

In These Last Days: The Extraordinary Uniqueness of Our Time

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Abstract

The present era is a particularly unique time in the history of the human species: the next glacial phase of the earth's climate cycle should be beginning, but instead a manmade crisis of global warming is intensifying, a global viral pandemic is underway, and an archetype of awakening and wholeness is activating. Here, I focus on the origin and meaning of this archetype, as well as on my own experience with it. I conclude that it was created during the birthing process of the human species, which took place during the ongoing 2-3 million year-old cycling of the earth's climate. This traumatic birthing left an archetypal trace that was always forgotten yet is ever remembered in the collective unconscious. Now, this archetype is activating, creating a powerful alteration in consciousness similar to a peak experience, but which is often mistaken for a call to prophecy. The mounting anxiety that accompanies this, together with converging crises that threaten survival needs, make individual and collective progress toward greater wholeness and psychological maturity difficult in these last days.

Key Words

Human species, climate cycle, trauma, birthing process, boom-bust cycle, anxiety, collective unconscious, archetype of awakening and wholeness, peak experiences

Introduction

The present era is unique geophysically and psychologically. Not only is a rapidly mutating virus spreading sickness and death around the globe, but geophysically, the planet is near what should be the end of the latest interglacial phase of its 3 million-year-old climate cycling. In fact, earth should be about to enter a progressive cooling that would last about 100,000 years and which in the past has brought extinction-level conditions for the human species (Archer, 2009; Imbrie & Imbrie, 1979; Ruddiman, 2001, 2016; Wilson et al., 2000). This is a trying time for our psyches: such fear and uncertainty abound (O'Hara, 2015) that achieving wholeness and self-actualization (Maslow, 1968) appear to be beyond the grasp of many people. Physical and psychological resources should be being mobilized in these last days, and, indeed, a powerful archetype¹ appears to be activating more frequently. This archetype, whose activation is well known both in historical and contemporary times (Edinger, 1999; Stevens & Price, 2000), is often felt to be a divinely inspired call to

prophecy and is sometimes called the Archetype of the Apocalypse (Edinger, 1999) since it most often entails strong feelings of an imminently impending, catastrophically destructive “End Time.” My own experience with and analysis of this archetype suggests that it is not about a world ending, divinely orchestrated catastrophe, but rather is a call to awakening and wholeness.

Here I focus on the psychological aspects of our current situation, particularly the surging anxiety, cultism, and tribalism, and describe my own experience with the archetype. My encounter with the archetype occurred without any sense of a supernatural or divine call and I’ve concluded that, while it is definitely a wakeup call, it actually was brought into being as a consequence of our species’s birthing process during the earth’s cycling climate. Instead of being a foretelling of a divinely orchestrated final catastrophe, it is a call to wholeness, a call to awaken to particularly difficult times ahead and the need for cooperative action. In what follows I will describe how I arrived at these conclusions and what I believe it means for our time.

Our Turbulent Evolution

Appreciating the importance of our species’s birth process requires a look at our evolution and at conditions on earth at our time of origin. Mithen illustrates the progression of hominid brain size from the much smaller brains of our prehuman hominid ancestors such as the *Australopithecines* to the current size of our brains in the figure below.

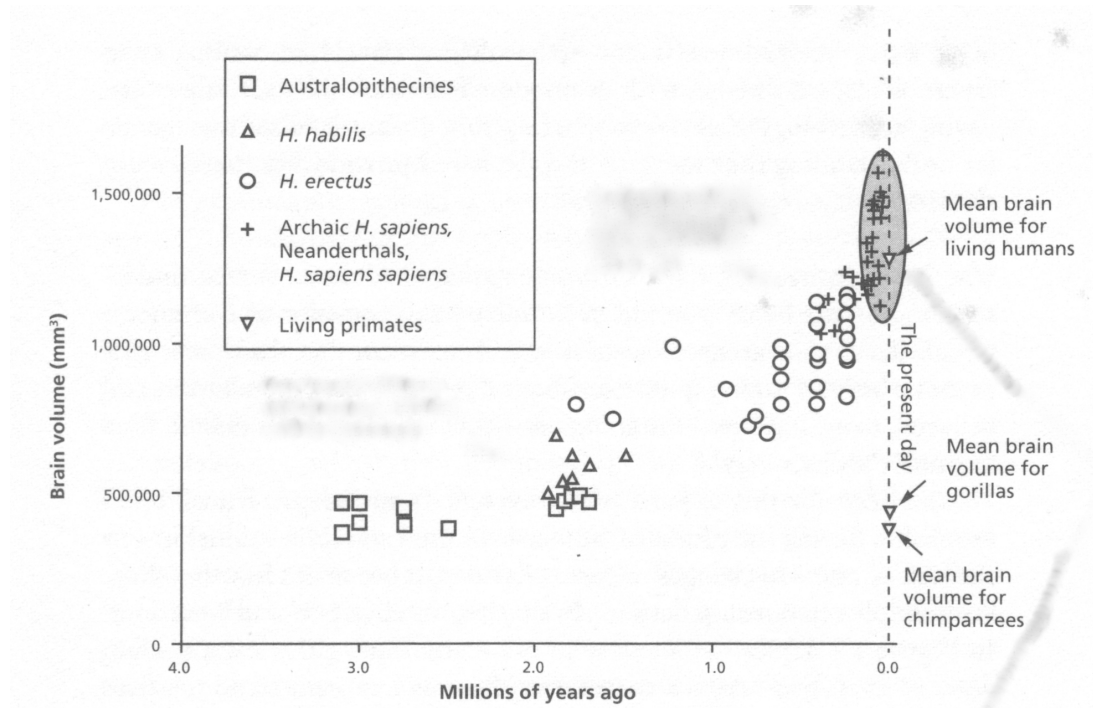


Figure 1. Progressive increase in brain volume during hominid evolution (Mithen, 1996, pg. 12)

Mithen's figure shows that we started becoming human 2 - 3 million years ago with the appearance of *Homo habilis*, hominids who had brains slightly larger than *Australopithecines* whose brains were about the size of brains of present day gorillas and chimpanzees. The *Australopithecines* had persisted in Africa without much change for about a million years. Beginning around two million years ago *Homo habilis* began to appear and brain size began to increase. There were, of course, very significant brain, body, and behavioral changes during those early years: particularly the development of upright posture (*Homo erectus*), which freed the hands from locomotor duties; use of fire, which allowed for cooked food, critical for growing, energy-hungry brains; development of tools; development of language; freeing of sex from the estrous cycle; and the formation of competitive and cooperative groups, which required enhanced social skills. However, this is only part of the story, for the environment during the millions of years in which all these things were occurring was decidedly different than what most of us might suspect.

Many tend to think that our natural environment — as it has been known contemporaneously and through historical records — is climatically stable and usually convivial to our species's survival and progress. Furthermore, many would think that such an environment existed back then, during the reign of *Homo habilis*, *Homo erectus*, and early *Homo sapiens*. In fact, that was not the case then and is not the case now, for during the ascent of our hominid ancestors to human status and right up to the present day the earth's climate has been oscillating in a cyclic pattern of long, cold, dry glacial phases followed by short, warm, wet interglacial phases (Calvin, 1991; deMenocal & Bloemendal, 1995; Ruddiman, 2001; Skinner [et al.](#), 2004). During the last million years, warm phases lasted 10,000 to 15,000 years whereas cold phases lasted about 100,000 years. Living conditions for our hominid ancestors were extremely difficult, even extinction-threatening, during the long, cold, arid glacial phases. Around the globe land above about 40 degrees north latitude was essentially uninhabitable due either to being covered with ice sheets and glaciers or to being wind blown deserts. In Africa, drought and desertification were widespread. All around the globe, sea level fell to 200–300 feet below where it is now as more and more of earth's water was sequestered as ice at high latitudes. Life for our hominid ancestors must have been very hard: little arable land, fierce dust storms, and scarce game. When sea levels rose to or above current levels during warm periods, surviving hominid populations that had dispersed along the coasts would have had to retreat inland. As ice sheets melted and the climate changed to a warmer, wetter regime, conditions were much more conducive to survival and reproductive success.

Birthing Leaves its Mark on the Psyche

So, as the hominid line slowly transformed into the human, i.e., as the long birthing process for our species occurred, Earth's cycling climate forced a repeating boom-bust cycle on its adventurous hominids.

Populations expanded and dispersed in warm, wet periods. Conflict between bands of foragers could usually be avoided by one band moving to new territory. In cold, dry periods, populations contracted and each band of hunters and gatherers struggled to survive as resources diminished. Contraction may have involved moving back, back into already occupied territories, thus setting the stage for fierce competition and conflict over hunting rights, shelter, arable land, and other resources. This environmental whipsaw was a prime mover for increasing brain size and adaptability. Because it happened over and over and over again — for the entire time of our species's birth — I propose that the storms of feelings associated with the boom-bust cycle of existence that our early ancestors experienced left a trace deep in the psyche of the human species. Most likely this psychic trace would be strongly binary: Experiences during warm interglacial phases representing “good,” a relative Garden of Eden vs. experiences in cold phases representing “bad,” a Hell; relative progress and plenty vs. ruination, trauma, and loss. Furthermore repeated trauma can leave a persistent scar on the deep psyche. Connolly's (2003) description of how terrorizing events have a powerful, prolonged influence is a good example:

Living through times of terror leaves indelible traces, traumatic blanks and distortions in the individual and collective unconscious, that are passed from generation to generation in an unending spiral that can only be interrupted by an individual and collective act of consciousness. (pp. 407–408).

Transgenerational transmission of trauma has been found in families of holocaust survivors and an epigenetic mechanism that does not involve gene mutations appears to be involved (Kellerman, 2013). It is likely that descendants of slaves and indigenous peoples whose ancestors were subject to long periods of oppression, mistreatment, and conquest would also be affected by intergenerational trauma transmission. Such findings support the idea that the trauma of our species's birthing process could have left a scar, a trace on our psyches. Neuroscience also supports this contention. The brain areas that have been shown by modern neuroscience to be critical for our ability to experience emotion, i.e., to feel fear, rage, pleasure, and pain, and which would have been necessary for the experience of trauma are present in all mammals, including our hominid ancestors (Van der Kolk, 2014; Panksepp, 1998). These ancient parts of the brain, referred to as the reptilian brain by MacLean (1973), are critically important for emotional learning and memory. Panksepp (1998) described their functions as follows:

Although the underlying emotional circuits influence and guide learning, *their initial adaptive functions were to initiate, synchronize, and energize sets of coherent physiological, behavioral, and psychological changes that are primal instinctive solutions to various archetypal life-challenging situations.* (p.123, italics added).

In order to understand how I came to realize that the trace left in the deep unconscious of our species manifests in our era as a powerful archetype requires knowledge of two experiences in my own life that played a major role in shaping my own thinking and understanding.

The Importance my own Experiences

Two events in my early life played an important role in my coming to realize that the birthing process of the human species had led to the formation of a deep-seated neuropsychic structure. The first was the death of my mother in an automobile wreck when I was 10 years old. One afternoon, as I was being driven to my home in the country by family friends, we passed the scene of a very serious auto accident. There was an overturned car, Highway Patrol cars, ambulances, and many onlookers. My parents had planned a party that night, but no members of my family returned home that evening. I learned the next morning that my mother had been killed in that very accident. I was devastated! It was the early 1950's and I was never given the chance, nor did I even begin to know how to process my feelings. I covered my shock, pain, fear, and grief with anger: I developed a blue-white rage at God for allowing my mother to be killed. This anger lasted for many decades, played a significant role in my life trajectory, and had a profoundly negative influence on my attitude toward God and religion.

The second event occurred when I was 37 years old. My ex-wife, with whom I had experienced a difficult divorce, appeared one night at midnight at the door of my apartment to vent her distress and dissatisfaction with her life. I wondered why I had even opened the door for her, but I swallowed my anger at her late night intrusion and listened. She left after about an hour of detailing her grievances, but prior to that I had an inexplicable brightening of my consciousness. In addition to carrying on 'normally' with her, I quite suddenly became aware — with amazing clarity — that something extremely important, something awesome, something that commanded my utmost attention and allegiance was about to happen. This brightening of my awareness did not, however, include knowledge of what that something was, only that it was enormously salient, very imminent, and utterly undeniable. Along with the sense of imminency and importance, I also experienced a seeming augmentation of my cognitive state, an expansion of my mental horizons. Altogether, I was intrigued and intensely curious as to what was happening to me. No fear was present, nor was there any sense that I had received a Divine message.

In the next few days, I wrote, in one sitting, a manuscript on the applicability of the notion of complementarity to understanding brain function. It was subtitled "Eulogy for a Neurophysiologist" for I had concluded that reductionistic neuroscience was unsatisfactory because it did not include a mechanism that would account for a self. I was unaware of the significance of my conclusion. In the next month, I made appointments with my Departmental Chairman and the Dean of the medical school where I worked to alert them that some-

thing huge was imminent, though I still did not know what. Those were awkward meetings, but I felt compelled to warn them. A humanities professor (Episcopal priest) with whom I spoke commented, “There are not supposed to be any more prophets.”

I wondered if I was having a prolonged limbic lobe seizure or had had a stroke. The absence of any sensory, motor, or cognitive neurological deficits suggested otherwise and as a neuroscientist I felt I would have known. Was it a psychotic break? Time, I thought, would tell. During this period I had the insight that I could attract a following if I so chose, but I intuited not to go that route. The vivid and persistent self-image I had in those days regarding the brightening of my consciousness was that I was on the back of a large tiger that was moving very fast and that my best course of action was to hold on as tightly as I could and see what happened.

Later and still casting about for something, anything, that could be the basis for my persistently brightened, awe inspiring consciousness, I *consciously decided* that I must have had a premonition of the end of the world. My own death, I felt, was far too insignificant to account for the commanding state of consciousness I was experiencing. No, to match the grandeur of my experience it had to be something much, much bigger. A psychiatrist I consulted about feeling that the world was soon to end tried to reassure me: “Aren’t you glad it’s just a feeling.” By 1980, however, expecting the world to end just about any day had become very tiresome, even onerous, so I decided to pin the idea to the grand alignment of the planets that was due in 1982. Gribbin & Plageman (1976) had forecast that the enhanced gravitational effects of the planetary alignment would produce great earthquakes and destruction.

However, 1982 came and went and nothing happened! I had to accept, admittedly with some relief, that I had been wrong in assigning the origin of my altered consciousness to a premonition of an imminent end of the world. This ameliorated my feeling that the world was soon to end. Nevertheless, I continued to wonder what could account for my altered state of consciousness? Could it be an eruption of a memory or feeling state associated with a past end of the world? I did not know, but the sense that something important had happened to me was to persist for the rest of my life. So, as I got on with research and teaching in neuroscience, I was always waiting and watching for some explanation to become apparent.

Putting it all Together

In 1994 I experienced another energetic alteration in consciousness where ideas, thoughts, and new knowledge **came** together in a crystal clear way. The synthesis, that occurred over a period of about a decade, brought together several strands of information and thought. First, the birthing of our species during the earth’s climate cycling; second, the psychological importance of our species’s birthing process; and third, the Jungian notion of archetypes. My appreciation of the importance of the earth’s climate cycle in the evolution of the human species blossomed in the mid-1990s. Two books were particularly important: Calvin (1991) and Stanley

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(1996). Calvin described the importance of ice age climates for human evolution and Stanley proposed that repeating drought conditions in equatorial Africa that began when the earth's climate started cycling 2.4 million years ago caused a shrinkage of forests that forced some ape-like, tree-dwelling *Australopithecines*, the likely precursors of the earliest hominids, out onto the grasslands. These creatures had not changed much in the preceding 1.5 million years, but this sudden change in climate apparently led to the first hominids, *Homo habilis* and *Homo erectus*. Stanley (pg. 4) states that early *Homo* was "the product of a difficult birth. In fact [a] catastrophic birth." Then, over the course of the next ten years, I first became familiar with the works of Stanislov Grof (1988) and Christopher Bache (2000) on our capacity for deep memories of our birth experiences.

Birth of an individual is associated with trauma and stress — sometimes severe — and not only to the mother but also to the fetus and the baby. Freud, Rank, and other psychoanalysts have proposed that trauma to the infant at birth is a source of anxiety buried deep in the psyche (Rank, 1924/1952; Grof, 1988). In fact, Freud is quoted as saying that birth is the "first experience of anxiety and thus the source and prototype of ... anxiety" (Woolverton, 2011). Grof (1988) has demonstrated that the birth process sets up systems of condensed experience in the unconscious. The feeling states associated with each phase, from an intrauterine state of bliss to a difficult, even terrifying delivery process, to emergence into the external world with a sense of liberation, are coalesced there. Furthermore, under certain conditions, individuals can become conscious of those feeling states (Grof, 1988). Tarnas (1991), considered Grof's work to be "the most significant development in the recent history of depth psychology" (p. 425) and felt that "the biological process of birth is itself an expression of a larger underlying archetypal process" (p. 429). Tarnas also noted that "the individual's reliving of the birth process appears to mediate participation in a much larger, transpersonal archetypal death-rebirth process, with the individual and collective levels of the psyche radically interpenetrating" (p. 491).

Both Grof and Bache contend that transpersonal material that comes up as individuals encounter their birth process appears to originate from the collective unconsciousness. For example, Bache (2000, p. 90) says, "one may undergo the entire death-rebirth sequence in deep and profound identification with the human species." In fact, Bache (2000, p. 79), noting the work of Rupert Sheldrake, has proposed the existence of a "species-mind" that "would remember its vast experiences" in a way similar to how an individual remembers his or her own experiences. Bache goes on to describe an experience with that looks very much like it could be a compressed, almost atemporal, version of the trauma that accompanied each extinction threatening glacial phase:

Amidst a field of relative calm, a small anxiety began to grow. Slowly more and more persons were looking up and becoming alarmed. Like persons living on an island (before weather forecasting) who gradually become aware that a hurricane is overtaking them, humanity was gradual-

ly waking up with alarm to events that had overtaken it. Conditions got worse and worse. People became more and more alarmed as the danger increased, forcing them to let go of their assumptions at deeper and deeper levels. The world as they knew it was falling apart. Decades were compressed into minutes, and I felt their alarm deepen as they lost more and more of what they had considered the normal and necessary structures of their world. Step by step, events were forcing a rapid reassessment of everything in their lives. The events that had overtaken Earth were of such scope that no one could insulate themselves from them. The level of alarm grew in the species field until eventually everyone was forced into the melting pot of mere survival. We were all in this together. Families were torn apart, parents were torn from children and children from each other. Life as we had known it was shattered at the core. We were reduced to simply trying to survive (p. 247).

Early in the 2000s, I was introduced to and recognized the importance of Jung's notion of archetypes (Jung, 1959). However, it was only around the year 2005 that I read Edinger (1999) and came to the conclusion that I too had experienced the activation of an archetype. Edinger suggested that the apocalyptic thinking of John, author of The Book of Revelation, similarly inclined thinking of modern day leaders of prophetic cults, such as David Koresh (the Branch Davidian cult) and Bonnie Nettles and Marshall Applewhite (the Heaven's Gate cult), and perhaps all the historical and present day instances of incorrectly prophesying an imminent End Time were associated with the activation of a specific archetype, namely the Archetype of the Apocalypse. Edinger felt that this archetype was activating very powerfully in our era. Psychologically for the individual, he considered this to be part of the individuation process, "the coming of the Self into conscious realization" (p. 5). This was "always an upheaval," leading to one of two possible outcomes. First, some people achieve a conscious integration of unconscious content leading to a broadening out of the individual's personality, including a sense of wholeness and universal interconnectedness. In this case, as Jung (1959, p. 93) says, the individual attains consciousness of "the world of the archetypes, because in it he is still a part of Nature and is connected with his own roots." Second, most people are not successful in consciously integrating unconscious content. For them, complex formation and projection — sometimes highly energized — are the norm. Jung (1959, pp. 93-94) describes their predicament this way,

If the primordial images remain conscious in some form or another, the energy that belongs to them can flow freely into man. But, when it is no longer possible to maintain contact with them, then the tremendous sum of energy stored up in these images ... falls back into the unconscious. The unconscious then becomes charged with a force that acts as an irresistible *vis a tergo* to

whatever view or idea or tendency our intellect may choose to dangle enticingly before our desiring eyes.”

In my own case, like those described by Edinger and Jung as being possessed by the archetype, I had experienced a very energetic alteration in consciousness that appeared to include formation of a compelling complex: I came to believe (for a few years) that the world was soon to end. However, the question still remained: what, if it was not a divinely inspired call about an imminent End Time, was it?

Only then did it dawn on me that our hominid ancestors’ repetitious experience of the cyclic boom-bust dynamic, i.e., a traumatic birthing process always forgotten over the generations, but ever remembered in the collective unconscious, had created a neuropsychic structure that manifested as a powerful archetype. The idea that repeated trauma could produce an archetype is entirely compatible with Jung’s notion of how archetypes originate. He said,

There are as many archetypes as there are typical situations in life. Endless repetition has engraved these experiences into our psychic constitution... When a situation occurs which corresponds to a given archetype, that archetype becomes activated and a compulsiveness appears (Jung, 1959, p. 48).

Just what is this archetype whose activation underlies End Time/millennialist thinking, leads to a complex characterized by emergence of a prophetic impulse, and presents with a powerful, compelling feeling that something very, very important and dangerous is imminent? I have come to believe that it is an archetype formed in the distant past of our species with an intention of awakening us to knowledge of our species’s evolutionary history and to particularly difficult times ahead, specifically the soon to arrive next ice age. Here it is important to recall the actual meaning of “apocalypse,” i.e., *an uncovering of something that was hidden*. In the Christian West the term has become firmly associated with the biblical book of John, *Revelation*, which is often known as “the Apocalypse of John.” John describes a ghastly end of the world associated with the second coming of Jesus. Edinger (1999) proposed that such End Times thinking was due to activation of an archetype, “the Archetype of the Apocalypse,” in reference to the prophecies of John in the Christian bible. Indeed, prophets have arisen throughout history and in the Christian West a catastrophic apocalypse in conjunction with the return of Jesus Christ has often been predicted. For example, Weber (1999, pg. 28) cites a source “listing ten dates between 1260 and 1834 when a Second Coming was expected; and any diligent researcher could easily add ten hundred more.”

Stevens & Price (2000), reject Edinger’s the notion of a specific Archetype of the Apocalypse and suggest that End Time/apocalyptic thinking is due to the effects of group splitting:

The apocalyptic myth is evidently a product of the cultural psyche, the result of historical Judeo-Christian influences on the actualization of the archetypes of in-group loyalty and out-group hostility, the archetypal categories of ‘friend’ and ‘foe,’ the ‘familiar’ and the ‘strange.’ It is these categories which are incorporated in the theological language of ‘Good’ and ‘Evil,’ and the archetypal symbolism of ‘light’ and ‘dark’ (pp. 157–158).

While group splitting dynamics can no doubt lead to polarized thought and action, I believe that the archetype that accounts for the prophetic impulse is a great deal more than that. Namely, it is actually an Archetype of Awakening and Wholeness that accompanies the coming of the Self. For most individuals in whom this archetype fully activates, the ideas and images that come up are those of apocalyptic catastrophe similar to those that have been inculcated into the Judeo-Christian cultural psyche for millennia. By a quirk of fortune, namely my deep and long held anger towards God and my allegiance to a science oriented worldview, I was inoculated against a religious End Times interpretation when the archetype activated. Had that not have been the case, I have little doubt I would have concluded it was all about me, that I had received a divine message about an imminent End Time, i.e., I would have succumbed to ego inflation. As a matter of fact, at the time I briefly considered and quickly rejected leaving my job to pursue a prophetic career. In any case, I submit that End Times apocalyptic ideas that so often accompany activation of the Archetype of Awakening and Wholeness arise because there is such a good match with what our species experienced, over and over and over again during our long birthing process: destruction/punishment/death during glacial phases and renewal/growth/rebirth during interglacial phases.

This archetype, under conditions of stress, can activate with at least three closely related consequences. First, is a vague, unfocused but growing and powerful anxiety: a sense that something hugely important, implacable, and destructive — that threatens everything — is inexorably approaching. Second, in an attempt to deal with upwelling archetypal energies, individuals become particularly susceptible to believing conspiratorial thinking that identifies various “others” as the cause for their discomfort (LaFrance, 2020). Third, is the eruption of a prophetic impulse, i.e., the irresistible feeling that one has been blessed with special knowledge of forthcoming events. First, let’s consider the high levels of fear and anxiety.

Anxiety and Fear Roil the 21st Century Mindscape

With regard to the survival of our species in a difficult and dangerous environment, anxiety would have a critical role in promoting vigilance (Stevens, 1993, p.75). And, now at the end of this warm, wet, relatively benign interglacial period, heightened anxiety is particularly appropriate. Indeed, heightening anxiety appears to be one mechanism by which the archetype gets our attention. In the past, over and over and over again, such times foretold extinction threatening climate changes ahead, including the possibility of severe population

downsizing. Attentiveness and vigilance would be beneficial. Perhaps the creative intelligence of the Universe² (Bache, 2019; Grof, 1988; Laszlo, 2016) promoted the development of an evolutionary mechanism (the archetype) to alert us to this impending danger and that the alerting becomes strong near the end of the interglacial period. Furthermore, anxiety often points toward necessary inner work that can be liberating. As Kierkegaard (1944/1968, p. 139) said, “Dread is the possibility of freedom.” Finding that freedom requires one to engage with their own inner darkness, i.e., their own collective unconscious and its shadow contents. Only then can the light of Hope be found. Of course, there are many other reasons for anxiety to be high in this era — not the least of which are the global coronavirus pandemic, increasing political polarization and tribalism all around the globe (Chua, 2018), and the burgeoning, out-of-control global warming crisis (Klein, 2019; Kolbert, 2014; Wallace-Wells, 2018). My pointing to a species’s birth anxiety is not intended to lessen their importance.

In many respects, much behavior in today’s world seems to reflect a state of deep-seated anxiety, a growing anxiety that, in the hyperindividualized, wealth-oriented worldview of this modern era, breeds growing intolerance, enhances polarization and political partisanship, and fosters tribalism and authoritarianism. In America and elsewhere, significant segments of the population express strong distrust of government, become more and more rigid in their opinions and beliefs, and more and more convinced that others are not just different, but are, in fact, dangerous, even evil (Chua, 2018). Fervently believed conspiratorial thinking abounds, fantastical scenarios are common, false optimism substitutes for genuine Hope, and belief that the end of the world is approaching is common (Dias, 2020; LaFrance, 2020)). In America in particular, gun ownership has skyrocketed and many gun owners believe that the government will soon move to confiscate their guns or that societal unrest will soon require their use to defend themselves, their families, and cohorts. Abramsky (2017, p. 9) has documented these trends and speaks of an “epidemic of fear” gripping America and the world.

Many people temper their anxiety by laying the blame for it on an external “other,” i.e., by projection, saying, “It’s the government;” “It’s the Blacks, the Muslims, the Jews.” Today, in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, this approach is exemplified by those who stridently assert that the coronavirus pandemic is a hoax perpetrated by a “deep state” conspiracy aiming for world domination (e.g., LaFrance, 2020). Others simply deny the real existential threats that are pressing in upon them. Denial is a particularly effective means of ameliorating the anxiety associated with the burgeoning climate crisis (Weintrobe, 2013, 2021).

For others, activation of this archetype gives rise to a compelling prophetic impulse. Prophets have arisen throughout recorded history and in most cases, including historical and contemporary ones (Edinger, 1999), they have claimed some sort of religious calling or special ability to interpret apocalyptic literature such as John’s Book of Revelation. However, assigning the call to prophesy to one or another God is not an adequate

explanation in today's world (e.g., Wright, 2018), so the reality of prophets and calls to prophesy begs the question of what could produce such a prophetic impulse. My alteration in consciousness in 1976, I believe, provides clues. Structurally, my experience exhibited the following features:

- (1) Awesomeness - Powerful, unexplained alteration in consciousness,
- (2) Revelation - Sense of being gifted, of perhaps being chosen,
- (3) Irrefutability - Certainty about its veracity,
- (4) Salience - Sense of pre-eminent importance,
- (5) Imminence - Immediacy, something to happen very soon,
- (6) Obligation - Responsibility to share,
- (7) Persistence - Altered consciousness that lasts a lifetime, and
- (8) Charisma - Enhanced ability to attract loyal followers.

Having one or a few of these features burst into conscious awareness is not unusual for those having religious (Otto, 1958), mystical (Ferrer & Sherman, 2008), or peak experiences (Maslow, 1964/1976). Maslow lists over a dozen features of peak experiences of which four, Truth and Effortlessness (akin to my Irrefutability); Uniqueness (akin to my Revelation); and Necessity (akin to my Obligation), correspond closely with the features of my experience. Interestingly, Maslow, (1964/1976, pp. 19-21) also felt that revelatory episodes that produced prophets and led to the establishment of religions were “very likely, indeed almost certain[ly]...perfectly natural, human peak-experiences” conceptualized in accord with the culture and language of the prophet. Peak experiences may very well be closely related to, even identical with, activation of the Archetype of Awakening and Wholeness.

Otto (1958) coined the term “numinous” and emphasized the experience of sacredness, holiness or Divinity as well as awe, ineffability, humility, gratitude, and a sense of interconnection with the universe as a whole as characterizing the religious experience. Many of these features also occur in mystical experiences (Ferrer, 2015). Perhaps, activation of the Archetype of Awakening and Wholeness is a causal factor in the alterations in consciousness that accompany all these experiences.

To suddenly, explosively become aware of many of the features of my experience, or of the features of peak, religious, and mystical experiences, at once would, as it did in my case, capture one's attention in a persistently commanding way. Such an experience could, and in my case did, in fact, produce a prophetic impulse. The only explanation I could think of for the feeling states I first experienced in 1976 was that a world ending natural event was soon to occur. For a religiously inclined individual in the Judeo-Christian West, such a prophetic impulse would often be interpreted literally in light of longstanding notions of an imminent, Divinely orchestrated End Time. This would be especially true if their experience included a sense of numinosity, i.e. of

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having a Divine or sacred origin. In that case, the experience would be felt as a revelatory call to prophecy and could lead to formation of a cult. It is important to note, however, that whenever such feelings irrupt in an individual, they do not, *per se*, establish the meaning of the experience.³ In and of themselves, there is nothing that is necessarily catastrophic in these features, but they are preeminently commanding. John Ryan Haule (2011, p. 146), for example, noted that “the experience of an archetype results in non-ordinary states of consciousness. It feels irresistible, numinous, spiritual, magical, fascinating, compelling, transforming, illuminating, and revelatory.”

Jung (1959) distinguished between the activated archetype with its various personal and culturally determined embellishments and the archetype-as-such. For Jung, the archetype-as-such formed a framework and guide for the behavioral responses (the activated archetype) of an individual *in the context of his or her own ecosystem and culture*. On this point, Jung said:

Again and again I encounter the mistaken notion that an archetype is determined in regard to its content, in other words that it is a kind of unconscious idea (if such an expression be admissible). It is necessary to point out once more that archetypes are not determined as regards their content, but only as regards their form and only then to a very limited degree. A primordial image is determined as to its content only when it has become conscious and is therefore filled out with the material of conscious experience (Jung, 1959, p. 79).

The Jungian archetype is not the feelings, behaviors, images, or ideas that occur, but rather an underlying neuropsychic system that promotes and shapes their occurrence, that makes them possible.

My psychic brightening, as well as the alterations in consciousness that produce peak, mystical, and religious experiences, seemed to follow closely Jung’s and Haule’s descriptions of experiencing the activation of an archetype. When it happened to me, I had no idea what the imminent ‘something’ was the idea of which had so forcefully and compellingly intruded into my conscious awareness. Assigning it to a pending global catastrophe had been strictly a matter of last resort. Such a catastrophe seemed to be the only thing that could match the power and grandeur of the experience. In retrospect, I came to see that I was, as Jung said, filling out my psychic brightening with my unique “material of conscious experience,” i.e., as a scientist schooled to look for natural causes. That sort of “filling out” is also what happens in peak, religious, and mystical experiences and is what accounts for individual and cultural differences in the content of the experiences.

This, along with the fact that all prophets who have predicted an imminent End Time have been wrong, together with a consideration of literature on past and present End Times prophets and their thinking (Cohn, 1970; Cohn, 1993; Edinger, 1999; Keller, 1998;; Stevens & Price, 2000; Strozier, 1994; Walsh, 2019; Weber, 1999), suggests that the idea of a Divinely orchestrated End Time is a product of the cultural unconscious (Hen-

derson, 1988) of the Judeo-Christian West. As a matter of fact, indigenous people not exposed to the causative societal conditioning that produces it can have a tribal society without beliefs about God or in any sort of catastrophic End Times (Everett, 2016).

The Archetype of Awakening and Wholeness

Like all other archetypes, the Archetype of Awakening and Wholeness has intention. First, at an elementary level, it is a warning from the collective unconscious: “Attention! Big changes are coming! Get ready!” In the past, although there was no conscious knowledge of the reality of earth’s cycling climate, what it would have had us get ready for was the onset of the vicissitudes of yet another long lasting glacial phase. This is exactly the sort of thing one would expect from the actions of an adaptive unconscious (Wilson, 2002). As discussed above, one of its operating modes is increased anxiety. Another intention is to produce charismatic leaders capable of attracting loyal followers. As resources dwindled during glacial phases every band of hunter-gatherers, every tribal group would have needed such leaders, especially leaders who seemed blessed from the spirit realm, to marshal the group’s strengths and resources as their world became more and more hostile.

Today, we⁴ have inadvertently accomplished the greatest feat of geoengineering in history by adding enough extra heat to the earth’s climate system to prevent us from going into another glacial phase for the foreseeable future (Ruddiman, 2005/2016; Archer, 2009; Ganopolski et al, 2016). However, greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise, as do global warming, sea level rise, ocean acidification, and frequency of extreme weather events. The United States, which among large, highly industrialized nations has led the world in per capita greenhouse gas emissions, has ignored the climate crisis during all of the Trump presidency (2016-2020). Global plans to control global warming and its knock-on effects have stalled (Wallace-Wells, 2018). So, in an instance of great irony, the archetypal warning that originated to warn of the next glacial phase of the earth’s climate cycle must now be seen as applying to the rapidly developing man-made catastrophe of uncontrolled global warming (Bendell, 2020; McPherson, 2019, 2020).

In addition to warning us, another intention of the archetype is to awaken us to our connection with the creative heart of the universe and our co-creative responsibilities. Coming to grips with the fact that our evolution in a very challenging world has impacted our psyches may reconfigure our ego consciousnesses. For centuries we in the West have lived in a cocoon of faith that told us that we were specially created and that all would be well in the end: the wicked would be punished while the good would be taken up into a new Heaven. In various ways, that is a comforting point of view that has been important for many people in finding meaning in life. In fact, our birth process was, indeed, special, but creation continues and we are part of an open-ended process where failure to act will have grave consequences. Now we face the task of blunting our ego consciousness, our hyperindividualism, and our misguided optimism. In particular, we must reassess our allegiance

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to an ideology of continuous growth and development if we are to develop a transformed consciousness appropriate to addressing the existential crises that face us today. Yes, we evolved in a very difficult world and it is remarkable that we are here at all. Yes, it is quite humbling to come to grips with this reality. However, we must also remember that without successfully enduring the hardships of the earth's climate cycling, that very difficult environment for evolutionary adaptation, we would not be what we are today, i.e., large-brained *Homo sapiens*.

In These Last Days

So, here now, in what should be the last days of this, the latest interglacial period, at this unique end time where civilization itself trembles before an onslaught of crises, we find ourselves at a point of transition. There is widespread discontentment, anxiety, and a feeling that we have lost our way (Benjamin, 2020; Gottlieb, 2021; O'Hara, 2015; Weintrobe, 2021). There is a yearning to somehow reverse the disenchantment of the world that has accompanied the enlightenment, the industrial revolution, and the growth of modernity and technology. Many feel hurtfully disconnected from the spiritual heart of the universe and wonder why the meaning of life has slipped away. As Rue (2000, p. 34) says, "there are good reasons to believe that the story traditions of the Axial religions have played themselves out, and that their influence will continue to decline." A new narrative with which individuals can identify and find meaning in their lives is desperately needed. Such a narrative must include information about our difficult evolutionary birth, how we repeatedly adapted to and overcame adversity, and how we must now adapt again or perish. It should include the possibility that we have, throughout the course of our evolution, been following an ever-unfolding creative impulse from the heart of the universe to develop the knowledge and the means to break free of the bust-boom cycle of existence that got us here. Bringing our contemporary life narrative into alignment with the core knowledge of our adaptive unconscious will ameliorate at least some of the discomfort that characterizes this extraordinary era (Stevens, 1993; Wilson, 2002).

Everyone needs to know that if we were to enter into another glacial phase there is no guarantee that our species and the progress we have made during this interglacial period would last or, if it were to vanish, ever recur. Avoiding that outcome by preventing the next glacial phase is a remarkable achievement. The task now is to prevent continuation of uncontrolled global warming due to increasing greenhouse gas emissions (Klein, 2019; Kolbert, 2014; Wallace-Wells, 2019). That future, with its life-threatening high temperatures and eventual sea level rise of 200-300 feet above current levels would be just as destructive as another ice age.

The ongoing pandemic together with ongoing uncontrolled global warming and the rise of authoritarian political regimes that foster and feed upon misinformation, fear, and societal fragmentation have created an extraordinarily stressful environment (Benjamin, 2020; O'Hara, 2015). The possibility of near-term loss of sources of security, even to the point of death, demands a place in our conscious awareness. While the chaos,

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uncertainty, and high levels of anxiety of our time might be considered as a rich opportunity for individuals to strive for and reach wholeness via self-actualization (Maslow, 1964/1968; O'Hara, 2015), three aspects of reality work against that actually being the case. First, many, perhaps most, have lost the ancient sense of death being a part of life which for aeons was provided by participatory consciousness, i.e., *Participation Mystique* (see Ferrer & Sherman, 2008; Winborn, 2014). For individuals with low awareness of participation such close proximity to knowledge of their own mortality heightens their anxiety. Maslow (1964/1976, p. 113) noted how diminished we would become "If we lose our sense of awe, of humility, of being struck dumb, if we lose our sense of good fortune, then we have lost a very real and basic human capacity." Second, as May (1953/2009, p. 25) noted, "Apathy and lack of feeling are also defenses against anxiety. When a person continually faces dangers he is powerless to overcome, his final line of defense is at last to avoid even feeling the danger" (See also Weintrobe, 2013, 2021). Third is the widespread postmodernist presumption (for example see, Barrett, 2015) that psyche, self, and all human knowings are illusions generated by a neural computer in the brain.

These things can make therapy a difficult task for psychologists and psychoanalysts. For clients, they bring unmet security needs as well as the reality of one's mortality to the fore which make the pivot toward greater psychological growth and maturity difficult. Perhaps contemporary psychotherapy will soon become more like grief counseling (Heery, 2015) as clients and therapists work toward finding meaning for lives that appear more and more insecure and seem likely to be cut short. There is no doubt that a strong spiritual foundation and an open heart (Heery, 2015) will be helpful in this trying time.

Realizing what trials our species has survived and that we have the means to prevent the worst effects of global warming is exhilarating. To feel that we have been guided to know where we came from allows our souls to move past the static vision of a fixed endpoint beyond our control, i.e., an End Time, and opens the possibility of consciously exercising our co-creative talents in working to establish a thermostable world. Indeed, our survival through very dark, difficult times points to remarkable human resilience and is a basis for continued Hope in this difficult, uniquely challenging liminal time. Trying to prevent an ever-worsening global warming catastrophe is an appropriate task for *Homo sapiens sapiens*. Succeeding at it would signify our transition from a long childhood and adolescence during this interglacial phase to a more mature stage of development as a species. Sadly, the possibility remains that human beings are incapable of attending to the crises that threaten their existence and, at best, will have to endure a very difficult initiation process as earth readjusts itself to a more stable ecology (Harvey & Baker, 2017).

These last days are challenging for mankind. Our new narrative must recognize that the survival of our civilization ultimately requires a degree of cooperative action and psychological maturity hitherto unknown.

One thing is certain: now is not the time to block the journey to wholeness by mistakenly projecting our indi-

vidual or collective shadow contents into perceived external enemies or by denying the reality we face. Now is the time to courageously face both the darkness within and without. Knowing of the importance of our species's birth, the archetype it created, and the seriousness of the challenges before us, we will better be able to work our way toward a new, more mature, more sustainable phase of the human adventure.

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Notes

1. I follow Anthony Stevens (Stevens, 2015, p. 352) in considering archetypes to be phylogenetically determined “neuropsychic centres possessing the capacity to initiate, control and mediate the common behavioural characteristics and typical experiences of all human beings”
2. By “creative intelligence of the universe “ or “universal creativity” I refer to the unnameable mystery of being above the God of theism (Tillich, 1980). My lingering distaste for the notion of God I had as a 10 year-old — literally as an all-powerful entity in some heavenly realm who controls all earthly affairs — makes using the word “God” hard for me. That is my issue, however, and I am happy to acknowledge that many if not most who use the term feel connected to something incredibly more awesome and sacred than was my limited conception when I was a boy. I am also happy to say that I have long since let go of my feud with God and today I am at peace with the awesome mystery of being that accommodates so many religious and spiritual traditions. I strive, as a somewhat conscious human being, to enjoy whatever each day brings.
3. Simply having a prophetic impulse does not determine how the archetypal energy associated with it will be used.
4. One reviewer urged the elimination of all uses of “we” on the grounds that “a generic unknown ‘we’” should not be used in academic writing. I declined to make widespread changes since this paper is about how *our* evolutionary history affected *us*, the human species, a group to which *we* all belong. Furthermore, the long glacial climate phase we would otherwise be entering at this time has always been associated with a participatory mode of consciousness dominated by lived interconnection and interdependence with others, the ecosystem, and the spirit world. (Ferrer, 2008; Winborn, 2014). From the point of view of a psyche attuned to the earth’s cycling climate, the growing participatory turn in consciousness that characterizes this era, i.e., what should be the last days of this interglacial warm phase, is to be expected because that is the cooperative mode of consciousness necessary for survival during the hardships of the glacial phase.