

## TOWARD THE INTEGRATION OF COLLECTIVE TRAUMA IN A TIME OF EXPONENTIAL CHANGE



*Thomas Hübl is a contemporary mystic, spiritual teacher, author, and systems-thinker whose work marries modern scientific knowledge with the world's ancient wisdom traditions. For nearly 15 years, he has led international workshops, multi-year training programs, and online courses for students in contemplative and process-based study. Thomas initiated the Celebrate Life Festival, and founded the Academy of Inner Science, and the Pocket Project, whose aim is to explore collective trauma and shadow work, and their integration through large-scale group processes. With support, the Pocket Project has quickly become a global organization and is now researching important aspects of local traumatization. Thomas was born in Austria in 1971. He lives in Tel Aviv, Israel, with his wife, award-winning Israeli artist, Yehudit Sasportas, and their daughter, Eliya. Email: thomas@thomashuebl.com .*

*Julie Jordan Avritt is co-author, collaborator, veteran ghost, and integral ink beside certain cultural mystics, culture change agents, start-ups, upstarts, & renegades on a mission to think bigger, bigger, BIG. Among other places, her work can be found in a print volume of Kosmos Journal; two volumes of S/tick; Gravel; Visible: A Fem-methology –Volume Two; and in the forthcoming graphic book, Grand Challenge: How Leaders Grow their Businesses by Addressing the World's Most Intractable Problems, with stellar visionary, Seth Kahan. Email: juliejordanavritt@gmail.com .*

*Our politics, education, and cultural consumption happen on a global scale. Our ethics and morality also need to be globalized. A new global order calls for a new global ethic. A global ethic is the key to addressing the true difficulties of our time. – THICH NHAT HANH.*

*It's exhilarating to be alive in a time of awakening consciousness; it can also be confusing, disorienting, and painful. – ADRIENNE RICH.*



IN ALL EPOCHS AND ACROSS ALL CULTURES, soothsayers, seers, evangelists, and doom-sayers have pronounced humanity's imminent demise. "Apocalypse now" – and now,

and *now*. Despite the perennial nature of these ominous portents, we have continued onward in every age, not merely surviving, but it seems, thriving. Over time, our numbers have swelled in a giant mushroom cloud; we have travelled to every corner of the globe and some beyond – exploring and experiencing, conquering and colonizing. The warnings of Nostradamus, street corner revivalists, and modern Mayan prophets have become only so much background noise against the still rising sun.

After all, here we are, burgeoning seven billion – and our world still turns, humanity with it.

Yet, despite our relative species success, at this stage in our brief history we face greater disruption and uncertainty than perhaps at any other time. The changes that have occurred in the modern era alone – from the rise of the Industrial Revolution through to the Digital Age – mark a period of unprecedented transformation. Silicon chip-based technologies are now advancing at an exponential rate<sup>1</sup>, creating a progressive leap the human mind has not yet evolved to intuit or understand. A tremendous evolutionary pressure is mounting in the form of technological expression. Its full emergence may generate a revolution that will topple many centuries-old structures of consciousness and ways of life. To alter these structures is not merely to change history, but to change our very selves. And yet, there can be no doubt: our world requires new structures, new systems – new and awakened consciousness.

With exploding growth, we face troubling concerns: planetary climate change; income inequality and the growing number of the world's poor; water crises; famine; inadequate nutrition; gender disparity; disease; homelessness; human trafficking – and these are just some of our world's systemic or "wicked" problems, growing quickly and ever more complex.

While the booming growth of technology creates many questions and some very troubling concerns – its dazzling potential may offer humankind real possibilities for meeting complexity, empowering us to solve many of our world's most troubling "grand challenges," perhaps within the next decade. Scientific breakthroughs are emerging at warp speed and rapid growth in tech brings with it profound capacity for

enhanced connectivity and deepened civic engagement. Social media allows strangers to communicate in ways not dreamed of only a short time ago. Collective consciousness is no longer a remote concept left to analysts and other fans of Jung, but is a graspable notion for all connected via Twitter, Instagram, or Facebook. Connection over distributed networks, the linking of servers and systems and the relay of massive amounts of memory and information shared in discreet packets zooming at light speed, offers a worthy analogue for a global brain. As we leap into the next sphere of consciousness along an evolutionary trajectory, we recognize that leap as exponential; we are going systems-scale.

Exciting implications aside, there are, no doubt, critical consequences for any technology bereft of humanity; of any brain disconnected from *heart*. But in our time, wisdom that emerged millennia ago in the East – from the Hindu Kush to the Himalayas – has travelled oceans. Mindfulness is sweeping Silicon Valley and leadership conferences in every city, even appearing on the cover of *Time Magazine*. But as more mystery is unveiled and explained, still more human shadows emerge. Perhaps the greatest question of our time is not whether we will achieve the scientific, technological, and consciousness breakthroughs that might allow us to solve systemic world problems and usher in one thousand years of peace and abundance, but whether we are prepared, individually and collectively, to embrace deeper, wider spans of self- and other-awareness; to incorporate a new global ethics and deepened sense of collective integrity; and begin, finally, to integrate the painful cultural shadows we feel rising to the surface all over the world, asking to be acknowledged and healed.

These are fundamental stones in the path to a cultural awakening, and we are invited to walk them together – to marry our individual practices to a collective spiritual dialogue.

#### A JOURNEY INTO THE DEEP STRUCTURES OF CONSCIOUSNESS

##### MOVEMENT AND STILLNESS

Our world's ancient wisdom traditions speak of two distinct principles of energy or consciousness: stillness and movement. Their motion is the combustion engine of the great spiralling wheel of ever-present change called life, and understanding their nature is vital in the enlightenment process. Everything we perceive as fixed in space and time is actually *movement* – forms of energy, constantly changing. Too often, we fall prey to the notion that our circumstances, the people in our lives, or some aspect of ourselves are fixed and permanent. Yet,

our perceptions themselves are forms of movement, elements of flux in a universe of flux.

Consciousness itself is change because it is constantly evolving – or appearing to devolve – and we with it. Movement contemplates movement.

Areas of stagnation in our lives create a sense of separation, however unconscious. Lack of movement may surface as a feeling of stuckness, appearing as financial difficulty, illness, or relationship struggles. Where there is adequate movement, we tend to experience effortless joy and health. Flow states – whether in sports, the arts, or sciences – occur when the energy of consciousness moves through and awakens us. In flow, we enter heightened states of awakening and may achieve profound breakthroughs. Movement liberates us.

Paradoxically, we belong to great stillness – the other side of the mystical coin of change.

Beyond the mystical understanding that all is movement dawns the realization that consciousness, too, is stillness, presence, silence, nothingness, *isness*. Engaged in practices of cultural mysticism – insight mediation, embodied awareness, or in pure moments of bliss or revelation – we enhance a capacity to drop into the depths of pure silence, to feel the full-empty of its embrace. In such moments of quiet clarity, we see that we are not the structures we are bound to and identified with during ordinary waking consciousness. Rather, we contain and are contained by a quality of deep space – presence – timelessness: some immense property of stillness belonging to the ineffable.

And while we are busy mentally separating these principles into dualities, the greater truth is that stillness and movement are one; they are the nature of consciousness itself. As we reach into this awareness, we arrive at a yet another mystical truth: the *word* and the energy it embodies are not two, but one. Full congruency between *logos* and its meaning, or “divine reason<sup>2</sup>,” must exist before truth can. Put another way, truth cannot be understood through intellectual understanding alone; we must know it with embodied wisdom. We must live it. We must begin to walk our talk.

Standing in a gallery, investigating a strange new work of art, whatever the observer notices says as much about her as it does about the painting itself. In this way, all art, in so far as it is observed, is a work of co-creation. We have evolved into awareness in a universe which reads as a great tome, and we, its co-authors. We, the trillion, fractal co-architects of the experience of consciousness have come to write-live-be our stories, experientially.

A sign of the times: our narratives, once linear, are now powerfully multi-dimensional.

While in latency, we remain unaware of ourselves as co-creators. For long periods, we perceive ourselves solely as narrator, subject, or object. The unformed ability to recognize our innate powers of authorship frequently generates an obsession with the past, as well as an anxiety about the future. We often become fixated, reading and rereading yesterday's newspaper, fretting often and much over karmic material acquired ten minutes or twenty years ago. From this vantage, space-time is restricted: flattened, fixed, linear. The very beingness we inhabit feels equally compressed, as our self-sense has not yet grown whole and rounded.

Here, we experience a kind of flatlander-*itis*<sup>3</sup>, a limitation of both self-sense and worldview. A common collective fiction based in these earlier realms of awareness is that humans are temporal beings who live *on* a planet. Yet, the water, carbon, and carbohydrates of our bodies *are* our planet. Indeed, human beings are Earth the same way we are the microbial fauna we carry. We are the trillions of symbiotic microorganisms existing in delicate balance on our skin and hair and in our gut, all necessary to life and health. In earlier stages, we fail to recognize interdependencies and instead believe entirely the story of material reduction and separateness – for instance, that bacteria and other microorganisms are harmful and best sterilized from our bodies and environment. (In even earlier stages, we are altogether unaware of their existence.) But as we evolve in consciousness, we grow in relatedness to all that is, to all we are.

We come to understand we are planetariums; our bodies contain, and are contained by, ecosystems.

Awakening is a process of unfolding relatedness between the external and exponentially nested systems which birthed us – from ancestor to planet to solar system to galaxy, and all that lies beyond – with their corresponding interior landscapes, mirrored perfectly in the still waters of self. As above, so below. The act of becoming conscious of our interior architectures marks a tremendous leap forward; it is a catalyst of evolution and its revelations make mystics of us all.

We find we are systems within systems, wholes within wholes. Just as every particle is also wave, every human is both substance and spirit. We are the emergence of qualities of consciousness on terra firma. We are its thrust and its yearning; its nascence and its soulfulness; its unformed and its pioneering vanguard. We are its seeking writ in stardust.

#### TOWARD A MODERN UNDERSTANDING OF KARMA

We might think of the Eastern word *karma* as an item of carry-on luggage, a suitcase we find ourselves

forced to heft between planes during a busy airport layover.

Consider the most recent conflict or difficult conversation you experienced with a friend, colleague, or lover. In our contemporary understanding, karma is the mix of distracting thoughts and heavy energies you carried with you after that conflict as you attempted to go through the rest of your day. With little opportunity to digest the emotions it brought up for you, you held on to this material and it remained unprocessed for a period of time. You carried these energies like so much luggage in the form of bodily sensations, difficult emotions, and distracting thoughts – for ten minutes, the remainder of your afternoon, weeks, or possibly far longer. While you attempted to tend to other matters, a vital percentage of your processing power was taken up with an experience from the past.

Any difficult, undigested, and unresolved energy that takes up precious resources in our minds and bodies is karma.

Karma is not about blame or punishment or retribution. What it may be instead is a design requirement for any sufficiently complex system of consciousness. Karma allows for the metabolizing of residual energies, so the primary cycle of stillness and movement, of rest and flow, can seek and fulfil a system's homeostasis. As we are busy attempting to process unresolved energy from a past "negative" or conflict experience, thoughts and feelings will resurface, disrupting our flow. These energies block us from being fully attuned with others, or fully accessible to our work and lives.

If the scale of conflict we encounter is ongoing and chronically stressful – whether it is domestic violence or gang violence, personal assault or world war – it will become very difficult for us to metabolize in order to find the appropriate rhythm between flow and stillness required for our progress and self-actualization. A person born into a high conflict zone – an area of high violence, crime, or poverty; a war-torn nation; or a community whose ancestors death with deep oppressions and pain – will likely have little direct causal understanding of the origins of the symptoms they carry: inability to achieve presence or mindfulness. Here, the scale has dramatically increased though the principle is still karmic; it is only that it far supersedes the story of the individual. In cases of childhood suffering, war, and global atrocities, our karma has become collective. In the contemporary lexicon, we file such stories of debilitating suffering under the heading: "trauma."

RECOGNITION OF THE EFFECTS  
OF TRANSGENERATIONAL TRAUMA

*Trauma* is used to describe the inner regulation system of any mammal going through a potentially life-threatening experience. In response to a threat, or perceived threat, our nervous systems engage ancient, evolutionary mechanisms in rapid-fire succession. Fight, flight, and freeze are automatic functions; they happen so quickly, we need not deliberate over which is correct. Indeed, we cannot; there is rarely enough time to process both the danger, and how we intend to face it, which is almost certainly why evolution has pre-programmed certain functions.

When an individual experiences trauma, s/he must be given the time and resources to adequately and appropriately work through its content. If these are not provided, the trauma is likely to remain as unprocessed energy in the system long-term and will have a further affect not just on the individual, but the collective. Any experience that is larger than our current capacity to process will be postponed, frozen, and stored somewhere in our nervous systems, waiting for its time to be processed and released. If this release does not come, the effects of trauma may create illness, dysfunction, or disability<sup>4</sup>.

Trauma forces intolerable levels of fear to surface. If we cannot bear to confront our fear, we may select to avoid it through patterns of disconnection, dislocation, or disassociation – i.e., by dampening and disabling functions of consciousness. In this way, the psyches of traumatized individuals are frequently fragmented, for longer periods of time. A culture of traumatized persons is a storehouse of unresolved conflict, unacknowledged suffering held in shadow and projected in the landscape – onto others and onto circumstances, creating further retraumatizations. These are the fixtures and alleyways in the realms of the collective unconscious, and they frequently surface as intense feelings xenophobia, racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and other cultural hostilities and toxins.

We can see the effects of similar shadows illustrated in the discussion of global climate change. The fear of and failure to meet this oncoming change rationally creates collective shadows, the opposite of resilience. Despite growing scientific evidence for the existence of climate change, we refuse to move forward, remaining entrenched in denial by greed and apathy, refusing to collaborate, refusing to do what must be done to save our world and ourselves. As the planet revolts, we become forced to react, but continue to refuse to do so rationally. We choose instead to meet change from our collective shadow: with violence, hatred of

foreigners, psychosis, isolation, distancing, resistance, and nonparticipation.

In studies of transgenerational trauma, researchers are discovering that second and third generations – the children and grandchildren of Holocaust survivors, for instance – carry the greater burden of the collective trauma from their ancestors<sup>5</sup>. Second and third generations are believed to experience less resilience to stress, and may be more likely to experience post-traumatic stress disorders, depression, and anxiety in times of difficulty. Every human carries a piece of our ancestral karma – the unresolved and unintegrated material carried over from the previous generation – as physical, emotional, and psycho-spiritual imprint. Further, the individual shadows we carry sync with those carried by others around us as unconscious energies attract and build coherence. In this way, we draft unconscious cultural agreements, laying them beneath the subfloor of our social architecture.

While symptoms indicating the existence of trauma may appear in the lives of individuals – difficulty regulating emotions, inability coping with challenges, or manifestations we call depression, anxiety, and even personality or mood disorders – in truth, they arise out of the collective unconscious, a shared but hidden culture of suffering we have collectively denied, suppressed, and split away. These cultural agreements emerge as information networked through our individual nervous systems and coded as “normal reality.” In this way, an integral part of our cultural matrix is built upon denied suffering, which we take as “just the way things are.” From this place of deep shadow, we often fail to recognize truth or to meet change with resilience.

Any large-scale catastrophe acts as a barometer, a visible gauge by which we can measure our collective resilience – as well as to discern the degree and nature of our weakness. Europe’s recent refugee crisis served the collective by exposing those areas most in need of our attention: for healing and integration.

The refugee crisis came over the continent as an intense shock, revealing widespread resistance, difficulty, and, in many places, an outright unwillingness to accept refugees themselves – men, women, and children, the victims of war and other crises. Where they could, many communities inside these countries opened their homes to refugees, but the governments of the nations involved remained largely intractable. They are many of the wealthiest countries in the world, yet the inadequate response and lack of partnership combined with xenophobia and hatred elicited by the faces waiting at their borders was a dark indicator that even our most advanced countries are not yet ready to serve as official partners with evolution.

Still, at least a couple of European Union nations stood up against the disillusionment to greet the spill-over of international faces with assist and support. Rather than growing more rigid and resistant, their social and institutional structures attempted to become pliable as this new energy flowed through them. Although these nations represent a small minority, they are our leading-edge, pointing boldly to a world to come.

Collaboration, participation, global social witnessing, and planetary citizenship are essential values for the era we enter. We can no longer wait for current structures and governments – too often burdened by bureaucracy or corruption to move swiftly and ethically – in order to take action. So, we must act. We must grow together into a new version of ourselves.

Whatever has been blocked, denied, or suppressed in the experience of one generation is simply energy or information – a modulated wave – that can neither be created nor destroyed; it must fulfil its movement. We might envision the impact of collective trauma, such as that created by the Holocaust, as a series of scars etched into the tissue of our shared humanity. Succeeding generations will enter the world bearing those scars, and it will be their task to integrate the psychological impact of whatever traumas created them.

Over the better part of the last fifteen years, I have worked with small and large groups, facilitating the integration of shadow content, i.e., the healing of collective traumas. Wherever people come together to heal the unconscious, I have observed a consistent energetic process. The initial stage of any group process reveals energies of denial and resistance. A later element of the pattern emerges as a mass eruption of intense energies – where many people in the group may begin to weep or experience other deep emotions together. Some groups may experience collective visions or ancestral memories together and these are profound emotional experiences of unburdening and release.

While working with large groups in Germany and Israel, both of which are the inheritors of significant collective trauma, I observed deep openings into shared unconscious pain. For all who were able to remain with the process, dropping into the flow of suppressed material held in the dark lake of the unconscious, real change occurred. A few in the room were unable to bear the process for a period of time, and required the attention of one-on-one counsellors. Such work demands a sophisticated process and conscious facilitation, as well as time carved out for support during the integration of group shadows.

#### THE DEVELOPMENTAL, EVOLUTIONARY MATRIX OF CONSCIOUSNESS

The evolutionary impulse of consciousness to awaken is both a vertical drive – linking upwards through the centuries in each successive ancestral generation, arriving finally in the present moment in the form of *you* – while simultaneously emerging or “descending” from the potential realm of the future, emitting its vibrational light, its alive intelligence, also into the present, and once again, as *you*. Concurrently, this evolutionary impulse expresses itself as a horizontal or lateral drive, surfacing as interpersonal and transpersonal fields of relating, connecting between and across the social fields of a single generation – weaving its weft and warp along the tapestry of generational community, culture, and nation, culminating as the fabric of planetary consciousness.

The axes of these vertical and horizontal drives meet, forming a matrix out of which developmental, evolutionary consciousness weaves its *I* and *We*, its *You* and *Its*, its interior and exterior domains<sup>6</sup>. Indra’s net.

Through the reconciliation of karmic or traumatic wounds, we grow able to establish healthy relations, bonding in attunement with one another so that the field of social resonance, of pure and essential presence, is restored. This is the awakening of self-to-other, of *love*.

#### EMERGENT COMPETENCIES REQUIRED IN THE PROCESS OF GLOBAL AWAKENING

At higher stages of conscious awakening, we arrive at *we-space*, a palpable and awakened sense of intersubjectivity. In *we-space*, new competencies – new capacities of consciousness – become accessible, even required, for expanded stages of our cultural evolution to emerge. One important competency unfolds as the capacity to embrace change. At a time of tremendous disruption, developing this skill is a foremost priority. Without it, change will forever be something that happens *to* us. We will fail to come online as co-authors and will forever be the victims of circumstance. Another competency of *we-space* is innovation. True innovation requires resonance between multiple minds with the resources of their environment. The ability to service collective trauma is another important capacity emerging at higher stages of awakening.

*We-space* exists as a wave field, one we can visualize as a watershed, a living container for both sources and flows of energy, feeding into and returning out of the collective energy body. The ability to synchronize to a coherent field is a distinctly *We* ability, and is greatly needed at this time in human history. As our

centre of gravity comes to rest in higher stages of evolutionary development, this field becomes a space we can “look” into – still another competency. Before we achieve this stage, we are too fragmented to perceive the conditions of the social field or to discern its impact on the self or the whole. We struggle to feel into others and to recognize our own feelings and motivations clearly. In this way, awakening is an act of coming into wholeness, of defragmentation and integration. We arrive at higher stages of consciousness with a deepened self-sense and clarified depth perception. “Seeing” becomes something we do as much with our hearts and minds as with our eyes.

What we discover through this process of awakening, as well as during peak moments or heightened states of consciousness, is that the matrix of consciousness – parts both awakened and in shadow – is nothing less than the invisible organizing principle of all life. This field calls to us as the impulse of evolution, as the voice of the Divine. Our own nervous systems contain a perfect blueprint of this primary structure, and are connected directly into that greater field. In our bodies, we find the conditions for both exquisite coherence and connection, as well as for unfathomable pain and separation. Both are great mysteries, unravelling themselves to us in their own time in the process of awakening.

Wherever we find ourselves lacking sufficient coherence with the field, out of alignment with our Source, our bodies, minds, and cultures will suffer. Lack of coherence creates blockage, disintegration, and devolution. Starved for coherence and lacking adequate integration, evolution eventually stalls and cannot proceed. We may drop into lower levels of consciousness until we discover the nascent thrust forward once again.

#### GLOBAL SOCIAL WITNESSING

In meditation, we practice unhooking consciousness from the object of awareness. Through practice, we discover the inner witness, that which is not arising as our thoughts or sensations, but exists in the still silence beneath – a silent, non-judging observer.

Recognition of this deep inner witness brings peace and balance. By nurturing our capacity to hold witness, we lend support to areas such as emotional regulation and stress tolerance. In this way, holding witness perspective has the effect of deepening conscious awakening.

Out of this imbedded awareness emerges another competency of consciousness, an ableness of our time we might call *social global witnessing*, perhaps best understood as a mixture of contemplative precensing<sup>7</sup>

and active attunement. Rooted in solo contemplative practice, the seeds of this capacity in consciousness branch out, flowering as a necessary and collaborative function of the collective.

As social global witnesses, we hold active presence and engaged awareness of our world, observing all that arises around us while simultaneously observing all that arises within us. We remain aware of our internal responses to our exterior world, whether our response is resistance, shutting down, or even a sense of going numb. As attuned social global witnesses, we create an expanded interior space from which we begin to recognize the self-sense of the collective.

An appropriate motto for the attuned global witness might be: “As I witness the collective, I witness myself,” or conversely, “as I witness myself; I witness the collective.”

Our modern devices contain immense computing power, more than the entire Allied forces possessed during World War II<sup>8</sup>. With a few taps of a screen, in fact, we can reach loved ones, friends, and colleagues half-a-world away. Small enough to carry in a pocket, we can access whatever is happening anywhere in the world, as it’s happening. But much of what we label “news” is much more than current events. Popular, often corporate-owned, news outlets frequently sell fear-inducing, ratings-focused content – an assault on body and brain. Given the nature of the collective trauma we inherit, this material serves as a mirror to all we carry. Depending on how we choose to relate to it, it either shapes our views of the world and one another, further generating fear and toxicity, or denial and numbness, or it points the way toward needed integration and healing. The choice is ours.

If given too much space in our lives, negative news media can make it further difficult to engage the present as connected witnesses. Rather than fostering empathy for those suffering as a result of the atrocities we read and hear about worldwide, certain forms, like 24-hour TV news, may only serve to disconnect us. Here, our collective shadows emerge in polarizing and dehumanizing ways – but the light we carry invites us to recognize these expressions as the call to heal our wounds, rather than to project, deny, or identify from them.

The paradoxical truth is that, to be global witnesses, we must remain conscious of current events in our communities and in the world, but we must learn to do so with all capacities online – where no part of us has checked out or become dysregulated. This is no small task. Refusing to sink to hysteria, polarization, or cynicism requires conscious vigilance. It asks that we attend our world’s pain with thinking minds and feeling hearts. To serve in presence as true

global witnesses, we must be willing to consciously feel and accept all that has been split off, dislocated, and denied. We must choose to be present witnesses for pain, for terror, and for trauma. We must be willing to consistently and consciously resolve those energies that have been left stored and undigested. In essence, we must open the carry-on baggage of our world, sort its contents, unpack.

Whatever trauma I carry belongs to the collective shadow and acts as a filter, preventing me from seeing the world, from witnessing clearly. Discovering this elemental truth, I learn the importance of clarifying my past and find that my own integration becomes an act of service.

#### MULTI-PERCEPTIVITY

The next evolutionary competency we meet is that of multi-perceptivity, the capacity for holding contradiction, paradoxes, without rejection or confusion. As we begin to master new, evolutionary capacities in collective awakening, we begin to desire solutions to our world's most intractable problems, recognizing these are the responsibility of all. We do so while allowing the space that hosts them to become alchemistic ground for transmutation and innovation to appear.

Becoming a conscious participant in global awakening is one of the noblest human endeavours we may undertake; it is the beginning of true caring, love, compassion, and inclusion. Whatever has been externalized, projected, suppressed, or denied can find a home within – embraced with acceptance.

#### GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

To grow in further consciousness, we will be required to face the pain we as a species have inflicted upon other beings, upon ourselves, and upon our planet – suffering we are still very much inflicting. We are called to develop deep planetary empathy. If we refuse this much-needed evolutionary upgrade, we will remain locked at our current level of consciousness, dooming ourselves, and almost certainly, untold other species. This transformation is an evolutionary imperative. We can observe the consequences of delaying this call in the repetition of many of our destructive patterns, those negative cycles of “news” and history – conflict and war and destruction – as well as the personal cycles of conflict all too often repeated in the lives of those with unprocessed trauma.

Therapeutic psychotherapy and other healing modalities offer valuable tools to individuals for the restoration of traumatic wounds, liberating sufferers from patterns of retraumatization, initiating

lives of greater choice and freedom. We must awaken to the degree of pain and unprocessed energy we carry. Its gravity slows down our evolution, stalling out the developmental process. By holding onto unresolved and unprocessed energies – past traumas and conflicts we dare not face – we doom humanity's children and grandchildren to carry this trauma for us.

The contents of one generation's collective unconscious is a hidden field of suppressed shadows the children of the next generation must be born into and forced to carry forward. This makes it a moral imperative that we reclaim these disavowed elements of self in our own lifetimes. Once we have done the work to excavate, heal, and integrate these lost fragments of self, they seek transcendence. We do not lose them, as an atom does not lose its quarks on its journey to become molecule, nor does a molecule lose its atoms as it becomes cell. It is only through the process of reclamation of cultural shadow, in the integration of collective trauma, that we become a sentient whole, able to make the world anew, together.

Just as a species acquires marvellous and often surprising physical adaptations, permitting it to survive even harsh or sudden changes to its environment, evolution offers adaptive upgrades in consciousness at every turn. Inherent to this is recognition that through conscious application, we may advance our own evolution as a matter of intention, desire, will, and practice. While the denser physical domain progresses relatively slowly, consciousness is unbounded. Through skilful practice, we may work to achieve mastery of our inborn ability to evolve. Through mindfulness, intention, precensing, attunement, collective dialogue, and other consciousness practices, we accelerate our path forward.

Here, the old is seen and made new, and the new is born. The liminal is the temple of birth-and-death where traumas are reconciled, the past released, self-structures both included and transcended, and the glittering, eternal present handwrites invitations to the field of future potential.

#### DEVOTION AND SACRED LAW AS FUNDAMENTAL TOOLS OF AWAKENING

In embodiment spirituality, we discuss two levels of practice asking to be combined. These are state practice and process practice. State practice, the process of seeking higher states of consciousness, may be reached through a strong contemplative practice: meditation, contemplation, prayer. During contemplative practice, sudden moments of awakening, or

state experiences, may occur for anyone at any stage of consciousness. A Buddhist's peak state and an evangelical Christian's will come in distinctly different flavours, but the numinous speaks to all.

As we progress along a path toward higher awareness, many of us begin popping in and out of higher states until we begin to establish a more permanent realization. At the same time, we may work to restore our relationship to life through what is referred to as process practice, a deeply relational spiritual training. Process practice is the restoration of all our relations through a deep practice of compassion, love, and illumination of the body-mind. Through process practice, we walk our talk, manifesting spirit and intelligence through a fully embodied relationship with our lives and all that we encounter. Process practice is done in the world, wherever we are. It does not ask that we depart from ordinary living to mediate or pray in a desert or ashram; it asks instead that we become cultural practitioners – to learn to use embodied awareness as a marriage bed for the transcendent and the immanent, the sacred and the secular.

It is through a combination of the contemplative state practice and a cultural yet mystical process practice that we become midwives in the awakening of our social agreements and their underlying architecture. This work inherently deepens and widens the interior space for self and all.

We live in a time that is a great challenge to full embodiment. An inheritance of multigenerational trauma combined with the nature of our post-modern lifestyles has severed the intellectual self from our physical and emotional bodies, dramatically limiting opportunity for much-needed integration. Since around the time of the Enlightenment, the rational intellect has been promoted as worthier and vastly more important than feeling, creative, and even spiritual pursuits. As a result, have been urged into compartmentalization and our rational minds have lifted off from our bodies, the home of emotion, memory, empathy, and creative awareness. This “helicopter mind” urges decisions that exclude the heart and the body, revealing why we have so removed ourselves from nature. An embodiment practice, more important now than ever, synchronizes all parts of the central nervous system and permits the realignment of the whole self. Embodiment is an urgent aspect of awakening, and is needed by all individuals, institutions, and organizations.

Devotion is generally a difficult concept for the scientifically informed, postmodern consciousness. After all, we abandoned the grip of repressive religion for greater intellectual autonomy. But what

began as a departure from regressive forms of faith soon leaves us stuck, itching from allergies to anything identified as “sacred.” We become doomed to meaninglessness, trapped in a cynicism that initially felt empowering, but has left us only with despair. In search of relief, we consume and abuse the entertainments marketed by capitalists, seeking shelter in hyper-individualism, but find only further fragmentation. We have lost our childlike wonder, sense of humility, and any reverence for connection. Too often, we suffer from the loss of a calming sense of illumination, that inner glow of Spirit, or anything more luminous than the incandescence of a cell phone screen.

And so, we long for technology to drive us to the brink of what we know, to usher a mechanical singularity that might offer a new sense of transcendence. Or, perhaps, destroy everything that is human.

#### THE LAW OF THE DIVINE IS SIMPLY THIS: LOVE.

Law should not be perceived as a rule or structure but as a longing for the deepest love affair with life. Sacred law is the way home. It is living in full synchronization with Source. It is the suspension of time, space, and separation. Law is holy communion.

Living in accordance with higher Law is to live in accordance with sacred ethics, with the essential flow and stillness. Divine laws are cosmic meridians, holding the web of life in the most coherent light and creative power of which our souls are a holographic projection.

When law must be enforced from the outside, we have lost our natural understanding and companionship with its divinity, and with our own. We live in a world of excessive regulation, litigiousness, and legal encumbrance because the sacred nature of Law, an inherent right of consciousness, has yet to be fulfilled in the collective through the act of awakening, and so law has been heavily externalized in many unjust and legalistic forms. Lower consciousness seeks to enact law through authoritarianism, using suppressive and restrictive functions to disempower the many while empowering only the few. This has led to widespread rejection of the notion that living according to higher Law could offer freedom, but it is a fundamental truth: divine law is the path to sovereignty.

#### CONCLUSION

What would it look like if our shared narrative were one of ascent – where, we, the mythic hero, having accepted a bit of divine guidance or inspiration,

chose to find our way out of the underworld, to rise from Abyss into Grace?

What would it feel like if we abandoned our great slumber and chose, instead, awakening?

Our past is not yesterday, but all of the stored and unresolved energies we hold, unseeing, consuming our capacity to remain fully present and awake. In the same way, our future is not tomorrow. It is an ever-present state of higher consciousness we are growing into now and now and now. The future is the potential of all resonant possibilities vibrating into being.

When we find ourselves attuned and enraptured in states of pure and essential flow – by inspiration, innovation, or genius – we are participating in the *effects* of the future. We are co-creating with the pure impulse of the evolutionary force. In such moments, we glimpse a taste of all we are becoming and all that we are. By choosing to resolve the karmic/traumatic energies we carry, our shared future becomes vibrant with innovation and creativity; it becomes a location of healing where the light can pour through. In this light, we emerge as radically, exponentially whole.

Should we access such a future, the marketplace will shine with the presence of G-d, and we will know the sacred has returned. Science will meet mysticism in a marriage of souls. Medicine will remember the body's holy origins. All of this will be possible because we will have begun the work of excavating our shadows, making conscious every energy that has been held in the dark of the deep *unawake*. The result of our co-excavating will find us in a new state of deep communion and ever-present co-relating.



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<sup>1</sup> Berman, 2017. “*Technology Feels Like It’s Accelerating*.”

<sup>2</sup> Logos, 2017. *Encyclopedia of Britannica Online*.

<sup>3</sup> Abbott, E, 2017. *Flatland*.

<sup>4</sup> Dube, et al, 2003. *Adverse Childhood Experiences Study*.

<sup>5</sup> Portney, 2003. *Intergenerational Transmission of Trauma*.

<sup>6</sup> Wilber, 2005. *AQAL*.

<sup>7</sup> Baek, 2017. “Collective Presencing.”

<sup>8</sup> Kaku, 2012. *Physics of the Future*.

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