

A beginner's guide to Master Storytelling

AND INTEGRAL MOTIVATION THEORY

Exploring a new storytelling-based motivation theory to drive lasting cultural change on social and environmental issues



Transforming our world through storytelling.

Storytelling for social and ecological transformation.

The greatest challenges we face today, including climate change, social inequality and environmental destruction have not emerged accidentally, nor are they all the inevitable result of natural processes. They are all symptoms of the deep psychological drivers that shape what we value, and how we think and relate to the world around us.

These psychological drivers are all shaped **by the stories we tell ourselves.**

Understanding what these underlying 'stories' are and how they shape social norms, values and behaviours requires an entirely new storytelling approach and theory. This is called **Master Storytelling.**

Master Storytelling is not to be confused with the ability to *master* the art of storytelling (i.e. becoming an *expert* in storytelling), rather, it refers to the overarching term to describe our work with metanarratives.

Metanarratives are the implicit narratives which are expressed *every time* we communicate. It is at the metanarrative level where we engage with **values, motivation and purpose** - the three primitives that shape the social and cultural norms that drive our politics, economic institutions and our long-term behaviours.

As metanarratives are implicit they take a different type of attention to 'see' them. Thanks to recent breakthroughs in neuropsychology and neuroscience we now have a better grasp of how metanarratives work, how the brain processes them and how these seemingly invisible narratives play a huge role in shaping how we relate and value the world around us.

Using these insights opens up a whole range of possibilities for rethinking our current theories of motivation, understanding how values operate, and how to work with metanarratives to catalyse long-term change, both on a personal level and within society at large. Ultimately, grasping the power of metanarratives holds the key to uncovering profound solutions to today's pressing challenges.

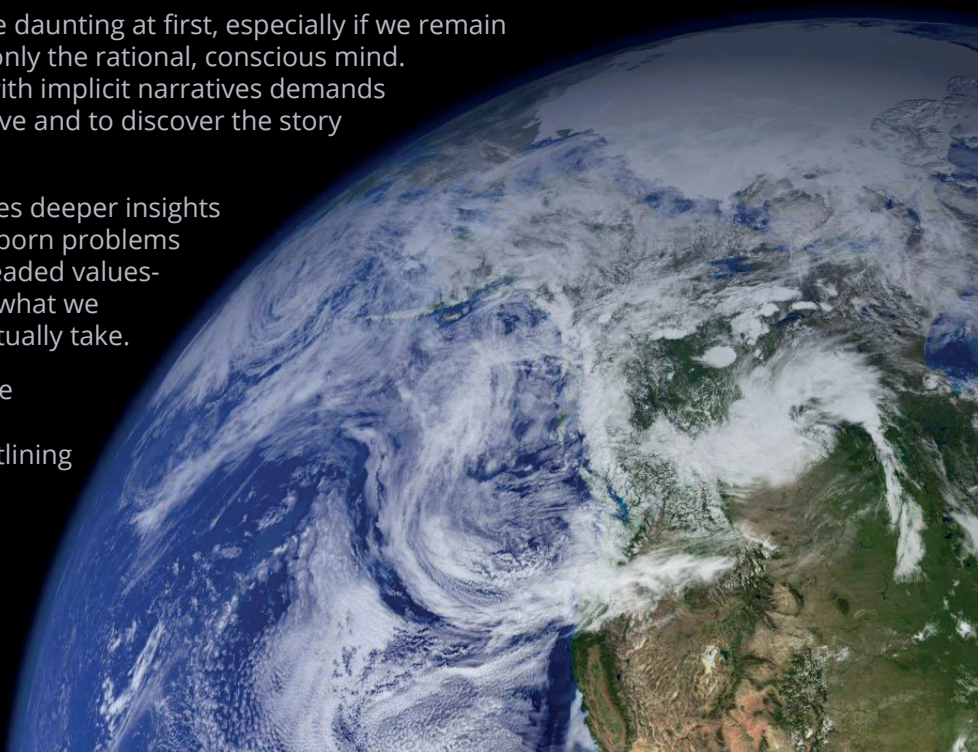
Master Storytelling is not a technique, or a single storytelling method. It is about transitioning to an entirely new paradigm - a new way of thinking - on how to motivate, engage values and to drive lasting and meaningful change on the issues that we all care about.

Working with metanarratives challenges our conventional approach to storytelling—a field that has often been reduced to crafting marketing propositions designed solely to inspire, connect emotionally, or inform audiences about positive change. While this approach may seem effective, it neglects what is happening at the pre-conscious level of the self and how to harness lasting change through storytelling methodologies.

Engaging with metanarratives can be daunting at first, especially if we remain confined to a paradigm that values only the rational, conscious mind. Working at the preconscious level, with implicit narratives demands the ability to see through the narrative and to discover the story underneath.

Working with metanarratives provides deeper insights on how to overcome incredibly stubborn problems like polarisation, apathy, and the dreaded values-action gap, the disconnect between what we claim to value and the actions we actually take.

This beginner's guide offers a concise introduction to Master Storytelling, explaining its core principles and outlining actionable steps you can take on your journey to becoming a Master Storyteller.



Introducing Master Storytelling

We instinctively know the power of stories and storytelling. We know that stories hold incredible power over us. They can make us laugh, cry, fear, jump with fright, empathise, transport us to different worlds and see from different perspectives.

A good storyteller can wield incredible power over their audience, shaping how they see, feel, and relate within the story that is being told. A skilled storyteller can awaken certain values, shift opinions, help to see from a different perspective, and so much more.

We should never underestimate the power of storytelling, nor the power of the storyteller.

We crave stories because storytelling and stories are fundamental to being human. It would be almost impossible to imagine a world without stories, where we only communicated through instructive and dry technical language.

This would indeed be a cold world, devoid of colour, emotion or imagination.

But what does our need for stories reveal about us? Why are they so important in helping us to make sense of ourselves and our place in the world? And more importantly, do we *really* understand the true nature of stories and storytelling and how to harness them for positive change?

Or do we just relegate stories and storytelling to the basic function of a marketing tool or technique to grab people's attention, or to manipulate emotions so that audiences will give or take action with our respective campaigns or causes?

To understand storytelling and its true nature we first have to recognise that storytelling goes deeper *than we think* as storytelling works both at the conscious and pre-conscious states of attention.

To make sense of storytelling means that we must be willing to leave behind some old and outdated paradigms that shape our thinking and attention, and embrace new insights from neuropsychology that shows the dual nature of the two hemispheres of the brain, and how each one interprets information differently.

In this Beginner's Guide to Master Storytelling we will touch upon some of the basics of metanarrative work. As metanarratives make up half of all communications, it is probably best to think of Master Storytelling not as a subject, topic or area of study but as *an entirely new discipline* of which there are many subjects.

One of the major insights this book offers is an entirely new motivation theory called **Integral Motivation Theory (IMT)**. As we will see, working with metanarratives *and* working with a new motivation theory is the same task, both are essential to the other.

As Master Storytelling is a huge area of work, this book only gives the bare bones of metanarratives and how to work with them. This is why there is a lot of theory and very few practical examples. If you are interested in seeing how this theory plays out in practice, then join our training programme, available only at ministory.co.uk which gives real examples and practical ways you can leverage storytelling methodologies within your own work.

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There is no such thing as a story.

Biologist Stephen Jay Gould once concluded, after studying evolutionary biology for his entire life, that *there is no such thing as a fish*. The point is, not that he didn't believe in the existence of fish (he wouldn't have been a very good biologist if he did), but rather that most sea creatures are not as closely related to each other as we think, so it was wrong to put them into the same category.

The same can be said of stories. There is no such thing as a story. We use this term 'story' interchangeably, referencing a wide range of narrative and non-narrative encounters. What we mean by storytelling can mean something entirely different depending on who you speak to, whether they are a salesperson, a novelist, a campaigner, an artist, a marketing executive, an architect, an animator, a leader or an educationalist.

What we mean by stories and storytelling varies too widely for them to be put into any one singular category.

For the sake of this book we will be exploring the concept of story and storytelling within a larger framework as we will be working with metanarratives. These feed into and shape all stories, whether they are verbal or non-verbal, narrative or implicit narrative. Metanarratives shape them all. Think of them as the foundation on which stories and storytelling are formed.

So we are not just talking about fictional narratives, nor about real life-stories, nor about deeper cultural narratives that shape social norms, nor about mythic stories or other ancient forms of storytelling practices, *we will be talking about all of them*.

As my work primarily focuses on communicating, motivating and engaging audiences on social and environmental issues, most of my examples will refer to this context, with more references to climate change (as this offers the best examples). Even if you are not working in this area the insights in this book can be *applied to any form of storytelling* as we will be touching upon some universal principles that apply to us all.

So whoever you are, whatever your role, especially if you are *not* in a communications role, the contents of this book will apply to you, because we are talking about something fundamental that affects us all.

So sit back, get comfortable, and let our story begin...

Foreword.

Working on the front-line for social and environmental transformation for almost all my adult life, I get to see things from a unique position. I get to see what works and what doesn't; what resonates and what falls flat, what hits the mark and what flops. This brings a certain sobriety to my work. After all, *the audience never lies*.

It doesn't matter what the latest research says, what the latest psychological breakthroughs are or the claims made from the latest peer-reviewed scientific paper. When it comes to understanding how to motivate audiences to take real and meaningful action on social and environmental issues and how to create long-term behavioural change, *what we think should work is of lesser importance*. Either it *does* work, or it *doesn't*. This is where theory and ideas collide with hard, cold reality.

And I think most of us working on climate-related communications have hit this hard, cold reality and are beginning to ask some deeper questions. On the one hand we seem to be doing everything right, and yet we are still struggling to drive through the necessary changes we urgently need to see today.

It seems that we're presenting the right information, we're making our messages clear, we're using doom and gloom style messaging, we're using positive and inspiring style messaging, we're telling stories - real stories - of people already affected by climate change. We're doing emotionally engaging content, we're doing scientific and sober content, we've used playful communications, comedy, as well as serious messaging. We've used the arts, drama, painters, illustrators. We've tried big campaigns, small campaigns. We've tried better representation in our messaging, we've tried celebs, we've tried alternative stories... We've exhausted almost every idea that we have in trying to awaken audiences to the seriousness of the current crisis.

Not only have all of these approaches not worked to trigger change at the rate, scale and depth needed today, there are signs that despite the changes we have managed to create, that things are starting to go backwards.

Not only do we stand on the brink of an unprecedented global crises – climate change, environmental degradation, as well as a dizzying array of complex social crises that all demand immediate and real action, what is perplexing it that *we know* what is happening and *we know* how urgent our situation is, *we know* what we need to do, we even have the resources, skills and technology to bring about the changes needed. **What we seem to lack is the motivation to do so.**

So, given this context, why has there been no development or serious rethinking of our current motivation models, which were developed in the 1950s (Maslov Hierarchy of Needs) or 1980s (Self Determination theory)? Why the unwillingness to do any major rethink in this critical area? Why are we not doing a major rethink in our current strategies for change given they haven't worked? And, more importantly, why do we keep doubling down on what we've always done, telling the same 'story' again and again, despite the clear evidence that what we are doing isn't working to the scale, rate and depth that is needed to address today's crises?

Having spoken to other professionals including storytellers, campaigners, changemakers, policy experts and a whole range of different activists all working for positive change, there is a growing feeling that there is something deeper happening here. Somehow, despite our best efforts, what we are doing isn't quite resonating. There seems to be a feeling that there is something that *sits below everything*, a stubborn undertow that we somehow can't shift.

Whenever we take a step forward, whether it is a campaign success leading to a policy change or a swell in support that leads to political change, the success almost always feels short lived, as everything slowly and eventually realigns itself back to where we started. All campaigns seem to fizzle out, promises that are made are slowly and systematically rescinded, watered-down, reduced, sidelined or just ignored altogether. This is the ever-frustrating experience of the one-step forward, two-step backwards world of campaigning for social and environmental change.

Do we ever really ask the deeper question of *what everything is realigning itself back to*? What is this deeper hidden narrative that draws us back to where none of us want to be? What is this deep driver that ultimately makes our work for real and lasting change feel almost impossible?

This deep underlying driver can best be described as a metanarrative.

Metanarratives are not only misunderstood, they are often ignored despite the huge power they have over our lives. Until we fully understand what metanarratives are, how they work, and - more importantly - how to change them, then nothing will ever really change. No matter how well we run our campaigns, how we influence public opinion, and how we highlight the urgent need for action, everything will always revert back to dominant metanarratives that shape our lives.

This is where I believe we need to be urgently focusing our attention.

This is the purpose of this book: to offer an overview and outline new ways in how to work with this deep underlying driver, and how to integrate and apply this thinking into our work.

Working with metanarratives is no small task. Not only do we need to develop different modes of attention so that we can 'see' these seemingly invisible narratives, but we also need to undertake the challenging task of deconstructing the dominant cultural paradigms that shape our thinking that obscure the implicit layers of all communication.

When working with metanarratives, it is important to view them as part of a whole eco-system. Rather than thinking of them as narratives (sequence of words), we should think of them as the place where values, paradigms, motivation orientations and purpose meet and interact with each other. This is why working with metanarratives will challenge the very fabric of our

understanding of how values and motivation work. These insights can help us to ask bigger questions, and to challenge whether our current motivation theories are fit for purpose in light of today's problems.²

By shifting to an ecological mindset we can begin to see how the values, motivation and purpose can never be understood in isolation but only in how they interact with each other. A bit like three constitutive parts of an engine. When we understand how this 'engine' works, we can see how metanarratives play a huge role in driving motivation and behaviours and how changing them can bring about the deep changes we are collectively struggling to bring about.

These insights can help us to build a brand new motivation theory called **Integral Motivational Theory (IMT)** – a motivational theory based on insights taken from the nature of metanarratives and their role in driving how we think, feel, value and relate to the world around us.

This work has been incredibly difficult to pull together, not because it is intellectually challenging (although many aspects of it are!), but because there *is so much that we need to unlearn*. Every stage of building this new motivation model requires us to challenge our basic assumptions of what drives behaviour as well as social and cultural norms. This new theory demands a radical rethink on our understanding of the nature of stories, how motivation works, the nature of values and the role purpose plays at the preconscious level of everything we do.

This work has been further hampered by the fact that there are so few source materials to draw upon, as our academic obsession with specialisation means there are too few people working with a multi-disciplinary focus, too few people willing to question the dominant paradigms that we hold as a culture, too few people who have the imagination to think outside the standard linear thinking that dominates most of academic thought, too few people who are trained or even know how to *contemplate* what is implicit in everything we do, or to view ideas through an integral or ecological lens. It is probably why we are stuck in a rut with no real new ideas to move us forward.

My hope is that this book will, at the very least, *help you to think better*, to spot the obvious mistakes that we keep repeating, and how to escape the thinking traps that have kept us stuck in a rut for so long, resulting in our inability to effect real change on both the social and environmental crises of our time.

There is no magic solution being offered here. Working with metanarratives is hard, as it requires deep thought and challenges almost every foundational belief that we have when it comes to understanding human motivation. But this approach does offer us incredible insights and new ideas on how we can motivate audiences towards positive change.

Before we start, as we will be critiquing old models and old paradigms I invite you to embrace what is called *a beginner's mind*. This is not about dumbing down or reducing our intellectual faculties, but rather to stretch them by acknowledging that when it comes to working with the interior aspects of the self, including values, motivation and purpose, there is so much that we don't know about ourselves, especially in our hyper-rationalistic, scientific and technocratic culture.

Exploring some of these inner themes, especially when it comes to working with the self-transcending aspects of the self, may feel a step too far for some of us in terms of trusting in different ways of knowing. But I would argue that the only thing that is preventing us from creating real and lasting change on both social and environmental issues is ourselves, and whether we are willing to cross the threshold of the dominant paradigms that shape how we think and relate to the world around us.

By learning how to use and stretch a different 'muscle group' altogether, which includes imagination, intuition, emotion and contemplative attention can we begin to work with what we have historically called 'the heart', which is the source of human motivation, behaviour and values.

This is an invitation to learn a new language, develop new skills and embrace new ways of knowing. Because when we do all of this, only then can we ever hope to tell a new 'story'.

Kieran O'Brien
Director of Ministry



Master Storytelling is a new discipline which requires an understanding of a few core concepts. Below are a few definitions to help us to get started in this area of work. Some of these concepts may be interpreted slightly different by others, the descriptions below will help you understand how these concepts work in this book.

Contemplation

Contemplation is often associated with thinking deeply. Thinking deeply, whatever that might be, is not the same as contemplative thinking or contemplative seeing. There are many interpretations and definitions of contemplation, for the sake of this book contemplation is defined as a mode of attention that transcends the words and narrative, and 'sees' beyond *things* - beyond the tangible and explicit, not as *we think them to be* but *as they are*. When working with metanarratives, values, purpose and motivation it is important that we develop this way of seeing so that we can 'see' all that is implicitly communicated at the metanarrative level of all communications.

Ecological thinking

Ecology describes the relationship between living things and their environment. Therefore to think ecologically is to think as if all things are connected, related *and living*. Our common perception to problem solving is through the utilisation of mechanistic thinking, to think in linear ways and as if all things are dead or inanimate objects. This thinking may work well if you are a mechanic building an engine, but makes no sense when working with values, motivation, purpose and metanarratives.

Ecological thinking presumes that you cannot understand something outside of the relationship it holds with the other. Because all things are connected, *only by understanding the whole can we understand the part*. This approach sits in opposition to contemporary (and most academic) ways of thinking that tries to break things down into parts in order to understand the whole. This has resulted in the specialisation of different disciplines, but with very few trained to think broadly in an interconnected way across more than two disciplines at most. This has resulted in some major collective blind-spots which we will cover in this book.

First principles thinking

This is a problem-solving method that involves breaking down complex issues into their most fundamental parts and resembling them to create new solutions. **IMT** embodies this approach, as we will be re-evaluating the three primitives - values, motivation and purpose - and exploring how they work together within a relational context as well as how they function at the implicit level (or metanarrative level) of all communications. Only by questioning the first principles on which we build everything else, can we ever find deep solutions to the problems we face today.

Flow state

We tend to prefer to think analytically, systematically and mechanistically. This gives weight and preference to the attention of the left-hemisphere of the brain. The right hemisphere of the brain thinks more in a relational state, so it is more appropriate to use terms like flow and flow states to describe this relational thinking. A flow state is contagious, it recognises that when one aspect flows in a certain direction (i.e. motivation orientation), it influences the others to flow in that state as well (purpose and values). Another term for this is frequency or vibration.

The popularisation of this term by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi³ posits only one flow state, where we enter into a moment of intense focus, enjoyment and a sense of control. In **IMT** we will explore how *everything is always in a flow state*. You don't *enter into a flow state*, but *shift* from one flow state to the other. We tend only to notice different flow states when they are at odds with the dominant flow state that we are in. (Don't worry, this will make sense later on!).

Integral ecology

This concept draws from Catholic Social Teaching and is found in the encyclical *Laudato Si'* by Pope Francis⁴. It is built on the idea that everything is connected, the social, the environmental and the spiritual. We cannot address the environmental issues without understanding and working with social issues, and we can't understand both social and environmental issues without understanding the spiritual. All are connected. All need to be addressed if we are to care for our common home.

Integral ecology forms the bedrock on which **IMT** is built. As a methodology it is narrative informed and this approach recognises our current crisis is foremost a relational crisis. Not just how we relate to the environment and our global family, but also how we relate *to our own selves*. This approach not only coheres best with what is happening within metanarratives, it offers a stronger framework on which to build a new motivation model based on the insights from a wisdom tradition.

Meta

This is an often misunderstood concept. Meta which means 'after' or 'beyond' is a self-awareness of oneself. Someone telling a joke about telling jokes is meta, someone making a movie about making a movie is meta.

Meta does not sit *within*, but rather 'with', 'after', 'alongside', 'on top of' and 'beyond'. Meta is associated with a different type of attention altogether, as it transcends, encompasses and comprehends the whole. To think meta, requires the ability to move over, beyond and outside the subject matter text itself in order to reflect on it.

Metacrisis

This is the common term for understanding today's global crises through the lens of a systems and interconnection perspective. A metacrisis lens will view everything as part of a single phenomenon. Rather than thinking of our current crisis as an environmental crisis, or a psychological or spiritual crisis, or crisis in economics of governance, we can see that it is all of these things, and not reducible to any one of them.⁵

While this approach is similar to integral ecology in that it recognises and treats everything as connected, it (ironically) fails to acknowledge or take seriously the role metanarratives play in the metacrisis. Through the lens of metacrisis thinking is the tendency to seek ways to 'solve' the crisis using systems thinking and trying to find coherent solutions through the complexity. While this approach is certainly useful, it tends to lead to a somewhat academic paralysis as academics struggle to cohere any deep and meaningful solutions that can be practically applied.

While this analysis offers useful insights it doesn't offer a natural starting ground on which to build the new **IMT**. There is little desire for further analysis and the exploration of increasing complexity at this stage of proceedings. We need something which we can pick up and run with *now*. This is why drawing from a wisdom storytelling tradition offers more leverage on which to build real change.

Non-rational

The non-rational has often been conflated with irrationality - that which is not logical or reasonable. Within this dualistic thinking we dismiss everything that does not fit within a framework of pre-described reason or logic. When audiences deny climate change, we dismiss them as being irrational. This labelling not only increases polarisation, but also it infers that the solution is to promote rational responses to our crisis, without recognising that our over-reliance on rationality as *the only means of thinking* is part of the problem itself.

Almost all of human behaviour is driven by non-rational forces. We know that we need to eat healthily, exercise lots and spend time with family and friends to live a healthy and happy life. But most of us rarely do, even though we *know* it is the right thing to do. We are not robots or automata, just because we *know* what to do, does not mean that we do it. Understanding the non-rational aspect of the self, the part of us that does not follow rational thought, is essential if we are to understand motivation and behaviour change.

Spirituality

This is one of the most misunderstood aspects of the human self. Some self-identify as spiritual, while others would not - this common understanding reduces spirituality to something of a personal preference. Spirituality is not a belief system, it simply refers to our universal desire for meaning, connection and transcendence in life and is universal in nature. No-one is *not* spiritual. How it is expressed, of course, differs greatly, whether it is within a religious context (a faith tradition), or in a secular context (mindfulness, personal growth, ethical living, etc).

Understanding spirituality is core to **IMT** as we try to work with and engage the self-transcending dimension of values, motivation and purpose. It is not the role of **IMT** to promote any belief system or spiritual agenda, but rather to understand what spiritual and faith traditions reveal to us about what resonates with the human psyche and how to use these insights to move audiences to the higher self-transcending stages found in **IMT**.

Values-ception

This is the ability to 'see' values. The more we work with values the more we recognise that they are not to be conflated with explicit values - the corporate values that you might find on an organisation's 'about us' page on the website. Implicit values are hard to 'see', and requires the ability to contemplate what they are. To 'see' values requires a deeper understanding on how values are created, engaged and transmitted through metanarratives.

Purpose-ception

Similar to values-ception, purpose-ception is the ability to 'see' purpose within any communication. This is not to be confused with explicit expressions of purpose which may be displayed on an organisation's vision, mission and values strategy, or translated into a slogan, ambition or statement that is displayed and communicated through brand and communication strategies.

Purpose is expressed implicit in everything we do, and plays an essential role at the metanarrative level. To see purpose requires the ability to develop a *theory of mind*, which is the cognitive state that allows us to perceive other's intentions. When we contemplate narratives, or even a work of art, we can develop the perception to perceive what the author or artist was thinking, feeling and the values they are communicating.

Where has it all gone wrong?

Why are the stories we tell not 'working'? What are we missing?



If storytelling is so powerful, then why isn't it working?

This is a difficult question to answer. Having worked for years in this field, as a specialist in storytelling for social and environmental transformation, it is this nagging question of 'why isn't it working?'. Why aren't we seeing the transformation needed today? Are our stories not inspiring enough? Do we need to be better at articulating the current crisis? Maybe we need better platforms to share our stories? Perhaps our shift from doom and gloom to more positive and hope-inspired storytelling will make all the difference?

When we are confronted with stubborn problems, the focus should never be on trying to find answers to the questions we ask, but to *find better questions to ask*. Rather than asking how we can get our storytelling to work better for us, perhaps we need to ask, with a sense of humility, *do we even know what stories are?* Do we *really* understand their nature and how they work? Have we just made some incorrect assumptions about how we think stories work?

The proliferation of storytelling

Almost all charities, non-profits, social and environmental movements and organisations are all clearly utilising and engaging with storytelling techniques and methodologies throughout their work.

Long gone are the days when we thought that providing audiences with just information would automatically equate to engagement or behaviour change. Long gone are the days when we only used 'stats and facts' as part of our engagement strategies.

The idea that audiences would look at the data and scientific evidence, weigh up the decision on what to do using their rational faculties, and then shift their behaviour in response to these facts, has long been proven to be a highly unsuccessful engagement strategy. It's simply not how humans work.

We are not robots, where you input data and the output is behaviour change. If only it were that simple.

This insight is widely acknowledged across the sector, resulting in the proliferation of storytelling approaches and methodologies. Instead of only applying messages to the 'head', the common belief is that we need to engage both, 'head' and 'heart'.

With storytelling pretty much established as the default communication and engagement strategy for so many organisations and movements, with emotionally charged storytelling on the rise, then why are we not seeing a significant uplift in meaningful behavioural change on some of the biggest issues we face today?

Does storytelling *even work*? Are the deep psychological drivers behind today's crises too deeply embedded that anything we do will unlikely make any real difference?

Core assumptions

To answer these questions we need to take a deep dive into some basic assumptions that we have made about human behaviour that shape almost all of our communications, engagement and motivation strategies.

1. Deficit model

There seems to be a core belief that audiences lack something, and that we are here to provide that missing piece. We think that they lack knowledge, so we run *information deficit strategies* - where we look to raise awareness and inform audiences on what the problem is and what they need to do.

Or we run *emotionally deficit strategies*, as if what people lack is inspiration, or an emotionally charged connection to real people who are suffering from climate change. The assumption is that we might know climate change is real, but until we feel it is, only then will we act.

Or we run *motivation deficit strategies*, as if what people lack is an understanding of how serious the problems are. We try to tell stories that are more authentic, stories of people who are already suffering from drought or floods overseas, in the hope that these authentic stories will convince audiences that climate change is real.

While each one of these approaches can work *up to a certain point*, what happens when they don't? What happens when this deficit model that shapes almost all of our engagement strategies no longer delivers any change? Do we simply repeat what we are doing, but this time turn up the temperature? Do we shout a bit louder? What happens when audiences decide to create their own reality (see case study 1 on pg. 11)? What then?

2. Path of least resistance

There is a core assumption about behaviour change that is omnipresent across all aspects of our work. This thinking is so deeply embedded in our core beliefs and assumptions that it may even feel absurd to question it.

This is the idea that to get audiences to take action, to engage with your campaign, to donate, to volunteer, or whatever the action is, the role of the communicator is to create a narrative that shows how taking action is easy, fun, enjoyable - all based around the assumption that audiences will only engage if we create a path of least resistance - whether this is a physical path (make it easier for people to sign up) or a psychological one (show how making a difference won't take up too much of your time, etc).

Everything is about attracting, offering simple solutions,

making life easier, over-promising on how our campaigns and initiatives will solve the current crisis, etc.

We don't say these things because we believe them to be true (I suspect no-one working for social and environmental issues today would believe there are any simple solutions), but we create narratives that explicitly or implicitly communicate this.

We do this because we believe it is necessary in order to motivate audiences into action. But by doing so we change the nature of our work and we fall into the marketing paradigm trap (see pg. 29), which causes more problems in the long term than it solves.

3. Two aspirins good, four aspirins better

We assume that what works in some situations can be applied universally to all situations. If there is an example of audiences responding positively to emotionally charged storytelling, we absolutise this method and roll it out across all of our channels in the belief that not only does this work, but *it is the only way to engage audiences*.

This is classic linear thinking. What happens in some contexts does not mean it points to a universal truth.

For example, we can have research, evidence, peer-reviewed papers that all attest to the 'fact' that emotionally charged storytelling is how we inspire and drive behaviour change. We may back this up with a nod to science, where research shows the impact stories have on the chemicals of the brain, such as dopamine, oxytocin and cortisol.¹

Once we have this 'fact' presented to us, ratified by evidenced based scientific research and other academic sources, we get locked into its logic and apply this approach dogmatically to everything we do.

When it fails (which it will do) we look elsewhere for our campaign failures, or even blame audiences who don't respond positively to our storytelling approach. Because we have research or a scientific theory to back up our thinking, we tend to become unwilling to question what we are doing.

This results in us deploying the same story strategy in everything we do even when we can see with our own eyes that it is not working and that in some cases it is making things worse in terms of growing polarisation, apathy and indifference to the urgent issues that we need to take action on.

Our failure to spot this creeping universalisation in our methodologies means that we get stuck in a rut, telling the same stories again and again thinking that if they worked once, they'll surely work again. This is clearly not the case.

4. We are the heroes in this story

This points towards a creeping sense of moral superiority that we are the heroes in this greater story, that we are on the right side of history, while others are not.

Not only does this attitude feed into and nurture the polarisation of audiences, but it prevents a truly deep encounter with our audiences, as we approach each

encounter as we are the ones with the answers and solutions.

This implicit power dynamic not only puts audiences off, but it fails to acknowledge that *we have all been part of the problem*. As we will see later on, we have all contributed in some way to the psychological conditions that are causing so much harm to how we relate to our global family and to the world around us. *We have all participated in toxic metanarratives*, and most of us, without knowing, are still continuing to do so.

There are no real heroes in this greater story. A more humble and open approach here is not only necessary, but essential if we are to bring everyone on board.

5. Interiority doesn't matter

This last issue, for me, is critical. Having worked for so long in this area I have encountered again and again a complete disregard for matters of interiority. By this I mean an almost *wilful ignorance* towards the importance of values, motivation and purpose in the bigger picture.

There has been an obsession with achieving short-term goals, short term fixes, trying to get audiences to sign up to the latest campaign or to take urgent action with almost a blatant disregard for *how we do this*.

The prevailing attitude seems to be 'just as long as we get audiences to show up, sign up or pay up, *how we do it* is of less importance. The ends justify the means.'

Within this logic it doesn't matter if we use doom and gloom narratives to drive our campaigns - after all a bit of fear does no harm. It doesn't matter if we mirror marketing strategies, playing to our audience's lower values by offering them rewards, or subtly massage their ego, just as long as they take action, right?

This consistent erosion of values, as well as a lack of attention to what motivation orientations we engage with may seem insignificant. But now that we are in a major global crisis, on the precipice of runaway climate change, with very little sign of a significant shift on the political scene to make the necessary changes needed, with *rising* polarisation and climate denialism, do we still feel comfortable saying that values don't really matter? Do we still feel comfortable saying that *how we motivate* isn't all that important?

If we took interiority much more seriously earlier on, I don't think it would be an exaggeration to say that we wouldn't be in this mess that we are in today.

While that might feel like a bold claim, I will argue, throughout this book, that our inability to take interiority seriously has meant that we have not been able to shift the dominant metanarratives that shape how we think, relate and value the world around us.

The consequences of this cannot be overstated.

The result is that rather than shifting or transforming toxic metanarratives, *we have instead reinforced and strengthened them*. Not intentionally of course, but our dismissive attitudes to the interior self has led us up to this point.

Case Study 1

What is truth?



Credit: Danielle Paradis

The seemingly simple question, "What is truth?", proves surprisingly difficult to answer. It shouldn't be. After all, reality exists independently of opinion—what is, *is*. For example, an excess of CO₂ in the atmosphere warms the planet. This is not a matter of perspective but a scientific fact. Yet, despite this straightforward relationship, the concept of truth is increasingly being strained.

The persistence of climate denialism in the face of overwhelming scientific consensus and global media coverage is both baffling and troubling. Decades of rigorous research and widespread dissemination of evidence regarding anthropogenic climate change have made the dangers of excessive greenhouse gas emissions widely known. Yet, denialism not only persists but thrives within political movements worldwide. In the United States alone 23% of elected members of Congress are classified as climate deniers⁶ and 15% of Americans deny climate change is real.⁷

Today's climate denialism differs significantly from the misinformation campaigns of the 1990s. This is no longer a matter of ignorance or misunderstanding the science. The ubiquity of climate messaging across media platforms makes it clear: denialism now represents a deliberate choice—a form of *wilful ignorance*.

A stark example comes from Canada, where Alberta's United Conservative Party passed a resolution to reframe carbon dioxide as a "foundational nutrient for all life on Earth" and advocated for its removal from the list of pollutants.⁸

This vote, which passed by a large majority, reflects not just political posturing but an active effort to rewrite scientific reality. Even a member who argued that, like water, CO₂ can be beneficial in moderation but harmful in excess, was booed by the crowd.

This is a critical shift. Denialism today is not about minimising the urgency of net-zero targets or debating the prioritisation of climate policies. It has evolved into the outright rejection of established scientific principles.

Faced with this level of denialism, our usual approaches of explaining the science more clearly, providing data visualisations, or even crafting emotionally resonant stories seem powerless against this context. The issue is no longer about making information accessible; it is about *confronting a refusal to engage with the concept of truth itself*.

This is not a question of a lack of understanding, nor a lack of basic education where we are not grasping the basic science, this is a question about valuing, to the point that we are willing to re-write the science to fit in with a preconceived narratives shaped by what we already value.

This is not a failure of communication but a broader crisis of epistemology - how we define and agree upon what is true.

If truth becomes subjective, "up for grabs" by political or social consensus, the ability to address complex challenges like climate change just collapses. Once we take the foundation away, where anyone can decide for themselves what is real or not, then it is pretty much game over. Any attempt to create meaningful dialogue and action become almost impossible when we can no longer define what is true.

For those of us working for positive change there is nothing in our current 'bag of tricks' to counteract this type of situation. Do you think positive and hope-driven messages on how we can build a better future will cut through in this scenario? Do you think making positive arguments for a green and sustainable future will make a difference here?

Unless we know how to work with the deep underlying metanarratives that shape how we see, value and relate to the world around us, there seems to be little hope of responding to situations like these. This is why our work on metanarratives is not only important, but it offers *the only approach* that can deal with deep-rooted situations like these.

You can read the full article by DeSmog.com [here](#).

POLICY RESOLUTION #12

Submitted by: Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock, Red Deer South

Type: Add

Area: Environmental Stewardship - Emissions Reduction

Article Number: 204.5

Resolution

The United Conservative Party believes that the Government of Alberta should...

b. Recognize the importance of CO₂ to life and Alberta's prosperity by implementing the following measures:

- i. Abandoning "Net-Zero" targets,
- ii. Removing the designation of CO₂ as a pollutant, and
- iii. Recognize that CO₂ is a foundational nutrient for all life on Earth.

Rationale

CO₂ is a nutrient foundational for all life on earth. The carbon cycle is a biological necessity. CO₂ is presently at around 420 ppm, near the lowest level in over 1000 years. It is estimated that CO₂ levels need to be above 150 ppm to ensure the survival of plant life. The earth needs more CO₂ to support life and to increase plant yields, both of which will contribute to the Health and Prosperity of all Albertans.

The nature of storytelling



What exactly is storytelling?

Storytelling theory

From my experience too many people *presume they know what storytelling is* and what the nature of stories are. We have too many people who adopt a storytelling role, especially in charity communications, without any real understanding of even the basics of storytelling.

If you are writing stories to entertain or for pleasure then understanding what stories are, what their true nature is, and how metanarratives work may be of less concern.

But if you are seeking to use stories and storytelling *to do something*, to transform behaviours, to motivate, to transform cultural and social norms, then knowledge on how stories work with the human psyche is essential.

Because storytelling can seem simple, we mistake that simplicity for what is easy. The simplicity of storytelling belies the huge complexity of what even the most basic stories can do to us.

Storytelling is never as easy as most people think it is. If it was, then we would have cracked the storytelling 'formula' by now, we would have crafted powerful story-led content, we would have engaged and motivated audiences to take real action for positive change as well as using storytelling to transform the social and cultural norms of our time.

More importantly, we would have cracked the global issue of motivation.

We haven't. And why? It's not that storytelling can't do all these things, it can, it is that we seem to have no idea how storytelling really works, and how to leverage the real power of storytelling to drive lasting and meaningful change in our current crisis.

The storytelling engine

It would seem an exaggeration to call yourself a car mechanic if your knowledge of cars extended only to the exterior aspects of the vehicle, and you had no idea how an engine actually worked, or that you didn't even know what an engine was!

And yet, in my experience of working with several 'experts' in the field, it seems too many people have taken on the title of a storyteller, yet with no real idea on how a storytelling engine works, nor what a metanarrative is or that metanarratives even exist!

The result is that *we utilise storytelling as a communications tool* as part of our wider marketing and outreach strategies. We therefore reduce storytelling *to its most basic form* as a way to elicit emotional connection to our latest campaign or initiative.

It is why most of our storytelling strategies follows the

deficit model (page 9) where stories are designed to provide the audience with something that they are missing, whether that is information, understanding or emotional connection. Once the story has delivered this basic function, it has served its purpose.

Under this mindset, *stories are in service to achieving a measurable goal or outcome*. Little consideration, under this marketing mindset, is ever really given to how we can leverage the true power storytelling.

Instead, stories are there to provide a service, to manipulate audiences into taking action. Beyond achieving this purpose we don't seem to consider nor understand their real value.

Most people that I have trained or worked with have freely admitted that they would prefer not to do storytelling. They see storytelling is for 'other people', and are much more comfortable at writing reports, analysis and intellectual thought or opinion pieces.

It is probably why the terms *story, stories and storytelling* are branded freely across most organisation's communications strategies, and yet have very little to do with storytelling at all.

If we take the stories we find in charity communications, most 'stories' read more like a report or case study that is found in an academic article or research piece. They have almost nothing to do with what we would all generally agree a story is (a narrative that transports you, the audience, *into* the story).

The loss of power

Stories and storytelling have the power to shift how we see and relate to the world around us, to transform cultural norms, to shift global political trends, to even transform our stubborn economic and social institutions that all rest on the fragile psychological paradigms that we believe to be true.

Stories hold almost no real power when we utilise them as part of a marketing strategy.

The very little power that remains within the stories we tell, when we bastardise them for a marketing purpose, is that they are reduced down to their most basic function - to emotionally engage, inspire or inform.

When we look to ancient cultures, wisdom traditions and indigenous cultures we can clearly see that the stories that they tell, which were usually mythic in nature, have almost nothing in common to the stories that we find at the heart of our communication strategies.

These are the cultures that knew how to tell stories to shape cultural norms and values, to motivate, to weave a sense of deep belonging and to engage with the self-transcending aspect of the self.

These cultures, especially indigenous cultures, tend to display high pro-social and pro-environmental behaviours, the very things that we are trying to engage in our work, and are struggling to achieve.

And yet, we seem to be reluctant to learn from different cultural perspectives on the possibilities of what storytelling can deliver for us, as it means thinking outside our cultural norms and intellectual paradigms.

Let us not pretend, even for a second, that our version of storytelling is anywhere near to where it needs to be.

Storytelling and paradigms

The stories we tell not only reflect the paradigms that we hold to be true, but *they communicate and reinforce the paradigms that we hold to be true*. Stories not only communicate *more than we think*, they also communicate *how we think*, further embedding the many paradigms that have caused so many problems in the first place.

For example, if we believe that humans resemble *homo economicus*, that we are rational and self-interested beings who seek only to maximise our utility⁹, then our stories will be shaped by this core belief. We will run campaigns, initiatives and communication strategies that are shaped around the belief that if audiences can rationally understand the problem, and we show how taking action can somehow maximise our audience's utility (for pleasure, power, egoic reward) then they will take action.

We might not notice that we are doing this, or that we are reinforcing a false paradigm, but we will tell stories in this way because we just seem to believe that this paradigm is true.

This is why we run information-led climate campaigns with the expectation this information will drive motivation, we highlight social problems in the belief that once people understand what is happening they will be motivated to act.

However we run our campaigns or initiatives, the foundational thinking remains the same.

Our current storytelling strategies within this paradigm are reduced to the role of informing or inspiring audiences to take action, with the motivation to do so shaped by the belief that taking action will somehow maximise our audience's utility.

When we adopt this paradigm we will almost automatically engage in one of the most toxic paradigms today, the marketing paradigm (see page 29). This is where we dangerously adopt marketing logic that dictates that we play to our audience's lower values in order to motivate them to act.

We do this by playing to the lower values of self-enhancement, security or pleasure as a way to motivate audiences to engage with our campaigns and initiatives. As we will see, this approach might 'work' but only in the short term, as this paradigm is designed for profit and short term results, not long-term positive behaviour change.

So when our marketing strategies invariably fail to deliver on our long-term ambitions we never seem to see to be able to think that *our thinking as part of the problem*. We tend to blame external influences, perhaps blaming certain media outlets or certain politicians for our current mess. We will do anything to avoid self-reflection, especially the idea that our motivation assumptions, based on the *homo economicus* paradigm, may be at fault.

Paradigms hold huge sway over our lives, as we tend to assume that they are true. They create, what is called, a paradigm trap. *As we think through paradigms* we tend to not notice them, and in doing so we freely participate in them further embedding their values, their logic and their way of seeing and relating to the world around us.

It is why the *homo economicus* paradigm is still alive and well today.

When we work with metanarratives we can become better at spotting paradigms, especially toxic ones. After all, no paradigm is values neutral. The dominant values and cultural norms of a society are best understood as expressions of the paradigms that we hold to be true.

It therefore follows that only by changing the metanarrative can we ever hope to dismantle and replace toxic paradigms and the values that arise because of these paradigms.

Or to put it another way, only until we see and recognise how we are still adhering to the *homo economicus* paradigm, can we ever start to build a new metanarrative for real change.

The true nature of storytelling

The ultimate nature of stories and storytelling is not defined by the utility we place on them, but by the potential of what they can do. This is how we define things, not by their lowest attribute, but by their highest.

Stories are not to be defined by their ability to entertain or emotionally engage us. Nor how they can be utilised for a sales pitch or a corporate presentation in order to persuade your audience towards a certain goal. This is the marketisation of storytelling.

Stories have the power to *reorientate us*, to shift the deep psychological foundations on which we use to make sense of ourselves and our place in the world.

This is why the purpose of storytelling is not to convey information, nor to elicit an emotional response, but rather to transform *how we see, relate and value the world around us*. In other words, the real power of storytelling can be found in their ability to reach into the deepest part of the psyche, and to transform the stubborn paradigms that shape how we think and what we value.

As paradigms are communicated *implicitly* in the stories we tell, then knowing how to change the underlying metanarratives within all of our communications offers an entirely new approach to audience motivation and how to respond to the social and environmental crises of today. This is where the true power of storytelling lies.

Case Study 2

Escaping paradigm traps



Paradigms are extremely hard to spot. As we *think through paradigms* we tend not to notice them, and we accept their logic as if they are true. We will even defend paradigms despite the absurdity of their logic and the foundation on which they are built. No paradigm is values neutral: every paradigm shapes not only how we think, but also how we see, relate and value the world around us.

Scientific paradigms are easier to spot and shift, as they can be stress tested through observations and experiments. For example, the Newtonian paradigm, as proposed by Sir Isaac Newton, is the belief that the universe works more like a machine and all laws of nature work in a mechanical way. This paradigm is no longer seen as relevant as quantum mechanics not only disproves this foundational belief, but quantum theory and the theory of general relativity offers a better way to explain the behaviour of nature at the quantum level.

Social and psychological paradigms are much harder to spot and shift as *we need to observe ourselves through the paradigms we hold*. This is circular thinking, and it is why we get trapped so easily in some of the most basic of paradigms. We can't think our way out of a paradigm, as we think *through* paradigms. So the only way to get out of a paradigm is *to imagine our way out* - to see what life would look like outside of the paradigms we hold to be true, so that we can look back on the paradigms that we are in and spot the absurdity of their logic.

Often we talk about a paradigm *shift*. But unlike scientific paradigms, psychological paradigms can never be shifted, *only transcended*. To transcend to a new paradigm the two following conditions need to be met: the first is that the old paradigm is no longer fit for purpose and is falling apart, and the second condition is that there needs to be a new paradigm to move to. As psychological paradigms are communicated and reinforced at the metanarrative level of our communications, that means every time we participate in them we reinforce them.

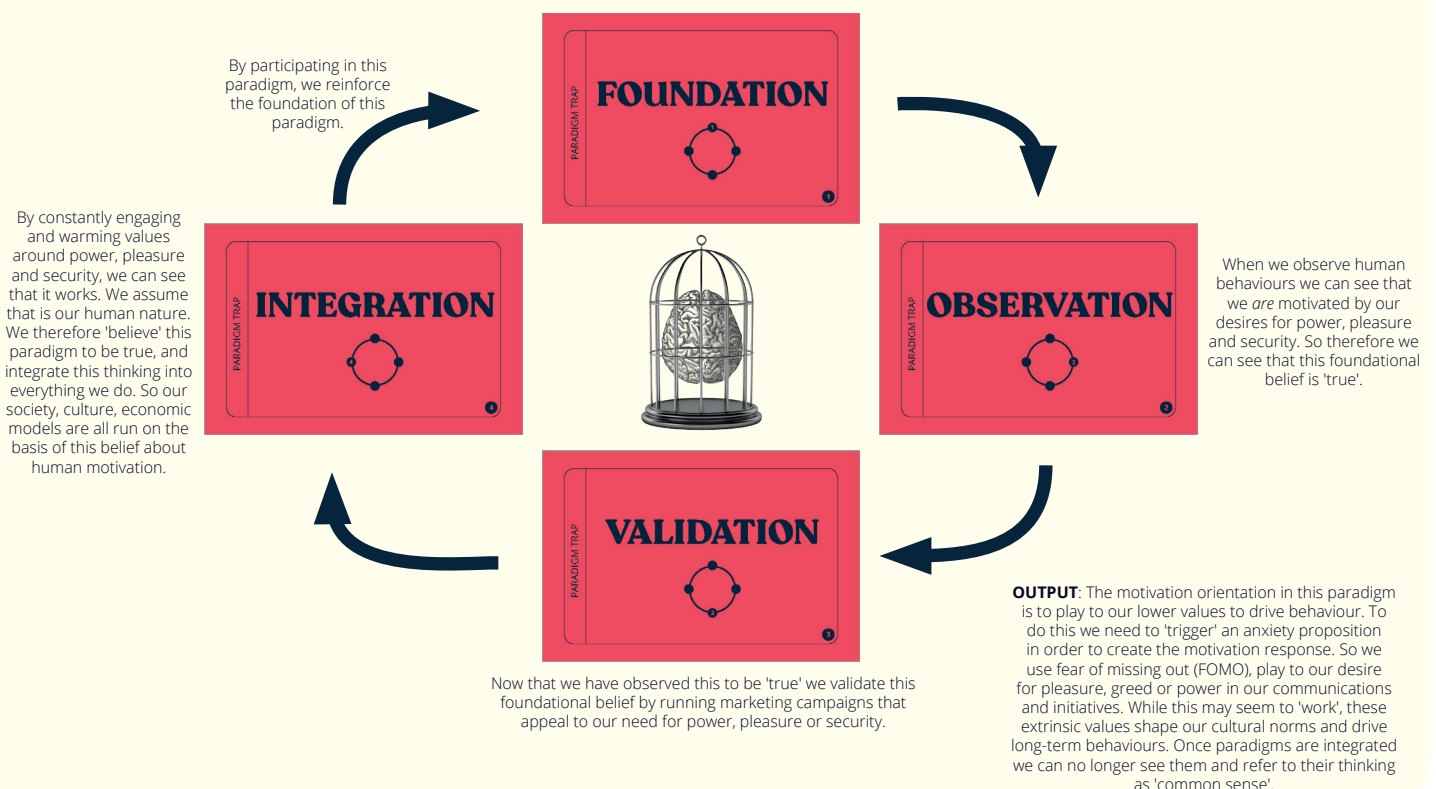
Understanding what paradigms are, how they work, how we get stuck in their logic trap, and - more importantly - how to escape them is essential for anyone seeking to bring about long-term social and cultural change.

Taken from our Master Storytelling toolkit, here is one of the tools which is designed to help us spot and escape from paradigm traps. A paradigm trap is made up of four stages: **foundation, observation, validation and integration**. By naming each stage we can begin to see how the paradigm works and start to spot how easily they get integrated into our ways of thinking.

Homo Economicus

Example of a paradigm trap

Foundational belief: that humans are rational and self-interested who seek only to maximise their utility (*homo economicus*). Therefore to drive motivation we need to appeal to our audience's desire for utility (power, pleasure, security, consumer needs, etc).



Exploring Primitives

What are primitives and how do they work?



Primitives serve as the foundation on which everything is built. To help understand the psychological drivers behind today's global problems we can simply look at the interplay between the three primitives of values, motivation and purpose to understand what is happening at the pre-conscious level.

What is a primitive?

Primitives are foundational to *everything we do*. Think of them as the three primal colours of red, green and blue, the three prime colours when they interact with each other can create over 16 million different colours.



In our case we will be exploring the three primitives of *values*, *motivation* and *purpose* and how their interaction can create millions of different narratives.

As they are each a primitive, they are foundational to every communication, story and initiative that we make. You can't get below or under a primitive, and you can not build a narrative or communication without them.

If we take time to analyse our campaigns and communications through the lens of each primitive, we can be provided with a deeper picture of what is going on at the pre-conscious level of everything that we do.

Each primitive cannot be understood in isolation, but only in relation to the other two primitives. When they interact with each other they create different flow states that shape and characterise every narrative we make.

This is why it makes no sense to study *values* in isolation. To make sense of values you have to understand how *motivation* works. For motivation to work you need to understand how *purpose* works. Without this integral approach to primitives we struggle to truly understand the nature of metanarratives and how they work.

Each primitive changes its nature in different flow states. There are, broadly speaking, two dominant flow states: extrinsic and intrinsic. This is why we can talk about extrinsic and intrinsic values (see page 31), extrinsic and intrinsic motivation (see page 39) and extrinsic and intrinsic purpose (see page 46).

Each primitive, when in a different flow state, will influence the other two primitives. For example, if we engage with extrinsic motivation (play to fears, anxiety, desire for pleasure), we will invariably engage extrinsic values (power, pleasure, security).

The three primitives of values, motivation and purpose are relational primitives that are always in a flow state. Understanding these flow states and how they shape our communications can offer profound insights on how to engage values and shape behaviours and cultural norms.

This is where the power of storytelling lies. It is not about how a story can inspire you, nor how a story can make you feel, but how to put these three primitives into a different flow state on which to drive long-term and meaningful motivation for change. By changing the primitives flow states, the foundations on which all values and behaviour emerge, can we start to build lasting and meaningful change.

The exciting thing about working with primitives is that they are universal in nature and works with anyone, regardless of cultural background, political beliefs, ideologies, or educational background. Working with primitives not only gives us great depth, but also great breadth, in terms of outreach and influence.

How to understand primitives

To understand metanarratives we need to understand primitives, and to understand primitives we need to understand metanarratives. They both go hand-in-hand.

The reason is that metanarratives are shaped and formed by the three primitives of *values*, *motivation* and *purpose*. To 'see' a metanarrative means that we need to be able to 'see' each primitive. To understand metanarratives we need to understand how each one of these primitives interacts and flows with the other.

As each primitive works at the implicit level, we cannot see them through our analytical and rationalising mind. As metanarratives are dealt with the right hemisphere of the brain means that we can only see them when viewed through a *contemplative* mindset.

Understanding this basic insights is important, especially when it comes to understanding how primitives work at the pre-conscious (non-verbal and non-narrative) state. If we take values as an example, just because we are talking about protecting the environment, does not mean that we are engaging the protecting the environment value (see page 33).

If we are using any form of extrinsic motivation in our engagement strategies, to trigger extrinsic motivation means that we need to play to our audience's fears and anxieties, or offer a psychological reward.

In so doing, we warm and engage with extrinsic values such as sense of belonging, security, pleasure or power.

Understanding how these three primitives work together and influence each other in different flow states can offer us some profound insights into motivation and how to drive long-term change.

Different flow states

Different flow states from each primitive

Fig 1. Primitives in an extrinsic flow state



Extrinsic flow state

The flow state is externally regulated, so to maintain this flow state requires ongoing external influence.

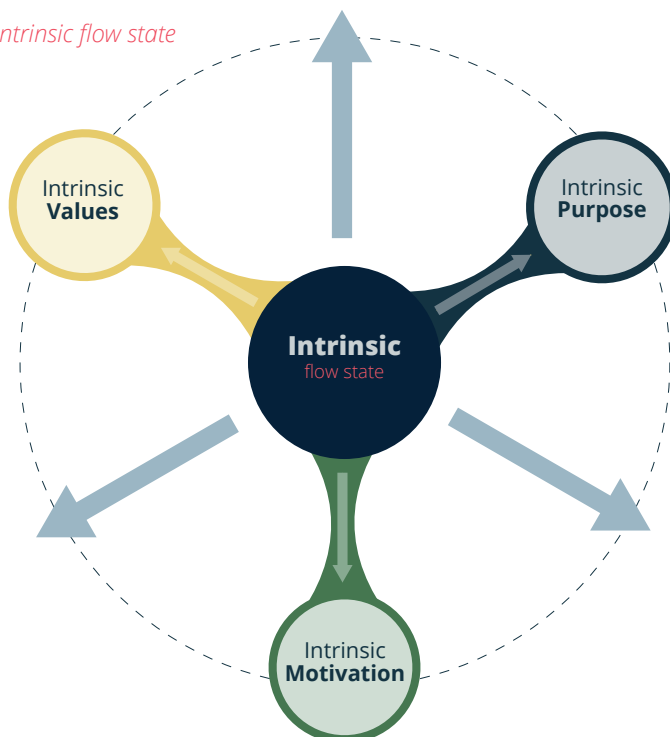
Each primitive of values, motivation and purpose when subjected to external regulation enter into an extrinsic flow state. This is where we engage extrinsic values, extrinsic motivation and extrinsic purpose.

Extrinsic values, such as power, security, self-enhancement are the values we want to avoid engaging with altogether.

An extrinsic flow state represents the deep dynamics that provide the psychological foundation on which destructive patterns of behaviour towards our planet and to our global family emerge.

Primitives in an extrinsic flow state. This flow state occurs when we contract within ourselves. This flow state is 'triggered' as a response to external stimuli, especially fear or anxiety, or greed and egoic validation. It is an extractive flow state that is sustained only by drawing from outside itself. This flow state is unable to create order without trying to manipulate its surroundings. We can argue this flow state is manifested in a range of behaviours such as consumerism, militarism, sexism, classism, colonialism, and a whole range of negative problems we see today.

Fig 2. Primitives in an intrinsic flow state



Intrinsic flow state

The flow state is self-regulated, it flows from in to out.

Each primitive changes its nature when it is in an intrinsic flow state. Values become self-transcending, motivation is triggered by a desire for connection and relatedness, purpose shifts beyond goals and outcomes and seeks inner transformation.

This flow state tends to warm and engage intrinsic values such as protecting the environment, social justice and peace.

This flow state creates the 'energy' to drive long-term positive change.

Primitives in an intrinsic flow state. This flow state occurs when we no draw from within ourselves. This flow state is 'triggered' when we align ourselves to a self-transcending purpose. In this flow state we no longer need egoic validation, no longer need consumer goods, no longer need to manipulate the world around us in order to create a sense of personal order. This flow state is characterised by a desire to live simply, to live sustainably and with a sense of deep interconnection with both the human family and the natural world. This flow state is restorative and regenerative in its nature.

Exploring Metanarratives



What are metanarratives, how do they work and why can't we 'see' them?

Metanarratives provide the psychological foundation on which a culture or society functions. No culture can function without one, and no culture does. We all live under these implicit narratives that play a key role in shaping our values, our sense of purpose, how we think, relate and see the world around us.

What is a metanarrative?

This is a rather difficult question to answer.

Metanarratives are not what they first appear to be, in fact *they don't appear to be anything*. This is where we get into the difficulties and challenges of working with metanarratives.

As metanarratives work at the implicit level, unless we *know how to pay attention to them*, we can't see them, just as we can't 'see' values, nor can we 'see' purpose, nor can we 'see' the implicit power dynamics that exist within every narrative. Just because we can't 'see' them explicitly does not mean that they are not there.

Every time we communicate, every campaign, every social media post, every story we tell, every initiative are all defined by *two layers of communication*. The narrative and metanarrative.

The narrative is the explicit narrative which is usually made up of the *who, what, where, when* and *why* of the stories we tell. We tend to focus almost all of our attention on narratives, ensuring that we give the right information, we frame our messages correctly, we use the right language, we ensure we have diverse representation in our stories, etc.

The metanarrative is the implicit narrative, which is a collective term that encompasses *all aspects of what is implicitly communicated*.

Out of the two, the narrative and metanarrative, the most important one in our work for social and environmental change is clearly the metanarrative.

Narratives, in the grand scheme of things, are of secondary importance.

And why is this? If the focus of our work is to drive positive action, to motivate and create behavioural change, then our priority is to focus on the three primitives that drive all these: values, motivation and purpose. These three primitives are communicated *implicitly* in everything we do, at the metanarrative level not at the explicit narrative level.

This means that our obsession with creating the right narrative, with fastidious attention to the contents of our story, how we frame certain messages, whether we are using positive or negative narratives, all of these are of *secondary importance* to what is happening at the metanarrative level of everything we do. Long term behaviour change is not shaped by narratives, but by metanarratives. Only by paying attention to different values, motivation and purpose orientations can we really understand what is happening at the metanarrative level of everything we do.

Metanarratives - a brief history

(and why we have ignored them for so long).

The last major work on metanarratives can be attributed to the French philosopher Jean François Lyotard, who explores metanarratives in his major work *The Postmodern Condition: A report on knowledge* in 1979.¹⁴

In his view, metanarratives are the grand narratives or overarching stories that societies use to legitimise their knowledge, practices, and institutions.

Metanarratives function as broad, unifying stories that explain historical progress, social norms, or human purpose.

He attributes metanarratives to *explicit narratives* such as the Enlightenment narrative of reason and progress, Marxism or religious narratives.

This interpretation tends to over-associate metanarratives with a theme, subject or ideology rather than understand the implicit and pre-conscious nature of metanarratives.

In Lyotard's analysis he suggests in a postmodern era *we should abandon metanarratives*, as he points to the horrors of the 20th Century, including wars and totalitarian regimes as a result of our attempt to form a grand-narrative that claims universality.

Instead we should focus on "petite narratives" that honour diversity, contingency, and the specificity of cultural or individual experiences.

But this thinking mis-frames what metanarratives are, their nature and our understanding of them. Framing metanarratives as 'grand narratives' suggests that not only that we *should get rid of them, but that we can*.

This thinking has serious consequences.

The result is that we have totally ignored the omnipresent nature of metanarratives and the huge influence they have over our lives.

We have dismissed metanarratives as grand-narratives, something from a bygone age, relevant only to a time when we lived under a single religious narrative, or when our communities were small enough to gather around a fire and coalesce under the canopy of a single story.

The idea that metanarratives no longer exist or have any relevance in our post-modern and plurastic era simply pushes metanarratives out of sight, placing them at the whims of unconscious forces.

This does not mean they go away, but simply that they still continue to exert control over us, but *we no longer have control over them*.

The two hemispheres of the brain

With new insights into the nature of the two hemispheres of the brain by neuropsychologist Dr Iain McGilchrist, we now have a better understanding of the nature and role of the two hemispheres of the brain and the two different attentions each hemisphere provides.

Gone is the theory that one hemisphere is creative, the other analytical, the new theory shows that both hemispheres do analysis *and* creativity.

It is not that the two hemispheres of the brain do different things, but they do the same things *differently*.¹⁰ This may seem like a small insight, but it opens the door to an entirely new enquiry into the two different modes of attention each hemisphere provides, and how our modern day preference is shifting ever closer to a dominant left hemisphere imbalance. The consequences of this are huge.

Each hemisphere pays a quite different type of attention to the world: and the type of attention we pay transforms the world we perceive and in which we come to believe we live. — Iain McGilchrist

Insights from neuropsychology

Exploring all of McGilchrist's insights from his research into neuropsychology is too big a task here,¹¹ instead let us pick up on some of the basics that have direct implications for our work in storytelling for positive change.

McGilchrist offers evidence to show how the two hemispheres of the brain think differently. The left hemisphere has a narrow attention, where it is more specialised for focused, detail-oriented tasks. It breaks down experiences into discrete parts and seeks to understand reality through dissection - a disembodied approach to understanding.

This hemisphere is crucial for language, categorisation, and linear reasoning. However, this mode of thinking tends to be reductive, abstract, and overly confident in its interpretations, often at the expense of broader contextual understanding.

This mode of understanding is very useful for mechanistic thinking and building machines, great for comparing and contrasting, making things distinct, putting information into boxes and categories. But this mode of attention does not understand, or *can understand*, implicit information like values, purpose or the interior aspects of motivation. That is the role of the right hemisphere.

The right hemisphere, by contrast, prefers to see relationally, to look at the big picture. It understands things not by taking them apart, but by bringing things together to understand the whole. The right hemisphere is self-aware, it knows that it does not know, and tends

to be open and attentive in its thinking. As a result it doesn't think in either/or or black/white patterns, it prefers to see the whole picture (gestalt), and can deal with paradox.

It is also associated with broad, open attention that focuses on context, relationships, and the "whole picture." It processes ambiguity, metaphor, values, purpose and understands implicit meaning.

Our culture prefers the attention of the left-hemisphere because it gives us power, the power to manipulate the world around us to serve our needs. The right hemisphere, by contrast, gives us understanding and meaning, it seeks connection.

The left seeks to *apprehend* the world (ap-prehending, from Latin ad + prehendere, to hold onto – manipulating) the right seeks to *comprehend* the world (com-prehending, from Latin cum + prehendere, to hold together – understanding).

Understanding reality

This next insight, which is essential for our **IMT** model focuses on how the two hemispheres understand reality. This is a big philosophical topic, here we will briefly summarise it as the *hierarchy of attention*.

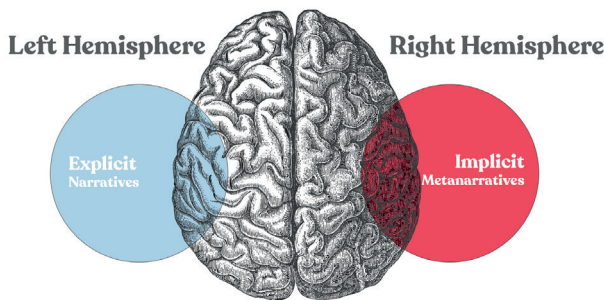
The right hemisphere is more in touch with the real world, it sees the big picture. When we look out into the real world the right hemisphere receives the information first to make sense of it. It then passes this information to the left

hemisphere which then makes sense of that information through its own schema of concepts and pre-conceived ideas.

The left hemisphere does not have access to the 'real' world, it only deals with *re-presented information*. It tries to make sense of the world through maps, internal concepts and ideas - or rather - it makes sense of the world *through the story it tells itself*. This is the filter in which the left hemisphere understands reality. The left hemisphere seems to be completely oblivious to this fact, as it *thinks it does all the thinking*, it does not realise that it plays a secondary role in our thought process.

This results in two toxic traits, the left hemisphere is prone to *ignorance* - it is unaware of what it does not know. Because it thinks that it does all the thinking, it cannot see beyond its own logic or the paradigms it holds to be true. And secondly, the left hemisphere is prone to *arrogance* as it tends to make universal statements on things that it possibly cannot understand.

It elevates its own way of thinking, rationality, as the highest form of intelligence. In so doing it cannot see the obvious flaws in its thinking, refuses to see any other ways of thinking as even relevant, including intuition, imagination, contemplative thought and more embodied ways of knowing. It often confuses its own stories, internal schema, abstract thoughts or maps of reality for reality itself.



Over-reliance on the left-hemisphere's way of seeing distorts everything.

Not only does it distort how we see reality, but it distorts our understanding of what we define as true. Truth, under the logic of the left hemisphere, is what *we think truth is*, according to the left hemisphere's own narrative (see case study 1 as an example of this in action).

Language is held in the left hemisphere, not the right. So we are very good at articulating the values and perspective of the left hemisphere of the brain, and we struggle to articulate or make sense of the reasoning of the right hemisphere.

The right hemisphere plays the important role of understanding the deeper aspects of language, the meaning behind what we communicate. The right hemisphere can distinguish between an insult and friendly sarcasm, it can understand analogy, metaphor, humour, myth, poetry and all other aspects that demand an understanding of what is happening at the deeper implicit level of what we communicate.

As the language centre is held in the left hemisphere, we cannot access the right hemisphere's understanding through language or explicit narrative, but rather through implicit communication such as poetry, myth, analogy, music, metaphor, etc.

Resonance and dissonance

Our right hemisphere communicates to us emotionally through a feeling of resonance or dissonance. When something feels right - resonance - or something doesn't sit right at the 'gut' - dissonance.

When we encounter feelings of resonance, this plays an important role in motivation. When things fall into place, feels just right, then we are more likely to engage. When we encounter dissonance, when something feels off or it just doesn't sit right the left hemisphere will find ways to get rid of that feeling.

There are many ways the left hemisphere does this, one of those ways is that the left hemisphere *confabulates* (makes up a story) to help rationalise the feeling of dissonance. No matter how crazy the story might be (e.g. climate scientists are all making it up, they are all funded by a secret cabal to overthrow the world), we will believe that story to be true.

Our almost exclusive attention on narratives, where we ensure we get the right information across, try to explain the science, or to use emotional storytelling to convince audiences of the need to act, we tend to overlook the much bigger issue of whether our narratives and initiatives *resonate*, do they feel right to *all audiences*.

If not, if our messages somehow create dissonance, then expect to see an increase in a range of toxic behaviours, such as climate denialism, conspiratorial thinking, polarisation and increased scepticism.

Resonance occurs when everything at the metanarrative level aligns, when we use intrinsic motivation *with* intrinsic purpose *and* align to intrinsic values. When we get this flow state wrong, real problems arise.

The 'values ecology' of the two hemispheres

The two hemispheres have two different 'values ecologies'.¹² This means that they value and prioritise different things and will only pay attention to what falls within the periphery vision of that valuing system.

As the left hemisphere seeks goals, pleasure, power, manipulation and security, it will ignore and dismiss anything that doesn't deliver on any one of these things.

This filtering process makes it blind to all things that offer no discernible utility, or anything that does not have a measurable goal or outcome, or anything that does not provide it with power or pleasure.

This bias of the left hemisphere of the brain has a huge influence when it comes to our understanding of how to create long term and real solutions to the climate and social crises of our time. The thinking trap is that we use left hemisphere thinking to try to find solutions to our crisis. But the left hemisphere cannot think outside the things it values, which are goals, power, pleasure or utility.

The result is that we try to effect change by creating campaigns that are goal-orientated, with almost no reference or consideration to the values, paradigms and culture norms that we are reinforcing *through our campaign strategies*.

Under the attention of the left hemisphere what happens at the metanarrative level of all communications simply doesn't matter. It can't, because the left hemisphere can't 'see' the implicit.

So it doesn't seem to matter if we use marketing techniques and methodologies in our work, it doesn't matter if we try to motivate audiences into action by using fear or creating anxiety (especially eco-anxiety), it doesn't matter if we play to our audience's desire for pleasure, success, power or egoic validation to drive action. What does matter, according the left hemisphere, is whether we achieve the goal or not.

Under a dominant left hemisphere view of the world, not only do values, purpose and motivation not matter, but a dominant left hemisphere cannot even see these things to understand that *they could matter*.

Our current crisis is not a lack of good will on the behalf of individuals towards social and environmental issues, but rather it stems from *a form of blindness*, where our metanarratives promote and engage certain values that shape how we see and relate to the world around us.

This is why we should view our current crisis as *a valuing crisis*, where our way of seeing and relating to the world around us is being shaped by the values ecology of a dominant left hemisphere attention.

This helps explain the nearly universal patterns of behaviour and ways of thinking that trap us in the short-term goal-orientated change strategies found across the sector. We can see this thinking and left hemisphere bias exemplified both in our ways of campaigning and in our theories of change. A dominant left hemisphere

attention limits our ability to imagine or even envision how we can ever bring about genuine transformation by changing cultural norms, or by changing the underlying values that give rise to the way we relate and act in the world. The left hemisphere can't imagine how to do this because it is not within its ability to do so.

Only by being able to look beyond a dominant left hemisphere perspective, can we begin to see things differently. For example, we can begin to see that values are not principles or guides that help us make decisions or prioritise what we think that is important (which is how the left hemisphere sees values), but rather values shape *how we see and what we pay attention to*.

This is what makes values are so important and why we need to be values focussed in everything we do. Values not only drive behaviours but they reshape our ability to see *what is*.

This is why a dominant left hemisphere perspective is always a distorted one, for it is not in touch with the real, only the re-interpretation of what the real is through its own internal valuing processes. As Anaïs Nin puts it so succinctly, we don't see things as they are, we see them as *we are*. And to add to this, we see the world through the stories we tell ourselves.

Left hemisphere bias

We can call this distorted perspective a left hemisphere bias which plays a huge role in shaping how we even *relate to and understand reality itself*. Being able to see this bias is beyond the ability of the left hemisphere to see, for it cannot see its own bias! That's the point.

Even within our collective attempts to drive positive change we can see the classic hallmarks of dominant left hemisphere bias almost universally applied across all areas of work. This includes our attempts to persuade audiences into positive action by playing to left hemisphere values of power or pleasure, with almost everything directed towards an explicit goal or outcome.

This is why we see an almost universal adoption of marketing approaches in our work for positive change, where we seek to manipulate audiences (create a marketing proposition) to get audiences to sign up to the latest action. Whether we use negative messaging of fear/anxiety or positive messaging where we play to ego validation/reward - both attempts reflect left hemisphere logic and values.

Even the stories we tell are distorted by the logic and values ecology of the left hemisphere, where so much of what we call storytelling has nothing in common to anything that resembles a classic definition of a story, where most 'stories' we tell feel either like an academic case study or a marketing proposition.

We tell these types of 'stories' not because we believe these are good stories (because they are clearly not!), we tell these stories in this dry, objective and academic way because that is how we think motivation works. This is classic left hemisphere thinking, where everything has to have a goal and our desire to contribute to making that goal happen has to be self-enhancing or self-serving in some way.

Not only does this over-reliance on the left hemisphere of the brain prevent us from seeing what this hemisphere values, this over-reliance *distorts our thinking to reflect the left hemisphere's own logic*.

A clear example of this can be found in the much popularised *homo economicus* characterisation, a model of behaviour that we find in neoclassic economics. This is where we view humans as rational and self-interested beings who seek only to maximise their utility. It is this anthropological perspective that provides the psychological foundation on which we have built our current economic, political and social institutions.

Flawed though this over-simplistic portrayal of human nature is, and despite being vigorously debunked by numerous academics who point out the obvious altruistic behaviours and acts of self-transcending kindness and love that we are capable of, the issue is not whether we agree or disagree with this *homo economicus* characterisation, but whether we act *as if it were true*.

You can see the *homo economicus* characterisation being reinforced every time we seek to motivate our audiences into action. When we believe that humans are self-interested, we run campaigns and initiatives that tend to play to our audience's desire for pleasure, power, security or egoic identity. We show how taking action can be rewarding, where you can have fun, or play to our sense of egoic validation that we are the hero's bringing about positive change in the world.

In other words, every time we use a form of extrinsic motivation we reinforce the values of the *homo economicus* characterisation, which is a perfect description of the values ecology of the left hemisphere of the brain.

This almost universal drive towards utility/outcomes/goals is so endemic in our thinking that we no longer notice we are engaging with this strategy. Everything we do that seeks utility, a goal or outcomes is simply a reflection of how the left hemisphere of the brain prefers to think.

From a strictly rational perspective, we tend to believe that we can create social and cultural change by directing all of our focus on achieving certain goals or outcomes. Whether that is enacting policy reforms, a fundraising target, raising awareness, or taking part in a tick-box exercise of eco-actions will lead to lasting change *without paying attention to what is happening at the metanarrative level of everything we do*.

Cultural norms and global politics are ultimately shaped by shared values, not by individual and incremental goals being achieved. Without engaging the right values it becomes nearly impossible to generate the profound, sustained motivation necessary for true transformation.

As we have already experienced, even when a rational and highly compelling case is made for a net-zero future, political will soon dissipates not long after our campaigns for change conclude.

Engaging and tapping into our core values is essential for creating long-term, meaningful change. This is how we building meaningful change. All this essential work takes place at the metanarrative level of our communications.

Two levels of communication

Understanding the dual nature of storytelling



Narrative

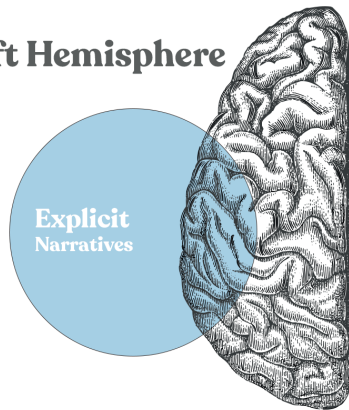
Left hemisphere attention

This is the *who, what, where, when* and *why* of the stories we tell.

Narrative contains all the explicit information that is contained in the stories we tell. This includes the character, the context, what the story is about, and all the other obvious explicit aspects that make up a story.

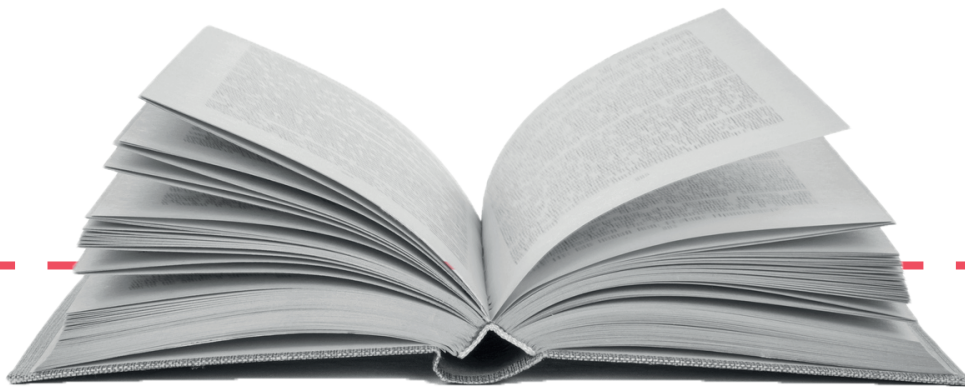
We tend to focus almost all of our attention on ensuring that we get the narrative right, making sure we use the right frame to describe climate change, use the correct terminology, ensuring that our messages will land correctly with our audience, etc. With an almost exclusive focus on narrative we tend to see narrative work as the 'solution' to our current problems. This is why we are seeing a shift across the charity sector for more authentic stories, better representation, different voices, with the expectation that by changing the narrative we change values and behaviours.

Left Hemisphere



Explicit

Implicit



Half of our brain, the right hemisphere, is dedicated to the sole task of working with implicit information. That is why it is more accurate to say metanarratives make up half of all communications.

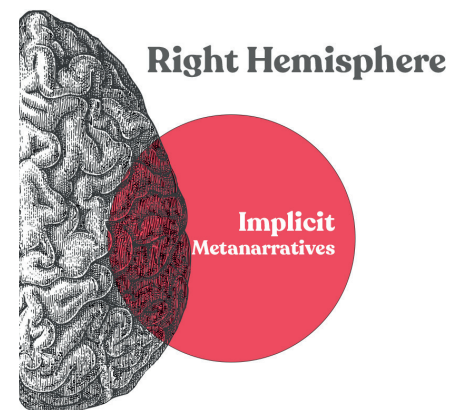
Metanarrative

Right hemisphere attention

This is the relational aspect of the story, the flow state of *values, motivation* and *purpose*.

Metanarrative communicates all the implicit aspects of the stories we tell. We can argue that the real story is not to be found at the narrative level but at the metanarrative. We communicate and reinforce paradigms at the metanarrative level, it is the space where values are communicated and shaped, it reveals what type of motivation orientation we are using as well as the intention of the narrative, or rather the purpose. The space between words is far from empty!

For example, if we play to the usual marketing strategy of showing how taking action on the climate crisis can be fun, rewarding, that we will somehow get something in return if we sign up to the latest campaign, we reinforce the *homo economicus* paradigm, the belief that we will only do something if it maximises our utility (for pleasure or for power). In so doing we reinforce the belief that humans are motivated only towards self-enhancement values (see values map on pg 35 - self-enhancement values are extrinsic values). Once this belief is accepted, we live and act as if this is true. This is how metanarratives reinforce paradigms.



Goal-orientated dynamics

When we are goal-orientated and guided by the values ecology of the left hemisphere of the brain, we not only reinforce the *homo economicus* characterisation, we also *change the nature of the campaigns and stories we tell*.

Goal-orientated campaigning, for example, will almost always point to a 'magic solution'. These magic solutions are what makes up a marketing proposition, where we show how taking action will somehow solve all the world's problems. For example: 'sign up to our campaign to bring about a Net Zero future', 'Give today to stop global hunger'.

These are called magic solutions because no single campaign can bring about a net zero future, and no single donation can stop global hunger.

Magic solutions are not just exaggerated marketing propositions, they reflect a deeper psychology that reflects the thinking of the left hemisphere of the brain. As the left hemisphere is only focussed on what is explicit, it tends to see global issues as technical problems to be fixed, approaching global poverty and climate change as a mechanic would.

The reasoning behind this approach is straightforward: if there is hunger, we provide food; if the climate is changing, we build carbon-capture plants and pursue decarbonization on a large scale. This "fixing" mentality absolves the audience from any personal change or transformation, implying that external interventions, such as campaigns or donations alone will deliver the necessary transformation.

This goal-orientated thinking not only keeps audiences as passive contributors to an external (usually technical) solution, we also run into some other major problems when we focus all of our attention towards what is called an *extrinsic purpose*. This is a type of purpose that seeks a goal/outcome/action as the focus of our attention. While it might seem logical to shape all of our work towards tangible goals and specific outcomes, the more we learn about the nature of motivation, the more we learn how extrinsic purpose aligns closely with extrinsic motivation and extrinsic values - the values that we are seeking to avoid altogether.

This left hemisphere's goal-orientated thinking tends to view global concerns through a mechanical lens while paying very little attention to the underlying values, culture and all the important implicit aspects at play in our communications. It would seem that the values ecology of the left hemisphere of the brain is not just about being mechanically minded and goal orientated, it seems that this hemisphere of the brain has certain characteristics that have huge implications for our work.

The left hemisphere will do anything to avoid undergoing any personal transformation or to undergo any form of suffering. It will always seek transformation through externalities.

A campaign for positive change, under the perspective of a dominant left hemisphere, will always place the focus of change outside, or external, to the self. The left hemisphere seeks to create order *through the manipulation of externalities*.

For example, when it comes to our climate campaigning, of course we will look to world leaders to make bold change, of course we will ask others to engage in eco-friendly behaviours, of course we will put pressure on businesses to make bold changes to become more eco-friendly.

The point is not that we should or shouldn't seek to bring about these goals or actions, it is *how we seek* to bring about these goals and actions. When our campaigns are geared towards a form of extrinsic purpose, we almost exclusively use a form of extrinsic motivation. And why? Because these two *flow well together*.

This is where we get into the problem at the preconscious level of everything we do. When extrinsic purpose and extrinsic motivation are aligned together we tend to warm and engage extrinsic values. These are the self-enhancement values of power, achievement, and security that sit on the opposite side of the values spectrum to the ones that we are seeking to engage.

Values not only have a tendency to *stick around* long after our campaign has finished, but values have a way of feeding into cultural and social norms and behaviours. As behaviours are shaped by values, if we are advocating for change while engaging the wrong set of values, it means that we are undermining our ability to create long-term and meaningful change.

We can now see a deep pattern emerging here, where almost all of our communications and campaigns for positive change are shaped around the values ecology of the left hemisphere.

This can begin to explain the short-termism of our ability to effect real and lasting change. Even when we try to change the narrative, or try to change our approach entirely, without understanding the values ecology of the left hemisphere of the brain we will always be trapped in this values ecology.

A perfect example of this can be seen in climate communications and strategy. As we know, the failure of earlier doom and gloom messages were in effecting change. These dire warnings that were designed to shock, evidently did not lead to the deep and much needed change we needed to see.

So the obvious logic now is to move away from doom and gloom messaging towards positive and empowering messaging, where there is a shift from using anxiety and fear to drive motivation towards positive messaging that shows how eco-actions can be personally rewarding, fun, exciting and something that we may want to be a part of.

While this shift might seem significant, when viewed from a metanarrative perspective, we can see that there is no shift at all. *This is still the same motivation orientation*, albeit from negative to positive position. It is still following the values ecology of the left hemisphere of the brain (this point is explained in further detail later on).

The right hemisphere has an entirely different values ecology. It is not about seeking a goal or outcome, or any self-enhancing utility at all. In fact it seeks the opposite: *self-transcendence*. This is where we do something not for personal reward or pleasure, nor to avoid anxiety

or suffering, but because of an inner draw towards that which transcends the self. Whether that draw is towards beauty, value or any other self-transcending purpose.

Working on this aspect of the self, or rather with the right hemisphere of the brain, is challenging at first because our language centre is held in the left hemisphere of the brain, so being able to articulate right hemisphere dynamics and experiences is really challenging.

Think about trying to describe what it means to be in love. We can't really do this any form of justice by describing with words or within a rational discourse. If we are to describe love we have to infer what this experience is *through* words by using poetry, metaphor, analogies, music or any other form of expression that points *towards* the experience itself. Words can't capture this.

This is why motivation is so hard to articulate. Can we ever put into words what *really* motivates and drives us? Can we really explain motivation away by simply viewing motivation as a response to what we feel? Because if this was so, then why can we not precisely describe those feelings? Why can we not articulate something that is so fundamentally part of who we are?

So much of what it means to be human, our inner drives, our passions and what motivates us is *ineffible* - beyond words. Not because these experiences are so abstract or super-natural, for motivation is an everyday lived experience. We can't articulate so much of who we are because the left hemisphere can't understand or articulate anything that is outside its frame of referencing.

The dual modes of attention

The two hemispheres of the brain play very different roles in understanding and making sense of the world. By understanding what each hemisphere 'sees' we can start to paint a picture of what we are failing to 'see' when we over-rely on the left hemisphere's perspective.

The left hemisphere sees *things*, while the right focuses on the *relationship* of things. This relational seeing is not just about how different things relate to each, as a part of a machine would interact with different parts, but a deeper understanding of relational concepts like values, power, intentionality and purpose.

This means the left hemisphere will focus on the explicit aspects of the stories we tell, the right on the implicit.

The left hemisphere deals with explicit information, such as narratives, the right hemisphere deals with implicit information, such as metanarratives. This explains why we can focus on both narratives and metanarratives at the same time.

It also explains why we can interpret values and purpose without being consciously aware of us doing so.¹³ While the left hemisphere can focus on the *who, what, where, when* and *why* of a story narrative, the right hemisphere focuses on values, purpose and the deeper meaning of the stories we tell.

This is important for our work on metanarratives, as all that falls within the remit of a metanarrative can only

be 'seen' by the right hemisphere. This also means that we cannot use our rationalising mind to make sense of values, motivation or purpose, because to do so means that we distort them when we put them under the gaze of left hemisphere thinking.

When we approach any one of the three primitives, to understand them in their 'natural' state, which is when they are communicated implicitly, we must move beyond rational thinking and seek to approach them through a contemplative mindset. This means being able to see values, motivation and purpose *through* the words and narratives.

Overcoming our cultural blind-spots

Due to our cultural conditioning we tend to ignore almost everything that is happening at the implicit level of all communications and only focus on what has been made explicit. This offers an incredible, as well as shocking, insight:

If half of our brain is dedicated to understanding and interpreting what is implicitly communicated, that means metanarratives don't play a minor role, where they exist in the background of the things we do, but rather metanarratives make up half of all communications.

It is hard to state just how important this insight is. If half of all communications are made up of metanarratives, and this half is where we find the most important elements that drive social and cultural norms as well as long-term behaviour, then the fact that *we don't even think metanarratives exist* begins to show you the scale of the problem we have today.

Hopefully you can begin to see why working with metanarratives is so important. Take our climate campaigns and initiatives as an example. We can see that we have been focussed almost entirely on getting the correct information across, how to frame our messages, how to tell stories to persuade or to provide evidence to back up what we are saying. Almost all of our attention has been focussed on *trying to get the narrative right* and trying to validate our cause with our audiences.

Under this approach, it almost feels like we are trying to get our audiences to *think right*, in order that they *act right*. This, in some way, reveals the paradigm we are trapped in: the idea that if we get the right information across, if we educate, raise awareness, tell impact stories of climate change in order for audiences *to understand, then they will act*.

This is clearly left-hemisphere logic. If we remember the left hemisphere can't see the implicit, it can't see the role of values, motivation orientations or purpose playing out at the metanarrative level of every story and communication we tell, therefore it cannot see what is happening at the metanarrative level and how metanarratives are what drive long-term change.

Left hemisphere and storytelling

The left hemisphere is a terrible storyteller. We can see this across the charity sector, and not just in climate communications. It is the type of storytelling where

so-called 'stories' are presented, but they read like academic case-studies. They feel like the audience is looking in, or down, on the person in the story. They may have a quote or two from the people in the 'story', but there is no attempt to transport the audience *into the story*.

Instead, most 'stories', especially for fundraising propositions, tend to read like a news report. They are objective, third person orientated, which feel flat and devitalised. These stories tend to stick to a rigid marketing formula that is designed to make us feel in a certain way in order that we take action or donate.

See [Example 1](#), [example 2](#) and [example 3](#) from WaterAid where each story follows exactly the same predictable formula, with case study pull-out quotes that qualify why giving to their cause will bring about change.

The potential here to tell some incredibly rich stories, to involve the audience, to breathe life and vitality into this narrative is totally missed. Instead each story is a devitalised, flattened imitations of what a story could be with the same simple and predictable narrative.

This approach to storytelling is not restricted to one or two charities, it can be seen almost universally across the whole charity sector. *It is the same story being told again and again*. The context might change, the theme might change, the country of focus might change, but it is still *the same story*.

Creating stories through left hemisphere logic is undermining our collective ability to create powerful stories, stories that have vitality and a life of their own, full of meaning and purpose that can inspire and lead to real transformation in our audiences.

Instead we tell these bland stories that follow predictable narrative structures, not because we want to, but because the logic of the paradigms we hold demands it. That is the power of paradigms, *they limit our ability to see what is possible*.

Paradigm trap

Our lack of ability to see or understand what metanarratives are and how to work with them is not an oversight that should somehow fall on the shoulders of climate communicators and campaigners, but this oversight reflects a deep cultural paradigm that *we are all trapped in*.

If we can't even see the metanarratives that are everywhere, then how can we ever hope to see the problems that are everywhere?

Being metanarrative blind (or mono-narrative focussed - however you want to frame it!) means that not only do we not see what is happening at the metanarrative level of everything we do, but we *participate in and reinforce the same toxic paradigms that are exacerbating the problems we are trying to solve*.

The irony is that in our attempt to make the world a better place and to drive positive change, we are unconsciously reinforcing the same psychological

foundations that gave rise to the problems in the first place.

While this is clearly not our intention, it is almost impossible to avoid if we are metanarrative-blind.

Metanarratives are received unconsciously and are communicated unconsciously. We participate in their flow whether we are aware of them or not.

When we are unable to see metanarratives we are at the mercy of their logic and their values. As metanarratives communicate and reinforce paradigms *we tend to mistake paradigms for our own thinking*, which is why we will rush to defend them, despite the absurdity of their logic.

This explains why we will, on the one hand, totally reject the underlying premise of *homo economicus*, but at the same time we wouldn't think twice about running a volunteer recruitment campaign that shows how signing up will be fun, how you will get something else in return - training, skills, experience - all to put on your CV. And woe to anyone who would ever dare to point out the illogic of your thinking!

As we tend to mistake paradigms for our own thinking we will mistake any criticism of them as a criticism of our own selves. This is the power of a paradigm trap and why, even the most absurd ones are so difficult to shift.

Paradigms *limit our ability to think well*. A sure sign that we are trapped in a paradigm is a noticeable limitation on our thinking. The result is that regardless of our academic credentials, when it comes down to understanding a topic like human motivation our insights will be incredibly naive, childish even.

And we can see this being played out today, where even leading charities and communication experts are rolling out campaigns that adopt a '*show happy pictures and the audience will want to do the happy things*' style of motivation. The idea that if we tell positive stories of people taking positive action, where everyone is smiling to camera, we will somehow overcome the motivation gap and drive real transformation. This approach is not only naive, it is almost a child's interpretation on how motivation works.

Lack of inspiration is not the problem we are facing, it's motivation. And motivation is a much more complex subject that requires a deeper understanding of the human psyche, the role of values and metanarratives as well as understanding the right-hemisphere of the brain's role in long-term motivational behaviour change.

Shifting from doom and gloom to positive messaging is hardly anywhere we need to be right at this moment. Instead we need to be asking bigger questions like 'are we in a paradigm trap, and if so what is it and how can we get out of it?'

A paradigm can always be spotted by our basic assumptions about what *we just assume to be true*. In fact paradigms always seem to make *common sense*. Of course it makes common sense for our campaigns and activities to all point towards a goal or direct outcome. It would seem absurd to think otherwise! That's the power of paradigms.

Overcoming cultural paradigms

Escaping from today's paradigm traps

Paradigms and metanarratives

It is hard to separate our understanding of metanarratives and our current paradigms that shape today's thinking. Paradigms not only shape metanarratives, they are communicated through and reinforced by them.

Metanarratives reveal the dominant paradigms that we hold to be true, they are shaped by our assumptions, they reveal the story that we tell ourselves about ourselves. In many ways we can say that metanarratives reveal *our common story*. This is where we draw our common sense making from. This common story may rarely be expressed explicitly, but it can be found implicitly in everything we do.

We tend to think of the deep psychological drivers behind today's ecological crisis as something buried deep within the unconscious mind, or as some dark force within our wider culture that can't be shifted in any way. That is simply not true. Psychological drivers are always expressed at the metanarrative level of everything we do.

To change them is simple. We just no longer participate in them.

Metanarratives can only exist through our willingness to actively participate in them. Without our consent, they pretty much die and fade away. To change toxic ones we simply choose to participate in a new metanarrative - one that is designed for human flourishing. Or to put this another way, to transcend the old story, we simply tell a new one, a better one.

This is clearly not the metanarrative thinking of Lyotard, that associates metanarratives with 'grand narratives' found in religion or political ideas and theories. Instead our understanding of metanarratives goes much deeper and is expressed at the primal level of all communications.

Any careful reading of history will reveal that within every social advancement there was a shift in the story we told ourselves, or rather, there was a shift in the metanarrative of that culture.

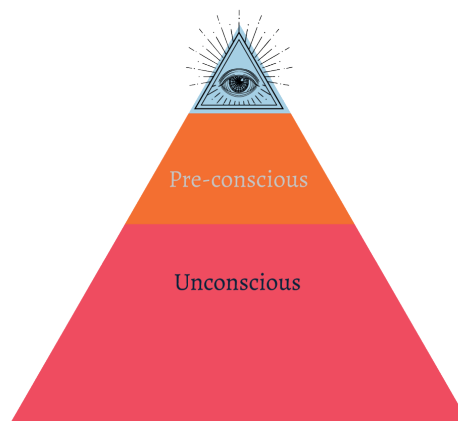
This shift is not a linear process. Telling a new story, shifting a paradigm, is not as easy as uttering a few special words and everything somehow falls into place. It takes time, commitment and ongoing realignment to the new story. Just as the very foundations of sexism or racial inequality have been challenged and exposed for what they are, it doesn't mean that we have got rid of these social ills. Unwinding and untangling paradigms can take time, and tends to take longer when we fail to understand how metanarratives continue to communicate and reinforce old paradigms long after the paradigm has been debunked.

The Cartesian paradigm

There are a set of key paradigms that play real havoc on our current storytelling. The first is the Cartesian paradigm, based on Rene Descartes' dualistic philosophy. It is best known for its one-liner 'I think therefore I am'. Descartes was a sceptic, and concluded that the only thing that we can trust is the fact that we think.¹⁵

This philosophical insight has made a huge impression on Western and modern thinking, as it elevates rational thinking and is sceptical of all non-rational thinking, especially emotion, intuition and imagination. In fact, all the characteristics that make us human were viewed with suspicion by Descartes.

This has resulted in a significant shift towards a dominant left-hemisphere way of thinking. If we model this paradigm it looks a little bit like this triangle, a control tower model of thinking, with rational thought at the top and all the non-rational thinking, or rather the unconscious mind, below.



In this model our rational mind is superior, and we can provide lots of rational arguments to back up this case!

But this is not how we think at all, but rather *how we think we think*. This paradigm clearly puts the left hemisphere, the over-rational aspect of our thinking in control. When we over-associate ourselves with our rational mind, we create a power imbalance between the two hemispheres of the brain.

Iain McGilchrist describes the relationship between the two hemispheres of the brain as that of a master and an emissary.¹⁶ The master sees the whole, the bigger picture, the emissary goes out to do the master's bidding. This is a healthy relationship. With Descartes' influence we now have reversed this relationship in which the left hemisphere is now put in charge and the right hemisphere's modes of thinking are seen as inferior or to be treated with scepticism.

This paradigm has had a huge real-world impact on both social and environmental concerns. When the left

hemisphere is in control, it seeks to manipulate the world, it shapes everything according to its own logic. It views all other forms of knowing as not only inferior but not to be trusted.

The impact this thinking has had not only on ourselves but on different social groups throughout history, especially indigenous groups who view the world through a different paradigm, cannot be overstated. We can even begin to trace how this paradigm, with its hierarchy of rational thinking, tends to create a hierarchy of value, treating anyone who doesn't think this way as inferior, especially women!

It is no surprise to see that not only was Descartes a sceptic but he also viewed nature as mechanistic, believing that if you were to open up certain animals you would find that they are just machines with mechanical parts.

Iain McGilchrist gives example from his medical profession showing patients with severe damage to their right-hemisphere (so had to over-rely on their left hemisphere) saw the world as a machine, made up of parts that all interacted with each other.¹⁷

McGilchrist also shows the evidence between dominant left-hemisphere thinking and schizophrenia. This manifests in fragmented thinking, rigid patterns, and a detachment from lived, embodied experience. Patients often experience a *diminished sense of connectedness to the world* and an impaired ability to *grasp implicit meanings*, which aligns with the left hemisphere's tendency to isolate and de-contextualise information.¹⁸

The Cartesian paradigm makes up a perfect paradigm trap. As it is this paradigm that promotes rationalistic, disembodied, abstract thinking as superior, we tend to try to find solutions to today's problems through this paradigm. This partly explains why we haven't taken metanarratives seriously at all, nor storytelling (unless we utilise it as part of a marketing strategy).

In this paradigm we see ourselves as individual, disconnected, and independent from each other and our natural world. We genuinely believe ourselves to be separate from nature, and tend to refer to the 'natural world' as something separate to us.

This paradigm is so endemic in our culture, it is almost impossible to escape its logic. If you were in an important high-stakes corporate meeting and you stood up and started to talk about your intuition, your feelings, or using language like 'we need to understand the flow here', 'if we take a moment to contemplate the deeper meaning here...' instead of referring to the latest research, a chart, powerpoint display with key bullet-points or some other rationalised argument, you probably wouldn't be taken seriously at all.

And yet, all the worst ideas, or the failed initiatives and campaigns have all come from 'good thinking', which have all followed some logic or rational approach.

It is a reminder, yet again, that we are not *homo economicus*, we are not rational people, *we are relational*. Understanding how we relate to reality (in other words, how we think of ourselves and the paradigms we

hold) can help us make sense of how we can motivate audiences towards long-term behavioural change.

The technocratic paradigm

Following on from the Cartesian paradigm is the technocratic paradigm. This paradigm is not just about our love and obsession with science and technology, as if science can provide all the answers to today's problems, it is a way of thinking that distorts how we see and relate to the world around us.

This thinking is closely aligned to the left hemisphere's preferred way of thinking that seeks to understand reality by objectifying it first, taking it out of a deeper context and relationship, breaking it down to its constitutive parts and then utilising this knowledge to manipulate the world around us.

For example, under the technocratic paradigm we may look at a tree, we will look to see what category it falls into (a birch, oak, or pine tree), we can study it and take it apart to understand how it receives nutrients, how the cambium between the phloem and xylem produces new wood and bark... all the while viewing the tree as a mechanistic process.

This paradigm gives us power to understand how a tree works and how we can manipulate it. But this mode of attention de-values the tree. It no longer seen as part of a bigger picture, part of a highly complex ecosystem that produces oxygen to give us life, nor what its purpose is, or that a tree has intrinsic value. The only value it has is the value we assign to it, whether this is monetary value, or the pleasure this tree may provide us.

As a result, this paradigm changes our relationship with nature, and how we see, value and relate to the world around us.

In this paradigm we hold science and our technological ability as the pinnacle of human endeavour. While there is much to celebrate about our scientific and technological achievements, within this paradigm we fail to spot the obvious - that our obsession with science and technology is not only killing our planet, both in terms of how we value and relate to the world, but also it gives us the power to grab and manipulate our world to meet our immediate needs.

Despite all the evidence to the contrary, we seem to be obsessed with the idea that with each scientific or technological breakthrough that our lives will be better, easier or that we should accept every scientific progress unquestionably, because each stage of scientific progress will always offer us more power.



Watch our video explainer on the technocratic paradigm [here](#).

This is simply not the case as the technocratic paradigm not only devalues the world around us, but strips it from its meaning and purpose. Not only is this mindset making our lives worse, it is also destroying our natural world.

Within a storytelling and motivation context the technocratic paradigm is a disaster.

The bias of this paradigm is that to understand anything we must subject it to the methodology of this paradigm, where we take things out of their embodied context, break them down to their constitutive parts and then see how this knowledge can give us the power to manipulate the thing that we are seeking to understand.

If we are to understand stories, or how stories work, or even *what stories are*, under this paradigm we turn to scientists to help us with this endeavour. This has resulted in highly distorted storytelling theory called the *science of storytelling*. Most storytelling training programmes, especially corporate and business storytelling, tend to start with this thinking.

This is the paradigm trap - in order to give something validity in our current culture we have to show how there is scientific basis for it. We won't take meditation seriously, despite it being practiced for thousands of years, until we show the science behind it.¹⁹

So we take storytelling seriously, only because we can 'prove' that telling stories engages certain neuro-chemicals. These three chemicals of oxytocin (empathy), dopamine (pleasure) and cortisol (attention) are seen as essential to engage if we want to capture our audience's attention and to get them on board with our messages.

But in doing so, this paradigm distorts the true nature of stories and storytelling, where we now view storytelling as a methodology to use narrative to 'excite' the brain. Because, as the logic follows, if we engage these certain chemicals the behaviours attached to them will follow.

This is not how storytelling works, nor how we engage with different values. In fact, this approach distorts our understanding of values.

Pope Francis in the encyclical *Laudato Si'* suggests that the technocratic paradigm is one of the greatest threats we face today. He refers to its thinking as 'ironclad logic',²⁰ because you simply can't argue against it.

Under our example of storytelling theory, it is true that stories excite certain chemicals, there is evidence that this is what happens when we tell powerful stories. It is true that certain chemicals can lead to certain behaviours, especially the empathy chemical of oxytocin.

But as soon as we try to tell stories to engage these chemicals, where - in our mechanistic thinking - we try to 'excite' the brain in the hope that this technique will deliver the desired output, we change the nature of the stories we tell. We shift them, at the metanarrative level, towards an extrinsic purpose. We utilise stories as a marketing tool, and in so doing, we end up promoting the values of the marketing paradigm - one of the most dangerous paradigms that exists today.

The technocratic paradigm is so attractive because it gives us power to manipulate the world around us, but it also devalues our relationship with the world around us.

This paradigm, through its iron-clad logic, not only devalues our world, but it strips everything of its intrinsic value. This is how the left-hemisphere sees the world - flat, devitalised, mechanistic and without meaning or purpose. Nothing is sacred in this paradigm, the only value that exists is extrinsic value - the value that we place on things (usually monetary value).

As a result, rainforests are chopped down, natural habitats are destroyed, land, sea and air are polluted - not because we want to or made a conscious decision to do so, but because that is how we value them. Our value, within this paradigm, is technological progress. A progress defined on how much we can progress in science in order to further manipulate the world around us. This vision of progress does not take into account happiness, wellbeing or meaning - only power.

To overcome the technocratic paradigm we have to find ways of breaking its spell over us. This means exposing how this paradigm distorts how we understand, see and value our world. This means we need to take more seriously different ways of knowing, especially when it comes to interior aspects such as values and purpose.

To paraphrase McGilchrist, the sciences make a great servant but a terrible master. The sciences cannot provide the deep answers to motivation, values and purpose which we desperately need today. For this we need to reclaim and rekindle the importance of the humanities which deal with the human aspect of the self.

The marketing paradigm

Not to be confused just with marketing and advertising, the marketing paradigm expresses *a way of thinking* around human motivation that underpins almost everything that we do.

It is one of the most insidious and dangerous paradigms there is, as it is based on a theory of human motivation that relies on a form of extrinsic motivation to sell goods and services. As we will see, extrinsic motivation is not a harmless motivation orientation, as to 'trigger' extrinsic motivation you have to either play to your audience's fears or create anxiety, or you play to the lower values of greed, security or ego. This can be reduced to a simple marketing formula:

1. *Create the need, or create anxiety*
2. *Offer a 'magic solution' that will take away your anxiety.*

This is called inadequacy marketing,²¹ which works by creating anxiety or a sense of inadequacy in your audience - the greater the anxiety the stronger the motivation tension to buy your goods or services.

The reason why this paradigm is so dangerous is because it is a long-term psychological pollutant. We love this paradigm because it gives us enormous power over

others without having to do very little. It doesn't require high-skill or a deep knowledge of psychology to apply, it just requires a willingness to engage with its logic.

Create anxiety and use that anxiety to motivate your audiences to buy your product. It's that simple. And not only that, it 'works'. But it 'works' at a cost, for it is a long-term psychological pollutant.

If we imagine the marketing paradigm is like a motivation engine, we can start to see how everything we do, every campaign, story, fundraiser, social media post draws from this 'engine' in some way. This engine works by showing the need or creating anxiety²² and offering a magic solution - something that will solve all your problems.

It is all these subtle feelings of inadequacy, that may not seem much at all, but over years and years of exposure to the million of marketing messages that make up the background noise of everyday life, this anxiety has a cumulative effect.

We can see the driving force this psychological drive has on the hyper-consumeristic culture that we have created today. In this paradigm we don't buy goods or services because we need them, but to help us overcome our fears and anxieties. In this paradigm we value things that offer to take away our anxiety.

This is why we will buy, and even pay large amounts of money for things that are meaningless and hold no real tangible value. These may include luxury items, as we value the social recognition they may bring. But our desire for social recognition emerges out of an anxiety state.

For the marketing 'engine' to work we need to trigger a motivational response. The best way to do this is to play to our lower values of greed, fear or ego.²³

GREED

You are not in possession of the thing that will make you happy.
There is a better, smarter, flashier version of the things you already have.

FEAR

You are not safe.
You will miss out, it will be gone before you know it.

EGO

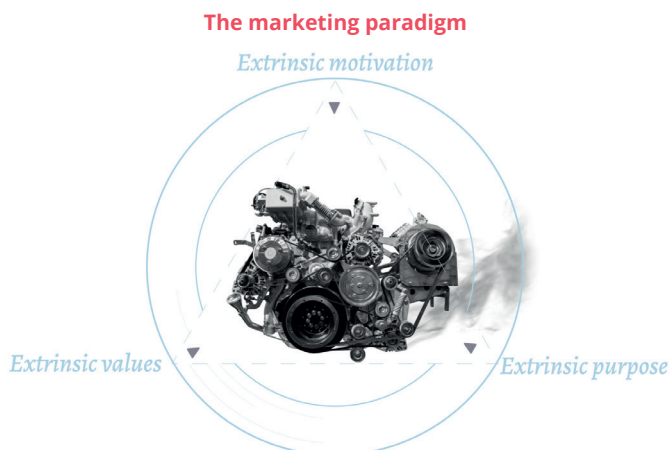
You are not attractive enough to be loveable.
You will not be accepted or respected by others unless you are wearing the latest fashion items.

While this approach may work, it warms and engages our lower values, keep us in a high-anxiety state, and tends to promise that by purchasing an external item we can

avoid doing any inner work. Instead of valuing ourself and our own sense of worth, we can buy makeup and look beautiful to avoid this inner task.

Not only does this create addictive patterns of behaviour (as we need to keep buying makeup in order to regulate our self worth), to trigger the motivation adverts have to play to our fears and anxieties.

Whether it is beauty models air-brushed to perfection, boasting an idealised body shape, or the promise of power or pleasure that the latest smartphone upgrade may offer you, or the luxury items that will validate your sense of worth, this relentless industry keeps us trapped in emotionally and spiritually immature states.



If we view the marketing paradigm like an engine, we can imagine it as a fossil-fuelled engine. It may work, but for it to work it needs to create a pollutant - a psychological pollutant. So every time we use the marketing formula we are contributing to the psychological conditions that are causing the problems that we are trying to address.

We already know the excessive dangers marketing plays in distorting what we value and what we desire. It's constant claim to offer ways to make us happier with the next purchase, upgrade or experience tends to play out the exact opposite in the long term.

The marketing paradigm is responsible for

creating a high-anxiety culture of which we can see the effects it has created over time, including compulsive behaviours, worrying growth of depression, mental health issues and growing suicide rates, all of which are taking place against the backdrop of our access to material goods and services that was beyond any previous generations.

It seems that the marketing paradigm is not just about marketing goods and services, it is based on an omnipresent motivation theory that needs to create anxiety to drive behaviour.

This is why the marketing paradigm is not just restricted to the selling of goods and services, as we can see the same motivation patterns within political campaigning, in media outlets, on social media algorithms, absorbed into business models - all playing a huge role in shaping the values we hold and how we think and relate to each other.

This ever-present and deeply invasive paradigm is the dominant paradigm that shapes not only how we understand motivation, but also plays a dominant role in shaping our cultural values and collective sense of purpose.

In fact, it would be more appropriate to say this paradigm provides a new myth to live by.

Myths are deep stories that ultimately deal with the deep nature of the psyche and the how to make sense of suffering. So, when we look at the dominant myth that shapes our deep psyche, we can begin to see that we have allowed marketers to become the new

mythmakers. For every hardship that we face, for every insecurity we may have, for all of our deep wantings there is a 'magic solution'. *Marketers offer us a way to take away suffering.*

The problem is that this paradigm needs to create fear and anxiety for it to work. While there is always the promise that there is a new product or service that can take away our deepest anxieties, by using anxiety to drive the motivation proposition we are increasing social anxiety, not decreasing it.

This is what makes the marketing paradigm so toxic, it takes on a pseudo-spiritual role that it can take suffering away.

This paradigm distorts how we think, which then shapes how we seek to find solutions to problems. It is very much aligned with the values ecology of the left hemisphere of the brain, as it will do anything it can to avoid suffering, hardship or any aspect of inner conversion.

As we can see with our convenience culture where our use of plastic straws, plastic spoons and single-use items were all designed to make our life easier. Our desire to avoid suffering, our desire for convenient lifestyles, only transfers the suffering elsewhere – embodied by the plastic pollution that is now destroying our oceans and marine life. Our desire for cheaper goods and services, more choice, better luxury items are all strategies to avoid suffering – which only transfers suffering further down the supply chain, expressed by poverty wages, as well as environmental destruction and pollution.

If you want to understand the deep psychology of any culture simply reflect on how it deals with suffering.

When we look to indigenous and primal cultures who exhibit high pro-social and pro-environmental behaviours you can see an almost universal adoption of myth, rituals and rites of passage that would lead the participants into suffering, in order that they could transcend suffering within a sacred space. We no longer know how to do this, so we do the opposite.

When we explore what is happening at the metanarrative level of almost every communication, initiative and story we tell we can see this deep dynamic taking in place. Not just in our communications, but *everywhere*. Millions upon millions of marketing messages all promising to take away suffering if you just simply buy the 'magic solution'. This not only seems to be our current myth; but it is a deep belief that we have even incorporated within our attempts to drive positive change.

Transcending suffering

Our campaigns for change tend to follow the logic of the marketing paradigm. We either offer doom and gloom messages with the offer that if we act now, or sign up to the latest campaign we can 'save the planet' (a 'magic solution' that offers to take away suffering), or we do positive storytelling showing an optimistic view of the world we want, with people smiling and working together we showcase a *world without suffering*.

Having worked for so many years first-hand on climate and social communication strategies, it has always bewildered me that positive messaging just doesn't seem to resonate with audiences in a meaningful way. Bright, positive imagery and positive storytelling seems to work only in the short term, making this strategy for engagement extremely hard to maintain over a long period.

Logically speaking this approach should work. Who isn't attracted to the idea of living in a safer and happier world? Who isn't willing to undergo a bit of hard work to bring these utopic visions to life? If this is the case then why do our positive appeals of 'together we can make a difference!' just feel flat and slightly meaningless? They shouldn't, but they do.

From this experience I can only conclude that the deep psyche doesn't take these positive narratives or positive storytelling seriously because these stories fail to acknowledge or integrate suffering in any way. While marketing narratives use our fear of suffering as a motivation trigger, positive messaging tends to avoid suffering altogether, resulting in a weak motivation tension within them.

Positive messaging, narratives that appeal to positive thinking, appeals to 'work together to build a better world' fail to create any motivation tension. It is why they tend to fall flat.

This is where we find a deeper insight into motivation theory and storytelling. To create a motivational dynamic you have to deal with suffering in some way. Aspirational messages fail to do this, positive thinking and optimistic outlooks fail to do this. It is not because humans don't want to live in a better world, it is because it submits to the thinking of the left hemisphere of the brain - that tries to do anything to avoid suffering.

The right hemisphere of the brain knows differently. It sees the world differently, it sees the bigger picture, it sees what is implicit everywhere, *it knows suffering is necessary*.

This explains why stories that resonate deeply with us, the best stories, tend to transport us into the story so that we experience suffering.

Whether it is fictional tales, blockbuster movies, or even well written charity communications - they all do one thing: *they make us suffer well*. We will quite willingly watch a 2hr movie or read a series of books about a young wizard called Harry Potter who is tortured, threatened with death and has to deal with the loss of some of his closest friends - all laid out in excruciating detail. And by the end of it want to read it again!

This is where we experience the suffering in a safe space. We *feel* the fears of the hero in the story, we experience their sorrow and grief, we also take part in their joy and jubilation at the necessary happy ending where their suffering is transcended. And in reading or engaging with the story *we are transformed by that experience*.

This behaviour, where we *enjoy* suffering, might bypass

as normal, it is anything but. It is extraordinarily peculiar behaviour. We tend not to notice how strange our collective storytelling behaviour is, where we have an active desire to fear, to feel, to be shocked. This makes no logical or rational sense. But we don't seem to notice these peculiar behaviours because these strange behaviours come so naturally to us.

This is the substantive difference between the marketing paradigm and the storytelling paradigm. The marketing paradigm seeks to bring about transformation by avoiding suffering, so we buy into the external 'magic solution' to solve all of our problems. The storytelling paradigm, by contrast, seeks to bring about transformation by transcending suffering, by taking us into the story so that we are transformed.

These two paradigms are two entirely different approaches to motivation. The marketing paradigm utilises extrinsic motivation to drive behaviour, while the storytelling paradigm engages with intrinsic motivation to drive behaviour. The marketing paradigm tends to engage extrinsic values while the storytelling paradigm tends to engage intrinsic values.

Having worked with a number of clients over the years I can honestly say that almost everyone thinks that they are intrinsically motivating audiences, that they are doing storytelling right. There is a tendency to think that there is room for improvement in their writing styles, or better ways to communicate their messages, but in terms of motivation theory - there seems to be widespread belief that everyone has got it right.

Most clients I have noticed are happy to be advised on narrative changes and improvements. But the idea that they are *not* using intrinsic motivation? The idea that they are *not* engaging with intrinsic values? This always seems to be outside of their imagination. This makes for a very difficult conversation.

As way of an example, when we look at climate communications over a two-year period (between 2020-23) and mapped it to a motivation continuum below we saw an almost universal trend towards using a form of extrinsic motivation to drive almost all campaigns.

But this makes no sense, as there is no evidence

anywhere to suggest that you can extrinsically motivate an intrinsic value. In fact, quite the opposite. To trigger an extrinsic motivational proposition you have to create anxiety or play to your audience's lower values. If you try to extrinsically motivate an intrinsic value you end up warming and engaging extrinsic values instead.

This goes back to the simple error that we associate values with the theme. So if we are talking about 'protecting the environment' we think we are engaging with the intrinsic value of 'protecting the environment'. As we will see, this is simply not the case. Values work at the pre-conscious level, at the implicit level, they have very little to do with words.

This almost universal trend to use extrinsic motivation is not just an oversight or a coincidence, it goes in some ways to suggest that we are trapped in the marketing paradigm. We have absorbed its logic, that to bring about positive change we either play to fears/anxieties or promises of pleasure/power.

Not only have we created campaigns and initiatives that fail to engage the right values or create the conditions in which we can deliver on long-term change, we have also reinforced one of the most toxic paradigms by our full participation within it.

We can't build long-term and meaningful change on social and environmental issues if we keep reinforcing this paradigm again and again. We can't build positive change when we keep using an anxiety 'engine' to drive everything we do. We can't create real transformation if our optimistic and positive storytelling strategies avoid suffering altogether.

These messages just don't resonate, they don't 'land', they don't make sense from a metanarrative point of view. Using fear and anxiety to motivate undermines our ability to create long-term change. Adopting positive messaging robs us of power, where our messages just fall flat as there is no motivational tension found in someone smiling to the camera trying to inspire you to embrace a new eco-lifestyle because it offers pleasure.

To create stories that can change the world, we first must understand how to craft stories that work with intrinsic values, that deal with suffering in some way, and resonate with the deep psyche.

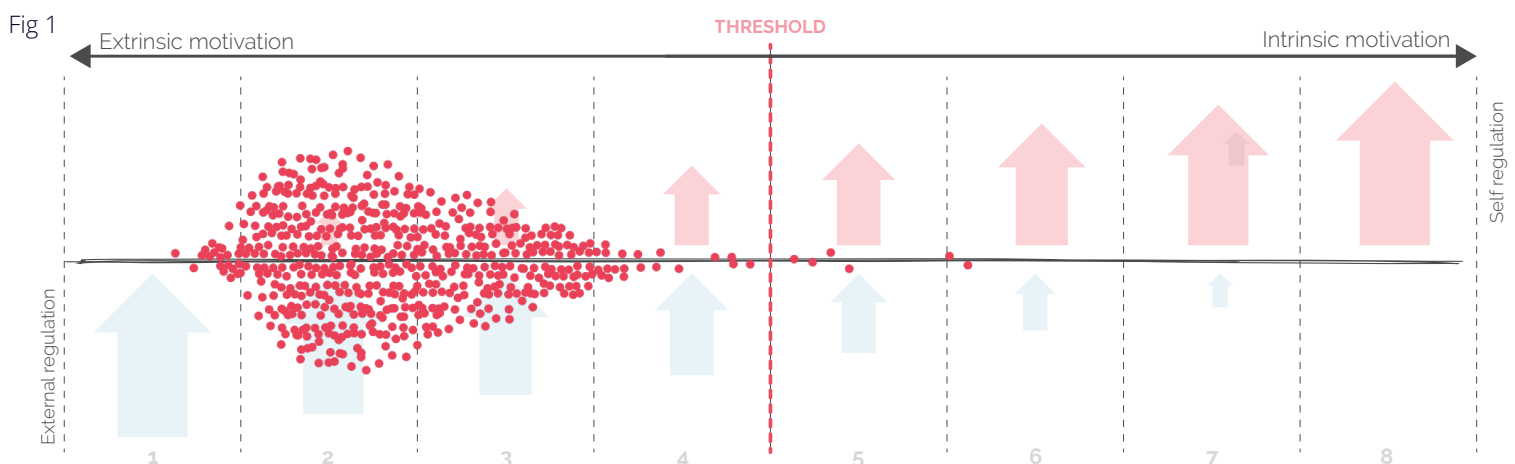


Fig 1 Distribution of climate messages over a two year period mapped to a motivation continuum. There is a clear clustering towards orientations 2 & 3, with only a few outliers making it to stages 5 and beyond.²⁴

Case Study 3

The marketing paradigm



This Kia advert offers the perfect example of the marketing paradigm in its call to action: "it's hard to be an eco-warrior, but it is easy to drive like one." The advert offers the *path of least resistance* to becoming an 'eco-warrior'. We don't have to become a better version of ourselves, we can just buy the 'magic solution'.

The marketing paradigm is summed up by the simple formula:

1. Create anxiety 2. Offer 'magic solution'

It's such a simple approach to audience motivation and engagement that we use it almost all the time. We might not recognise this formula, but we are very familiar with its implementation. The millions of marketing messages that surround us almost daily tends to draw from this simple formula. Think of car adverts, cat food adverts, fast food adverts, cosmetic adverts and everything in-between. Somehow we are missing out, something is not quite right, but by buying the good or services order will be restored.

The challenge of the marketing paradigm is the ability to see it. Because this anxiety-inducing pattern is omnipresent in our culture we are no longer attuned to it, nor can we see its effects on ourselves and on within our wider culture at large. Therefore we absorb its logic and apply it to our own communications and audience engagement strategies as we can see in the examples below.

This marketing paradigm is a complex paradigm that is not just simply about creating anxiety, nor just about playing to our lower values of greed, lust or ego to sell goods and services, it is all of these *and more*. The more sophisticated marketing becomes (and it has become extremely sophisticated) is that it becomes adept at shifting our perception of value.

Given that our current ecological crises can best be seen first and foremost as a *values crisis*, we need to pay a lot more attention to everything that distorts our sense of intrinsic value.

The emphasis on 'magic solutions' thinking tends to place change as external to ourselves. In the marketing paradigm we don't have to change, we don't have to grow up, we don't have to undergo any transformation, we just have to *purchase the magic solution* which will solve the problem for us.

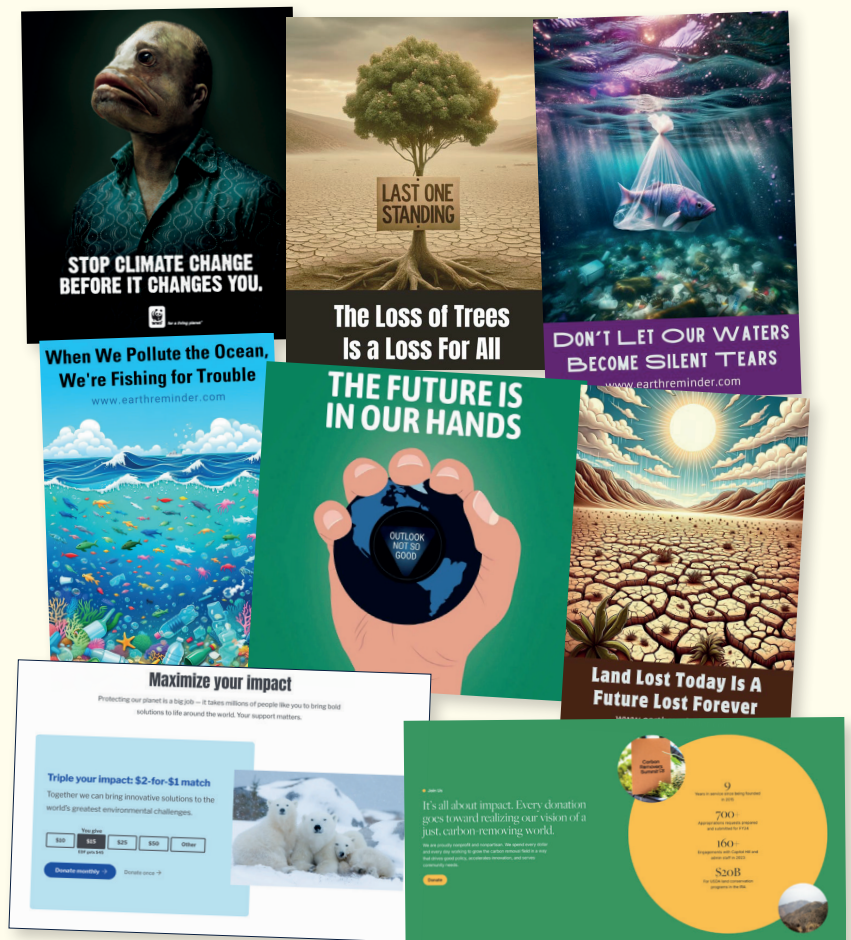
This paradigm prefers to keep us immature, dependent and keeps us in cycles of co-dependency and addicted to external 'magic solutions'. We don't even seem to notice how ridiculous the claims are made by these magic solutions, where signing up to the latest campaign or donating £5 a month can 'save our planet' or 'stop climate change'.

We make these bold claims not because we believe them to be true, but because the paradigm demands that we do, because without a 'magic solution' we can't create the tension to drive the motivation to engage.

The nature of the marketing paradigm is towards profit, not towards behavioural change, it is designed to extract and manipulate, not to awaken us to a better version of ourselves.

Until we recognise not only the limits of this paradigm in helping to bring about lasting change, but also the long-term dangers this paradigm places as it manipulates what we value can we ever start to work in a way that can deliver on our long-term ambitions.

In order to transcend this paradigm we first need to be able to spot it in our own communications, and know how to work to an entirely different dynamic altogether.



Explainer

The nature of attention



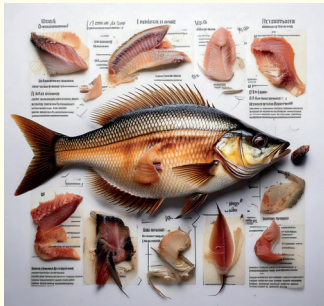
To understand how the three primitives of values, motivation and purpose work, we first need to understand how their nature changes depending on the different mode of attention which we give them.

How do we understand a fish?

This might feel like an odd question. What do we mean *understand*? In what context? Do we mean *what is a fish*? Or do we mean how does a fish function? How does it swim? Or do we mean what is the purpose of a fish?

We can ask the same question but *attend to it* in very different ways. We can attend to this question from a biological perspective, ecological perspective, symbolic perspective, ethical perspective or a philosophical perspective. All different perspectives have value, and they answer the same question in different ways, but *each perspective has a different valuing system*.

Left hemisphere attention



The left hemisphere likes to break things down to their constitutive parts in order to understand the whole. It prefers to compartmentalise and classify information, it sees value only in terms of pleasure, power or utility. To understand a fish it will *first take the fish out of the water*.

It will first seek to classify and label it - to see what species the fish is. It will seek to break down the different functions of the fish, how the tail works, how fins work, to see how gills extract oxygen from their environment. We can go further and take the fish apart, to see how it breathes, how it digests food, etc.

While this type of attention may offer us insight, it also changes the nature of the fish, for it *kills the fish*. When we take the fish out of its living environment, the fish no longer has vitality or life. It is objectified, classified and we can no longer understand the relational aspects of the fish. We may

now know how a fish 'works', we may know the fish through a mechanical lens, but that does not mean we truly understand the fish, only that we know how to manipulate it.

Right hemisphere attention

The right hemisphere seeks understanding by looking at the whole picture with a focus on relationships. This attention will focus on a seeking to understand the fish by its social complex behaviours, to understand a fish's purpose by how it relates to others and is part of a much more complex ecosystem of life.

To understand the fish we can't put it into a fish bowl to study it, as we will never understand how it relates socially and is part of a wider ecology. Nor can we study the fish by itself, in isolation. We need to understand how the fish interacts as part of a larger school of fish, how they help each other to defend themselves, the complex interplay of how they decide to mate, to protect their young, etc.

To understand fish in this context requires an entirely different attention if we are to see the fish fully alive and as part of a bigger complex ecosystem. Only then can we ever truly understand what a fish is. For this type of attention not only do we need to learn how to swim, but know *how to breathe underwater*.



Breathing underwater

Of course this thought exercise isn't really about fish but to illustrate the necessity to learn how to see things within an ecological mindset. Due to the technocratic paradigm, we tend only seem to pay attention to a one-dimensional view of reality, where things are taken out of their living context and classified into its respective category.

When it comes to understanding the three primitives of values, motivation and purpose we have to recognise that each one of these changes their nature when they are viewed in their *explicit* state, or under the perspective of the left hemisphere of the brain. In doing so it may offer us some insight. In an explicit state we can put values into a category, we can define different types of motivation and put a label on them. But to truly understand any one of the primitives we have to see them 'alive' in their natural context, which is in their *implicit* state. This means we need to understand how primitives work at the metanarrative level of everything we do. It may take a while to adjust to this perspective, but when we do, we can begin to see how values, motivation and purpose work in synergy together, shaping how we think, relate and act in the world.

Understanding Values

How to work with values in their implicit state



Values lie at the core of human motivation, shaping our behaviours, priorities, and the ways we interact with the world. Understanding how values work, how to engage and awaken them is essential for anyone working for positive change in the world.

What are values?

Trying to understand what values are and how they work is not as straightforward as we may think. If we really knew the true nature of values and how to work with them, then I believe we would be in a very different position to where we are today in terms of being able to drive through meaningful change on the ecological crisis.

In my experience, especially working with a range of clients over the years, *everyone thinks that they understand values*. After all, if you take a quick look at the 'about us' page on the website, you'll usually find an organisation's core values proudly displayed.

As Ruth Taylor from Common Cause Foundation reminds us in this simple exercise, there is a vast difference between corporate values and the real nature of values.

| Organisation 1 | Organisation 2 | Organisation 3 | Organisation 4 | Organisation 5 |
|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Curious | Courage | Integrity | Integrity | Empowerment |
| Empowered | Integrity | Accountability | Excellence | Inclusiveness |
| Inclusive | Respect | Courage | Care | Accountability |
| Agile | Collaboration | | Resilience | Equality |
| | | | Courage | Solidarity |
| | | | | Courage |

If we take a look at the different corporate values from Oxfam International, Exxon-Mobil, Kellogg's, WWF International and Coca-Cola, can we guess which list of values is from which organisation?²⁵ The answer is probably no, as they are almost all indistinguishable.

Most organisations will assume that having corporate values and trying to regulate the organisation's behaviours towards those values is how values work. These values sit alongside the vision and mission of an organisation and tends to offer the aspirations of the way the organisation hopes to operate.

When we attend to values with this mindset we turn values into *guiding principles* and in so doing, we change the nature of the values themselves.

Just like in our example of trying to understand a fish, when values are taken out of their living environment (implicit/metanarrative) and made explicit, their nature changes. Explicit values tend to be static and devitalised, they function more like moral propositions, a set of *thou-shalt-not* guidelines of what we can do and what we can't do. This means that we utilise values in a way to *externally regulate* behaviours.

Values that are expressed explicitly hold almost no relational power.

Explicitly expressed values hold almost no real power for transformation. While corporate values may serve as providing an organisation with a sense of direction and what it aspires to do, working with values in this way in no way reflects the complex and often hard work required to work with values, and how to awaken the necessary values needed for long-term change.

For anyone seeking to create lasting transformation on the issues we face today, then engaging fully in values work is essential. Naming a set of key values in your vision, mission and values statement is hardly where we need to be at this moment.

Understanding values

Values can never really be understood in isolation outside of any context. Values are context dependent. How Oxfam engages its values of *Courage* will be entirely different to how Exxon-Mobil engages with its value of *Courage*. It is why different organisations can boast the same values, and yet operate and behave completely differently.

Values hold the power to influence and create lasting behaviour change when they are expressed within *an implicit context*, or in other words, when they are engaged at the metanarrative level of everything we do.

And why is this? Because it goes back to how the two hemispheres of the brain work. The left, which holds language, only deals with explicit information. The left doesn't 'see' the implicit, only the right hemisphere can 'see' what is implicitly communicated.

As values are implicitly communicated, it falls to the right hemisphere to interpret them. With this understanding we can now begin to see *why values have very little to do with words*, as the language centre is held in the left hemisphere, not the right, and it is the left hemisphere that deals with narrative.

Values are not words, nor themes. They are non-verbal, and they are implicit in everything that we do.

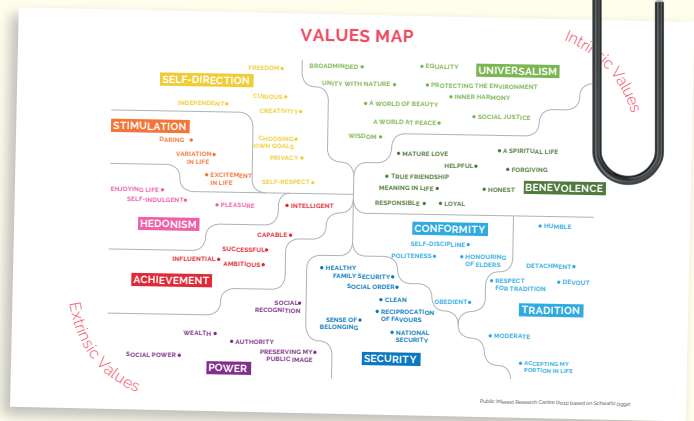
This helps to explain how values can be communicated 'silently' throughout everything we do, how cultural values are received and adopted without us ever really being explicitly aware that we have absorbed them.

Knowing this helps us to think about moving beyond words, moving beyond narratives and exploring what is happening at the metanarrative level of every communication.

This presents a significant shift in current approaches to values theory and how to work with values in a more integrated way.

Explainer

Values explainer



Values are central to human motivation and social behaviour, shaping not only individual actions but also how communities and societies function. Being able to harness their power is essential if we are to bring about real and meaningful change.

Values assumptions

While there are different approaches to values and our understanding of them, let us overcome some basic misconceptions.

The first is that values are what we hold as important to us. This is where we are conflating what we value with values, they are not quite the same. For example, we may value the environment and our natural world in terms of holding them as important to us. But at the same time our behaviours may reflect a different set of values, in terms of our consumer, energy and travel habits. This is often referred to as the values gap - the gap between what we value (prioritise) and what we do. They don't always align.

The second misconception is that values are guiding principles. We see this in corporate values expression, where we explicitly select a set of values and try to ensure that everything we do aligns to those values. While this may be of some use from a corporate perspective it doesn't quite describe what values are and how to work with them. While values can be used as guiding principles, that doesn't mean that is the nature of values. When we think of values as 'guiding principles' we change the nature of them, and we overlook how values work at the preconscious state, not at the conscious state of thinking.

The third misconception is that values are themes or topics. For example, if we are talking about **authority** then we are engaging with the **authority** value, if we are talking about **wisdom** we are engaging the **wisdom** value. As we have already covered, values are communicated implicitly, they are dealt with by the right hemisphere of the brain. They have very little to do with words.

Values basics

There are broadly two types of values: intrinsic and extrinsic.

Intrinsic Values: These focus on self-transcendence and include compassion, social justice, and environmental protection. They prioritise collective well-being and promote behaviours that support fairness, cooperation, and sustainability.

Extrinsic Values: These focus on self-enhancement, such as wealth, power, and status. They are often driven by external validation and encourage competitive or materialistic behaviours.

Values are interconnected. Emphasising intrinsic values reinforces related pro-social attitudes and behaviours, while prioritising extrinsic values can suppress intrinsic ones. For example, focusing on material success may diminish empathy or concern for environmental issues. This is referred to as the see-saw effect, where promoting one sets of values diminishes the other.

Values are relational, where we highlight a certain value we can 'warm' the surrounding values. For example, if we promote values like **protecting the environment**, we may 'warm' surrounding values like **social justice** and **a world at peace**. This suggests that if we all work in common towards promoting intrinsic values, not only do we advance our cause, but we help tip the balance towards these values within our culture.

The values quadrant shows four sub-groups of values. If you read the Schwartz values map on page 35 you can see the values in more detail. On the right we have the four categories of openness to change, self-transcendence, self-enhancement and conservation.

Please note the four tensions of personal focus vs social focus, anxiety vs non-anxiety. Understanding these tensions can help us to understand the underlying tensions that exist at the metanarrative level of our communications.

Knowing that any attempt to use anxiety to drive motivation will likely engage with the self-enhancement or conservation values associated with this tension. In other words, any time we use extrinsic motivation (anxiety based motivation) we are likely engaging and 'warming' extrinsic values.

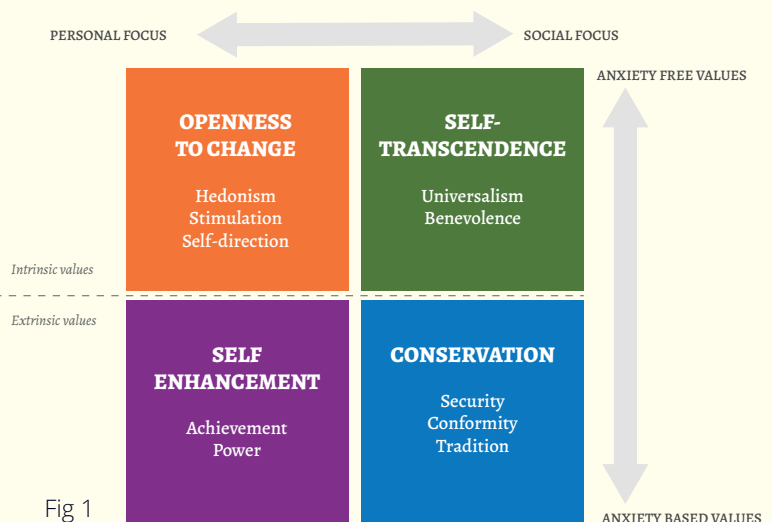


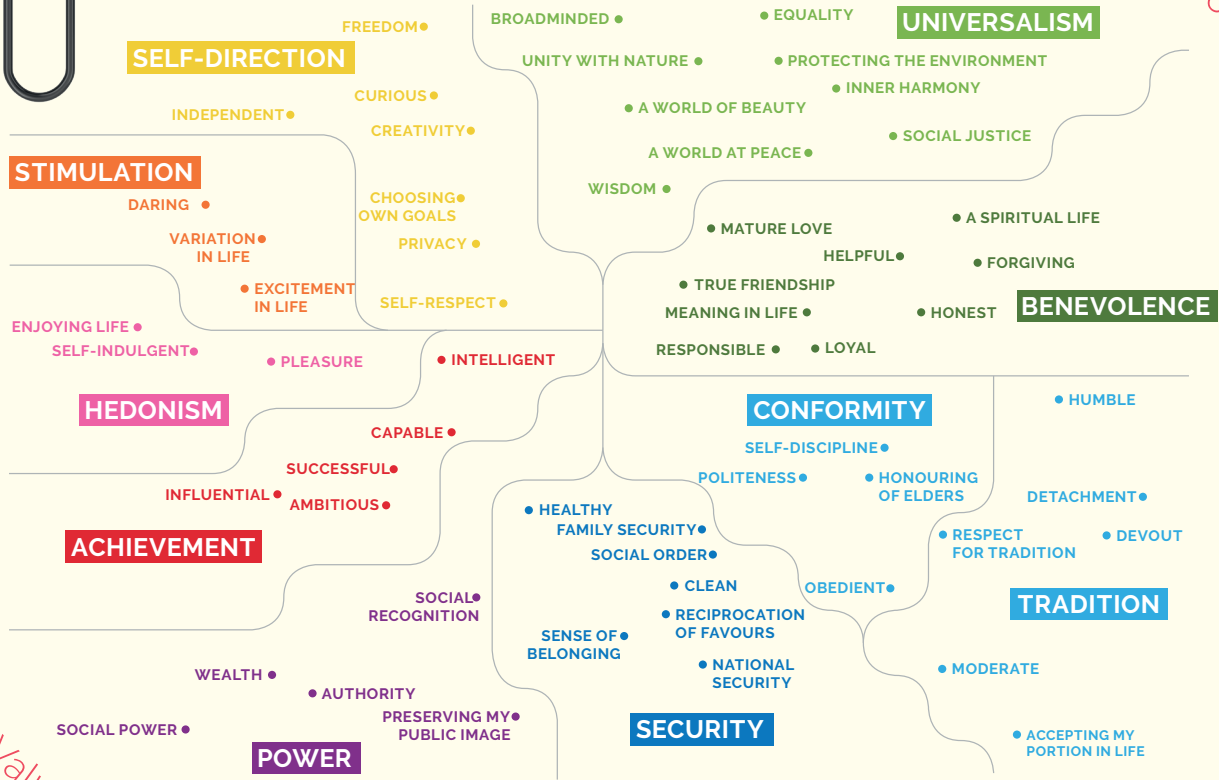
Fig 1



VALUES MAP

Extrinsic Values

Intrinsic Values



Public Interest Research Centre (2011) based on Schwartz (1992)

The Schwartz values map is an extremely useful tool to help us understand how values work, how they relate and the different nature group of values have. The map above is based on a simple-space analysis, where the closer the values are to each other, the more they have in common. The further away, the less they have in common.

Evidence suggests that when we prime a set of values on one side of the values map, we suppress the values on the other side.

Interestingly, when we place different groups in a blind values test and ask what values they think are more important, they will almost universally tend to select intrinsic values, regardless of their different political beliefs, social upbringing and cultural background.

The values that we are particularly interested in are the universalism and benevolence values in the top right-hand corner of the map. These intrinsic values are classified as self-transcending values, which means that we engage them in a very different way that we would engage self-enhancement values.

We are very familiar with how to engage self-enhancement values, as we have seen in the marketing paradigm (pg 31), where we use anxiety and fear or play to our audience's desire for pleasure or reward. Any use of standard marketing approaches, or any form of extrinsic motivation will create the tensions required for extrinsic values to emerge.

To engage intrinsic values that are self-transcending in nature requires an entirely different approach. This means that we need to seek ways to *intrinsically* motivate *intrinsic* values. To do this requires a deeper understanding of what intrinsic motivation is and how to work with this often misunderstood aspect of motivation.

The values we are seeking to engage are self-transcending values. They don't emerge out of a sense of fear or anxiety (motivation orientation 1 & 2), nor out of a sense of duty or a desire to achieve personal goals (motivation orientation 3 & 4). Instead they emerge out of an entirely different stress state, where they emerge out of the tension of opposites. The value of forgiveness can only be understood by someone who has really suffered, and somehow has drawn from within the courage to forgive those who have hurt them. The same can be said by all aspects of love-based values, we will only take them seriously when they have been tested and have overcome trial. Only then do they have power, otherwise they feel aspirational and abstract.

This is why we are drawn to conflict in our stories, that's why we bring our audience into the story to *suffer well*.

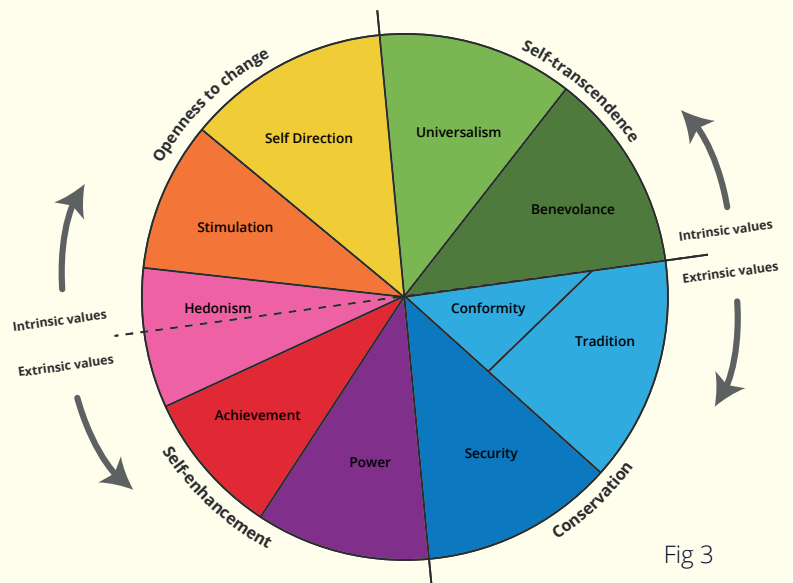


Fig 3

Values-ception

Values hold incredible power when they are communicated implicitly, that is where their true power lies. Values aren't just about helping us with decision-making, they shape how we see and relate to the world around us. In their implicit form values *have an energy*, and that energy can be positive and transformative, or it can be negative and destructive.

There is no such thing as a values-free communication. Everything expresses values. Every narrative, story, social media post, campaign slogan, everything expresses certain values.

The question is never a case of whether we are expressing values or not, but rather what values are we expressing. That is why corporate statements that proudly boast 'we are a values-driven organisation' expresses a deep misunderstanding of what values are and how they work. Every organisation is values-driven, it just depends on what values are driving the organisation.

Values play a key role in motivation, especially in terms of sustaining long-term behaviour change. When we engage values through their correct motivation orientation (i.e. intrinsic values engaged via intrinsic motivation), not only can we motivate our audiences to engage with our campaign asks and initiatives, we can also prime the conditions required to foster long-term behaviour change.

Values are like fuel that keeps the motivation engine in motion.

The challenge here is not that we are not values focussed, but that we can't always 'see' the values that we are engaging in our work.

After all, if values theory is correct - the idea that values drive behaviours - then why are we not seeing the changes and behaviours associated with the positive values that we are promoting? After all, for years we have been promoting intrinsic values such as **social justice** and **protecting the environment** (see map on page 35), then where are the results or our collective effort? Why do we still see the values-action gap, the gap between what we value and what we do?

This is where we get to one of the most controversial aspects of Master Storytelling that suggests due to our metanarrative-blindness we *don't always engage the values that we think that we are engaging, in fact sometimes we are engaging the opposite values altogether* throughout our campaigns, stories, initiatives and even in our brand propositions.

To understand how this can even be possible requires a better understanding of the nature of values and how they work at the preconscious level of everything that we do.

Values at the pre-conscious state

If we are running a climate campaign the assumption tends to be that we are automatically engaging with the intrinsic value of **protecting the environment**. After all, we are talking about protecting the environment,

we are showing ways we can protect the environment, audiences who sign up are clearly showing pro-environmental behaviours, so why wouldn't we be engaging with the **protecting the environment** value? After all, values lead to action and we can measure those actions.

When we explore this scenario again by looking at what is happening at the metanarrative level we can see a very different picture, one that is quite worrying.

If we recall, values are implicitly communicated, so their interpretation is the reserve of the right hemisphere of the brain. Values are therefore communicated at the metanarrative level, not at the narrative. Even if the narrative refers to protecting the environment it does not automatically mean that we are engaging with this self-transcending value.

Values have very little to do with words, instead they arise out of different stress states. The dominant extrinsic values of power, security and pleasure emerge out of an anxiety stress state. If we use FOMO (fear of missing out), play to a person's need for ego validation, play to a desire for pleasure or fun, use any form of anxiety - we are creating a stress state that leads to extrinsic values.

This is clearly evidenced in values theory that shows that if we create anxiety of any kind (see Fig 1 - pg 34) we create the dynamics to drive extrinsic values, not intrinsic. This means that all forms of extrinsic motivation plays a role in engaging and reinforcing extrinsic values, even when the narrative refers to an intrinsic value, such as protecting the environment.

If we take this insight and apply this retrospectively we can see that almost all of our earlier climate campaigning used an element of fear or anxiety as a motivation drive (i.e. 'the world is falling apart, we need to act now!'). If anxiety stress states engages the opposite values to the ones that we are seeking to engage then we can begin to see a pattern emerging.

As we look at these campaigns from a metanarrative perspective we can now see that this approach doesn't make any real sense. These approaches may make perfect logical sense, after all we are explaining a problem and offering a solution (perfect left hemisphere logic), but this approach overlooks human nature which is based on values-driven motivation. We are not robots or automata, we are relational and our behaviours are driven by values, not by logical propositions.

If we are trying to drive long-term behavioural change, as well as change cultural norms, then we should be warming and engaging intrinsic values in everything we do, not extrinsic.

The fact that we think that we have been engaging intrinsic values reveals just how deep the problem is.

This begins to reveal the paradigm that we are trapped in, where we simply cannot see what values are being communicated throughout our campaigns and initiatives meaning that not only have we been failing to engage with intrinsic values, we have been engaging and reinforcing extrinsic values - the opposite values needed

to drive positive long-term change. It is no wonder that we are struggling to bring about the deep social and cultural changes needed today.

It would seem that the deep problem here is not a lack of will, nor a lack of knowledge, but a *lack of power* to bring about real and lasting change. This lack of power can be broadly attributed to our inability to tell the right stories that engage intrinsic values.

This is why it is so important to develop the skill called *values-ception* which refers to the ability *to see and interpret values within their implicit state*. Without this essential skill how will we ever know whether we are priming the right values? How will we ever know how to drive long-term change?

Getting things wrong at the values level of everything we do has extremely serious consequences, because values matter *more than we think*. They are the driving force that shape *how we think*, and therefore how we act and relate to the world around us. This is why more thinking and reflection on this often overlooked topic is desperately needed.

Values insight

Hopefully, by now, we can begin to see that *we cannot make sense of values by thinking about them*, or rather by using left-hemisphere logic to try to understand them. The left hemisphere distorts things that are the preserve of the right hemisphere.

To truly understand values we need to attend to them with the right-hemisphere of the brain. This means that values can only truly be understood *when we contemplate them*, when we move beyond words and we 'see' how they play out at the deeper relational dynamics that exist within all aspects of our communications.

This shift in how we attend to values helps us to escape the usual cul-de-sacs when it comes to values theories, where values are simply written off as personally defined principles that guide our prioritisation and decision making. Instead we can re-vision values as something a lot more dynamic, *alive even*.

There is much to learn here, but as part of this introduction lets cover some basic insights:

1. Values *really* matter. All behaviours, actions, cultural norms and behaviours are shaped by values. Just because we have relegated values to the realm of corporate vision statements does not mean that they are of lesser importance.

Values are always expressed - consciously or unconsciously. No communication is values-free. It may take us a bit of practice to 'see' values, but if we take time to develop the skill of *values-ception* this attention can offer us profound insights into what is happening at the pre-conscious level of everything we do.

2. Values hold real power in their implicit state, not in their explicit state. Asking audiences which values they prefer, or which ones they prioritise, is almost a pointless act.²⁶ Putting intrinsic values into corporate vision statements may play a minor role in helping to guide corporate decision making, but it does not guarantee that these are the values an organisation communicates

throughout its work.

Expressing corporate values is not how values really work. As values work at the pre-conscious level they are communicated through everything we do. And if we don't know how to see or read metanarratives then we don't always know what values we are communicating or engaging throughout our work.

3. Values are not themes or subjects. We don't necessarily engage **protecting the environment** value by talking about it. Values emerge within different stress states and they *emerge in service to something else*.

When we use narratives to create the tension of fear or anxiety to drive behaviours (as in the marketing paradigm) we create the conditions to warm and engage extrinsic values *regardless of the topic we are engaging our audiences with*.

When we create a different tension altogether, one of self-transcendence or personal awakening (or any form of intrinsic motivation) we create the conditions to warm and engage intrinsic values.

4. Values, stories, metanarratives and purpose are not abstract concepts. Our common perception of them might label them as such, but the reality is that they are part and parcel of our concrete reality, they are all as real as the air that we breathe.

Part of the deep problem of today's crises is our over-reliance on the left hemisphere of the brain's perspective that dismisses *anything that is not a thing*. The result is our collective inability to take *matters of interiority as seriously as matters of exteriority*. This is why we will plow millions of dollars into technical or scientific research on how to deal with the climate crisis, while almost neglecting or underfunding any real research into metanarratives, storytelling, values and motivation theories - even though it is this area where we will make the greatest change.²⁷

This comes down to the belief that all matters of interiority are abstract and therefore are of less value, while external matters such as improvement of energy efficiency, creating sustainable transportation and conservation approaches are seen as concrete solutions and therefore hold more value. If we are to find deep solutions to today's crisis we need to take matters of interiority a lot more seriously, if not *more seriously*, than matters of exteriority.

5. To understand values we need to understand ourselves, which means *understanding ourselves beyond the logic of the left-hemisphere of the brain*. This is challenging work as left-hemispheric attention is our default type of attention. Almost all of our academic institutions are geared towards left-hemisphere logic, and our attempts at understanding anything seems to be measured and quantified by the scientific methodology (see technocratic paradigm on page 26).

If we are to get out of the mess that we are in there is clearly a need to stop valuing only the things that the left hemisphere values - which includes rationality and logical thought, goals and outcomes, power and pleasure, control and order. Instead we need to place more value on personal transformation and personal

awakening, storytelling and mythology, purpose and relationality, values and motivation. This shift can help us transcend the values ecology of the left-hemisphere (extrinsic flow state) and embrace the values ecology of the right-hemisphere (intrinsic flow state).

6. Narratives are not as important as we think they are when it comes to engaging values. Our obsession with creating the right narrative, with fastidious attention to the contents of the stories we tell, how we frame certain messages, whether we are using positive or negative language, how we handle representation in our stories, all of these are of secondary importance to what is happening at the metanarrative level of everything we do. Because it is in metanarratives where values are communicated, expressed, warmed and engaged. It is metanarratives that really matter.

This shift, in my experience, is almost impossible for some people to think their way into. They are stuck in the explicit, in getting the right information out, in making sure a series of tick-boxes are checked in order to deliver on their goal or desired outcome. This thinking is not only seen at the corporate level of organisational thinking, it seems that our organisations are geared to thinking this way.

To rethink of ourselves as storytellers, to rethink our primary task as engaging, warming or awakening intrinsic values as *a priori* will feel like an entirely different way of working to the usual information-deficit campaigns that dominate our campaigning space.

7. Behaviour change is not shaped by narratives, but by metanarratives. While narratives may set the thematic focus, the real magic of how to drive behaviour change lies beyond the words themselves. Only by paying attention to values, motivation and purpose in their implicit state can we really understand what is happening at the metanarrative level of everything we do and how to harness metanarratives for positive change.

8. Values flow. The values that we receive are the values that we embody and communicate to others. This is the participatory nature of values. It is why we should attend to values not through objective thinking, putting them into categories and labelling them, but rather to see them as part of dynamic flow that we all participate in.

This is why an ecological view of values is more helpful for our work, where we see values not as guides, personal beliefs or principles (which is a left-hemisphere perspective) but rather as living and breathing dynamic flow states. We should see them *as they are*, not as we think they are.

Engaging intrinsic values

The nature of intrinsic values, what they are and how they work, is clearly an area that we collectively struggle to understand. Intrinsic values are very different in their nature to extrinsic values. We know how to engage extrinsic values, we are experts at doing so. We know how to use fear and anxiety to drive self-enhancement behaviour (as we constantly do in marketing).

When it comes to working with intrinsic values we seem to either apply the same logic that we apply to extrinsic

values, or we end up with weak narrative propositions that feel woolly, aspirational and flat. Either approach will fail to work.

As way of an introduction to intrinsic values here are just a few of the basic traps we keep finding ourselves in:

1. We try to use marketing techniques to engage with intrinsic values. We play to people's desire to belong, play to the ego, show how getting involved will offer pleasure or power. These approaches are all linked to extrinsic values of self-enhancement or self-direction (see values map on page 35 for further details).
2. We use extrinsic motivation to engage with intrinsic values. There is no evidence anywhere that we can extrinsically motivate an intrinsic value. In fact, when we try to do so we create, what is called, values dissonance. This is an experience where something doesn't quite fit, or something feels out of place. This dissonance can cause negative reactions in your audience.
3. We don't engage intrinsic values through aspirational messaging, nor by pointing to these values, nor by proudly displaying them in our corporate vision statements. Intrinsic values need to be awakened *within your audience*, this is why we need to use storytelling to do this inner task.
4. We promote intrinsic values through a naive positive lens - where our images and branding are filled with lots of colours, love hearts, rainbows and people smiling having fun. Not only is this a complete misunderstanding on how to engage intrinsic values, this approach can have the opposite effect altogether.

The left hemisphere does not understand or even trusts intrinsic values. It views them as naive, childish, especially concepts like a world at peace, equality and social justice. Intrinsic values are only ever taken seriously by the left-hemisphere when they have emerged out of a form of suffering or hardship.

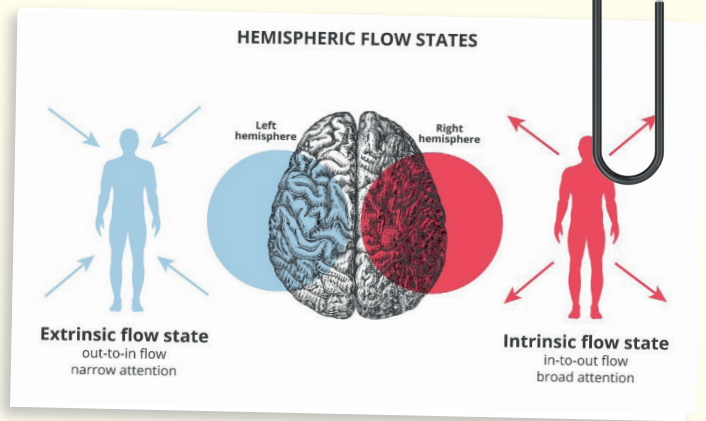
This is why stories with conflict, where good overcomes evil, where the hero has to suffer, resonates with us. Using positive, colourful and childish illustrations is simply reinforcing the left-hemisphere's view of intrinsic values.

5. We tend to refer to scientific literature to understand values. There are broadly two academic disciplines, the sciences and the humanities. When it comes to understanding values, purpose and meaning it seems - for some inexplicable reason - there is a tendency to seek answers to these complex concepts from the sciences.

This reflects the technocratic paradigm that we are trapped in, where we believe that only the sciences can be trusted or can provide answers. The neglect or downplaying of the humanities, including art, history, literature, philosophy and religion means that we will never truly understand the nature of intrinsic values, nor how to engage them.

Explainer

Flow states



As we move into working with the right-hemisphere of the brain, there is a need to embrace some new concepts, models and language to describe what is happening at the metanarrative level of our communications. One of these concepts is flow states.

Metanarrative flow states

When it comes to storytelling, the left hemisphere will focus on the explicit narrative of the story, including the characters, the phraseology, the terms used, etc. The right hemisphere will focus on the flow between these things, including the deeper dynamics behind the narrative. These implicit dynamics reveal purpose, motivation and values. The storyteller, consciously or unconsciously, will always communicate these three primitives *through the narrative*.

All communications, all stories, all narratives express different flow states. Being able to interpret these different flow states can not only help us to understand the paradigms that sit behind our communications, but also the different orientations our stories and communications sit in.

Flow states

Flow states are defined by and represent the various stages of dominance between the two hemispheres of the brain. Based on insights taken from neuropsychology the research shows that there is an interplay of power between the two hemispheres of the brain where one takes on a 'Master' role, the other takes on a 'Servant' role.²⁸ This interplay is not binary (e.g. either dominant left or either a dominant right attention), but rather is characterised by different states of interplay for dominance between the two hemispheres.

Every flow state offers an entirely different set of characteristics and traits, which can be evidenced at the metanarrative level of all communications. Each flow state represents a different relational configuration of how the three different primitives of values, motivation and purpose play out under different stages of hemispheric dominance.

If we take stage 1 as an example, this first stage would be defined by an entirely dominant left hemisphere attention. This type of attention will be characterised by an almost exclusive focus only on matters of exteriority. This flow state will have little time and will give almost no attention to any matter of interiority (i.e. values, purpose, meaning, spirituality, etc).

This flow state will reflect the *raison d'être* of the left hemisphere which is a desire towards power, pleasure and manipulation.

When we map the characteristics of this attention to our motivation model (see page 47) we can see how the characteristics of the left hemisphere aligns perfectly with stage 1 of extrinsic motivation, as modelled by Self Determination Theory.²⁹ This motivation orientation is expressed as an external reward or threat of punishment.

This stage 1 orientation works only when it points to a tangible goal that offers power/pleasure/security (usually a financial reward or short-term tangible outcome), or to avoid suffering. This is defined as an *extrinsic purpose* (see page 48). When we combine the three primitives of stage 1 extrinsic motivation, alongside stage 1 of extrinsic purpose, alongside extrinsic values, we see that they all flow well together. The three combined create a stage 1 flow state.

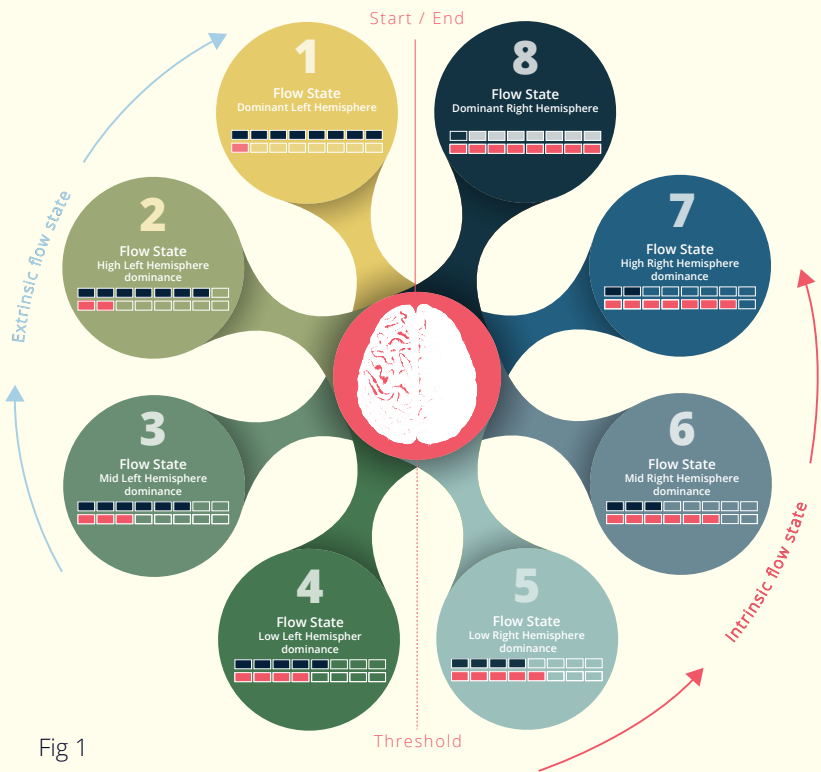
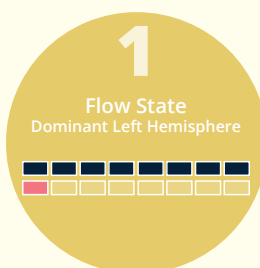


Fig 1





When we use extrinsic motivation, directed towards an extrinsic purpose (goal our outcome), extrinsic values are the result. The reason this happens is because when we trigger extrinsic motivation we need to play to our lower values of hedonism, security, self-enhancement or power, all of which are extrinsic values (see chart on page 35).

Understanding how our choice of motivation, which aligns with our choice of purpose creates different flow states offers us a profound insight on what is happening at the preconscious level of every communication we make. The lower flow states tend to work best towards short-term results or goals, but in so doing they tend to create long-term psychological pollutants. Working to the higher flow states requires more skills and insights on human motivation, but the result is that they will lead to long-term positive change as well as warming the necessary values needed for cultural change.

This understanding of different flow states helps us to understand how metanarratives work, as well as setting the foundational basis for our new motivation theory **IMT**.

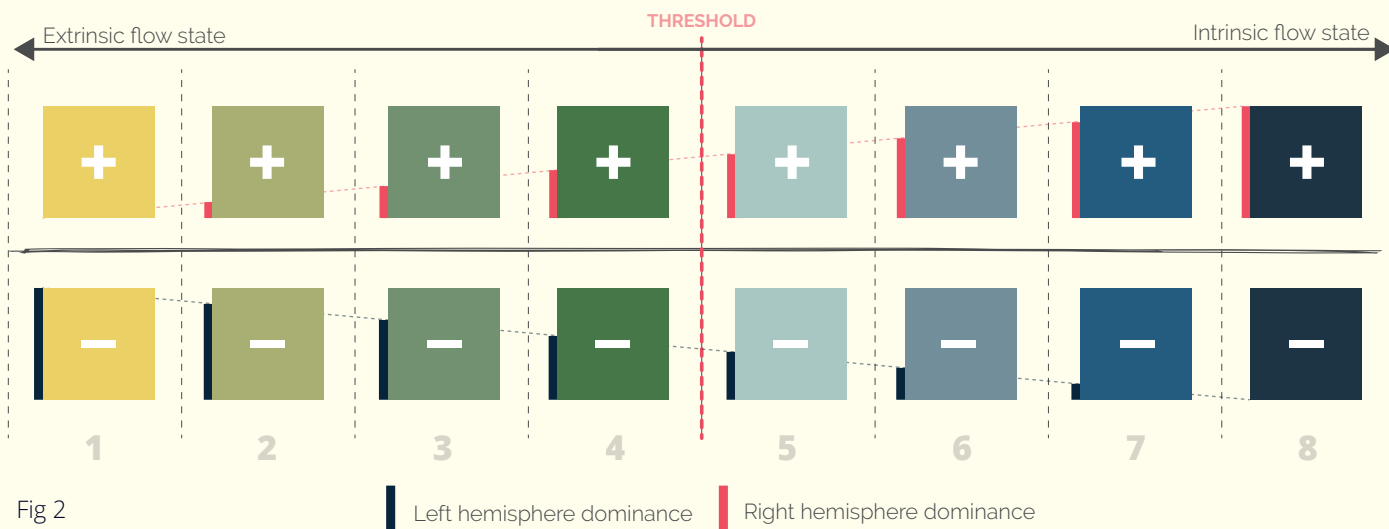


Fig 2

Left hemisphere dominance Right hemisphere dominance

IMT not only recognises 8 discreet flow states, it also recognises each flow state can be expressed negatively or positive. For example, stage 1 motivation orientation can either be negative - fear of punishment, or positive - desire for reward. When we factor all this together we create 16 different orientations on which we can build our metanarratives.

Each orientation can express the same narrative *but in different ways*. Just think how a left-leaning newspaper can report exactly the same story as a right-leaning newspaper in completely different ways, especially on hot topics like immigration and asylum seekers. The same story can be expressed through very different values, different flow states.

How we would run a climate campaign in orientation 1 (reward or punishment), would be very different to how we would run the same climate campaign in orientation 8 (self-transcendence), even if the campaign action remains the same. Each orientation engages different values and has different long-term consequences. Each motivation orientation 'works' - in terms of driving motivation - but each orientation works completely differently when viewed from a values perspective.

Everything we do draws from a certain orientation, whether we are conscious of that orientation or not. Every story we tell, every communication we make, every social media post we write... all reflect a different flow state. We tend not to notice flow states when we are all in the same one. As all these orientations work at the preconscious level, we may not be able to see or spot them.

Knowing what each orientation is, how it works and how each orientation effects our ability to create long-term change is, to put it simply, absolutely essential information for those who are seeking to bring about long-term positive change. Each orientation offers an almost infinite number of ways it can be expressed in a narrative. Just think of the millions upon millions of marketing messages that all emanate just from orientations 2 or 3. We should view this orientation model as the basis on which to draw *all stories from*.

Power of flow states

Learning the different flow states are and how they not only shape metanarratives, but also can be *communicated through metanarratives*, can offer us some incredible insights into how motivation works, how to engage intrinsic values and how to create the psychological conditions needed to bring about real and lasting cultural and social change.

While the flow states models in fig 1 & 2 may not be much to look at first, as we learn how to use them and integrate them into our work we can begin to see that these models hold *incredible power*. They can offer deep insights into why our current strategies are failing to bring about long-term change, as well as guide us further up the continuum to the higher orientations 5-8 that help us to find different ways to authentically engage intrinsic values.

Knowing where our stories *flow from* and where they *flow to* can create an entirely different experience altogether with your audiences. Flow states are not just about improving narratives or our storytelling, but also influences our brand propositions, long-term engagement strategies, fundraising propositions, corporate focus, campaigning techniques and an almost limitless amount of new ideas and potential new pathways to drive meaningful change.

Understanding Motivation

How motivation works and how to build a new integral motivation model



Motivation is key to everything we do. Real change cannot be brought about without a deeper understanding of how motivation works, how to engage our audiences to awaken long-term behaviour change, as well as how we overcome the seemingly apparent contradictions of trying to externally regulate self-regulated motivation.

Understanding motivation

Motivation is an extremely complex discipline to understand. Knowing why we are motivated to do some things and not others is never a straight forward linear process. Motivation takes in a wide range of factors that needs to be considered, including psychological and physical factors, upbringing, personal experiences, cultural norms and values and a whole plethora of influences that are essential to understand if we are to make sense of motivation.

From my experience, there seems to be a significant lack of understanding when it comes to motivation. The term motivation seems to be associated with creating a series of mental tricks in order to keep to our diets or to ensure that we go to the gym on a regular basis.

Every fundraiser, every campaign, every story, every social media post, everything we do depends on getting motivation right. If we get motivation wrong, then we can't generate income, we can't influence change, we can't drive positive action - in other words, without motivation everything falls flat.

I have run several workshops and training events for a range of clients, storytellers and experts in their field. When asked to name a motivation theory, or what motivation theory they deploy in their communication strategies the room is usually filled with blank looks and silence.

Given that everything that we are trying to do is to motivate audiences into taking positive action, it seems beyond perplexing that there still remains a general ignorance around this most basic and fundamental primitive that effects everything we do. There seems to be a lackadaisical attitude towards motivation, *that* we don't really need to know about motivation or know how it works, *as if* understanding motivation theory is a nice-to-have, rather than a core essential.

Given where we are today, this level of ignorance can no longer be justifiable. If we are serious about bringing real change to our world then learning motivation theory can no longer be seen as a non-essential.

Motivation for positive change

Without a sophisticated understanding of how motivation works it seems to me that not only do we struggle to bring about long-term positive change, but we are just blindly throwing out any random motivation strategy in the hope that it works.

This lack of knowledge puts charities and organisations working for positive change into a very dangerous and vulnerable position.

Without an understanding of the nature of motivation for positive change we are at risk of deploying the wrong motivation strategy altogether, which can lead to some very serious consequences.

The most obvious consequence is that we will almost always go for the easiest motivation technique available, and the one that seems to work. If we take extrinsic orientations 1-2, these orientations are extremely easy to deploy, you hardly need any skills, training or insights to work with these orientations. Anyone can run a raffle fundraiser.

The risk of adopting the same motivation strategies taken from marketing theory (see the marketing paradigm on page 27) is that we end up reinforcing not only the marketing paradigm but we also engage extrinsic values making our work for long-term change almost impossible. Within this paradigm we end up telling the same story, again and again, where we show the need and offer the magic solution. Under this predictable narrative, no wonder audiences switch off, no wonder we struggle to generate income, no wonder we fail to influence real change.

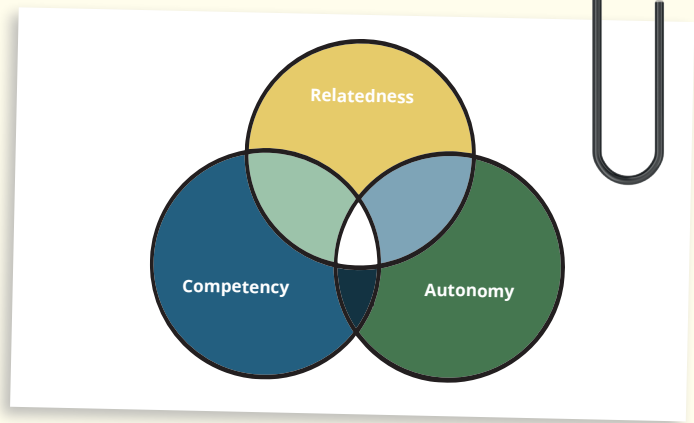
Technically speaking, portraying your audience as the hero and those in need as passive victims might 'work' in terms of creating a motivation tension to drive action, but for this technique to work *requires us to reinforce terrible stereotypes*. The 'show-the-need' methodology demands that we show the communities we are trying to help as victims in need of saving. While this approach might seem to work in the short term, it undermines our ability to create positive change in the longer term.

The need to shift from marketing approaches is not only financially sound, but also aligned with moral and ethical imperatives. This change is evident in the humanitarian sector, where a conscious effort is underway to abandon lazy white-savior narratives in fundraising campaigns in favor of more ethical, partner-informed storytelling.³⁰

How we do things matter. How we motivate matters. Our concepts of success can never just be focussed on simple metrics of income generation, social media interactions or downloads, but rather everything we do must also contribute to engaging and awakening the necessary values needed for long-term change. After all, as we have seen, values matter the most.

Explainer

Self Determination Theory



One of the most influential motivation theories that has dominated our thinking over the last few decades is Self Determination Theory. This motivation theory was developed by psychologists Edward Deci and Richard Ryan which emerged as an attempt to move beyond the limits of behaviourist approaches to motivation which focused heavily on external rewards and punishments. Instead they explored more internal self-driven factors. In so doing, their work has offered some fantastic and highly practical insights into motivation that have offered a paradigm shift in psychology in terms of understanding what drives human behaviour. Although we might not personally be aware of SDT, we will have experienced the impacts of this theory in some way.

Self determination basics

A basic explanation of SDT posits that people are inherently driven by a desire to grow, thrive, and fulfil their potential, this motivation depends on the satisfaction of three basic psychological needs: **autonomy, competence, and relatedness**.

- Autonomy refers to the need to feel in control of one's actions and choices, aligning them with personal values and interests.
- Competence involves the need to feel effective and capable in achieving goals and overcoming challenges.
- Relatedness is the need to form meaningful, supportive connections with others.

When these three needs are met, individuals experience intrinsic motivation—engagement driven by inherent interest or enjoyment. Environments that do not support these needs can lead to diminished motivation, disengagement, or reliance on extrinsic motivation, which is driven by external rewards or pressures.

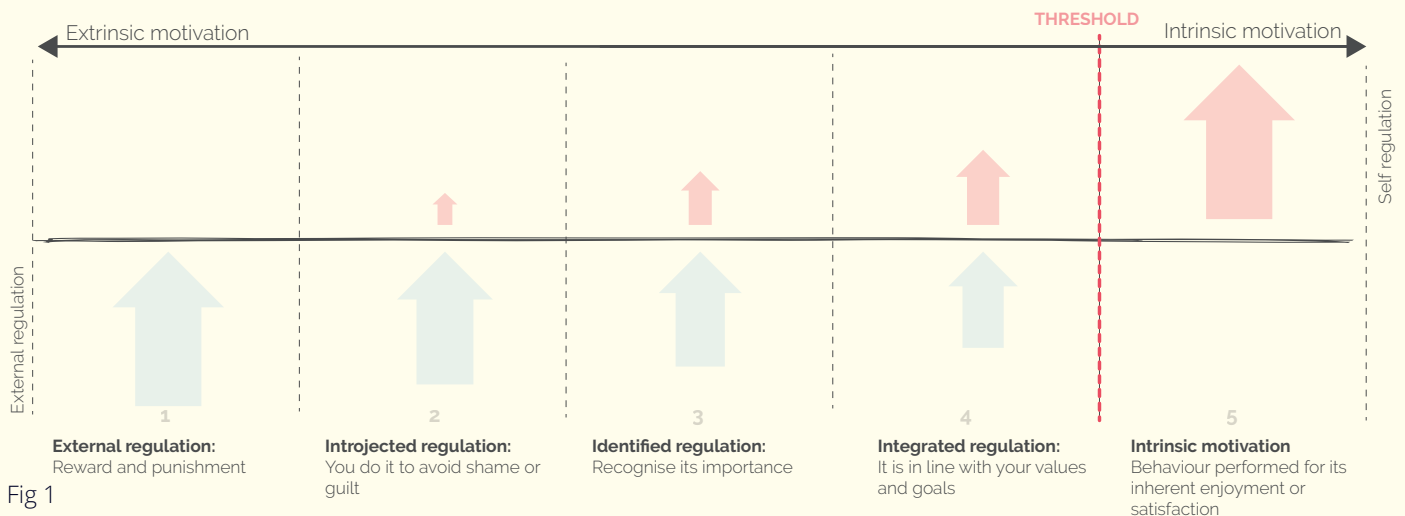


Fig 1

The famous motivation continuum looks something like the above (please note, the above is missing amotivation, which would technically be classified as a stage 0, where there is no motivation to do anything). This motivation continuum gives elaborate detail towards the different stages of extrinsic motivation, and yet categorises *all intrinsic motivation as a single orientation*. This is where we run into problems with the limits of this motivation model.

The purpose of SDT theory was to help express that humans are not just motivated by external stimuli (punishment and reward), but that there was also self-determined aspects to motivation. While the intention of this model was to map out intrinsic motivation, it ended up doing the opposite, mapping out extrinsic motivation in detail, and offering very little insight into the true nature of intrinsic motivation.

From a practical point of view, this model offers great insight into extrinsic motivation, but almost nothing when it comes to intrinsic motivation. This means that we have numerous ways to trigger extrinsic motivation from each of the four orientations (play to fear, reward, ego, shame, FOMO, achieving personal goals, etc), and then only one orientation for intrinsic motivation which has only three psychological triggers: autonomy, competence and relatedness.

It would seem that this theory simply runs out of steam when we cross the threshold from extrinsic to intrinsic. Unsurprisingly, as SDT pre-dates insights from neuropsychology, this theory makes no mention of the different dispositions of the two hemispheres of the brain, and no mention of metanarratives and hardly mentions interior approaches to motivation like storytelling.

Are our motivation theories fit for purpose?

Exploring whether our current motivation theories can effectively address today's challenges is a no-brainer. Clearly, they fall short.³¹

Having worked with a range of different audiences, on different platforms, created different resources and engagement strategies, it has always struck me that there seems to be something that we are missing, something fundamental to everything that we do. The problem seemed to manifest itself every time we struggled to motivate audiences to take real action on the *very things that they say they value or care about*. If you haven't worked in this field, I can't even begin to describe how frustrating this is.

This has widely been described as the values-action gap. The gap between what we say we value and what we do. Which begs some deeper questions as to why we lack the motivation to take action on the things that we say we value and care about? Why does it feel so hard to bring about real change? And why does it feel like we are *pushing against the flow* when it comes to creating real and long-term positive change?

It would seem that we hold more expertise at motivating towards goals, including transactional giving and campaigns objectives. But when it comes to long-term behaviour change, cultural change, social change, political change - these are the areas we are really struggling to influence any big shifts.

It seems that we are experts at extrinsic motivation, and amateurs at intrinsic motivation.

This reason for this comes down to our current motivation theories and models. It would seem that our current understanding of motivation is woefully inadequate to the task of dealing with the complex and interconnected issues that we find ourselves in today.

It is no wonder we struggle to bring about real and meaningful change. It is no wonder we struggle to motivate diverse audiences, with diverse worldviews, diverse opinions, diverse experiences, diverse beliefs, and diverse political outlooks all towards a single common goal. With our current motivation models this work seems an almost impossible task.

Given the complexity of today's issues we obviously need a motivation model that can do some heavy lifting.

Any motivation theory that is worth its salt will need to be able to deal with the complex and interconnected nature of the problems we find today. Motivation theory cannot simply

To understand this section remember the values ecology of the left hemisphere of the brain. The left hemisphere will only pay attention to external things and objects, abstract concepts and ideas, and will only pay attention to anything that aligns with its values: power, manipulation or pleasure. Building a motivation model with the left hemisphere of the brain will therefore reflect the same values, where motivation is only understood in terms of achieving a certain goal, and whether the activity gives us pleasure or power.

be about achieving small life-style changes and goals, it has to be able to function well when dealing with the global complexities that we face today.

We just don't have the luxury of time to be dealing with outdated or insufficient models that can no longer meet this need. Ensuring we not only transition to a more useful theory, but to do this as soon as possible seems to be of utmost importance.

Baked-in problems

Understanding why our current motivation models are no longer fit for purpose comes down to *the purpose in which we shape our motivation theory around*.³² We can see that the purpose in the classic definition of motivation, which states "motivation is the process that initiates, guides, and maintains *goal-oriented behaviours*". Motivation within this mindset reduces motivation towards goals and outcomes - which just happen to reflect the values ecology of the left hemisphere of the brain.

With this goal-orientated purpose baked into almost all motivation models, it is hard not to think of motivation outside of the usual visual clichés of someone climbing a mountain, the perfect pose of a talented ballet dancer, the successful business-dressed individual punching the air, or a sports personality triumphantly receiving a trophy.

This tendency for goal-orientated outcomes inevitably leans heavily towards not only an individualistic perspective on motivation, but it tends to lean towards immediate and measurable outcomes. There is little to no space within this framework to understand motivation outside goal-orientated behaviours, when it can't be measured by an outcome, and how to motivate audiences towards the self-transcending aspects of values and purpose. Motivation, within this context, is about *your* goals, and how to get *you* there.

The other major problem with our current motivation models comes down to our current definitions of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. We see these definitions of motivation defined by Deci and Ryan in Self Determination Theory as:

Extrinsic motivation refers to behaviours that are regulated by external rewards, such as money, praise, or avoidance of punishment. These all make up a form of external regulation. This form of regulation relies on external incentives to drive the behaviour and can be effective in the short term but struggles to sustain long-term behavioural change.

*Intrinsic motivation stems from internal desires and the inherent satisfaction of the activity itself. When we are intrinsically motivated, we engage in activities because we find them enjoyable, interesting, or personally fulfilling. This form of motivation is often more sustainable and effective for long-term change.*³³

These two descriptions offer some real problems. The first is that these two descriptions of motivation both align with the attention of the left hemisphere of the brain which only recognises things that offers it pleasure, power or helps to achieve a tangible goal or outcome.

The second is that these two definitions pre-suppose motivation towards a goal or outcome. What about motivation for doing something where there is no goal or outcome, where we are not seeking something in return, but we do something because of a self-transcending purpose? In other words, what about spiritual awakening and human flourishing within this model? What about living a life of purpose and meaning which may never really manifest itself in tangible goals or measurable outcomes? What about motivation towards the most important aspects of life and living?

It seems this model is heavily biased towards productivity and the goals and outcomes that the left hemisphere of the brain likes to pay attention to.

Practical implications

In terms of getting audiences to sign up to campaigns, to donate and to take a short term action - SDT theory works extremely well. But when we move beyond short term goals, where we are trying to motivate towards cultural change, how to engage intrinsic values, how to create the psychological conditions to bring about long-term behavioural change - this model is woefully inadequate to this greater task.

It seems that our main motivation theory seems to work up to a point, then after that it fizzles out when it comes to the important work of cultural and long-term behaviour change, and how to drive pro-social and pro-environmental behaviours. In fact, this theory undermines our ability to bring about the changes we seek.



Popularised images of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, each one is defined by where we draw our pleasure form.

The popularisation of this model and the definition of intrinsic motivation as being defined by autonomy, relatedness and competency has fed into other numerous motivation models,³⁴ this thinking has radically shaped how we think about motivation.

The problem is that when we try to apply these to our campaigns and communications we seem to hit a major problem - the three defining components of what makes up intrinsic motivation just don't seem to work within a real-world context. This has resulted in us defaulting to extrinsic motivation as our main motivating approach (see fig 1 on page 30).

Let's explore each one separately.

Relatedness was the concept that Deci and Ryan

Please note: this section offers an overview of motivation and is not a deep dive into the subject. There are lots of nuances and qualifications that need to be made here, which fall outside the scope of this book. But overall the main position still stands: our current definition of intrinsic motivation is seriously inadequate to the task with helping us to address today's current crises.

conceived in their original book *Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behaviour*³⁵ which arose out of *external observations* of behaviour in different contexts, especially educational settings. It was viewed that for people to be self-determined in their motivation they needed a connection to others, especially *a sense of belonging*.

When we look at the value of *sense of belonging* on the values map we see that this value is an extrinsic value (see map on page 35). The reason why is that this value relies on others to regulate a sense of belonging through group acceptance or social inclusion for its fulfilment.

Autonomy has been identified as important for intrinsic motivation, as self-motivated individuals would be in control of their own actions and choices. But when we map autonomy to the values map we can see that this aligns closely with the value of *choosing own goals*, which falls on the left-hand side of the values map. Not only does autonomy lean towards an individualistic concept of motivation, this psychological drive leans towards self-direction and not self-transcendence.

Competence is stated as the third psychological need for intrinsic motivation. This need was defined as the ability to achieve certain goals. If the task was too easy or too hard motivation would subside, but if the task was challenging enough and within one's competency skillset, then motivation would increase. But this aligns intrinsic motivation towards

an extrinsic purpose - a measurable goal or outcome. This goal-orientation bias of motivation reveals classic left hemisphere thinking.

The three psychological needs that are described in SDT as essential for intrinsic motivation just all happen to be three components that mirror or make up the values ecology of the left hemisphere of the brain. They fall within the left hemisphere's need towards personal control, external validation and a need to achieve a goal or outcome.

Stating these inconsistencies might seem like a small pedantic point, but it reveals one of the greatest oversights in human psychology, with dire consequences for our planet and for our global family. For it essentially means that we have lost the ability to intrinsically motivate audiences towards positive change.

This seems to be the crux of our problem when working towards long-term and meaningful change. If the dominant and highly influential motivation theory incorrectly defines intrinsic motivation, then there is no recourse but to use extrinsic motivation in everything

that we do. Even if we do try to use SDT's interpretation of intrinsic motivation, we are still engaging with extrinsic values, we are still focused on extrinsic purpose and we are not engaging with the self-transcending nature of the self.

It is no wonder we have wholesale adopted this thinking into our work, where we play to people's desire for pleasure and control, or some form of self-enhancement as the motivation drive for our campaigns and initiatives. No wonder we use success stories to show so-called climate heroes, as a way to inspire others to act. No wonder we follow marketing methodologies, when we seem to *know no other way to motivate*.

This is why we show that signing up to our campaigns is fun, rewarding, or offers some pleasure, with the reassurance of power that *we* can make a difference, we have the solutions and we can fix the problem. These individualistic, heroic, technocratic narratives dominate our collective psychological space, to the point where we not only fail to notice them for what they are, but we will even defend their use as the solution to the problems we face today.

The influence of SDT cannot be overstated. As this thinking on intrinsic motivation has influenced so much of psychology that it is almost impossible to draw on any insights from psychological sciences that have not been influenced by this foundational thinking.

Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, within SDT, are defined not by their values, nor by the different natures between self-enhancement and self-transcendence, but rather by where we draw our pleasure from.

Redefining extrinsic and intrinsic motivation

SDT distinguishes the two types of motivation through the values ecology of the left-hemisphere of the brain. As the left hemisphere only pays attention to goals and outcomes, pleasure and power, it is no surprise we see both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation being distinguished through these dimensions.

According to SDT, when we draw pleasure from seeking an external reward, like a trophy, this is classified as extrinsic motivation. When we draw pleasure from the activity itself, this is classified as intrinsic motivation.

This classification is popularised in the many descriptions of motivation that we see across almost every psychological explanation of these two types of motivation. The problem is that both motivation types are not that different in essence, for they are both directed towards a form of pleasure seeking, self-enhancement or towards an external goal. This has resulted in a very skewed interpretation of motivation theory.

It is time to redefine these two motivation types and explore them in relation to the values ecologies of the two hemispheres of the brain, as well as aligning them to their respective values. In so doing we can create a much more balanced and coherent model.

First, we must distinguish between a motivation trigger (input), and a motivation behaviour (output). A motivation trigger is what we use in marketing, where we create a proposition (i.e. advert, communication, social media post, poster, article, animation, etc) to drive the motivational response, whether it is FOMO, offer of reward, play to the ego, or even to play to a sense of shame or guilt. This is what we, in our work for positive change, are interested in - *the motivational trigger*.

Then there is the motivation behaviour - this is what occurs after the fact. We can observe particular behaviours and surmise what motivation that particular behaviour aligns to. If we look at young students studying hard for an exam without any pressure from a teacher this may show a form of self-regulated motivation. But this does not technically mean that they are intrinsically motivated as they may be motivated by fear of failure, of being judged by others, etc.

Extrinsic motivation should not be classified as our seeking of pleasure from an external source (e.g. winning a trophy) but rather as our inner desire towards self-enhancement, security or self-direction. And why? Because these align with the extrinsic values that are mapped out on the values chart, they also represent the values ecology of the left hemisphere of the brain. This means that this form of motivation is triggered when we try to avoid suffering or any form of inner transformation and rely on external magic solutions instead.

We are experts at engaging with these motivation orientations, as most of our campaigns and initiatives mirror the same tactical methodologies that we find within the marketing paradigm. While this motivation approach works, it engages with extrinsic values leaving in its wake a range of highly undesirable problems.

It is why we should treat extrinsic motivation the same as we would any other form of pollutant. This is why it is helpful to think of extrinsic motivation like a fossil fuel engine. This engine may work, but it leaves behind a psychological pollutant. Our insistence in using this engine may deliver on short term outcomes, but will make long-term change almost impossible. In other words, we may motivate audiences to sign up to our latest campaign, but then wonder why we are unable to effect real change on global issues.

The changes we seek require a change in values and cultural norms, which are both regulated by the motivation orientations we use throughout our work. Only by changing motivation orientations can we ever hope to build the psychological foundations needed for the changes we seek.

Intrinsic motivation, by contrast, can be redefined as our inner desire towards self-transcendence, re-alignment and comprehension (to bring together, to make the whole). This best represents the values ecology of the right hemisphere of the brain. While this may initially feel abstract, this definition of intrinsic motivation finds its foundations on hard science and insights from neuropsychology, not on theoretical thinking (which is always subject to bias from left-hemisphere logic).

When we align intrinsic motivation to the values ecology of the right hemisphere of the brain we can begin to see that intrinsic motivation is not 'self-regulated', but rather intrinsic motivation emerges when we are in connection with and drawn by that which is external to us, or rather, *that which transcends us*.

There is no such thing as self-regulation, all motivation is externally regulated.

We are either externally regulated by our fear of suffering (extrinsic motivation orientations 1-4) or externally regulated by our desire to transcend suffering (intrinsic motivation orientations 5-8). This redefinition opens up the door to a whole world of new opportunities on how to trigger intrinsic motivation orientations.

No longer is intrinsic motivation seen as an interior desire towards seeking pleasure within the activities themselves. No longer is intrinsic motivation seen as an automatic output when the conditions of competency, relatedness and autonomy are met. Instead, intrinsic motivation is now best understood as our *universal inner desire for transcendence*. This interpretation not only aligns with our values map, it also aligns with insights from neuropsychology and neuroscience.

It is here where we now move into the essential role of storytelling, for this type of motivation *can only be triggered through storytelling*. We need storytellers that align us to an intrinsic purpose, that can lead us into the 'belly of the whale', to make us feel, to see differently, to awaken within us our inner desire to transcend the individualistic and egoic needs of the self.

Only a storyteller can trigger intrinsic motivation. For it is the storyteller who has the power to take the audience into the story, where we encounter - in a storytelling form - suffering. This is where we feel the pain of the other, to see through someone else's eyes, to fight dragons, to overcome obstacles, to break old ways of thinking, so that this experience awakens the necessary values needed in us. All this work can take place within stories, and these are the stories that we need to tell.

Not marketing stories that offer us magic solutions, or so-called stories that read like academic case studies, or stories that try to inform us of what we need to or ought to do (extrinsic motivation). We need stories that awaken us, stories that treat us less like rationalistic beings (*homo economicus*), less like emotionally charged beings (*homo emotus*), but stories that treat us like spiritual beings (*homo spiritus*), that recognise and align us to our inner desire for self-transcendence.

This is where we are motivated not for reward, for pleasure, for power, for control, for social recognition - but rather by a deeper desire for connection, a deeper sense of purpose, to awaken to our true selves and towards integral human flourishing.

Overcoming left-hemisphere bias

The reason why we have struggled to define or work with intrinsic motivation is because of our lack of understanding of the nature, logic and values of the

right hemisphere of the brain. As a dominant left hemisphere culture, anything that we see as not fitting in with the logic of rational/linear thinking we deem to be inferior or label it as irrational. This comes back to our inability to discern between the *non-rational* (emotional, contemplative, intuition found in right hemisphere thinking) and *irrational* (not following any logical order).

The result is that almost all of our campaigns and initiatives follow a logical and rational order. This rationalistic approach has focussed so much on getting the message right, trying to find logical reasons why we need to urgent action, while at the same time overlooking the fundamentals that drive long-term change, such as values, purpose, motivation and metanarratives.

Intrinsic motivation, in its fullest sense, cannot be described by the language or logic of the left-hemisphere. We have seen what happens when we attempt to do so, as seen in the goal orientated and pleasure focus biases found in SDT. When the left hemisphere tries to understand the logic and values of the right hemisphere it will not only try to reinterpret them to its own logic, it will tend to view right hemisphere thinking as childish, naive, ill-informed and something that needs to be rejected or replaced by something much more rational, robust, and scientifically validated.

While scientific and rationalistic approaches are obviously good and should never be dismissed, they simply don't hold the whole picture. As we have seen in SDT, this model has been scientifically validated, thoroughly researched and established as a working motivation model, which is why it holds so much influence. The problem is that no-one seemed to notice that the model was only mapping the motivation orientation of *one hemisphere of the brain*, with an almost total neglect of the right hemisphere's motivation orientations.

This oversight would never have been noticed from a scientific perspective. It is worth pointing out that these breakthroughs in neuropsychology and neuroscience draw from insights taken from the humanities, especially philosophy, literature, art, theology and psychology.³⁶ This reaffirms, yet again, the limits of science in terms of understanding the whole.³⁷

The left hemisphere and dominant left hemispheric thinking may provide us with knowledge and the power to manipulate the world around us, but it doesn't help us understand even the most basic questions around who we are, how we think, how we relate to reality, what values are, how motivation works and the true nature of purpose.

Without these insights we invariably lack a holistic view on human motivation, making our work for meaningful change almost impossible. This results us in being trapped in some highly toxic paradigms, especially the marketing paradigm.

Being trapped in a paradigm means that we can never see past the 'evidence' that each paradigm presents us

with. Even when we know that our current approaches for change are not working there seems no ability to find solutions that take us outside the paradigms that we hold to be true.

Instead, we will double down on extrinsically motivated campaigning, information-deficit strategies, offer short-term 'magic solutions' or goals/outcomes that will somehow solve all of our problems, use fear and guilt, or play to our inner desire for pleasure/power/egoic validation, all of which make up the backbone of the marketing paradigm.

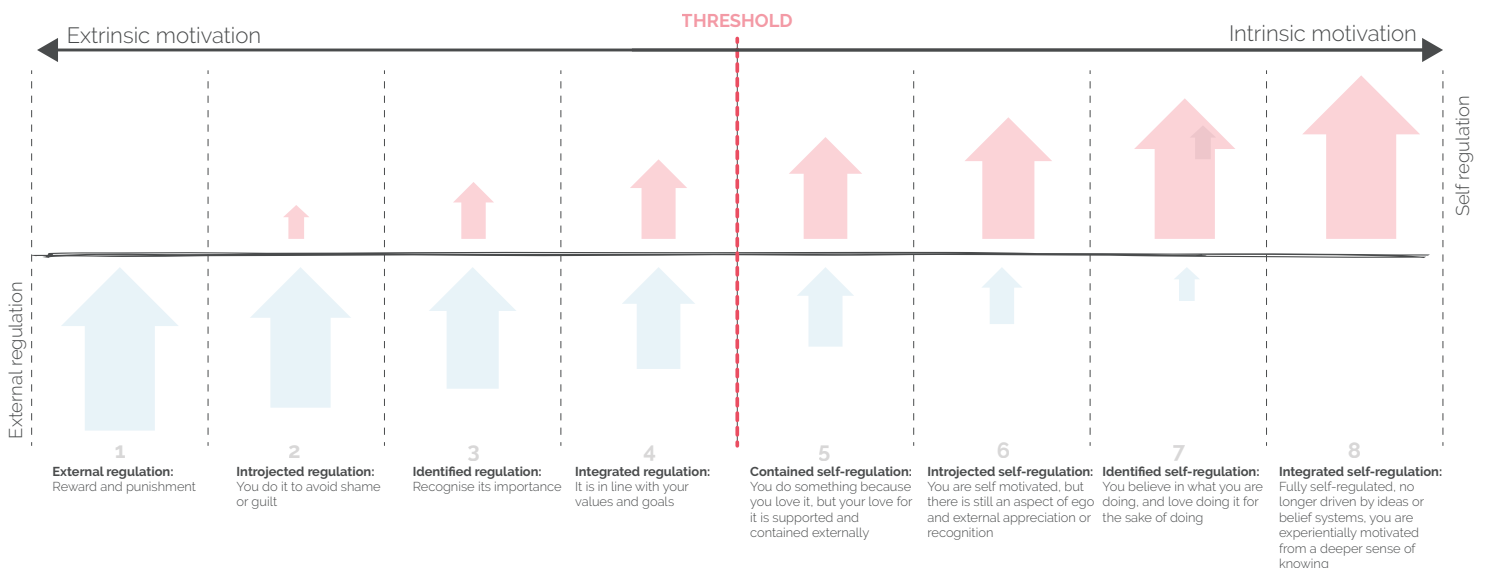
The marketing paradigm is defined by a deep foundational belief that we are rational and narrowly self-interested - *homo economicus*. Our participation in this paradigm *by any means*, means we further embed this paradigm, its values and its worldview into our culture and ways of relating to the world.

What is most worrying about all of this, is that we think that we are not doing marketing. We think that we are using intrinsic motivation. We think that we are doing storytelling correctly. We genuinely think that the problem to the lack of real action on both social and environmental issues is due to external influences, things that are outside of our control.

The reality seems to point in the other direction. It seems that our failure to

bring about real and meaningful change on both social and environmental issues is just as much a fault that lies within our ways of working and our ways of thinking, guided by the paradigms we hold to be true.

But this is good news. Because if the reason for our failure to drive meaningful change is due to internal concerns, things that we have full control over, then we are in a much stronger place to change them and transform our work for positive change.



This new motivation model based on the foundations of SDT, balances intrinsic motivation into four new orientations. No longer is intrinsic motivation a pleasure seeking self-regulated type of motivation, instead we can begin to see that intrinsic motivation is aligned with the values and motivation orientations found in the right hemisphere of the brain. This now creates a whole new range of opportunities to engage with this often misunderstood type of motivation.

Understanding Purpose

How purpose works at the metanarrative level



Purpose is probably one of the most misunderstood out of the three primitives found at the metanarrative level of all communications. Purpose is not to be confused with the broad purpose statements that we find in our corporate vision statements, but rather it is best understood as a flow state, a deep intentionality that shapes how all narratives flow.

Understanding purpose

Outside of brand positioning, where a purpose statement is seen as a corporate branding slogan designed to summarise the organisations intentions as well as garner aspirations and motivation, we don't seem to fully appreciate or acknowledge the key role purpose plays in *all narratives and communications*.

Purpose is always implicitly communicated, and when we view purpose at the metanarrative level it functions differently to an organisation's self-declared purpose statement.

To understand the true nature of purpose requires a deeper understanding of how purpose functions alongside values and motivation at the implicit or metanarrative level of all communications.

Purpose plays an essential role in metanarratives, as *purpose sets the flow state of the metanarrative*, shaping which motivation orientation we work with as well as what values we engage and awaken. Purpose, in its explicit state, plays a lesser role, as we see in these purpose statements taken from major corporations (see quiz).

The tendency is that we think of purpose as an explicit statement found within our corporate vision statements, rather than understanding the different types of purpose that sits behind each communication and narrative.

In my experience with working alongside charities is that they often conflate their cause with their purpose, or rather their charitable purpose (which is more of a classification that is required by the Charity Commission). A cause and a purpose are different. One sets out *what* the charity seeks to do, the purpose is the *why* that sits behind a charity's existence.

Within marketing theory, purpose is interpreted as an ambition for your organisation.

In the marketing paradigm a purpose statement becomes a corporate magic solution, how the organisation will somehow solve all world hunger, solve climate change, solve global inequality, and will somehow - by itself, as the hero in the story - bring about global order and restoration.

These purpose statements will often shape the hero dynamics for the organisation. Not only will donating to the charity will somehow solve all world poverty, but that the charity will somehow achieve this *on their own*.

These simple statements can play a huge role in orientating all communication strategies for an organisation and, if not fully understood, can end up reinforcing marketing values and the marketing paradigm, making long term change almost impossible.

Intrinsic and extrinsic purpose

Quiz: match the purpose statement

It's all about doing the right thing – for our shared planet, our valuable communities, and the future of how we service and support our customers.

Refresh the world. Make a difference.

To inspire and empower youth culture.

Nourishing families so they can flourish and thrive.

Working together for a healthier world.

For those who make the world.

As it has been from the beginning, our purpose goes far beyond profit. We believe in the pursuit of doing good.

Stanley Black and Decker, Kellogg's, Coca Cola, Office Depot, Pfizer, Starbucks, Footlocker.³⁸

There is very little study or available literature on the different orientations of intrinsic and extrinsic purpose, despite both of them playing an integral role in shaping the power dynamics in all narratives.

Every narrative communicates a purpose. That purpose is not to be confused with the *functionality* of the narrative (i.e. the purpose of this narrative is to raise money, or to raise awareness of climate change). Implicit purpose works very differently and can only be really understood by a deeper understanding of the human psyche.

For example, an extrinsic purpose is not just a purpose towards a goal or outcome, but can be defined as

our deep inner drive towards safety, control, power or manipulation. Intrinsic purpose, by contrast, can be defined as our deep inner drive towards self-transcendence and deeper connection.

These are two entirely different drives with entirely different ways of engaging the same activity. We know the shape and characteristics of these two purposes, because they also reflect the two value ecologies of the two hemispheres of the brain. The left hemisphere seeks to control, manipulate, gain power or pleasure as way of creating order and safety for itself. This is a survival drive, and there are obvious evolutionary reasons as to why we have this purpose.

The right hemisphere's drive transcends survival instincts, it serves as a deep inner desire for connection, comprehension, to include and bring together, to transcend the egoic self so as to be realigned with something that is bigger than the self. This is why we cannot talk about intrinsic purpose without talking about spirituality. Only by acknowledging the spiritual dimension of the self can we ever understand purpose.

Purpose flow states

Purpose works in a co-creative fashion with metanarratives. Purpose not only changes its nature in different flow states, but purpose *changes the different flow states*. This is why purpose has so much power, and why it is just as an important primitive as values and motivation. All three primitives must be viewed as having equal power and equal influence on the others. This integrated approach can lead us to deeper understanding of how metanarratives function.

Purpose has eight different flow states that are represented by the eight discreet orientations in the diagram below. Each flow state is represented by an inward or outward flow. Orientation 1, for example has a very high inward flow. This is where purpose moves into a high self-contraction state, which can be expressed at the metanarrative as a fear of suffering, or our desire for reward/pleasure.

Stage 8, by contrast, is a dominant outward flow state. This is where purpose is not about achieving an external goal, but rather is expressed as a desire that seeks interconnectedness. In this orientation we transcend egoic patterns of behaviour and move towards a desire for self-transcendence.

Self-transcendence can be interpreted in many ways, but broadly it is understood as the inner drive to go beyond self-interest and to move towards altruistic behaviours that seeks the well being of others as well as our natural world. We can view the self-transcendence values on the values map in the upper right hand quadrant, including world at peace, social justice, protecting the environment, a spiritual life and equality.

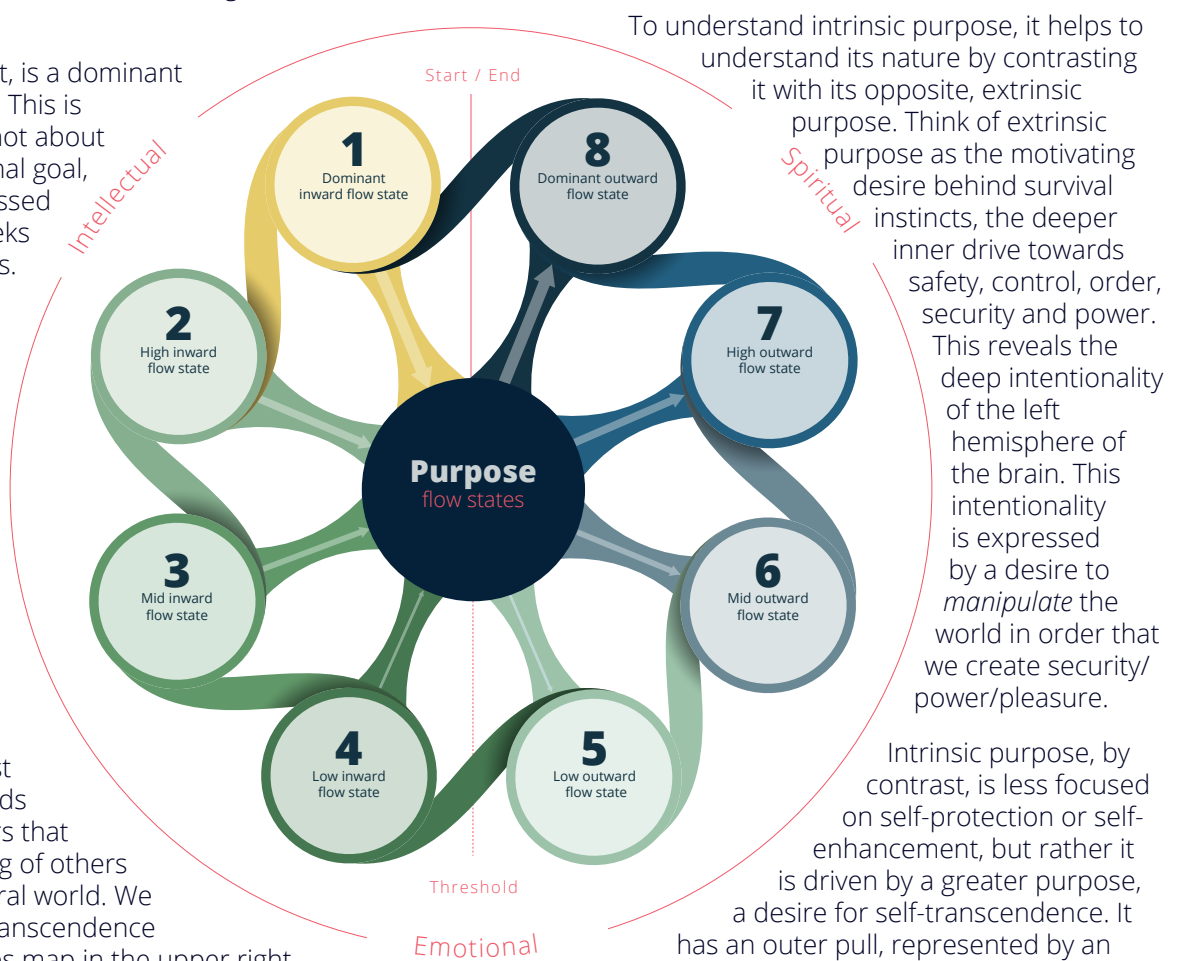
This is a reminder, yet again, that we don't engage these values by talking about them, through words or narrative, nor by using extrinsic motivation where we should/ought to/need to care for our planet and each other. Rather, we engage these self-transcending values when our motivation orientation sits within stages 5-8, and our purpose sits within stages 5-8. In other words, when we use intrinsic motivation towards an intrinsic purpose, intrinsic values are the by-product.

Triggering different purpose flow states

How do we work with intrinsic purpose? If purpose is a

primitive that is always expressed at the metanarrative level of all communications and narratives, then how do we ensure that we engage the right purpose orientation? What are the different purpose flow states, how do they work and how do we trigger them?

Working with purpose is one of the most challenging aspects of **IMT**, as it requires a deeper understanding of the dynamics of the psyche, the purpose dynamics of the two hemispheres of the brain, and how metanarratives create different tensions and what values emerge out of this different tensions. Exploring all of this deeper work is beyond the scope of this book *Introduction to Master Storytelling*. A fuller account of how purpose works and a deeper explanation and some of the nuances of working with purpose is available on our main [Master Storytelling training course](#). For the sake of this introduction, what follows is a brief summary.



It is not 'triggered' by aspirational messaging (i.e. pointing to higher values or catchphrases like 'we can build a better world!'), instead it is triggered by the *overcoming of the collision of opposites*. This is where we can begin to understand the deep nature of storytelling.

We know that the left hemisphere will do anything to avoid suffering. It will constantly seek the path of least resistance, or it will seek order and control. Anything to avoid risk, anything to avoid disorder, anything to avoid suffering.

The stories the left hemisphere prefers to tell tend to be objective (reads like a report or case study), evidence based with quotes from experts, filled with propositions of what we should and ought to do, objectifies the subjects in the story, uses extrinsic motivation as a call to action, and over-promises on the magic solution to the problem it presents.³⁹

The left hemisphere doesn't know how to integrate, only to reject. It seeks to create order by the expulsion of what it deems as disorder. We can see this pattern in modern storytelling in the many violent action thrillers that fill our screens, that all use a form of redemptive violence. To bring order we have the hero in the story who spends most of the movie hunting down and killing the enemy. Only until all enemies are dead is order restored. These stories are known for their simple narratives of good guys vs bad guys. There is little room here for complex subtleties and nuances. Any attempt to do so will undermine the flow state of the narrative.

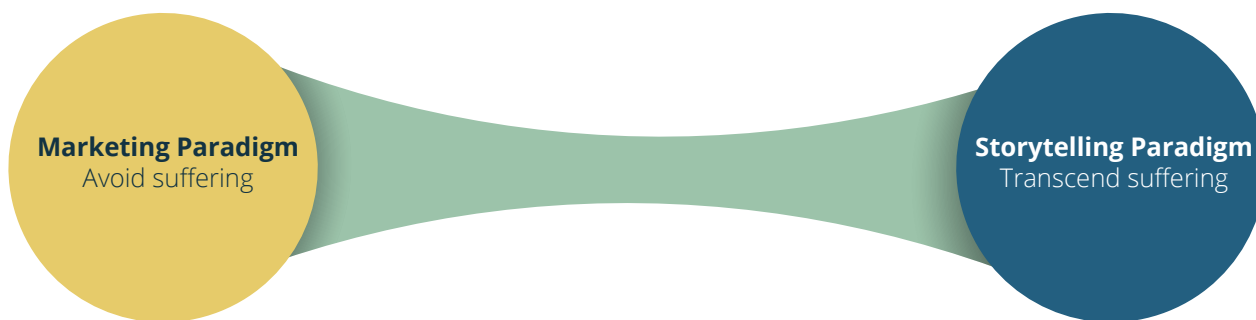
Stories that are based on extrinsic purpose are usually identifiable by simplistic narratives, simple ways to restore order and simple concepts of good/bad or order/disorder.

This type of narrative emerges when we are aligned with the lower orientations (1 & 2) on the purpose model. We are committed to telling this type of story because the purpose orientation demands it. When our intention is towards an extrinsic purpose, expressed as a short-term goal or outcome (usually money/income) then our narrative will naturally align with marketing methodologies, resulting in simple good/evil narratives and magic solutions.

When we look to the motivation continuum (i.e. orientations 1 & 2) we can see the same patterns playing out. To trigger these lower orientations we utilise our fear of suffering (threat of punishment), or offer a reward - physical or psychological, (offering a reward is, broadly speaking, still a form of avoiding suffering as it plays to our deeper desire for greed, power or security). These are two strategies to expel disorder.

This means our desire to avoid suffering plays an integral role in all four stages of extrinsic motivation.

No wonder we are so attracted to marketing methodologies and approaches in our work, and no wonder we are helpless to the temptations of



If you ever want to understand a society or culture simply look at the stories it tells itself. And if you really want to understand a culture or society, simply look at how it tries to create order out of disorder, or rather, how it deals with suffering.

Our collective attempt to create order (positive action, behaviour change, political change) out of disorder (climate change, poverty, environmental destruction) is subject to the same rules and flow states as we find in stories (without the killing and shooting of course!). To bring about redemption/order we need to get rid of the enemy (poverty, environmental destruction, etc). So we run campaigns with simple narratives of good vs evil, propositions of what is wrong, and how a donation or taking action will bring about restoration.

In this context your audience doesn't have to change, we just have to expel or get rid of that which we deem as disorder or unclean. This narrative demands that we avoid any complexity, or that we explore the underlying interconnected nature of our current crisis. Within this context we don't ask our audience to grow, we just need to present a simple good/evil narrative and how order can be restored by filling out the direct debit mandate.

consumerism and marketing messages - because these orientations represent the dominant myths of our culture.

We don't consume because we are greedy or selfish, we consume because to do so aligns with our deep desire to overcome anxiety and suffering. Our consumer behaviours are coping behaviours in our attempt to create order and control in our lives. Consumer behaviours are simply an expression of what it means to live out of our dominant cultural myth.

Beyond marketing logic and extrinsic purpose

Our almost universal adoption of marketing logic, techniques and approaches means that almost all of our narratives for change are based on deficit strategies. It seems to be as if we are trying to sell something that our audiences are missing, whether it is some insight or piece of information: the belief that if only audiences knew this one thing about climate change, *then* they will act! Or if we can get them to feel a certain way through emotional storytelling *then* they will act!

Both approaches are based on the same deficit marketing logic and both approaches fail to understand how long-term action is shaped not by knowledge or

emotional engagement, but rather by values. And those values are reinforced at the metanarrative level of all communications.

Changing our metanarratives is how we create long-term behaviour change, not information, not knowledge and not feelings. Because if this was the case, then our informative and emotionally charged storytelling methodologies would be making real headway in driving real change. They're not, and nor will they.

Real action, real behaviour change, real cultural change comes not from knowledge, not from feeling but rather from a re-orientation, which is a shift in our disposition to how we see, feel, value and relate to the world.

This deeper re-orientation work can only be done by shifting towards an intrinsic purpose. This means lasting change cannot be achieved if we are still stuck in the marketing paradigm, still stuck using extrinsic motivation, still stuck pointing towards the self-enhancing goals found in extrinsic purpose.

To transform our world, to transform culture, to transform values, to transform norms and behaviours means that we need to transcend to the higher flow states of intrinsic motivation and purpose. Without this deep change, real and lasting change is almost impossible.

Here comes one of the most controversial and challenging statements in this book: To get to the higher flow states of purpose and the higher motivation orientations means that *we need to abandon marketing methodologies altogether*. This is a radical and challenging call to a whole sector that has wholesale adopted and applied marketing logic and methodologies almost universally across all areas of work. This shift will never be an easy one, but it is a necessary one if we truly are committed to bringing about real change.

This means shifting our focus from short term goals, and start to look at the bigger picture to see how our way of working is contributing to, and reinforcing positive or toxic metanarratives. Given where we are today, I no longer see how positive change can happen when we are all still participating in and reinforcing the same psychological drivers behind today's ecological crisis.

No longer can we participate in toxic metanarratives, no longer can we deploy marketing approaches that evidently lean towards extrinsic values. Our urgent task to is to pave the way for a new psychological foundation on which to build meaningful change. Only through a deep change in culture, paradigms and metanarratives can real change ever happen.

The storytelling paradigm

You don't leave old paradigms by de-constructing them, we only leave them when we transcend them. Which, of course, means we need *a new paradigm to transcend to*. To transcend the old, we need somewhere else to go. This new paradigm, as it is broadly speaking a motivational paradigm, not only has to work but it has to be proven to work. Without this, there is no point moving to a new motivational theory if it doesn't work.

The only possible paradigm that has the robust strength, depth and motivational dynamics that can drive behaviours towards their higher self-transcending state is called the storytelling paradigm. Remember, this is a paradigm, a way of thinking. It is not to be confused with storytelling or the telling of stories *per se*, as we can argue that we already do storytelling throughout our work, as evident in our collective communication strategies.

The problem with our current approach to storytelling is that we do storytelling within the marketing paradigm. We tell stories towards an extrinsic purpose, we use emotional manipulation in order to persuade our audiences towards a specific goal or outcome.

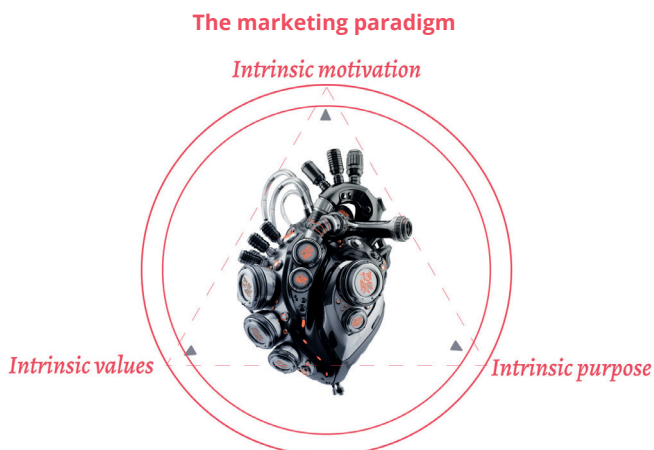
In other words, the stories we tell are not really stories *for* transformation, but stories *about* transformation, of which the audience either funds or supports transformation through a magic solution, they do not need to undergo any personal change or personal transformation themselves.

The marketing paradigm is defined by its belief that we are self-interested and rational beings - based on *homo economicus*. This paradigm naturally aligns to extrinsic motivation as it plays to our lower values of fear, greed, ego identity, pleasure, need for external validation. It works best when pointing towards an extrinsic purpose and

engages extrinsic values.

The storytelling paradigm is founded on the opposite. It draws its foundation on the highest dimension of the human self, which is the spiritual dimension and our deeper desire towards self-transcendence. Rather than motivating towards our lower values or using extrinsic motivational triggers that utilise fear, reward, sense of security or belonging, the storytelling paradigm works with intrinsic motivation and values.

To understand what this paradigm is, we need to understand how this new motivational 'engine' works. This means understanding how the three primitives of intrinsic motivation, intrinsic values and intrinsic purpose



If we view the storytelling paradigm like a self-generating eco-friendly engine. It has no psychological pollutants because it doesn't need to play to our lower values or play to our fears or create anxiety. This 'engine' is in the shape of the heart, but it represents the values and logic of the right hemisphere of the brain.

all work together. To do this we need to understand one of the hardest concepts to make sense of: that is *intrinsic purpose*.

Intrinsic purpose is best described as a purpose that is naturally attuned to self-transcendence. Intrinsic purpose doesn't seek order, pleasure or control, instead it seeks meaning, connection, integration and relationships. It is obviously closely aligned with intrinsic values such as social justice, environmental protection and equality.

The essence of this purpose translates as a *disposition towards self-transcendence*, where motivation is triggered not through our fear of suffering, but rather *through our desire to transcend*, which can only be achieved *through the transcendence of suffering*.

This might sound like a strange motivational driver at first, but when we broaden our understanding of what we mean by suffering we can begin to make sense of this.

Avoiding suffering is not to be conflated with our desire to avoid pain (which I think we can all agree is a good thing!), but rather our avoidance of any inconvenience or hardship that demands any element of inner growth or personal maturity. Avoiding suffering is a catch-all term that describes the belief that something external will somehow make my life easier/better/fulfilling. Whether it is the latest upgrade, goods or services.

By contrast, as we know, all good stories must have conflict, where opposites are held in tension. This is where the hero in the story has to suffer in some way, or it seems like our hero is failing, only for them to find that last bit of inner strength to get back up and find a way through to create the story's resolution or happy ending.

Without this basic formula stories fail to resonate. Without any element of suffering or hardship, without any conflict and resolution, stories feel flat and uninspiring. The greater the tension the greater the story.

The fact that the deep psyche responds so positively to this tension of opposites in storytelling reveals something deeper about us.

If we take a moment to think why would this be, why do we enjoy stories that scare us, make us cry, make us fear, raise our heartbeats in terror - surely the logic would be these are all the things that we would want to avoid? Why are we, within the safety of a storytelling arc, *attracted to suffering*?

I would argue that this attraction reflects the spiritual nature of the human psyche. It is no coincidence that when we get to the higher stages of storytelling in wisdom literature, mythic storytelling and in religious narratives we find the perennial theme of the collision of opposites between suffering and love, and how love is *revealed through suffering*.

We not only see this universal pattern in the stories of world religions, we also see this pattern in almost all mythology, as well as within the rites, rituals and

storytelling found in indigenous communities.

Rites of initiation, for example, would tend to include a physical element of suffering, held within a sacred space or context. The intuition was that until the young were initiated, they would seek power, create disorder and the community would fall apart.

These insights around the importance of transcending suffering seems to be a lost knowledge, known by our ancestors, known still by indigenous communities, but we are unable to know this deeper truth. The paradigms that we hold cannot contain this wisdom, and the left hemisphere will refuse to accept this logic.

What this insight reveals is a deeper driving dynamic that challenges our dominant thinking about how we create meaningful change on social and environmental issues. What is being offered here is so counter-logical, so against the grain of what we may deem as common sense, and yet, somehow this deep truth is evidently displayed by communities that show high pro-social or pro-environmental behaviours.

It is the one thing the left hemisphere will do anything to avoid, because without our fear of suffering, the left hemisphere no longer has the authority to play a dominant role in our thinking. When we transcend suffering, the left hemisphere can no longer be master, it is relegated to its rightful place as servant.

When we no longer draw our behaviours from a fear of what others think of us, or a fear of being insecure, or a fear of missing out on pleasure/rewards, then extrinsic values no longer play a dominant role in our lives. Instead, when we transcend the need for external validation and power we can live in the absolute freedom of living simply, sustainably and in solidarity with those in need.

It would seem that intrinsic values can only be authentically engaged when they emerge from within, when they are self-regulated. That means we cannot engage them through the use of usual marketing methodologies that use fear/anxiety or pleasure/power as motivational triggers, nor can we engage them authentically by offering images of people smiling, colourful illustrations and positive thinking.

To understand how to trigger intrinsic values we simply have to look at how our great ancestors managed to do this, how wisdom literature, art and religious storytelling all do this.

Intrinsic values are triggered and engaged by encountering and transcending its opposite value - to self-transcend means that we need to transcend our need for power, need for security, need for order. We can find these transcending narratives within religious/spiritual/wisdom traditions, where the focus of the story is to bring you into suffering in order for you, the audience, to be transformed by it. It is called *the way of descent*.⁴⁰

To self-transcend, where we no longer live as the little

egoic 'I' (e.g. *I think therefore I am* - Descartes), and undergo a transformation of the self so that we live the greater interconnected 'we' (e.g. *I am, because we are* - Ubuntu), requires us to undergo an inner transformation of the self. Ancient cultures knew how to do this, but we no longer do.

It seems that we really struggle to make sense of intrinsic purpose, a type of purpose that does not have a goal, does not lead to more power or security, does not offer pleasure, does not offer any of the things that the left hemisphere values. Ironically, this type of purpose, to our modern mindset, *has no purpose*. Anything that doesn't lead to a tangible goal or outcome, is seen by the left hemisphere as *purpose-less*, and it will be ignored altogether.

Rediscovering intrinsic purpose, where we engage with an activity not because we seek power or security, pleasure or reward, but because of a deep inner desire towards connection, meaning, re-alignment, inner-growth, and all the other aspects of spiritual growth and development, this shift will require an entirely different mindset altogether.

This is not a new paradigm, it is an entirely ancient paradigm, one that we have forgotten. Therefore, our greater task is not to convince or persuade people into action on climate and social issues, but rather *to remember what we once knew by have now forgotten*. What Joanna Macy calls *The Great Turning*,⁴¹ from a metanarrative view this can only be achieved by *The Great Remembering*, the restoration of lost wisdom, the remembering of who we are, what we are and how to connect to a deeper purpose in life that aligns us to a restored relationship with the earth, ourselves and each other.

The storytelling paradigm, therefore, is not about telling stories, but rather a call to think differently about how we motivate audiences for positive change. Shifting from goal-orientated and short term thinking that we find within the marketing mindset, towards a storytelling paradigm that seeks to use storytelling approaches to awaken us to our higher self-transcending values is a fundamental shift. A challenging shift, but one that is desperately needed if we are to bring about the deep changes we need today.

Only by re-aligning us towards an intrinsic purpose, *out of which the right behaviour follows* can we ever really bring about the deep changes that we need. First the transformation, *then* the action.

Intrinsic purpose and intrinsic values

It is not enough to say that we must instil within our audiences a sense of purpose. This belies the fact that all communications and all narratives already communicate a purpose. Purpose is implicit in everything we do, there are no communications that do not imply a purpose.

The more important question to answer is 'What purpose do we want to align with?' If all narratives of an organisation are aligned towards an extrinsic purpose (usually income) then that is the dominant purpose of

the organisation. It doesn't matter what the self-declared purpose is in their vision and mission statements. How we act reveals our true purpose.

Purpose, as we have seen, plays an essential role at the metanarrative level of all communications. When our metanarratives are aligned to a higher purpose flow state, for example flow states 5-8, we will invariably lean towards intrinsic motivation and engage intrinsic values. Understanding this can help us to escape the seeming paradox found within SDT.

As intrinsic motivation is seen as entirely self-regulated, it therefore cannot be externally regulated. To *externally* regulate a *self-regulated* motivation orientation creates a paradox - it can't be done. According to SDT you can create the conditions for self-regulated motivation to occur, but technically you can't directly intrinsically motivate someone. You can inspire, set out tasks that are within your audience's competency, or give your audience positive feedback and show how they are making progress on their goals. But it is up to the individual to find within themselves the motivation to complete the task.

While these approaches and this model may broadly work for task-orientated behaviours, these approaches don't make much sense when applied outside of this context, especially for those of us who are using storytelling methodologies for positive change.

But this seeming paradox does highlight an important aspect of our work when it comes to understanding how to intrinsically motivate our audiences. When it comes to cultivating a deep desire to care for our planet and for each other there are some hard problems that we need to overcome.

Technically speaking, you cannot make someone love something. Trying to warm and engage audiences towards the self-transcending intrinsic values is like trying to get someone to love the environment, or love their global neighbour. Technically speaking, you can't. This is up to the individual to do on their own.

Perhaps you can try to inspire audiences to love, we can even show images of people taking positive eco-actions, while smiling to camera. But this makes up for a very weak motivation proposition, bland even. We can try show lots of people enjoying themselves, while they are taking positive action, but we are back to extrinsic motivation again, where we are using our desire for pleasure to drive the motivation orientation.

This is why working with these love-based values are a lot trickier than we first may think. It is far easier to drive a sense of duty to care for the environment, or use fear and tell horror stories of what will happen if we don't care for the environment. We can even use guilt, shame as well as anxiety to drive action. But to love? That calls for an entirely different approach.

This is where we begin to see the limits of SDT theory when it comes to working with intrinsic motivation. Creating autonomy, relationality and competence does in no way guarantee, or even suggest, that

behaviours will align to intrinsic values when these three psychological drivers are met. In fact, the opposite may be true. There is a case to be made that in our desire to achieve personal goals (extrinsic purpose) we will engage extrinsic values, not intrinsic.

Not to point out the obvious, but you cannot extrinsically motivate love. I've seen this too many times in communications that infer that it is our duty to love our neighbour, or it is our duty to love our planet. Unfortunately love doesn't work like that. You can't love out of duty, any attempt to do so will only distort our definition of what love is.

Love, *authentic love*, is self-transcending by its very nature. This is a type of love where we no longer think about ourselves, or put our needs first. Instead we put the needs of others before us. We will not only go the extra mile for the ones we love, but we will willingly sacrifice our needs, comforts and risk our own security for the those we really love in our lives. When we enter into this flow state we are not diminished, but instead we flourish and we discover our true selves.

The main issue I have with SDT is the almost technical approach to motivation that bypasses any meaningful reflection on the nature of love and the aspect of the self that seeks self-transcendence. This technical approach to motivation suggests that if we simply ensure the three psychological needs of competency, relatedness and autonomy are met we will arrive at intrinsic motivation. All of which are, of course, externally regulated.

The main problem with this theory is that it simply doesn't work outside of a highly controlled task-orientated scenario. How are we, who are working for positive change in the world, supposed to use this model within a real-world context? There is very little in SDT that offers in terms of tools, techniques or resources that can work with the interior aspects of the self, nor with spiritual desire or deep intrinsic flow states.

The goal-orientated bias of this theory is very much focussed on task and goal-orientated actions, best suited to getting students to study better, or to getting staff to work harder. This motivation model is in no way fit for purpose for today's problems. It is why we need a new understanding of intrinsic motivation, as well as practical ways to be work with intrinsic motivation within our work.

Motivating intrinsic values

Intrinsic values cannot be extrinsically motivated.⁴² This means that if we are using any form of extrinsic motivation then we are most likely warming and engaging extrinsic values, not intrinsic. Intrinsic values emerge from within, and the best way to externally influence the interior self is through the co-creative act of storytelling.

When we consider the dual nature of storytelling, we can see that stories are a co-created act, defined by an encounter between the storyteller with the audience. The storyteller narrates the narrative, but what is implied through the narrative is 'narrated' by the audience. It is up to the audience to imagine the story, to create an

internal visualisation of what the dragon looks like, to understand the hidden dynamics between characters and what is not being said. And if we are a good storyteller, we will do the classic 'show, don't tell' where we make the audience work for the story.

This is why stories are a mix of external regulation (narrative) and self-regulation (metanarrative).

Stories have the power to draw audiences into the narrative, to create the space for the audience to *think and see for themselves*. We don't get this same dynamic in unidirectional communications like scientific reports, case studies and explainers. We don't get this dynamic in most marketing propositions where we are presented with a need and a potential solution.

The problem with most marketing propositions is not that they ask for too much, but that they ask for so little from the audience.

This is what happens when we use extrinsic motivation in our communications and narratives, which creates this propositional and face-to-face dynamic. This confrontational style of communications creates no space for the audience to co-create the meaning of the stories we tell. We, the storyteller provide all the information, because we think that is the right thing to do.

For the marketing formula to work we need to keep narratives and fundraising propositions simple, overlay the need and overlay the magic solution - any attempt to add nuance, context, complexity, subtleties, implicit messaging will only weaken the proposition. This is why our fundraisers follow such simple narratives and offer such simple solutions to *some of the most complex issues we face today*.

It is not that we, who are working for positive change, believe in our over-simplistic marketing propositions, that a donation can somehow solve all world hunger, or that signing up to a campaign can stop climate change. It is the logic of the marketing paradigm that demands such simplicity, and it is this paradigm that has power over us.

When we move to the storytelling paradigm, when we look to work with intrinsic motivation, the opposite is true. This motivational orientation does not naturally align with simple narratives and simple solutions, but rather it demands nuance, context, emotional engagement and the ability to transport your audiences into the story.

It is hard to see how we can intrinsically motivate audiences without storytelling.

In storytelling we are creating the space for audiences to imagine, to feel, to see and to contemplate the deeper meaning of the story. We are more interested in creating the space in narratives to bring the audience in, so they play a role within the narrative itself.

Stories are not the re-presentation of the drama, they are the drama. Our interaction and co-creative engagement with stories is what

makes storytelling so powerful.

Of course, bringing your audience into the story is not a technique that is just limited to narratives. The same can be applied to good art, design, music, architecture and poetry - all aspects that implicitly communicate a deeper message or a deeper story, where space is created *to invite our audience in*. This is why storytelling should never be reduced just to narratives. As metanarratives are communicated *through* words, they can also be communicated through other forms of expression. Anything that offers the space for implicit communication can be classified as a story.

The SDT approach to motivation, from the perspective of those of us who are trying to create positive change, is almost useless. This model has no tools or practical resources and techniques that can help us to trigger intrinsic motivation orientations. Without this much needed insight how are we to authentically engage intrinsic values?

No wonder we have fallen back to the marketing paradigm, with its tried and trusted motivation techniques. I'm sure we would all be happy to leave marketing theory and logic behind *if we had something else to move onto*. Otherwise we are stuck using marketing techniques to drive positive change, where we use FOMO, tribal belonging, fear, anxiety, positive thinking to motivated our audiences into action. What else are we to do in absence of a more holistic working model?

We urgently need a new model, a model that works both short and long-term, and can deal with some of the biggest challenges we face today. Achieving this demands a return to basics, to re-learn the art of storytelling, where we take both narrative and metanarrative seriously and to be able to work with the spiritual aspect of the self, that part of us that does not seek reward, pleasure or outcomes, but seeks self-transcendence.

We need to learn how to tell stories as ways to connect our audiences towards an intrinsic purpose.

To do this requires a shift in how we view stories, from marketing propositions to *moments of encounter that leverage transformative change in our audiences*.

This means transitioning from the marketing paradigm that seeks to avoid suffering and embrace the role of a storyteller which is to make your audience *suffer well*.

Just as our desire to avoid suffering plays to the lower four stages of the motivation continuum, it would seem our desire to transcend suffering is what takes us to the higher four stages of the motivation continuum.

Beyond rationalism

If you are new to deep storytelling methodologies, new to spirituality and mystical ways of knowing, this area of work may feel quite unfamiliar. As we live within a highly left-hemisphere and hyper-rationalistic culture, everything here may feel entirely counter-logical.

Probably because it is! This is not following the logic of the left hemisphere of the brain, it is following the transcendent logic of the right hemisphere of the brain.

To work with and understand intrinsic purpose requires our willingness to *transcend rational modes of thinking*. This, for many, will feel like a step too far. Our culture idealises rationalism and embraces this thinking as our dominant way to think. We are sceptical of any other ways of knowing (which reflects the Cartesian paradigm).

As a result we have a deep love for the sciences in which we turn to as a way to understand truth, while neglecting all other modes of thinking, especially emotion, intuition and imagination.

To transcend rational modes of thinking does not mean that we become irrational (i.e. not based on logical thinking), but that we transcend rationalism and embrace the non-rational aspects of our thinking. We include what is useful about what rationalism provides us, but we also recognise the limits of rationalism when it comes to understanding all aspects of implicit communication - including values, purpose and motivation.

The *non-rational* is not the same as *irrational* (although our hyper-rationalistic thinking will assume it is). Working with the non-rational is to work with intuition, emotional understanding and contemplative approaches to thinking. These require an increase in intelligence, an increase in our ability to discern, to see the implicit, to see values and purpose in everything we do.

The greatest skill of a Master Storyteller is simply to see the unseen, to see what is implicit in everything, and know how to take the implicit seriously in order to be able to harness values, motivation and purpose for positive change.

In other words, working with the non-rational is to see what the left-hemisphere cannot see. This means being able to work with the right hemisphere of the brain. This way of seeing may take time and training to develop, but being able to 'see' the implicit offers us the opportunity to finally find the deep answers we need when it comes to how we harness motivation for positive change on social and environmental issues.

And the good news is that we *all* have the ability to do this, it is not a specialist skill available only to a select few. After all, barring any serious medical condition, we all have a fully functioning right hemisphere of the brain!

One of the most counter-cultural acts that I think that we can do today is to take all aspects of right-hemispheric thinking just as seriously as we take left-hemispheric thinking.

That means taking what is implicitly communicated just as seriously as what is explicitly communicated. This translates as taking all things that cannot be empirically 'proven', like values and purpose, just as seriously as we would take all material things that can be empirically proven.

This shift towards right hemisphere dominant thinking is

an integrating act, not a shift from one way of thinking, only to be replaced by another, where we eschew scientific understanding and knowledge to be replaced by fairytales and mythic ways of knowing.

The task of the Master Storyteller is to hold both ways of knowing as equally valid, the skill of a Master Storyteller is being able to integrate them both.

As we work towards Integral Motivation Theory (IMT), this integral mindset is essential, especially if we are to work with intrinsic purpose. This integral approach, as advocated by thinkers such as Ken Wilber, suggest that in order to evolve we have to 'transcend and include',⁴³ where we seek to keep previous insights, all that is good with the old model, while transcending the limits of the old in order that we grow and transcend towards the new.

There is no space here for any anti-science or anti-rationalism sentiment here, but rather to accept the limits of these ways of knowing. As McGilchrist suggests, science cannot take us to what is beyond its limits, such as holding onto things like ultimate truth.

"Truth carries within it the whole purpose of science, and gives meaning to its activities. However, science will not admit anything that is not empirically verifiable – yet the value of truth, like all value, is incapable of empirical proof."

- Iain McGilchrist, The Matter With Things, pg.1123.

The shift required here is to embrace *different ways of knowing*, where we can know both rationally and scientifically *as well as* through intuition, emotions and with our imagination. The different ways of knowing do not cancel each other out, but complement and enrich the other. The holding of the two depends on our ability to integrate, or as McGilchrist suggests, to *com-prehend* - to bring together, which is the integrative nature of the right hemisphere of the brain.

This integral approach can help us overcome the obvious thinking traps we find ourselves in today, including the most obvious one which is the complete denial or disbelief that metanarratives even exist! Of course they exist, we can 'see' them when we know how to look for them. It is just that we can't see them with the rationalising mind, only with the contemplative mind.

This is why rationalism is failing us, not because it can't see values or purpose, but because it believes that anything that falls outside its way of seeing simply doesn't exist, or at the very least, be taken seriously.

As the rationalising mind cannot see the implicit, it will conflate the explicit versions of the three primitives of values, motivation and purpose for the very things themselves. It will think that the values we declare in our vision statements are actually the values we are working from and communicating throughout our work, despite all the evidence to the contrary.⁴⁴

Hyper-rationalism limits our seeing. As this way of thinking can only see the explicit, we will *think* that we are

engaging intrinsic values, because we are talking about them. Or we *think* we are purpose driven, because our vision, mission and statement tells us so. Or we *think* that our positive messaging is intrinsically motivating audiences, when the opposite tends to be true.

Hyper-rationalism and rational thinking is utterly inept at spotting the paradigms that we are trapped in. The rationalising mind tends to think not only is its way of thinking superior, but its way of thinking is *the only way to think*. That is why rationalism can be spotted by its two defining characteristics: arrogance and ignorance. Arrogance, in that it can know things that are outside of its ability to know, and ignorance because it does not know what it does not know, but thinks it does know.⁴⁵

According to McGilchrist, the left hemisphere is incapable of humility, as well as any form of self-awareness. The left hemisphere genuinely believes that it is the source of its own thinking, it has no real understanding that it plays a secondary role in the hierarchy of attention, where it only deals with re-presented information, which has been passed to it from the right hemisphere.

Even though the rationalising mind is heavily shaped by values and paradigms it will assume that its thinking is not only values free but untouched by the external influence of cultural paradigms. According to the left hemisphere, we are not trapped in a paradigm, how we think is normal.

This is why scientism (the belief that only science can provide answers) is so dangerous, for it thinks that in its attempt to be objective that it offers a values free and objective perspective on what is true. Because of this belief we seem to turn to the sciences for what it considers to be true, while invalidating *what we already know to be true* from a personal and embodied experience.

For example, just as we know that meditation is an intrinsically good practice, only until we have scientific evidence that shows the medical benefits do we take it seriously. We know that storytelling is intrinsically good and has value of its own, but we only take storytelling seriously when there is scientific evidence that shows how telling stories can warm or engage certain neurochemicals do we begin to take it seriously.

But the twist here is that when we turn to the sciences to validate the very things that we already intuit to be true, when we view them through the scientific lens we *distort their purpose*. We turn meditation into a form of modern-day mindfulness, used by corporations to help staff deal with stress and increase productivity. Taken out of its Buddhist context and wider story it now serves as a utility towards an extrinsic purpose. We turn stories into ways of engaging neurochemicals, transforming our storytelling into marketing propositions where all stories are utilised towards an extrinsic purpose.

As we all live in the technocratic paradigm and we have absorbed this iron-clad logic into everything we do, we seem to have a magic brush that paints an extrinsic purpose on everything we touch. Whether it is art,

music, poetry, storytelling, photography - anything, you name it, is now *reorientated towards an extrinsic purpose*. Everything must deliver on a goal, must have an outcome for it to hold value, and it must deliver towards an extrinsic value of pleasure, power or offer security in some way.

This is not just a broad comment on the state of our world, but to help us understand what is happening at the very practical levels of our work. It is almost impossible to get a charity or organisation to sign off any campaign, initiative or project that *does not have an extrinsic purpose*. Everything has to be geared towards profit, towards a measurable outcome, or some other form of goal-orientation.

How can storytelling even breathe under these conditions? How can authentic narratives that drive long-term change ever emerge within this stifling environment where we cannot move beyond extrinsic purpose?

Not only are we trapped in the technocratic paradigm, but we seem to be unaware that we are trapped in a prison of our own making, where we are both the prisoner and the prisoner guard. We hold the key to freedom, there is no-one keeping us here, repeating the same mistakes again and again at the metanarrative level of all of our communications. We are free to leave this paradigm anytime we like.

What stops us from doing so seems to be a lack of imagination to think our way out of the paradigms that we are trapped in. We can't seem to imagine *thinking* in a different way, where instead of creating endless marketing propositions we see our role as Master Storytellers who seek to drive motivation, audience engagement and global change through the transformation of culture, values and purpose.

To escape the technocratic paradigm we need to recognise the limits of science. Not that science is in any way bad, but it cannot seem to function beyond empirical evidence and measurable phenomena. And when it tries to make sense of the implicit it ends up distorting the very things that it seeks to understand.

The scientific approach not only de-values storytelling, it tends to treat audiences as biological automata. This is the idea if you give the right data input (exciting stories) then certain chemicals will be engaged. Those chemicals will then help the audience to remember the story, and as a result the right actions will follow.

Not only is this a naive view of how storytelling works, it is a naive view of the nature of how we think, value and relate to the world around us, and how behaviour change is created.

This serves as a very important reminder, that no paradigm is values free. In fact, if we really want to understand where our collective values come from, we will do well to look at the paradigms that we hold to be true. There you will find the source of the underlying values that shape modern day culture.

The scientific approach will always shift everything it tries to understand towards an extrinsic purpose, thereby changing the values we engage with. Science can never really understand how to work with intrinsic values because the left hemisphere cannot make sense of the mythic. Just because we storytellers may talk of dragons, may lean towards more mythic language, use archetypes and analogies, even use simple illustrations or animations to convey our messages, this does not mean that we are trying to water down our intelligence. In fact, we are trying to expand it!

Hyper-rationalism can never make sense of the mythic, of spirituality, of intrinsic purpose, of all the aspects that are required to engage with the higher and self-transcending aspects of the self. This is why creating deep psychological solutions that lean towards the more spiritual and self-transcending aspects of the psyche, where our stories take our audience into the 'belly of the whale' in order for them to let go and surrender their need for self-gratification, to let go of the ego and hubris, this type of storytelling will make no sense to the left hemisphere.

In fact, left hemisphere thinking will do the exact opposite, as we have seen in the marketing paradigm, where all marketing propositions show how buying a product or service will help us to avoid suffering, avoid inner maturation, avoid inner growth. There's a magic solution out there that will solve everything.

Hyper-rationalism is defined by a need to control and avoid suffering as it seeks an ordered world fitting into neat boxes and categories. Anything that does not fit in with the left hemisphere's way of thinking is simply rejected, especially paradox, context, myth, imagination, and contemplation.

Within this thinking framework, it is almost impossible to work with and awaken intrinsic values, because working with and awakening intrinsic values requires that we take seriously the path of descent.

When our campaigns and initiatives point only to the 'path of ascent', where we show how joining our campaign can be fun, or we have the magic solution that will take away all suffering, or that positive thinking and a 'we-can-do' optimistic attitude will somehow save the day, any short-term results these approaches may yield will be offset by our inability to bring about real and lasting change on the issues we care about, because we have just reaffirmed the values ecology of the left hemisphere of the brain.

Marketing dictates the path of ascent, that by having more we will be happy, the desire to live in abundance, to have power and prestige, to be successful and to be loved by others as a result. While none of these aspirations are intrinsically bad in themselves, the problem is when we draw all of our happiness, our need for validation, our desire for security *externally*, outside of ourselves, to the complete neglect of being able to draw *internally*, from within, which leads to inner resourcefulness, inner resilience and inner growth.

Marketing never demands inner growth. That is why

marketers are mythmakers, for they promise to take suffering away.

The role of the marketer is to offer a magic solution that will take suffering away, the role of the storyteller is to make their audience suffer well in order to foster inner growth and inner maturation.

What makes the storyteller so powerful is their ability to take their audience into the story, to feel, to see and - more importantly - to *reorientate themselves*. Powerful storytelling is never about inspiring audiences, nor about passing on key information, nor about making your audiences feel in a certain way.

Powerful storytelling is about reorientating your audiences to a different flow state.

This is why the storyteller, if they are a good storyteller, will know how to transport their audience not only into the story to make them feel, but will gently lead them into the path of descent - into the cave in order that we are transformed by this experience. This is what separates superficial storytelling - making people feel happy so that they might want to do something - to deep storytelling where we lean into suffering within the story so that we might be transformed by it.

This is why self-transcendence needs a storyteller, someone to reassure us that the path of descent, the journey into the dark cave is not only worth it, but necessary. Why would we ever go there otherwise?

Not only do good stories draw us in, but they draw us through.

Some reassurances

As you can see, this is a heavy topic. But we should never be afraid of depth. After all, *the deeper we go the further we go*. If we remain on the superficial level of all things, then we will never really be able to understand the deep drivers that undermine our ability to bring about positive change. Remember, it is our aversion to interiority and deep inner exploration that is part of the problem we face today. If we want deep change (which, I think we all do), then we must be willing to embrace deep thinking.

So here are just a few reassurances that working with intrinsic purpose is not as scary as it first seems.

Remember there are four intrinsic orientations. The path of descent and the more deeper aspects of storytelling are describing the higher orientations (7 & 8). This does not mean that all charities, organisations and movements need to become spiritual gurus in their communication and engagement strategies. But rather that we learn what is happening at the higher levels of inner transformation so that we can apply some of these insights respectively into our current ways of working.

In many cases this understanding of the path of descent may simply be expressed by campaigns that are driven with stories that are no longer shaped by the marketing magic formula (create anxiety, offer magic solution), but rather by a storytelling formula of bringing audiences into the story and using stories to awaken the necessary

values needed for the campaign's success. This minor tweak can be easily applied to existing audience engagement approaches.

At no stage is the claim being made that suffering is somehow good, or that we should celebrate suffering in some way. No religious or wisdom tradition advocates this. Instead they all tend to show that *suffering is necessary*, it is in our attempt to avoid it which causes more suffering. That is why suffering must always be integrated and transcended if we are to be transformed.

Working with the higher states of purpose orientations needs careful attention and professional insight, otherwise we risk creating more harm than good. For example, from a humanitarian communications point of view, a higher purpose orientation **would not** be expressed by communicating those who are suffering from injustice and poverty should somehow be painted as heroes, as the ones who have overcome hardship and toil. The inference here is that their suffering has helped them to become better people.

Not only would this weaken your fundraising propositions in the long-term (if suffering is good, then why should we help those in need?), it will also placate the deep messages that we absolutely need to deliver in our messaging. Entering into suffering means telling stories that help your audience to feel the absolute outrage, the complete injustice of social inequality and poverty. This is not a call to look at poverty and injustice through rose-tinted glasses, with people smiling to camera in a positive disposition.

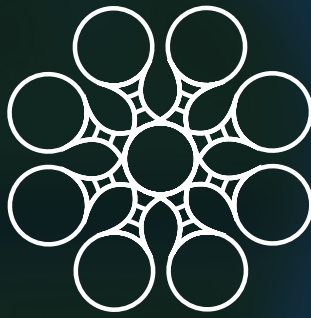
Audiences will only feel this deep injustice when we *bring them into the story* in a more authentic way. This is how we tell stories ethically - not to manipulate our audiences into action (marketing methods), but to awaken within our audiences the deeper desire to act by engaging them with what is real.

Making your audience 'suffer well' is not as morbid or negative as we might think! Just think of reading your favourite story, or watching your favourite film. The parts of that story that transported you into the scene, where your heart started to beat fast, where your hands even began to sweat - this is what we mean by *suffering well*.

Within the safety of a story, entering into suffering and transcending it is something that resonates with us *because it is meaningful*. This, of course, makes no real sense to the rational mind. It is the most counter-logical thing we can imagine. And yet, the pattern is there for us all to see. The greatest stories, myths, religious storytelling all make good use of suffering, not as something to avoid, but something to enter into.

So think of all your favourite stories and how this pattern occurs in them, then look at our fundraising and marketing propositions and see how this simple pattern is missing altogether.

What makes storytelling so powerful is that it can do all this complex work of reorientating towards different flow states, between extrinsic and intrinsic flow states, even in the most simplest of narratives.⁴⁶



Introducing Integral Motivation Theory (IMT)

Integral Motivation Theory is a new motivational model that has been designed specifically for those of us who are working for positive change. This model builds upon Self Determination Theory, but rebalances the left hemispheric bias of this model that is goal and pleasure orientated with the right hemispheric bias that is geared towards self-transcendence.

What makes this theory so different and so powerful, is that it works in an integrative way by bringing together the three primitives of values, motivation and purpose to make up a more holistic model. While this may be a more complex model, it can deal with more complex issues.

Because this model is based on integral approaches, it aligns with integral human development, integral ecology and integral spirituality. Or, in other words, all approaches to human maturation and human flourishing that seeks to integrate all aspects of human life.

This theory works with, and integrates, all of the human psyche, including the rational, emotional and spiritual. This theory redefines intrinsic motivation and aligns it with the values ecology of the right hemisphere of the brain. By doing so this theory can help us to see through the dominant paradigms that we are trapped in, challenging us to think in new ways when it comes to motivation, audience engagement and long-term solutions to the problems we face today.

Why are we talking about metanarratives and a new motivation theory?

To understand metanarratives and how they work, we need to understand Integral Motivation Theory, and to understand Integral Motivation Theory we need to understand metanarratives. These are not two discreet disciplines, they are one and the same. After all, what we are trying to do at the metanarrative level of our communications is to motivate. Knowing that we motivate *through metanarratives* opens up a new way of approaching human motivation that takes us beyond the limits of Self Determination Theory and its insistence on autonomy, relatedness and competence as the three psychological drivers behind intrinsic motivation.

Does it work?

When approaching any motivation theory we need to see whether it works. Where is the evidence, the case studies, the peer-reviewed papers? This is where we get into the challenges with working on long-term change, both individually as well as cultural and social change. These changes can not be measured by the scientific methodology, or in labs.

To understand how intrinsic motivation works, how intrinsic values work and intrinsic purpose works we simply need to study cultures and societies that exhibit high pro-social and pro-environmental behaviours, and look at how these three primitives are expressed in their storytelling and cultural rites, rituals and norms. By mapping metanarratives to real examples of positive cultural norms and behaviours is the best way to 'prove' this approach works.

Preparing the ground for IMT

Our collective failure to bring about real changes on both social and environmental issues is not due to our lack of energy, passion, drive or beliefs on our behalf. It is due to the fact that we have been using the wrong motivation engine. We have been using the same engine that is found within the marketing paradigm.

It is not that we have failed, but rather that we have *been failed* by the very engine that we thought could bring about change. This engine is not designed for behaviour change but for profit, not to awaken audiences to their higher values but to keep our audiences docile and passive.

This is why the marketing paradigm is by far one of the most insidious paradigms there is. It is causing so much harm to our world, and yet we all seem to be fully engaging within its logic. Just look at the numerous charity fundraisers, campaigns and initiatives that utilise this motivation 'engine' and embraces the logic of marketing theory. We embrace this paradigm because it offers us power. We will even defend this paradigm as we tend to mistake paradigms for our own thinking.

Not only is this paradigm a long-term psychological pollutant, but it engages extrinsic motivation, extrinsic values and extrinsic purpose - the three primitives that create the psychological foundation on which our negative and destructive behaviours draw from.

Trying to create long-term positive change without making any changes at the metanarrative level of everything we do is a futile gesture.

In **IMT** we don't replace extrinsic motivation with intrinsic, but we include them both - extrinsic *and* intrinsic. The rationale is simple, by offering a model that shows you which orientation you are using, this gives us all a choice to self-select which one to use. If we want short-term and highly regulated motivation that engages extrinsic values, then go for orientations 1-4, if we want long-term self-regulated motivation that engages intrinsic values, then go for orientations 5-8.

If we are working for long-term positive change it should be pretty obvious which orientations we should be working with. The more we work within orientations 5-8 the more likely we shift our dependency from orientations 1-4.

It is best to think of stages 5-8 as a different eco-system, which is driven by an engine that follows an entirely different logic. This engine doesn't need external pressures to maintain the motivation. When using this engine we no longer have to play to our audience's fears and anxieties, or to play to their greed or ego.

This engine is different to the engine found in the marketing paradigm, which is a *manipulative* engine. It works best by manipulating our fear of suffering to drive motivation, or manipulates our lower values around greed and desire for pleasure to drive motivation.

The storytelling paradigm engine works differently, for it is a *liberating* engine. It works by connecting us to our deep inner desire for comprehension, connection, relationships and self-transcendence.

Introducing Integral Motivation Theory

Only IMT has the power to bring about the global changes we seek today.

While this might seem like a bold claim, it really is the only motivation theory that takes seriously the full gamut of human experience, works with intrinsic values and can be integrated into our storytelling methodologies across the board. In short, this theory has the power to change everything because *it changes everything*, including paradigms, values and all that takes place at the metanarrative level of communications.

Not only is this motivation theory highly practical, it offers huge advantages over previous motivation theories in the following areas:

- this theory integrates cutting-edge insights from neuropsychology into the dual nature of the two hemispheres of the brain
- this theory integrates motivation theory with values theory and with purpose theory, making a more robust and coherent motivation model
- not only does this theory recognise the importance of metanarratives and implicit communication, it uses metanarratives to engage with the higher orientations of this model
- this theory transcends the old paradigms that have kept us trapped in marketing theory and the lower stages of extrinsic motivation
- this theory integrates the rational, emotional and the spiritual aspects of the human psyche

To understand how this motivation theory works we have to accept the following conditions:

Our previous definitions of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation no longer holds weight. Instead, extrinsic motivation should be defined by the motives and values of the left hemisphere of the brain, and intrinsic motivation by the motives and values of the right hemisphere of the brain. This insight not only offers a more robust understanding of how motivation works based on the evidence provided by neuroscience, but it also offers a whole new way of working with intrinsic motivation that was not available to us before.

We can only fully understand motivation by looking at the interaction of the three primitives together. That means our classification of intrinsic motivation must align in some way with intrinsic values. Without this alignment we are susceptible to a distorted model.

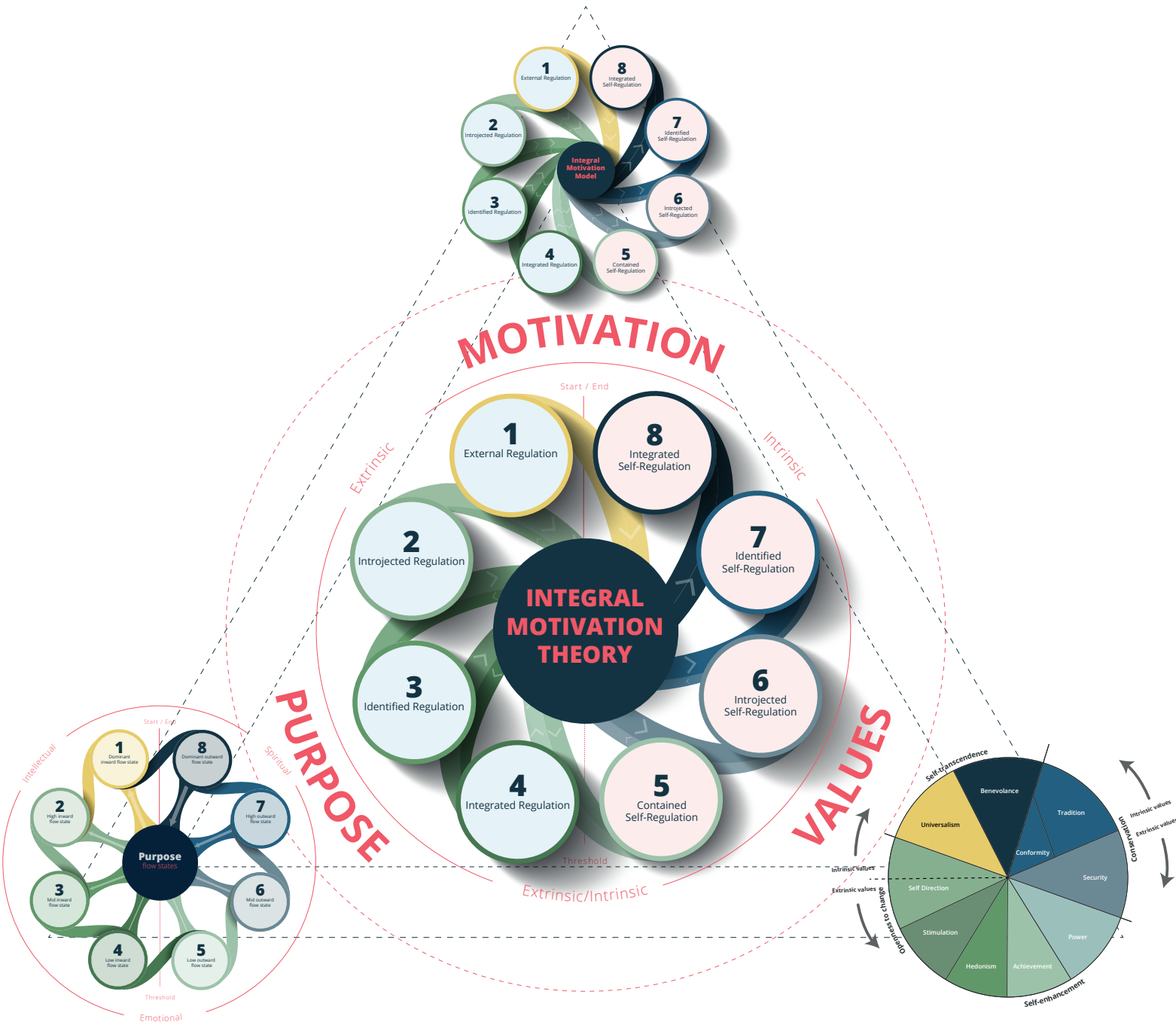
And finally, we must accept the self-transcending and spiritual aspect of the self. If we are hard-line materialists, who see the world only through a left hemisphere perspective, this model will make no sense, because the core elements of this model are outside the sense-making capabilities of the left hemisphere of the brain.

Integral Motivation Theory

A new motivation model for social and environmental transformation



This new motivational theory recognises the interconnected nature between values, motivation and purpose as three primitives that are expressed at the metanarrative level of every communication. This means that there is no such thing as a values/motivation/purpose free communication. With this foundation in place, we can now work with these three primitives in eight different flow states.



By working with motivation through an integral lens we can begin to revise the role of storytelling for social and environmental transformation. This may be challenging to think through at first, but the more we practice using this model, the more it will make sense.

The old storytelling theory

Our previous approach to storytelling was through the marketing paradigm. This is why our campaigns and initiatives were based on propositional thinking, with the

belief that we could tell stories to convince audiences of the need to take action with our respective cause. Stories were seen as a utility to leverage some response, almost always aimed at a call to action. Within this framework our stories tended to follow marketing logic, point towards an extrinsic purpose and almost always rely on some form of extrinsic motivation. While this approach could deliver on short-term outcomes, it was reinforcing the marketing paradigm, engaging extrinsic values and playing to the logic of the left hemisphere of the brain.

This has ultimately resulted in a range of inconsistencies that made no sense, such as trying to extrinsically motivate intrinsic values. Not only does this not work, it has resulted in our collective inability to bring about real and lasting change on some of the biggest issues we face today.

Being blind to metanarratives not only means that our ways of working have engaged the wrong values, resulted in our inability to motivate for real change, but by embracing the logic of the marketing paradigm we have re-engaged and reinforced the very same toxic metanarratives and paradigms that are driving today's problems.

The new storytelling theory

The storytelling paradigm is a shift in our thinking about human motivation, which has huge implications for all aspects of our work. For this shift demands a major rethink about the fundamentals of motivation theory and how to engage the necessary values to drive positive change on social and environmental issues.

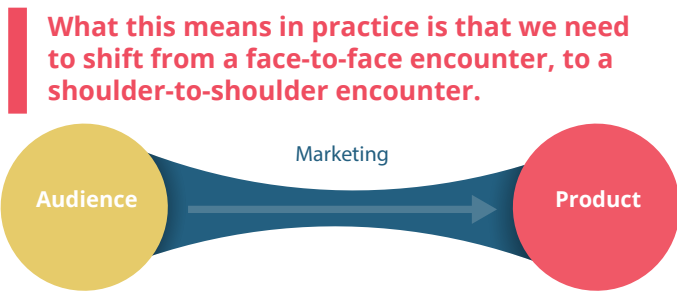
In order to transcend from the marketing paradigm to the storytelling paradigm we first need to embrace how metanarratives, implicit narratives, play a key role in shaping how we see, think, value and relate to the world around us. Understanding this can help us to see that when we make changes at the metanarrative level of *all of our* communications and bring our audiences to the higher flow states, we can awaken the necessary values needed to bring about long-term change.

This essential reorientation task can only be done *through storytelling*, this is why we call it the storytelling paradigm. It is not just about telling stories (which we already do), but to *think like a storyteller*, where we bring our audience *into the story* to reorient them towards an intrinsic purpose.

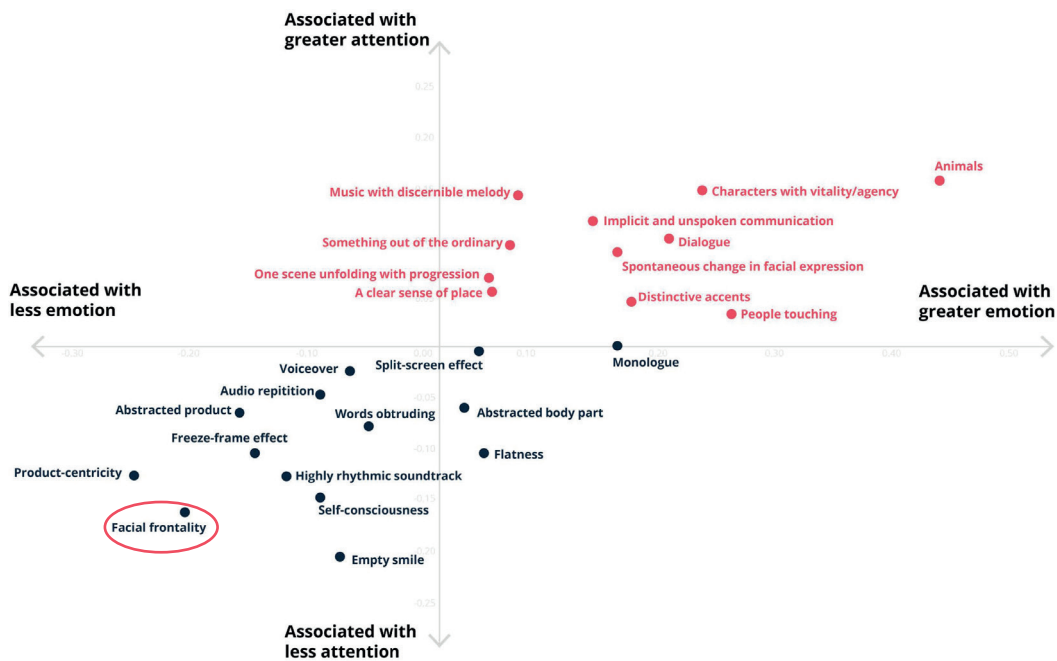
This approach is a radical departure from how we currently utilise stories as part of our wider marketing strategy, where stories are used to communicate information or persuade audiences to act. Stories, within the marketing paradigm are utilised to serve an extrinsic purpose, thereby changing their very nature and ability to motivate for long-term change.

In the storytelling paradigm we do not see stories as a form of persuasive narrative, but rather we see storytelling as moments of encounter that can to *reorient audiences towards their higher self-transcending values*, out of which we can build the motivation for real change.

Shifting from goal-orientated narratives to values-awakening narratives is essential if we want to build the psychological foundations in which real change can emerge.



Marketing is about getting the audience to buy the product. It is a face-to-face encounter. How we get audiences to buy the product is of less concern, as success is measured by sales, not by the values we engaged.



Research taken from Systems 1 Group that shows face-to-face marketing propositions show lower emotional impact than all the characteristics we find in storytelling (found in upper right hand quadrant).⁴⁹

If we think of marketing as a way of confronting our audiences with a proposition, in order to get them to 'buy our product', we can perhaps begin to see how the dynamics of this paradigm creates this face-to-face encounter. You can see this style of encounter visually embodied across most charity communications, where we have people looking directly at the camera, usually in a confrontational manner, in order to create the marketing proposition within the message.

We do this because the paradigm demands it, despite the clear evidence that shows how facial frontality in visual communications leads to lower emotional engagement and is associated with lower attention from audiences (see above).

In a face-to-face dynamic the goal/outcome is the focus, what values emerge out of this encounter are of secondary importance. Following marketing logic, if we use FOMO, a bit of anxiety, or play to our audience's egoic needs it doesn't really matter, the end always justifies the means.

But this lack of understanding of the interior self, and what is taking place at the metanarrative level of all

communications, leaves in its wake a whole raft of issues. When our criteria for 'success' is measured only in the metrics of a goal being achieved, whether it is signups or income generated, then we distort what 'success' really is. Our work for positive change on environmental and social issues can never be reduced to short-term goals or outcomes, but rather on creating the conditions for long-term positive change.

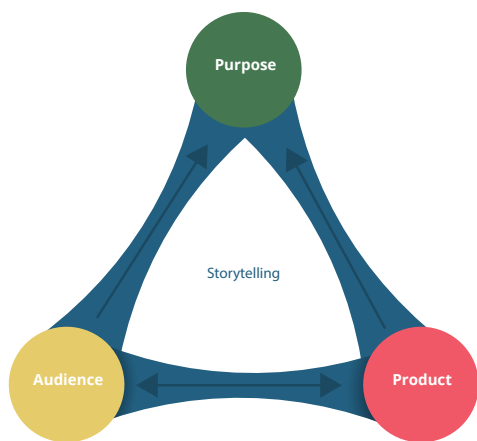
There is no point in raising money for our causes if the way we fundraise reinforces and strengthens the psychological foundations which are driving the problem in the first place.

The marketing paradigm tends to be blind to values, paradigms and the cultural norms that are being reinforced within this all-encompassing way of thinking. Our normalisation of marketing theory and logic is undermining our ability to create real change.

Shifting towards the storytelling paradigm

The storytelling paradigm represents a *shift in our disposition* in how we seek to motivate our audiences into action. This is a shift from a face-to-face encounter - as we have seen in marketing - to a shoulder-to-shoulder encounter, where we bring audiences into the story, where together we seek to awaken to our higher values.

Rather than trying to confront our audiences, to get them to do something, where we point towards an extrinsic purpose, we instead tell stories that show how the 'product' is in service to a greater purpose, a purpose that is self-transcending.



Storytelling is a shoulder-to-shoulder encounter, where the product is taken out of focus, instead we tell stories towards a higher purpose of which the product helps us to achieve. This approach naturally leans towards engaging our higher values.

This storytelling approach is used extensively within the private sector where businesses focus less on their product and more on their purpose, usually a social or environmental one. Rather than point towards the quality or value-for-money of their goods or services, instead they tell stories to show how their products are in service to building a better world.

The irony here is that commercially-focused businesses are shifting more and more towards embracing some of the basic hallmarks that make up the storytelling paradigm, while charities are remaining in the marketing paradigm, stuck narrating the same tired marketing formula of 'show the need, then offer the magic solution'.⁴⁷

We know that this storytelling methodology works from a commercial point of view in terms of increasing sales and increasing long-term audience retention.⁴⁸ The fact that this storytelling methodology works so well reveals something interesting about us.

Despite our political differences, despite our different worldviews, despite our differences of opinions, we do share a common desire for a better world (despite what this may look like on the surface!). Understanding how to leverage this common desire has to take into consideration what is happening at the metanarrative level of everything we do.

Metanarratives reveal the story we tell ourselves. This story is a powerful story, it holds huge sway over us shaping how we think, value and relate to the world. This story is so powerful *because it is implicit*, we act *as if it is true*. When we believe the homo economicus story to be true it helps to explain why we almost exclusively draw all of our motivation orientations from extrinsic motivation. We draw from this motivation orientation, not because it makes logical sense to (because it doesn't), but because we believe that the only way to motivate audiences is to play to our fears, anxieties, ego or greed.

It is beyond our collective imagination to think otherwise.

How can we build a just world, where we overcome inequality and poverty, where we prioritise caring for our planet over profit, where we build an economy that works for all when the voices that advocate for these changes are still promoting the same metanarratives that gave rise to these injustices in the first place?

We might think, or rather rationalise, why we need to build a new economy that is more human-centric rather than capital-centric. But we can't bring these changes into fruition if we still keep reinforcing the underlying values found in the marketing paradigm.

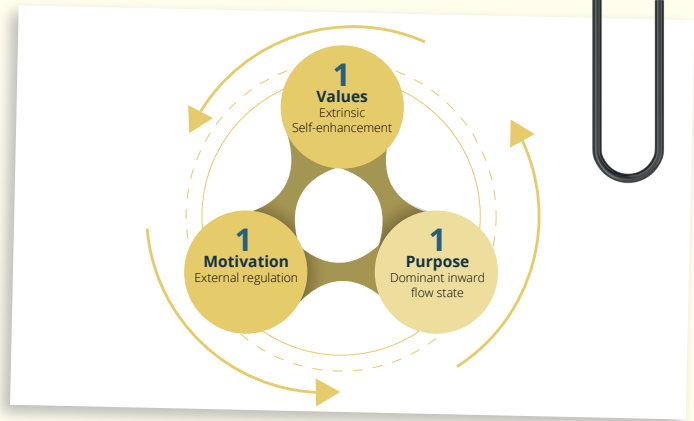
We can't create the motivation for real change if our common story is still the old outdated story, where we unconsciously think and act as if the values and beliefs of the *homo economicus* anthropology are true.

The storytelling paradigm is therefore not about improving our writing skills, or how to tell better stories to capture our audience's attention. Instead, this paradigm offers a different way of thinking about how we regulate values and social behaviours *through narratives*. Not through propositions, but by changing the deep metanarratives that shape how we relate to the world around us.

This is not a new paradigm but one that we have forgotten. Our great, great ancestors knew how to do this, but we no longer do. Due to our cultural shift towards a dominant left-hemisphere view of the world, we have forgotten the implicit, we have forgotten that *the spirit of the stories we tell* are alive, they are what are shaping the world around us. We are not in control, the stories are. Only until we learn how to change these deep stories will we forever be at their mercy.

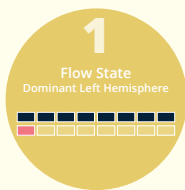
Explainer

Flow state orientations



Metanarratives are shaped by the interaction between the three primitives of values, motivation and purpose. In **IMT** we have classified these different interactions into eight discreet flow states. Each flow state leans towards a different set of values and behaviours. Working with different flow states will take time to learn and recognise.

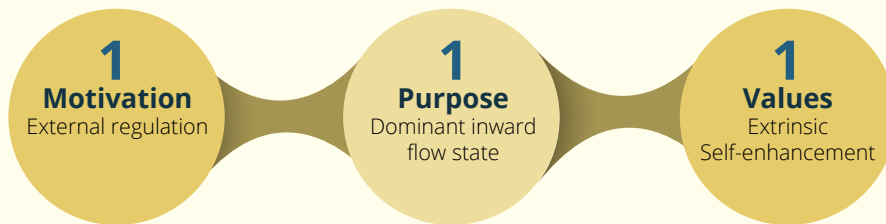
Explaining flow state and orientations



For our example we will look at the easiest orientation to understand, orientation 1. This flow state represents a dominant left hemisphere disposition and outlook. As this hemisphere only deals with explicit information, this orientation is deeply influenced only by external pressures.

This primary flow state starts with the first motivation orientation, *External Regulation*. This 'carrot and stick' orientation is triggered through externalities, whether it is the fear of punishment or a desire to receive an award. These externalities will have to be physical - like money, or the threat of a fine.

Once we have chosen our motivation orientation, we will naturally align to a corresponding purpose, which is stage 1 *dominant inward flow state*.



Technically speaking you don't have to. Theoretically you can have stage 1 motivation linked to a stage 8 purpose. There is nothing stopping us from doing this. The problem is that when we motivation orientations and purpose orientations don't align our narratives feel disjointed. They don't flow well together, therefore they just don't resonate. We

experience a form of dissonance where something will feel odd - we might not be able to put our finger on what it is, but something just doesn't align. This dissonance is hugely problematic from a motivation point of view.

Resonance and dissonance

Resonance and dissonance are extremely hard concepts to qualify and to make any hard and fast rules about. Both are beyond formulaic approaches and tend to reflect the reasoning of the right hemisphere of the brain. Dissonance is when we know something is not right, but we may not be able to articulate why. This dissonance can feel embodied, we can even feel dissonance in the gut. Both resonance and dissonance are powerful motivators.

We can talk our way out of dissonance. We can rationalise and convince ourselves that our initial intuition was wrong, offering a logical and reasonable excuse why we may think that this is. But the feeling of dissonance is the right hemisphere of the brain telling us that something is wrong *from its perspective*. In other words, there is something wrong at the metanarrative level. It tends to indicate that things are *not in the right flow state*. Ignoring dissonance can mean the difference between a campaign's success and a campaign's failure.

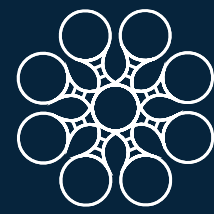
Resonance is a powerful motivator, because motivation increases when everything begins to *feel right*. Harnessing resonance is essential for successful fundraising and campaigning.

Flow states

Learning about the different flow states is essential for creating powerful metanarratives for change. After all, it doesn't matter what changes we make, how clever our campaigns or initiatives are, how colourful and engaging they are, when it comes to working with the higher self-transcending orientations things *have to feel right*. They have to resonate, otherwise the whole motivation model falls apart.

Let's look at a simple example - running a campaign encouraging recycling. If we use stage 1 motivation where we threaten audiences either with a fine or a financial reward to recycle, and our key messages are aligned to saving money, then this message resonates - stage 1 motivation aligned with stage 1 purpose. If we were to run the same campaign, but this time change the purpose towards an intrinsic purpose - where recycling will bring us into a closer relationship with the earth, this message doesn't resonate. Logically it can be true, but it just doesn't feel right as we are using stage 1 motivation (fear/anxiety) aligned to stage 8 purpose (self-transcendence). For our campaigns to have a high impact we need to ensure we get the flow right.





IMT is a tri-model that recognises the integral relationship between the three primitives of values, motivation and purpose. We cannot understand any of the three primitives in isolation, they can only really be understood in relation because they always exist in relation - this is their 'natural' state. When we make any one of these primitives explicit, or when we try to understand them outside of their natural state, we distort them. To fully understand how they work and how they relate to each other we have view them through a contemplative mindset.

Given that most of us have very little training or experience of contemplative approaches, where we can perceive what is implicit, below are some basic models to help us get started. The three models are:

1. Motivation orientations

2. Purpose orientations

3. Values orientations

Motivation orientations

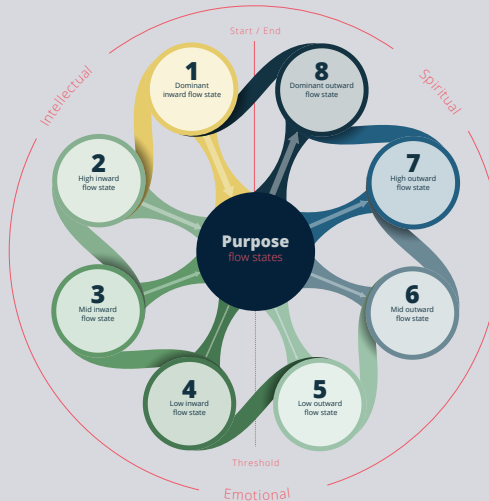


The eight motivation orientations are:

1. **External regulation** - *reward or punishment*
 2. **Introjected regulation** - *internalised reward or punishment, including egoic praise or shame*
 3. **Identified regulation** - *recognise the importance of the goal or objective*
 4. **Integrated regulation** - *behaviour aligns with identity and explicit values*
-
5. **Contained self-regulation** - *behaviour shifts beyond self-enhancement, but still requires elements to externally regulate*
 6. **Introjected self-regulation** - *beyond self-enhancement, still aspects of egoic regulation*
 7. **Identified self-regulation** - *behaviour transcends own needs, seeks self-transformation*
 8. **Integrated self-regulation** - *behaviour actively seeks self-transcendence*

Building on the foundations of Self Determination theory, this motivation model uses the same orientations for extrinsic motivation (as these have been established to work), but rejects SDT's understanding of intrinsic motivation altogether. Instead, intrinsic motivation is aligned with the values ecology of the right hemisphere of the brain, and looks at our inner desire for self-transcendence as our underlying drive for intrinsic motivation. This approach creates a whole range of opportunities to work with intrinsic motivation, using insights from neuropsychology.

Purpose orientations



The eight purpose orientations are:

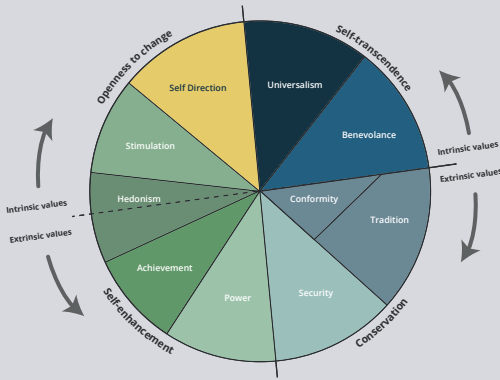
1. **Dominant inward flow state** - *purpose seeks self-enhancement*
 2. **High inward flow state** - *purpose seeks avoidance of suffering*
 3. **Mid inward flow state** - *purpose seeks power and choosing own goals*
 4. **Low inward flow state** - *purpose seeks to achieve goals aligned with explicit values*
-
5. **Low outward flow state** - *purpose driven by love for others*
 6. **Mid outward flow state** - *purpose seeks love in service*
 7. **High outward flow state** - *purpose seeks personal transformation*
 8. **Dominant outward flow state** - *purpose seeks self-transcendence*

The eight purpose orientations are never to be dismissed as insignificant or to be blandly applied to a brand proposition or a vision document. Purpose is a flow state, this flow state is evident in every metanarrative. These flow states, while they may look simple, when they work at the implicit level they play a powerful role in influencing both values and motivation orientations. To work towards each purpose requires a whole range of techniques and methodologies. Purpose transcends goals, objectives or personal ambitions, for purpose aligns us to the deepest aspects of what it means to be human.

Values orientations

The eight values orientations are:

1. **Power** - *self-enhancement, personal focus*
 2. **Achievement** - *self-enhancement, personal focus*
 3. **Hedonism/Stimulation** - *openness to change, personal focus*
 4. **Self Direction** - *openness to change, personal focus*
-
- Threshold
5. **Security** - *conservation, social focus*
 6. **Conformity/Tradition** - *conservation, social focus*
 7. **Benevolence** - *self-transcendence, social focus*
 8. **Universalism** - *self-transcendence, social focus*



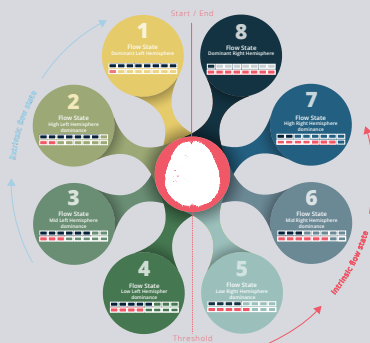
The eight values orientations broadly align with the eight motivation and purpose orientations. They are not meant to be a perfect match, as values are nebulous in nature. There are many influences that shape the values we hold, but we can broadly talk about how different stresses result in different values. If you create high-anxiety, you are more likely to engage the values found in Power and Achievement groups. If we create a desire for connection and personal transformation then we will likely engage with the values found in Benevolence and Universalism groups. Working with values requires a willingness to work with the fuzzy nature of values that don't always fit into discreet categories or follow any certain rules or formula.

Flow orientations

The eight purpose flow orientations simply map out the different power dynamics between the two hemispheres of the brain. Very few of us live out of a totally dominant left hemisphere perspective where we still retain our intelligence but we are unable to process humour, understand metaphors and analogies and tend to see the world as mechanistic, etc.

And by contrast, very few of us live out of a totally dominant right hemisphere of the brain where to the outsider we might seem naive or foolish, but at the same time very wise, able to hold paradox, prefer to talk in mythic language and stories while being able to apprehend deep meaning.

Most of us sit somewhere inbetween these two polar opposites. But these different flow states don't come from the individual, in that we all have different flow states due to our different personalities, but rather the flow states are highly regulated by our cultural norms, values and - more importantly - by the dominant metanarratives that shape our lives.



Metanarratives

As metanarratives are *implicit* we need to use abstract models to help us to make sense of them. Just as we have visual models of what an atom looks like, with a solid ball for a centre with electrons orbiting around it, the reality is that atoms don't look like this in real life. We use his visual model as a *re-presentation of reality* in order to help us understand it.

The models in IMT are not pointing towards what an actual flow state looks like, but rather are conceptual visuals to help us make sense of them. By doing so we can begin to understand the complex dynamics taking place at the metanarrative level of all communications. We can't explicitly 'see' values, purpose or motivation but they are there. We may have to use our imagination to visualise them with our inner mind, but that does not mean that we are imagining them!

These models are designed to help us to make sense of what is happening everywhere. Remember, metanarratives are not restricted to narratives, they can be expressed *through* art, architecture, music, ritual, design and a whole range of different outlets.

Metanarratives represent the spirit of the narrative that we are communicating, and it is this spirit that drives motivation. We can even say that metanarratives represent the spiritual dimension of narratives. This is why, when we move to the higher orientations in the IMT, we see a high convergence with the thinking and insights found in spiritual traditions around human motivation and the higher stages of intrinsic motivation, purpose and values.

Without understanding metanarratives we have no way of accessing intrinsic motivation. To 'trigger' intrinsic motivation means that we need to trigger a response from the right hemisphere of the brain, so our 'trigger' will have to be communicated at the metanarrative level, not at the narrative. For extrinsic motivation we create fear or anxiety, and offer magic solutions, for intrinsic, we tell stories that make our audiences feel and see for themselves, out of which the right values emerge.

Everyone has intrinsic values, they just need to be awakened. The job of a Master Storyteller is to do this very task.

Practical ways forward

Putting IMT and metanarrative work into action



The next question is how do we pull all of this together? How do we work with metanarratives? How can I use IMT theory in practice? What are the practical ways forward here? In this next section we will explore some basic principles on Master Storytelling and practical ways forward to implement these.

Simple steps to start off with

As this book is only a beginner's guide to Master Storytelling what follows are some very basic steps that we can all start to implement throughout our work.

For these next steps there is an assumption that you are working for positive change on social and environmental issues. You may not be in a communications role but that doesn't matter, these next steps are broadly for everyone working for positive change.

First step: look again.

Stop! Take a moment to look again. Look at your own work and start to think about the metanarratives that are implicit in your own communications, whatever they may be - social media posts, strategy papers, campaigns, fundraisers, stories, etc. Reflect on what motivation assumptions you have made. Start to think about the implicit purpose that underpins your thinking. Try to spot some of the more obvious marketing traits like 'magic solutions' or the use of extrinsic motivation in your work (especially if you are fundraising, where a small donation will somehow 'feed the world!').

Second step: pay a different attention

Start to contemplate the deeper narratives that underpin everything you do. This means paying attention to what your right hemisphere of your brain is telling you. Pay particular attention to *what you have assumed*. Remember, all communication is made up of two halves, one is the narrative the other the metanarrative. Take time to 'see' the metanarrative, look beyond the words, try to see what is implicit from a values, motivation or purpose perspective.

Third step: take interiority seriously

Remember to always take interiority seriously. Take values seriously. Take motivation seriously. Try to avoid our common dismissive attitude to all matters of interiority. It might not seem to matter if you use a bit of FOMO to get people to sign up to your latest event, where a little nudge of 'get your tickets now before they sell out'. Technically speaking, it probably doesn't hurt to use a bit of fear in the grand scheme of things.

But think about the bigger picture. If you *only* know how to use FOMO to motivate audiences to do something, if you *only* know how to play to the ego, use fear, create anxiety as your go-to for motivation, then all this accumulates. Using any fear or creating any form of anxiety to drive motivation means that you are creating

a psychological pollutant. It might not be much, but just like a fossil fuelled engine it contributes more and more to a polluted psychological environment. The same can be said for any use of extrinsic motivation.

If we begin to take values pollution just as seriously as we do with air pollution then perhaps we might start to take metanarratives a lot more seriously.

Fourth step: do your own inner work

It is no coincidence that all wisdom traditions, world religions and indigenous traditions all regularly practice some form of interiority - meditation, contemplation, prayer, rituals, rites and reflection. If you want to be able to work with metanarratives, to be able to see that which can't be seen explicitly, then doing some sort of meditation or contemplative practices gives you huge advantage in this area.

Start to re-think the purpose of things like mindfulness. Rather than seeing mindfulness through a utilitarian perspective, as something that helps to alleviate stress, start to see this practice as a training ground where we are learning how to see, or rather how to, as the poet Carol Bialock phrases it, *breathe underwater*.⁵⁰ This is a way of submerging ourselves into the full attention of the right hemisphere of the brain.

Fifth step: open up

To paraphrase Ghandi, be the flow you want to see in the world.

The challenge of working with metanarratives is that they are not abstract academic concepts, but they reflect the deep relational dynamics that are within us all. How we relate to the world, how we value the world, how we see the world is communicated at the metanarrative level of what we do.

To change from the *homo economicus*, left-hemisphere hyper-rationalistic extrinsic flow states means that we must be willing to undergo our own ecological conversion, where we open ourselves up to the transcendent, to connection, to the spiritual aspect of the self. Only then can we ever move to the higher flow orientations. Only then can we 'tell a new story'.

Remember, changing metanarratives doesn't save us from the world problems. In fact changing metanarratives doesn't change anything at all. They simply create the psychological foundation on which real change can be built. Changing metanarratives is not a magic solution, but an essential component that sits alongside everything that we are doing for positive change.

In brief

A summary of key points in this book



While so much has been covered in this *Introduction to Master Storytelling*, in many ways we have hardly touched the sides of this vast subject area. While it may take a while to pool together all the different issues raised in this book, here is a quick reference summary.

Motivation theory

When working towards positive change on social and environmental issues, the key area where we are collectively struggling is in the area of motivation.

This is strange as research tends to show that audiences value caring for our planet and for our global family. What we value and how we act seems to be out of alignment. We call this the values-action gap.

Given motivation is the biggest area of concern, it seems incredible that the last time we developed a motivation theory was back in the early 80's. There has been no major advancement in motivation theory since then.

The old motivation model, while it mapped out the lower stages of motivation very well, it falls apart when applied to the higher stages of motivation - when we work with intrinsic motivation.

Our current definitions of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation are woefully inadequate, as we differentiate them not by their values, but where they draw pleasure from - either from the activity itself (intrinsic) or outside of the activity (extrinsic).

These definitions of motivation have skewed our understanding of intrinsic motivation, where we seem to confuse intrinsic motivation for a pleasure-seeking type of motivation.

Our understanding of motivation theory does not align with values theory, where intrinsic values do not align with our definition of intrinsic motivation.

Our motivation models all tend to be goal-oriented and pleasure seeking by default. Both of which reflect the values of the left hemisphere of the brain.

We are experts at extrinsic motivation, as we can evidence that almost all of our communications align with an extrinsic motivation trigger.

We have lost the knowledge on how to work with intrinsic motivation. If we no longer know how to 'trigger' intrinsic motivation then it makes our work for long-term positive change almost impossible. The result is that we are restricted only to extrinsic motivation which deals with short-term goals.

Every time we use extrinsic motivation it creates a long-term psychological pollutant, whether it is anxiety or fear, or whether we warm our lower values of greed, egoic affirmation, security or power. These tend to warm extrinsic values that undermine our ability to bring about the changes we seek.

Values theory

We have assumed that we are engaging intrinsic values in our work, because we have associated the explicit narrative of our campaigns with the value itself. We have assumed that our campaigns that seek to protect the environment are engaging the value of 'protecting the environment'.

We have conflated explicit values with implicit values, with no real consideration of how they both function in these two entirely different flow states. Explicit values are the values mentioned in corporate statements, they act as guidelines. Implicit values are expressed at the metanarrative level of everything we do, these values have 'energy' and the power to influence behaviours and actions.

Values are not thematic, they do not arise when we talk about them. Instead values emerge from different stress states that take place at the metanarrative level of everything we do. When we use fear and anxiety we warm and engage self-enhancement and security values which are both extrinsic.

Values do not emerge from beliefs or personal convictions of what we think we value. This is why we have the values-action gap, where we say we value protecting the earth, but then our behaviours may show otherwise.

As values are communicated pre-consciously we can show how values are dealt with by the right hemisphere of the brain. This shows how values can be absorbed without us even noticing.

Values are not transmitted consciously but pre-consciously through different flow states. We participate in their flow and we do this without even noticing.

Paradigms drive social values. If we believe in the *homo economicus* paradigm, our metanarratives will reflect the thinking of these paradigms where we assume that to motivate audiences we will need to play to their self-enhancing values of power, pleasure and utility. When we all act as if the *homo economicus* paradigm is true we express this belief at the metanarrative level of our communications. Everything that follows will therefore be directed towards a form of extrinsic motivation, which in turn warms and engages extrinsic values.

There is no values-action gap. Our actions perfectly reflect the values of the dominant metanarratives that shape our lives. When we ignore metanarratives we ignore the huge role metanarratives play in regulating the very values that are undermining our ability to effect real and lasting change.

The two hemispheres of the brain

Using insights from the work of Dr Iain McGilchrist, we now know that the two hemispheres of the brain think independently and attend differently to the same information. We can now say with confidence that the left hemisphere deals with the explicit (narrative) and the right hemisphere deals with the implicit (metanarrative).

This insight puts metanarratives back on the map as a major driving force that can help us to explain the psychological drivers behind our current crisis. No longer do we view metanarratives as grand narratives that we may once have held in common (i.e. religious, political narratives), but that they are always present and always communicated implicitly.

Because we have moved our attention more towards the thinking of the left hemisphere of the brain, we no longer see what is implicit everywhere. So we no longer can see values, purpose, metanarratives, paradigms or all aspects that drive how we think, value and relate to the world around us.

What is implicitly communicated is not insignificant by any means of the imagination. Values, motivation and purpose - the very things that shape social norms and our behaviours - are all communicated at the metanarrative level of *every communication*.

The left hemisphere has a different values ecology to the right hemisphere. It is not correct to say that the left hemisphere holds extrinsic values and the right intrinsic values, but rather that the left hemisphere will manipulate everything to align with its values ecology of power, pleasure and security. So environmental 'solutions', according to the left hemisphere, will almost always be technical and driven towards an extrinsic purpose (usually money-centric - how to grow a green economy). It will not consider storytelling, values, motivation, the spiritual or any aspect that falls outside its periphery of attention.

The right hemisphere of the brain thinks differently. It is much more aligned with intuition, imagination and feelings. While all of these different ways of knowing are looked upon with great suspicion in our Cartesian culture, these different ways of knowing are not inferior, they hold key insights into human motivation that are beyond the grasp of left hemisphere attention.

As our culture moves more and more towards a dominant left hemisphere view of the world, we can begin to see how this shift is having negative effects in our world. A dominant left hemisphere may seem to be more intelligent (rational), but it prefers to manipulate the world around it according to its own logic. While this relationship between a dominant left hemisphere and our current culture takes a while to explain, we can broadly say that there is a strong link between the ecological crisis we are in today and our collective shift towards a dominant left hemisphere perspective.

Re-balancing the hemispheres means changing our attention to how we see the world. This simple act can help us to see better, to see what is happening at the metanarrative level of everything we do.

Key points

We need to pay attention to what is implicit in everything we do, with special attention to what motivation orientations we are using throughout our work, what purpose we are aligning everything towards, and to take a deep look at the underlying values that are implicitly engaged through our work. If we don't pay attention to what is happening at the metanarrative level we risk reinforcing toxic paradigms and engaging the wrong values.

By changing the metanarrative we can do extraordinary things. We can change cultural norms, escape from paradigm traps, engage values more authentically and drive deep change. All of this is within our grasp if we are willing to learn how to work with the right hemisphere of the brain and apply some of these insights into our current ways of motivating.

We will protect and defend old paradigms, even the most absurd ones. This is why it is important to adopt a 'beginner's mind' in this work, where we remain open to thinking differently about our ways of engaging and motivating audiences into positive change.

As we have two hemispheres that think independently we can hold onto two contradictory beliefs at the same time. We may academically disagree with the *homo economicus* characterisation, giving lots of well-reasoned arguments why humans are not rational and self-serving individuals. But at the same time we will run campaigns, fundraisers and engage in a range of motivation orientations that act as if the *homo economicus* characterisation is true - where we seek to motivate audiences by playing to their lower values, or show how signing up to a campaign can increase their utility (i.e. pleasure, power, egoic validation).

Big change comes through big changes. If we are seeking to bring about big changes on social and environmental issues, and yet we have made almost no change at the metanarrative level of everything we do, then it is highly unlikely that our ambitions for change will ever be met. If we are still using marketing theory to drive our campaigns, don't expect the necessary cultural and social changes to suddenly appear if we are still reinforcing the old culture.

The ultimate point of a Master Storyteller is really to help facilitate a paradigm shift. This shift in paradigm is already under way with different thinkers who are looking more towards the spiritual dimension of the self and working with what is implicit.⁵¹ But this shift needs all of us, all contributing in any way that we can.

Marketing is guided by the mantra of 'give the people what they want'. This means that everything we do is to be shaped by seeking what our audience's desires. Under this mindset it is no wonder that we always play to the lower values or use basic marketing principles. Storytelling's mantra is 'give the people what they need'. To fulfil this mandate we need to know what are our audience's deepest needs are, and how we can shift our way of working to fulfil their needs towards connection, meaning and purpose. This is a major shift in thinking.

Next steps

Becoming a Master Storyteller



If you are ready for the next step and to start to put Master Storytelling into practice, we have a range of resources to help you on your journey.

Join our specialist Master Storytelling training programme

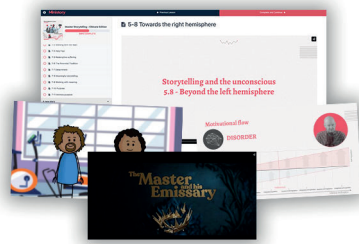
Full training programme to help you develop practical skills in Master Storytelling techniques and how to integrate IMT into your work

• **Online self-directed training** videos that explain the theory in more detail • **Workshops** covering different themes and offering more practical guidance • **Storytelling Circle** support group, an bi-monthly online meeting space to share and support each other in their work • **Toolkit** containing 6 tools that can be used in workshops, meetings or as tools to help strengthen strategies and motivational thinking



1 Learning the theory

Online self-directed training



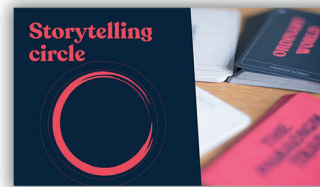
2 Specialist workshops

Practical applications



3 Storytelling circle

Bi-monthly support



4 Master Storytelling Toolkit

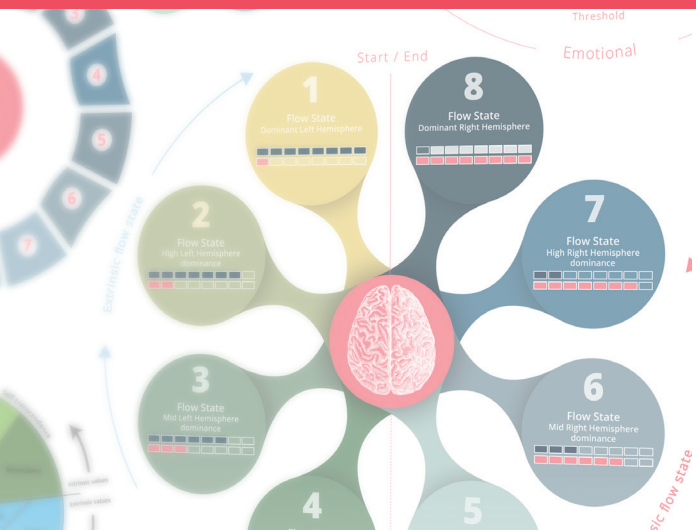


Over 17hrs of self-directed learning modules covering all the elements in this book in more detail, using animations and visual storytelling to help embed the theory.

As part of the training programme you will have free access to a range of workshops on specialist subjects relating to Master Storytelling and IMT.

This bi-monthly support group is designed to support each other on practical ways to implement insights taken from Master Storytelling theory.

This card pack is made up of 6 core tools to help you build powerful metanarratives for social and environmental transformation.



Putting theory into practice

This training offers both theory and practical insights on how to work with metanarratives and how to integrate insights from IMT into your work.

This training is designed especially for anyone working for positive change on social or environmental issues. The insights from this training can be applied almost to any context in which you are seeking to influence change.

It is ideal for leadership development, strengthening communications strategies, developing richer engagement strategies on social media and traditional media outlets, fundraising, campaigning, volunteer recruitment and management, and so much more.

Digital only training programme

- Access to 8 modules of online training
- Access to training materials and handouts

Full training programme

- Access to 8 modules of online training
- Access to 3 full follow-up practical workshops
- Master Storytelling Toolkit
- Access to the Storytelling Circle

DISCOUNTS AVAILABLE

ministry.co.uk/master-storytelling

Master Storytelling toolkit



Specialist toolkit designed to accompany the full Master Storytelling training programme. This includes:

1. Values toolkit
2. Re-ordering toolkit
3. Paradigm trap toolkit
4. Hero's journey toolkit
5. Flow state toolkit
6. Motivation orientations



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Endnotes

- 1 The common misconception around storytelling seems to stem from what is broadly referred to as 'the science of storytelling.' This misconception comes from the observation that stories can have an effect on the neurochemicals of the brain. The logic that follows is if we use stories to engage these chemicals we can drive emotion and long-term behaviour change, especially if we engage the 'love' chemical oxytocin. This thinking is fraught with many problems. Not only is this not true, but utilising stories as a means to emotionally engage our audiences means that we end up getting caught in the marketing paradigm trap. See page 29 for more details.
- 2 See O'Brien, Kieran - Are our motivation theories fit for purpose in light of today's problems?, https://medium.com/@kieran_Ministry/are-our-motivation-theories-fit-for-purpose-in-light-of-todays-problems-9889951b07f7
- 3 Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi is the foundational thinker behind the concept of flow, outlined in his book *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* (1990)
- 4 Francis. (2015). *Laudato si'*: Encyclical letter. Vatican Press, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html
- 5 For further reading on the metacrisis, see Jonathan Rowson, <https://jonathanrowson.substack.com/p/the-antidebate-and-the-metacrisis>, or watch Daniel Schmachtenberger on <https://youtu.be/4kBoLVooqVY>
- 6 See <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/climate-deniers-of-the-118th-congress>
- 7 See <https://news.umich.edu/nearly-15-of-americans-deny-climate-change-is-real-ai-study-finds/>
- 8 Resolution 12, as per insert, was passed at Alberta's United Conservative Party AGM on 2nd Nov, 2024, <https://www.desmog.com/2024/11/02/alberta-conservatives-pass-climate-denial-resolution-12-to-celebrate-co2-pollution/>.
- 9 The *homo economicus* term was first proposed by John Stuart Mill in the 19th century: Mill, John Stuart. *The Basic Writings of John Stuart Mill*. 2002 Modern Library pbk. ed. New York, Modern Library, 2002.
- 10 Iain McGilchrist, *The Matter with Things*, London, Perspectiva Press, 2021, or you can watch his videos and talk available for free on <https://channelmcgilchrist.com/>
- 11 For more information and a summary of McGilchrist's work, watch our video *Putting hemispheric lateralisation theory into practice* here: <https://youtu.be/kbsDkmKfZw8>
- 12 The term 'values ecology' is one that I have used instead of Iain McGilchrist's preferred term of the hemisphere's *raison d'être*, (the 'reason to be'). The reasoning behind this term is to differentiate from universal values (as we cover on page 33) and the values ecology which is the valuing system found within each hemisphere of the brain. These two ecologies represent the deep drive for power/manipulation as found in the left hemisphere, or the deeper drive for comprehension/self-transcendence of the right hemisphere. These deep drives play an incredible role in shaping how we think, relate and value the world around us. The closer we work with values the more we can begin to see how the different values ecologies of the two hemispheres act almost like a living thing, almost a life force that plays out in the real world. When we shift from an understanding of our unconscious mind as a repository for our deep desires or deep inner will towards an understanding of our unconscious mind more as the repository of a life force, that shapes how we see, think, value and relate to the world, only then can we really begin to understand human motivation and behaviour.
- 13 Our current understanding of thinking splits everything into an over-simplification of conscious thought and unconscious thought. This crude categorisation tends to associate anything that is not explicit as unconscious or pre-conscious. I would argue that values, motivation and purpose do not appear to us unconsciously, but we don't see them because *we are unconscious to their presence*. When we exercise our right hemisphere's ability to 'see' the implicit, we can begin to see all that was previously hidden to us - including values, motivation and purpose. This seeing is called values-ception, which is an important skill set to develop when we work more and more with metanarratives and all aspects of implicit communications.
- 14 Lyotard, Jean-Francois. 1984. *The Postmodern Condition*.
- 15 The full quote of Rene Descartes was 'I doubt, therefore I think, therefore I am'. This almost creates a formula that gets rid of right hemisphere thinking. The idea is that if we want to understand what is true, first we have to doubt accepted beliefs only until they can be verified through rational thinking. The result of this has been disastrous, for it seems to be true, and yet it puts us at the mercy of the values and logic of the left hemisphere of the brain. The result has been the growth of hyper-rationalism and materialism, which may have led to great scientific breakthroughs, but we are at a loss now of what is meaning, what is purpose and a complete loss of the spiritual dimension of the self.
- 16 McGilchrist, Iain. *The Master and His Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World*, 2019. McGilchrist argues that the right hemisphere is more reliable and insightful than the left, and that without it, the world would be less meaningful.
- 17 *ibid.* pg 332
- 18 *ibid.* pg 305
- 19 The explosion of mindfulness and mindfulness practices is a good example of this. Despite mindfulness practices can be traced back thousands of years to ancient eastern and Buddhist philosophy, it was only taken seriously in the West when Jon Kabut-Zinn used mindfulness in part of his work on chronic pain, and formalised mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR). Once the science was shown to work, only then was it taken seriously within Western cultures.
- 20 "Technology tends to absorb everything into its ironclad logic, and those who are surrounded with technology "know full well that it moves forward in the final analysis neither for profit nor for the well-being of the human race", that "in the most radical sense of the term power is its motive - a Lordship over all". As a result, "man seizes hold of the naked elements of both nature and human nature". Our capacity to make decisions, a more genuine freedom and the space for each one's alternative creativity are diminished." *108, Laudato Si', On Care for our Common Home*, Pope Francis, 2015 - https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html
- 21 See Sachs, Jonah: *Winning the Story Wars, Why Those Who Tell - And Live - The Best Stories Will Rule the Future*, 2012
- 22 Anxiety in this context is not the same as medical definition of anxiety, which is Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD), which is a feeling of fear or dread. Within this context anxiety can be seen as fear of missing out (FOMO), that fear that we don't have enough, a feeling that what you do have is not good enough, a sense that you will be happier elsewhere, etc.
- 23 Sachs, 2012
- 24 This chart offers an important insight into motivation orientations across the climate movement. This chart comes with some major caveats. It is based on a desktop search of climate communications. The results have not been ratified by any formal institution, the methodologies to map them are based on establishing the motivation 'trigger' in a communication. Any researchers who are interested, I would welcome a proper research piece carried out to establish this trend in more detail using a more robust analysis.
- 25 The answers are: 1 = Coca-Cola, 2 = WWF, 3 = Kellogg's, 4 = Exxon-Mobil, 5 = Oxfam International. Read full article here: https://open.substack.com/pub/valuesnarrativesculture/p/the-big-thing-people-miss-when-thinking?r=46wgo5&utm_campaign=post&utm_medium=web&showWelcomeOnShare=true
- 26 The reason why asking audiences to self-select which values they view as important has been thoroughly researched by [the Common Cause Foundation](https://www.commoncausefoundation.org/). Throughout different workshops they have evidenced that when we make values explicit, and ask audiences to choose which values are most important to creating a better world, participants will almost universally select intrinsic values as important, regardless of different cultural backgrounds or political perspectives. This begs the question why do we all self-select intrinsic values, and yet our behaviours may reveal a different set of value-driven priorities? The answer is simple - in the abstract, who doesn't want world peace, social justice and to care for the environment? Of course we will all self-select these values as important if asked. That's not the problem we are facing today, that people don't prioritise certain values. The problem is that our collective behaviour is shaped by values that are implicitly communicated. The reason why this is, comes down to the the right hemisphere aligning behaviour with the values it sees. If the values-brain sees extrinsic values everywhere, that is the values it will prioritise.
- 27 This point is part of bigger rethink around prioritisation around social and environmental solutions. To put it simply, it doesn't matter if we develop a new economic model based on doughnut economics, nor create a breakthrough in home insulation if we cannot create the motivation for audiences to engage with these solutions. Motivation is key here, especially on global political concerns, this is why a better understanding of values, how they work and how to engage intrinsic values is the area where we desperately need to be focussing our immediate attention. On this foundational piece of work everything else lies.
- 28 See McGilchrist, Iain. *The Master and His Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World*, 2019, or watch our animation explainer here: <https://youtu.be/7BsYALdijw>
- 29 Self Determination Theory is the dominant motivation theory, as devised by Deci and Ryan, which explores the different stages of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation types. You can read more here: <https://selfdeterminationtheory.org/>
- 30 See Jess Crombie, *Rethink, Reframe, Redefine - Co-creating and storytelling*, 2024. <https://www.jesscrombieconsultancy.com/research> While this research is welcome and very much overdue, there are some critical problems with Crombie's approach. The idea that charities have almost all the power in the development of narratives, and that we should move towards co-creating narratives alongside the people we are trying to help is clearly a welcome insight and much needed move. But the research rapidly moves into the technicalities of how to co-create a story without any robust understanding of the nature of metanarratives, values, purpose, motivation theory and the traps of the marketing paradigm (and how co-created narratives can still deploy the same marketing methodologies that we are trying to move away from). The result is that we risk shifting the balance of power in narrative creation, but we end up with weaker fundraising propositions where we create positive stories with no real motivation drive to engage or to give.
- 31 See O'Brien, Kieran. *Are our motivation theories fit for purpose in light of today's problems?*, https://medium.com/@kieran_Ministry/are-our-motivation-theories-fit-for-purpose-in-light-of-todays-problems-9889951b07f7
- 32 Here is a classic example of the integral nature of values, motivation and purpose, and why we can't look at motivation without understanding purpose, and we can't understand values without understanding motivation - the three are inextricably linked. Without this understanding we fall into the obvious trap of developing a motivation model that aligns with an extrinsic

purpose (pleasure or goal/outcome). The result is that we will then create a model that only pays attention to goals or the seeking of pleasure, which reflects what has happened with the Self Determination Theory model and all the derivative motivation models that takes SDT as its foundation.

33 Deci and Ryan, Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations: Classic definitions and New Directions, 2000. https://www.selfdeterminationtheory.org/SDT/documents/2000_RyanDeci_IntExtDefs.pdf.

34 Other motivation models based on SDT include, Cognitive Evaluation Theory (CET), Organismic Integration Theory (OIT), Goal Contents Theory (GCT), Basic Psychological Needs Theory (BPNT), Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model, Self-Concordance Model, Achievement Goal Theory (AGT), Expectancy-Value Theory (EVT), Motivational Interviewing (MI), Self-Regulation Theories, Transformational Leadership Theory, Positive Psychology Frameworks, Gamification and Motivation Design Theories to name but a few! It cannot be overstated enough just how influential this theory is on modern psychology and almost all of our current attempts to understand motivational theory.

35 Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). *Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behavior*. New York, NY: Plenum

36 For a fuller description of this read McGilchrist, Iain. (2021) *The matter with things: Our brains, our delusions and the unmaking of the world*: London, Perspectiva Press. Iain's previous work as a lecturer in English literature, philosophy and psychology offered invaluable insights into how the brain works, which was missed by almost all scientists and neuroscientist specialists. By offering insights from the humanities we now have a much more profound understanding into the nature of the two hemispheres of the brain and how we actually think. McGilchrist goes into much more detail on the limits of the scientific methodology where he explores Science and Truth, pgs 407-507.

37 Questioning science seems to be a red line in our culture. We tend to view the scientific method as the only way to truth. This is highly problematic for a number of reasons, especially when we begin to understand the bias of the left hemisphere to distort everything through its way of seeing. If this feels like a step too far, then I encourage you to read an article by leading scientists who try to grapple with the issues we are working on in this book. See Metz, Joseph *World Scientists' warning: The behavioural crisis driving ecological overshoot* (2023) <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/00368504231201372> This paper offers a great account of the negative influence of marketing, as well as a range of other social influences that drive the behavioural crisis. But then concludes that we need to turn to marketing to solve this, offering an example of framing ("advertising a yoghurt as 98% Fat Free is much more compelling than promoting the same product as containing only 2% milk-fat") as a way to deal with the behavioural crisis. Not only is this proposed solution woefully inadequate to the problems we see today, and not only does this 'solution' further embed the logic and thinking of the marketing paradigm, but to have a whole paper on behaviour change and never mention *any* of the primitives of values, motivation or purpose, nor mention storytelling or metanarratives shows an incredible blind-spot. Given this paper was compiled in collaboration with leading scientists around the world begins to reveal the limits of science in being able to answer even the most basic questions around motivation and behaviour change.

38 The answers are 1. Office Depot, 2. Coca Cola, 3. Footlocker, 4. Kellogg, 5. Pfizer, 6. Stanley Black and Decker, 7. Starbucks.

39 To see an example of a dominant left hemisphere resource, see *Stories for a sustainable future*, by European Footprints. <https://worldlargestlesson.globalgoals.org/resource/whatdoyoucareabout-stories-for-a-sustainable-future/> Despite its title and the introduction promising different stories, this book does not contain a single story, or anything that closely represents or could be classified as a story. It represents a series of case studies. Each one written in an academic and within an objective disposition. Each one concludes with an extrinsic proposition, whether it is "We need to act now" (pg 10, 11, 27) or "Pick up litter, it's fun!" (pg 16), or playing to a form of duty as a call to action. This book contains a series of propositions by different young people of what they do and what we should do. As it contains no stories, anything that represents a story, it is extremely hard to read as there is no depth, vitality, emotional engagement or intrinsic purpose to it. It is a perfect reflection of how the left hemisphere likes to communicate.

40 The clearest example of transcending narratives can be found in the Sermon on the Mount within Christian scripture (Matt 5-7). This is referred to as the summit of Jesus' teaching where all self-transcending values of peace, justice, care for the earth are all engaged through suffering - 'happy are those who are persecuted...', 'happy are those who mourn...', 'happy are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness...' First the descent, then the ascent, '...for theirs is the kingdom of God', '... for they will be comforted', '...for they will be filled'. A reminder that to engage intrinsic values we need to descend (enter into suffering with) and not to ascend (aspirational statements of what we ought to do). This thinking is so counter-logical it is pretty much ignored, even within the Christian tradition!

41 Macy, Joanna; Brown, Molly (2014). *Coming back to Life* : the updated guide to the work that reconnects

42 There are of course caveats and nuances to this statement. But broadly speaking, using any form of extrinsic motivational triggers, as found in orientations 1-4, requires us to lean towards self-enhancement and self-direction values rather than self-transcendent. As we move up the motivation continuum this distinction becomes somewhat blurred - but for the sake of simplicity, the rule of thumb is that intrinsic values emerge out of engagement with intrinsic motivation strategies, not extrinsic. Further details on this nuance is available via our Master Storytelling training programme.

43 See Wilber, Ken. (2007) *The integral vision*: Shambhala Publications Inc

44 Corporate values and implicit values don't always align. Corporate values tend to offer guidelines on how to act towards a purpose, implicit values tend to represent the paradigms the organisation holds to be true. So it is possible for an organisation to declare *dignity* as one of their core corporate values, while at the same time showing images of people living in poverty, looking down the lens of a camera, framed as helpless victims, where their images are used in a very undignified way to create a fundraising proposition. Or you can have a corporate value of *sustainability* while using marketing methodologies and promoting marketing values throughout all communications, where we do the classic show the need and offer magic solutions. The most important values are the ones that we implicitly communicate, for they are the ones that play out in the real world, not the ones declared within corporate statements.

45 This theme is taken up in length in McGilchrist's *The Matter with Things*, (see above).

46 If you want a great example of this type of storytelling in action simply re-read *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*. A perfect example of reorientating your audience towards pro-social behaviour, without being preachy or using any form of extrinsic motivation.

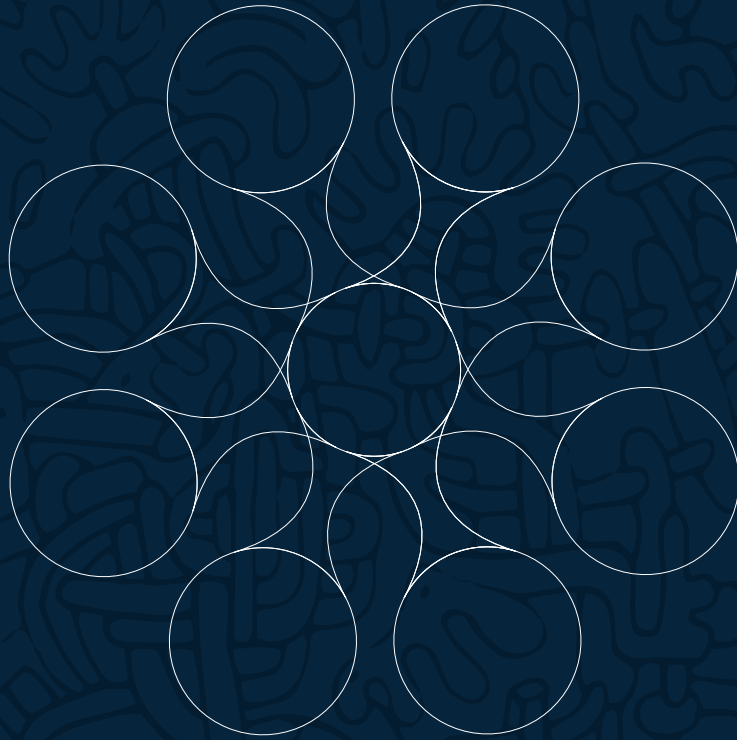
47 There are reasons why commercially focussed businesses find it easier to move towards the storytelling paradigm then it is for charities and organisations working for positive change. It comes down to the fact that commercial enterprises only have to simply flash their environmental or social credentials to create this purpose driven flow state, where their product is in service to a purpose. Charities, for example, who are already working for a social or environmental change have to show how their product (social or environmental change) is in service to something that transcends this cause. This requires more specialism and insights on how to work with intrinsic purpose. How to do this is taken up in our full training programme - Master Storytelling Training: <https://ministry.co.uk/master-storytelling/>

48 Evidence of purpose-driven companies as commercially successful can be found in a range of reports, including Edelman Trust Barometer, see: <https://www.edelman.com/trust/2019-trust-barometer>, Accenture's research into purpose-led businesses, see: <https://www.accenture.com/us-en/insights/strategy/brand-purpose>, PurposeCraft's research: <https://purposecraft.co.uk/blog/the-business-case-for-company-purpose>

49 See Wood, Orlando. (2021) *Look out*: IPA or watch his talk here: <https://youtu.be/Gw1opNk0fn4>

50 Breathing Underwater by Carol Bialock, <https://lacadepaz.com/poetry/breathing-underwater/>

51 See thinkers like Rupert Sheldrake, Daniel Schmachtenberger, Ken Wilbur, Bernardo Kastrup, John Vervaeke, plus many more.



A note to readers

Thank you for taking the time to read through *A Beginner's Guide to Master Storytelling*. This book is the result of many years of personal research and professional experience of working alongside clients in workshops, resource development, training and in different consultancy roles. All the research that delivered these insights have been delivered without the support of any external funding.

If you found this content helpful or thought-provoking, please consider sharing this book with others who might benefit from these ideas, or spark conversations about **#metanarratives** and **#MasterStorytelling** within your networks. If you're interested in collaborating on any of the topics discussed, please get in touch at hello@ministry.co.uk.

We also invite you to support our work by joining our Master Storytelling training program, which empowers a new generation of storytellers with the insights needed to create real, lasting change on social and environmental issues. Given our current state of global affairs, this work is more urgently needed now than ever before.