



Advances in the Study of Spirit Experience: Drawing Together Many Threads

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ABSTRACT

This article traces some important changes in anthropology during the last 100 years, especially with regard to the study of consciousness. Vignettes of the field material of a number of scholars given here exemplify that the philosophy under which we have studied in the past is now no longer limiting itself but is extending its provenance all the way to the study of spirituality. Earlier, the concept of liminality broke through social anthropology and loosened the power of Durkheim, while the study of what the old consciousness scholars called psi proved ineradicable from researchers' reports and keeps coming back. Arising from whatever causes, there has been a literature explosion on spirituality and shamanism in the last fifteen years. This article draws the following conclusion from the vivid field examples given: that a thing variously called spirit-energy is everywhere and is commonly accepted at the heart of the ritual of all the different societies.

KEYWORDS: consciousness studies, liminality, shamanism literature, radical empiricism, spirituality.

When reading Mark Schroll's short piece on "Psi and Anthropology: Joseph Long's Forsaken Legacy?" (personal communication, 2005), expanded to "Whither Psi and Anthropology?" in Schroll and Schwartz (2005), I was amazed to see that in 1990, when the members of the Association for Transpersonal

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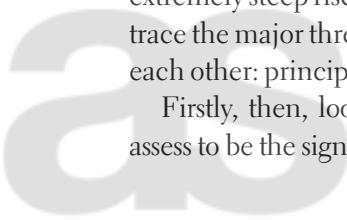
Anthropology and colleagues in transpersonal studies considered applying to the AAA as a division on behalf of their newly named “Society for the Anthropology of Consciousness,” (SAC) they avoided mention of the controversial topic of *psi* so that the American Anthropological Association (AAA) would accept them. Their concern was due to the fact that in 1986 a similar group with similar aims had already been refused in its application for divisional status with the American Psychological Association.

Notwithstanding, this article shows that *psi* and its implications *have* been discussed in its many forms, and also are well demonstrated since 1990 by the expansion of excellent studies of the nonordinary, not only in the SAC but within the AAA generally. It is interesting to note that as a result, much of our liberated, present-day spiritual anthropology has stolen a march on present-day theologians, divinity school divines, religious studies textualists, and even gentle New Age philosophers and guides.

Let’s look at the difference in writing. Just now, the anthropologists of consciousness and religion are often right *inside* their subjects’ own experiences, and their publications show it. This is most certainly because anthropologists do fieldwork. They’ve had the experience. They’ve been in situations of trouble where they’ve been praying, singing, chanting, or healing along with their people in trouble. This is a huge change. Putting it shortly, to study ordinary human changes of consciousness, certain of us have had to shift our own invisible, real spiritual life and what we know of that of others into a position to the front and have it working *in us*, so that we fully *know* the material of our fieldwork. We’ve then written this material, intimately. The method is gradually being taken up by the societies for the Anthropology of Consciousness, of Humanistic Anthropology, and, occasionally, the Anthropology of Religion, and it is evidence; it is the nitty gritty. Theory will have to work with this, not “theory with theory,” as if theory were a game or depended on some set-up, scientific experiment. On the contrary, what is real is nature, the spontaneous workings of humanity. Our job may well be to gain knowledge so that we may have knowledge in the Native American sense—a different kind of science.

This article attempts to show our progress in history toward this point of view. It falls into three sections. First, I offer “consciousness” as from the perspective of Victor Turner and myself, in the decades up to now, with the shadowy backdrop of what I now know was actually going on in consciousness studies. It culminates with our present united struggle. Secondly, I explore the chronology of significant books, articles, and presentations on consciousness, discussed in their particular order in time, with some illustrations from them. The chronology shows an extremely steep rise in the numbers of these. I find the dates fascinating. Thirdly, I trace the major threads of thought through the history, moving and encountering each other: principally the threads of “the transpersonal” and “liminality.”

Firstly, then, looking from my own *present* perspective, back on what I now assess to be the significant points to note in the development of our “consciousness



of consciousness,” I’d start where accounts of experiences by indigenous people of other levels of consciousness arose in the ethnographic literature. For me, they start with *Black Elk Speaks*, the personal story of Black Elk, a Lakota holy man, as told to John Neihardt, showing the way to heal, and the book also gives evidence of Native American knowledge:

We went into the tepee. The sick little boy looked as though he were only skin and bones. I had the pipe, the drum, and the four-rayed herb all ready. I had to think awhile, because I had never done this before and I was in doubt.

I made low thunder on the drum. Four times I cried “Hey-a-a-hey,” drumming as I cried to the Spirit of the World, and while I was doing this I could feel the power coming through me from my feet up, and I knew that I could help the sick boy.

You see, I had never done this before. I was so eager to help the sick little boy that I called on every power there is.

While I was singing this I could feel something queer all through my body, something that made me want to cry for all unhappy things, and there were tears on my face.

When I looked at the sick little boy again, he smiled at me, and I could feel the power was getting stronger.

Then, putting my mouth to the pit of his stomach, I drew through him the cleansing wind of the north. Then I helped the boy stand up and to walk around the circle. He was very poor and weak, but he did this.

Next the little boy was feeling better and was sitting up and could eat something again. In four days he could walk around. He got well.

[Neihardt (1932)1961:200–203]

A certain little fact creeps in here, also dated about 1932. It is not without significance.

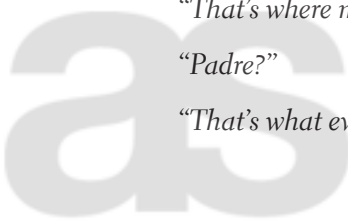
Victor Turner was a young boy of 12. He told me this story in 1943 when we were first married. We were visiting his old home town, Bournemouth, in England. In the sunshine around the sandy corners of the suburbs, Vic showed me a red-brick Anglican church. It was locked when we tried the door.

“That’s where my padre was the minister.

“Padre?”

“That’s what everyone called him. We were good friends when I was 12.”

[Turner, personal communication]



In 1932, Victor Turner's parents had already broken up, the father a scientist in the new invention of television in Glasgow, the mother, Violet, a classical actress. Violet had left Glasgow and moved in with her own mother in Bournemouth. How did the padre meet up with the fatherless boy? Way back in Vic's lonely days, the padre had shown him—had spread out before him—all the mystics of Christianity and many from the rest of the world: the Rhineland mystics, the Silesians, the Spanish Santa Teresa and St. John of the Cross, William Blake, St. Francis and his counterparts, Rumi and Al Ghazali in the world of Islam. Then there were the Mahabharata and Bagavadgita, and faintly far off, hints of Buddhism. As for me, listening, all I could do was bewail my ignorance of these marvels.

From the padre, Vic caught the desire to learn Greek, but there were no classes in Greek at his school. Vic persuaded the headmaster himself to teach him Greek. It was this accomplishment that helped Vic later to win scholarships.

Vic told me a story about the padre while we were walking along the sandy, pine-fringed avenues of Bournemouth beyond the church.

When I was about 12 years old, the padre fell ill with some complaint.

I was asleep in my bed—must have been about 3 o'clock in the morning. I didn't really know much; I was just a boy. I awoke and saw a big oval light at the end of my bed. This light was like nothing I'd ever seen; it was warm, full of love—it was alive, mild. I looked and looked. I knew everything was all right.

It went away after a time. Next day they told me the padre had died at about 3 in the morning. So I knew it was him, telling me something.

[Turner, personal communication]

Decades later, I called this event an “actuality,” not originating in Vic's head, not a symbol, but something from “out there,” an actuality. Vic wrote many poems about the experience of that light, discovering that only the word-music of poetry could catch the moment.

As Vic walked along telling the story, I felt as if I had seen the light myself, and the consciousness of it never went away.

Victor and I had almost no acquaintance with Black Elk's book nor Native American religion. All the same, 1932 was when Black Elk's story of initiation came out. Nor, for that matter, did Vic and I have much knowledge of Eliade's *Shamanism* ([1952]1972), published when we were in the field, ourselves deep in rites of passage—and not even when Vic wrote *The Ritual Process* (1969). We did not know that a certain archeologist named Weiant had met an Indian in 1938 who had divined where extraordinary finds lay hidden, and that in 1952 this story had been vouched for by the eminent ethnohistorian John Swanton, cofounder and one-time president of the American Anthropological Association, in an open letter to all listed members of the association. Nor did we read *Lame Deer's*

Lame Deer, Seeker of Visions (1972). Mainstream anthropology may have woken up to Swanton's message, but it ignored all nonanthropological books on spirituality. Vic and I read Henri Junod's wonderful *Life of a South African Tribe* ([1912]1962), which uses van Gennep ([1909]1960) and evinces a deep empathy for African healers' work. Meanwhile, in the 1950s, the anthropologist Colin Turnbull was among the forest people of the Ituri in the Congo. Until the 1990s, he never published his key experience, that of the true *unio mystica*, the highest sense of religious unity, which came to him at the sound of the pygmies singing. Turnbull tells us how the Mbuti sang these songs at night seated around a fire whenever there was a need to cure someone's sickness, "to make good," as they put it. The song form involved *canon*, that is "rounds" — with overlapping voices in harmony. Turnbull had closed his eyes and felt free to join in the singing. And he tells us that in an instant it all came together: there was no longer any lack of congruence, and it seemed as though the song were being sung by a single singer. While all the others had their eyes open, their gaze was vacant.

There were so many bodies sitting around, singing away. Here, he said, something was added to the importance of sound, another mode of perception that went far beyond ordinary consciousness. The *molimo* singing seemed to incorporate *all* the elements; the totality of the present, including the singers, dancers, and listeners, as well as the central fire, the sound of the ritual *molimo* trumpet, the camp itself, the clearing in which the camp was built, and the forest in which the clearing stood, whatever, if anything, contained the forest, and it very definitely included whatever is implied by such equally ambivalent terms as *God* and *spirit* (Turnbull 1990:58).

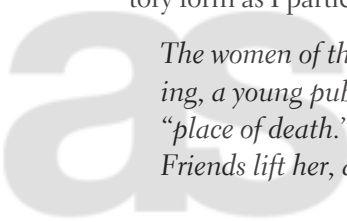
Turnbull published this article in 1990, decades after his experience in the fifties. In the fifties, Vic and I didn't even know that Turnbull existed, and all was a blank in the mind of anthropology as well. But along came Carlos Castaneda (1968), and with his 8 million copies of the popular Don Juan books blasted away the positivism commanded by the academy, and its ideas of what was correct "reality." History does not relate how many actual academics read the books. Neither did Vic and I realize what had happened. We never read the books. Also in 1968, Harner was reporting visions among the Jivaro of Amazonia under the influence of ayahuasca (1968, 1972). Still Vic and I didn't stir. Similarly, anthropology marveled briefly at Solon Kimball's ghost story (1972), but then forgot about it. I can hardly believe the penny never dropped. Spirituality stared us all in the face. Black Elk? Lame Deer? Eliade? Who were these? Drops in the ocean, not even "boulders." Vic and I denied ourselves the luxury of these people. At that time, like everybody else, Vic was going to have to be steadily mainstream, "brilliantly orthodox,"¹ maybe, but no more, because of our three children and the matter of jobs. Nevertheless, owing to the giants, something had given.

Since 1960 in England, Vic and I had been reading Arnold van Gennep's *Rites of Passage* ([1909]1960) in its English translation, with its clear presentation

of the three stages of the rites: separation, seclusion, and re-aggregation. In the fall of 1963, we were due to move to America but had not yet received our visas. So we were very much in a “betwixt and between” stage in our lives. There and then, in the Hastings public library, Vic wrote an essay that emerged from the experience of waiting. It was entitled, “Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites de Passage*.” He had learned on his pulses what liminality was. We finally made the trip to America in February 1964. Soon after, we arrived at Cornell, in March 1964; Vic gave that paper at the Annual Meetings of the American Ethnological Society at Pittsburgh, and it was published that year (Turner 1964:4–20). In it, he expanded his non-Durkheimian notion of liminality using van Gennep’s *The Rites of Passage*, identifying many of those liminal anomalous moments “in and out of time” that did not belong to a normal social structure—the sense of a doorway, of a deep difference between the mundane world and a sacred, liminal time. A person is often aware of the changeover. Entering a sacred place causes one to take a deep breath. People going through rituals of initiation and also of healing often find them an opening experience, an event in its own right, *sui generis*, giving a knowledge of deep connection to all people, all things, past and present. Our friends in the various religions attested to it; there was an opening. Some anthropologists have gone through that door. People in a situation of liminality find themselves in a relationship of what we termed *communitas*, the comradeship and fellowship of people within ritual. Here was a change in consciousness. *The Random House Webster Unexpurgated Dictionary* (1998) now defines *communitas* as: “*Anthropol.* The sense of sharing and intimacy that develops among persons who experience liminality as a group.” The sense of liminality, with its inner *communitas*, turns out to be one of the most common examples of change of consciousness, much appreciated wherever it is found, and then taken for granted by participants. The fact was, before Vic ever did fieldwork, he already knew what it was: that which brings one back to the sense of the basic unaccommodated human being. He had that sense when he was in the British Army in World War II, inducted as a conscientious objector to the war, loading food onto railroad wagons. He and the men really liked each other, just as in *A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* by Solzhenitskin—in the unbelievable scene of men in the prison camp in Siberia building a wall, finding joy—joy—in working together.

Victor Turner had felt the phenomenon of *communitas*—then not mentioned in the social sciences—among the boys in the circumcision camp in Zambia: that is, the comradeship of those under ordeal together. I myself found it in a celebratory form as I participated with the women in the girl’s initiation ritual:

The women of the village come in a crowd to their child, the one we are creating, a young pubescent girl lying under a blanket in the bush in the symbolic “place of death.” This is her rite of passage into the society of the women. Friends lift her, and place her on the leading woman’s back. The crowd of



women presses closely around the two, and as one body we all begin to dance, the bearer dancing as well. Singing, we forge our way back to the village, smiling out in triumph at the world. There is love and excitement in every eye. Many say this is the greatest of the Ndembu rituals, the Nkang'a, girl's initiation. The crowd imitates childbirth as it goes by constantly pressing themselves in toward the girl, like the body's contractions in childbirth. It is impossible to mistake the sense of being all one body—but more than a biological body: this "body" is made up of conscious remembering individuals who have been looking forward to the occasion for weeks. We drop her neatly, backwards, into her seclusion hut.

[Edith Turner, from unpublished field notes 1953]

Communitas was also there in the Ndembu healing ritual of Chihamba in which Vic and I joined in 1953, among the patients who were in passage between illness and health.²

Once we were back in Britain, the concept of liminality was received in puzzlement by Max Gluckman, Turner's old professor, and by other colleagues. They were concerned about the suitability of such material for anthropology. Could it fit in to Durkheim's view of religion as a concept deriving from "society" itself, writ large?

Even so, Vic Turner went ahead and wrote down the facts of the liminal, the essays in *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, opening up the study of "liminality"—this apparently nonanthropological phenomenon found in the betwixt-and-between phases of rites of passage, full of irrational masked figures, rebirth features, and ritual reversals. (*But can anything* be "nonanthropological"?). Moreover, he recognized liminality in many other societies in a variety of betwixt-and-between circumstances, especially among persons going through some threshold or limen in life together. One can see how the study of altered consciousness—as seen right there within social process and just as strange as visions and *psi*—gradually dawned on us as a worthy field of study. We were coming to it in our own way.

Anthropology, on its part, wondered, and avoided this non-Durkheimian subject. But they began to wonder about Durkheim. It seemed that Durkheim had been proving that all power must inevitably be attributed to "society," especially as regards religion. Durkheim appeared to enjoy what he thought he saw. Was Durkheim some kind of fascist? Was this how society *ought* to be? Or what? Westerners were mixed. They loved the structured order of Durkheim's thought, his immunity to any actual religion. It looked like good clean anthropology. Yet Westerners have come to dread "society" and its condemnatory power. They loved that great American, Emerson, and his faith in self-reliance, the freedom of the individual, and new ideas. So in spite of Durkheim, for a time in the sixties, Vic and I were able to teach the new concept of liminality—in variance with Durkheim—while running a seminar at Cornell in a spacious living room where

anyone could say anything, and did. *The Ritual Process* was the students' favorite book, and we were happy with the word *communitas*.

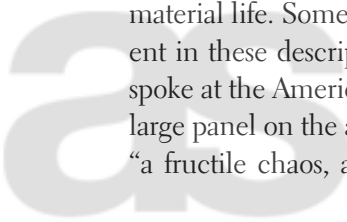
And there the matter stood. Turner went on to the University of Chicago and then Virginia, exploring pilgrimage, epic, theater, neurobiology, and the symbolism of cultures all over the world. His considerable oeuvre on "symbolism" was okay with the mainstream; it was real anthropology and very good. Total rationalists have used it, and watered it down very nicely. Turner also happened to be supported in his liminality theory by such religious studies scholars such as Urban Holmes (1976) and Tom Driver (1991:152–165). Time went by and he gradually became a sick man.

Meanwhile, in the intervening years, what was happening to liminality in anthropology?

Turner said in 1974 (p. 231), "Communitas is a fact of everyone's experience, yet it has almost never been regarded as a reputable or coherent object of study by social scientists." One may comment that even now, it isn't treated seriously in the mainstream, not investigated experientially; its own odd laws are not counted in the study of real-politiks with which much of our discipline is concerned.

Yet at the same time (1974), as if on the other side of a wall from us, the Association for Transpersonal Anthropology (ATA) was coming into being, born from a momentous meeting at the American Anthropological Association meetings at Mexico City, at a panel entitled "The Rhine-Swanton Symposium on Parapsychology and Anthropology." Papers were presented by Joseph Long (a medical anthropologist who was in Trinidad at the time of a strange public apparition of a coffin), Agehananda Bharati (ordained Hindu religious scholar and a convinced rationalist), Norman Emerson (with a story of a "seeing" archeologist), Jule Eisenbud (psychiatry), Robert van de Castle (a major authority on dreams), Harris Walker (quantum physics), and Roger Westcott (linguistics), among others. Margaret Mead was present and approved of the study of *psi*. However, Bharati created a scene and screamed "Fraud!" He could not take parapsychology seriously. Now that I know more of the history of the ATA and the Society for the Anthropology of Consciousness, I am amazed at the heroism and persistence that went into the liberation of "the psyche" in anthropology.

To return to the Turner front, Victor had earlier described *communitas* as possessing an "unused *evolutionary potential*, a potential not yet externalized and fixed in structure[d form]" (1969:128). *Not yet externalized*. This was his clue both to the conundrum of the invisibility of *communitas* and to its futuristic component. Here we have a view of something vivid and hard to hold down, yet seen in the cracks of material life. Something spiritual, of the psyche, the field of the ineffable, is present in these descriptions, hard to put into words, yet often experienced. Turner spoke at the American Anthropological Association annual meetings in 1980, at a large panel on the anthropology of experience. He drew attention to liminality as "a fructile chaos, a storehouse of possibilities, not a random assemblage but a



striving after new forms and structures, a gestation process, a fetation of modes appropriate to postliminal existence" (Turner 1986:42). Edward Bruner at the same meeting called the concept of experience "a new anthropological ancestor, in the tradition of the human sciences, as opposed to Durkheim" (Bruner 1986:4). The concept was discussed independently from the Castaneda dictum that one had to have the *experience* of being a shaman to understand shamanism—Turner had never at any time read Castaneda. His concept had nothing to do with shamanism or experimental parapsychology. His thinking was taken merely from fieldwork among indigenous people. One can begin to see in this stage of anthropology, through the struggles on one side of the transpersonal people trying to get *psi* recognized, often using far more precise and scientific language than Turner's cry for experience, and the mysterious but powerful weight of liminality thrown on the other side, how the discipline of anthropology eventually had to break open to include spirituality and personal experience.

Then, at this time—the eighties and after Victor Turner's death—the anthropology of experience appears to have been unconsciously taken up by anthropological humanists, while at the same time the humanists and the transpersonal pioneers were imperceptibly joining together. We see the consciousness of a new kind of humanism, as distinct from the old atheist positivist humanism. Without any fanfare, anthropological humanists such as Ed Bruner (Bruner and Turner 1986) and James Fernandez (people who possibly didn't know what they were doing), and Bruce Grindal (1983) and Dennis Tedlock (1990) (who did), were also preparing the way with their publications for the liberated study of consciousness.

There had been other stirrings in anthropology. In a remarkable essay entitled "Word, Eye, and Mind in Anthropology" (1984:110), Paul Stoller related his own apprenticeship among the Songhay of Niger and his experience of sorcery with his teacher, Dunguri. She warned him he would be tested and told him the cure, and that night he experienced what David Hufford (1991) has later called "hagriding," a recognizable nighttime spiritual affliction, causing paralysis and semi-suffocation under a mysterious heavy weight. Stoller also heard creatures walking on his roof. After quite a time he remembered the cure, the recitation of verses from the Koran. He said them and immediately recovered. From then on, he knew he had to accept a different attitude toward the philosophy behind anthropology:

Once the anthropological writer has experienced "the inside" or "the place where logic bites its own tail," the discourse of ethnographic realism is no longer completely adequate. When I confronted first hand the powers of Dunguri in Wanzerbe and acted like a Songhay healer, all of my assumptions about the world were uprooted from their foundation on the plain of Western metaphysics. Nothing that I had learned or could learn within the parameters of anthropological theory could have prepared me for Dunguri. Having crossed

the threshold into the Songhay world of magic, and having felt the texture of fear and the exaltation of repelling the force of a sorcerer, my view of Songhay culture could no longer be one of a structuralist, a symbolist, or a Marxist. Given my intense experience—and all field experiences are intense whether they involve trance, sorcery or kinship—I will need in future works to seek a different mode of expression, a mode in which the event becomes the author of the text and the writer becomes the interpreter of the event who serves as an intermediary between the event and the readers. . . . Anthropological writers should allow the events of the field—be they extraordinary or mundane—to penetrate them. In this way the world of the field cries out silently for description and . . . the anthropological writer, using evocative language, brings life to the field and beckons the reader to discover something new.

[Stoller 1984:110]

This truly allowed the dialogue with the people in the field to assume to the full its potential importance to ethnographers and their readers. Stoller's experience occurred in 1979. I myself had not encountered his 1984 article until I was writing up my own 1985 African spirit experience, and then I used it in my documentation in 1992b. These time lags are significant. Here, Stoller was ahead of us, like the present anthropologist-practitioners such as Knab and Earle in 2003.

The fact was, Stoller told me later how his 1984 article had stirred up the jeers and shaming remarks of his colleagues in the corridors of Westchester University where he taught. Later, as most anthropologists know, Stoller received prizes for his work. Stoller's story is salutary. Are we ever again going to scorn someone who pushes on further than ourselves?

In similar vein to Stoller, when Colin Turnbull in 1990 finally published his experience of liminality and bliss among the Mbuti, he added:

To conclude, what is needed for this kind of fieldwork is a technique of participation that demands total involvement of our whole being. Indeed it is perhaps only when we truly and fully participate in this way that we find this essentially subjective approach to be in no way incompatible with the more conventional rational, objective, scientific approach. On the contrary, they complement each other and that complementarity is an absolute requirement if we are to come to any full understanding of the social process. It provides a wealth of data that could never be acquired by any other means.

[Turnbull 1990:51]

In so many of these accounts we see the words, "This has altogether changed my way of thinking," or, "This was a turning point in my life."

As for myself, even as Vic Turner was dying in 1983, through the good offices of Roy Wagner, I was beginning to explore shamanism—which seemed to have little to do with liminality. But the study of shamanism brought in *spirits*, and after Vic died I made a research trip to Zambia in 1985 and actually saw a spirit in the middle of a spirit ritual.³

This was indeed a turning point for me. What happened was that I became immersed in the drumming ritual of Ihamba to heal a woman with a devouring spirit in the form of an invading tooth. The healing took a long time. Finally, when most of the crowd had given up hope, a major climax occurred.

We saw the sky grow dark and a wind come up. Suddenly, the central figure swayed deeply: all leaned forward; this was indeed going to be it. I realized along with the people that the barriers were breaking. Something that wanted to be born was going to be born. Then a certain palpable social resistance—like a skin—broke, and something calved along with me. I felt the spiritual motion, a tangible feeling of breakthrough going through the whole group—the spirit event first and the action afterwards.

Then the woman fell. I was clapping and singing with the others like one possessed—while the drums bellowed—while the tribal doctor leaned over and pressed the patient's back, guiding and leading out the tooth. The patient's face wore a grin of tranced passion and her back was quivering rapidly. Suddenly she raised her arm, stretched it in liberation, and I saw with my own eyes a large thing emerging out of the flesh of her back. It was a big gray sphere—a sort of plasm—about six inches across, dark and opaque. I was amazed—delighted. I still laugh with glee at the realization of having seen it, the Ihamba spirit, and so big! We were all one in triumph. The gray thing was actually out in the open, visible, and I could see the hands of the tribal doctor working and scrabbling on the patient's back—and then it was there no more. He had whatever it was in his pouch, pressing it in with his other hand as well. The receiving can was ready; he transferred whatever it was into the can and capped a castor oil leaf and bark lid over it. It was done. The patient was now relieved of her sickness.

[Turner, 1992b:148–149]

I had felt this unison through the group, vividly. We had reached, not a chance high spot, but a condition in which the community was one. This was where the spiritual change took place.

As for my function as ethnographer, I had had to relax the detached-observer imperative in order to see as the Africans saw, thus bridging the gap and entering the culture. This turned me around to the spirituality of religion, honing my sense of atmosphere and my understanding of spiritual healing.

So we're coming home to the *presence* of something, as my friends the Inuit also told me later. Your scalp begins to quiver. Indeed, this quiver itself is documented by scientists: "A brief ecstatic state and sense of union (often lasting only for a few seconds) [which] may be described as no more than a shiver running down the back at a certain point" (d'Aquili et al. 1979:177). Victor Turner's comment on this goes: "A sense of harmony with the universe is made evident and the whole planet is felt to be *communitas*" (Turner 1986:43). Let's hear it from Gary Holy Bull, from the Lakota:

Before a ceremony I tell each and everyone there that you should talk to your spirit.

Ask it to talk to the Greater Spirit. These things are sacred. They move by themselves. Like the wind, spirit moves by itself.

When people bring their spirits together, there is great movement, great energy. It's one of the most awesome feelings we can experience.

When you bring spirits together, things will move by themselves, things will happen, you can see into the beyond, and hear the unheard.

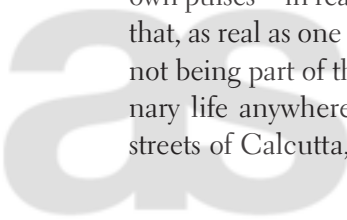
[Keeney 2000:84.]

Stoller and the humanists (and, later, Tim Knab and Duncan Earle) took over religious anthropology when there was no religious anthropology, freeing much of the discipline of anthropology from its tight positivism, looking kindly, not critically, at the sincerity behind the religious experiences of those we study, and often experiencing as practitioners, *actual practitioners*, the healings their friends were engaged in.

The following are some of the humanistic fieldworkers and anthropologists who picked up on the theme: Bruce Grindal (1983); Nadia Seremitakis (1991); Jean-Guy Goulet (1994); Don Mitchell (1996); Stephen Friedson (1996); Edith Turner (1996, 2005b, in press); Roy Willis et al. (1999); Stephen H. Sharp (2001); George Mentore (2005); Laura Scherberger (2005); Tenibac Harvey (2006), and the poets of anthropology, among others.

It's a curious thing that, even if scientific investigators of society did begin to apply their method of observing, questioning, and measuring to the phenomenon of *communitas* and spirituality, there would be serious difficulty. Like the famous electrons in particle physics, spirituality and *communitas* will not stay still to be watched. Of all social phenomena, *communitas* is most likely to turn into something else when watched. This is because, by definition, in the mode of *communitas*, a person is not an object, and especially cannot praise herself or himself, nor describe or enact on command what often is impossible to put into words. Naturally, the old social scientist types reject this material as unusable—which it is, under the definitions of old social science. Furthermore, another scientist, a neurologist, Antonio Damasio (1994), has been messing up the nice logic of the old guard by proving that the *absence* of emotion and feeling can break down rationality itself in the human brain.

During this period, ethnographers were out there testing spirituality on their own pulses—in real human fieldwork, and finding real *psi*,⁴ if one wants to call it that, as real as one can get, fast embedded in the contexts, showing every sign of not being part of the social structure or culture we have to obey. While in ordinary life anywhere, the same thing crops up—among Baptists, rabbis, in the streets of Calcutta, in Lhasa, Tibet, and in the midst of a Sufi prayer meeting.



According to the angry old guard of anthropology—which is still here—they're all supposed to be wrong; you should ignore their experience, which never happened anyway.

It is time to proceed with part two of this article and look at the publications on spirituality (see the chronology of books in the bibliography section).

■
CORE WORKS IN THE SPIRITUALITY BREAKTHROUGH DURING
SEVEN DECADES, SHOWING EXPONENTIAL INCREASE

An exponential increase is visible in the number of notable publications or AAA presentations on spirituality, healing, shamanism, radical empathy, radical participation, and the work of anthropological practitioners. Note the obvious exponential increase in the figures. In the five decades from the 1900s to the 1950s, there were five notable publications; in the one decade of the 1960s, there were four publications; in the one decade of the 1970s, there were six publications; in the one decade of the 1980s, 11 publications; in the one decade of the 1990s, 15 publications; in the half-decade, 2000 to 2005, 15 publications; in January to September 2006, seven publications. (See also the figures given in Koss-Chioino 2006:38.)

Clearly, this escalation of publications on shamanism, healing, and spirituality has been persistent and is not part of a mere experimental moment or flash in the pan. It is, in Barbara Tedlock's words (1991:69–94), “an ongoing reconfiguration of social thought and practice that ought to be recognized for what it is, a change in ethnographic epistemology embodying key ethical and analytical issues that has already produced a major body of work.” This was written 15 years ago about anthropologists who gave themselves whole-heartedly to their cultures of study. Their testimony gave a lift to the rapidly growing interest in spirituality and shamanism. At the present time, the reaction of one mainstream old-school anthropologist to spirit studies has been to concede place to the new ethos with a kind of shrug—“We're not supposed to call spirits ‘metaphors’ anymore.”

This exponential increase constitutes a real shift. What it comes down to is that the publishers know they can sell books on shamanism and healing. Although this may not seem the case to some, shamanism has won its place in anthropology and is the fastest growing field within it. There is no way that Western rationalism can shake the rise of spiritual studies.

Thus in regular anthropology, we of the spirit persuasion recognized Stoller's 1984 article as making the breakthrough, followed by my own testimony while he was suffering gibes at Westchester. Ed Bruner, with the publication of his and Turner's *Anthropology of Experience* (1986), backed us experiencers to the nines, much as Margaret Mead helped the infant ATA. I was heartened by the Africanist Michael Jackson's *Paths toward a Clearing*. Listen to what he had to say as

early as 1989 about pebble-divination at a time when the spirit movement at home was starting to bud within the field of cultural studies:

The existential changes effected by Kuranko divination are so immediate and positive that the truth or falsity of what the diviner proposes does not matter, because the divination works. Studies of divination which are intellectualistic in their bias and thus focus on the credibility of the system reflect an objectivist methodology that plays down subjective experience. . . . Relying on participatory experiences rather than disinterested observations leads to the pragmatist viewpoint, which does not reduce Kuranko divination to an object of intellectual knowledge but sees it in a wider frame of reference as an object of use.

[Jackson 1989:63–64].

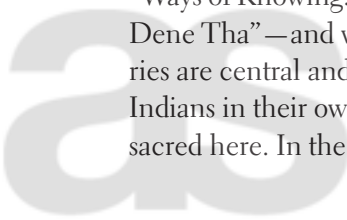
He was a radical empiricist: he told us like it was.

Karen McCarthy Brown in 1991 thrilled everybody and won a Victor Turner Prize with *Mama Lola*, with such wonderful scholarship that they couldn't touch her, initiated shaman that she was. The writers came in thick and strong after that. Carol Laderman in 1991 also won a prize for *Taming the Wind of Desire: Psychology, Medicine, and Aesthetics in Malay Shamanistic Performance*. She herself experienced that terrible releasing wind of desire. Was her subtitle, "Psychology," a matter of burning incense to Caesar or did the word psychology truly mean "the knowledge of the soul"? The experience was there in the book, and was not censured; it was rewarded.

These books were so solidly academic that you'd have to search hard for the great moments, whether it be in Michael Jackson's dream that prompted him to go to the diviner, or Laderman's own personality that helped her submit to the shaman's instructions and admit the wind "like a hurricane" into herself, so that she *knew* how the sick were cured—these episodes are so hidden by reams of academic "context," "concomitant circumstances," and endless unannotated tape transcriptions that the passages are lost, like some Maya temple long since buried in the jungle; and students often miss them altogether. We weren't out of the bush yet.

In 1992a, with some kind of passion, I wrote an article called, "The Reality of Spirits," tearing open the whole sorry cover-up. There *are* spirits, and we have no business contradicting so many good people around the world. The article is now in its fifth republication so we must be doing something right. Here I am trying to encourage the faint-hearted and those who fear for their jobs. We face a nasty hegemony.

In 1994—what a decade!—Jean-Guy Goulet, now of Ottawa University, wrote "Ways of Knowing: Towards a Narrative Ethnography of Experiences among the Dene Tha"—and we see the same kind of inner stories. Only in his case, the stories are central and clear. We have entered and heard the quiet conversations of Indians in their own homes, heard the wonder in their voices. All the people are sacred here. In the name of God, let them be left so.



Goulet's story is basically about the gift of *psi*, or "seeing," in the religious world of the First Nations of northwestern Alberta. The Dene Tha feel that people from outside who do not directly experience the reality of dreams and visions do not and *cannot* understand Dene Tha religion. Goulet explains that personal experience is the cornerstone of this religion and that it is also the necessary entry point for its investigation. What determines the flow of information between ethnographer and people is the people's estimate of the ethnographer's knowledge of the religion in his or her own experience (1994:114). I would comment that indeed, if any two people from separate parts of the world have both experienced something religious, however different they are, the stories they would tell would be truly shared and the doors would be open to *communitas*, as Victor Turner termed it.

In the case of the Dene Tha, whose white overlords had done little but discredit their religion, it has been practiced very privately and often involves the recounting of stories. People tell each other their own strange experiences within their tribal world—a world inhabited by helping animal spirits, informed by dreams, and gifted with experience of the dead and reincarnation. Goulet (1994:130) recounts how he saw the dead in a vision. A young Dene girl whom Goulet knew had been accidentally shot dead by a hunter. On a public occasion after this event, Goulet saw the dead girl in midair, smiling and radiant with light. He told the girl's mother about it. From that time onward, Goulet was accepted into the tribal community. He had truly "been there." Goulet says: "Among Athapascans . . . a person with religious experience is described not as a *believer*, but as someone who *knows*" (Goulet 1994:114; italics added).

Here the anthropologist and the people together may constitute a community. Such an identification may actually work, due to interawareness, which becomes intereffectiveness. Thus, oneness in social life is supported by stories told within the tribe itself and includes ethnographers who also have such stories to relate.

From the viewpoint of 2006, we may have to go back to square one and these magnificent stories, not having to do with belief and disbelief, but having to do with what a *human being experiences*, including the ethnographer. Joseph Long in 1977, in the time of the taboos, bewailed the lack of a comprehensive theory about such events because of "the relative scarcity of materials dealing directly with anthropology and *psi*" (Long 1977:389). Now, by the year 2006, we have fine and plentiful ethnographies of this kind, and this puts a different construction on the matter; we see things from a different angle. That angle is the Goulet effect. We "get" what these new ethnographers have to say, because they are said by real people, not lobotomized to cut off any sense of the feeling and wonder of religion. We "get" them because we "know"; we have that faculty still within us somewhere, and it can respond.

So hear how in 1996 the anthropologist Stephen Friedson, now heading musicology at the University of North Texas, published *Dancing Prophets*—a book that pictures exactly how one can be led by spirits and humans into a land of

such expansion and freedom as one would die for—this in “savage” Africa, during rites persecuted by the Christians. His “I know” descriptions of how he too entered the process and took on the fulfilling spirit sets one’s scalp quivering—the body’s salute to the spirit. Friedson experienced a *vimbuza* spirit in Malawi when learning what it was like to join the African prophets, *nchimi*. It was only when he wrote about it afterward that he realized exactly what his experience implied, though the Africans had tried to tell him.

He was in trance with a dream:

Someone comes up behind me and whispers the name of a prophet spirit, a vimbuza. That instant, my whole body seems to leap out in front of me. It is as if my body space is elastic, with the front part stretching outward and upward. Along with the expansion of my body, I feel a tremendous exhilaration.

The whisperings of the invisible vimbuza caused my “self” to expand, creating a space within me, an opening, a clearing. I believe that this was an expression of the dynamics of possession. In order to be possessed by vimbuza spirits, there must be a space created in oneself to accommodate the possession.

[Friedson 1996:20–22]

An opening, one asks? Where from, where to? Victor Turner spoke of the limen, the threshold: liminality. Friedson knew about the space into which something enters in initiation; he experienced it, and here is the connection between liminality and spirits—the *door opens* to the spirits.

Then down at the end of the decade, in 1999, here comes Roy Willis from the Lungu in eastern Zambia, precisely documenting the entrance of spirits in a ritual. I give you his own words:

A crowd of fifty people had already gathered, along with three men drummers, who immediately started to play. The sick woman was sitting upright with her legs straight in front of her with a cloth right over her head and body, covering her.

The patient betrayed no emotion. The leading medicine woman, all the time in trance, incensed her with smoke, then rested her fly-switch lengthwise on the patient’s cloth-covered head as if it were a lightning conductor. Chanting broke out among the crowd, while the drummers built up their insistent di-DIdidi di-DIdidi beat, working creatively against each other to magnify the throbbing summons to the powerful ngulu spirits, drawing them to this special cleared space in the night. The patient was alone beneath her cloth in the very center of darkness, under simultaneous assault through several sensory channels. Soon she was going to lose her sense of social selfhood, her name, her wifehood and motherhood, her village and tribal identity.

For some minutes the veiled figure was motionless, the drumming and chanting becoming increasingly urgent; then the first trembling movements under

the cloth signaled the onset of spirit action. Everyone's attention was concentrated on what was happening there, on the imminent revelation. The movements became convulsive, the cloth fell away, something was struggling massively in her, urgently seeking to emerge. They saw her round black face raised, her awestruck eyes. Those around her stooped to listen, straining to sift intelligible words from the semi-babble of glossolalia that they heard, in order to learn the name of the spirit entity stirring in this woman.

"Mbita!" someone cried, triumphantly repeating the newly uttered name of the patient's ngulu spirit. A moment later the spirit-filled body of the patient ceased its convulsive quivering, the wordless cries of pain or ecstasy ceased, and, amazingly, the figure rose to its feet, suddenly whole, reborn from suffering and chaos. And now, in its new, changed state and moving with the continuing rhythm of the drums, the spirit danced before us all, visible, revealed.

It was the spirit dancing, in a slow languorous way, a smooth gliding movement, sensual too, with simultaneously gyrating hips as the human-spirit-body turned through a wide arc, then a spiraling movement through the cleared dancing space, going through this sequence of gliding, swooping movements several times. Now the whole group was dancing with "Mbita-who-was-the-patient," the new spirit, in a dance of spontaneous joy at her epiphany. All were filled with divinity.

[Willis 1999:94–96]

To end the session, the medicine woman went to the patient and twisted the hair on the top of her head to bring her around from her trance. The patient had no recollection of her altered-state experience. She literally had no words to describe it, nor had the medicine woman.

For all of them, the drumming and the movement had pleasantly dissolved the boundaries of ordinary selfhood. Now Willis felt in a spaced-out state. There had been a hard-to-find "gentleness" about the night's performance. He said he was lifted out of normal consciousness into a state where ordinary perceptions of time and space were drastically altered. He knew that they were all related, different versions of each other, but that there were no fixed boundaries to selfhood; there was a permeability and flexibility between self and other, an infinite flexibility, and again this sense of everything flowing within the all-encompassing rhythm of the drum. Willis experienced the dissolution of the ordinary sense of time and space, the coordinates of ordinary selfhood, the sense that "he" was a person with a particular inventory of social characteristics, including a "position" in society, living at a particular time. All these defining and localizing criteria temporarily vanished. He said he was indeed in Victor Turner's state of *communitas*, intensely aware of himself in relation to his fellows. He was interested that he could "see" himself more clearly than in ordinary reality, when self-perception was typically more

fragmentary, tied to one or another fleetingly relevant social role. Then, in the moment of *communitas*, he saw himself whole and objectively. He was “at home” and among, as it seemed, “kinsfolk.” He discovered that the state of *communitas* provides access to those transpersonal entities or forces commonly called “spirits.”

Obviously, full religious experience is here to stay in academic anthropology.

Around the turn of the 21st century, the anthropologist Duncan Earle was in Guatemala working for the Save the Children Fund. But, good man though he was, he came to dislike the Fund mentality and found himself identifying with the Maya, becoming almost a “fly on the wall” he said (2003:3) among his adoptive family. He joined in all their religious activities, making offerings to the Sacred Earth and keeping up with his mentor, the shaman Don Lucas, as they biked around to shrines.

However, Don Lucas took it into his head to initiate Earle, and threw the beans to divine if he should. More than four times, the answer of the beans was that he should. So he and Earle set off for the shrine, where they found crosses, candles and an altar, with women chanting. The place was undeniably sacred. Late in the night, in total darkness, amid hollow breathing sounds, and thumping, and a high tranced voice (a kind of voice I have heard so many times myself, among so many trancing cultures), the spirit of Lucas’s dead mother is heard, and Earle finds she knows things that only he has ever known. How could that be?

All is complete, and they name poor Earle “Dog” — which shatters the solemnity in a big way. Earle is apparently a dog who is only “half house-trained,” and might “bite.” The meeting breaks up in total hilarity—but Earle now has to study like crazy and get to know the entire herbology and almanac by heart.

At last, what Earle has now become is so much taken for granted that he is asked to heal a young girl with hepatitis. He arrives at the bedside with Maya culture pouring out of him, and it works. Sins are redeemed, mistakes corrected, the almanac read, herbs found; Earle has “taken on Lucas’s persona.” He gives the girl herbs and tea, all the while chanting (like Black Elk and Essie Parrish—he *is* a healer). The girl recovers, and Earle has “crossed the line.” He says, “I came back somehow somebody else, beginning in the Mayan dog days.” He has joined the life “where the whole village receives the mother-father, where the cargo carries the totality, for Earth’s sake, the place where everyone is kin.”

Earle read the story from which this was taken at the annual meetings of AAA in 2003, to a packed room with people standing in the corridor. He is a droll but brilliant expositor, with a personality that is hard to capture. His work and that of his colleague Tim Knab (2003) are important examples of the escalating trend of research, what Earle called a shift from the “the observing, well-mannered, and fundamentally removed character of the ethnographer” who “participates in order to observe,” like a “good spy”—toward “observing in order to participate, cohering in a radically new way, a way of working that leaves the notebook behind for a time” (Earle 2003:2).

What I find so astonishing is that we knew about these differences way back in the 1950s, but *still*, even in 2006, this “ideal” of the detached ethnographer keeps appearing and even now scares many a SAC member into conforming. This is because, of course, if they want a job they have to keep up the appearance of “objectivity.”

Next, George Mentore. Now what to do with a 2005 book that ought to get a Victor Turner Prize, that plumbs the entire spectrum of spirituality among the Waiwai of Guayana, is spiritual in every line, and yet at the same time is a model of intellectual probity and the anthropological avant garde? This shouldn't be possible. It makes our memory tests and psychological theories of shamanism look limp and pale before the presence of these all-penetrating spirits—let alone when we know that the doughty band of St. Andrews University Amazonianists is standing in defense of the Indians' theologies, healings, and experiences. George Mentore drew a conference of Amazonianists together at the University of Virginia in November 2005. This sector of influence too is increasing its fame exponentially. Mentor's book, *Of Passionate Curves and Desirable Cadences: Themes on Waiwai Social Being*, shows deep spiritual relationships at all levels of village life, in an anthropology that the old methods could never achieve. *Ekati*, the spiritual vitality the people so well recognize, is everywhere, in everything; it shines in the eyes, it is in the heat of the body, it is in the growing child. It is both the kind of energy that gives life and also has its own will, which is to bring about beauty and sex and a range of odd and effective power symbols. If it did not have this function, it would be left as a “pure divinity,” which it doesn't prefer.

I personally feel it is our prime duty to respect and preserve this will and never to preach modern atheism to these people under the guise of the so-called universal philosophy of the high-ups and educated. The West can make itself seem sweet to those short of money and short of outlets for self-advancement. We can easily be guilty—let's face it—of trying to castrate out of them that human biological gift for spirit things, which they love passionately and have a human right to retain without the weight of our academia upon them with our hints and insinuations. The Christian church is still a partner of anthropology in this unholy game, in spite of the millions who can read for themselves Jesus's gospel of love. Both lots say, “Do not dare to think outside the limits that I shall command you.” Whereas the fact appears to be that the capacity for spiritual experience, unregulated by such commands, is a human endowment that we all possess, and its corollary: no one religion has a monopoly on God.

As well, on the contemporary scene and as part of this literary and academic explosion, the study of consciousness has acquired various comparative studies of shamanism and spirituality, by Michael Winkelman and Phillip Peeks (2005), Helmut Wautischer (2006), Joan Koss-Chioino (2006), myself, and others, along with a surprisingly large number of collections on shamanism *per se*. Also in 2005 appeared the two-volume *Encyclopedia of Shamanism*.



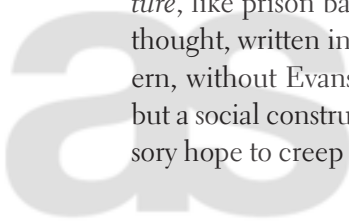
RESEARCH GROUPS AND SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT BEARING ON SPIRITUALITY

For the third part of this essay I will trace the threads of thought throughout the history, moving and encountering one another, so that we can become conscious of our neighbors in the development of our own particular thread. Other readers will be able to suggest many more.

As one who was outside of the making of the original ATA and SAC, now in 2006 I see the history of *psi* studies—along with the question of *psi*'s existence and what anthropology has actually been allowing itself to publish—as a history marching through time with various movements and allies. I will briefly mention from my point of view the different groups and schools of thought in the long development.

It is interesting that it was because of a 1939 psychic event in archeology, within anthropology, that the Swanton group arose and in 1959 made itself felt in the AAA under the rubric of the study of the transpersonal, which I take to mean those subtle communications that biology had been refusing to admit that we call the spiritual. Before the ATA was formed, two things occurred in 1964: Vic Turner received like a blow the impact of what it was to be liminal and wrote it, and Castaneda was struggling to use his “impossible” material at UCLA. As I see it, Castaneda's publications in 1968, in which he smashed through the barriers of positivism, gave an immediate stimulus to the transpersonal movement and we see the quick gathering of scholars for the 1974 meetings and the forming of the ATA in 1978. Castaneda's stories also highlighted the need in the movement to protect intellectual rigor when writing about this metascientific field. Vic Turner's liminality on his side, meanwhile, was starting to ring the death-knell of atheist Durkheimianism. These two strands, the transpersonal and the liminal, the mate as it were of the transpersonal across the way, eventually produced the “double whammy” on the positivists. “Transpersonal” and liminal: now we see how they helped to free one another in the course of time from the old science's commands.

The first trickle—the drops in the ocean—the boulders in the stream—had long since come in with Black Elk, Eliade, Harner, and others, mainly scorned. Now the ATA struggled with its dilemma: the wonders that experience had related; true wonders, were, after all, just anecdotes of “experience.” One couldn't scientifically connect these stories with the existence of the soul itself, or with the idea of release from structures of false power, with the real person, and human rights. All around us in the late 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s was structuralism, *la structure*, like prison bars. Then the nihilists intervened, a sad and strange school of thought, written in “flattened” or undecipherable language called the postmodern, without Evans-Pritchard's “romanticism” at all, their doctrine being: all is but a social construction of reality. They could not enable a single false and delusory hope to creep in, in case such an emotion might detract from the probity of



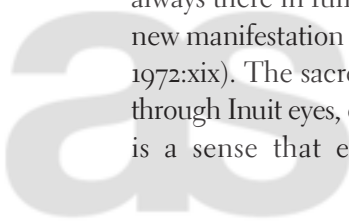
the material. But there can be no human material without the drift of emotion,⁵ let alone *communitas*. Because a researcher chooses not to write about it, that does not mean it does not exist. If we stain our samples black, we will not be able to see that which shines. In fact, in spite of what we may do, we are not actually *able* to predict a world of despair. We do not have the slightest idea what next year will be like. Furthermore, anthropologists have been twisted up in the business of breast-beating, labeling their own mistakes, their neoimperialism, and the folly of writing anything at all—almost like Russian nihilism.

So, “experience” was not sufficient for the ATA, to be the SAC in 1990. They hankered for probity and intellectual weight. Where the change did take place was in the big swing in favor of the indigenous view, Danny Alport and his linguistic insight into Native American languages. He showed their vital verbal character to be better than ours—an antistructural trait. Now we have Marjorie Balzer, Claire Farrer, Antonia Mills, and Bilinda Straight, all writing ethnographies that take the battle into the enemy’s camp, and give the positivists classical, scholarly, and above all human pictures of life where people live naturally in the milieu of spirituality. This includes the earlier studies I have exemplified. Hitherto, anthropology’s attitude to “third world” philosophies has been condescending and reductionist. What right has anthropology’s authority system to dictate in any way whether or no *psi* exists? Native Americans are hard put to it not to hate anthropology, so strongly have its false psychologicistic analyses flourished. Right now, we who study spirituality find ourselves standing on the higher moral ground, and we can relax our terror of science and actually embrace the philosophies of Native American religion, Hinduism, that of Africa—their own way of thinking, and take pleasure in talking together with these systems of thought, listening, not dictating—anywhere in the world. Humbly we can accept their philosophies where they are broader and more fruitful than ours.

In anthropology, there have been various groups and area scholars involved in this recent history. These are the threads of its evolution. Historically, as regards the conscious change in cultural anthropology toward spirituality studies, it took place with Stoller the Africanist in 1984, along with myself, Michael Jackson, Richard Katz, and Colin Turnbull (his statement then unknown). Native Americanists showed up with the Tedlocks in the 1990s and also with Goulet’s group in Canada: Young, Guédon, Mills, Marton, Bruce Miller, and Henry Sharp. In the nineties onward, Africanists were represented by Friedson and Willis, and the weird and lovely Malidoma Some, likely to be put down because he is “popular.” Now, we in the 2000s are in the age of the great anthropologist practitioners, Earle, Barbara Tedlock (2005), and Harvey among the Maya, and Knab among the Puebla people of Mexico, most kindly initiated by their hosts in the valuable crafts of healing. The picture of Castaneda’s solitary prowls around Mexico with his sorcerers has changed to a picture of courteous gestures of hospitality and real conversations between our seekers and their givers.

Very recently, Joan Koss-Chioino (2006) has gathered a group of researchers that has come forward with Sol Katz, Philip Hefner, the Scientific and Spiritual Transformation Project of the Metanexus Institute, and the Institute of Religion in the Age of Science (IRAS) groups, also including Bonnie Glass-Coffin, Marjorie Balzer, and many others. Rachel Mann, Buddhist, at the University of Virginia, and the anthropologist Roberta Culbertson have a small group associated with the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities. What I am calling the U. Va. sub-department of spirituality includes the anthropologists Roy Wagner, George Mentore, myself, Wende Marshall, and Hanan Sabea, along with members of the religious studies department—Ben Ray, Virginia Ochs, and Marcia Childress. Eric Mittelfort represents history, and Michelle Kisiuk ethnomusicology. Even Dean Nelson sees the truth of spirituality. Yet more exciting, a new field of spirit studies has come to the boil in Amazonia, originating in the department of anthropology at the University of St. Andrews, Scotland, with Joanna Overing, Alan Passes, Tony Crooks, and others. There is even a small school for the study of shamanism and laughter (Scherberger 2005), which brings me back to the major change of consciousness that occurs in *communitas*. This topic has a life of its own, and here the “grotesque” deserves mention, with the work of Joanna Overing (2006: Amazonia) and Masao Yamaguchi (Japan, the urban grotesque); also concerning *communitas* I cite Willis who experienced it with the Lungu, and Harvey, who called it spiritual entanglement. Again, the *communitas* of humor is found in many temple theaters throughout the world like Kuttiyattam, Kathakali, and Wayang, and in earlier performances of the Ndembu funeral, which had comic interludes (paralleling Shakespeare’s tragedies); *communitas* is there with the Japanese Nobelist Oe Kensaburo, a truly humorous writer who used the concept; with the English antistructural writer Terry Pratchett; with Bakhtin; and last but not least, the great Martin Buber of “I-Thou.” *Communitas* has “evolutionary potential” as Vic Turner said—*communitas*, the very thing one cannot lay hands on. Will we anthropologists be beaten by that? We may have to use the estimating tools and measuring rods of *communitas* itself to be able to encompass,⁶ for instance, what is known as the human heart?

What then is *psi*, and do we have to “prove” it exists? When did it develop in evolution? We are aware that religious healing is done through *psi*. Nobody plans or constructs a spiritual healing; it is *given* to the healers. Healing and shamanism may well be regarded as within nature, because nature itself, as the Chinese say, is thrumming with the same force that inspires the healer and heals the sufferer.⁷ Eliade said in a blinding illumination that spirituality from primordial times was always there in full. “The sacred does not cease to manifest itself, and with each new manifestation it resumes its original tendency to reveal itself wholly” (Eliade 1972:xix). The sacred doesn’t *evolve*. It’s always been there. For instance, looking through Inuit eyes, everything in the universe has its *inua*, its soul. Nowadays there is a sense that even the animals continually dwell in the bliss of that



connectedness and that this has always been so. Is religion, then, that same consciousness of a spiritual power that passes through and through everything in the universe—matter, living things, animals, and humans—part and parcel of all of nature as a matter of course? Healing itself is an equiprimordial phenomenon, “at each new manifestation it resumes its original tendency to reveal itself wholly.” The universe, as well as humankind, has always had energy, and its use has been “written in” to everything that is (that is, the way things work, throughout); and it just happens as it wills. Thus, for instance, we are endowed with a permeable psyche. It may dawn on one that this tendency toward religion is inborn, an endowment, a biological predisposition, a propensity, existing for just such a purpose, the communication with spirits (who also *are nature*).

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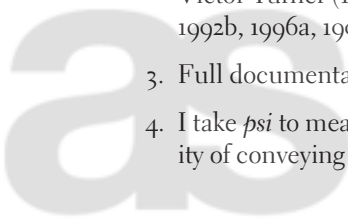
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

There are various trends. Toward spiritualism studies? A serious study of psychics? More on death, consciousness, NDEs, and reincarnation? More dream studies? Multiple personality (seemingly a dead end right now)? The body? Shamanism? Spirits? Theories of ultimate reality—energy, biology? There have been many already. I think we need a big new offensive. The SAC will have to rescue the Society for the Anthropology of Religion from its studies of superficials, to enter the field of religion, and say far more than the SARs seem to have the nerve to say. It is important at last to find out what this *psi*, this *chi*, this *wakan*, this shamanic gift *is*. We do indeed need to get close to it to know it, and closeness is now of the essence. So far, one of the best ways has been shown to be what we have done, to accumulate full-scale ethnographies on spirituality and *psi* as those faculties appear in the lives of different people all over the world. When these become commonplace, science itself will be compelled to join up with us and accept the human being as spirit-involved. Once this is achieved, we can together lay out the characteristics of *psi*, spirits, and their provenance, and become familiar with them.

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NOTES

1. The commentary on Victor Turner's Ph.D. dissertation, 1955.
2. Unless otherwise stated, the Turner material for this article is adapted, *passim*, from Victor Turner (1964, 1969); Turner and Bruner (1986); Edith Turner (1989, 1992a, 1992b, 1996a, 1996b, 2003, 2005a, 2005b).
3. Full documentation is found in Turner (1992a:128–158).
4. I take *psi* to mean not only telepathy and present-day psychic crafts, but the possibility of conveying energy to a person in healing and, generally, the gifts of a shaman,



finding lost objects and people, changing the weather, speaking with the dead, and second sight.

5. As neurology now tells us (Damasio 1994).
6. Academic teachers sometimes wonder how to teach these skills and this kind of fieldwork to students. Appropriate methods will be found in Turner (2006b), "The Anthropology of Experience: The Way to Teach Religion and Healing."
7. Cf. Mark Schroll and David Bohm's term, *holoflux*" (Schroll 2005:58).

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