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Walking with healt and spirit

An invitation to ponder and dialogue

Preamble

I thought it was only fair to say that this collection of pieces is very different from a formal set of writing like a book or article. These are ideas, thoughts and occasional questions about ageing ... an opportunity to ponder and dialogue.

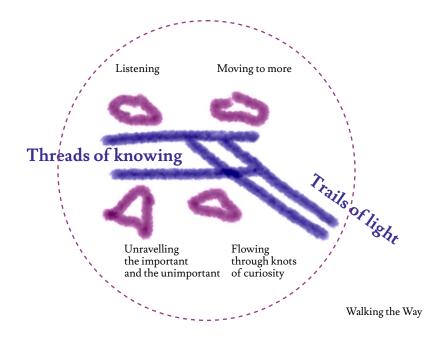
They have emerged from time spent in creativity and poetry courses at my neighbourhood art gallery, a long-anticipated visit to the South African Museum of Rock Art, much lingering in art galleries and an increasing need to put down thoughts and musings without wondering if they made sense.

I became increasingly aware my professional work was coming to an end and I was scared. What did that mean? Could I live with myself or even know myself if I wasn't doing the work I loved? Then, two more major changes ... letting go of a journal I had established so that it could grow elsewhere and adjusting to the sudden need for cancer treatment. Not a time known for being able to think clearly or indeed have much stamina for anything really.

This collection emerges from arriving at a crossroad. A place full and empty at the same time: connection with life experiences and awareness of hidden dimensions.

An early expression of this transition is the image opposite: this shows the gradual move away from my professional work I call, Threads of knowing, into a path of ageing and spiritual awareness, Trails of light. And I think of our life's resources as our traveller bags.

And perhaps I'll also say something about the title of this collection, Walking the Way with heart and spirit: an

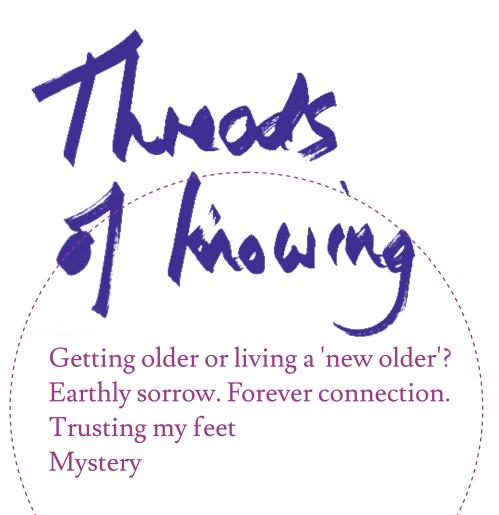


invitation to ponder and dialogue. In a Celtic course, we were asked to put together a Code of Practice. At the time, I was thinking about my professional work and thought I was putting together a Code to guide me in that. That Code still feels right for now and something I am living into. It includes the words, Strength to Walk the Way, my gift from the Deep Ancestors.

I hope you think of these pieces as an invitation to share your thoughts about this part of our lives.

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Walking the Way is a personal exploration. In the spirit of friendship, do pass it on to anyone who may find it helpful. But it is not for commercial use.



Getting older or living a 'new older'?

Would we look forward to getting older If we thought it meant knowing less? Where the beyond is even bigger than we could grasp and We are far less significant than we feared?

Why be older and know less?
A symptom of being ill, some would say.
Choosing to leave the past.
Even though that's where others think we still live.

And this new 'older'?
Defying expectations.
Daring to live forward.
Re-inventing innocence.

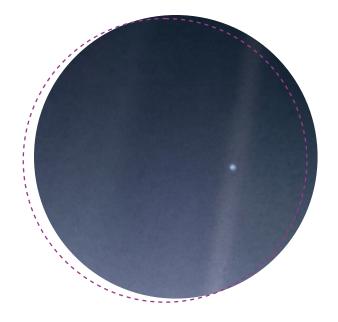
A consciousness. Excitement. Joy. Curiosity. An indefinable magic.

Why not?

Earthly sorrow. Forever connection.

Earthly sorrows.
Become real when the sense of now.
Comes to an end.
Sense of permanence.
Evaporates.

Yet
Our connection
Continues.
Through the mysteries.
Of a different consciousness.



Trusting my feet

My feet take me to the river. As our morning walk begins. Passing by the newly planted trees and Power station turned art space.

Today, the art is outside.

Very young artists.

With coloured pencils.

Looking for that special place to draw.

But the boards are already full.

Front and back, struts and stays.

They keep looking.

There must be space for just one more.

What a joyful sight!
Makes me smile.
Maybe make my far-off friends smile too.
Time to interrupt their morning with some quirkiness.

My feet start walking again. Time to trust again. Off to the next adventure.



Mystery

Everything is brought together as one.

A wonderful amalgam.

Beyond boundaries.

Where wounds and weariness and life lessons and hope are all present.

It isn't a person.

It isn't even anything physical.

It's an awareness or consciousness that has always been.

There through the ages.

Through the dimensions.

Constantly in me and with me and beyond me.

Waiting to be acknowledged.

Blocked out by my rational mind.

But there were steps to go through:

Recognising intuition: being aware but unknowable.

Witnessing a flow: watching my own steps but not trusting them or acknowledging the path.

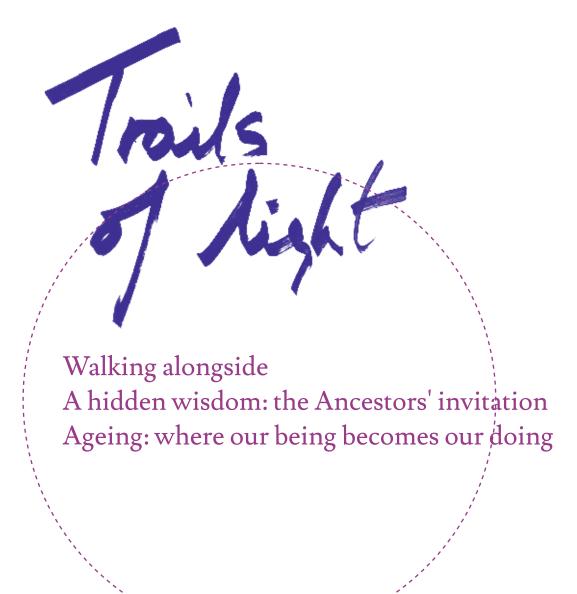
Getting out of my own way: being guided by an invisible compassion and kindness.

Feeling part of my path: sensing the special Gift from the Ancestors.

Becoming awareness: with a wholeness beyond a path. Living openness: a consciousness beyond definition.

A mystery that has no name.





Walking alongside

Voices arrive on my morning walk. I know it's time to listen.

But my questions start coming immediately. Why am I walking so slowly? Why the light-headedness? I've prepared for the walk, done my stretches enjoyed my tea.

But the Presences are with me. Time to put my agendas aside. And being wiser than me. I need to listen.

Enjoy each step.
A lifetime is in that step.
Let it be steady.
Let it take you to the next one.

Breathing in, breathing out. A peaceful step. A joyful step. Soft sounds, light breeze. Warm comfort from the sun.

Enjoy the learning in each step. Savour its newness. It's there to befriend and guide you. As are we ... walking alongside.



A hidden wisdom: the Ancestors' invitation

Come to us.

Listen to us.

Be with us.

Enjoy the collective silence we will share.

I don't know what will emerge.

But something will.

A surprise?

A confession?

A secret love?

They hold many secrets – some revealed over the years.

Now is different.

Somewhere new.

More expansive.

More dimensions, realms, perspectives.

Manifesting.

An evolving wholeness becoming ever more beautiful.

The hidden wisdom gradually comes to light.

Shyly finding its strength.

Enjoy what is revealed.

Enjoy. Breathe. Enjoy.



Ageing: where our being becomes our doing

Some communities call us the elders. For others we're the old people.

But what about us? How do we see ourselves? Do we put a label on an old body which is but an anchor for a free spirit?

Some days I feel ageless. Suspended in the light with little or no physical presence. Other times, I lack balance, worry about falling and move with the pace of a tortoise – he or she would win!

But my sense of presence is light yet palpable. I have given up agendas, plans for the future, visions to guide me.

I am living in the present and future together.

My current breath is what matters.

Being in a cosmos that is infinite, compassionate and

Enough about the being what about the doing?

healing is what matters.

Is it still about being the grumpy old woman? Or living the fantasies of how we used to be? The innovator? Risk taker?

Dashing through departure lounges ... always off to something new.

Now it's more about heartfelt connection.

Sharing wisdom, sense of history, adding to our ancestral legacy.

And living with the times of being ignored, feeling bereft or abandoned in a different departure area.

This is all part of our heritage. Whether we recognise, honour and presence these contradictions. is where our being becomes our doing.



Sunrise at Devon, UK

Trovelling along
the troils of light

Part 2

An invitation to let go and move along the trail

Preamble

Somehow I thought that once I moved from threads of knowledge to trails of light things were going to be simpler!

Trails of light would be a time of lightness and understanding. Not disruptive and dark.

But I had been focussing on the trails. Fascinated by the light and sense of direction, I didn't see, or perhaps didn't want to see, the spaces between the trails.

Experiences once forgotten started coming out of the darkness. After the initial shock of seeing them, I find I can let most go. They no longer threaten, frighten or scare me. Some do stay longer. Then they leave.

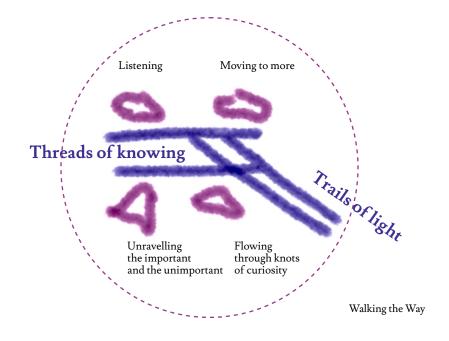
Lightness and understanding did come but with tears and challenges about whether to stay connected or let go of the known and familiar.

And I was beginning to feel something the mystics had described – the sense of being grounded while feeling part of something much bigger. It felt like a coming home. A familiar place yet now more tangible.

Walking the Way with heart and spirit was an invitation to ponder and dialogue. Many of you did and sent me your writings so full of gentleness and tenderness. Thank you so much. With Walking the Way travelling along the trails of light, I hope you enjoy the lightness of the trails as well as the letting go of any darkness in between.

Thank you for being fellow travellers.

Anne



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Tears – let sorrow flow

Tears arrive.

Unexpectedly.

with an awareness too full to be spoken

Pain.

Joy.

Hurt.

Tears tiny yet so full.

Let sorrow flow.

Maybe they cleanse.

Or release.

Or frighten.

Let sorrow flow.

Did they leave

A gaping hole

Or hurt lurking?

Or has a new awareness taken over

An unconscious healing

In a hidden place?

Let sorrow flow.

Knowingness of tears

Tears.

Beyond mind.

Beyond thought.

What do they know?

How come they come now?

They keep coming ...

Are they weeping for me?

Yet it is restful in this dark place.

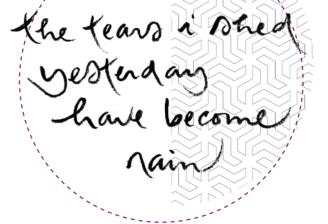
Amid divine support.

A treasured place.

Unknowable.

Yet real.

And tangible.



Calligraphy by Thich Nhat Hanh

Darkness – the space between the trails

Experiences come out of the darkness. Forgotten? No. Time for release? Perhaps.

No longer scary or frightening. Power is gone.

I let go. They leave.



Red traveller's thread with Celtic cross

Challenges of staying connected

As I am travelling so are others.

Do we stay connected or drift apart?

As we become more absorbed in our own travelling?

I hold earlier images of them. And they of me. How much do we share and explain our later images? As we move deeper into our own mysteries?

Or is it too difficult? Is it simpler to keep to the mundane rather than explore the unknowable?

The invisible, different and new. Do we dare risk?

Moving along the Tail

On the trail of light

Moving further into stillness: Invitation from the Ancestors

On the trail of light

I am the flow. I am the spaces in between.

I am the curve of the breath where it ebbs and flows.

I am the space beyond the space where all is mystery.

I am full and empty.

Full of the experiences of life.

Empty yet feeling full.

I am beyond detail and weight.
Which could bring me down to earth.

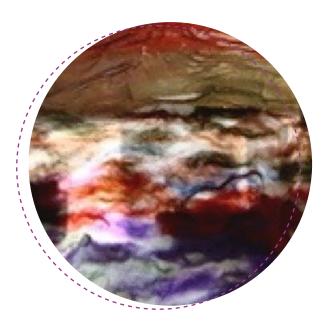
I am in a place that nurtures me.
Without mind or function.
But full of song and light.

I am an entity that is physical.

While being beyond all that is physical.

Waiting for a cosmic breath.

That links me to all other.



Moving further into stillness: Invitation from the Ancestors

Walk, talk or rest. From your inner stillness. A place of cohesion, connection and harmony.

It can feel empty. While being so full. Fixed yet always evolving.

Enjoy the experience of stillness. While you are walking, talking or resting.

Be present in that stillness. Your greatest access point to the Ancestors. And we are here for you all the time.

When the time comes for you to join us. We welcome you.
To the web of connection and harmony.
Linking us all.



Ways of thinking that continue to be important to me:

Principles of Appreciative Inquiry

The Social Constructionist Principle Words create worlds.

The Poetic Principle Whatever we focus on grows.

The Simultaneity Principle Change begins from the first question we ask.

The Anticipatory Principle
Positive Image → Positive action → Positive future

The Positive Principle In every society, organisation, team and group, some things work well.

Wholeness

'When people experience the wholeness of their system, something happens to bring out the best in our capacity.' David Cooperrider.

Narrative Principle

Stories weave a connectedness & help create meaning.

Awareness Principle

Self → Self in relation to others → Social relations -> Community relations → national → global connectedness

Free Choice Principle

Choosing to act, or not act. Choosing our impact.

Acting 'as if'

Acting as if the change is already happening.

Levels of Appreciative Inquiry from extraordinary to tragedy



THE EXTRAORDINARY

The best in human experience, those times of positive deviance that jump out.

THE ORDINARY

Capacity for seeing the best in the seemingly ordinary and insignificant events.

THE TRAGIC

Level of elevated AI capacity appreciative inquiry in the midst of tragedy.

Building Resilience with Appreciative Inquiry: A Leadership Journey through Hope, Despair, and Forgiveness by Joan McArthur-Blair and Jeanie Cockell. Foreword by David L. Cooperrider. Berrett–Koehler, 2018.

Quotes from Thich Nhat Hanh

Smile, breathe and go slowly.

'To be' is to interbe. You cannot just be by yourself alone. You have to be with every other thing.

Breathing in, I calm body and mind. Breathing out, I smile. Dwelling in the present moment I know this is the only moment.

Indra's Net web of relationships that sparkle, nourish and amplify

'The Jewel Net of Indra is like an infinite set of glittering points of light. In Indra's Net, as in the AI itself, the myriad of reflections within each glittering jewel are the essence of the jewel (organization) itself, without which it does not exist. The Net is an ancient image of oneness and diversity. Indra's Net is a web of relationships that sparkle, nourish, and amplify ... as does the Appreciative Inquiry approach to embracing and leading organizational change.'

Walking Where panilies words
the Way have new meanings

Part 3

An invitation to explore how Appreciative Inquiry is the gift that keeps on giving

Preamble

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) was a lifeline when I first came across it in the early 90s. And it has been a gift that continues to give as circumstances change and new interpretations follow.

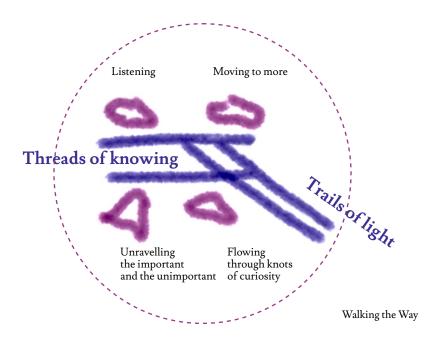
Its appeal at the beginning was the new way of looking at, and working with, organisations – looking for the best in those organisations, discovering meaningful experiences, building on them with others and co-creating inspiring and coherent ways for future growth.

This became the basis for my consulting practice which was much more joyful and beneficial to all than prevailing deficit-based practices at the time. Sharing emerging practices led me to start the *AI Newsletter* which went on to become the *AI Practitioner* journal. Reading narratives from across the world was a continued inspiration not only for me but for the increasing number of practitioners, researchers and others drawn to this new field.

AI went from being a consulting practice to a way of life. One that was going to stay with me as I left work behind and moved to a different age and stage.

Thankfully, the strength and power of the fundamentals of AI are about continually exploring and learning. It's as though nothing changes but everything changes.

As in the earlier *Walking the Way 1* and *Walking the Way 2* pieces, life now is about living life slowly. Taking each breath and step in a way that is kind and compassionate to me, to the people around me and to the larger world.



I am living a relational and socially constructed life I never anticipated. The interdependence can be nourishing at the same time as being a separate entity.

I am increasingly aware of the guides who walk with me and support me during the silences and walks by the river. The time will come when I join them.

Walking the Way 3 begins with "Learning how to live this next stage" by letting go of the things I once knew and waiting for what comes next.

This is followed by "Appreciative Inquiry: the gift that

keeps on giving" where words like gentle improvisations, interrelatedness and worldliness have special resonance for me now.

Similarly, "Balancing True Self and Subtle influences" brings together my true self and subtle spaces where I can settle into special conversations and let labels fall away.

This leads to "Peaceful Consciousness" and "Interbeing, Interconnection and Indra's Net" which is an increasing awareness of a different consciousness and an infinite net where everything is reflected in everything else.

The final section includes a meditation I created to help me at difficult times and a section with further information on an early AI model: Continuity, Novelty and Transition; the Myth and Metaphor of Indra's Net; Learnings from Women Mystics: Hildegard of Bingen, Julian of Norwich and Teresa of Ávila; and Anne's Code of Practice.

Living this stage is constantly enriched by the experiences from earlier stages as well as many inspirational and courageous thinkers, writers and innovators through the ages.

I hope these pieces encourage you to explore what AI means to you too.

Anne



going home, created by Anne Radford

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Learning how to live this next stage

Slowly. Step by step. Breath by breath.

Letting go of the known. It doesn't have any meaning anymore. Even if I did know what I thought I knew. It's so long ago. It's not needed for my one step one breath.

Yet there is still the letting go Of that awareness. Of once knowing.

Feels strange seeing it go. Sensing it go. Breathing out as it goes. Stepping softly. No more holding on.

Now I'm afraid.
What happens next?
What happens in the space?
More memories or something new?

Relief at last. Something arrives. Words arrive. Beingness is still alive. Source unknown but welcome. A different consciousness takes over. Placing me into a wider dimension.

It all feels
Tender.
Subtle.
Silky.
Seductive.
Welcoming.
Every moment a beautiful moment.



being home, created by Anne Radford

Appreciative Inquiry: the gift that keeps on giving

Familiar words. New meanings.

Thank you, AI, for finding me. This gift that keeps on giving.

Along my path from cynic to enthusiast. Where doubts became narratives. Dissonance harmonies.

Tender steps towards being a practitioner.

A new world opened up.

Consultants and clients drawn to a new language.

To the excitement of meaning-making.

Co-creating becoming the norm.

Cultures, teams and organisations flourishing.

The surprise of mystery.
An openness beyond predictability.
New constructs.
Disrupting years of traditional thinking.

Risking the walk.
Alongside mystery.
As a regular companion.
Sometimes a stroll.
A scary leap.
With a comforting quotation to lean on.

In this new phase.
Without plans or agendas.
The knowns and unknowns.
Bring new meanings.
Into the essence of what gives life.

Each moment emerges.
A gentle improvisation.
A newness.
A connection to a larger consciousness.

A different knowing. Where timeless concepts. Of Interbeing. Interrelatedness. And interconnectedness. Become the new guides.

Each moment. A carefulness, kindness and worldliness.

AI is still present.
With rich surprises.
Continuing the mystery.

Balancing true self, subtle influences and peaceful consciousness

An early AI model, Continuity, Novelty and Transition, brought together discovering the best, imagining new options and planning next steps. "AI brings all these areas into balance and harmony simultaneously."

Continuity – threads of identity, purpose, wisdom and traditions that give life.

Novelty – unexpected newness or new possibilities.

Transition – planned change.

Now, as I live a very different life some forty plus years later, I use a different model: one where balance and harmony is about living my true self, being aware of presences seen and unseen and being part of a mystery that continues to deepen.

True self – being present.

Subtle influences – new preferences.

Peaceful consciousness – in the walking, breathing and being.

True self

Many years ago, a shamanic practitioner asked me to do a guided meditation, True Self. As I read it now years later, I smile. It still feels right.

I was aware of how this figure came towards me with her outstretched arms and put those arms around me as she merged with me.

I felt as though I was merging with someone who was infinitely comforting and who was my friend full of light as well as strength and someone I could rely on.

I felt pleased to be with this ally – and I smile – knowing that I have a real friend who has my best interest at heart.

After the merger ...
This light is powerful and strong.
A real presence.
Something I haven't felt before.
A still power.
With things left to do.

She will help me walk slowly. Be in the moment. Look out for me.

It is as though she is bringing The gifts of the Ancestors.

What will this inspire me to do? That's to come later.

Subtle influences

Labels, crowded diaries and planning fall away. Seemingly, I no longer need them. For a while I missed them. Now they're distant echoes. Providing space for special conversations. For settling into my own light.

Special conversations

Conversations used to matter.

All of them.

Now there are those that do, and the rest are ignored.

Social etiquette says they all matter. Current lifestyle frees me from that.

Fewer people. In an expanded consciousness. Each alone. Yet not alone.

More focus on one step one breath. More silence between breaths. More space for surprises.

The special conversation is something precious. Where communication unfolds. In conversations worth having.

Settling into my own light

Gradually, labels fall away. No longer the consultant, practitioner or publisher. Leaving behind the expectations of others.

Letting go is a struggle.

I am.
In a new space.
With new energy.
For new words and meanings.
A guardian of my own light.



Peaceful consciousness

In *How to Walk* Thich Nhat Hanh asks the Buddha to walk for him when he didn't feel able.

When walking became difficult for me, I turned to my Ancestors as I have done so often and asked them to walk for me.

Asking the Deep Ancestors to walk for me.

Letting the Ancestors breathe. Letting the Ancestors walk. I don't have to breathe. I don't have to walk.

The Ancestors are breathing. The Ancestors are walking. I begin to enjoy the breathing. And the walking.

There is only the breathing. There is only the walking. There is no one breathing. There is no one walking.

Peace while breathing. Peace while walking. Peace is the breathing. Peace is the walking.

For more information on Thich Nhat Hanh and his books https://thichnhathanhfoundation.org

Interbeing, interconnection and Indra's Net

Living slowly. Step by step. Breath by breath.

The subtle and silky joy of being in Indra's Net. The knot of interbeing. The web of interconnection. Being aware of the spaces.

A different consciousness. A wider dimension. Of humility and influence.

An infinite net.
No beginning.
No end.
Nothing exists by itself.
Everything reflects everything else.

The story of such a special gift.
Becoming an image.
Transcending.
Linking.
All our cultures.
Where every moment is a beautiful moment.

A meditation



Further information

AI model: Continuity, Novelty and Transition

"AI brings all these areas into balance and harmony simultaneously."

The foundational AI questions address the three elements of continuity, novelty and transition.

The first is Continuity:

Describe a high point experience in your organization, a time when you were most alive and engaged.

Without being modest, what is it that you most value about yourself, your work and your organization?

What are the core factors that give life to your organization, without which the organization would cease to exist?

This leads to questions about Novelty, the unexpected newness of what the organization could become. Imagine you have awakened from a long, deep sleep. Your ideal state has become a reality. What is going on? What has changed?

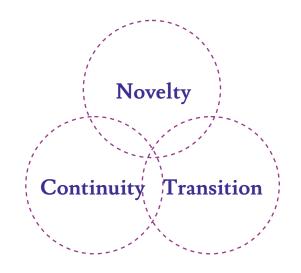
Then there is the Transition, the intentional change in the organization. How will the organization achieve the dream that was discovered?

AI brings all three areas into balance and harmony simultaneously:

Continuity – threads of identify, purpose, wisdom, pride, traditions that perpetuate life in organizations.

Novelty – unexpected newness or new possibilities.

Transition – planned change.



These elements are presented in more detail in David L. Cooperrider, Diana Whitney and Jacqueline M Stavros, Appreciative Inquiry Handbook: The First in a Series of AI Workbooks for Leaders of Change Premium Edition Lakeshore Communications, 2003 pp23-25.

The myth and metaphor of Indra's Net

Indra's Net is an ancient image of oneness – or wholeness – and diversity.

The message of the story is simple and powerful – we are all connected to each other and whatever we do has an impact on the other.

As an organizational consultant it was a delightful metaphor to open-up a client conversation about how the actions in one organizational area might impact another. It connected individual actions to a whole system.

In 2003, in the early days of Appreciative Inquiry, David Cooperrider introduced the metaphor of Indra's Net into the AI Consulting Charter. "It can be viewed as a root metaphor and vision for AI Consulting; it is offered as a creative matrix of generous opportunity and reverberating relationship."

A description of Indra's Net

"Far away in the heavenly abode of the great god Indra, there is a wonderful net which has been hung by some cunning artificer in such a manner that it stretches out indefinitely in all directions. In accordance with the extravagant tastes of deities, the artificer has hung a single glittering jewel in each "eye" of the net, and since the net itself is infinite in dimension, the jewels are infinite in number. There hang the jewels, glittering like stars of the first magnitude, a wonderful sight to behold. If we now arbitrarily select one of these jewels for inspection and look closely at it, we will discover that in its polished surface

there are reflected all the other jewels in the net, infinite in number. Not only that, but each of the jewels reflected in this one jewel is also reflecting all the other jewels, so that there is an infinite reflection process occurring." (Cook, 1989, p. 214)



https://www.jigsawlearning.ca/additional-services/blogs/indras-net-story-interconnectedness Cook, F. (1989). The jewel net of Indra. In J. B. Callicott & R. T. Ames (Eds.), Nature in Asian traditions of thought: Essays in environmental philosophy (pp. 213-229). SUNY Press.

Learnings from Women Mystics: Hildegard of Bingen, Julian of Norwich and Teresa of Ávila

During the pandemic lockdowns, we adjusted to living differently. Through Matthew Fox and Mirabai Starr, I learned about three women mystics who not only lived differently but achieved much through their literary and spiritual work.

Hildegard of Bingen, Julian of Norwich and Teresa of Ávila lived in the 12th, 14th and 16th centuries respectively and were significant in how they dealt with difficult situations.

They lived much of their lives as anchorites or religious recluses in confined spaces. With very limited access to others, they provided spiritual advice to all who asked. They wrote often to religious leaders and politicians about social inclusion and the oneness of all beings. They created beautiful and complex devotional artwork and composed many pieces of music including an opera!

They treated their experiences of illness and grief as portals for gifts and visions. Even when their lives were in danger and they had to hide their writings, they continued to focus on self-knowledge and providing service to others.

The three women mystics are:

Hildegard of Bingen (1098 to 1179) Germany She was a Benedictine abbess, writer, poet and composer described as a visionary, a prophet and a pioneer who wrote books on biology, botany, medicine, theology and the arts. She provided spiritual or political advice to everyone including the Pope and Emperor.

Julian of Norwich (1342 to 1416) England She lived at the time of the Black Death and was considered an anchor in the world rather than being detached from it. Her ministry focused on a radical unknowing, collective transformation and a greater reality of interbeing or attending to the whole. She was the first woman to publish a book in the English language, Revelations of Divine Love.

Teresa of Ávila (1515 to 1582) Spain She lived at the time of the Inquisition and was investigated by it because of her visions and voices. She used the metaphor of watering a garden to describe a spiritual journey involving self-knowledge, prayer and engagement with others. Teresa, as the others, was a polymath accomplished in writing, composing music, and painting.

For more information https://www.mirabaistarr.com

Anne's Code of Practice

Treat each interaction with reverence inviting the others into a sacred space.

Honour my Ancestors and their gift to me - strength to walk the Way.

Manage the paradox of being strong in purpose and humble in co-creation.

Know when to use creative approaches and when to work within my comfort zones.

Draw on my inner strength, professional connections and societal responsibility.

Walk with the presences seen and unseen.

Thriving on the Connection to Source and Gaia.

