

Introduction:

The roots of Systemic Constellation Work (SCW) reach into many fields. A kind of ‘action therapy’ this group based therapy approach was conceived by Bert Hellinger in Germany in the early 1970s. The application of ancestral cause theory allowed for finding and restoring ruptured ‘Orders of Love’ in the ancestral lineage and the family of origin. Bert Hellinger, “the ultimate empiricist”, synthesized aspects of numerous psychotherapy methods and called his work *Familienstellen* (Family Constellation, FC) which he practiced with “unwavering loyalty and trust in [the authority of his own] soul.” Fusing *ancestors* and *soul* with psychology made *Familienstellen* an almost instant success in Germany and not surprising a target for scathing critique. In less than thirty years FC spread around the globe; a remarkable phenomenon indeed. Many facilitators still use the tenets of Hellinger’s original work, albeit others practice under the generic term Systemic Constellation Work (SCW). SCW is applicable to solve problems in many kinds of systems, including, yet also entirely outside of psychotherapy and certainly beyond family systems therapy. Throughout this paper (as well as in my own facilitation) the more generic term Systems Constellation Work (SCW) will be used.

So far, research regarding SCW focuses mostly on client improvement, i.e., researcher collected data about outcomes after treatment. Here and there other aspects of this group based process are touched on, e.g., its likeness to ancient community ritual. Group participants are by far not as visible in the research while not in client role. This is my interest here, since representing and witnessing (the other roles participants experience) are not only crucial to make imbalances three dimensional and visible, but they tend to be powerful

experiences in their own right. The consensus to date appears to be that *representatives* and *witnesses* help others, get a constellation in turn, and take away (as a kind of afterthought) how their experience may have mirrored issues in their own life and systems. The value of a representative's service to the client's system and how it effects the person representing has not yet been systematically explored. Therefore, this paper discusses *representing in SCW* per se and will frame the phenomenon of representational perception as a contemplative practice in the service of embodying relationality as well as embodied difference. The claim then becomes that engagement in such practice broadens personal epistemology *and* ontology beyond the confines of ones own *Sitz im Leben* (e.g., personal history and context.) Over time increased human systems and relational literacy across socially constructed boundaries becomes the take away. This emphasis honors the importance and agency of representatives and witnesses in the co-creation of social change in service of individual family systems as well as beyond.

Part I — *Origins* — introduces a case study; sketches work and life of its founder, sets the stage for nesting ancestral cause theory within a family systems theory framework, and briefly points to important tenets of the work.

Part II — *War Stories* — introduces the author's *Sitz im Leben*, offers insights into her own family system, ancestral legacy and correlation to the experience of Germany's still living 15 million *Kriegskinder* and their children (*Kriegsenkel*.)

Part III — *Pincers Maneuvers* — offers a theoretical foundation for a *thou-ological* discourse and for representing as the *applied* thou-ology tool. We will see how representing elicits Martin Buber's *I-Thou* encounter and proceeds to expand it into systemic *I-We* processing. Likewise it will be shown that SCW enacts, addresses, and completes

Emmanuelle Levinas call for *seeing the naked face* of the other, thereby being held to practice (temporary) situational responsibility for the other. While both their calls deeply reach into (and radiate out from) the heart of process oriented SCW at large, it is representing which becomes the path to where horizons of otherness and its particularities meet in service of mending the world.

In Part IV — *Here We Come!* — In this chapter we set our gaze beyond outcome data and map import, scope, and future of SCW as a contemplative tool. This is followed by concluding remarks.

Part I: Origins

Here We Go!

Activism? Therapy? Religion? Rituals? Pilgrimage? Politics? Many wonder these days how to move forward as we simply *must* learn to co-exist in more life-supporting ways. There *are* some, who raise a prophetic voice. Prominently among them figures Pope Francis (among other times) when he addressed the TED2017 conference in Montreal and interpreted the conference title *The Future You*. He imploringly called for living an inclusive *we*. He invited the audience to approach our future by opening a dialogue with many ‘yous’ (plural) today. He emphasized “the future is made of *yous* (sic!); it is made of encounters, because life flows through our relations with one another.” The words and vision of Pope Frances is a fitting opening to this thesis because it emphasizes the same kind of inclusive, we-oriented dialogue and systemic experience which participation in *Systemic Constellation Work* (SCW) offers. SCW, a group approach to uncovering and mending systemic imbalance, was first conceived and developed in Germany in the early 1970. *Familienstellen* (Family Constellation) was synthesized

from a variety of sources rooted in family systems and ancestral cause theory. The charisma and sure-footed skill of founder Bert Hellinger, as well as the captivating efficacy of his method, rapidly spread the work throughout Germany and eventually worldwide. This unique work offers participants both, an embodied *experience* of systemically fragmented ‘yous’ *and* a process by which mending broken connection is facilitated.

SCW has been extensively researched in Germany, South America, Australia, and the US, among other places. Data collection mostly focuses on efficacy of SCW as service to clients (individuals, groups, communities, and organizations.) In addition a number of academic papers discuss the *Wirkmechanismus* (the *how-it-works*). Overall, however, the data backs SCW to effectively address imbalances in an individual, a family lineage, a community, or an organization while other facets of the work still await our attention.

This thesis therefore expands existing research by discussing the nature and theoretical foundation of *participation* in SCW groups; here in particular *representing* (and by extension) *witnessing*. Both will be defined as embodied contemplative practice in service of another with the explicit intent to expand the representative’s human systems literacy, personal epistemology, and ontological horizon. A more poignant way of saying the same is that representing in SCW offers us an opportunity to practice *alternatives to killing* one another. Martin Buber’s *I-Thou encounter* will be explored as the meeting through which representing and witnessing over time accomplishes such a tall order. SCW facilitates Buber’s *meeting* not located “in one of the two [or more] partners nor in both together, but only in their dialogue itself, in this ‘between’ in which they live together.” It shall be shown that process oriented SCW deliberately makes space for as well as ritually

tends to Buber's *between*. Representatives and the circle of witnesses experience a series of estrangements and fragmentations which foreclose the '*between*'. Under the guidance of a facilitator they partake in the co-creation of dynamic relational mending of said ruptures. A constellation at heart therefore is the practice of *Tikkun Olam* (midrashic mending of the world), which expands Martin Buber's *occasional* arising of such experiences into near predictability. Participants partake as clients because of their own need for help, but most often they also have *de facto* human interest in the more ethical comportment called for by Emmanuel Levinas. They answer his call by temporarily embodying beholden-ness in their very embodied service to the other and their (family) system. They dwell in the place of a particular other (dead and living) and attentively notice sensation, emotions, and impulses. These are occasioned by that very place, i.e., sensation, emotions, and impulses differ from their own experience outside the constellation.) Representing and witnessing, then, answers the call of both scholars enacted as showing up in the voluntary, de-facto ethically inspired contemplative and embodied presence for strangers. How a conversation between aspects of Buber and Levinas' teaching reflects this will later be demonstrated as a *pincers maneuver*.

“Now I See You!”

To make these claims more accessible to readers unfamiliar with *Systemic Constellation Work* (SCW) the following case study describes one (composite) Systemic Constellation (SC) process. The vignette demonstrates the four *functions* participants can take on during a constellation process – client / issue carrier, representative, witness, and facilitator.

Composite Case Study

A client presented with resistant drug problems suffered bouts of debilitating depression, and grieved the recent loss of his lover who had suddenly died. The facilitator inquired about tragic events in his lineage, of which the client claimed to know nothing. He did report pervasive alcohol use, dogged stoicisms, and bouts of depression in his mother and grandmother. This guided the facilitator to take a closer look at the maternal lineage. The client was asked to choose someone to represent himself, his mother, his grandmother, and his great grandmother and line them up, one behind the other in historical order. The representatives were invited to stand with quiet attentiveness. Mother, and Grandmother immediately looked at the floor (e.g., in SCW the place of the dead). Great-grandmother stood erect and visibly rigid. One by one, the facilitator asked them to share feelings, sensations, and impulses initiated by their role. Great-grandmother reported being barely able to stand. Nor could she lie down in the position of one dead. The client's representative walked off to the side, looked on, and reported feeling cold, lost, and despite the presence of three others in the circle, utterly alone. Suddenly the client, seated in the circle of witnesses (himself a witness of the process), shared a faint memory; something 'never spoken of' in his family of origin. His great-grandmother had gone missing. She likely died during the San Francisco earthquake in 1906. The client's family waited for her to re-appear and gradually stopped speaking of her. The systemic silence eventually became so powerful that even her name was no longer remembered. Hearing this, the attention of the client's representative shifted. He intently looked at Great-grandmother, now unable to take his eyes off the rigid person, tears slowly welling up. Her representative, who had reported feeling terrified and frozen, was gently invited to face her great-grandson. Their eyes locked. He winced, cried, and finally wailed uncontrollably, his eyes still locked with hers. Everyone else in the room was also moved to tears – exactly what the family system had denied itself through stoic erasure of grief, and memory. This tragic loss, nested in the overwhelming collective terror of an earthquake, remained un-processed; the family's grief froze in time. Two generations of women and this great-grandson carried the burden of denied grief for an ancestor and for collective loss in silent loneliness. Now tears flowed freely among these erstwhile strangers, people slowly approached each other, held hands, hugged, and cried some more.

After a while, their shared grief settled and the facilitator gathered the whole group for a ritual process of closure to this unfinished 'family business'. Everyone present was invited to create a temporary shrine in honor of this ancestor. The well-appointed room offered images, flowers, and figurines. With the help of all (client still seated and watching) artifacts were gathered, set on a quickly added side table, and lovingly arranged, while here and there laughter bubbled up. Great-Grandma, seated behind the table, watched the activity with rapt attention. Then the facilitator invited all back in a half circle to face the seated elder. Simple sentences were offered to whoever felt moved to speak: "Granny, I am your great-grandson, (name)." "I now see you, Granny." "You have a place in my heart." "I am so grateful we found you." "Please bless your daughter and my mothers, who grieved for you too." "Please, bless me (name), as I go forward from here." Slowly a new ease settled in. After releasing the client representative from his role, the facilitator asked the client to stand in his place in the vibrantly connected system. He stepped into the new configuration and was given time to settle in. Finally, the facilitator offered a closing sentence. A version of this frequently is offered as opportunity to experience *consent* to the tragic loss of a loved one while a community bears witness: "You died. I take life for a while longer, and when my time comes, I too will die. Until then, you have a place in my heart."

Standing next to his 'granny', the client no longer needed to carry forgotten memory and un-lived grief for his family system. He can know his ancestress and claim her as an ally. Which he did, "For the family album", he only half joking told the group as he excitedly took pictures of the colorful shrine.

Common Origin

Our collective *longing* for better human relations needs not only proclamation but even more so doing. We need to urgently update to life giving (even life saving) inter-human comportment. Some already manifest this longing for better relations through their actions; Dan Booth Cohen is one of them. An erstwhile international peacemaker, Booth Cohen recalls that his peace making relied “largely on education, dialogue, spiritual development, emotional literacy, and cognitive awareness”. While he praises these tools as necessary and powerful, he also experienced how “psychological, religious, and spiritual tools do not reach and resolve the source of [conflictual] impulses.” In 2000, SCW, the missing tool found him. He soon became a facilitator of SCW and conducted the “first academic research [in the US] that examined its philosophical stances and roots as an integration of existential phenomenology, family systems theory, and elements of indigenous spiritual mysticism.” Sally McFague, a feminist ecologist and theologian, also calls for a tool; for her tool spells *justice inspired praxis*. She likewise thinks systemically when she offers the notion of *common origin* as a starting point *and* helps us understand such surefooted cosmic poetry as Barbara Taylor Brown’s *luminous web*. Common origin places human beginnings next to non-human life and deems it *equal to all* of creation. McFague takes Taylor Brown’s poesy to its ethical conclusion, when she writes

The common creation story is more than a scientific affair; it is, implicitly, deeply moral, for it raises the question of the place of human beings in nature, and calls for a kind of praxis in which we see ourselves in proportion, in harmony, and in a fitting manner related to all others that live and all the systems that support life.

McFague, Buber, Levinas, and Pope Francis, each in their own way urge us to grow into seeing the other in a way that makes us beholden and part of a whole; volunteering to represent is a tool and one path to grow into that capacity. Representing in SCW is the intentional practice of purposeful inter-dependence, of negotiating the right place in a given family or other system

(again: not our own) and by doing so entering into embodied presence of otherness and participation in a *Knowing Field*. Listening to the Knowing Field has shown to connect representatives to each other and to all which supports life. We literally *sense, feel*, and eventually *know* ourselves better “in proportion, in harmony, and in a fitting manner related to others”. The practice is instrumental in forming beholden-ness to the other in a temporary experience of taking on particular expressions and adequate responsibilities connected to the place we find ourselves in. In short, we serve a particular other (the client) in their quest for healing, while tangibly expanding our own ontological and epistemological horizons in the process.

I introduce the term *thou-o-logy* to signify the process of representational cis-cendental contemplative presence and interaction with otherness. Actually ‘becoming’ the *particular* other in a constellation as a stand-in to temporarily dwell in their system and in the process of mending will be termed *applied* thou-o-logy. Applied thou-o-logy in turn roots in the *we-o-logical* contemplation of un-relenting albeit exceedingly complex existential and historical inter-dependence between all life forms. We-o-logy emphasizes the need to “keep as wide open the arena for testing our proposals as we can and to be open to multiple voices, including the voices of bodies and material reality.” When asking, how we can represent the other meaningfully and ‘efficacious’ undoubtedly the transcendental *mysterium* behind our connectedness comes into view. The unknowns of ‘how-does-this-work’ and the ethics involved, while not the focus of this thesis, will later be briefly explored.

The Scars We Inherit

Ancestral trauma theory slowly receives more attention in disciplines concerned with individual and collective suffering. In SCW, ancestral trauma becomes literally tangible: a representative's 'frozen' feeling points us to trauma somewhere lodged in the lineage. Violence and other traumatic experiences routinely shatter connection while mending broken connection just as routinely is the antidote to traumatic rupture. This can be a daunting pursuit. In SCW Participants and facilitators alike are faced with and sometimes overwhelmed by seemingly monolithic suffering. A closer look at the systemic *Gestalt* of suffering allows to see three intricately interlaced layers. The most obvious is the aftermath of *biographical* trauma: personal traumatic experience disrupts an individual's life, their day to day functioning, and their overall resilience to life's challenges. This often is diagnosed as PTSD and may require individual therapy and care. Upon closer examination beneath the individual's vulnerability an ancestral component emerges. SCW addresses this layer by assuming ancestral cause(s) entangled with present day conflicts and struggles. African American scholar Joy De Gruy, for example, researches such intractable conflicts and conditions and finds persistent patterns of ancestral injury in her community. She notes, "While African Americans managed to emerge from chattel slavery and the oppressive decades that followed with great strength and resiliency, they did not emerge unscathed. Slavery produced centuries of physical, psychological, and spiritual injury." Lauded Hebrew poet, Yehuda Amichai calls this the "the howl of the orphans ... passed from one generation to the next, as in a relay race: the baton never falls." Psychologist and Holocaust researcher at Hebrew University, Rachel Yehuda, has collected ample data to back up that the descendants of Shoa survivors are indeed predisposed to lowered stress resilience in turn. A third layer, less discernably woven into these, is the collective *historio-social* context within which

any lineage narrative unfolds. Michelle Sotero, professor at Las Vegas University, explains how the relatively new field of “historical trauma theory provides a macro-level, temporal framework for examining how the ‘life course’ of a population exposed to trauma at a particular point in time compares with that of unexposed populations.” This, alas, raises the question if there *is* such a thing as ‘un-exposed’ populations in our post-modern world. Larry Graham, professor emeritus at Iliff School of Theology, pondered the pervasiveness of war in every human’s existence:

The human race is constructed by war in ways that we don’t even begin to understand.... Our beings, [our families], our nations, our cultures, our religion—they are constructed, infused by, built and rebuilt by war.... The fact that we are not aware of that doesn’t mean it’s not true. What we have not found is a way in our culture to productively engage the multilayered ways we have experienced war—it’s impacted us, we’ve endured it, we’ve recovered from it, we are passing on our legacies from it and all of that is part of who we are.

Something, however, is missing in Graham’s sweeping lament. From a systemic perspective it is important to name that wars are *initiated*. Perpetrators of (war) violence *create* separation, alienation, loss, and grief — all antithetical to systemic connection, inclusion, and balance. *Perpetrating* therefore is an important distinction from *being at the impact*, albeit in the end perpetrators *and* victims, as well as their descendants all certainly suffer. Because of the systemic entanglement between them every systemic constellation undeniably and explicitly includes perpetrators *and* victims to constellate their not-so-luminous web. In addition, a representative for *war* often will be added next to perpetrators and victims which elicits a three-way relational dialogue *between* them from which conditions for mending and healing can emerge.

Presently Larry Graham’s lament brings the quickening of war mongering to mind which already results in huge numbers of displaced people in many parts of the world. The

enormity of grief is overwhelming and the shattering of connections across the globe is deafeningly loud. Many places still and again are at the mercy of age old, seemingly self-birthing monsters of war. While we “are not obligated to complete the work we are also not free to abandon it.” Alas, even after more than 70 years of effort and work on the legacy of the horrendous trauma inflicted by Nazi Germany’s people the baton still is handed to the next generation on both sides. What may the currently rising tide of violence leave in its wake? Not giving up then is not about outcomes alone — it becomes soul work. Through SCW we offer the soul of a person, a family, a community, even a nation, a voice and our sentient bodies to express itself. This will be discussed in more detail later on.

A Systemic Perspective

Booth Cohen marvels how “[a] constellation group defies conventional description. It is neither group therapy, nor a variant of an encounter group, 12-Step program, peer counseling, support group, or religious or spiritual gathering.” While I generally agree with Booth Cohen’s assessment, I suggest SCW does have a contemplative, albeit non-religious dimension. After all, the founder of *Familienstellen* is a trained theologian and philosopher and *was* a catholic priest for more than two decades. While his facilitation has a phenomenological emphasis, his extensive poetic writing decidedly is in conversation with the *spirit* of wisdom traditions. That said, from the beginning *Familienstellen* was defined as interaction with the family soul. It should also briefly be mentioned that Hellinger’s self-assured, directive and unapologetically confrontational facilitation, as well as the stunning number of followers he attracted, was critically investigated as a ‘cult’ in 2004 by German authorities. Leading up to this, opposing sides of the Family Constellation community in Germany clashed (a kind of highly

publicized systems therapy culture war) and re-formed as Systemic Constellation Work outside Bert Hellinger's sphere. Variations of systemic work now have developed over two decades — and counting.

Some (myself included) developed much less directive, more process-oriented styles of facilitation. Others translated the systemic principles into language applicable to organizations and corporations. Again, unlike Booth Cohen's refusal to name a spiritual dimension, the claim here is that participation in constellations provides contemplative practice for all involved and spiritual experiences for many. Interestingly, however, it seems that conversations with 'soul' come full circle: A recent edition of essays written by German coaches and business advisors sports Bernd Schmid's article *Soul, Guilt, and Professional Action in Organizations*.

Hellinger's Becoming

Bert Hellinger (*1925) grew up in a religious household in Leimen, Germany. His parents supported their son's resistance to Nazi pressure, even as Hitler Youth organizers were "notorious for encouraging children to betray their parents." At age 17 Hellinger was branded *Volksfeind* (enemy of the people) for his refusal to conform and was ironically saved from imprisonment through being drafted before a trial. In 1945, 20 years old, he returned from war, experienced in "combat, capture, defeat, and release from a prisoner of war camp." Soon — his intention from a very young age — he entered monastic life, studied theology and philosophy, was ordained as a catholic priest, and eventually sent to South Africa. He lived for sixteen years engaged in educational ministry, learned to speak Zulu, and studied Zulu culture. Later he reports that he was (not surprisingly) impressed, never hearing "anyone speak disrespectful about their

parents.” What’s more, Zulu philosophy did not match Heidegger’s (one of his teacher’s) dictum which categorically claims “To be human is to be thrown into a world with no clear logical, ontological, or moral structure.” Quite the opposite! “These were not lost individuals thrown into being but temporary custodians of life knit into a tightly woven fabric of generations past and yet to be.” After 16 years of transformative experiences in South Africa he amiably left the order and returned to Germany.

All around, German families harbored pain and secrets nested in stories of loss, violence, and disconnect. It was the early 1960s and families had tucked away pain and despair, busy with the creation of the *Wirtschaftswunde* (economy miracle.) Impressed by the notion of respect for *all* family members, the living and the dead, Hellinger immersed himself in the study of family systems. Quickly and unapologetically, he included the dead and their fate. In contrast, most other Family Systems modalities looked only at the *living* members of the family.

Eventually he combined his career as an educator, his experience of Zulu life and philosophy, his theology and philosophy, as well as his studies with numerous humanistic psychology celebrities in the US and in Germany as his own ‘brand’. Rather importantly for post WWII German clients he fearlessly included *all* the dead — victims, perpetrators, life giving, life limiting — if part of the system in question, they all were given a place.

It did not come as a surprise that practically *every* German constellation revealed lost members, betrayal of neighbors, and/or murder victims. Just as nearly, all harboured secrets, angst, shame, and more prominently pervasive numbness. Over, and over, grandparent-, father-, mother-, and sibling-shaped holes formed the pattern in the lineages of *Kriegskinder* (war’s children) and *Kriegsenkel* (war’s grandchildren). Surviving parents or grandparents often were

disowned by their offspring for known atrocities or general involvement in horrendous Nazi terror — resulting in a painful loss for both sides nevertheless. Moreover, parents of Hellinger’s early clients all too often had survived *their* experiences and memories only by way of choking love, connection to their children, and meaning with all too tightly pulled up bootstraps.

Hellinger’s *ancestral cause* assumption allowed to address and possibly resolve *any* of life’s problems. Family Constellation swept through Germany over the next couple of decades, swiftly gaining nationwide prominence, and as mentioned above, also notoriety.

Belonging and Loyalty

Just as radical as talking with and to ‘the dead’ was Hellinger’s understanding of family ‘origin’ which had (and has) the medically informed therapy establishment up in arms.

Here, the individual is seen as nested *within* and belonging to a family soul. “[It] is not we who possess a soul, but rather a soul ... possesses us; and ... the soul is not there to serve us, but rather we are in the service of the soul.” Booth Cohen comments:

The radical, if not revolutionary, context of the soul in Family Constellation is this: Foremost our Creators are our biological mother and father. In the soul, the object of greatest love and yearning are the parents. ... In a Constellation circle, the emphasis on ones own parents as the source of life aims to re-integrate the soul in the body and mind.

Meanwhile, Bert Hellinger’s notion of parents as ‘origin’ compares favorably with extensive interdisciplinary research conducted by psychologist Garcia Navaez. Her work maps human morality as it is nested in neurobiological development. Her data, taken from attachment studies and developmental neurobiology suggests, “mammalian caregivers and offspring *need* to bond — especially the mother and the neonate — so that the offspring are well cared for with *warmth, food, safety, and acceptance.*” Moreover, “75% of the brain (in terms of size) develops

after birth, coconstructed by caregivers ... through at least the first five years of life.” Giving birth, and co-constructing an infant’s becoming does indeed make parents the origin of *sensory* and *emotional* formation. By extension, this makes sense of Hellinger’s metaphorical locus of, *no-matter-what*-belonging and fierce loyalty to forebears. Hellinger, like Navaez, consistently observed *unterbrochene Hinbewegung* (interrupted reaching-out movement) to the mother where early bonding had failed. A mother’s death, post-partum depression, infant hospitalization, other means of infancy separation, or relationships haunted by loss and unresolved grief, to name just a few, are on Navaez’s list of circumstances which can disrupt the bond and result in “poor social experience during sensitive periods [for the infant which] may result in the development of competitive, soloist universes.” A ritual sentence, as simple as, “I am sorry, I was not there for you,” or “Now I can see you,” genuinely spoken by a representative, can thaw long frozen grief and open the system to fluid giving and receiving. Souls breathing again and love flowing again become tangible experiences. Soul loyalty with the family system therefore also marks representational experience in SCW as *soul work*, again, to be discussed later in more detail.

Part II: War Stories

Sitz im Leben

Just as with theology, thou-o-logy is biography — meaning that context matters. A brief overview over my own origins familiarizes the reader with the roots of my passion for ancestral trauma and for systemic constellations. I was born in Heidelberg, Germany 11 years after the gates of Auschwitz, Buchenwald, Treblinka, Dachau, Bergen-Belsen, Flossenbürg, Sachsenhausen, Terezin, Majdanek, and many, many lesser known concentration camps opened. I identify as a female pink-skinned, silver-haired German-national and an early *Kriegsenkel* (War

Grand-Child.) In the US I am categorized as a *legal alien resident* and married to a white US-American of Scottish decent, albeit several generations removed from his family's Scottish origins. Before 2000 I breathed, loved, and worked as a Naturopath near Heidelberg, Germany and as a psychotherapist in Colorado, US. Studies at a theological institution resulted in this thesis and in identifying as a contemplative humanist, trained in the healing arts, researcher of the contemplative practice of cis-cendental thou-o-logy within SCW.

Some 45 years ago I dimly grasped that I had opened a door to which no one had given me a key. I happened upon a book in the *Städtische Bücherei Heidelberg* (public library.) Pulling it from the shelf, it opened to a grainy black and white photograph of pale emaciated bodies hanging from butcher hooks in front of a brick wall. There were WWII and Holocaust curricula at school. Chancing on this image, however, was so horrifying that I never discussed it anywhere. Struck by its sheer obscenity, I got violently sick and fled from the building, horror stricken. I was years old and the image to this day has not paled from my retina, nor has the nausea it brought on dislodged from my soul. Being German, even a *Nachgeborene* (a later-born), has ever since meant being in intimate relationship with millions of *butchered* Jewish and non-Jewish victims of Germany's Nazi crimes — *as well as* to the perpetrators who murdered them. That very moment brutally hit home how 'we' abandoned neighbors to peril, persecuted men women and children, incarcerated them cruelly, and *slaughtered* them coldly! The adults of my 'childhood-we' were the very people who partook or condoned and they also were the ones I loved as grandparents, trusted as neighbors, and belonged to in community. Today, the adults of that era are dead, their children, born between 1930 and 1945, the *war generation and my parents*, are dying. Then the adults still were all around – they were my elders.

A Practical Necessity?

Many German families managed the dual trauma of perpetration and suffering through silence; some began a new life elsewhere. The parents of US born Burghart Bilger, staff writer at the *New Yorker*, immigrated to the US in the early 1960s. Bilger recently returned to Germany to research his grandfather's involvement in World War II and published his story in the September 2016 issue of the *New Yorker*. He encountered several hundred Germans of his parent's generation at a national congress of *Kriegskinder* (war's children) and notes:

They came to Cologne from every corner of the country ... because they couldn't sleep at night and their marriages had foundered. Because they'd lived in the same town all their lives yet never felt at home. Because they were undone by loud noises and tight spaces, uneasy with intimacy and desperate with solitude. Because they were seventy years old and still waiting for their lives to begin.

While traveling down memory lane Bilger also encountered German *Kriegsenkel* (war's grandchildren) of roughly his own generation (and mine). They, he found, also suffered under estrangement manifested in similar symptoms. While some are still in denial (or worse part of the neo-nazi presence), the *Kriegsenkel* generation was and is more able to engage their suffering *en masse* and often chooses to connect individual pain to the troubling collective past. Bilger also heard of *Familienstellen* (Family Constellation, FC.) He signed up for a FC group in Berlin and witnessed, as he puts it, how Germans over the last three decades made "peace with their dead." He later reflects on the experience of sitting in a circle with some fifteen participants:

What happened next is hard to categorize. It was part theatre, part therapy, part séance—a measure of just how far Germans will go to come to terms with their past ... If sessions like [this] have found such a passionate following, it may be because [the] country's secrets run so dark and deep. Communing with your ancestors is more than a matter of mystical belief in Germany ... It's a practical necessity. How else can a people so bent on silence for so long ever learn their true history?

Bilger did not quite understand that the necessity to engage the past in *community* is much more important than finding historical truth. At large constellations are done in groups where strangers meet each other in the heart of suffering; where they can bring their pain to light and process it *for and with* each other. In fact, a vivid public *discourse* is happening for the past seventy some years in Germany in which the past is processed in media, literature, and academia. Eminent memory scholar Alaida Assmann, professor of Cultural Studies in Konstanz even co-founded a whole discipline of *memory scholarship* with her husband Jan Assmann, a bible scholar. 40 some books to her name document how *Deutsche Erinnerungsgeschichte nach dem 2. Weltkrieg* (History of Remembering in Post World War II Germany) unfolded in the academe and in the culture under (among others) her tutelage. In contrast, the personal, the privately held, the thoroughly hidden trauma of *Kriegskinder* (*1930 – 1945) at large was powerfully silent for a long time yet still formed and informed the generation of *Kriegsenkel* (* after 1945).

Silence

SCW accesses ancestral fates, ancestral trauma, ancestral coping, and unresolved ancestral entanglement in the lives of descendant. *One* such strand of fate is the ‘war story’ of my maternal lineage: My great-grandmother, Anna (*1879), was 35 when my great-grandfather was drafted to fight in WWI. She was the single mom of three small children for four years. 6 years of WWII amounted to 10 war years in her life. My grandmother Marie (*1903) was 11 and 36 years old, when the same two wars became *her* decade of war. Her first child, Uncle Georg Junior died from a fever at age two in 1931, the same year Elisabeth, my mother was born. Marie, like her mother before, became a single mother when my grandfather Georg was drafted into military service in 1939; the second time in his too short life.

My mother's war, WWII, began at age 8 and like her mother before, she had an absentee father. Her childhood and formative years was steeped in ever-present Nazi propaganda from conception until age 14, when WWII crashed into an inexplicable nightmare. When Grandfather Georg (*1900) left to be a soldier, first in France, later on the *Eastern Front* he left behind his family, backbreaking quarry work, a patch of subsistence farmland, a sow, two goats, and a small flock of chicken. During six years of absence, he became a voice read from letters and postcards and morphed into an image on small yellowed photographs. He is a slight infantryman behind thick wire-rimmed glasses. He often stands among horses. He sometimes holds a little dog. Among comrades, he gently gazes at the camera.

As the war-years stretched, life everywhere in Germany became harder. Finally the country was freed by allied forces from its participation in brutal tyranny. Other men returned and eventually the numbers of home comers dwindled — so did my family's hope. My grandmother and her only living child remained in suspension: Georg Dunger, husband and father was missed in action. Their tale of loss froze into a formulaic, close to mute narrative: He learned French. He healed mom's earaches with chopped parsley packs. His last letter arrived in January 1945. Mom waited. Had he come back her life would have been *so* different. He was declared legally dead in 1965 — 20 years after the war ended. He would have been 65 years old.

A Kind of Homecoming

Their narrative (as in many German families) squelched questions hidden in plain sight: My mother never discussed *how* her father may have been killed, nor *what* her father may have done all those years. I mostly 'met' him when representing in SCW through the good fortune to experience and witness how other family systems in Germany and the US wrestled

with their past. Standing in the role of an SS officer, a child of a concentration camp survivor, an unnamed victim of genocide, a mother grieving her child lost to bombing (or more recently to violence and drugs), a likely raped grandmother who committed suicide, a man incarcerated without the possibility of parole — those were but a few experiences to learn. My experience in these roles and the experience of solutions the respective constellation process reached were, and still are, embodied knowing which expanded my emotional courage and my soul's capacity to bear the painfully disturbing possibilities hidden within my own grandfather's (and my other elder's) unknown and unknowable story. Representing helped at the very least to add previously un-included questions into *my* life story. In fact, SCW radically includes otherwise *un-includable* questions, as well as tacitly un-includable members into the family system.

My questions evolved over time and through systemic inquiry: Did grandfather Georg die in the trenches? Was he part of a trek of soldiers marched across Russia? Did he die on the march? Did he starve in a POW camp? Answers remain absorbed by the silent web of unknowable history. Arresting still is how the unknowable combined with my mother's silence for the longest time kept me from wondering (let alone asking) *who* this man behind the wire rimmed little smile, the gentle face, actually was. What was his *experience*? What did he *do*? Was he just one more 'ordinary' soldier? For sure, research offers knowledge what being a *Wehrmacht* soldier can have looked like. The historian Daniel Goldhagen documents many possibilities, too many, in his painstakingly detailed book *Hitler's Willing Executioners*.

Did Grandfather Georg round up Jews in a Polish village? Did he herd women and children into the woods? Did he watch them dig their own grave? Did he raise a rifle to shoot row after row after row of unarmed victims? Did he throw a torch into gasoline-soaked

straw bails? Did he watch crazed humans trying to claw their way out of a burning locked barn? In my maternal lineage, these horrendous possibilities remain shrouded in silence and buried by frozen grief. The shroud tore open for me when I finally had the courage to look at the man Georg *and* consent that being a soldier in *that* war, in *that* army, at that time quite possibly might offer gruesome answers to these questions. Alas, no historical information (or intimation) was ever found; *Groußvadder Schorsch* (Grandfather Georg in my German vernacular) remains a faded ghost.

Again, it was by way of perceiving the feelings of those I represented — on both sides of numerous perpetrator/perpetrated equations — that I grew able to hold these unanswerable questions *and* live with purpose and dignity in their presence. In and through the embodied pain of other seekers, my soul and emotional resilience expanded and gradually extended beyond the loyalty to my family system's muted soul. *Standing in an other's shoes*, as Levinas asks us to do, awarded me the study of pain, rage, coldness, longing, numbness, protectiveness, hatred, love, care, and connectedness depending on the unfolding systemic process and the role I embodied. Through seeing and experiencing grief, disdain, powerlessness, rejection, longing, shame, crazed-ness, helplessness, and love others felt in and for loved ones guilty of known horrors, I learned to carry my Grandfather Georg's heart – possibly the heart of a war criminal – in my heart, right next to existential sorrow. After all a kind of homecoming.

III. Pincers Maneuvers

For the Love of Life

Now we approach the pincers maneuver in which Martin Buber's and Emmanuel Levinas' *pieces de resistance* will be entwined to become the taproot which reaches deeply into

and also radiates out from the heart of SCW. A selective gaze into the life and work of Buber and Levinas demonstrates how our closely their and my individual and collective *histories* are inextricably interwoven in the depth of history. This undoubtedly is the reason why their work and call is so important to me and to my love for human life.

Emmanuel Levinas, born in Lithuania in 1906, belongs to the generation of philosophers whose youth and young adulthood was formatively impacted by the violence and destruction of WWI and the ensuing chaos across Europe. In 1914 Levinas' family fled to the Ukraine and returned to Lithuania in 1920. Before he was even 14 years old, Levinas had experienced the first global war of known history and knew intimately the age-old blight and flight of (Eastern) European Jewry. In 1923, he left Lithuania to study philosophy, psychology, and sociology at Strasbourg University in France. Later (1928-29) he added Husserl and Heidegger lectures in Freiburg, Germany. A year after Hitler's rise to power he published *Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism* in Paris. In a handwritten *Prefatory Note* to Seán Hand's 1990 translation, Levinas commented on his 1934 article. "[The] source [of bloody barbarism] stems from the essential possibility of *elemental Evil* into which we can be led by logic and against which Western philosophy had not sufficiently insured itself." He brandished Heidegger's "ontology [as] being concerned with being [de l'etre soucieux d'etre] - a being, to use Heideggerian expression, 'dem es in seinem Sein um dieses Sein selbst geht.'" The freedom to be entirely concerned with the self, he warned, has human inter-dependence and inter-human responsibility falling altogether by the way side. Levinas "reconceived transcendence as a need for escape." He saw this self-possession and transcendental escape in the core of *Hitlerism*, boosting Nazi Germany's *obsession* with de-humanizing Jews. He warns, in question is "not a

particular dogma concerning democracy, parliamentary government, dictatorial regime, or religious politics ... It is the very humanity of man.” Levinas passionate scholarship predicts *and* observes the abysmal perversion of human ethics during the next eleven years. Levinas had joined the French army when in 1940 he was “Captured by the Nazis; imprisoned in *Fallingsbotel*; a labor camp for officers. His Lithuanian family is murdered. His wife Raïssa, and daughter, Simone, are hidden by religious in Orléans.” He survived and devoted his career and life to the rescue of human ethics in a post-Holocaust world. Only in 1976, did he process his own captivity and the brutal deconstruction of *his* humanity by German camp guards. Famously, only the German shepherd Bobby resisted Nazi dictate. Bobby would “appear at morning assembly and was waiting for us as we returned, jumping up and down and barking in delight. There was no doubt that we were men ... This dog was the last Kantian in Nazi Germany.”

The Naked Skin of Face

Deborah Bird Rose, US American environmental philosopher and extinction scholar, lives and studies with and among aborigines in Australia. She is inspired by Levinas’ call for human-on-human responsibility, yet also notes that over time Levinas shifted the actual naked skin of the face into bodiless abstraction. She laments “He gives us a God so abstract as to be effectively absent, and calls us to be responsive to a face that is equally abstract.” That means, bodies and particular faces are removed from his *First Philosophy* to offer a faceless face instead. His call thereby, alas, loses traction when embodied humans wonder how a particular and experiential answer to his call can be lived. Nevertheless, Bird Rose honors his pre-incarnation human ethics as more than reasonable given that he scarcely survived the *Endlösung der Judenfrage* (Final Solution to the Jewish Question) while most of European Jewry —

including many of his family members — did not. She reminds us that for centuries Western culture has doubted, even denied humanity to some by defining them as *other* and not or not quite human. Categories of race were created, as Levinas knew all too well, to de-humanize otherness *ad lib* according to the ‘science’, philosophy’, or ‘theology’ of the day. Ted Vial espouses Levinas and Bird Rose when he writes, “Race connects physical characteristics to the essence of who a person is, to their culture, personality, intellectual and moral predisposition.” Bird Rose, then, pushes Vial’s thought further toward Levinas’ experience and suggests, “Clearly, the *self* defined by substance is in peril in a world where substance is the criterion by which life-worthiness is made.” She then sensitively and compassionately reads Levinas’ abstract face as a *mask* “behind which are the hidden others of Levinas’ life work: the six million dead” and she adds “he testifies to the unimaginable; the lost bodies, lost lives, lost dead, lost humanity, lost God.” She does lament, yet also honor that “He offers us “beautiful tropes ... ghostly and insubstantial, full of love, and drenched in hidden grief.”

This is where her reading converges with mine and (as previously suggested) with my claim that SCW answers, enacts, and fulfills Levinas’ call by offering a tool to *study and practice* ethical responsibility. Granted, I read Levinas rather *literally* (and therefore likely naïve.) His *Face* summons *particular* faces on my retina and in my soul; *face* is the particular face o an other, including those of the dead. Gazing from passport photos, bunk beds, cattle cars, selection ramps, mass graves, even bodies hung from butcher hooks: six million faces, twelve million eyes. Women Faces, Children Faces, Men Faces —and more women, children and men faces. They, and the day-to-day faces of their descendants, some of them my friends and family of choice, *constitute* my very beholden-ness to Levinas’ face. Consequently, as does Bird Rose, I

fail to follow Levinas into the rarified notion of a 'faceless face'; fail to grasp a realm so disembodied that only abstract language is felt to be able to convey it.. It is most often the particular *face* of one dead (or one living), which others and I have represented in countless constellations, especially in Germany, but also throughout Europe, the US, and in Israel.

Melissa Raphael's premise in *The Female Face of God in Auschwitz* concurs. Raphael constructed a feminist post-Shoa theology in critical conversation with her mostly male scholar ancestors (including Levinas). She collected the memories of women who survived concentration camps and used their recollections to construct her platform for a post-holocaust feminist theology and ethics. The female face of God, she noted, was present in the particular faces the women saw, touched, nourished, protected, or grieved. The women told her that seeing, touching, holding, and importantly, physically cleaning the other, was the very comportment by which they helped each other *and* notably each other's dignity survive. Survival in the camp, then, was not only nourished by response to and call for an abstract transcendental deity (or Face) but, and importantly so, manifested in the long remembered particular faces. Human ethics was lived through physical care mutually extended when soothing their defiled bodies and mending their trampled souls. Again, cis-cendentally they *knew* the also answered the abstract Face behind the particular other through hearing, touching, cleaning, feeding, comforting, and holding, which had made them *known* by the other in turn.

In SCW a *particular* other comes to be known by the *particular* representative in similarly embodied processes of sensing, seeing, touching, holding, confronting and protecting. Albeit representational encounters with an other are incomparably short to these women's ordeal they nevertheless are an "intersubjective experience [which] proves 'ethical' in the simple sense

that an ‘I’ discovers its own particularity when it is singled out by the gaze of the other. This gaze is interrogative and imperative. Seeing the “face is what forbids us to kill.”

The first gaze at the other is the very place where the *pieces de resistance* of Emmanuel Levinas and Martin Buber respectively touch and entwine into the taproot from which embodied practice of ethical comportment can be nourished. SCW participants gather temporarily, engage in the study and practice of being with and dwelling in the other, and practice (albeit temporary and contextually contained) to be responsible for each other. All participants collaborate in *Gestaltung* (shaping) of a live-giving, more robust experience of a systemic we, even as it is the *particular* person’s gaze which cracks hidden systemic narratives open and, to speak with Leonard Cohen, let the light come in. Often this light manifests as sparks of hope — even joy! In the end, all in the constellation are partaking in the hope for that particular system’s wellbeing *and* take embodied echoes away into their own lives. At the core of SCW, then, lies the opportunity to ritually practice alternatives to killing (excluding, de-humanizing, and so forth) the *particular* other, even as the presence, inclusion and protection of *non-particular* others is felt as well. Of course, both of these claims *parallel* not *replace* the proven validity of SCW as an impactful therapeutic modality to treat suffering clients and their family system.

On the Narrow Ridge

A selective gaze into Martin Buber’s life reveals him as a Jew born into and deeply affected by intellectual classic and late 19th century German culture. He was the descendent of a respected, nationally assimilated, Jewish family and lived his formative years in Poland, his education informed by his Grandmother’s love for German classics and his

Grandfather's love and scholarship of modern midrashic tradition. The early 20th century saw Buber in Berlin, where he and his wife were immersed in Germany's pre-war *Aufbruchstimmung* (get-up-and-go-mood). While there, he advocated for the rise of a better world and a *place* for the Jewish people in that new world; his thinking and vision rooted in his brilliance and the vastness of his cosmopolitan heritage. The following, then, is a survey of Buber's *Sitz im Leben* and the part of his work, which pertains to the pincers maneuver announced earlier.

Maurice Friedman, eminent Buber scholar and biographer, asserts Buber's "early seeking for unity and his later focus on dialogue" can only be properly understood through his early traumatic bereavement. Buber was born in Vienna and three years old when his mother disappeared without a trace and 'never came back'. The child was taken to Lemberg/Poland (now: Lviv/Ukraine), the estate of his grandparents, Adele and Solomon Buber. In stark contrast to Martin's mother, they were a wellspring of attention. They offered deliberate, engaged, reliable, and heartfelt adult presence. Buber, the child, was lonely at the large and busy estate, but showed promise as a brilliant albeit silently mourning *Wunderkind*.

Buber early on recognized these opposing relational experiences as part of every human's condition and made the tension between them the fertile soil in which the seed for *I and Thou* later would grow. Maurice Friedman tells us on the whole Buber "is really saying that if we don't allow a genuine 'We' to life, we will destroy ourselves. 'We' meaning community, fellowship, the social principle." This suggests, while *I-Thou* has become iconic, the larger 'we' was maybe even more needed in Buber's world. He in fact conceived of community "as a type of plastic shape, an object (or subject) of *Gestaltung* and hence realization." The German word *Gestaltung* means the giving of shape to something. This then implies that somewhere in the

process of creating communion and community human intention and agency is involved. As if describing a systemic constellation process, he then adds “Everything starts from the most basic facts of human existence: the body and motion [by way of which ethical] life remains inextricably linked, within the world of space, to the human body and to physical sensation as they reach across the divide toward an unmitigated *Erlebnis* (*experience*).” Any representative in SCW would know that “The inmost growth [and healing] of a person does not occur, as people like to suppose today, through one’s relation to oneself but through being made present by another and knowing that one is made present.”

Clearly, this significantly correlates with *representing* as one tool to practice genuine ‘we-ness’. However there is an important distinction to be made between the *constellation between* and Buber’s *I-Thou between*. In the former spontaneous pivotal moments of one *knowing* and one being *known* are *invited*, they do not only occasionally arise. Walter Kaufmann, Buber student, translator, and philosopher in his own right, seems to think the same when he cautions that it is insufficient “to divide the world into two basic ‘word pairs’ (I-Thou and I-It, respectively.) I will add that it is likewise insufficient to wait for the less likely one, *I-Thou*, to magically occur, while *I-It* covers all ‘lesser’ relational moments. Kaufmann aptly suggests “The more others mean to me, the more needful is it for me also to think about them, sometimes in an effort to understand better how they feel and think. Such thoughts are not a fall from grace, a relapse into inauthenticity, or a betrayal to be atoned for in another more ecstatic encounter.” Representatives are with Kaufmann. They put themselves in the position of needful, painstaking experiencing another’s feelings, even sensations. They deliberately slow down, still, turn carefully toward and reposition themselves in relation to other(s), while being gently poised

for dazzling and compelling I-Thou moments to arise. Buber's ephemeral nature of *I-Thou*, then, may be more about his own relational agility than about a necessity of happenstance.

Paradoxically, this does not deny the ephemeral mystery at play in SCW, nor does it suggest that meeting can be *willed* alone.

To summarize: Where the non-religious philosopher Emmanuel Levinas speaks of 'intersubjective experience' the religious philosopher Martin Buber speaks of *I-Thou*. Both describe a moment of particular *Begegnung* (meeting). Meeting, then, is being singled out by the gaze of the other by Levinas and arises in spoken or silent dialogue in Buber's work. Both offer the experience of not just an other, but *the* other. As stated above, my reading of both Buber and Levinas may be naïve; nevertheless, I confidently locate a successful pincers maneuver in the *meeting* of these respective parts of their philosophy.

Soul Work

Sarah Pessin, director of the *Center for Judaic Studies at Denver University*, invites us into a paradox. For the purpose of this thesis her scholarship on forgiveness will be introduced as it relates to what will be framed as *soul* wounding. Soul wounds, as I define them here, are wounds of potentially unforgivable magnitude. They hide beneath visible expressions of illness, depression, failure, addiction, numbness, and more, and they are passed from one generation to the next. Pessin, as I understand her work, advocates for the negotiation of trans-generational soul wounding — passionately so in her role as director of the *Holocaust Memorial Social Action Institute* (HMSAS) at Denver University. Her unique forgiveness *paradigm* nevertheless insists we must approach the need for forgiveness, reconciliation, or mending, as if engaged in a precariously delicate balancing act. Importantly, we can never *assume* forgiveness

will be given (let alone, feel entitled to it.) In fact, we need to expect that one grievously wronged may not *ever* be able, nor willing to grant a *gift* of forgiveness. Those who *seek* forgiveness, she urges, need to remain (or become) vulnerably *hopeful* that *some* shift, if ever so minute and unknowable, *may* be possible. Moreover, resentment, refusal, or hatred, harbored by those wronged, Pessin insists, needs to be given an *uncontested* place in the dialogue. As stated earlier, SCW likewise insists that the otherwise un-includable needs to be embodied and present in the systemic process. This is especially important in relational processing of soul wounds. How, then, is *soul* in this context understood?

I borrow the concept of soul from master facilitator and senior psychologist Hunter Beaumont. He suggests, to again making the word *soul* usable by understanding her as experiences that lie between the mental and physical. Soul, he writes, is sensory everyday occurrence, easy to access, observable, describable, in reach of awareness, and most of all, relational. To him this lets soul's original beauty shine through: Soul uses — maybe *is* — sensation, emotion, and the yearnings of the heart to explore, repair and generate relational affectedness. Beaumont asserts, “This soul is not eternally unchanging, but rather, learning, growing, and maturing. Soul knows hurt and pain as well as joy and serenity. [She] can remember long after conscious mind has forgotten. If we respect her, soul can guide us and teach us, and she thrives with our respect.”

The loss of a loved one, war, torture, genocide, and intersectional oppression — all devastating — leave soul wounds in their wake. They have the power to overwhelm resilience and leave a life wounded — soul deep. One of the core phenomena SCW observes is life limiting loyalty with unhealed ancestral soul-wounds, here termed *entanglement*. Representing makes a

client's entanglement with an ancestors' fate visible and the process ritually untangles the blind bond, replacing it with adequate connection and seeing love. Difficult fates are acknowledged, ancestors and descendants are invited into their appropriate place in the lineage, and release from bearing entangled weights is carefully negotiated. Over and over the suffering in the family soul (and in her members) comes to light through the voice and body of each representative who makes it possible to ritually balance give and take and belonging. "Now I see you!" — one wonders if this assertion reaches our 'soul-ears'. Jakob Schneider, another master practitioner, expands this when he 'layers' individual and family soul within the larger Web of life. "[Soul] is not some mystical otherworldly power. It is the whole of individual, collective, and cosmic existence that animates and carries us, that binds, and perhaps even leads us. In this concept of soul there is a 'knowing' that connects us."

When things in a family go well we call expressions of this systemic Gestalt strength, resilience, or heirlooms. When descendants identify with and carry forth painful, unresolved, even destructive ancestral patterns SCW calls it (as introduced above) *entanglement* with the family soul. The experience of representing in SCW, then, can be described as *embodied* participation in a soul field which Albrecht Mahr, MD senior German SCW facilitator and theorist, named the *Knowing Field*. He understands it as surrounding and connecting us at all times, but becoming highly accessible in the ritual context and intentional receptivity of SCW. To summarize, representing in SCW is stepping into the field of systemic knowing, becoming the embodiment of the systems 'soul at work', partaking in a ritual process of undoing entanglements, thawing frozen places in a lineage (or any other system), and co-creating a template of balanced systemic responsibility.

Soul Language

Not surprisingly through thousands of constellations specific expressions of soul have developed into a language signified by sensations, feelings, and impulses; a sign language which can consistently be translated by a trained SCW facilitator: The dead *want* to lie down. The dead *cannot* lie down if something is unfinished (e.g., the great-grandmother in the opening case study). Survivor guilt and loyalty with a dead ancestor (even if the client's don't know) has representatives stare at the floor, mesmerized and oblivious to the living. Others stare outside the circle, equally unaware of the others, indicating someone/something is missing. At large, representatives sense danger, have sudden physical pains, want to lie with the dead, feel compelled to honor life, parents, ancestors, utter words or bow (*verneigen*), are genuinely moved to tears of sorrow, or given to outbreaks of joy. Representatives also have a strong sense of right proximity to others and certain relational positions feel more safe or adequate than others. In a lineage constellation, for example, a child stands *in front* of the parent (the reverse is known as *parentification* of the child). In a family of origin, children feel best to the left of the parents, siblings lined up in birth order. Stillborn and aborted children mostly belong to parents (not with the sibling order). They feel most at peace sitting on the floor in front of the parents, often leaning against their knees. This predictable language and the use of structured 'responses' moves SCW into the realm of healing ritual, as asserted by Wilhelm Sax, who compares it with *Healing in the Garhwal Himalayas*.

Part IV: Human Horizons Meeting

Sensing Knowing

A few words about how SCW trusts that representatives temporarily *can* have other-experiences. Hans-Georg Gadamer's envisions *ideal resolution of dialogue* as the fusion of horizons. Edward Hirsch, Jr., founder of the *Core Knowledge Foundation* and professor emeritus of education and humanities at the University of Virginia, warns that this resolution may not be quite so ideal since our *Sitz im Leben* (lived context) matters to how we *can* interpret information. "If the interpreter is bound by his own historicity he cannot break out of it into some halfway house where past and present are merged." Who's past and who's present (if at all) we are seeing in a representative is certainly a consideration. It is noteworthy that 'receiving the other' in the *Knowing Field*, has indeed at times been backed by historical accuracy. Is this a phenomenon of *fused* horizon? Well, possibly, it is. Representational information, however, is generally (and preferably) not gleaned from language narrative but from sensations, from hunches, and from impulses, unfolding as a kind of body narrative. In SCW the sensory horizons involved may simply touch and transfer information as does holding another's hand or the look into another's face.

Insa Sparrer, Licensed Psychologist in Munich, Germany and co-founder of *Systemische Strukturaufstellungen (SySt®)* with philosopher and SCW theorist husband, Varga von Kibéd, notably asks "humans are first and foremost connected, upon which the question arises 'what separates them?'" To her it is rather surprising that we are *not* feeling connected, because "if we were, the question how we receive information [if we stop long enough to listen] becomes obsolete." Native Indian scholar, Vine Deloria Jr., positively knows we are connected — across time and space and species no less — at least those blessed with knowledge of indigenous philosophy and practices. Members of the Algonquin tribe "habitually repair to the woods, set up

a log shelter about the size of a telephone booth, get inside, and, when the power is sufficiently strong, make contact with a friend or relative who may be hundreds of miles away.” To be sure, such skill must be taught, diligently practiced, and intentionally implemented. If judged by the *rational* mind, the dialogue between the Great-Grandmother, her representative, and her great-grandson’s representative in the constellation vignette is as unlikely as is the phone booth in the woods. And yet representing in a constellation is a similar foray into states of *expanded knowing*, often followed by many repeats for those who get 'hooked'. Some degree of *expanded knowing*, according to educator and SCW facilitator Alison Forness, is accessible to any beginner. Varga von Kibéd found that precision comes through practice, resulting in ever more accuracy of discerning ones own from the experience of the other. Although, he too considers neophyte experience of representational perception common occurrence.

All this undergirds the potential of representing in SCW as the *practice of embodied contemplation of otherness*. I-Thou moments, as well as those of embodied contemplation of particular otherness are the take-away. Moreover, representing is a service to another and advocacy for and participation in *Tikun Olam*, the mending of the world. All this (followed by its social action potential) hears and answers Buber’s longing for community and communion, and Levinas’ call for de facto ethical interest, even commitment to a priory responsibility for the other. Framed this way, representing *is* nothing short of courageous social action. This very insight rings excitedly in the voices of participants at a workshop with German facilitator Stephan Hausner in California.

“When I represent ... when anybody represents” one participant shares
 “it’s like walking 10 000 miles in someone’s shoes in the blink of an
 eye.” Another —much moved — adds “The generosity of people to take

on sometimes incredibly traumatized human experience for somebody they just met 15 minutes before, and work it through physiologically, emotionally, energetically, and give that to somebody, is just exquisite.”

Conclusion: Here We Come!

Being disconnect from their origins, history of oppression and violence, and disenfranchised from a meaningful place in society, has ordinary people at large suffering from soul wounds inflicted by social trauma. More knowledge about trans-generational and intercultural trauma therefore is urgently needed — alas, it is prominently missing in the medical model of *trauma-as-disorder*. Since we can safely surmise that no *lineage* was and is spared from the woes of an historical context, the medical model unfortunately misses deep social and historical currents of trauma in the ocean of global human life. It is my experience that this generates silence, depression, despair, and tenacious perseverance to belong as expressions of more or less blind loyalty with the ancestors. This is where SCW is an ally to unveil *blind* loyalty and put life giving respect and love in charge. As representatives in *Systems Constellation Work* we can, one representation at a time, unpack ignorance, look straight at brokenness, and shed preconceptions of those we represent and collaterally our own.

The practice of meditation or yoga – solitary, even in a group – is well established, yet the practice of shedding blindness in systemic relatedness (outside of therapy groups) is hard to come by. The short-term duration of a workshop makes all those present members of a temporary heterotopia and gives them the role of co-creators and co-healers in a relational field. This heterotopia shifts according to changing groups, systemic *Anordnungen* (configurations), and the issue addressed. Yet, regardless of content, engaging with the systemic dynamic gradually develops connections within a field of brokenness. Participants, I

have argued, follow Emmanuel Levinas' call, and pick up the gauntlet he threw to humanity through the practice responsibility with and for the other. Participants come back because Martin Buber's *between* is tangible, compelling, and deeply nourishing. Together participants study and exercise ethical beholden-ness to others and Other which over time connects them with every other human and non-human being in the living web across time and space.

Touching and being touched, seeing and being seen, hearing and being heard while representing is the contemplative practice of respectfully meeting familiar and foreign others in a *we-space*; a breathing, multi faceted thou-ology. The hope is that thou-o-logical literacy broadens personal epistemology and ontology beyond the narrow confines of ones *Sitz im Leben*. The prospect is that such literacy reflexively stops us short of harming the other *and us* and serves to mend the world we are one representation at a time.

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