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Antonio Luigi Palmisano

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Introduction. On medicalization of life and ritual

Abstract

Today the processes of objectivation and reification reach all fields of social life. The institutions of trance notwithstanding their strong social, political, religious and existential values seem to have difficulties to withstand this continuous and widespread interpretation and the reduction to sanitary institutions, that is, to compensative forms of modern medical therapy. This implies nevertheless the possibility of deep reflection on the concept of “therapy” and on the relation between therapy and the construction of a world of relations between social actors and also between social actors and the social and cosmological construct. The analysis of the modified states of consciousness, or more appropriately of the alternative states of consciousness, allows thus the particular analysis of “taking care of the Other”, this “taking care of the Other” being realized in the conditions of an alternative state of consciousness.

**Itinerari sciamanici, ibridazioni e *Banisteriopsis caapi*
Breve saggio etnografico su di una comunità mistica post-moderna**

Maurizio Ali

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Shamanic itineraries, hybridations and *Banisteriopsis caapi*. A short ethnography of a post-modern mystical community

Abstract

Shamanism considered as a psycho-social structure and as an expression of an “anti-modern” Weltanschauung (i.e. a holistic approach repudiating the notion of “absolute individuality”) has caught the interest of a legion of anthropologists and historians of religions, medics and psychologists who are fascinated by such an “exotic and bizarre” scheme to manage relations with the ultra-mundane universe through the performance of an agent, the shaman, who is provided with inborn powers that are generally stimulated by drugs, the entheogens which modify the state of consciousness. Urban

shamanism, an emerging social phenomena, appears as a hybrid creation synchronizing forms and contents of the “traditional” shamanic practice with the absolutely post-modern needs of disciples (or clients) looking for their psycho-social balance. This essay describes an ethnographic experience realized in Colombia in an urban context with a shaman of Italian origins.

Key words: Ayahuasca, Banisteriopsis caapi, Colombia, Yaje, Shamanism.

Antropologia dell'estasi

Simone Borile

p. 41

Anthropology of ecstasy

Abstract

Modern society fills us with the desire to take an escape journey away from the present or to a faraway place. The need for a break with our own bodies and our problems to reach places which will help us to forget problems is widespread: bliss lived as a distraction from worldly objects, but also as an authentic human journey in search of the sacred, expressed in the patient care of our own inner selves. An inner journey which does not always lead to achievements and success but also to moments of distress and loss. A necessary journey however, in which restlessness is also a fundamental part of modern man, it actually becomes a structural element of his existence, the compulsory passage for his fulfillment.

Bliss, therefore is seen as a moment of contemplation, the search of an inner path of modern man that does always lead to certain results but which lifts up the individual towards a journey against stagnation and cultural instability.

Scenes of the self, and trance

Annelies and Jan M. Broekman

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Abstract

Trance shows the Self as a process involved in all sorts and forms of life. A Western perspective on a self and its reifying tendencies is only one (or one series) of those variations. The process character of the self does not allow any coherent theory but shows, in particular when confronted with trance, its variability in all regards. What is more: the Self is always first on the scene of itself—a situation in which it becomes a sign for itself. That particular semiotic feature is again not a unified one but leads, as the Self in view of itself does, to series of scenes with changing colors, circumstances and environments.

Our *first* scene “Beyond Monotheism” shows semiotic importance in that a self as determining component of a trance-phenomenon must abolish its own referent and seems not able to answer the question, what makes trance a trance. The Pizzica is an example here. Other social features of trance appear in the *second* scene, US post traumatic psychological treatments included. Our *third* scene underlines structures of an unfolding self: beginning with ‘split-ego’ conclusions, a self’s engenderment appears dependent on linguistic events and on spoken words in the first place. A *fourth* scene explores that theme and explains modern forms of an ego—in particular those inherent to ‘citizenship’ or a ‘corporation’. The legal consequences are concentrated in the *fifth* scene, which considers a legal subject by revealing its ‘standing’. Our *sixth* and final scene pertains to the relation between trance and commerce. All scenes tie together and show parallels between Pizzica, rights-based behavior, RAVE music versus disco, commerce and trance; they demonstrate the meaning of trance as a multifaceted social phenomenon.

Usi alternativi della transe: il caso del candomblé keto

Luisa Faldini

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Alternative use of trance: the case of the candomblé keto

Abstract

This paper intends to present and discuss some uses of possession trance. Starting by Lewis assertion(1972) about trance's use, we outline some field cases relating to instrumental use of trance in Brazilian Candomblé by both followers and priests. It is obvious that the state of trance is used in a conscious way to get approvals or to break the rules and that the rationalization of these actions passes through religious explanation. The way in which the religious trance is exploited by followers and priests comes out clearly.

Die Struktur der Trance in afrobrasilianischen Kulturen Über die Ritualisierung veränderter Bewusstseinszustände anhand von Therapie, Initiation, Liturgie und Divination

Stefan Festini Cucco

p. 81

The structure of trance in afro-brasilian cults. On the ritualization of modified states of consciousness in therapy, initiation, lithurgy and divination

Abstract

Trance as a ritualized modified state of consciousness plays a key role in many moments of religious life in afro-brasilian cults. It is the main means of interaction, communication and the exchange of vital energy axé between devotees, gods and ghosts. As such it characterizes the cults' liturgy, initiatory rituals, therapeutic methods and divination techniques, which can hardly be considered solely if the aim is a holistic understanding of the structure of trance.

By following the analytical model of Antonio L. Palmisano (2013), the author begins with a short examination of the three major paradigms of trance institutionalization – vision, possession and ecstasy – and proceeds with the analysis of trance-structure in the afro-brasilian context. Based on personal ethnographic data collected during a fieldwork of several months in Rio de Janeiro, the essay displays the emic perspective in a descriptive way. By doing so the reader should get a good insight in the cults' life and their utilization of trance in ritual activities.

Power, slavery, and spirit possession in East Africa: A few reflections

Beatrice Nicolini

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Abstract

Spirit possession and its relationship with power aims to offer here a better understanding not only of East African societies, but, most of all, of their historical role in numerous political and military conflicts and also within peace-building processes that represent a continuation of a topic of long-standing concern in East African history. The relationships between religions, local cultures and institutional powers throughout contemporary East African history will be re-read through regional and transnational, as well as international dynamics.

**Doppio legame e ipnosi
Verso una teoria della trance come processo costruttivista**

Antonio Luigi Palmisano

p. 127

Double bind and hypnosis. Towards a theory of trance as constructivist process

Abstract

The research done in the 50's on schizophrenia leads first of all to the hypothesis and then to the theory of the double bind. The double bind appears after a thorough investigation of the notion of paradox and its effect in the pragmatic of human communication as a particularly complex form of communication with noteworthy therapeutic potentialities, if its shapes differ from the schizogenic double bind. This work takes the therapeutic double bind into consideration and defines it as such on the basis of its specific structure which is contextualized in states of trance, and not on the basis of its generic use in therapy, i.e. hypnosis is defined as its specific field of practice. The structure of the double bind shows its elasticity and efficiency both in the process of hypnotic trance induction and in the induction of ritual trance. It is also efficient in maintaining the state of trance through the facilitation of dissociation processes which allow the person to elaborate new constellations of relationships and can therefore finally exploit the modified state of consciousness.

Ayahuasca-Induced Interiority Transformation in 3 Middle-Aged Educated Women

Ron Reminick

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Abstract

This study focuses upon 3 women whose lives had become conflictful, emotionally painful and anomic.

The consequences of pain crosses gender and culture lines, especially if one is not aware of their afflictions or knows no way to a fulfilling life. Through the life histories of these 3 women I trace their struggle out of past life experience into an "ayahuasca world" of unlimited possibilities and transformative experience. They came to know themselves more clearly.

Many women, usually educated and literate, have the resources and ability to change their lives by cultivating new relationships, assuming new occupations, or adopting more fulfilling social roles. A greater number who are not well-educated or who live by tradition may not find their way to successful adaptation. Many ethnographic studies describe tradition in change, or the effects of globalization on indigenous societies. Some record the use of ayahuasca, but do not study the outcome.

We need to nurture the genius that has moved humans into higher levels of consciousness since time immemorial; the gifts of the few who have transcended normal consciousness, nurtured their own spirituality, and who have become leaders and teachers.

Rites of passage are universal in human society and suggest the need for identity development and cultural sustenance. They propel the human mind into deeper levels of consciousness and conscience.

This study is about 3 women's spiritual quest for a transformative experience they can share with others. It describes the possibility of a new consciousness through guided shamanic ritual.

Evidenze neuroscientifiche di trance ipnotica: evoluzione storica e applicazioni

Giuseppe Vercelli

p. 201

Neuroscientific evidence of hypnotic trance: historical evolution and applications

Abstract

The study and interpretation of hypnosis and the phenomena which occur through modified states of consciousness has very ancient roots. This article takes the current knowledge about hypnosis into consideration with reference to the recent discoveries of neurosciences and offers a scientific interpretation of this discipline which has been mystified for too long. The magic-religious phase, the mesmeric magnetic phase, the psychological and physiological phase are reported while the recent therapeutic applications are described on the basis of phenomena which develop in subjects during an induced hypnotic state through the amplification and recognition of the “mental representation of reality”.