

Ancient shamanic emotional healing techniques and today's philosophical counseling

Daniela Stănciulescu¹

Abstract: In shamanic thinking, an important idea is that the earth does not belong to us. Earth is just a wonderful and welcoming host for us and other species. Did the sense of ownership dehumanize us, as the French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau would observe? Maybe. Lust for wealth, greed, and selfishness, these traits specific only to human people, among all inhabitants of our planet led, over time, to irreversible planetary changes. Earthquakes, tsunamis, forest fires, and floods: all these disasters seem to be the consequences of human reprehensible acts. Not only the rapid climate changes but also the recent wars and the pandemics have attracted emotional and psychological problems, such as depression, anxiety, or PTSD, a phenomenon that is growing alarmingly worldwide. In these difficulties times I believe the shamanic techniques could work together with philosophical counseling to heal us, opening the way to a peaceful and balanced understanding of our relationship with the Universe and ourselves.

Key-words: shamanic technique; shamanism; core shamanism; ancient philosophy; philosophical counseling;

¹Spiru Haret University Romania; APPA – American Philosophical Practitioners Association;
Email: danastanciulescu@yahoo.fr

Introduction

There are many definitions and conceptual frameworks regarding the term *shamanism*. Even more are the ironies, criticisms, or even fear of shamanic healing techniques. Above all, Shamanism is a spiritual and cultural tradition that reflects some of the oldest forms of healing, originated over 30,000 years ago and is widely practiced in South and North America, Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia, Micronesia, and Polynesia. Shamanism constitutes a set of universal practices used for a long time, and “the fact so many different cultures throughout human history have found shamanic techniques useful and relevant suggests that the holotropic states engage what the anthropologists call the ‘primal mind’, a basic and primordial aspect of the human psyche that transcends race, culture and time” (Grof, 2000, 9).

Broadly, anthropologists’ opinions follow two approaches to the origin of the shamanic phenomenon (Hall, 2022, 87-106):

1. Shamanism is rooted in the practices of hunter-gatherer societies in Siberia. The exponent of this direction, the Russian anthropologist Anna Kuznetsova claims that the essence of the shamanic phenomenon belongs exclusively to the cultural space of Siberia.

2. Shamanism includes all similar spiritual techniques from prehistory to the present day. Regarding that second opinion, the most important representative is Mircea Eliade, who believed that traces of shamanic practices appear in the existence of our ancestors everywhere. Siberia is a vast area of Russia and northern Kazakhstan, being composed of all of North Asia. In East Asia the Buddhist religion is predominant, combined with the Taoist religion (in China and Korea) and the Shinto religion (Japan). And a lot of Asian people have shamanic roots, not only Siberian ones. For example, after the Enlightenment, the Buddha showed some “miraculous powers”: he rose into the air, cut his body into pieces, and let his head fall to the ground, to collect them later, under the amazed eyes of those present. But this archaic symbolism of ascent and fly, as well as the mystical space that reflects the vision of a “paradise” and at the same time an “inner space”, accessible only to Buddhist initiates through the practice of techniques such as yoga, asceticism or contemplation, are fundamental elements of shamanism (Eliade, 1964, 406).

In Tibet, Lamaism has preserved shamanic ideas and techniques, such as the magical means by which lama sorcerers fly, command the weather, fly through the air, and perform ecstatic dances (Eliade, 1964, 405-411). Furthermore, early Chinese history reflects a shamanic view of the relationship between man and the universe, including spiritual journeys to other worlds, the invocation of supernatural beings, the use of talismans to attract the benevolence of divine beings or communication with plant and animal reindeer. Even Taoism contains elements that are rooted in Chinese Shamanism. Thus, the practices of the Shangqing included some shamanic rituals, and one of the first Taoist philosophers, Zhuangzi (Chuang Tzu), wrote some stories that were supposed to contain shamanic elements. Eliade believes that Daoism, especially late Daoism, has assimilated, to a greater extent than yoga and Buddhism, the archaic techniques of ecstasy. Eliade also shows that Chinese "shamanism" apparently dominated religious life long before the preeminence of Confucianism and the state religion. The term "shaman" is proposed conventionally by Eliade to bring together related beliefs spread, under various names, around the globe. Thus, Eliade indicates "the shaman is indispensable in any ceremony that concerns the experiences of the human soul as such, that is, as a precarious psychic unit, inclined to forsake the body and an easy prey for demons and sorcerers. This is why, all through Asia and North America, and elsewhere as well (e.g., Indonesia), the shaman performs the function of doctor and healer; he announces the diagnosis, goes in search of the patient's fugitive soul, captures it, and makes its return to animate the body that it has left. It is always the shaman who conducts the dead person's soul to the underworld, for he is the psychomp par excellence. Healer and psychomp, the shaman is these because he commands the techniques of ecstasy - that is because his soul can safely abandon his body and roam at vast distances, can penetrate the underworld, and rise to the sky. Through his own ecstatic experience, he knows the roads of the extraterrestrial regions. He can go below and above because he has already been there. The danger of losing his way in these forbidden regions is still great; but sanctified by his initiation and furnished with his guardian spirits, the shaman is the only human being able to challenge the danger and venture into a mystical geography." (Eliade, 1964, 183).

Current research in the field of shamanism

Even though in the modern period scientists tend to interpret the shamanic state of trance as a mental illness, such as hysteria, schizophrenia or epilepsy, the followers of shamanism have always been known to distinguish between a sacred experience and a mental condition (Grof&Grof, 2017). Nowadays, with the dissipation of the materialistic mirage, the return to spirituality has become a rapidly developing contemporary phenomenon, which means the re-actualization of ancient spiritual healing techniques, such as shamanic methods, oriental meditative practices, psychedelic substances, experiential psychotherapies, and psychiatry.

More and more people seem to realize that genuine spirituality based on profound personal experience is a vitally important dimension of life. In view of the escalating global crisis brought about by the materialistic orientation of Western technological civilization, it has become obvious that we are paying a great price for having rejected spirituality. We have banned from our life a force that nourishes, empowers, and gives meaning to human existence. On the individual level, the toll for the loss of spirituality is an impoverished, alienated, and unfulfilling way of life and an increase of emotional and psychosomatic disorders. On the collective level, the absence of spiritual values leads to strategies of existence that threaten the survival of life on our planet, such as plundering of nonrenewable resources, polluting the natural environment, disturbing ecological balance, and using violence as a principal means of international problem-solving. (Grof, 2000, 138)

The most important directions of analysis of the shamanic phenomenon concern Siberian shamanism and Native American shamanism, as well as the western shamanism that we encounter today in crowded areas of cities.

1. *Siberian shamanism.* Russian anthropologist Anna Kuznetsova believes that shamanism is a part of the Siberian culture. Also, Kuznetsova believed that the way shamanism is understood today is increasingly

moving away from the true values that ancient Siberian shamanism contained. She summarizes the characteristics of Siberian shamanism as follows: (1) divine choice involving dreams, (2) initiation through illness and self-healing, (3) musical performance and dance, and (4) responsibility to meet the psycho-spiritual needs of the community. (Hall, 2022, 87-106)

2. *Native American Shamanism.* The fascination with shamanism of the “white” people that conquered America with shamanism led to the taking over and, above all, to the processing of Native American traditions, a trend that the anthropologist Robert J. Wallis called “neocolonialism” and which provoked the indignation of the native populations who see this as a kind of “theft” of identity (Robert J. Wallis, 2003). In South America, the main prerogatives of aboriginal shamans are, broadly speaking, healing, journeying into the depths to the mother of Animals to obtain game and favorable weather, and helping barren women. Characteristics of South American shamans are initiation by vocation, retreat into solitude, apprenticeship with a preceptor, closeness to one or more familiar spirits, symbolic rituals of death and resurrection, secret language, mystical flight, and deep-sea travel. The main causes of the disease are the violation of taboos, which can be resolved with the help of collective confession, or the abduction of the soul by a dead person, who is cured after an ecstatic journey to Heaven or the depths of the sea. The shaman travels to find the soul of the sick and bring it back into the body (Eliade, 1964, 289). In North America, the main function of the shaman is healing. The shaman also gets involved in other magical-religious rites, attracting or stopping rain, etc., making divinations, protecting the community from the charms of sorcerers, etc. (Ibid., 297) Initiation into shamanism takes place through death and ritual resurrection, and shamanic techniques involve the ingestion of so-called magical substances, flying to the sky, healing by suction, searching for the soul of the sick, the function of a psychopomp etc. (Ibid., 324)

3. *Western shamanism.* One of today's religious studies specialists, Kocku von Stuckrad, believes that neo-shamanism is a reaction to the concept of “exorcism” by which Max Weber understood the devaluing of mysticism. He summarizes the recent history of shamanism as follows:

- During the Enlightenment, the shaman was perceived as “a religious virtuoso, a reminder of those ancient ecstatics and artists

who were able to transgress ordinary reality using music and poetry.”

- After Mircea Eliade made his discoveries known, the shaman “became an indication of a new understanding of humanity’s relation to nature, of man’s ability to access spiritual levels of reality, and of leading a respectful life toward the *sacred web of creation*.”
- After the “seminal work of Carlos Castaneda, „major shamanic protagonists hold a degree in anthropology” and “try to combine this education with a spiritual practice outside the academy”.
- Finally, von Stuckrad identifies the American transcendentalist philosophy of Thoreau and Emerson as an intermediary link between Schelling’s nature philosophy and neo-Shamanism. (Stuckrad, 2002, 771-799).

Taking into account the attraction that shamanism exercises today in a civilization oversaturated with scientific materialism, on the one hand, and religious fanaticism, on the other, three main types of shamanic practitioners have been cataloged in the Western world: *wannabes* or *followers*, respectively practitioners who have acquired indigenous or pseudo-indigenous shamanic techniques; *neo-shamanism* practitioners (characterized by eclecticism); *core shamanism* practitioners (the conservative branch), the latter two orientations preferring a revised form of shamanism adapted to modern times (Brunton, 2003).

Wannabe practitioners are the keepers of traditions, who prefer to carry on various indigenous practices, live in groups, and are usually led by a guru: „They typically romanticize their adopted system, overstating its positive attributes while ignoring negative aspects. They often focus on overt symbols of their adopted group such as ritual, costume, and language. They may fall victim to distortions of the native system they are emulating such as adopted Pan-Indian elements that had no place in a particular Native American group’s traditional culture” (Brunton, 2003).

Followers of neo-shamanism appropriate shamanic elements from several shamanic cultures and beyond: „They are consistent with other New Age homogenizing where specific content is an expression of what works for individuals, according to their personal experience with various spiritual systems (...) eclectic pioneer shamanic practice are an earth-centered spiritual philosophy with strong ecological overtones, an

idealization of past cultures and societies, an idealization of simpler societies who are revisited as noble savages, and an apocalyptic faith. I also have seen in many of these people an overarching belief in a progressive evolution of the universe and its inhabitants framed in developmental language” (Brunton, 2003). Core shamanism practitioners are followers of basic shamanism, a direction developed by the anthropologist Michael Harner, whose intention was to develop an exhaustive methodology for the application of shamanic techniques in the most scientific way possible: „Core shamanism emphasizes the *shamanic journey*, an excursion into no ordinary reality by an individual or group of individuals facilitated by monotonous drumming. The excursion is purely a consciousness experience. The destination(s) of the journey is/are the conventional Lower, Middle, and Upper Worlds (...) The “tradition” in core shamanism is methodology. This has the effect of freeing up practitioners from culturally specific restrictions that, while appropriate in their culture of origin, are seen as unnecessary in the contemporary American setting. Other traditions are expected to emerge over time as practitioners explore and communities emerge” (Ibid.). The rhythm of the drums, used by shamanic healers to access the altered states of consciousness, should be sufficient to induce shamanic trance, or so claim today's followers of core shamanism.

Anyway, both followers of neo-shamanism and core shamanism refuse to be included in the New Age movement (Townsend, 2004, 49-57). Nowadays, on the American continent, the neo-shamanic practitioners carry out their work, including in the academic environment, in parallel with the Native Americans, despite the latter's hostile attitude towards the “white shaman”, to whom they object regarding the approach of shamanic techniques through the Decontextualization, universalization, psychologization, individualization, reproduction, reification of cultural primitivism and the romanticization of indigenous shamans (Wallis, 49).

Hobson's original essay, “The Rise of the White Shaman as a New Version of Cultural Imperialism,” concerned white spoken-word poets in the Bay Area who were dressing in pseudo-Indigenous garb, adopting pseudo-Indian names, and performing homages to white poet Gary Snyder's poem “Shaman Songs” (Hobson 1). Reflecting on this piece twenty-five years later (in 2002), Hobson turns to purveyors

of "White thought "Indian medicine", for whose efforts he blames "spiritual fakers", including Carlos Castaneda (3). By contrast, Hobson affirms that Native American "medicine people" (his preferred term, as opposed to "shamans") have continued to practice, largely invisibly to non-Indigenous people, and in a way that is dispersed across various professions and social roles, including "throughout the university structure." (Hall, 3)

Western shamanism has received various criticisms over time, summarized by Wallis (2003) as follows:

1. Decontextualizing and universalizing.
2. Psychologizing and individualizing.
3. Reproduction and reification of cultural primitivism.
4. Romanticizing of indigenous shamans.

Another objection to contemporary shamanism is that the trance used by our shamanic ancestors for soul-healing journeys is now replaced by a pseudo-trance or sleep, and sometimes hallucinations induced by psychotropic substances. And although, the decision to embark on an internal journey with the aid of mind-altering substances is personal and certainly significant, however it is important to remember that expanding consciousness is not the goal itself, but rather a means through which people hope to understand their lives and reorganize them" (Levanon, 2022, 2881).

Shamanic healing technics

In *The Way of the Shaman*, Harner starts from Eliade's comparative studies, which we have seen identified unmistakable similarities between ancient spiritual practices across the globe, and defines the Westerner shaman as a person who enters the altered state of consciousness only through appeal to the jerky sounds of the drum. In this trance, which carries him into unusual realities, today's shaman can gain the knowledge and power to heal himself and others.

The main tool shamans use in healing is shamanic trance, a form of deep relaxation of the mind in which altered/holotropic states of consciousness occur. Our distant ancestors knew full well that altered states of consciousness serve a profound purpose. Ancient shamans, for

example (and here we can include *avant-la-lettre* “hypnotherapists”), used these states of consciousness for healing. Later, religious mystics (Christians, Buddhists, Taoists, Sufis, etc.) used them for communication with the divine, calling them “revealing” states.

Ancient and aboriginal cultures have spent much time and energy developing powerful mind-altering techniques that can induce holotropic states. They combine in different ways chanting, breathing, drumming, rhythmic dancing, fasting, social and sensory isolation, extreme physical pain, and other elements. These cultures used them in shamanic procedures, healing ceremonies, and rites of passage -- powerful rituals enacted at the time of important biological and social transitions, such as circumcision, puberty, marriage, or birth of a child. Many cultures have used for these purposes psychedelic plants (Stafford 1977, Schultes and Hofmann 1979). The most famous examples of these are different varieties of hemp, the Mexican cactus peyote, Psilocybe mushrooms, the African shrub eboga, and the Amazonian jungle plants Banisteriopsis caapi and Psychotria viridis, the active ingredients of yagé or ayahuasca. Additional important triggers of holotropic experiences are various forms of systematic spiritual practice involving meditation, concentration, breathing, and movement exercises, that are used in different systems of yoga, Vipassana or Zen Buddhism, Tibetan Vajrayana, Taoism, Christian mysticism, Sufism, or Cabalah. Other techniques were used in the ancient mysteries of death and rebirth, such as the Egyptian temple initiations of Isis and Osiris and the Greek Bacchanalia, rites of Attis and Adonis, and the Eleusinian mysteries (Grof, 2000.2, 3).

So, the artists are in an altered state of consciousness when they create. It is the phenomenon that Irina Mavrodin describes, concerning literary art, as “the hand that writes”, given that no writer can explain where and how his inspiration comes from. Extrapolating, an invisible hand seems to superimpose the hand of the creator, guiding the movements of the artistic instrument with downright mathematical precision. We go through different altered states of consciousness every day (when we sleep, when we relax, when we travel by car or train and daydream, when we imagine or conversely, when we concentrate intensely

on something, etc.). Altered states of consciousness are gateways to our subconscious, or rather, to ourselves.

In the shamanic trance, although deep, we aim to create an authentic relationship with our true self, which is why the conscious mind should remain present, which is hardly possible after ingesting psychotropic substances. As in hypnotherapy sessions, the subject's mind must relax into a shamanic trance, but the "hidden observer" must remain in position, calm and completely lucid.

The main shamanic healing techniques aim, as in the distant past of mankind, to recover parts of the soul, lost because of trauma, the extraction of negative energies, or the cutting of negative energy cords. Among the most common causes of soul loss are sexual, physical, or emotional abuse, some accidents or traumatic events, the loss of a loved one, death or divorce, etc. Symptoms of soul loss include chronic depression, anxiety, emotional blockage, lack of physical or emotional energy, memory loss, various addictions and/or compulsive buying, post-traumatic stress syndrome, troubled relationships, unresolved heartache, etc.

Other shamanic healing techniques target trauma that the soul comes from previous lives. Thus, from a Shamanic perspective, the cause of illness can be found in a previous life. Trance facilitates the discovery of the existence in which the trauma occurred that produces effects in the present tense and its erasure. And in hypnosis regressions are made in past lives, with the same finality.

The concepts of karma and reincarnation represents a cornerstone of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Zoroastrianism, the Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhism, and Taoism. Similar ideas can be found in such geographically, historically and culturally diverse groups as various African tribes, native Americans, pre-Columbian cultures, the Hawaiian Kahunas, practitioners of the Brazilian umbanda, the Gauls and the Druids. In ancient Greece, several important schools of thought subscribed to it. Among them were the Pythagoreans, the Orphics, and the Platonists. This doctrine was also adopted by the Essenes, the Pharisees, the Karaites and other Jewish and semi-Jewish groups, and it formed an important part of the cabbalistic theology of medieval Jewry. It was also held by Neoplatonists and Gnostics. For the Hindus and the Buddhists, as well as open-minded and

knowledgeable modern consciousness researchers, reincarnation is not a matter of belief, but an empirical issue, based on very specific experiences and observations (Grof, 2000, 235.)

From a psychological perspective, it is the subconscious that releases a story to help heal a current problem without making the problem of metempsychosis. From a philosophical perspective, "we can certainly refer to Western ancient tradition, specifically the Platonic understanding of knowledge and Ideas, that like traditional cultures assume no external factors. And so similar to the shaman, whose "job" is to mediate, and even translate the visions and knowledge supposedly obtained from the outside, the practical philosopher who follows or at least is familiar with ancient Greek philosophical traditions, even the Jungian idea' of universal archetypes, does not rely on external facts, s/he can be aware of their influence on one's journey, but instead of dismissing visions as the stem of external stimuli, s/he will refer to them as the reason for the visions" (Levanon, 2881). And from a shamanic perspective, the shaman accesses past lives, accompanied and guided by helping spirits. The shaman is only a bridge between worlds, not the actual healer.

The structure of a work plan in which shamanic healing techniques and philosophical counseling intertwine

In principle, a work plan that brings together philosophical counseling and shamanic healing could have the following structure:

Step 1: Identification of the problem, or the preliminary interview, a meeting in which the counselor makes sure, among other things, that he is not dealing with a person with serious mental disorders, in which case a specialist's opinion is recommended. This step is common for philosophical counseling, psychological therapy, and shamanic healing.

Step 2: Identify the emotions that arise about the problem. Usually, this step is used more in philosophical and psychological interview, and less in shamanic healing.

Step 3: Analyze how the problem could be solved. If the client leans towards a spiritual approach, then, in addition to hypnosis, meditation, or prayer, one of the shamanic spiritual healing techniques can be introduced,

with rigorous explanations and only by a therapist or counselor who studied those practices.

Step 4: In the contemplation stage, the shamanic experience is integrated, a process that can be as difficult as the previous stage, because a spiritual experience, however powerful, if unprocessed, does not have the power to stimulate transformation. In the integration phase of the spiritual healing experience, I believe that the discussions between the counselor and the client should have the history of religions as a support point, from a philosophical perspective. The client can be made aware of the fact that all the great religions that underlie today's philosophical concepts, Buddhism, Taoism, and Pythagoreans, contain shamanic elements. This important stage is recommended to be performed with those who have the necessary tools. And philosophers possess tools such as Socratic dialogue, critical and creative thinking, reasoning ability, conceptualization, criteria creation, thinking exercises, guided contemplation, and more (Levanon, 2881)

The client can learn that the holotropic states of consciousness, specific to the shamanic trance, are also found in the mysteries of the ancient world:

These mysteries were based on mythological stories about deities that symbolized death and transformation. in ancient Sumer there were Inanna and Dumuzi, in Egypt, Isis and Osiris, and in Greece, the deities Attis, Adonis, Dionysos and Persephone. Their Mesoamerican counterparts were the Aztec Quetzalcoatl or the Plumed Serpent and the Mayan Hero known from the Popol Vuh. These mysteries were particularly popular in the Mediterranean area and in the Middle East, as exemplified by the Sumerian and Egyptian temple initiations, the Mithraic mysteries or the Greek Korybantic rites, Bacchanalia and the mysteries of Eleusis (Grof, 2000, 11).

As Grof shows us, among the initiates of the Eleusinian mysteries were many illustrious and famous figures of antiquity, such as Plato, Aristotle, and Epictetus, the military leader Alcibiades, the authors of plays Euripides, Sophocles, the poet Pindar, the philosopher emperor Marcus Aurelius, as well as the Roman statesman and philosopher Marcus Tullius Cicero (Ibid., 11). In ancient mysteries, altered states of consciousness are

attributed to hypnosis. But the forerunners of hypnosis are to be found in tribal shamanism, as we read in the Handbook of the National Guild of American Hypnotists. Like the shamanic trance, the hypnotic trance is an altered state of consciousness, localized in the theta state, sharing several elements, such as rhythm, defocused attention, or dissociation. If inductions are used in hypnotic trance (which include progressive relaxation techniques and a certain rhythm of the voice, a certain intensity, repetitiveness, etc.), shamanic journeys are mainly based on rhythmic drums.

Step 5: Is the stage of balance, when the client is fully aware of the emotional and spiritual cause of the problem for which he sought the support of the counselor, and is ready to make healthy decisions about the future, with a new openness to spirituality and a new understanding of human relations.

Ethical considerations regarding the use of psychotropic substances in spiritual healing sessions through shamanic methods

Many people associate modern shamanism with the consumption of hallucinogenic substances, but these practices of accessing trance are relatively recent, as Eliade claims. Moreover, Eliade shows, “a closer study of the problem shows us that the use of narcotics rather reflects a decline in the technique of ecstasy or an extension of this technique to “lower” populations and social groups. Eliade believed that the use of psychotropic substances would be related to the desire to acquire, by mechanical means, external to the body, a “magical heat” that would cause trance, that is ecstasy. Indeed, as Stanislav Grof showed, the reactions to LSD could include experiences of psych spiritual death and rebirth, episodes of mystical rapture, feelings of cosmic unity, a sense of oneness with God, and past-life memories. At the same time, Grof's early experimental observations would link LSD to paranoid states such as apocalyptic visions. In the past, the appeal to psychotropic substances was related to the perfectly justified desire for knowledge of our being about unusual realities, which we intuit but cannot access in an unaltered state of consciousness. When, in 1970, the consumption of LSD became illegal, Grof followed the therapeutic direction of the altered state of consciousness

without resorting to drugs, admitting that altered consciousness experiences can be induced by a variety of other non-drug techniques, as mandala drawing, meditation, movement meditation as hatha yoga, tai-chi, or qi-gong, shamanic drumming, rattling, chanting, etc. (Grof, 2014).

Even if they weren't reintegrated into legality, hallucinogenic substances worry the contemporary world, because of the mirage of altered states of consciousness.

As psychedelics doing their way back to academic research (see: The Journal of psychedelic studies), supervised therapeutic practices (see: The Journal of psychoactive drugs), and overall public discussion (see: The Joe Rogan Experience), new questions and needs arise, one of them is what I identify as the need for a philosophical guidance, during a psychedelic intentional journey, reflective dialogue after the journey, and in the realm of micro-dosing (Levanon, 2880).

I cannot comment on the effectiveness of using these substances in the treatment of incurable diseases, but as far as shamanic journeys are concerned I consider drugs to be an unnecessary accessory and unsafe, if not dangerous, if used. And even though most people who have had psychedelic experiences say they are fascinated and tempted to repeat them, regardless of the risks, I agree with Maya Levanon about the usefulness of these experiences in our concrete lives, because not all experiences are equally beneficial to our development, even experiences that we consider extremely meaningful, if we do nothing with them, they tend to become anecdotal or simply fade away over time. However, I do not agree with the involvement of the philosopher/philosophical counselor in the integration of experiences that include the use of narcotic and psychotropic substances. The call for such methods of accessing altered states of consciousness depends on the experience of the person administering the substance and legal aspects that cannot be neglected. Furthermore, the quality of information received during such a trip varies randomly, depending on the dose and/or the subject's imagination. The philosopher's only concern with these clients could, in my humble opinion, be to guide them in their search for the answer to the question: *What do you think drives you to seek emotional healing/spiritual growth in drug use?*

Conclusions

In today's so depressing global context, ancient forms of spirituality such as Shamanism appear as an effective dressing for wounded spirits in the senseless struggle called "living", and the path to healing that they propose us lies in the reconnection of the human being with nature and, ultimately, with his true self. In the shamanic sense, all diseases come from imbalance and out of relationship with nature, with others and with ourselves. Awareness of the importance of this relationship for our health is the first step towards healing. We may better understand, through the lens of our personal experience, Grof's view of turning inward as a method of combating the existential problems facing humanity today:

Deep reverence for life and ecological awareness are among the most frequent consequences of the psych spiritual transformation that accompanies responsible work with non-ordinary states of consciousness. The same has been true for spiritual emergence of a mystical nature that is based on personal experience. It is my belief that a movement in the direction of a fuller awareness of our unconscious minds will vastly increase our chances for planetary survival (Grof, 1990, 212).

This study aimed to demonstrate that current shamanism is not only important through the place it occupied in the history of mysticism but, above all, in preserving the psychic integrity of the community, as Mircea Eliade also showed.

The shaman's essential role in the defense of the psychic integrity of the community depends above all on this: men are sure that one of them is able to help them in the critical circumstances produced by the inhabitants of the invisible world. It is consoling and comforting to know that a member of the community is able to see what is hidden and invisible to the rest and to bring back direct and reliable information from the supernatural worlds. (Eliade, 509)

Unlike the people of modern times, our ancestors knew that human beings are holistic. They knew, therefore, that we are, paraphrasing Descartes, more than *a brain that exists because it thinks* and manages to connect to the realities that the rational mind, characteristic of the modern period, stubbornly seeking scientific evidence for everything, had refused to accept. The modern philosophical period, starting with the rationality of Descartes, led to an emphasis on the importance of analytical thinking at the expense of spirituality, a current that dominated humanity for several centuries. This difficult period that emphasized rationality and technology mocked the sacred both from a temporal perspective (the sacred being, in Eliade's opinion, a reiteration of religious elements from the origin of the world) and spatially (the sacred being the center of the universe). Research into the history of religions led Eliade to believe that spirituality would defeat the thinking characteristic of the modern period. According to the historian of religions, archaic human beings would have been oriented in time and space. In contrast, modern human beings would be disoriented, even if religious symbols are also found in their subconscious. And here Eliade seems to have been right. Recently, *The Economist* pointed out that shamanism is the fastest-growing religion today. *The Economist* reports that the growing popularity of this "religion" is due to climate change anxiety (2023). The main purpose of modern shamanism is the healing of the spirit, in the current global context so unfavorable, through ancestral methods. Shamanic therapies differ radically from the techniques of traditional medicine, but without entering into conflict with them. They include a wide range of techniques and methods that were formed during prehistoric times and survived through the ages thanks to so-called primitive societies that continued to cultivate them away from the civilized world. Therefore, the specific language of these healings still preserves ancient conceptual baggage, which includes phrases such as "spiritual guides" or "power animals", "the upper world" or "the lower world", etc., and from here questions arise difficult as to whether spiritual beings are "real" or not. A bigot, who thinks it's infamy to think you can communicate with angels or spirits of light, for example, or an atheist, who thinks it's foolish to hold such a thing, will never accept spiritual language and techniques. So spiritual techniques are not for them. A rational person, however, who wants to understand how these techniques work from a psychological or philosophical point of view, learns that spirit guides and

power animals can be a kind of inner masters who communicate important information about us and help us to regain personal power. Spiritual beings and sacred spaces perceived during trance, shamanic or just hypnotic, can be considered as simple imaging techniques that help us access a deep level of our consciousness, where healing occurs quickly, painlessly and safely. Shamanic journeying can therefore be an effective practice in our personal development. In this sense, shamanism should become one of the tools of philosophical counseling, along with meditation and hypnosis, to help us travel into the depths of our being while remaining grounded in the here and now.

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