The Polarization Effect

Healing our Worldviews

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Abstract: Our current sustainability crisis reveals a deeper systemic behavioral pattern, discussed in this paper as the polarization effect that gave rise to our mechanistic worldviews. This effect is in part driven by our attempts to control our natural world to suit our economic needs via technological advancements that have decreased our reciprocity with our natural systems. This has also resulted in a loss of evolutionary coherence in our human made systems and increase in entropy. Although there have been attempts to negate this by forming and imposing agreement and regulatory mechanisms, a far more fundamental change is required. This paper proposes that it is time to acknowledge that many of our conventional human-made systems are based on a systemic design error. An ancient Australian Aboriginal teaching called Kanyini is explored, to better understand the nature of this design error to offer this understanding to heal the system dynamics of our worldviews.

Keywords: *Worldviews, the Polarization Effect, Systemic Wholeness, Reciprocity, Healing*

1 The Evolution of our Worldviews

We are currently faced with the greatest challenge in our human history (IPCC, 2013). In September 2015, 191 countries adopted the UN Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. This put in place 17 focal areas, or Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), for the transformation of our societies to safeguard our living conditions on the planet. To achieve these SDGs, drastic changes and major transformation are required in our socio-economic and political systems, especially if we are to achieve the reductions in greenhouse gas emissions necessary to limit warming to no more than 1.5 degrees pre-industrial levels. These SDGs also set as targets to eliminate world hunger by 2030, and regenerate our natural environment, among others. It is mentioned in SDG 17 that partnership is the key to achieving these targets (Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform, 2018), which also requires a new way of envisioning and applying our collective responsibilities.

Do we truly comprehend what is required in order to achieve this level of transformation in our mainstream systems (Riedy, 2013; Wahl, 2016)? And does this not also require a deeper shift in terms of our worldviews, i.e. our belief systems and outlook on life (Jacobs, 2016; Laszlo, 2017; Meadows,1999; Senge, 2006)? This article aims to provide a deeper systemic understanding of the behavioral dynamics of our worldviews and their corresponding stance in the world. Drawing on various disciplines, methods, and approaches, this article weaves together narratives from the oldest continuous living cultures with the aspects of our modern worldview that developed from setting ourselves apart from our natural world. By contrasting these various worldviews and exploring the difference in behavioral dynamics set in play by each tradition, we gain a deeper understanding of the systemic patterns and processes that most influence the evolutionary potentials for our collective flourishing and thrivability.

We begin this exploration with a short narrative that has been inspired by one of the oldest continuous living cultures, the Australian Aborigines. The narrative is fictional yet inspired by real life events during the time that the lead author lived in Australia from 1998-2006. During this time the lead author spent many years studying and learning from the Australian Aborigines about their cosmologies and custodianship practices. Custodianship is the Australian concept for our collective responsibilities, in other countries this is often referred to as stewardship. To be a custodian means to honor that life is given to us in trust, in custody, as curators and caretakers.

1.1 Narrative based on an Indigenous Worldview

"It is early morning. The sun is rising slowly; a new day awaits us. I awake by the first rays of the sun on my skin and the choir of the birds. I am recalling my dreams before the day calls me into activity. I remember how in my dream I was together again with my mother, and around her the circle of Elders where she now belongs. The dream was so vivid, almost more real than the day. I remember vividly how on the last day of her life here she took my hand and told me: Now our lineage continues in you, I pass on all my wisdom, knowledge and power to you now as it was passed on from my mother to me. Be well my daughter, stay on the path of this wisdom, it will guide you always and it will keep our children safe.

As she took her last breath a warm energy flew into my body, which made my skin tingle all over. I heard a deep buzzing in my ears and saw a bright Light. Time stopped and I saw and felt myself connected to all who had come before and all who

are not yet born. I experienced Life as one continuum. Everything happened as if in slow motion. Seconds felt like eternity. A deep sigh brought my attention back to the room. As I moved my head to the right to look at her, my mother had taken her last breath out. Her spirit had moved to the world of our ancestors. A deep sadness filled my heart, yet deep inside I knew this is the way. I knew that she is always within me as I am within her, and one day I too will join her to the place of our ancestors. It is now my responsibility to carry on the lineage and keep our children safe.

This was almost a year ago that she moved to be with our ancestors. Later this morning I need to prepare our girls for their ceremony into womanhood. It is now my task to prepare them for this sacred rite of passage. To help them understand the powers given to them by nature via their bodies. When our children are born each child is received as a gift of the Creator. Each child is honored for her or his unique purpose in Life. To better understand how we can nurture and support the potentials of each child we observe closely which animals are attracted to the child from the moment of conception. This will show us the powers that nature has given to this child to bring forth. We also look at the plants that each child is attracted to and her and his natural rhythm of sleep, dream, and activity. By being aware of this and supporting each of our children to become conscious of our oneness with nature, our children learn to have great trust in their bodies and in their abilities to live in harmony with nature.

We raise our children as a community. Each child has many different aunties and uncles in addition to their grandparents and parents. Each of these relationships are unique. To each relationship is assigned specific responsibilities for the mentoring and education of our children. In this way our children know they are never alone and there is always someone they can talk to or ask questions. To foster the curiosity and inquisitiveness of our children we never give them the answers to their questions directly. Instead we point them in the direction for finding their own answers, which we can then confirm or guide further. We want our children to enjoy their learning process and to know that Life is our greatest teacher. Life naturally provides us with the answers to our questions by teaching us through experience, by giving us specific dreams, and by sending us messages via our kinship with nature. By paying attention to the patterns in nature we become aware of the weaving that connects the visible and invisible worlds of our existence. We transmit our history and our sacred knowledge to our children via our stories, and through specific ceremonies for awakening their powers.

It is time now for me to prepare our girls for their rite of passage into womanhood. The crows told the girls of my coming. As I enter the ceremonial field, they are all prepared, ready and excited. They have dreamed of this day long before. It is time now to embrace their next stage of womanhood, to open more fully to their creative power as women in the caretaking of life inside their bodies, and through the worlds we share with others. As I embrace our girls I feel the arms of my mother, and her mother, and all our grandmothers around us. Together we form a circle of love, knowledge, and wisdom. Within this circle all times meet - past, present and future - within the material worlds and in the spirit worlds. In this circle the future generations that are not yet born are with us too. Through this circle we remember how we are deeply united and we ask the unborn children to share with us what we need to know as their ancestors." ~ Australian Aboriginal Elder, fictional character inspired by real-life events.

1.2 Our commitment to the deeper transformational change

In his recent book *Designing Regenerative Cultures*, Daniel Wahl raised the deeper question as to *why are we worth sustaining* and *how we might initiate wise actions that help us to transition towards regenerative cultures*. He further mentioned that in order to pursue the deeper question of *why* we need to examine first our belief systems that shape our worldview (Wahl, 2016, p.16). By reflecting on our indigenous holistic worldviews we might understand better what we have grown away from and sacrificed in the name of modernization (Jacobs, 2016). There are reasons why our dominant current socio-economic and political systems have become so decoupled from the larger ecology of life. Our relationship with our natural environment has changed dramatically over time, and yet not every culture took this route towards *modernization* based on extractive economic practices (Smitsman *et al.*, 2018). By exploring *why are we worth sustaining,* it might also bring us closer to understanding *why we became so destructive as a species*. If the aim is sustainability and thrivability of life, one may even wonder if it is worth sustaining and saving humanity at this point in time. Thrivability goes further than sustainability. As Jean Russell explained in her work as one of the founders of the Thrivability Movement:

> "*Thrivability is the ability for you and me to thrive, for what is around us to thrive, and for thriving to be the sum of all we do. Thrivability emerges from each of us holding the persistent intention to be generative: that is to say, to create more value than we consume. When practiced over time, this builds a world of ever-increasing possibilities. The more I have explored, the more I believe we all want that – for ourselves and, more and more, for the world around us.*" *(Russell, 2013, pp. 127-131)*

Many indigenous worldviews, in contrast to modern or mechanistic worldviews, are founded on a deep understanding and experience of the nature of life as interdependent, interconnected, reciprocal and whole (Jacobs, 2016). Indigenous worldviews see human beings as part of nature. Reciprocity, mutuality, and co-evolution are regarded as guiding principles for the evolution and development of our societies. For example, the concept of consumption within many indigenous cultures has a whole different meaning, compared to societies where humans consume animals and plants without reverence for how we as humans beings can also be consumed by our animal and plant relatives. This ancient totemic relationship where an animal, insect or reptile consumes the person, often in a dream state, has almost completely disappeared from our so-called modern mechanistic societies. In shamanic traditions being eaten by an animal in a dream or vision is regarded as an initiatory experience through which the animal shares its medicine and power with the person, and restores the person's consciousness to a deeper embeddedness within our natural worlds. Consumption in mechanistic worldviews lack acknowledgement of reciprocity and mutuality, i.e. human beings consume for their needs and nature is being consumed (Smitsman & Smitsman, 2019).

However, the evolutionary process of nature is cyclical and reciprocal, rather than linear, singular, and extractive. By learning from indigenous cultures we can start to see out of which changes our mechanistic worldviews emerged (Jacobs, 2016). By recognizing that nature evolves, grows and learns through reciprocity, mutuality and collaboration, we can become conscious curators for a guided evolutionary process. This midwifing and curating process is essential if we are to heal our worldviews. As mentioned by Alexander Laszlo:

"Guided evolution implies normative considerations. The norm, however, is nature, not idiosyncratic human proclivity. It is our challenge to foment individual and collective developmental processes that manifest evolutionary consonance. An action-oriented theory of evolution suggests that human beings have the choice consciously to participate in the co-creation of the future. And yet it seeks neither to predict nor to "socially engineer" the future. Rather, it aims to create the conditions for the emergence of sustainable evolutionary futures." (Laszlo, 2009, p. 214)

This *guided evolutionary process* does not aim to replace our mechanistic worldviews with earlier indigenous worldviews in order to become ecologically conscious. Rather, it recognizes that our mechanistic worldviews emerged from a growing loss of reciprocity with our natural world. This also reveals how by design we are not able to bring forth systemic wholeness and evolutionary coherence with nature if we do not acknowledge first this information-feedback loss (Smitsman & Currivan, 2019; Smitsman & Smitsman, 2019). Most of our modern human systems are internally fragmented and generate polarization and division between people and with our natural world. Such systems cannot bring forth thrivable outcomes (Russell, 2013; Wahl, 2016). Restoring our *wholeworld-view* is essential if we are to avoid further destruction of the life-supporting conditions of our natural world. Jude Currivan describes this in the following way:

"While retaining the uniqueness of our personal, microcosmic expressions of consciousness, this wholeworld-view embraces the meso-cosm of our collective human experience and the macrocosm of our entire Universe, existing as a finite expression of the infinity and eternity of cosmic mind. When fully realized such a view of the world does away with the conflictual interactions of duality perception, empowers mitigation of selfishness, and enhances cooperation and altruism, not only with each other but with all life as well." (Currivan, 2017, p. 229)

1.3 Did we evolve or devolve?

The mechanization of our societies is only quite recent within the larger context of our species. Ironically, describing cultures and groups of people as indigenous vs. non-indigenous shows the stark contrasts in different evolutionary choices from common ancestors. Some may argue that we are in fact all indigenous, since we are all born from this Earth. Yet as certain groups of people sacrificed their symbiotic relationship with nature over economic gains, these groups of people are often considered as non-indigenous based on their different belief-systems and practices that reflected a change in the way we perceive and relate with Nature.

Our current mechanistic worldviews grew from the employments of specific technological developments that decreased our reciprocity and attunement with nature in an attempt to gain more control over our human development needs. Indigenous communities, in contrast, tend to conducts their activities in such a way that it is informed by their reciprocal relationship with nature. As such interconnectedness, interdependence, and resilience through collaboration is celebrated and actively endorsed as a partnership with the cosmos, and a caretaking relationship for our natural world (Jacobs, 2016). Different choices and different perceptions of what is priority gave way to different evolutionary trajectories. Comparing those with each other can give us further insight concerning the deeper causes for the kinds of challenges we now face as a global society. This may also provide us further understanding what we need to change and rectify in our design process

for resolving our sustainability crisis.

Many people understand and admit that a much deeper shift of consciousness is needed in our societies. Some express this as an aching pain in their heart, and sorrow in their minds. Many also share that they find it difficult to experience a sense of peace and happiness in the societies that put profit and technological developments before the wellbeing of people and nature. And yet, are we questioning *why* this is happening in a way that this inspires and supports us to change? Do we understand sufficiently *how* we are continuing to sustain, and depend on the very systems that keep us locked into a trajectory geared towards collapse? Are we seeing our own design errors in the way we engineer our societies to increase more entropy and less co-coherence with our natural world?

People often express how they feel trapped in society's systems. Trapped in performing roles and functions within social-economic systems that do not care about their intrinsic worth. It is not surprising that so many people feel burned-out. In these socio-economic and educational systems there is little space for cycles, rhythms, and rites of passage. We are expected to learn and work by predetermined standards, criteria, and outcomes that were created to enhance our productivity and compatibility with the machinery of society (Smitsman & Chung, 2018; UNESCO, 2012). By indoctrinating this linearity and exponential growth curve from an early age, there is little space left for people to experience their life as an expression of a deeper underlying wisdom.

This same mechanistic system has also obliterated the use of ritual for nurturing a relationship with nature as sacred. The fertility rituals, the rituals for girls to come into womanhood through their first menstrual cycles, the rituals for coming into manhood through initiation, the ritual of rebirth, all these have become lost for the majority of people who grew up in these systems. Replaced by a doctrine of medication for treating depression, and consumption with useless shopping to mask the void that our ancestors knew to be an invitation into the sacred and invisible dimensions of life. Not only has this distorted how we view our own bodies and the natural cycles of life, it has also severed our kinship with nature and our relationship with the *Spirit of the Land*. Sacred sites are now tourist attractions, instead of places of reverence and initiation where the *Spirit of Mother Nature* guided us to grow into consciousness. For example, despite numerous requests by the traditional Custodians of Uluru not to climb their sacred site, tourists have continued to ignore these request and are often more interested in *taking a selfie* from the top of this sacred Rock (Ruck, 2012).

When people grow up in those mechanistic systems it is not surprising that their worldview does not inspire a stewarding relationship with nature (Jacobs, 2016; Smitsman & Chung, 2018; Sterling, 2002; Stone et. al, 2005). Accordingly, this has also impacted on how we view and relate with our body and its natural rhythms. Furthermore, the mechanistic systems have portrayed a view of life that is ruled by competition and survival of the fittest. Rewarding the best performers in the system and marginalizing those who do not fit the *standards.* And yet, we are now asking people to review their life through the lens of sustainability by adopting principles that we were taught to deny from an early age. By living in a world that runs and measures its activities by the clock of progress, can we honestly expect people to now understand causality based on natural principles within life's eco-systemic contexts? (Currivan, 2017; Laszlo, 2009; Smitsman, 2015)

In this artificial model of progress devoid of life's wisdom, people are taught that unless they progress by society's standards and criteria, they are a failure. Sadly, even in the young minds of our children we can see the impacts of this kind of indoctrination (Smitsman & Smitsman, 2019). In a system that creates winners and losers, the emotional scars from systems that judge and select start early. Many children are made to believe that by not

being rewarded as a winner, one becomes a loser in life. The push and reward mechanisms of this social-economic ranking system are also the basic tenet for what in many companies is called their performance and appraisal schemes.

A long time ago we lived in close communion with nature. Although it is not feasible for people to return to becoming hunter-gatherers, there are valuable perspectives from those earlier worldviews that can remind us what our sustainability, and even better *thrivability,* rests upon (Wahl, 2016). Some of these earlier worldviews are still taught and practiced today. For example, the teaching of Kanyini, which loosely translated means *love with responsibility*, is an Australian Aboriginal concept which is foundational for the co-creation of systems and societies where all of us can thrive and flourish (Randall, 2007).

1.4 Kanyini – Love with Responsibility

The Australian Aborigines represent the oldest continuous living culture on our planet (Lawlor, 1991). By learning from this culture it also provides us further insight regarding the essential practices and cosmological understandings for worldviews that generate collective thrivability. As we are in the midst of our greatest sustainability challenge, this reflection is necessary. Our current worldviews did not just emerge by themselves. It is the result of a long change process in how we relate with and view our role and purpose as homosapiens with infinite desires on a finite planet. As was shared earlier, people only tend to care for the worlds they feel a part of. At the foundation of all indigenous worldviews is a deep sense of belonging to and kinship with nature. Another way to view our sustainability crisis, is as a clear indicator that many people no longer feel that their belonging is nature-based.

Our kinship with nature is given little value in mainstream society. Hence the earlier question; how can we expect people to care for our natural world, if they don't experience a sense of belonging and kinship with nature? The Australian Aboriginal teaching of Kanyini, which is loosely translated as *love with responsibility*, provides further insights into these questions (Smitsman, 2017). Uncle Bob Randall, a former Yankunytjatjara Elder and Custodian of the Uluru cultural heritage, explained that Kanyini comes from a deep sense of connectedness and relatedness with the whole family of life. He further explained how the teaching and practice of Kanyini comes alive through four key principles (Randall, 2015):

1. *Ngura*– A sense of belonging to the land that grows us up. To feel at home in nature.
2. *Walytja* – To connect with life as family. Our kinship relation with all the members of life, i.e. the trees, the animals, the rocks, the plants, all are family.
3. *Kurunpa*– Love, Spirit and Soul. Our spirituality and experience of soulfulness.
4. *Tjukurrpa* – Creation period, or also called *the dreamtime*, and the right way to live. How we align our intentions, behaviors and actions with the universal principles and laws, and relate with this as the wisdom of life.

These four principles of Kanyini interconnect with the five coherence dimensions of thrivability that Alexander Laszlo refers to in his earlier publications. He explained that when these five dimensions align as a continuous living practice, supercoherence emerges (Laszlo, 2018a, p. 69):

1. *The intra-personal dimension* through thrivability within oneself.
2. *The inter-personal dimension* through thrivability with one's communities and social systems.

3. *The trans-species dimension* through thrivability with the more than human world.

4. *The trans-generational dimension* through thrivability with past and future generations of all beings.

5. *The pan-cosmic dimension* through thrivability with the deep dimension of immanent consciousness in the cosmos.

The Kanyini principles and the five coherence dimensions of thrivability are rarely cultivated as a whole living system through our mainstream systems. Both these concepts provide a valuable window into a deeper understanding of how to design regenerative cultures, which is becoming a growing field of practice as the next step beyond sustainability (Wahl, 2016). Let us now explore these 4 Kanyini principles a little further (Randall, 2007).

Starting with *Ngura*, many people today do not experience a sense of belonging to nature as their home. For the many of the indigenous communities *Land* does not only mean the plot of land on which we live. Land is alive with Spirit, stories, meaning, and family. It is the ground and foundation from where our kinship with nature and sense of family with all living things emerges. When we include this principle in the redesign of our cultures, it would drastically alter how we take care of and take from the land, including our relationship with the animal world. For more than 99% of human history, people have lived in hunter-gatherer bands totally and intimately involved with other living organisms, suggesting that the evolution of human responses to animals were shaped by these interactions. Through paintings (including ancient cave paintings) and other art forms like epitaphs on animals' tombs, we know that animals played important and significant roles in the lives of our ancestors. From historical evidence, we also know that many examples of *relationships* between people and animals are emotional in nature. However, it is the specifics of our relationships with animals that vary across cultures, depending also on whether our animals relations are seen as primarily a source of food and/or also as companions (Amiot, et. al, 2017).

In our current mainstream economic systems, animals and plants have no legal representation and are rarely represented in parliament and policymaking. There are a few countries that have started to give animals a voice in the system of democracy. For example, in the Netherlands the Party for the Animals (PvdD) is the first political party in the world that does not put the short-term interests of human beings in the pivotal position, but the entire planet and all her inhabitants instead. There is a growing global movement that is committed to the interest and representation of animals, nature and the environment in the decision-making processes of our political, cultural, and economic systems.

Yet, predominantly nature is still seen as a resource; a natural capital to sustain human needs. Nature is rarely considered as family to which we belong. People are often treated the same way, but we don't always want to acknowledge that. As said earlier, our intrinsic worth is not important in the eye of our mainstream economic systems. There are no genuine progress indicators that measure the state of our collective wellbeing. And those who claim to work with such indicators, as for example the Bhutanese Gross National Happiness Index, often have a shadow side to it that has been kept out the light of mainstream media. The shadow side in this case the expulsion of about 110,000 Bhutanese ethnic minorities in the early 1990s (Shrestha, 2015).

Without a sense of *Ngura*, a sense of belonging to nature, people more easily feel alone, lost, and disconnected from each other and life. From this perspective, it may also explain the high rate of depression in many of our modern societies around the world. When the lead author met with one of the Aboriginal Elders from the Kimberley region in 2005 in Australia, he explained how in his tribe traditionally they had no idea what depression meant. When a person got ill, he explained, they would first look at possible social causes,

whether there would be any disruptions in the fabric of their communities to explain what was affecting the person.

The principle of *Walytja*, further emphasizes that our sense of connectedness as a family stems from our connectedness as life. This principle needs to be in place in order receive the spiritual nourishment, also called *Kurunpa*, through that relatedness and interdependence. The principle of *Kurunpa* refers to love, psyche, spirit and soul. Through our spiritual connection we naturally experience life and each other as interconnected and interdependent. Without this, a deeper sense of community and care for all living things will not emerge. This principle also reminds people that what we perceive with our physical senses is only one aspect of a larger reality. When people are not connected to this principle or conscious of this, they will only relate with life from a materialistic perspective. Our spiritual nature is emphasized strongly in indigenous worldviews. This spirituality is deeply embedded within a sense of care and responsibility for our natural world.

In his talks Uncle Bob emphasised the importance of appreciating all our relations for their intrinsic worth by honoring that the same *Spirit of Life* is within each of us. The same has also been expressed by Joanna Macy, Gregory Bateson, Satish Kumar, Arne Naess, E.F Schumacher, Jane Goodall, and Rachel Carson, many of whom form part of the Deep Ecology movement. The phrase *Deep Ecology* started with the Norwegian philosopher and mountaineer Arne Naess in 1973. The deep ecology movement is founded on eight principles that outline the inherent value of all living beings, and how this recognition requires a fundamental shift in the rationale and orientation of our environmental policies and practices (Drengson, 2018). By recognizing the fundamental right of each expression of life from its intrinsic value within the whole, it provides a completely different set of principles and values compared to our mechanistic systems. The intrinsic rights of the trees, plants and animals have no place in the extractive economy that uses our natural world only for resource supplies.

The Aboriginal Elders further teach that this deeper understanding about psyche, spirit and soul (*Kurunpa*) comes from *Tjukurrpa*. In English, *Tjukurrpa* has been translated as the dreamtime (Lawlor, 1991). *Tjukurrpa* explains that that creation is an ongoing process in a multi-dimensional universe based on sacred principles, laws, by which we remain connected through all time and space while changing form. The Elders explained to the lead author during her visits with them from 1998-2006 in Australia, that *Tjukurrpa* relates to the invisible world behind what we see and know as the created universe. From this comes the understanding of the *right* way to live in accordance with these universal laws and principles. The Elders also explained that this sacred knowledge was passed on via a process of transmission from the original Ancestral Beings to humanity to guide us as custodians for this living world. In the words of Uncle Bob:

> *"We are only Caretakers for our time on this Earth, for our children's children who are going to come after us. We are not the owners, we are the carers, that is the law of survival for every single one of us. Care for everything, care for each other. When we start caring for what needs caring for, which is Mother Earth, our waterways, our environment, our air, .. we got a lot to do. We are caretakers for Mother Earth. Let's care, let us be that. Knowing it is for our children's children's children, and not for us to abuse." (Randall, 2007a)*

2 Custodianship for our collective thrivability

This indigenous worldview of Kanyini inspires responsibility as loving care for all living things *as family* through relationships of reciprocity and mutuality (Randall, 2007b). This is also the foundation for the development of our sense of custodianship for our planetary wellbeing and our collective thrivability (Smitsman, 2017). This is in stark contrast to our modern worldviews that are often based on individualized leadership and power, through dynamics of control and *influence over*. When colonial practices aimed to destroy the Australian Aboriginal communities, it violated these four interconnected Kanyini principles. People were removed from their homeland and their sacred sites were invaded (violation of *Ngura*). Children were removed from their parents, and families were torn apart. Their kinship with nature was attacked by attempting to prohibit their ancient totemic relationships (violation of *Walytja*). By being removed from their ancestral land many families could no longer act as caretakers for the animals, plants, and trees that were part of their family. Their cosmology was ridiculed and their spiritual belief-systems and practices became prohibited in the systems of the colonizers (violation of *Kurunpa)*. The ancient cosmologies were replaced by mechanistic scientific worldviews with reductionist principles. The role of custodianship of honoring the sacred creation laws handed down to the clans from the beginning of time became severely constrained (violation of *Tjukurrpa),* (Nelson & Nelson, 2014).

The results of these violations is that the survivability and thrivability of many of the Australian Aboriginal communities has become severely undermined. This has led to a huge loss of culture, very low quality of life, and internal community violence. Not only can we see in the teaching of Kanyini the vital dimensions of sustainability and thrivability. We also see what happens if these dimensions are severed and replaced by practices and mechanistic worldviews that share a very different purpose. What happened to many of the Australian Aboriginal communities happened also to many other indigenous communities around the world as a result of those same colonial practices.

During an interview we conducted with Robynne Nelson of the Yorta Yorta Australian Aboriginal heritage, Nelson explained that custodianship within her clan is based on the understanding of collective responsibility at the level of the clan (Nelson, 2018). This collective responsibility is different, she explained, from the individual and specific responsibilities by the tribe's leaders. They make, as she explained, a clear distinction between individual and collective leadership and responsibility. The collective leadership is what they call custodianship, where the whole clan and tribe take responsibility for the thrivability of all. Individual and collective leadership exist synergistically in their community. This is another important dimension to consider when we work for the healing of the underlying dynamics of our mechanistic worldviews (Senge, et.al, 2015). In our mechanistic systems leadership has become mostly individually driven and for the protection of specific individuals, or specific groups of individuals, not for *life as a whole*.

2.1 The Earth Charter and the Fuji Declaration

Our mainstream socio-economic and political systems lack this deeper vision and practice of custodianship for our collective thrivability. The Earth Charter made a first attempt to bring countries together in a shared commitment towards collective responsibility for the health of our planet and the wellbeing of the future generations. The Charter was created in follow-up to the 1992 Earth Summit. The document was developed over a decade through an inclusive consultative process through which more than five thousand people contributed,

and endorsed by thousands of organizations. The Earth Charter outlines our Universal Responsibility in the following way:

> "To realize these aspirations, we must decide to live with a sense of universal responsibility, identifying ourselves with the whole Earth community as well as our local communities. We are at once citizens of different nations and of one world in which the local and global are linked. Everyone shares responsibility for the present and future well-being of the human family and the larger living world. The spirit of human solidarity and kinship with all life is strengthened when we live with reverence for the mystery of being, gratitude for the gift of life, and humility regarding the human place in nature." (The Earth Charter, Preamble).

Many years later, the Fuji Declaration took this even further by declaring also a shared responsibility for igniting the divine spark in the spirit of our humanity in order to design a more harmonious and flourishing civilization for the coming generations (The Fuji Declaration, 2015). These collective agreements are not legally binding. They reflect that a deeper healing in our worldviews is taking place with a growing shared commitment to put this into generative actions for a thrivable planet.

Coming back to the earlier question prompted by Wahl, *why are we worth sustaining?* This raises the question, *can we trust ourselves as custodians for the good of the whole*? These Charters and Declarations are wonderful, but not sufficient to fully transform our societal systems in a way that is necessary if we truly want to ensure that all members within the family of life can enjoy a quality life. Can we trust ourselves with this tremendous responsibility, and opportunity? Perhaps sometimes yes, and other times no. The next question worth asking is, *do we trust each other to care together for what is our shared responsibility for our collective wellbeing*? It seems many people would answer no to that question. Without this deeper trust in each other, can we take our collective commitments and efforts to the next level from sustainability to thrivability? Why did all this distrust in ourselves, each other, life, and society grow to this extent? What is this polarization effect that has created all these divisions between people? We will explore these question more in-depth through the next section of this article.

2.2 The polarization effect

Long ago the context for our personal development was embedded within the role that we served in relation to the clan and tribe to which we belonged. The personal dimension was always within the larger context of this shared collective identity. Personal development through individuation is rather a recent phenomenon. In some of the indigenous languages the word "I" did not even exist. Our identity formed at the group level as an interdependent network of relationships that includes the natural world as family. Our sense of belonging and purpose was thus deeply embedded within this collective context, from where our sense of self and personhood emerged as an integral part of nature's living systems of the larger universe.

As discussed in the previous section, the four Kanyini principles are based on this understanding of *oursness,* which is quite different from the *mineness* cultures of our modern worldviews. Uncle Bob explained this in the following way:

> "The land grows all of us up, it really does. The land owns us, it's the ancient one, not us. We're the children who come and go, take what we need for a short time and then pass to our children…The oursness stretches from horizon to horizon, the clouds are

the ceiling at daytime and the stars at night. To that size of "you" and what you're responsible for, to shrink down to this little box, of my house, my car…Its so small in comparison to what's ours. And you're part of that oursness, and you feel that, feel that so well. You feel good when you're in that space. Feel like you're living with family. When you include everything that's alive in that space, then you grow up knowing, believing and accepting that these are all your family. You can never feel alone in that situation." (Randall, 2007a).

2.3 The Anthropocene

It appears that over time our relationship with the natural environment changed. To a large extent this was also influenced by the invention of new tools and technologies. Accordingly people became more skilled in adapting the natural world to their needs and desires. This further altered the way we perceived our place and purpose as human beings. Whereas previously our worldview and human activities centered on service and stewardship for our collective wellbeing, it now changed to one whereby nature was seen as a resource base to serve our human development. By changing the way we as human beings saw our purpose and that of nature in relation to us, it gave rise to a very different belief system. No longer aware or appreciative of our interconnectedness, it now became much easier to shift the belief from the collective to the individual.

This dramatic shift in our human relationship with the natural world and the impacts thereof has also been called *the Great Acceleration*. Based on a set of 24 global indicators published in the Anthropocene Review 2015 by Steffen et al., human activity through predominantly the global economic system is regarded as the prime driver of change in the Earth Systems post 1950s (Steffen et. al, 2015). These data confirm the view of the Anthropocene, first coined by Paul Crutzen in 2002, to describe that we have entered a whole new era where human beings are the main cause for the changes in our Earth systems (WWF, 2012). To some the Anthropocene starts at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, whereas others argue that significant human impacts started some 8000 years earlier with the rise of farming and the global spread of human populations towards the end of the first Agricultural Revolution. Irrespective of where we draw the beginning of the Anthropocene, it is clear we are in it now and that this will remain for a long time to come.

This change in our relationship with the land (*Ngura and Walytja*) is also reflected in the design of our political and legal systems. If we look at the period of the 1600s this increasing favoring of individuation can be seen in the thinking around social contract theory and the doctrines of property rights. Take for example the political theories of Thomas Hobbes and his famous work Leviathan, which was published in 1651. Hobbes proclaimed that:

"And therefore where there is no own, that is, no propriety, there is no injustice; and where there is no coercive power erected, that is, where there is no Commonwealth, there is no propriety, all men having right to all things: therefore where there is no Commonwealth, there nothing is unjust. So that the nature of justice consists in keeping of valid covenants, but the validity of covenants begins not but with the constitution of a civil power sufficient to compel men to keep them: and then it is also that propriety begins." (Hobbes, 1651, Chapter XV).

As nature became property, and humanity the owner of these property rights the polarization effect of our mechanistic systems increased. Our cosmology of partnership with the living

cosmos now became replaced by positivistic sciences of fact-finding, and economic resource policies of extraction and maximization. We as human beings now became the originators for our own moral compass to navigate by the maps we designed for profit maximization and technological advancement. We could now decide what is true, what is false, and what is fact, or so we thought. As our technological advancements increased, our economic systems became more and more extractive and divisional. Dividing society between the *haves* and *have-nots* and taking us further away from a reciprocal relationship with our natural world. Our mechanistic worldviews started to become more and more a closed-loop system that feeds on itself, by killing and removing what it cannot integrate within itself. Human life became increasingly more dependent on the tools that we had initially invented to ease our life. Over time the economic rationale became a rationale that even justified the enslavement of billions of people.

In such systems, colonizing more than half of our world was not considered immoral. The economic machinery needed constant servicing with ever more people at the bottom of the pyramid, to serve a growing elite of the wealthy at the top. Our earlier conception of service to nature was now cast to the domain of the *savage cultures* and *lost tribes*. Those who planted the flag of the economic rationale became the spokespersons for what was collectively agreed upon as the civilized humanity. It would take a few more hundreds of years before we started to see the damage that this caused to our natural world and the fabric of our relationships in all domains of life. These technological developments primarily served civilization's growing political-economic model that was extractive and hierarchical, rather than regenerative and ecological. It was not technology itself that brought forth our mechanistic worldview. Rather, it was the purpose for which we used these technologies (and new institutions) as a means to control the natural environment (and other people), to serve human needs and desires decoupled from a collective sense of shared responsibility for *the good of the whole.*

Our earlier indigenous worldviews might have been seen as restrictive and inferior for those who believed science is the new God, and nature our dominion. The perceived *freedoms and corresponding rights of the individual* became increasingly more decoupled from what was once considered a collective responsibility to care for the *good of the whole*. This divisive polarization did not emerge over night. It evolved from specific changes in our human activities over time. We became less open and responsive to feedback from our natural systems and thus less reciprocal with life as a whole. Our economic systems also became more complex and extractive of both people and nature, accordingly our sense of belonging shifted more and more to the human-made systems that organized those rights and freedoms to suit their purpose (Smitsman *et al.*, 2018). To belong or not to belong became increasingly more a social construct by the ruling elite, with political and economic consequences.

By creating artificial ranking systems to determine who could have what, where and for what purpose, man-made hierarchies started to create deep cleavages in our social fabrics. These cleavages are still present in our modern societies today. The political and economic elite that grew and benefited from these polarizing systems imprinted deep into the psyche of our collective mind that our previous worldviews were wrong and outdated. This ruling elite did not exclude religion, however. Quite the contrary, it often used religion to further reinforce its believed superiority by dominating, and at times eradicating, those who it perceived as less civilized and a threat to its status quo. Based on such worldviews, it is not surprising that colonization and the brutal domination over indigenous people around the world became a widespread practice.

As this belief in our superiority and domination over nature continued to grow it

became further reinforced through economic developments that appeared to grant more freedom and status to people in exchange for their time and labor. The long-term costs and impacts of this exchange only became more visible as we started to reach, and overreach, the boundaries of our planetary carrying capacity. These perceived freedoms and rights were in stark contrast with our earlier worldviews of interconnectedness and interdependence. The irony of these perceived freedoms is that they are actually based on the desire to control and be in control. Control is contrary to the natural principles of life and requires constant reinforcement, which in itself shows it is not based on systemic freedom (Smitsman & Smitsman, 2019).

Now that we are faced with the dire consequences of the impacts of our human activities at scale, more people are starting to realize that freedom cannot be achieved at the expense of our interconnectedness. The earlier premises of our indigenous worldviews are re-emerging, in the quest for deeper systemic transformation that is truly evolutionary.

2.4 The shadow side of polarization

As we shared earlier, our modern economic and socio-political systems are the result of fundamentally different worldviews compared to those of our ancient ancestors. As our intimate relationship with the Land changed, our sense of connectedness and view of nature as family was replaced by a growing belief in individuation, competition and survival of the fittest. The religion of money and descartian science became increasingly the new norm(al). And now our interaction with *the dreamtime* is replaced by virtual realities, artificial intelligences, and social-media.

Whereas some cultures kept the emphasis on nature-centered human development, many developed through a type of technological and agricultural development that undermined our eco-systemic interdependence. Technology and agriculture does not need to undermine our caretaking for our planet, however. The problem is not with technology or agriculture per se. The problem is in the role and purpose we have attributed to technology and our growing dependency on it (Laszlo, 1999). Biomimicry is an example for how we can also work with the intelligence of nature to create technologies that support and even strengthen our eco-systemic interdependencies and the health of our planet. This divisive polarization effect of creating a sense of separateness between people, and between people and their living environments, is thus not because of technological developments. As Alexander Laszlo mentioned:

> *"As such, technology can be considered a method or means by which human capability is augmented. New ways of living, of creating value, and of raising not only standards of living but — what is far more important — quality of life call for such augmentation and extension of human capabilities.[...] technological progress over the last 150 years has brought with it certain "side-effects" (cf. Meadows et al, 1972) that, although generally ignored for some time, have now become global issues that threaten the stability of societies and ecosystems the world over. The familiar litany of modern-day ills include population growth, social inequities, hunger, armed conflicts, water shortages, pollution, climate change – and these are but a few of the issues, each of which is related to every other, and which together form a complex challenge for societal development (Merry 1995, p. 78). In ever more urgent and pressing ways, the finitude of resources on our planet calls for new forms of production, distribution, and consumption, and for new ways of researching, developing, and innovating social and technological change in order to answer that call." (Laszlo, 2018b, pp. 4-5).*

To better understand the source of this divisive polarization effect we thus need to better understand what our mechanistic and modern society grew out of and away from. The development of tools and capabilities for altering and modifying our natural environment goes back thousands of years, to the very beginning of our human development. The desire to gain more control over our environment is ancient too. Indigenous people too used communication and hunting-gathering technologies. And let us not forget that animals also use and develop tools and technologies to modify their environment. For example, elephants are known to log trees to dug up water holes, dolphins have been found to use marine sponges in their beaks to stir ocean-bottom sand and uncover prey, and sea otters apparently use stones to hammer abalone shells (Choi, 2009).

Ecological developmental psychologists such as Ad Smitsman, Daniela Corbetta, Eleanor Gibson, and David Woods have researched for decades the environmental context for cognition development, with special emphasis on tool use development. James Gibson's (1966) work on ecological perception, and Eleanor Gibson's work on perceptual development (Gibson & Pick, 2000), inspired investigation how the process of learning and development gets fueled by children's growing capability to sense their relationships with the systems they mobilize and explore, for interaction and communication purposes. By exploring the potentialities of the systems they form part of, through the use of physical and symbolic tools, children learn to attune their activities to the system dynamics of their environment, and learn how to regulate their relationships to attain their goals (Fogel, 1993; Gibson & Pick, 2000; Heft, 2001; Smitsman, 1997; Smitsman & Corbetta, 2010).

According to Ad Smitsman, the use of symbolic and physical tools for exploring the environment changes the behavioral system, as this shifts the boundaries of our stance within that environment (Smitsman, 1997; Smitsman & Smitsman, 2019). By exploring more deeply what gave rise to our mechanistic worldviews and why its underlying system had such a divisive polarizing effect, this body of research from ecological developmental psychologists needs to be taken into account. If we think this through a little further it is not surprising that the more we started to engineer our societies, the more this would also have changed our perception of ourselves and our environment. This would raise another question, namely what kinds of tools would generate this alienating effect more? If we look at the principle of reciprocity and mutuality in living systems, we can see that these qualities of living systems also guides the development of relationships between the elements of the system, and the system as a whole. Reciprocity and mutuality is part of system coherence. Moreover, the experience of mutuality and reciprocity also generates a sense of *being in connection with* and may well be fundamental to the development of empathy (Smitsman & Smitsman, 2019).

Tools that distance us further from the feedback generated by our environment in response to our interaction with it, will thus have a greater alienation and polarization effect. As a consequence employment of such tools would make us less responsive to our environment and by becoming more decoupled from it, we contribute to the decline of coherence in the system and the increase of entropy. For example, to kill an animal mechanically in a factory is a very different kind of experience from having to kill the animal with your own hands or with a knife. Being distant from the suffering that we inflict on the animal makes it *easier* for people to exploit it further and disconnect from the suffering we cause. Hence we have seen that these machinated animal factories have been used at a much larger scales and have significantly increased the amount of entropy in the system due to loss of biodiversity and eco-systemic damage that we turn a blind eye to, or have become insensitive to. The famous Milgram experiment conducted by Yale University psychologist Stanley Milgram also showed how distance to the suffering we cause, in this

case listening to instructions yet not realizing their impacts, increases the willingness to inflict such suffering in order to obey to the system one is loyal to.

Somehow inside each of us is this drive to modify our environment in order to suit our needs. As our capacity to develop new technologies grew stronger and more complex, our impacts on our natural environments also increased. At the core of our mechanistic worldview is a deeper identification of what we made this mean. If our identity remains informed by the four Kanyini principles and emerges from the five coherence dimensions of thrivability, the use of technology would not drastically alter the way we perceive our place as human beings within the larger ecology of life. If, however, we believe that our technological intelligence sets us apart from other animals, and we allow this to make us less sensitive and responsive to the feedback that our natural systems provide, then the polarization effect emerges and becomes divisive. This polarization effect also includes a loss of co-coherence or evolutionary coherence with nature, leading to an increase in the entropy that we cause. It is this divisive polarization effect that is at the root of our current sustainability crisis.

Our sustainability crisis did not begin with the industrial revolution. It began thousands of years earlier when we changed the ranking of our human membership within the family of life. The polarization effect emerged with the decline of our responsiveness to feedback from life, when instead of adapting to and growing with the ecosystems we formed part of, we modified them to suit our needs. By imposing a different order upon the systems we formed part of, we became the element that slowly started to erode the natural coherence in our world. We created systems with entirely different feedback systems, engineered around variables and indicators that had nothing to do with the health of our planetary systems. We became more and more decoupled from the larger communication system of life. If we were to see the same behavior in our cells, we would say that the body is sick or cells have become cancerous. Yet at a species level we celebrated this change in behavior under the name of *progress, evolution, and human development.*

It took another few thousand years for this polarization effect to reach the scale, impact and magnitude that it has now. Also, let us not forget that it is only over the last 200 years or more that our population growth has risen exponentially as such altering the scale of our impacts. And our modern institutions are in fact not that modern at all if we consider that the underlying belief-systems are thousands of years old. In the same way one may argue that our current economic system is not that different from the feudal and colonial systems of our ancestors (Graeber, 2018). The polarization effect started long ago. If we don't address this, our latest technological inventions, artificial intelligence, and virtual reality simulations may create even more alienation. If we are not conscious of how this polarization lives within and through us, our human sense-making will become even further decoupled from nature's feedback.

When feedback is received and responded to, reciprocity between the elements of the systems starts to develop. This reciprocity is essential for systems to learn, evolve, and adapt (Smitsman & Smitsman, 2019). Tools that alienate or create polarization are often tools that inhibit this reciprocity. When tools became more technical and abstract, requiring less dexterity, the reciprocity information also becomes less available, which sets the tool user further apart from those who do not use the same tools (Smitsman, 2019). For example, these days many children learn about nature through their phones and computer, while never touching and taking care of a flower or animal. As such they became more distant from their natural environment and will not develop the necessary empathy with the plants and animals to develop a sense of care for this.

In summary, worldviews don't just form by themselves or by our mental activity. They

reflect a culture and its practices; they reflect the behavioral systems of groups of people that evolved over time (Laszlo, 2003). When our human-made systems forced us to become less responsive to nature, by ignoring the feedback nature provided us, our worldviews lost their sourcing from our membership within life as a whole. Systems that are not responsive to the larger environment that sustains it, become more and more destructive over time and start to generate their own information patterns that are not evolutionary coherent with the larger systems they form part of. These type of information patterns that are decoupled from our larger natural environment act as a kind of virtual reality. In this virtual reality one will be less attuned to the feedback from life as a whole, and accordingly one may act on information and instructions that are harmful to the good of the whole while not realizing this.

To resolve our sustainability crisis we thus need to be aware of the systems in which we find ourselves, and the extent to which those are co-coherent with the larger environment of which we form part. Systems that are decoupled from life as a whole, and thus lack this co-coherence, cannot bring forth thrivability solutions or ecologically sustainable outcomes. Even if we attempt to resolve our sustainability crisis through predominantly green technology solutions, it will not restore our co-coherence with life unless we also transform the underlying economic systems. In order for our societies to truly become regenerative and ecologically sustainable it requires that we (redesign) our human-made systems to become co-coherent with the natural systems on which our lives depend. This also implies restoring our reciprocity and mutuality with our natural word. Only then may the polarity effect diminish, and perhaps even cease over time, as we become once more embedded within the larger universe we are. In other words, ecological systems bring forth ecological results. To get different results we need to transform the system dynamics of the behaviors that are harmful.

This deeper shift needs to take place first and foremost within our economic systems, which are currently not in reciprocal relationship with our natural worlds (Korten, 2015). The conventional capitalist model has been most destructive in it maximization of resource extraction with zero incentives to restore what it depleted and damaged. There is little to no co-coherence between our conventional economic systems and our natural systems. In part this is because the actual price of goods and services are rarely accounted for, and hence the feedback of our economic systems are mostly decoupled from the larger reality of life from which it draws its resources. Ecological economic models are starting to emerge more, especially now that natural capital accounting is growing as a practice to provide a more honest assessment of the real price of our activities (World Forum on Natural Capital, 2017; World Business Council for Sustainable Development, *et al.*, 2017). Ecological economic models, in contrast to the conventional capitalist models, do account for the ecosystem services, by accounting for natural capital among others. These models also account for the cost of waste that our economic systems produce, the discounting effect of how we are reducing the quality of life for the future generations, and our growing ecological debt (Sustainable Development Goals 2015; Costanza, 2010).

3 Healing our Worldviews

Healing our worldviews, or as Ad Smitsman would have said, healing our stance in the world, is becoming a necessity right now. A stance is the way a person stands in the world based on the whole interaction dynamics of the person with his /her environment. One could also say that a stance is the posture that emerges from the whole behavioral system of a person or a collective. It is a relationship that includes how the person or collective takes

position within the localized space-time dimensions, as well as the posture that supports its activities and gets supported by those activities (Smitsman & Smitsman, 2019). This stance in our localized space-time dimensions thus brings into being the potentialities and dynamics of our various fields of being, individually and collectively. An organization can thus also have a certain stance that emerges from its behavioral dynamics, and even countries can adopt certain stances and postures.

In order to heal and shift worldviews that divide us, it is important to understand the underlying dynamics of the behavioral systems of such worldviews (Meadows, 1999, 2002). This deeper transformational change process is not a cognitive process. If it were simply a cognitive process, we would not have all the problems in the world we see today. Most people these days can identify what is wrong with the way we conduct our affairs, yet knowing this has not brought forth the deeper change for what is needed for our collective thrivability.

Changing the behavioral system and the dynamics it brings forth is complex (Meadows, 2011; Smitsman & Smitsman, 2019). The teaching of Kanyini highlighted how our behavioral systems are also informed by as well as informing our interaction with the land, each other, life, and the larger cosmos we form part of. Sometimes our worldviews lack behind, and remain coupled to an earlier stance that has become habitual yet is out of phase with our current development process. Many of our current worldviews appear outdated in light of the developmental processes now required of us at a species level. In particular where this concerns the urgent need to create evolutionary coherence in whole new ways so that the parts of the system start to collaborate for the health of the whole.

We have attempted to create coherence through top-down mechanisms such as centralizing policies, regulations, international agreements, and law. Yet this is not the kind of evolutionary coherence building that will bring the parts of the systems together in thrivable supercoherence (Laszlo & Laszlo, 2016; Smitsman & Currivan, 2019). We have also attempted to regulate our human systems through so called free market economics, which ironically created very little freedom for the masses of humanity who are now exploited by the ones who run the controls of those *free market systems* (Oxfam, 2017). Our human made-systems are not adapting sufficiently to the feedback we are receiving from our natural world. The dynamics of our human-made system are polarizing and dividing our diversity, whereas this is *the time* for it to come together in a collaborative way. Through this article we have aimed to raise awareness about the systemic dynamics of our mechanistic worldviews. We have called this the polarization effect and explained why it is divisive. We have also aimed to provide inputs to the field of knowledge and practices relating to systemic thinking and behaviors, inspired by a more indigenous worldview that is deeply reciprocal and responsive. It is time we become once more adaptive, responsive, and resilient, yet now in a whole new evolutionary context. It is time we stop creating all this noise in our internal and external systems, by delaying and hindering our collective efforts to help save our ecosystems from the dangerous tipping-points now emerging. Through this article we have highlighted several ways for how this can be done.

Systems Thinking is also a storytelling process, which can provide new routes to knowledge in support of the flourishing of persons, communities, and ecologicies. The way we tell our stories impacts on the dynamics that we feed into our systems. Our storytelling can create more division and further polarization by oversimplifications and *us versus them* dynamics. It can, however, also bring us closer to each other to build bridges there where people became divided. Journalist Amanda Ripley explained how bringing the right kind of complexity into the story actually prevents (further) polarization. She explained this in the following way in her article titled *Complicating the Narrative*:

> *"As politicians have become more polarized, we have increasingly allowed ourselves to be used by demagogues on both sides of the aisle, amplifying their insults instead of exposing their motivations. Again and again, we have escalated the conflict and snuffed the complexity out of the conversation. [...] Intractable conflicts feed upon themselves. The more we try to stop the conflict, the worse it gets. These feuds "seem to have a power of their own that is inexplicable and total, driving people and groups to act in ways that go against their best interests and sow the seeds of their ruin," Coleman writes. "We often think we understand these conflicts and can choose how to react to them, that we have options. We are usually mistaken, however." Once we get drawn in, the conflict takes control. Complexity collapses, and the us-versus-them narrative sucks the oxygen from the room." (Ripley, 2018)*

Acknowledging that transformational changes are complex and often paradoxical, we need to find a new and better way to develop coherence that does not simplify the story, impose artificial structures and exclude people (Russell, 2013). Healing is a coherence developing process that often requires deep changes in the structural dynamics of our systems. Especially there where our belief-systems are most deeply rooted and preventing us from seeing the wholeness within each and every part of us. When our internal biological systems are coherent, there is a healthy communication exchange between our internal cells and their larger environment. Disease patterns often arise from breakdowns in the information-exchange networks, as such hindering or even distorting the communication between the cells, their organs, and their surrounding environment.

Our focus is thus not merely on transforming worldviews that have a polarizing effect on our relationships with each other and our natural world. More fundamentally, our focus is on *healing* what divides us. This requires more than a new narrative or a better way to share our stories. Replacing one worldview with another will not resolve our global challenges. The outbreaks of racial tensions in the United States and Europe in 2017 showed how quickly our stance towards each other can become polarized, giving rise to divisions between people's worldviews that may initially not even have been there (Thompson, 2017). We can teach people to hate as well as to love. What are the dynamics that we are feeding in ourselves and in each other? For those of us working on a new narrative it will need to include the paradoxes of being and the complexities of our interrelationships, to avoid Trumpian simplifications that easily divide people in *us versus them* thinking. In a world of growing complexities people often crave such oversimplifications, and elicit leaders that appear to make things very simple. Yet, as Carl Jung explained long ago, it is only by learning to embrace the paradoxes of life that our consciousness grows and develops (Jung, 1969).

Irrespective of the historical and evolutionary factors that contributed or gave rise to this polarization effect, the power to heal these underlying divisions rests within each of us. Healing is a process of returning to our wholeness. As the teaching of Kanyini reminds us, wholeness at the level of personhood is based on a deeper underlying wholeness, which becomes expressed through our relationship with the land, life as family, soul and spirit, and the larger cosmos. This underlying wholeness was referred to by physicist David Bohm as the implicate order:

> *"[....] the central underlying theme has been the unbroken wholeness of the totality of existence as an undivided flowing movement without borders. It seems clear from the discussion in the previous chapter that the implicate order is particularly suitable for the understanding of such unbroken wholeness in flowing movement, for in the implicate order the totality of existence is enfolded within each region of space (and*

> *time). So, whatever part, element, or aspect we may abstract in thought, this still enfolds the whole and is therefore intrinsically related to the totality from which it has been abstracted. Thus, wholeness permeates all that is being discussed, from the very outset." (Bohm, 1980, p. 218)*

In a recent conversation we conducted with Jean Houston she expressed this eloquently in the following way when she said:

> *"A lot of my work has been about tapping into the vast domains of potential we all have, but simply do not use. [..] Once we know, as quantum physics affirms, that we do not just live in the Universe, but the Universe lives in us [..]. then look at the different powers and capacities that open up. That gives a different world, a different access, a different consciousness. When you open local consciousness to cosmic consciousness, to the actual ground and fundamentals of being itself, you have not only a different metaphor for being alive, you have literally a different human."*
> *(Houston, 2018)*

Healing our worldviews is about *that* process. To source our human view of the world, ourselves, and each other from the realization that *the universe lives in each and every one of us*. To see *from* wholeness and to see *this* wholeness in everyone, everywhere (Bateson, 1972). When we actualize this realization in our behaviors and systems, there is nothing to divide and nothing that can divide us (Smitsman & Currivan, 2019). This message has been shared consistently from the very beginning of our humanity through each of our cultures by our sages and visionaries. This message is not new, nor can it be. Life keeps reminding us, yet will we listen and accept what it implies? Our challenge now is in how to get this message into the mainstream.

Our challenge now is how to (re)design our systems such that the systemic behaviors of which we are part cease to bring forth this divisive polarization effect. To (re)design our human systems in such a way that we finally become evolutionary coherent and supercoherent with our planetary and cosmic systems. Applying the cosmic principle of increasing diversification from singularity through collaboration and syntony as the leading principle for creating evolutionary coherence and superoherence. To design receptive, adaptive, and reciprocal systems in partnership with the larger universe that lives within and through us. Working with the intelligence of life that guides how our diversity can enrich and express the wholeness that we are, from this underlying unity of our living cosmos (Currivan, 2017). This is *the* invitation. This is as Jean Houston expressed, *The Lure of Becoming* (Houston, 2018, 2009).

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