



The Three Narratives, by Joanna Macy

When we come together for this work, at the outset we discern three stories or versions of reality that are shaping our world so that we can see them more clearly and choose which one we want to get behind. The first narrative we identify is “Business as Usual,” by which we mean the growth economy, or global corporate capitalism. We hear this marching order from virtually every voice in government, publicly traded corporations, the military, and corporate-controlled media.

The second is called “The Great Unraveling”: an ongoing collapse of living structures. This is what happens when ecological, biological, and social systems are commodified through an industrial growth society or “business as usual” frame. I like the term “unraveling,” because systems don’t just fall over dead, they fray, progressively losing their coherence, integrity, and memory.

The third story is the central adventure of our time: the transition to a life-sustaining society. The magnitude and scope of this transition—which is well underway when we know where to look—is comparable to the agricultural revolution some ten thousand years ago and the industrial revolution a few centuries back. Contemporary social thinkers have various names for it, such as the ecological or sustainability revolution; in the *Work That Reconnects* we call it the Great Turning.

Simply put, our aim with this process of naming and deep recognition of what is happening to our world is to survive the first two stories and to keep bringing more and more people and resources into the third story. Through this work, we can choose to align with business as usual, the unraveling of living systems, or the creation of a life-sustaining society.