



*Noah's Ark with Rainbow, Norman French manuscript illumination, c. 1440-50.*

## **The Flood: Using ARAS to Illuminate the Imagination**

**Thomas Singer**

## **Table of Contents**

### **Part One: ARAS and the Illuminated Imagination**

### **Part Two: The Flood**

### **Part Three: The Ark and The Treasure**

### **Part One: ARAS and the Illuminated Imagination**

In this essay I want to show how ARAS and its way of exploring symbolic imagery can be both a source and vehicle for the Illuminated Imagination.



**Figure 1**

### **ERANOS Illuminating the Imagination of World Mythologies**



ARAS itself originated in the urge to illuminate the imagination of the early circle of scholars from many different disciplines that gathered around Jung at ERANOS to probe the mysteries of myth and psyche.

Those of us drawn to ARAS seek to illuminate both our own imaginations and, hopefully, in the process, to learn more about how the creative imagination of all the different cultures of the world have contributed to and been enriched by symbolic imagery.

An ARAS inspired illuminated imagination of the flood is my theme in this paper and, of course, it centers around water—how it is contained in rivers, lakes and oceans and how it periodically overflows its natural and/or manmade boundaries in floods.

But, I am equally concerned with water as symbolic of energy or libido and the other kinds of “flooding” that we are facing in multiple ways in contemporary life. Jung wrote in his 1936 essay Wotan:

An archetype is like an old watercourse along which the water of life has flowed for centuries, digging a deep channel for itself. The longer it has flowed in this channel the more likely it is that sooner or later the water will return to its old bed. The life of the individual as a member of society and particularly as part of the State may be regulated like a canal, but the life of nations is a great rushing river which is utterly beyond human control... .... Political events move from one impasse to the next, like a torrent caught in gullies, creeks and marshes.

Rather timely, isn't it???



**Figure 2** Author's drawing, 1970

I am going to start my sketch of the flood and flooding with an image of its opposite: not of waters overflowing but of waters contained. I drew this funky image to illuminate my imagination based on one of the first big dreams I had as a medical student in 1970.

Here is the dream:

I am attending a United Nations session and the discussion is focused on setting up a colossal cistern or water storage facility that will sit on top of the world. Whoever needs water in the world at a given time will be determined by a computer (this was long before computers were sitting on top of the world)—so that water for the whole earth

will be regulated and distributed equitably. I thought to myself, “I don’t like computers very much but maybe they could do a better job distributing water fairly than politicians have done. It was a global watering hole (“whole” as I misspelled it in my dream book).

Only forty-five plus years after having this dream did it actually occur to me that this dream might have found a personal symbolic expression in my devotion to the mission of ARAS which, at times, I have come to think of as a kind of visual version of Herman Hesse’s wonderful *Magister Ludi* or *The Glass Bead Game*. The waters of this dream can be interpreted as the realm of the creative unconscious from which flows a global distribution of life-giving energy in the form of visions and imagery that have originated in the psyche throughout human history. This brings us close to the vision of ARAS whose goal is to share with the world through books and the miracle of computer technology curated symbolic imagery from all cultures of the world and from all eras of human history. At ARAS we believe that there is a central, symbolic cistern which is the source of life giving and sustaining imagery/energy which takes different forms in different cultures that should be shared globally. So we begin with a global cistern of life nourishing energies that leads us paradoxically to the image of the flood and how contemporary society is endangered by real and symbolic flooding from many different sources.



**Part Two: The FLOOD in the World Today**

**Figure 3** The Flood. Early 5<sup>th</sup> Century. ARAS record 5Bk.022.

Each of us and all of us in today's world are caught up in a swirl of flooding forces that threaten to drown us in confusion, fear and doubt. In this second part of my presentation, I want to explore some of the multiple ways in which we are flooded that can result in paranoia, feeling overwhelmed, or simply the wish to withdraw from the world.

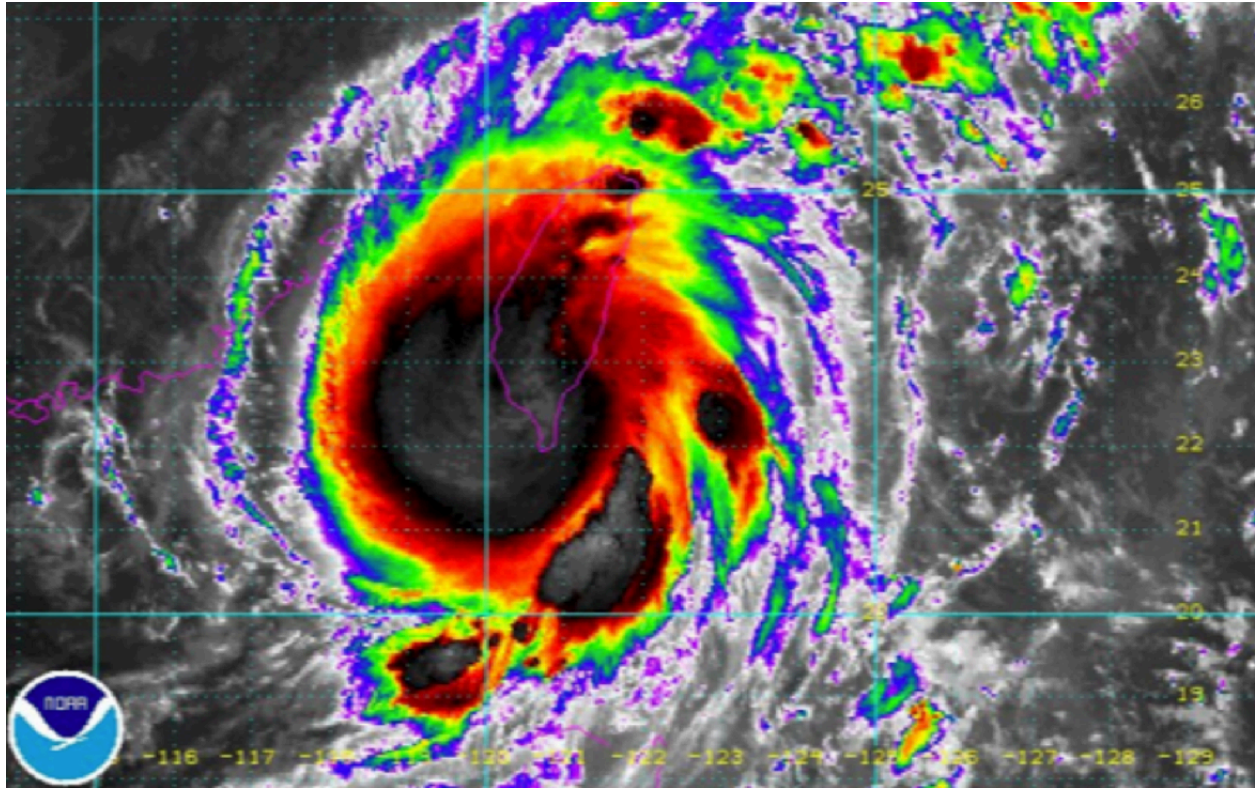
The flooding that we feel comes from many different sources that can be both internal and external.



**Figure 4** The Flood by J.M.W. Turner, 19<sup>th</sup> Century

Turner's vision of the flood evokes the awesomeness and intensity of the flooding swirl, although his vision has a mystical beauty to it that more everyday flooding does not.





**Figure 5** Satellite Imagery of Storm

A contemporary radar screen highlights the swirl of the flooding storm with the emotionally charged density of intense color.





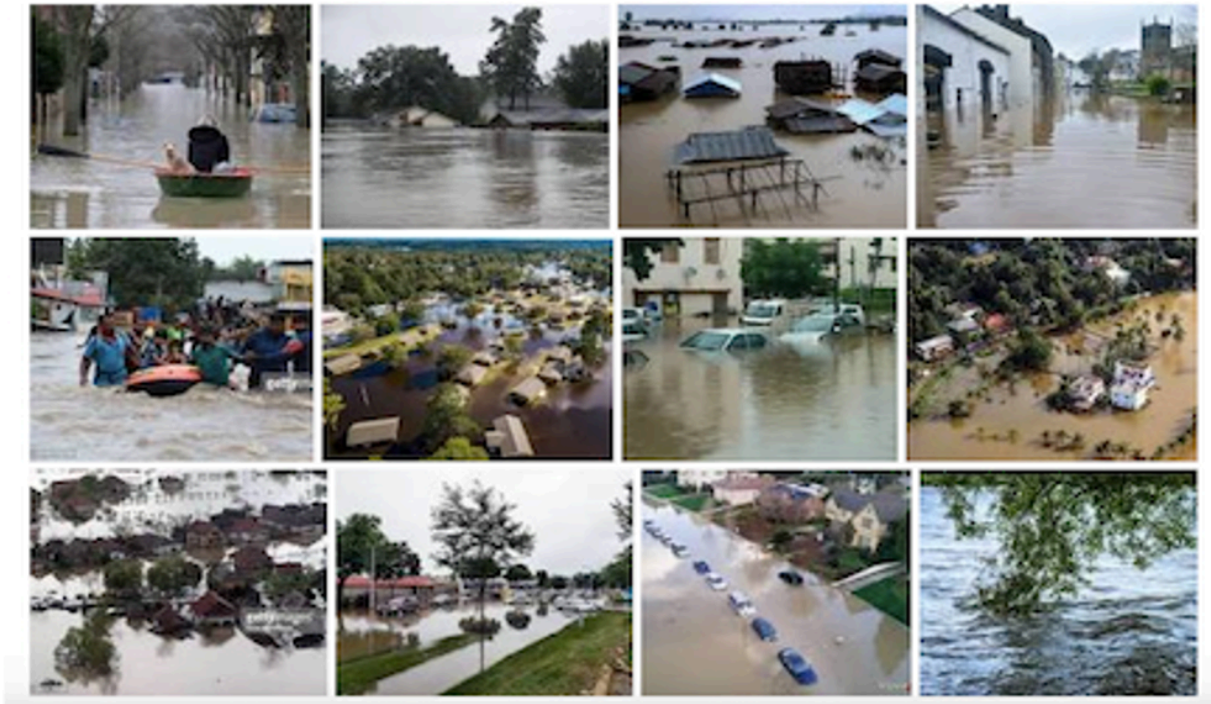
**Figure 6**

First, then, there is the actual flooding that is going on around the world. You might wonder if this flooding has actually increased or simply that we tend to hear more about it because we are being flooded with news of the floods. But the reality is that flooding is increasing around the world. Global floods and extreme rainfall events have surged by more than 50% this decade, and are now occurring at a rate four times higher than in 1980 according to a report in the Guardian.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/mar/21/flooding-and-heavy-rains-rise-50-worldwide-in-a-decade-figures-show>

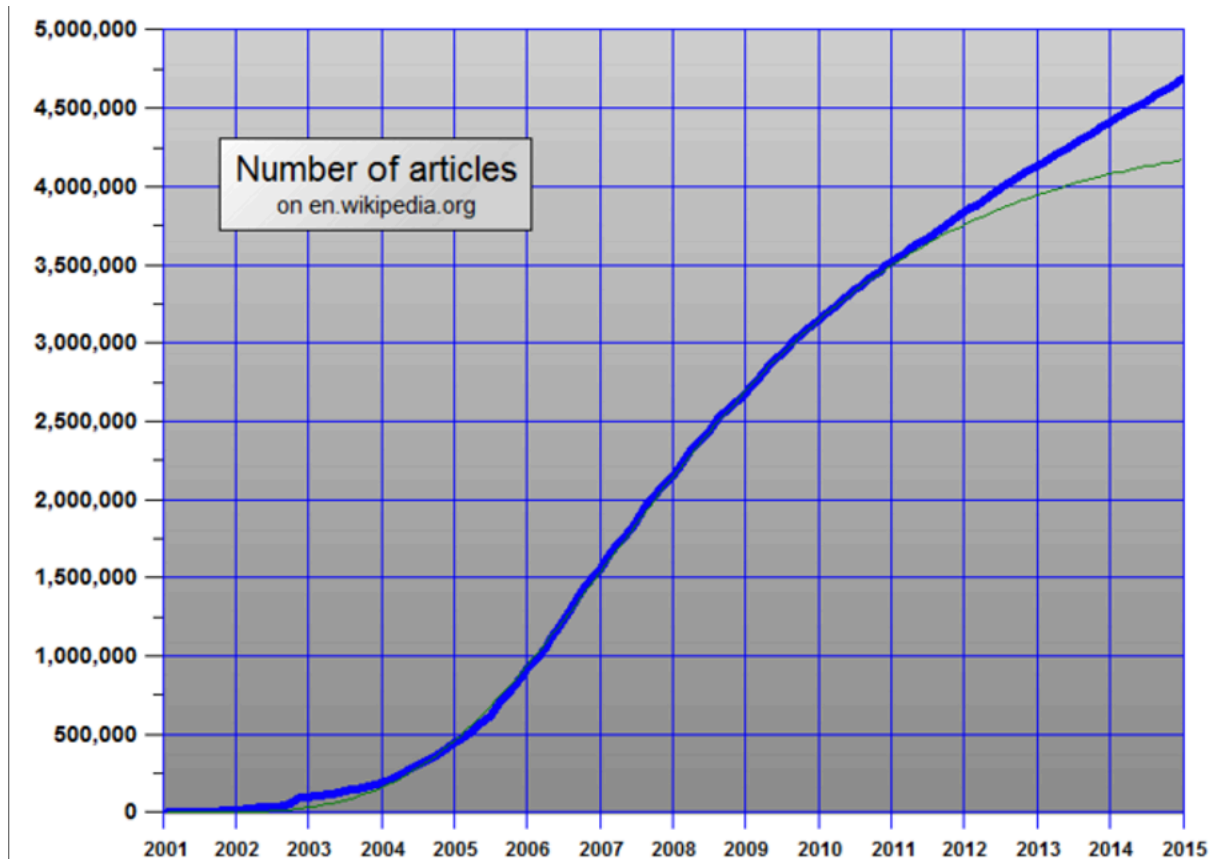
About 290,000,000 results (0.44 seconds)

### Images for flood



**Figure 7**

Second and closer to the ARAS mission, we are all being flooded by waves of uncurated imagery. If you click on a google search for “flood images” you will be informed that “about 294,000,000 results” are available in 0.44 seconds.



**Figure 8** Increase in Articles Submitted to Wikipedia

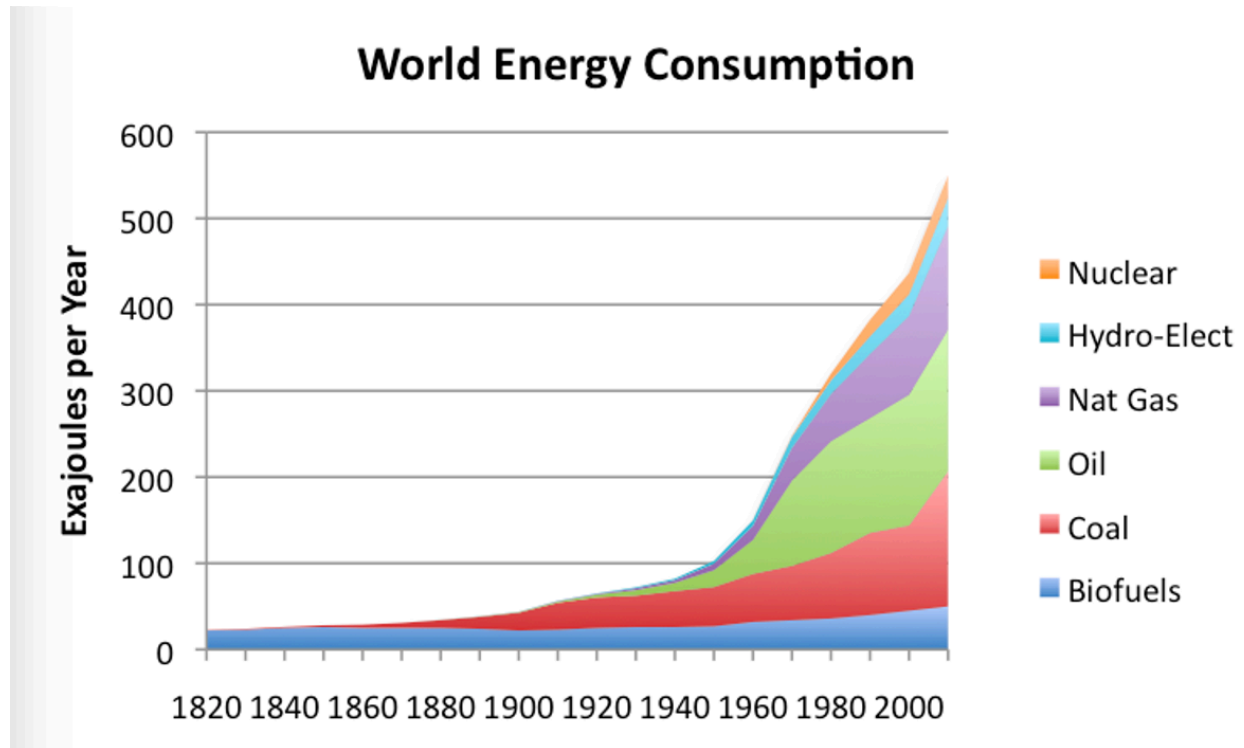
Third, we are flooded with information about everything from multiple sources every day. Here is statistical documentation from Wikipedia that exemplifies the flood of information to which we are all subjected. Wikipedia gets around 1500 new articles/day, of which close to 100% are judged to be without any quality to them.





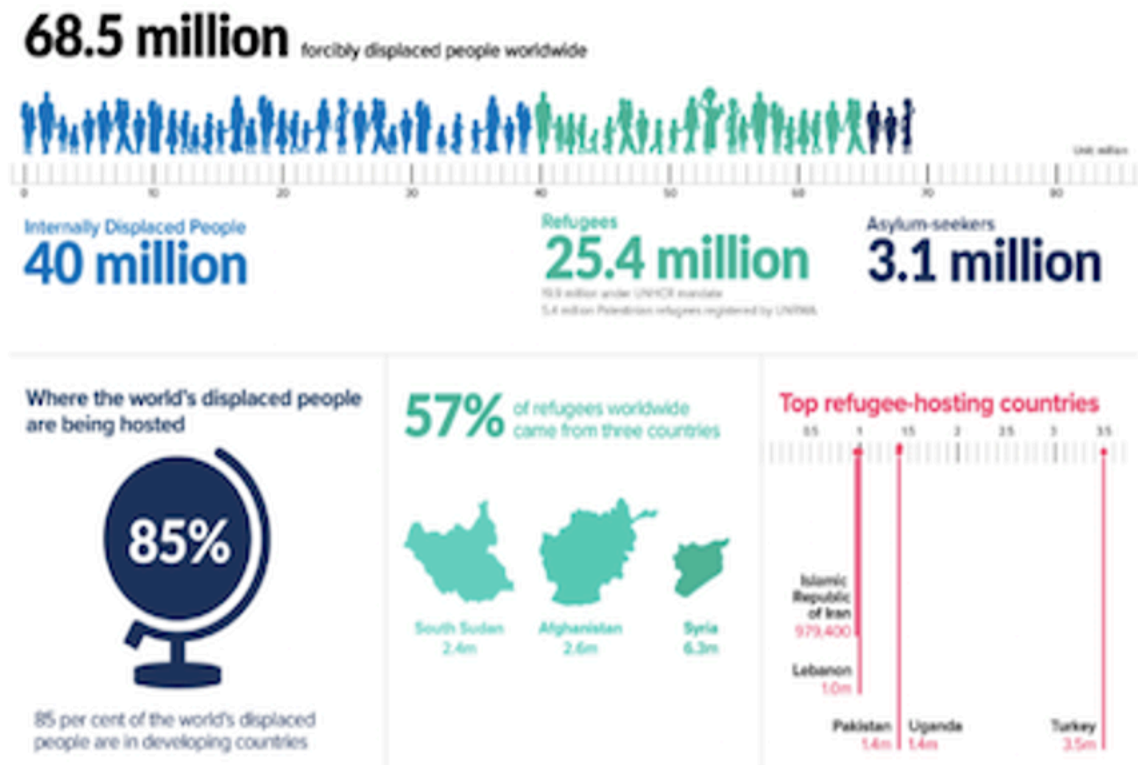
**Figure 9** Shopping Mall as Sacred Place

Fourth, we are being flooded by advertising and consumerism which invade every corner of our daily lives. Here is an image representative of the seductive flood of consumerism which has become the most sacred altar of contemporary life.



**Figure 10**

Fifth, we are being flooded by our devouring the world's natural resources at a staggering and ever-increasing rate. Here is a graph showing the increase in the global consumption of **energy** from 1820-2000. In 1970, about 22 billion tons of primary materials were extracted from the Earth. These included metals, fossil fuels like coal, and other natural resources. In 2010, that number had ballooned to 70 billion tons.



**Figure 11**

Sixth, we are experiencing a flooding of immigrants and people displaced by war and persecution around the world. This has become a major cause of increasing social unrest and political upheaval in the developed as well as undeveloped world.





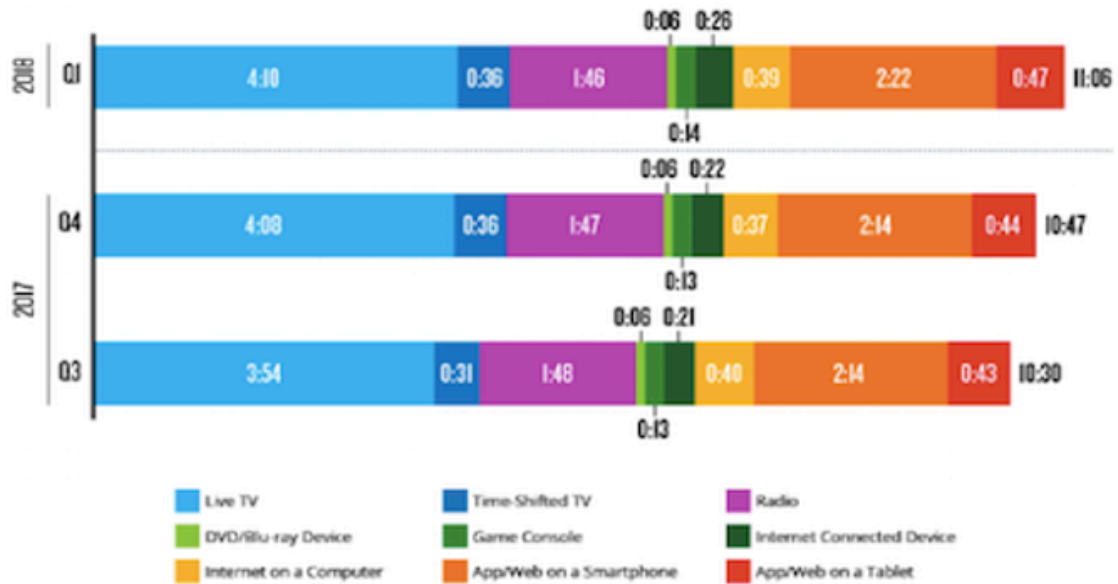
Figure 12

Seventh, many of us feel the flooding in modern daily life most through the increase of interconnectivity: phones, computers, social media.

<http://www.smartinsights.com/social-media-marketing/social-media-strategy/new-global-social-media-research/>

## AVERAGE TIME SPENT PER ADULT 18+ PER DAY

Based on Total U.S. Population



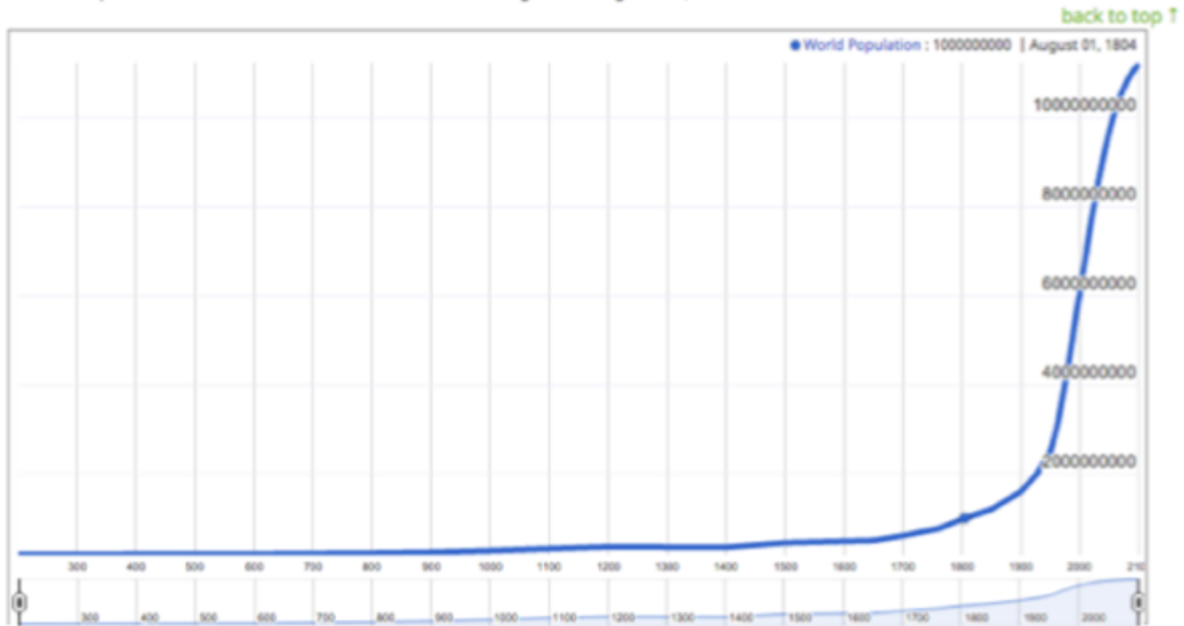
**Figure 13**

It is staggering to consider that the average American adult spends a little over 11 hours a day on some form of telecommunications or internet device.

The world population (the total number of living humans on Earth) was **7.4 billion** as of June 2016 according to Worldometers and based on the latest estimates provided by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division <sup>[1]</sup>. World population is projected to reach 8 billion in 2024 and 10 billion in the year 2056.

## World Population: Past, Present, and Future

(move and expand the bar at the bottom of the chart to navigate through time)



The chart above illustrates how world population has changed throughout history. [View the full tabulated data.](#)

At the dawn of agriculture, about 8000 B.C., the population of the world was approximately 5 million. Over the 8,000-year period up to 1 A.D. it grew to 200 million (some estimate 300 million or even 600, suggesting how imprecise population estimates of early historical periods can be), with a growth rate of under 0.05% per year.

A tremendous change occurred with the industrial revolution: whereas **it had taken all of human history until around 1800 for world population to reach one billion**, the second billion was achieved in only 130 years (1930), the third billion in less than 30 years (1959), the fourth billion in 15 years (1974), and the fifth billion in only 13 years (1987).

- During the 20th century alone, the population in the world has grown from 1.65 billion to 6 billion.
- In 1970, there were roughly half as many people in the world as there are now.
- Because of declining **growth rates**, it will now take over 200 years to double again.

**Figure 14**

Eighth, most of us have been aware of the flooding of world population growth for some time. Look at this horrifically clear graph of that phenomenon.

<http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/>

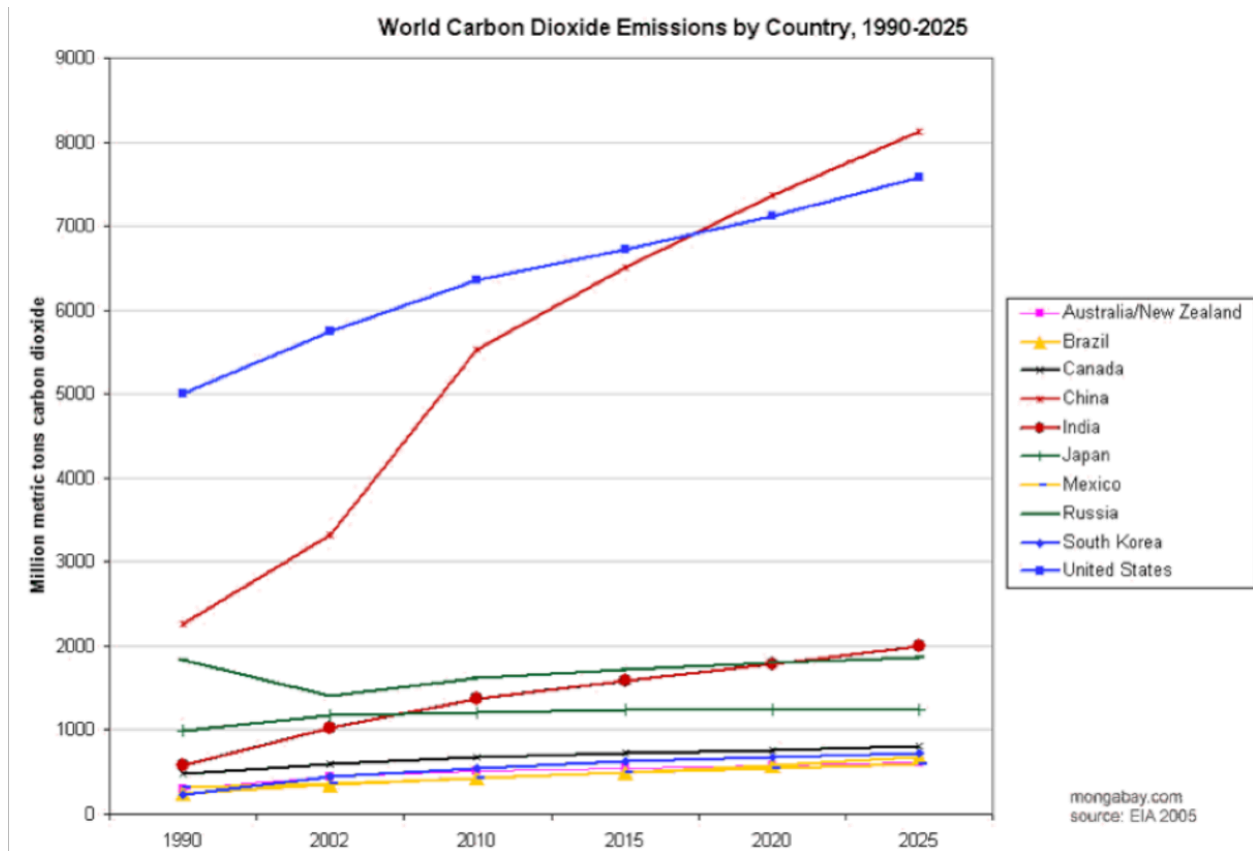


Figure 15

Ninth, with the flooding growth of population and global consumption, we are all becoming increasingly aware of how our environment (land, sea and air) is being flooded with pollutants.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pollution#/media/File:CO2-by-country--1990-2025.png>



**Figure 16** Charlottesville car attack, August 12, 2017

Tenth, and most horrifically, we are being flooded with seemingly ever-increasing acts of random violence and calculated acts of terrorism such as the Charlottesville incident in which a hate filled young man used his car as a weapon to run over protestors. Some days it feels as if the whole world is running amok.

There are now more guns in America than there are all men, women, and children combined. The current population of the United States of America is about 327.2 million. The estimated number of guns in the United States is **393 million**, out of a worldwide total of 857 million firearms. We are drowning in guns, bullets, and blood in the US....



To summarize, we are being flooded by an increase in:

1. actual flooding
2. flooding of uncurated imagery
3. flooding of information
4. flooding of consumerism
5. Flooding of global consumption of natural resources
6. flooding of immigrants and displaced people
7. flooding of interconnectivity: mobile phones, computers, social media
8. flooding of population growth
9. flooding of environmental pollution
10. Flooding of violence, terrorism and running amok

And I am sure that if we put our minds to it today, we could add many more sources of flooding in the world today.



**Figure 17** Noah's Ark with Rainbow, Norman French manuscript illumination, c. 1440-50.

### **Part Three: Building ARKs to Preserve the Treasure**

The archetypal story of the flood is always about the devastating effects of disasters, whether they originate in man-made or natural causes.



**Figure 18** Noah's Ark, Northern India (Mughal Court), 1590. ARAS Record 6Ca.073

As an archetype, the story of the flood and the efforts to avoid being washed away by events beyond our control have appeared in many cultures around the world, as in this gorgeous vessel illuminated by the 16th century Northern Indian Islamic imagination.



## **MONSTER CYCLONE CREATES INLAND OCEAN**

Destroying Entire Villages, Cyclone Idai Leaves Africa  
With An Inland Ocean

**Figure 19**

There are varied responses to the many forms of flooding that we are experiencing. Most of us will do whatever we can to save those closest to us if the flooding poses an immediate life-threatening danger. But for the multiple other ways in which we are being flooded, the most common response is to deny that it is happening at all or that it poses any kind of problem. For instance, we jump into the flood waters of interconnectivity and lap it up enthusiastically, even manically and compulsively (and my wife would despairingly tell you that I am one of those). For those of us who know we are drowning or at least suspect we are drowning in the multiple floods that directly and indirectly effect our lives, we can try to stop the flooding—at least in our individual lives-- and we can build whatever vessels we can with the hope of surviving the floods as well as to saving what is most valuable to us.





**Figure 20** Animals Leaving Ark, 1422. ARAS Record 5Fk.110

We know from the Biblical story of the Flood that Noah's ark offered safe passage for a pair of all living creatures. As they disembarked from the Ark, they were released to a new life after the flood had destroyed the old world. The animals had been kept alive and nourished through the flood. This was the treasure that was preserved. What kinds of modern day arks are we constructing to preserve life in the face of so many different kinds of flooding?





**Figure 21** Ark Encounter in Williamstown, Kentucky 2016

Some fundamentalists harken back to the Biblical Ark in its most concrete form as the model for a modern vessel. Indeed, one knows that the archetype of the flood is alive and well, when there is concrete, contemporary evidence of its presence in the world in the form of a modern theme park. On Thursday, July 7, 2016, a \$100 million replica of the ARK, the largest timber frame structure in the world was opened to visitors at the Christian theme park, ARK Encounter in Williamstown Kentucky. The park was built as an “evangelical tool aimed at teaching creationism, the literal interpretation of the Book of Genesis.



**Figure 22**

Knowing that we are already launched into the 6<sup>th</sup> mass extinction event in which over 50% of all living creatures (land, air, and sea) are expected to be extinct by 2100, another kind of Ark has already been constructed for the preservation all living plant forms and is actually operational in collecting and storing seeds in northern Sweden, although it now turns out that the town in which this ark was built is suffering the fastest global warming on the planet.



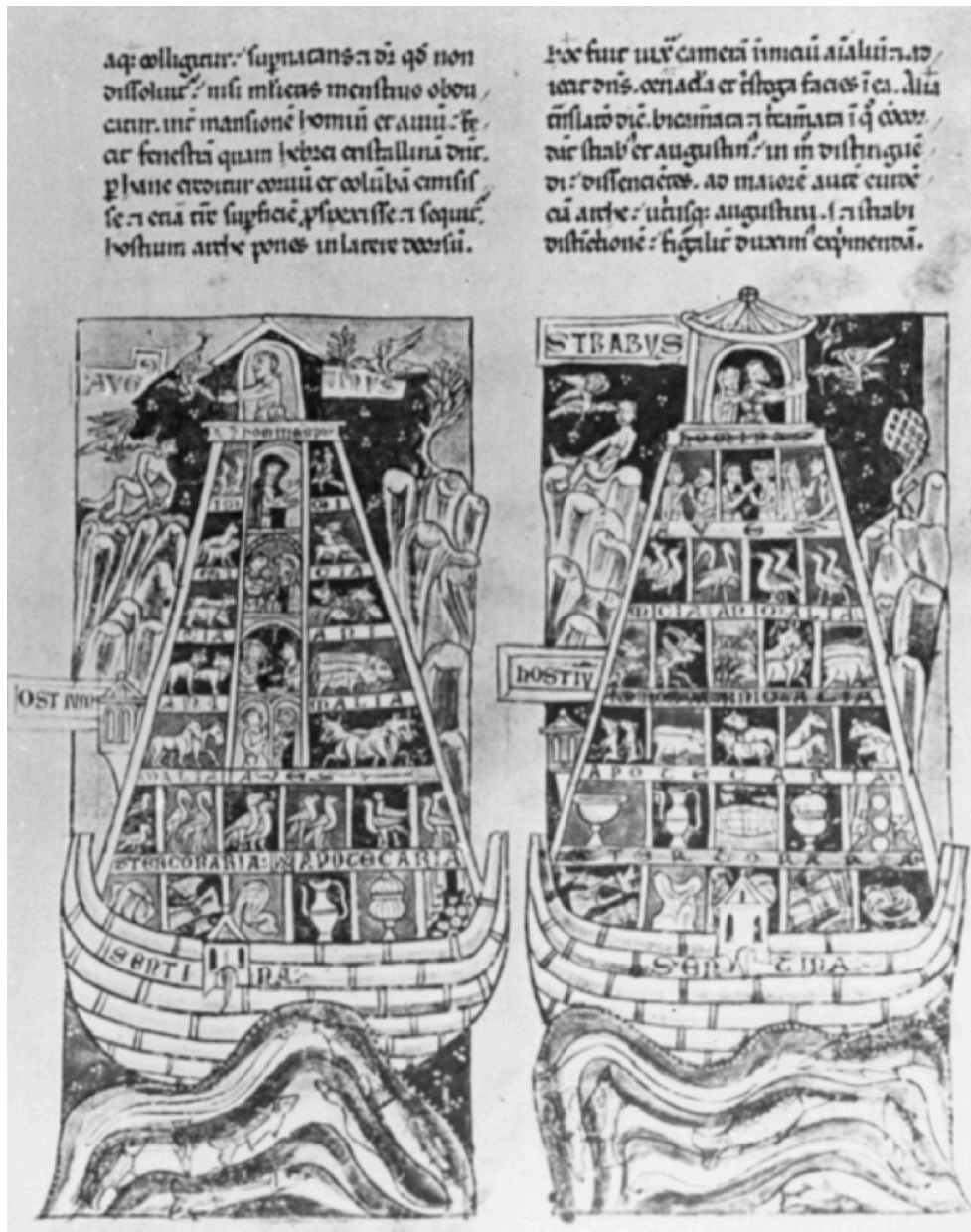
**Figure 23**

Our ongoing space program can also be thought of as creating another kind of ARK to take us to other planets or galaxies in anticipation of the flood.

In addition to preserving life itself, many of us also think of preserving culture, of creating containers that keep alive and protect the collected treasures of human civilizations. Museums can be thought of as a form of ARK, preserving what is best from all of human history from being diluted and washed away by the flood of mass culture. A contemporary vision of the museum as a modern ark is the Frank Gehry designed Louis Vuitton Foundation museum in Paris. Described as a “vessel navigating safely through storms”, the building is a kind of Noah’s ark, built for the preservation of art in a time of great danger.



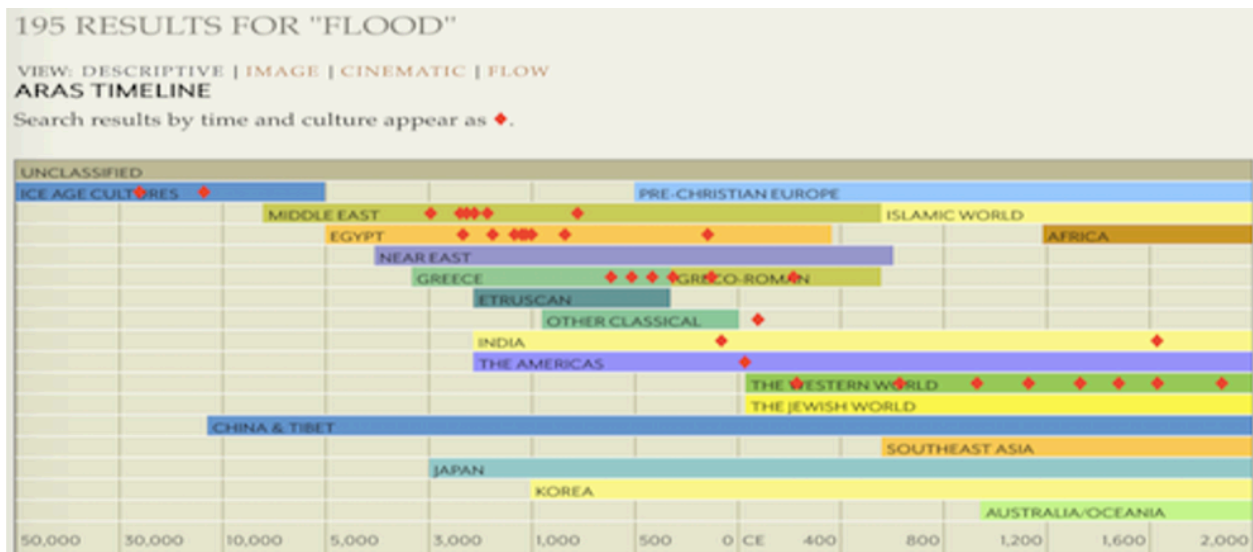
Too much of everything—whether it be images, news, people, goods—levels everything and CURATION becomes essential. We can try to contain what is of most value and meaning from being flooded by too much of everything.



**Figure 24** Two Depictions of Noah's Art: St. Augustine and Strabo

11-12<sup>th</sup> Centuries. ARAS Record 5DK.334

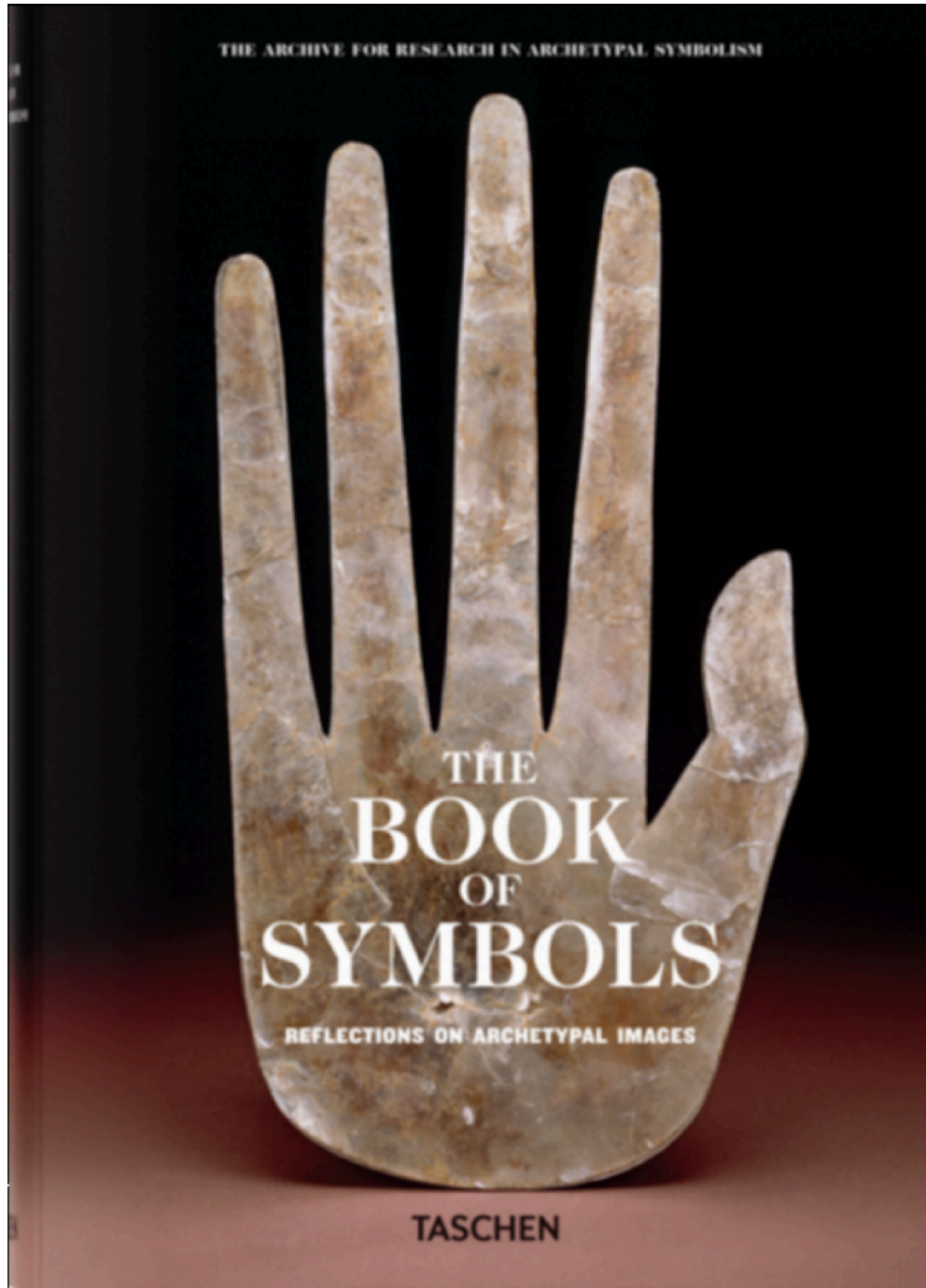
I love these images from the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century (St. Augustine on the Left and Strabo on the Right). They show the categorization, storage, and curation of all living forms that the illuminated imagination of the Middle Ages envisioned for Noah's Ark.



**Figure 25** 195 results for "Flood" on ARAS.org

ARAS, too, can be thought of as an ARK. Like Strabo and St. Augustine, we have constructed our digital ark to most effectively categorize, store, curate and keep alive our precious cargo of symbolic images. A cultural time line for every symbol provides ready access and easy movement from one image to another, from one culture to another, from one era to another.





**Figure 26** The Book of Symbols cover. Published 2010, Taschen.

In addition, we seek to share our ARK of the Illuminated Imagination with the world—in the form of books and our digital archive that offers global internet accessibility. The Book of Symbols has sold close to 300,000 copies world-wide and is available in seven

different languages. And, according to ARAS monthly reports, our ARK of the illuminated imagination is accessed online by people from 135 different countries.



**Figure 27** Pioneer Teens Program, ARAS

The most precious treasure to be protected and nourished through the ARAS Ark is the future in the form of our children and their capacity to respond in depth to what is meaningful and valuable in life, including their capacity to respond to symbolic



meaning, imagery, and thought. Through our Teen Pioneer Program, this is accomplished one child at a time.

The ARAS ARK, then, exists to protect, sustain, and grow what is of deep value to civilization over time, to bring the Illuminated Imagination in all its different forms and its interconnected soulfulness, into the world in a way that is alive, accessible, and rich in meaning to all who enter its ARK and wish to drink deeply of its treasured waters.



**Figure 28** *Crossed Rivers Mandala* by Martha Oliver Smith

I want to end this paper with an image that harkens back to the original cistern dream picture. How do we connect with and distribute the waters of the creative imagination—as well as the actual waters of the planet—in a way that nourishes us rather than floods us or leaves us in drought conditions? Art and Psyche is surely one small (or not so small way) that encourages and shares the waters of the creative imagination.

The endless flooding to which we are all subjected can seem overwhelming, insoluble and without hope. We all need a vision of how the illuminated imagination can contribute to the regeneration and rebirth of life on earth. I find such a vision in Martha Oliver-Smith's "Crossed Rivers Mandala" which beautifully illuminates the spiritual sense of a world infused with a flow of interconnectedness of all things. Through her vision, we can imagine what Jung called the Self as a place where two rivers intersect, flowing together in and out a single source, from the center of a white flower.

<http://aras.org/sites/default/files/docs/00088OliverSmith.p>

This is a vision of a world that is truly united through a deep well of vitality that should not be confused with globalization, although there is a hope that globalization might contribute to a realization of equally shared resources—concretely and symbolically—around the world. I have come to believe that ARAS is truly part of such a global watering hole/whole in its goal of sharing with the world from the deepest wells of the human illuminated imagination.