

Voices from the Shadows: Listening for the Self in Apocalyptic Times

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I begin today with a prayer from an ancient Hindu sacred text, the Atharvaveda. I offer it to help us start listening at the edges of our awareness, listening to the Voices from the Shadows...

*If there was something in the air
If there was something in the wind
If there was something in the trees or bushes
That could be pronounced and once was
overheard by animals
Let this Sacred Knowledge be returned to us
again. (Atharvaveda. VII, 66)*

There *is* something in the air, in the wind.... Crows shatter the silence, wheeling black bodies filling the sky. The doe's head jerks up and her white tail flicks to attention. The dark edge of the sky grumbles. There is something in the distant voice of thunder, the canny intuition of crows and the startle response of deer, something in a chorus of voices we can't understand, the voices of thunder, crow and deer...salmon, polar bear, and bee, voices speaking a long-forgotten language. In the awareness of the dominant culture, we hear those voices as abstract ideas, disconnected from us and from each other: global climate change, vanishing salmon runs, colony collapse syndrome. When salmon, bee and bear become separate abstract ideas, crucial knowledge is lost and fear comes, waking us from restless shallow sleep, whispering worries in the dim predawn light.

I search for a way to understand these times we are waking into, some way other than the 'end times' language which tenses our bodies and shuts down our hearts. When we fear the End of the World, we are caught in the illusion of linear time and the archetype of Apocalypse. Even if our bodies appear to live in linear time, our souls do not and the soul of the world does not. Perhaps these

times are the beginning of a world yet to be. As storyteller Michael Meade says about the great ongoing round of human existence:

People have always feared The End. Fear of the end of the world has been there from the very beginning of it. The End has been repeatedly predicted and religiously expected, yet has never arrived. Sometimes the greatest safety comes from going to where the fear seems to originate. Facing The End may be the best way to begin again. Amidst the roaring of the threatened and troubled world, surprising ways to begin it all again may wait to be found. (p. 4)

Or, as writer and activist Rebecca Solnit puts it "...again and again, far stranger things happen than the end of the world." I found the prayer from the Atharvaveda just as I was finishing my training thesis on 'community'. I placed it at the beginning of the thesis. The morning I began this paper, it floated back into awareness. It tells me that this paper is about 'making community'. And it is about Sacred Knowledge. To find one is to find the other.

Exactly what *is* ending now? A giant freeway bridge collapses into a great American river. Jet airplanes smash into towering buildings, turning them into massive skyscrapers of smoke and fire and death. Our government makes wars that bring chaos and death to millions of people we don't even know....and to our own. Waves of water kill a quarter of a million people on the other side of the world and destroy a cherished American city. Ten thousand year-old glaciers melt and begin to disappear. The worst economic meltdown in generations persists. What story are these events telling us? Why this? Why now?

While there are all too real, flesh and blood, consequences of these apocalyptic events, these events are also our collective dream. This collective dream, these powerful and terrifying images, what do they tell us about the dreamer? And who is that dreamer but all of us, the human collective, or at least that part of us identified with the ruling principle of consciousness of the dominant culture? Humanity dreamed this world into being and now we are dreaming its end.

I brought my thoughts and questions about these collective dreams to Edward Edinger's last work, Archetype of the Apocalypse: Divine Vengeance.

Terrorism, and the End of the World. His book is a gripping exegesis of the images of the New Testament Book of Revelation. Edinger seems to have long anticipated these times. According to the introduction, Edinger was following his understanding of Jung's psychology, particularly as Jung expressed it in *Aion*: "The coming of the Antichrist is not just a prophetic prediction—it is an inexorable psychological law." (p. xiii) Jung was deeply affected by the events of the first half of the twentieth century, as were W. H. Auden, T.S. Eliot and Spengler, among others, who imagined, as Yeats did, a "rough beast slouching toward Bethlehem to be born." ()

Edinger moves into his psychological exploration of Apocalypse with the Greek word *Apokalypsis*, meaning "revelation" or "the uncovering of what has been hidden."(p.3) Apocalyptic events, he says, signify the "momentous event of the coming of the Self into conscious realization." (p.5) According to Edinger, "this earth-shaking archetypal event is taking place right here and now."(ibid.) When the archetype appears in the dreams and fantasies of the individual, the catastrophe is for the ego. In individual psyche, the coming of the Self means a shattering upheaval, but it can lead to what Edinger calls "an enlargement of the personality and the emerging relation to the transpersonal level of the psyche." Not so for the coming of the Self in collective psyche, according to Edinger, because "collective manifestations of the archetype are by definition *unconscious* manifestations of the archetype acted out concretely."(p.12, emphasis his)

I came away from his book with a deeper appreciation for apocalyptic images and a sense of what this work might have meant to Edinger. Twenty-five years ago, in a 1983 interview in "Psychological Perspectives" he said:

It seems absolutely inevitable that immense turmoil, convulsive movements and eruptions of chaos in vast proportions are in the making so far as the political-historical aspect of mankind is concerned. That, I think, will dwarf the upheaval that took place at the beginning of the Christian era with the gradual disintegration of the Roman empire. That was small potatoes by comparison to what will happen this time. (p.xvi)

Small potatoes. Something about that homely image suggests to me that a dark vision for humanity consumed Edinger and drove him to make meaning of it. He

wanted to be part of bringing Jung's ideas into the collective so that we might, hope against hope, forestall the worst of what was possible. Yet, I had a strong feeling at the end of the book, which was not in finished form when he died, that he had boxed himself into a conceptual corner.

Here are some of Edinger's concluding words:

*The "coming of the Self" is imminent; and the process of collective "individuation" is living itself out in human history. One way or another, the world is going to be made a single whole entity. But it will be unified either in mutual mass destruction or by means of mutual human consciousness. **If** a sufficient number of individuals can have the experience of the coming of the Self as an individual, inner experience, we may just possibly be spared the worst features of its external manifestation. (p. 174) (emphasis his)*

A bit later he writes:

My hypothesis remains, however, that the extent of the destructive collective process will depend on how many other individuals can achieve Jung's level of consciousness. (p. 177).

There it is. The impossible situation Edinger believes we face. The existential peril is collective but only individual transformation will save us. I feel something poignant and collective in Edinger's dilemma, coming both at the end of his life and at the end of one of the bloodiest centuries in human history. As Einstein may have said; we can't solve problems using the same kind of thinking we used to create them. For it does not seem to occur to Edinger that apocalyptic events and movements in the collective could serve the same function for the collective as apocalyptic dreams and visions do for the individual, that individuals and their collectives, together, might experience the horrific shattering of the known world as a necessary prelude to a different awareness and a deeper relationship to the Creative Source of all being. It does not seem to occur to Edinger that what is being revealed **is** the invisible collective, or that the invisible collective has, **in itself**, the potential to heal a wounded collective consciousness that needs apocalyptic events, dreams, visions and movements to shatter it into individuation.

I believe this aspect of Edinger's thinking reveals a blind spot in his work, in Jung's work and in our work as Jungians. The blind spot is not just ours; it is central to the dominant culture. The thinking which created the dilemma Edinger illuminates is identified with the ruling principle of consciousness, the archetype of the Hero. According to this thinking, history is about leaders, about individuals who extricate themselves from the collective and take it in the direction of their vision, for collective good or collective ill. The collective is a dangerous place, prone to primitive excesses of group mind. The privileged psychological move is inward to one's own depths, not also outward into the collectives in which we are always invisibly embedded. The Other and the collective serve primarily as mirrors for our projections, allowing us to withdraw those projections and reclaim disowned parts of the personality. While these views of the collective are not false or wrong, they are profoundly one-sided.

I believe, as do many others, that we are at the end of a long time, perhaps 5000 years, in which the dominant culture and its dreaming have gradually, sometimes violently, prevailed over almost all other forms of collective experience and organization. We have come to the outer limits of that ruling principle of consciousness, the outer limits of our world view. As I have suggested to this group before, the archetypal image of that world view may be found in the ancient Babylonian creation myth, the *enuma elish*, in which the hero, Marduk, kills the mother, Tiamat, and makes the world from her pieces. We have no way of knowing what the author of the fragment from the Atharvaveda meant by it, how he or she experienced the world in which it was written, or what lost ancient wisdom is being described. But like the *enuma elish*, it comes from the period a couple of millennia before the birth of Christ, which many of us think may have seen the early development of what is now the consciousness which rules the world. That one-sided consciousness, I believe, is being challenged by the apocalyptic events of our times.

There is no easy path to the psychological realities contained in the deepest part of our collective cultural shadow. We can look for clues, for subtle easy-to-miss hints. We can listen for the marginalized and rejected voices

speaking from the fringes of our culture. We can notice what upsets us and arouses our defensiveness and judgment. And we can listen to our collective dreams. Some years ago, I ran across a paper which presents some of the best contemporary evidence I have found of what cultures untouched by what I am calling “the ruling principle of consciousness of the dominant culture” might have been like. It’s a long richly-detailed paper and I can only give you a flavor of it in service of suggesting that what lies outside of our ruling principle of consciousness is not just an idea but, most importantly, an experience.

The author, anthropologist E. Richard Sorenson, examines not just the cultural practices of the remote indigenous communities he lived in and wrote about over many years, but also the ways in which his cultural preconceptions, what he calls “Western epistemology,” molded his and others’ perceptions of those communities. He gradually, over many years, became aware of a kind of consciousness and interpersonal awareness that he experienced as completely different from the kind of awareness we in the dominant culture take for granted. He observed that when cultures with a radically different awareness encroached on these communities to the point where their awareness could not be sustained, that awareness faded away. Sometimes that happened gradually and sometimes something resembling a community-wide psychosis would, in a very short time, overwhelm the entire community, leaving all of its members in a dazed traumatized state with complete amnesia as to the nature, or even existence, of their previous state of consciousness.

He describes the necessary conditions for what he calls “preconquest consciousness” and what he saw happening when that awareness collided with what he calls “postconquest consciousness.”

The outstanding demographic condition required for such life is small populations surrounded by tracts of open territory into which anyone can diffuse virtually at will... The outstanding social condition is a sociosensual type of infant and child nurture that spawns an intuitive group rapport and unites people without need for formal rules. The outstanding psychological condition is heart-felt rapprochement based on integrated trust. This provides remarkable efficiency in securing needs and responding to nature’s challenges while dispensing ongoing delight with people and surroundings. The outstanding economic condition is absence

of private property, which allows constant cooperative usage of the implements and materials of life for collective benefit. The human ecology engendered by the interactions of these outstanding conditions makes the forcing of others (including children) to one's will a disruptive and unwholesome practice. It was not seen.

Any form of subjugation, even those barriers to freedom imposed by private property, are the kiss of death to this kind of life. Though durable and self-repairing in isolation, the unconditional open trust this way of life requires shrivels with alarming speed when faced with harsh emotions or coercion. Deceit, hostility, and selfishness when only episodic temporarily benumb intuitive rapport. When such conditions come to stay and no escape is possible, intuitive rapport disintegrates within a brutally disorienting period of existential trauma and anomie. With no other models about except those of conquerors... (these communities) adjust to the postconquest milieu by adopting formal group identities. First they internalize various abstract ideas of space, boundary, and kinship introduced by their conquerors. They then use them to anchor claims of their own to turf. They devise rules and customs that clearly identify them as a distinct people with formal rights. From this process different kinds of cultural elaboration emerge in separated regions – until a harsher level of conquest presses their uniqueness to extinction. (p.80)

Sorenson describes what he calls a “liminal awareness” in the individuals in those “preconquest” communities:

In the real life of these preconquest people, feeling and awareness are focused on at-the-moment, point-blank sensory experience – as if the nub of life lay within that complex flux of collective sentient immediacy. Into that flux individuals thrust their inner thoughts and aspirations for all to see, appreciate and relate to. This unabashed open honesty is the foundation on which their highly honed integrative empathy and rapport become possible. When that openness gives way empathy and rapport shrivel. Where deceit becomes a common practice, they disintegrate

Where consciousness is focused within a flux of ongoing sentient awareness, experience cannot be clearly subdivided into separable components. With no clear elements to which logic can be applied, experience remains immune to syntax and formal logic within a kaleidoscopic sanctuary of non-discreteness. Nonetheless, preconquest life was reckoned sensibly – though seemingly intuitively. (p.83)

And, finally, one last thought which bears directly on what I want to consider today:

Preconquest groups are simultaneously individualistic and collective – traits immiscible and incompatible in modern thought and languages. This fusion of individuality and solidarity is another of the profound cognitive disparities that separate the preconquest and postconquest eras. It in part explains why even fundamental preconquest cultural traits are sometimes difficult to perceive, much less to appreciate, by postconquest peoples. (p. 82)

The little I understand of current-day indigenous languages, taken from the words of those who still speak their language as it has been handed down by elders, suggests to me that one aspect of the reality that Sorenson believes is experienced by members of preconquest communities is a reality of movements of energy and not of discrete objects. In the dominant consciousness, objects are related to each other by cause and effect and reflected in our minds in symbolic and logical linguistic structures. Indigenous reality is created by and reflected in indigenous languages. It is a profoundly different reality from the one created by and reflected in the Indo-European languages with which most of us speak, write and think.

Sorenson's paper is an overview of decades of work in remote indigenous communities. He admits that his empathic immersion in the communities he describes deeply affected him, particularly the fate of one community where he happened to be present as its "preconquest" awareness was overwhelmed by "postconquest consciousness." But he also says that without that empathic immersion, he would never have understood what he finally came to understand.

With the dominant culture's habits of judgment, it's hard not to take a position on the question of whether the obliteration of "preconquest consciousness" by "postconquest consciousness" is a 'good' or a 'bad' thing and it seems easy to imagine where Sorenson would come down on that question. Certainly the encounters between indigenous cultures and what he calls the Western, Sinic, Indic and Islamic cultures, whose awareness is organized around the symbolism and abstraction of their languages, have created much human suffering. But today I am not making a judgment about those encounters. I want simply to suggest that, for better or worse, probably both, the encounters

between the “preconquest consciousness” of our indigenous ancestors and another world view drove that part of our psychic inheritance into our personal and cultural unconscious where it remains.

Or does it? In his recent book, Living in the Borderland, our colleague Jerome Bernstein argues that a different kind of awareness, what he calls “transrational reality,” is an “emergent psychic reality that is pressing for incarnation from within the collective unconscious.” (p. xviii) By “transrational reality” he means:

Objective nonpersonal nonrational phenomena occurring in the natural universe, information and experience that does not readily fit into standard cause and effect logical structure. These are the kinds of experience that typically are labeled and dismissed as superstition, irrational, and, in the extreme, abnormal or crazy.”(p. xvi)

Assuming that I understand what Jerome is saying, I see what he calls “the Borderland” as something closely related to what Sorenson describes as “preconquest consciousness” and I too imagine it is returning to individual and collective consciousness. Certainly, aspects of what Sorenson describes, in modern form, exist in the liminal realms we experience when we dive into our subjective inner world in service of experiencing the inner world of an analysand or, more generally, imagine that our subjective experiences of the world around us or the inner world of dreams and visions are a kind of language.

But valuing the experience of inner subjective realms is not a characteristic of the culture at large. As Jerome observes on the front page of his book, “we see and hear what we are open to noticing.” Again, Sorenson,

When I first came face-to-face with these experientially-based modes of cognition wherein logic was irrelevant, they slid right past me. I did not even see them. Even when I did begin to catch on, I tended to doubt such perceptions once I was again within the confines of Western culture. It took years of repeated, even dramatic exposure before these initially fragmentary mental graspings were able to survive re-immersion in Western culture. (p. 107)

A world view which clings to its identification with only one aspect of a polarity becomes dangerously one-sided and out of balance. This psychological condition inevitably, perhaps reflexively, leads to intervention from the deepest archetypal unconscious, from the Self. Shattering that one-sided world view may be a prelude, for both individuals and collectives, to a greater, more creative, living wholeness in touch with the Ground of Being.

And so, we return to the archetype of the Apocalypse and the question of what it is about collective consciousness that gives rise to the apocalyptic events, fantasies and movements of our times, a world-shattering return of the repressed. The world view of the dominant culture splits psyche into individual and collective psyche. It privileges individual psyche as the place from which creativity and meaning emerge. I believe this narrowed consciousness cuts us off from experiences which could reconnect us to an immediate knowing that we are completely interconnected in and to a world of fellow beings in which we always belong. I believe this awareness is our birthright. As Jerome quotes the astronaut Edward Mitchell:

On the way back home from the moon, as I was gazing out the window at mother earth, the awe-inspiring beauty of the cosmos suddenly overcame me. While still aware of the separateness of my existence, my mind was flooded with an intuitive knowing that everything is interconnected – that this magnificent universe is a harmonious, directed, purposeful whole.” (Bernstein, p. 56)

As Jungian analyst Arthur Coleman describes the one-sidedness of our current world view; “to the individual, the collective is unconscious.” (Centered on the Edge, p. 51). Coleman is part of a growing movement of thinkers, writers, organizational consultants and practitioners of a variety of disciplines examining what happens in groups when they experience what we as Jungians might call, the Self of the Group. Some of these experiences, I believe, can help us begin to recognize and welcome something of our long-buried “preconquest consciousness.” The ability to move intentionally in and out of different forms of consciousness is a human capacity sorely in need of development in these times. Developing such an integrative consciousness may be precisely what is

being asked of us by these times. The dominant separating consciousness leads us to believe that we think only with our minds and feel only with our hearts. An integrative consciousness might allow us also to think with our hearts and feel with our minds.

I can't, today, do more than mention the movement I am referencing, which is sometimes described as a movement to explore collective wisdom, collective intelligence or collective consciousness, but I have been delighted and gratified to find others considering questions I've been pondering for a couple of decades. Nor do I want to suggest that groups can't fall hard and often into 'collective stupidity.' I think of collective stupidity as the bewildering and disorganizing chaos we experience as group members hurl opinions and judgments at each other. It may be as much a harbinger of the return of the repressed as the apocalyptic images I am wondering about. But, certainly, we cannot explore the transformative possibilities of groups without acknowledging how much of our experience of collectives has been the kind of nightmare Matthew Arnold describes.

*And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night. (Dover Beach)*

It seems that those exploring ideas and experiences of collective wisdom struggle as I do to find language for what happens in groups when they are at their finest. Even in the midst of a chaotic group process, there are times when Something else enters the room, which suddenly becomes spacious. People begin to breathe again. Their hearts open up. A feeling enters that space that is hard to describe. Suddenly, Something much larger than the assembled group is present. A fractured and fragmenting collection of colliding egos becomes Something Else, a deeply felt Unity of everybody present and, paradoxically, a room full of wonderfully unique and necessarily separate selves. I feel, at those moments, that the group most needs me and everyone in it to be authentically and completely themselves, to speak the truth of their hearts into a space in which it is completely safe to do so.

Christopher Bache, professor of religious studies and consciousness researcher, describes his experience:

Sometimes when I am simply doing my job covering the day's assignment, it's as if the floor suddenly falls away. The atmosphere in the room becomes supercharged, and everyone seems to congeal into a superunified state. My mind becomes unusually spacious and clear, and my students' eyes tell me that they have moved into a particularly receptive state. Our hearts seem to merge, and from this open field of compassion comes a slow stream of thoughts that I, as spokesperson for the group, unfold and work with.

*In these transient moments of heightened awareness, I sometimes have the acute sensation that there is only one mind present in the room. It is as if the walls that usually separate us have become gossamer curtains. Individual persons melt into a softly glowing field of energy, and this unified energy **thinks and feels and hungers to speak**. Because this field incorporates the life experiences of everyone present, of course we sometimes find the details of our separate histories surfacing spontaneously in it. Because it embodies our private hopes and fears, of course we are sometimes deeply touched by what comes out of it. (Dark Night, Early Dawn p. 196) (emphasis his.)*

I have come to believe, as Bache does, that whatever This is, It is always trying to happen in groups, although only rarely does it happen as powerfully as Bache describes here. As the Latin phrase over Jung's door in Kusnacht says: whether we call Them or not, the Gods will be present. This experience could be called community or collective wisdom or collective intelligence. In its most powerful form, the members of the group have a simultaneous collective experience of Eros, or love, which, I believe, is the subjective experience of the Creative Energy of the Universe. In the language of the Atharvaveda, it is Sacred Knowledge. At those moments, it seems that belonging, like dreaming, is a doorway to the Self.

And it may also be somehow related to "preconquest consciousness." I only recently went back and reread Sorenson's paper as I was preparing to write this one. Certain phrases leapt out at me: his description of infant and child nurturing practices which "spawn an intuitive group rapport" and "unite people without need for formal rules;" the statement that the "outstanding psychological condition" of these groups is a "heart-felt rapprochement based on integrated trust;" and the core condition of an "unabashed open honesty." Finally, his

description of “preconquest” communities as “simultaneously individualistic and collective” is a perfect description of my experience when Something almost beyond language enters the room.

I want to emphasize Sorenson’s insight that coercion was not only completely absent from preconquest cultures but utterly inimical to their continued existence. I understand coercion to be a fundamental quality of the interpersonal and intrapsychic dynamics of the dominant culture’s ruling principle of consciousness. Just as we try to argue our verbal opponents into oblivion when we are in a state of collective stupidity so does the external and internal “postconquest” oppressor seek to intimidate us into disparaging all forms of thought, feeling and awareness which do not conform to the ego’s culturally-determined idealized notion of ourselves, setting the stage for a violent and dramatic breakthrough of the repressed.

I want to return to Edinger’s dilemma, caught, as he was, in trying to imagine that there could ever be a sufficient number of individuated people to respond to overwhelming collective existential threats. I believe that the “enlargement of the personality and the emerging relation to the transpersonal level of the psyche” Edinger describes can also be witnessed in our individual and collective responses to transcendent moments in groups. Just as a personal connection with the Source of our being can be healing and transformative, so, when a group opens to that experience, can the energies released be healing and transformative, for the group as a whole and for the individuals in it.

There are times when it seems that a group has arrived at a place where it is impossible to go forward. Something splits the group, evoking passionate arguments as members on both sides seek to convince everyone else of the correctness of their perspective. At those moments, groups can descend into collective stupidity. Individual and group complexes seize its members, personal complexes perhaps being energetically entrained by group complexes. The group feels chaotic and fractured, while individuals in it are gripped by a powerful sense of righteousness and, perhaps, a misplaced urge to ‘heal’ the group by trying to force everyone in it to ‘unify’ around one side of the polarity.

These are very difficult moments. Group psyche is always more powerful than individual psyche, the larger the group, the more powerful. It is unreasonable to expect even a group of Jungian analysts to be able to avoid these moments. But if there is a cool head left in the room, it would be good for someone to suggest that it's time to take a break and step back from what is happening. In my experience, the split in the group which is the subject matter of a particular disagreement is often a proxy for a much deeper, though related, issue which needs to be surfaced and worked with consciously.

Here I think our understanding of Jungian psychology could be most helpful, to us and to those exploring 'collective intelligence.' We know that we're experiencing group shadow and that suffering that shadow may allow whatever has been driven from group ego awareness to return. We have an expectation that the 'transcendent function' might work if we resist the temptation to come down prematurely on one or the other side of the emerging polarity. As analysts, we are experienced at what I think of as 'listening for the Self' in our consulting rooms and within ourselves. As I said earlier in reference to the contents of our cultural collective shadow, we can only look for clues, for subtle easy-to-miss hints. We can listen to marginalized and rejected voices speaking from the fringes of the group. And we can notice what upsets us and arouses our defensiveness and judgment. Perhaps we could also listen to our dreams.

That small soft voice in our heads, easy to override or dismiss, the casual thought passed over quickly by our analysand, the 'difficult' group member who challenges the certainties of the group ego and the lone quiet voice in the back of the room...these are the voices we most need to hear. These are Voices from the Shadows. And beyond listening for these voices, there is the hardest part, the part that goes beyond theory, beyond understanding, beyond everything we know and believe. That is the part where we admit defeat. We not only think it, we feel it. All the righteousness in the group seized by collective stupidity can give way to a deep and heartfelt humility, to an acknowledgment of the limits of human power, our brokenness and frailty and the inevitability of error. Certainty can give way, as group members remember that the forces of nature and the

cosmos, to which we are always subordinate, are a Mystery beyond human understanding. It often takes enormous courage for somebody in the group to be the first to stand up in the midst of the “ignorant armies” and admit defeat or to say, from a vulnerable and open heart, the thing that the group most needs to hear. But the moment when the group leaves a state of collective stupidity and falls into a humble open place is sometimes the moment when something transcendent enters the room.

Let's return to where we began with Edinger, as he was saying that “the ‘coming of the Self’ is imminent; and the process of ‘collective individuation’ is living itself out in human history.” The apocalyptic events I described at the beginning of this paper are also Voices from the Shadows. Here is my fantasy about what they may be saying, what our collective dream is saying about the dreamer. I believe they speak, first, to our culture's profound unconsciousness of the interrelationship and interconnection of everything on earth, indeed in the cosmos. I bring up Sorenson's observations because I believe he is describing communities in which interrelationship and interconnection were woven into the fabric of an individual and collective way of being, the source of the various ways of being human which he describes. Only in such a community could life exist within a “complex flux of collective sentient immediacy.” Only in such a community could individuals thrust into that flux “their inner thoughts and aspirations for all to see, appreciate and relate to.” When their “highly honed and integrative empathy and rapport” was no longer sustainable, community members fell immediately into “postconquest” behaviors. That behavior became much more than a behavior, it became a hitherto completely alien world view, one which we in the dominant culture find so familiar that we cannot see it for what it is.

I believe the Voices from the Shadows are speaking not just to the isolation of the Western ego but also to the extreme inflation of that ego. Again, from Jerome, “...since the ego cannot be trusted to curtail its own inflation and sense of omnipotence, we remain in danger of species extinction” (p. 61). That dangerously inflated collective ego built the twin towers that came crashing down

on September 11th, those towers which declared in Ozymandian voices, “look upon my works ye mighty and despair.” () Building those towers was no accident, nor was targeting them and bringing them down; these acts were psychologically inevitable, highly symbolic acts of humans who arrogated the power and righteousness of the Gods. The events of September 11th were human tragedy on archetypal scale, an apocalyptic challenge to an inflated collective ego.

My experiences and those of writers exploring collective wisdom strongly suggest that dropping our defenses and embracing our vulnerability is paradoxically both a precondition for and a result of a collective experience of the wisdom of the group. In that sense, the September 11th catastrophe was an invitation to descend into and explore the almost unbearable feeling of vulnerability many of us experienced, along with a deep and sorrowful connection, to the traumatized New Yorkers, to the families of those who perished that day and to a shocked and saddened world. It was tragic, but not surprising, that we, collectively, chose not to embrace those feelings, but moved instead into righteousness and aggression. Fear of our collective vulnerability persists and it is a reasonable fear, given that our technologically interconnected culture is fragile and extremely vulnerable to catastrophic disruption. The image of widespread and devastating technological collapse often appears in fantasies which involve the “End of the World.”

But if we can go to the place of that fear, as Michael Meade suggests, on the other side of that fear is a gift. All of the events I described at the beginning of the paper have left many of those identified with the ruling principle of consciousness feeling vulnerable and afraid. The rest of the people in the world - - and there are many of them -- know that vulnerability is an inescapable part of being human and just go about their lives. Acknowledging that vulnerability and embracing it seem like a good place to begin creating the world that could be coming into being, the first step in moving toward an understanding that we are all in this together, that nobody really knows what to do and that each of us

carries a vital and indispensable piece of what we need as a whole. As business writer James Surowiecki says in his book The Wisdom of Crowds, there is a

“simple, but powerful, truth that is at the heart of this book: under the right circumstances, groups are remarkably intelligent, and often smarter than the smartest people in them.” (p. xii).

As I said at the beginning of this paper, I search for a way to understand these times we are waking into, some way other than the ‘end times’ language which tenses our bodies and shuts down our hearts. Something **is** ending but it is not The End of the World. It is the end of one dream of the world and the beginning of another. We who live in these times have an extraordinary opportunity to dream and begin to shape a very different world, a world that perhaps our children or grandchildren will begin to see. The collective existential threats I have referenced, and perhaps more that we can only imagine, may initially be terrifying. Those existential threats will take very specific forms in the very specific places where we live and in the particular groups and communities to which we belong. Facing them together has the potential to offer experiences of profound interconnection and interdependence, a renewed sense of community and hope. As Rebecca Solnit says

“horrible in itself, disaster is sometimes a door back into paradise, the paradise ... in which we are who we hope to be, do the work we desire, and are each our sister’s and brother’s keeper.”

It seems that Edinger was both eerily prescient and understandably limited in his understanding of these times and what they require of us. He understood that as many of us as possible must take responsibility for our state of awareness, doing the hard work of finding and suffering our shadow and keeping a watchful eye on the ego’s claims to superior wisdom and power. I want to suggest that we also need to do the hard work of being in groups. We can no longer elevate some among us to positions of leadership and expect to sit back and passively follow their lead in making decisions that affect us all. In the words of the iconic Tina Turner song: “We don’t need another hero!” The work we do in groups can be as powerful and important as the work we do alone, perhaps even more so, but just as it is more powerful, it may also be, by the same order of

magnitude, more difficult. The work of suffering our shadow becomes individual **and** collective, the claims of our individual and group egos to superior wisdom and power need to be even more suspiciously watched.

The danger of collective stupidity, which steals into groups through the back door of shadow, moves from problematic to world-threatening when it is writ large upon the world stage. If we no longer split psyche into individual psyche and collective psyche we can understand, instead, that psyche has no divisions, that what our separating minds perceive as me, my family, my community, my political party, red states/blue states, my country, people who look and think like me, everybody else...these are all fantasies of the isolated self. If anything, these imagined psychic entities can be conceived of as intimately nested concentric spheres of relationship and responsibility, radiating out from the core of the individual self and stretching out to include the cosmos, as Lakota artist, teacher and activist Rosalie Little Thunder describes her understanding of her peoples' traditional teachings. As she says, "When you hear the voice of the community, you are hearing the Voice of the Creator."

For me, when we begin to understand that our lives and fates, our existence and our consciousness are always inextricably intertwined with that of all others, the apparent complexities of the relationship between the individual and the collective fall away. We have the same task as individuals that we do as members of collectives; collectives have the same task as individuals. That task, as defined by the world's great spiritual traditions, is conceptually simple and, at the same time, the most psychologically and spiritually challenging work of our lives. We need to set aside what some of those traditions call 'the ego' and open ourselves to the Creative Energy of the Universe as it moves through us and all beings, that Mystery which gave birth to the cosmos. Embracing our human frailties, vulnerabilities, brokenness and insignificance, we still have the responsibility that only humans seem to have, which is to allow that Energy to infuse our lives and work, to give it material form, to bring it into the visible world. When we do that we serve Life. Collectively the task is the same. Despite the real and often painful limitations which must be faced as we give that Energy

form in the world of matter, we might still ask the Fisher King's existential question: who or what am *I* serving? Who or what are *we* serving?

As we struggle and stumble toward the world yet to be, it will be good to hear many stories, especially the stories of those who speak from the shadows of our Western culture. One such voice belongs to Muskogee, poet, musician and playwright Joy Harjo and I will give her the last word.

Emergence

It's midsummer night. The light is skinny;
a thin skirt of desire skims the earth.
Dogs bark at the musk of other dogs
and the urge to go wild.
I am lingering at the edge
of a broken heart, striking relentlessly
against the flint of hard will.
It's coming apart.
And everyone knows it.
So do squash erupting in flowers
the color of the sun.
So does the momentum of grace
gathering allies
in the partying mob.
The heart knows everything.
I remember when there was no urge
to cut the land or each other into pieces,
when we knew how to think
in beautiful.
There is no world like the one surfacing.
I can smell it as I pace in my square room,
the neighbor's television
entering my house by waves of sound
makes me think about buying
a new car, another kind of cigarette
when I don't need another car
and I don't smoke cigarettes.
A human mind is small when thinking
of small things.
It is large when embracing the maker
of walking, thinking and flying.
If I can locate the sense beyond desire,
I will not eat or drink
until I stagger into the earth
with grief.
I will locate the point of dawning

and awaken
with the longest day in the world.

~ Joy Harjo ~

(Map to the Next World)