

C.G. Jung Society, Seattle

Inside Pages: In-Depth



Psyche and the Spirit of the Times

Remarks from November 5, 2004

January 2005

Psyche and the Spirit of the Times were a series of Community Conversations on the state of the American psyche. Excerpts from these November 5, 2004 conversation are included in this issue of *Inside Page: In-Depth*.

Connie Eichenlaub, Ph.D.

This series of community dialogues entitled “Psyche and the Spirit of the Times” was designed as a continuation of the discussions which began during the March 2004 conference: “Portals to Psyche: Jungian Trends in the Northwest.” The intent of the conference was to explore how the archetypal dimensions of psyche, space, and time shape our individual and collective lives. The intent of this ongoing series of community dialogues, co-sponsored by the Jung Society of Seattle and Antioch University, has been to “...help us discover analytic tools that we can use to understand the current dynamics of collective psychology and to shape our choices in response” (Mission Statement). This is our fourth and final meeting and I invite you to think about how we might find a way to continue this type of personal and community involvement. Tonight we have a panel of speakers, George Callan, Randy Morris, and Jerry Wennstrom, who will individually speak to a different perspective around the question, “What Happened?” during the election season, and perhaps also address “What is Happening” at this moment when the polarities of our collective psyche are so transparently fixed.

The goal of these gatherings has been to follow the promptings of the *anima mundi* that would “... lead us deeper into an understanding of America’s destiny and its role in the fate of the earth” (Mission Statement). There was a similar enterprise begun in Ascona, Switzerland in 1933, the Eranos lectures. In the journal *Spring* 1977 Aniela Jaffé writes about Jung’s involvement in this yearly gathering of speakers who represented a range of disciplines in the sciences and humanities and arts. She states that Eranos was a place for

...friendly gathering and the interaction of opposites—heaven and earth—these images perhaps best express the archetypal character of Eranos. In accordance with the wish of its founder [a wealthy benefactress, Olga Fröbe], Eranos was originally dedicated to the encounter of the two great opposites of western and

eastern religion and spirituality...In Eranos, something occurred which is almost unthinkable in the scientific world of our time: a unification of opposing perspectives in a spirit of friendship and sympathy....As a center for spiritual encounter, oblivious of all borders, inner and outer, it stood from the beginning in a compensatory relationship to a hostile world of splitting and specializations. Even the extremely difficult times during and after World War II were not able to disrupt this spirit of friendly unity. (Jaffé, "Jung and Eranos," 204, 206).

Jung, who participated intermittently in the planning of programs and gave fourteen lectures over a period of eighteen years (1933-1951), commented that the contribution of these dialogues to western culture constituted a type of "spiritual national defense" (Jaffé, 206). According to James Hillman, in an Eranos lecture which he gave in 1967, six years after Jung's death in 1961, the image, or metaphor, of the polar opposites is the one which Jung favored most when wrestling with the "ungraspable nature of psychic realities" (Hillman, "*Senex and Puer: An Aspect of the Historical and Psychological Present*," *Eranos Jahrbuch 36*, 1967: 311).

So how can an intentional "spiritual National defense" actually happen? By setting aside a container for the transformative energy of the opposites, we are creating a surplus of psychic energy which works as a type of "loan" to the collective psyche. (The loan which is collected by members of an organization and lent at no interest to someone in need is another meaning of the Greek *eranos*, which also means a feast to which the banqueters bring a contribution.) What makes the transformative abundance of psyche possible is the intent to live in a psychic connection with each other and with the dreaming of the world. Tonight when we speak and listen, we are inviting in the liminal dimension of *kairos* [what Arnie Mindell might call Imaginary Time, t_1 , where $3_1 = 5_1$, as opposed to Consensual Reality]. About the turning points, the epochal transitions in time, Jung states:

We are living in what the Greeks called the *kairos* – the right moment – for a 'metamorphosis of the gods', of the fundamental principles and symbols. This peculiarity of our time, which is certainly not of our conscious choosing, is the expression of the unconscious man within us who is changing. Coming generations will have to take account of this momentous transformation if humanity is not to destroy itself through the might of its own technology and science. ("Present and Future," 1956, qtd. in Hillman, 303)

This prologue to this evening's panel is a way of inviting the collective psyche which is present into *kairos* time so that we can identify and "refine the external aspects of our being from which point the world can be moved" (Richard Wilhelm, "Shaping", in *Lectures on the I Ching* [1926-1929], 104). To that end, I'll finish with a brief rhymed prose verse by Lu Chi, a Chinese poet of the early fourth century A.D.. [anthologized in the Chinese *Book of Songs*] Lu Chi invokes the image of the dark man, *yu-jen*, *homo teneber*, the dweller in the dark valley, a mythological landscape which occurs in the *I Ching* and the *Book of Songs*. The dark man appears in the *I Ching* to give unobtrusive support to people who need strengthening or consolation. I believe that as we enter *kairos*, the boundaries of inner and outer dissolve, and we are with these shadowy men and woman speaking from our dreams and from the tension of opposites.

There are in the world tenebrous men
Who stand angling at mysterious banks.
They dust their cloud crowns to leave the world,
They slip on their dark wrappers and stand motionless.
That is why, outside of reality, one cannot conceive their secret
And, pursuing the mundane, one will not be able to fret their waves.
The harshness of autumn cannot make their leaves fade,
And the fragrance of spring cannot make their flowers bloom.
Transcending the world of dust and the world of shades and free from the web of connections,
What has a mundane order to offer to them?

Hellmut Wilhelm, "The Interplay of Image and Concept," *Eranos Jahrbuch*, 36(1967):44

Randy Morris, Ph.D.

I stand before you today in this, the beginning of the second term of the administration of George W. Bush, as a life long Democrat committed to progressive values of social and environmental justice. I fervently believe that my generation is involved in what Joanna Macy calls "The Great Turning," a time of transition between the industrial growth civilization of the previous 250 years and the sustainable society of the future. I am committed to serving the process of this transition with all the means at my disposal, fully aware that my efforts may be futile, in which case the world as we know it will come to an end, not in a blaze of glory, but in a whimper of immense suffering. The previous four years of the Bush administration has opposed nearly every value that I hold dear. They champion the use of violence in the advancement of American interests. They see the environment as a commodity to be exploited and are ruthless in their pursuit of the profit to be gained there. They envision a future in which precious commodities such as water, food and air are owned and exploited by corporations whose motive is profit, not the alleviation of human suffering. They spurn the imagination of a global community in which the United States is an interdependent partner. I agree with many liberals who say that the logical end point of their political ambitions is to acquire power for the purposes of creating a world run by the United States, which is run by the Republican Party. They want nothing less than imperial rule abroad, one-party rule at home. So imagine my surprise when I learn that Bush won the popular vote by over 3 million votes. I discover that 79% of those who voted for Bush say they did so because of his "values," values that require a completely different perception of the world than mine. I cannot fathom their rationale and often find myself wondering in what kind of a bubble these people live. Surely, if they saw things my way, they would not have voted for George Bush. I wonder, is this just the sour grapes of a political loser, something that happens to a minority of people at every election, or is my dire assessment of the world rooted in a truth that is somehow more true than my political adversaries? Do these people know something that I don't? Whose worldview is more accurate, theirs or mine? And how would I be able to tell?

On the other hand, I am also a practicing depth psychologist and an educator in the tradition of C. G. Jung. As such, I am subject to many methodological assertions that guide my inquiry. First, depth psychology is highly reflexive. It asserts that the first bubble to examine is not theirs, or yours, but mine. Because, from the point of view of the psyche, all things are subjective, the primary question is not "What bubble are they living in" but rather "What kind of

bubble am I living in?” Only then can I begin to analyze the unconscious projections that define my worldview, and begin the difficult task (Jung calls it a “moral” task) of withdrawing my projections. For example, one of the first reflexive questions I have to ask is, how is *my* thinking as fundamentalist as *theirs*?

Second, what drives our depth inquiries into the presuppositions of our own thought is a fundamental attribute of psyche, namely, that she is intensely *curious*. Therefore, as a depth psychologist, when I read a letter to the newspaper that particularly irritates me, I cannot indulge in my anger. It only obscures the questions and thwarts the inquiry. Instead, I need to take my anger as a road map and follow it down. This is especially important in trying to understand a worldview that is fundamentally ‘other’ than my own. Take this one, from the *Seattle Times* on Nov. 4, 2004:

John Kerry need not report for duty this or any morning as president of the United States. The reason is clear, yet will be denied by The Times and the morally bankrupt left. In public life, your private life is reflected in what you tend to say and do.

It's clear to a majority of voting Americans that John Kerry's tendencies are poor judgment, arrogance, corruptness, deceit and hypocrisy.

George Bush's life tendencies of integrity, discipline, determination, decisiveness, vision, courage, patience, optimism, and a true devotion to America, have been clearly seen by the majority of voting Americans.

The majority knows that George Bush's character is soundly made of these very desirable character attributes. In the end, character does matter in the times we are living in.

Robert Mullins

Federal Way

Here I am confronted by a worldview that is completely at odds with mine. I can either get angry, or I can get curious. Initially (because it is easier), there is the cognitive critique of my bubble – what new information is here? Does it cause me to change any of my assumptions? With what can I agree in these statements? Then there is the emotional inquiry – what kind of anger is this? Where else do I experience this anger? Why does this make me so angry? How is this man like me? Since the anger of Mars is so intimately entwined with the beauty of Aphrodite, I will want to ask where is beauty hidden in this statement? Only in the context of this review can I proceed to ask about how this letter reveals the assumptions of Mr. Mullin's bubble. Of course, to proceed much further in my depth inquiry, I would need to be in the presence of Mr. Mullins. This is crucial. Depth psychological inquiry works best in the context of human presence.

Third, depth psychology asserts that there is both a personal and collective unconscious that is at work in all things. Indeed, the very quotation from Jung that is used in the mission statement for these talks makes this point. It is worth repeating.

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 collective 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. (CW 18; 371)

This is fundamentally a spiritual perspective because it asserts that there are powerful intelligences at work in the global psyche that I can neither see nor completely fathom. Jung calls them archetypes. Systems theorists might call them ‘meta-systems’. Personify them and they become ‘spiritual beings’. However you choose to name these decisive forces, the “great mysterious” lies at the heart of the universe and it seeks balance and transcendence. At a collective level, therefore, what is happening now is part of a larger corrective in the global psyche and it will require art and pains to discern its intentions and to do our small part in directing its energies. How do we know what our small part is? By paying attention to and enacting the hints given to us by our own psyches through dreams, synchronicities, intuitions, art and intellectual inquiry. Jung called this work “the transcendent function” and it asserts that out of the tension of opposites will come a third, unknown, creative possibility that will resolve the previous tensions. Unlike the image of “the rapture” advanced by evangelical Christians, we cannot know the nature of this resolution in advance. The hypothesis of the transcendent function is hopeful and it remains an article of my faith in dark times. Dark to me, that is, since apparently the majority of Americans are elated at the outcome of this election, a fact that cannot be lightly dismissed.

And third, depth psychology inquires into the psychological construct of the “god image,” understood as the psyche’s best representation of what is of ultimate concern, yet which is unknown and unknowable. As a psychology, the depth perspective does not make theological pronouncements about the nature of God, but rather works with each person’s best psychic representation of “the great mysterious” as it develops throughout a lifetime. This is an incredibly valuable approach to religious experience because it completely relativizes claims of exclusivism, an idea that has been a source of suffering, violence and death for thousands of years. Depth psychology says that each religion advances elaborate images of God which are apprehended in a variety of ways by their adherents. But none of these images are “absolutely true” because God, at root, is mystery. What matters most is not which particular image you “believe,” but how your god-image evolves and differentiates throughout a lifetime to approach the immensity of the divine.

So allow me to get curious about what is happening out there, proceeding from my own bubble so as not to make unwarranted assumptions about yours. I just returned from a month long professional leave in the south of France, with a stopover in Amsterdam on my way home. While there I became intensely curious about three historical moments in European history that seem to bear on our current situation. I would like to briefly describe each of these moments as a way of making some points.

First, around 200 AD, as told by Elaine Pagels in her brilliant book on the Gnostic gospels, *Beyond Belief*. Irenaeus, the bishop of Lyon in what was then the Roman province of Gaul, is struggling with the question of how to unify the various groups of Christians scattered throughout the empire. It was not enough to shout in the midst of their violent persecution, “The blood of Christians is seed!” How could they strengthen and unify this enormously diverse and widespread movement so that they could survive their enemies? Irenaeus called for the consolidation of just four of the hundreds of gospels that existed at that time. He made sure to include the Gospel of John, despite its profound differences with that of Matthew, Mark and

Luke, because the Gospel of John was the only one to assert that Jesus was the son, “of one substance,” with God. Irenaeus then preached that those four gospels alone constituted the unity of the Christian church. All who did not subscribe to these writings were heretics and deviants. Much consternation followed, since other church leaders naturally wanted to know by whose authority Irenaeus was making this claim. It took another 150 years for the Council of Nicea, at the behest of the Roman emperor Constantine, to declare that these four gospels were the Christian creed and were to form the basis of the Holy Catholic Church. All other gospels were burned, except for some pesky monks in Egypt, who put the heretical writings in amphora jars and buried them in the desert. They were discovered in 1945 at Nag Hammadi and have revolutionized the study of early Christianity. Meanwhile, Constantine had found a way to unify the beliefs of his empire and Christianity, the religion of love, became wedded to power.

Second, 1244 AD in that part of southern France now called Provence, the citadel of Montsegur is captured and the last members of the heretical sect of Cathars are burned alive at the stake. The Cathars were heretics because they believed that priests were corrupt and unnecessary to the task of knowing God. They were Gnostics, who privileged personal experience of the divine over the received beliefs and creeds of the church. To root out the heretical members of this sect, the Holy Catholic Church invented a new office in Rome called the inquisition. It used repression, interrogation, and torture in the name of God. It required neighbors to report on suspicious activity. It dug up the bones of suspected heretics to burn them. A hundred thousand inhabitants of southern France were slaughtered for their beliefs. In the end, the king of Northern France had extended his dominion into the south, the Pope had wiped out a threat to the power of the church, and the idea of the “thought crime” had been invented. It formed the basis for all future police states. No longer were you defined by your good works, but by the ideas that informed your actions. Think the wrong thing, no matter how good a person you are, and you will be burned alive at the stake.

Third, Amsterdam in 1944. In two small rooms behind a tall building along the canals of Amsterdam, the Frank family, with their two young daughters and three other Jews, lived for 25 months. Their food was supplied by sympathetic Dutch employees of Mr. Frank’s business. They all lived in constant terror of being caught. But in the midst of this darkness, the young Anne Frank writes a luminous journal of her inner experience to keep the fear at bay. On August 4, 1944, a Dutchman phones the Gestapo to report that there are Jews hiding in the building. During the arrest, when the Gestapo roots through a briefcase to look for valuables, they throw some worthless notebooks on the floor and leave. Of this group of seven Jews, the only survivor of the concentration camps is Otto Frank, Anne’s father. Of a pre-war population of 120,000 Jews in Amsterdam, 20,000 survive the war. Meanwhile, the Dutch friends of the family retrieve the journals and return them to Otto after the war. Of these diaries, Primo Levi writes:

Perhaps it had to be that this one Anne Frank moves us more than all the other countless victims whose names remain unknown. If we had to share, and could share, the suffering of each one of them, we should be unable to go on living”

Bearing these three tales in mind, what do I want to say about the collective unconscious dynamics of this election from a depth psychological perspective? While I would welcome evidence to the contrary, I believe that in the election of 2004, we are witnessing a surge of fascism in America, crudely disguised in a language of moral values and Christian piety. It is a perfect storm of unconscious power and self-serving religious sentiments. The idea of the

“thought crime” is being revived as, for example, when liberals are not just seen as deluded citizens, but as an “abomination of God” or when Catholics are denied mass because they vote pro-choice. Narrow-minded god-images are elevated to supreme status and are made to justify the mean-spirited denial of civil rights. 100,000 civilian deaths in Iraq are made to seem trivial compared to what gay men do in private. “God” becomes a way of encouraging a blatant disregard of reasoned science, of denying critical thought, of closing the American mind.

Like all storms of fascism, it is fed by fear. In this case, the fear that is consciously named is Islamic terrorism, and we are told that in order to fight it, we must become as fanatical as the enemy. But the real fear, in my opinion, is the imploding of an unsustainable economic order which is experienced by many as the literal end of the world, and as a justification for eschatological fantasies. In the face of this fear, two political solutions are offered by the collective. In one, championed by the right, conservative Christians and George Bush, the individual is encouraged to live by the immutable values of God who, if you just believe, will restore order to the chaos of the world. A different solution is offered by the left, a secular vision in which reason, science and social justice will provide the necessary solutions. This view is condemned by the right as being morally relativistic, but the left sees that in a diversity of belief systems and a free and open society, there is just the kind of order that is needed for complex systems to prosper. As a partisan, I believe the latter view is more sustainable. But in the end, neither view will prevail in their current form, since there is a new myth waiting to be born out of the conflict of these competing ideologies. Nevertheless, I contribute to the evolution of this dynamic by standing firmly yet flexibly for my reasoned beliefs.

So, what therapy does the perspective of depth psychology offer us in our present political climate? First and foremost, it would agree that the only political power that the individual holds is the power to vote. In voting we exercise our political will. Prescription #1: don't forget to vote next time. Second, as the example of Iraneus and the Cathars shows, the psyche is imperiled by fundamentalisms of all kinds. In his own day, Jung lived through the scourge of National Socialism and the Cold War. His response to both was the same, to champion the individual soul and to recognize that good and evil run through the heart of every human being. Therefore the practice of depth psychology is a “soul education” that requires the ability to discern the movement of light and dark in our own hearts. Its goal is to differentiate the feeling systems of the soul, to develop “soul capacities” that will allow us to love more freely, more fully, especially in the presence of fear. I would assert that this “soul education,” which sometimes goes by the name of “whole person education” in progressive educational circles, is an essential aspect of a much broader “education for democracy” that lies at the heart of the educational mission of this institution, Antioch University. Prescription #2: practice soul education. Third, depth psychology would be merely another subjectivism if it did not in some way galvanize the will into action. In this sense, it supports the development of reasoned positions, informed by an awareness of unconscious dynamics, through which the individual can function in the world. This is another way of saying that I do not apologize for my partisan views. This is where I choose to stand. I *do* think my views are more accurate than my opponent's views, though I am willing to have my mind changed in the face of evidence to the contrary. This will require that I solicit a diversity of opinions that are different from mine. We Democrats need to spend more time talking earnestly with Republicans. In diversity there is strength. Prescription #3: welcome the presence of people different from yourself. And finally, in the spirit of Anne Frank and the millions of others who have turned to the cultivation of the inner

life as a way of keeping the light of hope alive in a dark time, I have a responsibility to “lighten up” a bit, to turn to the beauty in my dreams, in my loved ones, in the natural world. The cosmos is a beautiful place and I won’t let George Bush, whoever he is, mess with my appreciation of it. Prescription #4: Practice Beauty.

So the panelists this evening have been asked to leave you with some questions to consider for our discussion later. Try these:

1. What is your understanding of what conservatives mean when they talk about “cultural values”? How is your analysis colored by your own religious and/or spiritual background? What are *your* cultural values?
2. What are some ways that you can “cultivate the presence” of people whose political views are different from yours?
3. What are some ways that you can practice “soul education”?
4. What do you do to “lighten up” or to “practice beauty”?

George Callan, Ph.D.

In an atmosphere of tyranny, we look around for kindred companions with whom to share a common language. The ancients—alchemists, philosophers, poets, and oracles—begin to rumble beneath the rhetoric of the dominant cultural discourse. The Jung Society and Antioch University prepared a *temenos* for Spirit of the Times. Connie Eichenbaum and Randy Morris had the vision and foresight to open the door—and a band of hearty participants walked through. Dark times breed soulful conversations.

Sometime in early October I was asked to participate in the post election panel for the Spirit of the Times community dialogue. I accepted, pleased to be asked. How was I to know that three days after the election I would be in a profoundly altered state of consciousness, able only to offer fragments of images and poems and an expression of fondness for the ordinary gestures and sounds of the day. I was not in a state of grief, as so many were. I was walking in a territory of profound presence—a condition of emergency alert. I was reminded of a near-death experience I had many years ago in white water, when my kayak and I were thrown into a section of the river inhabited by great ragged rocks with big teeth. I remember that everything slowed down. Sounds became muted. There was a sense of sharp presence, aliveness, clarity. Everything was in profound relationship—myself, my little boat, my paddle, the river, the rocks, the electric air. Each movement of the paddle was significant, essential, even holy. My attention was not on the outcome, but on the dream-like trajectory.

This is the state I was in as I stood tenderly before a group of bereft “American”* citizens that night, wondering what I might say, and feeling quite clearly that we are most certainly in a state of emergency. I spoke of the mournful music of a violin I had heard earlier in the day when I found myself unable to prepare a talk for my part on the panel. Oh, if I could only play the violin! I would spend my allotted time on the panel playing a dark melody. And so I turned to the music of my soul—poetry—and to my old friend T.S. Eliot, who’s deep sense of solid ambiguity has offered comfort over the years. “There are some things,” he wrote, “about which nothing can be said and before which we dare not keep silent.” Those “things” were present amongst us in the room that night. Those “things” were on the minds of the people who made their way to a community gathering to be with others and speak from the heart.

We might take this surreal period in history to step out of the political virtual reality, the materialistic addiction to information, the manic-depressive approach so prevalent in the “American” culture. We are free now, to take our focus off of the polls, the facts, the statistics, the personalities, the sound bites—and place it on the trajectory—that mysterious vehicle we are all riding together, over which we have so little control. For when we do this, we step out of the realm of the collective ego, where the one sided and polarized view prevails, and where so much of the world is being governed. We are then free to step into the archetypal realm. For in the mythic reality the oneiric trajectory toward destruction is full of gods. And we know that the myth is always happening whether we tend to it or not. We know that the daemon uses our individual and collective pathos to move us closer to our destiny. We know that the seeds of creation lay hidden in the rubble of destruction. For we are dying people on a dying planet—and living people on a living planet. We must tend to both.

And so, how do we hold this time so full of opposing possibilities? In 1959 Carl Jung offered a direction,

Today humanity, as never before, is split into two apparently irreconcilable halves. The psychological rule says that when an inner situation is not made conscious, it happens outside as fate. That is to say, when the individual remains undivided and does not become conscious of his inner contradictions, the world must perforce act out the conflict and be torn into opposite halves.

I read this as an invitation to each of us to enter the cave of the psyche where our own personal and cultural demons dwell unwitnessed – unacknowledged. From this stance we become curious about our own shadow and the shadow of our culture. From this place we listen to what the symptoms of our time have to say about the forgotten or forsaken material of the psyche. And so what our culture has assigned to the underworld becomes our personal business. We notice what has been severed from the body of civil governance, what has been cut from the guidance of our children, the security of our elders, and the care of the poor. We bring our attention to that which has been eliminated from the arts and sciences and the fields of health and literacy.

A symptom is a relational amnesia—a psychic forgetting of what is essential to our authentic nature and our connection to the world. Our medicine may be found in our capacity to remember - to host the images of what has been lost. This is a challenge in a time when our government suffers from a strong bout of *iconophobia*, requiring that images be approved. While we are given statistics, figures and geographical maps, the truly chthonic images are sorely missing. No body bags. No coffins. No injured, maimed or dismembered “American” soldiers or Iraqi children. No homeless or hungry Iraqi families. No Iraqi mothers holding their dead babies. The approved image is a dead image. No one can take from us the power of our imagination. It is our business to cultivate and nurture the images that have gone missing. It is our business and possibly our salvation to keep one eye always on the underworld. The more attention we give to the imaginal work of the psyche, the less will be spent on the scapegoating and polarizing tendencies of the ego. In his *Four Quartets* Eliot reminds us,

*In order to arrive there
To arrive where you are, to get from where you are not,
You must go by a way wherein there is no ecstasy.*

*In order to arrive at what you do not know
You must go by a way which is the way of ignorance.
In order to possess what you do not possess
You must go by the way of dispossession.
In order to arrive at what you are not
You must go through the way in which you are not.
And what you do not know is the only thing you know
And what you own is what you do not own
And where you are is where you are not.*

It is my fantasy that in our sincere gatherings we might find a way to quiet our polarizing, political, literal discourse for the possibility that some robust poetic might rise in our midst. At the same time it is helpful to remember that polarization is not an aberration, but an essential part of a larger process. In the ancient art of alchemy it was known as the operation of *Separatio*. Like the mythic separation of earth and sky, which provided a space for the growth and development of sentient beings, the alchemical *Separatio* evoked a psychological severing, offering space for the germination of consciousness. Edward Edinger echoes Jung when he says “one becomes conscious as one is able to contain and endure the opposites...” (p.187)

It is wise to remember at times like this that when the unconscious has something to say, it will often impose itself by way of rupture. If we keep our eye focused only on the rupture we will miss the revelation.

*I place quotation marks around the word “America” to remind myself that imperialism lives in the language as well. Though we have taken this word to mean the United States, it seems important to remember that we are only one part of a body known as “The Americas.”

Jerry Wennstrom

When I was asked to speak at the final event in the series, “Psyche and the Spirit of the Times,” I willingly agreed to do so. Being scheduled a day or two after the election; I felt the timing of the event would make for an interesting evening. I can only give my impressions of the event and they may or may not be what the others experienced or had in mind when they spoke. From what I understand, our particular trio was not the originally planned line-up of presenters. This wild card and the particular group of people who attended the event appeared to be the magic formula for an auspicious evening to unfold.

The general weight of the event revolved around the recent election. This was an informed group and most of the people in the room were unhappy about the results of the elections, and the way in which they were conducted. Clearly, many people were stunned and in a state of confusion and pain.

Randy Morris spoke first. He was more political in his approach than George Callan and I. Randy spoke from a place of intellectual clarity and helped define the boundaries of our choices, politically and metaphorically. Randy took a courageous stance as a “Democrat.” He also gracefully introduced the alchemical possibility that something existed beyond any two polarities.

George Callan spoke next. She fully embodied the feminine healing spirit with her

contribution. She mothered herself with gentleness and beauty as a response to her disappointment with the election. She gave herself space for healing by doing what she loved to do creatively. In doing so, she mothered and gave space to those of us needing the same kind of healthy distance from our confusion. George brought us back to the present moment, giving us permission to take only the next, small step in our attempt to navigate the wild waters of a chaotic turn of events.

I spoke last. I guess I can speak most personally about my contribution to the evening since I stand best in my own two shoes. I am incapable of planning what I am going to say to an audience. With the conditions of unknowing once again in place at this event, speaking to the audience became a prayer. Feeling the weight of the audience's suffering I compassionately asked for what was needed in the moment.

Having had George and Randy speak before me enabled me to go inward and listen more deeply to them, to the audience and into the silence. With this allotment of time to "think" I foolishly hoped to get a feel for the evening and call up what was needed in advance. I intended to respond sympathetically to what I was sensing in the room. However, my intent was just an idea and to my surprise my good intentions left completely, the moment I stood up to speak. Standing before the audience, I felt no sympathy at all. Instead, I felt ruthlessly determined to address the indulgence of suffering-my own and that of others. I could only speak of the fierce reality and renewal that is delivered by turning and walking into everything that looks like "death." Our individual expressions of pain were coming up around the election, this was clear. What I perceived at that moment was that our political situation was a product of all of our excesses and general complacency as privileged Americans -- and we all, somehow, contributed to the creation of this collective entity. After following the energetic lead of the moment and saying all I could say, I ended with silence. It was all I could do.

Connie Eichenlaub appropriately shifted the session at this point by giving the floor to my wife, Marilyn Strong, who took us into Quaker-style silence. Marilyn sang a Jewish chant, invoking a return to the land of the soul. During the silence, which followed, I simply felt the need to hold the space for others to feel deeply what they were left with after all was said and done by the presenters. Holding this space, and allowing others to pour out their necessary responses required more of me than speaking did. There was an intensity of emotion in the room that was spontaneously expressed out of the larger silence. The expressions of hope and despair that came through our group were truly the healing resolve of the evening. There is a wonderful saying, "There is no other God but all of us together."

Jerry Wennstrom is author of *The Inspired Heart: An Artist's Journey of Transformation* and subject of a Parabola Video, *In The Hands of Alchemy*. www.handsfalchemy.com