

When Knowledge Breaks

A Relational Diagnosis of Interrupted Indigenous Transmission

Western psychiatry often interprets Indigenous distress as a problem of forgetting—a failure to preserve the past.

Elder Bob Randall offers a different diagnosis. The problem is not that knowledge is lost. It is that the relationships holding it together have shattered.

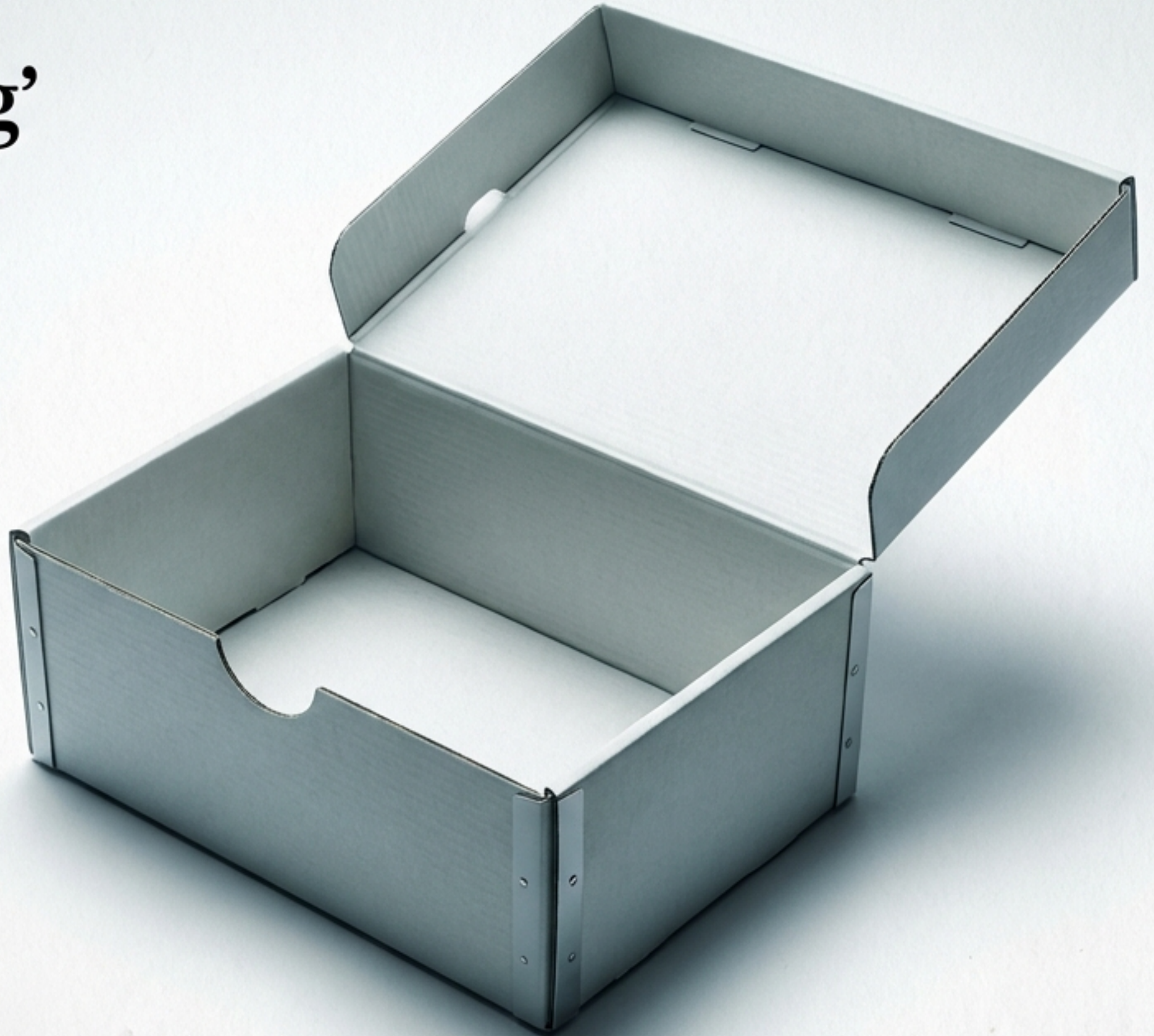


The Standard of Care: A Diagnosis of 'Forgetting'

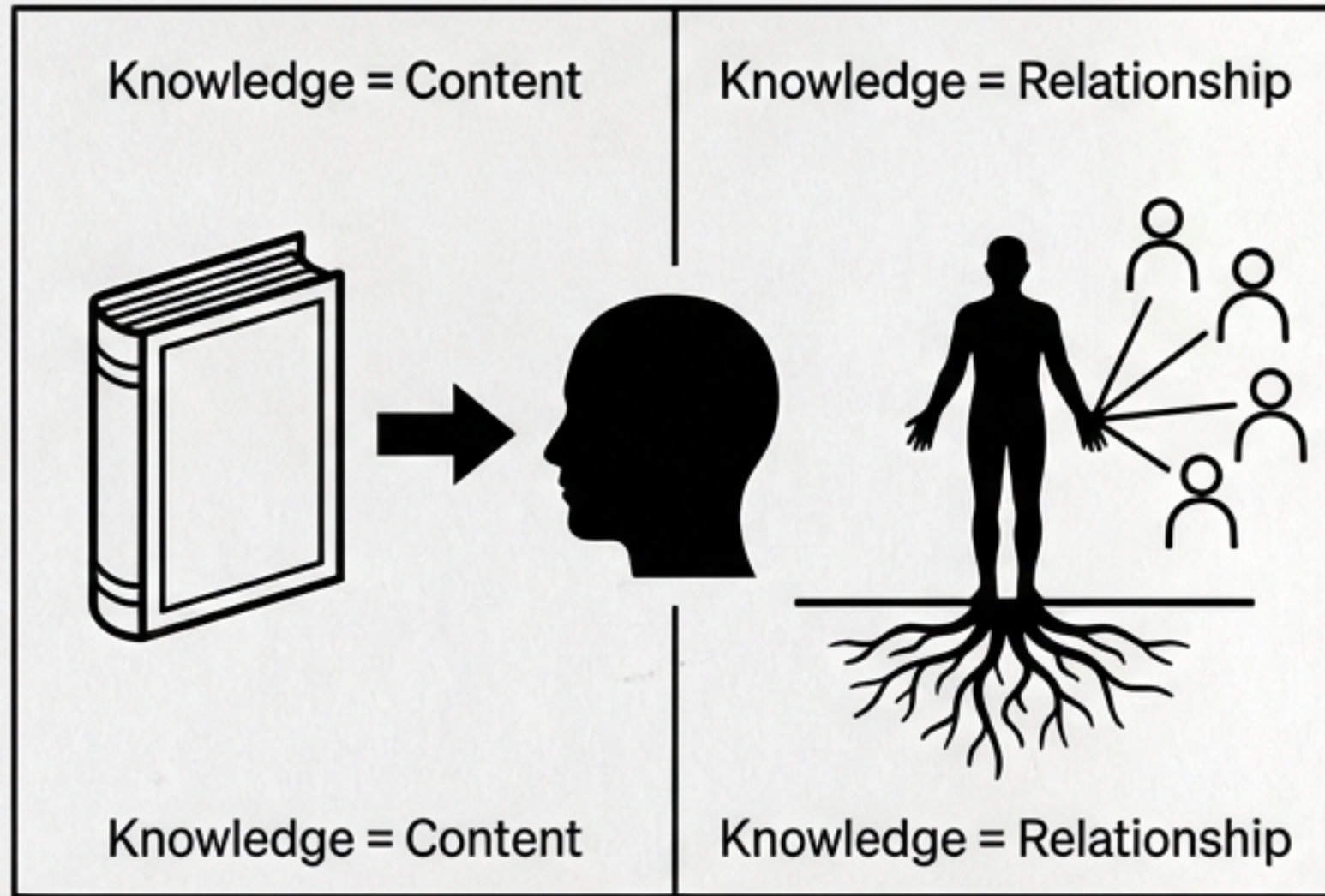
Current frameworks frame
interrupted transmission as:

- Cultural Erosion
- Historical Amnesia
- Narrative Discontinuity

Because the diagnosis is "forgetting," the prescribed treatment is Recall. Institutions build archives and documentation programs to store content before it vanishes.

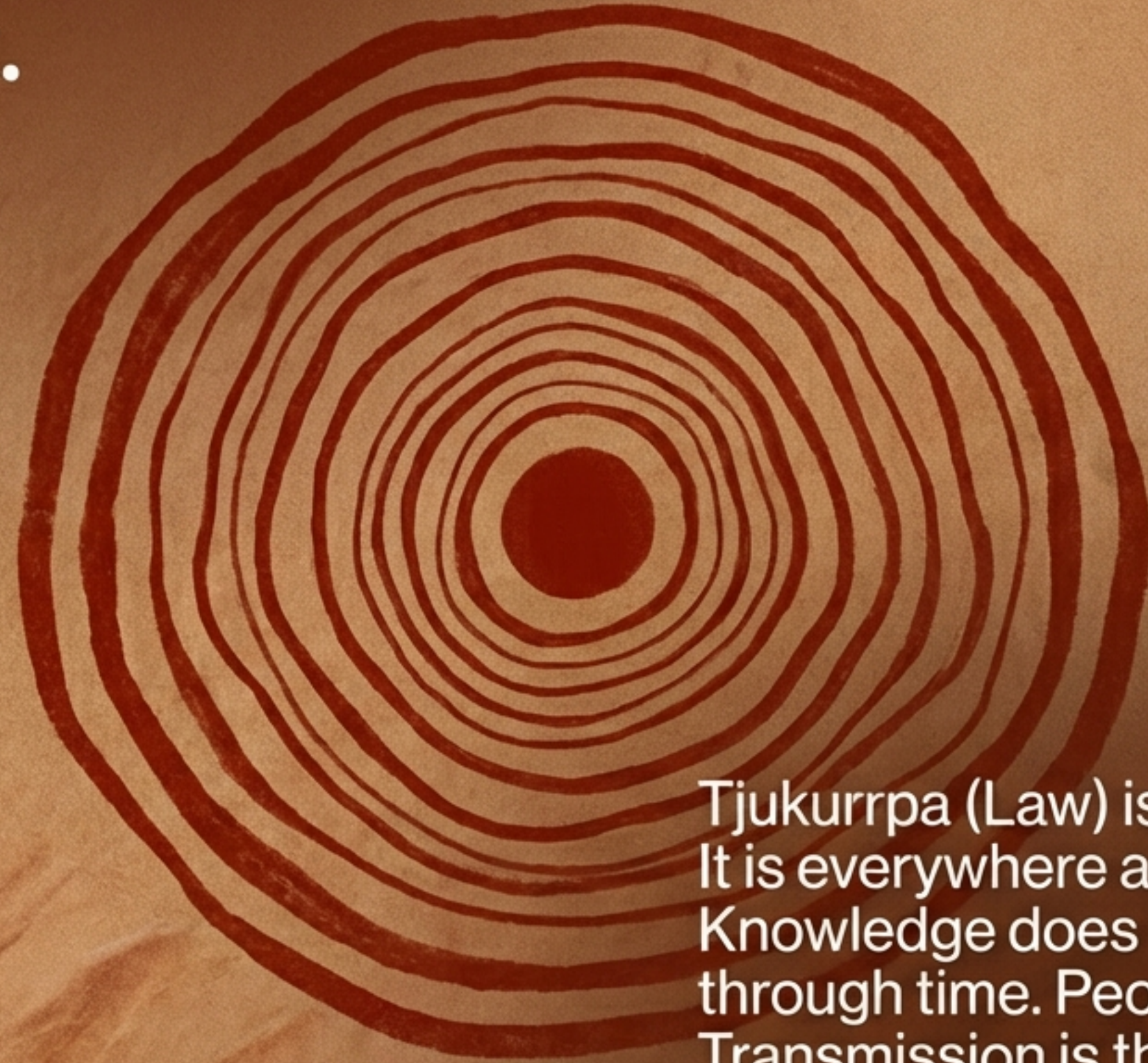


The Category Error



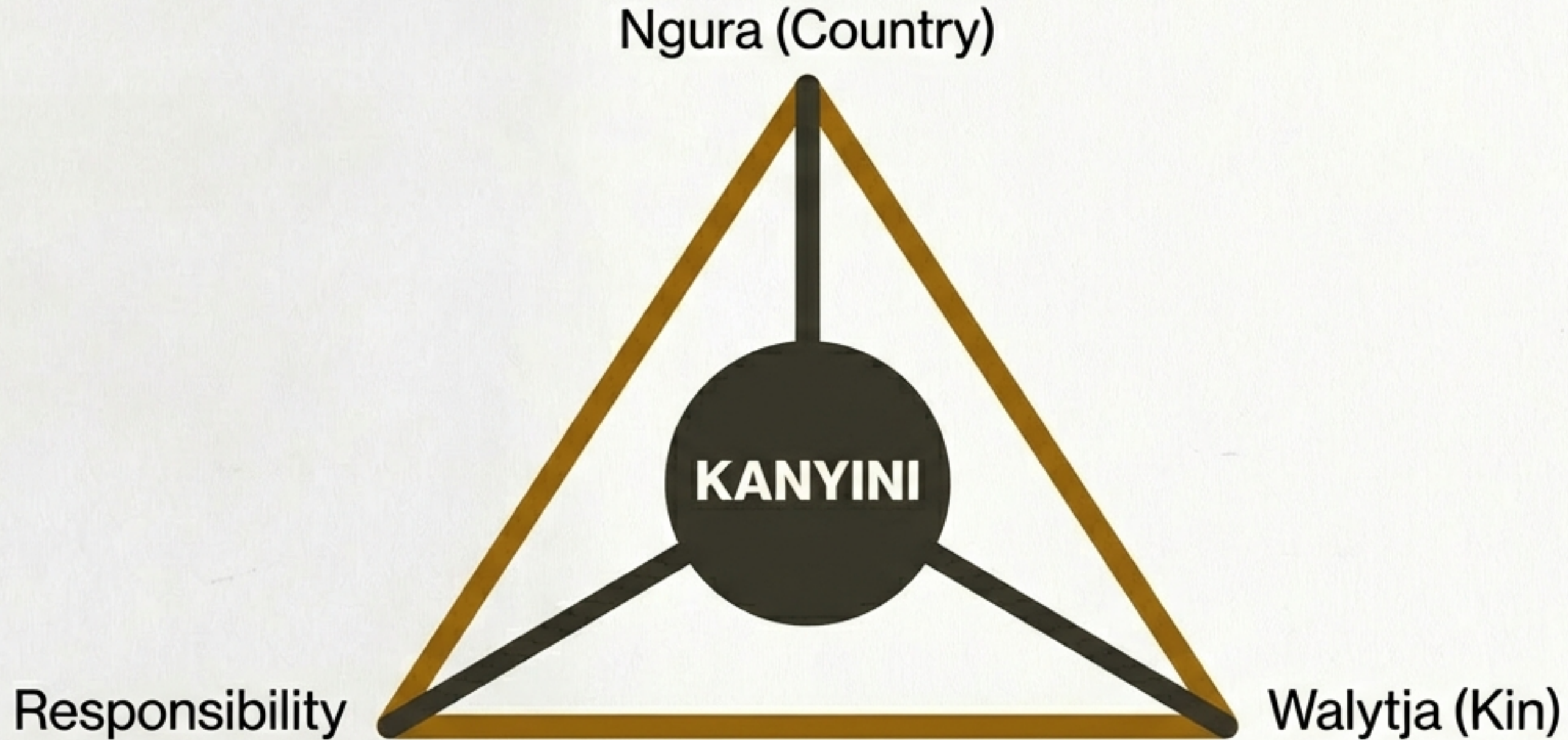
“The problem is not that knowledge has been forgotten. The problem is that the relationship that holds it has broken.” — Elder Bob Randall

**Transmission is not movement.
It is alignment.**



Tjukurrpa (Law) is not “the past.”
It is everywhere and always present.
Knowledge does not move forward
through time. People stay aligned to it.
Transmission is the act of maintaining
alignment with an existing order.

Kanyini: The Binding Agent



Kanyini = Unconditional love and responsibility for all things. Without this structural mechanism, the connection between Person and Country collapses.

The True Diagnosis: Fragmentation



Shattered Mosaic

Violence did not erase the knowledge. It dissolved the glue. When relationships are severed, knowledge fragments. The stories and rituals persist, but they lose their coherence.

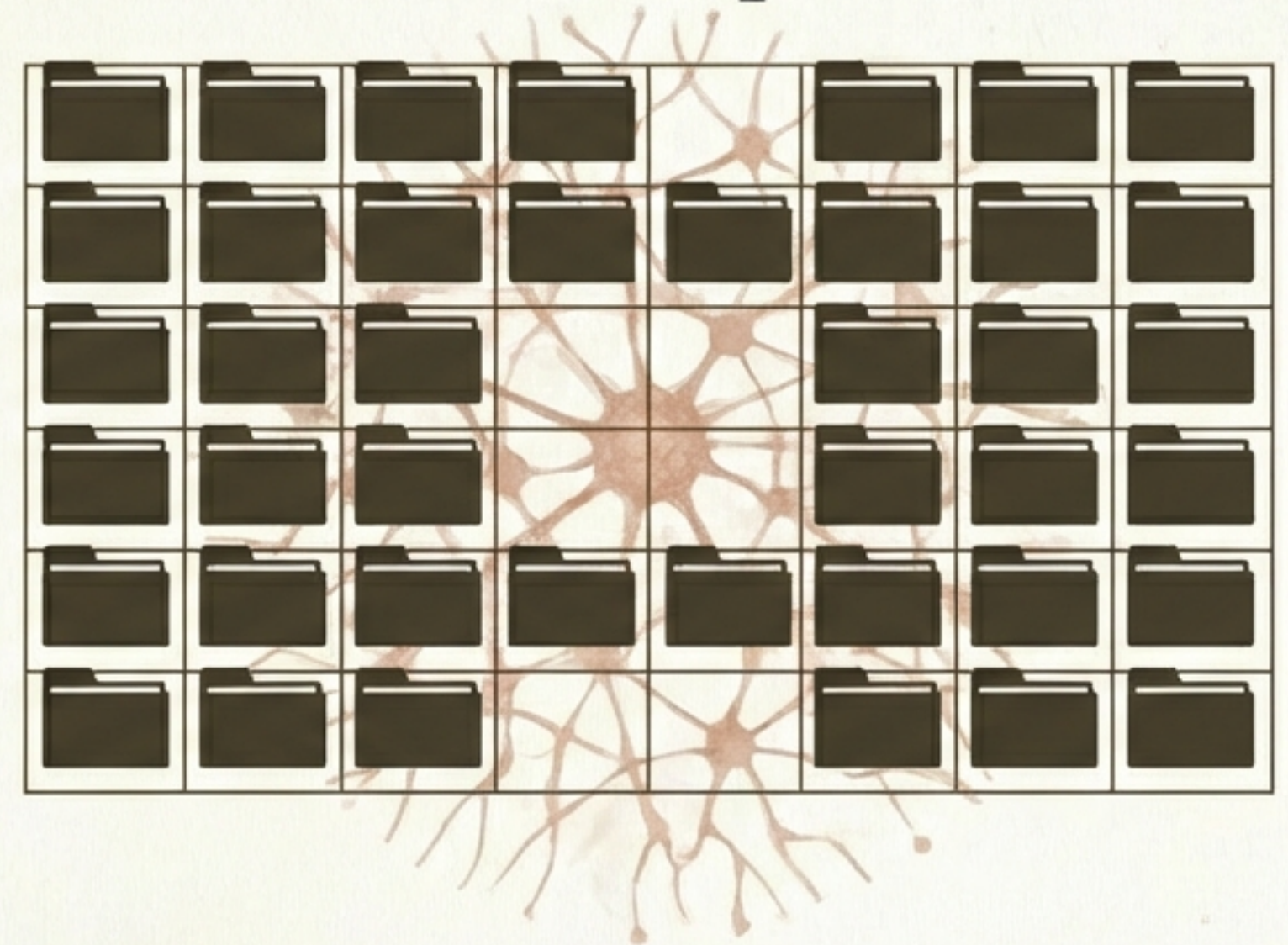
“The deepest wisdom of the Tjukurrpa has been shattered into fragments.”
— Bob Randall

From 'Ours-ness' to 'Mine-ness'

The Rupture

- Removal from Country (Severing Ngura)
- 🗨️ Prohibition of Language (Severing Tjukurrpa)
- 🏛️ Institutionalization (Severing Walytja)

The Consequence



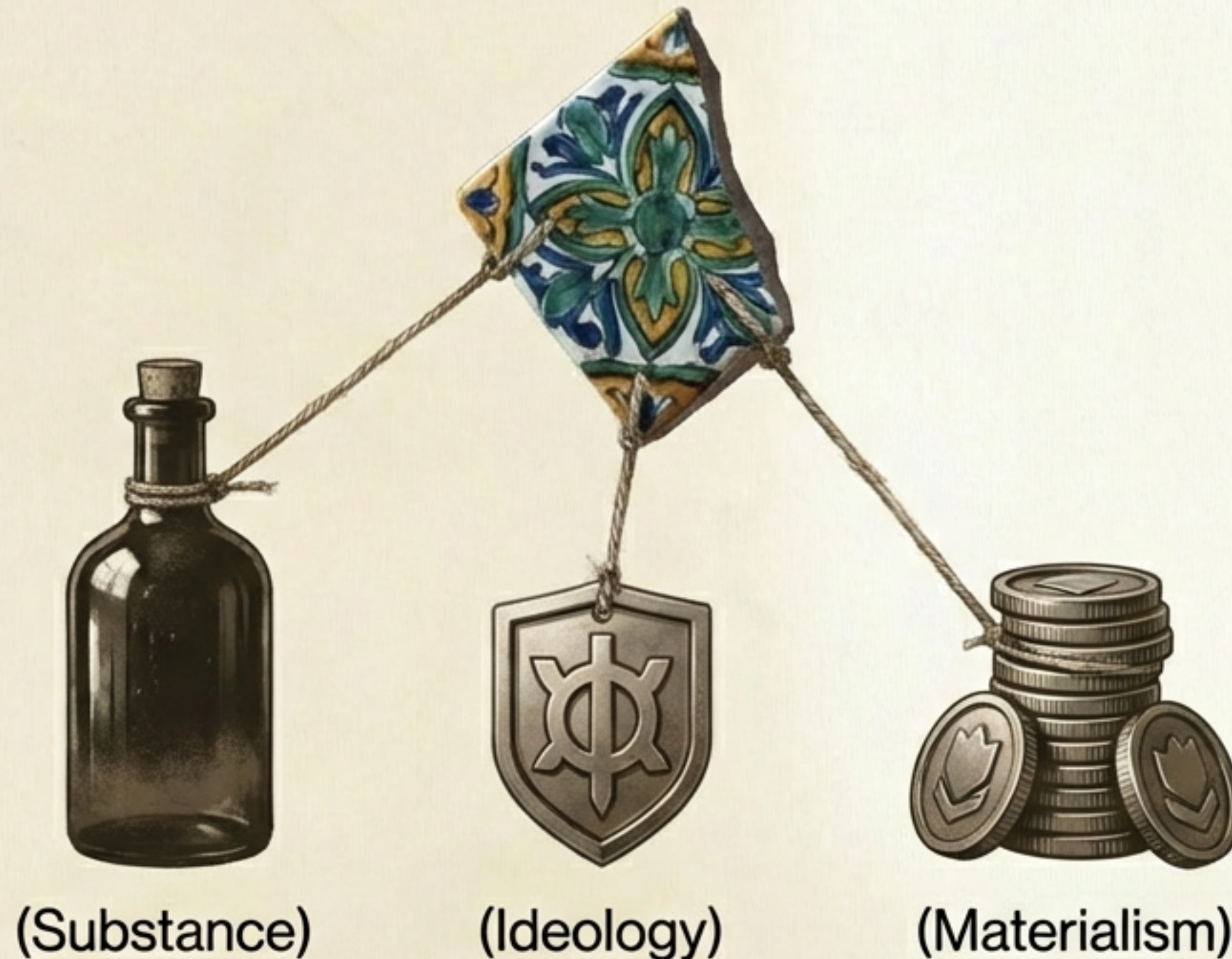
Institutional life trained children away from collective responsibility. Knowledge, which requires shared responsibility to live, cannot survive when reconfigured as individual possession.

Disconnectedness is an ontological crisis.

When the individual is unmoored from the relational field, they are not just 'lonely.' They are ontologically adrift. This is the root of distress often misdiagnosed as individual pathology.



Substitution: The Search for False Belonging



The void of disconnectedness creates a need for coherence. We attach to substitutes. These substitutes promise stability but cannot carry Law or Responsibility, leading to a deepening cycle of distress.

Memory withdraws when safety is lost.



Memory is not a hard drive; it is a relationship. It is only available when the individual is held within the safety of Kanyini.

“The price of learning the new songs is that it is hard to go back.” — Bob Randall

Right Story vs. Wrong Story

Cross-verification with Tyson Yunkaporta



RIGHT STORY
(Embedded in Place & Obligation)



WRONG STORY
(Decontextualized & Inert)

Knowledge removed from its relational ground becomes inert.
It may be factually accurate, but it is relationally severed.

Recovery is not Retrieval.



Stop Preserving Content.



Start Restoring Connection.

If the problem is not forgetting, the cure is not remembering.
Recovery is not returning to a pre-colonial past; it is
is re-entering a relationship of responsibility in the present.

Restoring the Grout

Coherence returns when responsibility is taken up. We do not need to 'find' the knowledge; we need to become the kind of people capable of holding it.



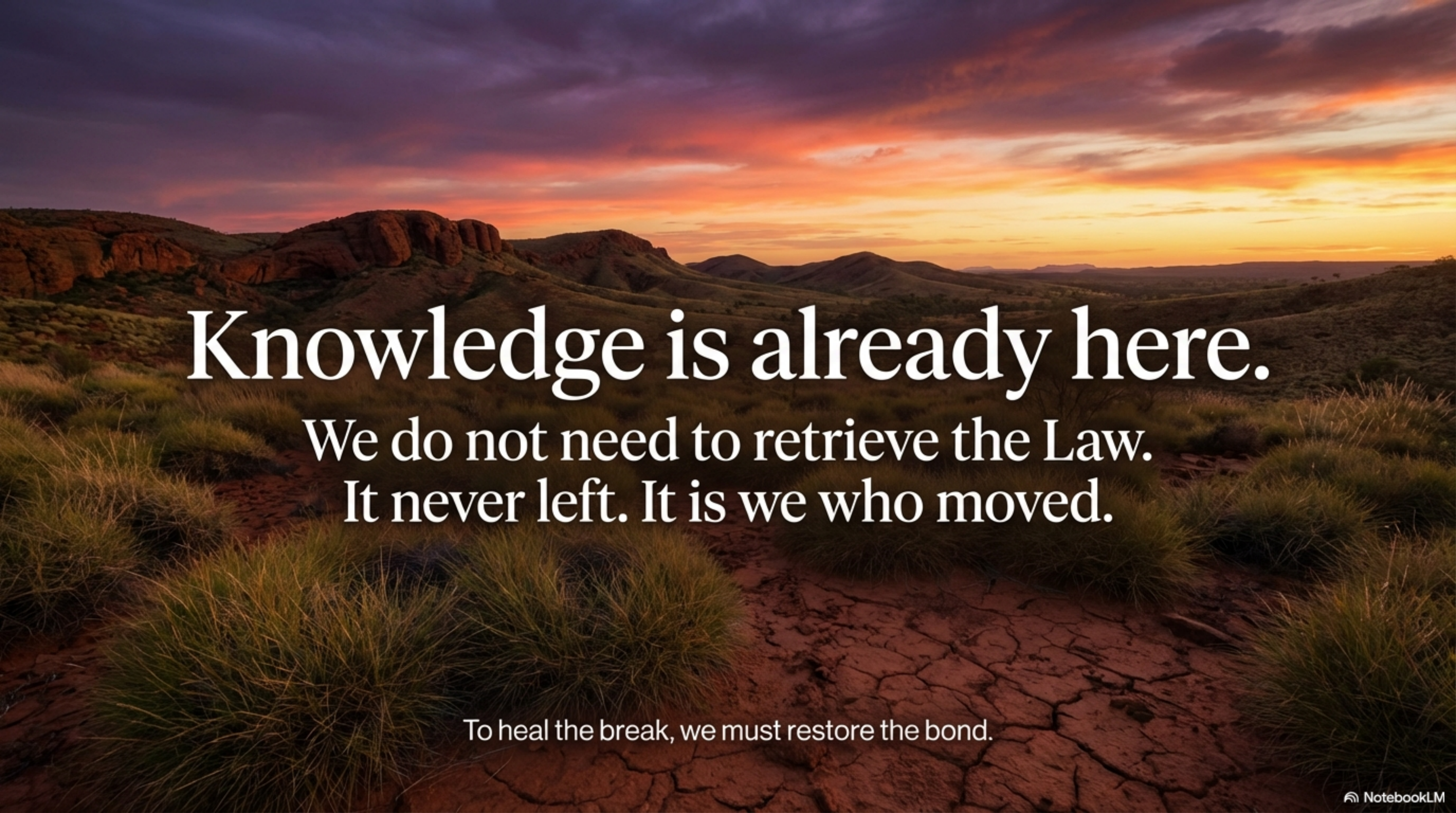
Implications for Psychiatry

Symptom Management



**Relational
Repair**

Are we building memory, or are we building belonging?

A landscape photograph at sunset. In the foreground, a dirt path with deep cracks in the dry earth leads towards the horizon. The path is flanked by clumps of dry, yellowish-brown grass. In the middle ground, there are rolling hills and a prominent, flat-topped rock formation. The sky is filled with clouds, transitioning from a deep purple and blue at the top to a bright orange and yellow near the horizon where the sun is setting. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

Knowledge is already here.

We do not need to retrieve the Law.
It never left. It is we who moved.

To heal the break, we must restore the bond.