



SHAMANISM: REMOVING THE MASK, REVEALING THE MYSTERY

Tellico Village Library, Loudon, TN

October 23 rd , 2024

Karel James Bouse, PhD/PhD

Institute of Emerging Psychologies/ Center for Shamanic Psychology

<https://institute-ep.com>

info@institute-ep.com

CONSCIOUSNESS QUESTIONNAIRE

Please Indicate Answers to All Questions with the Number that Best Matches Your Response:

- (1) Strongly Disagree
 - (2) Agree
 - (3) Neither Agree Nor Disagree
 - (4) Agree
 - (5) Strongly Agree
-

- () I believe in a single divinity.
- () I believe in angels.
- () I believe in a creator God that dwells in heaven.
- () I believe in heaven and hell.
- () I believe in the superiority of humanity over nature.
- () I believe that divinity is present within all living things.
- () I believe that animals have sentience.
- () I believe that plants have sentience.
- () I believe that stones and soil have sentience.
- () I believe that humanity is descended from alien beings.
- () I believe in a creator goddess.
- () I believe in "The Force."
- () I believe in multiple divinities.
- () I believe that all beings are One.
- () I believe that everything is sacred.
- () I believe that there are nature spirits (including fairies.)
- () I believe in the presence of a personal god.
- () I believe that the material plane is only one aspect of total being and consciousness.
- () I believe in the existence of Satan.
- () I believe in the battle of good vs. evil.
- () I believe in the power of prayer.
- () I believe that there are many things that science has to date been unable to explain.
- () I believe that science has the potential to explain more than it has to this point.
- () I believe in miracles.
- () I believe in the capability of spirit to heal.
- () I have entertained the idea that some of the narratives in mythologies and folklore originated in actual events.
- () I believe that dreams are a bridge to the unconscious.

- I have had prophetic dreams.
- I have had lucid dreams.
- I have had personal encounters with the spirit world.
- I can communicate with animals telepathically.
- I can communicate with other people telepathically.
- I have experienced synchronicities.
- I have experienced déjà vu.
- I have seen ghosts.
- I have sensed the presence of unseen spirits and entities.
- I have encountered extraterrestrials.
- I have seen, or sensed the presence, of deceased ancestors.
- I have participated in faith based healings.
- I have seen animals that were not animals but shape-shifters.
- I have encountered the presence of deceased loved ones.
- I have felt the presence of a great beneficence.
- I have felt the presence of malefic entities.
- I have been saved from misfortune or accident by the timely intervention of a spirit.
- I have experienced a spirit talking to me in my sleep.
- I receive messages from unseen entities from time to time.
- I have strongly developed intuition.
- I have predicted the outcome of events correctly.
- I have seen auras around living things.
- I have had a near-death experience.
- I am sensitive to vibratory emanations.
- I have sensed myself to be in 2 places simultaneously.
- I can see spirit entities around people.
- I have experienced miraculous healing.
- I have experienced being outside of my body.
- I know things before they happen.
- I think that we might be living in multiple planes or aspects of consciousness simultaneously.
- I feel that I may have lived previously.
- I perceive death as a transition rather than a finality.
- I think that time and space may only be human constructs of cognitive organization.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Altered State of Consciousness (ASC) refers to a psychological state other than normal waking consciousness in which the individual retains liminal rational awareness coupled with the ability to perceive phenomena usually imperceptible while in the normal waking state.

Anomalous Experience is an experience or set of experiences falling outside of the parameters and explanations of rational, sensory-based material cognition and societal reality constructs. These include near death experiences (NDEs), out of body experiences (OBEs), mystical experiences, shamanic journeys and interactions with anomalous phenomena.

Consciousness is defined by the APA Dictionary of Psychology (2015) as one's awareness of elements both internal and external to oneself. There are conflicting interpretations of precisely what constitutes consciousness. Both Freud and Jung accepted the concept of a massive unconscious outside of our ego perception. Jung expanded this idea to include a collective unconscious which was the realm of archetypes, ancestors, myths, and paranormal perceptions and experiences.

Dasein is a term used by the 20th Century German philosopher Martin Heidegger to describe a mystical manner of being in the world and the drive to inquire into the mysteries of existence. It also incorporates the manner of one's "becoming" as they go through life.

Interdimensionality refers to the concept that there are parallel realms of consciousness existing beyond that which we can perceive with our physical senses. We interact with these realms at will in shamanic journeys, and spontaneously in dreams, and perceptions of paranormal phenomena. In this context so-called UFOs and alien beings, spirits, ghosts, and other cryptid entities are of interdimensional origin.

Lifeworld describes the collective and personal lenses of biology, personal history, genetics and ethnicity, family, culture, shared history and spiritual orientation which constitute the meaning making apparatus by which we interpret events and phenomena.

Limbic System is the area of the temporal lobe that includes the amygdala (which controls emotions, memory and flight/fight response) and the hippocampus (which is

the mediator between the amygdala and the cerebral cortex (the seat of rational thought, analysis and language.)

Neo-shamanism refers to the practice of traditional/indigenous shamanic techniques and interdimensional interactions for purposes of healing within the matrix of a culture (e.g. consensual contemporary Western culture) that neither supports it nor shares its lifeworld. The use of these techniques in our current society has proven to be effective as alternative adjunct therapies in medicine and psychology.

Paranormal literally means “next to normal” and refers to activities, observations, and manifestations of anomalous events and phenomena that are perceived in normal waking consciousness although having interdimensional origins outside of it.

Shaman is the designation used to describe an individual from a traditional/indigenous society who interacts at will with interdimensional entities and the spirits of nature to heal, protect, gain information and otherwise ensure the wellbeing of his/her community.

WHAT IS SHAMANISM?

Definition: Shamanism is an ancient technology which enables the shaman or practitioner to enter an altered state of consciousness at will from normal waking consciousness for a pre-determined purpose. During these journeys the shaman communicates directly with interdimensional entities e.g. spirits, ancestors, nature and animal spirits, gods to obtain aid at the request of an individual, family, clan or the community as a whole for the following purposes:

- Healing (Physical, Psychological and Spiritual)
- Rebalancing
- Divination
- Protection
- Psychopomp
- Artistic inspiration
- Defeat of demons and harmful spirit entities
- Removal of curses

The shaman is a healer, medium, priest and psychologist whose relationship with the world of spirit enables them to benefit the lives of others on a material level. The shaman is a fully integrated member of the community who fulfills normal tasks such as teaching, helping with the hunt or the harvest, and assisting neighbors and family.

History and Anthropology of Shamanism: According to the religious scholar Mircea Eliade (whose 1965 book ***Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*** remains a classic, essential anthropological overview of shamanic practices) the use of shamanic technique emerged trans-globally and cross-culturally from the earliest times of hunter gatherers. According to artifacts discovered over the years, shamanic practice was a common practice spanning nearly all cultures, ethnicities and societies and social groups worldwide.

Elements of shamanic practice endured throughout the development of civilizations and religious practices although shamanism itself is Not a religion. Modified shamanic practice is present in the priesthoods and sacred kingships of Ancient Egypt, China, Sumer, Babylon, Mongolia, Greece and Mexico. The Bible itself recounts shamanic-based miracles such as the feats of Moses and Jesus. The legendary Merlin

displayed many shamanic abilities. The use of shamanic techniques can adapt to any socio-religious matrix. An example of this would be Rasputin who was from all accounts a powerful shaman who was able to heal from a distance, but who operated within the matrix of Russian Orthodoxy as a staretz or Holy Man.

Shamanic practice atrophied and nearly disappeared in Europe in the Middle Ages. Despite the effects of encroaching urban, contemporary culture since then it has remained an integral way of life in indigenous and traditional tribal societies worldwide. From Lapland to the Amazon, Siberia to Korea and Tibet and far beyond shamanism has endured wherever tribal groups have maintained their cultural autonomy. Scholars such as Mircea Eliade, Michael Harner and Stanley Krippner spent years in remote places studying shamans and shamanic practices. They re-introduced shamanism to millions of contemporary Westerners through their writings, professorships, presentations and workshops. Thanks to them and their colleagues shamanic practice has become increasingly accepted in the fields of medicine and psychology as well as daily spiritual practice on a global scale.

Characteristics: There are several characteristics of those with shamanic abilities that Eliade noted in his 1965 book. These include:

- A near death experience or life threatening injury or illness or a psychotic break.
- Balances material and mystical realms.
- Psi capabilities. These include visions, lucid dreams, clairaudience, clairvoyance,
- mediumship, distance viewing, telekinesis, ability to communicate with animals and/or
- plants, interdimensional (including “UFO” encounters.)
- Highly intuitive.
- Predominantly introverted.
- Acute spiritual awareness.
- Out of body experiences.

Most people with shamanic abilities express one or more of these traits. The NDE or near fatal illness/injury is consistent with the Jungian archetype of the “wounded healer.” Frequently people undergoing those conditions perceive interdimensional encounters and experience anomalous phenomena during which the spirits reveal that they are meant to serve others through their shamanic practice. Eliade also reported that consistently those who refused or corrupted this ministry frequently met with ill fortune or worse.

MECHANICS AND NEUROBIOLOGY OF SHAMANISM

How Does Shamanism Work?

- 1) Determines very specifically what the purpose of the journey is, where s/he is going and what needs to be accomplished.
- 2) Articulates the purpose, destination and entities being sought out for assistance relative to the purpose.
- 3) Employs drumming, meditation, or other means in order to enter an altered states of consciousness which will enable them to interact with other entities interdimensionally.
- 4) Locates helping entities/spirits and presents purpose/need to them.
- 5) Performs any actions needed on the client while in the altered state and with the assistance of the helping entities/spirits.
- 6) Returns to a normal waking state (after thanking those who have helped), reports
- 7) outcome of journey to client, and makes recommendations for client as suggested by helping spirits/entities.

What is the Neurobiology of Shamanism?

Unlike dreaming (including lucid dreaming), meditation or other envisioning practice the shamanic journey is:

- Undertaken with a specific purpose
- Entered into from a fully engaged state of normal waking consciousness
- Involves the cerebral cortex (executive brain) and the limbic system (amygdala and hippocampus) which are both engaged and active. This enables the practitioner to pose specific questions, act rationally and at will, and even vocally narrate the events and conversations taking place in the journey as they are occurring.
- Recalled as any other sensory experience and subject to analysis and interpretation upon return to the normal waking state.

How Does Shamanic Healing Work?

- 1) The shamanic practitioner is engaged at and by the request of the client, their family or the community to facilitate a specific task.

- 2) The client, family and/or community are active participants in the shamanic healing process.
- 3) It operates on the premise that the client or community is ultimately responsible for the healing or other desired outcome.
- 4) The process itself involves a synergistic combination of:
 - Belief
 - Empathy
 - Hypnosis

How Does Shamanic Practice Differ From Schizophrenia?

Unlike a schizophrenic episode, shamanic work:

- Is undertaken at the will of the practitioner
- Is deliberately entered into from a normal waking state of consciousness to accomplish a specific and carefully articulated purpose
- Is directed toward going to a previously specified place to meet with previously identified interdimensional entities
- Demands that practitioner retains rational control over his/her actions during the journey
- Can be aborted at any time during the journey
- Allows for practitioner to assess validity of experience as it relates to the purpose of the journey
- Requires that practitioner return to a normal waking state once the purpose of the journey has been satisfactorily accomplished

Here's an interesting footnote: DNA research on shamans and shamanic practitioners from all cultures noted the presence of the same gene that is responsible for schizophrenia. This gene has also been found to be present in mediums, extreme mystics, visionaries and people with a high psi capability. Evolutionary psychologists have determined that societal/cultural repression of the abilities carried on this gene frequently results in its expression of (you guessed it!) schizophrenia.

TRADITIONAL SHAMANISM VS NEO-SHAMANISM

Differences Between Traditional Shamans and Neo-Shamans

	Traditional Shaman	Neo-Shaman
NDE as call to service	Yes	Sometimes
Psychotic break	Sometimes	Sometimes
Culture supports shamanic worldview	Yes	No
Trained by tribal shaman	Yes	Sometimes
Culture validates shamanic practice	Yes	No
Culture validates spiritual healing	Yes	Sometimes
Trained through non-tribal instruction	No	Yes
Recognized as shaman by community	Yes	Sometimes
Shamanic ancestry	Sometimes	Sometimes
Culture recognizes shamanic practice	Yes	No
Undergoes shamanic initiation	Yes	Sometimes
Societal belief in magic	Yes	No
Sacred, ritualistic drug use	Yes	Sometimes
Experiences cultural dissonance	No	Yes

Traditional shamans operate within a cultural matrix that believes in magic, mysticism and the validity of the shaman's work. Neo-shamanic practitioners are operating within a consensual cultural worldview that negates non-material experiences and abilities, and frequently pathologizes anyone who claims to experience any aspects of the paranormal.

THE SHAMANIC UNIVERSE

What Are the Defining Characteristics of the Shamanic Worldview?

- Everything is a sacred aspect of creation with a purpose and soul
- The spirits are the interdimensional aspects of things visible here on Earth in material form
- All living beings including rocks, mountains, rivers and other geographical features are sentient and sacred.
- All astronomical and meteorological phenomena are sacred, sentient and have purpose.
- Soul centered vs ego centered
- Precursor to what became basic Gnostic belief in the divinity of all beings
- Everything has an interdimensional aspect to all
- Interdimensional phenomena and occurrences encountered/experienced in an altered state of consciousness e.g. dreams, journeys, visions are as real as anything on the material plane
- The Earth and all her children (ourselves included) are part of the sacred wheel of life

THE SHAMANIC JOURNEY

The shamanic journey used by most practitioners has a clearly defined protocol:

- 1) The journey is undertaken at the specific request of a community or individuals to enlist the help of spirit/interdimensional entities for a defined purpose e.g. healing, insight, guidance, assisting transitions.
- 2) The practitioner determines whether the journey's purpose can be best accomplished by seeking assistance from the inner personal world (a/k/a lower world) or the interdimensional transpersonal world (a/k/a upper world.)
- 3) The practitioner undertakes the journey at a specific time and place and clearly articulates the purpose of the journey clearly. For example "I am going to the inner personal world to seek help to locate Johnny's lost dog."
- 4) Each journey destination has a predetermined route usually originating in a place of nature known to the practitioner that holds particular power or resonance for them.
- 5) The journey itself is the movement of conscious awareness from normal waking consciousness to an altered state of consciousness in which material stimulæ are reduced making it possible for the practitioner to perceive phenomena and landscapes and interact with beings not perceivable in the normal waking state.
- 6) The journey state is induced and maintained through an external device e.g. drumming which alters the frequency and intensity of the brain waves. Most journeys occur in a state of consciousness similar to hypnogogic, phase 1-2, or hypnopompic sleep.
- 7) The journey ends when the practitioner has accomplished its purpose and needs to return to the normal waking state to inform the person/people requesting help of what the spirits have done or recommended.

PITFALLS AND BENEFITS OF SHAMANIC PRACTICE

Shamanic practice is a powerful tool toward achieving and maintaining integrated physical, mental and spiritual balance and health. Some of the clear benefits of shamanic work include:

- Intense, effective self-discovery
- Artistic inspiration
- As an accessible non-invasive spiritual/meditative practice
- Medical benefit of using shamanic technique as an adjunct to traditional Western allopathic methods. This has been proven particularly effective in treatment of cancer as well as more mundane ailments.
- Psychological benefit of using shamanic philosophies and techniques as an adjunct to traditional therapeutic protocols. Carl Jung was on the verge of investigating shamanic practice as a powerful psychological therapy when he died in 1961.

And as there are benefits, there are also pitfalls that the practitioner needs to be aware of. These include:

- Spiritual bypassing is a common pitfall that usually occurs when the practitioner is not sufficiently grounded or self-aware, engaged in material existence, or is lacking in knowledge of their lenses and unresolved psychological issues (particularly those related to trauma and shadow issues.)
- Tendency to be seduced or deluded into using shamanic techniques for self-gain, coercing others or otherwise attempting to manifest personal desires on the material plane.
- Cultural dissonance. Neo-shamans in particular are vulnerable to this due to lack of cultural and community support.
- Social and personal isolation due to alternate worldview.

KAREL JAMES BOUSE, PhD/PhD

Dr. Bouse is an internationally recognized Psychologist/Historian, Author and Educator who has presented her research on shamanism and the paranormal to professional and academic audiences in the UK and the US. She is the author of three books including the bestselling *Neo-shamanism and Mental Health* (2019. London, UK: Palgrave MacMillan.) She has been Guest Editor for the prestigious Journal of Humanistic Psychology and is a peer reviewer for the JHP, and the Journal for Psychical Research (UK). Her doctoral dissertation in Psychology examined current Neo-shamanic practice from a psychological perspective and won the Dissertation of Distinction award. Dr. Bouse has been fortunate to study shamanic practice with Dr. Michael Harner and the psychology of shamanism with Dr. Stanley Krippner. She previously earned a doctorate in History/American Studies from the University of Maryland. Her degree focused on US foreign policy and media in the Middle East, Northern Ireland and Africa, and she researched her dissertation at the Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library in Abilene, KS.

Dr. Bouse has been a Neo-shamanic practitioner for over 30 years and has taught classes in shamanism, self-discovery and interdimensionality since 1990. She is the founder and Director of the Institute of Emerging Psychologies (<https://institute-ep.com>) and is currently organizing the Center for (Neo) Shamanic Psychology through the Institute. Shamanic Psychology is a new multidisciplinary system for self-discovery and mytho-mystic/material integration based on the work of Jung, Campbell, Hillman, Harner, Adler, Krippner, and her own extensive research and practice. It offers private consultations, classes and courses to therapists and other interested people who desire an alternative approach to traditional psychological explorations. She is writing her next book *Essays in (Neo) Shamanic Psychology* and preparing materials and texts for use by the Center.

Magic is what not what we do. Magic is what we are.

GOOD READS

If you would like to learn more about shamanism and shamanic practice, here are some suggestions.

Bouse, K. (2019). *Neo-shamanism and Mental Health*. London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Bouse, K. (2022). *Finding the Phoenix: Seven Tools for Transformative Self-Discovery*. Bloomington, IN: Balboa/Hay House.

Eliade, M. (1964). *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Harner, M. (1982). *The Way of the Shaman*. New York, NY: Bantam Books.

Harner, M. (2013). *Cave and Cosmos: Shamanic Encounters with Another Reality*. Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books.

Jones, S. & Krippner, S. (Eds.) (2016). *The Shamanic Powers of Rolling Thunder*. Rochester, VT: Bear & Company.

Jones, S. & Krippner, S. (2012). *The Voice of Rolling Thunder*. Rochester, VT: Bear & Company.

MacKinnon, C. (2012). *Shamanism and Spirituality in Therapeutic Practice*. London, UK: Singing Dragon.

Rock, A. & Krippner, S. (2011). *Demystifying Shamans and Their World*. Charlottesville, VA: Imprint Academic.

Winkelman, M. (2010). *Shamanism: A Biopsychosocial Paradigm of Consciousness and Healing*. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger.