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## The magical flight: Shamanism and theatre

Cardaña, Etzel

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PO Box 117  
221 00 Lund  
+46 46-222 00 00

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completely different ball games. What we are doing is incorporating some of these basic tenets, mainly trance induction and trance induction soothes our souls. That's fine. Do it in psychotherapy and more power to you, just don't call it shamanizing. It is not the power that these old ones are talking about. The shaman I work with had his first visionary revelation when he was five years old. He is sixty-five now, he has been on over thirty vision quests and these vision quests make your hair stand on end. We can gain a lot from that, but we should not get confused here.

*Question:* Juergen, you said, if we follow the injunctions of language, in other words, the doing: what Bill might say about the practice of shamanism, I see there two possible dangers. One is that we begin to think the injunction is it. The second point I would like you to address is the lack of context for that part that is not the injunction. In my training, it was never the words or the acts.

*Kremer:* I don't think it is just the injunction. Is it a communal practice or an individual practice? I would like to second what Bill was saying. It is the communal practice that gives a lot of power to what is going on and there is the communal validation also. When shamans talk about power, their concept of power is a very individual concept. From my understanding, and I am not an anthropologist, the understanding of power in these traditions is much more a communal understanding. It is the individual who goes out but this is part of the power of the tribe or the community, something which is not there now. There is an aspect of communal validation, it is not just the injunction and the going out, it is part of the practice we can study.

*Question:* Do the Lakota still perform the sun dance ritual? And why would they chose this is instead of the vision quest? What are the differences?

*Lyon:* Yes, they still do the sun dance which is actually a vision quest. It is the highest form of vision-quest ritual one can participate in. Vision questing or *hanbleceya* is reported in the literature as being done when you don't have time to go on a sun dance. The sun dance ritual requires four days before and four after. There is also a day for the Grandfather at the end. It is a thirteen-day ritual. In the old times, it was seen as the highest form of vision questing.

*Aromolaran:* I think that every man or woman, be he or she white or black, whatever, can go in quest of visions. You don't have to be attached to anybody, you need not do anything drastic. You can sit down and get trained. However, it is not a weekend kind of thing. It takes a long time for you to get trained. Then you can access information of different

types, be it close to your living room or ten thousand miles away. Each person is made to access information, otherwise you would not be here on this planet. The fact that you are here shows that you are able to access information. You possess all the elements in your body that make it possible for you, if you only would know how and were willing to go all the way.

## THE MAGICAL FLIGHT: SHAMANISM AND THEATRE<sup>1</sup>

Etzel Cardena

### *Preamble*

The magical flight, as Eliade pointed out, represents "a desperate effort to be rid of a monstrous presence, to free oneself" (1976:240), it shows both the limits of a grounded material soul and their transcendence in ecstasy. It is also the image of a fleeing activity: the bird has to come to the ground to feed itself, the human must return to the awareness of time passage, body decay, personal history. The soul returns to its temporal lodging, the performer ends the play/ritual/act and becomes, once more, the neighbor, the farmer, the actor.

Shamanism and theatre share more than this need to get rid of the "monstrous presence"; they have been reflections of each other, at times as clear as water, duplicating the creature in front of it, at times very distant, even opposing. When humanity begins to reflect, to take a perspective, to look at itself, at the world, to be temporal, aware of its corporeality, to rebel against those limits, at that moment, performance and ritual, shamanism and theatre are indistinct.

The drawing of *The Dancing Sorcerer* at the cave Les Trois Frères shows a semi-human, semi-animal figure, arguably a shaman, arguably a performer, probably both. Nobody knows with certainty, of course, the functions of the first hunting ceremonies, of the first songs, of the first dances, but it is likely that, then as now, shamans had to have mastery of their voice, their body, their social role. If the flight was not going to be isolated from the community, they should attract the attention of the other members, mold it, represent their anxieties, fears and aspirations, become the best expressions (and co-creators) of the collectivity. Although the early humans were discovering a more complex subjectivity

than the other primates, presumably it was not sensed as definitely separate from the external world. The emotional states of the individual and the community were co-terminous; the experience of flight required the evocation of very concrete feathers, joy became a song, pain a dance, death an image.

How much and when the prehistoric shaman became individuated from the ritual collectivity is unknown but then, as now, one could expect someone to be willing to take more risks, to engage the attention of others more profoundly, to take the general collective vision to acceptable (or sometimes unacceptable) extremes. But from such a "technician of the sacred" to the actor in the Athenian tragedy there is a distance; from the sacrifice/ecstasy of the Lakota sun dancer to the performer of a Neil Simon comedy, there is a far cry (cf. Arraud's [1958:141] statement: "No one in Europe knows how to scream anymore, and particularly actors in trance no longer know how to cry out:").

### 1. *The Ritual Origins of Theatre*

From an analytic standpoint, every ritual has performance components (every re-doing of an action which involves a collectivity of many or of oneself and one's reflectivity, involves rules of acting, a certain esthetic aspiration, the conveyance of a meaning) and every performance has ritual components (expected re-creations of social interactions with a symbolic component, e.g., witness the particular way of gaining admittance to the theatre, the "appropriate" costuming of both performers and audience, etc.). But a transcendent, religious<sup>2</sup> function of both, which partly defines shamanism, is manifest only in certain rituals and it is to them that I refer in this section.

The most widely accepted theory of the origins of drama proposes that dramatic mimesis and religious ceremony, both found in ritual, eventually gave rise to Western drama (Brockert, 1982; Friedrich, 1983). There is far less agreement on the specific transformation that had to take place before Athenian tragedy appeared in all its complexity but it seems likely that myth and ritual had to become integrated before the word of the playwright could take over. Ritual action, even while independent of the verbal meaningfulness provided by myth, had various functions for the community: the re-enactment of an action (and with repetition the practice to remain effective at it), the pre-enactment of a similar action (so that, by sympathetic magic, the act can be successfully accomplished), and the communal cathartic discharge of emotions (to further bind the participants to each other, allay fears and produce enough arousal to initiate the deed). Or, in other words, "the aspects of imitation, representation, and expression" (Friedrich, 1983:163)<sup>3</sup> and,

healing outcome. The participants of the ceremony invoked, then, a non-physical presence to assist them in their very concrete present and future endeavors. The functions of shamanism and of ceremonial ritual were, at this point, virtually identical; more open to debate is the stage when the role of the shaman/performer became differentiated from the community.

The Cambridge School of Classical Anthropology (which during the first part of the century developed the ritual theory of drama) suggested that there was a basic common content to the ritual(s) that preceded the formalization of drama. Gaster, for instance, described a ritual pattern of *mortification-purgation-invigoration-jubilation* that represented the cycle of the seasons (Friedrich, 1983:163). The mortification over winter and the decay and death of Nature was followed by a renewal of plants, animals and humans. Death and procreation, creation and destruction, in an eternal cycle, were the nature of existence. But the balance was rather fragile and the consequences of a shift in that order, terrifying. Humans then had to face the unnameable and, by giving it form and enacting a successful resolution, help preserve that balance which so many times must have seemed to fail them (and us).

In an account of that ritual, Mother Earth gave birth to the Year-baby Dionysus who succumbed to Death, was dismembered and then put together again and triumphantly reborn, until the next year. Kirby (1976), proposing a variation to the Cambridge school, found in the suffering, dismemberment, contact with the spirits and ecstatic nature of Dionysus, the perfect description of the shaman's path. He also considered the shaman's performing techniques and props, and concluded that there was a direct path between shamanism and Greek tragedy which had originated, according to some accounts, in the *tragoidia* in honor of Dionysus (Kirby, 1976; see also below). However, although the common ancestry between shamanism and performance is one of the tenets of this paper, the direct links between specific shamanic practices and formalized tragedy or even Greek culture in general, are, at best, vague (Friedrich, 1983:166-167).

An alternative to the seasonal cycle as the archetypal ritual was suggested by W. Burkert. It was, for him, the aggression and carriage that Nature made of humans, that humans made of animals and of each other, "the fear of death, the frenzy of killing," which had to be controlled and exorcised in ritual bloodshed and sacrifice. The violence within and without, that brought disorder to a tenuous existence, was given a rationale and a formalized expression. In that way, the human became a co-creator of the cosmic design and not a mere prey of capricious forces. Violence was sacralized, contained, and the guilt for butchering others was transformed to that for disobeying a religious mandate. Burkert's proposal can accommodate the seasonal cycle as a manifes-

ing necessary for the preservation of life) and it allows for a ritual that could antedate the awareness of vegetation cycles. As a model of a more primitive and traumatic event in the history of humankind, it can certainly precede the more elaborate chronological accounts of a Year-baby that was periodically dismembered and reconstituted.

More fraught with problems than the suggestion of a paradigmatic ceremonial ritual is how to explain the specific development of the rational, orderly and complex Greek drama from a, we can assume, less orderly and specific activity. There is certainly some connection between the Dionysian ritual and formalized Greek theatre (for instance, the first dramatic contests occurred in the *City Dionysia* festival) and the first theatre theoretician of weight, namely Aristotle in his *Poetics* (1961), reconstructs the process as a gradual development out of songs and dances from the Dionysus cult, perhaps involving the sacrifice of a goat or *tragos*, and some kind of satyric plays or *satyricon*. Regardless of the exactitude of Aristotle's reconstruction, his definition of tragedy exemplifies the transformation of a ceremonial ritual into a more formalized, esthetic endeavor, which maintains imitative, expressive and healing functions, but where a transcendent function has been eliminated or, at the very least, greatly diminished.

Tragedy, then, is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play; in the form of action, not of narrative; through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions (Aristotle, 1961: 61).

By the time of Aeschylus' first recorded plays (in the 5th century B.C.), theatre, as we know it, etymologically and descriptively a place to look at, has been born: most of the audience has become a more or less passive audience; only a few participants actually perform; the separation between the audience and the performers is being enforced by increasingly complex architectonic designs; acting is gradually becoming a secular profession. While the content of some of the tragedies and comedies is mythological, the intent of the production is to describe and reflect events, rather than re-enact or invoke the sacred realm and transgress the sacred/secular frontier in more than a vicarious way.

Clearly, from Schechner's (1976) standpoint, the efficacy (i.e., ritual) aspect of theatre was in descent while the entertainment function was rapidly rising. For centuries onwards, the Western world would ascribe sacred functions only to "property" educated clergy, while the performers would suffer all sorts of infamies, from bad pay to being denied a proper burial. Shamanism, with its panoply of non-institutional functions and skills, did not regain the importance which had already been awarded in *Practical Theatre*. Overthru sacred rituals outside the official

for instance, the "feast of fools" and the "donkey" ceremony, held in Medieval Europe, where minor clergy and common folk would substitute a donkey for the priest and baying for the sermon). Even the liturgical representations of the Middle Ages, full of pomp and preparation, lacked any ecstatical constituents (Brockett, 1983:90-96).

After the Age of Enlightenment and its opposition by Romanticism, Nietzsche is the first important figure to question the removal of the irrational in the consideration of human nature and, more specifically, the loss of the ecstatic element in drama. In his *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music* (1872), he describes the Dionysian life force, ecstatic, boundless, excessive to the point of extermination, and the Apollonian force, its individuating, rational, orderly counterpart. It is in the Dionysiac where he locates the sheer, raw, animal physicality which is common to all humans and allows the direct experiencing of that which surpasses them. The Apollonian, Nietzsche concluded, caused human suffering but was now irretrievably bound to human destiny (Friedrich, 1980:5-36). Nietzsche's prescriptions for the improvement of Western culture are hardly worth mentioning, but his diagnosis of our malady, his description of the human delusion of a pure rationality and of a religion without bio(life)logy, have found their way to us through Freud, Jung and, for our purposes more importantly, through the vision of Antonin Artaud, *le momo*, the French madman.

## 2. *Digestive Theatre and the Theatre of Cruelty*

The cultural unrest pervading Europe at the end of the century had filtered to drama and, increasingly, theoreticians and practitioners began scrutinizing an art that some considered dead or agonizing in the formalisms of *haute culture* and its counterpart, the *vauville*. Antonin Artaud (1896-1948), not the first<sup>4</sup> but certainly the most urgent and relentless critic, wanted to overthrow, or perhaps more correctly to throw up, the inherited theatre and the odious culture that had given birth to it. Confronted with what he called a digestive theatre (*theatre digestif*), he proposed a theatre for the "total man," for the body as well as for the mind, a theatre where cruelty had to be experienced to awaken the humans from their pathetic slumber.

Artaud was a desperate man or, better, a desperate collection of selves in search of an author. He was certainly a "wounded healer" whose crises and metaphysical anguish rarely abandoned him.

I suffer from a frightful illness of the mind. My thought abandons me at every step—from the simple fact of thought to the external fact of this materialization in words (1965:7).

Not surprisingly, Artaud's society saw fit to confine him to "mental institutions" for a number of years and ground his wandering soul with

demption was not to be attained by the civilized use of reason and Marx, as it was for the great theatre rebel of our century, Bertolt Brecht. Rather, Artaud saw (and literally experienced) a civilization that tyrannized life, that created a split between the world of matter and the world of spirit, between passion and performance, cruelty (as a model for passion) and life. And theatre was the paring point for the magical flight.

*The theatre still remains the most active and efficient side of passage for those immense analogical disturbances in which ideas are arrested in flight at some point in their transmutation into the abstract (Artaud, 1958:109).*

Artaud wanted the social and psychological status to be annihilated "by an anarchistic destruction generating a prodigious flight of forms" (1958:92) that would reinvoke man and reality. Reality, then, and not just an art form, was in play and the means to recover it had to be extreme, given the prostitution of life pervading language, movement, social relationships, religiosity.

As Nietzsche before him, he invoked the dark, the uncontrollable, the mysterious, "the transgression of the ordinary limits of art and speech, in order to realize. . . a kind of total creation in which man must reassume his place between dream and events" (Artaud, 1958:93). For Artaud, only through the "implacable intention and decision," the "rigid control and submission to necessity" of his theatre of cruelty could this re-encounter with the world of magic be realized. And, dumb and tumbled as humans were, they needed to be shocked out of their easy comfort and face the eternal conflicts found in myths and cosmic terror, they had to witness humanity at the most primeval and universal, they had to be exposed to "atrocious crimes, superhuman devotions" (Artaud, 1958:85). It is no accident then, that Artaud's most famous play and production, *The Centi*, deals with incest, murder and torture.

The total spectacle envisioned by Artaud was not devoid of contradictions, vagueness and even the risk of that modern form of esotericism called fascism, as the critics have pointed out. Artaud himself, in his short-lived productions, could not embody the metaphysical struggles he so keenly felt himself. Nevertheless, he provided more than a call for "spiritual therapeutics," for transgression and trance, for myth and physical immediacy. His concepts and techniques for a sacred theatre, either directly or as a motivating impulse, have influenced perhaps every attempt to create ritualistic performance and integrate drama and shamanism in the last fifty years—from Jean-Louis Barrault's mystical and refined "total theatre," to Peter Brook's "Theatre of Cruelty" season in 1964 and his more recent attempts to integrate non-Western and Western performance traditions, to the Living Theatre's very overt attempts

### 3. Shaman as Performer

Most accounts of traditional shamans highlight their religious, noetic functions, but even a cursory reading of their activities illustrates that performing elements are interlinked with the healing, experiential and social aspects of shamanism (Halifax, 1979). The shaman sings, composes poetry, dances, plays music, is a master storyteller, enacts battles and spiritual extractions, and generally must possess the poetic ability to immerse the observer in the shaman's vision, to re-discover a hidden aspect of the world and make it tangible by actions and speech.

It would be a misinterpretation to define performance as mendacity or to think that the enactment is done exclusively for the spectators. By acting, the shaman becomes, and the frontier between objectivity and subjectivity is surpassed. The possibility of deception is no greater (or lesser) than that which speech or thought allow. The septic pointing out to a sleight of hand as "proof" of a shaman's falsity is, rather, demonstrating how much their concepts of reality differ. The Evenk shaman who realizes his magical flight while suspended from two thongs, questions by his act our separation between "his" world and "ours," between the sacred and the secular.<sup>6</sup> An effective performance, almost by definition, seeks to subvert our interpretation of the world by proposing a different side to it or, even, a radically different unveiling of the real; performers who are able to induce in themselves and their audience a distinct mode of experiencing the world (e.g., an altered state of consciousness) are, therefore, sharing not only entertainment but a distinct metaphysical vision.

Kirby (1976) has suggested that shamanic practices not only gave rise to Greek drama in general, but to many other forms of popular entertainment found all over the world. In his words, shamanism could be considered "the great unitarian artwork that fragmented into a number of performances" (1976:140). For instance, the practice of trance for healing purposes and communication with a spirit world frequently includes ventriloquism (to represent voices of spirits, elements, etc.), stage magic and illusionism techniques (as in the extraction of the disease agent and escapism fears), puppets (which, among the Javanese, may represent miniature shamans and undergo trance themselves), acrobatics (rope-walking and similar deeds being the concrete representations of the mastery of liminal equilibrium and, sometimes, of marvelous flights), fire-walking, fire-handling and fire-eating (which Eliade considered the shaman's "particular magic specialty" [1969:5]) are very much in evidence among practicing shamans, and even that unsettling source of laughter, clowning which has been assumed to have healing functions among some ethnic groups and is present in shamanic "demon plays."

While it may be argued that the presence of these forms of entertainment within the shaman's armamentarium does not constitute proof of

their origin in shamanism, it nevertheless demonstrates the versatility of the shaman as performer and, more importantly, the intimate connection of the performer illustrating/creating a challenge to our untested assumptions of reality and the shaman's liminal position. In the most basic denotation of drama as "action," the shaman is then the dramatist *par excellence* and for him acting becomes not a euphemism for deceiving but the denial of separation between the shaman's interiority and the world at large. This perspective, then largely preempts the charge of shamanic trance as "mere" role-playing.<sup>7</sup> Unshamedly, the shaman performs, that is, gives form to the external through his interiority and, even if for a moment, spreads his wings through the chasm.

#### 4. *Performer as Shaman*

Disregarding its origin in vital ceremonies, performance soon became the mirror of Western cultural transformations. The majestic, mysterious (and, one can assume, frightened) Egyptian representations involving multitudes had a much simpler counterpart among the increasingly rational Greek people. With the advent of yearly contests (with prizes in fame and fortune) in the *City Dionysia*, acting as a profession soon became established; the Romans developed the "star-system" and even prefigured our days by having an actress as their empress. The moral order imposed by Christianity could not easily tolerate the physicality or the ambiguity of performers and, from Early Middle Ages and for many centuries, held actors in opprobium and withdrew sacraments and salvation for them (Brockert, 1982). The more subtle withdrawal of a transcendent function had, of course, occurred many centuries before.

At the beginning of this century, what the actor could strive for, at most, was the serene rational and emotional balance proposed by Diderot in the eighteenth century. An important step toward reinvesting the actor with a soul was taken by Stanislavsky who advocated the use of the performer's personal history to don the role with it, of concentration and imagination (as magicians had proposed before him), and, in his later writings, of the body as the royal road to veracity. As usual, Artaud was more radical,

To join with the passions by means of their forces, instead of regarding them as pure abstractions confers a mastery upon the actor which makes him equal to a true healer. To know that the soul has a corporeal expression. . . . To understand the secret of the passionate time. . . . (Artaud, 1958:133).

For Artaud, the actor had to be an "athlete of the heart" who would recharge vital energy by the cultivation, in his body, of emotion. Artaud's "metaphysics of speech, gesture, and expression" (1958:90) were to be

very concretely embodied in the performer's art; an art that would not represent egoistic or personal concerns, but archetypal truths. Artaud sought a type of science of the body and of speech that would allow the performer not only to induce trance in himself but to throw the spectator as well into "magical trances" (1958:140). Artaud did not, or could not, specify the principles of this science other than give vague references to the use of the breath to produce a feeling according to cabalistic terraries (he was familiar with a number of esoteric disciplines) or the importance of the solar plexus. Nonetheless, his vision of the performer as a master of the attainment and induction of altered states with the purpose of healing a degraded humanity is, if not the first, the strongest proclamation of the performer as shaman.

It was during the 1960s that a far more detailed account of the "sacred" training of the performer was given by Jerzy Grotowski (1968).<sup>8</sup> The productions of his Polish Laboratory Theatre, particularly *The Constant Prince* in 1968, gave concrete evidence of his concept of the "holy actor." For Grotowski, the actor should perform under trance, a trance to be obtained not by the accumulation of skills but by its opposite, the *via negativa*, the elimination of anything extraneous to the innermost core of the performer. The performer should overcome any resistance to psychological/physical impulses, take body and voice to their limits and then, in good shamanic style, go further on the flight. For Grotowski, as for Artaud,<sup>9</sup> to speak of the body and the voice is to speak of the soul at the same breath, one continues the other and the sacrifice that is required of the physique of the actor has a parallel in the psychological dissection that Grotowski wrote about,

The important thing is to use the role as a trampoline, an instrument with which to study what is hidden behind our everyday mask—the innermost core of our personality—in order to sacrifice it, expose it (1976:186).

The spiritual liberation that Grotowski desired for his actors became insufficient for him in the 1970s, when he decided to extend his notions to the public at large, a development that will be covered in the next section. After Grotowski, a number of theatre groups and individuals (including the Living Theatre in its first stages) pursued far more self-consciously the link between shamanism and performance, sometimes with questionable means and results.<sup>10</sup> Another line of inquiry has involved having performers visit traditional shamans to be trained and/or exchange information and techniques.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, theatre anthropology and noetics remain specialized fields and are comfortably disregarded in the training and performance of most actors and theatre troupes, despite an occasional and oblique reference in some plays and productions. The call remains particular.

### 5. *Everyone a Shaman?*

Attempting to eradicate the tradition of an essentially passive audience (i.e., "those gathered to hear and see something," Webster, 1977:40), Vakhlangov and others, at the turn of the century, brought the action of the play to the center of the auditorium, while Arraud's prescription for the inducement of trance in the audience included the elimination of the stage and auditorium replacing them "by a single site, without partition or barrier of any kind, which will become the theater of the action" (Arraud, 1958:96).

Again, Arraud did not really accomplish this objective in his productions, but in the 1960s a number of directors took the dramatic action outside of the stage and placed their productions in garages, barns, show windows, even common houses and the street (Schechner, 1973). The role of the assembly was transformed as well so that, for instance, the theatre goer became a guest of Grotowski's *Dr. Faustus* (1963) or was invited to participate in nudity and emotional and physical interaction with the actors of Schechner's *Dionysos in 69*. Although the demands on the audience were greater than before in these productions, its possible responses were limited and sometimes contrived by the content and structure of the plot. A more direct attempt "To create a communal rhythm to flow between everyone, performers and audience" (Innes, 1981:250)<sup>12</sup> was made in Ann Halprin's *Trance Dance* (1973) where the audience was expected to partake in the re-creation of a group myth in the last stage of the production.

The most daring endeavor to engage all of the assembly in a communal and spiritual activity has to be Grotowski's work in the '70s and 80s with people from many countries to create an "Active Culture",

... an experience that has no spectators. There is no separation between the creative process and the creative result. . . . It comes from all the participants and is shared by all of them, and not the results of (previously worked out and artificially recreated) experience. . . . Shared activity and not shared expression (Innes, 1981:177).<sup>13</sup>

Grotowski and his colleagues "initiated" thousands of people in the forests of Poland and other countries to days-long activities with overt ritual components and intense physical actions, which some participants declared to be profound and consciousness altering experiences.<sup>14</sup> Whether this constitutes long-scale shamanism is arguable, since many of the constituents of the shamanic complex are absent, despite the communal intensity and the alteration of consciousness. Far more defensible is the notion that Grotowski and others reintroduced the ritual aspect that had been absent from the theatre assembly's conventional experience.

ries and that seems to be essential for a re-evaluation of shamanism within our culture.

That Grotowski's flight, which has essentially required the elimination of any theatrical element so that the assembly can attain transcendence, is not the only one available for artists searching the expansion of consciousness. This has been demonstrated by the American Robert Wilson whose productions have shared with the audience his own and others' (including brain-damaged and deaf-mute people's) inner states so that the arbitrariness and limitations of a consensual perspective of the world become overt. Wilson's work has been claimed to serve as a bridge to the subjectivity of others so that therapeutic goals, in a broad sense, can be obtained not only for his "handicapped" collaborators but for the audience as a whole (Cardena, 1983).<sup>15</sup>

While the strength of ritualistic theatre has largely abated, still the contemporary theatre goer has a much broader range of participation options than has been the case for centuries. That any of these constitute shamanic experience or training is unlikely, that some of them allow some form of transcendence seems certain.

### Epilogue

Traditional theatre, and Western culture at large, have been mainly undisturbed by the propositions I have reviewed. Some aspects of ritual theatre have been digested, most have been condemned to a fringe existence and this state of affairs has disillusioned those waiting for a total artistic and metaphysical rebellion. But it must be asked if it is reasonable to expect that our pluralistic and vague culture could achieve some mode of shamanistic homogeneity. The odds are extravagant: Grotowski versus Carol Channing or a week of ritual ceremonies versus the Super Bowl?

Under risk of splitting again this world, the magical flier cannot neglect the ground to rest but can still enjoy the wonderful release in that flight which the shaman of Les Trois Frères took so long ago.

### Notes

1. In this paper I will deal exclusively with the development of Western theatre, although the relation between shamanism and the Eastern theatrical tradition may be at least as important (e.g., Ortolani, 1984).

2. In the very broad sense of *re-ligare*, i.e., re-establishing the connection between the sacred and secular realms.



3. My discussion in this chapter is greatly indebted to Professor Friedrich's exhaustive and lucid work.

4. In addition to general movements such as Romanticism and Expressionism, all of them, in one form or another, rebelling against the neoclassical model of an idealized and mainly material/conventional reality, I should mention, among others, the attempts by Tairov and Laban, at the beginning of the century, to rediscover ritualism in performance.

5. For a very comprehensive, although not necessarily sympathetic, discussion of Artaud's influence on contemporary theatre see Innes (1981).

6. Kirby (1976:142) defines it rather as an "essentially fraudulent convenience" where shaman and audience partake of a delusion. Kirby, then, exemplifies the mode of thought which the shaman seeks to overthrow.

7. A thorough consideration of the issue is outside the scope of this paper, but for a brief discussion the reader can consult, Larry G. Peters and Douglass Prince-Williams "Towards an Experiential Analysis of Shamanism," (1980):397-413. As for the relativity of conceptualizing "acting" as falsity, in addition to the vast literature in hypnosis, the reader can also consult J. Lanzetta *et al.*, "Effects of Nonverbal Dissimulation on Emotional Experience and Autonomic Arousal," (1976) and Paul Ekman's recent work on facial expression, posing and emotional experience.

8. See Grotowski's *Towards a Poor Theatre* (1968), an enormously influential book during the 60s and 70s in the training of experimental theatre actors and directors. Grotowski has cautioned though that his book should be regarded as a "day-log" of his group's activities rather than as a method for training.

9. The resemblance of the tone and content of Artaud's and Grotowski's writings is evident. Grotowski had developed his main ideas before he read Artaud. Also, Grotowski's "poor theatre" aims at reducing theatrical elements to the essentials, i.e., the actor and the audience, and runs counter to Artaud's preoccupation with scenic elements and total spectacle.

10. The current deluge of shamanism/theatre workshops bears witness to this phenomenon. The authenticity and validity of these events is not the topic of this paper, but the difference in rigor and involvement between most of these expressions and, say, Grotowski's work in the 60s should be mentioned.

11. The activities of the Centre for International Research (CIRT), Brook's trips to Africa, India and other places, and the current proposal by the British avant-garde director, Steven Rumbelow, to do a multi-disciplinary, multi-cultural project, all exemplify this movement.

12. Professor Innes' (1981) book is a very good source for the description (and traditional criticism) of various important avant-garde productions.

13. For an exposition on how to practically attain this goal see, *Encuentro con Grotowski* (Encounter with Grotowski), Conference given by Jerzy Grotowski, Mexico City, June 1981.

14. Personal communication with members of Mexico's Center of Theatre Investigations, and personal experience.

15. The consideration of theatre as a therapeutic tool is outside the scope of this paper. Although, of course, therapy has an important healing function, other constituents of shamanism (e.g., the healers' control of their altered states of consciousness) are usually absent in it.

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## THE PATH OF THE RAINBOW YIN-YANG: BEYOND SHAMANISTIC APPROACHES TO PSYCHOTHERAPY

Jeffrey Mishlove

### *Introduction*

In a recent interview with Dr. Huston Smith, as part of my Mind's Eye television series, I questioned Dr. Smith about the place of shamanism within religious traditions. His answer intrigued me. He acknowledged that shamanism, like Tantrism, was noted for encouraging the development of psychic experiences. This was an important contribution, he added. But there was a touch of sadness in his voice when he reminded me that neither shamans nor tantric mystics were noted in the history of religions for the sanctity of their ethics or for the purity of their philosophy. While he felt they had certainly done more good than harm, he also felt that shamans, in general, fell short of the high ideals to which many spiritual traditions aspire. I think that several of us here might question Dr. Smith's interpretation. However, in my own experience, knowledge of shamanism and its traditions is of value insofar as I am able to integrate it with my own highest level of spiritual, psychological and scientific understanding.

Clearly, in many areas where shamanism is practiced, often a parallel tendency is reported for spiritual practices to degenerate into magic, and even into magic practice for malevolent, short-sighted and greedy purposes.

Undoubtedly, in my mind, one of the great factors today inhibiting the wide-scale development and integration of psi abilities in our society

is the fear that they will be misused—or used in the service of the darker side of our own subconscious. A detailed exploration of this dynamic is offered by psychoanalyst Jule Eisenbud in *Parapsychology and the Unconscious* (1983).

Another factor, of course, inhibiting the widespread use and acceptance of psi abilities, is the dominant materialistic metaphysics which, according to sociologist Pitirim A. Sorokin (1937), has been the glue holding Western civilization together since the time of the renaissance.

Sorokin also maintains that we are now experiencing a major transition of cultural epochs. The sensate materialism of the past five hundred years is no longer capable of providing cohesiveness and unity within our society. Thus, in the twentieth century, we have witnessed more war, revolution, and social alienation than at any time since the fourteenth century (which historian Barbara Tuchman so eloquently described as "a distant mirror" of our own age).

We stand at the brink of history, as a culture, faced with the most awesome technologies for destruction that humanity has ever known; searching for a wisdom deeper than that provided by materialistic philosophies, and yet torn by religious factional differences. We, as a culture, are looking for a synthesis, a balance, a unity and harmony of spiritual and material values. We have not yet found such a synthesis, although perhaps we do stand at the brink of a new era. For all their terror, we can take some comfort in understanding that events of the past thirty-six years have yielded less wild viciousness than this planet witnessed during the first half of our century. Perhaps, therefore, we have earned the right to feel hopeful.

It is within this context that I wish to share my deepest life experiences and purpose, born, as I was, in 1946, nine months following the end of the Second World War, the first of the "baby boom" generation.

My premise is that psi functioning lies at the heart of a potential, new, balanced, cultural integration. After all, psi functioning lies at the heart of shamanistic, religious and spiritual traditions. Yet, psi also falls even more clearly within the domain of science (since 1969, parapsychology as a scientific discipline has been affiliated with the American Association for the Advancement of Science). As shamanistic traditions have demonstrated over the millennia, psi functioning can have important practical significance for healing, finding lost objects. Finally, and probably of greatest importance, psi experiences are a continual reminder of the essential interconnectedness of ourselves with all of nature.

### *Personal Experiences*

My own midwestern upbringing was conventional enough. Naturally, as a college student in the 1960s, the crust of conventionality was blown