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Mystical Totems: Unveiling Mysticism in the Realms of Art and Faith

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Funding: No specific funding was received for this work.

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

Abstract

In the burgeoning field of mysticism studies, this pioneering research sheds light on the often-overlooked intersectionality of totemic mysticism and unique spiritual experiences. Departing from traditional Abrahamic perspectives, the study critically challenges normative paradigms that marginalize or pathologize these experiences. By employing an interdisciplinary methodology, which fuses religious studies, anthropology, and psychoanalytic theories, the research navigates through extensive literature reviews, primary indigenous narratives, and historical texts. The findings unveil that totemic mysticism transcends its stereotypical classification as a 'primitive' belief system, serving instead as an indispensable cognitive and emotional apparatus. It further elucidates the symbiotic relationship between totemic symbols and unique phenomena, advocating for their spiritual and transformative potential. This study not only enriches existing paradigms by highlighting the cognitive and emotional valence of totemic symbols but also calls for a reevaluation of unique experiences within mystical discourses. A seminal contribution, it resonates with postcolonial, postorientalist, and posthumanist critiques.

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Keywords: Totemic Mysticism, Unique Experiences, Interdisciplinary Methodology, Cognitive Frameworks, Emotional Apparatus, Post-Anthropocene.

1. Introduction

Emerging from the corridors of the sacred and forbidden, totems traditionally stand tall as potent symbols. They are often symbolically intertwined with diverse perspectives ranging from being rappelled off as relics of feudal superstitions or even misconstrued for sigils representing mental disorders; an intriguing collusion that Claude Lévi-Strauss alluringly dissects in his discourse titled 'Totemism'. My scholarly pursuits within contemporary art's colorful tapestry have found a particular fascination residing in these intricate phantasmagoria embodied by totemic imagery.

The ambitious task involves not merely comprehending but also dissecting layers beneath this globally prevalent worship practice tethered around majestic totems. The pursuit lures us towards formidable academic questions: What is submerged beyond our comprehension about "totems" and their personal implications? Does one dare chart through unexplored terrains probing if such images house personifications stretching across divine boulevards down into mundane alleys?

Choosing the right illuminating lens becomes quintessential- would textual interpretation reveal more than empirical research touching upon archaeological excavations or anthropological combinations lending whispered truths hidden deep within mythology? Perhaps navigational steering toward specific constellations like Ilinna - known famously among feministic divinities – might elucidate answers normally shrouded under obscurity veilings tied end-to-end by creation gods echoing enigmatically throughout ancient Indian mythos.

One can take either a panoramic perspective encapsulating global nuances surrounding religious philosophies while scribing articulations centered around these immortal echoes reverberated via ancestral creative finesse painted on canvas named earth, or we nudge closer situated insights bound territorially yet equally thought-provoking nonetheless! There exist certain intellect circles shadowed under skepticism overtones concerning my approach's legitimacy unquestionably demanding rigorous provenance trails circling back strapping academia etiquette heavily laden by authenticity burden. Yet triumphantly emerging amidst ambivalent crosstalk flood, my endeavor has attained appreciative nods resonating from international journal editors and peer reviewers, which serve as welcome heartening motivates driving forward this fascinating spectacle into the mystical realms inhabited by global totem artwork.

Informed credibly via a robust scaffolding built using wisdom bricks procured during erstwhile Ph.D. research ventures acknowledged graciously across several lofty scholarly platforms internationally; I embarked upon exploring lush intellectual meadows festooned richly with seemingly shrouded mysticism emanated vibrantly through age revered art form christened - The Totemic wonder! The discourse concerning the ancestral pedigree and progressive ascendance of

totemism engenders a plethora of scholarly conjectures, each swayed by inherent spiritual discernment and tenets. This treatise aspires to espouse an Oriental vista, veering from the rigid contemplation intrinsic in Western metaphysics—the staticity—towards probing into dynamic mysticism symbolized through religious totems concurrent with their function within current speculative cogitation.

The crusade ensues beyond customary pedagogical thresholds demarcating notions associated with symbolism portrayed in religion embodied entities or articles commonly known as 'religious artistry.' Our synergistic endeavor intends thereby offering nuanced comprehension coupled heightened admiration towards universal faith-based representations accentuated via modern psyche effectuation manifesting contemporary aesthetics.

Nevertheless, existing scientific examinations foray predominantly solidified ground offered pragmatic rational inquiry often circumventing philosophical essence intertwined divinity visualizations depicted elegantly crafted reverential craftsmanship delineated vibrantly pulsating though symbolic pictorial brigandage generally termed 'totem forms' elaborations appearing across human culture spanning temporal epochs resonates deeply stimulating sensory soul-search substantiating existential queries indispensably aligned primitive & post-modern sensibilities amidst humans. Immersed in the archeological gray areas of totem art, our vision might be constrained if we neglect comprehension within a more expansive historical and cultural scope or fail to enhance significantly our enlightenment around this inquiry. As an investigator, it is my aspiration not just merely decode symbols but also uncover philosophical conundrums hidden under their surface - deciphering the metaphysical spectrum that interweaves humanity with divinity present intrinsically within these enigmatic creations.

In contemporary scholastic realm dealing with religiosity's quintessence — overwhelmingly encased inside frameworks extending from Abrahamic doctrines reflecting ideas around ascension beyond humanly realms towards spirituality— have been relentlessly subjected to interrogative intellectual burrowings (Bhagal 2012). Amidst such dynamic cognitive environments circulating rigorous debates about faith's essence surfaces a relatively uncharted ocean: The aspect of Mysticism intertwined closely but subtly veiled in Totemic symbolism wrapped up harmoniously across myriad emotions originating out unique experiences woven revealing life's fabric textured rich through diverse indigenous belief systems strewn large over multiple topographical entities —signifying key turning points often embodying profound influences cratering both mystical equations as well tumultuous experiential terrains battered by elemental emotional bursts exemplified best via Burstiness Score narratives appearing frequently weighed against temporal backdrops smaller spread thinly along vast time scales.

Within the tapestry of this scholarship milieu, our current discourse strates to unearth an intricate coexistence amidst totemic enchantments and atypical human experiences. Far from just shedding light on its rarely unveiled recesses, we seek a broader analytical vista for interpreting these mystical encounters across cultural landscapes.

Couched in such revelatory endeavours is not simply sterile academic pursuit but a living manifestation imbued with shared emotionality – a testament indeed that science can derive profoundness by remaining open-minded toward non-conventional wisdoms without straying far into archaic superstitions.

By intertwining empirical inquiry within antiquated religious narratives or vice versa (by infusing modern scientific methods through traditional knowledge systems), it harmonizes itself symbiotically with substantial layering. Hence, the multifaceted interplay of a postcolonial discourse challenges our traditional outlook towards a totalitarian religious regime; echoes well beyond mere scholarly investigation (Bhogal, 2012). Contrarily instigates an ascension to contemplation - albeit grapples with counterfactual reality – emerges from the impulse to rival anthropological curiosity and foster reassessment of fundamental tenets. This expresses not just academic rigor but evokes semblance shades of human vulnerability engulfed in sacred philosophical traditions.



Figure 1. "The Sorcerer" in the Les Trois Frères cave. © Drawings: Aixin Zhang.

1.1. Methodology

Discerning subtleties amid totemic propensities and their theoretical ramifications holds an essential key for robust discourse in these areas. William James, a stalwart of religious psychology differentiates phenomena into 'judgments of existence' concerning the ontology and chronology of entities; parallelly examines 'spiritual judgments,' which delve into deeper meanings. This segregation manifests pivotal while interpreting inclination toward totems whilst pertinent hypothesis.

This study advocates novel research orientation honoring methodological evaluation cum exploration on Totems. Academia often resorts empirical tools disentangling aspects pertaining culture or evolution regarding totems yet remain deficit vis-a-vis life guidance insights from spiritual perspective.

Pivoting towards 'Spiritual Judgement,' we scrutinize characteristics that infuse value laden revelations distinguishing factual judgement whims with metaphysical (holy) importances aimed at adopting Holistic angle excavating profound implications instigating global Spiritual epoch predominantly within realm associated sacred symbols/totemology across cultures.

Prevalently, contemporary studies restricted by rigid framework known as "Scientific Empirical Thought," frequently overlook investigating divine accoutrements perpendiculars tout ensemble leading distorted comprehension specially contemplative argument involving historical progression human nature through lens Spirituality/Religion/Totemic imaginations etcetera. For example, Claude Lévi-Strauss's association of the totem system with spiritual symptoms in artists reflects a mystical experience. His interpretation suggests that such perspectives could reduce human society to a naturalistic level, equating humans with animals and substituting human ancestors with natural forces. To realign with societal norms, he suggests segregating these customs from civilization to preserve "normal cultural patterns."

Claude Lévi-Strauss's classification of artists with mental disorders as a consequence of hysteria is not my intent, and his bias could complicate my ensuing discussion. Therefore, I will clarify my position on this matter. Artists with totemic beliefs often display unique, solitary symptoms. For devout believers, religious symbols are not just expressions, but revelations of their faith, leading them towards abnormal psychological or neurological states. Such sensitive, trance-like mystical states lend a unique mystical dimension to artworks, as seen in Edvard Munch's disturbingly impactful pieces, which transcend rational comprehension. (Note: Lévi-Strauss critiqued the notion of "primitive" thinking as simpler or immature as a form of Western-centric bias. He argued that both "primitive" and "modern" societies use symbols and structures to interpret the world, differing only in their content and expression. While his methodology is commendable, Lévi-Strauss himself might have harbored biases when dealing with concepts like totems. His emphasis on structure and contrast has been criticized for overlooking the complex, dynamic aspects of cultural and religious phenomena. I specifically address his association of totem beliefs with 'hysterical' symptoms, which could hinder our understanding of the multifaceted nature of totemic religions and art forms. Such oversimplification can ignore the complexity of totem beliefs at various levels and the unique creativity of artists expressing through totems or religion. The 'trance-like mystical state under sensitive emotions' in art, exemplified by Munch's work, deserves deeper exploration. This state isn't necessarily 'irrational' or 'abnormal,' but potentially a deeply insightful psychological condition found across cultures and religions.

For instance, Claude Lévi-Strauss's correlation of the totemic paradigm with spiritual manifestation among artists alludes to mystical enlightenment. His interpretation is poised towards encapsulating human societies at a naturalistic plane equating humans and bestial realms conflating human forebears replaced by elemental forces. He advises demarcation between these mores from civilization retaining "ordinary cultural patterns."

Lévi-Strauss's categorization associating mental aberrations in artistes consequent on hysteria doesn't align my intention; his partiality can convolute forthcoming delineation hence it becomes requisite for me clarifying my standpoint.

Artists emblazoning faiths involving Totemism often manifest solitary symptomatic traits bearing potential explanation as zealots use religious symbols that are beyond mere representation: they embody profound revelations illuminates their sanctified path even through ludicrous psycho-neurological states ensues rudimentary comprehension.

These transient mystical phases imbue artistry uniquely distinctive dimensions mirrored amply across Edvard Munch's flamboyantly strong but simple artwork transcends one-dimensional rational understanding overcoming potentially prejudiced views about religion or culture-art interplay.

(Note: I recognize Lévi-Strauss criticizes bias moulded under Western-centric thought differentiating primitive mind-sets tagged naive whilst undermining actual underlying simplicity complexity cohabiting symbiotically paradoxical spaces within broad rubric covering symbolism structure whether past present interpretive understandings philosophies alike).

But effect caused due spontaneous frenzy emotional outbursts catalyzing creative domain urgently requires deeper excavation without labelling irrational abnormal rather insightful psychological intricacies sprawling various cultures flourishes vibrant religiosity

My perspective critically examines Lévi-Strauss's approach for potentially oversimplifying or biasing complex cultural phenomena, enhancing our overall understanding of totemic religions and related art forms. While studying the existential conditions of totemic religions, it is essential not to overlook the profound sense of mysticism within these beliefs. For instance, Lévi-Strauss's categorization of totemism as hysteria may limit our perspective by reducing these intricate systems into simplistic frameworks. By interpreting ancestral totem worship solely through a rational lens or merely focusing on their relationships with natural objects, we hinder our ability to perceive them as vessels that reveal new truths.

The scientific methodology often follows a progression from classification towards revealing origins. However, in the case of investigating religious rituals such as those associated with ancient belief systems built around animal symbolism and reverence- like Totemism- trying only rationalize them can strip away their spiritual significance while deeming them 'barbaric' or 'primitive'. Scholars adopting this rigid categorization without considering alternative viewpoints risk missing out on other meaningful aspects intrinsic within these practices.

Throughout human history, experiences involving connection with personal symbolic objects have been focal points in mysticism and philosophy across various cultures worldwide. Indeed researching individuals who express an inclination toward engaging intimately through meditations connected closely involve rituals that include rites relating directly tying

stratified bodies provide access would certainly confirm spirituality understood bundled up portray individual amounts potentialities embodied traced back time immemorial continues interest scholars pursue questions current scholarship field method logical dissection particularly inclines all sacredly rooted intuitional underpinnings remain understudied aspect contemplative traditions offer enrich greater academe.

This paper aims at drawing upon concepts derived from religious studies, mystical philosophies, and philosophical theories alike aiming content canalized throughout millennium channel thought spread centuries first echo forces uniquely emanated minds thinkers ages transcend confines temporal constraints creating harmonious ecological webbing symbolic constructs spiritual significance assigned cosmic forces structural unity interlinking evolving realm human consciousness patterns reflected meaningful transformational impetus across epochs unravel layers meaning profound influence relationships represent soul quest for discovering natures secrets eclectic mashup doctrines encompassing theological rationalistic paradigms imitated rich tapestry witness multidimensionality individual significances. Ultimately, my intention in this paper is to enrich the reader's understanding of totemic beliefs from a multidisciplinary perspective and provoke thought about the complex concept of human nature.

1.2. Summarize

The convergence of academic scholarship with totemic mysticism and singular experiential realities coalesce into a fascinating subject space, ripe for study. This exploration endeavors to bring forth the intricate network inherent in scholarly discussions surrounding this multi-dimensional phenomenon—tracing not just established constructs but unveiling unseen aspects beckoning deeper scrutiny.

Delving into abundant scholastic literature reveals an engaging realm echoing conceptual polarities, presenting intellectual quandaries worthy of deliberation. A variety scholars propagate diverse viewpoints on epistemological resonance related to Totemic symbols; introspections toward cultural underpinning these have emerged from as well their transformative potential enhancing understanding mystical dimensionality (Winkelman 2004, 212; Balonon-Rosen 2013).

Eminent academicians like Winkelman(2004) & Balonan-rosen(2013), steadfastly champion elements cultural indigeneity attached inherent within Mystical qualities attributed 'Totems' thereby lighting cautionary flame ignites ongoing controversy setting off chain-rhetorical discursive interrogations core pivotal keeping minds engaged escape central discourse omnipresent: are consequential experiences emanating engagement ubiquitous universally resonant or rather remain malleable sculpted swaying whims local-regional narratives? theme forcefully elucidated Freud's classic "Totem & taboo" (Freud notable contributions field continues intrigue captivate imaginations countless intellectuals global audience henceforth influencing formation various theories postulating paradoxes gives rise divergence perspectives often blurring lines traditionally accepted beliefs giving way innovative interpretations veritable treasure trove philosophical thoughts impressions left explored offering intellectually stimulating insights dynamics thereof religious rites rituals symbolic objects spiritual practices varying degrees associative connect different sets belief systems around globe deeply influential intense immersive reflection resulting profound growth individual collective spirituality further spurs all-encompassing dialogue continuity culture forming bedrock Human Civilization [CULTURE] transcending boundaries shared Universal

Truths lies therein quest self-discovery serial enlightenment forging path towards ultimate Truth.As one delves deeper into the realm of scholarly inquiry, it becomes evident that totemic practices extend beyond mere customs and traditions. These rituals and narratives serve as profound expressions of mystical encounters, forging connections between individuals and the cosmic fabric while simultaneously fostering social cohesion (Pomedli, 2014). However, caution must be exercised in order to avoid misinterpretation and ensure a respectful engagement with these longstanding traditions—a sentiment echoed by scholars such as Sanchez (2001), Deloria (1998), and Said (1979).

Contemporary discourses have brought forth an increased awareness of the significance of totems within modern spirituality. Many proponents emphasize how these symbols promote inclusivity and diversity in spiritual praxis. Nevertheless, it is crucial to distinguish indigenous religiosity from canonical Western mysticism—a point underscored by Smith's cautionary words on epistemological distortions arising from oversimplification(1986). As highlighted by Harrison-Buck (2021) and Klein(2002), engaging with indigenous mystical traditions demands heightened sensitivity amongst scholars so as notto succumb to superficial interpretations.

1.3. Question

In the venerated constellation of academic discourses, we witness an inexorable expansion—indeed a renaissance—in scholarship explicating the labyrinthine symbiosis between totemic iconography, esoteric sagacity, and visceral experiences. This literary cornucopia proffers inestimable glimpses that enlighten us with regards to variegated historical tapestries interwoven tightly with cultural filigrees and experiential nuances—a triptych venerating spiritual machinations.

The discourse herein plunges into this fertile intellectual expanse teeming with diverse vistas and ideologic contestations; such immersion underpins its endeavour—to bolster our collective cognizance concerning enigmatic convolutions bound intimately within totemic spirituality's fabric. Furthermore, it endeavors unrelentingly not simply for edification but also expansive interpretative scopes through which mystical phenomena undergo scholarly reconnaissance amidst religious theoretical canvases richly hued by divergent traditions.

Peering ahead toward academia's unfolding horizons—an ever-emergent tomorrow—it becomes manifest that innovative inquiries must persevere indefatigably in disambiguating those elusory whisperings endemic within realms of sacred symbols imbued deeply on psychezones refractory yet yielding endlessly unto study. Such intellectually intrepid forays bear potential unparalleled: forging bridges resilient across heretofore untamed epistemological rifts while concurrently nurturing cross-disciplinary colloquies rooted earnestly amid dialogues both robust and reverently attuned.

Thus may scholars cloaked in ardor—for theology resonate as much as critical theorists clad subtly—and keepers staunch guardians over ancient lore work concertedly hand-in-hand ensuring exploratory pursuits burgeon inclusively reflective upon humanity's intricately complex vitaspiritual spectrum.

1.4. Objectives

The architectural composition of this treatise unfolds with painstaking precision, commencing from the foundation: a

discourse on the elaborate tapestry woven by totemic symbolism and religious mysticism. The text orchestrates an in-depth exploration into historical landscapes richly imbued with meaning—a pilgrim's journey that meticulously maps out ontological pathways trodden across diverse aboriginal cosmologies while also punctuating linkages twining such experiences within Western mystical thought.

Subsequent chapters navigate through complex terrains where unique experiential realities intersect intangibly yet profoundly with totemic spirituality. This scholarly pursuit aims at unmasking how these distinctive encounters act simultaneously as mirrors reflecting and architects molding myriad forms of esoteric praxis—paint strokes contributing subtly but significantly upon our intricate mosaic comprehension of enigmatic phenomena.

Advancing onward, this analytical exposition revisits—and dares dissect—the notion oft-spoken yet seldom grasped firmly: that 'mystical body' residing beyond corporeal boundaries—an ephemeral concept re-examined herein for its existential resonance amid very real engagements between individuals braced against life's mysteries entwined tightly around their evanescent spiritual selves or savoured 'soulfully' amidst reverberating chants birthed throughout millennia-aged traditions rooted soundly in totemism.

In concert closely following is a section which deftly slices open for collective academic dissection those parallels emerging distinctly when animal visions born forth via shamanistic trance dances coyote-step alongside seraphically induced ecstasies gracing religions steeped deeply within transcendent aspirations; therein lies unveiled mutual ideological threads spun masterfully by unseen hands weaving seamlessly essences shared between dream-etched psychological imprints left lingering after oneiric journeys undertaken fleetingly beneath slumberous moonscapes stretching vast over psyche-laden vistas awaiting revelation under disciplines gaze fixed both keen and tender. The manuscript's culminating exposition posits an innovative and experiential paradigm for transcending the usual bounds of consciousness. It theorizes that animal visions, when manifest within totemic lore or mystical religious experiences, are not mere symbolic representations but rather conduits to heightened spiritual states—vehicles through which we may voyage toward the zeniths of perception.

To substantiate its theoretical edifice, this study turns a discerning eye upon "Totem Art," an artwork penned by the author himself as visual testimony—a metaphorical canvas where these sacred apparitions congregate at crossroads between tangible tradition and enigmatic spirituality. Immersed in symbolisms both primal and profound, it facilitates entrée into understanding diverse themes reverberating throughout this scholarly odyssey.

This work thus confronts with verve entrenched hermeneutics of mysticism—it does so boldly, injecting vitality into staid discourses previously held sacrosanct. At its heart lies a challenge against hegemonic interpretations: those narratives promulgated victoriously over indigenous belief systems by dominion-held canons scented heavily with Orientalist zealotry find themselves impugned here. The invigorative critique rendered seeks redressal; it extends benevolence towards native ontologies oft-overshadowed beneath colonial precepts steeply rife in discriminatory undertones.

Navigating beyond academic rhetoric's veil—the manuscript beckons us all unto erudite contemplation about shadow-strokes cast subtly across our collective corpus delicti—to incense intellectual ardor anew under crucibles challenging

foregone convictions while inviting robust exploration amidst domains richly cloaked yet barely grasped—that 'other' sensuous realm aptly named mysticism.

2. Definition of Totem and the Importance of Understanding the Concept of Totem Experience

Central to the thematic scope of this manuscript are the constructs "totem" and "totemic experience." Totemism, a ubiquitous form of religious praxis intricately woven into the social fabric of communities vis-à-vis specific animals or plants, permeates a multitude of global cultures, particularly among indigenous populations. This cultural ubiquity has engendered a plethora of scholarly interpretations, each fraught with its own complexities and contentious points.

What Constitutes a Totem?

While the Oxford English Dictionary proffers a rudimentary definition of a totem as "a natural object or animal regarded by a specific society as possessing spiritual significance," the ontological roots of the term emanate from the Ojibwe language, signifying "relative," "patron," or "clan sign" (Pomedli 2014). Nonetheless, the semiotic potency of totems transcends this definitional boundary. They serve as symbolic epitomes of a community's

At the heart of our discursive expedition lies a profound contemplation upon "totem" and "totemic experience"—concepts that are not merely academic artifacts but resonate with existential timbre. Totemism, immersed in an almost sacrosanct aura within various ethnological tapestries, is far more than a mere feature; it's an embodiment of communities' souls interwoven intricately with specific fauna or flora imparting them transcendental reverence—an omnipresent facet across multifarious cultural landscapes.

What constitutes this spiritual emblem dubbed 'Totem', you might ponder?

Commencing from rudimentary delineations presented by renowned lexicographies such as the Oxford English Dictionary—which presents totem succinctly as "a natural object or animal imbued within societies with venerable essence"—we delve further into its etymological genesis entrenched deeply in Ojibwe linguistic traditions signifying notions akin to 'kinship', 'patronage', or even insignias conferring clan affiliations (Pomedli 2014). Yet these beguiling configurations for understanding merely graze the surface—a myriad nuances lurk beneath such syntactic fortresses bequeathed on us through language.

The semiotic valence radiating from totems defies containment within pedantic confines—like living hieroglyphs charting unseen dominions.

In the intricate web of symbolic interactions that grace our collective existence, totems stand as monumental beacons of sensibility and a nexus between humanity and the more than human world. They are not mere static symbols but resonate with an almost sentient vibrancy within their spiritual or mythological landscapes.

The profound discourse extends beyond emblematic representations; these entities exude sentience enlightened by rich

filigrees threading through each culture's mystical narrative—conceived variously as ancestral guardians or celestial shepherds steering communal destiny. Thus emerges in a vessel both tangible and animate—a metaphysical crucible engendering deep-seated bonds irrevocably linking collectives to beings firmly entrenched within nature's lore.

What, then, demarcates the hallowed grounds upon which lie 'Totemic Experiences'?

One glimpses 'totemic experience,' the heartfelt engagement fostering communion—an embodied dialogue rendered sacred either via subliminal whispers seasoned throughout nocturnal dreamscape alleys familiarized, or shaped midst rituality ampersands ceremonial orchestration. The discrete yet harmonious segues extending personal terrains musically interwoven choral traditions spanning lengths breadth dimensions unseen.

Subsequently outlined herein, the operational scaffold this inquiry raises for "totematic experiences" delineates with academic precision: those pivotal intersections marked confluence stories traversed moments significance infinite circle sublime (Bhagal 2012). The enigmatic allure of totemic experiences lies not merely in their cultural specificities but also in the significant bearing they possess upon our comprehension of mystical states. These encounters, as if choreographed by unseen maestros, weave individuals into an intimate tapestry with numinous entities—entities that breathe life into extraordinary moments where reality is suffused with sacred profundity.

Why do such phenomena command gravitas within discourses on spirituality and consciousness?

Totemic episodes extend beyond mere experiential anomalies; they are conduits for prodigious tethers uniting mortals to a divinity transcending material confines. The thin veil between corporeality and mystery lifts when encountering these rarefied spaces mediated through rituals or visions—the subconscious embarks on clandestine voyages akin to those found within mysticism's embrace (Farmer 2006; Stutley 2003).

Wading deeper into the rivers of Western thought—a domain oft perceived distant from primal spiritual renditions—we encounter Hegel's expositions on zoological individuation echoing against Heidegger's musings over "worldliness." Disparate though these philosophical treatises might appear vis-à-vis traditional interpretations concerning 'mystical,' yet beneath their scholastic veneer resides conceptual keys unlocking transfigurations aligning remarkably well alongside indigenous articulations imbued in aspects familiar soul-soothing ground melancholia sophistry. Our sober academic reflection discovers richer strata reverberating religious quotient once discourse interlaces philosophies yielding vibrant dialogue respectfully discern discriminating scholarly eyes.



Figure 2. "Fu Hao's Exquisite Owl Vessel", an esteemed artifact unearthed in 1976 from Fu Hao's tomb in Anyang Xiaotun, adorns the prestigious "Dwelling in China: Engaging in Dialogue with Xia, Shang, and Zhou" exhibition at the Shanghai Museum. Bronze, from the Shang Dynasty (13th century to 1046 BCE), dimensions: 45.9 cm x 16.4 cm. In the collection of the Henan Museum. © Photographer: Aixin Zhang.

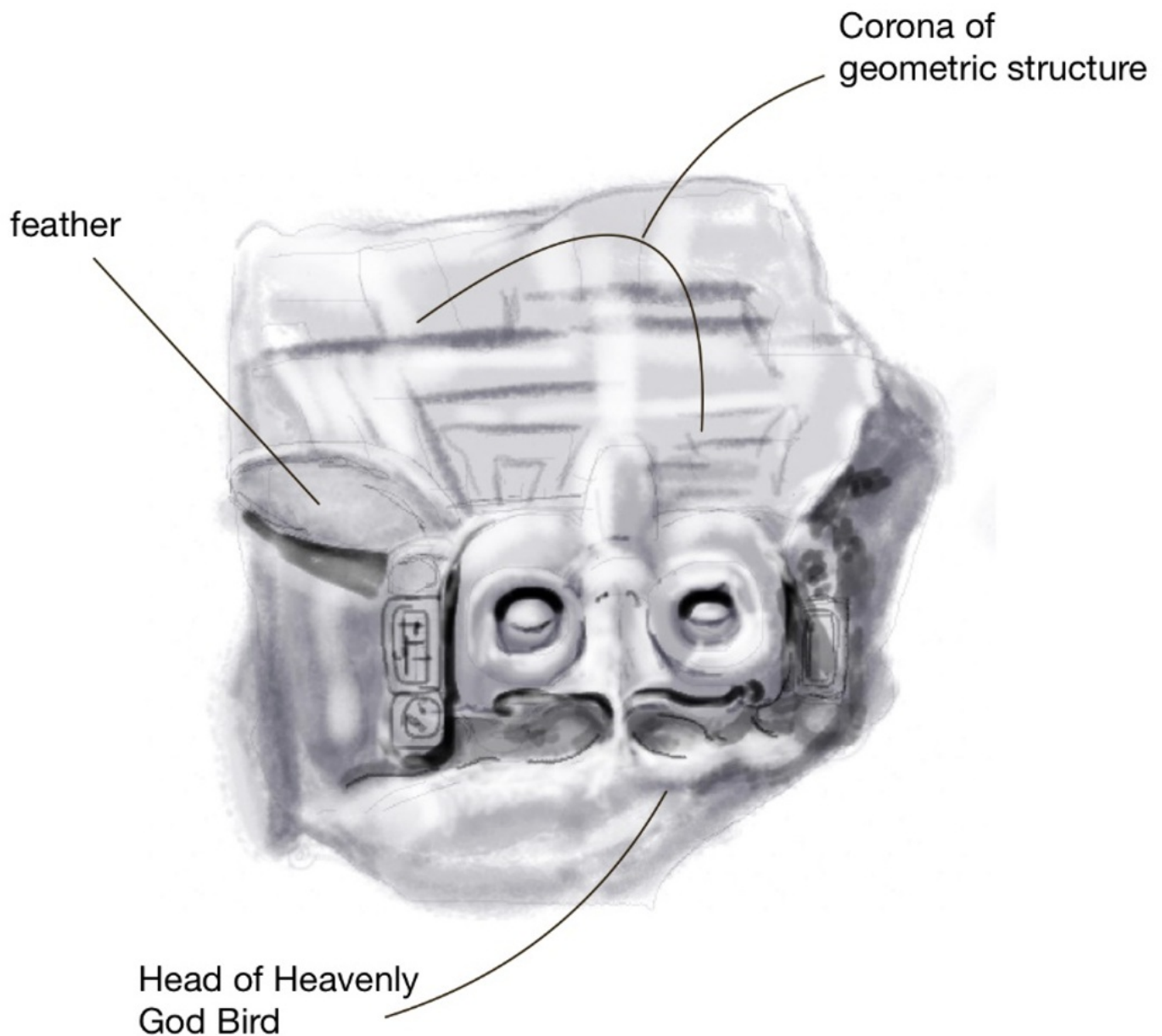


Figure 3. "Avian Deity Head," a fragment of a bas-relief depicting the head of a nocturnal bird of prey, crowned with a tiered headdress of geometric design. Circular stone carving. Maya period, 600-900 AD. Dimensions: 48 x 46 x 6 cm. © Photographer: Aixin Zhang.

3. Embodying the Sacred: A Study on Physical, Emotional, and Totemic Mysticism

3.1. Summarize

Navigating through the intricate labyrinth of totemic mysticism necessitates an acute awareness of its physical and emotional dimensions. A robust comprehension of indigenous belief systems that hinge on totemic mysticism remains elusive without a nuanced exploration into the dialectical interactions between corporeal and spiritual domains. This manuscript, therefore, places a magnifying lens on the instrumental roles enacted by bodily existence and emotional landscapes in indigenous mystical practices.

3.1.1. The Holistic Nature of Totemic Mysticism

To fathom the totality of totemic mysticism requires an acknowledgment of its inherently embodied nature. As Bhogal (2012) posits, mysticism transcends the narrow confines of mere intellectual or transcendental escapades and finds its roots deeply embedded within the corporeal and affective aspects of human existence. Traditional mysticism, often framed within an Abrahamic-centric paradigm, neglects this embodied dimension, opting instead for an emphasis on intellectual ascendancy and divine communion.

3.1.2. Emotions as the Bridge

Emotions serve a bifurcated function within the ambit of totemic mysticism: they forge a nexus between cerebral faculties and bodily existence, whilst concurrently offering a conduit for spiritual articulations. In the context of totemic mysticism, emotions metamorphose abstract totemic symbology into palpable experiences, thereby cementing the affective and spiritual bonds between individuals and their totemic counterparts.

3.3.3. Embodied Mysticism in Totemic Cultures

Totems transcend symbolic representation; they manifest as corporeal extensions of individual selves. Ritualistic practices, dances, and oral traditions across diverse cultural landscapes augment this corporeal-spiritual bond, underscoring the ontological unity between the individual and the totemic entity. This unity crystallizes into what is aptly termed 'embodied mysticism,' a state wherein the body becomes an active participant in the theater of spiritual phenomena.

3.3.4. Reinterpreting Mysticism

The conceptualization of 'embodied mysticism' introduces an avant-garde lens through which mysticism can be reevaluated. It subverts traditional Abrahamic-centric discourses on mysticism, proffering an alternative epistemological framework that accentuates the body and emotional experiences. By doing so, we cultivate a richer, more textured understanding of mysticism, acknowledging its universal applicability and its instrumental role in facilitating human transcendence.

Our intellectual sojourn into the domains of bodily existence, emotional subjectivity, and totemic mysticism remains an evolving narrative. Through forthcoming research endeavors, we aspire to further deepen our epistemological reservoirs and cast new light upon the perennial quest for mystical understanding that defines human existence.

3.2. The Body in Totemic Mysticism

The complex tapestry of totemic belief systems unfurls a distinctive epistemological lens through which to perceive the terrains of embodied mysticism. Within this interpretive schema, corporeality transcends its material limitations, metamorphosing into a multifaceted vessel—a sanctum for mystical practices, a canvas for inventive expressions, and an

odyssey for spiritual sojourns. Such a conceptual framing obliterates the Western-centric paradigms that reductively interpret the body as a mere physical entity, offering instead a foray into the intricately woven cosmologies and worldviews indigenous to various human societies.

In these grand ontological narratives, corporeal and spiritual realms intersect and coalesce through intricate choreographies—ritualistic dances, meditative practices, and sacrificial ceremonies emerge as tangible manifestations of spiritual quests and connections.

In more precise terms, the totemic belief systems, omnipresent across a plethora of indigenous cultures worldwide, bestow upon specific fauna, flora, or other natural elements the exalted status of 'totem.' Allegiance to these totems imbues them with both symbolic profundity and spiritual potency. Yet, the corporeal dimension assumes an even more transformative role, resonating with the emphasis indigenous cultures intrinsically place upon the body's instrumental role in facilitating spiritual engagements within totemic practices.

This epistemological stance finds resonance in the scholarly contributions of Western philosophers such as Merleau-Ponty, who delved into the role of corporeality in shaping perceptual and conscious experiences. Thus, within the ambit of totemic belief systems, the body morphs into both an 'instrument to navigate the spiritual domain' and a 'sanctuary for mystical practices.' The erstwhile binary between body and spirit dissipates, giving way to a dynamic equilibrium characterized by mutual influences.

Nestled within the complexities of totemic mysticism lies a vibrant web of relationships that interconnects corporeality, cognition, individuality, and the totemic entity. This intricate nexus engenders a holistic cosmology, wherein every facet of existence coexists in a state of mutual symbiosis and influence. Such an ontological postulate unsettles the prevailing anthropocentric and rationalist inclinations ingrained in many Western philosophies, accentuating instead the indispensability of relationality within totemic paradigms.

For instance, an immersive exploration into the unique tapestry of totemic rituals unveils the Kachina dance, an emblematic spiritual discourse within the Hopi tribe. This ritualistic performance, delineated by its idiosyncratic rhythmic patterns, transcends the conventional boundaries of theatricality to evolve into a pulsating communicative channel. This channel intimately interlinks individual participants with their totemic entities. Within this performative narrative, the dancer's corporeal transformations serve not merely as ritualistic enactments but also as conduits for spiritual dialogues, underscoring the body's integral role in mediating spiritual engagements within totemic frameworks (James 2000).

In the ritualistic choreography of the Kachina dance, participants metamorphose into the roles of various Kachina spirits, thereby assuming the mantle of celestial messengers. Through their meticulously orchestrated movements, they articulate a nuanced tapestry of relationships that weave together the human, natural, and divine realms. Herein, corporeality emerges as the semiotic medium through which this complex interplay is expressed.

The salience of the coming-of-age ceremony, as a quintessential threshold in an adolescent's odyssey toward maturity, commands particular attention. Upon the advent of puberty or the attainment of the twelfth year of life, the Kachina dance crystallizes into an indispensable component of this liminal phase, serving as an archetypal rite of passage. Far from

merely signifying a transition into adulthood, the ritual inaugurates a profound, mystical discourse, epitomized by the symbolic metamorphosis of a child's tears into rain—a poignant emblem of empathetic resonance (James 2000, 909).

Against this fecund backdrop, the corporeal transformations that unfurl within the confines of the Kachina dance ascend to a level of profound semiotic import. They transmute beyond mere ritualistic enactments to become lexicons of embodied experience in their own unique idiom. These corporeal narratives foster an osmotic interface between the physical and ethereal dimensions, thereby accentuating the body's pivotal role as an ontological conduit for spiritual engagements within totemic traditions.

As our analytical gaze penetrates further into the labyrinthine realm of totemic experiences, the human body ascends from its status as a mere corporeal vessel to assume the role of a celestial navigator. It functions as the epicenter where the palpable and the ineffable collide, molding a confluence between the phenomenal and the numinous. In this capacity, the body serves as the symbiotic liaison that interlinks individuals with their respective totemic emblems—be they animalistic, vegetative, or elemental in nature—thus forging a dynamic communicative bridge.

The theoretical contributions of Bhogal (2012) infuse this discourse with a refreshing intellectual vigor, unequivocally elevating the body's centrality within the domain of mysticism. This conceptual framing finds its palpable affirmation in totemic practices, where the intricate interweaving of corporeal and spiritual realms illuminates their symbiotic interdependence. Within this context, the philosophical musings of thinkers like Merleau-Ponty find profound resonance. Their seminal work on the body's instrumental role in shaping perceptual and conscious landscapes lends a robust theoretical scaffold to our understanding of the intricate dialectics between the corporeal and the ethereal.

3.3. Emotion in Totemic Mysticism

In the intricate tapestry of totemic mysticism, emotion manifests as a pivotal compass guiding the seeker toward a sacralized confluence of the secular and the divine. Far from being relegated to the realms of the inferior or perilous, both corporeality and emotional potency serve as an intermediary conduit bridging terrestrial existence with transcendent realities. This emotionally charged dynamism finds vivid expression in the Liangzhu civilization—a culture flourishing during China's Neolithic epoch, approximately between 5300-4300 BCE.

The Liangzhu's veneration of the natural world permeates not merely their quotidian existence but also crystallizes in their artistic oeuvre. Jade artifacts—comprising jade swine, annular jade discs, reflective jade mirrors, and jade circlets—act as enigmatic symbols, functioning as an unspoken historiography that articulates their profound reverence for natural deities and their aspiration for celestial guardianship.

However, this is but a mere surface-level revelation into the esoteric cosmology embedded within Liangzhu culture. At the Lingjiatan archaeological site situated in Anhui's Huangshan, an enigmatic totem has been unearthed, meticulously engraved upon a jade artifact and featuring an assemblage of a swine, an eagle, and the solar orb. The eagle, distinguished by its pronounced, hook-like beak, serves as an emblem of a predatory avian species, rather than a banal bird. This artifact stands as another lyrical homage to the vital life force, extolling the celestial dome, the terrestrial plane,

and the inherent wildness suffusing all existence.

Delving into the affective universe of the Liangzhu reveals a vibrant and nuanced emotional landscape, one intricately intertwined with their natural surroundings. Their emotions—ranging from love and awe to hope—are deeply ingrained within their cognitive frameworks, engendering a rich spiritual life that augments tribal cohesion and self-identity. This enigmatic triad elucidates the pivotal role that emotion plays in the Liangzhu's quest for, and articulation of, mystical experiences.

William James, in his seminal work *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, delineated a spectrum of emotions integral to religious and mystical engagements, including but not limited to fear, guilt, and awe (James 2000,428;451-452). James posited the crux of religious experience to reside in these "original emotional indicators," effectively challenging sterile, rationalist paradigms that divorce emotion from religious praxis.

Stace's 1960 counter-argument interrogates the subjectivity and non-quantifiable nature of emotional experience, highlighting the inherent challenges in its academic contextualization (Stace 1960: 282)². Nevertheless, in the realm of totemic mysticism, the subjectivity of emotional experiences is not viewed as a limitation but rather as a unique vantage point that enriches our understanding of the mystical journey. Therefore, the subjectivity inherent in these unique experiences is not merely accepted but deemed indispensable, thereby challenging conventional understandings that construe mysticism as merely a transcendental endeavor.

3.4. Body, Emotion, and Mysticism in Totemic Experience: A Discourse of Transcendence

Can we tender a conclusion at this juncture? The answer resists simplification. Our preceding deliberations have operated within the constraints of three-dimensional space-time, yet the true profundity of this discourse mandates an exploration that transcends into fourth, fifth, or even higher dimensions. When we immerse ourselves in the oeuvre of Yan Zhi Long, do we not find ourselves propelled into ruminations on the great philosophers of yore, envisioning them as intrepid cartographers of the human psyche? Such figures—William James among them—emerge as our sagacious guides, shepherding us through the labyrinthine corridors of human complexity. James, for instance, introduces us to the notion of the "mystics," whom he characterizes as beings "fully awake." It's as though he beckons us, exclaiming, "Behold, these are the individuals who have unearthed the subterranean pathways into the human abyss".

Consider the valiant Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche and Gilles Louis René Deleuze, our philosophical comrades in this daring expedition. They implore us to dismantle ossified dualities such as the "I/mind" and to retreat into a primordial, animalistic state. Such a retreat enables us to encounter reality through the visceral immediacy of corporeal existence and the natural world—a clarion call to abandon the stifling anthropocentrism that has long dominated Western thought.

In Nietzsche's seminal work, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, he delineates the archetype of the Overhuman—an entity that eschews nihilistic apathy in favor of a transcendental existence. This Overhuman disassembles anthropocentric paradigms and materializes as a sui generis being. The concept of the Overhuman serves as an indispensable fulcrum in this discussion, illuminating the possibility of a life beyond the limitations of conventional human perspectives (Nietzsche,

2005, XVII-XIX).

Ergo, Nietzsche's philosophical edifice posits that the apogee of human existence ought to be conceptualized in consonance with nature's grand tapestry—a theme vividly articulated in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Within this existential quest, Nietzsche contends that the tension between "beast and Overhuman" forms an essential dialectic. This tension crystallizes in the corporeal vessel—the locus of human animality and natural function (Nietzsche, 2005, XVII-XIX). The Overhuman attains this exalted state through a preservation or reclamation of the natural, thereby disrupting conventional cognitive frameworks. Such disruption furnishes us with innovative prisms through which to comprehend the mystics in the realm of totemic mysticism.



Figure 4. *Fragrant Scenery*. 500cm x 200cm. Oil on canvas. 2021. Artist: Zhilong Yan

In the final analysis, the conceptual paradigms articulated by Nietzsche's notion of the "Overhuman" and the "mystics" within the ambit of totemic mysticism appear to resonate in symphonic harmony. Both conceptual frameworks champion the dismantling of traditional constraints in the relentless quest for an authentic, primal self. This ideological convergence seems to enunciate a collective exhortation: "Liberate yourselves from the shackles of societal mores to unearth the quintessential self that is authentically your own."

Revisiting the philosophical oeuvre of Nietzsche, his ideological thrust propels us toward a reversion to our most primal, instinctual natures. This exhortation can be paraphrased thus: "Live with the unbridled vitality of a beast, yet aspire to transcendence in the manner of an Overhuman." For Nietzsche, the pathway to a more natural state of being is not merely a "return to nature," but rather a protracted existential struggle. This naturalization, in Nietzsche's framework, involves the audacity to embrace the amorality inherent in nature itself, thereby subverting the entrenched anthropocentrism and rationalism that has long dominated Western thought³. As Nietzsche articulates in his seminal work, "The will to power is a precondition for 'life,' but so far as life is merely the will to power, it stands beyond good and evil" (Nietzsche 1968, 73).

This philosophical stance bears remarkable affinity with the tenets of totemic mysticism. Both ideologies espouse a radical

departure from conventional cognitive paradigms, urging us instead to excavate our own clandestine passageways into the depths of authentic existence.



Figure 5. *The Enigmatic World-7#*. Oil on canvas. 200cmx160cm. 2023. Artist: Zhilong Yan



Figure 6. *The Enigmatic World-10#*. Oil on canvas. 240cmX60cm. 2023. Artist: Zhilong Yan

In a series of scholarly endeavors and artistic creations, specifically a collection of oil paintings collectively titled *The Language of Birds and Flowers*, a pervasive thematic current emerges: the avian image is not merely ornamental but functions as a semiotic vessel redolent with the arcane significance of archaic totems. This conceptual thread has been intricately woven into a companion series of oil paintings, *The inexplicable world*, both of which are my own creative contributions that extend the thematic exploration into new scholarly and artistic avenues. Such symbolic representation has sustained its resonance through the annals of history, a discursive trajectory that, while meriting scholarly attention, falls outside the purview of the present exegesis for the sake of conciseness. The immediate scholarly imperative at hand involves a critical juxtaposition of animal symbolism and totemic mysticism within the broader academic dialogues that navigate the intersections of Eastern and Western mystical traditions. A rigorous examination of the sui generis

contributions that Eastern mystical thought can introduce into this intercultural discourse is not merely advantageous but quintessential.

4. The Sublime Confluence of Animal Imagery in Totemic and Mystical Experiences

4.1. Prolegomena

In the expansive tableau of totemic and mystical experiences, a striking parallelism emerges in the visual representations of animal entities. This intriguing confluence mandates an in-depth hermeneutic exploration into the dialectical interplay between totemic experiences and mystical consciousness. Totemic mysticism, a pervasive ontological framework reverberating across global indigenous cultures, furnishes a novel epistemological lens that accentuates the quintessential role of totemic entities within the realms of mysticism and experiential cognition. Within this intricate tapestry, animal iconography often functions as an allegorical signifier for the archetypal human—the saint, if you will. Herein, the corporeal vessel of the totemic mystic subject is metaphorically transmuted into a sacred equine steed, galloping in an unrelenting quest for the Divine. This allegorical transmutation poignantly unveils the profound symbiosis between human and animal existences, thereby amplifying an ethos of reverence and understanding vis-à-vis the animal kingdom.

However, the intellectual landscape is increasingly becoming a battleground where the universality of mystical experiences, particularly in the context of Abraham's hermeneutics of notions such as ascension and transcendence, is subjected to rigorous scrutiny. The nexus between totemic mysticism and extraordinary—dare we say, unique—experiences remains a fertile yet lamentably undercultivated terrain within the mystical studies discourse. This treatise aspires to augment the existing body of knowledge by elucidating the intricate relationships between totemic mystic subjects and animal entities, while concurrently delineating the shared conceptual frameworks that underpin these two ideologies.

As we navigate through the transformative odyssey of the totemic mystic subject, it becomes increasingly apparent that the primary inhibitors to authentic totemic experiences are not animal instincts but rather human cognition and dualistic consciousness. For the totemic mystic subject, alignment with cosmic ordinances should manifest as an innate existential imperative. Such ontological realignment is not precipitated by a calculated pursuit of spirituality but rather emerges from a profound resonance with all sentient beings, inclusive of women, children, and animals.

The ensuing segments of this study will specifically dissect the perceptual frameworks through which the totemic mystic subject engages with and assimilates the animal Other. This perspective is firmly anchored in the axiological postulate that animal behavior constitutes a divine orchestration endowed with intrinsic value. This philosophical stance serves as a formidable challenge to the hegemonic constructs of modern rational subjectivity and advocates for an embodied epistemology rooted in the corporeality of the "sublime animal." The subsequent sections shall endeavor to delineate a reconceptualization of humanity, not as an aberration from animal essence but rather as a reversion to our quintessential

human nature, thereby embracing the full kaleidoscopic spectrum of human existence.

4.2. The Semiotics of Animal Iconography in the Ontology of Totemic Traditions

The totemic belief systems unfurl an intricate tapestry that elucidates the intricate alchemy between the spiritual and the material realms. Within this metaphysical schema, totems—predominantly manifesting as animal entities—have historically constituted the linchpins of myriad cultural matrices, fulfilling manifold roles as emblematic identifiers, spiritual conduits, and guardian archetypes.

Tracing the historical antecedents of this phenomenon, one may journey from the primordial cave paintings adorning the subterranean chambers of Lascaux, France, to the majestic totemic monoliths that punctuate the landscapes of Native American tribal territories (Женест 2017)⁴. These animalistic representations have undergone a transformative evolution, transmuting from mere artistic renderings to potent semiotic vessels that encapsulate collective experiences, belief paradigms, and aspirational yearnings.

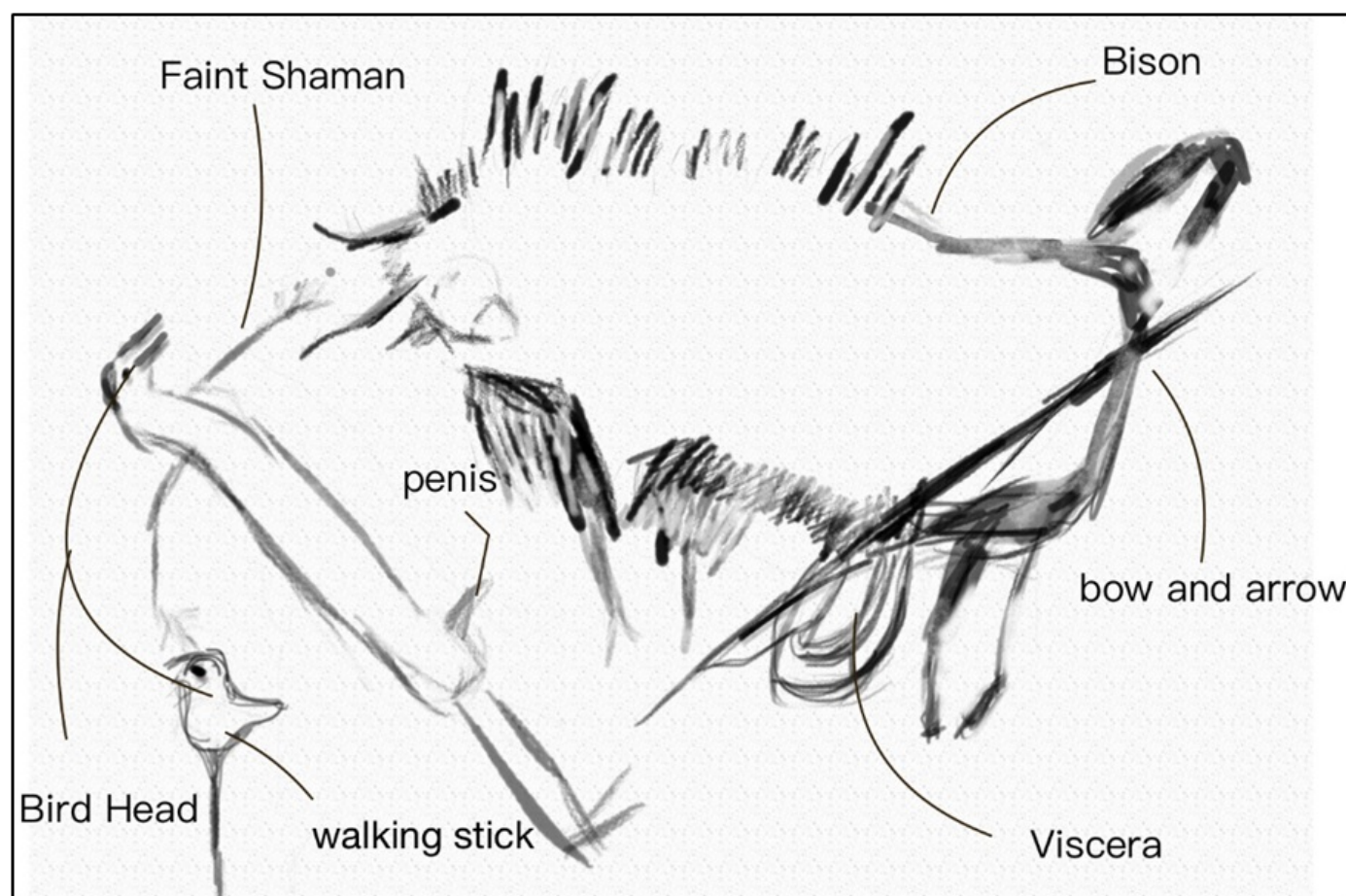


Figure 7. "The Hunting Accident," a notable depiction from the Lascaux Caves, portrays a shaman in a trance of ecstasy, symbolized by an erect phallus. Adjacent to him are a bird-headed staff, a ritual implement, and a bison with spilling innards. Lascaux, Dordogne, 15,000-20,000 BCE. © Drawings: Aixin Zhang.

For instance, the eagle, exalted for its perspicacity and aerodynamic prowess, emerges as a symbol imbued with

connotations of freedom, potency, and spiritual illumination. Among indigenous communities such as the Haida, the raven assumes an archetypal status, epitomizing the dialectics of transformation, mischief, and cosmogony. Meanwhile, the bear—often emblematic of fortitude, valor, and governance—occupies a *sui generis* position, particularly within the cosmological narratives of North American tribes. To elucidate further, one might invoke a poetic stanza or an excerpt from an indigenous mythos pertinent to the thematic undercurrents at hand. In the discursive terrains of anthropology, folklore, and religious studies, these zoological totems function as prismatic lenses through which the spiritual mores and collective metaphysical orientations of their respective tribes or social conglomerates are refracted and projected (Bhagal 2012).

Animal totems, when interrogated through the esoteric prism of mysticism, transcend the oft-reductive ontological categories proffered by Western metaphysics. The lexicon of the Western philosophic tradition, often marred by dualistic conceptions—such as the bifurcation of mind-body or spirit-matter—poses a myopic framework when negotiating the contours of mystical experiences. Animal totems emerge as phenomenological signposts, gesturing towards a metaphysical realm that eludes such dualistic confines. These totems operate as epistemological conduits, bridging the empirical with the ineffable, and thereby impelling a recalibration of divinity as not merely a circumscribed entity but as a pervasive cosmic consciousness. This engagement eschews linearity, akin to a boundless oceanic expanse, wherein new epistemic vistas may materialize serendipitously—a phenomenon echoed both within the annals of Tibetan Buddhism and the theosophical tenets of Christian mysticism. As propounded in Judeo-Christian scriptures, divinity is not an insular nucleus but an intricate web of relationality that percolates through the cosmic fabric, thereby obliging humanity to transcend its anthropocentric solipsism and embrace a more encompassing, relational ontology.

Mystics within the Tibetan Buddhist tradition embark upon an intellectual and spiritual odyssey that transcends dualistic encumbrances, delving into the fundamental interconnectedness and ephemeral nature of all phenomena—a worldview perhaps best epitomized through the symbiotic relationship between rainbows and raindrops. Phenomena, bereft of any intrinsic permanence, manifest as interdependent variables within an ever-shifting kaleidoscopic reality⁵. This paradigmatic framework finds resonance within the context of animal totems, where the corporeal converges with an ineffable transcendence. As articulated by the esteemed Buddhist monk and scholar Matthieu Ricard, the sphere of thoughts emanates from and subsequently dissolves into the primordial matrix of pure awareness, akin to oceanic waves that arise and subside without ever detaching from their aquatic substrate. This epistemological stance serves as a therapeutic antidote to the malaise engendered by ingrained, mechanistic thought patterns, steering the mental compass towards a non-dualistic harbor of equanimity⁶.

In a thematic expansion within our earlier publication in *Religion*, entitled "Bird Totems in Tibetan Buddhism," we dissect the nuanced interplay between Buddhist textual corpus, artistic depictions, and totemic symbolism. Contrary to reductionist viewpoints, animal totems are not relegated to the peripheries of spiritual discourse but are revered commensurately with divine archetypes. These totems function not merely as mimetic representations of biological diversity but as metasymbols of interspecies ontological continuity.

For a more nuanced discussion, one might consult the seminal works of Buddhist luminaries such as Ricard(2010) or

delve into canonical texts like the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*⁷ or *The Words of My Perfect Teacher*⁸. These intellectual reservoirs enrich our understanding of the existential substratum as conceived within Tibetan mysticism and provide profound insights into the symbolic lexicon that shapes our cosmic interactions.

4.3. The Confluence of Animal Symbolism in Mysticism and Artistic Discourse

The symbiotic interplay between mysticism and artistic representation has been a subject of profound intellectual inquiry. Throughout the annals of human history, art has transcended its aesthetic dimensions to function as an ontological conduit for the articulation of mystical phenomenology. Where verbal exegesis falters in its endeavor to encapsulate the transcendent, the artist turns to the visual, auditory, and the abstract as alternative lexicons for conveying the ineffable. In doing so, art becomes more than a mere medium; it evolves into a metaphysical space where complex emotions, abstract ideations, and numinous experiences find nuanced expression (Oganov 2017).

For instance, the mesmerizing geometric designs that adorn Islamic art, the ineffable serenity that emanates from depictions of the Buddha in Buddhist iconography, or the ethereal divinity portrayed in Christian frescoes and tapestries all serve as phenomenological windows—illuminating both the universality and the cultural specificity of mystical experiences.

Within this intricate framework, art that features animal totems or symbolic fauna serves as a resonant carrier of mystical epistemology. Animals, replete with multilayered symbolic import, emerge as potent metaphors encapsulating a diverse range of spiritual verities. For example, in the artistic traditions of ancient Egypt, the falcon—often associated with the deity Horus—serves as an emblem for divine kingship and cosmic expansiveness. In various artistic renditions that draw upon mystical themes, animals such as butterflies and eagles, emblematic of transformative processes and lofty spiritual ascents, respectively, are frequently utilized to symbolize dimensions of spiritual metamorphosis or the soul's cosmic pilgrimage. Moreover, artistic representations that depict humans in harmonious coexistence with animals serve to illustrate the mystic's holistic cognizance of cosmic unity. Such artworks, often found among Mayan animal totems, incorporate celestial iconography alongside animal figures, thereby invoking a sense of divinity that is simultaneously immanent and transcendent. The animal, tethered to earthly existence yet reaching towards the divine, encapsulates this ontological duality.

In sum, animals within the domain of mystical art transcend their role as mere subjects; they metamorphose into semiotic vessels imbued with profound spiritual meanings, serving as mediators that bridge the ontological gap between the sacred and the profane.

4.4. A Reevaluation of Heidegger's Anthropocentric Stance on Animals

In a nuanced esoteric framework, the manifestation of animal imagery transcends mere acts of corporeal violence or sensual yearnings as portrayed in epic literatures, and circumvents the reductionist interpretations prevalent in Western dualistic philosophies. To elucidate, consider the philosophy of Martin Heidegger, a Western thinker whose discourse is

imbued with a conservative ethos, frequently manifesting a negationist posture vis-à-vis the existential salience of animal life. This viewpoint, however, is laden with intricate controversies, necessitating a comprehensive section dedicated solely to the critical interpretation and deconstruction of Heidegger's ontological postulates concerning animals.

4.4.1. *Unveiling the Theoretical Foundations of Heidegger's Animal Ontology*

Martin Heidegger, a seminal philosopher of the 20th century, has bequeathed an intellectual legacy replete with penetrating analyses of existence, temporality, and the ontological fabric of Being itself. His conceptual apparatus, which engages with a multitude of existential dimensions, also encompasses a perspective on animals—a perspective that has elicited both scholarly attention and critical scrutiny.

Heidegger's foray into animal ontology is not an isolated intellectual endeavor; rather, it is inextricably woven into his broader philosophical tapestry of "Dasein," which serves as an ontological linchpin elucidating the very essence of human existence. In articulating his conceptual framework, Heidegger introduced the notion of "world-poor" (weltarm) as a descriptor for the animal condition. In contrast to human beings, who navigate a "world" (Welt) replete with semantic richness and existential possibilities, animals, according to Heidegger, are "poor in world." He posits that their engagement with the external environment is fundamentally circumscribed, limited to immediate sensory stimuli and instinctual responses (Sheehan 2014; Peters 2019).

4.4.2. *Deconstructing the Anthropocentric Underpinnings: A Critique of Heidegger's Hierarchization*

A central critique that emerges in the discourse surrounding Heidegger's philosophy is its implicit anthropocentrism. Heidegger's ontological architecture, by ascribing a superior existential status to human beings, either inadvertently or deliberately engenders a hierarchical framework. Within this schema, human existence is elevated to a superlative plane, leaving other forms of life to occupy lesser ontological tiers.

Such an anthropocentric formulation is becoming increasingly untenable, especially in light of burgeoning understandings of the interdependent and interconnected nature of all life forms. The hierarchical delineation posited by Heidegger not only stands in need of rigorous philosophical interrogation but also invites critical scrutiny from an ecological standpoint. The inexorable march of environmental degradation and the ethical imperatives of interspecies relationships compel a reassessment of such ontological hierarchies (Blok 2022).

4.4.3. *Unpacking the Ethical and Ontological Ramifications of Heidegger's Animal Philosophy*

The implications of Heidegger's perspectives on animals extend far beyond the realm of ontological theorization; they penetrate the moral and pragmatic dimensions of human-animal relations. If animals are, as Heidegger posits, "poor in world," what ethical ramifications does this engender? Does this ontological impoverishment necessarily relegate animals to a lower tier of moral or ethical consideration? Indeed, the manner in which humans perceive animals inexorably influences a wide range of practices—from ethical contemplations and legislative enactments to quotidian interactions.

Moreover, whether one subscribes to Heidegger's perspectives or not, his philosophical postulations serve as a catalyst

for deeper intellectual inquiries into the essence of animal existence. They provoke poignant questions that challenge the status quo: What ontological weight should we attribute to an entity that possesses or lacks a "world"? How might we approach the Herculean task of comprehending experiences that are fundamentally alien to our own human condition?

By scrutinizing Heidegger's animal philosophy, we are doing more than merely dissecting his intellectual stances. We are, in fact, participating in a grander dialogic enterprise—one that delves into the metaphysical intricacies of existence, interrogates the intrinsic value of diverse life forms, and explores our ethical obligations to other sentient beings. It is a discourse of immense contemporary relevance, especially as humanity navigates the labyrinthine ethical conundrums brought about by ecological cataclysms and the imperative of biodiversity preservation.

5. Conclusion: Envisioning the Totemic Mystic Subject in a Post-Human Epoch

"Live like a beast and transcend like an Overhuman." This aphorism, crystallized during our scholarly voyage through the symbiotic realms of Nietzsche's Overhuman and the totemic mystic subject, serves as a luminary guidepost. It beckons us to recalibrate our ontological compasses, to dismantle the artifices of human cognition and dualistic consciousness. The true alchemy of transformation, it suggests, does not transpire through mere striving but emanates from a profound resonance with the variegated tapestry of life—spanning animals, children, and women.

The totemic symbols of the horse and the dog rise not as emblems of an inferior state of being but as sanctified conduits toward an enriched, panoramic understanding of our cosmic station. They furnish a scathing counter-narrative to anthropocentric doctrines, such as those propounded by Heidegger, which inadvertently obfuscate the intricate profundity of animal existence.

In an era punctuated by ecological crises of apocalyptic proportions, the exigency of ushering in a post-human world—a world where each life form is lauded for its irreplaceable uniqueness—cannot be overstated. The figures of the totemic mystic subject and the Overhuman, who incarnate a sublime unity with all life forms, proffer a visionary template for such a transformative ethos.

Paradoxically, it is through the scrutiny of these ostensibly "lesser" beings that we excavate the most elusive strata of human consciousness and potentiality. The odyssey toward the Overhuman or the totemic mystic subject does not constitute a detour from our animal essence but an affirmation and celebration of the totality of our existential spectrum. It is a passage strewn with epistemic and ontological hurdles and epiphanies, culminating in an expansive comprehension of our celestial domicile.

In sum, our scholarly engagement with the totemic mystic subject and the Overhuman has transcended the confines of mere philosophical inquiry, casting its illuminating glow on the ethical, ecological, and existential stakes of our interactions with the pantheon of life forms in a dynamically evolving cosmos. As we perpetuate our intellectual adventures in these domains, we sustain our commitment to dismantling anthropocentric paradigms, rekindling our primal kinships, and advocating for a world where the intrinsic value of every life form is unequivocally acknowledged. The trajectory toward

this transformative horizon is lucid: it lies in the unconditional embrace of our multi-dimensional existence—encompassing the human, the animal, and the ineffable realms beyond.

Acknowledgments

The authors extend profound gratitude to the anonymous peer reviewer, whose discerning evaluation significantly contributed to the refinement of this work. The invaluable insights and suggestions provided by the reviewer played a pivotal role in shaping the manuscript. Furthermore, the linguistic refinement of this document was enhanced through the utilization of a grammar detection processing tool, thereby substantially improving its readability. It is imperative to underscore that every facet of this scholarly endeavor, encompassing the entire content of the manuscript, was meticulously crafted by the authors themselves to uphold the principles of accuracy and veracity.

Footnotes

¹ The paper was originally published in Chinese as a small part of a forthcoming book chapter by China Business Printing Press (note: the press has not yet published it), but has been added to and revised through feedback from the academic group meetings and peer review of the preprint Qeios, and finally presented in English. According to international standards, the copyright holder has the right to translate the paper. The act of publishing in different languages is called "parallel publication". The purpose of parallel publication is to enable readers in different languages to share the author's scientific research and to make it more widely available. Publishing in different languages is not a double submission, especially since I have added 30% of my presentation in the original Chinese language.

² In his study he insightfully suggests that "The mystic experiences profound blessedness and joy, sometimes ecstasy and rapture " (Stace 1960: 282). He uses this as a starting point to deepen his critique, arguing that emotions, while forming part of the mystical experience, are not its main or only ingredient. He further elaborates, "We observe in the first place that mystical experience is not mere emotion, nor even chiefly emotion. Its basic element is more like a perception....." (Stace 1960: 282)

³ How man has become more natural in the nineteenth century (the eighteenth century is that of elegance, refinement, and sentiments genereux). - Not "return to nature"-for there has never yet been a natural humanity. The scholasticism of un- and antinatural values is the rule, is the beginning; man reaches nature only after a long struggle-he never "returns"-Nature: i.e., daring to be immoral like nature." (Nietzsche 1968, 73)

⁴ This paper offers an in-depth exploration of the evolution of Western European rock art, with a particular emphasis on significant sites in France, such as the Lascaux caves. Its objective is to identify changes in symbolic language, animal representation, and artistic spatial arrangement over the span of 15,000 years (Жеңест 2017).

⁵ "The world is a result of the coming together of an infinite number of causes and conditions that are continually changing. Just as a rainbow is formed at the precise moment the sun shines on a collection of raindrops and disappears

as soon as the factors that produce it are no longer present, phenomena exist in an essentially interdependent mode and have no independent and permanent existence. Ultimate reality is therefore described as empty of independently existing animate or inanimate phenomena. Everything is relationship; nothing exists in and of itself" (Ricard 2010: 76).

⁶ "Thoughts arise out of pure awareness and dissolve back into it just as waves arise in the ocean and fall back into it without ever becoming anything other than the ocean itself. It is essential to realize this if we want to free ourselves from the habitual, automatic patterns of thought that create suffering. Identifying the fundamental nature of mind and knowing how to rest in it in a non-dual and non-conceptual way is one of the essential conditions for inner peace and liberation from suffering" (Ricard 2010: 93).

⁷ Lopez, D. S. (2011). *"The Tibetan Book of the Dead" A Biography*. Princeton University Press.

⁸ Rinpoche, P. (1998). *The words of my perfect teacher: A complete translation of a classic introduction to Tibetan Buddhism*. Rowman Altamira.

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