

SHAMANISM

When Consciousness looks at ITSELF:

the Shamanism pattern

Joy Manné

The Encyclopaedia of Religion starts its article on shamanism saying, 'in the strict sense (it) is pre-eminently a religious phenomenon of Siberia.' A year or two ago the New Scientist described 'shamanism' as a bucket category.

If we explore the shamanic life pattern, we open the question whether it is a human universal.

The Shamanic Life Pattern

Case histories are records of how a person develops. A 'life pattern' can be seen as a hypothetical case history, i.e. it describes a predicted course of development. Piaget, Freud, and Maslow are among psychologists who investigated and described such patterns of development.

Here I describe a shaman's life pattern. Its stages are 1. *Birth*, 2. *Youth and Early Adulthood*, 3. *Initiation*, and 4. *Practice*.

1. Birth

Shamans may be selected at or before birth. One way selection happens is through hereditary transmission.

Conception, gestation and birth are increasingly recognised as emotionally and spiritually significant events.

2. Youth and Early Adulthood

Calling

If a person is not selected at birth or through hereditary transmission, other possibilities for becoming a shaman include spontaneous vocation or calling.

Spiritual Crises or Illnesses

There is a well-documented correlation between puberty and the shaman's calling. The youth and early adulthood of the shaman contain significant illnesses or crises related to the calling.

The youth who is called to be a shaman attracts attention by his strange behaviour: e.g. he seeks solitude, becomes absent minded, loves to roam in the woods or unfrequented places, has visions, and sings in his sleep. ... (He) has fits of fury and easily loses consciousness,

hides in the forest, feeds on the bark of trees, throws himself into water and fire, cuts himself with knives... (He may go through an) hysterical crisis ... (ER/S)

Some of these activities are classical means of inducing altered states of consciousness or trance states.

3. Initiation

The extraordinary events in youth are the beginnings of initiation for those who mentally and physically survive the crises of calling. The traditional schema of an initiation ceremony is: suffering, death, and resurrection.

Teachers and Socialisation

The apprentice shaman is socialised. Initiation includes an apprenticeship to a master shaman from whom are learned the theory and practice, myths, cosmology, rituals and techniques of that particular shamanic culture. The training consists of journeying outside of the body, learning to relate to and control spirits, and healing techniques.

Ascetic Practices and Death-Rebirth Experience

Practices connected with the initiation are all classical means of inducing altered states of consciousness or trance. Preparation includes ascetic practices; exposure to various extremes, such as of heat or cold, or undertaking a particular diet or fasting; sleep deprivation, physical exertion, meditation, yoga, ritual, prayer, the use of drugs and hallucinogens, and long periods of quiet and solitude or isolation. Elements in initiation may include dreams of torture, especially the dismemberment of the body; the ecstatic experience of an ascent to

heaven or descent to the underworld; meetings with spirits; and religious and shamanic revelations. Mastery over fire and heat is significant.

Nature and animals

The shaman is supposed to meet with an animal during his initiation. That animal becomes his familiar spirit. It teaches him secret knowledge including how to communicate with animals.

Self-Healing

Self-healing from the crises suffered in youth and early adulthood is a sign that the initiation has succeeded. Curing the initiatory illness depends on consciousness looking at itself and developing through taking responsibility at the highest level for what it sees.

Recognition

Recognition that the initiation has been successfully accomplished comes when the shaman is acknowledged to have cured his illness.

Death

A shaman may die in a particular way, usually through a form of voluntary departure.

4. Practice: The shaman's work

After recognition, the shaman's tasks include teaching, journeying and healing, performing magic, relating to spirits, and a role in politics and society.

The Buddha's Life and the Shamanic Life Pattern

One striking example of the shamanic life pattern is the Buddha, as his life history is described in the Pali Canon. We do not imagine today that every detail in the story of how the Buddha became liberated or enlightened as

presented in any canon is a factual account as the earliest written texts only came into being several centuries after his death. It is therefore significant that the texts ascribe a shamanic life pattern to the Buddha.

As in the Shaman's life pattern, I will divide the Buddha's case history attributed to the Buddha in these texts into the stages of *1 Birth, 2 Youth and Early Adulthood, 3 Initiation, and 4 Practice.*

1. Birth

The Buddha's birth legend is that he was 'selected' before conception. The Bodhisattva, or the future Buddha's conception, gestation and birth were unusual and magical.

2. Youth and early adulthood

Calling

The Buddha experienced a calling when, having been protected from them all his life, he first saw old age, illness and death, and an ascetic

Spiritual Crises

Two episodes in the youth of the Bodhisattva may be compared to the spiritual crises that a shaman goes through at the same period in his life. The first is an agreeable ecstatic state; the second is a traumatic initiatory crisis.

In childhood or early youth, at an age which cannot be divined through reading the texts which have different versions, the future Buddha had his first intuition of a high altered state of consciousness:

During the work of my father the Sakka, while sitting in the cool shade

of the rose-apple tree, separated from desires, separated from bad things (dhamma), I reached the First Dhyāna, which is accompanied by thought and reflection, born from separation, consists of joy and bliss, and remained [there]. (MN, Vol I, p 246f, translation Bronkhorst, 1993:22f.)

This may be compared to a shaman's first, initiatory ecstatic experience. It is noteworthy the texts have this taking place under a tree. Trees are significant in shamanic experiences.

The initiatory crisis came years later and can be seen as the result of his calling. The future Buddha asked himself,

Supposing that, being myself subject to birth, having understood the danger in what is subject to birth, I seek the unborn supreme security from bondage, Nibbana. Suppose that, being myself subject to ageing, sickness, death, sorrow, and defilement, having understood the danger in what is subject to ageing, sickness, death, sorrow, and defilement, I seek the unageing, unailing, deathless, sorrowless, and undefiled supreme security from bondage, Nibbana. (MN, Vol I, p.163. Tr. MLDB, p.256)

Today we might call this an existential crisis.

3. Initiation

The Bodhisattva's illness, as the texts describe it, was his inability to accept being subject to old age, illness and death. His attempt at self-healing, or the cure that he sought, was the way out of this suffering. He left home and became an ascetic. We cannot be certain about the age at which this happened.

Nature and Animal Imagery, Good and Bad Spirits

The future Buddha's quest begins with episodes that recall the importance of animals and spirits in shamanic initiations. He leaves home on his horse. Horses are significant in shamanism as funerary animals, psychopomps, and means of achieving ecstasy. His attainment of Liberation is accompanied by nature and animal imagery: it is attained under a tree and in the presence of a serpent. Serpents and dragons are basic images in shamanic initiations and dreams.

Teachers and Socialisation

The Bodhisattva goes to various teachers hoping to learn how to achieve his goal. Besides learning their methods and practices and their concept of Liberation, he also becomes socialised with regard to the tasks of a religious leader.

The Death-Rebirth Experience and Ascetic Practices including Heat

The Bodhisattva realises that he has not found the 'cure' to his illness through his teachers and so goes off with five companions and practices austerities that are so extreme that only the gods' intervention prevents his death.

Mastery over fire and heat is significant in shamanism. There are abundant images of heat in the Buddha's Teachings.

The Buddha went beyond death, attained nibbana, and was reborn from this to fulfil his shamanic task, i.e., to teach.

Self-Healing

Eventually the Buddha rejects asceticism as not leading to his goal or healing. He remembers the

agreeable ecstatic experience or altered state of conscience of his youth, decides that it is the way to his goal, follows that route, and succeeds. He becomes a Buddha. In shamanic terms, he heals himself. Curing his illness depended on the Buddha's consciousness looking at itself and taking responsibility at the deepest level for what it observed.

Recognition

Recognition comes once the Buddha has convinced his five companions in ascetic extremes that he has found what they were searching for, or, in shamanic terms, that he has proved that he has cured his illness and can therefore also cure theirs.

Death

Invited to dine, the Buddha chose to eat food which he perceived was contaminated and forbade anyone else to eat any of it.

4. Practice: The Buddha's work as shaman's work

The shaman's tasks include teaching, journeying and healing, performing magic and taking up a role in politics and society.

Teaching

The Buddha as teacher is described as follows:

An arahant, a fully awakened one, abounding in wisdom and goodness, happy, who knows all worlds, unsurpassed as a guide to mortals willing to be led, a teacher for gods and men, a Blessed One, a Buddha. He, by himself, thoroughly knows and sees, as it were, face to face this universe – including the worlds above

of the gods, the Brahmas, and the Maras, and the world below with its recluses and Brahmans, its princes and peoples, – and having known it, he makes his knowledge known to others. The truth, lovely in its origin, lovely in its progress, lovely in its consummation, doth he proclaim, both in the spirit and in the letter, the higher life doth he make known, in all its fullness and in all its purity. (DN, Vol. 1 78. Translation DB)

The attributes in this passage are also typically the attributes of a shaman: he knows the worlds, he has cosmic knowledge, and he teaches it.

Besides teaching his method, the Buddha taught a variety of subjects which shamans also teach including ethics; the world with its elements; cosmology; ontology (the beginning of things); conception; how things are born, the nature of life (suffering, dukkha, and the escape from suffering); and a rather complete model of man (how consciousness functions, including what is 'not the self' – anatta). The Buddha has a knowledge of psychology: he encompasses with his own mind the minds of others, and knows whether or not their minds are lustful, hate-filled, delusional, focused or disturbed, broad or narrow, with or without a superior, concentrated, or liberated. Shamans are also psychologists.

The Buddha has magical powers. He sees with his Divine Eye (dibba cakkha). He teaches through his higher knowledge, abhiñña, includes such shamanic elements as psychic powers, levitation, clairaudience, thought-reading, remembering previous incarnations, knowing others' previous incarnations, and certainty of having attained Enlightenment.

Journeying

The Buddha journeys and performs various other shamanic acts through his magical powers (iddhi):

Having been one, he becomes many; having been many, he becomes one; he appears and vanishes; he goes unhindered through a wall, through an enclosure, through a mountain, as though through space; he dives in and out of the earth as though it were water; he walks on water without sinking as though it were earth; seated cross-legged he travels in space like a bird; with his hand he touches and strokes the moon and sun so powerful and mighty; he wields bodily mastery even as far as the Brahma-world. (MN I 69 & variously, translation. MLDB:165)

Healing

The Buddhist Teaching and terminology is rich in metaphors of illness and healing with a person who is not liberated being compared to someone who is ill, and the enlightenment process compared to a healing process. The Buddha's healing is aimed at psychological and spiritual illness.

Relationship with Spirits

The Buddha is described as teacher of gods and men. After attaining Liberation, when he expresses doubt whether to teach, Brahma Sahampati, who can be described in shamanic terms as a good spirit, comes to persuade him. The gods celebrate his first sermon. There are regular conflicts with the 'bad spirit,' Mara, which the Buddha naturally always wins. The Buddha controls his spirits; he is not possessed by them.

Political and social role

The Buddha has a rich social and political role. He ran the Order of his monks. He was regularly consulted by kings, brahmans, leaders of ascetic groups and others. He was a confident debater.

Regular shamanic practice

After his Enlightenment, the Buddha continued the typically shamanic practice of taking retreats in the forest. He encourages his monks to practice in solitary places.

V. A Shaman's Eye View Of The Buddha's Teaching On Anatta - 'No-Self'

The extensive parallels between the shaman and the Buddha's life pattern justify taking a shaman's eye view of the Buddha's Teaching.

A shaman enters into ecstasy or altered states of consciousness at will, and induces them in others for ritual or healing purposes, and like a shaman, the Buddha did exactly that. He taught his followers how to enter altered states of consciousness (e.g., i.a., the jhanas/dhyanas) or trans-consciousness (Nibbana) in order to become healed of Suffering, craving, attachment and other aspects of the human condition that lead to unhappiness, and to become liberated from rebirth. His method can be clearly demonstrated through an examination of his Teaching on anatta- 'No-self.'

I will not enter into the details of the controversy among scholars concerning the teaching of anatta - whether the Buddha actually taught that there was a permanent Self or

that there was not one: there is already an enormous literature on this subject and I have nothing to contribute to it as it is argued: the 'No-self' controversy is usually battled out between scholars on philological grounds. Rather I propose to take a 'shaman's eye' view of this Teaching, in particular by considering how the concept of 'No-Self' was taught. I will argue that the style of this Teaching provides the method through which the Buddha's followers could auto-induce a particular altered state of consciousness - the 'No-self' state, at will.

Before I turn to this, let me make some remarks about the Buddha's own self-concept which is so often misunderstood.

The Buddha's Own Self-Concept

At a recent conference on Buddhist Psychology many of the participants expressed their confusion about how the Buddha could function in the world *without a self*. Because they were Buddhists, they were trying to follow the Teaching and to achieve, or to imitate, what they imagined this form of functioning could be. I thought they had missed the point!

The texts portray the character of the Buddha as someone with a very advanced self-concept. His self-esteem is perfect; he has gone beyond doubt; he knows, and he is confident of his knowledge; he expresses himself with conviction. His sense of identity is strong. He talks about himself in the first person with clarity. He gives accounts of his personal experiences and of his spiritual capacities in the first person: e.g. he announces and proclaims that he is a Buddha and says what a Buddha

is. He gives first person accounts of the capacities required of him by society, e.g. he insists he is a competent debater. He discusses at ease and in more than full equality with kings and other notables. He defends himself and his teaching against unjust accusations and false representations.

It is clear that the Buddha's 'self,' – as this concept is understood in contemporary psychology and psychotherapy: namely: a clear sense of identity, the ability to function competently and realistically in the world, having a standard of ethics, achieving goals, interacting competently with people, making good choices, and so forth – was fully functional and indeed remarkably well-developed.

Neither psychotherapy nor meditation is possible unless the sense of identity or ego is mature and well-grounded. Otherwise there is nothing to change and nothing to go beyond.

What kind of a self, then, did the Buddha *not* have?

The context of the 'No-self' Teaching

The Buddha's Teaching on anatta – 'No-self' took place in a particular context: the tradition of meditation and asceticism of the ancient Indian religious movements. This tradition can be understood as consisting of 'direct and consistent answers to the belief that action leads to misery and rebirth. In this tradition some attempted to abstain from action, literally, while others tried to obtain an insight that their real self, their soul, never partakes of any action anyhow.' (Bronkhorst, 1993:128) This background influenced the way the

anatta – 'No-self' Teaching was conveyed. Gombrich explains,

The Buddha's position...was opposing the Upanishadic theory of the soul. In the Upanishads the soul, atman, is opposed to both the body and the mind; for example, it cannot exercise such mental functions as memory or volition. It is an essence, and by definition an essence does not change. Furthermore, the essence of the individual living being was claimed to be literally the same as the essence of the universe. (1996, p. 16)

How the Buddha Taught anatta- 'No-self'

Samuels compares 'the death of the self involved in the Buddhist attainment' to 'the ritual death and rebirth involved in many forms of shamanic training.'

The Buddha teaches against the existence of a permanent 'self' through philosophical arguments, which dispose of the positions of his adversaries, and through standard expressions, and routine sequences of questions and answers in which he drills his monks.

Here are two of the frequent formulae through which *anatta* is taught:

1. The Teaching that what is impermanent (*anicca*) and suffering (*dukkha*) is not the self taught in terms of the six senses (*salaayatana*): sight, hearing, smell, taste, physical feeling, and the mind.

*The eye is impermanent.
What is impermanent is suffering;
what is suffering is not the self;
what is not the self is to be understood as it is with the highest insight (pañña) as,*

'This is not mine, I am not this,
this is not myself.'
The ear (sota) is impermanent ...
The nose (ghana) ...
The tongue (jivha) ...
The body (kaya) ...
The mind (manas) ... (S IV 1
and variously)

2. The Teaching that what is impermanent and suffering is not the self taught as a routine sequence of questions and answers in terms of the five aggregates (*khandhas*): physical form, feeling, formations, perception, and consciousness.

'Is physical form (rūpa) permanent or impermanent?'
'Impermanent.'
'Is what is impermanent suffering or happiness?'
'Suffering.'
'Is what is impermanent, suffering and subject to change fit to be regarded thus: 'This is mine, this I am, this is my self?''
'No.'
'Is feeling (vedana) permanent or impermanent...'
'Is apperception (sañña) ...'
'Are formations (sankhara) ...'
'Is consciousness (viññana) permanent or impermanent?'

Etc.

'Therefore any kind of material form whatever, whether past, future, or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near, all material form should be seen as it actually is with proper wisdom thus: 'This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.'

Any kind of feeling, etc. (MN, Vol. I, 138f, translation from Walshe)

Indoctrination, Induction And The Shamanic Transmission Of Knowledge

What is particularly noteworthy in the passages containing the Buddha's Teaching of 'no-self' quoted above is that they look suspiciously like *indoctrinations*! Although there are some cases of philosophical arguments against other positions, there are many examples of the formulae quoted above.

Why should there be so much indoctrination in a teaching, where potential converts are invited to come and see, i.e. to test for themselves? (ehipassika)

It is well-known that hypnosis is easily induced when there is sensory deprivation or sensory repetition. Meditation requires sensory deprivation. Moreover there is sensory repetition, for example, in observing the breathing, which is basic to Buddhist meditation practice. My proposition is that these passages are not so much indoctrinations – although they do, in fact, in-doctrinate – as much as *inductions*. They serve as auto-suggestion, or auto-hypnotic messages designed to induce a particular altered state of consciousness, namely, that of 'no-self.' When the monks sat down to meditate (perhaps at the foot of a tree), having learned by heart, studied and been in-doctrinated into the ideas expressed in the passages above and in other similar passages, they would tell themselves with regard to all the experiences that arose 'This is not the 'self' or 'This is not mine, I am not this, this is not myself.' They would be using one of the many available *anatta* – 'No-self' experience inductions. Through it, all

that would be left to those for whom the inductions worked would be the experience of the altered state of consciousness of 'No-self.'

One of the shaman's tasks is to induce his followers into altered states of consciousness. This is one of the ways in which he transmits his knowledge. Many elements in the Buddha's method are capable of inducing shamanic states of consciousness. These include solitude, moderate eating. Vinaya [the texts on discipline] shows how few monks could cope with the periods of fasting, sensory deprivation, and Breathwork (aanaapaanasati *Sutta*). Felicitas Goodman, in her extraordinary work on trance and posture, has already shown that when trance is induced, 'without an absolute commitment to a mythology, ... there (is) nothing to give cohesion to the experiences... The trance experience itself is vacuous... If no belief system is proffered, it will remain vacuous.' The shamanic trance experience requires a belief system to give it its meaning.

The formulations of the 'no-self' teaching were the Buddha's way of leading his followers into an experience that was consistent with his teaching. The followers had to be in-doctrinated first, and clear inductions into the required state had to be given, because, as Gombrich has said, the Buddha's position and that of the brahmins was very close – close enough for him to call whether or not the Buddha believed in a self a pseudo-problem.

The inductions alone, however, were not enough. Simply practising the inductions did not necessarily lead to the ecstatic, or trance, or altered state of consciousness experience of 'no-

self' which the Buddha, as shaman, offered to his followers as a cure for their suffering. In-doctrination was essential as the Buddha's 'no-self' inductions could as easily lead the practitioner to the experience of the Self in the Brahmanical or Jungian sense as to the 'no-self' experience that the Buddha taught, i.e. they could just as easily lead a disciple to enter the ecstatic state offered by a rival shaman!

Breathwork and the Shamanic Pattern

The shamanic pattern occurs too in Breathwork. By Breathwork I mean working professionally with conscious breathing techniques for purposes of personal and spiritual development and as a method of psychotherapy. Using the breath as the means, consciousness looks at itself, take responsibility at the deepest level, and develops.

Birth

Rebirthing Breathwork got its name because people regressed to their birth trauma and relived it. Stan Grof, who invented Holotropic Breathwork, puts all of life's experiences into the four stages of birth. Ludwig Janus describes the shaman's journey as 'a graphic reactivation and symbolisation of pre- and perinatal experience.'

Youth and Early Adulthood Calling

Clients frequently feel called to breathwork. Choosing and undertaking a therapy of whatever kind is a response to a calling.

Spiritual Crises

Breathwork, like most other therapies deal with traumas that occurred

during youth and early adulthood. Breathwork also deals with pre-conception, conception, placental, birth, and past life traumas. It provides an excellent framework for dealing with spiritual crises.

Initiation

Breathwork is initiatory. The preparatory elements in this initiation are awareness and grounding. Developing these serves two functions: firstly, it gives the client the means to integrate the larger experiences that follow such as reliving birth, childhood, past life and other traumas, as well as deep altered states of consciousness. Secondly, the development awareness and grounding is a strong commitment to living life in the

present, as it really is. It is agreement to being fully alive, here and now in the here-and-now. Initiations are about taking on human life completely, and facing it as it is. The pattern of birth, death and resurrection occurs on all levels.

In advanced breathwork, altered states of consciousness are common. These range from trances of increased awareness and concentration, to the deepest states of meditation. Clients will spontaneously travel out of their body, develop healing capacities, meet their animal and spirit guides, and so forth.

Practice

Many breathworkers go on to running groups and teaching.

Comparing the Shaman Life Pattern and the Buddha's Life Pattern

	A SHAMAN'S LIFE PATTERN	THE BUDDHA'S LIFE PATTERN	THE BREATHWORK PATTERN
Birth	Important	Important	Important
Youth and Early Adulthood	Intense experience, Crisis	Ecstasy Crisis: seeing old age, illness, death and the ascetic	Intense experiences Crises
Initiation	Apprenticeship Dietary modification Body dismemberment, torture Solitude Ecstasy, journeying: ascent to heaven, descent, - meeting spirits. Revelation Self-healing Mastery of fire and heat Animals and nature	Apprenticeship Dietary modification Fasting so severely that he was only skin and bones. Solitude Ecstasy, journeying: ascent to heaven, descent, meeting spirits. Revelation Self-healing Mastery of fire and heat Animals and nature	Breathwork skills are learned. No extreme practices are imposed. Ecstasy, etc, happen naturally through breathwork. Revelation, Insight Self-healing Heat can occur in sessions Animal guides may appear during sessions
Professional practice	Teaching, Journeying, Healing, Magic. Ritual paraphernalia that includes: drum, dress, bag, mask	Teaching, Journeying, Healing, magic + criticism of magic. Monk's robes, begging bowl, medicines, etc.	Some clients choose to become professional breathworkers
Death	Suicide or 'voluntary departure'	'Voluntary departure'	UNKNOWN

When Consciousness Looks At Itself: Therapy, Healing, Creativity and the Shamanic Pattern

Therapy and Altered States of Consciousness

Andrew Weil maintains that we are born with a drive to experience altered states of consciousness. Therapy is essentially shamanic and induces altered states of various kinds.

Clients come through being more or less intensely in the crisis stage of their shamanic development. Development and healing occurs when consciousness looks at itself: i.e. when clients agree to be fully self-responsible. Self-responsibility is an essential element in shamanism. Potential shamans become recognised through having healed themselves.

Regression, which can be seen as a form of travelling, is common in most therapies, from Freudian analysis onwards. For Jung 'shamanic symbolism is a projection of the individuation process.' Body therapies, including dance can be used to enter shamanic states.

Shamanism And Mental Illness

On the controversial relationship between shamanism and mental disease, Walsh says,

What can we make of this curious combination of initial disturbance and subsequent health? Mainstream psychiatry rarely recognizes the possibility of positive outcomes from psychosis; the diagnostic manual does not even mention it. ... Yet a significant number of researchers, some quite eminent, have recognized that psychological disturbances, even including psychoses, may function as growth experiences that result in greater psychological or spiritual well-being. (Walsh, 1990 : 90)

Therapy is rarely an easy process. Many memories that come up are profoundly disturbing. Severe crises are called transpersonal crises, spiritual emergency or spiritual emergence in enlightened circles. Shamanic societies provide a framework for these experiences which is found only rarely in our societies.

Creativity and Shamanism

Creativity is essentially shamanic. In his fascinating book, *The Discovery of the Unconscious*, Ellenberger compares the shaman's 'initiatory illness' to 'creative illnesses,' as he designates 'the experiences of certain mystics, poets and philosophers.' He discusses elements in the development of the great psychiatrists, Freud and Jung and compares them to the general pattern of shamanic development. Noel shows the relationship between shamanism and the imagination, discussing contemporary shamanovelists and shamanthropologists.

It may indeed be that for creativity and invention to take place, it is essential for consciousness to have access to its shamanic dimension.

The Shamanic Pattern: A Human Universal?

Walsh takes the position that 'Some recurring combination of social forces and innate abilities must have repeatedly elicited and maintained shamanic roles, rituals, and states of consciousness.' My view is that they are indispensable. We cannot live well unless we develop access to, and a positive relationship with our naturally occurring shamanic states, from the crises of the Ego, to the Enlightenment of the Soul or No-Self. As Eliade says

Considered from its own point of view, all the strange behaviour of the shaman reveals the highest

spirituality; it is, in fact, expressive of an ideology which is coherent and of great nobility. The myths by which this ideology is constituted are among the most beautiful and profound in existence: they are the myths of Paradise and the Fall, of the immortality of primordial man and his conversation with God, or the origin of death and the discovery of the spirit in every sense of the word. (*Eliade, 1960 : 70*)

Consciousness is naturally shamanic. As naturally and as inevitably as consciousness tends to create the experience of Ego or individuality, consciousness tends also to create experiences that go beyond it, namely shamanic experiences.

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