

Meaning as Transmission

“Meaning does not reside in the self.
It lives in the intergenerational
transmission of responsibility.”

A humanistic-anthropological exploration drawing
on Anangu law as articulated by Bob Randall.



Meaning Loss Without Panic

Meaning loss is not a psychological crisis of belief. It is “orphaning”—the condition of relational severance. Meaning withdraws when the structures that sustain belonging across time erode.

“I often sense the deep loneliness of modern society.”

— Bob Randall, Kanyini, With Love

“The void of ‘no family’ is already felt by many.”

— Songman



The Displacement into the Self

“The ‘mineness’ cut the ‘oneness’.” — Bob Randall, Songman

“Whenever I hear someone say, ‘My way is the best,’ it seems so limiting to me.”

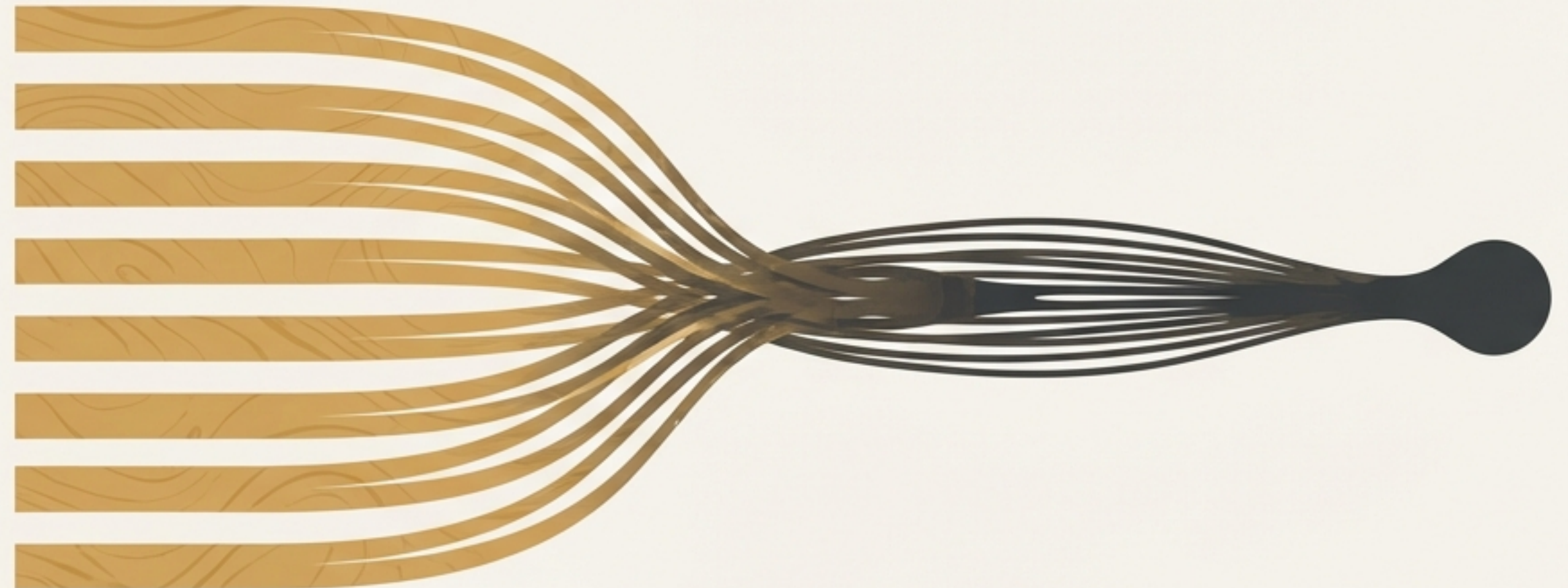
FROM:

A shared, continuous,
inherited world.

TO:

A singular position to be claimed,
defended, or optimized.

Individualism is not freedom; it is a
structural source of fragmentation.
Meaning cannot structurally sustain
itself when relocated to the scale of a
single, isolated life.



Continuity as the Human Condition

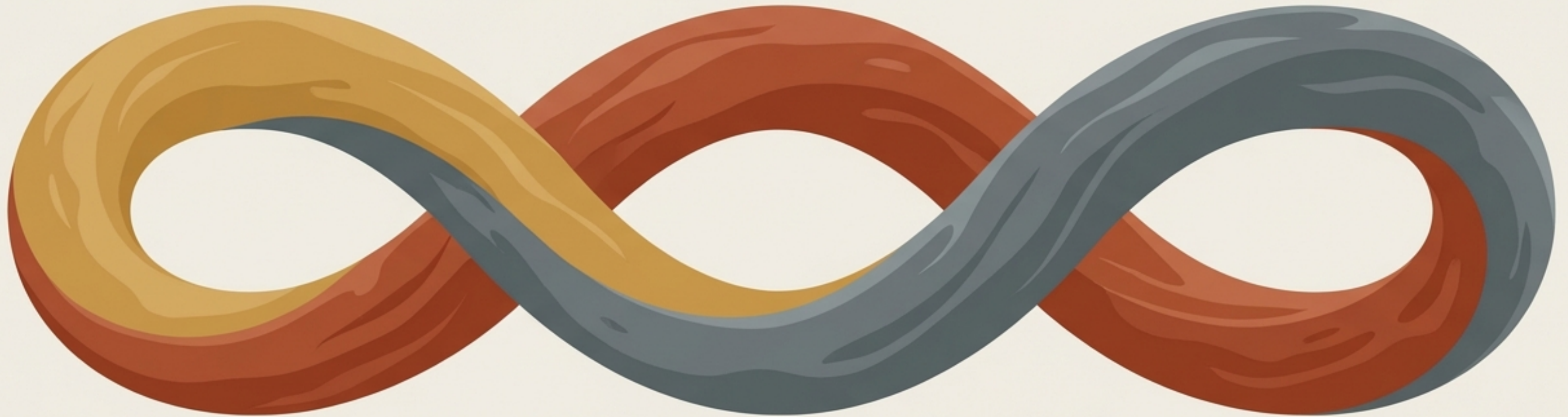
“This is our Tjukurrpa —
our past, present and future.”

— “Tjukurrpa Story” in Inter

Continuity is not a cultural add-on or a metaphor for tradition. It is an ontological structure. In Inter

The Paradigm Shift

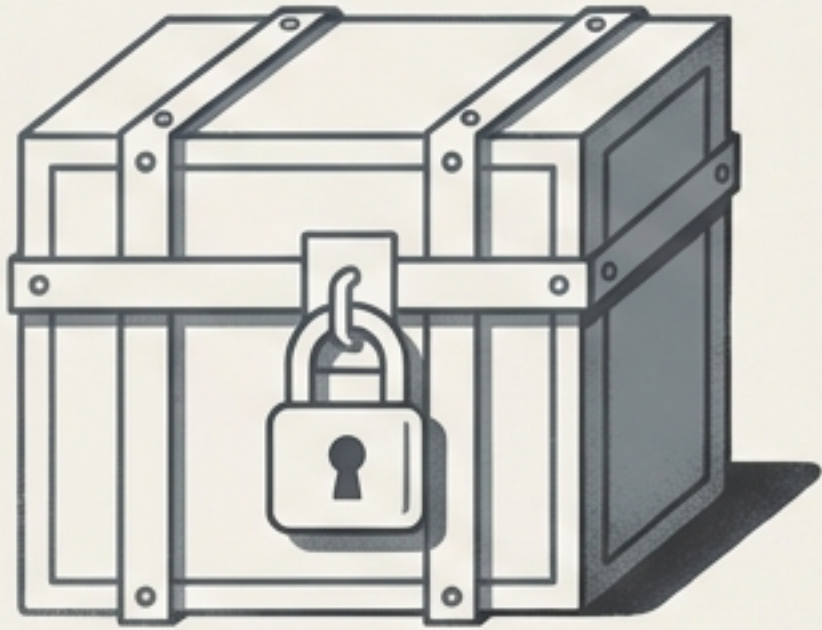
Persons do not create meaning ex nihilo; they enter a field of obligations, relations, and laws that were never absent. Humans function as passages, not endpoints.



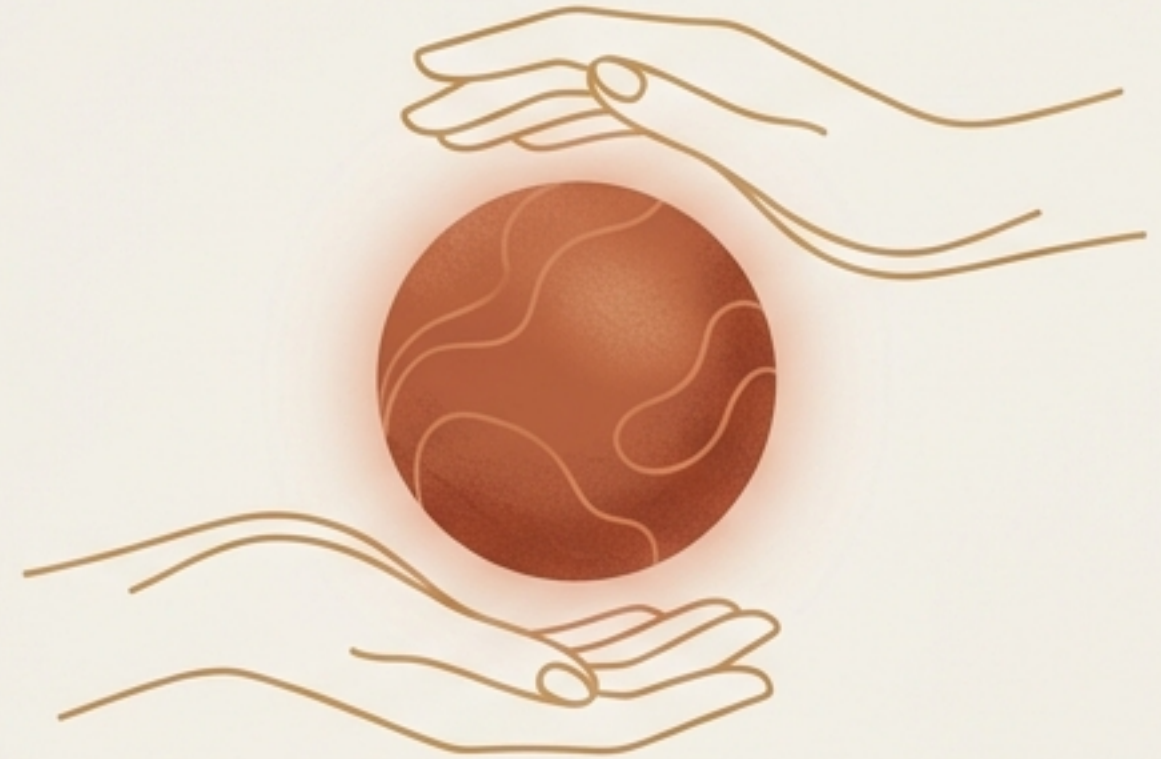
Custodians, Not Owners

“No one can own knowledge. We are responsible for knowledge.”
— Bob Randall, Songman in Inter

Knowledge is handed down for the benefit of all that will be.



STATIC OWNERSHIP:
Personal Possession & Control.



CUSTODIANSHIP & TEMPORAL RESPONSIBILITY:
Held Temporarily, Passed Forward.

From Authorship to Custodianship

Knowledge is not authored as personal insight or accumulated for self-advancement.
It is held temporarily, under obligation, within a transmission extending across generations.

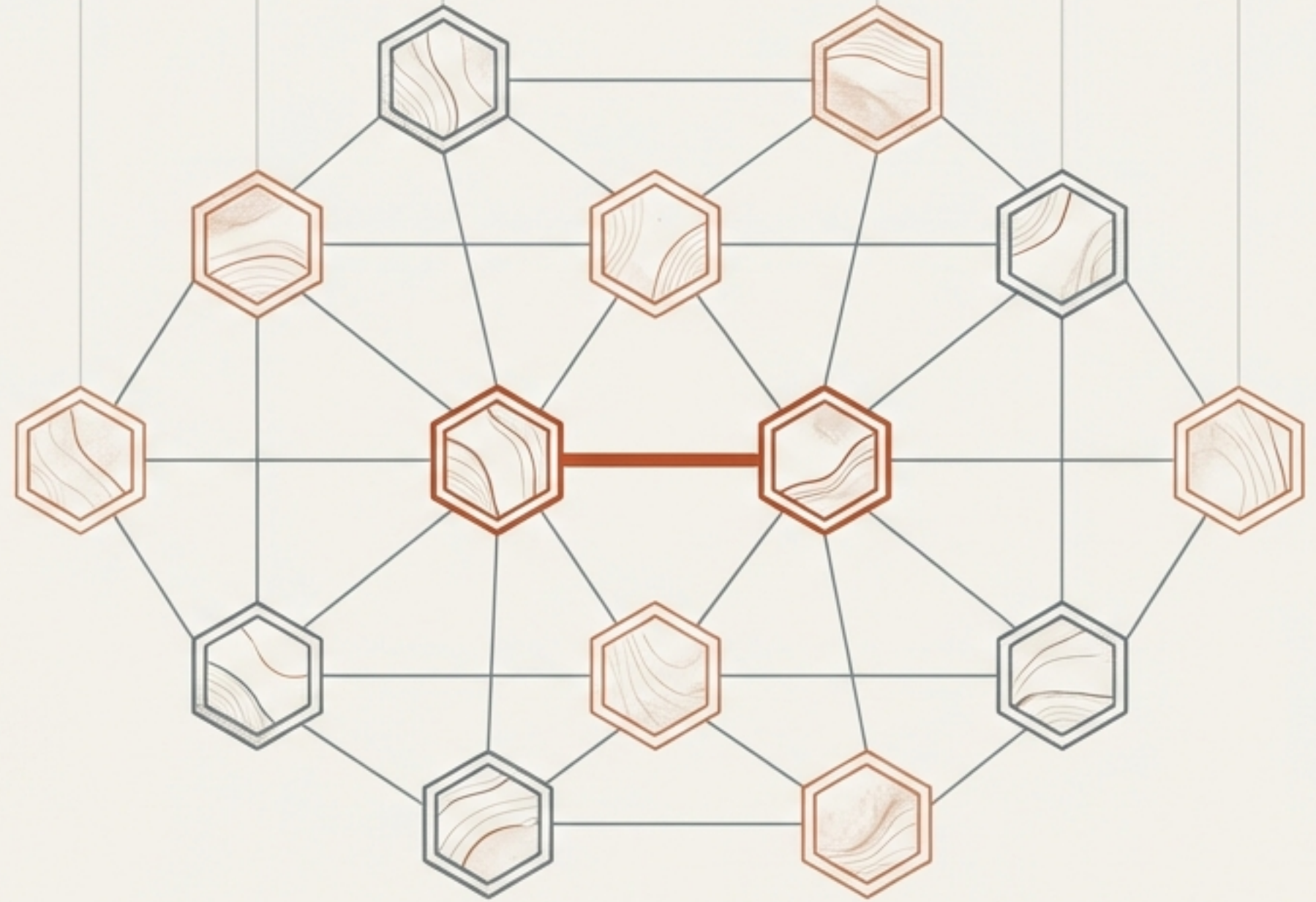
The Function of Role

“Each one of us is here for the purpose of being of service for each other each moment of our lives.”

— New Story drafts

Role is neither competitive nor hierarchical. Meaning is carried not by standing out, but by holding one's position reliably.

Role is the condition under which freedom remains intelligible across generations.



The Discipline of Humility

“We don’t own knowledge, we look after it.” — Kanyini

Humility is epistemic restraint. It is the refusal to claim authorship over what one has received.

Humility ensures the carrier does not mistake themselves for the source. It prevents meaning from being captured by the self, ensuring it passes through without distortion or loss.

LOOK AFTER

~~OWN~~

Mortality and Legacy Anxiety

The Individualist Crisis

If significance is located within the individual—through achievement, expression, or legacy—death is a rupture that erases what a life has produced.

The Consequence

Mortality becomes a crisis that must be answered through remembrance, symbolic immortality, or desperate preservation.



"The anxiety that accompanies death arises precisely because meaning has been over-invested in the self."

Death Without Crisis

“Death was when you had to stop but not life.”

— Bob Randall, Kanyini, With Love

You can choose to go from spirit to physical...
but you have no choice going the other way.

Our people believe we just need to let them go.

Death marks the cessation of individual activity,
not the cessation of continuity. Legacy anxiety
dissolves because the chain does not require
its carriers to persist indefinitely; it requires
them to pass on intact.

The Foundation of Dignity

“Kanyini is unconditional love with responsibility.”

— Kanyini

Kanyini

Humans have more responsibility to care for other living beings.

Dignity is inseparable from responsibility. Human distinction is not a basis for entitlement or the right to choose freely, but the capacity to carry responsibility consciously.

Reframing Humanism

“Humanism must center not on the expressive individual, but on the conditions that allow human life to remain coherent across generations.”

The Relocation

Shifting human dignity away from absolute autonomy and toward conscious custodianship.



Freedom Redefined

Not the freedom to invent meaning ex nihilo, but the freedom to take up responsibility knowingly.

The Grand Contrast

The Self-Authored Paradigm (Western Humanism)	The Continuity-Held Paradigm (Anangu Ontology)
Knowledge: Accumulated and owned.	Knowledge: Received and looked after.
Time: Linear; meaning peaks and disappears.	Time: Continuous (Tjukurrpa); meaning is in motion.
Role: A constraint on personal freedom.	Role: The site of embodied transmissible meaning.
Humility: Moral self-effacement.	Humility: Epistemic restraint against authorship.
Death: A crisis of legacy and erasure.	Death: Lawful passage; letting go.

The Work of Continuity

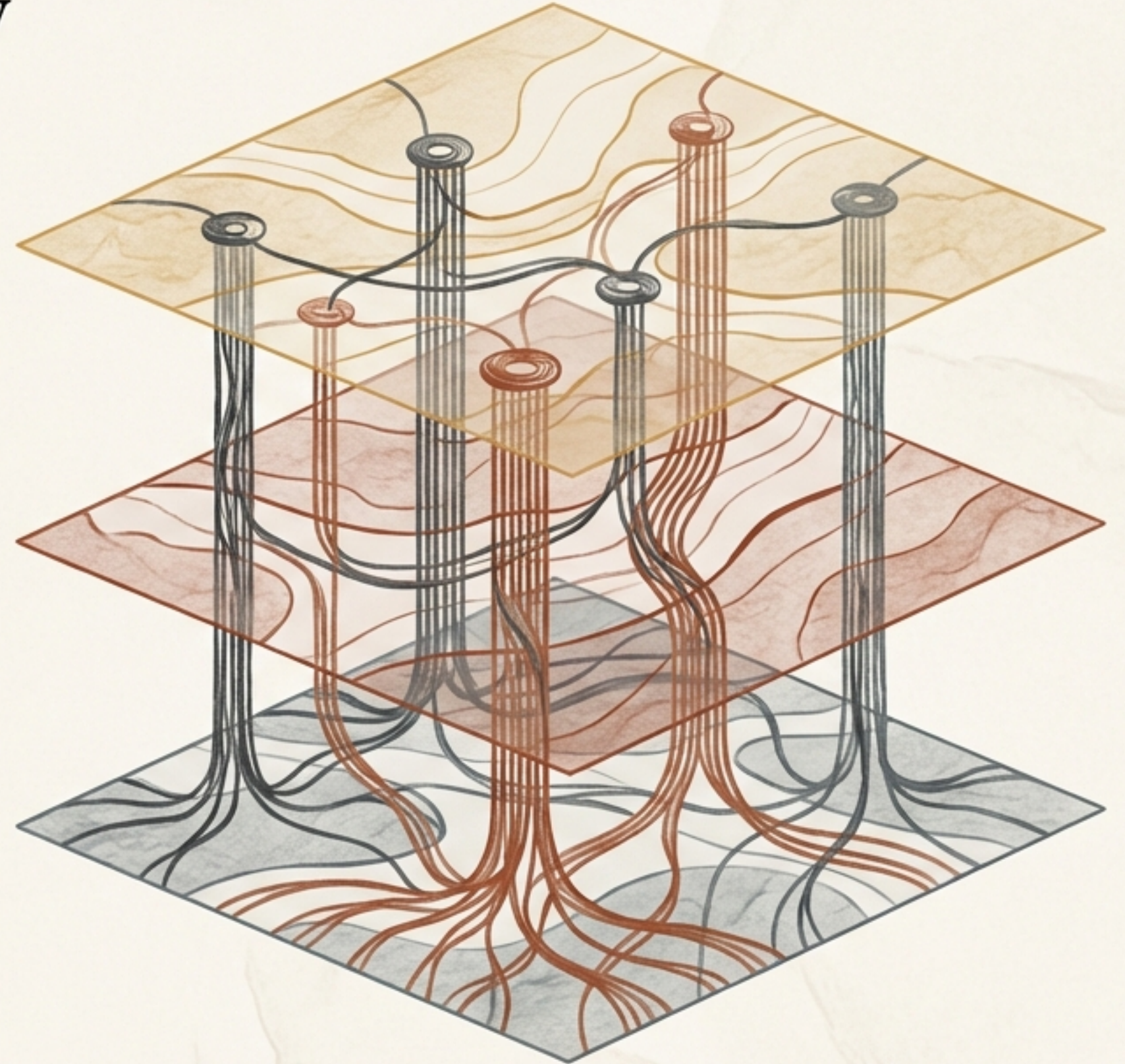
“The proof of being connected is being alive.”

— Kanyini Philosophy drafts

Connection is not an inferred feeling or an identity claim. It manifests through life itself—the ongoing circulation of care and knowledge.

The Anthropological View

Anthropology remains uniquely positioned to see transmission where other frameworks see only selves.



Meaning Must Be Held

“Everything living is family.”
— Bob Randall, Songman

Meaning does not need to be invented, rescued,
or endlessly affirmed. It needs to be held.

Place human dignity not in sovereignty over
meaning, but in fidelity to what must pass
through us, unchanged enough to endure.



References & Sources

Primary Source

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- Anangu Teachings: Life and Death (2013)

Anthropological Context

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- Louis Dumont, Essays on Individualism (1986)
- Marshall Sahlins, What Kinship Is—And Is Not (2013)