

All for One

Much of the propaganda that inundates the world's population is designed to justify animosities and conflicts, whether religious, racial or political. But there is a larger truth that also must be understood that we are all in this together, as Winslow Myers notes.

By Winslow Myers

The single most powerful idea that needs to be seeded into world culture as rapidly as possible is that we are one interdependent whole on this planet. Difficult as the implications may be for us to grasp, it will have only a salutary effect upon world politics, economics, cultural diversity, and religious practice.

Going further, it could be asserted that the internalization in the human mind and heart of this idea is the way evolution itself will manifest itself at this unfolding moment of history.

For relief from such headache-inducing abstractions, I often walk a path that takes me along a tidal river to a midden, a cliff-high mound of oyster shells left from the summer gatherings of indigenous Americans over millennia. The midden slopes to a beach where horseshoe crabs forage along the sandy shallows, a species so resilient that it has sustained itself unchanged for 445 million years.

The process that has allowed horseshoe crabs to flourish for so long has operated instinctually, on "automatic," in a roller coaster ride up into breathtaking diversity and down into five vertiginous moments of mass extinction, as life-forms jostled for their place in the ecosystem.

Those forms that adapted survived. Those that did not disappeared, leaving only their fossil remains. Scientists tell us we are into a sixth dizzying plunge as thousands of species go extinct around us. Natural selection continues to operate at full throttle.

Meanwhile, an "unnatural" factor, human consciousness, entered the scene. In what has been only an instant of evolutionary time, it became dominant, rather, it has assumed dominance over the system while in reality remaining totally subject to the system's every law and principle.

The "other" in the twoness of self and other is not only the perceived enemy or opposing viewpoint. The other is also the natural world that until now we have perceived as an infinite resource subject to our command and exploitation,

rather than as the ground of our own sustained vitality. We can be no healthier than it.

If the Chinese continue to operate their coal-fired power plants, the largest single source of carbon emissions in the world, the military-economic competition between China and the United States will become at best irrelevant and at worst a potential disaster. If the United States continues to use up a third of all global resources, it will matter little whether Iran produces a nuclear weapon or not.

These ecological realities behind our conflicts rarely surface in political campaigns because we are entranced by obsolete competitive metaphors: our politics are not the civil contribution of workable ideas based in interdependency. Instead they are a Super Bowl contest.

Super Bowl twoness is the obsolete thought-paradigm that informs everything we do. We compete from birth to death. We compare ourselves endlessly with others. We envy those who are wealthier or better looking or apparently happier, and look down upon those less fortunate than ourselves with a distancing pity or contempt. In a thousand daily ways, we take sides.

Especially in the United States our politics, our legislatures and courts, executive leaders, and mass-media discourse are dominated by polarized allegiance to conservative or progressive opinion.

A Republican president and vice-president administer a torture program of global reach, a program that would subject them to potential criminal trial by Nuremburg standards, but they have enough support among both Republicans and Democrats, given our fear of the terrorist "other", to receive a pass.

A Democratic president supervises a drone program that violates the sovereignty of other nations and kills innocents at his personal command, also a program that could arguably subject him to potential criminal trial by Nuremburg standards. But he too enjoys enough support to receive a pass.

We citizens whose collective will our leaders are sworn to enact continue in our moral ambivalence, our troubled twoness. Instead of the practical imperative of the Golden Rule, that bow toward the truth of interdependence found in all the major world religions, we live by the half-truth of "you're either with us or against us."

At the fateful moment in October 1962 when superpower competition, in the form of the Cuban Missile Crisis, brought the planet as close as it has been to thermonuclear annihilation, who was the enemy? Who was the "other"? Was it not war itself? Was it not ignorance itself? Why is this not equally true in every

competitive confrontation from the international to the intimately personal?

We humans emerged from a *uni*-verse. This is the single context out of which came all our religions, all our cultural and ethnic diversity, our constantly calibrated sense of twoness.

The great next step of the evolutionary process is from twoness to oneness, not as a New Age bromide but as an evolutionary necessity. This step can only take place in the way individual humans feel and think, as we, we upon whose decisions rests the fate of all life-forms on the planet, mature into willingness to look into how we can contribute to the health of the whole system.

Poet Robert Frost wrote:

Nature within her inmost self divides

To trouble men with having to take sides.

Frost's couplet distills the depth to which competition is structured into evolution. But we are awakening to the fundamental unity behind our twoness. As a Peace Corps volunteer once said, "The earth is a sphere, and a sphere has only one side. We are all on the same side."

Muslims, Christians, Alawites, Sunnis, Iranians, Jews, fans of Limbaugh, fans of Maddow, horseshoe crabs, we're all in this together.

Winslow Myers, author of *Living Beyond War: A Citizen's Guide*, serves on the Board of Beyond War (www.beyondwar.org), a non-profit educational foundation whose mission is to explore, model and promote the means for humanity to live without war.
