

Nietzsche, Fisher and yãkoana: Ways of conjuring up white-rational-realism through psychedelics

Nietzsche, Fisher e yãkoana: formas de conjurar o realismo-racional-branco por meio de psicodélicos

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ABSTRACT

This article proposes, based on plural and complementary readings, to avoid condemning ourselves to an exclusive way of decoding reality, belittling the others, and to reflect on how psychedelics could help us open up to otherness. It begins with Nietzsche and his break with the hegemony of Western rationality, goes on to Mark Fisher, who proposes an acid communism, as opposed to capitalist realism, points out various possible metaphysics and ends with a case study in which we analyse, based on Kopenawa, the animism of the Yanomami: the relationship between their shamans and the spirits of the forest (xapiripë), mediated by the psychedelic yãkoana.

KEYWORDS: Nietzsche, Mark Fisher, Metaphysics, Kopenawa, psychedelics

RESUMO:

Este artigo propõe, a partir de leituras plurais e complementares, evitar que nos condenemos a uma forma exclusiva de decodificar a realidade, menosprezando as demais, e refletir como os psicodélicos poderiam nos ajudar nessa abertura à alteridade. Começa com Nietzsche e a sua quebra da hegemonia da racionalidade ocidental, passa por Mark Fisher, que propõe um comunismo ácido, em contraposição ao realismo capitalista, aponta diversas metafísicas possíveis e termina com um estudo de caso em que analisamos, a partir de Kopenawa, o animismo dos yanomami: a relação entre seus xamãs e os espíritos da floresta (xapiripë), mediada pelo psicodélico yãkoana.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Nietzsche, Mark Fisher, Metafísica, Kopenawa, psicodélicos

Introduction

agora / você está sob efeito / de uma droga poderosa: // você mesmo

Rodrigo Garcia Lopes

Eles dormem sem sonhos, como machados largados no chão de uma casa.

Davi Kopenawa

In the latter half of the 19th century, Friedrich Nietzsche challenged the metaphysical framework of reason laid down by Socrates and Plato. He aimed to show that we're made up of more than just

reason, urging us not to get trapped in a single way of understanding reality and to appreciate our other impulses. Nietzsche sought to dismantle dualities like heaven vs. earth, the ideal world vs. the apparent world, and reason vs. emotion. He argued these divisions were created to let one aspect dominate the other, effectively denying life itself. This was a form of liberation, as the first part of this article will explore, but no liberation is ever eternal or absolute.

In the second part of the article, we'll see that, about a hundred years later, one way of organising society has become so dominant it's seeped into metaphysics itself, making it hard to imagine other ways of decoding reality. Capitalist Realism, a term coined by English theorist Mark Fisher, is so deeply rooted in the heart and mind of neoliberal society that any criticism of it seems inconsequential, barely scratching the surface of this old-new structure. Alarmed by its dominance, Fisher jotted down ideas for a potential antidote: Acid Communism. Drawing on the counterculture of the 1960s and 70s and its psychedelic worldview, Fisher wanted to show that we can't be trapped by this pervasive spectre. Other realities are, and must be, possible.

This is a key point for philosophers who study metaphysics as a discipline – as we'll see in the third part of this article. Metaphysics, born as a branch of philosophy exploring the foundations of being and reality, often reinforces a dominant way of thinking when treated as an exclusive method of decoding reality. This “majority” way of thinking, as Deleuze and Guattari put it in 1980, can be challenged by opening up to alternative perspectives, such as the use of psychedelics.

As a case study of another way of organising reality, in the fourth part of this article, we'll look at how Yanomami shamans use the psychedelic yäkoana to access different parts of their reality, where forest spirits, called xapiripë, reveal themselves and pass on ancestral teachings. This whole process is rooted in radical openness to otherness, a communion between humans and non-humans, whether they be plants, forest phenomena, or spirits. It's profoundly different from the White way of life and its realist-rational metaphysics, which produces a solipsistic view confirming its own position without considering the different.

For the Yanomami, psychedelics like yäkoana are a key to regions usually inaccessible. They're not a guaranteed access point – yäkoana works this way only with shamans – but a specialised and sophisticated tool. They're not a magic solution; they don't work in isolation or promise salvation, unlike other metaphysical approaches. Instead, they act in concert with other beings, demonstrating a correlation and cooperation among elements that are, from their perspective, subjects of their own existence. They represent another way of understanding the world, where all beings deserve equal treatment, without imposing our own hierarchical reflections.

This article aims to show, with the help of various authors who don't always agree, how psychedelics can serve as one possible way to challenge a monoculture of thought. This monoculture has manifested in various forms, like the tradition of Western rationality, capitalist realism, physicalism, or even the whitening of diverse cultures around the world.

Part one - Rational reality

The passage in *Twilight of the Idols* where Friedrich Nietzsche explains “How the ‘true world’ finally became a fable” is well-known. Its quotation marks and the subtitle (“History of an error”) highlight Nietzsche’s aim: to show that Western thought’s quest to establish a “true world” ended up creating a “mistake”. Essentially, Nietzsche argues that attempts to define the true world and reality were always based on criteria that, he claims, denied reality itself in all its complexity. It's a brief section, just six points, each presenting a different interpretation of the world.

It starts with Plato's view that the “true world” is only accessible to "the wise, the pious, the virtuous" (II, "How the 'true world' finally became a fable", 1). Plato suggested we must deny the apparent world because it's a lie; truth exists out there, beyond our senses. Nietzsche calls this the "oldest form of the idea, relatively coherent, simple, convincing." He then discusses how this idea evolved in Christian thought, where the "true world" is "unattainable for now, but promised to the man who is wise, pious, virtuous ('to the sinner who repents')." Initially, reality is only for the few who can access it – those, Nietzsche says, Plato equates with himself ("I, Plato, *am* the truth").

Later, this true world becomes a promise, attainable through a life of restriction, accessible only to those following the ascetic ideal. The path to the "true world" then passes through Kantian thought, where this destination, though "unattainable, unprovable, unpromisable," exists as a thought, “a consolation, an obligation, an imperative” linked to the categorical imperative. Nietzsche sees the Kantian "thing in itself" as an "elusive, pale, Nordic" version of Plato's idea. Thus, in these early stages, the "true world" is something beyond our sensory experience, a counterpoint that diminishes our own life.

In the fourth stage, we encounter positivism, where the "true world" is still "unattained. And as unattained also *unknown*." Science replaces religion in the quest to decode this truth, attempting to translate all existence into instrumental reason, discarding parts deemed useless. At the penultimate stage, we see a dark form of what Nietzsche calls nihilism, where the "true world" becomes "an idea that is of no further use, not even as an obligation," the idea is now "superfluous,” “consequently a refuted idea: let’s get rid of it!" The "true world" is flat, indifferent, and meaningless.

Finally, Nietzsche concludes this "history of error" by arguing that the "true world" has been abolished. And "which world is left?" he asks. "The illusory one, perhaps? ... But no! *we got rid of the illusory*

world along with the true one!" For him, this is "Noon; moment of the shortest shadow; the end of longest error; high point of humanity; *incipit Zarathustra* [*Zarathustra begins*]" (II, "How the 'true world' finally became a fable", 6). By abolishing the distinction between the sensible and suprasensible worlds, humans can finally focus on the only world that exists.

This brief passage appears to extend the themes from the previous two chapters of Nietzsche's *Twilight of the Idols*. In the first, he critiques Socrates' problem, summarised as an equation ("the most bizarre of all equation") where "reason = virtue = happiness" (II, "The problem of Socrates": 4). In the second chapter, Nietzsche discusses how philosophy has historically viewed reason and the "presuppositions of *reason*," leading to "unity, identity, permanence, substance, cause, objectification, being" and trapping us in error (II, "'Reason' in philosophy": 5). Nietzsche seems to argue that reason isn't the sole tool for understanding reality but rather one among many.

Nietzsche's issue wasn't with reason itself but with dogma. He viewed the dominance of reason, as seen with Socrates ("Reason = virtue = happiness only means: you have to imitate Socrates" (II, "The problem of Socrates": 10)) and Plato ("I, Plato, *am* the truth" (II, "How the 'true world' finally became a fable", 1)), as limiting the plurality of possibilities the world offers. This monolithic approach was also present in Christianity, where faith eliminated thoughts outside church dogma. Scholastic philosophers like Thomas Aquinas saw God as the source of universal intelligibility but ultimately unknowable. This pursuit of truth laid the groundwork for rational inquiry that eventually sidelined God, leading to a point where "the discipline of truth forbids itself the lie of faith in God" (Ansell-Pearson: 2012, 177).

After Nietzsche, Western thought began exploring other ways of understanding reality beyond reason alone. This includes Freud's psychoanalysis, Heidegger's phenomenology, Sartre's existentialism, and the poststructuralist generation of May 1968 (Foucault, Deleuze, Derrida...), who sought to explain the world through flux, force, and power. Though Nietzsche wasn't the first to challenge instrumental reason—Schopenhauer and Kierkegaard had already highlighted the need for broader theoretical tools—Nietzsche had the historical conditions to push this idea further. For Nietzsche, reality's complexity could only be grasped through a conflict of impulses that defy analysis, only interpretable from various perspectives.

Ultimately, Nietzsche aimed to break the metaphysical binaries of subject and object, theory and practice, showing that we are both subjects with practical perspectives and objects observed theoretically. He argued against the fixed identity promoted by figures like Socrates and Plato, advocating instead for embracing the world's variety and rejecting the monoculture of thought that dominated Western philosophy.

Part two - Capitalist realism and acid communism

Even though Nietzsche poked holes in the idea of a single, homogeneous reality, showing it was just an attempt to cram everything into one perspective, it's clear that since the end of the 20th century, this tendency remains strong. It's got an agenda of domination behind it. Take English theorist Mark Fisher for example¹. He starts the first chapter of his most famous book (2020) with a phrase he attributes to either Frederic Jameson or Slavoj Žižek (or both): "it is easier to imagine the end of the world than it is to imagine the end of capitalism." Jameson wrote this exactly in a 2003 article on architecture and urbanism (p. 76), though he said someone else originally came up with it. And in 2011, Žižek said something similar in a speech at Liberty Square during the Occupy Wall Street movement, which linked up conceptually with the Arab Spring and Brazil's June Journeys that began in 2013. Fisher uses this phrase to show how capitalism has become so ingrained in our lives that it feels like reality itself, hence the name of his book, *Capitalist Realism*. "It is more like a pervasive *atmosphere*, conditioning not only the production of culture but also the regulation of work and education, and acting as a kind of invisible barrier constraining thought and action," Fisher writes (2009, e-book). Capitalism, especially in its neoliberal form, is so dominant that any other ways of organising society are dismissed as utopian, if not naive – in other words, the opposite of the "realism" seen by neoliberal rationalists.

Fisher stresses that all social realities are constructs, but they become more powerful when they seem "natural," obvious, inevitable. He notes how radical theorists, from Brecht to Foucault and Badiou, worked to "denaturalise" these constructs, showing that social classes, for instance, don't have to stay the same – and the whole concept of social class isn't even a given. "Emancipatory politics," Fisher writes (2009, e-book), "must reveal what is presented as necessary and inevitable to be a mere contingency, just as it must make what was previously deemed to be impossible seem attainable."

Although Fisher died in 2017, he left behind the (unfinished) introduction to a work aiming to counter Capitalist Realism. In it, he suggests, as he hinted in his earlier work, not to overpower capital directly – since, under current conditions, we're not strong enough to do so – but to highlight the cracks in the system, such as the obstruction of our "the collective capacity to produce, care and enjoy" (Fisher: 2018, e-book). Fisher's goal is to open up space for other ways of organising society, showing that we don't have to be stuck with a realism that fights against reality. He recalls that neoliberalism aimed to quash all experiments in "democratic socialism and libertarian communism" flourishing in the late 1960s

¹ For another example, see Sepe Gimbo (2021): "as David Harvey (2014) has rightly shown, neoliberalism becomes - in the mid-1980s - the single, determining thought of government practices imposed on the so-called globalised society" (p. 146).

and early 1970s, like Salvador Allende's government in Chile, which sought an alternative to both capitalism and Stalinism (Fisher: 2018, e-book). It's no coincidence that neoliberalism had its first real test in Chile after the coup that ousted a democratically elected government, killed its president, and installed dictator Augusto Pinochet. Only after these trials did neoliberalism spread to richer countries such as the UK under Margaret Thatcher and the US under Ronald Reagan.

Fisher also points out that the countercultural experiences of these periods were "captured" by Capitalist Realism. While he references some key moments and episodes, these countercultural movements are often viewed as "precursors of the 'new spirit of capitalism'" (Fisher: 2018, e-book), especially because certain aspects, like the use of psychedelics, were co-opted by the tech elite in Silicon Valley. This elite has become a sort of neoliberal vanguard, influencing other sectors. Today, "disruptive" practices, in industry jargon, are not just accepted but often encouraged by these companies. There's been a reversal of the original intent: practices once aimed at creating alternatives to the existing world are now seen as ways to boost productivity in the same world.²

Despite this, Fisher believes it's worth revisiting and rescuing certain experiences from the 1960s and 70s, and earlier decades too, to combat capitalist realism. He aims to revive the spirit of times when we experimented with social arrangements, behaviour, and freedom – not individualistic freedom, but collective freedom. He calls this new way of organising "Acid Communism." He acknowledges that the 1960s and 70s also produced false gurus, escapist journeys, and empty solipsism that did little to combat capitalism's modus operandi. However, as philosopher Justin Smith-Ruiu noted in a 2023 *Wired* article about his magic mushroom experience, we shouldn't repeat the mistakes of previous generations, who created sects with hierarchical structures and high obedience, paralleling today's business dogmas. "The great mistake of the psychedelic gurus of old was to mistake the mode of perception that drugs afforded them for a sort of revelation, which is really just to trade one dogmatism, that of common-sense 'realism,' for another." (Smith-Ruiu: 2023).

Fisher's initial aim is to produce what Herbert Marcuse, a German philosopher who lived in the US after WWII, called "the Great Refusal." Marcuse was mainly referring to art, which should "protest against that what is" (Marcuse: 1973, 75), a move that could be seen as romantic, thinking that art is above or beyond reality. But neither Marcuse nor Fisher had this in mind: "The Great Refusal rejected not only

² And the case of psychedelics is exemplary in this sense, as can be seen in this Forbes article, which talks about the fashion among entrepreneurs for consuming hallucinogens to increase their productivity: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jackkelly/2020/01/17/silicon-valley-is-micro-dosing-magic-mushrooms-to-boost-theircareers/?sh=1341744c5822>

capitalist realism, but 'realism' as such," Fisher writes (2018, e-book). In *The Aesthetic Dimension* (1979, 36), Marcuse said, "There is... an 'inherent conflict between art and political realism'. Art was a positive alienation, a 'rational negation' of the existing order of things." (Fisher: 2018, e-book). Art, then, would alter reality by not accepting it as pre-made or natural. It's no wonder Marcuse used surrealism, with its excavations of the unconscious, projections of other dimensions, and imaginings of other realities, as a paradigm. For a strong connection between "the people" and the arts, Marcuse (1979, 36) adds "that the men and women administered by monopoly capitalism [shall] unlearn the language, concepts, and images of this administration, that they experience the dimension of qualitative change, that they reclaim their subjectivity, their inwardness". In other words, don't accept reality as it is – don't accept capitalist realism.

Fisher's choice of the phrase Acid Communism has a "provocation" and "promising" side, a kind of "joke" with a "very serious purpose," as he puts it (2018, e-book). The idea is to bring back a horizon that once seemed inevitable but now seems impossible to see: "the convergence of class consciousness, socialist-feminist consciousness-raising and psychedelic consciousness, the fusion of new social movements with a communist project, an unprecedented aestheticisation of everyday life" (Fisher: 2018, e-book). He emphasises that although today, with the rise of neoliberalism and its fascist overtones, such a confluence seems unreal, in other times it was almost within reach. This sense of materiality, this imminent certainty, is what he wants to revive. Not to turn his imagination into an ideal, which would become a communist version of paradise, but to know that another reality is possible. "Mark understood psychedelia literally," says fellow English theorist Matt Colquhoun, a friend of Fisher's and responsible for organising part of his estate. "So, 'psycho-', which means mind, '-delia', from the Greek delos, which (...) means to manifest" (Tesoro: 2022)³. Only, instead of merely promoting hallucinations, dreams are transformed into reality, into another reality, following a very traditional Marxist ideal that we have had enough of interpretations or hallucinations about the world. Now – and it's always now – we need to change it.

That's why Fisher's choice of the term Acid Communism is no accident. It's directly linked to psychedelia – acid, as you know, is slang for LSD – which Fisher reinforces by pointing out that the main "feature of the psychedelic is the question of consciousness, and its relationship to what is experienced as reality" (2018, e-book). If our perception of time and space can be altered, Fisher asks, aren't the categories we use to deal with reality also plastic? Not in an individual or "egoic" sense, which would flow

³ Psychiatrist Humphry Osmond coined the term "psychedelic" in 1956 in a correspondence with author Aldous Huxley. In an article published the following year, Osmond explained why he chose the term because it meant "mind-manifesting" (Sjöstedt-Hughes: 2023).

into naive relativism and voluntarism, feeding capitalist realism itself, so reliant on this "nihilistic hedonism," as Fisher writes in the first paragraph of *Capitalist Realism* (2009, e-book). Fisher's suggestion, then, is the power of psychedelics to show another angle on reality, one that escapes capitalist realism and reveals its mechanisms, "the systems of power, exploitation and ritual," showing that this altered mind, this manifestation of the mind, was "more, not less, lucid than ordinary consciousness" (Fisher: 2018, e-book). Furthermore, he provocatively asks: "how solid was the 'reality' from which psychedelic states fled in any case? Wasn't the state of consciousness susceptible to spectacle more like somnambulism than alertness or awareness?" (Fisher: 2018, e-book). Psychedelics, Fisher insinuates, made everyone question not only reality – which is already a metaphysical question for philosophers and scientists – but also created an existential discussion, a remedy against nihilism, about whether the life one lives is worth living. In a phrase, psychedelics popularised this metaphysical discussion, a "democratisation of neurology itself," expanding knowledge of "brain's role in producing what was experienced as reality" (Fisher: 2018, e-book). Psychedelia, Fisher continues, went beyond the act of taking drugs itself: it entered mass culture, from pop music to films and even TV, causing reality as we knew it to always be questioned. In its broadest scope, its intention is clear: to change mankind, to change humanity, to change reality. "A new humanity, a new seeing, a new thinking, a new loving: this is the promise of acid communism," summarises Fisher (2018, e-book).

Part Three - Metaphysics

In an article on the possible benefits of integrating metaphysical thinking into psychological treatments using psychedelics, philosopher Peter Sjöstedt-Hughes (2023) outlines a brief, non-exhaustive table showcasing different ways of thinking about reality. Among the possibilities noted by Sjöstedt-Hughes are Physicalism, Idealism, Dualism, Monism, Transcendence, Panpsychism, and Theism. For Sjöstedt-Hughes, metaphysics "concerns the fundamental nature of reality," exploring the mind's relationship "to matter, to the cosmos, the nature of space, time, and causation, of self and identity, the possible and the eternal, of the nature of existence itself" (Sjöstedt-Hughes: 2023). It attempts to account for this system through a logical chain—always an internal logic inherent to each of these ways of thinking about reality—while putting the evaluation of empirical data, revelation, or even intuition on the backburner. It's not that empiricism, revelation, or intuition can't play a role in a complete metaphysical system—they're often crucial, sometimes acting as a trigger—but the system only develops and completes itself from the connection between elements that are, within this internal nexus, correlated.

Among the metaphysical modes presented, Sjöstedt-Hughes explains, Physicalism suggests that only matter exists, nothing beyond it. Idealism takes the opposite route by proposing the mind itself as

the foundation for existence—in other words, reality ultimately happens inside our own heads. Substance Dualism admits both conditions: Idealism and Physicalism occur concurrently, as complements. Transcendent Realism posits that existence transcends mind and matter. Neutral Monism believes that what sustains our reality is a blend of mind and matter. An example is Baruch Spinoza's Pantheism, where mind and matter are identical because they're expressions of a more extreme reality, which the Dutch Portuguese Jewish philosopher called God or Nature. Pantheism is related to Panpsychism, which argues that minds are ubiquitously present throughout nature. In other words, all beings have a mind, an intention, a will, an internal life. All beings are animated; there is nothing inert. No being could be seen as a mere object or thing. They are all, at some point, subjects, with a view of the world, and the fact that we don't see this perspective doesn't mean it doesn't exist; it means we should learn to understand it. A variation of Panpsychism is Animism, present in Amerindian cultures—but not only: Sjöstedt-Hughes notes this way of understanding reality in Far Eastern Shinto as well.

Not only non-Western peoples seek an explanation for reality beyond Physicalism. Besides Spinoza with his Pantheism, Sjöstedt-Hughes (2023) cites other philosophers deeply associated with the Western tradition, like Immanuel Kant and his transcendental idealism—in which "time and space were not real but merely projections of our mind " (Sjöstedt-Hughes: 2023)—and the philosopher and mathematician Alfred North Whitehead, with his proposal of exaltation or connection with nature through a panpsychist metaphysics.

It's impossible to avoid metaphysics, Sjöstedt-Hughes emphasises. We always opt for some kind of explanation of reality, even if we don't realise it. "Even Physicalism is, ironically, a metaphysical position and should not be adopted without due caution," argues Sjöstedt-Hughes (2023). In other words, we all live from a way of interpreting reality; there is no outside, nothing neutral, objective, or exempt. It's not possible to observe the world from above, from a holistic and totalising perspective. When we think we live in an exclusive and true reality, and that other ways of interpreting reality are false—as happens with the tradition based purely on reason, unmasked by Nietzsche—we are merely practising an exercise in egocentrism. It's very similar to those who say capitalism in its neoliberal version is the only way to organise society economically today, as we saw with Capitalist Realism, combated by Fisher. As if the inability to admit or see other modes of existence made those modes inferior or, worse, simply prevented them from existing. This process goes back directly, at the very least, to colonialism, when white European men arrived in the Americas, Asia, and Africa and debated whether the inhabitants of

these lands, because they had different habits, behaviours, and skin tones, could be considered part of humanity.⁴

Whenever someone places themselves at the top (of the world, of reality, of existence...) and sees those who don't share the same codes as inferior or lesser, they are practising this prejudice. Furthermore, by not seeing that we are always exercising an interested perspective on the world by adopting a metaphysics, choosing a mode of socio-economic organisation, or opting for a political bias, we end up reinforcing the hegemonic stance of those who see themselves as the centre. As Whitehead said, "If you don't go into metaphysics, you assume an uncritical metaphysics" (Whitehead apud Sjöstedt-Hughes: 2023). Different ways of understanding existence should not necessarily be considered a priori inferior. "One can only judge a viewpoint and its experience to be *delusional* if one knows what reality is," argues Sjöstedt-Hughes (2023). And knowing what reality is in its entirety sounds at the very least like an exercise in megalomania—or a process of control and repression, as suggested by the notion of the "majority," as explained by Deleuze and Guattari.

Without necessarily representing a statistical or numerical reality, the notion of the majority is associated with the domination of one group over another. Deleuze and Guattari (1980, 133) explain that even if "man" doesn't exist in greater numbers in the world than mosquitoes (and children, women, black people, peasants, homosexuals...), they can be considered the "majority" "because he appears twice, once in the constant, once in the variable from which the constant is drawn." It's the unmarked, the one who is seen as the standard for everyone else, the origin, the model. The majority, in this way, is associated with men, white, straight, cis, city dwellers, and so on. In our case here, the majority would be the man who thinks he is the sole possessor of reason, who therefore believes in Physicalism as the only possible key to decoding the world and believes in Neoliberalism as the exclusive mode of socio-economic organisation. The problem is that, as the two French thinkers have said and repeated, the majority doesn't exist. When understood in the analytical standard, the majority never has a face; it is never someone. It is always a Nobody (Deleuze; Guattari: 1980, 134). Nobody could remain in the majority, this fixed format, this immutability-immobility, so incorruptibly at all times. Even if you establish a format, a pattern to behave in, a model to follow, at some point, when you can't control yourself, a certain unplanned behaviour can appear. That's why Sjöstedt-Hughes criticises those who point the finger at the other to say that the other person's way of understanding reality is wrong, because such behaviour tries to forge that majority that would be mistaken for the truth, while the others would be in error, in the false, in

⁴ For a more in-depth perspective on the subject and to see how racism was studied by Foucault as a strategy of what he called biopower in his *History of Sexuality 1. The Will to Know*, see Castelo Branco: 2021.

illusion. When, for example, other elements contradict the reality of someone who only believes in Physicalism, whose physics could be, even hypothetically, understood in its entirety by instrumental rationalism, this rational man of the majority seems to want to say: worse for reality. This character's argument tends to be that reason hasn't yet caught up with such a new experiment, but that it would only be a matter of time before it did—in an excuse so open that it could be used, under similar conditions, we can assume, by any metaphysical variety.

When Nietzsche combats reason as that which underlies all our reality, he is not abandoning the mind and making a leap of faith, in a procedure similar to what happened with Kierkegaard, who even suggested that we should, as a rule of behaviour, move from an ethical stage of existence to a religious one. It was Nietzsche who spoke of the death of God, a polysemous expression, but which can be read here as the inability of the Christian monotheistic religion to deal with all the complexity of life, which always shows itself with its flows of force and its wills to power, opting only for a process of taming this pulsational energy. Nietzsche didn't just want to invert the scale of forces, in which reason, which until then had been hegemonic in the way the world was interpreted, should be totally discarded, in a defence of irrationalism, but to think that reason is just one of the tools we have for decoding reality. In other words, when Nietzsche advocates the end of reason as the exclusive way of thinking about the world, he is combating this "majority" thinking and demonstrating that if there is one thing that can be realised about reality, it is that it cannot be understood as a unit, but that it is always in a process of transformation, of becoming.

One of the shortcuts to breaking this preponderance of reason, or using the term used by Sjöstedt-Hughes and taking the opportunity to bring concepts closer together, of mind over nature, whether through Physicalism (which is nothing more than a positivist version of science) or, worse, Idealism, in which matter is subordinated to mind, would be through the use of psychedelics. As psychologist John Buchanan (2022) puts it, psychedelics “are particularly effective at challenging established ideas about reality, for they often transcend its supposed boundaries”. Psychedelics would be present, for example, in the understanding of substantial dualism, in which the soul is imagined to be separated from the body, as happens with Metempsychosis, in which the soul survives the body to enter another body. But this wouldn't be the only form of perspective transformation offered by psychedelics. As Sjöstedt-Hughes (2023) points out, citing a scientific article on the exact changes in the perception of reality after consuming psychedelics, there would be a "general metaphysical shift from Physicalism to Panpsychism *via* psychedelics, thereby also showing the commonality of the position in psychedelic experience". In Amerindian cultures, to cite another example, animism generally becomes more evident through the consumption of psychedelic substances such as ayahuasca or similar, such as yâkoana,

present in rituals of the Yanomami, a people who live on the border between what is now Brazil and Venezuela. In the case of the Yanomami, psychedelics function as bridges that cross metaphysical modes, preventing the position of the majority from crystallising, always opening up to the other, to otherness.

Part Four - The Yanomami and the Yäkoana

In certain rituals, the Yanomami use yäkoana, a powder made from the resin of the inner bark of a tree (*Virola spp*) mixed with *Anadenanthera peregrina* seeds, dried and pulverised leaves (maxara hana), and ashes from other tree barks (ama hi and amatha hi). This concoction enhances its effects. Yäkoana contains DMT (dimethyltryptamine), a hallucinogenic alkaloid also found in ayahuasca, which is chemically similar to serotonin and acts by attaching to its receptors. "Its psychic effects are similar to those of LSD," explains anthropologist Bruce Albert in his book *The Falling Sky* (Kopenawa & Albert, 2015), where he notes and describes the cosmology of the Yanomami people based on the accounts of the shaman Davi Kopenawa. Yanomami shamanism involves "drinking" yäkoana (though the powder is actually ingested through the nose, with a minister blowing it into the shaman's nostril via a long tube) to contact the xapiripë—spirits or spiritual images of animals, stones, weather phenomena, and all beings of the forest. These spirits appear in humanoid form, small, luminous, shiny, and with body paintings. "To practise shamanism is xapiripruu, 'to act in spirit,' to become a shaman is xapiripruu, 'to become spirit'," explains Albert (Kopenawa & Albert, 2015), indicating transformation, mutation, and becoming, which characterises the whole ritual and opens one to otherness. By taking yäkoana, the Yanomami enter a "state of ghost" and become "other" (Kopenawa & Albert, 2015). The expression yanomami *poremuu* (translated as "state of ghost") is not exclusive to yäkoana use but can also describe dreams, pain, and illness, "during which the corporeal image/vital essence (*utupë*) is displaced and/or affected," explains Albert (Kopenawa & Albert, 2015). In these sensitised states of consciousness, the "ghost" within takes control of decisions. "'Becoming other' (literally 'taking on the value of another') primarily refers to this process" (Kopenawa & Albert, 2015).

Not all Yanomami see the xapiripë; only shamans initiated by more experienced shamans do. The process to become a shaman is lengthy, involving being chosen by the xapiripë, regular consumption of yäkoana, specific eating and sexual practices, and isolation. Not every yäkoana consumption leads to a break with physicality and a new way of seeing reality—one must be prepared for it. Yäkoana is a gateway to another metaphysical horizon, another way of being in the world, which for the Yanomami means becoming a shaman. Those who can't see the xapiripë still share in Yanomami animism but can't see the spirits, become other, or "die" (a term also used by the Yanomami when contacting the xapiripë). "Despite being invisible to ordinary men, [the xapiripë] are completely visible in their true human form

to the shamans" (Lutaif & Modernell, 2023), which is the only way to access "true knowledge about the various aspects of the forest": The shamans "assume, during the trance, qualities similar to those of the spirits, becoming both human and non-human, living in a polymorphous state" (Lutaif & Modernell, 2023). Non-initiates who take yäkoana at parties see nothing, not even physical objects such as their house and its other inhabitants (Kopenawa & Albert, 2015). The yäkoana opens the eyes of those who can see but closes those of the uninitiated. It is a gateway, but only for those who can open it. The hallucinogen is not the same for everyone, indicating that yäkoana also has agency.

Yäkoana also has effects outside of the trance state. Kopenawa recounts the first time he managed to kill a tapir, an animal difficult to hunt, which he attributes to ingesting the hallucinogen (Kopenawa & Albert, 2015). Thus, yäkoana not only acts as a gateway to the spirit dimension but also influences the physical world when spirits are not directly seen. This suggests that in Yanomami animism, there isn't a strict division between the physical world and the spirit world, avoiding the hierarchy common in other metaphysics. Instead, there's a continuum where the same world operates in various complex ways. Certain parts of this metaphysical geography are accessible only to shamans. By "'dying' under the effect of this hallucinogen, shamans can see spirits and view the world as they do, seeing humans as spectres" (Lutaif & Modernell, 2023). Kopenawa even says he becomes a "spirit man" (Kopenawa & Albert, 2015). This exchange of perspectives, change of states, and profound openness to otherness are fundamental to the relationship between shamans and xapiripë: "the spirits depend as much on the shaman to be fed with yäkoana as the shaman depends on the yäkoana to see the dance of the spirits" (Lutaif & Modernell, 2023), emphasising interdependence and a robust interrelationship between beings from different metaphysical geographies.

In this world where all entities are alive and animated, being is becoming, rather than a fixed identity. "Your teachers hadn't taught you to dream like we do," says Davi Kopenawa to Bruce Albert (Kopenawa & Albert, 2015), highlighting the self-absorption among whites, the people of the commodity, or napë (originally meaning "outsider, enemy"). Whites interrupt any transformation by fixating on an identity that reflects the Same, idealising the self and constructing the majority ideal. This stops any interference beyond the boundaries arbitrarily set as the individual entity, even if it's a society. "[Whites] sleep a lot, but only dream about themselves," Kopenawa accuses (Kopenawa & Albert, 2015). "The Whites' epistemic devaluation of dreams goes hand in hand with their solipsistic self-fascination—their inability to discern the secret humanity of non-human existents—and their 'fetishistic' avarice that is as ridiculous as it is incurable, their chrysophilia," adds anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (2015), reinforcing the whites' selfishness. "Instead of dreaming of the other, we dream of gold," he jokes. Ironically, Viveiros de Castro recalls, it was this kind of accusation of "narcissistic projection of the Ego

onto the world" that the rational-modern whites attributed to animist peoples. Thinking of all beings as humanoid was seen as anthropomorphisation. But in their eyes, it is we who, when entering the "space of exteriority and truth—the dream—can only see obsessive reflections and simulacra of ourselves" (Viveiros de Castro, 2015). "Instead of opening ourselves up to the disquieting strangeness of commerce with the infinity of agencies, at once intelligible and radically other, that are scattered throughout the cosmos" (Viveiros de Castro, 2015), we continue to worship our image and likeness. The shaman's gaze, seeing all beings as humanoid, is a resource for perspectival transfiguration. While whites hierarchise beings, placing themselves at the top, the Yanomami emphasise becoming and otherness.

From a political standpoint, in relations with the people of the commodity, Kopenawa explains that the Yanomami see themselves as different. They don't need books (which they call "skins of images"), but they know the Xapiri spirits and their songs, accessing ancient wisdom through them. Their current objective is to defend their forest territory to continue living as their ancestors did. "If they [*the Yanomami*] don't protect it, their children will have no place to live happily. They will think their parents lacked intelligence, having left them only bare, burnt land, filled with epidemic fumes and cut by dirty rivers!" (Kopenawa & Albert, 2015). Despite acculturation, homogenisation, and pressure to whiten his people, Kopenawa maintains his stance, prioritising difference over identity. He notes that some young Yanomami, influenced by white colonisers, fear taking yâkoana and imagine ("they even lie to themselves", in Kopenawa's words) that they will become white. Reflecting on this coercion, Kopenawa suggests a reciprocal transformation: "we will only be able to become white on the day that they themselves become Yanomami" (Kopenawa & Albert, 2015). He implies that transforming into another is only possible if the other also becomes another, embracing difference as a fundamental organising principle. "The whites call themselves intelligent. We are no less so," Kopenawa assures (Kopenawa & Albert, 2015). The difference between the two ways of seeing the world shouldn't diminish the powers of those who don't share the rational-realist majority project. "When I make my xapiri dance, sometimes the whites say: 'You can't see anything! You can only see yourself singing! Where are your spirits?' These are the words of ignorant people," criticises Kopenawa (Kopenawa & Albert, 2015). He disapproves of white people's aversion to being touched by another kind of reality decoding. "The 'soul' and its modern lay avatars, 'culture', 'science' and 'technology', do not exempt or absent us from this non-decoupleable commitment to the world," argues Viveiros de Castro (2015). For the Yanomami, the world is a "soul plenum", a whole seen as alive, requiring an "attentive and careful relationship" with "the mythical nature of things"—which whites lack. Whites focus on "the inexorable laws of the World Economy and the supreme objective of the Progress of the Homeland" (Viveiros de Castro, 2015). "Growing entropy is dialectically transfigured into triumphant anthropy," mocks Viveiros de Castro, highlighting the

consequences of a society that doesn't include other ways of understanding reality. These "people, freed from all 'retrograde superstition' and 'primitive animism', swear only by the holy trinity of the State, the Market and Science, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit of modernist theology" (Viveiros de Castro, 2015). The instrumental reason of this white metaphysics, disguised as physicalism or positivist science, appears as a fundamentalist dogma, challenging which risks collapse. To combat this imprisoning metaphysics sustaining capitalist realism, we might need to invest in more pluralistic ways of understanding the world—perhaps Yanomami animism?

Conclusion

As we've seen, up until the 19th century, Western thought was pretty dualistic. One term was always seen as purer, better, superior—depending on the context—compared to the other. Take the Socrates-Plato duo: they envisioned a world of perfect forms and our world as mere copies of these ideals. This ideal world was only accessible through reason, considered superior to all other mental tools for decoding reality. This dualistic approach continued through Christian thought, with paradise replacing the world of ideas, only accessible through a life of asceticism. It persisted right up to Kant's notion of the inaccessible thing-in-itself. Common to all these ideas was a certain denial or diminishment of our deepest impulses and an elevation of reason as the sovereign commander, negotiating or imposing its will.

Even Christianity relied on reason to understand its god. Enter Nietzsche, not a champion of irrationalism, but someone who believed reason should be a tool for dealing with reality—not the hegemonic force. Nietzsche's iconoclasm aimed to destroy the dualisms that had underpinned Western society for centuries, offering a more complex view of reality. He sought to dismantle the rigid moral division between good and evil, suggesting instead an existence embracing contradictions and ambivalences.

However, the metaphysics Nietzsche opposed seems to have morphed into a kind of realism—his worst nightmare come true. When he wrote about abolishing the "true" world, he couldn't have foreseen this argument being used to produce a realism that disallows any possibility of difference, treating any alternative as utopian.⁵

⁵ Azevedo and Rodrigues Júnior (2022, 4) corroborate: "modernity could be seen both as a demythologisation of the imaginary and also as a moment of multiplication of paranoid worldviews, aimed at making the hecatomb that befell Western Europe understandable and assimilable"

As Mark Fisher pointed out, we're living in an era of Capitalist Realism. From the late 20th century onwards, capitalism isn't seen as one way of organising society—it's seen as reality itself, with any other idea dismissed as wrong. Capitalism has become a dogma, resistant to any form of rebellion. Neoliberalism thus acts as a metaphysical system, presenting itself as the only truth while branding all others as false. Hence the famous phrase: it's easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism. Neoliberalism claims the truth, dismissing any other perspective as false.

Fisher's concept of Acid Communism suggests an alternative social and metaphysical order, inspired by the 1960s and 70s counterculture and its use of psychedelics to open up new ways of seeing the world. Psychedelics could create cracks in the reality that capitalist realism imposes.

This idea is backed by scholars like Sjöstedt-Hughes, who emphasises the importance of recognising multiple perspectives. Capitalist Realism, which could be linked to physicalism and an updated positivism, is fragile because it cannot tolerate any alternative views. Rational realism thinks like the majority, as Deleuze and Guattari conceptualized. Summarising Sjöstedt-Hughes and Buchanan suggest psychedelics as a means of breaking these certainties.

A prime example of using psychedelics to access new metaphysical geographies is the Yanomami people's use of yâkoana. Living under Animism metaphysics, a form of Panpsychism, the Yanomami see all beings as alive, each with its own perspective. While all Yanomami share this worldview, only shamans can see the xapiripë, the spirits of the forest. They undergo rigorous training to use yâkoana, a psychedelic that reveals dimensions of reality invisible to the untrained eye. Yâkoana acts as a bridge, transforming the shaman to see the spirits, a process rooted in openness to alterity.

For the Yanomami, psychedelics are essential to their metaphysics. Yâkoana don't work in isolation but in conjunction with the shamans, revealing invisible dimensions that complete their reality. Yâkoana also serves as a reminder to the West that there are other ways of understanding life beyond capitalist realism. It suggests a reality where all beings have their own dignity, not confined to a rational, white, capitalist, neoliberal, and Western framework.

There's always an attempt to create a metaphysical hegemony, but there are also ways to counteract this. The Yanomami view the world as open to difference, using yâkoana to access existential geographies that remain hidden to others. While yâkoana isn't a solution to the West's problems, it highlights that we don't have to accept a world that's exclusively rational, white, capitalist, neoliberal, and Western.

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