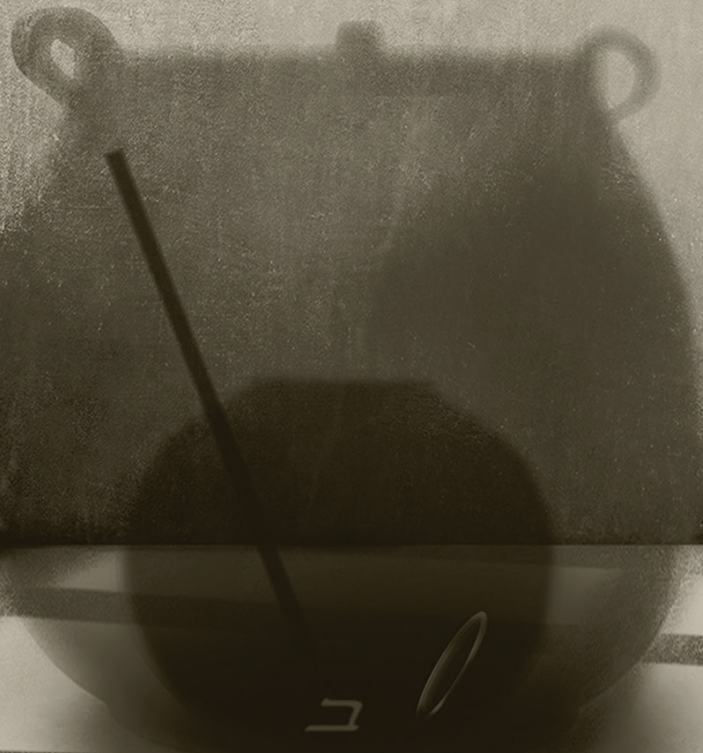


HEALING COLLECTIVE TRAUMA

a process for
integrating our intergenerational
and cultural wounds



THOMAS HÜBL

BOOK EXCERPT

HEALING COLLECTIVE TRAUMA

A PROCESS FOR INTEGRATING OUR
INTERGENERATIONAL & CULTURAL WOUNDS

THOMAS HÜBL
WITH JULIE JORDAN AVRITT



CONTENTS

Foreword by William Ury	ix
Acknowledgments	xiii
Prologue	xv
1. Mystical Principles of Healing	1
2. The Material Science of Trauma	13
3. The Inner Science of Trauma	29
4. The Architecture of Collective Trauma	61
5. The Wisdom of Collective Trauma	85
6. A Group Process for Integration	119
7. Guidance for Facilitators, Therapists, and Healers	151
8. Picture of a Traumatized World	171
9. Vision of an Integrating World	197
Epilogue	219
Appendix: Guided Practices	227
Pocket Project	241
Notes	243
Index	253
About the Contributors	271
About the Author	275

PROLOGUE

And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

Genesis 1:3 (New International Version)

The medicine is already within the pain and suffering. You just have to look deeply and quietly. Then you realize it has been there the whole time.

Saying from the Native American oral tradition

Forty years ago, Helen Epstein, a young journalism professor at New York University, published a groundbreaking book that altered the course of Western psychological research in trauma and validated many things that aboriginal peoples and Eastern thinkers had known for centuries. The book, titled *Children of the Holocaust*, was part ethnography, part oral history, and part memoir and was the first published work outside academia to explore the subject of the second generation (2G)—the sons and daughters—of Holocaust survivors. Her work inspired startling new questions: Had the unspoken horrors of Nazi Germany been in some way passed down to the descendants of those who had lived through them? If so, what might this traumatic inheritance mean for other traumatized groups and their progeny?

Epstein's book was a noble exploration of the intergenerational transmission of trauma, kicking off decades of often difficult, and sometimes illuminating, research in Israel, the United States, Switzerland, and beyond. While more research must be done on the subject, there is much to learn from what has emerged.

PROLOGUE

In 1981, the Jewish scholar and theologian Arthur A. Cohen described 2G this way: “It is the generation that bears the scar without the wound, sustaining memory without direct experience.”¹ In his 2006 text, *Healing the Soul Wound*, clinical psychologist and researcher Eduardo Duran assessed that in the overall body of research on the subject of historical trauma and its transmission, there is evidence to suggest that “not only is the trauma passed on intergenerationally, but it is cumulative.” Duran further contends that “when trauma is not dealt with in previous generations, it has to be dealt with in subsequent generations.” Moreover, when unresolved trauma is passed on, it may become “more severe” in successive generations.²

Early in his career, Duran’s work with Native American populations in California uncovered a critical cultural difference in how the indigenous community perceived and spoke about the effects, consequences, or *symptoms* of historical trauma that they directly experienced, such as poverty, illness, alcoholism, family separation, mental and emotional health conditions, and more. The Western world had become dominated by clinical, pathological descriptions and labels for all manner of emotional and interpersonal distress, but these communities didn’t use such terms. Instead, they referred to the suffering that had blighted their people during European colonization and had been passed down through the generations since as “spiritual injury, soul sickness, soul wounding, and ancestral hurt.”³

My work has shown me that trauma is never purely an individual problem. And no matter how private or personal, trauma cannot belong solely to a family, or even to that family’s intricate ancestral tree. The consequences of trauma—indeed, the cumulative effects of personal, familial, and historical traumas—seep across communities, regions, lands, and nations. The burden borne by a single person, family, or community invariably and inevitably reaches its larger society, touching even those who share little in the way of common identity or custom. The impact of human-created suffering extends beyond the original subject or subjugated group; trauma’s legacy weaves and wires

our very world, informing how we live in it, how we see it, and how we see and understand one another.

Many of us are aware of the manifest ways that unhealed trauma can create long-term personal pain and developmental problems for individuals. What is perhaps less well understood is how unhealed *collective* trauma may place similar burdens on the health of human cultures and societies, even placing our planetary home at risk. The symptoms of collective trauma appear to reveal themselves in the condition of collective bodies of all kinds—our communities, schools, organizations, institutions, governments, and environments—revealing where we are injured, fractured, or imbalanced. Indeed, it is my belief that unresolved systemic, multigenerational traumas delay the development of the human family, harm the natural world, and inhibit the higher evolution of our species.

I vividly remember sitting with my grandfather, *Opa* in German, as a young boy, listening attentively as he shared stories from his experiences of the Second World War. He had been a private in the Austrian *Bundesheer*, or “Federal Army,” and was serving when Austria was annexed by Nazi Germany. Sadly, this meant that he and his fellow soldiers were conscripted into service for the German Third Reich.

Opa’s stories of the war included being met in the open by enemy soldiers, where both sides chose simply to turn around and walk back, rather than engage in lethal combat. He often spoke of the good-heartedness and heroism of ordinary men, many of whom had been forced to fight, even though their hearts weren’t in the cause. A young man at that time, my grandfather was badly injured by an exploding bomb. Sustaining severe injuries to his leg, he was sent home, no longer able to serve.

Before the war, my grandfather had been a passionate soccer player, full of vigor and athleticism. Afterward, both his passion and agility were reduced. Though he kept much of the evidence buried throughout his life, he had been changed by unrelenting heartbreak, wrought

PROLOGUE

by the trauma of his experiences in the war. For the rest of his life, Opa was weighed down by the stygian gloom of the past, which was ever present in the room. At times, a distant, disconnected quality colored his benevolent eyes.

Though I could very much *feel* these things as a boy, I couldn't yet understand them. I was very close to my grandfather, and as I grew, I began to feel even more things. Some of these I couldn't name; they stemmed from hidden emotional layers, the consequences of the scars of war. Others were more tangible. The relationship between Opa and my grandmother, *Oma*, for instance, was often eruptive. (Oma had lost her mother when she was only fourteen, forcing her to fight her way through life.) Deep trauma haunted my grandparents' lives, as it had everyone who'd been touched by the war. Quietly, this quality of hidden personal and cultural suffering—present everywhere in Austria as I was growing up—began shaping my life and my future. I became compelled to learn all that I could about it.

While still in high school, I became passionate about emergency medicine and determined to become a paramedic, volunteering for the Red Cross. After a long period of training, I reached my goal and threw myself into work I cared deeply about. When I wasn't working or studying medicine, I served as a teacher for new paramedics. I loved the fast-paced, deeply present work. It required quick thinking, sound judgment, and fast action, as well as a grounded stance toward human suffering. Being called to assist at one crisis after another taught me how to see more deeply into human lives, all walks of them. I attended to both the rich and the poor in their most intimate moments of fear and pain and observed those of all ages and creeds as they struggled to survive the most traumatizing situations of their lives.

Many times, I was present in the final moments of a person's life.

Over time, I observed how the experiences of our patients weren't held in isolation, solely impacting the injured or dying and their loved ones. As emergency responders, we were exposed to that cascade of human suffering, and it affected us. Paramedics at that time received

no guidance about how to deal with the psychological repercussions of trauma, neither for our patients nor ourselves. Even so, my desire to understand suffering so that I might better serve in a healing capacity only continued to grow. I decided to become an emergency physician.

At nineteen years old, I had begun my own regular meditation practice. And, in parallel to my coursework and medical studies, I began investigating many of the world's wisdom traditions. I took these habits with me when I entered medical school in Vienna, where I spent my days working shifts and my nights deep in study. It was an amazing time, and I loved it—I felt I was in service to life itself. It was there that I first sensed something going on *beneath the surface* in my country. Whenever I traveled outside Austria, which I loved, I felt a strange sense of liberation, as though I could breathe more easily somehow. But each time I returned, a sense of resistance and constriction came back. This quality mystified me and began to feel like a call toward some deeper or higher understanding. I continued working and studying, until at twenty-six, I felt a powerful pull to leave it all behind and embarked on a period of silence and meditation.

People close to me were concerned. Why was I choosing to give up everything to just “sit around”? But I knew I had to do it; I had to enter deeply into the roots of the *I am* in order to learn the answers to the questions I sought.

I started my quest in India, then with my former wife, Lenka, I traveled to the Czech countryside where I spent many hours per day in meditation, driven to explore deeper levels of consciousness. I'd been inspired by inveterate sages and philosophers like Sri Aurobindo, Ramana Maharshi, and the writings of American philosopher Ken Wilber since I was twenty years old. I longed to experience what they were pointing to, to deepen my awareness and investigate the vast terrain of the interior world. That experience lasted four intense years and not only altered the course of my life, but profoundly grew and changed me.

I never went back to medical school.

PROLOGUE

When I returned to Vienna, I brought greater awareness and personal insight to my life and work. But I also brought home a more refined perception of my country's collective psyche and the subtle, yet powerful, energetic layers of history that it holds.

A year later, a friend took me to meet a teacher who was traveling through Europe—a wise, white-haired man who seemed to share my own profound drive for exploring the deeper nature of human consciousness. The instant we met, he keenly and accurately described parts of my experience that no ordinary stranger could have identified. I felt powerfully seen and this soothed my soul. Soon, this encounter opened teaching doors for me. People began inviting me to all kinds of places to teach and run workshops myself.

My life had radically changed: I'd spent four years predominantly in silence and now I was traveling between countries to speak and teach. Soon, I was running workshops and retreats for thousands of people and learning so much more about human consciousness. All that had been shown to me during my four-year retreat came to life. When I went to Berlin for the first time, I was aware of a heavy energy, present as a result of a collective wound. Though its scabs were invisible, it nevertheless itched the people there. The injury itself had occurred as a result of one of the largest human atrocities in history, and more than a half-century later it continued to fester. While the Holocaust Memorial honors those who were persecuted and killed, and open dialogue is fostered throughout Germany, I could sense that many things remained hidden, buried deep in the collective shadows. My time there was a revelation. It allowed me to see that a similar psychic wound existed in the people of my native Austria, a massive lesion that hadn't yet healed.

In this way, each group that I taught throughout Germany was in fact instructing *me*. I began to witness a profoundly recursive pattern, emerging again and again in groups of all types and sizes. The central locus of the pattern was an often-powerful eruption of energetic material related to the Holocaust and the Second World War. After three or

four days facilitating a group, this material surfaced as waves of emotion, physical sensation, and memory, including the phenomenon of *mass memory*, often experienced by large portions of the group during any given session. As this happened, scores of participants would begin to cry all at once, collectively experiencing images of the war as though they were personal memories. It would then take another one or two days for us to carefully process and integrate all that came up.

Amazed by the consistency of this pattern and the profound shifts that were possible within a dynamic group-change process, I was inspired to explore the collective shadow more deeply.

In cities all over Germany, with very different groups of participants, the same process arose. I recognized that it only happened after participants had achieved a certain level of connection and safety with each other and with me, and after a strong enough quality of group presence and coherence had been reached. What it delivered was often profoundly healing. Life had been pointing me toward a process for integrating collective trauma, and I knew this needed to be studied closely. I became devoted to learning all that I could. As I worked with the process, I grew better able to guide participants through its incredible waves of mass energy, assisting each group toward deeper regulation.

My period of contemplation and exploration of consciousness had brought me to my true calling—a purpose and mission that I’ve been passionate about ever since.

It was during those years teaching in Germany that I met my beautiful wife, Yehudit Sasportas, an Israeli-born, international artist—and my life changed again. Her work, like my own, dealt directly with themes of individual and collective trauma.

After I had traveled nonstop for years, we took up residence together in a Berlin flat. Yehudit introduced me to an astonishing world of art, previously unknown to me. My wife’s deeply inspiring approach to trauma through art, and the study of Judaism, brought another lens to my own research into collective trauma. And she introduced me to

PROLOGUE

Israel, where we later relocated so that she could continue her teaching commitment as an extraordinary professor in the fine arts department at the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design. Israel quickly became my new teacher, bringing me further into my investigation into the impact that exposure to war and continuing conflict—long-standing historical, cultural, and ancestral traumas—have on a nation of people.

Out of this work evolved a clear process for the integration of collective trauma, which I refer to as the Collective Trauma Integration Process (CTIP). I continue to facilitate CTIP events in both Germany and Israel and many other parts of the world and recently completed one for 150 people from thirty-nine countries. The CTIP can be done successfully in groups of all sizes, even those of up to 1,000 participants.

Today, we continue building on the lessons of this work through the efforts of the Pocket Project, an international nonprofit organization that Yehudit and I cofounded. At the Pocket Project, we work in unison with many brilliant researchers and collaborators all over the world with the shared mission of *contributing to the healing of collective and intergenerational trauma and reducing its disruptive effects on our global culture*.

There are many current crisis zones in our world today, places where the reality of war is imminent and ongoing. Yet, even where peace appears to exist on the surface, the ravages of the not-so-distant past can be felt. Every region has its own distinct trauma signature. It's as if a massive elephant sits in the human living room; few may see or acknowledge it, but we are all impacted by its presence. Everything about our societies—from geopolitics to business, climate, technology, health care, entertainment and celebrity, and much more—is dominated by the existence of this elephant, by the residue of our collective trauma. And as long as we fail to acknowledge or adequately care for it, the elephant will grow larger.

This book is offered as a step toward recognizing and attending to the growing crisis of collective trauma. It provides an exploration of the symptoms, habits, and unconscious social agreements that

collective trauma creates. Growing like mold spores in the dark and fragmented underground of the human psyche, trauma's seeds are evidenced all around us: widespread isolation, endemic depression, violent divisions, systemic injustice, and countless other destructive forms, including our burgeoning climate crisis. But, though it is urgent, this book is not apocalyptic. Its pages offer possibilities for how we might shed light on the dark and come together in revolutionary ways to directly address our generational and cultural traumas in order to heal ourselves and our world.

As a contemporary mystic and a prior medical student, I'm interested in bridging the wisdom gap between our world's ancient spiritual traditions and the current understanding afforded by science. I believe that we now find ourselves at the precipice of a new era; one that asks for a marriage between science and spirit, between soul and scholarship. Evolution itself seems to be extending the invitation.

The collective psyche is holographic: We are both one and many, unique and unified, individual and whole. We are each responsible to each other, to our ancestors, and to our descendants, as well as to the Earth, which is our home. Together, I believe we can and must heal the "soul wound" that marks us all. In so doing, we will awaken to the luminous possibility and profound potential of our true and mutual nature as humankind, a collective race of beings within the greater Cosmic order.

Integrated and unified, may we soon step together into the Light of a thriving future, better equipped to cocreate worlds.

I

MYSTICAL PRINCIPLES OF HEALING

We have not even to risk the adventure alone, for the heroes of all time have gone before us. The labyrinth is thoroughly known. We have only to follow the thread of the hero path, and where we had thought to find an abomination, we shall find a god. And where we had thought to slay another, we shall slay ourselves. Where we had thought to travel outward, we will come to the center of our own existence. And where we had thought to be alone, we will be with all the world.

Joseph Campbell
The Hero with a Thousand Faces

The late American mythologist Joseph Campbell explored two types of deeds that any hero or heroine might resolve along the archetypal quest. The first fulfills a material objective, the performance of some tangible and ultimately courageous act, however difficult or seemingly impossible. The second deed is less clear because it is spiritual in nature. It involves a journey along which the hero uncovers hidden mystical knowledge about human existence, often returning with a sacred message or some life-giving elixir.¹

As Campbell discovered, whether the deed at the center of a quest is physical or spiritual, the path of any hero, in any story—from humanity's earliest myths to its modern-day movie scripts—follows a common trajectory. And whether we encounter dragons or demons, sirens or

saints, an illusory city of celestial musicians or merely the mundane trials and temptations of an “ordinary” life, we are each the hero of our own stories.

Every hero’s journey is one of ultimate transformation. The story of the fool is to become wise. The story of the cynic is to break open in vulnerability and authenticity—to become real. The story of the despairing is to find hope, faith, and renewal. The story of the fearful or weak is to awaken into the nobility of one’s own true strength. These are fundamental journeys of the spirit, the narrative arc of souls. Of course, before we embark, we must respond to *the call*, a clarion invitation that is always sounding but can only be heard in the heart of great longing.

At this time in human history, there is a new calling, a powerful invitation rising from a sense of deep collective longing. It calls us toward a *shared* quest—one that will entail both practical and spiritual action. At its core, it is a journey of collective healing. To succeed, we must begin to make whole the rift between the worlds of science and spirit, to create a sacred marriage between vital, yet formerly contradictory, domains. Its fulfillment brings unity in place of division, integration rather than separation. As with all great heroic journeys, our very survival depends on it.

This book is an effort to amplify the urgency of the call and to inspire the hero/ine in all of us.

THE PRINCIPLE OF ENSŌ

Mystical wisdom arises from a direct and unmediated experience of the numinous that is both personal and universal. This experience reveals a glimpse into the great and unfathomable mystery at the center of All That Is, leaving seekers with a sense of heightened awareness—a clearer perspective of self and other, human and cosmos. When doctrine, dogma, sectarian politics, and power structures are lifted from the religious or spiritual lens, timeless principles for how to live a

healthy, harmonious, and fulfilled existence flow in. Whatever the culture, religion, or epoch, the principles that are at the core of the great Wisdom Traditions reveal perennial truths about the human condition, the nature of reality, and for some, that which is called the Divine.

Mystical theory is never simply about knowledge. It is about resonance, coherence, re-membering, and fulfillment. It is about creating deeper clarity of perception. The ancient *ensō* symbol found in the Zen school of Buddhism, sometimes called the “circle of enlightenment” or the “infinity circle,” is frequently depicted in Japanese calligraphy as a perfectly imperfect open circle. The *ensō* is often used to represent *satori*. The words *satori* and its relative, *kenshō*—which translates as “seeing into one’s true nature”—are commonly translated as “enlightenment.” The sacred symbol of the *ensō* represents vast space, that which lacks nothing and yet holds nothing. It simultaneously depicts cycles of beginnings and endings and the greater infinity that contains them. It symbolizes both completion and the space of opening in renewal.



Ensō symbol

The *ensō* reveals the path of energy as it seeks transformation through substance, in order that it may return into peace more fully developed. Our lives reflect this principle.

When a part of my life energy, or *chi*, becomes arrested, unable to fulfill its natural developmental path, it fragments from the whole and lands in the unconscious. As a result, I am unaware of this split but

nevertheless carry it with me in the form of additional psychic baggage. We could say that this process is similar to computer fragmentation: when a cycle can't complete itself, the system becomes hampered by fragmented files or disintegration.

Let's say that I find myself in a difficult conversation with a colleague at midday and become irritated and defensive or anxious. For the rest of the day, I find myself thinking back on the conversation, replaying it in my mind. Each time I do this, I reexperience the irritation and anxiety I felt when the conversation first occurred so that these feelings persist, even after I've stopped thinking of my colleague. That evening, I meet a friend for dinner. If I still haven't resolved the day's experience, I may as well set an extra place at the table for my energetic baggage. Even if I don't explain how I'm feeling or why, my friend will likely feel its residual presence. And should something come up over dinner that touches further irritation inside me, I will leave carrying still more baggage or fragmentation.

The unresolved energy that I carry weighs me down and colors my experiences, preventing me from showing up fully in the present moment. This baggage or fragmentation is karmic; it is the energy of the unmet past. Because it hinders precise alignment to the present moment, it creates a distortion not only in my perspective but also in my experience of space-time itself.

In the mystical traditions, fragmentation, stagnation, and isolation are observed as areas of weakness, illness, or disease. When organs, structures, systems, or people become shut down, closed off, isolated, or unfulfilled, their internal and external ability to communicate and receive information has been stunted or lost, and the health of the organism may be at risk. Healing is the work of opening or returning connection. It is the fulfillment of the *ensō*.

When we do healing work, we safely unpack the unconscious luggage we carry. We "defrag" in an effort to bring about greater integration. Healing permits us to travel lighter and brighter, to be more fully and deeply present to the moment, as less of the past splits our

energy and attention and weighs us down. We begin to feel a sense of deeper presence, of “here-ness,” and to see and sense our world with greater clarity and precision. Like it does for Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz*, our world goes technicolor.

With the fulfillment of the ensō, there is a return to peace. The openness of the circle permits divine intelligence to pour in. Here, what had been the ordinary world becomes nonordinary, and previously isolated, stagnated sectors suddenly breathe open and awaken with energy and vitality. Newly flowing and interpenetrating systems exchange intelligence and dance with life.

In the chapters ahead, as we consider more mainstream and contemporary psychological, neurological, epigenetic,² and sociocultural findings related to the subject of trauma, we will return always to ancient mystical principles related to being human and to healing. In this way, we are binding the hands of science and spirit in a sacred handfasting, weaving a double helix between ancient wisdom and contemporary understanding.

DESTINY OF THE UNHEALED HERO

From a mystic’s (or Jungian’s) perspective, every experience or emotion from the past that remains unacknowledged, unprocessed, or denied is stored in the realm of the unconscious, or shadow. These experiences have not been integrated by the psyche or spirit, and so they will—indeed, they must—surface again and again in new but familiar forms. *What we think of as destiny is in fact the unintegrated past.* And the fragmented, unintegrated past appears always as a false future of repetition, a preprogrammed path along which every individual and every culture sets out until the contents of that past have been brought into the light of consciousness, reconciled and healed. This mystical wisdom reveals itself in the study of history and psychology, and undergirds philosopher George Santayana’s words, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”³

We may choose to understand these repetitions of shadow content as *karma*, a Sanskrit word originally meaning “effect” or “fate” (i.e., destiny). Or we may recognize them in light of our contemporary understanding as trauma—specifically as *retraumatization*, the unconscious act of repeating the conditions of earlier traumas upon self and others.

Everything that resides in my unconscious inevitably flows into and blends with yours and everyone else’s. All together, this forms the collective shadow, which may be visualized as a series of dark subterranean lakes, flowing deep beneath our everyday awareness. The dark water of the collective shadow becomes a way station for the energetic residue of unresolved conflicts, multigenerational suffering, and all manner of unhealed trauma. It harbors the unacknowledged hatred of one nation for another, the suppressed terror echoing within a racial group or gender, and the unexpressed outrage felt by a tribe or religious faction.

Psychic energy that is held in the shadow remains out of sight until it becomes activated by external conditions and an accumulation of energetic momentum within the social field. Once activated, the dark contents of the shadow surface like a Loch Ness monster, cresting in the form of patterns of human behavior and consequence, from recurring toxic relationship patterns to poisonous social histories. These repetitions are the silent summoning of our unhealed injuries and unexamined failures. Freud termed the tendency to repeat the painful past *Wiederholungszwang*, or “repetition compulsion,” theorizing that unconscious retraumatization is an attempt to find conscious resolution to the original trauma.⁴ Whether surfacing as histories of poverty, family violence, or addiction, or on the social scale as ethnic hatreds, war, or social collapse, repetition compulsion is an ancient undercurrent in human affairs—one that can be healed.

While our will is our own, our choices are inevitably bound and restricted by karma, by trauma, by what we conceive of as “the past”—all that we have denied, disowned, dissociated, and suppressed. The unconscious denial of any experience freezes some portion of

our available energy in shadow, thereby restricting our freedom and movement. With every denial or suppression of the past, we create our destiny, which is the repetition of suffering.

Still, as the great spiritual myths reveal, the hero discovers that by acknowledging and repairing the folly of his past, by integrating all he has been, he may become truly free—and more of what he truly *is*.

THE FUTURE CAN REWRITE THE PAST

In both philosophy and quantum physics there is a theory referred to as *retrocausality*, which posits that certain, perhaps very special, effects may in fact precede their causes. While retrocausality remains hotly debated in both fields, new support continues to emerge. In 2017, the esteemed Royal Society published a paper by physicists Matthew S. Leifer and Matthew F. Pusey titled “Is a Time Symmetric Interpretation of Quantum Theory Possible without Retrocausality?” which presents theoretical support for retrocausality.⁵

If proven, the theory of retrocausality could mean that influences from the present or future are able to act on, and thereby *change*, the past. From the mystical perspective, this is an essential principle of grace and is always true. The future indeed has the power to rewrite the past. In fact, when we integrate shadow or trauma, we’re utilizing this principle because healing past energy creates a forward ripple effect. This releases light and energy that was previously held in shadow, offering greater movement and freedom of will in the present.

The retrocausality principle is at the heart of the work I facilitate around trauma healing for both individuals and groups, whether they’re the members of a family, organization, or community of practice anywhere in the world. A deeper examination of retrocausal healing will be explored later in this book.

There is still some essence of truth in German zoologist and evolutionist Ernst Haeckel’s words, “Ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny.” Put very simply, the origin and developmental stages of a single

organism across its life span (ontogeny) looks a lot like the changes that occurred in its ancestors as a whole throughout time (phylogeny). We are meant to develop, to evolve, as all life develops and evolves, and along a similar trajectory—fundamentally, consciously, systematically, *mutually*. As we awaken in consciousness, we create room for the light of inspiration and innovation to fill and pour through us. This activates flow states, unimpeded currents of pure evolutionary energy. This emergent, creative, and spontaneous stream of light and information is the essence of the authentic future, that which is original and nonrepeating.

As our karmic past is cleared, as trauma is healed and integrated, the genuine future can arrive to meet us. When we greet it from a place of presence and attunement, the world catches fire. Suddenly everything changes, yet nothing is lost. Like Paul on the road to Damascus, where before we were blind, now we see. We recognize new vistas.

We tend to see our world in three dimensions, but physicists tell us there are many more. To attempt to “see” multidimensionally, imagine a hologram. A holographic image is a photographic recording of a light field, appearing visually as a 3D object. While a photograph itself is merely a 2D representation, it can be projected in such a way that it is experienced as a higher dimension (i.e., 3D). Now imagine that you are a being who resides somewhere in, say, the fifth or sixth dimension, so that you are able to see and observe your own dimension, as well as every lower plane that it incorporates—just as we can see and recognize the first through the third dimensions. From your new point of view, you’d likely have a very different perspective on time, which is the fourth dimension. Time appears quite linear to us from our vantage down in 3D, where we commonly assume the past is always behind us, and the future is always before us (and never the twain shall meet). But from a higher dimensional perspective, we might recognize how it is that effects can precede their causes, and thus, how the future can change the past.

PERCEPTION DISTORTION IS SPACE-TIME DISTORTION

When we become burdened by the stories we tell ourselves about the past, we cannot show up fully in the present; we can't bring our most essential energy into our work or relationships. Whether we move through a day replaying content from a difficult romantic exchange or a frustrating business meeting, an active percentage of who we are is occupied in the past and therefore absent in the present and not available to the here and now.

Imagine that everything you perceive and remember, intuit and feel, see and experience is a projection on a kind of internal movie screen. Your experience of the room you sit in, the book or device you're holding, the words you're reading right now, and your own bodily sensations and feelings is merely perception projected onto this inner screen. Now, imagine that when you are fully available to the present moment, your movie screen is clear and crisp, and the surround sound has perfect clarity. But when you become occupied with thoughts or feelings about the karmic past, your screen becomes wrinkled and puckered. And when traumatic experiences happen to you, this screen becomes warped, and the sound is made tinny and staticky. Now, imagine that as you attempt to watch, advertisements or someone else's movie entirely becomes superimposed over your own! Any of this would make it difficult to clearly interpret what you're sensing and experiencing.

Everything we perceive about our world becomes distorted to the degree that we are fragmented by trauma and bound by the unresolved past. Perception of self and other desynchronizes. Cultural perceptions twist and distort. Since that unresolved content *is* the past, space-time itself warps.

Mythologically, such distortions are treated as illusions. Their purpose is to test the insight and spiritual fortitude of the hero. Whether these distortions appear in ourselves or others, in our families or societies, it's important to recognize the power they possess to destabilize and further fragment.

LOCATING TRAUMA'S COSMIC ADDRESS

We might think of the human body as a hologram, nonlinear and multidimensional. All parts of a hologram contain the image of the whole, just as the cells of the body—whether skin cells, heart cells, brain cells, and so on—contain the genetic blueprint for the entire body.

The energy flowing vertically along the spinal column represents what is happening *now*, but because the body is a multidimensional space-time template, it simultaneously reveals a full energetic record of its own past. The nervous system is the body's intelligent central core, and it contains a detailed *akasha*⁶ of an individual's entire developmental history.

With healing practice, we can learn to zoom in and feel deeply into or align with any of the holographic coordinates of the energetic nervous system, in both ourselves and others. By developing this skill, we can learn to use our own nervous systems to attune in relation to that of another. This allows us to access impressions or emotional sensations relating to experiences that occurred at specific points in space and time. This subtle competency grows in clarity as we learn to connect through the receiver of our own nervous system, establishing a data connection through deeper precision. By attuning to another person in this way, always with permission, we can simply feel, within our own system, the approximate age or stage in life at which a painful experience or trauma occurred. This is its “cosmic address.”

Unhealed trauma damages our capacities for presence and embodiment and harms our ability to relate and connect with others in a healthy way. When we can host our experiences within, we can more functionally relate without. As stressful and disconcerting as our world appears, if we can host it, we can respond to it.

THE DIVINE HUMAN MATRIX

We are each a pulsing fiber optic cable alive in a matrix of light. The source of this light, whatever we call it—source energy, life's seed, the Divine—touches us from the *authentic* future. It is an evolutionary

intelligence that seeks to download itself into and through us. From this conscious, ever-emergent wellspring, we are offered the full accumulated treasure of human life. It exists within us as an electricity that rushes upward vertically along every familial thread and arcs out horizontally along the fibers of our nervous systems, connecting each to the other and animating the full current of humanity in vibrating unison. The divine human matrix carries the encoded story of our race, back to its very genesis. All those alive today have been entrusted to hold this living record and chosen by evolution to update and renew it into a new tomorrow.

When a human incarnates, a stream of light enters into and travels upward along millennia of spiraling DNA and accumulated genetic histories. Pushing through thousands of years of karmic substrate, a single human soul emerges into a world weighed down by ancient, modern, and postmodern bands of tribal pain and cultural trauma. Its light surfaces, finally, at the conception and crown of a single bawling infant. Each child is new and innocent and perfect but has entered an incomprehensible story, one requiring great strength of spirit.

Shadow is created by arrested energy and is bound to vertices in the living matrix. But the fullness and beauty of what we are as an organic web of light, vibrating with information and potential, isn't diminished by these places of contraction, disunity, and devolution. As our collective story has unfolded, humans have descended again and again into real and mythological underworlds.

We carry the record of our darkest experiences in our bones and skin and teeth, in our families, communities, and societies. As we explore the subject of the human shadow and its longing for integration and release, we will look to medicine and mysticism, sages and scientists. The points of pain that we feel in our individual and collective bodies were left by accumulating traumas, but the call so many of us hear is an invitation toward collective healing, the ultimate hero's journey.

If we accept the call, we are likely to encounter the dark. But if we survive the dark, our eyes will have opened and we will be infinitely and indescribably changed.



THOMAS HÜBL

... is a modern mystic and internationally renowned spiritual teacher whose work integrates the core insights of the great wisdom traditions with the discoveries of contemporary science. Combining somatic awareness, meditation, and transformational practices, Hübl facilitates and leads workshops, retreats, and training programs in the US and internationally. He is cofounder of the Pocket Project, a nonprofit organization devoted to interdisciplinary trauma research and human outreach in conflict zones across the world. For more, see thomashuebl.com.

PREORDER AT YOUR
FAVORITE BOOKSELLER

