

# Eucalyptus rubida

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## The Universe is a Storyteller – Looking back/Looking in

If you understood the title of this essay, then there is really no need to read on. You have understood.

How is 'looking back' to be understood as 'looking in'. This understanding for me came when I first read the words 'When you go out, you are really going in'. For someone who has spent a significant part of his free time hiking in the wilderness regions of Tasmania, and writing of my experiences, this did not take a long time for me to see its depths. I would imagine others who read this would concur.

Our own story is not only told by a scientific exposition of the universe story, but the very telling of the story tells us about who we are right now. Hence Thomas Berry says "We bear the universe in our beings as the universe bears us in its being. The two have a total presence to each other and to that deeper mystery out of which both the universe and ourselves have emerged."

Our age is the first one to have the universe explained to us in such intimate detail. When you have experienced a sensitive account of our origin and transformations over time the experience is sometimes overwhelming as it enters our conscious awareness. But we already carry within us this story, and it is inscribed in our very constitution and deepest self. It is like a coming home, and it opens up the door to a new awareness of our own insignificance but at the same time our magnificence.

T S Eliot knew this:

*We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.  
Through the unknown, unremembered gate  
When the last of earth left to discover  
Is that which was the beginning;*

The fruit of the flower (pittosporum) shown on this page I found hiding in the Toolangi State Forest. It's shy beauty is astounding. In dozens of trips to the forest this was the very first time it revealed itself to me. Yet we

track our extreme origins back to the same creativities, the same spontaneities, maybe 150 million years ago when this species emerged, plants and animals even further back, possibly around 3 billion years ago. Everything, animal, vegetable or mineral recycles the same atoms and molecule continuously. Water in this plant may have been in my body or another animal's body during the past twelve months. We both display beauty, allurements, responsiveness.



We can both tell our respective stories, the one by a colourful asymmetrical radiance of being, the other by a creative and reflective integration of this more-than-human-world around us. Together, in this interaction, we make more complete the universe around us. What a profound meditation we are offered!

Another gateway into these spontaneities mentioned above is offered us in the writings of people like Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Henri Bergson, Brian Swimme and Sri Aurobindo. Teilhard refers to 'the within' that, in his estimation resides in all of matter, whether it comprises animal

vegetable or mineral. Brian Swimme tells us that the galaxy and the supernova exhibit an innate 'wisdom' that allows them to become transformed, and that this wisdom still lives in us.

Henri Bergson, in speaking about evolution speaks of an 'elan vital' that he sees as the guiding factor in the advance of life.

Of all the writers and thinkers I have already mentioned, I think that the Indian and vedantic spiritual man Sri Aurobindo speaks the most eloquently. He is not a cosmologist, philosopher or scientist like the rest. His wisdom comes from the ancient traditions of the Upanishads and the Vedas. These traditions by their very antiquity speak to the presence of a sublime wisdom accompanying the development of the human story.

Sri Aurobindo represents a contemporary interpretation of this wisdom in the terms of his tradition. As I see his ideas expressed particularly in his major work *The Life Divine*, he sees the historic human endeavour and the place of religion, as revealing the divine spark (I have to use my own metaphor here in the interests of some simplification, for which I apologise) which however imperfectly, emerges into our cultural and individual consciousness.

The spiritual path for him is to be guided by this divine presence within, and to allow it to come to fruition, as we gradually recognise the dignity of our humanity.

*In the centre of the castle of Brahman, our own body, there is a small shrine in the form of a lotus flower, and within can be found a small space. We should find who dwells there, and we should want to know that person.*

*The little space within the heart is as great as this vast universe. The heavens and earth are there, and the sun and the moon, and the stars; fire and lightning and winds are there, and all that now is, and all that is now: for the whole universe is in him and he dwells within our heart.*

*Chandogya Upanishad*

Trevor Parton