

Review of: "Enigmatic Totems: Exploring the Intersection of Art and Belief"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

I believe that the article is a draft of a great intuition to connect two concepts: that of totemism and that of mystical experience, -abstracting the concept of mysticism from its Western-Abrahamic receptacle or construct. However, an intuition of this type needs to be deeply validated with interdisciplinary dialogue. The text, therefore, is still a great intuition, but unfortunately it falls into profound conceptualization errors that respond to the absence of more pertinent bibliographical references.

Reconstructing the perspective of analysis of spirituality requires, above all, deconstructing the way in which this academic narrative has been carried out. The authors have the tools to carry out this deconstruction, but inevitably they cannot do so without going through the necessary authorities and disciplines that can help this intuition take shape in a much more convincing form. Besides, Levi-Strauss today the field of religious studies has increased greatly thanks to a total neuroscientific approach (v.gr. Andrew Newberg, Michel Beauregard, Patrick Mac Namara, or Johnatan Turner, from the neuro-sociology of religion- to say only a few authors -) providing the possibility of understanding that the so-called mystical experience is an experience that is rooted in the neurophysiology of human beings.

Consequently, the experiences that the authors call totemic -a reductionist concept, in my view, of the way in which we understand the spirituality of indigenous populations- can be understood as the first attempts at cultural expression, in native and ancestral societies, to channel a sensitive experience, which we are still far from having understood in its entirety.

Therefore, the model of comparative religions (abstracted, I repeat, from its colonialist components established since the 18th century, by the parameters of the Enlightenment) can shed some light to better understand the connection between what the authors call totemism and mysticism. .

The great weakness of this work, therefore, consists of: 1. the scarce basic bibliography to be able to analyze the phenomenon. 2. The weakness of the conceptual criticism of the concepts they are using of totemism and mysticism. 3. The absence of the academic intellectual process that has been carried out in neuroscience studies in recent years. However, the richness of the article consists in placing different components that were previously isolated in an interaction of analysis and hermeneutics that, when deepened, can bear fruit. I am not sure that the concept of "art" could serve as a purpose in this latest version of the article -because the cultural and colonialist projection that underlies beneath. That is the reason I think philosophers are not the most suited sources to analyze the expressions of spiritual dances, for example. No doubt Nietzsche or Heidegger identified some sublime experiences that transcend the logos of the language and go deep into the realm of the emotions. Then... this transcendence, if attaining the universal dimension.... In which

dimension resides? That is why my suggestion is to go deep into this universal dimension of indigenous or ancestral experiences by the means of another intellectual tool, that is, neurosciences (for instance, the authors have this intuition recurring to a precursor of this kind of analysis, William James).

My advice would be for this article to break down the different components it requires in order to become a more detailed analysis. That is, start with elaborating a more complex and interdisciplinary epistemology that later helps the authors to define more clearly the methodology that they are going to use to reach a conclusion as complex as defining “totemic mysticism.”

Therefore, concrete data of some contemporary peoples is required, confronting them with the historical-archaeological data that subsists in some current cultures, or with the historical analysis of colonial documents that require an ethnohistorical analysis or a very careful hermeneutics to understand the original meaning of the stories that speak of ancestral spiritual experiences.