NON-WESTERN FORMS OF KNOWLEDGE AND THEIR IMPORTANCE FOR EUROPEAN CULTURE

Venue: The Labyrinth, Zagarolo, Italy
Organizers: Center *Interstices*, *Alain Daniélou Foundation*, *Wasiwaska Center*
Dates: 26 to 28 April 2024

Conception

Since his pioneering study on healing plants among mestizo curanderos in Peru, carried out in the 1980s, Luis Eduardo Luna has incessantly worked on the specific world-configuration as well as on the international scope and ecosophical importance of Shamanism for the global culture of today. Together with Adriana Luna, he has been leading the *Wasiwaska Research Center* for almost thirty years, where interdisciplinary dialogues on subjects like Plant Ecology, Cosmos and Neuroscience, Animism, Visions and the Arts regularly take place. In 2023 the Transcultural and Ecosophical Platform of the Alain Daniélou Foundation, whose team build from 2024 onward Interstices – Center for Transversal Thinking, invited Luis Eduardo Luna to participate in a workshop in Italy on "Animism and Paganism" with Graham Harvey and Barbara Glowzcewski. From that dialogue an idea took shape about the importance of a concrete interaction (in theory and practice) with representatives of non-Western world-configurations which, already because of the mode of living inherent to them, offer an alternative to the dead-ended mainstream of Western culture today.

From a geopolitical standpoint, the mainstream tendency of a Western culture shows alarming signs of self-destruction. Increasing deforestation, a systematic eradication of animal species, uncontrolled urbanization, and a pollution rate that costs six million human lives a year are undeniable signs of a deep crisis affecting a culture whose "universal values" have been implemented in many parts of the globe. It is mainly in the visionary arts

and in the ethnology of the last thirty years that a new light was shed on world-configurations quite different from the European mainstream, which were once deemed "primitive" or "savage", in an attempt not only to understand them but also to learn from them and transform the incorporation of differences into an instrument of self-criticism. This effort was accompanied by a critical reflection on the asymmetric epistemology of the West, which ideologically eliminates every reflection on its own historical and social conditions to create an illusion of pure objectivity. It is on the basis of these two attempts that another idea of the "human" (devoid of the ethnocentric connotation that has characterized different forms of Western humanism so far) is emerging through interdisciplinary and transcultural joint-efforts.

The interaction on "Non-Western Forms of Knowledge" at the Alain Daniélou Foundation in collaboration with Interstices – Center for Transversal Thinking aims at opening a space for theoretical reflection and discussion on field work and research experiences on world-configurations belonging to Non-Western cultures (in South America, South Asia, and West Africa): their way of socializing with humans, animals, plants and spirits, as well as their social cohesion and institutional practices. This discussion will be carried out with an eye to (re-)evaluating alternative modalities of thinking and living in the West, the possibility of transversal innovations in Western thinking, such as the insights of a poetic anthropology, the subversive potential of ethnopsychiatry, or the geopolitical implications of ecosophy, as well as the difficulty of finding a culturally appropriate method to share indigenous knowledge in a globalized world – where globalization is synonymous with 'westernization'.

Modality

- *Morning sessions of April 26 and* 27: two lectures of around half an hour by Luis Eduardo Luna, followed by a general discussion of around an hour on his position and the contents of his talks.

- *Morning and afternoon sessions of April 26 and* 27: a fifteen-to-twenty-minute talk by each one of the workshop participants, followed by a discussion of around forty-five minutes, on some of the main theoretical complexes of the workshop:

1. the place of "the other" in European culture;
2. the question of doing justice to other forms of knowledge from/within an epistemic paradigm that claims universal validity;
3. possible forms of adopting and integrating other modes of living and thinking;
4. the framework and limits of self-critique in the confrontation with radically different paradigms;
5. the possibility of a transformation of thinking based on experiential breakthrough.

Such talks will serve as a bridge to relate certain thematic nodes from different standpoints and relate them (empathically or critically) with Luis Eduardo Luna's position and main ideas.

- *Morning session of April 28*: Closing discussion based on the reflections shared by Luis Eduardo Luna and the rest of the workshop participants on April 26 and 27.