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SHAMANISM AND METAPHYSICS

In this article, I explore the viability of a shamanist ontology. Through the lens of the German philosopher Ludwig Klages (1872–1956), I will address the possibility of outlining the philosophical merits of shamanism. Klages was one of the last European philosophers to represent a tradition which took seriously altered states of consciousness. Klages opposed a destructive ‘Spirit’ (= Reason, Will) to a nourishing ‘Soul’ (= Life). His thinking can be called ‘psycho-philosophy’, insofar as it reconciles psychology and cosmology. Klages’ intellectual legacy – also the legacy of German Romanticism – has been entirely neglected (not refuted) in mainstream 20th and 21st philosophical and scientific thinking. In this article, I try to show that Klages’ philosophy not only accounts for deeper states of consciousness but also cohering ‘original images’. Taking up this account might allow for bridging gaps between philosophical thinking and shamanistic consciousness. I will also briefly address the shamanistic consciousness’s alleged liability to ‘pathology’. Unfortunately, Klages’ work has hardly been translated. Therefore, I translated crucial passages myself.

Key words: Shamanism, Ecstasy, Inspiration, Consciousness, Soul.

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Шаманизм және метафизика

Бұл мақалада шаман онтологиясының өміршеңдігі зерттеледі. Неміс философы Людвиг Клагестің (1872–1956) призması арқылы шаманизмнің философиялық құндылықтарын ұсынуды қарастырады. Клагес сананың өзгерген күйлерін байыпты қабылдаған дәстүрді ұсынған соңғы еуропалық философтардың бірі болды. Клагес болса қиратушы деп сипатталған "рухқа" (= ақыл, ерік) нәр, тірлік сыйлаушы сипатындағы "жанды" (= өмір) қарсы қоя отырып қарастырған. Оның ойлау жолын "психофилософия" деп атауға да болады, өйткені ол психология мен космологияны үйлестіре зерделеген. Клагестің зияткерлік мұрасы – неміс романтизмінің мұрасы XX және XXI ғасырлардағы көтерілген басым философиялық және ғылыми ойларда толығымен түбегейлі ескерілмеді (жоққа шығарылмады). Бұл мақалада Клагестің философиясы сананың терең күйлерін ғана емес, сонымен бірге "түпнұсқа бейнелердің" үйлесімділігін де түсіндіретінін көрсетуге тырысады. Бұл мәселені қарастыру философиялық ойлау мен бақсылық (шамандық) сана арасындағы алшақтықты жоюға мүмкіндік береді. Автор сондай-ақ шамандық сананың "патологияға" деген болжамды бейімділігіне де қысқаша тоқталады. Өкінішке орай, Клагестің жұмысы осы күнге дейін іс жүзінде аударылған жоқ. Сондықтан зерттеу жұмысында дәлел ретінде ең маңызды делінген үзінділер аударылды.

Түйін сөздер: шаманизм, экстаз, шабыт, сана, жан.

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Шаманизм и метафизика

В этой статье исследуется жизнеспособность шаманской онтологии. Через призму немецкого философа Людвиг Клагеса (1872–1956) рассматривается представление философских ценностей шаманизма. Клагес был одним из последних европейских философов, представивших традицию, которая серьезно относилась к измененным состояниям сознания. Клагес же рассматривал "дух" (= разум, воля), описываемый как разрушитель, противопоставляя "душу" (= жизнь), обладающую питательным, жизнеутверждающим характером. Его образ мышления также можно

назвать "психофилософией", поскольку он изучал психологию и космологию в сочетании. Интеллектуальное наследие Клагеса – наследие немецкого романтизма – полностью не учитывалось (не исключалось) в возросшей господствующей философско-научной мысли XX и XXI веков. В этой статье показывается, что философия Клагеса объясняет не только глубинные состояния сознания, но и гармонию "оригинальных образов". Рассмотрение этой проблемы позволяет устранить разрыв между философским мышлением и шаманским (шаманским) сознанием. Автор также кратко останавливается на предполагаемой предрасположенности шаманского сознания к "патологии". К сожалению, работа Клагеса до сих пор практически не переведена, поэтому в данной исследовательской работе автор перевел в качестве аргумента наиболее важные отрывки.

Ключевые слова: шаманизм, экстаз, вдохновение, сознание, душа.

“Ecstasy [...] leads to a mastery
of a world of images over objects”.
“The elementary form of the contemplating
Spirit is divination.”
Ludwig Klages

Introduction

Shamanism can be rightfully seen as a challenge to ‘rational thinking’ since it opposes the latter’s concepts with indomitable *experience*. As Mircea Eliade put it in his ground-breaking study, shamanism cannot be categorised as a religion. Instead, it should be seen as a *phenomenon* which may pervade religious traditions. It does so especially, though not exclusively, in North and Central Asia (Eliade, 1972, p. 28). Shamanism resembles mysticism, Eliade continues, but obviously, it all depends on the definition. For the sake of my argument, I will define ‘shamanism’ here as ‘mediated and mediating ecstasy’. Shamans connect and *reconnect* a world of ‘immediate’ experience with an alleged ‘spiritual’ world. The latter transcends the world of so-called ‘objects’ by dissolving fixed boundaries: not only those of objects but also of the objectifying mind itself.

“The shaman,” Joan Halifax writes in her book *Shamanic Voices*, “a mystical, priestly, and political figure emerging during the Upper Paleolithic period and perhaps going back to Neanderthal times, can be described not only as a specialist in the human soul but also as a generalist whose sacred and social functions can cover an extraordinarily wide range of activities. Shamans are healers, seers, and visionaries who have mastered death. They are in communication with the world of gods and spirits. Their bodies can be left behind while they fly to unearthly realms. They are poets and singers. They dance and create works of art. They are not only spiritual leaders but also judges and politicians, the repositories of the knowledge of the culture’s history, both sacred and secular. They are familiar with cosmic as well as physical geography; the ways of plants, animals, and the elements are known to them. They are

psychologists, entertainers, and food finders. Above all, shamans are technicians of the sacred and masters of ecstasy” (Halifax, 1979, p. 3f).

Justification of the choice of articles and goals and objectives

Though data collection may be indispensable, the scholar of religious studies will soon need to submit to philosophical reflection. Granted, they may quickly discover that philosophy perhaps cannot avail us with strict definitions (e.g., of ‘religion,’ ‘consciousness,’ or ‘shamanism’); it does, however, teach that first *self-reflective* conceptual frameworks enable definitions to thrive. Whereas scientific conceptual frameworks, despite inner coherence, tend to be ultimately arbitrary, philosophical frameworks, even when debatable, at least try to draw from self-conscious reflection. This makes philosophy as indomitable as experience itself; most notably, shamanistic experience. For is not the process of thinking, in the final analysis, an *experience*, in which consciousness is set in motion by unconscious triggers? “Instead of wondering that thinking can be unconscious,” the German philosopher Carl du Prel (1833-1899) states, “we should realise that in fact *only* unconscious thinking exists, that is, a thinking that is accompanied by consciousness but is not produced by it.” (Du Prel, 1888, p. 75, my trans.) [The unconscious motor drive of conscious thinking, in Du Prel, is not the double of latter (it is not ‘rational’), but its embracing space].

Scientific research methodology

The study used an integrated approach using the accumulated knowledge of the theory of the humanities. Also, the scientific and methodological basis is the dialectical method of cognition of social phenomena, system-structural, comparative analysis, logical-theoretical, staged, analytical, statistical analysis.

The main part

The German vitalistic thinker Ludwig Klages developed a philosophy which comes remarkably close to shamanism. In line with the Romantic tradition, he focused on human consciousness's innate animate or ensouled character. His initial research interests concerned phenomena like handwriting, character, expressivity, dream, Eros, and ecstatic rapture. Departing from such endeavours into inner experience and nourished by the works of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, Klages aimed at revising philosophy's predominant rationalism and voluntarism. His main book, *The Spirit as the Adversary of the Soul* [This major book of almost 1500 pages, henceforth referred to as *GWS*, is as yet untranslated, except for short excerpts in Bishop, 2018. A translation of the final part, 'The Worldview of the Pelasgians,' will be published soon by Theion Publishing in Munich. In 2018, Theion published a translation of a shorter text by Klages, *Of Cosmogonic Eros*, trans. Mav Kuhn. For an introduction to Klages, also see Alksnis, 2015] deplored the bifurcation of Reality in a struggle between two metaphysical principles: an obnoxious Spirit (reason, will) and a living, vivifying, and animating Soul. In the light of the former's intrusiveness, he argued, any liberation from it will always take the form of ecstatic rapture and visionary contemplation, during which the soul takes back its lost inner territories. These territories, I will show in this article, consist of *original images*. Images connect the inner and outer world, psyche and cosmos.

True, explicit references to shamanism are sporadic in Klages. In the conclusive, anthropological part of *The Spirit as the Adversary of the Soul*, Klages mentions the "Finnish shaman". The latter, owing to "his faculty of enhanced contemplation" and the loosened ties between his soul and body, is capable of conversing with the dead. "He can go on a journey for days to bring information about people and regions of, for example, faraway Iceland, while his body is fixed in cataleptic rigidity." (*GWS*, p. 1284, my trans.) A few pages further, he refers to "the shaman who, by fixing eagle feathers to his rod, shared in the supposed omniscience of this sharp-sighted bird of prey". (*GWS*, p. 1292, my trans.) [As a remnant of the archaic belief in the capacitating virtues of bird feathers, Klages refers in a footnote to "the surprising readiness of countless women to have their hat adorned with bird feathers and stuffed birds," obviously "without the least awareness" of its original meaning. *GWS*, p. 1476f n. 115. Note that Klages doubtlessly thinks here of women's

fashion of his own days]. But, as said, such explicit references to shamanism are rare. This does not take away that the gist of Klages' overall argument explains the *mindset* and the *cosmology* of shamanism. Since 'mindset' and 'cosmology' are intertwined, in Klages, I am inclined to speak of a *psycho-philosophy*. Klages' psycho-philosophy resembles Gustav Fechner's [Gustav Fechner (1801-1887) was a German philosopher, psychologist and biologist who argued that matter is a condensation of consciousness. One of his most intriguing books was his *Zendavesta, oder über die Dinge des Himmels und des Jenseits (Zendavesta, or About the Things of Heaven and the Afterlife, 1851)]* and Carl Gustav Jung's.

The reason for writing this article lies in the illuminating virtues Klages' thinking has as regards shamanism. Rather than being an atavism, shamanism may rely on original potencies of consciousness and nature alike. As a 'proof,' the verification principle will be of no help here; not just because verification cannot exhaust phenomena, but first and foremost because the principle itself rests on the very ontological and transcendental premises Klages' philosophy radically puts into question: an allegedly neutral 'mind' facing a supposedly self-contained 'reality'. In terms of 'research methodology,' I will follow Klages' main argument and confront it with shamanism. Obviously, this research cannot pretend to be exhaustive. My main concern is to suggest a psycho-philosophical framework by means of which shamanism starts making sense. This implies that philosophical interpretation prevails over fact collecting.

Spirit and Soul

Let me go a little further into the dualism mentioned above insofar as necessary to understand Klages' philosophical account of shamanism (if not his shamanistic account of philosophy).

At first sight, it seems like it offers a modern version of Gnostic or Manichaeic dualisms, yet it is differently tainted. Klages' dualism, however, is complicated by the fact that it hides another, a healthy and more profound dualism between soul, on the one hand, and original images, on the other. The former is as conspicuous as pernicious; the latter is original and primordial. We can equally call it a *polarity* since it is not antagonistic.

The conspicuous dualism between Spirit and Soul, characterises Klages' entire thinking at first sight. 'Spirit,' in Klages, stands for *reason* or *will*. One may be surprised at this assimilation, for, so one could ask, is not reason informed whereas will is blind? What they both have in common, however,

is an *interruption* – which is the ultimate essence of Spirit, according to Klages. Reason interrupts by identifying and conceiving phenomena and transforming them into well-defined concepts; will interrupts by overpowering instincts and abusing their energy to reach a self-imposed, arbitrary goal. In the end, Klages contends, the essence of reason itself is will, pure arbitrariness and lust for power. Although reason claims it is rational – rightly so, Hegel would add – this claim is ill-founded. The principle of reason cannot do anything without the vital basis on which it draws, even while exhausting this basis. The (seemingly self-contradictory) critique of reason expressed by Klages sides with other contemporary philosophical critiques of reason, such as in Horkheimer and Adorno (*Dialectics of Enlightenment*), Gilles Deleuze, or Michel Foucault. By being nihilistic and purely interruptive, reason cannot but reveal its voluntaristic proclivity to self-promotion. History, Klages adds, shows reason's devastating effects: rationalisation has led to rampant industrialisation, and the ongoing destruction of nature – both outside (environment) and inside (the human body and soul).

The other metaphysical principle in Klages' dualism is 'Soul'. As immediate life experience, or the sphere of affectivity, Soul entails the more profound duality, or polarity. It is that which is affected by its counterpart, i.e., the vital sphere. Upon the taking place of this affection, life is born. "Life," Klages writes, "is the faculty to undergo life *without interruption*" (*GWS* p. 251; my trans.). The German is hardly translatable here since the word used for 'life,' *Leben*, is cognate with the other used word, *erleben* ('to undergo life,' 'to experience'). How to interpret this? In other words, what exactly is experienced or undergone when life is lived? As the soul's vital counterpart, Klages enigmatically explains, life consists of *original images* that are non-consciously contemplated and trigger instincts. To live, reasoning is not necessary; it ultimately harms life. Instead, 'living' comes down to being unconsciously aware, to being embedded in an all-embracing, passively experienced whole. "There is no lived experience which is truly conscious, and no consciousness can truly have a lived experience of something" (*GWS* p. 229; my trans.). The essence of life is continuity and interconnectivity. The articulations of consciousness can only interrupt it ["The Soul is characterised by living experience, and all living experience pulsates; the Spirit intermittently interrupts the lapping of living experience's waves." *GWS*, p. 748, my trans.].

Whereas Spirit's interruption of Soul creates a malign antagonism, the relation of life to the original images of which Soul consists, proper polarity. But what does Klages mean by 'original images'? There is an insoluble difficulty in trying to understand them since Klages' whole point and purpose is to show that they escape understanding; they can solely be accessed in ecstatic contemplation. It is, however, worthwhile to shed light on the notion of 'original images'; they bring us closer to what a shamanic consciousness might involve.

Instead of approaching Reality as a world of isolated objects – as science and vulgar perception usually do – we should see it as a whole of original resemblances or mutual reflections. Identities do not exist at all. Original resemblances or arch-images stand for primordial connections which make up for 'reality'. Their solidification in self-identical and, eventually, material objects relies upon the artificial manipulations of reason. As examples, Klages frequently mentions natural phenomena such as the dawn, sunrise, thunderstorm, lightning, a waterfall, an earthquake, an evening forest, or moonlight. Deep inner contemplation of these produces essential life experience. Life is the impregnation of the soul with images, 'imagi-nation'; reverse-ly, the outflow of images into the soul. It comes to expression in, for example, atmospheric paintings: "Each significant landscape painter," Klages notes, "whether Ruysdael or Claude Lorrain or Turner or Whistler or Böcklin, discovers with his paintings as yet unknown characteristic features of the atmosphere; the art historian, confronted with the painfully difficult task to articulate them in language, would search in vain should he borrow words from physical optics!" (*GWS*, p. 626, my trans.) Elsewhere, Klages quotes the 18th century German poet Novalis, who stated that "the seat of the soul is where the inner and the outer world touch each other". (*GWS*, p. 1141, my trans.) Already Empedocles, the ancient Greek philosopher of nature, wrote down the following verses: "For it is by earth that we see earth, and by water water, and by air glorious air; so, too, by fire we see destroying fire, and love by love, and strife by baneful strife" [Quoted in German by Klages in *GWS*, p. 1134; the English here is from Arthur Fairbanks, see *Empedokles*, 1898, p. 333.]. Empedocles, Klages suggests, was aware of the profound unity between soul and life, a unity re-emphasised in Goethe's famous phrase, "If the eye were not sun-like, the sun's light it would not see" (*GWS*, p. 1135), and, more dramatically, in his own poetic words, "the trees mumble, but they only speak to those whose soul once went into the storm" (*GWS*, p. 1142, my trans.)

It is unfortunate, Klages complains, that, precisely at the intersection of contemplation and concrete *tangential* experience (*Empfindung*), the disturbing intervention of the Spirit can occur. The living, vivid experience becomes suddenly isolated from its immediate context and is fragmented into ‘objects of experience.’ Original contemplation deteriorates into inspection and observation. Out of this encounter, the I or the Ego is born. It is a coalescence of Spirit and Soul, but in such a way that the latter is domesticated (and exhausted) by the former. Below, we will see that, despite the fateful coincidence of the I’s rise, the latter is indispensable for understanding ecstatic vision.

Ultimately, Reality cannot be seized or comprehended by Spirit. “The temporal nature of *reality*,” Klages contends, “inevitably demands its volatility; consequently, it makes the application of the concept of ‘Being’ to the phenomenal world impossible.” (*GWS*, p. 48, my trans.). This introduction of the concept, and the ensuing conceptual paralysis of phenomena, mark the dawn of Greco-European ‘civilisation,’ the destructivity of which Klages unremittingly laments. Chinese Daoism, he interestingly adds, represents an alternative. It has maximised the credentials of contemplated images while neglecting the force of tangential, touch-based experience. This has led to a worldview which celebrates viewed *appearance* (if not *apparency*, or even *apparition*) and disregards the sensed opposition *ob*-jected by objects. The Daoist world is a world without matter (*wu hsing*). The Daoist ideal is to abandon agency or interference altogether (*wu wei*). Before hastily turning to Chinese Daoism to escape from Greco-European objectification, however, we should be aware, Klages warns, that Spirit had not simply left China unscathed. “Here, too, the fateful power of Spirit, as we understand it, is at work, but not in favour of the inanimation of the body but of the disembodiment of Soul. Compared to the European spirituality [*Geistigkeit*],” Klages adds, “East-Asian spirituality [*Geistigkeit*] is less dangerous to life. True, in the end, it makes things shrivel and transforms flowers into strawflowers; but it does not spread like a consuming fire.” (*GWS*, p. 340, my trans.)

Ecstasy and vision

In the preceding, I already alluded to original images as Reality’s core. They appear (‘occur’) by impacting the inner core of the contemplating being – whether the philosopher (Empedocles, Klages himself), the poet (Novalis), or the painter (Böcklin). It is of note that Klages’ metaphysics implicitly accounts for a shamanistic consciousness and cor-

responding metaphysics. Let me recall that Klages himself hardly even refers to the word ‘shamanism,’ but his vocabulary cannot fail to evoke it. Interestingly, Klages accounts for levels of (non-)consciousness. The first level entails clairvoyance or a visionary viewing of images, and it paradoxically still *involves* Spirit. The second, more profound level regards a perennial sphere, the heartbeat of life itself, and dispenses with Spirit.

Let us take a closer look at how Klages interprets the altered state of consciousness reached by the visionary seer in his primary ecstasy. In the following passage, Klages describes ecstasy as a state which is related to, and yet not identical with, divinatory visions and clairvoyance. He suggests, and surprisingly so, that Spirit has a share in the latter. After having mentioned the association, in German Romanticism, of clairvoyance and mantic rapture with ecstasy, Klages emphasises that “ecstasy is not already in itself clairvoyant.” And he goes on to say that ecstasy, “[i]n its accomplishment most similar to the self-forgetfulness of those lost and drunk of happiness, temporarily leads to the extinction of consciousness as such in a surge of life waves stirred up thoroughly. It inundates those seized by rapture with a sea of images, depriving them of the slightest possibility to reflect on it.” (*GWS*, p. 260, my trans.)

The person who has undergone ecstatic rapture finds himself in a unique state: he is flooded with images but incapable of seeing them; more precisely, he can see them without being able to reflect upon the act of seeing. His seeing is unconscious. How should we understand this? It cannot be the rational subject of Enlightenment anymore, which is at stake here; the subject whose ‘dignity’ is celebrated in the modern ‘human rights’ rhetoric or global ‘democracies.’ What, then, is his state? Let us return to Klages.

“To bring about the aforementioned state in a person, the shell of the I must first blast. This occurrence will be accompanied by a concussion of conscious experience which can remotely be compared to a burst of the strongest emotions [...]. It is this concussion which, under particular circumstances, dies away in the sudden jet of mantic prognostics.” (*GWS*, p. 261f, my trans.)

The blasting of the shell of the I is a theme dear to the modern ‘spiritual’ thinking which nourishes both Jungian therapy and, remarkably, contemporary theories of leadership and management. (Cf Stein, 1984 and Sahni, 2022.) The I equals the Ego, which must be dethroned before inner development and maturing can occur. It should not be overlooked

that, at least in Klages, this dethronement is painful. It entails a shock experience.

What is more, its illuminating virtues are not assured. Only “under particular circumstances,” the “concussion [...] dies away in the sudden jet of mantric prognostics”. In other words, a visionary experience might, but need not, ensue the inchoate blast of the ego shell. It is not clear which conditions Klages is referring to here, but it seems that an intense encounter with Spirit is inevitable. For he continues by saying that “[n]ot the life wave embedded in purple dark makes clairvoyant, but the fact that this wave is whipped up and broken by the opposition of the ego-formed Spirit.” (*GWS*, p. 261, my trans.) [Also cf., on the conception of dreams in Pelasgian (= proto-Greek, primordial) culture: “the soul does not receive the highest wisdom, initiatory knowledge, or meaningful insights in the state of ordinary wakefulness; this occurs now in deep sleep, now in dreamlike rapture. *Images* will only germinate during the Spirit’s states of anaesthesia. *Impregnation* by these images will make one ‘seeing.’” *GWS*, p. 1285, my trans.].

It becomes clear that, in Klages, the role of the Spirit is highly ambiguous. Not only does the Spirit stand for the antagonistic force of interruption (as ‘reason’ or ‘will’). Oddly, its primary effect, i.e., the production of an I or, more generally, of the Modern subject, is also vital for the alleged visionary viewing of images. But it seems as if the latter is inevitably preceded by a *crisis experience*, which is the toll to be paid by the ecstatic seer. Such crisis experiences, in which the I is blasted, can take the form of illness, sad loss, or severe pain. “The sudden downfall of the lifestream, e.g., in a week of the severest disease; a day after the death of a highly beloved person; or in the tormenting hours of a difficult delivery, can unleash flashes of consciousness which abruptly transform their bearers into ‘knowers’ of their entire preceding life.” (*GWS*, p. 260, my trans.) [Today, an International Spiritual Emergency Network exists which offers professional help to those whose psychic crises is not recognised (let alone, acknowledged) by mainstream psychiatry. See <https://www.spiritualemergencenetwork.org/> Interestingly, shamanism is equally inaugurated by crisis experiences, cf. Halifax, pp. 4ff, and Eliade, Ch. II.].

True, Klages’ statements do not necessarily exclude other ways in which clairvoyance may occur (although the *possible* precedence of personal crises experiences would deserve closer scrutiny). But the emphasis here is on the disruption of the Ego shell, which gives rise to clairvoyance. “Not [already] the

life wave embedded in purple dark makes clairvoyant” [Klages quotes here a famous passage from Hölderlin’s *Hyperion*: “The heart’s wave wouldn’t foam up so beautifully, becoming spirit, if fate, that ancient silent rock, didn’t stand in its way.” (trans. Howard Gaskill)].

As said earlier, there is another, more profound level of (non)consciousness in which the Spirit is altogether absent. Whereas the first level clairvoyantly regards images that concern pending events or happenings, the second level concerns the perennial heartbeat of life or, as Klages puts it, “elementary Soul.” “When, by tremendous strength, the disturbing intervention succeeds in blasting off the *faculty* of reflection, a non-conscious flow of contemplation – temporarily uninhibited – can gain mastery in possibly memorable ‘Views’; provided that there is an inwardness which is vital enough. We can surmise already here,” he enigmatically continues, “that such ‘Views’ are essentially distinct from those glowing or flaming images which become susceptible to contemplation *not* through mere impotence of consciousness but by a fulness of the elementary Soul which drowns any reflection.” (*GWS*, p. 268, my trans.) ‘Views’ (*Gesichten*) – with quotation marks from Klages – refers here to images that (still) have event character, whereas ‘images’ (*Bilder*) refers to an eternal sphere. The former originate in the disempowerment of reflective consciousness and unchecked influx, the latter in the assertive abundance of life itself, which seizes the ecstatic person. In both cases, however, recollection comes down to the *formation* of views or images, as if the original ecstasy were essentially formless. “It is / because of an image,” the Lebanese poet Nadia Tuéni (1935-1983) writes, “that we already depart on the rugged shoulder of the roads, / and life watches over us like a crazy companion, / while death rejuvenates each summer.” (Tuéni, 1985, p. 262, my trans.) [The poem was first published in a collection with the meaningful title *Le premier rêveur de terre* (‘The First Dreamer of Earth’)].

Metaphysics of images

Altered states of consciousness are incremental. The first disruptive encounter between Spirit and Soul can enhance divination (“Not the life wave embedded in purple dark makes clairvoyant, but the fact that this wave is whipped up and broken by the opposition of the ego-formed Spirit,” “provided that there is an inwardness which is vital enough”). Ultimately, the divinatory state is superseded by a non-conscious state (“those glowing or flaming images which become susceptible to contempla-

tion [...] by a fulness of the elementary Soul which drowns any reflection”). The reflective level is gradually diminished and finally suppressed. What will manifest itself, then, is ecstatic rapture. The contemplating soul is immersed in ‘original images’ during this rapture. These images constitute the core of Being, according to Klages. They precede the world of objects. If Klages’ analysis makes any sense here, one could argue that these ‘original images’ represent the substance of what the shaman goes through.

Interestingly, Klages gives an argument for the nature of these original images by referring to the evolution of humankind. The argument relates to reconnection and reinstalment of unity after the increasing manifestation of ‘distance’ or ‘remoteness’ in human contemplation. In ‘The visionary act,’ a section in the part entitled ‘On the essence of reality,’ Klages writes,

“Supposed that every single being was indeed a microcosm, but that, after the intermediate realm of animals, first the rise of humans inaugurated the birth of distance, history, and cosmos; then, the images of ecstatic contemplation would not only be the end and accomplishment of world history but also, time and again, its creative arch-origin. And the meaning of the precipitations of all image-drunken moments would be this: *to be a consolidated means of the images’ renewal*. It would equally clarify the macrocosmic meaning of human creativity and activity *after* its disentanglement from the magic rotations of an original time, a time in which soul and world merged in rhythmically uninterrupted, successive embraces.” (GWS, p. 1190, my trans.)

In other words, with the rise of humans, an awareness of distance and perspective arose. Humans easily get lost in the wide areas of time (‘history’) and space (‘cosmos’). Worse, they may fall prey to Spirit, which disentangles them from their original embeddedness. The ecstatic moments of image-drunkenness compensate for the ensuing possibility of alienation.

Ultimately, the non-conscious moments of ecstatic rapture and image-drunkenness represent the deeper meaning of visions, views, or clairvoyance. The latter are messengers of the former. “Apparitions, reflections, visions, dreams and shadows are not in themselves bearers of soul [...], but only insofar as they are messengers, as it were, and hardly surveyable signs of occurrences that become demonically present in images and only in images, and that are sedimented in symbols.” (GWS, p. 1285, my trans.)

Interestingly, Klages’ entire psycho-philosophy issues in an anthropological yet appreciative de-

scription of the so-called ‘Pelasgians’ prehistorical mindset. Klages derives the name from an ancient Greek myth that designates a proto-Greek people. Rather than to a particular race, Klages mainly applies it to the alleged *mindset* of three categories: 1) the true poets of all peoples and epochs, 2) the primordial or archaic peoples living in a state of nature, and 3) the prehistorical ancestors of the European ‘civilised’ peoples, known through their idols, cults, symbols, and myths. (GWS, p. 1258) One of the authors on whom Klages relies here is the famous German scholar J.J. Bachofen (1815-1887), especially his book *Das Mutterrecht* (‘Mother Law,’ 1861) on matrilinear societies presumably preceding patriarchy. One can easily see that, by including poets, Klages saves ‘Pelagian’ culture from being mere folklore from times immemorial. The Pelagian mindset is profoundly characterised by image-drunkenness, in the poet no less than in the ‘primitive’. They both experience original images as animated, most particularly in the dream state: “highest wisdom, initiatory knowledge, significant insights: the soul does not receive them in the normal state of being awake, but now in a deep sleep, now in dreamlike rapture. Only from the *anaesthesia* of the Spirit germinate the *images* which, once they will have *fertilised* him, make him a ‘seer’.” (GWS, p. 1285, my trans.) [The 19th century German physician-author Albrecht Steinbeck closely associates clairvoyance and poetry in Steinbeck, 1836. Without mentioning ‘clairvoyance,’ Heidegger argues in a similar vein, when discussing poetry in ‘Language in the Poem’ (*On the Way to Language*). Also cf. I.H. Fichte: “it is a comprehensive, not a comprehended [sphere], one which comprises all ideas, in which everything creative roots, and which reaches down into our ordinary life” and “it most emphatically betrays itself in those conditions of clairvoyance, in which the original consciousness [...] temporarily takes the place of common empirical being.” Fichte, 1876, p. 411, my trans.].

Pathology?

In an article from 1974, Jean Houston, director of the New York-based Foundation for Mind Research, and temporarily Hillary Clinton’s advisor, writes the following: “In our culture those who reject the reality-consensus are sometimes considered to be psychotic or otherwise badly disturbed, while in some other cultures they may be acclaimed as divinely or demonically inspired. ‘Primitive’ cultures are often much wiser than we are in dealing with those who reject the reality-consensus. A child in these so-called primitive cultures who shows a spe-

cial facility for seeing visions or for having a psychic sensibility may be given rigorous training in different ways of seeing and being and then grow up to be a critical member of the society – a priest, shaman, or a prophet; a healer; or an artist. By contrast, too often in our society such children are intercepted by well-meaning ‘guidance counselors’ and ‘delivered’ from their curious talent by teachers, psychiatrists, and other executors of the ‘norm’. Thus do we continually cut off at the root a dynamic vehicle for society’s well-being, a vehicle of inspiration, of ecstasy, and of entrance into the larger Reality in which we all live and breathe but are conditioned out of seeing” (Houston, 2011, p. 582) [In the German edition of his *Against Method*, the famous, anarchistic Austrian-American philosopher of science Paul Feyerabend (1924-1994) quotes the entire passage. Also see Eliade, p. 41-49. Eliade writes that the crisis experiences have as their ‘goal’ the “singularisation” of the “medicine-man” within a society. (op. cit., p. 48).].

It would go far beyond the scope of this article to further explore the relationship between the ‘Pelagian’ or shamanic “image-drunkenness” on the one hand, and psychosis, on the other. And yet, Klages’ discussion of the “fulness of the elementary Soul which drowns any reflection” as a state which precedes reflective consciousness sheds light on a fundamental *flaw*. For not only is the concept of ‘psychosis’ highly determined by culture – which is obvious and inevitable. What is more disconcerting is that this concept *thrives* on two constitutive weaknesses: 1) a profound ignorance about the nature of consciousness and 2) the absence of any cosmology. Slowly but gradually, these weaknesses are admitted by several leading psychologists and psychiatrists. (Barušs, 2016; Kelly, 2010) But it is nonetheless true that psychology and psychiatry are handicapped from the outset as they stay away from the philosophical question, ‘what is consciousness?’.

Could it be that *literature* – ancient and modern – invites us to reconsider the shamanistic mindset as a state which is not limited to the so-called ‘shamanic cultures’ but which testifies to a *common* or commonly *available* mindset – even if this mindset is often ignored or misrepresented?

The Spirit as the Adversary of the Soul abounds with literary references to what Klages calls “bound pathics” (*‘müssende’ Pathiker*), that is, inwardly driven individuals who simply cannot act otherwise than they do. Worse, the personality of these “bound pathics” (e.g., heroes in novels by Dostoevsky or Ibsen) is frequently shattered. “Here,” Klages notes,

“we have everything which preoccupies contemporary psychopathology: the ‘flight’ in the night of oblivion, the ‘twilight states’ and even the paradigmatic ‘dissociation of the personality,’ objectification of each unconscious behavioural tactics, states of somnambulism, fictitious actions with a most adjusted expedience, without and sometimes against the agent’s will.” (*GWS*, p. 233, my trans.)

Results and discussion

We do not even have to limit ourselves to protagonists of modern novels such as Raskolnikov or Peer Gynt. Already in ancient Greek tragedy, Klages continues, we find examples of what modern physicians would call a “psychogenic delirium”: Sophocles’ Ajax or Agaue in Euripides’ *Bacchae*. And, Klages adds, does not Plato’s *Phaedrus* give us a better account of pathicism (‘pathology’) than any contemporary ‘scientific’ approach would do? Admittedly, as these ancient accounts did not yet presuppose a ‘consciousness’ in the modern sense of the word – one might prefer to speak here of modern subjectivity – there was no unconscious, either. Instead, Klages states, the alleged inner drives of those “bound pathics” were seen as “operations of *demonic forces on the soul of human beings*.” It is telling that today, “our language contains words like ‘inspiration,’ ‘insight,’ ‘illumination,’ ‘revelation,’ ‘enthusiasm,’ ‘ecstasy,’ ‘possession’.” (*GWS*, p. 235, my trans.) In earlier times, Klages concludes, “‘mania,’ completely different from contemporary ‘insanity,’ implied the incapacitating dwindling of conscious personality into *divinised life-drives* and was, therefore, held in much higher esteem than the wisest form of prudence.” (*GWS*, p. 236, my trans.)

Conclusion

In this article, I have tried to show that shamanism, far more than being an anthropological phenomenon, allows for a philosophical justification. Ludwig Klages has suggested that the shaman’s ecstasy comes down to a breakthrough experience in which a world of images (rather than objects) pervades ‘ordinary’ consciousness. The clash between what he calls Spirit (i.e., rational or willing consciousness) and Soul (i.e., pathic undergoing of life) could well account for the flashes of insight and even clairvoyance, allegedly attested by historical evidence about seers, prophets, philosophers, poets, and other bright minds. Beyond this clash, then, the seer may find “those glowing or flaming images

which become susceptible to contemplation [...] by a fulness of the elementary Soul which drowns any reflection”.

Any equation of shamanism to prophecy, clairvoyance, let alone philosophy or poetry, would be moot. The anthropological phenomenon of shamanism cannot be captured within the boundaries of a narrow concept. My claim is that shamanistic phenomena – just as philosophy and poetry, for that matter – are indicative of indomitable experiences

that Klages’ thinking accounts for. True, to the extent that these experiences constitute the constantly oscillating core of the mind, any conceptualising approach (including Klages’) must face provisionality. And yet, in the contemporary philosophical landscape, Klages is still somewhat unique. This makes his approach interesting. It could help fill the gap between anthropology and philosophy and prevent the corresponding, *lethal* bifurcation between ‘experience’ and ‘truth’.

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