

Techniques of the ceremonial. An actualization — Anthropocene Workshop

“(evolution) is and always will be unintelligible in so far as it takes consideration of only half of the whole circle of evolution, and refuses to accept the other half of the circle, that of involution, or the Fall, which would make it intelligible... a wheel comprising both the descent or departure from the comprehensive prototype being and the ascent towards this being”

“There might be some Yanomami here amongst us ...” A response coming from the public to a statement, made on stage by a speaker who affirmed that bringing the Yanomami into the conversation, or any other non-western cosmivision, was always being done in the guise of an “anthropologized other”. Anthropocene Campus, 2014.

There is a need for a wide range, a wide spectrum of *intelligences* in the conversation around Anthropocene; that is everyone’s sense of what the word demands. But there is a great gap from this intention to a real enactment of a dialogue between plural voices, with different conceptions of nature, conceptions of the body, conceptions of the *elements*, etc.... The *western* common sense still precludes, in many cases, any real entrance of other forms of knowledge into the conference room; there is a desperate loop at play, one that confirms its own premises while in the knowledge that those very premises, and the nominative, referential language that they spring from, are at the root of the malady that keeps a destructive cacophony *on*. The word Anthropocene is, in itself, a *call* made - almost unwittingly - by the geologist to all other sciences, to the philosopher and to the artist; a call to think a question that goes all the way to “who is man”, within the *western* sphere of thought. We place the argument here that for most traditional cultures, Anthropocene would have been an *Era*, or a condition that was always already understood. The shadow of man was always taken into account, through all kinds of refracted images that appear in diverse mythologies; and addressed through procedures such as the *offering*, or *pagamento*. In plenty of these cosmivisions, the human being was encoded in the matrix of the *origin myth*, as the conscious keeper of a metabolism that needed constant replenishment, a writer of the code that keeps the vital thrust of coherent co-creation at work.

Conceptions of the world that are embedded in terms like *Pachamama* (mother earth) - considered by the *western* mind as an infantile fantasy - come back to the table, and the conversation around them becomes crucial. We are not referring to the *Pachamama* that is mobilized as a pragmatic political position; not the version that geopolitical/forensic articulations propose, not the *usable* tool for indigenous struggles. These pragmatic *uses* have many sound operative arguments and are important for all kinds of urgent political struggles; but they are precisely the place where *Pachamama* has been rendered a concept, a term, a *noun*, and is therefore divorced from its *verbal* existence, the *form of life* that it entails. We agree to a non-essentialist use of the word; we can also agree on the use of temporary positions - contradictory in nature to any tribal *cosmoexperience* - such as the utilization of the capitalistic *biodiversity* argument - when urgent matters are at stake,

when the need is there to safeguard an ecosystem from industrial predators.

Yet there is another mayor safeguard that we want to speak about: the connection with that very *form of life* that is evoked in the word *Pachamama* and in many others like it, around the world... evocations that cannot be mobilized as conceptual political tools, since their truth lies in their relational force, in an experiential vision of the human on earth. So there are deep underlying strata that cannot be touched by the conversation on pragmatic and shifting subject positions within ever-changing geopolitical contexts. Returning to the conception of the world that is hidden inside the term *pachamama*, and actualizing it in new and singular ways, is a very different conversation indeed. This is the conversation that we propose.

The question here might be “When did we miss the obvious fact that we were part of a metabolism?” The radical mutation that we may be facing now is that there can be no more fantasies about not being a *native* to planet earth. There is no place, beyond the tribal field, where we hang our explorer hat, when we feel we are done with our fieldwork. To say it in another way, this means that the *western* hat is defunct, it can't be worn by anyone. Everyone has been *brought in, de facto* into that zone, and old basic questions that seemed to have been left behind return in a spiral; the archetypal speaks, breaks down linearity and illusions of progress, and time is brought to a stand still. The *natives* are sitting at the table, we have mutated into them, or they have mutated into us, *actualized* in us. Mythical thought and the *techniques of the ceremonial* are not brought in as an “anthropologized other” they are the *actualization* of the kind of holographic thought that a *connected* inhabitant of the Amazon jungle is naturally enacting, where the part always expresses the whole; and where *the image* and *the word* express singular universalities. These are, therefore the locus of healing procedures, which have multiple consequences in multiple scales, simultaneously.

Technosphere

During the seminar “Technosphere Coevolution” at the Anthropocene Campus Armin Reller narrated a kind of history of metals. The story had the same kind of qualities that a mythological narrative has. This is what struck us, precisely. The new companions that we have on the surface of the earth, the minerals and metals that we mined to make smart phones, are now forces to reckon with, since they were brought out from the depths where they used to dwell. To understand the multidimensional existence of these elements is part of the task for us now. The ABC of this matter is easy, as Peter Haff had said, - “I need coal” -. The XWZ: “what endless processes get mobilized when I get that coal?”... that is what brings us to another scale. This other scale calls for giants, and where are the giants who can converse with such an overwhelming reality? The giant is human *intentionality* at a scale that we view as unthinkable today, a mayor change in scale; or another scale in time. Other peoples of the earth left trans-civilizational *open letters*, they clearly understood the cyclical long run, and this factor was a constant, from Mexico to China to Egypt. These kinds of dialogues, within cycles as long as 26,000 years, did take place in our History and the evidence of them is only now half recognized.

We speak of a zone where metaphors are alive, facing us. In a mythological/alchemical mindset there are *elements* that are present within the narrative, as entities. They are animated so that they can be

addressed; or vice versa they are addressable because one recognizes that they are real agents, companions to our journey. Their scale being unavailable to material observation they are only perceivable as reflections, which is where myth comes alive as the force that can speak to them. A society who has corn as a companion will understand there is a corn god to reckon with. And there is no end to this story, nor a possible anthropological dissection of it, since it concerns us directly today, it is hidden in the poetry that brings us into another relationship to the matrix: language, code. In the shamanic worldview it is precisely through *intention* channeled in *images* and *words* that healing takes place, it is the site where everything is possible. We propose an actualization of these atrophied senses.

The geologist Peter Haff *animates* the technosphere for us: he talks about the energy it “eats”, for example. The technosphere becomes an *egregore*. *Egregore* is the name for a psychic formation, made of collective psychic force. Mythical thought would envision that after eating this psychic energy, an egregore comes alive, animated by the force that each of its parts is injecting into it; each of its parts having become unconscious matter. All this unconscious matter is *read* exclusively as *energy* by the egregore who collects it for sustenance. To make this image even clearer we might bring the archetype of the Devil in the Marseilles Tarot deck, that shows a figure that is larger than the humans who created it, and imprisons them; it has them on a leash. Facing the question of agency in front of an automated psychic formation such as the *technosphere* we advance the techniques of healing that the shamanic world has at hand. We suggest that the technosphere too can be a healing image: It can be turned into an entity that sits at the table, it can be brought into play via the *techniques of the ceremonial*, in the same way that a Taita may deal with somatic diseases - constantly - to prevent them from manifesting in his tribe. Every week, every day, every hour *origin* and *the elemental* must be brought to bear on our lives, lest we forget about Life.

So this is an extrapolation, one that comes from thinking holographically (scale is an illusion in the hologram). That is what a shamanic ceremony is: a mobilization, always necessarily in relationship with *origin*, in relationship with *the elemental*. The term technosphere can be one of the spirits in a mythological zone, and we can address it and trick it, as the hero tricks a god in a mythological tale. A god was always an element, a companion, Venus is copper, Venus is planet, Venus is woman, Venus is a force that unleashes passion; Venus, as any other force beyond human scale and beyond individual intentionality, is totemic, a fractal totem. This proposal envisions us in a ground zero, attaining our body, attaining the elemental dimension of the technosphere holographically; in order to get re ignited on a different path to the *Word* and to the *Image*.

RITUAL ASPECTS

Extracts and adaptation of a paper by Fabio Ramirez

Duga is the term for the “Word” of tobacco and coca, meaning the body of beliefs that incorporates the ritual use of plants, on a daily basis, into the systems of healing, education, spirituality and maintenance of the ecological balance by certain indigenous groups of the Colombian Amazon who refer to themselves as the “people of the center”, that is, of the center of the world: the Witotos, Boras, Andoques, among others.

According to the cosmology of these indigenous groups there is no “good” or “bad” in life. Instead they use the terms “cool” or “hot”. Disease, violence, anxiety, etc. are “hot”. “Cool” applies to wellbeing, peace, tranquility, etc. In life there are several goals to attain: to enter into contact with “good thought”, the kind of thought which is good for me, humanity and the world; to discover the origin of troubles and find solutions for them, at a personal, social, environmental and cosmic level; to heal all levels of existence; and finally to make the Word “real” in terms of facts.

Plants such as tobacco, in its form as a paste called *ambil* create an equilibrium between body and soul (emotions), so that the participant can find out how what he says “resonates” in his body as comfort, discomfort, contraction, easiness, etc. This becomes obvious during the ceremony under the enhanced awareness brought by the use of tobacco and coca leaves. This is the opposite of what happens during our normal daily activity; we are relatively “absent” from ourselves, in the sense that we are unaware of our whole functioning in terms of interrelations between cognitive, motor, sensory and emotional responses. In this way a comprehensive ethics arises in which my wellbeing is supported by my clarity of thought, the way it is reflected in my body and the extent to which my behavior positively influences the society around me, and the universe. This offers the possibility of healing the individual, the body, the emotions, the “soul”, society and the world in a single act, through the use of our main Western tool: The Word, though its cultural connotations are completely different. *Naikino* is the term for the **word-body** that works both “vertically”, as it interprets experience in terms of the origin myths, and “horizontally”, by means of analogies... for example.

The Word, *naikino*, is our essence. As Westerners, we would say plants sensitize us to this essence and enable us to experience it but for the indigenous wise men there is no distinction between plants, qualities and personalities. *Ambil* (tobacco) is simultaneously woman, the word, communication, the eye that sees and the ear that hears.

But this does not refer to the sharpening of normal senses. It has, instead, to do with the ability to see “beyond”, hear “beyond” and talk “beyond” the world of appearances. If we only consider the superficial layer of reality, we will always make mistakes. This kind of “sight” enables us to feel the subtle energy field of people, their emotions and motivations, and that is exactly the ground on which the ritual conversation takes place. The person who directs the ritual tunes into a subliminal current of information, which is impressed on his mind while origin myths are told and questions about personal and interpersonal matters are discussed.

There has never been any evidence of addiction among Duga practitioners, as a matter of fact it is non-existent among those who make a traditional use of that and other plants substances like *Ayahuasca* (*Banisteriopsis caapi*) and *Yopo* (*Anadanantera peregrina*).

The reason is that such plants are used in ritualized ways, and besides they are not forbidden, because they are part of a universal environment and are governed by specific rules.

In fact, the ceremonial is reminiscent of religious confession, psychodrama and psychoanalysis and it has a strong therapeutic value. Suddenly things begin to be perceived in a different dimension.

We can easily describe every single person in the so called Western world, to a greater or lesser extent, as an addict. To come back to the umbrella word of this seminar, the “technosphere” is very much the product of this all-encompassing tendency towards addiction.

Wisdom doesn't play any role in our society, which denies us opportunities to carry out such a quest. Furthermore, to a large extent our society encourages addictive behavior, in the form of the use of alcohol, cigarettes and palliative pharmacological products and its emphasis on consumerism, fashion... and technology.

One concrete proposal is to make use of the "Healing through Word" ceremony, as it is done in the Amazon by the Huitotos,, and to therefore discover and ratify, in practice the concepts that have been exposed here. Only Ambil (tobacco paste) would be used, as it is not an illegal substance in Europe.