

Trump Isn't Fun and Neither Is Paradigm Shift:

Where *Are* We Headed?!

Jerome S. Bernstein

When I tried to sit down and write out my thoughts for this, I encountered enormous resistance. So I stopped and sat with myself and focused on what I was feeling in my body. What I heard was a voice that said, "I'm pissed off and I don't want to organize or make sense of this madness." And after a few more minutes I realized that what I was experiencing was the chaos that has erupted in our country and in the American psyche. This election season has left us in a state of chaos with, in my view, much more to come. So, the rest of my comments will reflect what's roiling in me and some of what I see roiling in that chaos.

I would say that on November 8th, Election Day, the entire country and much of the world got a crash course in what the trickster archetype looks like and how it operates. There is a Navajo legend about how First Woman was organizing the stars and the constellations, carefully laying them out in patterned linear fashion on a huge Navajo blanket to be placed in the cosmos. Coyote

happened to be wandering by, looked over and saw the stars laid out neatly on the blanket. “Hmmm,” he said and then he picked up a corner of the blanket, lifted it up and flicked it down, flinging the stars in disarray into the heavens. According to Navajo legend, that is how we have come by the various constellations that we see in the cosmos.



I had a similar feeling as I sat and watched TV on November 8th, confidently knowing that for all his extraordinary powers to hold a substantial segment of the American population in his sway, Donald Trump would lose the election. And besides, all the pollsters said so, as well as all the pundits. There we were, all smug and confident for a few hours and then suddenly, over the course of just a couple of more hours, we saw coyote pick up the corner of that beautifully woven tapestry and flick order into chaos.

When Donald Trump first announced that he was running for president I was quite excited and glad. I had long felt that the election of Barack Obama, our

first black President, was at one and the same time a milestone for this country and a dangerous divergence from the necessary confrontation with our racist shadow that remained thinly veiled under layers of PC correctness. For me Donald Trump has been the shameless Emperor without his clothes, speaking the unspeakable, doing the non-acceptable, calling a spade a spade, and perversely, refreshingly, speaking truth amidst innuendo and lies – his own and others'. It was ugly, but it was truth for many. And as we know, psychologically, unspoken and unwitnessed truths, particularly on the part of large groups, can readily become the stuff of volcanic rage. For me, Donald Trump was the necessary scalpel to lance the residual abscess of bigotry, misogyny, sexism, sociopathic greed, and callousness of human spirit that our culture still carries.



How many of us actually did give consideration to the hundreds of thousands of unemployed and under-employed white non-college trained men and women in Middle America who struggle for a decent life and to feed their families? Or for the out of work coal miners in Appalachia? I know I did here and

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there – but only here and there. And truth be told, none of that group got anywhere near the degree of sympathy from me than what I carried for disenfranchised black people or for Syrian refugees.

Disenfranchised white people who have been essentially abandoned by both political parties, did find a true spokesperson and leader for themselves in Donald Trump. He voiced their truth. He voiced their anger. In any case, if there was any doubt in that regard, he told us that he alone could save them and that he was their voice. That most of us didn't believe him played right into his hands. After all, he was a no-nothing blow hard. But in the end, he was right, and we were wrong.

We all have our view of Donald Trump the man. I want to focus for a few minutes on Donald Trump as an agent of the collective unconscious. The role he is playing seems to be to hasten the demise of the 20th century American persona and the demise of the socio-political paradigm that has been operative in American culture and politics since the advent of the New Deal compact of



Franklin Roosevelt that came out of the Great Depression and American hegemony post World War II. The cornerstone of the New Deal compact was the promise of equal economic opportunity for all through the continuation of the massive industrial engine that had been

generated during the World Wars. It also guaranteed a social safety net for all as reflected in Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and more programs for the poor. Another cornerstone of that compact was supremacy in science and technology, military supremacy and ultimate dominance in trade and foreign policy. That basic model has been advanced and touted as the “American Dream” for the past 90 years.

In the selling of the “American Dream”, shadow elements of that dream were not talked about and were manipulatively passed over – the major ones being racism and white supremacy; classism; religious discrimination; the justification of enormous greed and the elevation of the corporation as an almost invincible competitor with the rights of the individual; the costs of job loss in the wake of globalization, increasing disparity between the ultra-rich, the rich, and the rest of society. I could go on....

I want to stress that for me, Donald Trump appears to be the primary agent of the collective unconscious in bringing about the final stages of the demise of that New Deal paradigm. He is not the cause.

I do not believe that Donald Trump’s ascendancy is a product of just another contentious and extraordinary political event. If we look at the extremes of the oscillations within that chaos that is roiling in the American collective psyche – the election of the first black President followed by the election of the most incitingly racist president; the seeming certainty that 2016 would see the breaking through the glass ceiling of electing the first female President only to witness the election of the most overtly misogynist president in U.S. history.

There are many other such extremes and collisions of opposites that were articulated during the campaign and that are still being put forth as we speak.

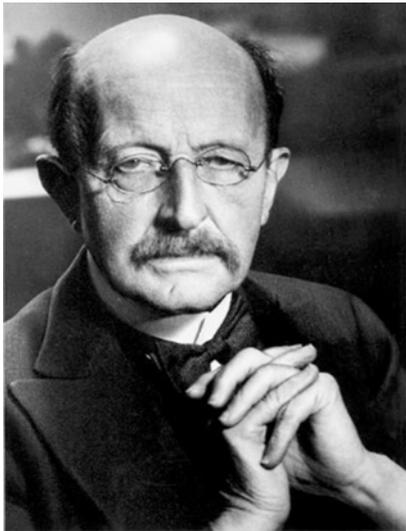
For example, Trump's promise to be the most effective and aggressive jobs-generating president in history particularly for his constituency, the disenfranchised rust belt and coal country whites, was an act of pure cynicism and expediency. Both he and Hillary Clinton promised to bring back manufacturing jobs to those parts of the country. Neither could deliver on those promises, and both knew it. In fact, *manufacturing* – not manufacturing *jobs* – but *manufacturing* has increased in this country over the past several years with one catch – a significant and increasing proportion of those jobs are being performed by robots. Indeed, automation along with developments in artificial intelligence is challenging industrialization as such, let alone claims that a major increase in manufacturing jobs is possible. Projected ahead 15-20 years, it is far from clear what kind of job market there will be at all. What appears to be clear is that manufacturing jobs as we have known them and as had been promised by both candidates, will not be a significant part of that picture. What is clear is that



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Trump's constituency ultimately will be sacrificed, if not by policy then by technology, market forces and political cynicism.

Psychic energy, like all energy, is not static. The principle of entropy as stated in the second law of thermodynamics, holds that energy loss is a natural phenomenon. Hot coffee turns cold; dust accumulates; machines deteriorate, used or not. For us, who tend to be addicted to known order and fixed reality, entropy intrudes as if it were a dis-order, as if something is wrong, that it should not be. But entropy is a natural phenomenon and is essential in bringing about new paradigms of creation and life. Trickster energy *appears* destructive to us because we naturally resist shifts in known order. In fact, trickster energy may be paving the way for the demise of a form of order *that has run its course and is no longer viable*. In that sense, I think this is the process that we are now caught up in and led by Donald Trump as trickster.



Max Planck, a Nobel Prize-winning theoretical physicist, held that all physical processes have a direction and what happens here and now matters *and cannot be taken back*. In other words, if the image I have been painting here--of our being witnesses to, and participants in, the demise of the primary socio-political paradigm that dominated the 20th and early 21st century--is accurate, then we are in for much more chaos and disorder for several years to come. We cannot reverse the entropy process we are in, but

hopefully we can learn to be conscious facilitating participants in a more functional paradigm yet to unfold. This brings me to my final point...

Following the shock of coyote's appearance, and finding ourselves in political and social disarray, both political parties are busy reinventing reality about what went right and what went wrong and trying to salvage perceived critical components of the old order. My prediction is that those efforts will fail and both parties will find themselves in a chaotic wilderness, functioning out of seeming essential pragmatism with much going wrong in their expectations.

For me, the most glaring evidence of the demise of the paradigm we have been living and the advent of a new one concerns the reality of the Global Climate Change crisis. 97% of scientists agree on the fact of global warming and the absolute necessity of dramatic change in human behavior and awareness if our species is to survive. Some say we have to make those changes by the end of this century. More recent reports consistently suggest only 10-15 years to make the most dramatic shifts in human behavior if we are to stave off *irreversible processes that could lead to the demise of our species.*



President-elect Trump says that the Global Warming Crisis is a hoax and has appointed someone (Scott Pruitt) of like mind and conviction to run the EPA.

This single act on Trump's part threatens calamity. We do not have four plus

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years to waste on dismantling what has been done and then re-discovering that the crisis of Global Climate Change is indeed real. I don't tend to be an alarmist. But on this single point, alarms need to be rung.

Somewhere in Jung's magnum opus – *Mysterium Coniunctionis* – he writes that as he sees it, there is an existential competition between the life instinct and the death instinct. Paraphrasing him, he goes on to say that based on the evidence so far, the life instinct seems to have an edge on the death instinct – that is, there seems to be a bias, a leaning towards the preservation and furtherance of all life, including our species. I was impressed with this passage in his *Mysterium* and found deep resonance with it. It seems to me that this is the ultimate meaning of consciousness-raising. It has formed the center point of my own ethical relationship to life and in my work.

At the same time, I am of the first generation of Americans who played a major, and perhaps the decisive role, in ending a protracted war by taking to the streets. In our struggle with the Global Climate Change crisis, we cannot win. We can only lose. There is no winning over nature. Nature's laws are what they are. What we have the possibility of doing is becoming sufficiently conscious to respect nature's laws and to live within their constraints. That is as close as we can get to winning. I submit that this point is one of the cornerstones of the new paradigm that is becoming manifest. It constitutes a profound confrontation with our species' presumption of dominion over nature. And it requires a degree of humility to grasp its implications. Mr. Trump and company are not known for their humility.

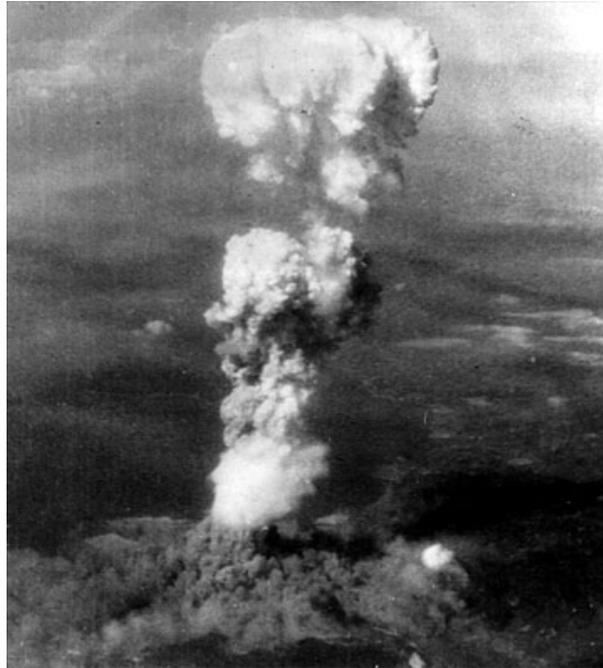


Imitating disabled reporter Serge Kovaleski

Historically Western civilization has not done well in learning from its biggest mistakes. We have a history of (subsequent) agreement that the First World War erupted through a series of blunders without any nation's conscious commitment to go to war. The subsequent carnage was unlike anything that had occurred in human history. It was just 21 years before another World War resulted in even greater carnage. One could conclude that our species does not practice prevention based on prior experience. Since the 1980s I have contended that the biggest lessons, the ones that most affect our species' behavior are learned less through logic and rational process than through *images* which bypass rational process and go directly to the emotional core, to the horror of the impact of human behavior on the species. In the Age of Technology, Artificial Intelligence, and the Anthropocene, this self-destructive behavior has produced technologies which point towards a palpable suicidal tendency inherent in our species' make-up. The historical record indicates strongly that it was nothing

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short of direct images of the horrors wrought by the dropping of the two atomic bombs on Japan that forestalled nuclear holocaust between the Soviet Union and the United States—this, and the subsequent threat of destruction of civilization itself at the height of the 1982 Cuban Missile Crisis.



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But those were discrete events – concentrated in time and carnage – images of which were almost immediately available to the world. The Global Warming crisis is above all *a process* more than discrete events, taking place over – not too many – years. One might say that the process is one of the frog being in a pot of cold water before the water is heated, versus being put into the water after it is boiling as in the case of the atomic bombs.¹ We are like the frog in the cold pot of water with the fire being gradually turned up ever higher. The scientists warn that if we wait until we register that heat as intolerable we may well have waited beyond any effective remediation of the problem at its core.

So, short of an enantiadromia where psychic phenomena turn into their opposite, we must be vigilant and not forget that it may become necessary to take to the streets. Just this week an analysand asked me if I thought it possible that someone as pathological as Donald Trump could find himself enthralled by, and thus transformed by the archetype of the Presidency. After reflecting for a minute or two, I was glad to hear my response: “Yes I do.”

Jerome S. Bernstein, M.A.P.C., NCPsyA. is a Jungian analyst in private practice in Santa Fe, NM, and has written and lectured internationally on the application of archetypal dynamics in politics since 1982. He is author of “Living in the Borderland, Power and Politics, and Beyond the Individual: Analytical Psychology Applied to Groups and Nations”.

1

Boiling frog Metaphor
From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

The boiling frog is an anecdote describing a frog slowly being boiled alive. The premise is that if a frog is put suddenly into boiling water, it will jump out, but if it is put in cold water which is then brought to a boil slowly, it will not perceive the danger and will be cooked to death. The story is often used as a metaphor for the inability or unwillingness of people to react to or be aware of threats that arise gradually.

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