

walking the land

artwork by Fyona Mitaxa



contemplatively exploring our inner landscape, discovering and integrating our shadow-side, towards: being the change, we want to see in the world

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It is lovely to have a home, but when that beautiful home becomes a prison, when you can't see anything out of the windows any more or anything beyond the establishment you have made for yourself, then it is time to walk out of the door, or listen for the knock on the door.
David Whyte

Introduction

Our time could be characterized by the phrase: "all is not well with the world." Factors contributing to such a characterization are: 1. the covid-19 global pandemic, disrupting the global community's sense of business as usual; 2. climate change, causing more dramatic weather events, more often; 3. the threat of mass extinction of species; 4. unending economic expansion, no matter the cost to the Earth's resources; 5. rising numbers of people seeking refuge in countries other than their own; 6. an information overload of conflicting views via social media platforms; 7. a global economic system geared towards the rich getting richer; 8. terrorism, or the threat of terrorism, creating a generalized anxiety, and suspicion of certain cultural/religious groups; 9. familial and institutional sexual abuse highlighted by the 'me too' movement; 10. the insidious nature of domestic violence; 11. systemic racism highlighted through the global 'black life matters' movement. As a result, is our western culture currently experiencing a *knock at the door* (see quotation above); a knock which is calling forth an equitable world for all life forms? Is our era calling forth deep structural change in the way we live together?

If our era is calling forth deep structural change, it will take more than a tinkering at the edges of the way we live together; it will take a transformation of the deeply held assumptions which orientate our personal and collective way of *being-in-the-world*. Therefore, alongside the call for outer transformation, is our era also calling us to undertake an inner work; an inner work of recasting our orientating reference point for who we know ourselves to be and how we experience belonging in the world? If so, we cannot wait for governments, or multinational corporations, or savior figures to lead the way. It is for each of us to undertake the inner work required. As Alice Walker argued: "We are the ones we've been waiting for because we are able to see what is happening with a much greater awareness than our parents or grand-parents, our ancestors, could see." So, if our era is calling forth outer and inner transformation, it is for each of us to attune ourselves to the call and consciously participate in the work.

How can we consciously participate in the work of outer and inner transformation? In terms of outer social change, each of us will participate in whatever way is appropriate and possible for us. In this regard, we could heed the words of 26th US president, Theodore Roosevelt: "Do what you can, with what you have, where you are." In terms of inner transformation, we can each participate by engaging in the life affirming practice of shadow-side integration. *Shadow-side* here refers to: aspects of ourselves which are normally hidden from our view. Such hidden aspects unwittingly bind us to a certain view of ourselves-in-the-world, even when that view has outlived its usefulness. Shadow-side integration involves a process which, firstly, brings to light the deeply held assumptions which shape our current view of ourselves-in-the-world, and secondly, enables us to transform assumptions which have now become untenable. In this way, shadow-side integration is a process of transforming our way of being-in-the-world, from

the inside . . . out. In turn, who we know ourselves to be-in-the-world determines our values system, which in turn shapes the way we live within and act upon our world. As a result, shadow-side integration transforms both our *being* and our *doing*. Consequently, shadow-side integration lies at the very heart of both outer and inner transformation.

The structure of the essay

The essay is written from and into a non-indigenous Australian western cultural mindset, within the genre of spiritual practice education. Spiritual practice education here refers to: the inner work of fully embracing our humanity, through consciously engaging in our ongoing inner venture of being and becoming. *Being* here refers to: feeling at home in the world through a clear view of selfhood in the form of: identity, purpose, values, and the experience of belonging. *Becoming* here refers to: breaking through and transcending the limitations of a particular view. One way we can break through and transcend the limitations of a particular view is through shadow-side integration. We do however, require a process for such a venture. *Walking the land* offers one such process. *Walking the land* is a metaphor for the spiritual practice of contemplatively exploring our inner landscape, discovering and integrating our shadow-side towards: *being* the change we want to see in the world.

In light of the above, the intention of the essay is to offer an overview of the nature and intention of personal and cultural shadow-side integration. Themes covered are: 1. the contemplative practice of *walking the land*, towards standing in our own ground, openheartedly; 2. personal shadow-side integration, towards the undefended self, offered freely; 3. cultural shadow-side integration, towards recasting our inner orientating reference point for our collective way of being-in-the-world; 4. attuning and responding to the call of the era, towards a new values system which seeks the flourishing of all life forms. Such a values system will enable us to once again walk humbly within the Earth community, with wisdom and compassion.



we are the ones we have been waiting for (Alice Walker)

I said to my soul be still and wait . . . wait without thought, for you are not ready for thought. So the darkness shall be light, and the stillness the dancing. T S Eliot

1. The contemplative process of walking the land

This section outlines the general nature and intention of the contemplative process of *walking the land*. Firstly, the section addresses the question: "Why the title of *walking the land*?" Following on from that question is a description of how Mitaxa's artwork resonates with the process of *walking the land*. The section concludes with a summary of the intention of the contemplative process as it relates particularly to personal shadow integration.

1.1 Why the title of *walking the land*?

Why is the title *walking the land* appropriate for this essay? Because there is a correlation between physical walking for social change and the metaphor of *walking* our inner landscape towards discovering and integrating our shadow-side. Physical walking and the quest for social change are commonplace. For example, public walks in Australia include: the Walk for Reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians across the Sydney Harbor Bridge; the Oxfam Walk against Want to combat poverty; and the Palm Sunday walk calling for peace and justice for refugees. Recently across the globe, people have rallied together and walked in the name of 'black lives matter.' As well as the public walks, there are the private walks. For example, Satish Kumar's eight-thousand-mile walk with friend E.P. Menon, in protest against the use of nuclear weapons. So, people physically walk for social change.



Walking the land as metaphor

As well as the practice of physical walking for social change, our time requires a process for transforming our way of being-in-the-world through shadow-side integration. *Walking the land* offers one such process. *Walking the land* is a metaphor for a contemplative process of self discovery. The contemplative process draws from and flows back into daily life, all the while engaging each person in their ongoing transformative venture of being and becoming. *Contemplative* here involves two particular elements. The first element is: relinquishing the desire to control the process of self discovery. The second element is: attuning to inner wisdom's present moment stirrings toward new possibilities. In line with these two elements, *walking the land* involves an attitude of tender, nonjudgmental openness and curiosity, towards an ever deepening experience of connection and belonging within self, within community, and within Life itself.

1.2 How the artwork resonates with *walking the land*

Mitaxa's artwork (as above and on the title page) resonates with the contemplative process of *walking the land* in that the artwork as a whole suggests a tender, slow movement through a landscape which involves light and shadows, valleys and hills. In a similar manner, contemplative

self discovery involves a slow, tender process of noticing and attending to whatever is emerging into present moment conscious awareness; whether it be light or shadows, highs or lows. In this way, rather than an attitude of intense excavation, contemplative exploration of our inner landscape involves an attitude of quietness and patience.

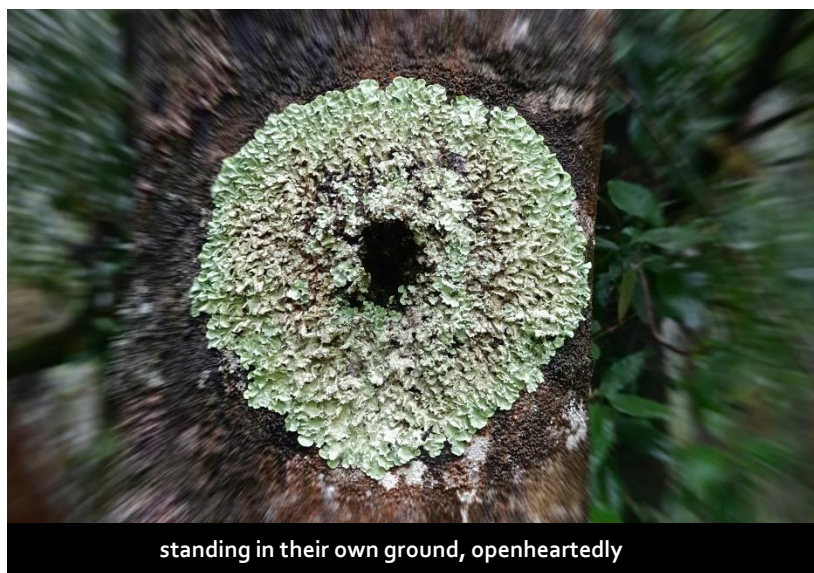
The artwork shows no predetermined pathway. In a similar manner, there is no predetermined pathway for exploring our inner landscape. Rather, each person explores their own questions relating to being and belonging, within the light of their current knowledge, beliefs, and lived experience. As such, the pathway of self discovery weaves its way through each person's current belief system. Therefore, while the process is the same, each person's experience of the process is unique to them.

The yellow at the upper point of the artwork represents the gentling light of lovingkindness. Why is an attitude of lovingkindness essential to the process of inner exploration? Without lovingkindness, the process can become too intense, leading towards self annihilation. Self annihilation is not the intention of the process. Rather, *walking the land* is a life affirming spiritual practice which enables each person to fully embrace their humanity, without attachment to a fixed identity. In turn, they are able to metaphorically: *stand in their own ground, openheartedly*. The snail like figure in the artwork represents such a stance in life.

In light of the above, the correlation between physical walking and inner walking is that physical walking for social change brings to light outer social issues. In a similar manner, walking our inner landscape brings to light the deeply held assumptions which shape our current experience of being and belonging in the world.

1.3 Summary of the intention of *walking the land*

The contemplative process of *walking the land* enables each practitioner to consciously participate in their ongoing transformative venture of being and becoming, towards: standing in their own ground, openheartedly. In terms of shadow-side integration, *walking the land* enables each practitioner to gently explore their inner landscape through: discovering, expressing, discerning, integrating, and transforming present moment shadow-side aspects.



standing in their own ground, openheartedly

2. Personal shadow-side integration

Within the light of social activism, this section outlines the nature and intention of personal shadow-side integration. The section addresses the questions of: "Why the necessity for personal inner transformation?" "What is our shadow-side?" "What does personal shadow-side integration involve?" "How do we recognize our shadow-side?" "Why bother integrating our shadow-side?" The section will conclude with a summary of the intention of personal shadow-side integration.

2.1 Why the necessity for personal inner transformation?

Peace activist, Dr. Scilla Elworthy argued: "outer activism requires that we do the inner work of self reflection so that we project less of our own shadow-side onto our world." It could be argued: 'Who cares about shadow-side projection? We just need to get out there and do something!' Elworthy argued that without undertaking the inner work of self reflection, we 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 towards further defensiveness and conflict between the parties concerned. As a result, each party becomes more entrenched in their own ideals, thus thwarting any possibility of deep structural social change. Therefore, personal shadow-side integration is a necessity.

2.2 What is the shadow-side?

To be human is to have a shadow-side. Therefore, we all have one. Our shadow-side is not some deep, dark pathology within us to be feared. Rather, as Jungian analyst, the late Robert Johnson argued: "Our shadow-side is simply those aspects of our self that we do not see or know." Why is it called shadow-side? According to author and psychotherapist, David Richo, the term shadow-side is used because: "Since our disowned qualities seem to be outside us, but are actually projected by us, as our physical shadow-side is, the word shadow-side is used to describe them." So, we need not recoil from our shadow-side.

2.3 What does personal shadow-side integration involve?

We will always have a shadow-side. Therefore, integration does not involve conquering or eradicating our shadow-side. Rather, integration involves choosing to allow present moment shadow-side aspects back into our conscious view, within the gentling light of lovingkindness. For that reason, integration involves both recognition and engagement. For example: One of my personality traits is perfectionism. When I was unaware that such a trait was operating within me, I was unwittingly driven by it. Through the practice of shadow-side integration I became aware of my perfectionist trait. Now, I am no longer unwittingly driven by that trait. Instead I can choose to use its gift, whilst at the same time recognize when it is running amuck. So, when I notice perfectionism is driving my thoughts, emotions, and actions, I can choose to simply let it go, or as necessary, continue to engage in contemplative self discovery around the issue. So, perfectionism is still part of my *beingness*, yet I am no longer driven by it; perfectionism is no longer part of my shadow-side.

Note: for a practice of personal shadow-side integration see:
[www.treeoflife.org.au/The sacred work of being human/Gently integrating our shadow-side](http://www.treeoflife.org.au/The%20sacred%20work%20of%20being%20human/Gently%20integrating%20our%20shadow-side)

2.4 How can we recognize our shadow-side?

If it is the nature of the shadow-side to remain hidden from our conscious view, how can we recognize aspects of it? According to Wilber et al:

“one intriguing feature of our shadow-side is that we often see those aspects of our self that we have split off, as irritating or brilliant traits in another person. . . where they frighten us, irritate us, depress us or turn into an obsession.” So, it would seem that we project our shadow-side onto others; be they individuals, groups, or institutions.

Our projections also sit beneath our conscious view, so how may we recognize them? There are indicators that we are projecting our shadow-side. Indicators such as:

- any time our reaction to a situation seems over the top, or, out of proportion
- when we hear ourselves blame others for the choices we have made
- reacting to someone or something for no particular reason
- when we assume we know what another person is thinking, feeling, or why they are behaving in a certain manner
- pronouncing generalized judgments on a particular situation
- when we are irritated by the way someone else chooses to live their life, even when their choice has no bearing on us
- when we idealize someone for their talents and accomplishments

We can experience the above indicators like a reactive hook within us. So, when we notice that inner sensation of being hooked, we can stop and ask ourselves, “hmm . . . could I be projecting something here?” Simply posing the question dissolves the inner hook sensation.

2.5 Why bother integrating our shadow-side?

Most people go through their lives unaware of their shadow-side, let alone bothering to integrate it. So, why bother going to all the trouble?

It can be confronting to recognize and take responsibility for our own thoughts, feelings, behaviours, and potentials. The following are some of the reasons for engaging in the process of shadow-side integration:

- One of the greatest benefits of shadow-side integration is that it frees up energy. Why? Because it takes a lot of energy to keep our shadow-side hidden from our conscious view, often experienced like an inner tug-of-war.
- Wilber et al, contended that our shadow-side: “expresses itself through distorted and unhealthy means.” So, even though we are unaware of our shadow-side operating within us, it nevertheless shapes our living in some way. Choosing to integrate our shadow-side empowers us to take responsibility for our own living.
- In terms of *being* the change we want to see in the world, the flow-on effect of personal shadow-side integration is twofold. Firstly, we can live daily life in accord with our values system, rather than believing one thing and doing another. Secondly, we can engage with others through a stance of: “the undefended self, offered freely” (from the theologian, Rosemary Haughton). Within the context of this essay, the *undefended self* means that we no longer hide from certain aspects

of ourselves. In turn, we can step beyond the confines of our present moment inner defence mechanisms. In so doing, we can experience the inner freedom to explore whatever is emerging within our inner landscape. *Offered freely* here means: we are more willing to respond openly to others and to seek to truly see and hear them, even if their viewpoint is diametrically opposed to our own. In turn, being truly seen and heard engenders an environment of trust. Environments of trust are necessary for deep structural social change.

It is important to note here that the inner stance of the *undefended self, offered freely* is not naive, weak, nor passive. Neither does it mean that we let people metaphorically: *walk all over us*. Rather, from an inner stance of the *undefended self, offered freely*, we can take resolute action against injustice, from a place of inner freedom. In this way, the *undefended self, offered freely* stands in direct contrast to that of defensively reacting through involuntary shadow-side drivers.

2.6 Summary of the intention of personal shadow-side integration

Personal shadow-side integration through the contemplative process of *walking the land* enables the inner work of self reflection that Elworthy called for. The work involves discovering and integrating present moment shadow-side aspects, through bringing to light that which we are projecting outside of ourselves. Through the practice of shadow-side integration we can experience inner freedom. The experience of inner freedom enables an inner stance of the *undefended self, offered freely*.

For those who seek to be agents of social change, the inner stance of the *undefended self, offered freely* enables them to be the change they want to see in the world, through: living daily life in accord with their values system, and engendering environments of trust through which deep structural change may be forged.



We are living in a great hinge of time in which everything is fundamentally changing. At great hinges of time, transformation is born. Anne Hillman

3. Cultural shadow-side integration

Our personal experience of being and belonging does not sit within a vacuum. Rather, our personal experience of selfhood sits within the beliefs and norms of our families of origin, our local communities, and our religious/spiritual/philosophical traditions. The beliefs and norms of each of these groupings sits within the dominant beliefs and norms of a cultural worldview. So, our personal experience of selfhood is shaped by many influences, culminating in the cultural worldview of the time. In line with such an understanding, this section responds to the questions of: "Why the necessity for cultural inner transformation at this time?" "How is a cultural worldview generated?" "What is the purpose of a cultural worldview?" "What does a cultural worldview have to do with social change?" "What does a western cultural shadow-side include?"

3.1 Why the necessity for cultural inner transformation at this time?

Physical walking for social change is important because it brings to light issues that had been hidden from the collective awareness. Even so, as mentioned previously, this form of social activism alone will not fully realize the deep structural social change required at this time. Why? Because most of the people taking part in the walks, do so within the same worldview and deeply held assumptions on which their society relies. Unfortunately, as theoretical physicist, Albert Einstein argued: "no problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it." Therefore, deep structural social change will require a new consciousness in the form of a new inner orientating reference point for our collective way of being-in-the-world.

3.2 How is a cultural worldview generated?

A cultural worldview does not emerge within a vacuum. Rather, a cultural worldview is generated through posing time honored spiritual questions regarding being and belonging, within the light of current knowledge, beliefs, and lived experience. Questions like: "Where did we come from?" "What is our purpose?" "What becomes of us when we die?" "Why is there good and evil in the world?" "Where do we belong?" One time specific question is: "What does it mean to be human in an evolving world?" The responses discovered to these questions generate a worldview in the form of a unified narrative. Once a worldview is generated, it becomes the boundary of our perceptions. At the same time, a worldview also becomes the interpretative lens through which we view ourselves-in-life, and integrate the expected and unexpected joys and sorrows of daily life.

3.3 What is the purpose of a cultural worldview?

We humans are meaning making creatures who long to belong. It is through the unified narrative of a worldview that we give meaning to our living and our dying, and experience belonging in the world. A cultural worldview offers a view of reality from which to source collective identity, purpose, values, and the experience of belonging. A cultural worldview offers meaning and belonging when it resonates with both heart and mind. *Heart* here refers to: an experience of being at home in the world,

or metaphorically truly *inhabiting our land*. *Mind* here refers to: coherency with current knowledge, beliefs, and lived experience. Conversely, when a worldview no longer resonates with heart and mind, it no longer offers an experience of meaning and belonging.

In line with the above understanding, there is no once-for-all-time cultural worldview. Cultural worldviews continue to change and evolve in response to an ever widening knowledge base and beliefs regarding the origins and nature of the world we inhabit. So, in each new era of western history, we are required to begin again, and taking into account human history thus far, we are required to repose our spiritual questions within the light of current knowledge, beliefs, and lived experience; and discover responses which hold true for us . . . now.

3.4 What does a cultural worldview have to do with social change?

What does a cultural worldview have to do with social change? Our cultural worldview determines who we collectively know ourselves to be and how we experience belonging in the world. Who we collectively know ourselves to be determines our collective values system. In turn, our collective values system shapes the way we collectively live within and act upon our world. Therefore, cultural worldviews shape both our personal and collective experience of *being* and *doing* in the world. Consequently, our worldview determines what we perceive as injustice and how we will respond.

3.5 What does a western cultural shadow-side include?

In a similar manner to our personal shadow-side, our cultural shadow-side involves those aspects of the cultural worldview which we do not see or know; the deeply held assumptions which orientate our current experience of being and belonging. Also, as with our personal shadow-side, our cultural shadow side unwittingly keeps our cultural mindset bound to a certain view, even when elements of the worldview have become untenable.

In terms of a western culture shadow-side, some of the deeply held assumptions which gave rise to the current worldview are: anthropocentrism, white supremacy, individualism, capitalism, and consumerism. Anthropocentrism refers to the primacy of the human species over and above all other species. White supremacy refers to the primacy of white skin over and above all other skin colours. Individualism refers to the primacy of the individual over and above the collective. Capitalism is: "an economic and political system in which a country's trade and industry are controlled by private owners for profit, rather than by the state" (Oxford online Dictionary). Consumerism refers to the concept that happiness depends upon continued accumulation of goods and services.

The assumptions listed above are orientated around two guiding principles: 1. separation; 2. domination. According to author, Charles Eisenstein, such principles gave rise to a cultural worldview in the form of: "The Story of Separation. . . the myth of the separate self underlies our entire civilization. . . . we are each separate selves in competition with each other, and gaining control through domination." Such a Story of Separation has run its course of usefulness for two reasons. Firstly, it is no longer congruent with current knowledge and beliefs regarding the origins and nature of the world. Therefore, it can no longer respond coherently

to our meaning making questions, or our longing to belong. Secondly, it has run its course of usefulness because it gave rise to a values system which allowed us to relentlessly deplete the Earth's resources. In this regard, Eisenstein asserted:

"from what state of being do we extinguish other species, ruin the Earth and sea, and treat nature as a collection of resources to be allocated for maximum short-term benefit? No mere personal facility, this numbing is inseparable from the deep narratives that run our civilization, and the social systems that those narratives support."

A Story of Separation lay at the heart of our western cultural culture's shadow-side. Remembering that a shadow-side will express itself through distorted and unhealthy means, it is vital that we integrate our cultural shadow-side.

3.6 The intention of cultural shadow-side integration

The intention of cultural shadow-side integration is to consciously participate in the ongoing cultural venture of being and becoming, through bringing to light deeply held assumptions which orientate our current cultural worldview. In turn, we are able to transform the assumptions which are no longer tenable. Even though cultural shadow-side integration is an ongoing venture, there are *hinges of time* within a culture's history; hinges which call forth major shifts in consciousness. At such times we are required to recast our inner orientating reference point for our collective way of being-in-the-world.

According to Hillman, we are living through such a *hinge of time* (see the quotation at the commencement of this section). Alongside Hillman, many people have heard the *knock at the door*. Many people now see that the western worldview and values system is no longer viable. It would seem that our era is calling forth a new cultural consciousness. It is no easy task to recast our collective inner orientating reference point. For those who choose to undertake such a work, professor Robert E. Quinn offered a metaphor which may ground and sustain the work: "*we build the bridge as we walk on it.*"



Shall we fight the new or co-operate with it. We fight, unwittingly as long as we try to make work what is no longer working. Anne Hillman

4. Attuning and responding to the call of the era

In response to having perceived the *knock at the door*, in the form of our current worldview no longer being tenable, this section offers an overview of the nature and intention of attuning and responding to the call of the era. Does this era offer a way forward in terms of discerning and living into a new consciousness? Yes, it would seem that a new orientating reference point is emerging; emerging in response to shifts in our cultural knowledge base which contribute to a new frame of reference for exploring our meaning making questions. Such a new orientating reference point is giving rise to a new set of assumptions; giving rise to a new worldview in the form of: A Story of Interbeing. In turn, a Story of Interbeing is giving rise to a collective values system which seeks the flourishing of all life forms.

4.1 Attuning to the call of the era

Hillman is not alone in her assessment of our era being a *great hinge in time*. Cultural historian, the late Thomas Berry named our era as: *in between stories* of how the world began and our place of belonging within that. Environmental activist, Joanna Macy named our era as: the *Great Turning* from an Industrial Growth Society to a life-sustaining civilization. Also, author and management consultant, Margaret J. Wheatley named our era as: the decline phase in the life cycle of any culture. Such views of our era locate this chapter of western history as a turning point within the broader context of the culture's ongoing venture of being and becoming.

Great hinges of time are disruptive. They challenge current views regarding being and belonging. Great hinges of time also herald that a cultural worldview has run its course of usefulness. Such times of inner change can be confronting, confusing, and disorienting to personal and cultural meaning making. How can we discern and live into a new cultural worldview when embedded in the human psyche is a fear of change? Due to the fear of change we can, in the words of Hillman: "unwittingly try to make work what is no longer working." And yet, Hillman also argued: "at the great hinges of time, transformation is born." Also, singer and songwriter, Leonard Cohen, echoed a similar sentiment: "there is a crack in everything. . . that's how the light gets in." So, rather than be paralyzed by fear, we can take heart that perhaps we are participating in a historical transformation of our cultural inner landscape. If we attune ourselves to the call of the era, rather than unwittingly fight against it, we will be able to discern a new inner orientating reference point.

4.2 Responding to the call of the era

How do we respond to the call of the era? We do the work of reposing our meaning making questions within the light of current knowledge and beliefs regarding the nature of reality. This essay names two significant shifts in our cultural knowledge base which contribute to a new frame of reference for exploring our meaning making questions. The first shift is towards a science-based evolutionary creation myth. Creation myths lay at the heart of a cultural worldview because creation myths respond to the spiritual questions of: "Where did we come from?" "What is our purpose,

or place of belonging?" "What becomes of us when we die?" In terms of an evolutionary creation myth, futurist and author Barbara Marx Hubbard argued that evolution is: "a whole process of creation, called Big History [13.8 billion years and still in the making] and we place ourselves in that history as participants in it." In response to an evolutionary creation myth, we now know ourselves to belong to and participate with Life's enduring, creative venture of being and becoming. Such an understanding of belonging through participation animates our daily lived experience.

The second shift is from a mechanistic view of reality to a systems view. In terms of such a shift, systems theorists Fritjof Capra and Pier Luigi Luisi contended:

"at the forefront of contemporary science, we no longer see the universe as a machine composed of elementary building blocks. We have discovered that the material world, ultimately, is a network of inseparable patterns of relationships; the planet as a whole is a living, self-regulating system. The view of the human body as a machine and of the mind as a separate entity is being replaced by one that sees not only the brain, but also the immune system, the bodily tissues, and even each cell as a living, cognitive system."

The shift from a mechanistic view of reality to a systems view, has brought to light an integral framework of thinking and being in the world. *Integral* here refers to: the awareness that each system is necessary to, and included within, the whole. Within such a view, no system takes precedence over the other; each system is unique in itself, while at the same time operating as part of the whole. An integral way of thinking and being in the world, gives rise to the principle of unity with diversity.

A new inner orientating reference point

An evolutionary creation myth and systems view of reality have contributed to recasting our inner orientating point around the principles of: 1. unity with diversity; 2. participation with creation. It could be argued that this inner orientating reference point is not new, but ancient. Why? Because interconnectedness and participation with creation were central to many indigenous cultures of the world. Indeed, we have much to learn from the indigenous cultures. At the same time, these orientating principles are new to modern day westerners. Therefore, we are required to do the work of exploring how the principles of unity with diversity and participation with the wider Earth community will take form within the context of a science-based evolutionary creation myth and a systems view of the nature of reality.

A new set of assumptions

In response to such exploration to date, a new set of assumptions is emerging into conscious view:

- We humans belong because we are here. We belong as one species within the wider Earth community; therefore, our view is one of self-in-life rather than self and life. As self-in-life we each participate in Life's enduring creative venture of being and becoming. Also, the view of self-in-life naturally calls forth moral response-ability.
- We each experience ourselves as unique beings in our own right, who are also intrinsically connected within and response-able to the greater whole. Therefore, as well as seeking personal wholeness we also have a role to play within the greater whole.

- We are part of the human tradition which is continually in the making. Because we humans continue to change, evolve, and adapt, we are enough. Therefore, we do not require salvation from an outside source. Rather, we can fully embrace our humanity-within-the-whole. We are however, required to start taking responsibility for the way we are currently living in the world. At this evolutionary turn, taking responsibility *turns* on the notion: we humans are co-creators in the future viability of a habitable planet.

A new worldview in the form of a Story of Interbeing

The new set of assumptions as listed above, gives rise to a new cultural worldview in the form of a Story of Interbeing (see Charles Eisenstein).

A Story of Interbeing breaks through and transcends the limitations of the former Story of Separation (see 3.5). A Story of Interbeing *turns* on the interrelatedness of all life forms, within an integral framework of systems within systems. Therefore, a Story of Interbeing gives rise to a cultural values system which seeks the flourishing of all life forms. Living into a Story of Interbeing will enable us to once again: walk humbly within the Earth community, with wisdom and compassion. At the same time, a Story of Interbeing can be an anchor point, courageously holding us firm as we consciously engage in this turbulent time of transformation from one way of being-in-the-world, to another.

4.3 The intention of attuning and responding to the call of the era

The intention of attuning and responding to the call of the era is to consciously participate in Life's evolutionary venture of being and becoming. When we locate our human place of belonging in the Big History of Life itself, we recast the inner orientating reference point for our species way of being-in-the-world.

A new inner orientating reference point centres on the principles of unity with diversity, and participation with the Earth community. Such an inner orientating reference point gives rise to a new set of assumptions, which in turn gives rise to a new worldview in the form of a Story of Interbeing. In turn, a Story of Interbeing gives rise to a new values system which seeks the flourishing of all life forms. Therefore, a Story of Interbeing offers a new consciousness from which to undertake the deep structural social change being called for at this time.



to walk humbly within the Earth community,
with wisdom and compassion

Concluding remarks

All is not well with the world, and we are living through a *great hinge of time* which is calling for outer transformation in the form of deep structural change in the way we live together. Such outer transformation cannot be willed or forced into reality. Rather, it will require change from the inside . . . out. Therefore, outer social change will require inner transformation; a transformation in the inner orientating reference point for who we collectively know ourselves to be, and how we collectively belong in the world. Who we know ourselves to be determines our values system. In turn, our values system shapes the way we live within and act upon our world. Therefore, outer and inner transformation are two sides of the one coin.

We can consciously participate in the necessary inner transformation through shadow-side integration. We can engage in shadow-side integration through the contemplative process of *walking the land*. *Walking the land* is a metaphor for the contemplative process of self discovery towards: standing in our own ground, openheartedly. In terms of shadow-side integration, *walking the land* involves each person contemplatively exploring their inner landscape: discovering, integrating, and transforming present moment shadow-side aspects, towards an inner stance of the undefended self, offered freely. Such an inner stance enables each practitioner to be the change they want be in the world through living daily life in accord with their values system. Also, in terms of being agents of social change, the inner stance of the undefended self, offered freely enables each practitioner to generate environments of trust necessary for deep structural social change.

In terms of western cultural shadow-side integration, the call is to bring into light and transform the deeply held assumptions giving rise to a worldview in the form of a Story of Separation. Without a transformation of this worldview, the fundamental changes that are required for an equitable world for all life forms, will fall short. While this is not an easy task, it is made possible by the emergence of a new consciousness. Such a new consciousness has at its core the orientating principles of unity with diversity and participation with the wider Earth community. In turn the new consciousness is giving rise to a new set of assumptions and a new cultural worldview in the form of a Story of Interbeing. A Story of Interbeing is giving rise to a values system which seeks the flourishing of all life forms.

Will we listen and respond to the *knock on the door*?

This essay closes with a quotation from Satish Kumar:

In order to protest successfully against materialism, consumerism, greed and lust for power and money we need to embrace non-materialistic values . . . For such inner transformation we need a change of heart, a change of attitude, a change of values and philosophy, a change of our world view and ultimately a change of consciousness. External transformation has to go hand in hand with internal transformation. They are two sides of the same coin.

Uplift 13 August, 2020

Resources

Over the page is a *fridge* copy of the main points. Feel free to print off.

Shadow-side integration: The understanding of shadow-side integration offered in this essay draws from workshops I facilitated on the topic, both locally and internationally. At that time the focus of shadow-side integration was toward a personal spiritual experience of inner freedom. In this article the focus of shadow-side integration is towards *being* the change we want to see in the world. Such a focus includes personal inner freedom, and at the same time intentionally stretches beyond a privatized spiritual experience, towards affecting change in the outer world.

Thomas Berry, *The Great Work: Our Way into the Future*

Fritjof Capra & Pier Luigi Luisi, *A systems View of Life: A Unifying Vision*

Charles Eisenstein, *The More Beautiful World our Hearts Know is Possible & Climate: A New Story*

Dr. Scilla Elworthy, *The Business Plan for Peace: Building a World without War & Pioneering the Possible: Awakened Leadership for a World that Works*

Rosemary Haughton, *The Transformation of Man: A Study of Conversion and Community*

Anne Hillman, *Awakening the Energies of Love: Fire for the Second Time*

Barbara Marx Hubbard, *Conscious Evolution: awakening the power of our social potential*

Robert Johnson, *Owning your own Shadow-side*

Satish Kumar, *Elegant Simplicity: The Art of Living Well*

Steve McIntosh, *Evolution's Purpose & Integral Consciousness and the Future of Evolution*

Joanna Macy & Molly Brown, *Coming Back to Life*

Joanna Macy & Chris Johnstone, *Active Hope: How to Face the Mess we're in without Going Crazy*

David Richo, *Shadow Dance: Liberating the Power & Creativity of Your Dark Side*

Alice Walker, *We Are the Ones We Have Been Waiting For: Inner Light in a Time of Darkness*

Margaret J. Wheatley, *Who we Choose to Be: Facing Reality, Claiming Leadership, Restoring Sanity*

Ken Wilber et al, *Integral Life Practice: A 21st-Century Blueprint for Physical Health, Emotional Balance, Mental Clarity, and Spiritual Awakening*

Artwork on the title page: Many years ago, I bought this artwork from Fyona Mitaxa, with her permission to use it in my work in the field of spiritual practice education. At the time I had no idea how I would incorporate the artwork; I simply had an inkling that one day this artwork would feature somehow. Now that inkling has come to fruition in the form of the title of this piece and the contemplative process of self discovery.

Walking the land . . .

contemplatively exploring our inner landscape, discovering and integrating our shadow-side, towards being the change, we want to see in the world



Walking the land
standing in our own ground,
openheartedly



Personal shadow-side integration
the undefended self,
freely offered



Cultural shadow-side integration
living into a new inner orientating
reference point



*Attuning and responding to the
call of the era*
a new worldview in the form
of a Story of Interbeing

