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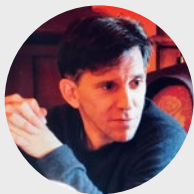
Alain Daniélou

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ALAIN DANIÉLOU: USER'S GUIDE

Owing to its multifaceted and transversal character, Alain Daniélou's work seems to call for an interpretation free from canonical standards of knowledge reproduction, as also from any form of dogmatism. However, using some of the author's heterodox aspects to justify amateurish and superficial opinions turns out to be the opposite of what emanates from his work and heritage. This essay is a tentative response to opposite extremes in the reception of his thought: excessive (and stagnating) philological rigor and vulgar (and parasitic) amateurism.



Alain Daniélou at the Labyrinth in 1992, photo by Jacques Cloarec

From interpretation to use, and back again

In his books *Lector in Fabula* (1979) and *The Limits of Interpretation* (1990), Italian semi-otician and writer Umberto Eco clarifies the difference between the notions of ‘interpretation’ and ‘use’ of texts. We can talk of ‘interpretation’ when the reader tries to do justice to the *intentio operis*, whereas the superposition of the *intentio lectoris* should be defined as ‘use’¹. What is the advantage of ‘interpretation’ over simple ‘use’ of a text (and by extension: of any culturally codified product)? An interpretation goes beyond the reader’s tastes and preferences, guides him/her in the process

of understanding and prevents his/her reading-process from being fully spontaneous and arbitrary. The interpreter wants to do justice to a source. The user, on the contrary, *plays* with that source, as if it were both too close to him and too far. He may therefore disregard its authority as a whole, as well as its power to guide – to the point of denying the very concept of ‘source’ and the related question of origins –, transforming the source into a simple pretext. The unprejudiced nature of pretextual readings can result in creative interpretation-games (like the transformation of a Sophoclean tragedy into a universal key to understanding the human psyche) or in presumptuous falsi-

fications (like the transformation of the Vedic tradition into a monotheistic religion of the book), but these two poles hardly ever appear in their pure form. In the same way, the question of limits does not revolve around ‘interpretation’, but rather around the crystal-clear distinction between ‘interpretation’ and ‘use’ – which proves to be utopian if we consider the complex history of effects related to the textual character of myths, gods, liturgies, societies or traditions in general. Umberto Eco makes a point of it: “use and interpretation are certainly two abstract models”².

Some examples should help illustrate the blurred boundaries between ‘interpretation’ and ‘use’. The monumental project of reconstructing Indo-European language and culture³ could not be called an interpretation in the strict sense of the word, since the cultural (that is, categorial, discursive and pragmatic) ‘source’ happens to be the product of mainly phonological and morphological speculations. The idea is simultaneously to create the cultural texture one is supposed to reconstruct. In spite of its logical procedure⁴ and pretension of strictly scientific method, the question of origins in this case does not lead back to a *terminus ab quo* but reveals – or rather produces – a *terminus ad quem*. As to the ‘use’ of a text, there are of course good and bad instances. Good ones, even in the hands of essay-writers (whose work is detached from criteria of objectivity), have sometimes more cognitive value than the results of exacting interpretations driven by a respectable ‘will to truth’. There is little or no doubt that one can learn much more from Roberto Calasso’s approach to the Torah in his book *Il libro di tutti libri* (*The Book of all Books*, 2019) than from some exegetic comments pursuing the *intentio operis* in a *literal* – as opposed to a *literary* – way. At the same time, a regrettable misunderstanding persists with regard to the idea of ‘artistic’ work: the category of art is thought to differ entirely from

(epistemic) knowledge in so far as the former is related to pure invention without any regard for facts, whereas the latter concerns facts and rejects any subjective interference. This viewpoint poses many problems. Are the Homeric poems fictionally detached from the historical facts leading to the Trojan war and the consequences of it? One could ask the same about the *Mahābhārata* and the Kurukṣetra war, or the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the vicissitudes of the Kośala Kingdom during the reign of Daśaratha. The answer is negative. Homeric poetry is a work of memory *making use* of history. This use is based on a conception of time and remembrance (*mnēmosynē*) that is not quite the same as ours. Memory in the Homeric age does not only have a relationship with past events and figures on a horizontal axis. It also implies the presentification of such contents and their rearrangement with a future perspective, as in the art of divination⁵. This means that any historical ‘interpretation’ of ancient Greece dealing with Homer is based on material emerging from a poetical ‘use’ of history. Something similar can be said of the Indian genre called *itihāsa*, which is not only what we understand by history, but is embedded in a much broader scope in which a vertical axis (mythic, cosmic, divine) coexists with a re-telling of past events that are difficult to situate between the limits of chronology and a past beyond the past (*illud tempus*). In the case of *itihāsa*, the reader can glimpse not only history, but also a stage with human and non-human agents, ranging from canonical gods and their ontological fluctuations (Viṣṇu, Rāma-Kṛṣṇa) to cows and monkeys embodying the whole power of the earth and natural landscapes (Pṛthvī, Hanumān)⁶. It is there that we find – quite paradoxically – fundamental elements to reconstruct the logic of past events out of a dis-placed source related to poetic remembrance. ‘Interpretation’ is sometimes (re-)born out of ‘use’, which means that ‘use’ is perhaps closer to the *source* than ‘interpreta-

tion' claims to be – and that the idea of 'source' is always tricky.

Alain Daniélou and Shiva: Western interpretation, Hindu use

There are few authors so difficult to classify as Alain Daniélou. This difficulty goes hand in hand with the creation of pre-texts justifying the one or the other approach to his thought. A man without academic credentials, he cultivates a principle of uncertainty with regard to the location of his own ideas: musician, painter, dancer, writer, and translator; Shaivite initiate with a Dionysian bent; libertine homosexual with traditional ideas. If we resort to Umberto Eco's classification, he was a man of 'use' rather than of 'interpretation', that is, a playful and even subversive reader. At the same time, he was fully committed to the preservation of traditional cultures and displayed conservative opinions that shocked forward-looking intellectuals of the post-Second-War period. Some quotations may illustrate this point: "Most of the problems of the modern West have been caused by maladjusted members of the *petite bourgeoisie* who spend their lives daydreaming instead of trying to learn"⁷. "The Indian system [here: the caste system], like any other, has its faults, but it deserves to be examined in depth instead of being portrayed as an abomination by people who have never been in contact with its happy victims"⁸. "Egalitarianism leads to bloodshed. All people are supposed to be equal but only according to the model of the average, pseudo-Christian European. No one thinks of being equal to the Pygmies, the Santals of India, or the Amazonian tribes"⁹.

There is no way of understanding Alain Daniélou without a taste for paradox, but a distinction imposes itself: paradox is not exactly the same as contradiction. In the case of Daniélou, it is part of a perspectivistic way of thinking stemming from his experience

in the traditional Hindu setting of the pre-Independence period (in the 1930s and 1940s), when "it was possible to discuss any problem without ideological interference or limited preconceived notions; one could think and try to go to the heart of things according to different value systems, without the prejudices or limitations that are created by set beliefs"¹⁰. Paradox, in this sense, does not rule out consistency. Daniélou went through different periods: 1. His childhood in Brittany, where he experienced the sacred in nature and its negation in the institution of the Catholic church¹¹. 2. His travel period, when he freed himself from the constraints of his own milieu¹². 3. His Indian period, when he was re-educated in an alien culture to the point of familiarising himself with it¹³. 4. His last period, when he sought to integrate his Indian experience by relating it not only to pre-Christian cultures in Europe, but also with non-European cultures in other parts of the world (Africa and South America)¹⁴. However, there is a binding thread (*sūtra*) uniting each one of those dissimilar phases: his relationship with nature and his attention for the sacred. This begins in his childhood with his experience of the sacred in the woods; it goes on with his liberation from the Catholic heritage of his family (which fell altogether upon his brother's shoulders, Cardinal Jean Daniélou); it becomes fully structured with his study of Hindu polytheism and his strong bond with Shiva (who, in the thought of Daniélou, is related not only to Rudra but also to Paśupati¹⁵), and it is consolidated with the re-integration of a forgotten past in the history of mankind, a past in which human and non-humans (gods, animals, plants) were closely related and religion was not reduced merely to the self-proclaimed verticality of the human element (man as 'crown of creation'). The questions are manifold: how did Daniélou read Shaivism? How did he retell his own life-story in the light of it? How did he expand it to create a new philos-

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ophy of life far beyond the Indian context?

To begin with, Daniélou’s Shaivism is not reduced to the solid place scholars assigned it in the almost undefinable religious and cultural complex called ‘Hinduism’. Since it is not scholarly reliable to speak of a Hindu god until his documented appearance, the consolidation of the god Shiva - focusing on textual evidence and maintaining a certain fidelity to the *intentio operum*¹⁶ - presupposes the decline of the Vedic god Rudra and the rise of the *trimūrti* (Brahmā-Viṣṇu-Śiva). This happens in the epic period (from 200 BCE to 300 CE), paradoxically enough in the context of Vishnuite texts: the role of Shiva (as the great destroyer) in the outcome of the battle that forms the central core of the *Mahābhārata* equates in a certain scene that of Krishna (the preserver of dharma)¹⁷, just as Shiva’s epiphany granted to the sage Upamanyu (in the same epic poem) bears witness to an elevation of that god that seems to go even beyond Krishna¹⁸. If one resorts to consolidated theological literature and the archaeological evidence of temples, the Shaivite religion can be said to have been constituted some centuries after the epics, that is towards the year 600 CE¹⁹. The Hindu point of view is different, since the transformations of a deity are not viewed as socially conditioned by the dynamics of human groups, but rather as relating to different aspects of the same non-human power. In this sense, the different names of Shiva (Paśupati, Hara, Rudra, Bhairava, Kapālamālin, etc.) are manifestations of his power in different contexts

within the same tradition – which is not only horizontal (historically-related), but also vertical (ritually or mythologically codified) and does not depend on human, but on divine will. The reading logic ensuing from this attitude is quite different, since the *opera* to be dealt with demand transversal and creative (rather than linear and reconstructive) use, and the elements borne in mind are arranged and combined in a different form according to religious symbols (the tiger skin as the embodied power of *prakṛti*; the spear *pāśupata* as the symbol of *pralaya*; a club with a skull at its end [*khaṭvāṅga*] standing for his power over death [*mṛtyum-jaya*]), attributes of the god codified in mythology (the three eyes related to sun, moon and fire; the erect phallus standing for the unlimited life-force; the matted hair pointing to the uninterrupted flow of sacrificial offering balancing creation and destruction) and analogical relations with natural forces (Rudra and Paśupati with fire – with its synthesis in ‘fiery-breath’ [*āgneya-prāṇa*] –, Shiva – as archer [*śarva*] and all-pervading nourisher or ruler [*īśāna*] – with earth and wind).

Daniélou deals quite extensively with the Hindu reception of Shiva in his monumental book *Hindu Polytheism*²⁰, where it becomes clear that uses and scholarly interpretations of the ritual, mythological and theological aspects of the god produce two different universes – each with its legitimate aspects. Hindu use of the sacred *corpora* plays with the whole transversal flow of creative associations, partial analogies, principles of belief and devotional overtones. In

such a context, the reader's fidelity consists in a sort of hermeneutic amplification that, from the point of view of strenuous textual 'interpretation', detaches itself from the *intentio operum*. In other words, Daniélou shows that if one bears in mind the dynamics of oral transmission, the 'use' imposes itself on the 'interpretation', but the user cannot be defined as possessing a free and playful subjectivity (as one may think from a Western point of view). What appears to be purely subjective is in fact a hidden aspect of the objective structure amplifying itself. In other words: the *intentio lectoris* is inscribed in a much broader canonical structure that seems to be rigid but is in fact more flexible than the hermeneutic freedom attached to an isolated (reader-)subject.

On use and *misuse*: the reverse-side of "orthodoxy"

Hindu Polytheism shows the native comprehension of the divine in terms of phenomenal multiplicity: "Existence is multiplicity. That which is not multiple does not exist. We may conceive of an underlying, all-pervading continuum, but it remains shapeless, without quality, impersonal, nonexistent. From the moment we envisage divinity in a personal form, or we attribute to it any quality, that divinity belongs to the multiple, it cannot be one; for there must be an entity embodying the opposite of its quality, a form complementary to its form, other deities"²¹. Alain Daniélou's emphasis on polytheism is on the one hand a protest against ethnocentric prejudices²², while on the other it is a critique of the notion of unity applied both to an instance of radical transcendence and to the sphere of world-immanence. In fact, from a Hindu point of view, neither the one nor the other is true: "To speak of a manifest form of a unique God implies a confusion between different orders. God manifest cannot be one, nor can the number one apply to an unmanifest causal aspect. At no stage can unity be

taken as the cause of anything, since the existence implies a relation and unity would mean existence without relation"²³.

Daniélou's use of Hinduism presupposes the affirmation of a polytheistic world-view against two tendencies that turned out to be a *misuse* of Hindu tradition (very often under the aegis of orthodoxy and primordality): 1. The equation of Hinduism and monotheism, usually related to Vedic literature, carried out in the colonial context mainly for ideological and political purposes. This equation forgets that non-duality is not unity, that the *Rigveda* is, strictly speaking, quite different from a sacred text like the *Torah* or the *Koran*, and that – as Daniélou says – "a simplified system (monism) could never accommodate the multifaceted, complex unity that characterises the Hindu pantheon, where, although every element can, from a certain point of view, be equated with every other, the whole can never be brought back to numerical unity"²⁴. 2. The esoteric invention of a universal Vedānta (a radically monistic metaphysical doctrine), against which Daniélou clearly pronounces himself: "In the general picture of later [i. e. modernized] Hinduism, an exaggerated importance has been attributed to some philosophical schools of monistic Hinduism which developed mainly under the impact of Islamic and Christian influences and which aim at reinterpreting Vedic texts in a new light"²⁵. In spite of the manifold problems that can be found in his writings, René Guénon (who undeniably influenced the young Daniélou) represents the subtlest and most creative version of this simplification – in the face of which the mediocrity of his contemporary acolytes is quite striking. The most vulgar version of this simplification is carried out by contemporary managers of spirituality claiming knowledge of Hinduism out of a concoction of commonplaces varying from decontextualized quotations from the *Rigveda* and some principal *Upaniṣads* to a



Brahmin reading Vedic hymns, photo by Alain Daniélou

kindergarten interpretation of the *Bhagavad Gītā* and truncated or indirect quotations of Śaṅkarācārya's philosophy. This ideological dilatation of Vedānta betrays some central aspects of any hermeneutic operation within the classical Indian context: a sense of perspective, argumentative subtlety and the propaedeutical acceptance of the opposite point of view. Since René Guénon had a talent for invention (the myth of his own initiation into Advaita Vedānta, the doctrinal complex of his Primordial Tradition, his oppositional categories 'East-West', etc.), we can say that the exercise of his *intentio lectoris* deserves the category of 'use'. All the other attempts mentioned above aimed at reducing the richness of Hinduism to a watered-down carbon copy of monotheistic theology should be regarded as misuses, since the *intentio lectoris* is in such cases so poor that it cannot renew, reshape or even partially bring to light the aspects of the *opera* or textual *corpora* they claim to treat with orthodox fidelity.

As we can see, the main problem is not the difference between 'interpretation' and 'use', that is, the problem of 'use' as conscious transgression of any hermeneutic operation led by a 'will-to-truth', but rather the impossibility of contributing – even transgressively and subversively – to a certain history of effects by means of enriching the symbolic pregnancy of the tradition(s) in question. Misuse begins with the denial and even degradation of both *opera* and *intentiones* through the dissonant improvisations of an utterly ignorant or dangerously fanatic reader.

The transcultural sphere of 'use': Daniélou's heritage in the XXI century

While Daniélou is an author who, already due to his own way of approaching the traditions he deals with, practically forces his readers to an exercise of (creative) 'use' rather than of (rigid) 'interpretation', his amplification, based on an elaboration in thought and experience of the different life periods mentioned above



Interpretation begins with ritual performance and displays multiple uses. Kālī sacrifice among peasants in Annapūrṇa, photo by Adrián Navigante

– childhood in Brittany, travel, Indian-sojourn, return to Europe – excludes and even forbids *misuse*. The sense of the sacred arising in his early childhood was reaffirmed first in Benares and then in the context of his researches on archaic pre-Christian religions. His connection with Nature that took place in the first period became, in the last part of his life, the key to his most inspiring thoughts on ‘religion of Nature’ (one of his definitions of Shaivism)²⁶ and the ‘animistic attitude’²⁷ that could save the world from imminent catastrophe. His archaeology of the sacred is approached not only with a sense of rigour, but also with the necessary artistic freedom (mainly gained in his period of travel and profoundly refined during his

Indian period²⁸) to let imagination play its part in consolidating received and elaborated ideas into a concrete philosophy of Life. Any (rigid) interpretation of Hinduism would not have allowed him to reflect on the possibility of a ‘Dravidian difference’²⁹, that is, the idea that the type of world-configuration codified in the Shiva cult might have originated before the Vedic period and might have been, as such, the Indian version of a much broader religious substratum extending far beyond the Indian subcontinent.

Sober ‘interpreters’ consider Daniélou’s ‘use’ of Shaivism extending beyond the Indian territory, especially his programmatic amal-

gamation of it with the Dionysian religion, as an abuse in the field of comparative religion³⁰. They also reject the opposition between Aryans and Dravidians in terms of ‘foreign invaders’ and ‘autochthonous groups’ as unacceptable speculation in the light of contemporary archaeological research (which contends the invasion theory as an explanatory key to the Indo-Aryan migration phenomenon)³¹. Both arguments miss the point of Daniélou’s ‘use’ of Shaivism, since not only its scope but also the consequences of his readings are quite different from what is assumed by his detractors. Daniélou’s interpretation of Shaivism has, of course, its problems, but they are not located where ‘interpreters’ condemn his ‘use’ as a transgression of acceptable intellectual standards³².

On taking a closer look at it, we see that the amalgamation of Shiva and Dionysos is no mere exercise in comparative religion, but a hypothesis based on Daniélou’s experience, as he explicitly declares in his book *Shiva and Dionysus*. This experience includes four central elements: 1. His own tendency towards a religion of Nature (as opposed to the abstract postulation of a transcendent being as source of all manifested reality). 2. His initiation into Shaivism in the orthodox context of Benares. 3. His research on the transmission of knowledge among the Sadhus of India as well as the difference between this special (ritual, cosmological and doctrinal) knowledge and the institutionalized aspects of Hinduism. 4. His increasing conviction of an archaic religious substratum

encompassing pre-Vedic India, sub-Saharan Africa, ancient Europe (Minoan and Thracian culture) and America³³. What is the relevance of this ‘use’ and how can it become a *misuse*?

Although comparative tendencies in the study of religions have fallen from favour in the field of specialised research, they can still be an incentive for interdisciplinary attempts to free scholarly thinking from its increasingly monolingualistic straitjacket. Alain Daniélou was a man of his time, but he also had intuitions ahead of his time. He inherited the vocabulary and theoretical framework of a generation of thinkers pursuing the question of origin, identity and primordality – a question that, for many reasons, is no longer tenable. For a certain time, he remained one-sidedly attached to an Indian metaphysical and cultural framework, thinking that it was a real alternative to Western models (which it is not), and that Western models were empty (which is not always the case). He believed in the purity of traditions, thus disregarding the complex processes leading to the formation of an apparently homogeneous cultural group. Is his extensive (and in many ways culturally transgressive) use of the Shaivite *corpus* – beyond geographically bounded and theologically well-defined parameters – a good use or a *misuse*? The amazing fact is that Daniélou permanently surpassed the limits of his own thoughts and convictions. He widened his perspective without incurring in dogmatic abuse; he remained creative without losing his fundamental basis, thus avoiding misuse of

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sources. In this sense, he was able to reverse not only the commonplace opinion on questions like difference, otherness, man and nature, perception and cognition, religion and life, etc., but even the contextual limitation of his own arguments.

It is especially in his last writings, notably in *Shiva and Dionysus*, that one appreciates this reversal of thinking and the role of this reversal for a transcultural debate in this century. Daniélou did not abandon former arguments but reshaped and extended them to extract the core of what he had known as 'Shaivism' in India. The book is not about two deities (Shiva and Dionysus), but rather about what these two deities paradigmatically show from other (forgotten or repressed) world-configurations. He coined the compound 'Shaivite-Dionysian' to summarise the common features of a world-view that challenges the pitfalls of modern civilisation: the separation of human beings from Nature, the impossibility of access to an invisible world of entities, moral condemnation of erotic and ecstatic rituals, the constitutive role of sacrifice in the dynamics of manifest reality, the view of matter as devoid of spirit and of Nature as the perishable order of being separated from the divine³⁴. The main task of the later Daniélou is not to reach liberation [*mokṣa*] in radical transcendence [*puruṣa, brahman*], but to understand, as deeply and realistically as possible, the divine play [*līlā*], the labyrinth of the universe, the fantasy of the gods in which human beings have to find their own way and make the best of their own lives³⁵.

In his postface to Ailton Krenak's book *Ideias para adiar o fim do mundo* (*Ideas to Delay the End of the World*)³⁶, Eduardo Viveiros de Castro relates the idea of the end of the world in the context of the Anthropocene to the failure of a certain idea of humanity, a humanity focused on a metaphysical depreciation of the world that ignores the fundamental question of rela-

tions³⁷. Our 'humanity' is ecocidal and ethnocidal, because its own hubris (in the form of an emancipation project) has uprooted and detached it from all other (visible and invisible) living beings. Viveiros de Castro calls this regrettable fact "ontological disjunction"³⁸ and does not limit it to the modern period of Western industrialisation but extends it back to the transcendental breakthrough of the axial period³⁹, a time most humanists were proud of, since it was thought to be the era of the 'main world-religions' (Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam). But in the light of the manifold catastrophes nurturing the idea of a final disaster, human beings begin to realise that these cultural achievements were only one side of the coin – and, in fact, the wrong one. Traditions have worked on the past and the future, but now it is all about the present, and the key-issue is space, not time, since our immediate space (the natural environment) is severely endangered. In this sense, the timeline-based struggle between tradition and progress, backward-oriented and forward-looking world-views, has become obsolete. All ideas about development and growth, *together with* ideas about gods, spirits, and other forms of subtle existence must be redirected to Nature. Shamanism has become the treasure-trove that Hindu soteriology used to be a century ago, since human beings need to learn how to reconnect with the inaccessible parts of Nature, to compensate for the major loss caused by their own God-complex. "Delaying the end of the world", writes Viveiros de Castro, "means to defer the final battle between [...] the 'humans' or 'moderns' – that is, the arrogant slaves of the empire of transcendence – and the 'earthlings' or 'terrestrials', that is, the multitude of humans and non-humans whose simple existence is a form of resistance"⁴⁰. The transcultural challenge of this century is essentially related to this problem, and to the position we take with regard to it.

Daniélou's position, which emerges from his reading of Shaivism, is quite clear. His pagan-polytheist philosophy of Nature, which some 'interpreters' of Hinduism may condemn as misunderstanding or even falsification, is perhaps the best 'use' of the Indian heritage one can make in this period, since it stands the test of a time-crisis and a change of epochal axis. It also shows that the least interesting aspect of Indian thought today lies in attachment to

simplified models of transcendence (like those portrayed by acolytes of a watered-down Neo-Vedānta) that miserably fail to relate the problem of humanity to the problem of relations, the problem of the sacred to the mystery of (a re-animated) Nature, and the experience of that mystery to a world-vision in opposition to what Western modernity arrogantly thought of as the only valid model for all humans. •

1 Cf. Umberto Eco, *I limiti dell'interpretazione*, Milano 2016 (first edition 1990), p. 49.

2 Umberto Eco, *Ibidem.*, p. 55.

3 Consider, for example, the following remark by Émile Benveniste: "the notion of 'Indo-European' has in the first place a linguistic value, and if we can broaden the scope and reach aspects of culture, it will happen only on the basis of language", *Le vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes*, Paris 1969, Vol. I, p. 8.

4 Logical procedures can begin with false premises (which in et per se do not at all betray their rational character on a formal level) and reach convincing conclusions, as long as the reader follows the procedure without questioning the slip between premise (and inference) and axiom (and self-evidence).

5 Cf. Homer, *Iliad* I.70, the reference to the diviner Chalcas, "who knew all things that were, those that were to be and those who had been before" (*hos hêdê tà t'eónta tà t'esomena pró t'eónta*). Marcel Detienne refers to the amplified conception of memory in the context of archaic poetry in comparison with the understanding of it in modern times, cf. Marcel Detienne, *Les maîtres de vérité dans la Grèce archaïque*, Paris 2006, especially pp. 66-67.

6 For the association of Hanumān with yakṣas cf. Philip Lutgendorf, *Hanuman*, in: *Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, Vol. I: *Regions, Pilgrimage, Deities*, Leiden 2009, pp. 579-586)

7 Alain Daniélou, *The Way to the Labyrinth*, New York 1987, p. 316.

8 Alain Daniélou, *Ibidem*, p. 319.

9 Alain Daniélou, *Ibidem*, p. 318.

10 Alain Daniélou, *Ibidem*, p. 308.

11 Cf. Alain Daniélou, *Ibidem*, pp. 5-6.

12 Cf. Alain Daniélou, *Ibidem*, Chapter 4: The discovery of the world, pp. 61-85, and also Alain Daniélou, *Le tour du monde en 1936*, Monaco 2007 (first edition: Paris 1987).

13 "For several years, I read nothing but Hindi and Sanskrit, no book, newspaper, or article besides those I had to translate. I found this very difficult at first, but the discipline I imposed on myself allowed me to grow accustomed to another mode of thought, a different conception of life and the world" (Alain Daniélou, *The Way to the Labyrinth*, p. 135). His learning process did not limit itself to the Shastric tradition, but encompassed a complementary side rejected both by the British administration and by the pseudo-intellectual vulgata of some modern Hindus: "For several years, I was daily in contact with Brahmanand, a very strange and ugly young man who was mostly interested in the magical forms of tantrism. [...] Through him I became acquainted with some very arcane details of tantric rites, particularly those relating to the significance of the labyrinth and the predictions that can be read in the bowels of the sacrificial victims" (Alain Daniélou, *Ibidem*, pp. 135-136).

14 The main contribution of Alain Daniélou's later period is his book *Shiva and Dionysus* (1979), but the composite construction of the divine power explored in that book as well as the cultural substratum related to it reappear in essays like *Relations entre les cultures dravidiennes et négro-africaines* (1978, in: Alain Daniélou, *La civilisation*

des differences, Paris 2003, pp. 151-165) and *Les divinités hallucinogènes* (1992, in: Alain Daniélou, *Yoga, Kâma: le corps est un temple*, Paris 2005, pp. 121-125).

15 Alain Daniélou, *Shiva et Dionysos*, Paris 1979, p. 67 (in connection with the definition of Rudra as lord of animals in *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* XII.7.3.20).

16 The plural (*opera*, genitive plural *operum*) refers to the textual corpus in which Shiva is alluded to or treated in detail, from *Rāmāyāna* and *Mahābhārata* to some *Mahā-Purāṇas* and *Tantra-Āgamas*.

17 Cf. Peter Bisschop, Śiva, in: *Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, Vol. I, pp. 741-754, especially p. 744.

18 Since Upamanyu tells Kṛṣṇa to worship Shiva himself (cf. *Mahābhārata*. 13.14.48-50).

19 Cf. Ysé Tardan-Masquelier, *Un milliard d'hindous : histoires, croyances, mutations*, Paris 2007, p. 140.

20 Namely in chapters 15 (Śiva, the Lord of Sleep), 16 (The Forms of Rudra-Śiva) and 17 (The Image of Śiva), cf. Alain Daniélou, *Hindu Polytheism*, pp. 188-203, 204-212 and 213-221 respectively. Daniélou adds a chapter about the metaphysical aspect of manifestation, in which the relationship between the god Shiva and the conception, symbolic and worship of the liṅga plays a central role (cf. *Ibidem*, pp.222-231).

21 Alain Daniélou, *Ibidem*, pp. 7-8.

22 "In our times monotheism is often considered a higher form of religion than polytheism. [...] Monotheism is always linked with a culture, a civilization. It is not through its forms but in spite of them that gifted individuals may reach spiritual attainment. [...] Monotheism is the projection of the human individuality into the cosmic sphere, the shaping of 'god' to the image of man" (Alain Daniélou, *Ibidem*, p. 10).

23 Alain Daniélou, *Ibidem*, p. 7.

24 Alain Daniélou, *Ibidem*, p. 11.

25 Alain Daniélou, *Ibidem*, p. 11.

26 Cf. "Shaivism is essentially a religion of Nature", Alain Daniélou, *Shiva et Dionysos*, Paris 1979, p. 20.

27 Alain Daniélou, *Ibidem*, p. 34.

28 Alain Daniélou always combines the free exercise of artistic expression in the modern sense of the word with disciplined existence in the milieu of traditional arts. The first aspect becomes clear especially in his short-stories (for example the community of friends he depicts in *La partie des dè*s who live quite independently of all conventions, cf. Alain Daniélou, *Les bétails des dieux et autres contes gangétiques*, Paris 1983, pp. 169-194), the second – which he made much more explicit during his life – in essays like *Les arts traditionnels et leur place dans la culture hindoue* (in: *Approche de l'hindouisme*, Paris 2007, pp. 49-90).

29 "Some of the most profound aspects of Hindu thought have been linked in the past, as they are still now, with the philosophy of Śaivism. This philosophy, originally distinct from that of the Vedas, belongs to another and earlier stratum of Indian civilization, which was gradually assimilated by the conquering Aryans" (Alain Daniélou, *Ibidem*, p. 188). "Shaivism, the religion of the ancient Dravidians, was always the religion of the people. Its metaphysical, cosmological and ritual conceptions were preserved by communities of wandering ascetics living on the fringe of the official society, whom the Aryans scornfully called Yatis (wanderers), Vṛatyās (untouchables) or Ājīvikās (beggars)" (Alain Daniélou, *While the Gods Play*, Rochester: Vermont 1987 (first edition in French: *La fantaisie des dieux et l'aventure humaine*, Monaco 1985), p. 15.

30 Which did not stop further attempts in that direction, for example Bernard Sergent's remarkable book *Le dieu fou: essai sur les origines de Śiva et Dionysos*, Paris 2016.

31 Such counter-arguments are nevertheless not based on substantial evidence, but on a more plausible conceptual framework for current research trends revolving around notions like 'gradual immigration' and 'acculturation'. Interestingly enough, the nationalist agenda in India rejects the invasion theory as 'Eurocentric', whereas Daniélou's affirmation of an indigenous substratum – as opposed to an alien Indo-Aryan element – was part of his anti-ethno-centric reaction-strategy against the Orientalist constructions of primordality attached to an Indo-European (in the sense of Indo-Aryan) cultural complex.

32 In dealing with this problem I leave aside the esoteric critique of Daniélou based on a vulgar appropriation of René Guénon and his idea of Tradition, since it does not deserve even a succinct analysis.

33 Basing his speculation on arguments by M. R. Sakhare on a Lemurian origin of the Dravidian people (which would also connect them to Madagascar and Indonesia), Daniélou sees the summit (but not the cradle) of that culture in Mohenjo Daro and Harappa. He also relates the divine pair Enki (Lord of the Earth) and Ninḫursang (Lady of the Sacred Mountain) in the Sumerian pantheon with Paśupati and the Harappan Mother Goddess, thus relating the culture of the Indus Valley to ancient Mesopotamia (cf. Alain Daniélou, *While the Gods Play*, pp. 6-8). His reflections on Śiva-Paśupati and Murugan, whom Daniélou associates with Zagreus (the Great Hunter) and Dionysos (the God of Nysa), include the possibility of a link between these deities and the sacred images of Lagba Yoruba (cf. Alain Daniélou, *Relations entre les cultures dravidiennes et négro-africaines*, in: *La civilisation des différences*, p. 158). Speaking about the pre-Aryan origin of Basques, Sardinians and Berbers, he points to the fact that they share their blood type (type O.) with American Indian groups. The typological language feature of agglutination as well as the religious symbols of these cultures permit him to venture the hypothesis that “they apparently belong to the same human species [as the Dravidians]” (Alain Daniélou, *While the Gods Play*, p. 9).

34 Cf. Alain Daniélou, *Shiva et Dionysos*, especially the preface and the introduction (pp. 11-16), where most of these features are programmatically mentioned anticipating his programme for the future in the last part of the book (The Return of Dionysus, pp. 292-295).

35 This is clearly expressed in a lecture dating back to the 1980s held at Aix-en-Provence, in which Daniélou delineates the main aspects of what he called ‘shaivite philosophy’, the main purpose of which is “to understand the nature of the world, the role and the destiny of living beings”. This universe, writes Daniélou, “can be seen as a play, a fantasy stemming from a transcendent being. But this being conceiving the world is necessarily external to it. It precedes the rise of space, time and existence” (Alain Daniélou, *Cosmologie shivaïte et polythéisme*, in: *Shivaïsme*

et tradition primordiale, Paris 2003, p. 37-42, here p. 37). One can see quite clearly that the use of Shaivism that Daniélou displays distances itself considerably from soteriological systems and focuses on a participation in the mystery of manifest reality – as a sphere of interdependence from which humans cannot detach themselves. This position is also expressed in Daniélou’s opposition between Shaivism and Jainism: “Ever since prehistory, India knew two great religious trends: the first one is Shaivism, a religion of Nature aiming at perceiving the divine in its work and integrating itself into that order; the second one is Jainism, an anthropocentric religion essentially focused on moral and social values” (Alain Daniélou, *Le renouveau shivaïte du troisième au dixième siècle*, in: *Shivaïsme et tradition primordiale*, pp. 43-67, here p. 43).

36 My quotations stem from the French edition of that book: Ailton Krenak, *Idées pour retarder la fin du monde*, Paris 2020 (first edition in Portuguese: São Paulo 2019).

37 Cf. Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, *Le monde a commencé sans l’homme et s’achèvera sans lui*, in: Ailton Krenak, *Ibidem*, p. 55.

38 Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, in: *Ibidem*, p. 58.

39 The term ‘axial period’ (Achszeit) was coined by Karl Jaspers in his book *Vom Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte* (1949) and was inspired by the epochal observations carried out by Abraham-Hyacinthe Anquetil Duperron (1731-1805) with regard to the relationship between the spiritual situation of Persia at the time of Zarathustra and that of Egypt, Greece, Rome, India, China and Israel. In postulating a holistic movement of humanity towards transcendence that does not reduce to the Christocentric view, Jasper’s reflection attempted to go beyond a monogenetic view of the development of humanity. But at the same time, it proclaimed a universally valid ‘becoming aware (*bewusst-werden*)’ of humanity after a specific codification of experience occurring in the dominant cultures to which such an awareness-process of the totality of being was ascribed (basically the cultures mentioned by Anquetil Duperron, obviously reshaped after the Orientalist propensity of the post-Second-World-War period).

40 Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, in: *Ibidem*, p. 59.



Alain Daniélou

INTERVIEW WITH ALAIN DANIÉLOU: A TASTE FOR THE SACRED

This interview, carried out by Jean-Pierre Joecker and Bernard Turle, was originally published in the French magazine *Masques* in 1984. The English translation in this issue of *Transcultural Dialogues* is by Adrián Navigante, revised by Kenneth Hurry. It contains minor changes and amendments with regard to the French text.



Revathi Palace in Benares, photo by Adrián Navigante

Q: *In the first pages of The Way to the Labyrinth, you say that everyone lives many parallel lives, which should not be amalgamated. In view of your own life's itinerary and your movements between India and Europe, what do you understand by that?*

A: All civilisations are faced with this problem. For example, Japanese people have been able to perpetuate a typically Japanese way of living and parallel to that they have adapted to the modern Western world. Those who try to integrate into another culture and way of living, without putting aside their own way of thinking and living, will inevitably fail in their attempt.

This is true of all people who want to learn from Indian gurus without questioning their own prejudices and convictions, mixing these two worlds with other dissimilar elements. You don't think in the same way under different circumstances and habits, so you should avoid thinking like a modern scientist when you approach religious conceptions – and vice-versa. Such mixtures lead to absurdities.

Q: *You have made a world-tour and many other voyages. How did you manage to integrate so easily into the Indian society of the 1930s?*

A: To a certain extent, it is a question of nature. I didn't believe at all in the Jewish-Christian

world. Since my childhood I had been against it, since I didn't think that it was a proper way of living and thinking for the person I was. I was therefore ready to go elsewhere and adapt myself fully to other cultures. That is exactly what I did in India. For many people that is very difficult to do, since you have to change your conception about many things: what is polite and impolite, what is clean and dirty, what is strange and what is familiar, etc.

Q: *But this change was progressive. You didn't just plunge all of a sudden into the Indian milieu, since at the beginning you spent some time at Rabindranath Tagore's place, which was fairly westernised.*

A: Yes, I did, but I had no intention of reforming it. My sole purpose was to understand and to integrate into the milieu without ever saying "You should do this or that" – which is what most Europeans do, and what makes them so rude.

Q: *Didn't your taste for the sacred make things easier for you? Your family context, with the exception of your father, is impregnated by the Christian religion, and when you left India for Italy, it was also because of your taste for the sacred that you chose Zagarolo, that sacred place of the Etruscans.*

A: Yes, that's true, but I think it was rather Dionysian instinct – even in my childhood. My perception of the mystery relating to Nature, that is to trees, animals and plants, had no connexion whatever with the moral aspect of the Christian world, according to which religion lies elsewhere. For this reason, I felt quite at home when I discovered the Hindu world, where people try to establish subtle connexions with mysterious forces. This instinct had been fostered in my childhood by the fact that I lived quite alone, cut off from my family group, since I was very often sick.

Q: *Your introduction to the Hindu world was also*

easy because you were not married – a wife at your side would have been an obstacle in that traditional atmosphere. You say that your destiny wouldn't have been accomplished if you hadn't had the advantage of preferring male love, that for you the cult of love has always been related to the sense of the divine, and that human beings come closer to the gods by loving the divine work in the beauty of the body or the intensity of pleasure and joy – as opposed to Christian masochism, which leads not to wisdom, but to inhumanity, cruelty and hypocrisy. In what sense did your homosexual condition facilitate your integration into Indian society?

A: My mother used to say that a man, regardless of his birth, can integrate himself in any other society, something that a woman cannot do. There are some interesting Hindu texts in which the role of homosexuals is to serve as a link between castes and social groups because they are outside the cosmic logic of biological reproduction. Their role is different. On the one hand, the link between cultures, castes and species; on the other, a certain mediumistic role with the supernatural. This can also be seen in the fact that shamans from different ancient groups often dressed as women, taking a husband and assuming intersexual roles.

Q: *In The Gods' Cattle [Le bétail des dieux], the homosexual is a chosen one, who has his own god within himself. What is the position of the others? Is it only the homosexual that is chosen whereas the others do not have any access to the divine world?*

A: From the moment when human beings, tied by marriage to reproduction and society, lose their freedom, they are integrated into a group. Those who do not have this impediment preserve their freedom to explore the rest of the world and other social groups. In India this wandering aspect is much venerated and there is no inherent material problem. If you belong to the strain of wanderers (who are an essen-



Sādhus, the holy men of India, one of the main sources of inspiration in Alain Daniélou's thought, photo by Amanda Viana

tial element of society), you will always find in any village somebody ready to nourish you and cover your basic needs. It is not perceived as anything at all strange or bizarre. Even nowadays, true Indian society has not changed in this respect. It has remained the same, with the exception of some urban layers who imitate the Western cultural model.

Q: *Do you still reject our society as well as good Indian society altogether?*

A: I think there are two kinds of society and hence two kinds of religion. The first one is the Dionysian religion, linked with Nature and mysticism. The second is the religion of the city based on moralism and empty rites, which imprison people. These two forms of religion have always been in conflict with each other, everywhere and from the very beginning. The question is: can we live a Dionysian life in a puritan society? It is not easy and depends on our country. But in spite of manifold persecu-

tions in the Western world, something from the Dionysian tradition has remained alive, and being connected with it is like belonging to a secret society. You can live in your own way and adapt yourself to the context as far as possible without making fundamental compromises.

Q: *But is it possible to liberate oneself within the Western way of living?*

A: Yes. It is precisely what the hippies are instinctively trying to do, as well as all those people who reject the oppressive ways of living imposed upon them and seek freedom and alternative forms of experience.

Q: *In a recent article, you say that for people who go to India, a true encounter is difficult precisely because of the castes. How was it for you and in what sense did being homosexual facilitate an easier integration process?*

A: I think we experience the same thing in the West. The problems that Italian or French



Shiva Lingam in Kathmandu, photo by Amanda Viana

homosexuals may have are quite different, and in India caste distinction is like a division of people from different origins. It suffices to know what is acceptable and what is not in each group. If you want to have access to the Brahmins – who have many restrictions and must perform purifying rituals of all kinds –, it will be a problem even if they need you. As opposed to that, in the artisanal castes restrictions are minimal, so on a popular level having contact with local people is much easier. You always have to know the problems of others, as if you were dealing with different countries.

Q: *When you went to meet Henri de Montfreid in 1934 on the Red Sea, didn't you already feel attracted to the country?*

A: I think that no problem exists anywhere; they appear where one creates them. Where-

ever I am, I try to adapt myself and understand others. There is no trace of a missionary in my character. For example, I don't think that I am more civilised than others because I was born in Europe! If we preserve this humble attitude, doors will always open for us. Some French people who have casual sex with young boys in Italy define them as homosexuals and are therefore beaten up. It is like telling somebody who is in business, "You are a Jew". There is always a question of sensitivity, attention and sympathy that enables us to integrate ourselves into another place. In India it is like having to adapt to twenty or thirty different places at the same time.

Q: *When you have an erotic experience, you say that it is the God of Love the mystics speak about. You mention Saadi, St John of the Cross and St Teresa of Avila – all very special characters of*

the Catholic tradition. How is that link important? Has your tendency to mystical experience rendered your integration easier?

A: While the religious exaltations of certain Christian characters are regarded as acts of semi-madness, Indian civilisation considers that voluptuousness¹ and erotic pleasure brings you closer to the divine state and mirrors it in human experience. What is very interesting for those who have had access to the reality of India is to find an explanation of what they already feel in a more or less subtle way. It is in this sense that India is an enriching and exhilarating country.

Q: *Do you think that only some people can feel that, or rather that Hindu thought can have a general influence on Western mentality? Do we have to go to India in order to have that exhilarating experience?*

A: I think that at root-level there is no difference between the two civilisations. Their sources are the same. Their evolution has been quite different, but you can always trace the elements. One curious thing about the people who travel to India is that they do not remain indifferent to their experience. Either they feel a sense of repulsion, or they say “It is here that I should have been born”. India shows a continuity that can be traced back to prehistorical times, and that is something that practically does not exist elsewhere.

Q: *The movement from West to East was very strong in some English writers who had sound insights into Indian reality. Then came the hippie movement, a considerable mass movement. But*

today India does not have such a good press, and it is not any longer in vogue...

A: Most people do not really speak about India, but of spiritual tourism related to India, which is quite another – very unrealistic – thing. I know a few people who really have contact with truly “Indian” civilisation. On different levels, they go to charlatans who write only in English and from outside the Hindu reality, or to ashrams where they are shamelessly exploited, or they relate India to drug experiences. In order to have access to a culture, you need in the first place to speak the language. You cannot really study French civilisation if you speak Chinese! It would be ridiculous. I know almost nobody who really makes the effort of learning an Indian language to the point of being able to read texts and practise a doctrine. There have been people like John Woodroffe, who was into tantrism and edited various texts, but such people are very rare...

Q: *You talk about a conflict between New Delhi society and the rest of Indian society. Was that one of the reasons why you left India?*

A: Of course, because from the very moment you have a foreign government, nothing happens without conflict. Nehru and the anglicised Indians around him hated Hindu tradition and did everything possible to destroy it. They dreamed of introducing romantic English socialism in India, which was the world in which they had been educated. I would have had many problems if I had remained in India, since the new administration wanted to eliminate what really interested me.

Pleasure is considered as a kind of mystical experience, and as such an approach to the divine state. Because of this, all forms of sensuality are acceptable.

Q: *Doesn't political organisation also belong to the structure of traditional thinking in India?*

A: That is a strange problem. Until Indian independence, many princely states were very modern, but the first thing the new government did was to destroy them because their structure was hierarchical. Now, they functioned well, and their hierarchical structure was no obstacle to the process of modernization – as is the case with Japan.

Q: *What strikes you as so negative in a project attempting to turn a caste hierarchy upside down?*

A: In the first place the image made of that social structure. People don't really understand what it is about. Europe knew corporative societies and their own way of living, with groups from different populations collaborating with each other. The real problem today, particularly in France, is that nobody wants to recognise the different castes. If you said: "North-Africans living here are a caste, so they should have civil rights, their own mosques, specific places to live their lives, learn their language and contribute their share to the balance of the whole", you wouldn't have any problem. But it is said they have to be integrated, and that is absurd. They are people belonging to a different culture which has to be preserved. In this sense, caste society is extraordinary, and that is the reason why all oppressed peoples have sought refuge in India. When the Muslims destroyed Persia, India found a place for the exiled Parsees, who are a very powerful organisation and have never had a problem. The Jews have been living peacefully in India since the time of the Phoenicians! The idea is simple: each group collaborates with the others and preserves its own personality, its own way of living, its own laws and beliefs. This builds an ethnic mosaic working for a common purpose, and there is some wisdom in that image.

Q: *Wouldn't you say that there are some under-*

privileged castes in India?

A: It is not so easy to say. In the West you have, for example, the privileged category of priests, and on quite another level the workers, whose living conditions are far below those of a priest or an archbishop. They are two different social groups. The difference in organisation with regard to the caste system is that in India such differences are hereditary – which was the case in the corporations of the Middle Ages –: in general people follow the family profession. Apart from that, in India stress is laid on the duties that each person has towards his or her own caste rather than on the advantages of belonging to it. The higher you go within the caste hierarchy, the more difficult (and even terrible) the duties become. Brahmins are in this sense the real "untouchable" ones without any right to do most things, such as divorce, drink alcohol, have more than one woman, etc. Due to this very fact, no poor worker wants to be a Brahmin. That is the moral of a story of two people of low caste who were arguing, and one said to the other: "I hope you will be born as a Brahmin in your next life". For them, belonging to the Brahmin caste is almost a curse. In Europe, for example, people do not choose to be Catholic or Protestant. They follow the religion of their parents. That is a somewhat extended notion of social grouping permitting cohabitation without major clashes. In India you have tribes living according to the world-vision of archaic times, being destroyed by egalitarian politics. They are deprived of their land, compelled to work in the city, condemned to poverty and destroyed as a cultural group.

Q: *What do you think is the future of India and of those traditional peoples?*

A: When the Aryan invasions took place (around 1700 BCE), a different social system, a new religious canon and a set of foreign habits were imposed on the autochthonous population, and

the ancient traditional religion was concealed. Centuries afterwards (between 600 and 500 BCE), Buddhism arose as a reaction imposing a new conception on those already existing. From a theoretical point of view, there is, in the Hindu mind, a certain Dionysian life-conception aiming at true knowledge, which means understanding the role of human beings and their *raison d'être* in creation. The problem is that people never ask themselves why they are in this world, why they belong to a certain group, and how they can realise their own nature in the best possible way. Precisely this is one of the the strongest points in the Indian conception of life. Assimilationist racism is a very strange and pernicious phenomenon by means of which human diversity is destroyed.

Q: *You say that in India there is a taboo concerning procreation, but no taboo at all with regard to erotic relations between people of the same sex. How is that?*

A: Pleasure is considered as a kind of mystical experience, and as such an approach to the divine state. Because of this, all forms of sensuality are acceptable.

Q: *Is that so only for men, or also for women?*

A: In principle it is also valid for women, but there is at the same time the obstacle of procreation. Woman has a double role, as lover and mother. The sexual act aiming at procreation is a rite that has to be carried out with utmost care. Partners are chosen according to caste distinction and astrological correspondences to ensure the best progeny for the continu-

ation of the lineage. Each one is a particular human species genetically transmitted for millennia, and duty requires the continuation of that chain. Mixing groups wouldn't allow the newly born to be a physical as well as mental bearer of its forefathers' heritage. If one aims at having pleasure through sexual acts, procreation should be avoided. For both women and men who abandon their social duties, there are two paths: monastic life (which women embrace very often) or divine slavery (that is, temple prostitution, which is an important tradition). Women who intend to devote themselves to pleasure (considered closely related to theatre and the arts) must avoid procreation.

Q: *In The Gods' Cattle [Le bétail des dieux] you describe very natural and even innocent relationships between two men, and an article of yours mentions massage sessions where sexual intercourse takes place in a natural way. Is that really natural in India?*

A: Homosexual relationships are quite natural. In Hindu religion, there is fundamental harmony and unity between body and spirit. Human beings possess certain faculties that are part of their bodies. Thinking with your brain is an example of that. If you cut off part of your brain, you lose everything that is there. However, within the conception of human personality, there is a certain element identified with a form of consciousness that is present in all other life-forms. This type of interconnection is now starting to be confirmed by science.

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1 We have employed an English etymological cognate of the term used by Daniélou in French: "volupté", which in the context of his thought makes reference to the Sanskrit term *ānanda*.

While this term is usually translated as "bliss", Daniélou emphasises the erotic and even sexual aspect of the experience of the divine, which is not separate from the spiritual dimension.



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HEALING BY TAKING CARE OF THE LAND¹

In this essay, originally published in French in the Journal *Multitudes* N°77 (winter 2019) and translated by Kenneth Hurry, Barbara Glowczewski shows how Indigenous peoples in Australia or French Guiana reinvest their traditional medicinal knowledge and re-elaborate healing rituals to take care of their people and their land. This is also the case in Europe, where rites for well-being and relinking with the earth are reinvented through music and dance, for example in festivals of shamanism as well as in the Zones to Occupy (ZAD) as contemporary attempts to re-enchant people's ways of living.



Nidala Barker doing a smoking ritual at the ZAD of Notre-Dame-des-Landes, 23 June 2018, photo by Barbara Glowczewski

“In times past, shamans would meet to drink *cachiri*² and in their dreams seek an answer from the spirits”, says Victor, an old Kali’na, as we were talking about the increasing anxiety of specialists at the silting up and growth of mangroves which, year after year, erode the beaches of Guiana, stopping the lute turtles from laying their eggs, and the fishermen from going out in their boats anywhere close to their villages. Erosion and the mud-bank that has already swallowed the sand of the village of Awala near the mouth of the River Mana are now threatening the sand beach of the estuary of Haut Maroni, where the houses of Yalimapo stand. The migration of mud-banks on the Guianan coastline, having also covered the beaches of Cayenne, is the most significant worldwide. According to the mayor of the township of Awala-Yalimapo, Jean-Paul Ferreira, his Kali’na people will adapt to these geological transformations just as they have to the five centuries of French, Dutch, Portuguese

or British colonisation, which caused the genocide of twenty-eight other Native American peoples who lived in this immense area (now the French Department of Guiana) and the lands bordering on Surinam and Brazil. One condition, however, is needed for this adaptation: the Kali’nas must be able to take back control of their lands and decide their own way of life. An initial restitution of 40,000 hectares has already taken place (December 2000) in the township of Bellevue.

Transplanetary Shamanic Knowledge

Victor remembers the time when, before his stroke, he used to work with five shamans: “We were strong then”. Over the last few years, a movement for the cultural renewal of the Kali’na people has successfully relaunched the half-forgotten sounding of shamanic drums (*sampula*) accompanied by singing, with men and women dancing in a circle for hours. Clubs of players, including all generations,

have multiplied in the villages. I asked Victor whether the former Kali'na shamans had any younger successors. He told me it was too difficult to become a shaman nowadays. The efficacy of the earlier shamans was based on sacrifice and isolation, essential for communicating with the spirits, and this was no longer available.

With Victor, I mentioned the three Kali'na men – two of whom over sixty and one younger one – who had taken part in the Festival of Shamanism and ancient traditions at Genac in South-Western France in 2017. “That was different”, he replied, “They talk and play their drums, but real shamans are silent and only act in their own community”. The fact remains that, at Genac, when the three Kali'na men played their *sampulas* and chanted for the guest healers from other countries, three Aboriginal women from Australia – to whom they had shown their dance-steps in the holiday cottage shared by both delegations – grabbed the hands of the members of other delegations to form a great dance circle. Native Americans from the plains, from Brazil and Colombia danced in a circle with shamans from Mongolia and Siberia. I gave my hand to an Aka Pygmy man from Congo who, with members of other delegations, started singing the words in Kali'na. The participants exulted with joy, transported by sharing their particularities, affirming something about their common world in which the human being is not the centre of the universe, but cohabits with the spirits of the Earth, communicating in different ways with non-humans, animals, plants, water, air, fire and stars. Later on, hundreds of workshops welcomed

for four days in tents set in a muddy field, some six thousand visitors. Enthusiastic or sceptic, the visitors kept asking how to recover what all these healers still have that they, in France, once had, but had lost.

At the 2019 edition of the Festival of Shamanism at Genac, two French Wayana of Haut Maroni explained, just like the Aboriginal Australians in the previous two years, that they, too, had lost much of their knowledge and were working, particularly through dreams, to recover it. Linia Opoya, a potter, and her husband, Tasikale Alupki³ – a collaborator of numerous researchers, notably on the project of virtual restitution of the Quai Branly museum collections – live at Taluen, a French Amazonian village struggling with clandestine gold-panning, which prevents them from living on the resources of the river, polluted by mercury, and of the forest, devastated by gold-seekers. For years the inhabitants have applied to have a school on the river, so as to avoid sending their children to the town, where some of them commit suicide owing to the deplorable living conditions there. The Aboriginal delegation from North Australia also spoke of the suicide of their young people as a result of their parents, grandparents, or great-grandparents having been taken away from their families on the pretext that they were of mixed race and had to be integrated with Whites. One child in five (between 1905 and the 1970s) was consequently forcibly shut up in a boarding school, destined to go into service with white families when adolescent, as a domestic or a farm labourer. This often involved unpaid work with situations of ill-treatment likened

The efficacy of the earlier shamans was based on sacrifice and isolation, essential for communicating with the spirits, and this was no longer available.



Aboriginal Australian and Kalin'a Guiana delegation at the Genac Festival,
photo by Barbara Glowczewski

to slavery by Aboriginal activists, lawyers and academics today. Some Aboriginal people, raised in disastrous conditions far from their families or else in adoptive families, started researching their ancestry in the 1990s, when a Royal Commission made it possible to identify the extent of these “stolen generations” and finance genealogical research with the aim of reunion. In the process, some found where they came from; others didn’t, but they also consider themselves Aboriginal. When living in cities, some relearn the language of their ancestors, if it is still spoken or is being studied by linguists. Of the hundreds of Australian languages and dialects, many have vanished leaving no trace. For Aboriginal people, however, languages are the living memories of their related territories, and words can come to you in dreams when you sleep in the right spot.

Reinventing rituals to tie people to their background

Amongst most of the peoples of Australia, a

child is deemed to be the incarnation of a song sowed by totemic ancestors: men-animals, or plant-women, rain- or star-people. As a result, he or she has duties concerning certain areas, which must be celebrated by ritual song, dance and paintings. In Australia, reconstructing one’s ancestral heritage has become a form of healing, a healing process that is both individual and collective. For the French Native Americans of Guiana, something of this kind also resonates, since they have also suffered aggression and displacement and still suffer today from whatever threatens their languages, their ways of hunting and fishing, or other aspects of their culture. As in Australia, so too in Guiana, faced with this distress, the young people mobilise in struggles against extractivism and turn to ritual healing to bind humans to their environment, “by the milieu” that is as a part of them, transversal to their being⁴.

“New concepts of living matter, in particular in the work of Manuel DeLanda, upset conven-

In Australia, reconstructing one's ancestral
heritage has become a form of healing, a healing
process that is both individual and collective.

tional distinctions between matter and life, organic and inorganic, passive object and active subject. In the “agential realism” of Karen Barad, material agentivity/agency does not privilege the human, just as, for Jane Bennett, “the power of the thing” places emphasis on the material base and relationship of all things, whatever their status: human, animal, vegetal, or mineral [...]”⁵ If new materialism rejects anthropocentrism, in my opinion, inspired by Aboriginal practice, the relationship between human, animal, vegetal or mineral is not a model of comparability but, on the contrary, a model of differentiation of relations, positions, differences that do not necessarily imply domination, but often fall within the negotiation of alliances and the tensions of possible and inevitable conflicts⁶.

At the workshops of the Festival of Shamanism at Genac, the Aboriginal delegation came from the coastal regions of Darwin and Kimberley in North Australia, as well as from the desert of Queensland. All were of mixed-descent with European, Chinese or Malay ancestors engaged in the pearl trade, or even Pakistanis and Afghans engaged with their dromedaries to explore the desert. They have encouraged the public to retrace – as they have done – the sources of their living tracks in the Earth, to start listening to the spirits, in their dreams⁷. In their own way, that is what the organisers of the festival attempt to do, in defining themselves as Celtic “déo” healers⁸. Of course, the Celtic tradition has not been transmitted from generation to generation, having been suffocated by the colonisation of Romans, Franks,

Kings, and then of a certain Republic. Neither are there many written traces for us to know how the ancient Celts operated, but these men and women of today invent new rituals, which they say are inspired by their bonds with the spirits of the Earth. Why not?

Starhawk, an eco-feminist activist who participated in the Occupy sit-ins in the US in 2011, and anti-globalisation protests before, promoted the Wicca witchcraft movement – a form of Neopaganism popularised in the 1950s by the British Gerald Gardner – aimed at ritualising this political and feminist action⁹. In 2017, Starhawk was invited with Isabelle Stengers to Notre-Dame-des-Landes where she executed a ritual for women. Inventing new rites is necessary for “thinking-feeling with the Earth”, as the Colombian Indigenous people say¹⁰.

Extending the Shamanic Domain

In June 2018, the inhabitants of the ZAD of Notre-Dame-des-Landes were recovering from the Government’s offensive in April-May to expel them, after its decision to abandon the airport project. The 2500 policemen and the armoured vehicles to drive them out had just destroyed about half of the cabins built on some 60 places of residence occupied, including farms renovated with the agreement of the peasants who had refused compensation for the lands confiscated by the State for the benefit of Vinci, the shareholder of the airport project. Among the “zadistes” and their peasant and other supporters, there were hundreds of wounded, violently assaulted by GLI-F4 grenades (25 g of TNT plus 10 g of

tear-gas), the use of which is prohibited¹¹. The inhabitants dumped in front of the Prefecture an immense heap of grenade shells launched by the police at the site, which was blackened by the smoke and damaged by the violence of these attacks on improvised barricades. The ultimatum given to present projects at the Prefecture created terrible clashes between those who felt betrayed at seeing the chicanes of their iconic “zigzag route” dismantled, and those who attempted to negotiate to avoid everything being destroyed. The filling-in of forms for farm projects, under such incredible pressure, demonstrated impressive collective map-making intelligence. Out of about forty projects, half were accepted, allowing most of the projects described on the forms to continue to function as a collective network. Some of the inhabitants of places destroyed by the police, after lodging in quarters still standing, preferred to leave or took refuge elsewhere. A certain sourness arose, occasionally poisoned from outside by those who did not understand what was at stake. All the areas fought over were transformed and depression awaited some combatants. At the ZAD, however, an incredible ferment continued throughout the summer: workshops of the group *Défendre Habiter* at the Ambazada, others at Bellevue and, since then, stimulating meetings and publications, including the launch, in January 2019, of an endowment fund, *La terre en commun* (*The land in common*), to buy up the land and buildings in order to prevent industrial agriculture which would destroy the countryside¹².

At the feast of St John, organised in June 2018

at the ZAD by the inhabitants of the Saint Jean farm, of the Rolandière and some other places, my youngest daughter Nidala Barker, whose paternal grandmother was a Djugun and Jabirr Jabirr elder, performed a ritual fumigation of well-being in which many took part. With some inhabitants, she gathered the sage that grows in many ZAD orchards, a medicinal and purifying plant for people and places, used by the Native Americans of the plains, as well as in rural European tradition¹³. In various European countries, alone or in groups, people are looking for pre-Christian traces, like the young Polish women who set up the *Laboratorium piesni*, a singing collective aimed at discovering ancient songs that can be interpreted according to a shamanic aesthetics paying tribute to trees, stones, rivers and animals¹⁴. Much followed by social networks, these singers are on tour everywhere. Isn't it wonderful that, in Poland with its Catholic majority, where fundamentalists fan the fires of historical antisemitism and a xenophobia revived by moral panic at the European injunction to welcome a few hundred Muslims, young Polish women should choose to explore the pre-Christian past? It is of little importance that, like numerous other collectives seeking traditional inspiration, whether pagan or shamanic, their forms of expression are reinvented. What is essential is to open to others, human and non-human, to hear once more the enchanted history of lands where the bison, the bear and the wolf roam. •

1 The text was extracted from a section called “Living with spirits” which was introduced in the following manner: “Experiments in Europe and Asia show a renewed interest in spirits of the Earth and of the Dead. Although mediums, shamans and other healers have long conversed and healed through spirits, their traditions are now being reinvented, rubbing shoulders with new practices. An increasing number of non-professionals are in need of healing and of another way of living with the world(s). The reactivation of spirits manifest in certain places in dream or waking experiences – even with machines – concerns not only individual healing, but also the art of weaving multiple links with all living forms, thus strengthening an alliance between humans and inhabited places, whether in the forest, the countryside, towns or even the very stuff of memory.”

2 Cassava beer

3 Alupki was co-ordinator of the Wayana-Apalai Commission for recognition by UNESCO of the *maraké* ritual initiation as intangible heritage. See Éliane Camargo, Veronica Holguin Lew, Sara Tandar et Équipe Wayana et Apalaï, « L’Amazonie amérindienne dans l’ère du numérique : le portail multilingue WATAU », *Patrimoines du Sud* [En ligne], 12 | 2020, accessed 9 Septembre 2020. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org>

4 See the film *Unti, les origines*, 2018, by the Kali’na activist Christophe Yanuwana Pierre, who fights against the destructive impact of extractivism and for the rights of the Native Americans of Guiana with the Customary Grand Council of which he is a member for JAG (*jeunesse autochtone de Guyane* – Indigenous Youth of Guiana) and at UN level.

5 *Environmental Humanities and New Materialisms – The Ethics of Decolonizing Nature and Culture*, Unesco 7-9, 2017, symposium organised by Nathalie Blanc

6 In this sense, Australian totemism cannot be summarised in an ontology of generalised continuity, as proposed by Philippe Descola in *Par delà nature et culture*; see B. Glowczewski, *Totemic Becomings. Cosmopolitics of the Dreaming*, Sao Paulo, n-1, 2015. And “Standing with the Earth : From Cosmopolitical Exhaustion to Indigenous Solidarities”, *Inflexions* No 10 : <http://www.senselab.ca/inflexions/>

7 Lance Sullivan, Yalarrnga healer of Queensland: <https://vimeo.com/233652286>

8 Déo: phonetic transcription of the term “derv” (“oak” or “forest being”) which defines Celtic shamans, <http://festival-chamanisme.com/>; See also “Chamans de tous les pays...”, F. Joignot, *Le Monde des Idées*, 3/8/2019.

9 Starhawk, *Dreaming the Dark: Magic, Sex and Politics*, www.peripheries.net/article215.html; <https://starhawk.org/>

10 Arturo Escobar, *Thinking-feeling with the Earth: Territorial Struggles and the Ontological Dimension of the Epistemologies of the South*, *Revista de Anthropologia Iberoamericana* 11/1, 2016: 11-32.

11 www.youtube.com/watch?v=QlGkqoNbiYQ On the grenades in question, 22 mai 2018, www.dailymotion.com/video/x6k6m3c

12 <https://encommun.eco>; conf de presse du 17 janvier 2019 : <https://vimeo.com/314732719> ; See Prise de terre(s), Notre-Dame-des-Landes, été 2019, <https://lundi.am/ZAD>; <https://lundi.am/Considerations-sur-la-victoire-et-ses-consequences-depuis-la-zad-de-Notre-Dame>

13 “Rites de passage”, *Zadibao* no2, <https://zadibao.net/2018/07/03/rituelle>; Nidala Barker at the Taslu Library, Zad of Notre-Dame-des-Landes, France, 23 June 2018, <https://vimeo.com/314743651>

14 <http://laboratoriumpiesni.pl/en>



Catherine Basset

Specialist in Balinese culture, anthropologist,
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ANTONIN ARTAUD, BALINESE THEATRE, THE “DOUBLE” AND SHIVA

In this text, Catherine Basset seeks to demonstrate (from a Balinese/Shivaite/Tantric perspective) that Antonin Artaud, poet, thinker and actor, experienced an initiatic process without a master, but based on reality, following a structural logic, after his discovery of Balinese drama in Paris in 1931 — on which he desired to found a supra-cultural sensory and metaphysical kind of drama (“Theatre of Cruelty”) — up to his identification with Shiva in 1937 and subsequent psychiatric internment.

1931. Colonial Exhibition in the woods of Vincennes, in the Paris region. Antonin Artaud, actor, poet and thinker, a figure of the literary and artistic avant-garde of Saint Germain des Prés, is struck and inspired by the performance of Bali (Indonesia) to such a point that he immediately writes an article on his experience, “On Balinese Theatre”. At this point he is midway, in terms of output, of what was to be his written production. Following the momentum initiated by the Balinese performance, he added to it texts written later, including “Le théâtre et la peste”, “La mise en scène et la métaphysique”, “Le théâtre alchimique”, “Théâtre oriental et théâtre occidental”, as well as the two manifestos of the “Theatre of Cruelty”. He collected these articles in an essay entitled *The Theatre and its Double*¹. This work is world famous, abundantly commented, and remains influential even nowadays in attempts at the exegesis and stage application of the “Theatre of Cruelty”.

The 1931 performance and assessments of Artaud's view

Conceived for a foreign audience, the 1931 performance was not only out-of-context, but also disparate: a revue of pieces selected according to a formula invented for tourists at Bali's first hotel, since become the mindless standard routine for tourism and tours abroad². This is one of the arguments that have brought into doubt the validity of Artaud's portrait of the Balinese theatre, another being the fashion of the cultural élite of the time: Orientalism, Spiritism, a mix of spiritualities of various origins and a whole range of esotericisms.

Artaud perceived “prodigious mathematics”

and admirable “intellectuality” in this eminently embodied drama in which each concrete action had a heuristic resonance in his mind. Had Artaud been prepared by the enthusiastic and relatively well-documented article of Florent Fels, filled with metaphysics?³ In any case, one needs to be fairly ignorant of Bali and its theatre to believe and claim, as a good number of commentators have, that Artaud merely produced a subjective view of it, distorted by his own ideas and desires. On the contrary, the more intimately one knows Bali and its theatre, the more one admires Artaud's description (and is sensitive to other sections of his work), as one is gradually more able to recognise the exactitude and breadth of his view.

The case of Antonin Artaud equally questions conditions of transculturality: a ‘horizontal’ transfer from one culture to another: take-over, appropriation and distortion from one culture to another; ascendant transfer towards a ‘supra-cultural’ absolute, universal principle — metaphysics, for Artaud; descendant transfer towards the tendencies and aspirations of the ego; or innate affinity, consonance... eventually including concretely vibrating aspects which, like Alain Daniélou, Artaud mentioned, explored and wished to develop.

From the Balinese theatre to Artaud-Shiva: ‘mad’ or ‘initiated’?

After the revelation that the Balinese performance produced in him, Artaud gathered information about Hinduism and Tantrism from reading and acquaintances⁴, but without ever going to Asia. As a result, his thought maintained the same configuration and his

will remained pointed in the same direction, notably in his *Héliogabale*⁵ and in his *Messages révolutionnaires*⁶... until in 1937, in letters, he identifies himself with Shiva⁷. In consequence — at least, it was Artaud's conviction — in order to “prevent him from being god”, he was forcibly committed to a mental hospital, where for long years he suffered the worst kind of treatments.

Only in Asia can such a divine identification be comprehended, admitted and enhanced. A reader totally unfamiliar with Hindu-Buddhist-Balinese conceptions cannot comprehend Artaud, or at least, not the Artaud of the 1930s. There were many misunderstandings and distortions in the attempts to stage the “Theatre of Cruelty” — starting from “cruelty”, which Artaud had however distinguished from the trivial sense of the word —, as well as in interpreting Artaud's texts and on the subject of his personality itself, reduced to an ego, a prodigious poet who had revolted against society, which had set him aside and tortured him.

The aim of this article is to present some of the facts proving that Artaud's identification with Shiva was anything but a delirium of egoistic infatuation and that, from a Balinese, Shaivite, Tantric point of view, his experience appears neither unique, nor senseless, nor devoid of reason, since in some way he underwent a painfully anarchical, spontaneous initiatic process.

In this article, “initiated” is used in the sense in which Artaud employs the term, keeping it for the awakening on the metaphysical, esoteric and/or mystic level, but without limiting it to formal, directed traditional initiations.

Indeed, outside the processes of voluntary, formal and directed initiation, we also find recognition (at Bali and elsewhere) of cases of self-initiation without any specific tradition, school, procedure and master, as well as cases

of ‘subitism’, passive awakening, unexpected revelation that lastingly transforms a person, ‘reconfiguring’ his cognition. This drastic experience (with or without drugs) produces extraordinary perceptions — sought but not always achieved by voluntary initiates — making the person capable of learning and interiorising knowledge of the type that various traditions reserve for initiates. Differences of cultural and personal cognitive pre-formatting are replaced by a sensation of unity (to the extent of cancelling internal-external dualities – the world and I), by a perception that is often rhythmic and geometric (because it is vibratory), which will henceforth geometrize thought, as it did with Artaud. Like Artaud, the person feels straight away “at home” in metaphysics, esotericisms, abstractions and symbols. But, during and after the revelation, he no longer really feels he belongs to this world; the tantric initiate is sometimes described as “living-dead”. Artaud would also say that he was “dead to the world”⁸.

“One feels oneself returned and reversed to the other side of things and one no longer comprehends the world that one has just left.

*I say: reversed to the other side of things, as if a terrible force had allowed you to be returned to what exists on the other side.”*⁹

Actually, in Balinese and other Indonesian languages, “turnaround”, “reversion” and “restitution” (as well as “resorption” and “inversion”) are said in the same way: *bali* = *wali* = *balik* = *walik*. They are structural, geometric notions, essential in metaphysics and ritual.

Throughout almost all his life, Artaud consumed drugs, particularly opium derivatives, initially as pain-killers (laudanum); this probably helped ‘prepare the ground’ of his intuition with regard to Balinese drama, so visionary and so precise, that it exceeds that of experts in this field... Since Artaud's thought was modelled on and by the structure of its

object of observation, it became *structurally* identical with this object — this spatially-oriented, geometric drama, with multiple layers of meaning and dimensions of action and resonances of all kinds; this inner cognitive mirror is added to the multiple phenomena of “doubles” that explains the title *The Theatre and its Double*.

Cosmic, cognitive and sacrificial structure of the “cruelty” double

Artaud described the operation of his thought as obeying a spatialised geometric structure. Like vibration, it stretches in concentric graduations and moves in alternations of centrifugal movements sweeping towards the periphery, towards the concrete world, in the direction of disintegration - putrefaction - decomposition (the “cruelty of existing” that obsessed Artaud, the deadly sacrifice by dismemberment) and of centripetal resorptions towards and in the principal Double, alias, the divine if one wishes (defragmentation, unification, sacrifice of the concrete, another “cruelty” but desirable death, access to the “central void”).

This form of thought coincides structurally, as Artaud recognised, with the Hindu-Buddhist conception, which is also concentric¹⁰. Now, the human body-spirit is a microcosm and the concentric motions of thought are conjoined to the identical ones of the macrocosm, the breathing of the universe at all levels: alternations of exits and returns to meditation of Shiva, the principal Yogi, simultaneously the cosmic, physical and mental force of gravity, ‘yogi and black hole’. The universe is thus conceived of as a co-creation of Energy (Sanskrit. *shakti*, Balinese. *sakti*) and of the Spirit (Shiva, or in Bali and Java, Siwa-Buda¹¹); its nature is ‘cosmic-cognitive’. Without employing the term *shakti*, Artaud, claiming inspiration from the latest advances in (Western) science of his time, expounds a rather ‘saktist’ concept:

“all life is energy and matter, its multiple forms being merely an expression of that energy. [...]

Human thought is also an energy that adopts forms.”¹².

The cosmic Body-Spirit extends concentrically in fractal subdivision around a point of origin and return (*bali/wali*) where Shiva-Spirit and (his) Sakti-energy merge, as well as all the potentialities of manifestation, in the One, which becomes void, *sunya*, *nirvana*.

“We shall be merged into the One, the only One, the cosmic Great One, which will soon be replaced by the infinite Zero of God. [...]

In balance, there are no gods. Gods are born from the separation of forces and they die on their re-merger”¹³.

In the manifested universe, ‘reality’ is a question of cognition: it is contingent, relative to the point of view of the knower, stratified, gradual — “graduated”, as Artaud says —, like the view from the sides of a mountain, a mountain whose mandala is heuristic geometry, a cosmic-cognitive structure. The gods are cognitive creations, heuristic tools: not supernatural individualities and objects of belief, but Principles of cosmic-cognitive Nature, objects of knowledge contained in their name and, if they have any, in their attributes.

“I call these gods names; I do not call them gods. I say that these gods designate forces, ways of being, forms of the great power of being that diversifies itself into principles, essences, substances, elements.”¹⁴

Discerning and naming objects and beings in the graduated continuum, in the “Great All”, means reifying as entities (albeit illusory or relative) what are actually parts (*kala*) and individuals.

“A thing that is named is a dead thing, and it is dead because it is separated.”¹⁵

Thus the Spirit (Shiva) or cognition falls into split-up creation, drawn by the/his Energy (*sakti*) emanated in vibrating radiation/subdivision, down to decomposition, the bustling of the *bhuta-kala*, micro-constituents of the material world (*bhuta*: manifested). Artaud often refers to such bustling and sometimes calls it “humus”, humus that culture must “prepare”.

Comprehending a deity is ‘to be (re)born with/in’ (this deity) [translator’s note: the Author’s play on words cannot be reproduced in English: ‘connaissance’ = ‘con-naissance’/co-naissance, since ‘con’ in Latin, or ‘co’ in French means ‘with’, and in French, ‘naissance’ is ‘birth’], by interiorising the meaning of the divine and thus identifying the self with the ontological Self (Sanskrit. *Svah*, Balinese. *Swah*, French. *Soi*, which has the same sound and meaning). When he recognised Shiva as the “centripetal force” that counters the “cruelty of existing” (ex-ist, exit), Artaud *structurally* identified himself with Shiva as a knowable ‘god-principle’ — and not as (a) God in whom one can only believe. Artaud judged belief decadent, as compared to knowledge (alias, for him, “culture”) and to “the superior and total idea of the world that Paganism would restore to us”¹⁶.

“[...] peoples [who] have ended up considering the gods as truly detached beings [...] have mistaken the meaning of these gods [...]”¹⁷

“[they have been] revealed as powerless to go back through the concentric touchings of forces, through the applied and concrete magnetisation of these energies, back to the initial discharge, back to the revelation of the principle that these

*gods wish to manifest*¹⁸”

This second phrase is of the ‘cosmic-cognitive’ order, with a “double”: it describes the centripetal mental process leading to ecstatic – and sometimes violent – revelation, identical to the cosmic motion of resorption produced by Shiva returning to concentration.

Understanding these structural aspects, this spatialised, geometric view, is essential in grasping Artaud’s intentions — he translates it even in his way of writing in “Sur le théâtre balinaise”, stratified and not linear, “double” here too in many sentences. Therefore the shortest route to reach “Artaud-Shiva” through the theatre (Balinese theatre and Artaud’s “theatre of cruelty”) must start there. In “The Meaning of Ganapati”, which appeared in the previous edition of this journal, Alain Daniélou provides an extremely clarifying summary of ‘cosmic-cognitive’ Nature, explaining what its Lord represents, the Hindu god Ganapati, half-elephant half-man, the son of Shiva and his consort-*sakti* (cosmic energy)¹⁹.

The centripetal Shaivite *somya* of the Balinese, as a principle and in drama

For the Balinese, imitating the act of resorption carried out by Shiva, as recorded in the name of their island — *bali* / *wali* = ‘return’, ‘inversion’, ‘sacred act of reversion’ — is a duty constituting their major occupation and their identity. They perform it in their sacrificial rites and other procedures with centripetal structure, many of which in drama. These resorptions aim at

Artaud’s identification with Shiva was anything but a delirium of egoistic infatuation. From a Balinese, Shaivite, Tantric point of view, his experience appears neither unique, nor senseless, nor devoid of reason.



Appearance in the theatrical setting of the sacred mask of Rangda the Widow (ARTAUD's "Tibetan devil"), coming from the temple. She is an aspect of the goddess Durga, Shiva's consort-energy *sakti* fallen into the cemetery. Through cosmisation rites, the mask is charged with this ultra-diffused/fractionated *sakti* energy. All those attending must crouch, including those bearing temple parasols, weapons and banners which accompany the deity. Photo by Catherine Basset

somya: the ascent in rank of all creatures or "states of being", the "rejuvenation" of every level of the universe, in the opposite direction of time.

Now, in the 1931 Balinese performance, Artaud saw an abridged version of Tantric Barong / Calonarang drama, which in Bali is performed in cemeteries and other impure places of decomposition or fractionation (jungle, beaches, crossroads) with the aim of achieving *somya* (and also duels of *sakti* between initiates, which Artaud didn't see in France, as he didn't see the trances of possession). Even in this truncated performance, Artaud recognised Tantrism (the "Tibetan devil", the Rangda mask [ill. 1 and 2]). Intuitively, he also understood that it consisted not in an exorcism that banishes evil, but the opposite, "an exorcism to make our demons POUR in"²⁰: indeed, it is a *bali/wali* return-reversion procedure, thus logically an 'endorcism' (Author's neologism)²¹.

Balinese drama and Artaud's "Theatre of Cruelty"

Artaud's "Theatre of Cruelty" displays the methods of a theatre of the future with the features of Balinese drama. We could match a Balinese reality with every phrase of Artaud's in "Sur le théâtre balinais" and other works. Lacking the space to do so in this article, we shall describe *simultaneously* the main principles of Balinese drama and of the "Theatre of Cruelty" through which Artaud had undertaken to re-found drama, in order to "with the foundations of a real science, reconnect on a small scale [...] with the whole of a lost tradition. [...] for culture, IN culture and [...] there is only one traditional magical culture"²². "On a small scale" refers to drama conceived as a microcosm (Balinese *buwana alit*), like the human body-spirit.

Like the "Theatre of Cruelty", everything in



Mantras, curses and teachings in Sanskrit and Ancient Javanese told by the wearer of the mask of Rangda the Widow. He risks his life in this role... just as ARTAUD was persuaded to risk his on his Artaud-Shiva mission in 1937. The *somya* will be achieved further by the meeting of Durga (Rangda) with Shiva (giant mask of Barong the Beast). Immediately, on the invisible level, they are supposed to return to their supreme, immaterial and original Double: the merger of Shiva (Spirit) - Uma (non-diffused sakti energy). Photo by Catherine Basset

Balinese drama is poles apart from the Western tradition of a 'psychological' 'theatre of text' hated by Artaud, the individual work of one author, which one might merely read; its incarnation on stage is secondary and subject to the text; its staging, including the play of actors, is merely the single deadpan performance of a deadpan text. The staging thus varies from text to text; its figurative naturalism — the imitation of daily life and its psychology — is thus the single unifying element to be understood by the audience, from one play to another.

Traditional Balinese drama, or the "Theatre of Cruelty", a utopian project of the 'new tradition' of Artaud, emerges from space, a scenic space of actions and semi-abstract beings, between its lower concrete "double", on the level of daily life and psychology in the manifested world, and its superior "double, virtual on the abstract level of cosmic Principles and metaphysics. The "true" drama connects levels

and "doubles". It brings superimposed levels of meaning. In Bali, each actor and spectator discovers and interiorises these levels, each with his own rhythm in the course of his life, with an ever-differing re-edition of the representation of the same narrative archetypal plots embodied in the same archetypes of characters (*solah*, "character", "behaviour", *sesolahan*, "dance", "drama").

The drama is acted out in the space of meditation, as an autonomous *entity* (microcosm), which is also archetypal, with its own codification: a set of invariables that may consequently represent and exploit all the narrative themes and plots. In Bali there are no written theatre plays. The performance is a *live creation*: like the words, the staging is created directly on stage, by the acting, according to conventions established by tradition irrigating everything with blood that is always identical and always new. In his two manifestos of the "Theatre of

Artaud's "Theatre of Cruelty" is the idea of cosmicising the scene, which, like a performative "plague" contaminates and transfigures the whole culture.

Cruelty", Artaud laid the foundations of the twin of this tradition, reinvented with drafts of codifications and the ways of portraying characters and emotions.

The archetypes of characters, drastically transfiguring the actor-dancers, are codified in all their visual and sound aspects (and, in Bali, linguistic as well), totally depersonalising the actor: the annihilation of ego indispensable to life in Bali society and to the ultimate ideal identification of the self with the divine/principial. The archetypal characters dance as such— in their "spectral state", as Artaud says — before becoming, often much later in the performance, such-and-such a character in such-and-such a narrative plot, selected by the actors just before going on stage...

Everything is extremely stylised (except, in Bali, the long talkative intervals, simultaneously pedagogical and burlesque, cut out in the 1931 performance). Together, the gestures, the vocal and instrumental sounds, the postures, costumes and vibrating headdresses that form the geometrised "body-doubles", rhythmic in space oriented by the four cardinal directions, weave semantic correspondences and vibrating resonances of all kinds.

Universality of affects and the inanity of the ego

For a genuine *incarnation*, in his "Theatre of Cruelty", Artaud was planning, among other things, linked to respiration, a precise location in the actor's body for each of the emotions, incorporating elements of Tantrism, Jewish

cabala and Chinese acupuncture.

As in Tantrism and like, later on, Alain Daniélou, Artaud perceived the omnipotence of vibration (the emanation mode of *sakti* energy).

*"Between 'the Intelligible' and the world, the creation, there is precisely harmony, vibration, acoustics, which is the first passage, the most subtle and the most malleable, which unites the abstract to the concrete"*²³

Daniélou recommended using natural melodic intervals and micro-intervals for precise affective connotations and impacts, of which he took over the principle of the *rāga* (the high-brow music of India) and its establishment in a holistic Sanskrit conception of 'all connected'. Artaud spoke of the "degrees of vibration of the passions"²⁴ with a prescience of the scientific theory that Daniélou was to develop in his essay *Sémantique musicale. Essai de psycho-physiologie musicale*²⁵. For his "Theatre of Cruelty", Artaud rightly desired music with micro-intervals; to do this, he incidentally utilised Martenot Waves in his play *Les Cenci*. Daniélou invented the Sémantic Daniélou with its 53 notes per octave²⁶ and Artaud dreamt of even more:

*"We shall seek what remains of an ancient music of quarter-tones, which had up to sixty thousand notes."*²⁷

Emotions are as archetypal as their dramatic expression, and in Bali they may only be expressed in drama, where they are not those of the ego. As in India, in Bali feelings, deemed universal, are called *rasas*, a Sanskrit notion that merges "taste" and feeling: sad, bitter,



The archetypes of the sovereign Dalem (“inward”, “deep”) and his pair of valets. The valets, roles of initiates, translate phrase by phrase (the Ancient Javanese of the masters or heroes), update the plot, teach everything and amuse, and their actions and words direct the staging created live. Photo by Catherine Basset



King Dalem with a minister, faced by one of the two valets-translators. As in everyday life, space is always oriented and hierarchized. Each character archetype is in its right place and in the right posture according to social hierarchy. As the “axis of the universe”, the king stands in the midst of space, legs forming lozenges and moving with symmetric motions. Photo by Catherine Basset

sweet, cold *rasa*, etc. The *rasas* are made to correspond to all kinds of elements of nature and culture, in the “Tantric cabalistic system” (an expression we owe to André Padoux)²⁸ which presents the universe as *classes of analogues* (having at least partly vibratory relationships). Each class of analogues is a *déwaloka*: the realm of a Hindu ‘god-principle’. Together, the classes of analogues / *déwaloka* form a mandala, a basic structure concentric and fractal, that is simultaneously the structure of the universe and of the concentric cognitive processes.

Associated with the cardinal directions, the classes of the 4 universal ‘cosmic-selves’ (Balinese *kandapat*) of each ego depict 4 archetypal, universal types of temperament. Ego is merely the ‘nothing’ pulled in the different directions, taking from them different “colours” of temperaments (*solahs*) and affects (*rasas*). Everything in the tradition strives to refocus the individual in the centre between these 4 cosmic-selves, so that it attains supreme neutrality, the fusion of the colours to white (Shiva), also found in the colours of the stage masks and make-up. The notion of the 4 ‘cosmic-selves’ is omnipresent in Java and Bali, contrasting with the enhancement of peculiarities of the ego, which are taken for a ‘realisation of the self’ in Western culture.

Artaud sought an “alchemical transmutation up to the feeling of unity”²⁹ and, with his “Theatre of Cruelty”, he worked to make Western or world drama once more capable of achieving that, as are the myths:

“a force dissolving individual peculiarities, a “unitary” and collective position that does not separate subject and object, matter and spirit, man and animal — in other words, the passages and analogies that efface the limited contours of human “characters.” (E. Grossman commenting Artaud³⁰)

*“[...] to understand nature and Man on top of that. Not Man in his singularity, but Man as great as Nature”.*³¹

Unitary science, unitary culture, holistic... and universal?

In an initiatic Tantric culture like that of Bali, everything is “cosmicised” following a unitary science. The “Tantric cabala”, associated with the mandala, is simultaneously the key to total understanding and the unified plan for executing everything, in a holistic culture, in every field of application, in harmony (or disharmony, “black” magic), in linking everything together and to Nature, whether concrete or principial. The “Theatre of Cruelty” is, at the same time, the idea of cosmicising the scene, which, like a performative “plague” contaminates and transfigures the whole culture.

With his resonant, stratified writing, full of “doubles”, and with stupefying precision, Artaud was a poet in almost all his works. He considered poetry as a science, a heuristic science of analogies, correspondences and resonances. With his prescience, Artaud was the same as the *kawis* (Sanskrit *kavya*), the omniscient initiate-sage-poets of Indo-Java-nese-Balinese tradition.

Artaud took an interest in numerous esoteric traditions because, like the poetic spirit, esotericisms match everything. And, like Daniélou, he found the same general spirit or similar aspects in different world traditions, as well as in ancient Europe.

*“Anyone can see that these esotericisms are the same, and spiritually mean the same thing. They indicate a geometric, numeric, organic, harmonious occult idea that reconciles man with nature and with life. The signs of these esotericisms are identical; there are profound analogies between their words, their gestures and their cries.”*³²

According to Artaud, being global and holistic, unitary culture must develop a “science of the spirit” and thus become, like the “Theatre of Cruelty” (or Balinese drama), simultaneously sensory and headed by metaphysics.

Associating these cultural similarities with the unity he perceived in Nature, Artaud denounced Western science split into specialised disciplines, “reason separated” owing to a “loss of knowledge”.

*“[...] we no longer know how to look at nature, feel life in its totality. Europe has torn nature apart with its separate sciences.”*³³

According to Artaud, true knowledge can only come from a “unitary culture”.

*“We have the idea of a unitary culture and we call this culture unitary in order to rediscover an idea of unity in all manifestations of nature that man rhythms with his thought.”*³⁴

“That man rhythms with his thought” is again an expression belonging to the ‘cosmic-cognitive’. According to Artaud, being global and holistic, unitary culture must develop a “science of the spirit” and thus become, like the “Theatre of Cruelty” (or Balinese drama), simultaneously sensory and headed by metaphysics, meaning connected by the body-spirit to the “Double”, “the unutilised real”, ignored by globalised Western modernity³⁵. Artaud explains to his publisher his choice of the title *Le théâtre et son double* as follows:

“[...] if drama is the double of life, life is the double of real drama. [...] metaphysics, the plague, cruelty, the reservoir of energies that constitute myths, which men no longer embody: drama embodies them. And by double, I mean the great magic agent of which the forms of the theatre are a mere figuration, waiting to become transfiguration.

*It is on the stage that the uniting of thought, gesture, action is brought about. And the double of drama is the real unused by men today”*³⁶.

Artaud wrote the following about Mexicans, but it could also be taken as Shaivite exegesis echoing the concentric cosmological and cognitive structure described at the beginning of the article.

“I say that true culture can only be learned in space, and that it is an oriented culture, just as drama is oriented.

[...] [The] spirit is located in the midst of space, meaning at its dead centre.

It is perhaps a metaphysical idea, this idea of the dead centre of space through which the spirit must pass.

But without metaphysics there is no culture.

Culture is a movement of the spirit that goes from the void to forms and the forms re-enter the void, into the void and into death. Being cultivated means burning forms: burning forms to win life. It means learning to stand upright in the incessant movement of the forms that one subsequently destroys. [...]

This terrible inner station, this movement of breathing: it is this that is culture, which moves both in nature and in the spirit.

“But that is only metaphysics, and one cannot live in metaphysics”.

*Yet what I say is correct: life must relive in metaphysics.”*³⁷

Vibrating with the 'same'

Ego is a kind of sounding board rather than an actual entity. Yet, acoustically, it is to the 'same' that any resonator vibrates properly: a resonator must also be tuned; it must, for example, sound the same note as the bronze slat whose sound it amplifies, be attuned to it. According to Daniélou and Indian theory, there must be a vibratory reality, in our metaphor of the ego as a resonator and in current expressions such as "being on the same wavelength" or "being in phase" to describe all kinds of affinity and innate tendencies.

"Each of us is able to discover his basic vibration, his sa, the tonic that corresponds to our deepest nature. [...] in a world where all is vibration, [it] is an essential element in our self-knowledge, the

in words or symbols, metaphysical notions and interiorised mystiques, or of which they have precognition, like those encrypted in Balinese or Javanese drama, encoded above several layers of more trivial meanings. Such recognition is reconnection with "origin and destiny" (*éling sangkan paran dumadi*) of the universe and the human together. One 'con-nait' [Author's pun on French 'connait' (know) "born with"]; one is reborn in knowledge as 'con-nais-sance' [Author's pun on French 'connaissance' (knowledge) "birth with"]. Artaud agrees with our puns on French words:

"Saying unity is saying knowledge [connaissance], since "to know" [connaître] is "to rise again with"⁴⁰

Through the truncated performance for

Artaud was a kind of 'super resonator' but unstable, which is why he scoured almost all the vibratory and emotional spectrum, passing through chasms, plural identities and disavowals, a life of suffering.

starting point of all knowledge. Discovery, awareness of what is our own sa, is the first exercise in the training of a musician [...] which continues, in the practice of yoga, by the search for the nada, the primordial sound that is the manifestation of the creative principle, the nada brahman from which the world comes forth." A. Daniélou³⁸

Artaud in consequence vibrated too, to the 'same'. The anthropologist Gérard Toffin, quoting Susan Sontag (*À la rencontre d'Artaud*, 1976) made the same mistake as she did, believing that it was just "*l'ailleurs' qui captivait Artaud*" ["elsewhere' that captivated Artaud] and insinuating that he would have drawn the same inspiration from any other exotic theatre³⁹. Artaud vibrated just as initiates vibrate physically in *recognising* (Javanese, Balinese *éling*),

foreigners in 1931, Artaud could not get any idea of the rich utilisation of verbal language in Balinese drama... and wrongly he minimises its importance. However, his conception of verbal expression was still in harmony with it:

"the metaphysical way of considering the word [is] an active force, which starts from the destruction of appearances to rise up as far as the spirit"⁴¹.

Reading or re-reading Artaud may produce a fusion, well-known in Hindu-Buddhist spirituality, between the knowing subject, the known (object of knowledge) and knowing (the process), and even an identification between receiver and emitter (reader and author) — perhaps a consonance of the sa-s ? — like that of Artaud and the Balinese drama in which his

thought *participated*: it is ‘he-that-I’ who thinks.

*“the magical identification is accomplished: we know that we are the one who was speaking.”*⁴²

NB: This “we” means “I”.

From there to identifying with the Spirit Shiva is just one step, which Artaud, exalted, took in 1937... like an initiate. Furthermore, behaving as a madman is part of yogi discipline in certain ancient Tantric traditions⁴³. In Bali, it is said of wandering madmen that they are (or have wished to be) too knowledgeable, meaning by this an initiatic apprenticeship poorly grasped or taken to the extreme. Furthermore, the temple priests (*pemangkus*) are designated, not by the citizens, but “from above” (*duur*), very often by some mental problem — a sign of election or propitious soil for cosmic connections? If they accept this office of mediation in the service of the ‘cosmisation’ of society, these madmen cease to be mad. In Bali, Artaud could have become an officiant in a Shaivite cemetery temple— the Balinese also recognise the ‘self-initiated’ among foreigners and sometimes assign them a ritual role.

*“Here is what makes the saints and even the initiates: they have rediscovered the notion of the true, and have learned to distinguish in the true and consequential meaning of the term, in the vibrating sense, the vehement sense that grasps us, the lie and the illusion of things”*⁴⁴.

“Artaud-Shiva”, his sacred rod and his sacrificial mission in 1937

It was with the modern West that Artaud was not attuned, for which he was ‘other’ / alienated.

The resonator of Principles, was Artaud in some way pre-initiated by opium? In the past, in Bali (and in other Tantric traditions), it was common practice for initiates to smoke opium; Artaud lived as an addict of opiates. In August

1937, however, he declared he had been weaned off it for 4 months and had decided to “remain on a terrible path, without drugs, without women”, since that, too, caused “the loss of *gifts* he had acquired⁴⁵. Thus he considered himself an initiate who had received the grace of certain knowledge-powers and had to render it by employing them in a sacred and sacrificial mission.

And/or was he pre-initiated through reincarnation, as he thought? Aggravating his case in the eyes of Western ‘rationality’, Artaud, still as an initiate and like numbers of Indonesians and other Asiatics, found powerful incarnations of himself in previous millennia and different identities in his present body — he was a Greek, Arland Antoneo, in Greek Arlanapulos, when he was thrown into prison in Ireland, then expelled, straitjacketed and interned in France and, writing from Ireland, he stated, amongst other examples during his life:

*“Soon I shall no longer call myself Antonin Artaud, I shall have become someone else, and the Duty incumbent on me is formidable. It is formidable, Annie, to discover suddenly who one is and that in reality one was another and that this other was Ramses II in Egypt, truly, Annie, truly, and that one has been other men throughout time, all charged with terrible responsibilities supported by powers, which are also terrible, maybe, but overwhelming.”*⁴⁶

Artaud considered his birth in 1896 at Marseille as an “error”... but also, sometimes, as the sign of a mission to be carried out, in Europe (the West, judged decadent), among the ‘other Indians’, in Mexico (Amerindian tradition to be saved), and, in 1937, in Ireland (Druidic tradition to be rediscovered), as “Shiva-christ”, “christ” without a capital letter, about which he specifies at times that it is not the Christ of the Christians, but the principal, occult Christ “of the catacombs”.



Acted by men, the terrible widow *tāntrikā*, rod in hand, with her female servant and translator. The audience is almost everywhere, traversed by dramatic action (and by ritual interventions), as ARTAUD desired for his “Theatre of Cruelty”. Photo by Catherine Basset

“I shall preach the return of the Christ of the catacombs, which will be the return of Christianity to the catacombs. Visible Catholicism shall be razed owing to its idolatry.”⁴⁷

Artaud wished to take to Ireland his “Rod of Christ”, a rod just as gnarled as the stick of Shaivist *tāntrikās*, a *pusaka śakti*, “treasure/regalia (charged with) *śakti*”... He may already have seen this rod in 1931: in Barong / Calonarang drama, it is in the hand of the sorcerer-queen, the figure of the follower of Tantrism said to be “of the left hand”, the science of decomposition, manipulating the *bhuta-kalas*, hence the mistress of epidemics... Mistress of the plague! [ill. 5]

Artaud first identified himself with God, then, in “L’homme contre le destin”, he expounds the 3 cosmic-cognitive forces — “the repulsive and dilating force, the compressive and astringent force, the rotatory force” and lastly, in inflamed letters⁴⁸, by virtue of the concentric motions of his thought, of a “centripetal” tendency, he identifies himself *structurally*, *logically* and

nominally as Shiva in this trilogy of cosmic forces that he logically, structurally associates with the Hindu trilogy⁴⁹, but also... with the Christian trilogy (“Artaud-Shiva-christ”)⁵⁰. The summary is as follows:

- 1st force, centrifugal, creator of the impermanent manifested world, sacrifice-dismemberment of the unity and thus the cause of the “cruelty of existing” (*exo, exit*) = Brahma = the Father;
- 2nd force, centripetal “astringent” (*somya* / ‘endorcism’, sacrifice-destruction of the forms, which it reintegrates and reinitialises) = Shiva = the Son, the Christ born of a woman, the sacrificed one returned to the origin = Antonin Artaud. “Prince of the destruction of things [...] come to be the accomplice of those who saw the evil of Life. [...] The christ-Shiva is the Negative of Creation” “The Christ has returned to bring to the light Pagan Truth, on which all Christian churches have shat with ignominy. The Christ was a magician who fought in

the desert against the demon with a rod.”⁵¹ Artaud was convinced he had inherited this rod and this mission.

- 3rd force, rotatory/cyclical force of balance and the renewal of life = “Vichnou” (Vishnu) and Krishna = the Holy Spirit = the ante-christ, since this cyclical force perpetuates, with life, the “cruelty of existing” in the world of perpetual decomposition.

His structural logic is exercised on the political level: the parties of right and left must mutually annihilate themselves⁵², like the elements of the dualities in the Javanese and Balinese doctrine of manunggal (“to make one”).

*“In the true doctrine of the Christ the Holy Spirit is the Bourgeois established and the Christ the Revolutionary in perpetuity. The 2nd force-god-Shiva is the revolutionary force, the 3rd force-god Vishnu is preservative.”*⁵³

At that time, while prophesying terrible global events and believing himself to be the victim of a plot, launched into a cosmic, metaphysical, religious and political battle, armed with his magic rod to attack and protect, Artaud cursed those of the cultural avant-garde of the cafés of Saint Germain des Prés, in whom he recognised “Vichnou – the ante-christ”. In Asia, it is customary to say “*he is an incarnation of Vishnu*” of any human being in whom one recognises the qualities of Vishnu, which one expects from rulers. Amongst other examples, Artaud wrote to André Breton:

If the Son Shiva the Christ is going to raise a Madman to bring down his ridiculous church, the Holy Spirit Vishnu Krishna will raise the ante-christ. [...]

*The one who becomes the ante-Christ you know him, you have shaken his hand, he is younger than I and he loves Life as much as I hate it”*⁵⁴.

The following is the mental sacrificial *somya* inspired by a conjunction of Shiva and the

archetypal christ:

*“Jesus-Christ this man person came to institute, on the level of the spirit, a rite of the disappearance of things, on the same principle as human sacrifices.”*⁵⁵

At the same time, Artaud broke off his engagement with a woman and felt an attraction-repulsion towards women, again in coherence with his identification as Shiva and with his feeling of the “cruelty of existing”.

*“Because it is the Holy Spirit, the monstrous dove (the Dove YONA, and YONI the vagina) that maintains life’s duration, in the contradictory delights of life.”*⁵⁶

The vagina *yon*i is a symbol of the female and thus of *śakti*, the energy-consort that leads Shiva to drop into the world of the ‘all-separated’. Aspiring to unity, a *tāntrika* may practise sexual yoga to merge sexual duality and its pertaining Principles; Artaud however took a dislike to this duality and conceived disgust for sexuality. After leaving the psychiatric hospital in 1946, he wrote again in 1947, a year before his death:

“Enough of man and woman,

Male and female.

Things are one”.

Whether Artaud knew it or simply felt it, Shiva Ardhanarisvara hermaphrodite represents this unity. In all cases, Artaud underwent and accomplished, with no concessions, his destiny as the Shaivite-christlike sacrifice.

“It is because I was convinced of being god, and to prevent me from remembering it, that everywhere I have been assassinated, poisoned, beaten to death, electrocuted;

*— in order to prevent me from regaining the consciousness and the science of my capacities and faculties.”*⁵⁷

Conclusion

Despite the cultural moulding of the body-spirit, some persons have, through a mysterious predisposition, affinities with another culture and/or can be reconfigured by that culture on the cognitive level, in a process either of formal initiation or of ‘self-initiation’ —Balinese initiates recognise both: they say, “*this person knows*”. Artaud really had “*a trans-cultural view of art*”, as Gilles Louÿs said. But in affirming that Artaud “*wanted to rediscover the ‘same’ in the other*”, Louÿs is wrong because Balinese drama and Shiva are not “others”, but the ‘same’ as Artaud, whose identification with him was not desired, but was like a consonance of his vibratory *sa*. Wishing to compare him to Artaud, Louÿs wrongly attributes greater objectivity to Henri Michaux who, visiting Bali at the same period, concluded about Balinese drama with “*the observation of its extreme singularity, which makes any view of a ‘same’ impossible [...]*”; Michaux, rather, had a more ‘obstructive’ Western cultural moulding and/or a different *sa*⁵⁸.

Artaud described as *real* a supra-cultural level of natural Principles, where metaphysics and the mystical universally join. To connect to it and raise awareness of the “cruelty of existing”, he wanted to (re)invent “real drama” through the “Theatre of Cruelty” — a project that remained utopian, because, as he knew, it implies the creation of a holistic ‘new tradition’, including a hypothetical universal metaphysics and, to provide the feeling without discourse, an extreme stylisation of the bodies of hyper-articulated and hyper-connected actors, like those of the Balinese actor-dancers.

Artaud was a kind of ‘super resonator’ but unstable, which is why he scoured almost all the vibratory and emotional spectrum, passing through chasms, plural identities and disavowals, a life of suffering. The Balinese and many other Asiatics attribute to reincarnation temperaments, instilled knowledge, innate talents, as well as the accomplishment of improbable vocations, particularly concerning foreigners with a kind of prescience of their arts and/or their metaphysical conceptions. Did Antonin Artaud find a better reincarnation later in Asia? What is certain is that in a way he predicted his destiny post-mortem in the modern world:

“*Who am I?
Where do I come from?
I am Antonin Artaud
And if I say it
As I know how to say it
immediately
you will see my present body
fly up in splinters
and gather itself up
under ten thousand notorious aspects
a new body
where you can
never more
forget me.*”⁵⁹

Antonin Artaud continues to prove a ‘super-resonator’, globally splintered in 10,000 truly “notorious” aspects, each reader having *his own* Artaud, resonating according to his own *sa* at these or those of his millions of phrases. The description of his centrifugal and centripetal apotheosis again recalls Shiva. •

1 Antonin Artaud : *Le théâtre et son double*, Paris, ed. NRF / Gallimard, collection Idées, 1964 (1938). Also included in the anthology *Antonin Artaud. Œuvres*, Evelyne Grossman (ed.), Paris, Quarto, Gallimard, 2004, pp. 505-593.

2 Since the 1931 performance was thus spoiled, we did not reproduce it in an identical manner in 1998 — so as to have the same impact on the 1998 audience as in 1931 — to respond to the request for a Balinese performance to commemorate the one in 1931 and as a tribute to Antonin Artaud, with the troupe of the same princely family. On the latter occasion, with public support, I affirmed the accuracy of Artaud's interpretation, against the opinion of Evelyne Grossman, a major specialist on Artaud, who confessed however to knowing neither Bali nor this performance.

3 VU n° 173 dated 8 juillet 1931.

4 These are, in particular, the Tibetan Book of the Dead Bardo Thodol, the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Tao-Te-King, the Popol-Vüh, René Guénon, René Daumal and André Rolland de Réneville. Artaud even wrote an article to counter the opinion of Denis Saurat on the Upanishads and to distinguish the metaphysics of philosophy: "A 'history of religions' written solely from man's point of view", in Antonin Artaud. *Œuvres*, (Evelyne Grossman, ed.), Paris, Quarto, Gallimard, 2004, pp. 482-484.

5 *Héliogabale ou l'anarchiste couronné*, in: *Antonin Artaud. Œuvres*, op.cit. pp. 405-474. Or the same work in a separate edition, Paris, *L'imaginaire*, éditions Gallimard, 1979.

6 Ibid. pp. 685-745.

7 Letters to Anne Manson and André Breton published in *Antonin Artaud. Œuvres*. Artaud had asked that all his writings be published. The divine identification process is documented by many of Artaud's writings; it will be explained at the end of the article, in an abstract form, clarified however by the preceding content of the article.

8 *Les nouvelles révélations de l'être* (1936-1937), in: *Antonin Artaud. Œuvres*, op.cit. p. 788.

9 "Le Rite du Peyotl chez les Tarahumaras", in *Les Tarahumaras*, in *Antonin Artaud. Œuvres*, ibid. p. 1689. Texts on the Tarahumara Indians of Mexico run up to 1948, the year of Artaud's death, after his experience with peyotl in 1936.

10 Philippe Cornu, a university teacher specialising in Buddhism, describes the cosmology of Tibetan Vajrayana Tantric Buddhism (of which he has long been an initiate) in the same terms as those that have inspired the author of this article in over 30 years of impregnation with Indo-Javanese-Balinese culture, known as Hindu-Buddhist. Among the numerous publications by Philippe Cornu: *Longchenpa, la liberté naturelle de l'esprit* (préface de Sogyal Rinpoché). Éditions du Seuil, coll. « Points. Sagesses » n° 66, Paris, 1994; *Le miroir du cœur. Tantra du Dzogchen* (translated from the Tibetan and commented by Philippe Cornu). Éditions du Seuil, coll. « Points. Sagesses » n° 82, Paris, 1997. 284 p.; *Guide du bouddhisme tibétain*. Librairie générale française, collection « Les guides Sélène », 1998. 351 p.; Avec Bertrand Dumas *La mort, un passage ? Regards croisés bouddhistes et chrétiens*, Editions du Cerf, 2018; *Padma-sambhava: Le Livre des morts tibétain*, préface de Matthieu Ricard (translated from the Tibetan and commented by Philippe Cornu), Buchet-Chastel, Paris, 2009.

11 Not Siddharta Gautama, the historical Buddha, but the ontological Adi Buda, the Principal Awakened One.

12 "I have come to Mexico to escape from European civilisation", in *Messages révolutionnaires*, in *Antonin Artaud. Œuvres*, op.cit. p.737.

13 "The war of principles", in *Héliogabale ou l'anarchiste couronné*, in *Antonin Artaud. Œuvres*, op.cit. p. 430.

14 "The war of principles", *ibid.* p. 430.

15 "La guerre des principes », *ibid.* p. 430.

16 "La guerre des principes », *ibid.* p. 428.

17 "La guerre des principes », *ibid.* p.429.

18 "La guerre des principes », *ibid.* p. 428.

19 Transcultural Dialogues, FIND, Issue 4 – May 2020, Spring Equinox. <https://www.find.org.in/fr/dialogue-intellectuel/transcultural-dialogues>. This deity is well-known in Bali, Java, Sunda and the surrounding area as Gana, Ganapati or Ganesha.

20 "Sur le théâtre balinaï", in: *Le théâtre et son double*, 1964, op.cit, p.92 ou in *Antonin Artaud. Œuvres*, op. cit. p.540.

21 The Author of this article invented the term 'endorcism' at least twenty years ago, following

a structural logic — opposite of *exo* is *endo* — since everywhere we unfortunately find “exorcism”, which in a great number of cases (in Bali and elsewhere) is a total *misinterpretation*. This *endorcism*, the only term suited to translate the purifying action of *bali/wali/balik/walik*, returning toward the inside and the origin, is absolutely not a borrowing from other authors (such as Michel Perrin) who, on their side, have applied the same structural logic to different cases where the term ‘endorcism’ has consequently a more or less different meaning. Nor must it be confused with “adorcism”, a neologism coined by the anthropologist Luc de Heusch, originally designating acceptance of possession (in the trance). However, in Bali, possession trances are as a rule desired (adorcism), being possessed is even a ritual duty; some possession trances belong to *somya* (endorcism) procedures, especially in connection with Barong / Calonarang drama, in which case we find adorcism in an endorcism.

22 “Lettre à Jean Paulhan” (Mexico, 23 avril 1936), in *Antonin Artaud. Œuvres*, op.cit. p. 664.

23 “Le shisme d’Irshu”, Appendix 1 d’*Héliogabale ou l’anarchiste couronné*, in *Antonin Artaud. Œuvres*, op.cit. p.472.

24 “L’homme contre le destin”, in *Antonin Artaud. Œuvres*, op.cit. p.697.

25 Alain Daniélou: *Sémantique musicale. Essai de psycho-physiologie musicale*, Paris, ed. Hermann, 1978.

26 www.semantic-danielou.com

27 “La musique de l’invisible”, in *Textes Mexicains* (1935-1936), in *Antonin Artaud. Œuvres*, op.cit., p.675.

28 We owe to André Padoux, specialist on Tantrism in India, the expressions “kabbale tantrique” and “système kabbalistique tantrique”, as well as the neologism “to cosmise”, which we employ in a wider acceptation than he does. André Padoux: “Contributions à l’étude du Mantrasâstra”, In: Paris, Bulletin de l’Ecole française d’Extrême-Orient (BEFEO). Tome 67, 1980. pp. 59-102. Et *L’énergie de la parole. Cosmogonies de la parole tantrique*, Paris, Fata Morgana, 1994.

29 “Le Mexique et l’esprit primitive”, in *Messages révolutionnaires* (1935-36), in *Antonin*

Artaud. Œuvres, op.cit. p.742.

30 *ibid.* p. 403. Presentation by Evelyne Grossman concerning *Héliogabale and other writings* by Artaud in the years 1934-35.

31 “Le théâtre et les dieux”, in *Messages révolutionnaires* (1935-36), *ibid.* p.700.

32 “L’homme contre le destin”, *Revolutionary messages* 1935-36, in: *Antonin Artaud. Œuvres*, op.cit. p.698.

33 “L’homme contre le destin”, *ibid.* p.695.

34 “L’homme contre le destin”, *ibid.* p.698.

35 Antonin ARTAUD: “Lettre à Jean Paulhan”, 25 janvier 1936, in : *Antonin Artaud. Œuvres*, op.cit. p. 662.

36 “Lettre à Jean Paulhan”, 25 janvier 1936, *ibid.* p. 662.

37 “Le théâtre et les dieux”, in : *Antonin Artaud. Œuvres*, op.cit. p. 702-703.

38 Alain Daniélou, *Origines et pouvoirs de la musique*, Paris, Les cahiers du mleccha, Editions Kailash., 2003, p. 210.

39 Gérard Toffin (CNRS): “Antonin Artaud et le théâtre oriental”, in : *Jeu*, (147), 165–169. North-American French language review, devoted to live performances of the arts.

40 “Le Mexique et l’esprit primitive”, in *Messages révolutionnaires* (1935-36), in *Antonin Artaud. Œuvres*, *ibid.* p.742.

41 “Théâtre oriental et théâtre occidental”, in : *Le théâtre et son double*, op.cit. p.108 ; or, in : *Antonin Artaud. Œuvres*, op.cit. p.547.

42 *Le théâtre et son double*, *ibid.* p.102; or, in: *Antonin Artaud. Œuvres*, op.cit. p.544. In the French tradition to which Artaud belonged, it is incorrect to use “I” in formal texts.

43 Andrea Acri: “Birds, Bards, Buffoons and Brahmans:(Re-)Tracing the Indic Roots of some Ancient and Modern Performing Characters from Java and Bali”, in: *Archipel n°88 / 2014*, Paris, Archipel, Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l’homme (FMSH), 2014.

44 “Lettre à Jeanne Ridel” (Laghoutat, 21 juin 1934), in: *Antonin Artaud. Œuvres*, op.cit. p.487.

45 “Lettre à mademoiselle Marie Dubuc” (Paris,

août 1937), in: *Antonin Artaud. Œuvres*, op.cit. p.816-817.

46 “Lettre à Anie [There is only one ‘n’ in “Anie”, whatever Artaud’s spelling] Besnard et René Thomas” (who had offered him the rod) (14 septembre 1937), in: *Antonin Artaud. Œuvres*, op.cit. p.834.

47 “Lettre à Anne Manson” (14 septembre 1937), in: *Antonin Artaud. Œuvres*, op.cit. p.833.

48 “L’homme contre le destin”, in: *Antonin Artaud. Œuvres*, op.cit. p. 697. “Lettres à Anne Manson”, op. cit. p. 831 and 833-834. “Lettre à André Breton”, op.cit. p.835. But the progress is seen to begin in earlier letters and a more complete view is obtained throughout numerous writings of the same period.

49 I made the same association of trilogies of physical forces and Hindu gods before discovering it in an Indian author (whose references I have unfortunately lost) and now in Artaud, which has supported my impression (since my first reading of the *Théâtre et son double*) of being faced with the language of an initiate, a self-initiate.

50 “L’homme contre le destin”, in: *Antonin Artaud. Œuvres*, op.cit. p.697. And “Lettres et

sorts de 1937”, in: *Antonin Artaud. Œuvres*, op.cit., pp.313-838.

51 “Lettre à André Breton” (6 septembre 1937), in: *Antonin Artaud. Œuvres*, p. 825.

52 “Lettre à André Breton” (30 juillet 1937), in: *Antonin Artaud. Œuvres*, p. 811.

53 “Lettre à André Breton” (14 septembre 1937), *ibid.* p. 837.

54 “Lettre à André Breton” (14 septembre 1937), *ibid.* p. 837.

55 “Lettre à André Breton” (14 septembre 1937), *ibid.* p. 837.

56 “Lettre à André Breton” (14 septembre 1937), *ibid.* p. 835.

57 “Suppôts et supplications”, in: *Antonin Artaud. Œuvres*, op.cit., p.1420 et 1423.

58 Gilles Louÿs (Université Paris 10 Nanterre): “Avons-nous donc tellement besoin de démons?”. Voyageurs français du XXe siècle à Bali», *Viatica*, revue en ligne, N°2, mars 2015: <http://viatica.univ-bpclermont.fr/l-art-des-autres>, pp.1, 2 et 3.

59 Olivier Penot-Lacassagne: *Vies et morts d'Antonin Artaud*, Saint-Cyr sur Loire, Christian Pirot Editeur, 2007, p.235.

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