catalytic system of genes that ultimately may generate disease phenotypes: genes, of course, are essential but the genome itself is the slave to the epigenetic cellular regulatory systems that interpret the environment and adjusts gene expression accordingly. If so, then aneuploidy takes its place with other epigenetic cellular systems that operate to control health/disease patterns of gene expression in a context-dependent manner. In the case of HIV/AIDS we begin to appreciate that causality also resides at higher levels of organization that are affected by environmental and behavioral changes and that there is strong evidence for a premature closure around an HIV-only cause for AIDS. This book deserves attention and open discussion at all levels of our biomedical establishment and by critical readers everywhere.

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Shamans/Neo-Shamans: Ecstasy, Alternative Archaeologies and Contemporary Pagans by Robert J. Wallis. London: Routledge, 2003. xviii + 306 pp. $109.95 (cloth). ISBN 0-415-30202-1.

Traveling between the Worlds: Conversations with Contemporary Shamans by Hillary S. Webb. Charlottesville, VA: Hampton Roads, 2004. xxii + 247 pp. $15.95 (paper). ISBN 1-57174-403-7.

Ever since Euro-American academics took interest in shamans, some of their fellow citizens have sought to become shamans. Arguably, the current popularity of shamanism began with religious historian Mircea Eliade's definition of it as a widespread, if not universal, set of techniques for inducing and utilizing nonordinary conscious states (Eliade, 1964). It was furthered by anthropologists Carlos Castaneda and Michael Harner—the former encouraging post-hippie aspirants to engage indigenous experts, the latter formulating an individualized, psychologized "core-shamanism" geared toward Western seekers/consumers. This review engages two recent works treating adapted or novel shamanisms from different ends of the academic-to-popular spectrum. Read in conversation with one another, I suggest they illuminate some key sociological and epistemological debates about scientificllate-capitalist materialism, if not the nature or practice of shamanism.

In *Traveling Between the Worlds,* Hillary Webb offers selections from interviews with twenty-four shamanic practitioners portraying what shamanism is and what it can offer her readers. More than half of her experts came to shamanism from the First World or as transcultural persons, making them (she argues) more accessible and giving them a special understanding of the problems of postindustrial society. The biggest problem on which Webb's experts concur is the failure of the scientific establishment to address certain universal human experiences and concerns—not only the paranormal, but the major existential questions of individual and collective identity, origin, and purpose. They agree that this failure has led us to a threshold, from which humanity either takes its next evolutionary step or, more pessimistically, suffers an onrushing catastrophe of our own making (Webb, 2004: 10, 80, 130, 213). For them, contemporary interest in shamanism bespeaks both the nearness of this threshold and the emergence of a "transformational community" of people creating demonstrable spiritual and social-structural change (Webb, 2004: 9, 32, 96). If traditional shamans can bring villages back into balance, the argument goes, postmodern shamans will be able to rebalance our global civilization.

Although he does not deal with so broad a cultural-historical canvas, archaeologist Robert Wallis also seeks to make room for Western shamans. Specifically, through *Shamans/Neo-Shamans* he is intent on showing the interpenetration of academic and participatory (neo-Shamanic) approaches to shamanism. Wallis highlights how Western neo-Shamanisms form part of the cultural milieu that includes and influences academics (Wallis, 2003: 13, 24, 227). First, insofar as they factor into policy decisions, neo-Shamans' ritual uses of sites like Stonehenge and Chaco Canyon affect access to, and thus shape use by, academic researchers, government conservators, and indigenous peoples. Second, neo-Shamanic groups often exercise wider influence on nonexperts than do social scientists, and thus constitute more than simply another interesting research subject. In cases where that influence reinforces paternalistic or otherwise exploitative relations with other societies, and even in the more benign cases he (as a practicing neo-Shaman) is quick to cite, Wallis argues that conscientious academics must address neo-Shamanisms (Wallis, 2003: 17–18).

In both works, neo-Shamanisms provide an opportunity to break from an "either/or" mentality that the authors feel has retarded Western thought generally and mainstream scholarship in particular (cf. Wallis, 2003: 193). Wallis's argument reflects his endorsement of the self-reflexive, politically aware turn in social scientific research over the last several decades (see Marcus & Fischer, 1986). He insists that the best social research comes from the recognition of a political context for research and from the honest self-positioning of the researcher within that context (i.e., as one more being with particular sympathies and partial perspective). Wallis argues that social scientists ought to take that recognition to one logical extreme and use themselves as research subjects, as simultaneous "outsiders" and "insiders" (Wallis, 2003: 4).

The call to reflexive awareness of positioning is in a sense preaching to Webb's choir of neo-Shamans. For them, pursuing the development of the essential self toward its destiny inevitably leads us back to rendering service to our community and the cosmos (Webb, 2004: 122). Shamanic practice gets us beyond our compartmentalized cultural conditioning to reveal the true interconnectedness of selves and cosmos. The importance of the self can be derived from the "healed healer" definition of a shaman enunciated by Eliade (1964). But the idea of self as a manifestation of the divine in the cosmos and a node in a web of human and other-than-human beings more directly reflects the New Age milieu in which neo-Shamanisms have taken root (cf. Heelas, 1996; Melton et al., 1991).

In taking a socio-political approach, *Shamans/Neo-Shamans* cannot avoid considering the grounds on which and the extent to which neo-Shamanisms like those in Traveling Between *the* Worlds can be considered legitimate shamanisms. Webb's experts say there is "no basic difference" between their practices and traditional shamanisms (Webb, 2004: 23). More cautiously, Wallis argues that their "close similarity to shamanisms is beyond dispute" (Wallis, 2003: 78), citing neo-Shamanisms' biopsychological effects, their creation of community and identity, and their respectful interface with traditional shamans, all of which we can see in Webb's interviews.

But significant differences exist, though Wallis's and Webb's experts diverge on where they lie and how to interpret them. Webb's neo-Shamans note distinctions among native traditions, as well as the different needs to which native and neo-Shamanic traditions respond. One, Malidoma Patrice Somé from Burkina Faso, even argues that importing shamanic traditions into the West can cause more problems than it solves (Webb, 2004: 148). Most, however, assent to Harner's conception of a "core-shamanism" that can be distilled, distributed, and decorated with culturally appropriate details while remaining authentic and efficacious (cf. Webb, 2004: 222).

This universalizing tendency is where Wallis focuses his strongest criticism of neo-Shamanisms. Hamerian core-shamanism ought to trouble us in the way it ultimately disregards cultural specificities and uses elements of many traditions indiscriminately to legitimate neo-Shamanic techniques and ends (Wallis, 2003: 51). It informs the equally problematic romantic notion of an Edenic past/future society represented by traditional shamanisms and accessible to neo-Shamans (Wallis, 2003: 64). Wallis also notes the influence of neo-Shamans on both the commodification of spirituality and the ossification of tradition exemplified by some indigenous groups' claims to "copyright" exclusivity on certain ideas and practices (Wallis, 2003: 203). For their part, Webb's interviewees also single out these developments for criticism, though in not nearly as stringent or thoroughgoing a manner as does Wallis.

As someone who has himself struggled with the issue of how his academic discipline (in my case, cultural anthropology) can make a difference in the arena of public discourse, I take Wallis's call to engage "popular" purveyors and consumers of neo-Shamanic claims seriously. Thus I was disappointed by the slightly too-academic style and $100+ cost of his book, neither of them invitations to nonexpert readers. For those two reasons, *Shamans/Neo-Shamans* will probably lose out to *Traveling Between the Worlds* in the struggle for hearts and minds, despite offering a good way to think about the latter and other similar works.

For someone claiming neo-Shamanic insider status, Wallis neglects describing shamanism experientially, which is exactly where the human-potential appeal will lie in Webb's book for many readers. Also, Wallis raises and then ignores an argument against writing off spirits, as mainstream Western sciences usually do. It is one thing to state that "neo-Shamanisms work" or to urge us to "respect alternative points of view." But it is quite another thing to take shamanic and neo-Shamanic truth claims—that their efficacy is related to the influence of other-than human beings—seriously. (See Edith Turner's [1992] more concise and pointed argument to that effect within anthropology.)

I would attribute these failings in part to stigmatization, but also to Wallis's critique of what he sees as illegitimate, ideologically driven claims to commensurability. For example, he attacks claims that indigenous or neo-Shamanic constructions of the past are interchangeable with, and thus approachable in the same manner as, academic-scientific (re)constructions of the past. He has no problem with the invention of tradition in and of itself. But he takes to task assertions that cannot be supported by established scholarship, like the assertion of an ancient Celtic "shamanism" (and, I imagine, Webb's neo-Shamans' claim to have rescued Jewish or Hawaiian or Mayan shamanic traditions).

Given this pattern of attacking false commensurability between epistemic systems, Wallis would find it difficult to turn around and argue for any convergence between neo-Shamanic animism and Western scientific theory. Webb and her experts have no such qualms. They not only tacitly assume the commensurability of many different types and genres of truth claims, but casually blend them together with overly broad attributions of authority ("it is said that X" and "I read somewhere that Y"). They frequently state that cutting-edge science—or what they construe as such—is uncovering, by a different but equally authoritative and validating manner, what shamans have known for thousands of years about the nature of humanity and the cosmos. Yet elsewhere they decry that same scientific cutting edge as separating us from access to the true nature of the world and ourselves.

Furthermore, Webb and her experts argue for a fundamental incommensurability between intellectual and experiential approaches to shamanism. "Words cannot accurately express the numinous," she writes. "The numinous can only be experienced" (Webb, 2004: xxii). This would logically complicate, if not preclude, a collaborative convergence of conventional science and (neo-)shamanism, a position even more upsetting to those who take seriously science as "public knowledge" (e.g., Ziman, 1968) than the constructivism on which Wallis draws.

On the matter of commensurability, we may well question the utility or even validity of approaching these two works with the same criteria, given their manifestly different styles, publishers, contexts, and (to a degree) audiences.

Even if Wallis and Webb are on some level talking past each other, I would argue for the appropriateness of a dialectical review. Both authors make claims about the same social phenomenon (with different names), sometimes using the same strategies and tropes (e.g., stalled mainstream vs. productive fringe), and with similar second-order goals in mind (i.e., making the epistemic world safe for particular kinds of diversity). And, curiously, both books fail to shed much direct light on the nature or practices of the various shamanisms they treat—no surprise, because their heads are elsewhere.

Considering the authors' expressed intent to move readers turned off by a mainstream scientific view of the world, I would further argue we can make assessments of their comparative successes both in presenting a compelling argument and in reaching their target audiences. As noted above, Webb's book has certain advantages over Wallis's in how it tailors price and style to its market niche. Wallis may want his book to reach that niche, too, but I fear it will not travel far from university library shelves, as handsome and well-crafted as it is. Within the fractured landscape of academia, it should find a congenial, if restricted audience that appreciates (quite legitimately) its contribution to the reassessment of shamanism and of the social sciences. Yet, for reasons Wallis's critique makes clear, Webb's book solidifies but does not substantively advance the extra-academic treatment of (neo)shamanisms.

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