

The land I now inhabit



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Note: Metaphors are interspersed throughout the paper. For easy recognition, the metaphors have been italicized.

Preface

Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves, like locked rooms and like books that are now written in a very foreign tongue. Do not now seek the answers, which cannot be given you because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything. Rainer Maria Rilke

We humans long to belong in our world. We experience belonging through a Story of meaning from which to source our identity and purpose. For the past sixteen years or so I have lived between Stories of meaning; I have *walked between lands* of meaning making. During those years I learnt to love the questions themselves. I also learnt to wait patiently and live into the responses to my questions; responses which could resonate with both my mind and my heart. Now I have come to a resting place. Now I live a new Story. Now I inhabit a new land.

The land I now inhabit is a metaphor for the new Story of meaning that I one day *awoke to find myself within*. The term *land* refers to my Story of meaning. The term *I now* refers to the newness of the Story. The term *inhabit* refers to the understanding that a Story is not an end-in-itself, rather the means through which we source personal and communal identity, purpose, and the experience of belonging in the world. This paper gives expression to some of the landmarks I have recognized along *the way*. *Landmark* here refers to: identifying markers within my experience of Selfhood, and stages or turning points along the journey.

The landmarks presented are drawn from my reflection on lived experience which included raising a family, travelling to numerous countries which held differing belief systems to myself and to each other, continued reading, the writing of articles and the preparation of workshops, countless conversations, and tertiary studies as a mature aged student including: a Bachelor of Theology, a Graduate Diploma in Spiritual Direction, and a Master's Degree where my thesis included a chapter on Story. My reflective practice took the form of meditation and contemplative self enquiry. Contemplative self enquiry was undertaken as a daily personal practice which included journaling my questions and discoveries, and also a monthly session with an accredited spiritual director.

Note : For more on the spiritual practice of contemplative self enquiry see: [www.treeoflife.org.au/Contemplative practices/Contemplative self enquiry](http://www.treeoflife.org.au/Contemplative_practices/Contemplative_self_enquiry). For more on the ongoing practice of spiritual mentoring see: [www.treeoflife.org.au/Contemplative practices/Spiritual mentoring](http://www.treeoflife.org.au/Contemplative_practices/Spiritual_mentoring).

The reason for writing

The purpose for writing this paper is to draw together the significant landmarks within my own inner landscape. Therefore this paper is not offered as a roadmap for others to follow. Rather, it is offered as my exploration into living a new Story. It is my hope that those who read this paper may be inspired to engage in their own interior journey of exploration and recognize their own landmarks within their own inner landscape. I also write for those who are seeking a framework of understanding for our juncture in history and what possibilities the future may hold.

I write within a particular horizon of meaning, in that I write as a non-indigenous Australian woman who was born the 1950's and lives in the

northern suburbs of Melbourne. I also write within the context of spiritual practice education which centres on principles and practices for living meaningfully in today's world. Therefore, my horizon is both shaped and limited by a suburban, western cultural context and the giving of meaning via a coherent Story, or unified narrative.



a suburban, western cultural context

Photo by Kaye Twining

There are many quotations listed within the pages of this paper, particularly at the commencement of each section. The quotations do not simply fulfill the role of substantiating an intellectual argument. Rather, the quotations are ones that seized my attention and affected me deeply. As I continued to contemplate the quotations, they became like *companions on the way*, opening doors for me to see a new view and as such, to grow into my new understandings. The quotations both grounded my explorations, and challenged me to continue to break through the limitations of my current view. The quotations also nurtured, sustained, and inspired me through the many years of my inner journeying. Therefore, I am grateful to each and every one of the authors.

* * * * *

With the drawing of this Love and the voice of this Calling, we shall not cease from exploration and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and to know the place for the first time. T.S. Eliot

Our greatest journey in life is interior. It is a matter of growth, deepening and an ever greater surrender to the creative action of love and grace in our hearts. Thomas Merton

The journey is not linear . . . it is a deepening. Anne Hillman

While human beings as a species are no different from the higher animals in terms of substance, the one striking difference is the human capacity to wonder, to pose open-ended questions, and to discover responses. Bernard Lonergan

We stand at an evolutionary juncture, called to awaken to a new kind of Love. This Love is not a feeling; it is a great power . . . awakening to this radically different Love . . . will shatter your perception of who you think you are. Anne Hillman

We are living at one of the hinges of time . . . transformation takes place at such hinges, or turning points in human history. Anne Hillman

By Story is meant our version of reality, the lens through which we see and understand what is happening now in our world. The Great Turning is the story we hear from those who see the Great Unraveling and don't want it to have the last word. It involves the emergence of new and creative human responses that enable the transition from the Industrial Growth Society to a Life-Sustaining Society. Joanna Macy and Molly Young Brown

The innate desire to explore

We humans are both driven and enabled to explore. Our innate desire to explore is facilitated by our ability to wonder, to question, and to

discover responses. Our urge to explore takes form in two ways. Firstly, we desire to gain knowledge about our world through exploring that which is observable in the outer world. Outer exploration is the domain of the sciences. Scientific exploration continues to expand our knowledge about how the world came to be/continues to be, including the human body/mind.

Secondly, as well as the drive for knowledge about our world, we humans also have an intrinsic desire to experience belonging in our world. Belonging is experienced via a coherent Story of meaning through which we source our personal and collective identity, purpose, and belonging. We discern our Story of meaning through inner exploration in the form of posing our spiritual questions around identity, purpose, and belonging and discerning responses which offer truth within the context of any given time and place in history. Inner exploration is the domain of spiritual formation, in the form of expressing, exploring, integrating, and celebrating a coherent Story of meaning.

Note: for more on the nature of spirituality see: [www.treeoflife.org.au/Resources/The nature of spirituality](http://www.treeoflife.org.au/Resources/The_nature_of_spirituality).

Junctures in human history

At certain junctures in human history, the knowledge gained through continued scientific exploration breaks through and transcends the limitations of the understandings that had previously been taken for granted. For example: in the 16th-Century Galileo observed that it was actually the Earth that revolved around the sun, not the other way around. Such an observation stood in direct contrast to the commonly held belief of the time that the Earth was the central point around which all else revolved. In response to such a commonly held belief, Christian doctrine had been formed regarding the centrality of the human in relation to God. Galileo's research contravened the commonly held belief, which in turn, contravened the church doctrine. Galileo's research caused such an outrage that he was put under house arrest. He was imprisoned because his theory challenged the cultural/religious meaning making Story of the time.

In light of the above paragraph, new scientific knowledge can break open a prevailing cultural Story of meaning and for a time, according to Thomas Berry, the population involved lives: "in between stories." Living in between Stories can give rise to an experience of disorientation in terms of meaning making and displacement in terms of belonging. Such



discerning a new Story of meaning . . . as if for the first time

Photo by Kaye Twining

historical junctures require of those involved to begin again, and taking into account human history thus far, to repose the time honored spiritual questions and discern a new Story of meaning . . . as if for the first time.

Numerous authors, writing from a western cultural context, have claimed our current time and place in history as one such juncture. Joanna Macy has named this juncture as: "The Great Turning." What has given rise to such a juncture? One reason is the shift towards a science-based creation Story. Creation Stories are foundational to our experience of belonging in our world because they respond to the time honored spiritual question of: "where did we come from?" What gave rise to the shift towards a science-based creation Story? Brian Swimme argued that: "We are the first generation to live with an empirical view of the origin of the universe." As a result of such an empirical view, the science-based creation Story has become the dominant norm within western societies.

Even though our historical time and place is named as a juncture, a juncture which is causing upheaval in terms of meaning making, we need not fear, or, fight against the process. It is a journey undertaken in response to the Call within the deeper rhythms of Life itself. It has taken place before and will no doubt take place again in the future. Therefore, we may draw both comfort and inspiration from the understanding that we are not in control of the process. At the same time, we are required to play our part.

Introduction

It's all a question of story. We are in trouble just now because we do not have a good story. We are in between stories. The Old Story - the account of how the world came to be and how we fit into it - is not functioning properly, and we have not learned the New Story. The Old Story sustained us for a long period of time. It shaped our emotional attitudes, provided us with a life purpose, energized action. It consecrated suffering, integrated knowledge, guided education. We awoke in the morning and knew where we were. Thomas Berry

Story is the human way of seeing in the dark. John Shea

The unceasing interplay between experience and narrative is a uniquely human attribute. We are the storytellers. We are the ones who put life into words. Christina Baldwin

Our Story is not what literally happens, but what we make out of what happens, what we tell each other, what we remember . . . we make our lives bigger or smaller, more expansive or more limited, according to the interpretation of life that is our Story. Christian Baldwin

Our horizon of meaning is both the lens through which we view ourselves and the boundary of what we are able to perceive . . . what does not fit into our horizon will not be seen or heard, or if it is, it will be deemed as irrelevant." Bernard Lonergan

When a meme [worldview] no longer seems to explain the nature of reality or guides us towards goals that satisfy our deepest desires, it recedes or quickly becomes extinct . . . when healthy memes don't exist, however, recessive memes can resurface and take over, such as extreme materialism or racial and ethnic hatred. It is a very dangerous thing for a culture to be without a healthy meme. Barbara Marx Hubbard

Horizons of meaning

According to Bernard Lonergan, we all view ourselves-in-life through a particular lens, or horizon of meaning. Even though we are usually unaware of the horizon of meaning operating within us, it continues to shape our view of ourselves-in-our-world. Our personal horizon of meaning does not emerge within a vacuum. It emerges in response to the norms and beliefs of our family of origin, our local community, our culture,

our religious/spiritual tradition, our genetic makeup and personality traits, and our ongoing lived experience. Therefore, our personal horizon of meaning is both shaped and limited by a wide web of relationships.

Are we hard wired into one particular horizon of meaning? No, as mentioned previously, our innate capacity to pose open-ended questions and continue to discern authentic responses, allows us to break through and transcend the limitations of a current horizon of meaning. As such, we humans possess the potential for self transcendence in the form of transformative shifts in our view of ourselves-in-the-world. Therefore, if we remain open and receptive to the interplay between our life experience and our current horizon of meaning, it is possible to continue to expand, or when necessary transform, our current view.

Within the overall context of meaning making, Lonergan's understanding of horizons of meaning awakened my awareness to the nature of truth and the human potential for self transcendence. Truth involves a perspective, i.e., a belief which has been personally tried and tested within life and found to be accurate. . . for now. In terms of self transcendence, our truth will continue to evolve in response to our ever expanding knowledge of the nature of being human within an evolving universe.

Note: For more on the nature of truth see: [www.treeoflife.org.au/Resources/The nature of truth in an age of perspectives](http://www.treeoflife.org.au/Resources/The_nature_of_truth_in_an_age_of_perspectives).

Stories of meaning

Whilst our horizon of meaning is the lens/boundary through which we view ourselves-in-life, it is our Story which forms a unified narrative from which to live meaningfully. Therefore, Story and horizons of meaning are interlinked. As a result, my studies of Lonergan's research on horizons of meaning offered a natural segue into my studies into the nature of Story. It was an easy progression to understand that human meaning making takes the form of a Story; a particular Story which is shaped by a particular horizon of meaning. When our Story is coherent with current knowledge about how the world works, it offers meaning. Conversely, without a coherent Story, we are *left in the dark* in terms of meaning making. At the same time, there is no once-for-all-time Story to which all must adhere, for our Story continues to evolve in response to ongoing personal lived experience and the ongoing collective exploration of how the world and the human body/mind works. Therefore, our Story is not an end-in-itself. Rather, our Story is the means through which we give meaning to our living and our dying at any given time and place in history.

In line with the above paragraph, our Story involves subjective interpretation. Even so, our Story is not fiction in terms of a fabricated fairytale. Rather, our Story involves current facts, our interpretation of such facts, and our response to our interpretation of such facts. In line with such an understanding, Anne Hillman argued that our Story is the "compelling context" through which we give meaning to our living and our dying; a compelling context derived through the rational exploration of our current experience of reality. Our Story shapes our values system, which in turn, determines the way we will live within and act upon our world. Therefore, even though our Story involves a subjective interpretation of the facts, it is a rational source for who we know ourselves to be and how we will live.

In between Stories

Early on in my inner explorations, I came across the quotation by Thomas Berry: "It's all a question of story. . ." (The first quotation listed above.) I was deeply affected by it. At the time I was in between personal Stories of meaning. My former Story had broken open in response to ongoing lived experience which challenged the beliefs I had held. Such beliefs crumbled. I experienced a sense of inner disorientation in terms of living meaningfully in my world. I experienced a crisis of meaning as I no longer held a coherent Story from which I could source my self image. I felt invisible and projected that experience of invisibility onto my world. As such, I seemed to be invisible to myself and others.

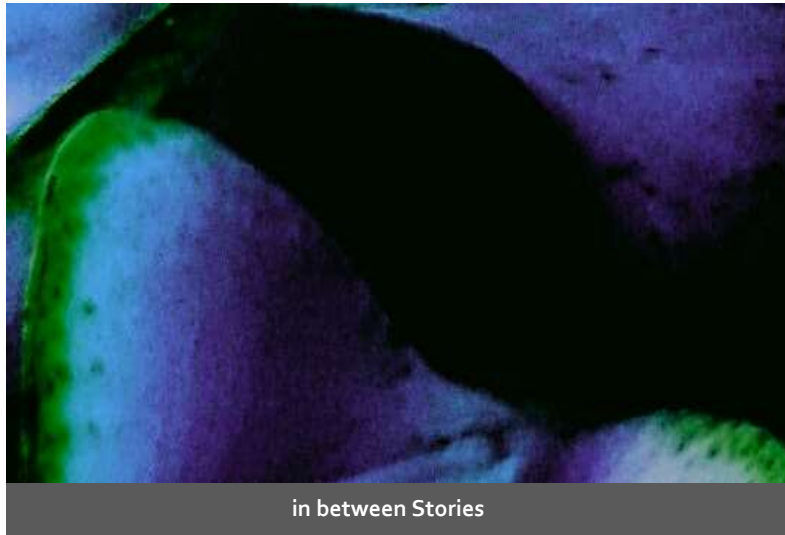


Photo by Kaye Twining

Berry's imagery of *in between stories* struck a chord with me and offered a word/image which gave meaning to my current experience of disorientation. No wonder I felt inner disorientation, I was *in between* Stories! Furthermore, the quotation put my personal experience within a broader context in that my experience also coincided with a cultural turning point. I was not alone! The image of being *in between* stories also offered hope in the form of the energy to undertake the journey of discerning a new Story. So I began the rather arduous and awe-filled adventure of seeking a new personal Story of meaning within a new cultural Story of meaning; a new Story which was coherent with current knowledge of how the world came into being/continues to be and how the human mind/body works.

Note: For more on Story see: [www.treeoflife.org.au/The sacred work of being human/Finding our place of belonging](http://www.treeoflife.org.au/The%20sacred%20work%20of%20being%20human/Finding%20our%20place%20of%20belonging).

Living into a new personal Story

It is lovely to have a home, habits, etc. but when that beautiful home becomes a prison, when you can't really 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

There's a common misunderstanding among all the human beings who have ever been born on the earth that the best way to live is to try to avoid pain and just try to get comfortable . . . a much more interesting, kind, adventurous, and joyful approach to life is to begin to develop our curiosity, not caring whether the object of our inquisitiveness is bitter or sweet. . . . If we're committed to comfort at any cost, as soon as we come up against the least edge of pain, we're going to run; we'll never know what's beyond that particular barrier or wall or fearful thing. Pema Chodron

Personal Stories of meaning draw from collective Stories of meaning. Therefore, my personal Story draws from an emerging new western cultural Story which is sourced from a science-based creation Story. I have noticed three themes emerging within a new collective Story: 1. interbeing, i.e., the inter-dependence of all life-forms within a framework of systems within systems; 2. unity with diversity as understood through the principle of both/and; and 3. the wider human tradition as experienced through an integral framework for understanding ourselves-in-the-world. Because our personal Story draws from a collective Story, this paper will interweave my personal Story with my understanding of the emerging collective Story.

In relation to my new Story of meaning, I have chosen to outline seven landmarks within my inner terrain. Such landmarks now form the compelling context from which to source my Self image and values.

Landmark 1: Transformative shifts within the one Story

While I was still living within my previous Story of meaning, I underwent a *dark night of the soul* experience. *Dark night of the soul* is known to be



Darkness by Sr. Mary Stephen

a particular Christian religious experience which, in the words of Gerald May, is likened to: "the dark of a real night" where it is impossible to "see clearly." Furthermore, May stated that through a *dark night of the soul* experience: "liberation takes place in a hidden way, beneath our knowledge and understanding . . . beyond our conscious control . . . it is a journey of consciousness . . . whereby a person is invited towards the freedom of their already existent, although as yet unrealized union with God." As

the *dark night* is beyond conscious control, it can only be understood post the experience. When the person is in the throes of it, it can be extremely confronting and disorienting.

Undergoing a *dark night of the soul* experience did not propel me into living a new Story as I do today, however it did allow me to experience a major transformative shift in my view of Selfhood. The shift took form in both who I knew myself to be and how I experienced God. I now knew myself to be: precious and passionate woman of God. My new experience of God was: That which is participating presence of Love. Experiencing such shifts in my view awakened my awareness to the nature of transformative shifts. As such, that religious experience consciously set me on the ongoing path of transformative living. Nevertheless, I continued to engage with the path within the framework of a Christian religious tradition and my personal relationship with God.

Note: For more on the experience of engaging in the path of transformative living within one Story, including my experience of dark night of the soul see: [www.treeoflife.org.au/Resources/A contemporary Story of grace & MA Thesis entitled: The contribution of a spiritual director to the spiritual journey of a person diagnosed with bipolar](http://www.treeoflife.org.au/Resources/A%20contemporary%20Story%20of%20grace%20&%20MA%20Thesis%20entitled%20The%20contribution%20of%20a%20spiritual%20director%20to%20the%20spiritual%20journey%20of%20a%20person%20diagnosed%20with%20bipolar)

disorder. For more on the art of transformative living see: [www.treeoflife.org.au/The sacred work of being human/The art of transformative living](http://www.treeoflife.org.au/The%20sacred%20work%20of%20being%20human/The%20art%20of%20transformative%20living).

Landmark 2: A universal pathway for transformative living

During my experience of *dark night of the soul*, I was surprised to find that it was the teachings of Buddhist nun, Pema Chodron, which offered me an *inner resting place*. Even though my belief system at the time sat within a



western Protestant Christian tradition, it was the teachings of Pema Chodron which sustained me through the *dark night* of inner disorientation. Pema Chodron's quotation (listed at the commencement of this section), *lifted a veil* of confusion and sorrow that had overwhelmed me. I was able to *stop internally fighting against* what was taking place within me. Instead I began to pose the open-ended question: "how may I grow in wisdom and compassion through this?" Furthermore, it was through her teachings that I came to experience self forgiveness.

Also, I found an *inner holding place* of comfort and strength in response to her words. Her teachings offered me a supportive framework and sustained me through the years of *the dark night*.

Note: For more on forgiveness see: [www.treeoflife.org.au/The sacred work of being human/Forgiveness & Cultivating nonviolent relationships](http://www.treeoflife.org.au/The%20sacred%20work%20of%20being%20human/Forgiveness%20&%20Cultivating%20nonviolent%20relationships).

Equally important for me was Pema Chodron's teaching on the practice of sitting meditation. Although prayer had become an empty, dry experience, I found that I could engage in the practice of sitting meditation. Sitting meditation gives rise to the experience of thoughts and feelings simply arising and dissolving like waves in the ocean, if they are not *bought into*. Through the practice of sitting meditation I came to understand that I could have thoughts and feelings without being totally identified with them. As a consequence, the circular thinking that had ravaged my mind came to rest. Additionally, Pema Chodron taught that as a person engages in the practice of sitting meditation, they naturally experience gentleness, precision, and the ability to let go. For me *gentleness* took form by way of softening my perfectionist bent; *precision* took form by way of clarity of mind; and the *ability to let go* related predominantly to the release of now redundant storylines. Therefore, sitting meditation allowed me to remain open and receptive to transformative shifts in my view.

As important as Pema Chodron's teachings were and still are to me, I did not take on a Buddhist worldview. What I did take on was the understanding that certain spiritual teachings could sit within and also transcend the belief system in which they originated. Therefore, those teachings can be viewed as universal teachings, or what is known as *wisdom teachings*.

In a similar manner to wisdom teachings, the path of transformative living can be viewed as a universal pathway, in that it can weave its way through a particular religious/cultural belief system, but is not restricted to such. The path is one of continuing to grow in compassionate self understanding



Artwork by Patricia Frasier

horizon of meaning. Therefore, each person or culture's experience of the pathway is unique to them.

towards an ever deepening experience of connection and belonging in the world. The pathway continues to engage us in our ongoing *dance* of both being and becoming. The path weaves its way through the current belief system of each person and/or culture. Therefore, while the pathway is the same, each person or culture engages with the path in their own time, at their own pace, and within their current

Landmark 3: Transformation is intrinsic to human consciousness

As mentioned previously, Lonergan contended that we humans possess the potential for self transcendence in the form of transformative shifts in our view of Selfhood. On what basis did he formulate such an understanding? Through his research, Lonergan discovered a pattern within human consciousness; a pattern which revealed the potential for self transcendence. In accord with the pattern, he discerned a method for conscious intentionality which he named as: the transcendental method of intentional consciousness. I first came across Lonergan's method during my GradDip training in the contemplative practice of spiritual direction. I became an accredited spiritual director. For me, Lonergan's method was the centrepiece of the training. Then during my Master's Degree I studied Lonergan's research more intently. His method became the methodology of my Master's thesis. Therefore, Lonergan's research on human consciousness and the nature and practice of self transcendence, has grounded my personal and professional approach to spiritual practice.

At the heart of the method is the posing of open-ended questions within the light of our current knowledge, beliefs, values, and lived experience. As mentioned previously, posing questions is an intrinsic human capacity. Responses are then discerned through engaging in the conscious activity of experiencing, understanding, judging, and deciding. Lonergan claimed that each of these four functions are a natural part of human consciousness. If Lonergan is correct and the four functions are intrinsic to human consciousness, then anyone can engage with the method of conscious intentionality. And yet, in terms of discerning a Story of meaning, whilst the method remains constant the responses discerned may well differ, depending upon the horizon of meaning into which the questions are posed.

Loneragan's method commences with being attentive to our affective experience, by way of consciously noticing what we: "sense, perceive, imagine, feel, speak," in response to daily lived experience. Therefore it is not our thinking alone which drives the method, it is our attentiveness to our whole range of affective experience. Lonergan claimed that it is our affective experience which is the "drive and power" behind authentic self-knowledge, because our affective experience reveals where we are living into, or away from, our values system. Thus, Lonergan's research has situated self transcendence within the realm of normative human experience, in that it draws from and flows back into daily life. Furthermore, Lonergan's method of conscious intentionality offers a framework of understanding for the practice of contemplative self enquiry, which also draws from and flows back into daily life.

Note: For more on Lonergan's method see: [www.treeoflife.org.au/Resources/A Beginners Guide to Bernard Lonergan's Method in Theology & A method for discerning personal inner truth](http://www.treeoflife.org.au/Resources/A_Beginners_Guide_to_Bernard_Lonergan's_Method_in_Theology_&_A_method_for_discerning_personal_inner_truth).

Understanding and engaging in Lonergan's method came easily to me. Perhaps that was because I had continued to practice sitting meditation, so I was already adept at curiously noticing and non-judgmentally engaging with my affective experience. Also, as the poet Rilke urged, I had begun to love the questions in themselves. Therefore, it was as if Lonergan's method offered a framework of understanding for that which I was already unwittingly practicing. The difference was that I was now intentionally and confidently engaging with the path.

Landmark 4: Land and identity

Like a wild animal, the soul [inner being] is tough, resilient, resourceful, savvy, and self sufficient. It knows how to survive in hard places. . . Yet despite its toughness, the soul is also shy. . . Just like a wild animal, it seeks safety in the dense underbrush. . . If we want to see a wild animal, we know that the last thing we should do is go crashing through the woods yelling for it to come out. But if we will walk quietly into the woods, sit patiently at the base of a tree, breathe with the earth, and fade into our surroundings, the wild creature we seek might put in an appearance. Parker Palmer

Cultural Stories of meaning and tangible land are often interrelated, albeit that the Stories may differ significantly. For example, the Dreaming Story of the First Nations peoples of Australia is embedded within the land in which they were born. Their experience of identity, purpose, and belonging is directly connected to country. In contrast, the western colonialist Story regarding land seemed to be more about conquering; the land was theirs for the taking, theirs to own and to profit from economically. Both Stories concerned land, both Stories differed significantly.

In terms of my personal Story and the connection with tangible land, I had noticed an inner longing to belong to land in some way. So I allowed the notion of *Kaye Twining of Reservoir* to continue to wash over me for a time. Reservoir is a built up suburb, characterized by medium density housing with concrete paths and roadways. There was no discernible connection with land in that scenario. So for a number of years I continued to play with the question of land and identity within the light of my current knowledge and beliefs. Finally I came to the view of: "I am Kaye Twining, of the planet named as Earth. I am an earthling." I had found my identity with land!

During my exploration of land and identity, I wrote the Pioneer poem. I wrote it in response to reflecting on a Tom Roberts painting (see below). A print of that painting had adorned a wall in our lounge room for many years, so I was well acquainted with it. The poem came to mind as I reflected on the painting during a session of a monthly program I co-facilitated called: Conversation from the Centre. The program involved silent meditation, individual reflection on a theme, and then sharing something of where our reflections took us. The reflection piece that night, offered by a participant in the group, was the Tom Roberts print. The poem is as follows:

*Pioneer, driven to start afresh in a new land.
Sit . . . wait . . . breathe
Breathe in rhythm with the land itself.
Listen . . . Listen to the heartbeat,
Listen for the songline
Sing . . . Sing the new song
Pioneer, invited to live afresh in a new land.*
Kaye Twining



What struck me about the Tom Roberts painting at the time was that in the third scene, there is a town in the background. As I continued to reflect on the young man burying his parents with the township in the background, a question crossed my mind: "why did non-indigenous pioneers seek out new land, simply to replicate the structures they had left behind?" Then, as I too had felt like a pioneer exploring a new inner terrain, I applied that same tone of question to my exploration. "Was I simply leaving behind the structure of one Story, to replicate the same structure within a new Story?" Or, "Was I listening for *the heartbeat* and *songline* of that new inner landscape and living afresh in response?" The sense of listening to the land stayed with me, inviting me to continue to *breathe in rhythm with the land*.

Note: Even though I am a non-Indigenous Australian, the imagery of *songline*, as I had encountered it in Bruce Chatwin's *The Songlines* took hold within me. Also Anne Hillman, drawing from the Australian indigenous notion of *songlines*, records the Call within Life as a song. Again, such imagery resonated within me. Perhaps the imagery of the *songline* is a wisdom teaching which both sits within and transcends the belief system of the First Nations peoples of Australia. For more on my experience of identity and land see: [www.treeoflife.org.au/Resources/Listening for the heartbeat: a contemplative experience](http://www.treeoflife.org.au/Resources/Listening%20for%20the%20heartbeat%20a%20contemplative%20experience).

Landmark 5: The labyrinth metaphor

One metaphor which has grounded my experience of engaging with the path of transformative living is that of *the labyrinth*. A labyrinth differs from a maze in that a maze is designed to confound, and/or test the logical awareness of those who enter it. In contrast, a labyrinth has but one path; one path which twists and turns its way into the centre and returns back to the beginning.



Photo by Andrew Twining

As a metaphor for the path of transformative living, the labyrinth grounds the inner journey by way of: 1. in response to the Call within the deeper rhythms of Life itself, choosing to take the first step by reposing spiritual questions within the light of the knowledge, beliefs, and lived experience of the time; 2. contemplatively walking along the twisting, turning path, with the intention of recognizing and letting go those belief structures which have now become redundant; 3. reaching the centre, which in the context of this paper, refers to discerning a new Story; 4. contemplatively walking the outward journey by way of integrating a new belief system within daily life; of living *from* a new Story and taking up a new place of belonging; of *singing a new song*. Because our lived experience will more than likely continue to change over our life time, so the inner journey of Self discovery does not cease. In this way, the inner journey is an ongoing life adventure. Therefore, we are continually *walking the labyrinth*.

In line with the labyrinth metaphor, the intention of the path of transformative living is not to pursue transformation with the aim of living on a plane of existence where the everyday joys, sorrows, fears, and anxieties no longer affect us. Rather, the focus is authenticity in daily living, giving rise to an ever deepening experience of connection and belonging in the world. As we seek to live authentically, transformative shifts in our view will emerge, as and when appropriate. Consequently, the path of transformative living involves the ongoing dance between our being - authentic living in the present, and our becoming - remaining open to transformative shifts in our view, if and when they emerge within us.

Landmark 6: The new inner landscape

The new inner landscape, or my new Story of meaning, consists of the responses I have now discerned to the time honored spiritual questions: "Where did I/we come from?" "What becomes of me/us when we

die?" "Who am I/we?" "What is my/our purpose?" "Is there a god/s?" "What is love?" Also, in each era of human history there is an overarching time specific question? In this era of western history the time specific question has been: "what does it mean to be human in an emergent universe?" I intentionally and intently explored these questions for sixteen years. The following questions and responses give expression to my new Story of meaning from which I source my experience of identity, purpose, and belonging in the world.

Question: "Where did I/we come from?"

The universe story is our story, individually and as the human community. In this context we can feel secure in our efforts to fulfill the Great Work before us. The guidance, the inspiration and the energy we need is available. Thomas Berry



This staggering new perspective is causing a massive shift in our understanding of how we imagine our own place, our home. We realize now that we dwell in one centre in a universe that is composed of millions of such centers. While this is difficult to comprehend, we are learning, nonetheless, to orient ourselves with wonder and awe in the midst of these immensities. Brian Thomas Swimme & Mary Evelyn Tucker

What if, instead the universe is alive at its deepest foundations? If there is a permeating field of aliveness and ecology of conscious thought in the universe, what does that mean for our life and life purpose? Duane Elgin

Response: We belong to the Universe Story, but which one? There are numerous science-based theories on how the universe came into being/ continues to be. Apparently the dead universe hypothesis was held for the last 300 years. Now there appears to be a shift towards the living universe hypothesis. Duane Elgin is one of the proponents of this living universe hypothesis. Furthermore, whilst the dominant Story includes 13.8 billion years of evolutionary history, some scientists would dispute that time frame. So there are numerous Universe Stories to choose from. The point is not so much which Story is correct; the point is to place ourselves, in the words of Barbara Hubbard, within a "Big History" context. So in response to the "Where did I/we come from?" question, the response is that we come from a Big History. In terms of which Story we adopt/inhabit, that will depend on which version resonates with our current horizon of meaning.

Question: "What becomes of me/us when we die?"

Response: Within the previous cultural Story of meaning, death was viewed as the human predicament. Within such a context, the spiritual question was: "where do we go when we die?" In response to such a question, numerous notions of an afterlife in an elsewhere community were postulated.

Within a new creation Story is the belief that death is a natural aspect of living, rather than a predicament to be resolved. Thus, all species live for a time and then die. We humans are no different. Consequently, the question regarding death is reframed as: "what becomes of us when we die?" In response to that question, my answer is that my body will dissolve back into the Earth, and all that I know myself to be will cease. What continues on after my death? The enduring life force which animated my being will continue on. The belief that death is a natural part

of life leaves me content in the knowledge that it is enough to know that I have lived for a brief time in the awe inspiring Universe Story; that I have consciously taken my place, in the words of O'Murchu, in the "great cosmic drama." Therefore, I am content in the belief that I will live and die unremembered.

Question: "who am I/we?"

We belong to a greater whole from which we receive our very being and without which we have neither meaning, purpose, nor uniqueness in the great cosmic drama.
Diamuid O'Murchu

We are empty of a separate self, but full of the cosmos. Thich Nhat Hanh

Before I can tell my life what I want to do with it, I must listen to my life telling me who I am. Parker Palmer

We are Life itself, not separate from it. Anne Hillman

Our ascent into insignificance. Brian Cox

Humility is the only lens through which great things can be seen, and once we have seen them, humility is the only posture possible. Parker Palmer

A holon is a whole made of its own parts, yet itself is part of a larger whole. And each holon has two opposite tendencies: 1. a self-assertive desire to preserve its individual autonomy and 2. an integrative tendency to function as part of the larger whole.
Diamuid O'Murchu

Interbeing makes us see our place in the universe, our relationship to nature, and our relations to each other differently. The same life force that runs through you runs through me and through all other living beings. www.Evolution Counselling.com

Response: Each of the quotations above sheds light on who we now know ourselves to be. Quotations 1, 2 & 3: A starting point for discerning who we are, is to consciously place ourselves within a big picture Universe Story. When we consciously place ourselves within such a Big History, then, and only then, can we perceive Life telling us who we are. Within such a context we know ourselves to be participants in an awe-inspiring Story of Life.

Quotation 4: Anne Hillman's words seized my attention. As I continued to contemplate that quotation, my view of Selfhood became one of self-in-Life. In terms of the question: "who am I/we?" the view of self-in-Life refers to the notion that we each participate in a dynamic process that is forever and continually in the making.

Quotations 5 & 6: I was both challenged and inspired by the quotation from Professor Brian Cox about our: "ascent into insignificant." Our ascent into insignificance culminated with the de-centering of the human species. No longer could we view ourselves as the central protagonist in the Story. At the same time, Cox also argued that we did belong; we belong because conditions are sufficient to give rise to our species. Within such a context, who do we know ourselves to be? We are one species among many within the Earth community. As one species among many, we realize that we truly are all in this together; that we all participate together in this venture called life. Through such a view we may once again learn to *walk humbly within the wider Earth community.*

Quotation 7: I first came across the principle of both/and through the writings of Daimuid O'Murchu. O'Murchu was drawing from the quantum physics idea of the holon, whereby something can be simultaneously a whole and a part; it can be both/and, rather than either/or. The principle of both/and breaks through the limitations of the dualistic principle of either/or which was embedded in the previous cultural Story of meaning.

Within the principle of both/and we now know ourselves to be *both* unique beings yearning for the experience of personal wholeness *and* that we are intrinsically connected within, and responsible to, a much wider web of relationships.



Photo by Kaye Twining

Being able to recognize ourselves as unique beings who function as part of the whole, we are freed from the competitive view which dominated the previous cultural Story through the principle of either/or. The competitive view gave rise to judgments, fears, and prejudices. To the contrary, the principle of both/and dissolves judgments, fears, and prejudices, which in turn, allows us to embrace the lived experience of unity with diversity. Through the view of unity with diversity we each know ourselves to be part of the one human community, without sacrificing our uniqueness.

Note: For more on this understanding see: [www.treeoflife.org.au/Resources/Standing in our Own Ground, Openheartedly](http://www.treeoflife.org.au/Resources/Standing%20in%20our%20Own%20Ground,%20Openheartedly).

Quotation 8: The term interbeing, as attributed to Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh, involves the inter-dependence of all life forms within a framework of systems within systems. Within such a framework, no system takes precedence over the other. What does this mean for uniqueness? In line with the principle of both/and each system is unique in its own right, while at the same time operating as part of the whole. Within this understanding of interbeing, each human being is viewed as a unique self-system which sits within numerous systems including family, community, culture, religious/spiritual tradition, the species, the wider Earth community, and the Universe. Human beings continue to name and claim their unique identity within the context of the whole.

Question: "What is our purpose?"

The historical mission [Call] of our time is to reinvent [reStory] the human at the level of species with critical reflection, within the community of life systems, in a time-developmental context, by means of story and shared dream experience.

Thomas Berry

To live a fully intimate human life. Loch Kelly

Life is relationship and the movement of relationship is living. To live is to be related. To be related to and interact with human beings, nonhuman beings, nature at large, constitutes what you call life. Vimala Thakar

Our deepest calling is to grow into our own authentic self-hood, whether or not it conforms to some image of who we ought to be. As we do so, we will not only find the joy that every human being seeks - we will also find our path of authentic service in the world. Parker Palmer

Our task and responsibility are to assimilate the wisdom of bygone traditions and having made it our own, to allow it to grow. Life is neither repetition nor continuation. It is growth, which implies at once a continuance and rupture.
Raimon Panikkar

Conscious evolution sets the stage for the next phase of individualism wherein we seek our uniqueness not through separation, but through deeper participation in the whole. Barbara Marx Hubbard.

Response: There is no once-for-all-time purpose. Rather, within the understanding that the human community participates in the dynamic evolutionary process of Life itself, in each new era of human history we are invited to discern the Call of that particular era to discover and take up our place of belonging: belonging as individuals, belonging as cultures, and belonging as a species within the wider Earth community. Responding to such a Call draws each one of us into an ever-deepening experience of connection and belonging in the here-and-now, while at the same time continuing to participate in the ongoing transformation of the wider human community. I name the above process as *the sacred work of being human*. As we collectively and consciously discern the Call of the era, each individual will then discern their place of belonging within the whole.

Note: For more on the sacred work of being human see:
[www.treeoflife.org.au/Resources/Reflections on the sacred work of being human](http://www.treeoflife.org.au/Resources/Reflections%20on%20the%20sacred%20work%20of%20being%20human).

In line with Panikkar's quotation (above), one way of taking up our task and responsibility is through an integral framework of understanding ourselves-in-the-world. An integral framework takes into account human history as a whole, within the awareness that history is forever and continually in the making. When we start viewing ourselves-in-Life through the lens of an integral framework we naturally come to see that we belong within the wider human tradition; a tradition which spans across time from ancient civilizations till the present; a tradition which views all of humanity in the evolutionary process of being and becoming.

Within the knowledge that our time and place in history is part of a larger whole, an integral framework is all inclusive in orientation in that it draws from the knowledge, beliefs, values, spiritual practices, and wisdom teachings which have emerged within the human community from ancient times until the present. At the same time, an integral framework also breaks through and transcends the limitations of that which has gone before. So, rather than replicating previous human experience, an integral framework offers a new lens for integrating the wisdom of bygone eras beyond either wholly accepting, or wholly rejecting the belief system from which the wisdom teachings first originated.

Question: "Is there a god/s?"

Response: Many undergo the inner journey of loss of connection and belonging with their cultural/religious Story and then after a time, reconnect. Because of the journey, they might experience that same Story in a very different manner. James Fowler named such a process as: "stages of faith." That was not to be my journey. Yes, I did undergo the stages of faith within the one Story, but my journey did not end there. Perhaps if the Christian tradition had remained central to western meaning making, my journey would have returned me to that tradition.

However, that was not the case, and I found I was one of the growing number of people who were faithful to the path of transformative living, yet no longer experienced belonging within a religious tradition.

Additionally my engagement in the practice of shadow integration gave rise to the questions: "Did we humans create the idea of God to project our brilliance onto?" And: "Did we create the idea of a devil to project our evil onto?" What is our shadow side and why did it raise such questions for me? To be human is to have a shadow side. Our shadow is not some deep, dark pathology within us. Rather, as Robert Johnson wrote, our shadow is: "simply those aspects of our self that we do not see or know."



Photo by Andrew Twining

In accord with Johnson, Ken Wilber wrote: "our shadow is the drives and feelings that we have deemed as unacceptable and so have split off from our conscious awareness." It is important to note here that our shadow side includes both our giftedness as well as the not so desirable aspects of our being. Even though we are unaware of our shadow side operating within us, we do unwittingly project it onto our world. Did we humans need to create a God/devil image to project our shadow side onto, until we had evolved enough to take responsibility for both our gifted and our evil ways?

Note: For more on shadow integration see: [www.treeoflife.org.au/The sacred work of being human/Gently integrating our shadow side](http://www.treeoflife.org.au/TheSacredWorkofBeingHuman/GentlyIntegratingOurShadowSide).

My personal Story is now framed by a post religion, post god horizon, within the cultural context of post, postmodernism. My Story also draws from the emerging evolutionary spiritual tradition. The shift to a post religion, post god framework is not in the form of a defensive reaction *against* the church and god. The shift was in response to posing my open-ended questions and discerning authentic responses for me. At first I was surprised and felt quite anxious to find myself in this new Story. So I allowed the anxious feelings to be an entry point for growing into authentic self knowledge. Now I experience a sense of awe at the whole process. I continue to follow the path of transformative living as it now weaves its way through the wider human tradition via an integral framework.

Note: Even though a god image is not relevant to my personal Story, in terms of a new cultural Story, such a stance is not required. It is simply where I have found myself to be. Others will engage in the themes of a new cultural Story through the lens of their religious tradition.

One implication of living into a new Story is that I know I have to take responsibility for my own beliefs and actions. I have to take responsibility for my own brilliance, my own ordinariness, my not so desirable aspects,



Artwork by Julieanne Beckham

and my actions which stem from such. As a result, the call is to: *become the change I want to see in the world* (Mahatma Ghandi). Another implication is that I am no longer part of a community of faith in the form of a religious tradition. At the same time, I continue to draw from wisdom teachings which emerged within religious traditions. Therefore I do not experience belonging within a

religious structure, nor do I experience belonging within a purely secular humanistic structure. Perhaps one day a new faith community will evolve, one which will centre on the wider human tradition via an evolutionary spirituality framework.

Note: For more on a new faith community see: [www.treeoflife.org.au/Resources/A new faith community](http://www.treeoflife.org.au/Resources/A_new_faith_community).

It is worth noting that whilst the Story has changed, there is an essential wisdom teaching from the Christian tradition on which both Stories turn. The wisdom teaching is: "in the end three things remain, faith, hope, and love and the greatest of these is love." That wisdom teaching has remained a constant throughout my inner journeying in the following manner: firstly, the wisdom teaching was the core of the former Story and when I experienced times of confusion and/or disillusionment with the church structure, that wisdom teaching sustained me and *held me on course*. Secondly, the wisdom teaching offered my inner being a *place of rest* during the many years of the *unravelling* of my former Story and the exploration of a new Story. Thirdly, within a new Story the wisdom teaching continues to be my inner orientating reference point.

Even though the wisdom teaching has remained a constant, my understandings of the terms faith, hope, and love have altered considerably. In terms of faith, I found resonance with Buddhist nun, Sharon Salzberg's understanding of faith, especially her notion of *Abiding faith*. According to Salzberg, abiding faith means that we have a lived understanding of our belief system, which is experienced as a: "magnetic force of bone deep, lived understanding. . . where we come to deeply know the underlying truths of who we are and what our lives are about." In line with Salzberg, I now view faith as a dynamic energy, or life force, which both drives and enables us to explore and integrate our deepest truths in relation to meaning making. Therefore, faith calls forth meaning.

In a similar manner to faith, hope is experienced as a dynamic interior response; a dynamic interior response to the possibilities in Life. Hope allows a person to continue to reframe past experiences of personal suffering into ones of meaning; to continue to grow in wisdom and compassion in response to present experience; and to continue to imagine future possibilities. Therefore, the meaning of the term hope now is:

the possibility of personal transformation - grounded in reality. In this way, hope calls forth identity.

Love is experienced as an energy which calls forth relationship. Therefore, Love calls forth belonging. (See the following question/response for more on Love.)

Note: For more on my understandings of faith, hope, and love see: [www.treeoflife.org.au/Resources/Love is. . . & Faith or non-faith: is that the question?](http://www.treeoflife.org.au/Resources/Love%20is...%20&%20Faith%20or%20non-faith%3A%20is%20that%20the%20question?) & **The nature of hope.**



photo by Andrew Twining

Question: "What is love?"

The energies of Love are subtle - sent and received at depth, these energies are registered beneath thinking, beneath feeling, seeing, hearing, and touching.
Anne Hillman

The awakening of Love in the human heart was the spiritual journey of our Time.
Anne Hillman

Don't be nice, be kind. Piero Ferrucci

There is in the world, as it were, a charged field of love and meaning which is ever unobtrusive, hidden, inviting each of us to join. And join we must if we are to perceive it, for our perceiving is through our own loving. Bernard Lonergan

Response: I first came across the question: "what is love?" in Hillman's book. She had reduced the time honoured spiritual questions down to: "Who am I?" "Who is God?" "What is love?" The love question stayed with me so I began to explore it within my new Story. I was particularly taken with Hillman's understanding that love is not of a supernatural source. Rather, the energies of love are an evolutionary imperative, pulsating within the very heart of Life. Furthermore, Lonergan, in accord with Hillman, argued that love is experienced like a field of energy woven into the very fabric of Life itself.

In light of the above, the energies of love do not emanate from, nor are bound within, humanity. Rather, the energies of love are beyond, between, and within each human being, continually call forth relationship in the form of communion, i.e., in union with. Such an experience of beyond, between, and within takes form in the following manner:
beyond (transpersonal) - through the calling forth of self-in-Life;
between (interpersonal) - through the calling forth of self-in-community;
within (intrapersonal) - through the calling forth of self-in-love. Within each of these expressions of love, the uniqueness of each person does not

dissolve into the whole. Rather, each person experiences their unique Self as part of the whole.

With the above understanding of the nature of love in place, I returned once again to the quotation by Thomas Merton (as listed in the preface).

Merton argued that the foundation of the interior journey was:

"surrendering to the creative action of love and grace in our hearts."

If love is now experienced as an energy which calls forth relationship, how may grace now be experienced? I now understand grace to mean: an undeserved gift in the form of the Call to live our humanity fully, within the gentling light of lovingkindness. Thus, we experience the fullness of our humanity when we are conscious that our daily living is permeated by the energies of love.

Note: For more on this understanding of grace see: [www.treeoflife.org.au/Resources/The question of grace in a new Story](http://www.treeoflife.org.au/Resources/The_question_of_grace_in_a_new_Story).

Landmark 7: Authentic living . . . now

Wholeness, by definition, can never mean a cancellation of one side of us in favour of another. Wholeness is an embrace, a receptiveness to all that is within us and an enthusiasm for working with it all, to mine and refine its buried gold. Parker Palmer

Before enlightenment, wash dishes; after enlightenment, wash dishes.
Buddhist wisdom teaching

You do not have to be good. You do not have to walk on your knees for a hundred miles through the desert, repenting. You only have to let the soft animal of your body love what it loves. . . whoever you are, no matter how lonely, the world offers itself to your imagination, calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting - over and over announcing your place in the family of things. Mary Oliver

The four pillars of a meaningful life: 1. Belonging (based on love) - you are valued for who you are; 2. Purpose - what you give using your strengths to serve others; 3. Transcendence - feeling connected to a higher reality; 4. Storytelling - the story you tell yourself about your life - retell, reinterpret. Emily Esfani Smith (TEDx Talk)

Before I could gain an understanding of authentic living within a new Story, I first had to revisit the notion of the Self within the themes of Big History, interbeing, unity with diversity, and the human tradition. Within such themes the emphasis is on systems within systems, with no one system taking precedence over the other. Each system is unique in itself, while at the same time is connected to and responsible for the greater whole. Within such a view, the Self is known to be a self-system.

My understanding of Self as a self-system is that it consists of: *an inner community of selves loosely tethered, animated by an enduring, creative life force, or pulsing heartbeat within the very nature of Life itself.* The community of selves includes: the experiencing self, the narrating self, the unstoried self, the shadow self, the witnessing self, and the wisdom self. The community of selves is not hierarchal in intent, culminating with wisdom self as authentic Self. Rather, authentic Self involves each aspect within the self-system.

Within such a view, authentic Self is realized through recognizing, befriending, and engaging with the inner community of selves through the method of conscious intentionality. As we do so, we grow in authentic Self understanding, from which we experience both personal wholeness in the form of inner freedom, and communal responsibility. Accordingly, the nature of authentic Self in my new Story can be expressed in the following

manner: the inner freedom to live in accord with a values system which seeks the flourishing of all.

Note : For more on authentic Self see: [www.treeoflife.org.au/Resources/Is authentic Self dead? & The question of freewill](http://www.treeoflife.org.au/Resources/Is_authentic_Self_dead?_&_The_question_of_freewill)



the colours are vibrant, well defined, and actually draw out the unique shape of the rock

Photo by Kaye Twining

The rock image (above) symbolizes something of what the experience of personal wholeness looks like, in that the colours are vibrant, well defined, and actually draw out the unique shape of the rock. In a similar manner, when we recognize, befriend, and engage with our inner community of selves, the vibrant colours within our Selfhood draw out the overall shape of our uniqueness.

In line with the above, authentic Self incorporates both form and essence. *Form* here refers to our unique Selfhood, or community of selves. *Essence* here refers to the enduring Life force which animates our unique Selfhood. We experience such an enduring Life force, in the words of Richard Moss: "as a deep open state of awareness." Without form there is no point to essence; without essence there is no meaning to form. Therefore, rather than authentic Self pertaining to essence alone, the new view involves both form and essence in the interplay of, in the words of Anthony de Mello: "not one, not two." As such, form and essence are not one and the same, neither are they two separate aspects of being human. In line with such an understanding, the path of transformative living weaves it way through both aspects of our being without seeking, in the words of Loch Kelly: "to land in either one."

Note: For more on the interplay between form and essence see: [www.treeoflife.org.au/Contemplative practices/Meditation & Resources/Vitality in daily life.](http://www.treeoflife.org.au/Contemplative_practices/Meditation_&_Resources/Vitality_in_daily_life)

Who I know myself to be

The human heart is full of longing . . . we long to discover who we are . . . the voices of longing keep our lives alert and urgent. Yet if we cannot discover a shelter of belonging within our lives, we could become a victim and target of our longing.
John O'Donohue

Here we might observe that the basic mood of the future might well be one of confidence in the continuing revelation that takes place in and through the earth. If the dynamics of the universe from the beginning shaped the course of the heavens, lighted the sun, and formed the earth, if this same dynamism brought forth the continents and seas and atmosphere, if it awakened life in the primordial cell and then brought into being the unnumbered variety of living beings, and finally brought us into being and guided us safely through the turbulent centuries, there is reason to believe that this same guiding process is precisely what has awakened in us our present understanding of ourselves and our relation to this stupendous process. Sensitized to such guidance from the very structure and functioning of the universe, we can have confidence in the future that awaits the human venture.
Thomas Berry

In line with O'Donohue's quotation (above), a coherent Story of meaning is like a *shelter of belonging*; a shelter which offers identity, purpose, and belonging within the whole. That which follows is a snapshot of who I now know myself to be and how I now take up my place of belonging. It is my new *shelter of belonging*. As a result, I now experience visibility in the form of personal wholeness, authentic communal belonging, and joyful humility and reverence for the mystery of being human in an emergent universe. In turn, I am now able to *stand in my own ground, openheartedly*.

Also, because personal Stories draw from collective Stories, my Story draws from the themes within a new cultural Story; themes including a science-based creation Story, interbeing, unity with diversity, and the human tradition.

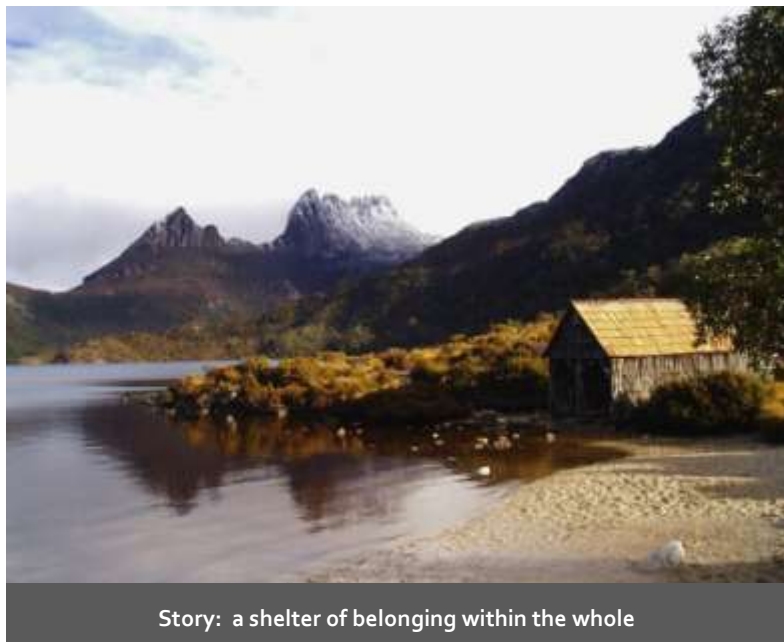


Photo by Robert Tyzzer

First and foremost, I am a unique manifestation of Life itself in human form, as we each are. As a unique self-in-Life, I seek my personal experience of Selfhood within the whole. Additionally, I am an earthling of the human tradition. I will live on this Earth for a time, then I will cease to be, unremembered. I am content in this knowledge. It is enough to know that I have lived. Furthermore, I am a woman of abiding faith in that I have lived into my current understandings. As a woman of

abiding faith I continue to live from and into my inner Call to: *walk gently upon the Earth in wisdom and compassion, forgiveness and mercy, with an unqualified yes to life.*

My horizon of meaning includes a post religious, post god, post postmodern, evolutionary spirituality lens/boundary. I love the questions in themselves, and am happy to live into the responses. I am particularly curious about what makes us *humans tick*. As such I draw upon the knowledge and wisdom teachings from diverse traditions past and present via an integral framework of understanding.

I live a fully intimate human life in that I seek to live authentically in the present, whilst remaining open to transformative shifts in my view. Also, I continue to experience the full range of joys, sorrows, fears, and anxieties that are a natural part of being human. I allow such affective experience to be the entry point for cultivating authentic Self knowledge via Lonergan's method of conscious intentionality. As such, I continue to engage in Life through the path of transformative living and seek to attune to the Call of our era to reStory ourselves into a new kind of Love and take up a new place of belonging within the whole.

I am a twice born. I was born into one Story through which I lived authentically and experienced numerous transformative shifts in my view of Selfhood. I then experienced inner disorientation in response to the loss of connection and belonging within that Story. For a time I lived *in between* Stories. As I continued to repose my open ended questions in response to my lived experience, I *was found within* a new Story. I can now name and claim a new experience of Selfhood and I now live authentically within a new Story. I now *sing a new song*. Even though I am living into a new Story, my inner orientation in life continues to be faith, hope, and love.

At present my creative side takes form predominantly in my writing. My motivation for writing is to find a language which gives expression to that which is taking place within my inner being so that it may take root and



Photo by Kaye Twining

flourish. Therefore, I relish the spiritual practice of writing. I also like to play with photos!

My vocation - what my soft underbelly loves - is spiritual practice education. For me, spiritual practice education involves principles and practices for living meaningfully in today's world. The general term for my work in this area is *the sacred work of being human*.

In line with my vocation I consciously choose to put my energy into exploring the

implications of a new cultural Story of meaning, rather than fight against, resist, or protest against the structures of the previous Story. So, alongside many others within western societies, I choose to give voice to a framework for living into a new cultural Story. Also, drawing from

Berry's quotation (above), I am life affirming, even though *my eyes are wide open* to the horrors that our species perpetrate on one another, the wider Earth community, and the Earth itself.

I seek to live daily life with integrity and authenticity, so that I may continue to grow into *being the change that I want to see in the world*. As such, as far as I am able, I take responsibility for my own beliefs and actions. Integrity and authenticity do not mean perfection. Rather, integrity and authenticity involve the inner freedom to live in accord with a values system which seeks the flourishing of all, including myself.

I have three particular commitments in life. The first is the ongoing inner journey of Self discovery, which involves the ongoing *dance* between my being and my becoming. My engagement in the inner journey involves tenderly exploring my inner landscape through a contemplative orientation. A contemplative orientation is one that does not seek to control, or force, the process. Rather, a contemplative orientation is one of participation by way of listening for, and responding to, the ongoing Call within Life to belong. Two contemplative practices which are fundamental to my ongoing inner journey are: meditation, and self enquiry within the gentling light of lovingkindness.

The second commitment is that of my family. In terms of family I am daughter of my 96 year old father and 90 year old mother. Also I am sister, wife to Andrew, mother of three children and two children-in-law, and grandmother to six grandchildren. My family have loved, supported, and inspired me into who I am today. For that I am grateful. In return, I continue to offer them my loving presence and practical support.

The third commitment is to Tree of Life Spiritual Wellbeing, which I initiated in 2007. Since its inception ToLSW has undergone a number of labyrinthine twists and turns. As well as having offered numerous workshops over the years on the local, national, and international stage, and individual spiritual mentoring, the present focus is that of offering an online resource for those who are seeking to walk the path of transformative living.

Note: For more on the work of Tree of Life Spiritual Wellbeing see: www.treeoflife.org.au/About

The Call now is to live *from* a new Story . . .



the Call now is to live *from* a new Story . . .

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Appendix 1

Is this cultural Story actually new?

The three basic laws of reality are differentiation, subjectivity, and communion. These laws identify the reality, the values and the directions in which the Universe is proceeding. Thomas Berry

The universe is a communion of subjects, not a collection of objects. Thomas Berry

During the last 30 years, we have witnessed a historical first: all of the world's cultures are now available to us. . . today, not only are people geographically mobile, but we can study, and have studied, virtually every known culture on the planet. In the global village, all cultures are exposed to each other . . . Knowledge itself is now global. This means that, also for the first time, the sum total of human knowledge is available to us - the knowledge, experience, wisdom, and reflection of all major human civilizations - premodern, modern, and postmodern - are open to study by anyone. Ken Wilber

We need a common and compelling vision of the nature of the Universe and the role of the human within it. Such a new cosmology must be grounded in the best empirical, scientific understanding, and must be nourished just as deeply by the vibrant cores of our planet's wisdom traditions. Only such a vision has a chance of awakening the deep psychic energies necessary to shape a new era of health, well being, true prosperity. Brian Thomas Swimme

A New Story - within a western cultural context

Numerous authors have argued that a new cultural Story is being called forth in response to the shift from an industrial to a sustainable living society. Also we are living in a cultural era which seeks meaning beyond a singular cultural Story of meaning; beyond a singular truth in the way we collectively give meaning to our living and our dying. In response, the emerging new Story, as presented in this paper, does not have particular storylines to which all must adhere. As such, a new Story does not depend upon one particular set of beliefs. Rather, a new Story offers core themes which reorient our way of viewing ourselves-in-life. Such core themes also give rise to a cultural values system which seeks the flourishing of all. Therefore, a new Story offers a new inner orientation for discerning our personal and collective Self image and values system, rather than an outer belief system to which all must adhere.

The core themes of a new cultural Story presented in this paper are: interbeing, i.e., the inter-dependence of all life-forms within a framework of systems within systems; unity with diversity via the principle of both/and; and the human tradition via an integral framework for understanding ourselves-in-life. Arising from those three themes is the understanding that each human being is a Self system, whose very being sits within many systems including culture and the wider human community. Furthermore, as a human community we all stand together as one, even though we do have various cultural and religious differences. Therefore, our oneness encompasses diversity. Also, the human community is one system within the wider Earth community. Within this view of systems within systems, or Stories within Stories, each system has its role to play and all participate in this venture called Life. So, in short, the new orientation is that of oneness and participation.

In light of the above, the question could be posed: "is the inner orientation of oneness and participation actually new?" The themes of oneness and participation have been part of the Dreaming, the Story of meaning developed by the First Nations peoples of Australia over 40,000 years ago. For example Jennifer Isaacs argued: "According to Aboriginal belief, all life

as it is known today - human, animal, bird and fish - is part of one vast, unchanging network of relationships which can be traced back to the great Spirit Ancestors." Therefore, it would seem that the orientation of oneness and participation is at least 40,000 years old.

Furthermore, the mysticism streams within the religious traditions of Islam, Judaism, and Christianity held an understanding of oneness and participation. For example: Islam - the poet Rumi in the 13th Century, Judaism - the Kabbalah, and Christianity - Julian of Norwich, writing in the 14th Century. Also the pantheistic tradition believes that: "God is everything and everything is God (www.philosophy.talk.org). Additionally, western philosophical traditions have debated non-dualism. Also, eastern spiritual teachings regarding non-dualism have been around from the seventh century, perhaps even much earlier. So, what could possibly be new?

Firstly, a new western cultural Story is primarily geared towards an inner reorientation of our particular way of viewing ourselves-in-life. Such a reorientation breaks through and transcends the limitations of the orientation within the previous cultural Story of: anthropocentrism, individualism, materialism, and a mechanistic view of Life itself. Perhaps such an orientation was required so that we could experience differentiation from the whole. In so doing, we could experience the potential for differentiation in the form self realization. In this regard, Berry argued that differentiation is one of the laws of reality (see quotation above). Now though, such an orientation no longer serves the health and well being of the individual nor the culture. So perhaps we are now required to once again *walk the labyrinth* and taking into account our experience of differentiation, repose our spiritual questions within the light of the themes of oneness and participation through the notion of unity with diversity.

Secondly, as well as a new Story offering an inner orientation rather than an outer belief system to which all must adhere, the context in which we are now reposing our spiritual questions is new. The context is now a science-based creation Story. Therefore, we are now reposing our spiritual questions within the light of current scientific understandings of how the world came to be/continues to be and how the human body/mind works. Such scientific understandings include: the macro level through disciplines such as astronomy and cosmology and the micro level through disciplines such as quantum physics, biology, and neuroscience. Again, this context is new for our culture. It is as if we were seeking an understanding of oneness and participation, in the words of poet T.S.Eliot, "as if for the first time."

Furthermore, in line with Wilber's quotation above, we are now experiencing ourselves within the context of a global village where "all cultures are exposed to each other." If the global village is viewed through the lens of interbeing, each cultural Story will naturally influence the rest. Therefore, our new cultural Story will be unique to us and will influence the greater whole in some way. Also, if we are to engage in dialogue with peoples of differing cultural Stories, we need to have a clear understanding of our Story so that we may *take our place at the table*. Without a new inner orientation beyond domination, western societies have little of consequence to offer in terms of interStory dialogue. So, even though we are seeking a new cultural Story for ourselves, our Story has implications for the wider global village.

A new Story - a wider human tradition view

In terms of the wider human tradition, could this era be another turning point in human consciousness; a turning point which both sits within and transcends western culture? In line with such a question, what if human consciousness continues to spiral around the inner orientation of oneness and participation? Perhaps such a journey could be understood through the labyrinth metaphor as presented in Landmark 5. In this case though, the centre of the labyrinth would be the themes of oneness and participation. What if human consciousness continues to *walk the labyrinth* and each time the outer edge is reached, oneness and participation are experienced anew, as if for the first time? What if human consciousness continues to evolve in its understanding of oneness and participation? Perhaps now is the time for human consciousness to *walk the labyrinth* and experience oneness and participation in the form of unity with diversity?

What gives rise to the above questions? When taking into account a broad brush stroke approach to human history, it would seem that ancient societies experienced themselves within the form of an undifferentiated collectivist mindset. Hillman, quoting anthropologist Levi-Bruhl, names this consciousness as: "participation mystique. . . which describes the shared group mind of early human clans." Within the notion of participation mystique, the experience of identity, purpose, and belonging sat within the context of the whole. In this context the whole also included aspects such as: wind, rain, plants, land, animals, sky. Such an understanding seems to resonate with the Australian Aboriginal beliefs.

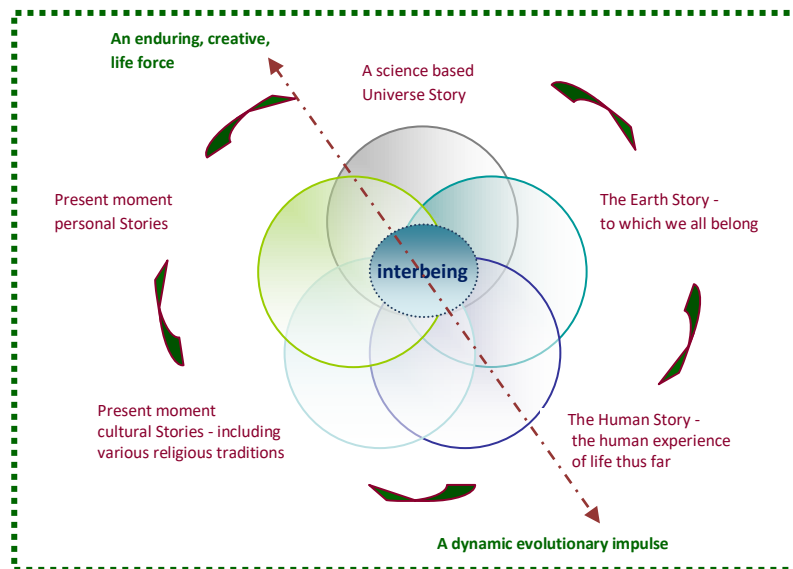
Then over time human consciousness underwent a shift towards a differentiated mindset, in which ego consciousness emerged. According to Hillman the term ego: "denotes that aspect of the individual which is self-aware, the part of the psyche which experiences the external world or reality through the senses, which organizes the thought process rationally, and which governs action." The ego-consciousness stage of human consciousness has culminated within western societies in the social norm of individualism, i.e., where "the idea that freedom of thought and action for each person is the most important quality of a society, rather than shared effort and responsibility." ([dictionary.cambridge.org.](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/)) Therefore, it would seem that the pendulum has swung as far as it can go in terms of ego-consciousness in the form of individualism.

In line with Berry's quotation above, could human consciousness now be undergoing a shift beyond differentiation and subjectivity? Is the turn once again towards communion, but this time in the form of unity with diversity? Unity with diversity, in the words of Joanna Macy and Molly Brown: "does not sacrifice, but instead requires the uniqueness of each part, the distinctiveness of its functioning and its perspective." Macy and Brown's description of unity with diversity reminds me of a patchwork quilt. A patchwork quilt is created by stitching together unique and sometimes color-clashing pieces of cloth. Each piece of cloth retains its uniqueness within the design, yet the overall effect is one of a vibrant and wondrous new creation. In a similar manner, within the context of communion through unity with diversity, each cultural Story is both unique in itself and when *stitched together* creates a vibrant and wondrous whole.

Appendix 2

Stories within Stories

A new western cultural Story draws from a science-based creation Story and as such is not dependent upon one particular cultural and/or religious belief system. Rather a new Story draws from an integral approach in that it consciously consists of Stories within Stories. Such Stories within Stories are animated by an enduring, creative, self-organizing life force which in the words of Andrew Cohen is like: "a dynamic evolutionary impulse." At the heart of a new Story is the theme of interbeing. The diagram below illustrates this understanding of stories with stories.



The following offers a brief outline of each of the elements within the illustration above.

The Universe Story

Like any paradigm shift, the shift to a living universe paradigm is transformative. In addition to changing our view of the universe, it can alter our sense of identity, our sense of life purpose, how we relate with others, and much more. Duane Elgin

Duane Elgin puts forward a living universe hypothesis. He wrote: "the dead-universe theory assumes creation occurred billions of years ago, when a massive explosion spewed out lifeless material debris into equally lifeless space . . . in striking contrast, the living-universe theory describes the cosmos as a unified system that is completely re-created at each moment. Unlike traditional physicists who believe that creation ended with the miraculous birth of the cosmos billions of years ago, living-universe theorists hold that the cosmos continues to be maintained, moment by moment, by an unbroken flow-through of energy." *Promise Ahead: A Vision of Hope and Action for Humanity's Future.*

The living universe hypothesis resonates with my horizon of meaning, so I continue to explore the implications of this science-based creation Story. When we consciously place ourselves within such a Story, Life becomes an ongoing dynamic process of emergence in the form of being and becoming.

The Earth Story

Earth, within the solar system, is a self-emergent, self-nourishing, self-governing, self-healing, self-educating community. All particular life systems in their being, their

nourishment, their governing, their healing, and their education, must integrate their functioning within this larger complex of mutually dependent Earth systems.

Thomas Berry

The Earth has gone through a number of geological eons and eras. The Phanerozoic eon is divided into the following eras: the Paleozoic, the Mesozoic, and the Cenozoic. Thomas Berry names our time as Ecozoic. He wrote: "The Cenozoic era (spanning the last -65 million years), has been terminated by the western-style industrialized human community in the late 19th, 20th, and early 21st century." (www.thomasberry.org). In a similar manner to Berry, biologist Eugene Stoermer was the first to name this current era as the Anthropocene. The term *Anthropocene* relates to or denotes "the current geological age, viewed as the period during which human activity has been the dominant influence on climate and the environment." (www.dictionary.com)

Interbeing

The theme of interbeing can lay at the very heart of Stories within Stories. Interbeing encompasses the inner orientation of oneness and participation. It also offers a way of viewing ourselves as unique beings seeking personal wholeness who are also connected within and responsible to a wider whole. Interbeing is also open enough to respond to differing cultural and religious belief systems.

The Human Story

The human Story views all of humanity in the process of evolution and encompasses the wider human experience of Life thus far. One way of understanding the wider human experience of Life thus far is through the framework of: *The Sacred Work of being Human* (www.treeoflife.org.au). The sacred work of being human involves attuning to the Call of the era to discern and take up our place of belonging within the whole. As we do so, we experience an ever deepening experience of connection and belonging in the here and now, whilst at the same time participating in the evolutionary process of Life itself.

In terms of the evolutionary process, according to the New Scientist (www.newscientist.com), homo sapiens appeared around 195,000 years ago, and shortly after began to migrate across Asia and Europe. The etymological root of the term *Homo Sapiens* is from the Latin and means: *wise man/[woman]*. Homo sapiens is the species to which we modern human beings belong.

Some authors argue that humanity is now experiencing the *birthing pangs* of an evolutionary shift from Homo sapiens to Homo universalis. For example, Barbara Marx Hubbard wrote: "as real as the evolution from Homo neanderthal to Homo sapiens is the jump from Homo sapiens to Homo universalis." Homo universalis involves conscious evolution towards a cocreative society. A cocreative society is one where, in the words of Hubbard: "it is ourselves fulfilled. Now we see that this new state of being is not life after death, but life at the next turn of the Evolutionary Spiral."

The present moment collective Story

The present moment collective Story offers the source for a collective self image and values system. The term *the present moment* refers to a particular time and place in history. For example, this paper is written within the present moment western cultural context, in the year of 2018.

As such the understandings reflect something of the range of current understandings of how the world works at this time.

In terms of the Australian landscape, Noel Pearson and Shireen Morris are reimagining a new national identity through the idea that: "Three Stories Make us One." The three Stories are: 1. the cultures of the First Peoples; 2. the colonialists; and 3. the immigrants. Within the concept of unity with diversity, each of these Stories are unique in their own right and function as part of the whole. So rather than seek a singular identity to which all Australians must adhere, perhaps each Story could be viewed a unique in its own right with its strengths and limitations, while at the same time intrinsically connected within and responsible to the whole. And the whole is not the 200+ years of British rule; the whole embraces: " the ancient heritage of the first Nations, the inheritance of British structures of government and society, and the gifts of people from all over the globe." If we Aussies could view our cultural identity as three stories that make us one, what a different cultural identity we would have. Well, we would actually have a cultural identity!

The present moment personal Story

Whether we are conscious of it or not we each live through our own personal Story of meaning which draws together our responses to our spiritual questions, based on our current knowledge, beliefs, and life experience. Often we are not aware that we are living through a Story. We simply go about our day, doing what we do. However, as Barbara Marx Hubbard has argued: "the call of our time is to consciously evolve." Conscious evolution requires that we become aware of the Story we are living within, and then choose to live the Story we want to leave behind for future generations.



choose to live the Story we want to leave behind for future generations

Appendix 3

InterStory dialogue

Our first task in approaching another person, another people, another culture, another religion is to take off our shoes. For the place we are approaching is holy. Else we may find ourselves treading on another's dreams. More serious still, we may forget . . . that [Wisdom] was there before our arrival. Mary Ross Fitzsimmons HHS & Isabel Gregory

Dialogical dialogue is a way of relating to one another, such that we allow ourselves to be changed in the light of the wisdom of the other. It is a dialogue that is always an exploration. Its philosophical roots stem from an understanding that the other is not really other, but participates in a shared reality of which we ourselves are a part . . . The other is not the same as our self, but is not separate from our Self either. Together, we both participate in a shared reality and we affect and change that reality through our interactions with one another. Rory McEntee & Adam Bucko

If we are to create a *vibrant patchwork quilt* of unity with diversity within the present day human community, it will require interStory dialogue. InterStory dialogue is easier said than done. Why? Because dialogue involves both listening and responding. However, we do not listen or respond objectively. How we hear, and for that matter what we actually hear, is determined by our current horizon of meaning. As mentioned in the Introduction to this paper, Lonergan argued: "what does not fit into our horizon of meaning will not be heard, or if heard will be deemed irrelevant." Also, the words we use are loaded with meaning, our meaning, and our meaning might not be the same as the person/s we are in dialogue with.

Within such a context, is it even possible to engage in interStory dialogue? Whilst recognizing that our conversations are shaped by our current horizon and our meanings, it is possible to attune to one another. In turn, attuning to one another generates an environment of trust from which we may experience interpersonal communion. How may we attune to one another? There are two qualities and one practice which allow us to *enter into another's Story*, without losing our own ground. The two qualities are: a contemplative orientation and a beginner's mindset. The practice is that of posing open-ended questions.

Before outlining the qualities and practice, it is important to note that if we can remember our Story is not an end-in-itself, rather a means through which we source our Self image and values, we can *hold it lightly*, i.e., to live deeply from our current view of authentic Self without fully identifying with it. When we *hold our Story lightly* we are more able to listen and respond to one another with an attitude of genuine curiosity, without the need to rush in to either defend or relinquish our own position. As a result, interStory dialogue becomes possible.

A contemplative orientation

A contemplative orientation is one where we let go the desire to control the dialogue. Within such an orientation we engage in dialogue with an openness to where the creative action of love and grace may be drawing us. Such a tender stance requires an attitude of curiosity and nonjudgmental exploration. A contemplative orientation aligns somewhat with McEntee and Bucko's understanding of dialogical dialogue (see the quotation above).

A beginner's mindset

A beginner's mindset, from the Zen Buddhist tradition, encompasses openness, curiosity, lack of preconceptions, comfortable with the unknown, and mind which is able to 'be with' the present moment. In terms of engaging in conversation with a beginner's mindset, Daniel Siegel's teachings from a neurobiological perspective are insightful. He asserted that there are two ways in which we perceive and process information. One way is through the "constructor mind." He argued that the constructor mind involves our: "top down conceptualizations where prior experience is activated, making it difficult to note the unique and vibrant details of what is happening here and now. The second way we perceive and process information is through the "conduit mind." The conduit mind involves: "bottom-up processing leading to the circuitry in the brain beyond the top-down filters of prior experience. Bottom-up perception is experienced as a conduit of sensory experience, where we see the unique aspects of what is in front of us." So, if we intentionally unhook from the top-down constructor mind and drop into the bottom-up conduit mind of sensory experience, we are able to listen and respond from a beginner's mindset.

Open-ended questions

As mentioned previously, Lonergan taught that we humans are created to wonder, to question, and to discover responses. As we do so, we are able to transcend the limits of our current view. For Lonergan, open-ended questions are at the heart of self transcendence. Open-ended questions allow the light of transformative shifts to break through the limitations of our current view. Open-ended questions emerge quite naturally from a beginner's mindset. When we pose open-ended questions in conversation we are creating space for all participants to remain open to transformative shifts in their view.

The intention of interStory dialogue

If we engage in interStory dialogue with a contemplative orientation, a beginner's mindset, and ask open-ended questions, the dialogue will allow each participant to attune to one another, or in the words of Parker Palmer: "to truly see and hear each other." When we feel truly seen and heard we experience a kind of resonance, or what Siegel named as "feeling felt." In turn, an environment of trust is generated. Within an environment of trust we can *stand in our own ground, openheartedly*. Also, we can *walk around in one another's Stories*, without fear of losing our own.

In light of such understandings, the intention of interStory dialogue is more than a simple pooling of ideas, opinions, and beliefs. Rather, the intention of the conversation is, in the words of McEntee and Bucko an: "opening oneself to the other without fear of losing one's own positions." At the same time, whilst we do not engage in interStory dialogue with the intention of changing another or being changed, transformative shifts in our view will emerge because, again in the words of McEntee and Bucko: "our dialogue with one another assumes the possibility of weaving together a new pattern of creation."