One Year Later – November 10, 2017

“Where Do We Go from Here and How Do We Get There?”

[ Slide 1 – Noticing ]

In our Post-Inauguration Panel of a year ago, I made the following observations:

We all have our view of Donald Trump the man. I want to focus on Donald Trump as an agent of the collective unconscious. The role he is playing seems to be to hasten the demise of the 20th century American persona and the end of the socio-political paradigm that has been operative in American culture and politics since the advent of the New Deal compact of Franklin Roosevelt coming out of the Great Depression and American hegemony post World War II....

And, I went on to say:

I want to stress that for me, Donald Trump appears to be the primary agent of the collective unconscious in bringing about the final stages of the demise of that 20th century
paradigm. He is not the cause. The “cause,” as it were, is both entropy and psychic evolution.

I believe that Donald Trump’s ascendency is not just a product of another contentious and extraordinary political event.

So, what would I say today? I would say that the evidence to date overwhelmingly supports my hypothesis of a year ago.

Max Planck, a Nobel Prize-winning theoretical physicist (1918), held that all physical processes have a direction and what happens here and now cannot be taken back. I want to stress this amplification of the second law of thermodynamics – WHAT HAPPENS HERE AND NOW MATTERS BECAUSE IT CANNOT BE TAKEN BACK. In other words, if the image I have been painting here of our being witnesses to, and participants in, the demise of the primary psychic and socio-political paradigm that dominated the 20th and early 21st century is accurate, then we are in for much more chaos and disorder for several years to come. We cannot reverse the entropy process we are in, but hopefully we can learn to be conscious
facilitating participants in a more functional paradigm yet to unfold. And this is where both political parties are likely to fail in the long term. Each is trying to regain power through pleasing and beguiling the electorate by dressing up and trotting out old policies and polemic for some kind of do-over more in-keeping with the dying paradigm than exploring the new paradigm endeavoring to emerge.

From my perspective, it is still too soon to glean ideas and images of what that new political paradigm might look like. In the present context we are beginning to get indications of what it will not look like. Paradoxically, in addition to playing the role of the Great-Destroyer-in-Chief, Donald Trump, in his short reign as President is provoking more consciousness-raising and conscious reflection, debate and dialogue than any politician in memory. Psychologically he is doing his job. But are we doing ours is the deeper more critical question?

At the same time, we should make no mistake about it, our President is an exceedingly dangerous man in the position
that he holds – in my view, more dangerous than Hitler or Stalin. Literally, he is a threat to the survival of our species.

In last year’s panel I mentioned a newly published book by a Japanese Jungian analyst and psychiatrist, **Iwao Akita. The book is entitled, Wandering Madness.** In it Dr. Akita distinguishes between personal psychopathology and madness and asserts that, “Mental disorders are not equal to madness.” We are not just in the sway of a seriously disturbed President, we are literally in the midst of a collective madness. Namely, Trump’s madness is predominantly archetypally driven and appropriates his personal psychopathology in service to the destruction of a prevailing paradigm to make way for a new and unique psychic paradigm, much as Moses was so designated at the burning bush.

[ Slide 2 – Healing the Split ]

In 1960, shortly before his death, Carl Jung wrote:
If referenced at all, this essay is read as if it were a philosophical treatise on the state of the world. I have never seen the above quote taken as Jung intended it to be taken, that is, as a serious clinical diagnosis.

Although Jung was clear and certain about his clinical diagnosis on the collective level, he acknowledged that he did not know how to approach applying his theories on a collective level.

We, humanity, must drastically shift our focus and way of thinking now. President Trump is not the issue. He is doing his
job as Trickster-in-Chief and I would say doing it well. Apart from that job, he really isn’t relevant to us – with one critical exception.

It seems clear already that President Donald Trump will self-destruct. My concern is that as Consciousness-Raiser-in-Chief, his end may come too soon before he has forced us – all of us – to confront and assimilate enough of our collective shadow dynamics and dissociative disorder which he mirrors back to us 24/7. And, my concern is also that as Destroyer-in-Chief, his demise will come too late in the wake of the destruction that he leaves behind – most particularly as it affects the Global Warming Calamity.

A major part of what distinguishes psychopathology from madness is that madness is driven primarily by archetypal dynamics the roots of which are often more collective than personal. I think Jung was absolutely right in declaring that the primary source of our collective madness is the demise of the spirit connection in our lives as reflected in what he calls
“scientific thought,” the roots of which go back to the Enlightenment. The result has been an overspecialization of what I call the Dominion Psyche which has no room for feeling and the non-physical and transpersonal dimensions of life and reality – or as Geoffrey West said most eloquently in our last program, simply “to care.” The spirit dimension cannot be measured by the mathematical ruler of science and therefore at best doesn’t count. At the same time, it is the spirit dimension that is the fount of our species’ ethical connection to the sanctity of life itself – all life – and without it we are left with our own suicidal hubris which behaves as if we were the creator.

A couple of minutes ago I asserted that Trump was doing his job on behalf of the collective unconscious **with one critical exception**. That exception is his wholesale dismantling and wrecking of the progress made in this country and secondarily in the world regarding the Global Climate Catastrophe.
Three weeks ago I wrote a colleague and noted physicist with decades of work as a climate scientist. Some time ago in a personal conversation he stated that the general statements put out by science and the government held to a timeline of 100 years by the end of which, if extreme measures are not taken now to drastically reduce CO2 emissions, we will have reached a point of no return wherein the problem will not be remediable and ultimately the planet will no longer be capable of supporting human life. He then added that there was a substantial and growing number of scientists that believe that we will reach that point in 10 to 15 years.

In my recent email query to him I asked if he still held to a timeline of 10-15 years before we cross that fatal line. This was part of his response which I received last week:

[ Slide 3 – Jeff’s response ]
• “There have been some new studies published in the last month that once again show that we need to drastically reduce our dependence on fossil fuels within 15 years [I repeat: 15 years.] If we do not do this, then the planet will warm by more than 2 C, which would set in motion catastrophic effects on the biosphere.

• “The meeting I attended in London made this even more clear....A number of the evolutionary biologists and paleontologists have pretty much conceded that we are on the brink of a mass extinction....As you know the rate of the warming now is unprecedented in Earth's history. It was a grim meeting to attend.”

Jeffrey Kiehl, Ph.D., Physicist and Jungian Analyst

Those are his words. But they are words only and convey understandable but abstract concepts. We won’t be able to hold them after we leave this room and their hold on us will diminish rapidly.

[ Slide 4 – The Uninhabitable Earth ]
This is the cover of a controversial article published on July 9th of this year in New York Magazine. Reading it is as grim as the cover, but even more so. I urge everyone here to read the article. It does have words and a few pictures. But the language is very graphic and conjures up images that are more likely to stay with us when we leave tonight and to hold onto us for a while, particularly if we hold images of our children and grandchildren in mind as we read it – that is, until the defenses of denial and psychic numbing take over along with our slippery collusion in not wanting to hold these images.
In our struggle with the Global Climate Change Crisis, we cannot win. We can only lose. Unlike other conflicts which threaten our survival, there is no winning over nature. Nature’s laws are what they are. What we have the possibility of doing is becoming sufficiently conscious to respect Nature’s laws and to live within their constraints. That is as close as we can get to winning. I submit that this point is one of the cornerstones of the new paradigm that is becoming manifest. It constitutes a profound confrontation with our species’ presumption of dominion over Nature. And it requires a degree of humility to grasp its implications.

In terms of what to do – there are only hard answers and questions – too many and complex to address here. However, from my perspective, one of the potentially fatal limitations is the absence of psychology as an integral and perceived essential tool in science’s tool kit. And even more to the point, I don’t believe that it will be possible to treat – a clinical term – western culture’s dissociative disorder without specifically
adapting Jungian theory as a primary treatment modality – most specifically his theory of the collective unconscious.

The concept of collective dissociation is a hard one to grasp – especially one of psychotic proportions. We are all, including me, caught in its web. Yet none of us in this room feels psychotic. And yet that collective psychosis threatens to pull us all over the threshold to the demise of our species at our own hand.

[ Slide 5 – Golfing ]
This is a photo taken this summer in Montana. **THIS IS** WHAT COLLECTIVE DISSOCIATION LOOKS LIKE.

Thank you for your attention.