

# **Animations of the Internet: Collective Intelligence and Transformation of the Self in a Time of Global Crisis and Initiation**

*By Michael Gaio  
For David Ulansey*

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*PCC Graduate Program  
California Institute of Integral Studies  
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"Know Thyself" -- Eucliedies

"Some day, after we have mastered the winds, the waves, the tides and gravity ... we shall harness the energies of love. Then, for the second time in the history of the world, man will have discovered fire." -- Teilhard Chardin

"In the heavenly abode of Indra there is a net stretching into all directions. In each "eye" of the net is a jewel which reflects all other jewels, and is reflected in all other jewels. It is like many mirrors reflecting in each other, multiplied endlessly, with infinite reflecting." -- Dusan Pajin

## Introduction

“What do you think of yourself? What do you think of the world?,” asks William James, in “The Will to Believe”.

What do you think of yourself? What do you think of the world? . . . These are questions with which all must deal as it seems good to them. They are riddles of the Sphinx, and in some way or other we must deal with them. . . . In all important transactions of life we have to take a leap in the dark. . . . If we decide to leave the riddles unanswered, that is a choice; if we waver in our answer, that, too, is a choice: but whatever choice we make, we make it at our peril. If a man chooses to turn his back altogether on God and the future, no one can prevent him; no one can show beyond reasonable doubt that he is mistaken. .... We stand on a mountain pass in the midst of whirling snow and blinding mist, through which we get glimpses now and then of paths which may be deceptive. If we stand still we shall be frozen to death. If we take the wrong road we shall be dashed to pieces. We do not certainly know whether there is any right one. What must we do? ‘Be strong and of good courage.’ Act for the best, hope for the best, and take what comes. . . . If death ends all, we cannot meet death better.<sup>1</sup>

As I sit here writing this article on a computer terminal, I reflect upon the countless hours of intellectual preparation and research I have conducted by way of personal conversations with friends and colleges, reading through books and notes from graduate school, and sifting googles of web sites, on-line news articles, and personal blog pages. My mind reels through a saturated plethora of ideas, concepts, facts, quotes, and diverse notions about the philosophy and history of culture and technology--and about the current state of the the world and my own state within this world. Having immersed myself in an environment of information in order to create more information (this article), I recognize how my local world view--my personal sense of *identity*--has become especially encapsulated within a vast and mostly incomprehensible view of the future of humanity. Among the many “glimpses” of potential paths I see through this mist that veils our future--one thing among them all is certainly clear: the problem of the *world* and the problem of the *self* are inexplicably intertwined.

World mythology is filled with stories and accounts of people overcoming great trials and tribulations. The myths which have endured the most through time present stories of people who come into relation with a greater comprehension or experience of the world--outside of or within themselves. We are reminded of the countless heroes and heroines emitted from the diverse span of cultural eras--such as Ulysses, Odysseus, Hercules, Inanna, Joan of Arc, Savitri--all of whom, by the incredible qualities and aptitudes of their humanness, were able to overcome some obstacle within their environment or within themselves. Leo Tolstoy, speaking for the tendency of most modern-day aspiring heros, says, “Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> William James, “The Will to Believe”

<sup>2</sup> Leo Tolstoy

And Carl Jung offers, "The best political, social, and spiritual work we can do is to withdraw the projection of our shadow onto others."<sup>3</sup> The core of all traditional mythology, philosophies, and wisdom religions persist to remind us: to change the *world* is to change *oneself in the world*.

We have not even to risk the adventure alone, for the heroes of all time have gone before us - the labyrinth is thoroughly known. We have only to follow the thread of the hero path, and where we had thought to find an abomination, we shall find a god; where we had thought to slay another, we shall slay ourselves; where we had thought to travel outward, we shall come to the center of our own existence. And where we had thought to be alone, we shall be with all the world.<sup>4</sup>

In our current modern day, both the problems of the *world* and the problems of the *self* are exasperated, and by all apparent observation--are approaching extreme ends of *crisis*. On the one hand, enormous planet-wide issues are impending upon us: *environmental devastation, global warming, species extinction, overpopulation, and pandemic pestilence*. In an issue of *Wired Magazine* (2000), computing pioneer Bill Joy presents a scope of apocalyptic scenarios that he believes could be unleashed in the future. This dire perspective, resulting from the unbridled advents of genetic engineering, nano-technology, and robotics, can be added to the list of impending environmental and social catastrophes.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, the human species itself, our general social environment, is over-ripe with injustice, poverty, violence, racism, dissent, and war (with the potentials nuclear and bacteriological warfare lingering upon the front of international tensions). And the individuals themselves--in the personal instances of facing the imminent and complex array of chaotic factors that compound a post-modern life--are becoming increasingly confused, subdued, and *pathological*. I am reminded of the words of Robert Jay Lifton, in his book, "The Protean Self: Human Resilience in an Age of Fragmentation:"

We are becoming fluid and many-sided. Without quite realizing it, we have been evolving a sense of self appropriate to the restlessness and flux of our time. This mode of being differs radically from that of the past.... I have named it the "protean self" after Proteus, the Greek sea god of many forms. The protean self emerges from confusion, from the widespread feeling that we are losing our psychological moorings. We feel ourselves buffeted about by unmanageable historical forces and social uncertainties.... We are beset by a contradiction: schooled in the virtues of constancy and stability--whether as individuals, groups, or nations--our world and our lives seem inconstant and utterly unpredictable.<sup>6</sup>

And from his book, "The Saturated Self: Dilemmas of Identity in Contemporary Life," Kenneth Gergen describes that our traditional notions of a complete, individual, and centered self

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<sup>3</sup> Carl Jung

<sup>4</sup> Joseph Campbell

<sup>5</sup> Bill Joy, "Why the Future Doesn't Need Us," *Wired Magazine*, 2000

<sup>6</sup> Robert Jay Lifton, "The Protean Self: Human Resilience in an Age of Fragmentation", (1993) p. 1.

... are falling into disuse, and the social arrangements that they support are eroding. This is largely a result of the forces of social saturation. Emerging technologies saturate us with the voices of humankind--both harmonious and alien. As we absorb their varied rhymes and reasons, they become part of us and we of them. Social saturation furnishes us with a multiplicity of incoherent and unrelated languages of the self. For everything we "know to be true" about ourselves, other voices within respond with doubt and even derision. This fragmentation of self-conceptions corresponds to a multiplicity of incoherent and disconnected relationships. These relationships pull us in myriad directions, inviting us to play such a variety of roles that the very concept of an "authentic self" with knowable characteristics recedes from view. The fully saturated self becomes no self at all. <sup>7</sup>

Perhaps this *is* the point: to eradicate, person by person, the *identification* to an modern sense of *individual self*. And perhaps, in the extreme contraposition of the modern individual to the unique challenges of the modern world, there is a congenital evolutionary function at work to remove the historically-rooted, rather distinctive sense of *human-centeredness* which, for all purposes--has become *the primary source of the problematic challenges that grip at our world*. Perhaps if humans loose the totality of identifications to traditional moorings, and move along with the dissociation of "Protean" bearings, a unique sense of identity will emerge.

## Neo-Hellenism

History suggests that significant cultural transitions involve, and even prescribe, a change in the way that humans perceive and understand ourselves in our world. It has happened before in the Hellenistic Age. "With Alexander the Great begins man as an individual," says W.W. Tarn, in his classic work "Hellenistic Civilization." <sup>8</sup> Here Tarn makes reference to a commonly known epoch of history that began with Alexander's massive crusade across, and conquering of most of the known world (of what was known in Greece at the time of the late fourth century B.C.E.), including the eastern Mediterranean, Egypt, Mesopotamia, the Iranian Plateau, Central Asia, and parts of India, and is understood to have ended roughly with the Roman Empire (first century B.C.E.). The Hellenistic era (which encompassed the birth and death of Christ), was distinct in its potent and dynamic cultural transitions, a "multifarious exploration of the limits and possibilities of humanity ... a laboratory of the extraordinary." <sup>9</sup> This civilization realized a consequential concurrence of organized civil structures, and saw the emergences of various new religious and philosophical systems--all of which provided a new framework for a significant transformation of human identity.

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<sup>7</sup> Kenneth J. Gergen, "The Saturated Self: Dilemmas of Identity in Contemporary Life" (1991) pp. 6-7

<sup>8</sup> W.W. Tarn, "Hellenistic Civilization" (1974) p. 79

<sup>9</sup> Dieter Georgi, "The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians" (1986) p. 390

In the article, "Cultural Transition and Spiritual Transformation: From Alexander the Great to Cyberspace," David Ulansky describes the essence of the Hellenistic time:

The defining quality of Hellenistic culture was the unification and intermingling of previously separate and autonomous political and cultural entities--city-states, nations, tribes--in a single new imperial system. This unification was the result of the conquests of Alexander the Great, the outcome of which was that what had formerly been a vast collection of diverse societies in the Mediterranean and Near East were absorbed into a single Greek (and subsequently Roman) imperial order.<sup>10</sup>

This simultaneous "unification and intermingling" allowed for (even encouraged or required) the populous to unleash themselves from their long-standing social bonds. This had numerous effects on the human psychology of the time--ultimately resulting in a stronger sense of identity to being *individual*.

One of the most powerful effects of the Hellenistic cultural unification was the fundamental shift that it produced in people's sense of personal identity. Up until the Hellenistic period, the structure of one's identity was centered in the group--tribe, polis, nation--of which one was a member. This does not mean, of course, that people were entirely unaware of their own individuality, but it is the case that the sense of belonging to a group was decisively more in the foreground of consciousness than it is today.

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This trend toward the dissolution of the bond between the group and the individual was also strongly intensified by the dramatic improvements in communication and transportation that accompanied the emergence of the new imperial order. A decisive leap occurred in the ability of individuals to leave the localities where they were born and move elsewhere in the empire, or at least to become aware (both consciously and unconsciously) of the possibility of doing so. Thus people became increasingly "detachable" from their local societies, and their sense of identity began to shift from being centered in the collective to being centered in their own individuality.<sup>11</sup>

And today, it appears that extreme *individualism* is in the *foreground* of human identity. Is the cause of a *new identity* to emerge from the *background* of our modern scenario?

It has been previously noted by many scholars, including \*\*\*, that there are clear resemblances between the Hellenistic cultural transition and our own age. General comparison between the Hellenistic civilization and our own Post-Modern ("Neo-Hellenistic") civilization shows interesting parallels:

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<sup>10</sup> David Ulansky, "Cultural Transition and Spiritual Transformation: From Alexander the Great to Cyberspace," published in "The Vision Thing: Myth, Politics, and Psyche in the World," (2000), pp. 213-31

<sup>11</sup> David Ulansky, pp. 213-31

Hellenistic	Modern / Post-Modern
A catalytic movement (Alexander the Great) that both disrupted and then interconnected a vast region of previously disparate cultural regions--resulting in a significant increase in cross-regional travel and dispersion of goods and information.	A cross-cultural, international unification on a global scale ("globalization"), with the catalysts of World War I (WWI), World War II (WWII), and the World Wide Web (WWW), establishing a global transportation and communications system.
Syncretism (from Greek, "a union of communities") through the reconciliation of disparate or opposing cultures, merging the various schools of thought and tradition, mainly between Persia, Anatolia, and Greece.	Syncretism through systems theory, integral philosophy, New Age spirituality, and a general tendency toward, the "consilience" (E.O. Wilson) of disparate disciplines of knowledge.
The grand emergence of many new spiritual, philosophical, and cosmological systems and perspectives ("trans-imperial symbolic systems", such as the "Christ Cult", popular astrology, and Plato's idea of the unique human "psyche").	New Age Spirituality, and a radical shift in cosmological perspective with Relativity Theory, Nasa, and the Hubble telescope.
A general apocalyptic view (Jews in Hellenistic civilization).	A general apocalyptic view--mainly from scientifically affirmed ecological crisis.

Such an observation of these similarities is not only interesting, but may also be useful for us in our current transition, as Ulansey describes:

Living now in our own time of cultural unification and intermingling--this time on a planetary scale--it is extremely valuable to possess in Hellenistic culture a case study of a previous period in which a similar process took place; for in the Hellenistic age we are able to discern a variety of effects of cultural unification which seem to be emerging once again in our own world. Or perhaps it would be more precise to say "re-emerging," since of course the history of Hellenistic culture is not simply an isolated case study in cultural dynamics, but simultaneously an investigation of the very roots of our own modern society and world-view.<sup>12</sup>

### A Return to Greece

Looking back across the remnants and records since the civilization of Hellenistic times, we can trace how Greece led to what we know of modern civilization today. Greece is where our culture began. And, among the overarching similarities between Hel-

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<sup>12</sup> David Ulansey, pp. 213-31

lenistic and Post-Modern times, in each there are the indications of *disintegration*, *re-orientation*, and *re-integration* during the “phase-shift” from one cultural paradigm to another. In the case of ancient Greece, the previous dominant culture gave way to the massive cultural transition. Today, our modernly established dominant culture is now in *process* of contending with such a cultural transition. As a totality of modern individuals, we each contend with the juxtapositions and polarizations of traditional and newly emerging world views--and together we endure an overall collective “cognitive dissonance” to the changes at hand. Interestingly, through the disorientation and dissociation in the passage--we have tendencies, make associations, and revive old remnants to the previous culture of Greek antiquity. A “return to Greece,” as James Hillman says in this book “Re-Visioning Psychology,” is a type of natural regression of the traditionally monotheistic and centralized culture to cope with profound times of change:

When the monotheism of consciousness is no longer able to deny the existence of fragmentary autonomous systems and no longer able to deal with our actual psychic state, then there arises the fantasy of returning to Greek polytheism. For the “return to Greece” offers a way of coping when our centers cannot hold and things fall apart. The polytheistic alternative does not set up conflicting opposites between beast and Bethlehem, between chaos and unity; it permits the coexistence of all the psychic fragments and gives them patterns in the imagination of Greek mythology. A “return to Greece” was experienced in ancient Rome itself, and in the Italian Renaissance, and in the Romantic psyche during the times of revolution. ... The “return to Greece” is a psychological response to the challenge of breakdown; it offers a model of disintegrated integration.”<sup>13</sup>

Such indications of a current day “return to Greece” include the re-investigation of democracy, and an overall re-investment in collective process. Like the “social state” that powerfully and harmoniously cohered the populous of the Greek Golden Age, our population yearns to again realize *golden relations* within our surrounding environment, and between our members of society. As the conglomeration of dire ecological and social situations persists toward severe calamity--something within the modern day populous tends to *reach* to realize something greater of itself. The “intelligence” of solitary individuals is not enough to consider the scope and panoply of intricately, interrelated global issues. Pressed against the dark and towering wall of the post-modern condition--the *individual psyche* is pressured to surrender and be subsumed again by the emergence of *mass mind*.

## Collective Intelligence

In his brilliant book, “Collective Intelligence,” Pierre Levy essentially describes how such a locally incomprehensible emergence of coherent global perspective may be surprisingly realized:

Crowds of refugees marching toward unlikely campsites. Nations without permanent residence. Epidemics of civil war. The clamorous babel of global metropolises. The

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<sup>13</sup> James Hillman, “Re-Visioning Psychology,” (1975), p. 27

movement of populations by means of survival skills across the interstices of empire. The impossibility of founding cities, the impossibility of establishing anything on the basis of a secret, a power, a soil, no matter where. Signs have become migrant. The earth continuously trembles and burns. We slip and slide dizzily among religions and languages ... between voices and chants, when suddenly, near a detour in a subterranean passage, bursts forth the music of the future. The earth, like a marble beneath the giant eye of a satellite ...<sup>14</sup>

The notion of *collective intelligence* was predicated by philosopher and futurist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's concept of the "Noosphere,"<sup>15</sup> H.G. Well's concept of "world brain", Marshall McLuhan's "Global Village", Howard Bloom's "Global Brain", and further instantiated with Howard Rheingold's "Smart Mobs", and Kevin Kelley's "Hive Mind."

Chardin's original "Noosphere" (*noos* is "mind" from Greek) described the "thinking layer" of the earth that spreads "over and above the world of plants and animals ... outside and above the biosphere."<sup>16</sup> Derived in part as the net effect of the products of the industrial revolution, militant ingenuity, and government-funded measures for national security--the *noosphere* consists of the vast network of mechanically and electronically accelerated global communications and transportation systems. The *noosphere is the planetary mind*--not unlike the *personal mind* which subsists by the dense and complex arrangement of neurons and nerve endings in the biological brain--it is constructed of the components of the hardware telecommunication system, the transcontinental airliners, the orbiting satellites, the fiber optic cables of the internet; and it includes the more etheric domains of radio and cellular device transmissions, the data-scapes of the World Wide Web (WWW). Arguments could be made that the noosphere also includes the entire scope of more refined elements of human culture--music, art, dance, theater, story, myth, and even dreams and fantasy--the very fruits of the human imagination. In any way, the *noosphere* encompasses an enhanced spectrum of both tangible and intangible information and social spaces--that, in most respects, is in continual design through a globally cooperative effort, incorporating all cultural disciplines, all social arenas--and, for better or for worse, effecting the lives of everyone on earth.

Practically speaking, the Internet and the World Wide Web comprise the actual confluence of the noosphere, and offer an infrastructure for the emergence of collective intelligence. Through the advents of the personal computer and internet technology, Levy proposes a new perspective for humanity "that incorporates and enlarges the scope of self-knowledge and collective thought."<sup>17</sup> He argues that, through current and future technologies, we are transitioning from a singular modality of *individual identity* to a far more developed sense of *collective identity*.

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<sup>14</sup> Pierre Levy, "Collective Intelligence: Mankind's Emerging World in Cyberspace", (1999).

<sup>15</sup> Teilhard de Chardin, "The Phenomena of Man", (1955), p. 182.

<sup>16</sup> Teilhard de Chardin

<sup>17</sup> Pierre Levy

## Digital Alchemy

The idea of the human identification of self being shaped by our technologies is well outlined by Erik Davis, in his book, "Techgnosis:"

From the moment that humans began etching grooves into ancient wizard bones to mark the cycles of the moon, the process of encoding thought and experience into a vehicle of expression has influenced the changing nature of self. Information technology tweaks our perceptions, communicates our picture of the world to one another, and constructs remarkable and sometimes insidious forms of control over the cultural stories that shape our sense of the world. The moment we invent a significant new device for communication--talking drums, papyrus scrolls, printed books, crystal sets, computers, pagers--we partially reconstruct the self and its world, creating new opportunities (and new traps) for thought, perception, and social experience."<sup>18</sup>

And though it is a fascinating notion to imagine how the evolution of the human being is directly influenced by the very technologies we invent, may we also not forget how we also re-invent and mold the same technologies--thereby *involuting* within a vast and deeply inter-relational intimacy between ourselves and our technologies. The path of the modern alchemical human, "The story of the self in the information age," says Davis, "is thus the story of the afterimages of the psyche, of those reflections and virtual doubles that are exteriorized, or outered, into technologies."<sup>19</sup> If what we *make* is what we *are*, and what we *make* also makes *us* ... then there is something to learn about the transformation of the modern self by looking at the most recent advents of internet technology. Referring to the original notion of Marshall McLuhan's, "the medium is the message," Erik Davis says, "From hieroglyphs to the printed book, from radio to computer networks, the spirit has found itself inside a variety of new bottles, and each new medium has become, in a variety of contradictory ways, part of the message."<sup>20</sup>

## Network Identity

In recent years, some of the most invested interest in internet research and development has been within the associated areas of *social networking* and *digital identity*. With the early rise of massively popular websites like *eBay* and *Amazon*, we came to realize the sheer magnificence of on-line community portals, especially in the realm of marketing and sales, as the super-efficiency and global reach of *e-commerce* changed the way the world does commodity and business forever. Yet just a bit further down the road--more modest, specifically marketed, and locally-oriented web sites like *Friendster*, *MySpace*, *LinkedIn*,

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<sup>18</sup> Erik Davis, "Techgnosis: Myth, Magic, and Mysticism in the Age of Information," (1998), p.4.

<sup>19</sup> Erik Davis, p.4

<sup>20</sup> Erik Davis, p.5

*Tribe*, and *MeetUp* arrived to focus on encouraging and enhancing the very *connections* and *interactions* between humans themselves. The advents of many types and technologies of “augmented social networking” is directly suggestive of the type of framework needed for an emergence of collective intelligence. In essence, the internet is based on fundamental principles of *openness*, *inclusivity*, and *decentralization*--which are the necessary elements for a thriving democracy. The Internet, embedded within the noospheric layer around the planet, is *the* manifest framework of *the* social network, and therefore a most grand symbol of the exteriorization of the collective psyche, and the *superset* of a *new human identity* in the world. Within this superset, are the numerous more modular components of unique social networking sites and portals--each representing yet another archetypal impression from a more localized grouping of the collective psyche. Each social networking portal, encapsulated as a super-functional container of unique social groupings, offers to its individual members a myriad of opportunities to both present themselves, and to get to know others across a non-localized space that can encompass the globe.

In his book “Smart Mobs: The Next Social Revolution,” Howard Rheingold describes the potential of on-line digital communications to catalyze new forms of cooperation:

The most profoundly transformative potential of connecting human social proclivities to the efficiency of information technologies is the chance to do new things together, the potential for cooperating on scales and in ways never before possible. Limiting factors in the growth of human social arrangements have always been overcome by the ability to cooperate on larger scales: the emergence of agriculture ten thousand years ago, the origin of the alphabet five thousand years ago, the development of science, the nation-state, the telegraph in recent centuries, did more than accelerate the pace of life and make it possible for the human population to expand. These cultural levers also enlarged the scale of cooperation, radically altering the way people live.<sup>21</sup>

Despite the tremendous advantages that the early social networking community portals brought--there has also been a slight technical aberration with “engineering the social bond”<sup>22</sup> and bringing the fullest potential of the *global brain* on-line. Ever since the initial hype and drive of the *Information Super Highway* (1990s), as googles of people have made the turn to invest more time and money into the on-line world--we have *literally* submitted our personal *identities* into the phenomena of the internet. For almost anyone of us who has spent even just a few years of occasional long nights at an internet terminal--we’ve established multiple email addresses, subscribed to numerous email lists, signed on to bulletin boards, made countless credit-card purchases, and more ... the list of identity information give-away goes on and on and on ... The result is that almost any one of us has the very particulars of our *personal identity* scattered and dispersed across the vast and unfathomable regions of the on-line world. A seven-year-old phone number, and the password name of a favorite pet who has since long passed, for example--may still float within information space, lost and rarely or never referenced in the remote tables of an obsolete

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<sup>21</sup> Howard Rheingold, “Smart Mobs”, p. 114.

<sup>22</sup> Pierre Levy, p.21

Hotmail database. And any one of our legal names (original or made up), has been entered and is currently stored within and between hundreds or thousands of databases world-wide. Aside from the more practical and serious legal and security issues against potential dissemblances (such as “identity theft”), which has caught the mainstream attention to the general discommodity of digital identity--the very nature of this *technical aberration* is suggestive of *the metaphysical and existential state* of the modern fragmented, disassociated, and insecure identity of self. And more, the corresponding consensus impulse to *fix* the problem of the technical in-congruencies involved with digital identity are representative of the inherent impulse within the splintered modern self to reclaim a centralized *individuation*, and ignore the natural in-congruencies which comprise a composite *personality*. Chardin shares a view of the general situation:

It looks as though we have lost both respect for the person and understanding of his true nature. We end up by admitting that to be pivoted on oneself, to be able to say ‘I’, is the privilege (or rather the blemish) of the element in the measure to which the latter closes the door on all the rest and succeeds in setting himself up at the antipodes of the All. In the opposite direction, we conceive the ‘ego’ to be diminishing and eliminating itself, with the trend to what is most real and most lasting in the world, namely the Collective and the Universal. Personality is seen as a specifically corpuscular and ephemeral property; a prison from which we must try to escape.<sup>23</sup>

And yet *personality* is what makes *people*. The modern human species, in our uncompromised quest to know ourselves within the cosmos from which we emerged, have come far down the long and forgotten road. Our path has lead us through a dramatic history pock-marked by traumatic instances of an ever escalating separation from nature and the subsequent removal of identification with our cosmic origins. Along the way, we have created our *personal characters* and our *stories and myths*. Though we have become lost in the journey to finding ourselves--our past guides us continuously forward. Levy makes reference to the uniqueness of our specie’s condition:

The original nomads followed the herds, which were themselves in search of food, according to the seasons and the rains. Today, we continue to wander behind our human future, a future that intersects us as we create it. Humanity has become its own climate, an infinite season from which there is no return.<sup>24</sup>

Without the *aberration* of our distinct human condition--which gives our species the unique qualities of *character* and *personality*--we might very well become submerged within the increasingly immersive world of our machines. It is our anthropomorphic tendencies toward *personalization* as a bio-psychological, interior *technique* that can keep us from being subsumed by our exteriorizations of technology.

My soul is not the result of objective facts that require explanation; rather it reflects subjective experiences that require understanding. To understand anything at all, we must envision it as having an independent subjective interior existence, capable of ex-

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<sup>23</sup> Teilhard de Chardin, p. 258

<sup>24</sup> Pierre Levy, p. xxv - xxvi.

perience, obliged to a history, motivated by purposes and intentions. We must always think anthropomorphically, even personally. ... Even the intentions, purposes, and other subprocesses that enter into experience cannot be reduced to explanations; they too are only open to anthropomorphic understanding. So studies of human being, all human studies, in order to know their subject must necessarily be anthropomorphic.”<sup>25</sup>

So, if the problem of digital identity is in any way representative of the disassociation of the modern “Protean” self, what is the greater significance of the technical aberration? If we can design a solution for the technical problems involved with digital identity, what corresponding derivative affect would this make to or indicate of the metaphysical and existential identity of the modern self? On a practical level, a new digital identity protocol could birth the next generation of super-capable social networking technologies, perhaps allowing for yet another radical shift in individual and collective identity. At a glance, this appears progressively inevitable. Yet, although there are currently several professional initiatives to implement a consolidated, secure, and interoperable digital identity protocol--the vast complexity of the technical and logistical situation suggests that it may take some time to figure it out. To engineer the base exteriorization of the collective mind may be not unlike *herding cats*, harnessing the waves of the oceans, or wrangling with the very underpinnings of the *anima* itself. As Carl Jung reminds us,

Anima is a factor in the proper sense of the word. Man cannot make it; on the contrary, it is always a priori element of his moods, reactions, impulses, and whatever else is spontaneous in psychic life. It is something that lives of itself, that makes us live; it is the life behind consciousness that cannot be completely integrated with it, but from which, on the contrary, consciousness arises.<sup>26</sup>

After all, collective consciousness is what we are here for, and collective intelligence “is a utopia of the unstable and the multiple.”<sup>27</sup> While the search of social affinity engines may be the Holy Grail of such phenomena as on-line dating, and social networking in general--in the greater scope, too much control and stability too quickly may not be the best thing to invoke the rising of for our collective IQ. As Levy says,

Collective Intelligence is less concerned with the self-control of human communities than with a fundamental letting-go that is capable of altering our very notion of identity and the mechanisms of domination and conflict, lifting restrictions on heretofore banned communications, and effecting the mutual liberation of isolated thoughts.<sup>28</sup>

Of course, proper homage is made to the dedicated efforts of our computational gurus and internet engineers. As Kevin Kelly says, “We cannot import evolution and learning with-

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<sup>25</sup> James Hillman, pp. 15-16.

<sup>26</sup> Carl Jung, “Collected Works of C.G. Jung,” 9, 1

<sup>27</sup> Pierre Levy, p. 202.

<sup>28</sup> Pierre Levy, p. xxvii.

out exporting control.”<sup>29</sup> We are learning as we *go*, and learning to *let go*. In the meantime, while our social networking technologies are sure to evolve in any number of surprising ways--the slight in-congruencies and aberrations of current trends may add the very subtleties and complex nuances that actually invoke and enrich intelligent social experiences and exchanges.

We can see how the original superset properties of the internet--*openness, inclusivity, and decentralization*--cascade across its multitudes of constituent portals and nodes--ultimately, offering to the solitary individual an increasingly more direct opportunity to experience a new mode of identity: of being *more* of a characterized *person* super-connected to a diverse *global* community. This concentration of *character* can come about by the already natural “process of differentiation” or “individuation”:

... human being is essentially a “differing” being, and that individuality is given with the particular mix of soul, the complexity of its composition. Therefore, when Jung defines individuation as a ‘process of differentiation’ and differentiation as ‘the development of differences, the separation of parts from the whole,’ it means realizing our differences from every other person.<sup>30</sup>

Immersed in the amplification of “social saturation” that is inherent in interfacing the rapid, multiplex of the noosphere--the individual becomes the subject of a radical process of *differentiation* from the entirety of the networked population. Thus, the individual can become both more *distinctly individualized* and *connected* in the same turn.

the cultivation of human personality is the culmination of two major evolutionary trends--the trend towards more extreme individuation, and that towards more extensive interrelation and co-operation: persons are individuals who transcend their merely organic individuality in conscious participation.<sup>31</sup>

## Hyper-People

If the natural purpose and repose of the human species is to *be people in cooperation*, then we should realize and exercise the most essential ways to allow ourselves to be more *personable* in our lives. Be it in attending social gathering events, exploring and arranging the bounds of personal relationships, submitting our profiles to on-line social networking web sites, or meditating with ourselves in direct *introspection*--the personalization process is *person-oriented*. An important distinction should be made clear here, however--that *personalization* and *individualization* are not the same. We do not need to associate our sense of being realized human beings with *being individuals*, as Chardin says, this is a

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<sup>29</sup> Kevin Kelly, “Out of Control: The New Biology of Machines, Social Systems, and the Economic World,” (2000)

<sup>30</sup> James Hillman, p.87

<sup>31</sup> Sir Julian Huxley, Introduction to Chardin’s, “The Phenomena of Man,” p.20

mistake ... a fatal one ... to confuse individuality with personality. In trying to separate itself as much as possible from others, the element individualizes itself; but in doing so it becomes retrograde and seeks to drag the world backwards towards plurality and into matter. In fact it diminishes itself and loses itself. To be fully ourselves it is in the opposite direction, in the direction of convergence with all the rest, that we must advance--towards the "other". The peak of ourselves, the acme of our originality, is not our individuality but our person; and according to the evolutionary structure of the world, we can only find our person by uniting together. ... Like the Omega which attracts it, the element only becomes personal when it universalizes itself. <sup>32</sup>

Chardin's notion of *universalization* is *unity with version* ("to turn" from Latin). To become universal persons--concentrating a simultaneous balance of coherent individuality in cooperative participation with the collective--we must "turn" both within ourselves, and upon the super-centric nodes within the collective plexus. Here Chardin introduces his concept of going "Beyond the Collective: The Hyper-Personal:"

... It is only in the direction of hyper-reflection--that is to say, hyper-personalization--that thought can extrapolate itself. Otherwise how could it garner our conquests which are all made in the field of what is reflected? At first sight we are disconcerted by the association of an Ego with what is the All. The utter disproportion of the two terms seems flagrant, almost laughable. That is because we have not sufficiently meditated upon the three-fold property possessed by every consciousness: (i) of centering *everything* partially upon itself; (ii) of being able to centre itself upon itself *constantly* ; and (iii) of being brought *more* by this very super-centration into *association with all the other centres* surrounding it. Are we not at every instant living the experience of a universe whose immensity, by the play of our senses and our reason, is gathered up more and more simply in each one of us? And in the establishment now proceeding through science and the philosophies of a collective human Weltanschauung in which every one of us co-operates and participates, are we not experiencing the first symptoms of an aggregation of a still higher order, the birth of some single centre from the convergent beams of millions of elementary centres dispersed over the surface of the thinking earth? <sup>33</sup>

This single center ("Omega point") derives from the concentrated efforts of each individual human deepening an *identification* to the *originality* within themselves. Chardin describes this "work:"

... what is the work of works for man if not to establish, in and by each one of us, an absolutely original centre in which the universe reflects itself in a unique and inimitable way? And those centers are our very own selves and personalities. The very centre of our consciousness, deeper than all its radii; that is the essence which Omega, if it is to be truly Omega, must reclaim.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Teilhard de Chardin, p. 263

<sup>33</sup> Teilhard de Chardin, p. 259

<sup>34</sup> Teilhard de Chardin, p. 261

Chardin's words here are reminiscent of an ancient eastern cosmological perspective, described here by Sir Charles Eliot, of the very old Hindu concept of Indra's net:

In the Heaven of Indra, there is said to be a network of pearls [or Jewels], so arranged that if you look at one you see all the others reflected in it. In the same way each object in the world is not merely itself but involves every other object and in fact IS everything else. In every particle of dust, there are present Buddhas without number. <sup>35</sup>

Chardin's meaning of *universalization*, is intended to capture a more encompassing view. It is an indicator toward our *original* and archaic identification to the *cosmos*--to the exquisite association of being both distinctly *original* in our personality and intimately *connected* to all *persons*. We are reminded that *unity* exists in *multiplicity*--and that we are ever in a constant dance of both deepening and widening our comprehension and realization of this mode of universal *personalization*.

... following the confluent orbits of their centres, the grains of consciousness do not tend to lose their outlines and blend, but, on the contrary, to accentuate the depth and incommunicability of their egos. The more 'other' they become in conjunction, the more they find themselves as 'self'. How could it be otherwise since they are steeped in Omega? Could a centre dissolve? Or rather, would not its particular way of dissolving be to supercentralise itself? <sup>36</sup>

... Since it is a question of achieving a synthesis of centres, it is center to center that they must make contact and *not otherwise*. Thus, amongst the various forms of psychic inter-activity animating the noosphere, the energies we must identify, harness and develop before all others are those of an 'intercentric' nature, if we want to give effective help to the progress of evolution in ourselves. <sup>37</sup> I would say there were a good many ways for a being to have a "within". A *closed* surface, irregular at first, may become *centred*. A circle can augment its order of symmetry and become a sphere. Either by arrangement of the parts or by the acquisition of another dimension, the degree of "interiority" of a cosmic element can undoubtedly vary to the point at which it rises suddenly on to another level. <sup>38</sup>

Without such an exquisite comprehension of this *hyper-personalization* process, there may be an *egoic* tendency here to make false associations to this notion of *universalization* ... toward an identified association to a *complete* and *unified self*. Here, Hillman would concede with this egoic association, and challenge us to take a different turn on the associated meaning of becoming "unified:"

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<sup>35</sup> Sir Charles Eliot

<sup>36</sup> Teilhard de Chardin, p. 262

<sup>37</sup> Teilhard de Chardin, p. 263

<sup>38</sup> Teilhard de Chardin, p. 89

This means nothing less than dethroning the dominant fantasy ruling our view of the world as ultimately a unity--that real meaning, real beauty and truth require a unified vision. It also means that we would abandon a notion of our personality as ultimately a unity of self. Instead of trying to cure pathological fragmentation wherever it appears, we would let the content of this fantasy cure consciousness of its obsession with unity. By absorbing the plural viewpoint of "splinter psyches" into our consciousness, there would be a new connection with multiplicity and we would no longer need to call it disconnected schizoid fragmentation. Consciousness, and our notion of consciousness, would reflect a world view that is diverse and unsettled.<sup>39</sup>

Here Chardin and Hillman might appear to contend upon different sides of the possible intended meanings and functions of *unity*. Perhaps this instance of apparent difference is representative of the contention within human identity itself in enduring the paradox of both tending toward the somewhat *singularly-oriented* mode of awareness while also residing in conscious *orientation* to the fully *diverse* and *multiplicit* world. Anyway, I see that Chardin's and Hillman's notions of "unity" are compatible. Hillman has a good point of not encouraging the dominant monotheistic conscious structure to continue its plight along the set path that has ultimately led to the over-rationalization, nominalization, and disenchantment of the post-modern world. Instead, he prescribes an alternate intention to engage more directly with the psychic core of the human condition:

... We need an imaginal ego that is at home in the imaginal realm, an ego that can undertake the major task now confronting psychology; the differentiation of the imaginal, discovering its laws, its configurations and moods of discourse, its psychological necessities.<sup>40</sup>

Hillman's assertion is based on traditional notions of the human *psyche* as being of a "poly-centric" and "imaginal" conformation:

Jung's lead into this imaginal territory has opened a view of personality that is no longer single-centered but polycentric. Owing to the depth of psychologies of Freud and Jung we have a more complete model of ourselves. We conceive our psychological nature to be naturally divided into portions and phases, a composition of earlier and later historical levels, various zones and development strata, many complexes and archetypal persons. We are no longer single beings in the image of a single God, but are always constituted of multiple parts: impish child, hero or heroine, supervising authority, asocial psychopath, and so on."<sup>41</sup>

Such an *identity mash-up* runs against the grains of the more traditional Cartesian modes of world view. Descarte's, "I think, therefore, I am," can now be transposed to a new adage: "*Imagination, therefore, I am and we are.*" The transition into such a *polycentric* mode of identity is perhaps indicative of the inertial tendencies of the more common

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<sup>39</sup> James Hillman, pp. 40-41

<sup>40</sup> James Hillman, p. 37

<sup>41</sup> James Hillman, p. 24

“Protean,” fragmented sense of identity of the post-modern person. While we have extensively magnified our capacity for *individualism*, and increased the numbers of our population to a level of *massiveness* that threatens our sustainability, we hang in the *phase shift*--until we have some means of harnessing our *individual* potential to *supercenterate*, our *collective* potential to *hyper-connect* into a symbiotic *superorganism* of a higher order of intelligence.

## The MetaBang

We have already seen how the advents of on-line social networking technologies can provide an arena for higher order collective cooperation. With commonly accepted and standard technologies such as super-functional websites and instant communications--the world has already become a more *polycentric* and *image-oriented* place. And with more recently emerging and popular web phenomenas such as *Flickr*, *uTube*, *Tribe*, and *MySpace*--it is clear that the human proclivity toward interacting with other *people* and with *images* has a solid place in the on-line world. From a psychological perspective, this is understandable, as Hillman describes a Jungian view of the image-composite human psyche:

Jung's position here states that the fundamental facts of existence are the 'fantasy-images' of the psyche. All consciousness depends on these images. Everything else--ideas of the mind, sensations of the body, perceptions of the world around us, beliefs, feelings, hungers--must present themselves as images in order to become experienced. 'Experience is, in its most simple form, an exceedingly complicated structure of mental images.' Should we ask: just what *is* psyche? What do you mean by psychic experience and psychic reality? The answer is: fantasy-images. 'Image *is* psyche,' says Jung. 'The psyche consists essentially of images . . . a "picturing" of vital activities. ...

Because our psychic stuff is images, image-making is a *via regia*, a royal road to soul-making. The making of soul-stuff calls for dreaming, fantasizing, and imagining. To live psychologically means to imagine things; to be in touch with soul means to live in sensuous connection with fantasy. To be in soul is to experience the fantasy in all realities and the basic reality of fantasy.<sup>42</sup>

As the Internet and World Wide Web (and media in general) have a natural propensity toward the *imaginal*--we can literally *imagine what* and *where* this might be developing toward. This "royal road" to "soul-making" may very well be the initial *Information Super-Highway* of the 1990s, and what it promised to deliver: an on-line, collectively shared, sensuously immersive "Virtual Reality." Although Internet enthusiasts of the late 1990s were surprised (and probably mostly disappointed) that the original vision of cyberspace was not realized with the immediacy and fascination that most had imagined. The 2001 "bubble-burst" of extreme progressivism and Internet enthusiasm has consequentially allowed for the more stable development of "brick and mortar" technologies and infrastructure to be settled. Now, in 2006, both consumer hardware and on-line infrastruc-

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<sup>42</sup> James Hillman, p.16-17

ture is finally allowing for much of the original *imaginings* of the “pre-pop” era: independent, high quality audio and video casting, voice over IP, and massive multi-person on-line (MMO) phenomena--such as *Napster*, and hordes of persistent 3D gaming environments. We are moving again across the noospheric frontier--this time onto a higher plateau of the “imaginal terrain.”

Among these, the recently growing popularity of a certain MMO called “Second Life” (note connotation to Christian prophecy of the “Second Coming”) has been getting increasing attention from the more common public. *Second Life*--only one virtual world of many (which in totality, comprise what is now being coined the “metaverse” or “multiverse”)--is comprised of thousands of “square-miles” of vibrant, 3-dimensional, interactive virtual space, over 200,000 members (thousand of which are on-line at any given time), and exchanges \$100,000s in *real* economic capitol in any given day. Not only is Second Life providing fantasy entertainment to the masses, it also offers almost anyone the potential to *make a good living*. A very recent issue of “BusinessWeek” magazine published a cover story, “Virtual World, Real Money,” reporting on this economically-real “virtual” phenomena. One member “avatar”, Anshe Chung (who quit her real world job shortly after making it big in *Second Life*), now holds about \$250,000 in virtual land and currency holdings.<sup>43</sup> The population and economy in Second Life is growing rapidly. Many third-party companies and organizations are forming now in anticipation of a *big-bang* of the *metaverse*.

While the real entertainment and economic potentials of such virtual worlds are attractors on their own for the masses to begin adopting “second lives” in cyberspace over the next few decades--we can also consider some of the more innate psychological attractors that exist. As a usable interface into the already developing on-line knowledge space, a navigational device into this region of the *noosphere*, a virtual world appears to make sense. Mimicking the more subtle details and complex nuances of our *reality*, of our highly *anthropomorphic space*--it appears the closest fit to the perspectival and person-oriented spaces which humans have been cruising around for millennia. Here, Hillman describes the more archaic tendencies of earlier human culture to store and manage knowledge:

The human memory was conceived as an internal treasure-house or theater rather than as an alphabetical or chronological filing system. Whereas an encyclopedic filing system is a *method* by which *concepts* are *written*, available one page at a time; a theater is a *place* where *images* are *envisioned*, available all at once. In the art of memory events belong together in clusters or constellations because they partake of the same archetypal meaning or pattern, and not merely because these events all begin with the letter *A* or *B* or happened on the same day or in the same year. The organization of the mind was based on inherent meanings, not on arbitrary nominalistic labels. In this arena of memory all the information of the universe could be stored, so that this art provided a means of having universal knowledge present to anyone mastering the techniques. It was both a retrieval system and a structural model for laying out the

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<sup>43</sup> BusinessWeek, “Virtual World, Real Money,” May 1, 2006

groundwork and hierarchies of the imagination on archetypal principles. The ordering rubrics that provided the categories were mainly the planetary Gods and themes from classical myths. <sup>44</sup>

Recreating such an interior *memory* space, this time shared collectively in a persistent and dynamic state, may also come to meet an even deeper *psychological* need for *making and sharing image and fantasy*:

In the beginning is the image; first imagination then perception; first fantasy then reality. Or as Jung puts it: 'The psyche creates reality everyday. The only expression I can use for this activity is fantasy.' Man is primarily an image maker and our psychic substance consists of images; our being is imaginal being, an existence in imagination. We are indeed such stuff as dreams are made on. <sup>45</sup>

And as each person exercises "imaginal being" within a hyper-connected, global communication space--may we then begin to gather the type of group interior *self-reflective* plenum that is a predicate of a higher order emergence of collective intelligence? Or is any rendition of a *virtual reality* during this time of environmental deterioration and mass species extinction an extreme *mass distraction* away from the exigent *reality*?

## Inner Greece

The emergence of the *metaverse*, as highly phenomenal and massively enticing as it is proving to be, is *reminiscent* of our tendency to "return to Greece." Just at the historically critical moment when the detriment of the *biosphere* is becoming commonly evident, and the "tried-and-true" methods of governance, economy, commerce, industry, and society itself are showing signs of failure and collapse--we *reminisce* upon the quintessential origins of our humanity in order to invigorate our motion into new paradigms. Hillman describes the necessary collective regression process:

When the dominant vision that holds a period of culture together cracks, consciousness regresses into earlier containers, seeking sources for survival which also offer sources of revival. Critics are right when they see the "return to Greece" as a regressive death wish, an escape from contemporary conflicts into mythologies and speculations of a fantasy world. But looking backward makes it possible to move forward, for looking backward revives the fantasy of the child archetype, *fons et origo*, who is both the moment of helpless weakness and the future unfolding. 'Renaissance' (rebirth) would be a senseless word without the implied dissolution, the very death out of which that rebirth comes. Critics miss the validity and necessity of regression.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> James Hillman, p.91-92

<sup>45</sup> James Hillman

<sup>46</sup> James Hillman, p. 27

Unlike the more bestial and corporeal distractions of mass media, gambling, pornography (all of which, of course, have on-line replications), the *metaverse* can offer something more, especially in its earliest of stages. Developing upon the technical and *ethical* foundations of the 2-dimensional, open-source, open-community predecessor web portals that came before (such as *Napster*, *Craig's List*, and *Wikipedia*), the virtual worlds of the *metaverse* can provide opportunities to exercise (with far less political bounds than within the *real world*) new methods of *social organization and cross-regional cooperation*. Once again, we see the establishment of a transitional framework, as in the Hellenistic era, for "a laboratory of the extraordinary," to plan out a return to a "Golden Age:"

... the 'Greece' to which we turn is not literal; it includes all periods from Minoan to Hellenistic, all localities from Asia Minor to Sicily. This 'Greece' refers to a historical and geographical *psychic* region, a fantasy or mythic Greece, an inner Greece of the mind ...

Greece persists as an inscape rather than a landscape, a metaphor for the imaginal realm in which the archetypes as Gods have been placed. We may therefore read all the documents and fragments of myth left from antiquity also as accounts or witnesses of the imaginal. Archeology becomes archetypology, pointing less to a literal history than to eternal actualities of the imagination, speaking to us of what is going on now in psychic reality.

The return to Greece is neither to a historical time in the past nor to an imaginary time, a utopian Golden Age that was or may come again. Instead 'Greece' offers us a chance to revision our souls and psychology by means of imaginal places and persons rather than historical dates and people, a precision of space rather than time. We move out of temporeal thinking and historicity altogether, to an imaginal region, a differentiated archipelago of locations, *where* the Gods *are* and not *when* they were or will be.

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## Avatars

The key aspect of an Massively Multiplayer On-line (MMO) phenomena, of course, are the people. In a *virtual reality*, members are commonly referred to as *avatars* (meaning "the incarnation or embodiment of a deity or archetype"). Members who subscribe to a world within the *metaverse*, sign-on, and then instantly appear within the virtual world as a self-designed entity, for anyone in the virtual locality to see and interact with. Avatars are not subject to the same physical limitations as the real world. They can fly or transport themselves instantly across the virtual landscape, create objects at will, carry everything with them at all times, and communicate instantaneously to any other member. Like the mythic deities of ancient lore, *avatars* appear magical and extraordinary ... literally, *metaversal* beings incarnate from *another world*. So, at least one aspect of the *metaverse*, of the "laboratory of the extraordinary," may be to provide a type of exercise arena, a *play-ground*, for the high order emergent aspects of human beings to begin to be *imagined* and

consequently *realized*. As we literally *simulate* and see ourselves, individually and collectively, become *superhuman*, we wear the training wheels for the actual realization. Paul Levy, describes from his web site, "Awaken In the Dream:"

We begin to have the astonishing realization that we have become the very vehicle through which, what Jung calls the Self, and what I would like to call the Godessence, is incarnating and becoming conscious of itself. This is Jung's great insight, and this is exactly what he meant when he describes the individuation process as the incarnation of the Self. This is the magnum opus of alchemy, where the ego becomes deified, and the Self humanized, as the Self and the ego mutually redeem each other. This is what Jung means when he says, 'Man is no more an end in himself, but becomes an instrument of God, and this is really so.'<sup>48</sup>

And Hillman further describes the necessary role of *imagination* in this interior divination process:

Subject and object, man and Gods, I and Thou, are not apart and isolated each with a different sort of being, one living or real, the other dead and imaginary. The world and the Gods are dead or alive according to the conditions of our souls. A world view that perceives a dead world or declares the Gods to be symbolic projections derives from a perceiving subject who no longer experiences in a personified way, who has lost his *imagine del cuor*. To rekindle this life we start with soul, reimagining its internal processes anthropomorphically.<sup>49</sup>

So in *imagining*, in *personifying*, and in collectively generating an *anthropomorphic* space, we may *visualize*, and then perhaps better *actualize* a resolution to the dualistic perception of being separate from the divine.

## Yahwehs Away

The *metaverse*, and the corresponding simulation of embodying "divinity" into "manifest" persons is reminiscent of some ancient Gnostic perspectives. In the Valentinian system (one of the most prominent of the Gnostic movement), the cosmos, the *universe* in manifest, is comprehended as a type of aberration from the original divine, the Pleroma (meaning "fullness" in Greek). Due to some type of tragic "mistake" or "flaw," elementary fragments of *pneuma*, the essential life force, are emanated and made separate from the all-encompassing origin. One of these "fallen" fragments becomes its own lesser and ignorant entity, designs from chaos a lower world of matter, which inherently captures and contains original aspects of the *pneuma*. This demiurge is known in Greek as the "Tetragrammaton" ("YHWH"), or "Yahweh" in the Hebrew Bible. This cosmology is also associated to the Kabbalistic perspective, and the corresponding design of the Sephirot and Tree of Life. In this system, the ten Sephirot represent vessels that, by the entire construct of

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<sup>48</sup> Paul Levy, "Jung's Great Insight," (2005)

<sup>49</sup> James Hillman

the Tree of Life, hold and transfer various attributes of the emanation of God, Ain Soph (“limitless light”) into the universe of the manifest world. In the Kabbalistic view, it is also recognized that something goes wrong: some of the Sephirot cannot hold the light, and there is the Shebirat-ha-kelim, the “breaking of the vessels.” This results in a shattering of pieces or sparks which fail to return to Ain Soph, and fall to become embedded in the material world. In the case of both traditional Valentinian Gnostic and Kabbalistic understandings, it is our work as human beings to reclaim these fragments, and return all to the fullness of the primordial source.<sup>50</sup>

According to these ancient traditional cosmological views, the emergence of the *metaverse* during this time of *global crisis* is rich with symbolic meaning. Just as environmental deterioration has reached a critical stage--leaving the *fractured shards* of entire species and ecosystems strewn across an overly populated planet--a *new universe* is opening beneath us. While we certainly cannot ignore the tremendous utilities of the Internet, our tendency may be to launch most fully into the *noosphere*, and continue to neglect the *biosphere*. Certainly, the *metaverse*, as an interior groping extension within our first order of material reality--could appear to be a continued *devolvement* into further reaches of gross material manifestation. Given this in the fullest of its own potential extremities (overlooking for the moment any possible strategy of the *imagination*, or even the real practicalities of augmented social networking)--what we have here is a very real *split* between the actual *reality* and the *virtual reality*, between a higher and lower order spheres of reality ... and a growing tendency of humans to deliberately (though most often with no conscious), submitting themselves into this *separation*.

## Over-Language

Such a *split* is indicative of the historically unacknowledged collective psychic tension and pain of the *human condition*. The quintessence of this condition has been, over the entire span of history, to collectively generate the *very situation* that invokes an “intra-psychic,” feeling state of the original “flaw,” the primordial “God wound,” in order to perform a re-enactment of the cosmic drama, to perform a *pathological healing* of the all *divine*, the *Self*, through the containers of *ourselves*.

The conclusion is inevitable that the concentration of a conscious universe would be unthinkable if it did not resemble in itself all *consciousnesses* as well as all *the conscious*; each particular consciousness remaining conscious of itself at the end of the operation, and even (this must be absolutely understood) each particular consciousness becoming still more itself and thus more clearly distinct from others the closer it gets to them in Omega.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Adam McLean, “Kabbalistic Cosmology and its parallels in the ‘Big-Bang’ of Modern Physics,” ([www.levity.com](http://www.levity.com))

<sup>51</sup> Teilhard de Chardin

We must do our absolute best, over the course of the next decades, to simultaneously maximize our awareness of the totality of the situation--even across the extremity of multiple and opposing poles of perspective. This includes the immediate reality--and largely the *embodied feeling* reality--of the impending *biospheric* collapse and species loss. This also includes the reality of our own *virtually-oriented* reality (be it to what ever degree of *noospheric* immersion is required) towards exercising the constituents that will enhance our *collective intelligence*. We are required to interweave each of the product instances of our *hominization* with the other: the harsh facts and corresponding responsibilities to our detrimental footprint upon the *biosphere*, and the consequential transformation and re-orientation of our species to the artifact of the *noosphere*. Each is required of the other: the extraordinary *psycho-emotional* impetus of the *biospheric* condition can catalyze and motivate, while the *universalizing* quality of the *noosphere* can organize impulses into properly placed formulation and facilitation.

For the soul to be struck to its imaginal depths so that it can gain some intelligence of itself--or, as we would say more dryly today, 'become conscious of the unconscious'--pathologizing fantasies are required. A bloodied or obscene image in a dream, a hypochondriacal fantasy, a psychosomatic symptom, is a statement in imaginal language that the psyche is being profoundly stirred, and these pathologized fantasies are precisely the focal point of action and movement in the soul.<sup>52</sup>

And so, we must bring the *images of the reality* into the modal places, into the functional spaces of the collective view. These *images* include the pictures of the dire results of the deteriorating world, as well as the *visualizations* of better worlds to be. Only by introducing the *images* of the *reality* back upon itself by this, or some similar manner, will the proper feedback and reflective process of collective mind be stimulated.

We are thus in the situation of a species whose members ... have not yet achieved the state of collective intelligence of the culture for lack of an articulated language. How do you invent a language that no one has spoken, for which there are no records, no examples, and when we lack even an idea of what such a language might be?<sup>53</sup>

Words themselves are becoming antiquated. Rarely enough do we even find an arrangement as worthy as these:

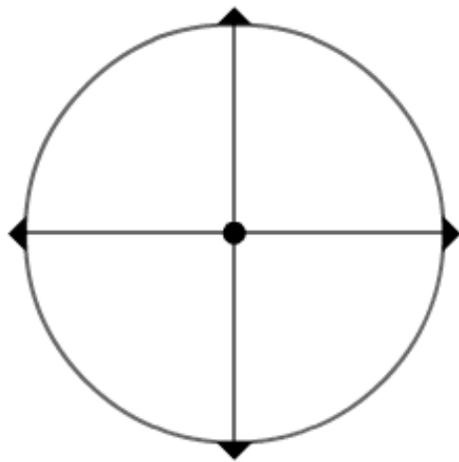
Today, *Homo sapiens* is faced with a rapid modification of his environment, a transformation for which he is the involuntary collective agent. I am not implying that our species is threatened with extinction or that the "end of the world" is approaching. I am not preaching millenarianism. Rather, I would like to point out an alternative. Either we cross a new threshold, enter a new stage of hominization, by inventing some human attribute that is as essential as language but operates at a much higher level, or we continue to "communicate" through the media and think within the context of separate institutions, which contribute to the suffocation and division of intelligence. In the latter case we will no longer be confronted only by the problems of power and

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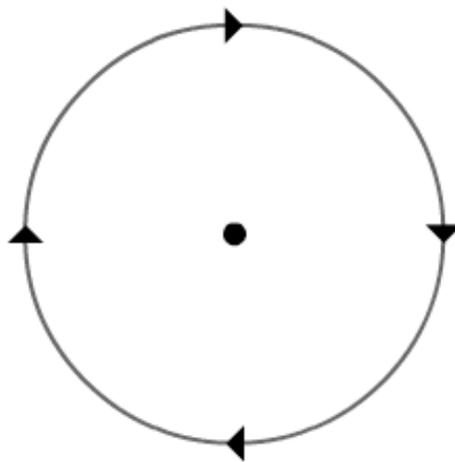
<sup>52</sup> James Hillman, p.92

<sup>53</sup> Pierre Levy, p.xxvi

survival. But if we are committed to the process of collective intelligence, we will gradually create the technologies, sign systems, forms of social organization and regulation that enable us to think as a group, concentrate our intellectual and spiritual forces, and negotiate practical real-time solutions to the complex problems we must inevitably confront. We will gradually learn ... to collectively invent ourselves as a species.<sup>54</sup>



AXIS MUNDI



ETERNAL RETURN



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<sup>54</sup> Pierre Levy, p.xxvi - xxvii