

TRR 2026: The Times They Are a Changin' by Nia To Go There

Song: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UJ-u-NUKtjU&list=RDUJ-u-NUKtjU&start_radio=1

Summary: As we reflect on the song by Bob Dylan, we intuitively realize that his warnings are real about dangers he foresaw 60+ years ago. Yes, major changes are shaking us up and we are now in the center of the storm. **What do we do?** We respond by making significant transformative changes where we learn from the wisdom of the past as we shape a future of relationship with each other and the living Earth. We go back 300,000 years to learn from our ancestors.

Bob Dylan seems to be prescient in his song: The Times They Are a Changin' warning us that if we don't change ". . .you'll sink like a stone" "For the loser now /Will be later to win" "The battle outside ragin' / Will soon shake your windows/And rattle your walls."

He released this song in 1964 but, in so many ways, its warnings are very relevant today in 2025. We are in the middle of a neo-fascist regime—of an autocracy. We are also on the verge of the sixth great extinction where the human species literally could disappear. We are experiencing escalating violence with daily shootings (in the United States) that are astronomical and unbelievable. The Gun Violence Archive, which defines a mass shooting as an incident with four or more people shot (injured or killed), counted **341 mass shootings** as of October 2025. We are in a mess! To say that "things they are a changin'" is the understatement of the year.

The Need for Transformational Change:

Today, I want to speak about the need to initiate change as a shift in consciousness. We need to initiate deep and meaningful change that recognizes **we are integral to the interdependent web of all existence.**

This change is natural, it rests in our bodies, in our emotions and in our lived experiences. It's not an intellectual journey. According to noted author Thomas

Berry ¹"We must invent, or reinvent, a sustainable human by a descent into our pre-rational, our instinctive integrity. What is needed is **not transcendence** but "inscendence," not the brain but the **gene**."

What is needed is not **transcendence**. In other words, change is not going to happen because of the intervention of supernatural beings: gods, goddesses, angels, Captain America, Iron Man, Black Panther, Thor, Superman, Wonder Woman or Black Widow.

What we need is "**inscendence**." We need to look inward and we need to understand the values and beliefs that shaped our past so we can better gauge where we've been to gain insight on how to live today that honors our instinctive integrity. I begin by speaking briefly about each major worldview shift in turn: ²1) Animistic Worldview ,2) Greco Roman Worldview, 3) Scientific Revolution and Its Mechanistic Worldview, 4) Participatory Worldview of Interconnectedness.

1: Animism (the other AI: animate intelligence)

The word **animism** comes from the Latin word *anima* which refers to spirit, soul or life-force. **It** is by far the oldest set of beliefs of humanity, and it was shared by Indigenous traditional hunting-gathering, fishing, farming, and herding societies throughout the world. I'm speaking of the Indigenous cultures in the Americas, the Ainu in Japan, the Sami in the Scandinavian countries, the untouchables in India, the Aboriginal peoples in Australia, the Maori peoples in New Zealand and the [Kānaka Maoli](#) peoples in Hawaii and all the Indigenous peoples whose values and beliefs reflected this animistic worldview. In so many ways, animism qualifies as the great, or world "religion" instead of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, or Judaism.

If we consider the last 300,000 years, it is astonishing to learn that 94% of the time **human beings viewed all of nature as sacred and interconnected**. They

¹ (Thomas Berry from Dream of the Earth quoted in Bill Plotkin, Nature and the Human Soul: Cultivating the Wholeness and Community in a Fragmented World. @2008. P. 1.)

² (The concept of Worldview shifts is loosely based on ideas from Giles Hutchins as detailed in his book, Nature Works: Activating Regenerative Leadership Consciousness, Wordzworth, 2024)

were immersed in the understanding that nothing is separate, that when **we harm one aspect of the world out there, it affects all of us**. During this era our planet was in pristine health.

Epistemology (way of knowing) was immersive where people learned through relationships with all other life forms. Because of this sense of interwoven alliances and relationships, it appears ³that wars of conquest and possession did not occur until about 10-12,000 years ago.

This Earth Centered perspective that permeated the globe began to shift and we moved into what we call the Greco-Roman worldview.

2: Greco-Roman Worldview

In essence the Greco-Roman Era began in the West, approximately 2500 years ago (428-348 BCE: before common era). This era was heavily influenced by well-known philosophers Plato and Aristotle. They essentially created **a worldview that emphasized an individual's acquisition of knowledge**, yet it was not divorced from a sense of commonly shared wisdom. Plato, for example, viewed self-knowledge as a key to self-enlightenment, a philosophy shared by Buddhism, Hinduism and Confucianism. And Aristotle's description of **Eudaimonia (an ancient Greek term) shares similar sentiments that** represent a deeper, more profound state of well-being and fulfillment than simple happiness achieved through virtuous, rational, and active engagement with life. It is the ultimate good, a life "well-lived" with purpose and meaning.

The Greco-Roman worldview permeated the cultural worldview throughout Europe largely through Alexander the Great who was tutored by Aristotle. Christendom also became a major influence during this phase and drew much of its philosophical teachings from Greco-Roman thought.

The Greco Roman epistemology or way of knowing was **reflective thought** using the strategy of Socratic questioning where questions were used to further explore concepts, to challenge assumptions, and to develop critical thinking skills.

³ (Greg Campbell, Total Reset: Realigning with timeless holistic blueprint for living, p. 14)

There comes a time when one worldview starts to fall apart and another worldview emerges. This happened in medieval Europe with the Thirty Years War, significant weather changes (a mini-Ice Age) and the famines and plagues that went with it including **corruption in the Church and patriarchal dominance that led to witch-hunts and Inquisitions**. At this time **monarchy, empire, "god kings" and acquisition of material goods also emerged as a mark of power**. As the old worldview began to die, the Scientific Revolution was born.

3: The Scientific Revolution's Mechanistic Worldview

The Scientific Revolution took place around 1543 to 1687. It was the beginning of a radical change brought about by new discoveries in physics, astronomy, and mathematics and associated with the names of Copernicus, Galileo, Descartes, Bacon, and Newton.

Isaac Newton's emphasis on a mechanized universe was completely devoid of relationships. This gave rise to a way of knowing where phenomena were explained through cause and effect, and things were broken down into smaller and smaller parts to get to the basic structural component that "causes" the thing to exist.

This was the era of philosophers and scientists looking for knowledge not from the interconnectedness of nature, nor self-enlightenment, nor the Church, but from the ability to manipulate nature for human betterment. **Knowledge became synonymous with power**. Knowledge became less embodied and less connected to a deeper self and the universal Mind (the principle source of being). **The reasoning was that the "universal Mind" could not be measured in a reductive sense, so it did not exist**.

Epistemology became reliant on **empirical evidence**. Knowledge was perceived as residing more in the **"brain"** and less in the **"gene;"** **4human beings began moving away from an instinctive integrity** and focused more on "left brain" functions such as data collection and analysis ignoring the right brain that is more introspective, intuitive and takes the larger view into consideration.

⁴ Iain McGilchrist, [*The Master and His Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World*](#), 2019.

Colonialism:

This period strongly endorsed and supported colonization (Christopher Columbus and other “explorers”) that was not a one-time event that happened to Indigenous People only, but it was a gradual process of shifting perspectives that emerged into a cultural worldview of hierarchical privilege where some human beings were dominant over other human beings and other life forms. As a machine, the planet was also colonized.

Colonialism and fascism are not that different. Both colonialism and fascism share foundational similarities rooted in systems of hierarchy, exploitation, and violence, particularly concerning the concepts of race, territory, and authoritarian control.

As this worldview is collapsing, we move into one that looks hopeful.

4) Participatory Worldview of Interconnectedness (*Decolonization*)

It was not until the 20th century that the compartmentalized and mechanistic view of the world began to dramatically shift. This was brought on by brilliant minds of the day - scientists like Einstein, Bohr, Plank, Schrödinger, Bohm - each of whom explored the existence of an all-pervasive field. Today, many refer to this field as the Quantum Field or Zero-Point Energy Field.

In the 1920s...quantum theory challenged scientists to accept the fact that the solid material objects of classical physics dissolve at the subatomic level into wavelike patterns or probabilities. ⁵These patterns do not represent probabilities of things, but rather **probabilities of interconnections**.

The subatomic particles have no meaning as isolated entities but can be understood only as interconnections, or correlations. This is how quantum physics shows that we cannot decompose the world into independently existing elementary units. As we shift our attention from macroscopic objects to atoms and subatomic particles, nature does not show us any isolated building blocks but rather **appears as a complex web of relationships among the various parts of the unified whole. It is the whole that determines the behavior of the parts.**

⁵ Fritjof Capra, *The Web of Life: A New Scientific Understanding of Living Systems*, 1997.

In the 1970s Geoffrey Chew's (theoretical physicist) bootstrap philosophy' not only abandons the idea of fundamental building blocks of matter, but he accepts no fundamental entities whatsoever—no fundamental constants, laws or equations. ⁶"The material world is seen as a dynamic web of interrelated events. None of the properties of any part of the web is fundamental; they all follow the properties of the other parts, and the overall consistency of their interrelations determines the structure of the entire web."

According to this worldview, the human mind is seen as reverberating within an interdependent connected world. Our inner psychological wellbeing influences and is influenced by the outer world. **Such a worldview shift transforms underlying beliefs and informs values and is an integral part of decolonization. This sense of interconnectedness is not alien to us, it feels like a homecoming.** We have felt moments of this connectedness in our lives when we feel love and aliveness - a heart-felt sense of being aligned, present and true in the moment.

Summary:

1. **Animacy:** In this era relationships and the dynamic entanglement of all life-forms create the interconnected web of life and this worldview in many ways is the worldview that we must integrate into our contemporary world. The challenge is how to bring together two seemingly contradictory worldviews: one that sees the "world" as alive, and the contemporary worldview that sees the "world" as a non-living machine.
2. **Greco Roman Worldview:** What stands out for me in this era is the practice of scholarly reflective practice and holistic thinking encouraging action based on meaningful purpose and living a fulfilled life as in Eudaimonia. The philosophical musings of the Greek Philosophers most likely gave rise to profound existential questions: "Who am I?" "Why am I here?" and other questions that challenge us to think more deeply about life's many puzzles and to engage thoughtfully with each other.

⁶ Fritjof Capra, *The Web of Life: A New Scientific Understanding of Living Systems*, 1997.

3. **The Scientific Revolution and Its Mechanistic Worldview:** It's difficult to see what we could gain from this era because it established such a dangerous precedent for the extreme trajectory of planetary and human colonization the effects of which we are still experiencing today. However, gathering empirical evidence from both objective and subjective perspectives does have value and merit.
4. **Participatory Worldview of Interconnectedness:** This is an era that adopts both a scientific and intuitive approach to highlight the intelligence in all aspects of nature and this is a period when scientists have broadened scientific research to encompass the visible and invisible "world" and how the two are entangled in this "quantum" web of relationships. This era is personally meaningful to me as an Indigenous person because it validates the animistic worldview where the planet, people, flora and fauna flourished for hundreds of thousands of years through reciprocal relationships.

Intelligence in Nature:

Below are a few books that underscore the intelligence in nature illustrating that⁷ "We are human only in contact, and conviviality, with what is not human."

BOOK TITLE	AUTHOR	SUMMARY
<i>Eager: The Surprising, Secret Life of Beavers and Why They Matter</i>	<i>By Ben Goldfarb.</i>	<i>Eager</i> is a powerful story about one of the world's most influential and intelligent species, how North America was colonized, how our landscapes have changed over the centuries, and how beavers can help us fight drought, flooding, wildfire, extinction, and the ravages of climate change. Ultimately, it's about how we can learn to coexist, harmoniously and even beneficially, with our fellow travelers on this planet.

⁷ Dave Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, 1999.

Being Salmon, Being Human	by Martin Lee Mueller.	<u>Watershed Health</u> : The entire ecosystem benefits from healthy salmon runs, as the nutrient cycling and increased vegetation help stabilize stream banks, control erosion, and provide shelter for young salmon. If we imagine the world as a salmon might see it, humans would see how this enriches our own intelligence and how reciprocal relationships serves all life-forms.
Thus Spoke the Plant	Monica Gagliano	Her research revealed that plants communicate via chemical signals, they take care of their young and they contribute to the planet in multiple ways They help the earth by producing the oxygen humans and animals breathe, absorbing excess carbon dioxide that contributes to climate change, and regulating the water cycle through transpiration.
The Hidden Life of Trees	Peter Wohlleben	Author Peter Wohlleben convincingly makes the case that the forest is a social network. He cites groundbreaking scientific discoveries to describe how trees are like human families: tree parents live together with their children, communicate with them, support them as they grow, share nutrients with those who are sick or struggling, and even warn each other of impending dangers.
The Light Eaters	Zoe Schanger	<i>The Light Eaters</i> is a deep immersion into the drama of green life and the complexity of this wild and awe-inspiring world that challenges our very understanding of agency, consciousness, and intelligence. What is intelligent life if not a vine that grows leaves to blend into the shrub on which it climbs, a flower that shapes its bloom to fit exactly the beak of its pollinator, a pea seedling that can hear water flowing and make its way toward it?
The Evolved Nest	Darcia Narvarez and G. A. Bradshaw	"... how humanity has forgotten its own nature, even as it has abandoned and turned against the Nature that formed and sustained us over millions of years."

The Spell of the Sensuous	David Abram	"Without the oxygenating breath of the forests, without the clutch of gravity and the tumbled magic of river rapids, we have no distance from our technologies, no way of assessing their limitations, no way to keep ourselves from turning into them. We need to know the textures, the rhythms and tastes of the bodily world, and to distinguish readily between such tastes and those of our own invention. "
Spiritual Ecology	Ed. Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee	Leading voices from Buddhism, Sufism, Christianity, and Indigenous traditions unite to address our forgetfulness of nature's sacredness. They offer insights into climate change, species loss, and deforestation, urging a reassessment of our beliefs about the Earth.
Intelligence in Nature	Jeremy Narby	Narby presents the first in-depth anthropological study of this concept in the West. He not only uncovers a mysterious thread of intelligent behavior within the natural world but also probes the question of what humanity can learn from nature's economy and knowingness in its own search for a saner and more sustainable way of life.

Decolonization: There is an urgent need to regain our innate sense of consciousness as we learn from other life-forms. Once again, we must recognize that we human beings are integral to the ecosystem of life's interdependent web of relationships. This sense of deep and reciprocal relationships is integral to decolonization where we once again "see" as the Ubuntu people: "I am because you are; you are because I am."

Key Points to Remember as part of our decolonizing journey:

1. The Earth is a living animate being and we are integral to the Earth. Human beings are nature.
2. Human beings must restore (and re-story) our deep connection to our Earth origins and destination. This, in essence, is decolonization.
3. Life in its myriad forms is intelligent: plants, animals, trees, rocks and so on.

4. There is much to learn from and about the First Peoples.

Colonialism. I want to underscore the importance of recognizing that the colonial culture we are living in today is perfect "fodder" for fascism. They share these basic tenets:

- **Earth as an Object** supports Resource Exploitation. Land is property to be owned for economic purposes. This has given rise to a capitalistic mentality that supports economic disparity. *This is a 360 degree shift from the other AI.*
- **Racial Superiority** This includes all forms of racism which is the bedrock of various kinds of violence: **1: direct violence** (supports ethnic cleansing, genocide, eugenics) **2: structural violence** (examples are systemic racism and other mechanisms that exclude particular groups from opportunity), **3: attentional violence** (dehumanizing other human beings, dissociating from past violence through revisionist histories).
- **Worldview of "Power Over" and separation from the interdependent web of all life.** We have to make a conscious effort to change the past so that it doesn't continue its **repetitive cycle of colonialism/fascism.**

Closing Remarks:

I end with the poetic words of Andreas Weber, one of my favorite biologists. I quote from his book entitled *The Biology of Wonder: Aliveness, Feeling and the Metamorphosis of Science*, 2016.

"We hang here, inquisitive carbon-based life forms, knowing that every atom of carbon now in our bodies was once in the interior of a star. Every living being is a knot that ties the moment. It flows through us. Every living being is a knot that ties the whole. We are here and everywhere at the same moment because we are the ocean's breadth and the drop that knows its origins. Like all organisms, we still carry our origin with us in the salty plasma of our cells. The ocean has been folding itself into us. The milieu of the body's fluids is our inner sea. We are the living world. We are connected to it in a way that we cannot untangle.

Finally, something for us to ponder. At one time all human beings were Indigenous. We all were and still are beautiful in our **inscendence** with our ancestral knowledge that must take root in today's world as we grapple with the effects of colonialism and its systemic grasp on our human consciousness and aspirations. My hope is that we commit ourselves to creating a dramatic shift in consciousness that gives rise to a more beautiful world our hearts know is possible. Yes, my hope is that "the times they are a changin'" for the better.

Questions to ponder:

1. From your perspective what positive insights does each era offer?
2. How do you see the root tenets of colonization acted out in our Western culture today?
3. From your personal perspective what are the root tenets of decolonization? How do we shift into a consciousness that will help bring about decolonization?
4. **Essential Question: What wisdom can we glean from our past to deepen our "Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part?"**