need not be seen as a ‘scaled up’ village. The village-city-the state is a false hierarchy arising out of various historical coincident. It is because the city as an institution is not of the same family as the institution that nation is, cities constantly strive to open dialogues with many cities, many nations. This dialogue is never of conflict, confrontation or collaboration. It is invariably the dialogue related to assimilation, transfer, and transactions. In other words, the nation is a text; the city is its constantly renewed translation. And like a typical translation, the city has two idioms, one close to the idiom of its original location, and the other close to the idiom of its receiving audience. Here, of course, I speak in metaphor and not in the literal sense of the term ‘idiom’.

...I thought, at least momentarily the space and time in which I lived became one, neither retaining their identity, both together they were my 'spots of time', allowing me to see myself in the mirror of the world around me. At all other times, and in all other places, I was blinded by the distance between the city space and my time.

I am thinking here more the idiom of being, the existential consciousness which enables the phenomenology of entanglement. It is therefore that though the city is not the producer of natural products, it is the mother of all fashions. The city knows how to name human aspiration, how to translate it into reality and how to translate at the same time the commodities from the real world into a new language of aspirations. In this work, the city remains engaged quite remorselessly. Therefore, the city is not a ballad for patriotism; it is an epistle for existence. That is the second most important reason why all cities I have been through have become me.

Every time I have moved into a new city, it has primarily been moving into a new dwelling. The houses I moved into in different cities were either better than the other houses there, or worse than them. They were never just houses by themselves. Moving into a new city was always moving into a new competitive space. In those houses, there were things that were necessary to make life possible, and I did not make any of those by myself. The shapes and sizes, the textures and styles, the functions and utility of those things were all designed by other people, elsewhere. I merely found myself surrounded by those objects, with my existence incomplete without them. Thus, moving into a new city was always moving into the time and space made by others. In a way, this was to remain an unfinished being, an incomplete becoming. No, not my mind was complete in itself. It brought with it to the new city layers of memory, of many times. But the space remained the same. It was the space that plunged me into a competitive space where I arrived to realize how incomplete I was. This was always a sure recipe for feeling alienated. In that alienation, I was a beast of burden carrying many times in my memory, and carrying them into the same space. So many cities passed through my life, but the space I found in them was the same. I could escape that space only if I entered the crevices of those cities, found the forgotten people, entered their consciousness and started looking at the world through their eyes. When that happened, I could find myself, felt a little less unfinished, incomplete, continues with the rest and not broken away from them. The elephant people in Baroda, the Gypsies in Leeds, and the Kanjar-bhats in Kolhapur were all such people who joined for me one layer of time in my mind with the other scattered layers of time, extended my space confined to my cluttered dwellings out towards those wandering feet in the streets. When that happened, I thought, at least momentarily the space and time in which I lived became one, neither retaining their identity, both together they were my 'spots of time', allowing me to see myself in the mirror of the world around me. At all other times, and in all other places, I was blinded by the distance between the city space and my time.



Photograph: <https://unsplash.com/@pranavnahata7>



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DR. NAMRATA GOSWAMI

SPACE POLICY: THE UNKNOWN BECKONS AND A STRATEGIC PLAN MATTERS

We want to go to space! Escape Earth’s gravity, get to its orbits, and then travel to cislunar (space between Earth and Moon), establish a presence on the Moon, and then utilize the Moon as our eighth continent and venture out into our solar system. Indeed, that is what encompasses space beyond the orbits and the gravitational pull of the Earth-Moon zone. It appears as a dark void, and yet the unknown does call to us. Earth itself is a spaceship, which for now, is the only habitable planet in our solar system. We may know of Earth like planets that might sustain life in other solar systems, and even if we do,[1] we might not be able to ever know or visit them given the enormous distances.[2]

Despite knowing full well, the reality of such vast distances, the imagination of space and what it holds, has ignited human civilization with a mysterious longing, and a spiritual realization that we are, after-all, a part of what we call the universe. In some sense, we are connected to that universal core. This has led to missions of star gazing, exploration, scientific discovery and a movement to become interplanetary. Until now, human civilization has been able to get to its Moon, but travel beyond that has not come easy, and we have been confined to sending robotic missions to distant planets.

All these space ambitions, aspirations and goals have been conceived by different nations and their societies for divergent reasons, some for geopolitical reasons, others for showing off technology, and now with a potential to utilize the resources of the Moon, Mars and asteroids for human space development. Space education has become an important component of the sciences and the arts, from the physical, life to the social sciences; the understanding of human behavior and motivations, the passions and the deeper need to expand ourselves and our descendants into the universe beyond Earth.

Dr Namrata Goswami

In China, the State Council of the People's Republic of China (PRC) writes the space policies and produces the White Papers on Space Activities,[8] but the policy process involves other institutions like the China National Space Administration (CNSA), the China Academy of Space Technology (CAST), the China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation (CASC), the Shanghai Academy of Spaceflight Technology (SAST), the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), the Chinese Academy of Military Sciences (AMS) amongst others.

There are those who argue for an expansionist vision including myself,[3] and then there are those who argue for an Earth confined human civilization given the potential for planetary degradation that the human species is accused of.[3] I argue that human civilization is capable of progress and that we are not doomed to repeat the mistakes of the past.

Into this grand meta-narrative, enters the idea of space policy, and what it involves. The Cambridge dictionary defines policy as “a set of ideas or a plan of what to do in particular situations that has been agreed to officially by a group of people, a business organization, a government, or a political party”. [5] “Public policy can be generally defined as a system of laws, regulatory measures, courses of action, and funding priorities concerning a given topic promulgated by a governmental entity or its representatives.” [6]

In this, we can have policy advocacy groups, educational institutions, public intellectuals, and competing interest groups and institutions that might aim to shape the policy process to their interest. I define space policy as a process of developing, prioritizing and implementing a plan of action developed by the government entity entrusted with the task. In the U.S. the National Space Council (NSpC) coordinates the development of the national space policy in consultation with different government departments. Simply put, this is an inter-agency process, which means that different departments might have their own set of priorities in regard to a national level space policy.[7]

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The crewed spaceship Shenzhou-14, atop a Long March-2F carrier rocket, is launched from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwest China, on June 5, 2022. Photo courtesy Li Gang/Xinhua/ZUMA Press.

Given that, a space policy process can identify that as a problem and call for new organizational structures like the U.S. did in terms of developing a NSpC whose mandate is far larger and broader than NASA and to develop a dedicated military service for space deterrence like the U.S. Space Force (USSF) in 2019

So, how does the space policy process actually work? The first stage is problem identification; the second stage is policy formulation, the third stage is policy adoption, the fourth stage is policy implementation, and finally, policy evaluation.[10] Let us now define these stages and illustrate it through examples.

Policy in democratic settings require elite consensus, societal cohesion and support and leadership to push it forward. The first stage in the policy process is identification of a problem, be it organizationally, or a technology, that requires to be built to forward a particular policy goal. Sometimes even if an organization already exist, for example like NASA, it might not be optimized to do some of the tasks set by a space policy directive, or have the organizational flexibility to adapt quickly to certain key strategic goals. Like deterrence and protection of U.S. space assets in LEO or GEO. Or NASA might not be optimized to invest in space resource extraction and development, being focused since the end of the Cold War on space science and space exploration missions. Even to use policy words like space development which changes the narrative from space exploration can be a difficult process to adapt to. Given that, a space policy process can identify that as a problem and call for new organizational structures like the U.S. did in terms of developing a NSpC whose mandate is far larger and broader than NASA and to develop a dedicated military service for space deterrence like the U.S. Space Force (USSF) in 2019.[11]

China initiated a space policy process through their White Papers and developed their own PLA Strategic Support Force (PLASSF) in 2015 to address issues like joint warfare training and capability. India identified the absence of a supportive space eco system for the development of its commercial space sector and consequently developed new institutions like the NSIL and the Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Center to help coordinate, legislate and develop the regulatory and institutional structures to resolve the problem of absence of such supportive structures.

The second stage in the space policy process is policy formulation. This is the stage where once a problem area has been identified, states then formulate specific policies to address these issues. For China, the formulation of policy to develop reusable rockets and cislunar space capabilities is addressed in its 2021 White Paper on Space Activities.[12]



The Seal of the United States Space Force is the official seal of the U.S. Space Force, the space service branch of the U.S. Armed Forces. The seal itself was approved on 15 January 2020.

Even today in the U.S. where there is a policy adoption of public-private partnership for space missions, it is pretty much a supplier of space technology mindset that the commercial space industry has adopted in the U.S. where systems they build have to be justified within the NASA overall preamble, for instance for a program like the Artemis Program with companies building the lunar landers and launchers, and the LunaNet support structure for NASA missions to the Moon.

For the U.S., developing capabilities for space exploration and space science including the Moon is formulated in its 2020 National Space Policy,[13] its 2021 Space Priorities Framework[14] and its cislunar strategy.[15] The United Arab Emirates has issued a national space policy that is focused on developing its national space program with a priority on enhancing UAE internal space capabilities, international collaboration as a member of the U.S. led Artemis Accords,[16] and through signing Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) with countries like Luxembourg to participate in the future of space resources extraction that Luxembourg is focused on.[17]

The third stage of the space policy process is policy adoption. In this stage, countries that have formulated a space policy goes about adopting the policy through for example, in the U.S. through Congressional approval, in China, through State Council policy adoption, in India, a parliamentary debate and budgetary approval, within the UAE, support from its own regime type. This step is crucial as it is during the adoption stage that an interagency process is key, and policy priorities are set, and missions can be either enhanced or diluted depending on which agency will play to its own strengths to ensure that space policy missions are within their own range of expertise and capabilities. One could see this process play out during the U.S. policy adoption of Commercial Cargo and Commercial Crew Programs where some insiders within NASA were allegedly resistant to the idea given the fear that the commercial sector may take over some of the missions NASA felt entitled to carry through, to include developing a reusable rocket and supplies to the International Space Stations.[18] Even today in the U.S. where there is a policy adoption of public-private partnership for space missions, it is pretty much a supplier of space technology mindset that the commercial space industry has adopted in the U.S. where systems they build have to be justified within the NASA overall preamble, for instance for a program like the Artemis Program with companies building the lunar landers and launchers, and the LunaNet support structure for NASA missions to the Moon. [19]

China's policy adoption of developing its commercial space sector through its document 60 titled *Guiding Opinions of the State Council on Innovating the Investment and Financing Mechanisms in Key Areas and Encouraging Social Investment* issued by the State Council in 2014 went through a process of ensuring that these private space sectors were made keenly aware that they worked within the guidance of that document as well as the 2021 National Defense Law.[20]



Photograph courtesy <https://www.nasa.gov/specials/artemis-accords/index.html>



When India adopted a policy of supporting its commercial space sector including making its launch systems (rockets) private, the establishment of institutions like NSIL, the allocation of budget to develop those capacities, and the offering of launch pads for the launch of India's first commercial rocket are in the policy implementation stage.

Japan adopted a new Space Policy Framework in 2008 that focused on space development and utilization, gave priority to establishing space legislations that supported such a process and focused on developing Japanese citizens capabilities and skillset to benefit from the space commercial sector.[21] African nations developed a Statute for the development of the space sector through the African Union and called for the establishment of an African Space Agency to ensure that African nations benefit from space to include from the commercial development of space.[22]

The fourth stage in the space policy process is policy implementation. Once a policy is adopted, the policy has to be implemented by institutions tasked with it. If U.S. national security space policy calls for deterrence and security of U.S. space assets in Low Earth Orbit (LEO) and Geosynchronous Orbit (GEO), it will be the task of the USSF to implement such goals. When the U.S. adopted a space policy goal of going back to the Moon, and to develop sustainable presence on the Moon, it is the domain of NASA to ensure that those policy goals are met and that the policy is implemented. When Presidents George W. Bush Jr and Barack Obama called for the commercial development of space as a policy goal, it fell to both NASA and the commercial space industry to develop and implement those goals. Implementation is the stage where budgets matter and how much is allocated for the actual building of missions, institutions, and end capacity. When the African Space Agency was established in Egypt and budgetary allocations were made by African nations to build it, that policy had passed the implementation stage. When India adopted a policy of supporting its commercial space sector including making its launch systems (rockets) private, the establishment of institutions like NSIL, the allocation of budget to develop those capacities, and the offering of launch pads for the launch of India's first commercial rocket are in the policy implementation stage. When Japan developed its own Space Domain Mission Unit in 2020 as part of national security space,[23] and announced its space mining legislation in December 2021 to support the commercial extraction of space resources,[24] these developments are within the policy implementation stage.

The final stage in the space policy process is policy evaluation. This is the stage where policies that have gone through the policy feedback loop are now in the final stage where we can evaluate how successful and/or how ineffective these policies were towards the goal of space exploration/development.

The launch of LVM3-M3/OneWeb India-2 mission is scheduled for March 26, 2023, at 0900 hours IST from the second launch pad at Satish Dhawan Space Centre SDSC-SHAR, Sriharikota. Photograph courtesy ISRO.

Till today, India has not issued a written official explanation of what happened with its *Chandrayaan 2* mission based on scientific audit, as to why it failed in the last few seconds to land on the lunar surface, and what policy needs to be adopted to ensure that does not happen again in the future. That is why I say, political and strategic culture matters in the end of how the space policy process unfolds. Moreover, it can be messy in the real world and complicate the conceptual compartmentalization I identify here in this article.

For instance, it is at the policy evaluation stage that space missions like U.S. Artemis Accords for lunar development can be assessed for effectiveness, in terms of how many international partnerships is it able to procure, who are these international partners and what actual capacity do they bring to the program. If some major space faring nations have not joined the Artemis Accords, for example, India, then this is the stage to assess why. In India’s case, the policy of sending missions to Moon and Mars, the slow adoption of an actual official space policy, the lack of clarity as to why India is against UN proposals for developing responsible behavior in space to include its voting record of abstention, should be explained by the Indian Department of Space within India’s space institutional structure, so that nations understand why India has adopted such a stand. Strategic ambiguity at the policy evaluation stage is not helpful. The U.S. needs a policy evaluation for instance, of whether the establishment of the USSF has actually made the U.S. more secure in space, and what is the kind of culture, education, tactical and strategic mindsets and training, space officers are being exposed to, to make them successful guardians of space for the future. Policy evaluation must be based on both qualitative and quantitative analyses, to include financial assessments of which policy has succeeded in accomplishing its goals, within budget and on time, and if not, then an objective explanation on why that is the case.

In all of this, a grand strategic vision for why a state and society invests in space capability and why that matters must be clearly identified at the beginning stages even before problem identification. How grand strategic perspectives are adopted is of course determined and influenced by strategic culture, and political culture of a particular state and society. For instance, driven by China’s Comprehensive National Power (CNP), a concept inspired by Deng Xiaoping, and now adopted by President Xi Jinping within his ‘National rejuvenation’ framework, China has pushed for a particular set of problem identification, followed by the entire policy cycle of which institutions formulate, adopt, implement and evaluate which policy. Failures are discussed within a tight knit closed group without an external audit. Till today, India has not issued a written official explanation of what happened with its *Chandrayaan 2* mission based on scientific audit, as to why it failed in the last few seconds to land on the lunar surface, and what policy needs to be adopted to ensure that does not happen again in the future. That is why I say, political and strategic culture matters in the end of how the space policy process unfolds. Moreover, it can be messy in the real world and complicate the conceptual compartmentalization I identify here in this article.

Nevertheless, it is a useful mental model to keep reminding us that a clear policy plan is always useful to keep us on the path, since we as humans tend to deviate so often from what we set ourselves to accomplish, including in our own lives. States and societies are after all a representation of humans working together and/or competing on a grand scale, and they will reproduce many of the behaviors we see at the individual level, only with much more complexities and with much more resources to solve or exacerbate the problems of the day. Vision and purpose of a space program is therefore the critical guiding light.

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DR. CAUVERY GANAPATHY

NAVIGATING NEW ENERGY TRANSITIONS IN OLD WAYS

Green energy transitions are commonly positioned as a model of transformation restricted not just to energy systems but to the very calculations that animate contemporary international relations, as well as a likely panacea to the problems inherent in the use of hydrocarbons. These problems skim the domains of social inequities, affordability, accessibility, and environmental pollution or degradation, among others. Another feature, prized enormously, with regards to clean energy systems, and their accompanying transitions, is the possibility of reducing the rancor that permeates the international system due to the unequal distribution of hydrocarbon resources which has quite naturally fortified hierarchies of influence and power among countries. While the need for this transition is non-negotiable, and the enthusiasm relating to its phenomenal promise is heartening, perhaps equally germane to this discussion is the consideration of whether some of the issues that plagued conventional energy systems could appear- or, have already appeared- on the firmament of this new form of energy transition.

One among these issues is the issue of monopolies- monopoly control that countries develop over resources that are intrinsic to the green energy systems or monopoly control that a group of countries could develop over the international order by curating and codifying a regulatory system that represents more their interests and concerns than a mutually beneficial schematic of global rules, or even simply monopolies that commercial entities can develop over crucial technical inputs that this system needs. Monopolies are singularly inhibitive and destructive in every ecosystem, regardless of whether they exist in pockets of the economy or of the polity, and regardless of whether they are national or transnational- and they are an insidious legacy of the old system that is very effectively creeping into this new one.

Dr Cauvery Ganapathy

China need not explicitly threaten a disruption to the rare earths supply chain for this issue to feature most prominently in the risk assessments that countries such as the US and India would be expected to conduct, simply because strategic prudence is to prepare for one's defense based not on the imagined nor calculated ability of an adversary to attack but in fact, on the capability of the potential adversary to mount such an attack.

The nature of the green energy system being formulated and worked towards presently, unfortunately, in many ways, appears poised to repeat the unlearnt lessons of the history of the hydrocarbon economy. While the two supposedly contradistinguishing features fundamental to the entire idea of green energy transitions are decentralization and a self-dependency expected from its localized production systems, worryingly, there is plenty within the systemic moorings and the growth trajectory of green energy systems presently which could commend themselves to the creation of entirely new and dangerously entrenched monopolies.

One of the areas this potential is most significant in is in that of the rare earths which are the principal constituent raw material for the technologies/engineered products that the green energy transformations are dependent upon- a mind-boggling array which spans from the ubiquitous symbols of clean energy systems, viz., the wind turbines and the EVs to the grander projects with semiconductor enablers and precision-guided munitions.

Among the most visible symbols of green energy transitions are the ongoing and projected changes in the automotive sector. India as a country that has committed to ambitious renewable energy targets and as one largely and worryingly deficient in the most basic raw materials needed for batteries, for instance, is a good example to consider when discussing the existence and implications of possible monopolies in the field. Central to India's ambitious target of achieving 500GW of renewable energy by 2030, for instance, is the transformation that is expected from the domain of Electronic Vehicles (EV). Under the commitments in this specific domain, India expects for nearly 70% of all commercial vehicles, 30% of private cars and about 80% of 2/3 wheelers to be EVs by 2030. Due to the significant position India occupies in the climate change and green energy transition narrative by sheer dint of its size, it is necessary to consider the kind of insecurity and vulnerabilities that New Delhi would be faced with if monopolies over these rare earths such as lithium, critical to the EV plan, were to become more entrenched and institutionalized in future.

There is in India, today, as in many countries, a recognition that the rare-earths supply chain are most certainly going to be susceptible to power politics through the monopolies that some countries enjoy.

The pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine, amplified the vulnerabilities of supply chains and the dangers of resource nationalism in ways that governments had not planned for, much less anticipated. Alarming academic prognosis relating to how the world may have to contend with transnational threats born out of intentional or accidental supply chain disruptions were aplenty pre-pandemic- to no avail, in hindsight, unfortunately- and they have only grown now. Governments, world over have taken notice, yes, but there remains a nagging concern about whether the justifiable alarm is grossly belated, and if the vulnerabilities have already been consolidated in a manner that cannot be reversed.

Much beyond the green energy systems, the abject insecurity that emanates from any country holding a monopoly over elements such as terbium or dysprosium which are integral to the production of propulsion systems of jet engines and missiles, creates a strategic nightmare that countries such as India and the US have to now continuously grapple with, given that China, a country that has known predilections towards creating discomfort for both New Delhi and Washington, is the world leader in rare earths processing capabilities standing close to 87%, and has more than 70% of rare earths deposits, both of which lie at the heart of the entire green energy transformation edifice.

China need not explicitly threaten a disruption to the rare earths supply chain for this issue to feature most prominently in the risk assessments that countries such as the US and India would be expected to conduct, simply because strategic prudence is to prepare for one's defense based not on the imagined nor calculated ability of an adversary to attack but in fact, on the capability of the potential adversary to mount such an attack. So far as that remains the metric, Beijing possesses the most alarming monopoly that could corrode any hopes of a newer and less acrimonious international energy system free of the liabilities of the previous one, green or not. Objectives could be fluid, and may also keep changing, but capability takes years to build, and China has prudently invested in building that capability.

It would take a mammoth, incredibly well-strategized and efficiently implemented whole-of-government approach by any country now to be able effectively counter any efforts by Beijing to harness the full potential of the obvious monopoly it enjoys in the field of rare earths to advance its global agenda and ambitions.

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) which enjoys a monopoly over Cobalt reserves, an essential raw material in the production of batteries, is notoriously lax with its human rights, labour rights and environmental regulations. The scourge of child labour has also been proven to be a part of the entire cobalt mining enterprise of the DRC, and yet the country remains a valued member of the international supply chain and countries and international actors who prize the value of human rights continue to do business with the DRC despite all the violations in order to propel their own green energy transformation agendas forward.

This should not be interpreted to mean that countries are not making efforts to counter the expected ill-effects of possible monopolies in rare earths. After the Minerals Security Partnership in June of the same year, in December, 2022 Washington spearheaded the creation of the Sustainable Critical Minerals Alliance- an initiative that is central to the efforts to not allowing a country or a group of countries to hold the rest of the world hostage due to their contribution and prominence in the rare earths supply chain. Significantly, however, the constitution of this voluntarily group which naturally does not include China or Russia, is again reminiscent of the clear delineations of old vintage reflecting the battle-lines between the OPEC and the non-OPEC parts of the world. Now, the composition of this grouping is entirely justified and self-explanatory. The reason it is being flagged in this commentary is to substantiate the hypothesis that although the ways and means may have morphed, and the actors on either sides of the divide may have changed, there is nevertheless a divide that is as clearly inherent in green energy transitions as they were in the hydrocarbon economy with a clear marking of territory, thereby negating any hopes of this new form of energy system gradually bringing an end to the era of high politics and vicious bargaining that oil politics is marked by- politically and economically.

The history of the hydrocarbon dependent economy is replete with struggles that local populations have waged against the exploitation of natural resources or the environmental impact such extractions have or both. While the US, Spain, Greece, Portugal and some of the Nordic countries have been known to have deposits of rare-earth that are profitable to mine, the political systems within these countries are founded on that inalienable principle of democracy which allows for populations to agitate when they believe their interests are being compromised. As such, in deference to the objections and protests of local populations, these countries have chosen not to exploit these local rare earth deposits due to the proven adverse environmental impact that such mining has. This right to protest is not, however, a universal privilege, and just as hydrocarbon wealth did not translate into equitable political, social or economic benefits, so too there exist countries today where the extraction of rare earth minerals continues in complete disregard for human rights and best practices in the process of extraction or any respect for possible anxieties of local populations that are left to suffer the environmental impacts of such extraction.



Collage.

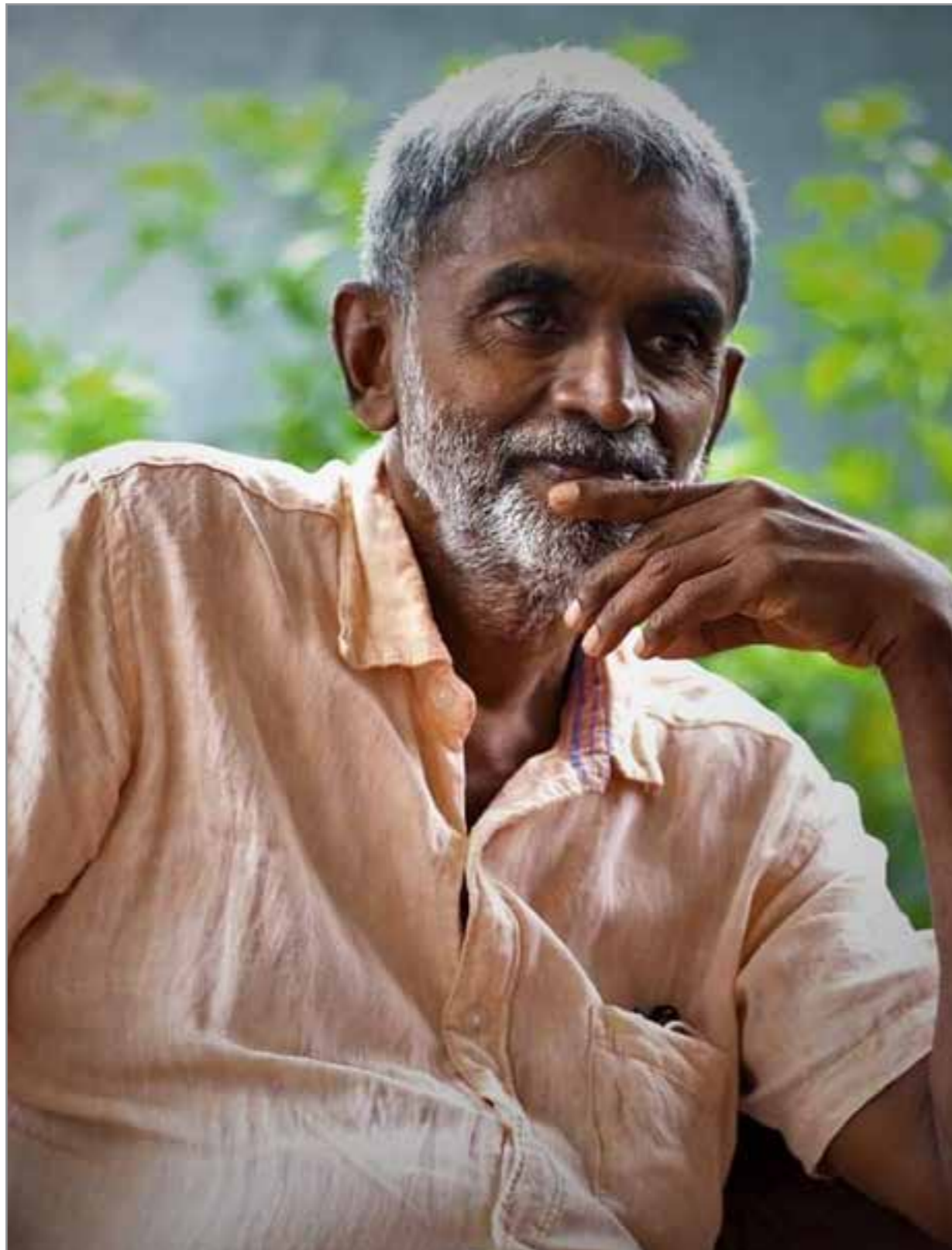
China will remain the most important actor and supplier- at least over the next decade, if not for longer. Effectively, this would tantamount to the rest of the international community helping perpetuate the monopoly that China enjoys in the field, if they wish for their own green energy transformations to be fulfilled.

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) which enjoys a monopoly over Cobalt reserves, an essential raw material in the production of batteries, is notoriously lax with its human rights, labour rights and environmental regulations. The scourge of child labour has also been proven to be a part of the entire cobalt mining enterprise of the DRC, and yet the country remains a valued member of the international supply chain and countries and international actors who prize the value of human rights continue to do business with the DRC despite all the violations in order to propel their own green energy transformation agendas forward.

More than 3 decades ago, the Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping had famously declared that what oil was to the Middle East, Rare Earths would be to China. With all its inherent systemic flaws and abominable travesties in the social, political and economic spheres, China offers one valuable lesson. While it is true that China has an abundant reserve of these rare earths, and the lead-time for developing alternative sources of raw materials in this field is prohibitively high- thereby, making it difficult for any country to compete in the near future- it is equally true that the country's primacy in the global value chain of green energy systems is tied more to the processing capacity that it has built over the decades, than to the reserves it is endowed with. So robust is this capability presently that there is very little likelihood of any country matching, much less rivalling, Beijing for it for at least the next decade. Success, then, as a country is not an accident of nature or geography – which is what having the deposits of rare earths is. It is, instead, a painstaking enterprise built on implementing a strategic vision of domestic economic growth and consolidation with the objective of internal stability and capability which could then be leveraged towards its global ambitions.

There are multiple other reflections of the old system that will gradually but certainly emerge in the transformation that the green energy transition brings in its wake, but perhaps the most ironical part of its identity is the fact that in order to fulfil the clean energy agenda that the world is trying to commit to, China will remain the most important actor and supplier- at least over the next decade, if not for longer. Effectively, this would tantamount to the rest of the international community helping perpetuate the monopoly that China enjoys in the field, if they wish for their own green energy transformation commitments to be fulfilled.

The levers of power that define geopolitics keep adapting to new realities born of, among other parameters, the world's changing demand for certain ideas, assets or commodities. Those that spun silk were prized once, just like the ones that harnessed energy from oil were priced later; those that learnt how to harness power from steam engines were higher up in the critical-to-the-world hierarchy once, just like those that make nano-chips are today; those that learnt the art of guarding their own territorial waters while projecting the naval prowess abroad held a near monopoly over international affairs for centuries just as those that managed to somehow trace their provenance to inexplicable but effective symbols of religion indemnified their monopoly in international calculations. Examples such as these abound in human history, and are particularly plentiful over the last two centuries when the advances in technology have been far more rapid and paradigm altering than before. The dubious commonality that undergirds all of these examples- and the multiple others that have not been listed here- is that the ability of one country to maintain a monopoly or establish a leadership in a particular domain has been as much a function of their own ability as the inability of other countries to act in time. Green energy transitions, which in principle, could in fact be a panacea in most regards, may prove to be the new battleground for this story to be retold.



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PROFESSOR DAYA SOMASUNDARAM ADDRESSING COLLECTIVE TRAUMA IN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

Abstract

Indigenous communities in Australia have undergone considerable trauma and manifest a variety of dysfunctional symptoms at the collective level.

The consequences of collective trauma include loss of self-esteem, dignity, purpose, meaning, sense of belonging, communality, connectedness, ethical mores and norms, spiritual beliefs and an induced state of learned helplessness, dependency and passivity. The epidemic alcohol and drug abuse, violence and child sexual abuse needs to be understood in the context of the experiences of colonization that set-in motion a cycle of massive trauma and loss that was passed on from generation to generation.

Colonization and subsequent interventions by government, missions and others have undermined the family and social systems, the processes that traditionally solved family and community crisis and problems.

The long-term solution would be to break the cycle and rebuild mechanisms of self-regulation within the community and the families themselves.

Interventions need to rebuild healthy family and collective processes, dynamics and functioning, to restore social cohesiveness, confidence, dignity, pride, identity and spirit.

Further research is needed to develop the evidence base for collective trauma, operationalise the psychosocial diagnosis and evaluate family and community level interventions.

Professor Daya Somasundaram. Photograph by Dr. S. Sivathas.

It is becoming increasingly clear from experiences around the world, that communities which have undergone considerable trauma develop fundamental changes in their social structure and dynamics. Unless community level consequences are taken into account and addressed, well-meaning individual oriented programmes may not be so effective. However, the problem may not fall within western psychiatric medical models or mainstream paradigms. This paper discusses the concept of collective trauma as a useful framework and suggests appropriate interventions.

The continuing evidence of ill health and disadvantage manifested through a variety of physical, psychological and social parameters in indigenous communities compared to mainstream society in a comparably developed, affluent country needs urgent attention[1]. The large gap in life expectancy; high morbidity, mortality and rates for various mental disorders including Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Depression, Alcohol and Drug abuse, suicide and self-harm; over-representation in prisons; poor educational and employment achievement; high incidence of physical and sexual violence and abuse; and family disharmony all point to a basic dysfunction in the community [2-45, 6] When the family and community are functional many of the social problems do not arise or are sorted out within the community [5].

It is becoming increasingly clear from experiences around the world, that communities which have undergone considerable trauma develop fundamental changes in their social structure and dynamics. Unless community level consequences are taken into account and addressed, well-meaning individual oriented programmes may not be so effective. However, the problem may not fall within western psychiatric medical models or mainstream paradigms. This paper discusses the concept of collective trauma as a useful framework and suggests appropriate interventions.

Collective Trauma

Erikson [7] described Collective Trauma as 'loss of communality' following the Buffalo Creek disaster and with colleagues [8], 'broken cultures' among the North American Indians as 'destruction of the entire fabric of their culture' due to the forced dispossession of traditional lands, displacements into reservations, separations, massacres, loss of their way of life, relationships and spiritual beliefs. Subsequent accounts describe 'cultural bereavement' [9] due to the loss of cultural traditions and rituals in Indochinese refugees, and the importance of family [10-12] and socio-cultural consequences [13-18].

Milroy [19] spoke of the tearing of the social fabric in the Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association (AIDA) submissions. The National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health [20] trace the cause: *"The sense of grief and loss experienced by generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in relation to dispossession, to the disruption of culture, family and community and to the legislated removal of children has contributed to ongoing problems in emotional, spiritual, cultural and social well-being for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander*

individuals, families and communities." Lowitja O'Donoghue [21] stated, *"The assault on Aboriginal people includes massacres, diseases, dispossession and dispersal from the land... the traumatic consequences of policy and the destruction of Aboriginal and community life that resulted."*

A survey [22] of the aboriginal population of Western Australia, found a high prevalence of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (55 %), depression (22%), alcohol abuse (73 %), linking it to massive trauma. O'Shane [23] drew attention to the loss of pride, identity, self-respect, language, songs, laughter, spirituality, relationships, traditional knowledge and skills in the communities. The consequences are trans-generational [15] and result from the breakup of traditional culture, kinship networks, way of life and belief systems [1, 5, 6]. The Australian Guidelines for the Treatment of PTSD [24] links the *"the legacy of historical trauma (as)family and community functioning can continue to be compromised in each subsequent generation by social and psychological problems (such as substance use), leading to a vicious cycle of deteriorating conditions, pervasive social disadvantage, and for individuals, increased risk of further victimisation and traumatic exposure, coupled with reduced psychological resilience"*. It advocates a *"broader approach ... using traditional therapies including the use of healers, rituals and ceremonies, Narrative exposure therapy and cultural social processes"*.

Sociopathology

'Collective Trauma' can be defined as the negative impact at the collective level (that is on the social processes, networks, relationships, institutions, functions, dynamics, practices, capital and resources), to the wounding and injury to the social fabric [18]. The long-lasting impact at the collective level results in social transformation of a sociopathic nature.

The legacy of historic trauma is compounded by what Phillips [25] terms current 'situational trauma': police harassment, continuing deaths in custody, and deaths of family members to suicide, self-harm, or other injury. Weatherburn et al [26] point to the destruction of aboriginal culture as the major underlying but distal cause of aboriginal over-representation in prisons and advocate supporting aboriginal women, strengthening aboriginal social norms and increasing investment in boriginal employment schemes. Incidental triggers may precipitate the arrest and detention [6].

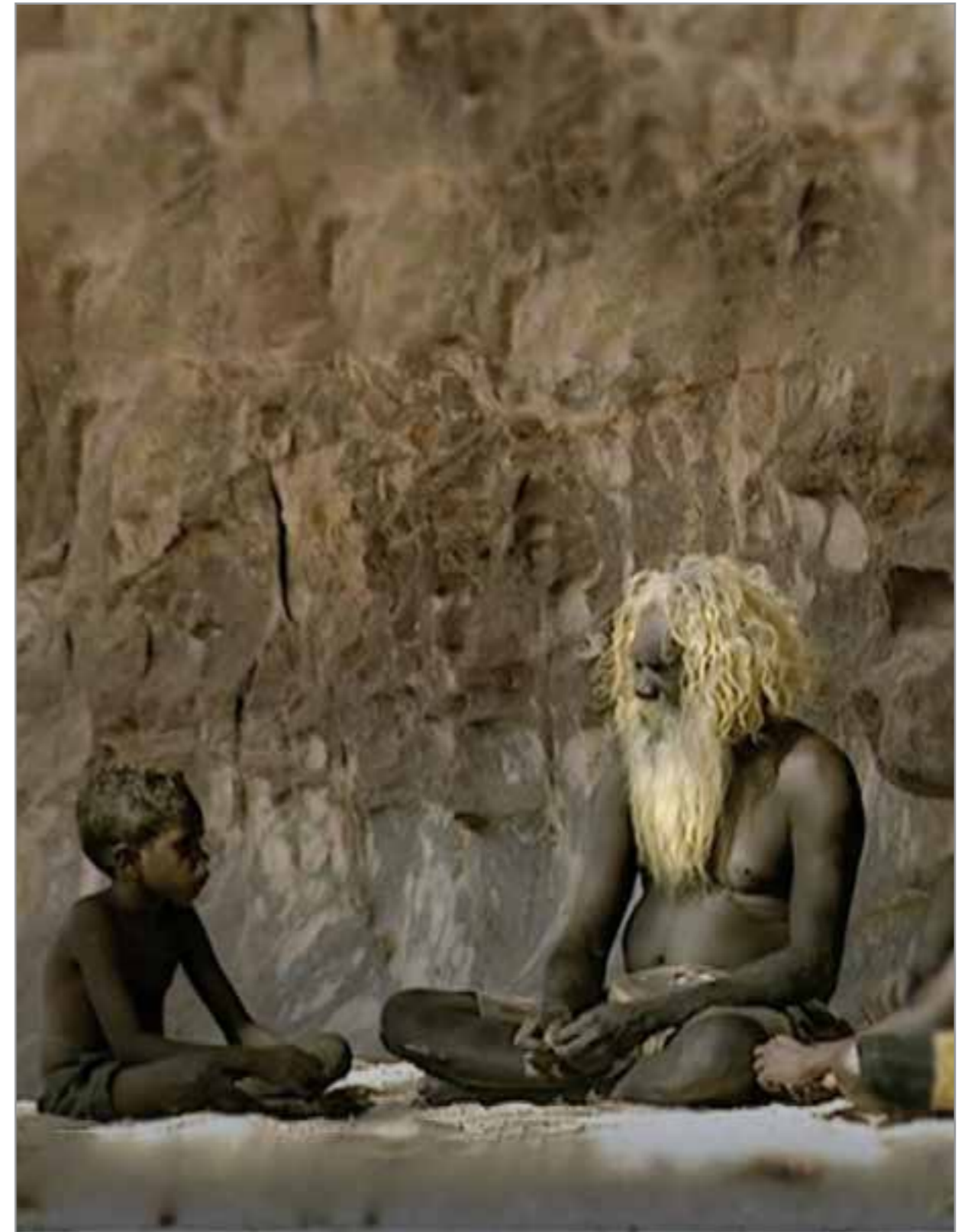
Unfortunately, colonization and later interventions by government, missions and others, sometimes well-meaning but more often virulent, actively destroyed the very family and social systems, the processes that traditionally solved family and community crisis and problems [5]. The long-term solution would be to break the cycle and rebuild mechanisms of self-regulation within the community and the families themselves.

The more pernicious consequences of collective trauma include loss of self-esteem, dignity, purpose, meaning, sense of belonging, communality, connectedness, ethical mores and norms, spiritual beliefs and an induced state of learned helplessness, dependency and passivity. The epidemic alcohol and drug abuse, violence and child sexual abuse needs to be understood in the context of the experiences of colonization that set-in motion a cycle of massive trauma and loss that was passed on from generation to generation [27]. The trauma is passed on in child-rearing practice with children growing up in pathological family and community environments of violence, gambling, child sexual abuse, poverty, disinterest in education or work, erosion of respect for elders, cultural values or practices and poor role models. Indigenous youths' negative experiences with an excluding mainstream society, frustration of expectations and a punitive criminal justice system further compounds and aggravates the situation. Alcohol and drugs are used to cope with the grief, distress and traumatising while the suppressed anger and rage manifests as violence towards self and others [5]. Unfortunately, colonization and later interventions by government, missions and others, sometimes well-meaning but more often virulent, actively destroyed the very family and social systems, the processes that traditionally solved family and community crisis and problems [5]. The long-term solution would be to break the cycle and rebuild mechanisms of self-regulation within the community and the families themselves.

Interventions

A fundamental prognostic question is whether the process of systemic destruction and assimilation gone too far, has the loss of traditional 'high' culture, beliefs and spirit been irretrievably lost or changed [28-30] ? However, as the burnt bush and forests regenerate with new rains, perhaps if the necessary opportunities and enabling environment are provided, the indigenous culture and community can rise again from the ashes.

Historically, there are examples of successful indigenous initiatives that were stifled but can be learnt from [28]. It is important to recognize and build on their strengths, resilience and what has been achieved in the last few decades to regenerate indigenous communities through appropriate healing and community programmes [5, 6]. Conventional medical treatment of individuals through medication, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) or psychotherapy may not be appropriate [4].



Photograph courtesy Planet Doc/Youtube.



Similar attempts to rebuild traditional social functioning have been employed by community patrols in the Northern Territory to tackle problems of suicide, violence and alcoholism among the Yolngu people. Pearson [32] recounts how the efforts of Yolngu elders in Yirrkala to prevent the introduction of alcohol into their community were stymied by multi-national commercial interests and the irony of the current government's legislation aimed to solve the very social problems the Yolngu leaders had frantically tried to avert.

The broader problems of collective traumatisation are best approached through strengthening and rebuilding family and community structures, re-establishing the communities' dignity, self-esteem, collective identity, pride, beliefs and sense of communality.

One way to create pride in the indigenous culture would be to honour traditional beliefs and practices and recognize their value for present day society. For example, strategies for dealing with climate change could learn from indigenous non-exploitive and organic relationships to land and nature. Another important quality are the deep, meaningful human relationships, kinships ties, responsibilities and obligations, resource sharing, co-operation and conflict resolution rituals that evolved over 50,000 years. A potential for increasing pride and self-image, lies in the colonial stereotype label, *aborigine*, that enshrines negative and denigratory connotations. The racist ideology of the times gave it a sense of being primitive, inferior, uncivilized, savage and even subhuman that legitimized the colonial domination. Tragically, indigenous people have internalized a negative view of themselves, with shame, self-loathing and a loss of dignity. The term '*aborigine*' reflects current reality, the power relationship and oppressive system that keeps them in place. As this balance changes, more respectful terms such as '*indigenous*' becomes more acceptable. Other indigenous communities have managed substitute such terms as '*first nation*'.

There are now innovative attempts to repair the torn social fabric among indigenous communities. The Dulwich centre in Adelaide [31] has used narrative practices to '**reclaim community**'. By sharing stories at community gatherings, relationships, connections and links are re-established, traditional values, beliefs, knowledge, skills and hope are re-kindled, giving rise to community solidarity and support. This method has been expanded to other indigenous populations around the world including in New Zealand and North America. *Dadirri* is a powerful cultural practice for listening, building relationships, support and healing as are storytelling, family and community story maps, using dreams, art, music, dance and theatre [5]. Similar attempts to rebuild traditional social functioning have been employed by community patrols in the Northern Territory to tackle problems of suicide, violence and alcoholism among the Yolngu people. Pearson [32] recounts how the efforts of Yolngu elders in Yirrkala to prevent the introduction of alcohol into their community were stymied by multi-national commercial interests and the irony of the current government's legislation aimed to solve the very social problems the Yolngu leaders had frantically tried to avert.

Photograph courtesy The Collective Trauma of Indigenous Australia/Youtube.

Instead of being hampered by excessive concern for individual privacy and confidentiality which are western constructs [36], working within the family circle can be handled with sensitivity and knowledge of cultural dynamics. Prof. Martin from Queensland [37] has shown how much can be done with families even with limited resources but despairs over the devastation and intergenerational legacy that is occurring to children in mainstream families, let alone indigenous families.



Photograph courtesy The Collective Trauma of Indigenous Australia/youtube.

Wilkes [33] of the National Indigenous Drug and Alcohol Committee describes successful systems introduced in the Groote Eylandt and Maningrida communities to reduce alcohol-related problems. In community development work, a sense of agency, participation and ownership is vital [1, 5, 6, 27]. Hunter [2] has advocated for sustained commitment to educational opportunities and resources as a practical way forward.

Although the *Breaking the Silence, Creating the Future* and 'Little Children are Sacred' reports have highlighted the high levels of aboriginal child abuse which have fed popular, stereotyped media images of child sexual assault and led to the Northern Territory emergency response, the Social Justice Report (2007) [6] points out that what is not realized is the alarming levels of child neglect. The report argues that the deprived socioeconomic conditions of indigenous communities with overcrowding, unemployment and lack of services breed neglect. The failure of the government to provide adequate services and opportunities that could rectify these conditions need consideration as much as focusing on the responsibilities of indigenous families and communities. There are also systemic failures in the child protection system such as underreporting and systemic bias towards western values and strategies that could be interlinked. Indigenous families and communities may not have sufficient trust and faith in a system that responds with forced removals, separations, excessive control and punitive measures rather than address underlying causes and dynamics to report cases or ask for help.

A Royal College of Psychiatrists' publication recommend for "Culturally Competent Services" the family as the preferred point of intervention [34]. The family is the basic social unit in non-western, traditional '*collectivistic communities*' [35]. Families tend to think and act as a unit. Mainstream society values a more "individualistic" approach which emphasizes emancipation from the family, individual rights and protection. When there are issues of domestic violence or child abuse, mainstream structures, institution and services move to protect the individual, away from harm's way and thus subtly promote separation. Medical treatment also tends to be individual oriented; diseases and solutions are conceptualized in reductionist terms. However family and kinship is central to indigenous culture [1, 5, 27]. In indigenous families, a holistic integral approach, working with available family members, addressing their various needs and relationships as well as the family dynamics, finding and mobilizing support systems maybe more appropriate. In a healthy, supportive family environment, members would recover and may not need individual treatment as such.

It is useful to involve the family from the outset in the initial history and assessment, encouraging their contribution and point of view. At times, difficulties in family dynamics can be observed, assessed and even addressed in these settings. Home visits maybe needed to engage the whole family, including significant extended kin. Initially non-cooperative and difficult males may eventually come around with a non-challenging, supportive and patient approach (Anthea Krieg, personal communication).

Instead of being hampered by excessive concern for individual privacy and confidentiality which are western constructs [36], working within the family circle can be handled with sensitivity and knowledge of cultural dynamics. Prof. Martin from Queensland [37] has shown how much can be done with families even with limited resources but despairs over the devastation and intergenerational legacy that is occurring to children in mainstream families, let alone indigenous families.

The other critical area in regenerating communities is to support, encourage and empower the indigenous community, their emerging leaders and elders to restore social norms, values, beliefs, responsibilities and relationships as well as determine their own programmes.

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Photograph courtesy The Collective Trauma of Indigenous Australia/youtube.

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DR. HOWARD RICHARDS

I HAVE SEEN THE PROMISED LAND

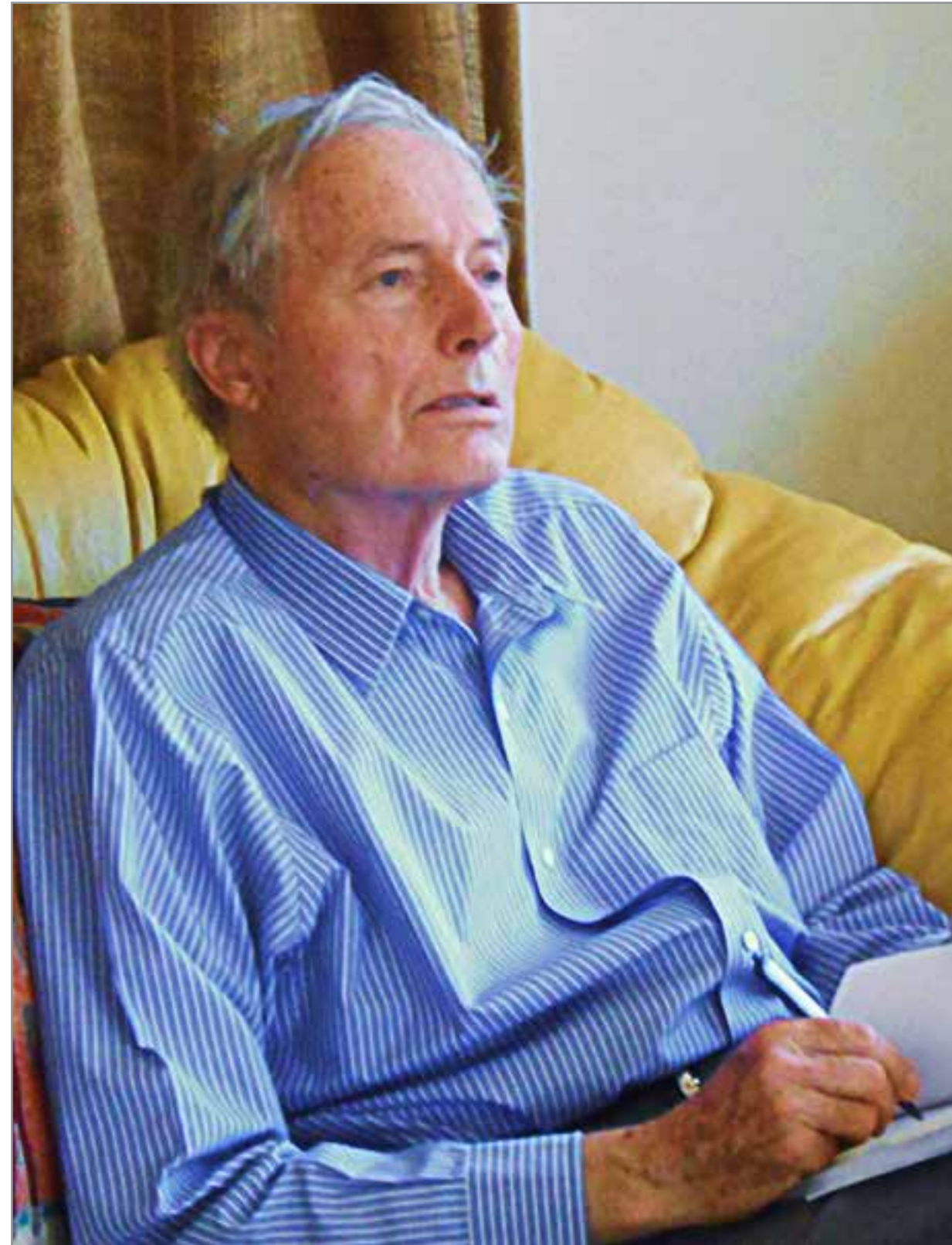
My title is taken from the last speech of Martin Luther King Jr. It was given in Memphis, Tennessee, less than 24 hours before his assassination. He was in Memphis to support a strike of the sanitation workers of Memphis, and to bring the strikers, and everyone else, back to the path of nonviolence.

At that point in his career –he was only 39 years old— King was world-famous for nonviolent resistance to racism, but his thinking and his activism had moved on. Experience and logic had taught him that racism was not going to end while blacks and whites were competing for the same scarce good jobs. He was organizing nonviolent resistance by both poor whites and poor blacks against poverty.

King was not the first to conclude that in a list of evils to combat, or in a list of worthy causes to support, there are good reasons for identifying poverty as a cause contributing to most of the other evils on the list, and for regarding ending it as a worthy cause that deserves priority because if that problem could be solved it would make it much easier to solve most, if not all, of the other problems. The death of the biosphere, or all out nuclear war, would, no doubt, be worse than a human population separated by wealth and income levels into haves and have-nots. But when you try to find ways to save the biosphere, or to end militarism and war, you realize, sooner or later, that the old devil money, the love of which is the root of all evil (*1 Timothy 6:10*) stands in the way.

Does anyone deny that the great majority of the world's people needs to work for a living? Does anyone deny that among that great majority only a minority enjoys dignified work at decent pay, or, failing that, enjoys making a good living as a self-employed micro-entrepreneur?

Anyone who is unaware of these basic facts, if there is such a person, should consult the statistics available on the website of the UN's International Labour Organization.



Dr Howard Richards

I believe that creating more dignified livelihoods is urgent and necessary. I believe that creating more dignified livelihoods nips big trouble in the bud before it gets worse. I also believe that moving to achieve dignified livelihoods for all is inevitably to move to change the fundamental basis of today's global economy. It gets to the heart of the matter, and makes changes in the depths of hearts. It changes the basic structure of a civilization in crisis, namely the structure of buying and selling. To say that our civilization is in crisis is to say that changes need to change the basic structure of our civilization, and that is what devoting surplus to creating dignified livelihoods does.

Does anybody seriously disagree with King's considered opinion that racism will never become past history, and cease being present reality, while people with different racial and ethnic identities compete with each other for the same scarce good jobs?

Does anybody believe that sexism and patriarchy will go away while women and men compete for the same scarce good jobs?

Does anybody believe that drug dealing, organized crime, and other illegal ways to make a living will recede while legal ways to make a good living are as scarce as they are today?

Can we save the biosphere while so many jobs depend on destroying it?

Indeed, those who give full employment, and raising the incomes and benefits of the employed, a high ranking or top ranking among their priorities, have been competing for centuries with those who consider it necessary –or consider in their self-interest-- to keep wages low, and some percentage of the work force unemployed, in order to encourage the capital accumulation without which there can be no increases in productivity of the kinds that historically have raised standards of living.

The former –the partisans of labour unions and welfare states—have made the kinds of historic gains that made many people believe that humanity's social problems had been solved, that the Scandinavians had solved them. It was thought to be only a matter of time until the Soviet bloc saw the light (indeed this was precisely the light that Mikhail Gorbachev saw) and democratized its socialism. The USA, back in those days, which were the first years after World War II, was already –led by enlightened patricians like the daring duo Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt—on its way to socializing its democracy. The third world would develop—and what development meant was synthesizing indigenous values with the universal human rights promoted by the Scandinavians who held the key posts in the United Nations.

For the past half century, we have been witnessing, aghast, the refutation, by facts, of the expectations of yesterday's social change activists. In our book *The Dilemmas of Social Democracies* (2006) my co-author Joanna Swanger and I explain why the expectations sketched above were not just disappointed.

They had to be disappointed –they were destined to fail—because of the deep structure of the system installed earlier, in the 17th through 19th centuries. Thomas Piketty in *Capitalism in the Twenty First Century* (2014) demonstrated with massive impeccable evidence that what we had shown had to happen because of the structure of the system, had in fact happened.

In this article I am proposing a different approach –a different approach that is not actually anything new because I build on many existing facts on the ground, and on many contemporary theoretical trends in feminism (gift economy, care ethic), ecology (degrowth), and revivals of indigenous voices that had been silenced first by colonialism and then later by the globally dominant culture (Ubuntu, buen vivir, dharma...). The approach I suggest can be called “creating dignified livelihoods.”

I believe that creating more dignified livelihoods is urgent and necessary. I believe that creating more dignified livelihoods nips big trouble in the bud before it gets worse. I also believe that moving to achieve dignified livelihoods for all is inevitably to move to change the fundamental basis of today's global economy. It gets to the heart of the matter, and makes changes in the depths of hearts. It changes the basic structure of a civilization in crisis, namely the structure of buying and selling. To say that our civilization is in crisis is to say that changes need to change the basic structure of our civilization, and that is what devoting surplus to creating dignified livelihoods does.

There have already been many government-funded public employment programmes providing employment because people need employment. Sometimes they describe their purpose as social integration. I have analysed at length elsewhere (in *Economic Theory and Community Development*, 2022) India's Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee, Sweden's government as employer of last resort of 1938-70, and South Africa's Community Work Programme. One of my and my co-researchers key conclusions is that government funding alone cannot possibly get the job done. Joseph Schumpeter was right when he argued in 1918 (*Die Krise des Steuerstaats*) that a nation state financed by taxes cannot be a sustainable welfare state. Another key conclusion is that economic growth will not and cannot do the job either. The time has come for an unbounded approach –for a care ethic driving efforts across all sectors, reviving old norms and inventing new norms of caring and sharing, giving and reciprocating. An unbounded approach, bringing all sectors on board, is needed to shore up the faltering efforts of the public sector.

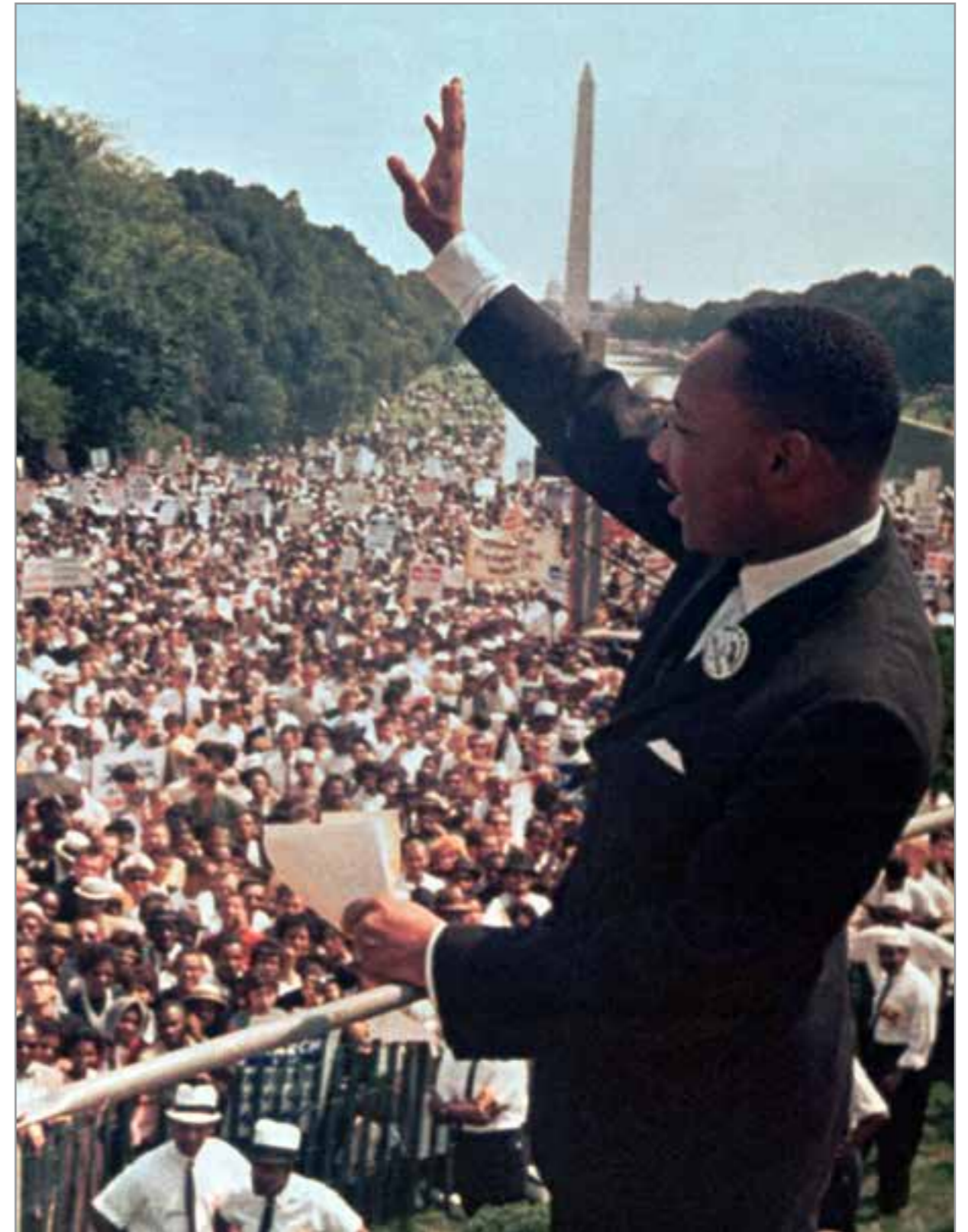
The now dominant system, viewed metaphorically, is like a huge airplane with nearly 8 billion passengers, no pilot, and a terrifying destination. The passengers give no thought at all to where the plane is going. Most are preoccupied with trying to make ends meet. If their minds have any energy left after worrying about how to make ends meet, the mass media offer them many consolations to help them, per Billy Joel, "... forget about life for a while." Nevertheless, however distant the big picture may be from any given mind, the buying and selling we do every day *is the deep and fundamental cause of the flight to end all flights*: destination social and environmental collapse.

Each passenger is a legal person authorized to own property and to be a party to contracts called purchases. Each purchase, regarded from the seller's point of view, is a sale. Each passenger is trying to sell more than she or he buys, aiming for income exceeding expenses, aiming to win the game by having more receivables than payables, more assets than debts. Since total sales must equal total purchases, if somebody sells more than they buy, someone else must go farther into debt or maybe drop out of the market game by sitting in one of the seats reserved for those who in real life are drunks sleeping on the sidewalk. It is not a question whether there will be losers. The question is who the losers will be.

The losers will be those who fail to sell; those who are not hired (failing to sell their labour power) because there can never (sustainably) be enough buyers of goods to make it profitable for employers to hire everyone who needs a job; and those who sink hopelessly into debt.

Inevitably, the simple buying and selling that define our civilization --what Theodor Adorno named the *Tauschprinzip* and André Orléan calls *séparation marchande*-- lead to today's military/financial baroque as exemplified by weaponizing banking and by Apple Corporation's sci fi creative accounting. But we must not let the exotic extremes divert us from considering the consequences of our everyday loneliness. Simple buying and selling already defines markets separating winners from losers.

An instructive example: Back in the 1920s, anthropologists could still find in the Trobriand Islands, customary practices where the inland people met the fisher folk on the beach for ceremonial exchanges of the fruits of the land for the fruits of the sea. Such customs could go on forever, with nobody noticing if some years the fish were worth more than the crops and other years the crops were worth more than the fish. No losers.



The Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. waves to the March on Washington crowd from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, the site of his "I Have a Dream" speech. (Associated Press).
Photograph courtesy <https://www.washingtonpost.com/>



Mother and child, north Laos. Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

Dignified livelihoods for all is a cause that deserves priority because if it were successful it would banish institutional malfunctions in fundamental ways. By welcoming the losers back into the human family, it would open paths to correcting other malfunctions. It is a cause that turns other worthy causes that are now lost causes, for example reversing global warming, into causes where there are real possibilities of success.

Market games are games with losers. They are unstable.

Dignified livelihoods for all is a cause that deserves priority because if it were successful it would banish institutional malfunctions in fundamental ways. By welcoming the losers back into the human family, it would open paths to correcting other malfunctions. It is a cause that turns other worthy causes that are now lost causes, for example reversing global warming, into causes where there are real possibilities of success.

David Graeber exhaustively documents in his book, *Debt: The First Five Thousand Years* (2011), that markets where the aim of the customary game is making money, lead inevitably to human vs. human conflict as winners accumulate winnings and losers sink into debt. Mother Nature falls victim too.

My proposal is to pay with surplus funds those who cannot be paid from wage funds created by the sales of products, or by taxation. Typically, surplus is income from property ownership. But anybody might have a surplus, including a worker whose wages exceed what she or needs.

Perhaps a bit like Don Quixote and a bit like the Roman emperor Nero, tilting at windmills while the world goes up in flames, we are trying to show in practice that another world is possible here on two acres of an experimental country located at the end of the earth, where if you went any farther south from the southern tip of it, you would be crossing the sea on your way to Antarctica. We (my partner Caroline, our daughter Shelley and I) have been creating a few dignified livelihoods, partly indirectly by donating regularly to non-profits, joining other donors in funding somebody's non-profit pay check.

Directly, we support planting and caring for trees (in some cases native species –the government gives us the seedlings free). And keeping bees, protecting birds, organic gardening (including teaching it to little kids in elementary schools) using worms and compost to improve soil, using flowers that attract beneficial insects and companion planting instead of pesticides, convening necessary conversations, and running a website (www.chileufu.cl) Along with one other donor and six or so organizers, we support food security, and basic security in general, in our immediate neighbourhood.

In the thirteenth century Saint Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274) anticipated and elaborated Bill Mollison’s third principle: *The temporal goods that God gives us [everything we have in the worldview of Saint Thomas] are ours as to their ownership, but as to the use of them, they belong not to us alone, but also to such others as we are able to help out of what we have over and above our needs. (Summa Theologica, II II, Question 32, Article 5, Reply to objection 2)*

This is not a business. We are just spending part of our pensions. Our surplus. Some people spend their pensions on brandy and white summer gloves. For others, our idea of fun is blending creating dignified livelihoods with the occasional shot of brandy and the occasional special garment.

These few selected facts about our little experiment make it seem more wonderful than it really is. They conceal unmentioned failures and unconfessed embarrassments. Unabashed, I take these few selected facts to be down-to-earth details that illustrate three ethical principles that are generally applicable worldwide. As formulated by Bill Mollison, the founder of the permaculture movement, they are:

- 1. Love the land.
- 2. Love the people.
- 3. Share the surplus.

Mollison’s first and second principles are indispensable, but I only have space to comment on the third. It is the one that holds the key to funding dignified livelihoods for all.

In the thirteenth century Saint Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274) anticipated and elaborated Bill Mollison’s third principle: *The temporal goods that God gives us [everything we have in the worldview of Saint Thomas] are ours as to their ownership, but as to the use of them, they belong not to us alone, but also to such others as we are able to help out of what we have over and above our needs. (Summa Theologica, II II, Question 32, Article 5, Reply to objection 2)*

Especially since the classic contributions of David Ricardo (1772-1823), economists have carefully analysed a phenomenon nearly coterminous with “surplus.” Namely: “rent.” Economic rent is an amount of money earned that exceeds what is economically or socially necessary. For Ricardo it was emblematically what landlords charge farmers for the use of their land. Ricardo advised the government to tax the landlords. Similarly, in our times, Thomas Piketty and colleagues have demonstrated that the enormous salaries of Wall Street and City of London bank executives are mainly rents, proceeds of power, not proceeds of performance.

There are rents from natural resources. There are rents from privileged locations. Some of them are privileged because of where the government itself chose to put a highway or an airport. The inheritors of wealth, the trust fund kids, have surpluses. They are often a source of donations funding dignified livelihoods.

So “rents” and similar windfalls define part of the answer to the question, “Where might the funds needed to provide dignified livelihoods for everybody come from?” By definition, if they came from rents, the work of the world would go on as before, undisturbed. Rents are not costs of production. Production does not depend on them, and it does not stop when they are used to create dignified livelihoods.

Another part of the story seeks to answer the questions raised by the management guru Peter Drucker, when he wrote that “...how the profits are distributed and to whom is of great political importance.” (Business Objectives and Survival Needs. *The Journal of Business*, Vol. 31 (1958), pp. 81-90, p.87)

Another key question is, “How can the enormous increases in productivity made possible by the advance of science and technology –an advance expected to accelerate in the future—be shared with all human beings?” Here it is *science* that is the source of the surplus.

And there is a whole other dimension. It is Asset Based Community Development, or, in its African version, Unbounded Organizing in Community. In Latin America, Spain and much of Europe it is *economía solidaria*. The poor do not have nothing. Often they have surplus time or unused talents. Cooperating to use better what the have-nots already have, is a game-changer. It shrinks the requirement to move surplus in regularly from elsewhere in order to achieve happiness in the *villas miserias*.

So what did King mean when he said shortly before his death that he had seen the promised land? From his writings we can deduce some conclusions. He defined the ultimate goal of the movement he led as “the beloved community.” This implies the conversion of souls, does it not? Not or not only conversion in the sense of believing one thing instead of another in one’s mind. (Matthew 6:27) But conversion to what the liberation theologians would later call ortho-practice. It means more community and less *homo economicus*.

Many therapists today would define the power of love exceeding the love of power as mental health as opposed to the reigning insanity. As King argued in his doctoral dissertation, it means that justice is not an ethic in its own right, but rather a means to the end of implementing an ethic of love. If this is not the path to surviving the existential crisis of our global civilization, what is?

It means people governing markets instead of being governed by markets (I can hear King intoning in another speech: Feed the hungry!) It means the power of love exceeding the love of power. Many therapists today would define the power of love exceeding the love of power as mental health as opposed to the reigning insanity. As King argued in his doctoral dissertation, it means that justice is not an ethic in its own right, but rather a means to the end of implementing an ethic of love. If this is not the path to surviving the existential crisis of our global civilization, what is?

I have tried to persuade several academics, and several graduate students looking for a dissertation topic, to make a proper quantitative study of the sums involved in multiplying dignified livelihoods. I have had no luck so far, but I have not given up. Based on my own experience and the limited quantitative data I am aware of (See Chapter Nine of *Economic Theory and Community Development*), the surplus required is far less than the surplus owned by people who own surplus.

The amounts required might seem beyond reach when you think of funding coming from governments that are already sinking in unpayable debt and already facing demands to lower taxes.

The amounts required might also seem unobtainable when you think of creating employment for the excluded the old fashioned roundabout way –finding a market for some good or service that is not already supplied by somebody else who got there first, raising funds with venture capitalists, putting engineers to work designing production and marketers to work designing marketing, and finally hiring workers you hope will produce value exceeding their wages sufficient to enable you to pay off your loans and deliver profits to your investors.

But when you think in terms of an ethical imperative to use existing surplus to pay people to do necessary work like saving the biosphere, the job seems doable.



Rice Farmer. Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

José Truda Palazzo, Jr. is a Brazilian environmentalist, wildlife gardener and writer with a career spanning 45 years and 14 books published as author or co-author. An avid SCUBA diver, he has been mingling with marine wildlife in 11 countries around the world. He served for almost two decades in government delegations to international marine conservation treaties and is a co-founder of many conservation organizations around Brazil and South America. A member of the IUCN (World Conservation Union) Task Force on Marine Mammals and Protected Areas and its Tourism and Protected Areas Specialist Group, a Life Member of the Australian Conservation Foundation, and a Board Member of the Brazilian Humpback Whale Institute, he also serves as Senior Conservation Officer for IBRACON, the Brazilian Institute for Nature Conservation. His next book, *Living Water: Marine Ecotourism, Communities and Conservation* will be published in 2023 by Australian publishing house Stormbird Press. More about his work and writings at www.josetruda.wordpress.com. E-mail: josepalazzo@gmail.com

JOSÉ TRUDA PALAZZO, JR.

WE, THE OCEAN

The gauge marked 50 bar, $\frac{1}{4}$ of the air cylinder's original pressure, which meant it was time to slowly make it to the surface. A few hundred meters from the beach at Playa del Carmen, in the crystal-clear waters of Mexico's Pacific coast, the group of divers, me included, rise as one as instructed by the guides. Still mesmerized by the experience, we all look down during our ascent and watch the dozen or so adult female bull sharks circling around. We had just spent a good half hour with them, watching our experienced Phantom Divers guides feed the three-meter-long bulky animals, who swam around and looked at us with eyes which expressed curiosity, not aggressiveness. I soon emerged from the sea, but it didn't leave me; the salty solutions running through our body are a permanent reminder that we all came from it, in the deep time of the amazing journey called evolution.

It's been almost 45 years now since I embarked on a lifetime of defending the oceans – rather, the Ocean, this single all-encircling body of living water that's the defining feature of our planet. It was 1978 and countries around the world were killing whales by the tens of thousands, an almost 400-year long slaughter which brought most species of these magnificent animals to the brink of extinction. But whaling was only the most scandalous of Ocean-maiming activities undertaken by humankind, enough to rally citizens from around the world (including me) to demand an end to their massacre. And it worked: nowadays commercial whaling is banned in all but three countries and in the high seas, and most whale species are on a safe path to full recovery. But as I said, this was only the most visible aggression against the Ocean – the proverbial tip of the iceberg, and there was much more below the water line.

As people were fighting to end whaling, more pervasive threats continued to escalate against the living salt waters of our planet. Nowadays climate change is the über-rallying cry, and governments and corporations alike, with varying degrees of honesty, tout their efforts to mitigate, reverse, or otherwise contain it against an ever-growing curve of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere – and the Ocean.



José Truda Palazzo, Jr.



Sharks: Visiting sharks in Playa del Carmen opens a gate towards a different insight about the Ocean. Credit: Chino Loria/Phantom Divers.

Ghanaian scientist Dr. Rashid Sumaila, one of the world's leading authorities on fisheries and overfishing, challenged the conventional beliefs around "food security" at the recent United Nations Ocean Conference, by stating that we should start caring about the food security for sharks, whales, seabirds – in essence, abandon our greedy grabbing of marine wildlife even if it's deemed "sustainable" from a catch level standpoint, and begin to think about leaving enough fish and other wildlife in the Ocean so the great and interconnected marine food webs can function properly.

But an equally disastrous event has been happening for decades under our collective noses without any proportional reaction: overfishing. In the last five decades alone, humankind has doubled its consumption of what we conveniently dubbed "seafood", but which in fact are thousands of species of marine wildlife, each with a role in the grand ecological web of the Ocean, and most of them with life cycles that we don't actually understand enough to manage sustainably. Currently we are consuming more than 150 million tons of marine wildlife a year. Most of it comes from unsustainable operations that are rapidly depleting these species, as scientific studies repeatedly published have warned, yet to no avail.

But the direct consumption of marine wildlife as food is only part of the problem; the way it is caught makes this, the last great hunter-gatherer activity of humans, also the most wasteful use of any natural resource on Earth. From coastal gillnets that drown endangered dolphins by the dozen to longlines that cover thousands of miles every day in the high seas killing sea turtles, sharks and albatrosses; from the indecent but widespread practice of bottom-trawling, which entirely destroys the seabed and its living communities of corals, sponges, mollusks with a weighted net to the shrimp fisheries which "discard" (that is, kill and throw overboard) up to 80% of its total catch composed of other species of living beings, we have all tacitly allowed the primitiveness of the Paleolithic hunter, who burnt entire forests to eat some deer, to survive into the 21st century in a different kind of arsonism.

I mentioned the Ocean as living waters a little while before. It is no metaphor; every drop of sea water in existence is filled with innumerable living creatures which compose the plankton, the wondrous basis of all life on our planet. I was first introduced to these marvelous creatures while looking through a microscope in a time when there was no internet, but you can check them online now, and I doubt you wouldn't be mesmerized by their beauty. From minute crab larvae to the geometrical forms of the diatom silica shells, a whole universe in a drop hints at the immensity of the living exchanges and relations that exist in the Ocean and about which we never pause long enough to reflect upon. And yet we should. More than 50% and probably up to 80% of the oxygen we breathe is produced by marine algae like those hiding in that water drop. And an enormous amount of the carbon we keep spewing in the atmosphere is absorbed by the Ocean.

But guess what? It can't do it without healthy populations of whales – or fish and other myriad animals that roam the blue vastness. Recent studies are proving that the existence of robust *biomass* in the Ocean, in the form of marine wildlife of all kinds, is essential for the absorption and retention of carbon in the marine ecosystems. If we continue to extract marine wildlife – "seafood" – from the Ocean at current levels, no effort will suffice to mitigate the climate crisis.

I have so far led you through a (somewhat depressing) story centered on the utilitarian view of the Ocean by humankind and its consequences. It is true that reversing the current decline in marine wildlife would serve us well; however, it would be a pity if we only thought of saving it due to egotistic reasons. There's so much more to the Ocean that can enrich our lives than considering its inhabitants as "seafood"! And one needs to go no further than listening to a talk by Her Deepness Dr. Sylvia Earle, the most acclaimed female underwater explorer of all time, to find reasons beyond our self-interest to do something to protect the seas. Sylvia's vivid depictions of fish lives and characters, observed during her hundreds of hours of SCUBA diving, come as no surprise to fellow divers like me, but certainly raises eyebrows among the general public, so used to think of fish as some inanimate thing on a dinner plate, devoid of intelligence and feelings. Fish do feel pain, but they also feel the world around them in other ways, and live complex lives in their multidimensional environment. So do octopuses and cuttlefish, not to speak of our acquaintances, the marine mammals. But even those very simple organisms in the drop of sea water live a complex existence and hold a key place in this immense symphony of life, this endless source of marvel.

Starting to realize that the Ocean deserves not only to be conserved as a repository of "goods" for humans have important implications from an ethical standpoint, leading us to challenge the conventional views on marine conservation and "sustainable use". Ghanaian scientist Dr. Rashid Sumaila, one of the world's leading authorities on fisheries and overfishing, challenged the conventional beliefs around "food security" at the recent United Nations Ocean Conference, by stating that we should start caring about the food security for sharks, whales, seabirds – in essence, abandon our greedy grabbing of marine wildlife even if it's deemed "sustainable" from a catch level standpoint, and begin to think about leaving enough fish and other wildlife in the Ocean so the great and interconnected marine food webs can function properly, so that no albatross or penguin chick will die of hunger in a remote subantarctic island because its parents, having traversed hundreds of miles of sea, couldn't find enough to feed it.



Blue Dragon: Creatures such as this tiny, beautiful blue dragon nudibranch fill the apparent void of the high seas with pulsating life. Credit: Sylke Rohrlach.

Industrial fishing must be banned from the high seas immediately – it is unduly subsidized, highly destructive, and oftentimes controlled by veritable mafias which regularly resort to slavery and rampant corruption to keep their murderous business afloat. National industrial fishing fleets should be gradually retired. And artisanal fishing, practiced by coastal communities, must be brought to exist under sustainable levels and practices, with full financial support from the billions that are currently being spent in paying industrial fishing to destroy everything.

We must start working not only to restore fish and other marine wildlife populations to a “sustainable harvest” level, but to a point where all these interactions can continue to happen adequately. We must restore the health of the Ocean as a whole.

Should we stop fishing? The answer is, simply, yes, most of it. Industrial fishing must be banned from the high seas immediately – it is unduly subsidized, highly destructive, and oftentimes controlled by veritable mafias which regularly resort to slavery and rampant corruption to keep their murderous business afloat. National industrial fishing fleets should be gradually retired. And artisanal fishing, practiced by coastal communities, must be brought to exist under sustainable levels and practices, with full financial support from the billions that are currently being spent in paying industrial fishing to destroy everything. Eventually, if we want to have a healthy Ocean that serves us through its many planetary ecosystem services, most fishing must end. But what will the billions of people depending on “seafood” eat? The answer lies in a combination of carefully managed artisanal fishing, aquaculture, and the emerging industry of tissue cultivation, which already produces acceptable “seafood” products that can replace wild-caught ones.

Besides being helped, as they deserve, into truly sustainable artisanal fishing, there are other ways through which coastal communities can benefit from restoring Ocean health. Fishermen around the world are partially or fully replacing extractive activities for non-extractive ones, earning much more from Marine Ecotourism, and with that not only improving their own lives, but opening a window of awareness for millions of people about the beauty and importance of the Ocean. These activities, diving, whale and shark watching, or simply contemplating the watery realm in its grandeur, are an essential part of our effort to restore our ancestral links to it. A sense of intimacy, of belonging, a rapport, a bond. Something hard to define but which will make you question where your next “seafood”- marine wildlife – plate came from, and how much it costs the planet. Which will make you ask your politicians why your tax money is being given to fund destroyers of the marine world. Which will, hopefully, make you think whether offshore oil extraction or deep-sea mining are acceptable at all, this late in the climate emergency.

And make you ACT upon all those things with the immense power of citizenship we all carry.

And, in the end, will make you long for the sight of the blue horizons, make you feel rewarded by knowing there are still sharks and whales, corals and diatoms, albatrosses and turtles out there, and ultimately feel one with the Ocean, our mother, our kin.



A Mandarin fish, one of the many jewels of the coral reefs of Yap, Micronesia. Credit: Brad Holland.

Lincoln Jaques' poetry, fiction and travel essays have appeared in Aotearoa, Australia, Asia, America, the UK and Ireland. He was the winner of the Auckland Museum centenary ANZAC international poetry competition, a finalist and 'Highly Commended' in the 2018 Emerging Poets-Divine Muses, a Vaughan Park Residential Writer/Scholar in 2021, and was the Runner-Up in the 2022 International Writers' Workshop Kathleen Grattan Prize for a *Sequence of Poems* (judged by Janet Charman). He holds a Master of Creative Writing from AUT.

LINCOLN JAQUES

THE ART WORLD'S BEST KEPT SECRET: THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, ZAGREB

Zagreb's Museum of Contemporary Art sits in the new part of Zagreb at the intersection of Avenija Dubrovnik and Avenija Većeslava Holjevca. I say in the new part of Zagreb – the area was developed during the Socialist surge from 1945 to 1990. Between these years, in a nightmarish dream sequence from a Buñuel movie, blocks of communal towers rose steadily across the River Sava, and families rapidly moved in.

The museum itself, though, is located in the eastern block (Istok) of the grand expansion. This part of the city is home to Mamutica, one of the largest socialist housing developments in southeast Europe. The towers of the Mamutica development rise up so high it gives one the impression of being built on a hill. The whole area is a flat plain, however.

The museum sits in the midst of these decaying tower blocks like a guest who's turned up to a metal thrash party dressed in a tuxedo. The building was designed by Igor Franić, a Professor of Architecture at the University of Zagreb, from a large pool of international submissions. Franić also designed the "Kocka mora" (roughly translated "Sea Cube") sculpture in Dubrovnik in 2007. The artwork was a homage to fallen soldiers, "Defenders of the City", of the 1992-1995 war. Plonked in the middle of the ancient walled city, looking largely out of place, the oversized box of glass projected images of the lost soldiers, intermixed with reflections of the nearby Adriatic Sea, and included the poem "Hymn to Liberty" by the famous writer Ivan Gundulić. It cost 10 million HRK during a time where money was desperately needed to rebuild the city walls and replace the tiled roofs that had been relentlessly shelled by the Serbs. Not only that, it took a lot of technology to keep it going, costing half a million HRK a year. Eventually, the technology couldn't keep up. It broke down often, so much so that the locals renamed it "Monument to Fallen [Microsoft] Windows". It was finally removed in 2020.



Lincoln Jaques



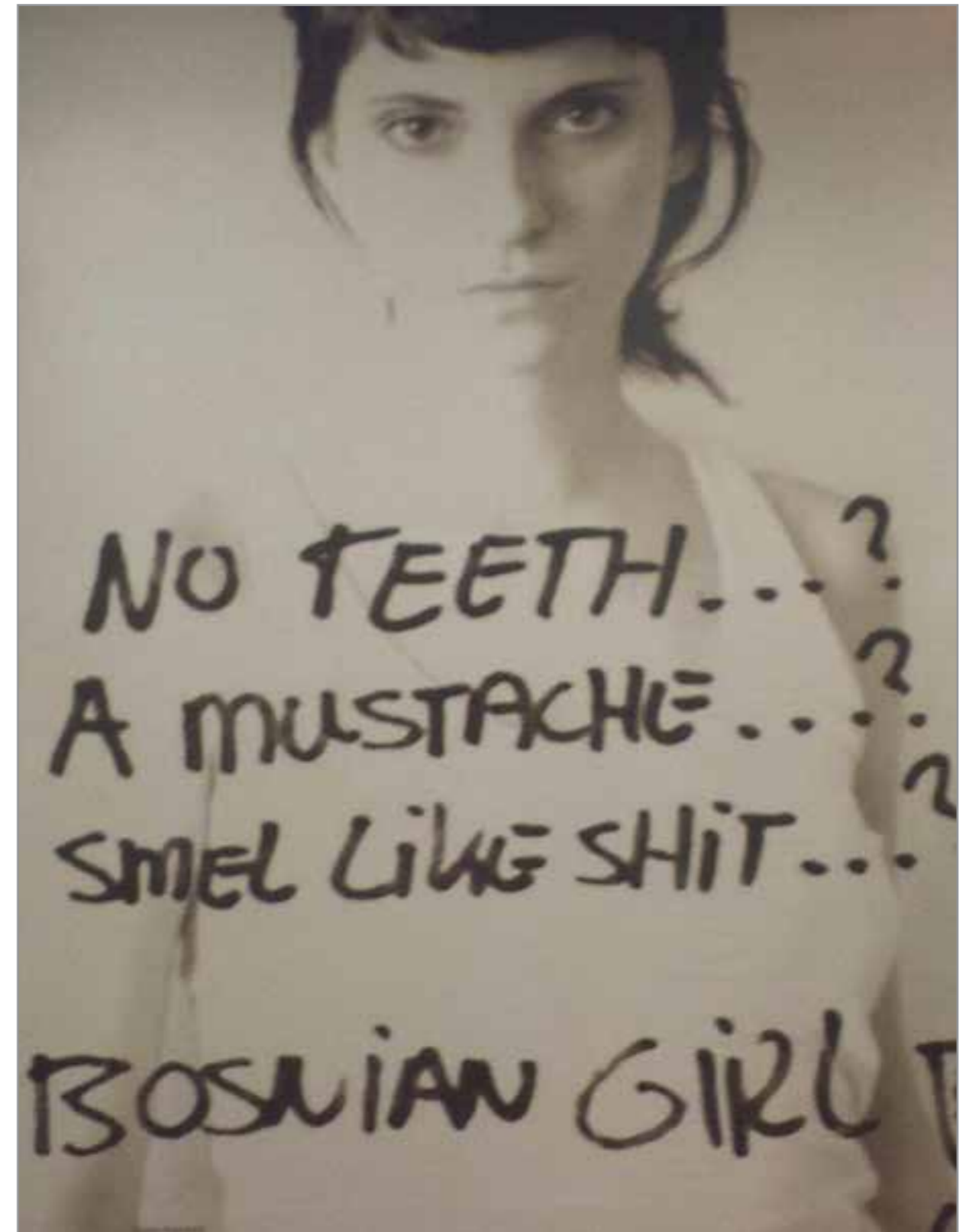
The Museum of Modern Art, Zagreb. Photograph by Lincoln Jaques.

To build the Museum in Zagreb, it took 6 years and 450 million HRK (US\$84 million) to complete. Coincidentally, we were in Zagreb for the opening. We didn't even intend to go if I remember. It was December, it was winter, and the snowfall was particularly high that year. But there was a bit of a fuss about its opening—there was a lot of controversy over the money and the delays and it had been in the news a lot—and on top of that my wife's cousin was a curator for another gallery in the city centre near Josip Jelačić Square. Although she didn't have VIP invites, she was determined to get us in.

So on an evening in December as the snow fell, we pulled on our coats and hats and boots and left our apartment in Vrbanićeva to catch the tram across the River Sava. My heart sank as we reached the museum. Word had spread of the opening, and obviously it must have been one of the few interesting things happening in the dead of winter, when Zagreb families are land-locked after the summer season spent at the coast or up in Istria. The crowds snaked around on the expansive forecourt of the museum. Ropes had been set up and placed in rows like the opening of a Hollywood blockbuster. Half the people kept to the rules and lined up in orderly within the ropes; the other half, as it generally is in European countries, were bunching up at the grand entrance, waving their arms, or standing around in some hope that an opportunity would present itself to rush at an opening in the queue.

I told my wife to forget it and she just looked at me strangely. I remember when she first brought me to Zagreb, we were in the central city at rush-hour. Each tram that arrived in Josip Jelačić Square was packed to capacity. I simply backed off and was ready to wait for another. My wife firmly informed me that if I continued letting full trams go I would be standing in the cold for another several hours. She was doing no such thing. She pushed me through the tram doors. I think I bashed someone in the nose with my forehead. But there was no retaliation. Simply a resignation to crush one's body into the tram and stop breathing for the duration of the journey—hoping like hell that you only needed to go a few stops until the oxygen ran out.

We got off the tram and fought our way through the crowds and reached the agreed meeting place where my wife's cousin waited for us. She already had a plan. She'd thought it out carefully. Apparently, I was part of the plan.



The Museum of Modern Art, Zagreb. Photograph by Lincoln Jaques.



The Museum of Modern Art, Zagreb. Photograph by Lincoln Jaques.

The cousin had brought with her several others, all from the gallery where she worked. The hustle was that she would exert her position as a curator (the gallery where she worked was small but important in the local art scene) and she would nominate her colleagues as critics and art historians (although I think one was a cashier and the other worked in the gift shop). I didn't know what place I had in the scheme of things. There wasn't time to explain. Instead of lining up with the others, we headed for a side-entry hidden from the general crowd but not completely out of sight of anyone who caught on to our illegal storming of the museum. Cameras were everywhere – I think RTL Television was there and HRT Radio Television also. I remember seeing reporters from Narodni list and Večernji list and 24sata, a major tabloid player in Zagreb. When we got to the side-door, there were bouncers pushing back a small crowd. Lots of arm-waving once again. I think one man was shaking his fist. The bouncers were holding tight, trying to tell the interlopers to go and join the crowd. Their cries fell on deaf ears.

I couldn't help wondering what all the fuss was about. It was only art, wasn't it? And couldn't everyone just come back the next day when the gallery opened in its normal hours? But no, the opening of the gallery had been across all media, had infiltrated all sections of Zagreb society. To be anyone, from now on, you would have to have been at the opening of one of the most talked about and prestigious galleries in Croatia. Failing to be one of the first to enter the 450 million HRK gallery would be too much of a shame to bear. Again, I said to my wife, let's forget it and go find a slastičarnica (patisserie). Again she gave me the same angry, disbelieving look.

We were getting in those doors.

The cousin talked to the men at the door. One shook his head. They were big men with thick necks who only wore polo shirts against the bitter cold but their constantly throbbing biceps kept the body heat in and everyone else out. Being found in the morning dead in a ditch and frozen stiff crossed my mind. This was the door, so I heard, where the celebrities and sporting icons, not to mention the world-renowned artists that had flown in from various parts of Croatia (and the world) were being shuffled through. Not that I spotted any myself.



The Museum of Modern Art, Zagreb. Photograph by Lincoln Jaques.



The Museum of Modern Art, Zagreb. Photograph by Lincoln Jaques.

The bodyguards weren't buying it. Being a curator was not enough. I then discovered what my role was. The cousin said something and pointed to me. With my little snapshot of Croatian, I determined the words 'foreigner' 'England' 'Time Magazine' and 'ArtReview' (the latter 2 were spoken in English, as if to add an underlying current of authenticity). I stood mute and staring, I think at this stage my wife stabbed me in the ribs. I smiled, nodded. 'Yes, Time!' I said. A complete lie. The bodyguards looked at one another. There came a moment of inner panic as I waited for them to demand my Press ID or any kind of proof to back up the claims the cousin was making. The one that seemed to be in charge stood for a moment, staring me down, then when I was about to give up and walk away (unhindered by the wrath I would have faced later from the cousin and my wife) one of them opened the glass door and we were escorted into the darkness.

We were inside one of the greatest art museums in the world.

I don't actually remember much about the rest of that night. Everything became a blur. I think the city Mayor was there, and many artists who had pieces in the opening show; maybe even Franić himself was lurking in the shadows. A few celebrities were pointed out to me, but I didn't recognise who they were. I remember I was introduced to many well-known artists that evening, but I can't for the life of me remember their names or what we talked about. I have a strange habit of freezing up around people I respect and admire, artists and writers being the group I highly regard most. There were speeches happening down on the ground floor, the many unveiling of things, but my wife and I gravitated up the levels, away from the crowds, to explore on our own. I remember looking out at the masses still lining up behind the ropes outside on the plaza, and feeling deeply guilty of the privileged way I got in. I remembered thinking how the word 'foreigner' had so much silly importance. I remember there were a lot of people dressed in very fine clothes. The women wore fur coats and their hair was pinned up like 1920s film stars. I had on a possum beanie from New Zealand, sneakers that let in the water from the melting snow, a jacket that was way too warm for the heat now coming from other bodies in the crowded rooms. Normally we'd check in our coats and bags, but the check-in counter was lost in the maze of corridors and bright lights.

What I do remember most was being glad to escape the overheated museum and breathe in the cool night air again. On the tram home the moon reflected in the waters of the Sava as we crossed back over into the older district. Josip Jelačić Square was still emptying out as we changed trams to

head back to Vrbanićeva. The stalls from the Christmas Markets had closed their shutters for the day. To this day I marvel how at the time I didn't realise I'd become a part of history. It's those little experiences that hit you out of the blue as you wake somewhere in the world at 3am and say to yourself: I was there.

It was some years later, in 2018, that I revisited the museum. This time it was October, and although the blistering heat of summer had passed, by the time we caught the tram out to Avenija Većeslava Holjevca it was gone lunchtime and hitting 30 degrees. No snow this time, just a concrete jungle of tower flats and SPAR stores and Bila supermarkets and new multi-level shopping malls. The front entrance from Većeslav Holjevac greets you like a modernist Greek temple, without all the fanfare of Gods and sacrifices. Its unassuming blandness is deceptively underwhelming. Before you crouches a geometrical pariah, daring you not to enter, unnerving you, but at the same time exotically drawing you deep into its inner sanctum to explore images and pieces that will deconstruct your thinking, like all good art galleries should do.

Inside, something I didn't get an appreciation of years earlier at the opening night, are large, open spaces allowing you to get a sense of the magnificence of the architecture first before you intersect with the art. In fact, it was much bigger inside than what I remembered it being, which tells me just how many people were crushed into that space that night all those years ago, in contravention of any Health & Safety protocols.

The first thing that hit me was the colossal sized art piece filling the wall as you enter the main gallery. It's a photograph of an unsmiling girl, with a note in untidy handwriting scribbled below: 'NO TEETH...? A MUSTACHE...? SMEL [SIC] LIKE SHIT...? BOSNIAN GIRL'

The work is by Šejla Kamerić. The graffiti was found scrawled on a wall in an army barracks in Potočari, Srebrenica, believed to be written in 1995 by a Dutch soldier who was supposed to be protecting the Srebrenica safe area. The work screams into your face and sums up everything difficult and complex about that whole conflict. Kamerić herself was born in Sarajevo. She was 16 when the war started, after her family returned from Dubai where her father worked as a sports coach. Despite the war, she attended the Sarajevo Academy of Fine Arts, specialising in Graphic Design. She belongs to a group of 'War Generation' artists, those who have lived through conflict and atrocities as teenagers.



The Museum of Modern Art, Zagreb. Photograph by Lincoln Jaques.

Things get decidedly more interesting the deeper I venture. I walk past a room where thousands of clay heads line shelves in a type of death-mask convention, all staring out at you standing within the confines of the narrow doorway, silencing and reducing your life to small window that will close soon enough. The next exhibit that catches my attention is a series of stories written on postcards, as if these were intended to be sent out to the world as small SOSs. The stories tell of those who have faced domestic abuse in relationships where they should have felt safe. On card 32: CROAT, MARRIED, ONE CHILD, a woman (who fittingly names her story 'BISERKA') tells of her escape from constant physical and mental abuse from her husband. The husband would use psychological warfare against her, saying how he would shoot himself if she left him. After each time he beat her he would say to her "Go wash your face. I want to see my masterpiece."

Another exhibit is a cloth with the controversial words embroidered: 'AN ARTIST WHO CANNOT SPEAK ENGLISH IS NO ARTIST'. The 'no' is in red. There's a sign advertising "Prof. Joseph Beuys, Institut [sic] for Cosmetic Surgery. Specialty: Buttock lifting". There's Andy Warhol style artworks and a sculpture of 2 Pinocchios tied together by a twisting rope connected the genitals with the words: 'Mine is bigger than yours' in letters cut from a newspaper in an echo of a serial killer's note. There's a full-size yellow 1960s Renault 4 lying on its side and, in what attracts me the most, a fully recreated room from an apartment that looks to belong to a part-artist, part-writer, perhaps during the communist period. The room is complete with wardrobe on top of which are suitcases, ready to be packed at short notice; chairs, a gas cooker, a 10-speed bicycle, a set of skis, a bed with sunken springs, a black & white TV set and a table on which are an assortment of pens, pencils, writing paper, drawing block pads, a Nordmende transistor radio and a silent gun-metal Olympia typewriter, its keys still alive and sparkling under the spotlights. The room has the feel that someone has just stepped out to buy cigarettes. But it manages to create a loneliness in the onlooker that once tapped, can never be quite released again, like a stuck key on the Olympia that will never again be able to complete a sentence.

After an afternoon of meandering through the galleries, mostly empty now and nothing compared to that opening fanfare in 2009, I feel a certain sadness. I sit for a while in the empty café that looks out across to the rush of afternoon traffic to the glittering neon lights of the Avenue Mall. The mall is full of people, walking through a structure similar to the gallery I now sit in.

But whilst the shopping mall is full to the brim, the gallery in comparison is empty, forgotten. The people's art is Adidas, H&M, iNovine, Next, Samsung, Skechers, Tommy Hilfiger, United Colours of Benetton. Their semiotics are the signs that draw them to the labels which rule their lives, which gives them identity. But our galleries also offer us meaning in an uncertain world; they hold up mirrors to ourselves, help us understand who we are, where we've come from, and most importantly where we're heading. For a moment on a cold night in December 2009 the Museum of Contemporary Art was the place to be seen. Now the air conditioning cools only the few who come to shelter from a harsh world, to escape the sun for a while, to have those few precious moments to think deeply about our world and our place in it. Art has been telling us all we need to know since time immemorial. We just keep on ignoring it.

Here in The Museum of Contemporary Art is housed important works, a fascinating, connective narrative journey, and I hope that everyone reading this will take the time to visit if they should be in Zagreb.

Katie Costello was born and raised in Hubbard, Ohio, USA. Her greatest passion in life has always been to help animals. She is lucky enough to be a licensed veterinary technician and owner of *The Canine Campus Training and Wellness Center* and *The Canine Campus Bed and Biscuit Inn*, where she helps animals through behavior work, does training of all types including aggression, fear, and service dog work. A vegetarian since she was 6 years old and a vegan for the last 15 years, she currently has 7 dogs, 5 cats, 7 chickens, 3 roosters, 1 very special turkey and 2 farm pigs that are amongst her dearest friends. She is founder of 2 non-profit organizations, K-9's for Compassion (Co-founded with her father), a therapy animal group and *The Together 3 Journey*, a service dog organization. She has been on the board of many animal organizations throughout her life, including *Happy Trails Farm Animal Sanctuary* and C.H.A.I.N. (Community Helping Animals In Need) and SVBT (Society of Veterinary Behavior Technicians). She enjoys freelance writing about (mostly) animals for different magazines, with her favorite being *Live Encounters!*
<https://thecaninecampustraining.com/>

KATIE COSTELLO

THE MESMERIZING WILD HORSES OF ASSATEAGUE ISLAND - *Photo Feature*

When I was a child I would read, and then re-read the “Misty of Chincoteague” book and dream of a day that I could go to such a magical place. When I was 20, I took my first trip to Chincoteague (on the Virginia side of Assateague Island). It was everything I knew it would be. I couldn’t wait to go back. Through the years, and an internal struggle with the rounding up and selling of the horses on Chincoteague, (See: <https://www.chincoteague.com/for-more-information>.) and their being penned up I started to explore the Maryland size of the island over the last 20 years. These horses are truly free. They aren’t penned, they aren’t rounded up to control populations. I tend to see life from the animals perspective, and the fact that animals should have a say in their lives and well being really caused me to struggle going to Chincoteague and “overlooking” the penning. I purchased a jeep 4 wheel drive so that I can go out on the OSV (Over Sand Vehicle) area of the beach to allow access to some of the remote horses. On the OSV you really are able to see the horses as they live, the harshness of the island, you can hike from bayside to oceanside, and you can drive to the Virginia line on the beach. It is a type of heaven on earth to me. Even though I go every 8 weeks to visit, I still tear up upon arrival and the beauty of being with those amazing souls, and I cry when I have to leave. There is truly a mystical, magical allure to this very special island.



Katie Costello



01 Wild horses of Assateague Island. Photograph by Katie Costello.



02 Wild horses of Assateague Island. Photograph by Katie Costello.



03 Wild horses of Assateague Island. Photograph by Katie Costello.



04 Wild horses of Assateague Island. Photograph by Katie Costello.



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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'* 265 publications (till April 2023). 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-publisher-editor-of-live-encounters-magazines/>
<https://www.amazon.com/Mark-Ulyseas/e/B01FUUQVBG>



MARK ULYSEAS FLIGHT OUT OF TIME IN A DARK AGE

The cock crows thrice. He awakens in the moonlit room staring at the fan. Power cut. Sweat trickles down his neck onto the pillow. Opening the front door he walks out into the night and sits on the wall. These are the days of recompense. And the nights intermission between truth and lies. A snake weaves its way across the grass momentarily raising its head as it passes and then disappears into the shadows followed by the call of a nightjar.

He searches in his pocket for the phial, breaks it and empties the contents into his mouth. Senses careen between the shadows and lunar landscape as he lies down on the wall watching the sky and dreaming of eternity.

On a full moon night no one sees the stars.

- Excerpt from Rainy, My friend & Philosopher by Mark Ulyseas

Suicide, some say, is the best recourse to exit this life that continues to inhale excess and exhale hatred and violence. There is much talk about beauty and love. These two pretenders continue to seduce us with the notion that life is beautiful. But is it? Is there love and beauty on this physical plane or are these just swirling hazes of delusions.

But why focus on humanity when Nature is, perhaps, the most unforgiving and violent of them all. The beauty is visual, the violence is all pervasive. There is no sanctity of life. It is one global bloodbath amongst humans, animals, insects, birds etc. Some call this the Circle of Life.



©Mark Ulyseas

Plane at dusk with the rising moon. Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

There are instances when an animal is euthanised to put it out of extreme suffering. Why can't we do the same without having to seek legal approval to commit suicide or to be euthanised? Do we need to suffer to gain brownie points in the *After Life* or do we refrain from suicide out of fear of retribution from our Creator or the insurance policy that does not cover suicide?

"Everything that needs to be said has already been said. But since no one was listening, everything must be said again." - Andre Gide.

Repetition is perhaps a reminder that life has become a drudgery for many of us who see through the haze of delusions. We reluctantly accept the futility of daily life yet surprise ourselves with *Hope* – the dreamscape that continues to flow like a perennial spring.

The flight of time is nothing more than the pageantry of sunrises, sunsets, moon rises, moon sets and changing of seasons, each dressing and undressing to seduce the voyeurism latent in our senses.

"The flight of time maddened me. The necessity of choice was always intolerable; choosing seemed to me not so much selecting as rejecting what I didn't select. I realized with horror how restricted were the passing hours and that time has only one dimension - a line, whereas I wanted it deep and wide; as my desires hurried impatiently along it."
- Andre Gide, *Fruits of the Earth*.

We can escape the flight of time by committing suicide. But is this really *suicide* or the culling of the soul by euthanasia? The taking of one's life perhaps out of desperation, out of boredom or to spite someone?

There are instances when an animal is euthanised to put it out of extreme suffering. Why can't we do the same without having to seek legal approval to commit suicide or to be euthanised? Do we need to suffer to gain brownie points in the *After Life* or do we refrain from suicide out of fear of retribution from our Creator or the insurance policy that does not cover suicide?

If we commit suicide are we then dispatched to the fires of hell, a great conflagration that tortures souls with an evil being overseeing our eternal misery? Is it *this* threat that keeps most of us from committing suicide?

An estimated 703,000 people a year take their life around the world. For every suicide, there are likely 20 other people making a suicide attempt and many more have serious thoughts of suicide. - <https://www.who.int/campaigns/world-suicide-prevention-day/>



Dragon fly at dawn. Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

Suicide is condemned by many religions including Hinduism, which refers to suicide as 'atmahatya' (soul-murder). It warns against committing suicide for in its wake comes karmic laws that prevent the soul from being liberated. But does this apply to the altruist actions of Buddhist monks who set themselves on fire in protest against injustice?

One has never really understood this against the backdrop of unending murderous wars and genocide. Perhaps to die with honour – *seppuku* – is the way to go.

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What is the difference between killing people in a war and taking one's own life? Perhaps one should go into war unarmed to get oneself killed to avoid eternal damnation? Or to stand in the middle of a busy highway? Or to walk off a tall building.

The refrain often heard is that *Life* is sacred. But Nature doesn't think so. So why do the *righteous* express indignation at those who seek abortions? Rabbits abort their fetuses for various reasons and some monkeys abort their fetuses when new males arrive in the troop. These are just some examples of the *sanctity* of Nature. Survival of the fittest, the rest can dispose of themselves by any which way.

The perceived sacredness of the physical world exists only in the mental framework of a human being conditioned by cultural and religious traditions.

To live is really a choice for there are many options including - prancing to the tune of *carpe diem*, existing as a victim to the circle of life like a rat trapped in an exercise wheel or walking into an oncoming train on a whim. Either way its *Omnia Mors Aequat**.

Life is *only* sacred if it is lived to serve others less fortunate at the peril of one's own life. The act of selflessness becomes the ***flight out of time*** and perhaps out of darkness, forever.

**Death equalises all*. Ref: *The Rape of Proserpine* by Claudian, late C4th CE.



Dragon fly at sunset. Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

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