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**THE XHOSA DIVINER:
WAYS OF UNDERSTANDING**

It is my aim in this paper to show that although a natural scientific oriented mode of trying to explain what is being done by the Xhosa diviner, has some usefulness, it also has severe limits and should not be the approach of choice for understanding the phenomena which revolve around his work.

In my research, I attempted to understand the diviners by using methods of personality testing notably the Rorschach and the TAT. I also did extensive interviewing. In order to be able to get a perspective on diviners in their group and out of it, I compared two groups of them namely, 15 males and 21 females with 14 herbalists and a further control group of 10 male Fort Hare labourers as well as 4 Fort Hare female unskilled workers. Apart from this, I tested a group of psychotic females (seven) in Tower Hospital at Fort Beaufort. However, this was not a random sample of psychotic females in the hospital, but a specially selected group of women who said that they had taken the initial and some of the further steps towards becoming a diviner but had not succeeded in qualifying. Apart from these, a group of Fort Hare students namely seven males and 22 females, were also tested, but only on the TAT on the same cards as the traditional groups.

The results of the Rorschach¹⁾ may briefly be summarized as follows:- There are not very significant differences between the various groups except in so far as the psychotic females can be clearly distinguished on the Rorschach from all other groups in the sample. In other words, the diviners results were essentially those of "normal" people compared to Fort Hare labourers and herbalists, but the psychotic females or the failed diviners

1) The scoring method used was that of E. Bohm, *Lehrbuch der Rorschach-psychodiagnostik*, H. Huber Bern, 1972, but in my interpretations I have been influenced by many other Rorschach workers as well.

(amagqira) could be distinguished in terms of certain definite pathological signs on the Rorschach. For the group as a whole then, they seem to have a limited capacity for looking at their world in an abstract manner. Instead, they tend to handle reality by breaking it up into common sense parts, that is, they seem to be people who are in good contact with everyday reality.

The group as a whole consists of self-limiting, conforming people who do not easily take up individualistic points of view and cannot be described as expansive. As a corollary they seem to be unimaginative and there is no free expression of emotions, i.e., although it is not suggested that they are unemotional or that they do not have emotions (on the contrary); the testees do not freely react to and construe emotional meanings in their world. Intellectually they do not function at a high level and apart from the findings in respect of psychotic females, there are no indications of gross pathology. However, a striking finding is that diviners use certain contents of the world which have a special meaning in traditional society very much more frequently than the other groups. This I take to show that certain forms of their culture still form part of their experience of the world and that this is specially emphasized in the case of both male and female diviners although it is not absent in the case of the others.

If these Rorschach findings seem negative, we must remember that they sound so because a frame of reference derived from Western thinking is being imposed on a group of people who do not share western culture for the most part. I will come back to this point later, but it is as well to keep in mind that this already refutes the diagnosis of diviners as people who are necessarily suffering from some form of psychopathology.

The Thematic Apperception Test

The test used was a variant of the Thematic Apperception Test developed by S. Baran of the N.I.P.R. After extensive studies she made a series of tests designed to tap relevant areas of the experience of Zulus. The areas were (a) relation to authority and the work situation; (b) relation to the group; (c) relationship to

parents; (d) death; (e) self-concept; (f) sexual themes; and (g) relationship to the supernatural. A number of cards designated by her as rural were used and these same cards were then applied to Fort Hare males and female students in the Psychology III class. (Female N = 22, Male N = 7). The results are set out in 3 abbreviated tables.

Table 1

Percentage integrated content on TAT and Rorschach F + %

		<i>Rank order</i>		<i>Rank order</i>
Diviners – Male	51,4	4	60,6	4
Diviners – Female	59,4	3	64,1	3
Psychotics (F only)	29,21	6	50,0	6
Herbalists	64,3	2	62,2	2
Controls – Male	68,5	1	71,6	1
Controls –Female	40,0	5	54,2	5
Traditional Average		55		
Student Average		78		

In evaluating the story productions of these cards, I looked in the first place at the extent to which the testee was able to integrate the visual givens of the picture into his story. In most cases it was found that all the givens were integrated but in some cases some distortion took place or some features of the card were obviously omitted or it was interpreted in an ill-balanced way. We find here that in the traditional groups it was only the psychotic females who, as may have been expected, gave a fairly low percentage of integrated content (29 percent). On the other hand, the traditional group compared to the student group at Fort Hare showed a striking contrast. The traditional group (including the psychotic females have an average integrated content of 55 percent compared to the student average of 78 percent). This means that the task of perceptual integration was mastered

much better by the highly westernized group. It means, therefore, that perceptual integration is probably a measure of personality integration in the western sense, i.e., the ability to respond to the world in a controlled manner characteristic of the individual and in such a way that the meaning is assigned and the relation to the world controlled by him and not by the group. This is obviously the same as what is usually called ego-strength in psychoanalytic terms. The Rorschach F+% may be taken as one such index of ego-strength and a comparison of this with the percentage of integrated content in the traditional group showed a striking parallel. In terms of both these indices we find that the male controls (mostly labourers of Fort Hare where they were employed on building projects and in workshops) who had the most intimate contact with Western technology and approaches had the greatest measure of ego-strength whilst psychotic women have the least. The herbalists follow on Fort Hare labourers, thus confirming other indications of their status as a traditional group of a transitional nature who are expanding into western ways.

Interpersonal relations

The interpersonal relations as construed in the stories were evaluated onto two axes. On the horizontal axis differentiation was made between instrumental, affiliative and vectorial relations; on the vertical axis status and equalitarian relations were differentiated. In both cases provision was made for non-definition of relation e.g., the testee may introduce only one actor in the story and thus fail to define any relationships at all or he may fail to structure relationship even when more than one actor is introduced in the story.

Vertical Axis

On this axis it was found that there was a heavy emphasis on the non-defined category rather than on the defined categories of status versus equalitarian. The highest percentage on this non-defined category was again given by the psychotic women

Table 2 (Abbreviated)

Interpersonal Relations (percentages)

<i>Averages</i>	<i>Vertical Axis</i>			<i>Horizontal Axis</i>			
	<i>Status</i>	<i>Equal.</i>	<i>N/D</i>	<i>Instr.</i>	<i>Aff.</i>	<i>Vect.</i>	<i>N/D</i>
Traditional	35	7	58	16	8	5	71
Psychotics	16	3	81	4	—	4	92
Students	37	52	11	25	24	16	35

group. This is consistent with well established formulations of the schizophrenic as a withdrawn person who cannot handle personal relations. On the other hand, the male controls had the lowest non-defined percentage as may have been expected. We note also that almost all groups defined a fair percentage of their relationships in terms of status. Another important difference was found in comparing the traditional group as a whole with the students. The traditional groups structured only 6,6 percent of their relations in the story as equalitarian whilst the latter constructed 51,5 percent as such. This means that insofar as traditional people are able to structure personal relationships, they tend to structure these in terms of status differentials which probably reflect the structure of traditional society. Equalitarian relations were hardly used by any of the male or female diviners or herbalists.

The horizontal axis

This axis is essentially concerned with what the subjects conceived personal relationships to be for. This may be roughly stated as (a) instrumental: relating in order to achieve one's own goals, i.e., using other people as means to ends; (b) affiliative: regarding relationships as ends in themselves involving mutual

support, love and friendship, and (c) vectorial: regarding the relationships as a means to help or support others.

We note as in the case of the vertical axis that all traditional groups as contrasted to students, have a heavy emphasis in the non-defined category confirming the interpretation that they find it difficult to give shape, on an individual non-prescribed basis, to personal relationships. Again we notice that this trend is reinforced by psychopathology (psychotics 91,6 percent) and weakened by the transitional status (male controls 57,5 percent, Amahwele 60,7 percent).

Instrumental relations

In this category we note that students define more (25 percent) of these relations than the traditional groups (16 percent). Also we find that males in general used this dimension more than females. Within the traditional group we note that the highest percentage (34,5 percent) is achieved by herbalists. Again this shows them up as a transitional group in the sense that they have a foot in both the traditional and westernized camps. On the other hand, we note that diviners, both male and female give low percentages in this category. The charges that has been made that the diviners are people who manipulate personal situations in order to usurp unwanted authority or charisma cannot, on the basis of this finding, be sustained. It seems much more likely that in their dealings with their clients, they stay within the framework of traditional prescriptions.

Affiliative and vectorial relations

The most important findings here are that, of the traditional group, both herbalist and male controls are similar in the extent to which they give or do not give individual shape to personal relationships, (non-defined 60,7 percent and 57,5 percent respectively). They clearly differ when one asks what shape is given. In contrast to the fairly high percentage of instrumental relations construed by herbalists, the herbalists construe no

affiliative or vectorial relations. On the other hand, the male controls construe 17,8 percent affiliative relationships which is higher than the instrumental relations and 9,6 percent vectorial being only second to female controls in this respect within the traditional group. Male and female comparisons within the traditional group show that there are small differences only, which are not significant. The only fact that clearly emerges is that men construe more instrumental relationships than females, but we cannot say that females construe more vectorial and affiliative relationships than males. In comparing traditionals with students, we find a striking contrast in regard to affiliation. We find that the student group construe 23,6 percent of these whereas the traditional group as a whole gives only 7,7 percent. One may therefore say that this finding tends to indicate that in traditional society people are not ends in themselves neither are they means to ends. What the human being or being human is conceived to be in traditional society would require an intensive study of African religion and cosmology.

Socialization of aggressive and pleasure seeking drives²⁾

Table 3

Abbreviated tabulation of drive socialization

<i>Averages</i>	<i>Direct Unsocialized</i>	<i>Direct Socialized</i>	<i>Indirect</i>
Traditionals	36	31	33
Psychotics	40	40	20
Students	21	48	31

2) Baran, S. Development and validation of a TAT-type projective test for use among Bantu-speaking people, CSIR Special Report, 1971.

I also assessed to what extent the stories indicated action tendencies on the part of the individual according to which drives were expressed in an unsocialized manner or in a socialized manner or in an indirect manner. Here some important differences between the groups became noticeable:- (a) in regard to the question of whether drive is expressed in a direct socialized or direct unsocialized manner, we notice striking difference between the traditional and the student groups. Thus, male students, not separately shown above, shows 50 percent drive rated socialized versus 31 percent in the case of traditional males. On the other hand only 17,3 percent of drive content of male students could be rated direct unsocialized compared to 39,0 percent for the traditional male group. Whilst female students had 46,5 percent of their drive content rated socialized and 23,9 percent direct unsocialized, traditional females had 32,7 percent direct unsocialized and only 29,3 percent direct socialized. This would seem to indicate that traditional people are much less able to control impulse expression in a situation not provided for or covered by customary prescription than westernized (or partly westernized) black students.

Within the traditional group there is also a difference. The percentage of direct drive expression for male and female students is much the same but in the case of traditional females the indirect percentage is 38,5 percent compared to 29,6 percent for female students. We note further that this high percentage is achieved in spite of the depressing effect of only 20,2 percent in the case of psychotic females. Within the traditional group, we note that the direct unsocialized drive expression is smaller in the case of traditional females, 32,7 percent whilst these females show more indirect drive expression than traditional males.

Summarizing the above trends, we get the impression that:- (a) Acculturation or westernization in the sense of acquiring a western university education seems to bring about an increase in the amount of direct socialized drive expression in both males and females. This would seem to confirm the supposition that westernization brings about a change in personality towards the western norm of autonomous but socialized drive expression. I

do not, of course, within the present research material have any proof that such autonomous but socialized expression would be found in a white western group, but it is presumed that it would be so.

(b) Within the traditional group, males seem to be more inclined toward unsocialized drive expression whilst females seem to be more inclined to indirect drive expression.

General summary

On the basis of the two projective tests applied, the findings may be summarized as follows:-

The traditional consisting of diviners (male and female), female psychotics or failed diviners, male and female controls and herbalists strike the westerner as a group who are self-limiting and conformistic rather than expressive, who do not relate to the world and their fellowmen on an individualistic basis and do not construct meanings on the basis of individual experience. From an ego-psychological point of view, this would be impossible for them because of insufficient personality integration or lack of ego-strength. They cannot, at this stage, accept the challenge inherent in western culture, namely to live autonomous, self-regulated lives. On the contrary, the indications are that they would want to continue in terms of customs and prescriptions, i.e., to live in a shared world of meaning valid in their own cosmology. The findings relative to the psychotic women or failed diviners show that they can, on the basis of various aspects of both the Rorschach (low F+%, percentage of cards refused, queer or bizarre responses, other indications of pathology) and the TAT (percentage of non-integrated content and non-defined personal relations) be distinguished from the other groups.

This means that the hypothesis that ukuthwasa in itself is a form of schizophrenia cannot be upheld. On the contrary, diviners show up on the test as a normal (although self-restrictive) rather than a pathological group. I furthermore found no support for the idea that male diviners were a more "pathological" group than female diviners. A second important finding is

that in this non-westernized group, the group that had been diagnosed as schizophrenic showed some of the main schizophrenic signs found in western groups.

A further important finding in respect of the failed diviners, is that they also differ from the traditional group including the diviners in non-pathological ways. In the first place, they use very little folkloristic content compared to the groups of male and female diviners or controls. In the second place, they differ from both the traditional and the student group in that they use indirect drive expression to a very limited extent only. In the third place, by giving a low animal percentage and content such as architectural and scientific, they seem to indicate that they have assimilated certain attitudes characteristic of western culture, but were unable to integrate these fully in the Rorschach and TAT productions. These indications would point to a failure in an inability to utilize ukuthwasa as a culturally provided vehicle to resolve a severe crisis in living.

We further note that there are differences between traditional groups and black westernized Fort Hare students in that the latter are much better able than the former to produce TAT stories showing that they are able to socialize their drive expression and that they also define their personal relations on an individualistic basis to a far greater extent than the traditional groups. This means that they have assimilated the western ideal of autonomous personality functioning much better than the traditional groups.

Having now presented in a very rough fashion an outline of my findings in regard to the personality structure of the diviner and comparable groups, we must ask ourselves to what extent this really contributes to our understanding of the work of the diviner. The answer to this must, unfortunately, be a rather negative one. At best these findings can serve a negative purpose, in other words, showing that diviners are not necessarily pathological cases. It can also show us that within this group, those who failed to become diviners and went mad instead, are clearly distinguishable from the general group of the diviners. To generalize from the small group who did not succeed in becoming

diviners to diviners as a whole would be entirely invalid.

The findings further seem to contra-indicate any supposition that the diviners are talented showmen or charlatans who simply live by exploiting the ignorance of the unacculturated peasants. There is nothing in the test results to identify them as a resourceful psychopathic group at all. It is true, of course, that there are charlatans amongst them and also some of them seem to be quite ineffectual and do not have any patients at all. On the other hand, amongst the best of them there are some very impressive personalities indeed.

We must remember that both the Rorschach and the TAT as well as our methods of interviewing, leading to diagnostic categories, ways of understanding, personality psychology, etc., are all products of western culture. When we apply this approach to a member of an entirely different culture, we are bound to find deficit. For instance, if we think in terms of ego-strength and the integration of drive, then we are presupposing the validity of the western concept of the autonomous personality, whereas this may not necessary hold true within traditional Xhosa culture, and in fact, does not. In the same way, the traditional Xhosas may look at western culture and immediately see a deficit in our lack of knowledge of and respect for our ancestors. If they were to develop methods of studying the white man then they would probably find too, that they can impose pathological categories of their own on people whom we regard as important members of the community, e.g. medical practitioners, physical scientists and psychologists. Members of Xhosa culture may experience whites as cold, distant, uninvolved beings.

There are certain formidable barriers to our understanding of the work of the diviner. These may be briefly detailed as follows: (a) the empiricistic scientific framework; (b) the belief in progress; (c) the dominant western concept of the self as a closed entity and (d) the medical model of mental illness.

The empiricist scientific framework means that we tend to construe everything in terms of cause-effect sequences. For instance, if a non-westernized Xhosa dreams that he is drinking something, he may be inclined to think that this means that he is

actually being poisoned. However, if a westerner has a similar dream, he may construe this as follows:-

If you are drinking something in your dreams, it is completely invalid to deduce that you are actually been poisoned. If you later on develop symptoms diagnosed as reflecting "poisoning", this should be ascribed either to suggestion, i.e., your dream reflected your conviction that you are being poisoned and the symptoms result from the same conviction (which is in harmony with your belief system), or otherwise the symptoms derive from conditions, e.g. nutrition not provided for in your belief system. However, this cause-effect sequence does not make sense to the traditional Xhosa. To him the dream is a communication, it speaks of a reality of his life and no further explanation is basically necessary. An interpretation of the dream is only necessary if the message is not clear and in fact several diviners stated that they specialized in dream interpretation. If a Xhosa person dreams of the people of the river, or if his ancestors speak to him in the dreams, the message (e.g. that he has to thwasa) may not be immediately clear, but he has no need to doubt that his ancestor was speaking to him and there is no need for him to think as in western dream interpretation that the people of the river or the river itself stands for anything else, that is, is a symbol of something. The river as he knows it in his waking as well as in his dreaming existence is however, full of meaning. Even to the Westerner, a river is much more than a stream of H₂O. And in fact, if we are to understand the work of the diviner, or, to understand people in traditional culture, we have to know in what world of meaning they live. We must get him to explicate fully what the river means to him. However, the tendency of empirical scientific procedures is to strip everything of meaning except in so far as this conforms to the cause effect sequence and can be brought within a scheme of measurement. Although we all know that science cannot do everything, we are not at all conversant with the limitations of natural science. We are inclined to construe the findings of natural science as *the* reality or the only reality. However, unless we invalidate all other approaches to meaning, we must realize that science only

describes one aspect or profile of reality and not the whole. Other profiles of reality are possible, that is, other ways in which we can relate to the world and in which the world can disclose itself to us are valid and unless we are prepared to let this come into the open, we will be unable to understand anything which does not conform to the cause-effect sequence.

As Theodore Roszak has so eloquently shown in "Where the Wasteland Ends" the natural scientific view of reality is underpinned by and could only have arisen as a result of a long development in Judaic and Christian religion by which nature was persistently and in the end, successfully desacralized. This fact which so obviously differentiates between the traditional African and the contemporary western scientific-technological reality perspectives is rarely brought to bear on problems of understanding.

The belief in progress

In just about every aspect of life, the West has set itself up as a standard for the rest of the world. In so far as we regard our medicine and our psychology as being advanced, it follows that the Xhosa's approach to illness and malady, unsupported as it is by scientific anatomy, physiology and neurology, must then be regarded as primitive, retarded and undeveloped. The diviner is in no way striving towards the means of influencing body chemistry. On the contrary, he lives in an undivided world in which ancestors, dreams, plant and body all belong together. If he is informed in a vision or dream that a certain plant is to be used for a patient who will visit him on the next day he finds it unnecessary to enquire why this specific plant should have the properties of curing this particular person. The very fact that he fails to ask this last question discredits his whole procedure to the western scientist.

In so far as progress is defined in terms of an increased control of nature, which includes in western science the human body, it is clear that western science is indeed advanced. The question that is infrequently asked, however, is at what price this

increased control has been purchased and moreover, whether the concept of progress is still valid for our life on this planet. I think serious questions can be raised in regard to both these points of view. In view of our deep disillusionment with what has been achieved by the concept of progress; in view of the fact that the linear view of history has been discredited, and that we are disclaiming the validity of this concept in many respects, it is perhaps not wise of us to keep on setting ourselves up as a standard for other cultures. In this way we achieve only *comparative* social sciences and not truly *transcultural* ones.

The western concept of the self

There are many self theories which we can have a look at including those of Sullivan, Rogers, William James, Ludwig Binswanger and other phenomenologists, to mention but a few. In summary, however, we can say that although western psychology has studied the *phenomenology of self*, that is, how self interrelates with world, with fellowman and with significant others, it still, in the last instance, finds the self or the ground of being in an individual boundedness. The dominant form in which western man conceptualizes his individual existence is that of a demarcated self setting itself off against the world as a separate entity and essentially dividing man and fellow man into "I as a person" and "they as also persons". If we look at western man's autonomy and self-actualization, we will see that we would probably make out a good case that this has had positive results. However, if we think in terms of western man's alienation, his competitiveness, the invasion of his privacy by the mass communication media, etc., it also has certain negative aspects. However, we tend to conceptualize psychology also trans-culturally in terms of this image of the self and the Japanese psychiatrist Bin Kimura.³⁾ has pointed out that such a western concept of self

3) Kimura, Bin. Mitmenschlichkeit in der Psychiatrie, *Zeitschrift für Klinische Psychologie und Psychotherapie*, 1971, 19, 3-13.

may be in fact something which is peculiar to the west and need not have universal validity at all. He goes on to say that such a concept is in any case not valid for Japanese selfhood. First of all he points out that whereas in western languages we have only one first person pronoun they have in Japanese at least ten words for I and a similar number for you. In Japanese the specific form of the pronoun that a speaker will use when in different situations, will depend upon the sort of person being addressed or the sort of situation in which the speaker finds himself. When writing, we use a different pronoun and when we are relating something to another person, we again use a different pronoun. Secondly, the Japanese do not have our specific way of actively relating to the world and do not easily use expressions such as 'I see flowers'. They would rather say 'flowers appear to me'. In Japanese then, the tendency for the person who is speaking is to stand back behind that which is being spoken about. In such a case we cannot say that the I or self is creating the situation, but the reverse. The "I" or Ego allows itself to be brought into being by the situation. The self is constituted by what happens between people and perhaps between man and the world.

Kimuro not only suggests that Japanese selfhood is different from western selfhood, but he feels that western selfhood in being so self-isolating, is perhaps an exception rather than the rule. Perhaps the western selfhood as we know it now, is a distortion of what we originally were when we were still living in a world that was rich with shared meanings, e.g., in the Middle Ages. If that is so, then we should not be too puzzled about the fact that the diviner makes statements to the effect that he knows within himself what is wrong with the other person. What he is saying is not really much more or less than that we are accessible to each other, in other words, we live in a shared, common world. What he is claiming for himself could perhaps be no more than having gone through a series of intense experience called *ukuthwasa*, in which he became able to relate himself in a new way to the totality of meanings which constitutes his world, he is perhaps more sensitive than the non-diviner to what is going on between himself and another person or between the other

person and the community. I will return to this possibility later on.

The medical model of mental illness

In psychiatric history, we often refer to the work of Pinel as constituting a great advance in the treatment of mad persons in that he got them classified as ill rather than as transgressors or possessed by the devil. However, the researches of Michel Foucault⁴⁾ into the historical relations between madness and civilization have put this in a slightly different perspective. The fact is that in the centuries prior to Pinel, the asylum had come more and more to be restricted to criminals and mad people only. Prior to the age of reason, that is the 17th Century, madmen enjoyed a bigger amount of freedom than they did in the 17th or 18th Century or 19th Century. Pinel's success in redefining "madness" and "mental illness" was partly the result of the fact that the image of confinement had become almost inseparable from the image of madness. Nowadays the confinement of the mentally ill or mad person is not so much a physical confinement constituted by the hospital, padded cells and strait-jackets, but rather a chemical confinement in the prescription to keep on taking his medication. Moreover, because we still regard schizophrenia as basically incurable we are, in a sense, confining the person in the diagnosis.

On the one hand the medical model has been severely attacked by T.S. Szasz, some existential psychiatrists especially R. Laing and a host of followers⁵⁾. On the other hand, the occurrence of schizophrenia or schizophrenia-like conditions in non-western cultures has given some support to the medical model. From this apparent universal occurrence of schizophrenia, we may deduce some universal which transcends culture and a further obvious

4) Foucault, M. *Madness and Civilization*.

5) See especially T.S. Szasz, *Ideology and Insanity*, Penguin, 1974.

development of this argument is that schizophrenia must then be based in physiology and therefore probably be a genetically based biochemical disorder. Apart from the fact that a generally accepted genetic biochemical theory has not been generated we may ask ourselves whether there are other universals in terms of which man constitutes himself which may thus give rise to conditions which are similar in all cultural groups. I say constitute, because man is born as a subject and not as an object. In this regard, we note the following:-

(1) The human being is universally born to woman. This is not a mere biological event; in human terms it means that one has a mother first, then a father.

(2) The neonate is always (pre-reflectively) reacted to as a human being whether parents or other significant adults see him as a gift from God or the ancestors, as a welcome or unwelcome addition to the family, as a ray of light, a torch-bearer, as the carrier of greatness or as doomed to misery. They always react to him as a person, a subject who bears a name, has an identity, is someone and somebody, has a personality, is a fellowman; never as an organism, a thing, or mere form of life.

(3) In all cultures, the child, the adult, and the aged relate to people not as neutral objects, but as significant others with whom one can communicate. The human body is never pre-reflectively experienced as a mere object.

(4) Every child is born into a certain place which may change from time to time, but there is always a place which has significance to him and which he calls home.

(5) In all cultures, a child is born into a set of relationships which we call family which may have variations but which always consists of one or more adults usually related to him by blood.

(6) In all cultures, people must grapple with the fact that they must die. Man lives in time, has a life history; being-in-the-world is finite.

(7) The human being is universally characterized by the upright posture, but even this is not a mere biological given like breathing; it is acquired as an achievement and has to be maintained as opposition to the force of gravity throughout life; the close

ecological bond between man and his non-human environment is broken and thus a distance between him, the world and fellow-man is a primordial characteristic of man.

In view of the abovenamed universals of man constituting himself as 'n subject in a meaningful environment, surely it is possible to conceptualize man showing non-conformistic, idiosyncratic, incomprehensible, or alienated behaviour which in rough outline may show broad similarities without necessarily involving organic pathology or Mendelian genetics. I do not hereby wish to preclude the possibility that some forms of that general set of conditions known as schizophrenia may one day turn out to be an organically based disorder, but I must point out that to say that schizophrenia in Africa is the same as schizophrenia in Europe is to make a statement which derives as much from psychiatric authority as from scientific observation. In this regard Manfred Bleuler⁷⁾ has stated that "If our present psychiatric ideas had been developed on the basis of our experience in Africa rather than Europe it would hardly have been possible to speak of schizophrenia as an endogenous psychosis".

Having now explicated the main obstacles to western man's understanding of the diviner, it remains to be seen whether an alternative approach can be suggested in terms of which the possibilities are given for this practice to be understood. It should be clear that in order for us to come to a more definite understanding not only of the diviners but of man in general, we will have to redefine not only man, but the world. I cannot go into the possibilities of redefining these two fundamental entities. However, if we look upon man as being in the world, and if we look at both man and world as limited, but of infinitely varying potentiality, then it should be clear from this that other profiles of reality than those given by the natural scientists can be de-

6) Straus, E. The upright posture, in *Phenomenological Psychology*, Tavistock, 1966.

7) Bleuler, Manfred. Conceptions of Schizophrenia within the last fifty years and today. *International Journal of Psychiatry*, 2, 1, 1966, p. 12.

lineated. In other words, it would be wrong to take the undoubted success of natural science and hence see the world as a system of bare facts and thereafter try to fit that other stubborn entity, namely man, into the combination.

Man is always in a meaning-giving and meaning-disclosing relationship with the world. We can see that western man has roughly speaking, gone through two phases. In the middle ages, man was trying to give meaning to the world via his religion. Since the Renaissance, his main meaning disclosing approach to the world has been that of philosophy and natural science. The mistake we made is to regard only the latter as valid, not only for us but for all other peoples in the world and for succeeding generations as well.

However, if we accept that man is always in such a meaning-giving and meaning-disclosing relationship, then we must look afresh at the diviner who in Xhosa society is the main exponent of the nature of cosmic reality to his fellowmen. A study of the work of the diviner shows that he has at least four roles:-

(a) He is in contact with the ancestors or the shades and is therefore a mediator. A diviner made the following statement: "The ancestors have started teaching me. They will keep on talking to me until I die. One may become sick because the ancestors will want to eat and drink. Although they themselves will not be able to eat and drink, you must get people together to eat and drink; this makes the ancestors happy".

(b) He is also a seer. The following statements reveal this: "I know what is wrong with a person; these have been revealed to me in dreams". Another diviner said that "some I just look at and I know what is wrong with them. Some I hold by the hand and I feel his troubles in my own body. Sometimes I dream that a person will be coming and that he will be troubled by a thing that is specified". As regards the vumisa procedure, it is notable that many of my informants denied using this at all. Some however, say that the vumisa procedure may be used in various ways, for instance, "I use the vumisa procedure and during the process my ancestors come to me and tell me what is wrong with that person". Another diviner said "vumisa is necessary because

during this procedure you feel the sickness of the other person in your body". As we can see then *vumisa* is the exterior of a much more comprehensive matter.

I asked a diviner who had many initiates whether the initiates should make any confession. He replied that "the initiate cannot confess on his own accord. It is the diviner who must see these things (evil influences) in him and must rid him of them. I had a case of *ukupambana* (madness): in the course of treatment I saw a bat coming out of his mouth. Sometimes I myself dream that the affected initiate has the *impundulu*". It is easy enough to see that in such a case the western scientist will see this as invalid because to him it will mean hallucination which can only mean pathology. However, to conceptualize an auditory or visual experience as being a hallucination or a delusion, is to restrict the phenomenon to an abnormal or pathological mental condition and as such invalidate the experience. What we call hallucination is a universal ability which usually and especially in western cultures is not developed. In order to understand the diviner it is clear that we as trained scientists should put our scientific training in brackets for a moment. In other words, we should suspend judgement in as much as we are prepared to accept that there are other ways in which man can enter into a meaning disclosing relationship to the world. In other words, what the diviner is doing, is to take upon himself the responsibility for the explication of a dimension of the world which other people may find difficult to articulate. It is his function to give meaning to the strange, unusual or uncanny experiences of those who come to him.

(c) In the third place, the diviner is also an inquisitor. It always was his duty to smell out or identify those who are guilty of witchcraft. The fact that South African law has since the time of the British occupation tended to invalidate this aspect of his practice, regarding it as cruel, unchristian and bad, does not mean that it is no longer an inherent aspect of his practice, only a suspended one. Most diviners denied to me that they point to the guilty one, but one of them did. It is a fact, however, that it is something that goes on clandestinely in some cases in spite of legal prohibitions and thus must be seen as a remaining part of

his practice. In traditional society the diviner was a force to be reckoned with and had an important function of state. Smelling out was a recognized public activity which had to be authorized by the chief who together with his councillors could thus exert some control. In so far as this function of his has been invalidated in legal terms imposed from outside, it means that the culture has suffered a setback and has undergone an important change. (d) The function of the diviner is also that of healer. To deny that the human being has healing talents, is to deny an aspect of reality simply because it does not fit in with our notions of mechanical physiology and anatomy. There has recently been some experimental work on the possibility that this may be true and I see no reason why this should be denied. I also see no reason why abilities like extra-sensory perception should be denied. The only trouble is that with our present scheme of cause and effect, we do not know how to fit this systematically into our understanding of the world.

How is this to be understood? In what follows I will try to outline a procedure specially referring to the phenomenon of ukuthwasa.

1. Taking into consideration the fact that the boundaries which western man erects around himself as a person, i.e., his experience of his own identity as being separate from other people, does not necessary hold for our original being-in-the-world and very probably doesn't hold for people who grew up in a community-based culture such as the Xhosa, the accessibility of one person to another is not problematic. Man is always in a meaning-disclosing relationship to the world and this means that man lives in and as relationship to the world and to his fellow-men. African selfhood has been formulated in the following words:- "I am, because we are and we are because I am". There is therefore nothing mysterious in the accessibility that the diviners have into the *Lebwelt* or meaningful structure of the existence of the person who comes to consult them.

2. It is obvious that in the process of becoming a diviner, there is a great anxiety especially in the initial stages. It seems to me that we have to have recourse here to the concept of the un-

canny which has been so well formulated by Sullivan⁸⁾ as a set of relations which does not form part of the self-system of the person and being outside the person's usual cognitive processes, cannot therefore be integrated into everyday life; and is moreover marked by the absence of an identifiable object to which it can be related. Reformulated phenomenologically, it means that a structure of the world is announcing itself to the person, but that he is unable to take this into his self-system. This sort of uncanny experience is often seen in people who acquire the label 'acute'schizophrenic episode'. This means that there is something in my world which I have to take upon myself but for which I, at the moment, disclaim responsibility, which I cannot therefore assimilate into the structure of my existence. It seems to me that in the process of thwasa, the diviner tries to make these uncanny experiences into an intersubjective experience which can be shared with others and that this is supported by the community who regards the whole process as a meaningful one. This is where the western person in a crisis finds himself in a different existential position from the Xhosa in that the western person does not have the explicit support of the community in coming to terms with his experience.

3. There is a basic difference between Xhosa culture and western culture. Xhosa culture may be understood as being anthropophagic, in other words, it tends to reabsorb members, to include everyone in the community. It excludes witches — these are not regarded as being members of the community — so that if you are a member of the community, you remain one even if you are sick, inadequate or mad. Western culture on the other hand is anthropemic, that is, it tends to extrude members on grounds such as inability to compete or unfitness for adaptation to ordinary roles. It is interesting that, to become a diviner, one has to be 'sick' whereas if one wants to become a psychiatrist or a

8) Sullivan, H.S. The meaning of Anxiety in Psychiatry and in Life. *Psychiatry*, 22, 1948, p. 1-13.

clinical psychologist, having been 'mentally ill' will be considered a disadvantage. The only approximation to the diviner is initiation in western culture is the didactic psychotherapy required of prospective practitioners in approaches such as the Freudian and the client centered⁹⁾. However, such initiation is considered unnecessary for the psychiatrist with an organicist approach as well as for those who prefer behaviour therapy or behavioural technologies.

As a corollary, whereas the initiate or Umkweta has a clear meaning structure into which he can be assimilated, the western psychologist or client has to find his own particular set of life meanings.

4. In Hammond Tooke's approach to a structural understanding of Xhosa cosmology he starts from the polarities between nature and culture¹⁰⁾. In this scheme the diviner is in a mediate, marginal or ambiguous position. Hammond Tooke differentiates between various polarities in this nature-culture scheme, for instance, the opposition between wild beasts of prey on the one hand and edible domestic animals on the other; also between witches who are to be found in the forest on the one hand and domestic life inside the community on the other. However, we note that diviners do not become diviners through participating only in the culture pole of this scheme. The diviner goes to rivers as well as to the forest in order to be able to communicate with his ancestors. To him the ancestor is fully understood as both a figure of love and of wrath. Re-interpreting this in phenomenological terms, it must mean that the diviner has to make an intimate contact not only with the positive aspect of his *Lebwelt*, but also with the negative, denied aspects. It is interesting that

9) For a fuller comparison see, Kruger, D. Xhosa Divining and contemporary psychotherapy. *Fort Hare Papers*, 1974, 6/1, p. 37-46.

10) Hammond-Tooke, W.D. The symbolic structure of Cape Nguni Cosmology, in M.G. Whisson & M. West. *Religion and Social Change in Southern Africa*, D. Philip, 1975, p. 15-33.

the terms for diviner and witch are (apart from one letter) the same, in spite of the fact that the diviner is generally considered to be the person who must restore the balance between good and evil and must therefore place himself solidly on the side of society. However, in order to be able to achieve this, the diviner must participate in both the negative and the positive aspects of the culture and is deeply involved in the mediating marginal or ambiguous sphere in this regard. In other words, there may be a distrust of an individual diviner but at the same time, he is in a position of power in that he has, in Sullivan's terms, a more expanded self-system than the client.

5. It should be obvious by now that to really understand the Xhosa diviner, we need researchers who can participate fully in his experience. What we are looking for is not only the structure but the specific way in which individual diviners structure and restructure their own experience, that is, their existences. In order to be able to do this, we should try to get the diviner to explicate his actual experience, that is, to take himself out of the prescribed categories in which he lives in order to explicate his feelings of anxiety, isolation, alienation on the one hand and on the other how he feels close to the spirits, to his fellowmen etc. It is only recently that systematic phenomenological research methods have been developed. These methods instead of trying to quantify and measure, try to explicate meanings. If we can do an extensive enough research on the subject, it means that we must get the diviners and their patients to explicate experience in order to fully understand what is happening in the process of *thwasa*. This can only be done if one has a full knowledge of the language and can establish rapport with a number of diviners and initiates and can get them to articulate and explicate their experience. It is difficult to say to what extent this is going to be successful because diviners will naturally tend to give answers which do not reflect any difficulty in regard to any doubts that they may have about the correctness of their cosmology in relation to themselves. However, I do not see this as an insuperable obstacle to such a project.

Soul's¹¹⁾ research has shown that with increasing acculturation there is a movement away from the diviner. However this can by no means be seen as a linear thing because as people find themselves in transition, they find that they are trying to assimilate a culture which is psychically entirely different from their own. This means that it is difficult for them to assimilate the new experiences into their existing structures and in such a case they will have to fall back upon the diviner who can understand in contra-distinction to the white doctor or psychologist who do not share their basic cultural matrices or meaning schemas. Moreover, we should not underestimate the latent creative possibilities of the African context in conflict and in contact with western civilization. In this regard, I would refer to the work of the Zulu lightning doctor, Laduma Madela who developed a new cosmology and who discovered a grove of revelation on Ceza mountain¹²⁾. Whether Laduma is going to find many followers in his formulation of his new cosmology, I do not know, but the fact remains that Laduma has, in a situation which to us is simply a display of nature, discovered the meaningfulness of objects in that they point beyond themselves to the creative process itself and contributes to an understanding of how man exists in the African context.

As a counter-weight to absolutizing the empiricist, logical positivistic, scientific view which prevails so largely in the modern world, I would like to refer to Stephan Strasser's distinction between first, second and third objectivities.

A diviner, Dumile, told me of a dream in which his father came to him and said that he was cold and that his son should give him something to make him warm. He then made beer and

11) Soul, T.V. A comparative study of rural and urban Africans on their attitudes towards amagqira (witchdoctors), M.A. Thesis, Fort Hare, 1974, p. 54-66 (not published)

12) See K. Schlosser. Zauberei in Zululand, Schmidt & Klaunig, Kiel, 1972 and Bodenstein, W., Raum, O.F. A present day Zulu philosopher. *Africa* 30, No. 2, p. 160-181.

slaughtered a goat so that there was feasting. Dumile says that thereafter he knew that he had done the right thing because this dream did not come again. He had complied with a ceremony which should have been held in honour of his departed father who is now an ancestor. Similarly, when the diviner treats someone, and that person is cured, then this is taken as a proof of the correctness of his practice. Should the person not be cured, this will again be taken as a proof of a strength of the witchcraft forces operating upon him. In other words, the basic gnostic scheme according to which the diviner lives, provides also the means for verification, but obviously, this first objectivity will not be satisfactory to contemporary civilized western man.

Instead we insist on a different objectivity. The ability to think abstractly is the characteristic genius of western civilization. Anna-Louize Conradie¹³⁾ puts it the following way: "on the question: what is it? the philosopher replies by giving a definition which ignores whatever is accidental or irrelevant to the definiendum. Abstraction thus combines with the logic of classification to yield a kingdom of timeless essences which devaluates the everyday world to the status of appearance". This is the dualism mainly ascribable to Descartes which has emerged as a dominant scientific ideology of the West (2nd objectivity). However, it is becoming clear to many people that this scientific view, in claiming that physical mathematical procedures alone guarantee an avenue to the truth, has now become only too obviously inadequate to understanding the lived world or *Lebwelt* in which we journey and dwell. In this connection it is necessary to develop a radical thinking which will expose the root of objective thinking and show how it is anchored in the *Lebwelt*, which is the pre-given world of everyday experience and this is known as the third objectivity. It is this third objectivity that I propose should be our basic frame of reference in trying to un-

13) Conradie, Anna-Louize. *Learned ignorance*. University of Natal Press, 1968, p. 5.

derstand the work of the diviner.

This means that if we are to understand the diviner we must explicate his *Lebwelt*, i.e., find a scientific method by which we can understand him from a frame of reference which is internal to him. Our first step must be to understand his cosmology, i.e., how his culture articulates the reality in which he lives. Secondly, we must develop a method by which we can systematically explicate the meanings involved in his practice and how these meanings are translated into therapeutic action. It is important that we understand how the diviner thinks about his practice and for this purpose, the first and indispensable step is to suspend our own biases and pre-conceptions. We will have to explicate what the human body, being human, being sick, unfortunate, mad, etc., means to him. Furthermore, we will have to understand what the world, spatiality, animal, plant etc., mean to him and what the significance of these is to his practice.

It should be clearly understood that the western natural scientific world view does not have a privileged position in any conceptualization of what is real. Once the meaning structure in which the actions of the diviner occur, has been explicated, there is no need for an attempt to reduce these to quantitative categories in order to test the "reality" of his reality. It is only on the basis of logical-positivistic and physicalistic thinking that a statement such as that of Thorndike that "everything that exists, exists to some degree, and everything that exists to some degree can be measured" can be justified. From the point of view supported in this article, such a statement reflects a deep distrust of the reality of human experience and serves to invalidate non-quantifiable statements.

Furthermore, it should be clear that such research must start by acknowledging its nature as a dialogue. There is no way in which the researcher can define his own perspective of reality as being superior and his function must be to help the informing subject to explicate the meanings of what is being researched as fully as possible. This same method can be repeated with different subjects so that nomothetic research can be done. Such a point of view liberates the science of psychology and its sister

disciplines from the unattainable natural scientific requirements of identical repetition of experimental situations and the isolation of the subject from the process of observation.

A last point: white researchers in this field (and westernized blacks as well) should liberate themselves from any feelings of (be it benign) superiority which seem so natural within the traditional structure of South African Society and should heed a black psychologist who warns that "In South African society with its clearly-demarcated domains of permissible experience whites (members of superordinate groups) studying blacks (subordinates) find themselves face to face with an experiential hiatus of such magnitude as to denude their personal experience as a resource for both hypothesis formation and the meaningful interpretation of data"¹⁴). I do believe, however, that an acceptant openness for and deeply respectful listening to the experience of the informant which is the very essence of the phenomenological attitude can help to overcome this hiatus.

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14) Manganyi, N.C., *Mashangu's reverie*, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1977.