

Apocalypse 2012 AD!

(Another) Catastrophic End-of-the-World Prediction?
Or, the Death of One Era and the Birth of Another?

By David E. Roy

The latest in a seemingly non-stop series of apocalyptic visions of the end of the world comes to us with amazing computer-generated imagery (CGI) virtuosity in the movie *2012*. While this apocalyptic¹ event comes from a very different place than the one I wrote about last year concerning the Rapture, nonetheless it does have a definite religious quality to it.

Whereas that account was shaped by Christians (based on a serious misreading of biblical texts), what shapes this current one can be called "New Age" beliefs. The movement that expresses those beliefs certainly has functioned as a religion for many in recent decades.

Why does the New Age movement want to focus on 2012? Because, as we've been hearing recently, the calendar of the ancient Mayan civilization supposedly ends with the Winter Solstice of that year (December 21). By implication, this also spells the end of the world.

The Mayan Long Count Calendar

The Mayans, who kept more than one calendar, used what is called the Mesoamerican Long Count Calendar to track cycles of 100s and even 1000s of years based upon astronomical alignments.

For their civilization, one of the longest cycles lasted approximately 5,126 years and ended on December 21, 2012. There was, however, an even longer cycle of 25,920 years when the sun would again align with the galactic axis. This, too, is supposed to be on the same day in 2012.

So, if these astronomical alignments are intrinsically significant to the workings of the universe, and not just meaningful to the human observer, something deep and powerful could happen. Just what is the question.

The Movie's Prediction: A Typical (& Highly Visual) Collapse into Chaos

The movie *2012* takes the typical spin that everything ends, that everything possible will come crashing down upon our heads or blow up in our faces. In this case, the prophesized death and destruction is caused by a series of solar flares. These flares have somehow put the earth's core in a giant neutrino oven (was it the countertop or the over-the-stove model?).²

While the earth's insides boil and bubble, small bands of those in the know make their way to arks in the Himalayas to ride out the floods. Just about all of them are the

rich and powerful. Granted, they are not raptured up, up and away to a whole new planet, but the physical world as we know it is destroyed along with billions upon billions of human beings, not to mention countless other animals.

Ah, the drama of it all!

When is the Breaking Point? And, How Will It End?

And yet, one has to wonder today where things are headed with the combination of terrorism around the globe and the environmental destruction that has spread over our planet.

Regarding terrorism and war, the network news stations seem to be striving to catch up to the message of imminent catastrophic danger that Fox's *24* keeps pounding into viewer's heads every Monday night with grim Kiefer Sutherland's grisly approach to national security. This is hammered home several times each show with its trademark metal-on-metal **CHINK, CHINK, CHINK!**

As for the environment, there are millions upon millions of people around the world who have been concerned for decades about the catastrophic damage that is being done to the earth's biosphere. None of the current plans being considered seem anywhere near adequate to the job and problems at hand.

So, the question arises: Where and when is all of this going to end? More importantly, *how* is it going to end?

There can be little doubt that human beings are drawn to emotionally intense, dramatic accounts of the end of the world. While this response may well be universal, it appears to be particularly important to the severely oppressed, those people whose lives are filled with pain and suffering and marked by a lack of freedom and respect. Under those conditions, it seems to be human nature to dream of better times being brought about by the explosive, fiery deaths of those who have perpetuated the evil. The oppressed have little to lose which makes them all the more dangerous.

This is the type of end times, for example, depicted in the Hebrew Book of Daniel where the author described in dramatic imagery what was in store for the Roman occupiers. However, even here, the world does not come to an absolute end, but it is reborn as a beautiful place. The transformation follows the violent, bloody death of the oppressors.

The question, then, becomes: Is the brutal upheaval necessary or is there another way that the transformation could happen?

Stanislav Grof: Pioneering Psychiatrist

One of the persons who has offered a thoughtful alternative to the standard catastrophically searing end to human life on this planet is Stanislav Grof, M.D., Ph.D. Grof is a Czechoslovakian born physician-psychiatrist who has been a foundational leader in the Transpersonal Psychology field. He has been actively exploring the field of non-ordinary states of consciousness for more than 50 years.

Much of his work has been devoted to research and training utilizing Holotropic Breathwork. He developed this technique to induce an altered state of consciousness that did not depend upon drugs.³

In a paper prepared for a conference in 2009,⁴ Grof reported that he and others have had visions of this potential transformation while undergoing Breathwork. Grof lists many cultures, including the Mayan, that have ritualized methods of inducing altered states of consciousness. Many of them have discerned a future time where this transformation would unfold. For the Mayan's, this date is December 21, 2012.

Like a great number of the findings discussed by the Transpersonal Psychology movement, his report is not something that would be convincing to an empirically grounded researcher. There simply are too many variables that cannot be controlled adequately, any one of which could influence the outcome in the direction that would conform to the convictions held by the researchers.

Nonetheless, his data are intuitively intriguing and could serve as the basis for better-controlled research. After all, in the history of science, many great discoveries have started with the careful observations by a single individual: Galileo, Newton, Charles Darwin, Madam Marie Curie, and so on.

What is Ahead? Transformation of Humanity?

Grof's view of what this date could be about has the grace of simplicity, though there is a fairly complex picture that underlies his conclusions: He believes that what is looming is the end of an era, the death of an age, of an epoch, with the potential for there to be the birth of a new age.

The current age has been characterized at its worst by, "... a world dominated by unbridled violence and insatiable greed, egotistic hierarchy of values, corrupted institutions and corporations, and irreconcilable conflicts between organized religions," Grof stated in the paper (p.2). "Instead of predicting a physical destruction of the material world, the Mayan prophecy might refer to death and rebirth and a mass inner transformation of humanity," continues Grof (p.2)

Before turning to humanity as a whole, Grof first looks at the effects of Holotropic Breathwork on individuals. Here, Grof reports that it facilitates personal transformation, a dying of the old ways and the rebirth into a new life that is characterized by many positive features: "... a new appreciation for existence an reference for all life. ... development of deep humanitarian and ecological concerns. ... Differences among people ... [are] interesting and enriching ... [T]hese individuals develop a deep sense of being planetary citizens ... [vs. citizens of a particular nation, region, community]." (p. 27)

Individual Transformations May Foreshadow a Global Transformation

Grof feels these individual transformations⁵ foreshadow the nature of a global transformation that must happen if human beings are to survive and transcend our history of ecological destruction and the use of violence to resolve conflicts. One major method, obviously, would be broadening the use of Holotropic Breathwork, particularly

if it can be demonstrated that it has the degree of efficacy that would be required to gain broad support; and if the changes made were in the direction desired.

Doubtless, other methods of facilitating this type of positive transformation must already exist, perhaps needing refinement; and likewise, additional methods may be created as well.

Like Grof and many others, I believe we need all the help we can get to cultivate what I have come to call a deeper and broader humanity, one where we emphasize respect and compassion for other people, for all of life, for the planet itself.

This vision of the *apokalypsis eschaton*¹ is very different in its essential nature from the massive, fiery upheaval portrayed in the *2012* movie or any of the so-called Left Behind movement. In fact, it is just this destructive approach to life that is being transformed into something that allows all of life to exist together in an enriching harmony.

David E. Roy, Ph.D., can be contacted via e-mail at admin@cctnet.com or regular mail at the Center for Creative Transformation, 5475 N. Fresno St., Ste. 109, Fresno, CA 93710-8333. (559-435-7835)

¹One note on language: The word "apocalypse" does not mean the end of the world. It means that a previously hidden truth has been unveiled; hence, revelation. The Greek work *eschaton* means end or end of an age. So, when the two are combined, it means that the end of an era is being revealed. But this does not necessarily equate with the annihilation of the planet.

²In general, the science behind this movie is considered nonsense. See *David Shiga, reporter* at <http://www.newscientist.com/blogs/culturelab/2009/11/2012-movie-is-truly-disastrous.php> or Scientific American's Phillip Yam at <http://www.scientificamerican.com/blog/post.cfm?id=in-2012-neutrinos-melt-the-earths-c-2009-11-13>

³ Locally, Jim and Annie Compton-Schmidt, trained by Grof, have conducted numerous Holotropic Breathwork events. In the interest of journalistic full disclosure, I've attended one of Jim and Annie's workshops and also experienced a Breathwork session with Grof during a conference on Transpersonal Psychology and Process Thought.

⁴[2012 and Human Destiny: End of the World or Consciousness Revolution?](#) - "2012 Now" Conference, Fort Collins, Colorado - May 29, 2009 (PDF/34 pages).

⁵Grof's ideas are reasonably complex and, in some areas, will seem "far out." However, just because some of them seem so far removed from the view of the world most of us hold, it does not follow that they should be dismissed by anyone, but scientists in particular, without careful consideration. For example, he takes the Hero's story as developed by C.G. Jung and Joseph Campbell and puts it at the core of the transformation. The hero must do battle and if he survives, he returns home with the power, wisdom, and love to aid others. Transformation in the psychological sense, for Grof, involves processing three phases of birth trauma, bringing the material from the unconscious into the conscious mind. Grof also talks about the astronomical alliances that are predicted for 2012 and how this might impact the sought-for transformations. Finally, it needs to be emphasized that one can be guided by Grof's ideas even if one does not subscribe to all of them.