

Excerpted from Wishart (2002):

In the quotation below from Narby (1999), I have inserted numbers to delineate the progression of the development of anthropology and the corresponding anthropological perceptions of the shaman:

The answer lies in the mirror.

1. *When anthropology was a young science, unsure of its own identity and unaware of the schizophrenic nature of its own methodology, it considered shamans to be mentally ill.*
2. *When “structuralist” anthropology claimed to have attained the rank of science, and anthropologists busied themselves finding order in order, shamans became creators of order.*
3. *When the discipline went into “poststructuralist” identity crisis, unable to decide whether it was a science or a form of interpretation, shamans started exercising all kinds of professions.*
4. *Finally, some anthropologists began questioning their discipline’s obsessive search for order, and they saw shamans as those whose power lies in “insistently questioning and undermining the search for order”.*

This evolution of anthropology and the lens through which it viewed those cultures it was studying begs the question, “What lenses do we use to view the world, others, and ourselves, not just professionally, but personally?”

Reference List

- Narby, J. (1999). *The Cosmic Serpent: DNA and the Origins of Knowledge*. New York, NY: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam.
- Wishart, P. M. (2002). Reflections on “The Cosmic Serpent”. *Sacred Space*, 3(4), 50-53.