

SHAMANISM AND PARAPSYCHOLOGY

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All the ascetic aspects which in all parts of the world characterize "training" in shamanism have specific aims. According to shamanistic conceptions, the deeper levels of human personality do not in fact come into contact with rational capacities, but with a newly-awakened internal capacity for reaching and feeling them. However, in order to obtain these results, it is necessary to create an adequate situation of psychophysical necessity and to go beyond the usual barriers. Privations, solitude and actually overcoming the fear of death, create a different existential situation which carries the would-be shaman into a new reality. Within it, the resistances to going beyond are exceeded and living contacts appear with rules and structures of the other dimensions. Already, research and experiences regarding "emotional conditioning," reported by scholars such as Servadio, Hollós, Eisenbud, Ehrenwald and others, have shown that emergency situations, in the absence of other possibilities of horizontal contacts, can re-awaken and dynamize paranormal abilities which are deep within and provoke their activation. But the techniques of shamanic awakening have also been partly used by mystics of all times. One has only to think for example of the isolation of ascetics for months and years in the grottoes of the Himalayas in Tibet and India and also of the solitude of ascetics in the deserts of Thebaid. But the most characteristic point of shamanistic initiation is the moment of crisis in the form of epilepsy. This crisis was interpreted, not incorrectly, in olden times as a "holy sickness," and Plato was of the same opinion. An attack of this "holy disease" with its convulsionary aspects was considered the moment in which the spiritual forces finally opened a gap in the psychophysical personality of the would-be shaman, creating a completely new situation. The task of the candidate was and is that of adapting himself to this new situation, which is wider and dynamically different, without being overcome by it.

It should be pointed out that the psychic personality of the shaman in all cultures goes through the initial stages of any other member of the tribe. Then, his status becomes permanent. The shaman becomes able to cure his own illness, therefore he is capable of curing the disease

of others. These are characteristics which differentiate the illness and the cures of the shaman from the characteristics of neurotic and psychotic personalities. This situation has been well described by Eliade, by Widengren, by Rasmussen and other researchers. During their travels through the remaining areas of *veteroshamanism* here and there in the world, they were able to study and compare their various experiences.

Jan Ehrenwald writes: "Plato made a distinction between divine fury and other types of madness." Elémire Zolla writes: "If the shamanistic type of wizard wants to get in contact with the essence of life, he must learn to listen to the occult music of the universe and reproduce this secret music with his voice. He must become a resonance chamber, control and regulate his breathing. He uses the right instruments to reproduce the original sounds: rumbling, thundering, rolling about and animal cries." The psychologist and cultural anthropologist Luisa Frey-Rohn writes about these experiences: "When normal consciousness is affected by illness, trauma and psychic disturbances, it distances itself in proportion from reality; it is probable that the human spirit gets closer to the border zone of the psyche." Luisa Frey-Rohn also wrote about the interesting research conducted by Carl Meier on ancient mystic cults: "Meier demonstrates how illness in these ancient cults takes on the 'dignity' of a means of cure. Depending on the case, presupposing a cure, the god which caused the illness or which was itself ill intervened personally." Frey-Rohn observes: "If the disappearance of the curing god is the same as the constellation of an archetype, this is our psychological hypothesis; the manifestation of an archetype is interpreted in a dream or in a vision as 'divine intercession,' a mediation of a divine nature." A light invades the subject internally, which permits him to see within and also to see the world as an enormous plain, where there are no more obstacles to his vision and he can trespass on what is actually called past and future. These are the powers which parapsychology defines as "paragnostic."

C. Rhode writes: "According to the theory of the Orphists, the other dimensions were perceptible as soon as the 'sensitive I' lost its consciousness either in dreams or during faints, or in ecstasy. The moon and the stars become visible despite the light from the sun. There are clear signs in this context of the original great shamanism. Heraclitus saw Psyche as fire." De Martino writes: "The belief in paranormal powers is deeply rooted in the spiritual life of the 'Iglulik' community of Eskimos. An intimate 'magical' sympathy, a mysterious consent of souls binds the creatures to each other, setting the mood, in a way, for joys, pains, hopes and fears."

Rasmussen contacted Eskimo shamans, still close in part to that period which Mircea Eliade and his school define as "great shamanism." Both refer in detail to experiences of that "light" which illuminates the shaman internally. From inside, from that moment, he sees, distinguishes, can intervene, can understand and, above all, can act. With regard to the epileptic disease, on the basis of which ethnologists as well as psychologists have put shamanism between psychic sickness and neurosis, a few considerations will serve to distinguish the two situations. Today, on the basis of observations and studies of the primary phases of infancy, and also following innumerable experiences, it can be hypothesized that during the fetal period and during the first moments after birth, the relationship mother-fetus and mother-newborn baby is founded on communication and on a paranormal relationship. The rapid eye movements (REM) have shown that psychic activities and also dreaming ones, are already present in the fetus in the first months of pregnancy, and more so in the first months of life of the baby. An empathic communion, that is, exists between mother and child, and has paranormal aspects. This is shown not only by REM, but is also clearly demonstrated by the psychophysiological tests regarding the type and frequency of the current issued by the neurovegetative and the cerebral systems. It is, therefore, clear that the neurotic regresses to primary phases, not being able to face life on his own, in a search for the previous phases of unity and maternal protection characterized by those paranormal laws which, as Jan Ehrenwald affirms, are then nearly always repressed in the individual who is called "normal."

In fact, during growth, the so-called normal individual, due to the progressive development of his autonomy, tends to repress the phenomena connected with the period of dependence on his mother. That a regression to the primary phases exists, therefore, also in the would-be shaman is without doubt, but the evolution and the significance of this regression, if it can be called so in the case of the shaman, are very different. Eliade, Rasmussen, Halifax and many others who have studied and compared the phenomena and the effects of shamanic initiation, have developed the concept clearly.

In fact, it is true that the candidate shaman goes through an epileptic sickness and other initiatory illnesses which transform not only his psychic structure, but also his psychosomatic and organic situation. But having recovered from his illnesses, the shaman is in a condition to cure other people in a situation of empathy and integration with others which reminds us in some ways of the empathy of the mother with the fetus and then with the child. The shaman is in a condition to integrate himself at a deep level with other people, to feel their problems and

their structures in a paranormal way, and to help them, preceding by thousands of years that integration which exists at a deep level between the analyst and the patient, even if with another course and other rules. In all the shamanistic traditions the patient, in order to be cured and therefore renewed and "refounded," must be symbolically carried back to the primary conditions of the fetus and then into the intrauterine conditions and subsequently those of the newborn child. Cultural anthropology talks of "re-infetuation." In these conditions the patient, in deep integration with the shaman, is reborn.

Franco Fornari makes the following interesting points: "Oriental mystics claim that the control needed to reach divinity must pass through the control of the body and of its functions. But above all the control of the breathing, in and out, and of the apnea becomes the surest way to reach the level of the gods. It is therefore hard not to get the impression that the passage from breathing to apnea (which leads to the Yoga phase of ecstasy) leads to a road which evokes in a mysterious way the fetal state as a meeting place between soul and divinity, which was disrupted when breathing began."

Jean Servier rightly wrote: "A mystical vision can be compared to an hallucination caused by fatigue; however, these two phenomena are different. The hallucination makes a desired or feared object appear. It has a known psychological cause: the ecstatic vision which may be an ultra-perception occurs in the same way, but the cause is a different one, according to the statements of all the mystics. Men born in different climates, from the Equator to the Arctic area, with different diets, vouch for the presence of higher planes in the same way: just like the right crystals properly used can receive Hertzian waves, despite the fact that they come from different seams. According to the initiated, the ritual ceremonies following the descent of the 'Invisible' brought a sense of freedom, an infinite beatitude. Far from being ill, the shaman has an extraordinary nervous resistance."

But it is evident that diverse situations characterize the shaman and the neurotic: while the characteristics of the neurotic are dependence, doubt, selfishness, anguish and so on, the shaman, on the contrary, has not only cured his own illness, but exactly because he has cured himself, he can cure others. Moreover, he no longer even presents those elementary aspects of selfishness and dependency which exist even in so-called normal people. And these facts establish a difference which cannot be ignored. Another important fact is that for the shaman there is no longer a state of wakefulness, sleep or dream: he is above all this.

Most interesting are the many reports of those who have compared the experience of the various shamanistic traditions. Mircea Eliade

wrote: "The acquiring of the 'tapas,' that is internal heat, leads everywhere to the domination of the fire, and ultimately to the abolition of physical laws. This is like saying that a wizard properly 'warmed' can perform miracles. He can create new existential states in the cosmos, repeating in certain ways the cosmogony."

A characteristic of this "tapas" is that the shaman does not perspire. Eliade writes: "The tapas is mentioned in the 'Rig Veda'; its powers are creative on the spiritual level as well as on the cosmic level. Even the cosmic god Pravapati warmed himself intensely through breathing." A large number of primitive tribes depict magical and religious power as "burning." This power is expressed in terms such as "heat," "burn," "very hot," etc. In modern India, Muslims believe that a person communicating with God becomes "burning." Whoever performs miracles is described as "boiling." This extends to all the people and to all behavior considered magical and religious. Shamans and wizards, considered "masters of the fire," can eat hot coal, touch red hot metal and walk on fire. They also have a great resilience to cold. The shamans of the Arctic regions and the ascetics of the Himalayas possess, thanks to their "magical heat," a resistance which surpasses imagination. The meaning of all these techniques, "power through fire" and "magical heat," is very deep. It indicates access to a certain ecstatic state, or to a state which is not conditioned, a spiritual freedom. The shaman has gone beyond the normal code of perceptive temporal-space conditioning. The distance for him no longer exists, it is sufficient for him to intensify the sharpness of internal sight and the intensity of the internal light to be able to penetrate everything. The illumination puts him in a condition to understand. He has turned the usual situation of the common man upside down. Being internally re-awakened, he directly understands the content and the substance of the oneiric world of others and can operate on these levels. Movement means nothing to the shaman because his situation is upside-down in respect to that of the common man. He understands, sees and acts and, as already mentioned, he overcomes the darkness with the sharpness of his internal sight and with the internal intensification of the light. These are his instruments and distance does not exist for him.

The shaman is motionless and, in a certain way, he does not need movement, exactly like the "motionless motor" of which Aristotle wrote. He is placed in the position prior to the mythical "fall." According to the highest shamanistic traditions, the ascension to heaven for the shaman is the re-establishment of this primary situation of consciousness with all the related consequences. If we take into consideration the "mandala" of Tibet and of the Indian Himalayas, which have

so many and such essential derivations from the high shamanistic traditions, we see that the reintegration consists in having exceeded the walls of fire of the mandalic cities, acquiring them and causing their transformation into interior light, and in putting oneself in the central point of the mandala itself.

The problem of sickness, fruit of ignorance and lack of illumination, consequent to the "fall," must be solved in the light of understanding. And it is for this that the shaman must place himself in the universe of light and understanding, must not fear either fire or flames and therefore be capable of understanding them and transforming them.

Kurt Rasmussen writes: "The power which is felt by the Eskimo shaman of the Iglulik tribe is called '*quamaneq*.' This means light or illumination. It is a mysterious light which the shaman suddenly feels inside his body, his head or brain; an inexplicable light which makes research possible; a luminous fire which enables him to see in the dark literally and metaphorically . . . The shaman can now, even with his eyes closed, see in the dark and perceive things present and future which are hidden from others; the shaman can see into the future and know the secrets of others. For the first time that a young shaman experiences this light as he sits in his cell and calls the helping spirits, it is as if the house in which he is was suddenly levitated. He sees a long way ahead as if the earth were unfolding and his eyes could reach to the end of the planet. Not only can he see things far away, he can also discover souls, stolen souls which were either kept in distant unknown regions or held in the land of the dead." Rasmussen made the following comments on his own observations: "I could not understand how a man could survive in minus 30 or 50 degrees of cold, sitting in a small hut with no food apart from a little hot water twice in a thirsty period." Those aspects of Eskimo shamanism remind us of the power acquired by Yoga followers, to see beyond time and space. They also remind us of some of the experiences of Christian saints or of great Sufis.

Even today we are reminded of the seers of the Bretagne countryside who claim to see inside things, as if a light inside them shined and went beyond everything, without finding any obstacles in a world where distances do not exist and in which everything is transparent and luminous. In the 11th century a great Sufi in Baghdad, called Al-Ghazalli, tells us of his experience: "I therefore left Baghdad with no other intention but to live isolated and alone. I spent ten years in this way. In my solitude things were revealed to me which are impossible to describe. A blind man cannot understand colors apart from what he has heard in descriptions; it is like an eye which opens up to make out

various intellectual objects which are understood by sensing. So whoever possesses this capacity has his sight illuminated by a light which reveals objects which the intellect cannot grasp."

This is how Formida described his long stay with a solitary Tibetan hermit: "Solitude! Solitude! Mind and senses develop their own sensitivity in this contemplative life made of intimate observations and reflection. Does one become a visionary? Or does one go blind before that moment?"

And what else is the message of the *Bardo Tödol* (the Tibetan *Book of the Dead*) if not the teaching to melt with the fire of understanding the ice of images produced also on the thin plains of "ignorance" which are proper to the common man, once he stands in front of them, and does not recognize them as a projection of himself?

I think that if we carefully read the numerous reports of scholars and compare them with the contacts we have had with some shamans in certain regions of Africa, we can deduce considerations which may modify considerably certain interpretations concerning paranormal phenomena.

We read that the shaman bilocates himself, moves in space, can go far away and return in an instant, that he is clairvoyant besides being a therapist and magician. But the language of the great majority of shamans is different. The problem, for example, in parapsychology regarding the OBE—that is, if the subject is in fact a dual personality, if he has gone out from the body, if he has in fact traveled (as is thought by Scott Rogo), or if his knowledge is simply a telepathic fact accompanied by apparent traveling (as stated by Celia Green)—is handled from the beginning in another way. Our consciousness and our mind, according to the highest shamanistic conceptions, have never left our body for the simple reason that they have always been outside of and above, if we may say, our body and our brain. They do not need to go outside because they have never been inside. That which remains, therefore, according to the highest shamanism, does not correspond to the ingenuous and reductive discussions regarding an exit from the body. Even the common man, according to the aforesaid sources, has his consciousness and his mind outside his body and brain, but ingenuously he is convinced that they are inside and for these reasons he misunderstands everything. This blindness on the part of the common man the shaman attributes to "falls." What happens then essentially in the shamanic experience according to these ancient conceptions?

The shamanic initiation simply makes the candidate aware that the consciousness and the mind are outside and above the body and they have always been so. The practice related to the initiation re-awakens

a corresponding state of consciousness which gives the living awareness of this essential fact with all the related consequences.

This conception and the concordance of the related experiences coincide therefore with the statements of scholars such as Pribram and Eccles, that is, that mind and consciousness are a "prios" with respect to brain and body.

At the end of his book *Matter and Memory*, Henri Bergson wrote that it was impossible to compare our brain to a box containing a memory. It can be said that the memory is a conscious thing, but it is not confined to our human limitations. The brain plays the role of a filter through which a certain selection is made. Eugène Osty always maintained that "We live on the surface of a very vast intelligence."

The Vedanta shares this point of view. According to it, memory is not situated in the human brain, but is cosmic. Elémire Zolla writes that "Mysticism is complete knowledge compared to the 'talkative' intellect which is the organization of knowledge based on a truly optical model." Emilio Servadio says that even Freud believed in the reality of the psyche as a "prios" preceding brain and body. Servadio added that Jung purposely used the title *Reality of the Psyche* for one of his books. In this way Freud and Jung got close to the position subsequently taken by researchers such as Sherrington, Penfield, Sperry, Pribram, Charon and others. Even Roll conducted interesting studies, considering the psyche as something which goes beyond the spatial-temporal barrier, to establish a continuum with physical and psychic objects. Scott Rogo writes: "The prevailing impression of being in our bodies is the effect of certain common biological automatisms which insinuate themselves into the field of conscience." A few centuries ago in India, Shankara said: "Man is in chains because he mistakes *Atman* for his 'real-I.' This is due to ignorance." Through ignorance man identifies the *Atman* (pure consciousness) with the body, mistaking what one can think for reality.

Therefore, I repeat, there are not, for the shaman, any problems or distances, but, and this should be underlined, for him there exists only the problem of intensity of resistance to perceive and be perceived. It is the case, therefore, of using transpersonal psychology, of another state of consciousness, with characteristics and rules different from those to which the common man is accustomed.

The shaman contacts the individual and collective minds; he discovers the various psychological components and, moreover, he is aware of the rapport which exists between the various individual unconscious levels even in the collective realm.

According to the shamanistic conceptions, what in psychoanalytical language are called aggressive drives accompanied by a sense of guilt

and repressed, can produce nervous illness and psychosomatic disturbances, as well as those phenomena which in parapsychology are called "poltergeists." These phenomena, according to shamanism, cannot occur in the individual, as already mentioned, but can be produced in the collective realm. As on the individual plane the energy repressed can be channeled into the psychosomatic and paranormal phenomena of the poltergeist, on a collective plane it can discharge itself in earthquakes, seaquakes or other cataclysms, in these cases attributed to the gods as punishments. The shaman is aware of the situation, he sees the causes and, therefore, acts accordingly in order to avoid or to beware of all this.

In the currents still existing and derived from the great shamanism, those main elements are still present which penetrated into the highest aspects of all the great religions and in the messages of the highest religious and mystical men. With another language, they are present even within a cosmic and reintegrative Weltanschauung, causal interpretations of depth-psychology and parapsychology.

Giuseppe Tucci, a great expert on the East, found significant what a sage said to him. He wrote: "On the slopes of the sacred mountain in Tibet, a *sadhu* once said to me: 'Scientific truths are useful for the whole of mankind; in the same way, the perfection we reached is not limited and confined to ourselves. It is invisible and fluid. It spreads and maintains, unsuspected, the balance of the world.' " We should reflect on these words.

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DISCUSSION

ROSSNER: I think this was a very highly creative, valuable and important paper. I would like to comment on two specific points. You have mentioned that shamanistic initiation simply makes the candidate aware that the consciousness and the mind are outside and above the body and that they have always been so. There is the implication that "Something Transcendent," that has always been and is, can be perceived in those altered-states known as the shamanistic experience.

This is related to an idea that E. R. Dodds, formerly professor of classics at Oxford and a past president of the British Society for Psychical Research, pointed out about the origin of the Western conception of

immortality as found in Plato. Dodds suggested that it may have been due to Plato's own experience with the shamans of Northwestern Greece, and with the out-of-body experiences taught him by the Pythagorean sect, that Plato postulated his doctrine of the "separable Self" i.e. that the Self, the true Self (involving both the true "psyche" and "spirit,") is separable from the physical body and "above it." And, on the basis of Plato's conclusion Saint Augustine of Hippo was later to say that the soul is not completely incarnate *in* the body while we are alive here in this world, but that we are not aware of this fact in normative states of consciousness.

Thus from the history of religions in the West, especially from Plato and Augustine and that form of Christian tradition, I would suggest that the study of the shamanistic experience and its phenomena is strategic to the recovery of the basis of religious language. "God-talk," and all talk about the "soul not being limited to the body" ultimately arises out of shamanistic or psychic experience such as the out-of-body experience or astral projection of the shaman or the "ecstasy" of the mystic.

The second point that I would like to make is one you have mentioned, that the "shamanistic initiation" gives vision into supersensory realities that are there—in a "higher order" of intellectual ideas, like Plato's ideas. I suggested in one of my books that Plato's concept of the Ideals and Jung's concept of archetypes, perhaps, result from an experience of a shamanistic variety in which the mystic sees the "supersensory world." In one of my books and in a paper presented in 1983 at the Academy of Religion and Psychical Research I mentioned that the Sufi conception of super-sensory worlds in Islamic mystical traditions "corresponds with the conception of heavenly worlds and legendary higher astral worlds and paradises everywhere, from similar descriptions found among shamans, among yogis and in Plato and his ancient predecessors, visions of heavenly cities or heavenly worlds. We find these in the New Testament, in the visions of the seer John on Patmos, the apocalypse of John and modern descriptions by spiritualist mediums of summerlands or paradises." Contemporary psychics or some people who have a near-death experience claim to have seen "lands of light." Buddhist meditators, especially in the Mahayana Buddhist tradition, and Hindu yogis experience a visitation of similar "lands of light" in "higher astral planes." Mystic yogis and NDE's alike tell of "meeting beings of light." All of this suggests to them the possibility of a real, ontological, metaphysical reality that the human species can only encounter during peak, higher altered states of perception. You, Dr. Bernardi, have described this as a "shamanistic initiation ex-

perience." I think your paper, for that reason, puts a flooring under the kind of thing that I have tried to say.

BERNARDI: In both Plotinus and Plato their positions are quite clear. I went up in the Himalayas and contacted shamans of that particular area. I met there a shaman who made a migration from Tunisia down into the desert alone. According to advice given me by Gershom G. Scholem, the famous expert on the Caballa, I approached some particular tribes in the region, near Qumrân in the Jericho Valley. I found that shamanism is almost universal, it is not just in a few tribes. I have also confronted the very difficult question of the connections between soul, spirit and body. The people that I mentioned were absolutely all of them of the opinion that the soul or spirit comes first, and all the rest, the material world, the material conscious zone, the bodily organs, come afterward. This, of course, is pointed out by the real business of practical religions. Saint Teresa de Cepeda d'Avila, the famous early sage, pointed out that the real mystic—to translate the phenomenon in Hindu terms—makes the identification of the Brahman/Atman, that is the final unity between soul and divinity, and identifies this with bodily consciousness. St. Thomas also very pointedly said that a great mistake is to think that the soul is comprised in the body, when everything is quite the contrary, the body is comprised in the soul. Independently from Neo-Platonism it demonstrates the Sufi reality that the Sufi philosophy constantly stresses.

GROSSO: I agree with Dr. Bernardi and Dr. Rossner that shamanism might be described as the experiential roots of the belief in the separability of mind from body. These beliefs are based on unusual experiences. However, the fact that archaic peoples and early philosophic man had these experiences does not demonstrate that the mind in fact does and can separate from the body. That is what parapsychology is all about. It tries to demonstrate that these experiences do have some ontological validity. Merely to cite this interesting lineage of unusual experiences does not prove anything, because they are all different interpretations of the experiences. I personally think that these experiences are suggestive, but we cannot merely cite a long series of unusual experiences as proof of anything.

BERNARDI: Of course, there is no proof of this. I referred to the ideas of Eccles and Pribram, but of course this is not scientific evidence, it is just good speculation. Pribram says that between the soul and body there is a rapport and connection, one of sympathy and knowledge. There is the fact of synchronicity between mind and body, apart from the Jungian concept of synchronicity which was expounded. This hypothesis can be described for hours.

HALL: In Jung's work there is a discussion of the vision of Zosimos which involved dismemberment and reconstitution of the body that Eliade described as a characteristic aspect of shamanistic initiation. Dreams of the same sort of dissolution and repair of the personality can often be seen to take place prior to a reorganization of the personality that overcomes neurosis. It seems to me again possible that one might move from what you have said about shamanism, which is very interesting, toward some kind of laboratory form of this same dissolution and reconstruction and that that might be useful in parapsychological research.

BERNARDI: Jung has reached a different level of the particular way of seeing the shamanistic experience, because synchronicity goes around the main concept of archetypes. What the shaman actually does when he cures is to dynamize the positive aspects of the archetype that are missing and put aside the negative aspects of the archetype. Other anthropologists, such as the noted Frazer, have been blind in spite of the fact that they had such an enormous quantity of material. They were not able to properly interpret the data.

ROSEN: I think there may be an interesting discrepancy between the language that we use and the shamanic experience itself. We say the soul is outside of the body instead of inside. Others say no, the soul is inside, not outside. But the shamanic experience may *transcend* the distinction between inside and outside. So I ask whether it would be in the spirit of your paper to say that, rather than the soul being outside the body, we have transcended the distinction between inside and out?

SERVADIO: If I may respond for Dr. Bernardi, it was written by a yogi, whose name I cannot recall at this moment, that we have a constant experience of duality, but, from a certain point onwards, the distinction between what is inside and what is outside, that is between the inner world and the outer world stops; ceases, is transcended. This strikes me as a very intelligent remark because, as I pointed out in my own paper, we live in a world of duality. We cannot say that the reality, the empirical reality we experience every day is nothing, does not exist. Only from a certain point onwards this distinction between inner and outer realities has no more sense.

LIVERZIANI: Let us assume the existence of three levels in the human personality: the spiritual, the psychic and the physical. There are ordinary persons in whom neither the spiritual level nor the psychical one works a transformation of the physical level. But there are deeply religious persons, saints or shamans in whom the spiritual level transforms the psychic one, whereas no transformation occurs on the physical level: these persons can be called the saints who do not perform miracles.

There are also some persons in whom an action which starts from the spiritual level transforms both the psychic level and the physical one: these are saints who perform miracles. Among this kind of people we can put also the shamans as they have been characterized by Sergio Bernardi. A fourth category of people can be represented by psychics. Here, an action starts from a psychic level, but not from the spiritual one. Nevertheless, this action transforms the physical level. The experience of physical phenomena can appear similar; the difference seems to lie in the source, which is the spiritual level in the case of both the shamans and the saints who perform miracles, whereas the source which the operating force of the psychic springs from seems to be merely the psychic level.

BERNARDI: This distinction of three levels is respected by many spiritual traditionalists and religions. It is almost universal. Many scholars, including Eliade, maintain this distinction as constantly kept in the great shamans. They can all see everything in terms of eyes and the possibility of the soul being met in the eyes.

PERRY: I am worried that our interpretation of the shamanistic experience, the kind of interpretation that we had from Plato and through Plato to a good many Western thinkers, does not sufficiently honor the physical body. I believe that Augustine and perhaps even Aquinas have been misled in this way and have not realized quite what St. Paul was on about. Paul was certainly aware of out-of-body experiences and mystical experience, but he still saw the human being as a kind of symbiotic union of three levels, not three substances, but three levels—the soul, the mind, the body. We are in great danger, I think, if we regard the body as unimportant simply because, for some people's interpretation of the shamanistic experience, the soul or the personality predates it or is superior to it. I think we must regard ourselves as embodied beings and therefore give equal importance to the bodily as to the spiritual or mental side of ourselves.

BERNARDI: In great shamanism there is this idea that to heal other people you must first heal yourself. What is body or bodily is not just brushed off. The shamans say that it is important to have a good healthy body in order to achieve, to reach the peak experience.

PERRY: That makes me a good deal happier. Thank you.