

2012 and Human Destiny:

End of the World or Consciousness Revolution?

Stanislav Grof, M.D.

Since the publication of Jose Arguelles' book *The Mayan Factor: Path Beyond Technology* (Arguelles 1987) brought to the attention of lay audiences the ancient prophecy concerning the end of the Maya Long Count calendar, which started on August 11, 3114 BC, and will end on December 21, 2012 AD, this date has become the focus of many articles, books, and conferences and of a forthcoming movie entitled *2012*. Similar prophecies about the end of the Great Cycle can be found in many other cultural and religious groups – the Hopi, Navajo, Cherokee, Apache, Iroquois confederacy, ancient Egyptians, the Kabbalists, Essenes, Qero elders of Peru, the Sub-Saharan Dogon tribe, and the Australian Aborigines.

With a few exceptions, the Mayan prophecy about the end of the cosmic cycle, the Fifth World, has been interpreted in terms of actual physical destruction of humanity and of the material world, in a way similar to the interpretation (or better misinterpretation) of the term apocalypse by Christian fundamentalists, particularly the millions of American Christians who believe that at the time of this global destruction they will experience “rapture” and be united with Jesus. People who see it this way are not aware of the fact that the original

and literal meaning of the term apocalypse (Greek Ἀποκάλυψις *Apokálypsis*) is not destruction but "lifting of the veil" or "revelation." It referred to the disclosure of some secrets hidden from the majority of humanity to certain privileged persons. The source of the misinterpretation of this word is probably the phrase "*apokálypsis eschaton*" which literally means "revelation at the end of the æon, or age."

The purpose of this conference is to explore a radically different, more optimistic interpretation of the Mayan prophecy – as referring to the end of the world as we have known it: a world dominated by unbridled violence and insatiable greed, egotistic hierarchy of values, corrupted institutions and corporations, and irreconcilable conflicts between organized religions. Instead of predicting a physical destruction of the material world, the Mayan prophecy might refer to death and rebirth and a mass inner transformation of humanity. In order to explore this idea, we have to answer two important questions, First, how could ancient Mayans two thousand years ago predict what situation humanity would be facing in the twenty-first century? And second, are there any indications that modern society, more specifically the industrial civilization, is currently on the verge of a major psychospiritual transformation? I will try to address these questions in the course of my presentation.

The Mayan prophecy concerning the 2012 winter solstice has an important astronomical dimension. Over 2,000 years ago the early

Maya formulated a profound galactic cosmology. Being excellent observers of the sky, they noticed that the position of the winter solstice sun was slowly shifting toward an alignment with the galactic axis. This movement is caused by so called precession - the wobble of the rotational axis of the earth. The Mayans concluded that major changes of cosmic proportions would occur at the time of this auspicious solar/galactic alignment. This is an event that happens only every 25,920 years, which is the period required for the equinox to move through all twelve zodiacal signs. C. G. Jung used in his book *Aion* and in his other writings the term “Platonic Month” for the period that it takes the vernal equinox point to pass through one constellation of the sidereal zodiac (approximately 2160 years) and the term “Platonic Year” for the completion of the entire zodiacal cycle.

Astronomers of the pre-classic Maya culture called the Izapa Culture devised the Long Count calendar consisting of thirteen baktuns to target the time when the cosmic alignment would maximize - December 2012 AD. The cultural legacy of ancient Mayans includes stone monuments conveying in carved glyphs and images the prophecy concerning this auspicious alignment. The above facts make it clear why the list of presenters to this conference should include people like John Major Jenkins, who has spent two decades studying Mayan archeological records trying to understand their original meaning (Jenkins 1998, 2002) or Robert Sitler, who has spent extensive time with contemporary Mayans and can offer deep insights into their

culture (2006). It is also obvious that an accomplished astrologer and historian like Richard Tarnas would be able to make a vital contribution to the main theme of the conference (Tarnas 2006).

My own area of interest in the last fifty years has been research of non-ordinary states of consciousness or, more specifically, an important subcategory of these states for which I coined the term holotropic. This composite word means literally "oriented toward wholeness" or "moving in the direction of wholeness" (from the Greek *holos* = whole and *trepein* = moving toward or in the direction of something). These are states that novice shamans experience during their initiatory crises and later induce in their clients. Ancient and native cultures have used these states in rites of passage and in their healing ceremonies. They were described by mystics of all ages and initiates in the ancient mysteries of death and rebirth. Procedures inducing these states were also developed in the context of the great religions of the world – Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Judaism, and Christianity (Grof 2000, 2006).

It is less immediately evident and requires some explanation why and how experiences and observations from the study of holotropic states can throw new light on the problem of the Mayan prophecy. The key consideration in this regard is that powerful consciousness-expanding procedures (“technologies of the sacred”) played an integral and essential role in the Mayan culture. We have ample pictorial evidence on Mayan stone stelae, sculptures, and

ceramics that they used for this purpose the Mexican cactus peyote (*Lophophora williamsii*), magic mushrooms (*Psilocybe mexicana* or *coerulescens* known to the Indians as *Xibalba okox* or *teonanacatl*), and skin secretions of the toad *Bufo marinus*. Additional plant materials used in pre-Hispanic Mesoamerica were the morning glory seeds (*Ipomoea violacea*) called by the natives *ololiuqui*, *Salvia divinorum*, also known as diviner's sage, wild tobacco (*Nicotiana rustica*), and *balche* (a fermented drink made from the tree *Lonchocarpus longistylus* and honey).

A powerful and specifically Mayan mind-altering technique was massive bloodletting induced by using lancets made of stingray spines, flint, or obsidian to wound the tongue, earlobes, and genitals (Schele and Miller 1986, Grof 1994). Ritual bloodletting opened up an experiential realm that was not ordinarily accessible before the time of biological death. The Mayans used the symbol of the Vision Serpent for the experiences induced by blood loss and shock. This symbol represented the contact between the everyday world of human beings and the world of gods and sacred ancestors, who were expected to appear in their visions in the supernatural realms. The lancet was perceived as a sacred object with enormous power; it was personified in the form of the Perforator God.

Because of the extraordinary importance that these “technologies of the sacred” had in the Mayan culture, it is reasonable to assume that visionary experiences induced by them might have

provided inspiration for the prophecy concerning 2012 and played a major role in its articulation. It is thus fully justified to look at this prophecy through the prism of the discoveries of modern consciousness research.

In holotropic states of consciousness, it is possible to obtain profound revelations concerning the master blueprint of the universe designed by cosmic intelligence of such astonishing proportions that it is far beyond the limits of our everyday imagination. Individuals experiencing psychedelic states, including myself, occasionally reported that they had profound illuminating insights into the creative dynamics of the Kosmos. More specifically, psychedelic pioneer Terrence McKenna described in his preface to John Major Jenkins' book "Maya Cosmogogenesis 2012" that he received his insights concerning 2012 in his mushroom sessions.

Individuals who had such illuminating cosmic visions suddenly understood that what is happening in the material world is formed and informed by archetypal principles, beings, and events existing in dimensions of reality that are inaccessible for our everyday consciousness. They also saw that the dynamics of the archetypal world is systematically correlated with the movements of the planets, their angular relationships, and their relative positions to the fixed stars. This led to a completely new understanding of astrology, its origins, and paramount importance. It became clear to them that the source of astrology were global encompassing visions of the workings of the

Kosmos and not tedious accumulation of individual observations of correlations between events in the world and celestial bodies.

Richard Tarnas, amassed over a period of more than thirty years impressive and convincing evidence for systematic correlations existing between the archetypal world, celestial dynamics, and psychological and historical processes and presented it in his groundbreaking and paradigm-breaking book *Cosmos and Psyche* (Tarnas 2006). Rick's astrological research has focused primarily on correlations with the movements of the planets, but there exist astrological systems, which pay great attention to fixed stars; experiences in holotropic states can provide equally revealing insights in this regard.

An important aspect of experiences in holotropic states is that they transcend narrow linear time and make it possible to see events in the universe on a cosmic astronomical scale. In all their grandeur, time scales like the Mayan Long Count Calendar or the Great or Platonic Year are very modest as compared to others inspired by visionary experiences, such as those found in Tantric science, in which the age of the universe amounts to billions of years (a number similar to the assessment of modern cosmologists), or to those discussed in Hindu religion and mythology, such as the kalpas or the Day of Brahman that also amounts to billions of years. The visions of ancient Mayan seers could thus with the help of "technologies of the sacred" easily reach many centuries into the future.

The Mayan prophecy concerning the galactic alignment is not limited to astronomical observations and astrological predictions; it is intimately interconnected with mythology, with what C. G. Jung called the archetypal domain of the collective unconscious. For example, the Mayan seers referred to the December solstice sun as “Cosmic Father” and to the Milky Way as “Cosmic Mother. They envisioned the center of the galaxy, where modern astronomy places a giant black hole, as her creative and destructive womb. The time of the galactic alignment was thus the time of a cosmic hieros gamos, sacred marriage between the Feminine and the Masculine.

In the year 2012, the sun will have traveled to the edge of a cosmic dust cloud known as the Great Dark Rift that lies along the Milky Way and seems to divide its light into two paths. The Mayans called this dark rift Xibalba Be {Road to the Underworld) and saw it as a place of birth and death and of death/rebirth. It was for them the birth canal of the Cosmic Mother Creatrix, where the December solstice sun gets reborn in 2012. It was also a death place, because it is the doorway into the underworld, the land of the dead and the unborn. These associations clearly were not products of everyday fantasy and imagination of the Mayans projected on the night sky, but results of profound direct apprehensions of the connection between the archetypal world and the celestial bodies and processes.

The Mayan prophecy has also an important mythological connection to the story about the Hero Twins, Hunahpu and Xbalanque,

who were invited by the death gods to visit the underworld Xibalba and play ballgame with them. The Xibalba Lords put them through many ordeals and the brothers overcame them all and, finally, they died and were reborn as the Sun and the Moon (or according to some interpretations as the Sun and Venus). The part of the story that seems particularly relevant in this regard is the battle of the twins with the bird demon Vucub-Caquix ("Seven-Macaw"); he is a vain, selfish, and impulsive ruler, who pretends to be the sun and the moon of the twilight world inbetween the former creation and the present one. He seems to represent the ego archetype that is dominant at the end of the cycle. Seven Macaw seems to have an archetypal parallel in the New Testament — the Endtime Ruler or the "Beast," also known as Antichrist.

Hunahpu and Xbalanque defeat Seven Macaw and strip him of his teeth (the instrument of violence), of his riches, and his power. By doing this, they facilitate the resurrection of their father, One Hunahpu, a just ruler who represents selfless divine consciousness that is holistic; it shows concern for all beings, and makes political decisions based upon future generations or - as Native Americans say – with regard to how they will affect seven generations down the road.

Research of holotropic states – psychedelic therapy, holotropic breathwork, and work with individuals in “spiritual emergencies” – made major contributions to the understanding of mythology. Myths are commonly considered to be products of human fantasy and

imagination not unlike stories of modern fiction writers and playwrights. However, the work of C. G. Jung and Joseph Campbell brought about a radically new understanding of mythology. According to these two seminal thinkers, myths are not fictitious stories about adventures of imaginary characters in nonexistent countries and thus arbitrary products of individual human fantasy. Rather, myths originate in the collective unconscious of humanity and are manifestations of primordial organizing principles of the psyche and of the cosmos which Jung called archetypes (Jung 1976).

Archetypes express themselves through the individual psyche and its deeper processes, but they do not originate in the human brain and are not its products. They are superordinate to the individual psyche and function as its governing principles. In holotropic states the archetypal world can be directly experienced in a way that is as convincing and authentic as the material world appears to be, or more so. To distinguish transpersonal experiences involving archetypal figures and domains from imaginary products of individual fantasy, Jungians refer to this domain as *imaginal*.

French scholar, philosopher, and mystic, Henri Corbin, who first used the term *mundus imaginalis*, was inspired in this regard by his study of Islamic mystical literature (Corbin 2000).). Islamic theosophers call the imaginal world, where everything existing in the sensory world has its analogue, *'alam a mithal,* or the “eighth climate,” to distinguish it from the “seven climates,” regions of

traditional Islamic geography. The imaginal world possesses extension and dimensions, forms and colors, but these are not perceptible to our senses as they would be if they were properties of physical objects. However, this realm is in every respect as fully ontologically real and susceptible to consensual validation by other people as the material world perceived by our sensory organs.

Archetypes are timeless essences, cosmic ordering principles, which can also manifest as mythic personifications, or specific deities of various cultures. The figures of Maya mythology – Hunahpu, Xbalanque, their father One Hunahpu, Seven Macaw, Quetzalcoatl (Kukulcan), and others - like those of any other culture are thus ontologically real and can be directly apprehended by individuals experiencing holotropic states. As John Major Jenkins pointed out, Giorgio de Santillana and Hertha von Dechend contributed to the understanding of archetypes another important dimension that is relevant for the problem of the Mayan prophecy. They described in their book *Hamlet's Mill* the deep connection that exists between myth and astronomical processes (de Santillana and Dechend 1969).

In 1948, after many years of systematically studying mythologies of various cultures of the world, Joseph Campbell published his groundbreaking book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, which in the following decades profoundly influenced research and understanding in the field (Campbell 1968). Analyzing a broad spectrum of myths from various parts of the world, Campbell realized that they all contained variations of one

universal archetypal formula, which he called the monomyth. This was the story of the hero, either male or female, who leaves his or her home ground or is forcefully separated from it by external circumstances and, after fantastic adventures and ordeals culminating in psychospiritual death and rebirth, returns to his original society radically transformed - as an enlightened or deified being, a healer, seer, or great spiritual teacher.

In Campbell's own words, the basic formula for the hero's journey can be summarized as follows: "A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder; fabulous forces are encountered and a decisive victory is won; the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow men." Campbell's inquisitive and incisive intellect went beyond simply recognizing the universality of this myth over time and space. His curiosity drove him to ask what makes this myth universal. Why does the theme of the hero's journey appeal to cultures of all times and countries, even if they differ in every other respect?

Campbell's answer has the simplicity and unrelenting logic of all brilliant insights: the monomyth of the hero's journey is a blueprint for the transformative crisis, which all human beings can experience when the deep contents of the unconscious psyche emerge into consciousness. The hero's journey describes nothing less than the experiential territory that an individual must traverse during times of profound transformation. The story of the Mayan Hero Twins is a classical example of Campbell's Hero's Journey. It belongs to a vast array of archetypal motifs that we can experience in holotropic states.

I hope that the above discussion adequately addressed the first question that I asked earlier in my presentation: “How could ancient Mayans two thousand years ago discover anything that would be relevant for humanity in the twenty-first century?” The theme of Joseph Campbell’s Hero’s Journey brings us to the second question: “If the Mayan prophecy does not refer to the end of the world and to physical destruction of humanity, but to profound collective psychospiritual death and rebirth comparable to what Campbell described on the individual scale, are there any indications that such inner transformation is possible or that it actually is already underway.

My approach to this question is based not only on observations of the experiences of thousands of individuals in holotropic states of consciousness – psychedelic therapy, holotropic breathwork sessions, and spontaneous psychospiritual crises (“spiritual emergencies”) - but also on extensive personal experience of these states. I would like to begin this discussion with an account of an experiential sequence from one of my own psychedelic sessions. It provided for me deep insights into the archetype of the Apocalypse, a motif that occurs relatively rarely in holotropic states, but is particularly relevant for the topic of our conference.

About fifty minutes into the session, I started experiencing strong activation in the lower part of my body. My pelvis was vibrating as enormous amounts of energy were being

released in ecstatic jolts. At one point, this streaming energy swept me along in an intoxicating frenzy into a whirling cosmic vortex of creation and destruction.

In the center of this monstrous hurricane of primordial forces were four giant herculean figures performing what seemed to be the ultimate cosmic saber dance. They had strong Mongolian features with protruding cheekbones, oblique eyes, and clean-shaven heads decorated by large braided ponytails. Whirling around in a frantic dance craze, they were swinging large weapons that looked like scythes or L-shaped scimitars; all four of these combined formed a rapidly rotating swastika.

I intuitively understood that this monumental archetypal scene was related to the beginning of the process of creation and simultaneously to the final stage of the spiritual journey. In the cosmogenetic process (in the movement from the primordial unity to the worlds of plurality) the blades of the scimitars represented the force that is splitting and fragmenting the unified field of cosmic consciousness and creative energy into countless individual units. In relation to spiritual journey, they represented the stage when the seeker's consciousness transcends separation and polarity and reaches the state of original undifferentiated unity. The direction of this process seemed to be related to the clockwise and counterclockwise rotation of the blades. Projected

into the material world, this archetypal motif seemed to be related to growth and development (the fertilized egg or seed becoming an organism) or destruction of forms (wars, natural catastrophes, decay).

Then the experience opened up into an unimaginable panorama of scenes of destruction. In these visions, natural disasters, such as volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, crashing meteors, forest fires, floods and tidal waves, were combined with images of burning cities, entire blocks of collapsing high-rise buildings, mass death, and horror of wars. Heading this wave of total annihilation were four archetypal images of macabre riders symbolizing the end of the world. I realized that these were the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. (pestilence, war, famine, and death). The continuing vibrations and jolts of my pelvis now became synchronized with the movements of this ominous horseback riding and I became I joined the dance, becoming one of them, or possibly all four of them at once, leaving my own identity behind.

Suddenly, there was a rapid change of scenery and I had a vision of the cave from Plato's Republic. In this work, Plato describes a group of people who live chained all of their lives in a cave, facing a blank wall. They watch shadows projected on the wall by things passing in front of the cave

entrance. According to Plato, the shadows are as close as the prisoners get to seeing reality. The enlightened philosopher is like a prisoner who is freed from this illusion and comes to understand that the shadows on the wall are illusory, as he can perceive the true form of reality rather than the mere shadows seen by the prisoners. This was followed by profound and convincing realization that the material world of our everyday life is not made of «stuff» but created by cosmic consciousness by infinitely complex and sophisticated orchestration of experiences. It is a divine play that the Hindus call lila, created by cosmic illusion maya.

The final major scene of the session was a magnificent ornate theater stage featuring a parade of personified universal principles, archetypes - cosmic actors, who through a complex interplay create the illusion of the phenomenal world. They were protean personages with many facets, levels, and dimensions of meaning that kept changing their forms in extremely intricate holographic interpenetration as I was observing them. Each of them seemed to represent simultaneously the essence of his or her function and all the concrete manifestations of this element in the world of matter. There was Maya, the mysterious ethereal principle symbolizing the world illusion; Anima, embodying the eternal Female; a Mars-like personification of war and

aggression; the Lovers, representing all the sexual dramas and romances throughout ages; the royal figure of the Ruler; the withdrawn Hermit; the elusive Trickster; and many others. As they were passing across the stage, they bowed in my direction, as if expecting appreciation for the stellar performance in the divine play of the universe.

This experience brought me a deep understanding of the meaning of the archetypal motif of the Apocalypse. It suddenly seemed profoundly wrong to see it as related exclusively to physical destruction of the world. It is certainly possible that the Apocalypse will in the future be actually manifested on a planetary scale as a historical event, which is a potential of all archetypes. There are many examples of situations in which archetypal motifs and energies broke through the boundary that usually separates the archetypal realm from the material world and shaped history. The giant asteroid that 65 million years ago killed the dinosaurs, wars of all ages, the crucifixion of Jesus, the medieval Witches' Sabbath and Dance of Death, the Nazi concentration camps, and Hiroshima are just a few salient examples. But the primary importance of the archetype of the Apocalypse is that it functions as an important landmark on the spiritual journey. It emerges into the consciousness of the seeker at a time when he or she recognizes the illusory nature of the material world. As the universe reveals its true essence as virtual reality, as a cosmic play of consciousness, the world of matter is destroyed in the

psyche of the individual. This might also be the meaning of the “end of the world” referred to in the Mayan prophecy.

The observations from modern consciousness research that are most relevant for a positive interpretation of the Mayan prophecy are related to a phenomenon that is much more common in holotropic states than the experience of the Apocalypse; it is the experience of psychospiritual death and rebirth. This experience has played a crucial role in the ritual and spiritual history of humanity – in shamanism, rites of passage, the ancient death/rebirth mysteries, and in the great religions of the world (see the Christian concept of being “born again” and the Hindu “dvija”). The process of death and rebirth is a multivalent archetype that manifests on many different levels and in various areas and ways, but in self-exploration and therapy it is closely related to the reliving and conscious integration of the memory of biological birth.

Psychospiritual death and rebirth is one of the most prominent themes in therapeutic work using holotropic states. When the age regression in the process of deep experiential self-exploration moves beyond the level of memories from childhood and infancy and reaches the level of the unconscious that contains the memory of birth, we start encountering emotions and physical sensations of extreme intensity, often surpassing anything we previously considered humanly possible. At this point, the experiences become a strange mixture of the themes of birth and

death. They involve a sense of a severe, life-threatening confinement and a desperate and determined struggle to free ourselves and survive.

Because of the close connection between this domain of the unconscious and biological birth, I have chosen for it the name *perinatal*. It is a Greek-Latin composite word where the prefix *peri-*, means "near" or "around," and the root *natalis* signifies "pertaining to childbirth." This word is commonly used in medicine to describe various biological processes occurring shortly before, during, and immediately after birth. The obstetricians talk, for example, about perinatal hemorrhage, infection, or brain damage. However, since traditional medicine denies that the child can consciously experience birth and claims that this event is not recorded in memory, one never hears about perinatal experiences. The use of the term *perinatal* in connection with consciousness reflects my own findings and is entirely new (Grof 1975).

The perinatal region of the unconscious contains the memories of what the fetus experienced in the consecutive stages of the birth process, including all the emotions and physical sensations involved. These memories form four distinct experiential clusters, each of which is related to one of the stages of the birth process. I have coined for them the term *Basic Perinatal Matrices (BPM I-IV)*. BPM I consists of memories of the advanced prenatal state just

before the onset of the delivery. BPM II is related to the onset of the delivery when the uterus contracts, but the cervix is not yet open. BPM III reflects the struggle to be born after the uterine cervix dilates. And finally, BPM IV holds the memory of the emerging into the world, the birth itself.

The content of these matrices is not limited to fetal memories; each of them also provides selective opening into a vast domain in the unconscious psyche that we now call transpersonal. This involves experiential identification with other people and other life forms, ancestral, racial, collective, phylogenetic and karmic memories, and material from the historical and archetypal collective unconscious, which contains motifs of similar experiential quality. Emergence of this material into consciousness constitutes the process of psychospiritual death and rebirth and results in deep inner transformation.

Some of the insights of people experiencing holotropic states of consciousness are directly related to the current global crisis and its relationship with consciousness evolution. They show that we have exteriorized in the modern world many of the essential themes of the death rebirth process that a person involved in deep personal transformation has to face and come to terms with internally. The same elements that we would encounter in the process of psychological death and rebirth in our visionary experiences make

today our evening news. This is particularly true in regard to the phenomena that characterize what I refer to as the third Basic Perinatal Matrix (BPM III)(Grof 2000).

As I mentioned earlier, this matrix is related to the stage of birth when the cervix is open and the fetus experiences the tedious propulsion through the birth canal. This stage is associated with the emergence of the shadow side of human personality – murderous violence and excessive or deviant sexual drives, scatological elements, and even satanic imagery. It is easy to see manifestations of these aspects of the death rebirth process in today's troubled world.

We certainly see the enormous unleashing of the aggressive impulse in the many wars and revolutionary upheavals in the world, in the rising criminality, terrorism, and racial riots. Equally dramatic and striking is the lifting of sexual repression and freeing of the sexual impulse in both healthy and problematic ways. Sexual experiences and behaviors are taking unprecedented forms, as manifested in the sexual freedom of adolescents, premarital sex, gay liberation, general promiscuity, common and open marriages, high divorce rate, overtly sexual books, plays and movies, sadomasochistic experimentation, and many others.

The demonic element is also becoming increasingly manifest in the modern world. Renaissance of satanic cults and witchcraft, popularity of books and horror movies with occult themes, and crimes with satanic motivations attest to that fact. Terrorism of the fundamentalist fanatics and groups is also reaching satanic proportions. The scatological dimension is evident in the progressive industrial pollution, accumulation of waste products on a global scale, and rapidly deteriorating hygienic conditions in large cities. A more abstract form of the same trend is the escalating corruption and degradation of political, military, economic, and religious institutions, including the American presidency.

Ancient Mayans showed profound interest in death and in the process of death and rebirth. Much of the Mayan ritual and art was dedicated to the process of death, from the soul's entrance into the underworld called Xibalba to a final rebirth and apotheosis. Mayan mythology and funereal art described death as a journey whose challenges were known and its important stages were depicted on coffins, wall paintings, pottery, jades, and other objects that accompanied the deceased during the great transition.

Unfortunately, no specific eschatological texts comparable to the Egyptian or Tibetan Book of the Dead have survived from the Mayan Classical Period, since much of the Maya literary legacy has been lost for posterity. Only a few codices, accordion-like bark

paper screenfolds with rich and colorful illustrations, survived the hot and moist climate of Central America and escaped the ravaging of the Spanish invaders." However, in the 1970s, mayologists Lin Crocker and Michael Coe were able to distinguish a group of funeral vessels painted in the style of the Maya codices, probably by the same artists. Cardiosurgeon and archeologist Francis Robicsek was able to assemble substantial evidence for his theory that certain sequences of the vases of the 'ceramic codex,' placed in proper sequence, actually represented a Maya Book of the Dead" (Robicsek 1981).

Observations from the research of holotropic states of consciousness have thrown new light on human propensity to unbridled violence and insatiable greed – two forces that have driven human history since time immemorial and are currently threatening survival of life on this planet. This research has revealed that these “poisons,” as they are called in Tibetan Vajrayana, have much deeper roots than current biological and psychological theories assume – biology with concepts like the naked ape, the triune brain, and the selfish gene and psychoanalysis and related schools with their emphasis on base instincts as the governing principles of the psyche.

Deep motivating forces underlying these dangerous traits of human nature have their origin on the perinatal and transpersonal

levels of the psyche, domains that mainstream psychology does not yet recognize (Grof 2000). The finding that the roots of human violence and insatiable greed reach far deeper than mainstream academic science ever suspected and that their reservoirs in the psyche are truly enormous could in and of itself be very discouraging. However, it is balanced by the exciting discovery of new therapeutic mechanisms and transformative potentials that become available in holotropic states on the perinatal and transpersonal levels of the psyche.

We have seen over the years profound emotional and psychosomatic healing, as well as radical personality transformation, in many people who were involved in serious and systematic experiential self-exploration and inner quest. Some of them had supervised psychedelic sessions, others participated in holotropic breathwork workshops and training or various other forms of experiential psychotherapy and self-exploration. Similar changes occur often in individuals who are involved in shamanic practice or are meditators and have regular spiritual practice. We have also witnessed profound positive changes in many people who received adequate support during episodes of spontaneous psychospiritual crises (“spiritual emergencies”). Thanatologist Ken Ring referred to this group of transformative experiences as “Omega experiences” and included in it near-death experiences and alien abduction experiences (Ring 1984).

As the content of the perinatal level of the unconscious emerges into consciousness and is integrated, the individuals involved undergo radical personality changes. They experience considerable decrease of aggression and become more peaceful, comfortable with themselves, and tolerant of others. The experience of psychospiritual death and rebirth and conscious connection with positive postnatal or prenatal memories reduces irrational drives and ambitions. It causes a shift of focus from the past and future to the present moment and enhances zest, *élan vital*, and *joi de vivre* - ability to enjoy and draw satisfaction from simple circumstances of life, such as everyday activities, food, lovemaking, nature, and music. Another important result of this process is emergence of spirituality of a universal and mystical nature that, unlike the dogmas of mainstream religions, is very authentic and convincing, because it is based on deep personal experience.

The process of spiritual opening and transformation typically deepens further as a result of transpersonal experiences, such as identification with other people, entire human groups, animals, plants, and even inorganic materials and processes in nature. Other experiences provide conscious access to events occurring in other countries, cultures, and historical periods and even to the mythological realms and archetypal beings of the collective unconscious. Experiences of cosmic unity and one's own

divinity result in increasing identification with all of creation and bring the sense of wonder, love, compassion, and inner peace.

What began as a process of psychological probing of the unconscious psyche conducted for therapeutic purposes or personal growth automatically becomes a philosophical quest for the meaning of life and a journey of spiritual discovery. People, who connect to the transpersonal domain of their psyche, tend to develop a new appreciation for existence and reverence for all life. One of the most striking consequences of various forms of transpersonal experiences is spontaneous emergence and development of deep humanitarian and ecological concerns.

Differences among people appear to be interesting and enriching rather than threatening, whether they are related to gender, race, color, language, political conviction, or religious belief. Following this transformation, these individuals develop a deep sense of being planetary citizens rather than citizens of a particular country or members of a particular racial, social, ideological, political, or religious group. and they feel the need to get involved in service for some common purpose. These changes resemble those that have occurred in many of the American astronauts who were able to see the earth from outer space (see Mickey Lemle's documentary *The Other Side of the Moon*).

It becomes obvious that our highest priorities as biological creatures have to be clean air, water, and soil. No other concerns, such as economic profit, military pursuits, scientific and technological progress, or ideological and religious beliefs, should be allowed to take priority over this vital imperative. We cannot violate our natural environment and destroy other species without simultaneously damaging ourselves. This awareness is based on an almost cellular knowledge that the boundaries in the universe are arbitrary and that each of us is ultimately identical with the entire web of existence.

In view of the fact that everything in nature runs in cycles and is based on the principles of optimum values, homeostasis, and sustainability, the technological civilization's frantic pursuit of unlimited economic growth, exploitation of non-renewable resources, and exponential increase of industrial pollution hostile to life appears to be dangerous insanity. In the world of biology excess of calcium, vitamins, or even water is not better than lack of these substances and unlimited growth is the main characteristic of cancer.

It is clear that a transformation associated with the experience of psychospiritual death and rebirth would increase our chances for survival if it could occur on a sufficiently large scale. The great German writer and philosopher Johann Wolfgang Goethe

was aware of the importance of the experience of psychospiritual death and rebirth for the quality of our life and sense of belonging when he wrote in his poem *Selige Sehnsucht*: “Und so lang du das nicht hast, dieses: ‘Stirb und werde!’ Bist du nur ein trüber Gast auf der dunklen Erde.” (“And as long as you do not experience this: ‘Die and become!’ you will be only a shadow guest on the dark earth”).

Holotropic states of consciousness experienced in a supportive environment and under responsible guidance offer thus an opportunity for profound psychospiritual transformation of two different kinds or degrees. An individual who experiences death and rebirth – usually in the context of reliving and integrating the trauma of biological birth – discovers his or her own divinity, sacredness of all creation and oneness with other people, nature, and the cosmos. Deeper exploration of the transpersonal realms and particularly the experience of the archetype of the Apocalypse then radically changes the perception of the world we live in. We begin to understand that what we experience as material reality might be what the Hindu teachings refer to as *lila* – divine play created by cosmic consciousness. Both of these two forms of spiritual transformation have profound positive effects on the individual’s hierarchy of values and life strategy described above.

Various methods of inducing holotropic states –

“technologies of the sacred” – have been an integral part of ancient and native cultures for millennia (Grof 2000). Modern humanity has been rediscovering the healing and transformative power of these states in many different contexts. Meditative practices of the great Eastern spiritual traditions and various shamanic techniques are becoming increasingly popular, particularly among the young generation. Translation and publication of spiritual literature of many cultures, recording of their sacred music, and availability of competent teachers have greatly contributed to this process.

The isolation and chemical identification of the active principles of many psychedelic plants, development of new synthetic psychedelic compounds, and increasing knowledge about these substances have been instrumental in inner transformation of many individuals who have used these powerful tools wisely and responsibly. The use of psychedelics – the most powerful means for inducing holotropic states of consciousness - is seriously hindered by legal restrictions, bad and misleading publicity, and difficulties in obtaining pure materials. However, there exist very effective forms of experiential psychotherapy, such as various neo-Reichian approaches, primal therapy, rebirthing, and holotropic breathwork, which can induce these states without the use of chemical agents. Their increasing popularity thus represents a very promising trend.

Advances of modern medicine have made it possible to

save the lives of individuals involved in life-threatening accidents and diseases and have increased the incidence of near-death experiences (NDEs) The development of thanatology, a discipline studying death and dying, has amassed and spread information about these states and made it possible for survivors to use them for positive inner transformation (Ring 1982, Ring and Valarino 1998).. As the economic, ecological, and political global crisis escalates, it instills fear and diminishes hope for fulfilling and satisfying life in the minds of hundreds of millions of people all over the world. The resulting emotional turmoil seems to engender spontaneous psychospiritual crises (“spiritual emergencies”)(Grof and Grof 1989, Grof and Grof 1990). Once mainstream psychiatrists recognize that these states have an extraordinary healing and transformative potential - if they are properly understood - and provide support and guidance for this process rather than suppress it by tranquilizers, it could greatly contribute to inner transformation of many people.

We can now return to the subject of our conference and of this paper – the Mayan prophecy concerning 2012. Whether or not this was predicted by ancient Mayan seers, we are clearly involved in a dramatic race for time that has no precedent in the entire history of humanity. What is at stake is nothing less than the future of humanity and of life on this planet. Many of the people with whom we have worked saw humanity at a critical crossroad facing

either collective annihilation or an evolutionary jump in consciousness of unprecedented nature and dimension. Terence McKenna put it very succinctly: "The history of the silly monkey is over, one way or another" (McKenna 1992). We either undergo a radical transformation of our species or we might not survive.

The final outcome of the crisis we are facing is ambiguous and uncertain; it lends itself to pessimistic or optimistic interpretation and each of them can be supported by existing data. If we continue the old strategies, which in their consequences are clearly extremely destructive and self-destructive, it is unlikely that modern civilization will survive. However, if a sufficient number of people undergoes a process of deep inner transformation described above, we might reach a stage and level of consciousness evolution at which we will deserve the proud name we have given to our species: *homo sapiens sapiens* and live in a new world that will have little resemblance to the old one.

Literature:

Arguelles, J.: The Mayan Factor: Path Beyond Technology. Rochester, VT.: Inner Traditions, Berar and Company.

Campbell, J. 1968. The Hero with A Thousand Faces. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

- Corbin, H. 2000. "Mundus Imaginalis, Or the Imaginary and the Imaginal." In: *Working With Images* (B. Sells, ed.). Woodstock, Connecticut: Spring Publications 71-89.
- Grof, S. 1985. *Beyond the Brain. Birth, Death, and Transcendence in Psychotherapy*. Albany, NY: State University of New York (SUNY) Press.
- Grof, C. and Grof, S. 1990. *The Stormy Search for the Self*. Los Angeles, CA: J. P. Tarcher.
- Grof, S. and Grof, C. (eds.) 1989. *Spiritual Emergency: When Personal Transformation Becomes a Crisis*. Los Angeles, CA: J. P. Tarcher.
- Grof, S. 1994. *Books of the Dead: Manuals for Living and Dying*. London: Thames and Hudson.
- Grof, 2000. *Psychology of the Future: Lessons from Modern Consciousness Research*. Albany, NY: State University of New York (SUNY) Press,.
- Grof, S. *The Ultimate Journey: Consciousness and the Mystery of Death*. MAPS, Sarasota, FL, 2006.
- Jenkins, J. M. 1998. *Maya Cosmogogenesis 2012*. Rochester, NY: Inner Traditions, Bear and Company.
- Jenkins, J.M. *Galactic Aligment:The Transformation of Consciousness According to Mayan, Egyptian, and Vedic Traditions*. Rochester, VT: Bear and Company.
- Jung, C.G. 1959. *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*. *Collected Works of C.G. Jung. Vol. 9, Bollingen Series XX*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Jung, C.G. 1959. *Aion*. *Collected Works of C.G. Jung. Vol. 9.2, Bollingen Series XX*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

- McKenna, T. 1992. *Food of the Gods: The Search for the Original Tree of Knowledge*. New York: Bantam Books.
- Ring, K. 1982. *Life at Death: A Scientific Investigation of the Near-Death Experience*. New York: Quill.
- Ring, K. 1984. *Heading Toward Omega: In Search of the Meaning of the Near-Death Experience*. New York: William Morrow.
- Ring, K. and Valarino, E. E. 1998. *Lessons from the Light: What We Can Learn from the Near-Death Experience*. New York: Plenum Press.
- Robicsek, F. 1981. *The Maya Book of the Dead: The Ceramic Codex*. Charlottesville, VA.: University of Virginia Art Museum.
- Santillana, G. and Dechend, H. von. 1977. *Hamlet's Mill: An Essay on Myth and the Frame of Time*. Boston: Godine.
- Schele, L. and Miller, M. A.: *The Blood of Kings: Dynasty and Ritual Art in Maya Art*. New York: George Braziller, Inc.
- Sitler, R. 2006. The 2012 Phenomenon: New Age Appropriation of an Ancient Mayan Calendar. *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions*, Volume 9, issue 3, pp. 24-38.
- Tarnas, R. 2006. *Cosmos and Psyche: Intimations of a New World View*. New York: Viking Press.

