

THE RELUCTANT ADULT

REVISITED

An Exploration
of Choice

*The Victimhood Archetype and the
Evolution of Consciousness*

Jill Hall

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FOREWORD TO THE NEW 2025 EDITION

We are passing through the victim archetypal mode at this stage of evolution.... Victims can overcome their victimhood.

Jill Hall

It would be impossible to exaggerate the evolutionary importance of this book. I have read stacks of books in my life, as student, professional academic and seeker for Truth. For me, a book is a great one when it is at least as fresh and relevant decades after first publication. In that sense, *The Reluctant Adult (Revisited)* is a very great book; and it deserves to be a global best-seller.

I have been fortunate to encounter many great minds in my professional life; and any dispassionate reading of this book (were that possible!) should conclude that it has been written by one of the greatest minds of the author's generation. Jill Hall could surely have written many more books; but if there was to be just one magnum opus from her pen, then what you will read here really couldn't be bettered. Less is emphatically *more* – as I'm sure Jill would say herself.

You will read deep wisdom about our human condition and the evolutionary juncture human consciousness has reached, with an acuteness of insight and engaging complexity that would be hard to equal. I know of no-one else who could have written this book, or anything close to it. Relatedly, it becomes clear on reading *The Reluctant Adult* just why Jill Hall was a 'straight A' philosophy student – save for the fact that she had all her own ideas and insights, and refrained from piggy-backing on the authority and previous writings of others! *Thank heaven*, I find myself thinking.

In my published review of the first edition from 1995, I wrote that 'A full experiential engagement with the dynamics of victimhood is, I believe, crucial in fully understanding the import and implications of Hall's ideas.... In any adequate account of the human

predicament, the ideas set out in this book must surely take up a central position.... Soberingly, it could well be that engagement with the victimhood archetype may be the only hope for our future healthy evolution as a species.' Thirty years on, grandiose though it may sound, I stand by every word.

Jill Hall has a deeply stirring writing style. She has a striking propensity to pose questions – an erudite device that fits very well with the difficult, momentous subject matter she's grappling with. Her recurrent use of short parenthetical passages is perhaps symptomatic of a mind that is holding so many levels of understanding at once, and so does her level best – within the confines of the written-word medium – to make sure that no important stone of understanding is left unturned and thought about.

There is much new material in this new edition: two seminal articles on victimhood penned in the mid-1990s, a long interview from 2021 looking at the Covid 'pandemic' via the victim/persecutor/rescuer dynamic – throwing quite new light on the extraordinary events of that period; and a new detailed index.

Some might wonder about the practical relevance of the ideas in this book. From my personal experience, they have supreme relevance. Sue Hatfield's excellent foreword to the first edition is well worth a close reading in this regard. As with Sue, my own journey has been hugely impacted by the ideas in this book – ideas I first encountered in a lecture Hall gave at the University of East Anglia in the early 1990s.

Once exposed to these ideas, one sees how the victimhood mentality, and the associated 'Drama Triangle,' are continually playing out in all human relationships and institutions – usually unconsciously. It's by becoming conscious of how victimhood insinuates itself throughout the interstices of our lives – psyche and behaviour – that we'll then have the capacity to transcend it, and so to advance the evolution of human consciousness.

Another example of the practical application of these ideas comes from the pioneering work of Skeena Rathor and her Co-Liberation work. Skeena writes: 'In our work on Co-Liberation – of being free – Jill Hall's describing of what it is to be in a triangulation of reluctance in feeling and making meaning of the world, as

balanced adultifying human beings, has served our root-analysis work for the why and how of Liberation. We are enormously grateful for Jill's light of sight in seeing the shapes that our war-, control- and domination-paradigm casts over us. In pulling these shapes out of the shadows, we can let the light move through us once more. Jill Hall's work is a paint-brush for Liberation.'

Will *The Reluctant Adult* become a global best-seller? That will surely turn on the extent to which we're ready as a species for its challenging message. I hope that we are – but I fear we might not be. Perhaps this book is many years ahead of its time, and will become a global phenomenon many years into the future.

Jill Hall takes on the biggest questions facing humankind in *The Reluctant Adult*. In Chapter 9 (page 228) – a chapter which should be mandatory reading for all political leaders – she writes the following: '*Everything that we can possibly do to deny the validity of victimhood in our own life is our essential contribution towards fulfilling the evolution of humanity*' (her italics). Thus, we need to drop looking to external leaders to liberate us or improve our lives – for as Hall writes, it is *our own* victim attitudes that 'increase and reinforce our victim state, and help to bring about the persecutory behaviour of politically powerful leaders...' So 'it is a collective responsibility to shift the power of the Victim Archetype'; and it is only at the individual level, extricating ourselves from victimhood's grasp, that the archetype can be transcended.

We are emphatically not helpless and impotent to bring about real, genuine change; for as Hall resoundingly argues, only by *each and every one of us* individually relinquishing our addiction to victimhood can we achieve the next stage of human evolution. This is something we can all do, no matter what our race, creed, age or income level. And a careful reading of *The Reluctant Adult – Revisited* shows us how to do it.

Richard House, Ph.D.

Retired university lecturer in Psychology and Education Studies
Stroud, UK, May 2025

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

A little over four years ago I attended a lecture by Jill Hall at the University of East Anglia, the subject matter of which was very much a foretaste of this current book. I listened attentively, nodding my approval along with others in the audience and at the end went home, aware of some questions raised by the talk, of having found it interesting and challenging, but quite unaware of what it had stirred in me at a deeper level. It was only when I arrived home and closed the door behind me that my true response to the evening's talk began to come to the surface. Quite suddenly I became aware of feeling a surge of anger; I felt furious with Jill, angry and hurt at what I began to feel were the implications of what she was saying.

At the time I was in the first stages of therapy, of a journey of unfolding the patterns of my life, and barely beginning to understand my part in what felt then like a tragic drama. I saw myself very much a victim of life's circumstances; particularly a victim of my parents' seeming inadequacies. What I had heard that evening just didn't fit with what I then believed had been the reality of my childhood. Surely, I thought, if it wasn't my mother's fault that I felt the way I did, that my life had turned out the way it had, then it must mean it was my fault. If she was not to blame, if she hadn't got it wrong, then it must be me. I remember very clearly standing in my sitting room as the realization dawned on me: what Jill was saying was that I was to blame, I was the one who had got it wrong; and I was furious with her; she was blaming me, the innocent victim. Such was my logic at the time. Still firmly embedded in the mould of the victim, I couldn't then see beyond the position of blame – if, as Jill claimed, it wasn't Mother's fault, it must be mine.

At the time the only way I knew to make sense of my distress, of my feelings of inadequacy and impotence, was to embrace the idea

of the wounded child and guilty mother. I had no sense of my part in creating the reality which I now found so painful; no sense of being a cause unto myself; no sense that I could shift things around and come to see reality some other way.

Much has changed for me since that evening: the long process of therapy has for me borne fruit. I have indeed ‘shifted things around’, and I know that the pull of that energy of victimhood is still there – and at times surfaces with all the force it ever had; and I know also that I can see life otherwise. In the beginning I needed to blame, and blame I did, with all the force of the wounded victim child I nurtured within me. That was part of the journey, part of the healing; I needed to live out that aspect of me in order to move beyond it.

And what lies beyond that is the understanding that it isn’t about blame. My mother was no more the cause of my pain than I of hers: we jointly created, my mother and I, the reality that was our relationship; and each of us is responsible for how we perceive and how we respond to that experience. I could now choose to re-create, to re-experience, the reality of my childhood in this present moment and respond quite differently. I came to understand that it is not a fixed reality, but shifts as my relationship to myself shifts. It is a wonderful feeling to go beyond that position of blame and to know myself as my own causing: to move beyond seeing as a burden, to accept it as a responsibility, and to know that in such responsibility lies freedom. I realize now that Jill was simply spelling out that by claiming our intrinsic wholeness as an infant, we could come to enjoy the richness of true adulthood.

So it was in some sense a very different ‘me’ who came to read the manuscript of this book. I think if I had read it two or three years ago I would have hated it and responded much as I had to that evening’s lecture. Now as I read, it was with more openness and understanding; the subject matter was familiar to me; many of the ideas sat easily alongside my own; I had covered this ground in my own journey, and my understanding had grown along similar lines. And yet as I read, it was still there; I could hear beneath the surface all the old responses, the ‘yes buts’ that met each new point, each challenge to my old distorted logic: I could feel in me still the victim hooked into blaming, the wounded child seeking redress. But no

longer caught within the power of the Victim Archetype, I could also contact some other response that held me and carried me through as page followed page. A book that once would have felt like a blow became, as I read on, a gift.

I am thankful that my journey, in life and in therapy, has been as it has; thankful to have met with Jill and to have shared part of that journey with her; and thankful now to read this book with the insight and understanding that has grown in my talks with her over the years. This book is for me now less a challenge than an invitation; it is offered with love and written with grace. I experienced a sense of triumph and satisfaction as I came to the final pages – and turned to the beginning and started to read it all again. It is an important book, that comes at a time when we are perhaps ready to open and hear what it has to say; ready to move beyond our blaming, beyond our victimhood and know that we can respond to the reality of our lived experience in a more creative way.

It may be that as you read this book you will become aware, as I did, of the ‘yes buts,’ of the pull of that victim energy, of the part of you that feels blamed and angry at the very idea of not blaming. I would ask of you that you note such responses and read on, for the later chapters unfold the complexity of the activity of choice with recognition and compassion for our experience of non-choice. Be willing to put the book aside and return to it later. It is not, as I said, an easy book; but it could change the quality of your life.

Sue Hatfield

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

I am delighted this book is being republished over 30 years after the original publication. It is very timely.

Central to the book, as I understand it, is the Victim Archetype, brought about because of an over-identification with the wounded child who can never recover from the faults of the mother figure, and has at some level been blaming ever since; and not just her, but the world of which she is a part. This error stems from an over-identification of ourselves as just physical beings when indeed in the early part of our lives, we are very dependent on our carers, principally our mothers. But if we see ourselves as spirit which cannot be harmed incarnating into a physical body, then the premise for the Victim Archetype, the innocent helpless child, disappears, and with it, the addiction to blaming. This tendency to blame is supported by causal thinking which is always seeking to find the cause of our unhappiness in the external world.

I hope in this brief summary I have done the book justice. It really challenges not only our Western materialistic notions of the human being, but how they are at a subtle level supporting much of the world of psychology and psychotherapy, which looks for cause in early childhood. By giving spirit its rightful place, we are invited to go past this paradigm, seeing ourselves as able to choose, moment by moment, to feel separate, or recognize an interconnectedness with all that is.

In the last 30 years there has been a welcome addition to the psychology literature of using the here and now (existential), and many spiritual teachers who also emphasize the importance of being in the now. However, the author's central argument, I think, still holds – that we are at some level addicted to the thought patterns that keep us feeling separate, in the past and blaming.

The author explores some of the reasons that might explain the prevalence of victim consciousness, a consciousness which contributes to a health-and-safety culture which is neither healthy nor safe; a fear of litigation, and the litigation itself that abounds in many helping professions as well as in the world at large; and some of the premises of psychological theory which colludes with a world-view that does not serve us. In inviting us to remember that as well as physical bodies, we are spirit and therefore connected to all that is, we no longer inhabit a dualistic world full of them and us.

Given the state of the world, the book is a very important contribution to understanding how we have got into this state, and how we can move beyond it.

Robin Shoet

Psychotherapist and author

INTRODUCTION

This book started with a challenge. A great friend of mine, a Jungian psychotherapist, said one day during a discussion that I seemed to have avoided knowledge of my 'helpless self' which, she believed, was part of the fundamental furniture of the psyche. Provoked by this suggestion I embarked on an extensive inner search in order to come to terms with that aspect of myself which I was, perhaps, refusing to recognize.

I had been filled with fearfulness as a child. I was late to socialize and generally took a long time to get used to the world. I seemed ill-adapted to my environment in every way. For years I was plagued by an onslaught of frightening images every night, and each evening I dreaded the approach of darkness. Growing up was an enormous improvement. But in spite of all this fear I did not experience myself as helpless. I have never known a time when I did not have a strong sense of self. I always felt that I was the centre of my activity and that it was 'me' who was doing the living. I felt very alone but not helpless. But now, spurred on by the challenge of my friend, I did everything I could think of to find this 'lost' bit of myself. However, the more I searched, the more I experienced, instead, a sense of my inner power – power to be myself. It was all most unexpected. And then the ideas that I have attempted to share in this book began pouring in on me.

By the time I started writing, the heart of what I had most cherished in my life as well as the beliefs in which I had invested an enormous amount of energy were falling apart, day by day. Devastating though this was, I was reminded, once again, that I need not enter a state of helplessness. Although I felt anxious, despairing, lost, depressed, it still did not seem that my condition rested solely on the forces that I experienced as impinging on me. And I found that whenever I could allow some movement in my perspective, the

notion – and thus the fear – of helplessness would seem less real.

This book was born from my sense of the power that lies at the core of my being; and the deeper I searched, the more I knew such power could only come from what lies in us all – and in all things.

Let me say from the outset that I make assumptions about many things – in fact about all the things that most interest me. I make assumptions about spirit, the self and human nature. It seems to me that this activity is a part of the process of responding creatively to life, and so I make no apology. I trust that it is clear that I am offering only my viewpoint. If I keep accentuating that fact then communication will lose all immediacy and become hopelessly cumbersome.

And so I have chosen to speak directly of matters that are deeply important to me. I wish to share my vision of our psychological state of development as a species. These ideas are underpinned by many years of working intimately with hundreds of people as a psychotherapist – that is my grounding. However, the core theory arose out of a series of dream states. I would wake up at night with a phrase or a word on my mind and recognize that it carried a certain energy. I would start writing. The ‘theory’ emerged. It seemed to have a vitality and authority of its own. I have tried to express it in a somewhat ‘respectable’ form, but it has not been easy. I can hear people remarking, ‘But where are her references?’. Although I have been enormously upheld by all the thinking of past and present philosophers and psychologists, scientists and artists – absorbing ideas like breathing air and receiving continual stimulation – I decided not to make the writing of this book an academic project. In fact I had to ban reading during this period because I became all too easily overwhelmed with new thoughts whenever I received fresh input of any kind; and I knew that this book would never get written if I explored the subject any further.

I also did not want to stray too far from the immediacy of the core idea. It was some reading in the field of Social Psychology (which I just happened to do because of a debate going on about Family Therapy with some colleagues of mine) that made me decide on the ban. The reader may notice the different quality of the writing in Chapter 5, when I did make use of some of the material I read around hierarchical models. Otherwise, as far as I know, no book has

influenced the basic direction of my thought. It has arisen out of my experience of life and from different levels of my consciousness. This experience includes my training in Biodynamic Psychology with Gerda Boyesen. She communicated an extensive, immediate and vital approach to the embodied psyche for which I am enormously grateful. Some years later I came into contact with the teachings of the American Indian peoples in the wilderness of New Mexico, and experienced once more the impact of an enriching new ‘language of the psyche.’ Both simple and subtle, it became the tool through which I incorporated a whole un-lived aspect of myself. But I also found it extremely difficult to do justice to this ‘language’ in the written word. (Hence my confusion about when to use capital letters in Chapter 6.) I have many times spoken the teachings, and that feels the appropriate mode of communication.

And so the assumptions that I make are not merely empty intellectual ones. They inform my life – and I enjoy my life enormously. They work for me. I wonder why it is that something seems less of an assumption if someone else wrote about it somewhere else and a note is made of that fact? Why does something have more authority, the further removed it is from its direct point of entry into the arena of shared thought? It is an academic habit to be ashamed of making assumptions. We all make them all the time. The important thing is to clarify what they are and look at their implications.