

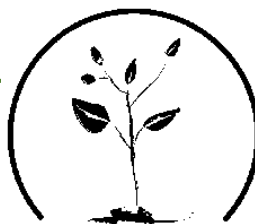
*The what, why, and how of
shifting the cultural mindset*



photo by grandson, Deklan

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The what, why, and how of shifting the cultural mindset

No problem can be solved by the same level of consciousness that created it. Albert Einstein

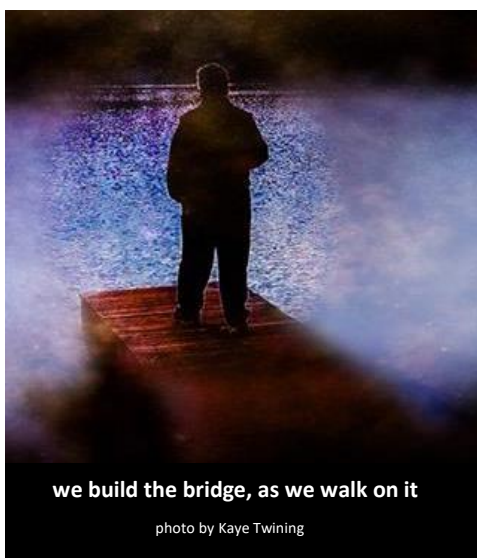
Preamble

We are living in turbulent times. The winds of change are squalling within, among, and beyond – causing unrest within many individuals, societies, and planet Earth. It is like a perfect storm is being generated regarding global social, economic, and climate conditions. In response, our world is crying out for profound change in the cultural structures that underpin the way we live within and act upon our world. In terms of the change required, author and media activist, Duane Elgin, maintained that the change will be comparable to that of the Agricultural and the Industrial Revolutions of previous eras. (*Promise Ahead*). And yet, according to scientist, the late Albert Einstein, the problems we face globally cannot be solved by the same level of consciousness, or mindset, that created them. Therefore, a new mindset is required. As a result, alongside the call for profound change in the way we live in the world sits a deeper call, a call for a transformation of our cultural mindset. This paper outlines the what, why, and how of shifting the cultural mindset.

Format of the paper: firstly, I was born and continue to live within a suburban, Australian context. As a result, I view life through a particular Western cultural lens; therefore when I refer to *global conditions* and *human identity*, I do so from my particular Western cultural reference point.

Secondly, the paper is written in the form of three distinct sections. The first section provides an overview of our Western cultural mindset. The section includes: how our cultural mindset is generated; why the existing mindset needs to shift; and two realities that offer the possibility of hope that our cultural mindset can indeed shift. The second section delves more deeply into the conditions shaping our transition from one cultural mindset to another, including the three pillars that are generating a new cultural mindset. Section two also defines our role in the dynamic process of cultural inner transformation. The third section offers a number of both personal and shared practices that enable us to actively participate in grounding a new cultural mindset.

A metaphor for the venture



Oh, for a 10-step linear plan that leads toward inner cultural change! However, there is no such plan, no checklist of preconceived ideas to follow. Therefore, those who undertake the venture do so with no particular path to follow, nor a final destination in sight. One metaphor that can sustain those who choose to engage in the inner venture of grounding a new cultural mindset is: *building the bridge, as we walk on it* (Robert E. Quinn, *Deep Change*). Drawing from the bridge metaphor, we can see the shape, texture, and colours of the bridge, or in this case the dynamics of a new cultural mindset, in the rear view as we collectively reflect on where our inner explorations have taken us thus far.

Section 1: The nature of our cultural mindset

We are heading for a global crisis of limits . . . We must remember that the nature of nature is to transform – especially when nature hits a crisis of limits. Barbara Marx Hubbard, *Conscious Evolution*

Section 1 takes a short Q & A format. The intention of such a succinct approach is to give the reader enough information to pique their interest regarding the nature of our cultural mindset, without drowning them with content. For those seeking an in-depth discussion of the topic, see my book *Call of the Era: being the Change through changing our Being*. The book can be purchased in either paperback or eBook at most online book sites.

The following questions shape the overview of the nature of our cultural mindset:

- 1.1 What is meant by the term *cultural mindset*?
- 1.2 How is a cultural mindset generated?
- 1.3 Why change the existing mindset?
- 1.4 Where is hope to be found?

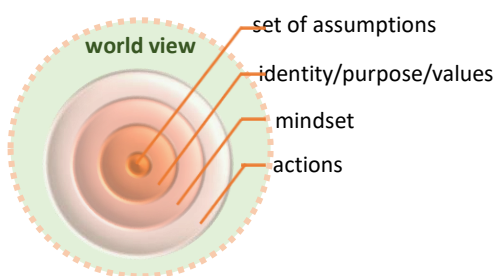
Summary

1.1 What is meant by the term cultural mindset?

Simply put, our cultural mindset comprises a set of norms, beliefs, habits, feelings, and values that predispose us to act in certain ways. Our cultural mindset sits just beneath the level of our conscious awareness, both informing and limiting the way we collectively think, feel, and behave. It is our cultural mindset that underpins how we will live within and act upon our world. How each individual lives from the cultural mindset, is further shaped by their personal lived experience, as well as their particular familial/communal/spiritual norms, expectations, and beliefs. One example of a norm within the Western cultural mindset is the value placed on “linear, logical, data-driven ways of knowledge and decision-making” (igi.Global.com). Driven by such a norm many readers may struggle with the direction of this paper because the direction draws from the notion that shifting the cultural mindset neither follows a linear pathway, nor has a particular destination in sight.

1.2 How is a cultural mindset generated?

A cultural mindset does not sit within a vacuum; it sits within a particular world view. The world view *turns* on existing lived experience including knowledge and beliefs regarding the nature of reality, as well as the origins of the world we inhabit. This world view gives rise to a particular set of deeply held assumptions. Such assumptions become the horizon that both informs, as well as limits, our experience of our human identity. In turn, our



identity determines our purpose. Our purpose determines our values. So, it is our identity, purpose, and values that generate our cultural mindset. In turn, our cultural mindset predisposes us to act in certain ways. When a cultural mindset is congruent with the world view, the collective experience is one of belonging because the

people intrinsically know who they are, why they are here, and how they are to live. Conversely, when the mindset is not congruent with the world view, there can be a collective experience of inner conflict.

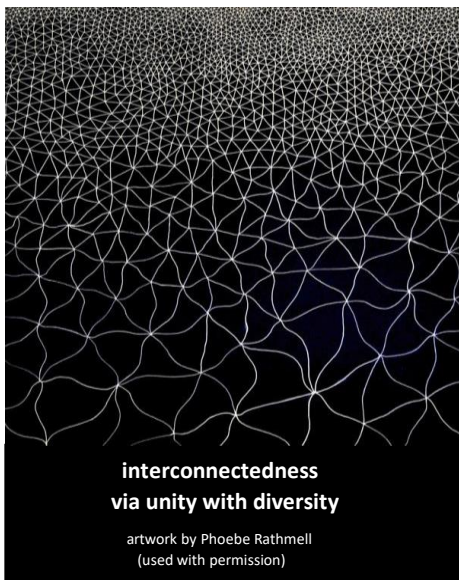
In summary, the centre-point of a cultural mindset is a deeply held set of assumptions that shape our human identity, while the end point is the actions of a society. Therefore, shifting a cultural mindset first requires shifting the cultural identity.

1.3 Why change the existing mindset?

Cultural mindsets continue to change incrementally over time in response to ongoing lived experience, including an ever-expanding knowledge base. At certain stages in a culture's history the mindset requires a radical transformation. Why? Because a once-useful cultural mindset does finally outrun its course of usefulness. According to Elgin, a cultural mindset has run its course of usefulness when it, "causes more problems than it fixes." Has our existing mindset run its course of usefulness? Does it cause more problems than it fixes? Well, the existing set of assumptions that includes humancentric and ethnocentric domination; separation; competition; and consumerism has given rise to an identity that professor AnaLouise Keating named as "self-enclosed individualism." Self-enclosed individualism has given rise to a values system that seeks the flourishing of the individual above and beyond all else. In response to an identity centred on self-enclosed individualism, Western societies have operated from a mindset of continual consumption of the natural world; a world that was created for them to exploit. And yet, Hubbard argued that our world has reached a "crisis of limits" due to the excessive way that we live. For example: due to our excessive exploitation of land, seas, and skies, we live with the threat that Earth may one day become uninhabitable for human kind. Therefore, it would seem that our existing mindset has run its course of usefulness and is now causing more problems than it fixes. As such, our existing mindset requires change.

1.4 Where is hope to be found?

In relation to grounding a new cultural mindset, where is hope to be found? The term *hope* in this context refers to: *the possibility of inner transformation - grounded in reality*. There are two realities that offer possibility. The first reality draws from Hubbard's contention that, "the nature of nature is to transform when it has hit a crisis of limits." Such a transformation will not be within our human control. Even so, because we are part of



nature rather than separate from it, we will be called upon to play our part. The question will be: "Will we choose to work against, or participate with, the transformative process?"

The second reality offering hope is that earlier pioneers of cultural transformation have identified a new orientating principle from which to ground a new set of assumptions regarding our human identity. The principle is *interconnectedness via unity with diversity*. It is not prescriptive in terms of destination. Rather, the principle both decentres the existing set of assumptions, while at the same time opens the way for a new set of assumptions to emerge within our shared consciousness.

Summary: Section 1

We are living in turbulent times. The global social, economic, and climate conditions are demanding that we change the way we live in the world. Our existing mindset, generated by an identity of self-enclosed individualism, is no longer fit for purpose. Yet there is hope. Significant change in our actions will be driven by a new cultural mindset; therefore, the deeper call of our era is for change from the inside . . . out. A new mindset is not only possible, it is already emerging into our conscious view. This mindset is orientated around the principle of interconnectedness via unity with diversity.

Section 2: Transitioning from one cultural mindset to another

Adaptation through cultural change is the hallmark of human kind. Mary E. Clark *In Search of Human Nature*

With an understanding of the nature of our cultural mindset in place, section two delves into the conditions shaping our transition from one cultural mindset to another. Such a focus goes some way toward understanding the turbulent times in which we live. This section also outlines the three pillars that are generating a new cultural mindset, as well as our role in the dynamic process of grounding a new cultural mindset.

We human beings are resilient. We can and do accommodate change. According to biologist, the late Mary E. Clark, an innate quality of human nature is that of adapting to new ways of living in the world. We accommodate change in our outer world through a transformation of our inner landscape; our shared identity, purpose, and values. Even though accommodation is an innate human quality, how do we transform our inner landscape, and in turn, shift the cultural mindset? It is imperative to realise that we can neither force, control, nor manipulate the transformative process toward a predetermined destination. Why? Because transformation is a dynamic process that weaves its way into the very core of our collective psyche - when conditions are sufficient. But what does the phrase *conditions are sufficient* mean? Also, are conditions sufficient at this time? Furthermore, what is our role in the dynamic process? Responses to these questions form the shape of Section two in the following sequence:

- 2.1 What does *conditions are sufficient* mean?
 - 2.2 Are conditions sufficient?
 - 2.3 Three pillars generating a new cultural mindset
 - 2.4 What is our role?
- Summary

2.1 Conditions are sufficient: what does the term mean?

Conditions are sufficient here refers to an historical time when both the outer world and inner landscape of a society are in a state of flux. At such times, a transformative dynamic kicks in and commences its work. Elgin named this transformative dynamic in terms of "push/pull." The *push* dynamic disrupts a stance of *business as usual* by way of thrusting us out of our once-viable cultural mindset, much in the way eagles launch their young out of the nest so they can learn to fly. The *pull* dynamic draws us toward a new mindset. If there was simply the *push* dynamic, we would be thrust out of a once-viable cultural mindset, cast adrift on a sea of meaninglessness. Equally, if there was simply the *pull* dynamic without the *push*, most of us would not even bother to take the required leap. Therefore, it is both the *push* away from, and the *pull* toward, that creates a readiness within a culture to adopt a new mindset.

2.2 How can we tell when conditions are sufficient?

What if we were to take a readiness assessment regarding *conditions being sufficient*. Is there any evidence to suggest a transformative push/pull dynamic currently operating within Western societies? One indicator of the *push* dynamic is the general feeling of unrest experienced by many individuals, societies, and planet Earth. But what of the *pull* dynamic? Are there indicators that we are being pulled toward a new cultural mindset? The following points outline something of the turbulent, yet transformative, push/pull dynamic unfolding within Western societies:

2.2.1 The push: outer world. Daily the news media depicts graphic images of the plight of the global village. For example: the effects of climate change on communities across the globe, evidenced by increasingly frequent severe weather events and rising sea levels. We are witnessing species extinction; global economic inequality; new technologies disrupting job security for both blue- and white-collar workers; global overpopulation. There is systemic racism; systemic sexism; family violence; institutional sexual abuse; growing numbers of refugee people; and the rise of religious and national fundamentalism creating spine-chilling *them VS us* scenarios. As a global village, we have hit a breaking point, a breaking point demanding change. We are rightly being pushed to change our way of living in the world. Our Western mindset has contributed significantly to the current global breaking point, so our existing mindset is no longer tenable. Having run its course of usefulness, our mindset is now causing more problems than it fixes. The current global conditions are pushing us away from our existing cultural mindset.

2.2.2 The push: inner landscape. In terms of our shared experience of identity, purpose, and values, the winds of change are causing unrest within the Western psyche, because our existing identity is no longer congruent with current lived experience, knowledge, and beliefs. For example: an identity as a solid, separate individual is no longer congruent with existing science-based understandings of the interconnectedness of all life. As a result, once-cherished beliefs regarding the meaning of being human are no longer holding true. In turn, many people are experiencing disorientation within their experience of selfhood-in-the-world. Additionally, because of the global conditions many people are becoming despondent about the possibility of a viable future. The loss of selfhood, and fear of the future, are contributing to a rise of anxiety and depression especially in younger people. The experience of loss and fear in our inner landscape is also pushing us away from our existing mindset.

2.2.3 The pull: a new orientating principle. We are now being drawn toward a new cultural mindset, one orientated around a new starting point regarding our human identity in the world. Earlier pioneers of inner cultural transformation (see 1.4) have identified a new guiding principle to orientate our exploration of a new collective identity. The principle is: *interconnectedness, via unity with diversity*. The principle is drawn from a systems view of evolutionary history, so is congruent with current science-based knowledge and beliefs regarding the nature of reality and the origins of the world we inhabit.

A systems view decentres the mechanistic view of evolutionary history that dominates the existing world view. The mechanistic view alleges that reality acts like a machine, in that it is made up of solid, separate parts that work together, but have no relationship with each other. The whole comprises the sum of the parts. A systems view of reality on the other hand, alleges that each part within the whole is interconnected and interrelated. The whole is greater than the sum of the parts, because of the relationship of the parts to one another, and to the whole. Drawing from a systems view of evolutionary history, the principle of interconnectedness via unity with diversity opens the way for a new experience of human identity to weave its way into our collective psyche. So, in effect we are no longer caught in a meaningless gap between authentic mindsets. We are now experiencing a pull toward a new human identity and cultural mindset.

2.2.4 The pull: common ground. Western societies are multicultural and multifaith in make-up, including First Nations' worldviews and mindsets. Yet, in light of such a diversity of meaning-making belief systems, is it possible to find common ground from which to generate a new shared identity and cultural mindset? Yes, it is possible. The common ground draws from the principle of interconnectedness via unity with diversity, and includes three aspects. The first two aspects involve big picture perspectives that lift our

gaze toward relocating our human identity within a greater Story of Life itself. The third aspect reaches into the very heart of what it means to be a human being.

Common ground 1: planet Earth. The first big picture aspect involves what Barbara Hubbard named as "big history." Big history relocates our human identity within a science-based evolutionary universe theory that is commonly known to be 13.8-billion-years in the making thus far. Within such a big history context we realise that we all share the one



planet, one planet we have named as Earth. Earth is part of the Milky Way galaxy. When we contemplate pictures of Earth sitting like a tiny ball in a huge expanse of darkness, we realise there are no state, nor national boundaries. There is simply land mass, oceans, and cloud. This planet Earth sustains us all, no matter our cultural or spiritual belief systems. If we could allow such an understanding to drop beneath the confines of an intellectual concept and seep into the utmost marrow of our being, we would recognise that we each participate in a greater story of Life itself. In turn, we would naturally choose to work for the common good of all life – human, flora and fauna, and planet Earth itself.

Common ground 2: the human tradition. Each one of us is part of the human race. The human race is one species among many within the wider community of life. This understanding gives rise to the notion of the human tradition. The human tradition situates all of humanity within the evolutionary process of being and becoming. The human tradition spans across time from ancient civilisations till the present; it takes into account human history as a whole, including religious, secular, and First Nations' meaning-making traditions. Therefore, even though the human race has copious meaning-making belief systems, each of the belief systems sits within the wider human tradition. So, in relation to the principle of interconnectedness via unity with diversity, whether an individual, community, or nation identifies as Buddhist, Hindu, Christian, Muslim, Jew, First Nation, atheist, pantheist/panentheist, pagan, animist, or humanist, they do so in the knowledge that their meaning-making belief system is both unique within itself, as well as being part of the greater whole of the human tradition. In this way, the human tradition is the common ground that binds together the various meaning-making traditions.

Common ground 3: the heart of humanity. The third aspect relating to our common ground reaches into the very heart of what it means to be a human being, that is, the human longing to belong in the world. *Belonging* here refers to a visceral experience of connectedness within the three interrelated dimensions of human consciousness. The first dimension is within our own skin; the second is within community; and the third is a greater Story of Life itself that gives meaning to our living and our dying. We experience belonging through a unified belief system, in the form of a sacred narrative, that addresses questions like: "Where did we come from?" "Why are we here?" "What becomes of us when we die?" "Why is there good and evil in the world?" "Is there a god/s?" "What is the nature of love?" Sacred narratives usually sit within recognised meaning-making traditions. Nonetheless, it is important to note that a growing number of individuals within Western societies are identifying as spiritual but not religious. Therefore, their sacred narratives may include a range of eclectic beliefs and practices drawn from various meaning-making traditions. Whatever the case, a sacred narrative is our human way of making sense of ourselves and our world.

When our sacred narrative is coherent with current lived experience, knowledge, and beliefs, it offers an inner shelter of belonging within Life's ongoing *dance* of being and becoming. When we experience belonging, we live with authenticity and integrity. Conversely, without an inner shelter of belonging we can each become disorientated, or lost, in the vastness of the *dance*. So, the common ground here is not in a singular sacred narrative that serves all of humanity for all time; it is the human need to experience an inner shelter of belonging through a coherent sacred narrative.

2.2.5 The pull: a new cultural spiritual arc

The term *new spiritual arc* refers to a new context for Western societies to integrate the variety of sacred narratives into a new cultural mindset. The new spiritual arc is *pushing* the Western cultural mindset beyond one of tolerating the various religious, secular, and First Nations sacred narratives. At the same time, the new spiritual arc is *pulling* Western societies toward a new cultural mindset that acknowledges the human need for an inner shelter of belonging, as met through a coherent sacred narrative. Consequently, the new cultural mindset will both welcome, and require, the multiplicity of authentic sacred narratives and meaning-making traditions.



multiplicity of meaning-making traditions

photo by Kaye Twining

One metaphor for the new cultural spiritual arc is that of a patchwork quilt. A patchwork quilt comprises many pieces of cloth that vary in size, shape, and colour. Sometimes the colours even clash. Yet when the pieces are sewn together by an experienced and creative quilter, each piece of cloth takes its unique place within the whole, crafting a final product that is beautiful, complex, and functional. In a similar manner to a patchwork quilt, the new cultural spiritual arc will figuratively stitch

together the diverse sacred narratives and meaning-making traditions around the unifying centre-piece of the shared common ground, orientated by the principle of interconnectedness via unity with diversity. In this way, each sacred narrative and meaning-making tradition will take its unique place within the whole. In turn, the new spiritual arc will enable adherents of each tradition to continue to practise their particular belief system and rituals within the knowledge that their tradition is both unique in its own right, as well as being part of the wider cultural mindset.

2.3 Three pillars generating a new cultural mindset

A new mindset will not be generated within a vacuum. Rather, a new mindset will sit within a new world view, a new set of assumptions, and a new experience of human identity. The three pillars generating a new cultural mindset are:

- a/ **a new world view:** including a science-based systems view of evolutionary history, giving rise to a new guiding principle of interconnectedness via unity with diversity.
- b/ **a new set of assumptions:** including participation, cooperation, and working together for the common good;
- c/ **a new human identity:** where we know ourselves to be unique beings in our own right who are also intrinsically connected and responsible to a greater whole. A greater whole includes the wider human and nonhuman world. So, rather than an identity *turning* on self-enclosed individualism, our new identity will enable us to figuratively

stand in our own ground – open-heartedly in the knowledge that our uniqueness is both required, and welcomed, within the greater community of life.

The three pillars generate a new cultural mindset that predisposes us to seek the flourishing of all life – human, flora and fauna, and planet Earth. How each individual will live from and into such a new cultural mindset will be further shaped by their particular familial/communal/spiritual norms, expectations, and beliefs.

2.4 What is our role?

A new cultural mindset has begun to surface within our collective awareness. At the moment the new mindset is figuratively: like fresh, clear water bubbling up from an underground spring until it finally breaks through to the surface of a wilderness environment. Only explorers of the wilderness see that the water has broken through. In



line with such a metaphor, even though a new cultural mindset is emerging, it is breaking through within the outer regions of our collective awareness. As a result, we are mostly unaware of its presence. How can we enable a new mindset to soak into the centre of our collective inner landscape? We can neither force, control, nor manipulate the process toward a predetermined goal. Yet, neither are we passive bystanders. With that in mind, it is important to recognise that our role is one of grounding that which is already emerging into our shared conscious view. *Grounding* here comprises:

- a/ **attuning** to the spirit of the age, that is, the call for a new cultural mindset;
- b/ **exploring** the new frontier of the three pillars;
- c/ **integrating** the three pillars into a new cultural mindset.

Attuning, exploring, and integrating require our active participation. This means that we consciously participate in the sacred work of transitioning from one cultural mindset to another. Specific practices that enable us to take up our role of active participation are listed in Section three.

Summary: Section 2

We are living in a time when our outer world and collective inner landscape are in flux, causing turbulent living conditions. Even so, human nature is resilient; human kind does accommodate change. We change our way of living in the world through transforming our cultural mindset. Presently, conditions are sufficient for a new cultural mindset to weave its way into our collective psyche. The transformative push/pull dynamic is thrusting us out of our existing cultural mindset, as well as drawing us toward a new one. Our role in grounding a new cultural mindset is one of active participation; attuning to, exploring, and integrating the three pillars that are generating a new cultural mindset (see 2.3). In turn, a new cultural mindset will predispose us to seek the flourishing of all life.

Section 3: Practices for grounding a new cultural mindset

One world is dying and another is being born. Tend both, Marianne Williamson

The first two sections of this paper have outlined a set of ideas regarding the what, why, and how of shifting the cultural mindset. Within the light of that set of ideas, this final section offers a number of both personal and shared practices that enable active participation in the transformative adventure that lies ahead. We should not be fooled though; active participation will not be all sweetness and light. We do live in uncertain times. In this regard, Marianne Williamson maintained that one mindset is dying, while another is being born. Birthing is known to be an act of labour, with good reason. Birthing is intensive, challenging work. There is pain involved; no one knows how long the birthing process will take, nor what problems may occur along the way; also, there is always the distressing possibility of a still-birth. Western societies are being called to actively participate in the challenging work of birthing a new cultural mindset. But how can we take up our role in the birthing process? How can we actively participate in such a challenging inner collective adventure? The following personal and shared practices lay a foundation.

But first, a cautionary note. Years ago, Williamson's quotation (above) caught my attention. Her quotation softened me toward an understanding that we cannot simply focus on the new cultural mindset, without also tending to the ramifications for people in the here-and-now; people experiencing unjust conditions created by the existing mindset. Therefore, much in the way that palliative care tends to the needs of the dying patient within the knowledge the patient will shortly pass away, we are called to compassionately and courageously tend to the issues facing those who are living with the consequences of the existing cultural mindset, knowing that the existing mindset is now defunct. Even as we seek to ground a new cultural mindset, we are also required to tend to those who are experiencing present moment unjust living conditions.

Personal practices

The following personal practices will enable each of us to actively participate in the challenging work of grounding a new cultural mindset:

1. Cultivating an inner holding environment
2. Staying connected with the outer world
3. Reflective practices
 - 3.1 Contemplative self enquiry
 - 3.2 Shadow-side integration
 - 3.3 Conscious grieving
- 4.. Meditative practices

1. Cultivating an inner holding environment

One world view is dying; we are living through a turbulent time of great change. Change is disruptive. Change is disorientating. Change can leave us feeling like the *rug has been pulled out from under our feet*, so to speak. We no longer experience the inner safety from which to engage with the inner transformative process. How can we take up our role in grounding a new cultural mindset when we are experiencing such disruption and disorientation? We will require an inner holding environment. Such an environment is generated through a congruent set of ideas. Even though the transformative process is more than an intellectual exercise, a congruent set of ideas can generate an inner holding environment that both stabilises and sustains a sense of safety within our inner landscape.

Therefore, while a set of ideas is not an end-in-itself, ideas do play their part in the inner transformative process.

Practice: the first two sections of this paper offer a congruent set of ideas regarding the time in which we live. Reflect on the first two sections within the light of the following questions:

- Do the ideas as presented offer you an inner holding environment?
- What would you add, or take away from, any of the ideas?
- If this set of ideas does not resonate with the way you understand our time, how would you articulate your understanding? Does your understanding pair at all with this paper's ideas?

2. Staying connected with the outer world

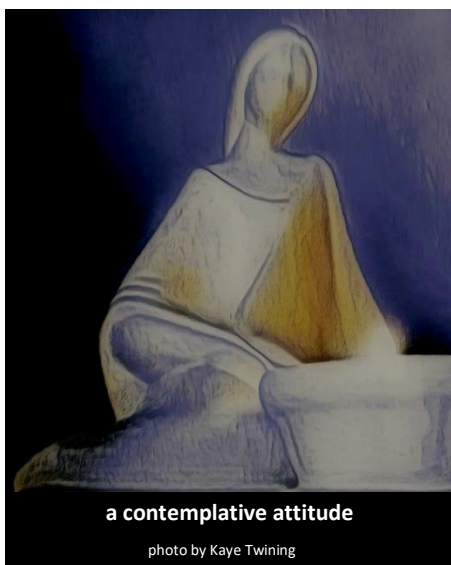
The media floods our screens and airwaves with graphic images and details regarding the plight of our global village. According to Clark, "the media shapes cultural perception – but the media focuses on the negative, destructive, violent aspects of human action." If Clark is correct and our cultural perceptions are shaped by the media, perhaps we should simply tune out all forms of media. And yet, it is important to stay connected with what is going on in our world. It is through staying connected that we recognise the signs of our time. But we must not be consumed by the media. Rather, as Zen Buddhist monk, the late Thich Nhat Hanh cautioned, connect enough to cultivate both understanding and compassion. In this way, staying connected to media requires both discipline and restraint.

Practice: stay connected to the outer world through reputable news media sites, but do not be consumed by the relentless 24hr cycle of the news media. Also, look at social media platforms, but resist the temptation to scroll through them every spare minute of the day.

3. Reflective practices

The following three reflective practices enable us to personally attune to, express, and explore how the transition from one cultural identity and mindset to another is taking shape in each of our lives:

3.1 Contemplative self enquiry. As the name suggests, this practice embraces a contemplative attitude. A contemplative attitude requires the humility of what the Buddhist tradition calls a "beginner's mind." A beginner's mind encompasses an attitude of openness, receptivity, non-judgmental curiosity, self compassion, and being comfortable but not complacent with the unknown, until it is known.



Set within a contemplative attitude, the self enquiry aspect comprises both open-ended questions and deep listening. In terms of open-ended questions, it is our innate spirit of enquiry that enables us to transcend the limits of our current view. In addition to our innate spirit of enquiry, the practice of deep listening refers to an inner movement that figuratively drops from head – to heart – to gut. *Head:* is the factual information regarding a particular circumstance. *Heart:* is the present moment affective experience evoked in response to the particular circumstance. Affective experience comprises thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations around present

present moment affective experience evoked in response to the particular circumstance. Affective experience comprises thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations around present

moment joys, sorrows, angers, fears, frustrations, and delights. Our affective experience offers an entry point for further reflection. *Gut*: involves discerning inner wisdom's present moment stirrings toward authentic self-discovery.

Practice: keep a journal that records your experience of contemplative self enquiry around attuning to and exploring the three pillars. One process for contemplative self enquiry is on my web page: *Contemplative practices/ Contemplative self enquiry*.

Helpful entry points for engaging in contemplative self enquiry are:

- i/ Record your practice of posing open ended questions and deep listening in response to a current news item.
- ii/ Contemplate the picture of planet Earth sitting in darkness (see 2.2.4 Common ground 1). Notice if this lifts your gaze toward relocating your human identity within a greater Story of Life itself. A process for contemplating an image is found on my web page: *Contemplative practices/ Contemplating an image*.
- iii/ With an attitude of open-hearted curiosity, repose your spiritual questions around: "Who am I?" "What is my purpose?" and "How am I to live?" within the light of the three pillars (see 2.3) and the common ground (see 2.2.4). Daniel Wahl takes our questioning even further. It is his contention that we are now required to pose the question: "Why should we humans be sustained?" Pose the questions, and then live into the responses.
- iv/ Contemplatively explore ways in which the principle of interconnectedness via unity with diversity is/is not informing the way you live in the world.

3.2 Shadow-side integration. Why is shadow-side integration particularly warranted at this time? In her book, *Pioneering the Possible*, peace activist, Dr. Scilla Elworthy argued that without undertaking the inner work of shadow-side integration we unconsciously project our angers, fears, and desires to be right onto others. Such projections create a sense of *othering* in the form of us-versus-them, leading toward further defensiveness and conflict. As a result, we each become more entrenched in our own ideals, thus thwarting any possibility of collective deep change. Therefore, personal shadow-side integration is a necessity.

Practice: One process for integrating our shadow-side is found on my web page: The sacred work of being human/ *Gently integrating our shadow-side*. For further information on our shadow-side see my web page: *Resources/ Walking the land: contemplatively exploring our inner landscape, discovering and integrating our shadow-side toward being the change we want to see in the world*.

3.3 Conscious grieving. When a society shifts from one cultural mindset to another, grief can be experienced. The emotions of grief relate to the loss of a once-meaningful mindset, as well as to the painful realisation that the existing cultural mindset has at least exacerbated, if not caused, many of the problems being faced today. Grief is a natural and healthy response to both loss and painful realisations. Yet because the emotions of grief arrive unbidden, thereby catching us off-guard, grieving can be judged as a negative experience, a negative experience to be avoided or simply toughed out. The gentle art of conscious grieving however, enables us to compassionately lean in toward our emotions of grief. Conscious grieving can lead toward acceptance. In turn, acceptance can enable us to lift our gaze toward new possibilities regarding a new cultural identity and mindset.

Practice: The gentle art of conscious grieving draws from the practice of Contemplative self-enquiry, starting with the present moment emotions of grief being experienced. For more on the general nature of conscious grieving see my web page: *Resources/ The*

gentle art of conscious grieving.

4. Meditative practices

Meditative practices underpin each of the personal practices listed above. On a practical level, meditative practices enable us to experientially know that we have thoughts,



encountering inner stillness

photo by Kaye Twining

feelings, and bodily sensations without being totally identified with them. No longer identified with our affective experience we are more able to consciously engage in each of the personal practices listed above.

In addition to disidentifying with our affective experience, meditative practices can also enable us to encounter inner stillness. According to author Ryan Holiday, "it is from stillness that new insights are perceived." For more on meditative practices see my web page: [Contemplative practices/ Meditation](#).

Practice: Any form of meditative practice that suits your personality type. For example: the various

forms of sitting meditation; walking meditation; sitting quietly in bushland, lap swimming in a pool; yoga; knitting . . .

Shared practices

The following shared practices will enable a new cultural mindset to weave its way into our collective psyche:

1. Exploring together
2. Conversation
 - Shifting the conversation
 - Book clubs
3. Social media
4. The arts
5. The role of awe
6. Existing meaning-making traditions
 - A new intra-tradition frontier
 - A new inter-tradition frontier

1. Exploring together

We are well beyond the time of the hero/heroine saving the day. No person can singlehandedly transition a society from one cultural mindset to another. Therefore, even though there are personal practices for active participation, now is the time to explore the lived experience of a new cultural mindset with others. But what kind of groups enable us to explore together? In this regard, architect and systems theorist, the late Buckminster Fuller argued, "you never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete." Drawing from Fuller's understanding, it would seem that the time for protesting against the existing cultural mindset has passed. Now is the time to join with communities and organisations that are actively seeking a new cultural mindset. For example:

i/www.australiaremade.org Australia ReMade is “an independent, visionary alliance of leaders, thinkers, and practitioners tired of just fighting the old system and toxic politics, and keen to build the new” (website);

ii/www.crossroadsconversation.com.au Conversation at the Crossroads is spear-headed by international relations scholar, Joseph Camilleri. The organisation seeks: “thoughtful and respectful conversation on the crucial issues of our time” (website);

iii/www.choosingearth.org. According to their website, Choosing Earth offers “approaches that can help clarify, transform, and guide our pathway of collapse into one of transformation.”

Each of the organisations listed above are seeking cultural transformation. So do not explore alone; explore with others who are also seeking to live into a new cultural identity and mindset.

Practice: Take a look at the above organisations, or do your own research regarding communities and organisations that are seeking a new cultural mindset, grounded by the principle of interconnectedness via unity with diversity. Join with ones that resonate with your field of interest and expertise.

2. Conversation

Conversation is a powerful tool for grounding a new cultural mindset because conversation can “build shared meaning.” (Daniel Wahl). Conversation generates shared meaning when participants: a/ non-judgmentally listen with the intent of understanding each participant’s point of view; b/ each responds from their own understanding with the intention of sharing their point of view, rather than winning an argument. Such deep conversation can take place any time, with anyone. For more on the process of this form of conversation see: *Dialogue: The art of thinking together* by William Isaacs. Also see my web page: *Contemplative practices/ Conversation as a spiritual practice*.

Practices:

- **Shifting the conversation.** Conversations around coffee breaks or dinner tables often focus on items in the news or social media that have generated emotions of sadness, fear, or self-righteous indignation. Such conversations often conclude with a wistful, “but what can we do about it?” What if we were to shift the conversation? We could shift the conversation by raising the ways people are actively participating in the transformative process of grounding a new cultural mindset. Or, we could toss some open-ended questions into the conversation? So, there are constructive ways to shift the conversation from what is wrong in the world toward dreaming together of what could be possible. Respectfully shifting the tone and intent of a conversation can be a simple, yet effective tool.

- **Book clubs.** Book clubs are designed for conversation. Therefore, book clubs can be ideal vehicles for exploring the tenets of a new cultural identity and mindset. Book clubs can start by reading any of the books in the Resources section on this paper. See particularly, Daniel Christian Wahl’s *Designing Regenerative Cultures*.

3. Social media

Whereas book clubs are designed for conversation, rarely does conversation take place on social media. Rather, social media focuses on monologues that entrench particular views. In this way, social media figuratively *digs trenches* for cultural *warfare*. So, far from being a vehicle for exploring together, social media can actively work against the transformative process. Even though social media platforms are not conducive to conversation, they do have the potential to play a different role.

Practice: intentionally seek to shift the tone and intent of social media through raising awareness of the what, why, and how of shifting the cultural mindset, as well as sharing helpful resources.

4. The arts

The arts play a significant role in shifting the cultural mindset because the arts are in touch with the spirit of the age. They both call forth a new cultural mindset, as well as embedding tenets of a new mindset within the marrow of our collective psyche. The arts also unmask something of our collective shadow-side, particularly through the mediums of cartoon and comedic routines. Comedy can raise our shadow-side into our conscious view with the lightness of laughter.

Practice: The arts enable multiple mediums and voices of interpretation regarding a new cultural mindset. Therefore, poets, song writers, script writers, film producers, dancers, photographers, musicians, comedians, authors, painters, cartoonists, and sculptors can each play their role in grounding a new cultural mindset within the collective psyche.

5. The role of awe

In their desire to conquer and exploit the natural world, Western societies have forsaken their sense of awe. Yet, if we are to live into our new human identity grounded by the principle of interconnectedness via unity with diversity, a sense of awe will be essential. According to author, Beverly Lanzetta, awe generates humility (*The New Silence*).

Transitioning from one cultural mindset to another will require an attitude of humility.



awe generates humility

photo by Kaye Twining

Practice: Time with the natural world. Our experience of awe is often dulled by the fast pace of today's living, an information overload, and technological devices that focus our attention on tiny screens. To reawaken a sense of awe it is important to spend unstructured time with the natural world. For those who cannot venture into the natural world, awe can be reawakened through documentaries, as well as photography and art exhibitions that highlight the profound beauty and interconnectedness of the flora and fauna around us.

6. Existing meaning-making traditions

Grounding a new cultural mindset is a collective spiritual adventure, a spiritual adventure that will include, but not be restricted to, existing religious meaning-making traditions. Each meaning-making tradition will be required to undertake its own inner transformation. In addition to each meaning-making tradition exploring its new frontier, one further frontier for exploration will be the relationship between all meaning-making traditions, that is, religious, secular, and First Nations. The following practices briefly outline these two new frontiers.

Practices:

- **A new intra-tradition frontier.** Each religious meaning-making tradition explores the intersection between its particular tradition's founding beliefs, the three pillars (see 2.3), and the common ground (see 2.2.4). Such exploration will require a contemplative attitude (see 3.1), and the posing of open-ended questions. A starting question could be: "how do

the metaphors, rituals, and images that shape the beliefs and practices of our tradition intersect, or not, with the three pillars, and the common ground?" Each religious meaning-making tradition will explore its own frontier in the knowledge that its tradition is both unique in itself, as well as being intrinsically connected and responsible to the wider cultural mindset. Each religious meaning-making tradition that engages in its inner transformative adventure, will then be able to figuratively *stand in its own ground - openheartedly*.

- **A new inter-tradition frontier.** Conversation between religious meaning-making traditions has been taking place for many, many years. In light of the new spiritual arc (see 2.2.5), the new frontier for inter-tradition exploration will be that of seeking authentic connection between all meaning-making traditions, that is, religious, secular, and First Nations. Authentic connection can be experienced through the patchwork quilt metaphor (see 2.2.5). A new experience of connection will be grounded by a new assumption that rather than each tradition being stand-alone, each is an authentic, yet diverse expression of the human longing to give meaning and experience belonging. In this way, each tradition is unique in its own right, while also being part of the wider human tradition (see 2.2.4 Common ground 2).

Concluding remarks

The winds of change are demanding a new Western cultural mindset. This paper outlines a what, why, and how of shifting the existing mindset. The intention is multifaceted. Firstly, to offer an understanding of the turbulent times in which we live. Secondly, to explore the nature of cultural mindsets, and how they shift when conditions are sufficient. Thirdly, to outline our role within the dynamic process of shifting the cultural mindset. Our role is one of active participation, comprising the sacred work of attuning to, exploring, and integrating the three pillars that are generating a new cultural mindset. Fourthly, to present a set of ideas within the public domain that spark ongoing reflection and conversation on the topic. Finally, to engender a sense of hope, grounded in reality. Hope resides in the knowledge that we human beings are both accommodating and resilient; we do adapt to/adopt change. Additionally, even though each one of us is a unique being in our own right, we are also intrinsically connected and responsible to a life force much greater than our personal lives. Therefore, we each participate in a greater Story of Life itself.

Even though there is hope for a viable future, undertaking the collective inner adventure of transitioning from one cultural mindset to another is challenging. We can be buoyed by the fact that we have met such challenges before and found our way through. We are up to the challenge. As we continue to consciously explore this new frontier of human experience and endeavour, we do so in the knowledge that a new cultural mindset will predispose us to live in ways that seek the flourishing of all life – human, flora & fauna, and planet Earth. A new cultural mindset will change us from the inside . . . out.

Resources

Mary E. Clark, *In Search of Human Nature*

Scilla Elworthy PhD., *Pioneering the Possible: Awakened Leadership
for a World That Works*

Ryan Holiday, *Stillness is the Key*

Barbara Marx Hubbard, *Conscious Evolution, Awakening the Power
of our Social Potential*

William Isaacs: *Dialogue: The art of thinking together*

AnaLouise Keating, *Transformation Now: Toward a Post Oppositional Politics of Change*

Beverly Lanzetta, *The New Silence*

John O'Donohue, *Eternal Echoes: Exploring our Hunger to Belong*

Shunryu Suzuki, *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*

Kaye Twining, *Call of the Era: being the Change, through changing our Being*

Web Page: www.treeoflifespirituality.com

Robert E. Quinn, *The Deep Change Field Guide*

Daniel Christian Wahl, *Designing Regenerative Cultures*

Cover photo: the photo of our youngest grandchild striding out of the tree was taken by our eldest grandchild. The flexibility of the youngest grandchild stunned me. The photo represents something of the transformative *pull* dynamic operating in our time; the interconnectedness between all life, both human and non-human; something of nature of grounding a new cultural mindset, in that the new mindset does not sit in a vacuum. Rather, the new mindset sits within a new world view, a new world view grounded by the principle of interconnectedness via unity with diversity. Furthermore, the photo conveys the flexibility required to engage in the inner transformative adventure.

Earlier pioneers of inner cultural change influential in the tone of this paper are: Thomas Berry, Joanne Macy, Charles Eisenstein, Anne Hillman, Margaret J. Wheatley, Brian Cox, Nora Bateson, and Fritjof Capra.

To organise a conversational-style workshop for your group on the theme ~ *shifting the cultural mindset* ~ contact Kaye at: kaye@treeoflifespirituality.com