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## Education for Apocalypse

### A Depth Psychological Approach

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God wants to be born in the flame of man's consciousness, leaping ever higher. And what if this has no roots in the Earth? If it is not a house of stone where the fire of God can dwell, but a wretched straw hut that flares up and vanishes? Could God then be born? One must be able to suffer God. That is the supreme task for the carrier of ideas. He must be the advocate of the Earth. God will take care of himself. My inner principle is: Deus et homo. God needs man in order to become conscious, just as he needs limitation in time and space. Let us therefore be for him limitation in time and space, an earthly tabernacle.

C. G. JUNG, Letters

### *Meditation on Hiroshima*

*We waited until the blast had passed, walked out of the shelter and then it was extremely solemn. We knew the world would not be the same. A few people cried. Most people were silent. I remembered the line from the Hindu scripture, the Bhagavad-Gita: Vishnu is trying to persuade the Prince that he should do his duty and to impress him he takes on his multi-armed form and says, "Now I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds." I suppose we all thought that, one way or another.*

ROBERT J. OPPENHEIMER  
after the detonation of the first atomic bomb

Imagine, if you will, a meditation dedicated to that moment (8:15 A.M., August 6, 1945) when an atomic bomb was first detonated over a densely populated city. Imagine preparing for this meditation by reading about the history of World War II, the war in the Pacific, the evolution of the Manhattan project, the accounts of the devastation visited upon the city of Hiroshima as the bomb released its power and the city was flattened. To make the images of your meditation more accurate, it would be important to study the pictures taken from the point of view of the delivery plane, the *Enola Gay*, as well as the few photographs taken from the ground that day, and especially the color drawings rendered by survivors as they trod through the burning remnants of their city.

Having prepared yourself with this study, imagine clearing a space for yourself in a special place where you will not be disturbed and you can be assured of solitude. Research the exact moment in your time zone that corresponds to 8:15 A.M. Hiroshima time and begin to settle your mind and breathing for some time in advance of this moment. More than likely, your imagination will begin to participate in the events as they unfolded in 1945—the long, monotonous plane ride, the children on their way to school, the young people clearing fire lanes, the complaints about the false air raids during the previous night. Then events will quicken—the excitement as the bomb is armed and dropped, the precise movements of the people on the ground as they prepare to meet their fate, the instant of the detonation.

If you have taken the trouble to enact this meditation, to witness Hiroshima through the deep imagination, you will have an imaginal

experience unique to your own psyche. Nevertheless, certain patterns of experience are likely to occur. The tremendous flash-boom of the atom bomb will probably carry you into a region of your own soul rarely, if ever, visited. First there is the encounter with the *mysterium tremendum* of the detonation, then a set of visceral experiences often beginning in the lower abdomen and coursing up through the gut and into the chest region, the area of the heart *chakra*. An identification with the souls of those who were instantaneously incinerated often triggers sharp pains that manifest in various body locations. Then there is the identification with the suffering of those left behind—the peeling skin, the embedded shards of glass, the helplessness of witnessing a loved one burn to death in a collapsed home. At this point, one can only cry.

The experience will then become even more intense as the witnessing imagination becomes aware that at that very moment there are 50,000 people in Hiroshima's Peace Park who are observing a minute of silence in relation to the same set of images. Indeed, there are people all around the world who are pausing in that moment to witness the immensity of that event. It is difficult to predict the direction that the meditating ego will take at this point. The key is to stay with the experience, not to flinch in the gaze of Hiroshima's terror. This much can be said: having dropped into the dark maw of Hiroshima's suffering, the ego is stripped of its moorings and an imaginal landscape common to humanity is entered. One rarely encounters this place without some sort of revelation taking place. If you visit this place, stay there as long as you can—waiting, watching, listening. Then slowly observe the natural movement in the psyche that signals the completion of the experience. Something says, "It is enough!" The meditating ego begins to reconstitute itself and to pull back from this other world into more familiar terrain. Time begins to make sense again and one recognizes the signposts of ego's familiar reality. An apocalypse has been encountered and survived. Time to dry the tears, review what has been seen and learned, and rededicate one's life to being a peacemaker.

This essay is an attempt to understand such an experience. As a resident of the city of Hiroshima for several years, I feel compelled to make sense of what happened there. After fifteen years of wondering about it, I am just beginning to penetrate the mysteries of that event. My thesis is this: what lifts the Hiroshima event out of the ordinary course of historical events is that it forces an encounter between the human psyche and the divine imagery of apocalypse.

I begin with an explication of the dynamics of the human psyche in relation to images of apocalypse and the role that these images play in

our current historical situation. After I establish the idea that images of apocalypse are a doorway to personal and cultural transformation, I meditate on the kind of education necessary to prepare individuals to become vessels for the sacred aims and intentions of the deep psyche. The language I use comes from depth psychology in the tradition of C. G. Jung. The object of study in this psychology is the human psyche, which is understood to have at least two levels of depth—personal and collective. It is understood in Jungian psychology that since both personal and collective images are experienced within the psyche itself, they are separable only in theory. However, as we shall see, their differentiation is essential to understanding the psychic dynamics of apocalypse. For our purposes we may say that the personal psyche is circumscribed by images that are grounded in personal experience while the collective psyche is grounded in images that come from outside of our own experience and therefore from what may be called the “objective” or “impersonal” psyche. It is not essential that the reader be familiar with the language of depth psychology; I include references for those who wish to know more about certain ideas.

### *The Function and Dynamics of Apocalyptic Imagery*

*In my dream, a friend tells me that a nuclear exchange is imminent between the United States and the Soviet Union. I am shaken with disbelief, but looking up in the sky, I see two missiles collide in midair and a mushroom cloud rising up in the heavens. When the cloud disperses, I see the Pleiades. It's as if somehow the nuclear explosion itself created the stars. (Hill, p. 118)*

The word *apocalypse* comes from the Greek *apocalypses* meaning “to reveal” or “a tearing away of the veil of that which conceals” (*kalyptein*). Embedded in the history of this word is the image of two realities between which exists a partition, a thin veil that conceals something of great value on the other side. Most often, this sense of “passing over” from one reality to the other is understood to be a function of the religious imagination in humans. One lifts the veil that separates the everyday, material, profane world and communes with the extraordinary, spiritual, and sacred world that is revealed on the other side. It is also imagined as a two-way street—something from the spiritual world can tear away the veil and insinuate itself into the mundane world. When the imagining ego beholds a visitation from “beyond the veil,” it is experi-

enced as a revelation. Let us call a revelation that is experienced in a waking state a “vision” and one that is experienced in a sleeping state a “dream.” A hundred years of depth psychology has taught us something about how revelation is experienced within the psyche, and I would like to review some of the more salient features here.

A first principle of depth psychology is that the images that appear within the psyche as revelation use a symbolic language that is fundamentally different from the linear language of the everyday waking ego. Because they are mediated by the waking ego, however, the images of revelation are translated into the literalisms and concreteness that are the ego’s normal mode of comprehension. The psychological task, then, is to de-literalize the image. For example, if you have a dream in which a voice tells you to kill your neighbor, it is important not to take this image literally. A more generative approach would be to explore the symbolic meaning of the image by considering your relationship with your outer neighbor in all its dimensions, as well as your relationship with the neighbors of your own psyche. What are neighbors, anyway, and how does “killing” affect your consideration of them? The waking ego must then take a moral stand with respect to the revelation. Why this image right now? What is being asked of me? If the ego blindly follows the injunction of the image and commits the murder, we could say that it has become possessed. The ego has lost its own choice-making power, a dangerous state indeed.

The stakes get higher when we consider a revelation taking place not at the level of an individual psyche, but in the psyche of humankind as a whole—the collective psyche. Consider, for example, the oldest collective revelation of the Western psyche and the origin of most people’s images of apocalypse, the Book of Revelation. Over the centuries, this book has had a special appeal for literalists who see within the dark and destructive imagery a divine plan for the destruction of this sinful world and the coming of a new age of Light brought by the Messiah. While this imagery clearly has redemptive power, there are two main problems with literalizing it. First, it infantilizes the moral ego by taking away its choice-making powers with respect to the revelation. Without a discerning ego, it is quite possible to enact the will of false or evil gods. Second, it can hasten the actual destruction of the world through a process of “immanentizing the eschaton,” that is, by making choices that accelerate the process of the world’s destruction in order to fulfill the prophecy.

If we de-literalize the images, however, the story is more credible and has much more to say. From the point of view of the psyche, the mythology of the Book of Revelation provides imagery that speaks to the

soul's yearning for a new way of being, a transformation of values, a new beginning. This call works at two levels. At the personal level the apocalyptic images of the Book of Revelation call for the death of habitual ego attitudes and a new life in relation to transpersonal values. At a collective level, these images call for the death of habitual cultural attitudes and a new cultural renaissance in relation to a new image of the divine. In Jung's view, apocalyptic imagery is a call from the collective unconscious for a new mythology taking shape in the objective psyche. He even goes so far as to assert that what is coming to meet us is an entirely new image of the divine that is being constellated in the objective psyche. From this point of view we may say that the purpose of any revelation is to bring about transformation, whether at the personal level or the collective level. Thus, when apocalyptic imagery arises spontaneously within the psyche it is acting as an initiation into a new mythology.

To understand the dynamics of this process more thoroughly we need to draw on a second principle of depth psychology, namely, that the psyche is a self-regulating process that is intentional. This means that the psyche is teleological; it pursues aims and intentions that are beyond the comprehension of the ego. This assertion is amply documented at the personal level by a century of clinical experience in which dreams and other manifestations of the personal unconscious are seen to have an uncanny knack for pinpointing the precise needs of a one-sided ego attitude. It is as if there is an "other" within our own psyche that knows just what we need to achieve optimum health and well-being. This "other" reveals itself in and through unconscious processes such as dreams, visions, body symptoms, illnesses, and so on. It is the responsibility of the moral ego to convert these messages into an ethical obligation by acting upon the hints given by the "other." This is not an easy thing to do since the compensatory hints given by the intentional psyche often run counter to the aims of the waking ego. It is for this reason that Jung states that an experience with this larger sense of the psyche is "always a defeat for the ego" (Coll. Wks. 14, para. 778). Moving beyond our habitual ego attitudes usually involves a painful crisis of letting go, but it always opens up a wider, non-ego perspective that represents a major advancement in personal growth and a new relationship with the divine.

The corresponding dynamic at the collective level is even more profound. Perhaps Jung states it best when he says:

Our personal psychology is just a thin skin, a ripple on the ocean of collective psychology. The powerful factor, the factor which changes our whole life, which changes the surface of our known world, which makes history, is collective psychology, and col-

lective psychology moves according to laws entirely different from those of our consciousness. The archetypes are the great decisive forces, they bring about the real events, and not our personal reasoning and practical intellect....The archetypal images decide the fate of man. (Coll. Wks. 18, para. 371)

What Jung is saying here is that from the point of view of the psyche, the transpersonal patterns of images that he calls archetypes are not located within human beings. Rather, human beings are located in and subject to the intentions of the archetypes. Hence, when the archetypal images that have governed the collective body of a culture begin to shift and transform, so moves the fate of mankind. It is my contention that at the end of the twentieth century, a lethal century that has left 80 million people dead in massive epidemics of violence, we are witnessing in the imagery of apocalypse the transformation of archetypal dominants in our culture. If we literalize these images, which are often received as divine injunctions, we are in great peril. If, on the other hand, we receive these symbolic images in great humility and marshal the will to enact their symbolic hints as though they were opening our culture to new opportunities for healthy growth, we are in a position to receive the lineaments of a new mythology that is asserting itself in compensation to the one-sided attitudes of a myopic, murderous, and dysfunctional culture. Jung personified the new myth that is coming into being by calling it "the coming guest." In a letter near the end of his life he writes:

Who is the awe inspiring guest who knocks at our door so portentously? Fear precedes him, showing that ultimate values already flow towards him. Our hitherto believed values decay accordingly, and our only certainty is that the new world will be something different from what we were used to....

We have simply got to listen to what the psyche spontaneously says to us. What the dream, which is not manufactured by us, says, is just so....It is the Great Dream which has always spoken through the artist as a mouthpiece. All his love and passion (his "values") flow towards the coming guest to proclaim his arrival....

What is the great Dream? It consists of the many small dreams and the many acts of humility and submission to their hints. It is the future and the picture of the new world, which we do not understand yet. We cannot know better than the unconscious and its intimations. There is a fair chance of finding what we seek in vain in our conscious world. Where else could it be? (Adler, pp. 196-97)

If it is true that we are living within the intimations and intentions of transpersonal factors seeking to heal a culture that is dangerously out of balance and that an encounter with an archetypal image involves a "defeat for the ego," a painful process of letting go in order to grow, then we need to draw upon a third insight of depth psychology—how to die well. This dying of which we speak is not a literal death, but a symbolic death; however, the death imagery appears real enough when it enters the psyche and is virtually indistinguishable from a literal death. The fear generated by this process is intense, which is why many people refuse to engage the process. In the language of depth psychology, we learn to die well when we undergo an initiatory rite of passage, and it is in the psychology of initiatory process that we will find the true purpose and promise of apocalyptic imagery.

In his brilliant and inspiring study of apocalypse as a rite of passage, Michael Ortiz Hill begins by saying:

Initiation into the apocalyptic mysteries seems to be a requisite for living a full and awake life during these exceedingly troubled times. This is not to say that the way of myth and dream is the only way of initiation—indeed I suspect one enters into the apocalyptic mysteries whenever one seriously and with concentration looks hard into the realities of who one is and into the times in which one is living. These dreams do, however, give a very vivid and raw picture of the psyche's perception of its situation. (Hill, p. 50)

The dreams to which Hill is referring are a collection of nuclear nightmares that he has arranged in the traditional three stages of initiatory process—separation, initiation, and return. These dreams are remarkable in their intensity and intelligence. They confirm many of the experiences I have had in my own nuclear dreams as well as those of others who have shared their nuclear dreams with me. Briefly summarized, the initiatory process of separation is often imaged by the psyche through apocalyptic imagery involving the suffering of children—children who are abandoned, seeking refuge, or in other ways suffering great pain. It is through witnessing the suffering of children, or any suffering, for that matter, that we can begin to separate from our own egoistic needs and move beyond them into the depths of our souls.

The second stage of initiation proper takes us into the landscape of the archetypal forces themselves. Here is encountered the beauty-terror of divine chaos, which dismembers the ego's attitudes and reconstitutes them into new forms, transforming the values by which the ego lives

and imparting a gift of new knowledge that is meant to serve both the individual and the community as a healing elixir. The third stage of initiation, then, involves the return of the initiate to the embrace of the community bearing the gift that one has become, a healer and harbinger of a piece of the new myth.

The initiatory process of death and rebirth provides the most generative way of understanding apocalyptic nuclear images as they appear in dreams and cultural artifacts. By de-literalizing the images and understanding them as psychic messages that are trying to teach us something about how to transcend the destructive trajectory of modern culture, we are more likely to avert the literal and unconscious enactment of apocalypse in the world. As Hill (p. 53) puts it, "Rather than enacting apocalypse in the world unconsciously, we deliberately enter the apocalypse of the psyche for the sake of the world....Such initiation is essential to living responsibly and with heart in an apocalyptic era." From a psychological point of view, this is what it means to "die well."

Before we turn our attention to the implications of these ideas for adult education, let me say that while we have entered into the psychic landscape of apocalypse via the imagery of Hiroshima and nuclear annihilation, there are other modes of access. With the breakdown of the Soviet Union, the disappearance of our "evil" twin brother, and the reduction of nuclear stockpiles, the images of apocalypse used by the collective unconscious have shifted somewhat to include other sources of apocalyptic destruction. Images of environmental catastrophe, invasion by aliens, annihilation by meteor strikes, genocidal viral epidemics, and so on, are increasingly populating our imaginal lives. However, the essential psychic dynamics remain the same—archetypal realities are shifting, a new mythology is being born, and we are being called in particular ways to undergo an initiatory rite of passage by entering into the most difficult psychic realities of the twentieth century for purposes of healing and transforming our culture and the world. The question that remains is to ask what forms of adult education can best prepare individuals to serve the aims of this process.

### *Toward a Liberal Arts Education for Apocalypse*

*I am approached by a bright light. It has definite form. I recall feeling very excited and knowing that "it" was a messenger from God. It hands me a letter. I take the letter and feel thrilled that I am personally being sent a letter from God. I feel chosen! I keep saying to myself, "I knew it. I am special!" With a feeling of great elation and anticipation, I open the envelope. I read the greeting: "Dear Humanity," and feel a sense of disap-*

*pointment because the letter is not addressing me personally. I feel as though I have just received some form of cosmic junk mail from God...like the "Dear Occupant" junk mail we all get from time to time. I experience a tremendous sense of deflation. I am disappointed to realize that I am not special after all. Suddenly I have a realization: I am humanity! A sense of joy and elation washes over me...a sense of "Oh, now I get it!" (Dream Network Bulletin)*

Depth psychology has long asserted that the task of the second half of life is to undergo a relativization of the ego in which conscious life discovers that it is a part of a much larger psychic structure. Through undergoing a series of numinous or "divine" experiences that are initiatory in nature, the ego comes to realize that it is living in relation to an "other," which is variously represented as either "God" or "Spirit" in religious language or "the greater Self" in psychological language. The process by which the ego hears the call of the Self and navigates the required transformation is called "individuation."

We have seen how this process is affected by the presence of apocalyptic imagery. We do not enter the landscape of apocalypse for ourselves alone, but so that our people might live. The educational question is this: How can we as adult educators create the conditions for the possibility of grace, for the possibility that the divine archetypal realities will enter, teach, and transform the ego on behalf of personal and cultural healing? If the preceding analysis holds any truth, as I believe it does, then the fate of the Earth (or at least of the human species) hangs on the answer to this question. As Jung put it so succinctly, *"The fate of the earth rests on a single thread, and that thread is the individual human psyche."*

To answer this question I would like to share with you some of the teaching principles and techniques I have used over the years. As a professor of liberal studies in a bachelor of arts completion program for adults, I have had ample opportunities to teach directly out of what I think is most important. However, like any teacher, I am constrained in various ways by the aims of the institution in which I work. While I have been given a relatively free hand in choosing and shaping my courses, the constraints of designing classes that meet once a week for two and a half to three hours for ten weeks is often a drawback to the kind of intense encounters required to work in the shadow of apocalyptic imagery. With these disclaimers in mind, I would like to begin by making some general comments about curriculum before describing several of my classes in more detail.

It is not possible within the scope of this article to spell out a consistent and coherent curriculum for apocalypse. All I want to do is submit

some of my own thinking for your consideration. For the purposes of exposition I will divide my comments on curriculum into two parts: traditional and nontraditional.

I have always been a firm believer in the idea that the proper study of mankind is mankind. To know anything of value, one must know who one is as a human being. I tend to follow the reasoning of Ernst Cassirer, who divides knowledge into two parts—philosophical anthropology and philosophical cosmology. While both are crucial, the anthropology takes priority since considerations of cosmology alone tend to be conditioned by human projections. Philosophical anthropology is always looking for the presuppositions of conscious activity and as such is the bedrock of all forms of inquiry. This is why every liberally educated person should have a strong background in life-span human development. To know who we are, we have to know from whence we came and to what we aspire. We also need to differentiate images and ideas about the feeling systems of the human soul so we can understand the beauty and complexity of what it means to be human.

The same is true at the level of the collective—to know who we are as a culture we have to know from whence this culture came and to what it aspires. This is why every liberally educated person should have a richly elaborated set of images for cultural, biological, and geological time frames. When I taught middle-school-aged children I would always begin with a lesson in which we used yarn of different colors to make three time lines around the classroom. One color represented geological time, and its scale was billions of years. Another color represented biological time, and its scale was hundreds of millions of years. A third color represented cultural time from a global perspective, which was measured in terms of thousands of years. We then cut out images of different places, animals, and human events and placed them at the appropriate intervals with small cards that told the story of that image. We also left some room at the end of each line for imaginative constructions of possible futures. To me, being liberally educated means that you are continually adding knowledge to these time lines.

Further elaboration of these images can take place through literature, a medium that allows one to participate with other beings in their subjective states. This is particularly valuable with respect to the creation of a global culture in which we need to appreciate each other's cultural assumptions. As Jung once said, "Absolute truth, if there is such a thing, will only be heard in the concert of many voices." Reading literature by and about people from cultures other than our own opens our heart to a compassionate acceptance of diversity.

A third crucial element of a liberal education for apocalypse is a corollary of the first—a thorough understanding of the rise of Western culture and especially Western science and technology since the Renaissance, with a special emphasis on the triumphs and tragedies of the twentieth century. I often tell my adult students who see in the Western tradition the source of apocalyptic self-destruction, that to find a new way one must know how we got here. Since Western culture holds hegemony over much of the developed world, it is essential to understand the history of ideas that have supported it. I caution that it is important not to pre-judge Western culture. The danger of throwing the baby out with the bath water is too great.

The last area of traditional liberal learning that I would like to mention is in the area of service learning. It goes without saying that a major goal of liberal education is to create reflective human beings who are prepared for acting on behalf of social justice. We cannot be said to “know” something unless we are able to act upon it. The idea of using the classroom to facilitate group dynamics that explore the relationship between reflection and social action is an integral aspect of an education for apocalypse. It is the only way in which ideas can make a difference.

It is possible to obtain most of what I mention here in traditional centers of education, although the mode of delivery is crucial to the assimilation of the knowledge and this will vary considerably. Let us turn our attention now to the nontraditional learning and teaching that is crucial to a liberal education informed by apocalyptic imagery. Again, I can only hope to sketch the broad outline of these points.

The first and most important learning has to do with ritual process. To be liberally educated, each individual should know the elements of ritual practice and how to create ceremony both for one’s self and for groups. It is important that the learner be able to tailor the ritual to the needs of the participants, and therefore a good knowledge of the world’s religions and spiritualities is essential, as is the openness of heart required to practice in the spirit of what Matthew Fox calls “deep ecumenism” (see Fox 1988 and Madhi et al. 1987).

A second crucial area for this kind of learning is dream work. Every liberally educated person should know something about the biology and psychology of the dreaming process and how to extract meaning from their own dreams. (see, e.g., O’Conner 1986). A consideration of dreams quickly evolves into a consideration of visions, hallucinations, psychotic episodes, and other manifestations of “daimonic” reality. It also requires that one have a philosophy of human-divine interactions capable of accounting for the revelatory power of these psychic phenomena. But

perhaps the most important aspect of doing dreamwork is that paying attention to dreams stimulates a corresponding response from the psyche itself. The result is an increase in consciousness. As the alchemists once knew, when an adept takes an interest in alchemy, alchemy takes an interest in the adept (Edinger 1985). So it is with dreams. If you take an interest in them, they will take an interest in you. In short, working with dreams is a sure way to directly experience the larger dimensions of the psyche.

A third important area of nontraditional learning is somatics, the understanding of the anatomy, physiology, and energetics of the human body (see Raheem 1987). Anatomy and physiology can be studied in traditional ways, but the integration of this knowledge into an awareness of the energetic pathways of the body is crucial. I tend to recommend that students begin with the study of a martial art or yoga for some period of time before turning their attention to a study of the chakra system. Further study requires experience with a variety of bodywork modalities and should include familiarity with the principles of acupuncture and the body meridians. A philosophical understanding of how trauma is held in body tissue and how this has manifested in the student is considered essential to this kind of inquiry.

Fourth, I think that a deeper nontraditional understanding and appreciation of natural phenomena is required (see Roszak et al. 1995). What I am saying is that in addition to traditional modes for understanding nature such as one acquires in botany, zoology, oceanography, astronomy, and geology classes, it is important to learn wilderness awareness skills that would allow us to bring more imagination to our perception of nature. A thorough grounding in natural history is important, as is knowing the names and characteristics of the flora and fauna that populate a particular region that is familiar to the student. Sitting in one spot for twenty-four hours, for example, allows one to enter into the subjectivity of the land in a unique way. Studying non-Western ideas about nature helps to liberate us from the hegemony of Western dualistic thinking. Developing a philosophy that can account for the subjectivity of natural phenomena, of the soul that inhabits nature (the *anima mundi*) is essential for cultivating this perspective.

And finally, I would say that a renewed valuation of the importance of personal expression is essential. Genuine revelation cannot do its work unless it is transformed into a form of communication. Whether through storytelling, poetry, creative writing, drawing, painting, or the plastic arts, the images that are welling up from the collective unconscious need

to be enacted for the purposes of communication. The notion that artistic communication is reserved for specially trained individuals called "performers" does a great disservice to the numerous revelations occurring to less accomplished individuals. I advocate the creation of small ad hoc communities for the express purpose of telling dreams, reading personal poems, showing amateur art inspired by revelation, and telling stories of initiation. In the end, expression that is inspired by apocalyptic imagery has the power to transmit meaning and inspire transformation in the individuals who are its recipients. The insight provided by such images must be converted into a moral obligation, must be "enacted" for the purpose of incarnating the "coming guest."

Having reviewed some of the important educational principles that are foregrounded by a consideration of apocalyptic imagery, I would like to illustrate how I have incorporated some of these elements into my classes. My discussion will be necessarily brief, but perhaps it will be enough to stimulate your own imagination.

For several years now I have taught a sequence of three classes throughout the academic year. I begin the academic year in the fall with a class called "Alchemy and Science: Toward the Re-Imagination of Nature." It is the most intellectually rigorous of my classes since it is a consideration of the history of ideas in the West, beginning with the Pre-Socratics, that have led to the development of modern science, the way in which our imagination of nature changed with the advent of the positivistic sciences and the task of re-imagining nature that is now confronting us at the end of the second millennium. I lay the foundation for these ideas through the use of an excellent book by Richard Tarnas titled *The Passion of the Western Mind* that skillfully navigates the stream of ideas that have been privileged by the power elite of Western culture. These are the ideas that have shaped the cultural unconscious of the West, which has in turn shaped our own forms of thought.

When we get to the European Renaissance, I turn to follow the thesis in the first half of a book by Morris Berman, *The Re-Enchantment of the World*, in which he employs a dialectic that begins with the alchemical, hermetic worldview of the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries. He describes how this view was able to perceive the subjectivity of nature through its appreciation of the *anima mundi*, the soul of nature. He then shows how the antithesis of this worldview, often referred to as the mechanical or Cartesian-Newtonian worldview, de-animated nature through its assumptions about the nature of mind and reality. The social, economic, and political climate of the times were conducive to this shift away from the irrationalism of hermeticism and into a sober rationalism

capable of wresting nature's secrets from her for the purposes of domination and control.

At this point in the course, we turn to a consideration of the myth of Frankenstein by watching the film *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* and reading Theodore Roszak's incredible retelling of the Frankenstein myth, *The Memoirs of Elizabeth Frankenstein*. Special consideration is given to the tensions between the competing images of nature and how it affected the treatment of women. It is no coincidence that while the battle between hermetic and mechanical philosophy was being waged, millions of women were being burned at the stake as witches. Epidemics of violence are always a hallmark of worldview transitions. We then return to the exposition given by Tarnas as to the triumphs and failures of mechanical science, the revolution of thought initiated by Einstein, and the possibility of a new synthesis of the hermetic and mechanical worldviews, a vision of nature that restores her soul through a process of re-animation and that relativizes the role of the human to one amongst many in a "council of all beings."

In addition to writing a formal essay that tells the story of the transition between worldviews and speculates on the newly emerging view of nature that is coming out of the new sciences, students are also expected to engage with the point of view of various characters in Roszak's novel. They are then asked to complete an "*anima mundi* project" that involves some kind of experience in a natural setting. Using whatever medium they choose, students are asked to illustrate their engagement with the ideas and feelings generated by the class material. I believe the themes that are covered by this course are one way of helping students understand the cultural thought forms that constrain and limit their habitual thoughts about the environment and prepare them to be receptive to new possibilities about the relationship between humans and nature. The class is an attempt to create the conditions for the possibility of new insights that will transform the student's relationship to nature. To my way of thinking, this is education for apocalypse.

A second course that I teach in the winter quarter is called "Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Childhood and Adolescence." Just as the Alchemy and Science class attempts to trace the dynamics of Western culture that forms the cultural context in which we live, so this class on childhood and adolescence traces the dynamics of individual development that form the psychological and spiritual context in which we find ourselves as reflective adults. We begin with the thesis that as adults we never see children as they really are but only as we imagine them to be, so we must imagine deeply. To deepen our imagination we must engage

the stories we tell ourselves about our own childhood since we have an unconscious tendency to project our feelings about our own childhood onto the children with whom we have contact.

What are these stories that so secretly inform our perceptions? To inquire into them, students create a portfolio of childhood memories called *Reveries on Childhood*. Using the idea of reveries as explicated by Gaston Bachelard in *The Poetics of Reverie*, we write one story a week, revise it, and enter it into the portfolio with accompanying pictures or art work. For many people, the prospect of dredging up old memories is a daunting task and for this reason each person is paired with a "chum" for the duration of the quarter who can serve as a sounding board and emotional companion. The affect generated by this opportunity to enter the doorway of childhood is often quite intense. After ten years of teaching this class, I am no longer stunned by the number of adult students who self-identify as being either physically, sexually, or emotionally abused. Paralleling this internal work, each student is required to observe a child in a natural setting on three separate occasions and to write about what they have experienced by applying the ideas discussed in class and the feelings that have been constellated through their encounter with the child.

The intellectual work is also intense, beginning with an article on the history of childhood by Lloyd DeMause (1974) that begins with the statement, "The history of childhood is a nightmare from which we have just begun to awaken." Many students are brought to tears by reading about the treatment of children as it has evolved in the Western world. We then consider the vicissitudes of the human sciences as we try to understand the various psychological maps that have been laid on children in order to understand them. We study one of them in more depth, namely, Erikson's stages of ego development. Early in the course we try to notice how our imagination of children is conditioned by our own race, class, and gender. What kind of kids show up in our minds when we think about child development? By including readings from diverse cultures, we expand our imaginations to include children of all kinds.

Issues of gender bias are engaged through Gilligan's (1982) critique of Erikson's stage theory. The secular bias of most developmental theory is engaged through readings on transpersonal developmental psychology (see Whitmont 1982 and Rudolf Steiner). The ego bias of most developmental theory is engaged by reading about the essentialist "acorn" theory of James Hillman (1996). Then we study the issue of discipline and punishment as it affects the development of conscience in the child and hence in the adult students who are studying it. This

subject is particularly engaging since it is relevant to adult students as both grown children and as current or prospective parents. We are then in a position to take on the subject that makes many students anxious—the wounded child. While various readings are used to display a variety of perspectives on wounding and healing (see Jeremiah 1990), the key to this class is to let each person do his or her own emotional work through the use of artistic drawings. Using a meditation, silence, and large pieces of newsprint, each student is asked to make four drawings: the idealized archetypal child, the child in the family, the abandoned child, and the child as carried by the adult. No more than five minutes is given to the completion of each picture in order to allow the psyche to address each theme unmediated by the critical ego. Quite often, healing is received simply through the creation of the images.

Finally we are in a position to take on the question of adolescence. Time constraints make it impossible to do justice to this rich topic, so I do what I think is most important—rites of passage. We consider the archetype of initiation that constellates in adolescence and talk about our own experiences with it and how it is currently being tended by the culture. The next week we have a guest speaker who works with at-risk adolescents using ritual process and initiation techniques. The class concludes with a consideration of the future of children in our culture and encouragement to follow up on the themes of the class by taking another class taught by a different teacher the following quarter titled "Children and Social Policy." We end with a ritual circle into which we invite our own inner child, the child we observed, our own children, the children we have read about, the suffering children of the world, and the spirit of those children yet to be born. We bless them, honor them, and vow to work on their behalf. Then we let them go. A meditation on children and childhood is an essential aspect of an education for apocalypse.

Each spring quarter I try to teach a class that has something to do with dreams and/or mythological studies. Over the years this has included courses with such titles as "The History of Dream Interpretation," "Dreams and the Earth," "Cross-Cultural Perspectives on the Spiritual Quest," "The Legacy of Joseph Campbell," and "An Inquiry into the Myth of the Holy Grail." All of these classes are designed to teach students how to relate to the products of the personal and collective imagination. I would like to share with you short descriptions of two of these classes, beginning with "An Inquiry into the Holy Grail," since I believe that this myth has much to teach us about apocalyptic revelation.

Understanding the grail myth is a valuable tool for clarifying the nature of divine-human interaction. We begin our inquiry by reading

von Eschenbach's *Parzifal* before the first class. To me, this is the most psychologically rewarding version of the myth because it was written prior to the Albigenian crusade, which severely curtailed the ability of writers to include the earlier pagan elements of the myth. Later versions of the grail myth lose their psychological power as they attempt to Christianize the original story. Our first class sessions are spent setting the historical context of the myth beginning with Celtic Europe and Ireland, Roman Britain, the historical King Arthur, and the events of ninth-century Europe, which many believe is the historical period that is mirrored in Eschenbach's tale. We then turn from this exoteric history to a consideration of the esoteric (or hidden) history of the myth, since it is in these stories that the deeper symbolic levels of the grail legends are accessed. We pause at this point in the class to develop a critical assessment of the respective truth claims of exoteric and esoteric histories. We then dive in to the esoteric material because it is through reading these stories, whether historically accurate or not, that the psyche of the student is most activated. We pay special attention in our historical considerations to the evolution of the church's attitude toward individual religious experience, noting how the church has a vested interest in controlling revelatory images of the divine.

Every class session begins with either a meditation or a visualization relevant to the assigned readings for that week. Students are asked to keep a journal of images as they come up in these class meditations and visualizations, including any relevant dream images that arise during the week. Once the historical context of the myth is set, the class then turns to consider three symbolic dimensions of the myth: the role of women and the figure of Sophia; the development of the ego as represented by Parzifal, Gawain, and Firefiz; and the problem of evil at the Castle of Wonders.

Discussion of these topics invariably leads to questions about the role of the feminine in the human psyche and the historical eclipse of the Goddess in Western religion; the need for the questing ego to learn holistically through head (intellect), heart (feeling), and hands (will); and the psychodynamics of evil understood as "passion without constraint." The relationship between the rise of romantic love in the Western psyche and its relationship to experiences of divine love is an integral aspect of this learning. A key text we use to understand the development of the story is *The Speech of the Grail* by Linda Sussman. The author's thesis is that the grail myth is itself an initiation into the power of speech, the ability of the ego to mediate and express the inspiration that comes from the divine through the imagination.

To understand more deeply what the author means by an initiation into speech, each student is asked to construct a mask of a character from the grail myth. Made out of plaster of paris, these masks are contoured to the faces of the students so that they can be worn. At our closing ceremony, each student is invited to put on the mask, become the character of the mask, step behind a podium that is alight with candles, and give a speech using the voice of that character. Many students report a kind of transit made by their consciousness wherein their waking ego fades and they are animated by the spirit of the mask. Having witnessed many of these mask speeches, I can report that there is considerable variation in students' abilities to surrender ego control to the spirit of the mask. Voice inflections, accents, figures of speech, and so on are all indicators of the relative presence or absence of ego dynamics. But regardless of how deep they go, every student is given a lesson in the nature and dynamics of spiritual experience. The Grail class ends with a consideration of how this myth may be the harbinger of a new form of spirituality taking shape in the human psyche, a spirituality in which the human has become a vessel for numinous experience and therefore a carrier of divine meaning. We consider the possibility that each one of us is the grail and our life purpose is embodied in the acts of speech we make on behalf of the divine.

The last class I will discuss here is titled "Dreams and the Earth." This class has several goals: to learn how to tend dreams, to learn how to listen to the voice of nature as it manifests in dreams, and to create a supportive community of dream workers. Most often, I teach this class outside of the university setting so that I have more freedom to engage ritual practice and ceremony. However I make a strong point that this class is not intended to be psychotherapy, that I do not "interpret" dreams, nor do I prescribe "treatment." Instead, I take an educational approach to dreams, teaching various techniques for cultivating or "tending" dream images. While there is obviously a great deal of social interaction and individual revelation that occurs in class, I work primarily as a facilitator and instructor rather than a psychotherapist.

The class begins with an overview of both the safety and discovery factors that contribute to successful work with dream groups. We then turn our attention to the history of dreams as they have been understood around the world, as well as more recent information on the biology of the dreaming state. Then, using a model developed by Stephen Aizenstat, we carefully examine the assumptions of what he calls "the multi-dimensional psyche." We devote a week to the study of each of the three dimensions of the psyche—the personal unconscious as explored by

Freud, the collective unconscious as explored by Jung, and the world unconscious as explored by post-Jungian, archetypal psychologies. Each dimension of the psyche has various techniques that are used to explore the meaning of dream images. While most dreams do refer to personal material that is couched in cultural imagery, the goal of this class is to move toward those dreams that come from the world unconscious, because they seem to carry something of the intentionality of nature herself. Most often, these kinds of dreams contain elaborate natural landscapes as well as a variety of animals that have varying abilities to "speak" in the dream. The possibility is entertained that these images exist independently of our observation of them and that this dimension in which they exist corresponds to shamanic realities as described by most indigenous cultures (see Noel 1997). We then learn what we can about how to navigate these realities using the dream images as guides.

To learn more about the nature of these imaginal landscapes, the class is invited to participate in a sweat lodge experience. While the sweat is done in a traditional way by a traditional ceremonial leader, the psychic images that are encountered while in the lodge bear a striking resemblance to the images that appear in dreams. In this way, an understanding of the dynamics of the deep imagination forms. Meanwhile, the class begins to develop a field of trust through the rituals of dreamwork and the sweat ceremony that serves to encourage the psyche to show herself in more revealing ways.

Near the end of the class we conduct a two-day dream incubation in nature as a way of learning more about the dynamics of the world unconscious and the voice of the Earth. Of course, dream incubations are about healing, and so each person must find a relationship to a wound that needs the healing grace of divine intervention. We begin by setting up camp in a wilderness setting. Whenever possible, I ask a person skilled in wilderness awareness skills to spend several hours with us to teach us about the animals and landscape in which we will be dreaming. Students then form dyads and begin work on a particular dream that seems relevant to their request for healing. We then spend several hours sitting in solitude as we invoke the spirits of the land to help us in our work.

After a light supper and a period of solitude in which we witness the transition from daylight to dusk to night, we prepare for the incubation ritual by sitting in a circle around an altar that consists of candles, sacred objects, natural forms from the land we are inhabiting, and masks of dream figures that have been created by each person. When the drumming begins, participants go one by one to a seat that faces a mirror,

watch themselves place the mask on their face, and experience themselves transit into the spirit of the mask. They then turn to the assembled group, the drumming stops, and the mask speaks spontaneously. What is said is always profound and unpredictable. I have found that the deeper and longer the preparation time for the mask ceremony, the more likely the ego is transcended and a genuine transit into the spirit of the mask is made.

When everyone is done, we ritually enter into a period of silence that is not broken until late in the morning on the following day. During this silence the dreamers are encouraged to pay careful attention to their experience, since revelation is not limited to the dream state. Usually, the morning silence is spent journaling or using art materials to capture the essence of the revelatory images. We then ritually break the silence and begin a series of talking circles through which we process the experience of the incubation. We close by giving thanks to the land. Most of the rest of the class is spent trying to make sense of what we experienced during the dream incubation. Students usually leave with a sense that nature does indeed have a subjective interiority that is accessible to the human psyche as the "voice of the Earth."

### *Best Wishes*

This essay began with a meditation on Hiroshima as an invocation to apocalypse. The nature and dynamics of apocalyptic imagery were discussed from the point of view of depth psychology, which sees in such images examples of the presence of divine revelation. Given the ubiquitous presence of apocalyptic imagery in our culture—from nuclear threats to genocidal wars to movies and music about Armageddon, not to mention dreams and religious mythology—it seems imperative that we de-literalize the images in order to minimize the risk of making them real. Instead, I suggested an alternative way of understanding apocalyptic imagery as potent symbolic forms, a way that preserves their symbolic power but de-potentiates their destructive power. This alternative way suggests that apocalyptic images are indicators that transpersonal archetypal realities are shifting and that the fate of the human species hangs upon a conscious interaction with these archetypal realities.

We then turned to the question of what kind of education would prepare individuals for apocalyptic encounters. I foregrounded several educational principles that I think are essential for preparing the individual to be a vessel for divine imagery and gave examples from my own

teaching practice for the purposes of illustration. I sincerely hope that you have been stimulated by these words. Perhaps you recognize a kindred spirit in my own experience or perhaps you want to know more about how to pursue your learning in similar areas. In any case, I wish you well on your terribly magnificent journey. I leave you with this dream upon which to meditate:

*I dreamt the world came to an end. There are tidal waves, earthquakes, war, hurricanes, volcanic eruptions, tornadoes, storms, pestilence, floods. The trees are torn up by their very roots. People are scattered around, dead, or like zombies, walking dead, soon to be dead. I see all my past friends, relatives, family, visions before my eyes; my life flashes before me and disappears. There are these large cracks in the earth and suddenly, from out of these cracks, come children, like seeds from the earth. But they are hurt, and burnt terribly, suffering, tired and frightened, I only know that I must get them out of the wreckage.*

*I am tying leaves around their feet because their little feet are so battered, and we have to go a long distance to get to the new ground. I am carrying the smallest ones that can't even walk yet, I am not sure where we are going. It is a place that is warmer, I tell them. I must keep their spirits up. The children must be saved so that they can start a new world.*

*But they are so weak, so tired, so little. I keep telling them this new place is just a little farther. Once there, they can rest and sleep and heal and play. They are crying and saying, "But we are tired. We hurt all over. We're burnt and bleeding. We can't walk any more." And I am desperate, because I know we must get out of the forest, out of the devastation that surrounds us, or I will lose them all.*

*I, too, am dying and must stay alive enough to lead the children to the new place, then to teach them how to take care of themselves and the world so they can begin anew. I am not afraid of dying in this dream, only afraid of dying before I can impart enough information to the children. My life has become unimportant to me beyond this. I am profoundly aware that when I die, I will continue to be there in the children, but first I must get them to a green place where they can learn to play again. I tell them stories, always, so that they will envision a greener land. (Hill, p. 130)*