

*Esse quam Videre*¹: Critical Reflections on the Use of Psilocybin as an Adjuvant in Psychedelic-Assisted Psychotherapy

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Abstract

The ethical and technical challenges of recent research with psychedelics and the attempt to regulate them as a health technology open a new horizon for reflections on scientific development and questions about how we experience spiritual and non-ordinary experiences of consciousness and relate to nature. We understand that Psychology needs to resort to psychedelic philosophy and the knowledge of indigenous peoples. Thus, we seek to discuss the distancing of Psychology and mental health technologies in relation to Amerindian spirituality and epistemologies. We are guided by the scientific and philosophical literature that would allow such a debate without an exhaustive review of recent production, but enough to weave threads from the fields of Transpersonal Ecopsychology and Gestalt Therapy with a decolonial perspective and that went beyond the merely theoretical aspects. We also recognize a political position that is often minimized or erased by researchers of psychedelic-assisted psychotherapies and the psych community in general. In this text we will address the role of Psychology and the psychotherapist in the face of modern ecocidal and pathogenic ideologies, the importance of reintegrating people into the environment and the territoriality of which they are part, the use of health technologies and the sacred from a matrix whose background does justice to the ancestry from which they come, among other satellite topics of this debate.

¹ To be, rather than to seem.

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Esse quam Videre: Reflexiones Críticas sobre el Uso de la Psilocibina como Adyuvante en la Psicoterapia Asistida por Psicodélicos

Resumen

Los desafíos éticos y técnicos de las investigaciones recientes con psicodélicos y el intento de regularlos como tecnología de salud abren un nuevo horizonte para reflexiones sobre el desarrollo científico y preguntas sobre cómo experimentamos experiencias espirituales y no ordinarias de conciencia y nos relacionamos con la naturaleza. Entendemos que la Psicología necesita recurrir a la filosofía psicodélica y al conocimiento de los pueblos originarios. Así, buscamos discutir el distanciamiento de la Psicología y las tecnologías de salud mental en relación con la espiritualidad y las epistemologías amerindias. Nos orientamos por la literatura científica y filosófica que permitieran tal debate sin una revisión exhaustiva de la producción reciente, pero lo suficiente para tejer hilos desde los campos de la Ecopsicología Transpersonal y de la Terapia Gestalt con una perspectiva decolonial y que fuese más allá de los aspectos meramente teóricos. Reconocemos también una posición política que a menudo es minimizada o borrada por los investigadores de psicoterapias asistidas por psicodélicos y la comunidad psi en general. En este texto abordaremos el papel de la Psicología y del psicoterapeuta frente a las ideologías ecocidas y patógenas modernas, la importancia de reintegrar a las personas al entorno y a la territorialidad de que forman parte, el uso de las tecnologías de salud y del sagrado desde una matriz cuyo trasfondo hace justicia a la ascendencia de la que provienen, entre otros temas satélites de este debate.

Palabras-clave: Terapia Gestalt. Ecopsicología. Psicodélicos. Decolonialidad.

Esse quam Videre: Reflexões Críticas sobre o Uso da Psilocibina como Adjuvante na Psicoterapia Assistida por Psicodélicos

Resumo

Os desafios éticos e técnicos das pesquisas recentes com psicodélicos e a tentativa de regulá-los como tecnologia em saúde abrem um novo horizonte para reflexões sobre o desenvolvimento científico e questionamentos sobre como vivenciamos experiências espirituais e incomuns de consciência e nos relacionamos com a natureza. Entendemos que a Psicologia precisa recorrer à filosofia psicodélica e ao conhecimento dos povos indígenas. Assim, buscamos discutir o distanciamento da Psicologia e das tecnologias de saúde mental em relação à espiritualidade e às epistemologias ameríndias. Fomos guiados pela literatura científica e filosófica que permitiria tal debate sem uma revisão exaustiva da produção recente, mas suficiente para tecer fios dos campos da Ecopsicologia Transpessoal e da Gestalt-Terapia com uma perspectiva decolonial que ultrapassasse os aspectos puramente teóricos. Também reconhecemos uma posição política que é frequentemente minimizada ou apagada pelos pesquisadores de psicoterapias psicodélicas assistidas e pela comunidade psi em geral. Neste texto abordaremos o papel da Psicologia e do psicoterapeuta diante das modernas ideologias ecocidas e patogênicas, a importância da reintegração das pessoas ao meio ambiente e à territorialidade da qual fazem parte, o uso da saúde e das tecnologias sagradas a partir de uma matriz cuja formação faz justiça à ancestralidade de onde provêm, entre outros temas satélites deste debate.

Palavras-chave: Gestalt-terapia. Ecopsicologia. Psicodélicos. Decolonialidade.

Introduction

The ethical and technical challenges of recent research with psychedelics and the attempt to regulate them as a health technology open a new horizon for reflections on scientific development and questions about how we experience spiritual and non-ordinary experiences of consciousness and relate to nature. We understand that Psychology needs to turn to psychedelic philosophy and the knowledge of indigenous peoples. This critical essay

seeks to discuss the distance between Psychology and mental health technologies in relation to Amerindian spirituality and epistemologies. Our survey of the literature focused on references that would allow such a debate without an exhaustive review of scientific and philosophical production, but that would be sufficient to weave knowledges and build crossroads between the fields of Ecopsychology and Gestalt therapy with a decolonial perspective and that could reach beyond merely theoretical aspects, that is, also recognizing a political position often minimized or erased by researchers of psychedelic-assisted psychotherapies and the broader psychological community. We also emphasize our commitment to the topics discussed in this text, so that the writing will adopt a first-person narrative, as advocated by Apffel-Marglin & Gonzales (2024). Therefore, in this text we will address the role of Psychology and psychotherapy in the face of modern ecocidal and disease-causing ideologies, the importance of reintegrating people into the environment and territoriality of which they are a part, the use of health and sacred technologies from a matrix whose background does justice to the ancestry from which they originate, among other topics related to this debate.

Several issues related to discomfort and violence, latent in contemporary times, are the result of a logic instilled in our culture and that distances us from undesirable dimensions in a modern, colonial and capitalist paradigm. These phenomena and their sufferings are consequences of past events and many others still present, generating psychopathologies, alienation and devaluation of that which is related to Nature (APFFEL-MARGLIN & GONZALES, 2024; BILIBIO, 2013; KRENAK, 2019). It also concerns political, economic and territorial wars, prejudices, all revealing traces of narcissism, hypochondria, anxiety, individualism, competitiveness and, above all, exploitation and fatigue (HAN, 2015; KRENAK, 2019). This separation from Nature aims to appropriate and use it as a resource, as well as those who inhabit a certain territory, since historically they are not considered human due to various arguments over the centuries (MALDONADO-TORRES, 2022), including in this appropriation the denial of the more-than-human dimension and the beings that inhabit it (APFFEL-MARGLIN & GONZALES, 2024; KOPENAWA & ALBERT, 2019; MACY & JOHNSTONE, 2020). We understand that these issues are related to the formation of an isolated ego, to the conception of a narcissistic and self-centered "human self", the product of a strong anthropocentric culture and linked to the origin of psychopathologies. The social maintenance of the *modus operandi* which denies the *anima mundi*⁴ is ensured by behaviors,

⁴ The soul of the world.

language and symbols to which we are systematically exposed. Culture dictates the norm, naturalizing "illusions" as if they were "truths", maintaining onto-epistemological and ideological hegemonies, exterminating other conceptions and concepts that are of no interest to it.

Paradigmatic changes that encompass sustainability and an ecological and hylozoic⁵ ethic are essential for the survival of our species and many other beings on our planet. Our discussion will initially consist of a historical review of the process of distancing ourselves from Nature promoted by a modern and colonial dualistic ideology. Next, we will present some details about Psilocybin-Assisted Psychotherapy, as well as Ecopsychology and Gestalt Therapy. We will then conclude with a critical analysis of the isolated and devitalized use of the drug based on the references introduced throughout the text.

Nulla vita extra naturam⁶: on the precariousness of life in the Anthropocene

The increase in the number of species in extinction (BÔLLA & MILIOLI, 2011), the fires in the Amazon and Pantanal biomes covering the sun on the horizon of large metropolises (G1, 2020), the environmental disasters of Mariana and Brumadinho (MENDONÇA, 2020) are some examples of the consequences of this modern dualistic, anthropocentric and ecocidal paradigm. Unfortunately, a scenario that does not spare *plantas maestras*, since they are also threatened due to climate change, predatory extractivism and the exploitation of psychedelic tourism (ENGEL *et al.*, 2023; MINUANO, 2024). The invalidation of funga in these discussions is reckless, requiring repeated efforts for its preservation, as pointed out by Oyanedel, Levi & Furci (2024). Thus, we observe the need to reflect on the process of distancing ourselves from Nature and its reification, as well as the use of animals, fungi and plants *maestros*.

Several authors cited in this text (for example, APFFEL-MARGLIN & GONZALES, 2024; KOPENAWA & ALBERT, 2019; KRENAK, 2019) invite us to think about how our society has been moving towards unbridled consumption and about the change in discourse to validate modernity over the last four centuries. This "evolution" finds its founding bases, but is not restricted to some relevant historical moments, such as the enclosure of lands in Europe, colonial imperialism, the industrial revolution, the expansion of the contemporary lifestyle and the consolidation of the Anthropocene in the post-war period in the mid-1940s

⁵ Hylozoism is a philosophical doctrine that considers nature to be animated and conscious.

⁶ There is no life outside of nature.

(APFFEL-MARGLIN & GONZALES, 2024; BILIBIO, 2010; MALDONADO-TORRES, 2022). In this sense, the massive ecological imbalance caused by the usurpation of the environment for the sake of unscrupulous profit is indicative of our greater illness. The crisis that has taken hold in environmental, social, psychological and economic instances in a global context shows the unsustainability of these onto-epistemological and ideological references, both individually and collectively and ecologically, given the critical scenario in which we find ourselves. We reiterate the need to reclaim values inherent in the hylozoic cosmogonies of the indigenous peoples.

We have observed an acceleration of the cycles of change and the level of complexity of human relations in late capitalism, especially in relation to new cognitive and cognitive horizons (HAN, 2015), so that Psychology is called upon to adapt its methods and objects of study. The rediscovery of psychedelics also leads to the questioning of theories about psychological processes, interpersonal relationships and ecological relations (AMORIM JÚNIOR *et al.*, 2024; PEREIRA, 2024). Doubts regarding the ability of academia to produce theories based on evidence and respecting ethical research requirements in a field that involves ineffable phenomena are also aspects to be considered. A certain skepticism regarding the methodologies adopted in investigations and the production of meaning in situations of non-ordinary consciousness show us the need for dialogue with other onto-epistemologies to describe and understand lived experiences (APFFEL-MARGLIN & GONZALES, 2024; LANGLITZ, 2023; VOLLET, 2023).

The renewed attention of the scientific community and the media to substances that promise to transform neuroscience and mental health, taking place within a scenario in which we are distanced from our environment and other beings, is symptomatic. As these medicines are not in fact new, since we have used them throughout history (ARNAUD & SHARPE, 2023; FREITAS, 2023; FREITAS, SHANENAWA & MAIA, 2024; KOPENAWA & ALBERT, 2019; NARANJO, 2000, 2020; REIFF *et al.*, 2020; RODRIGUES, 2019; WILLIAMS *et al.*, 2022; WINKELMAN, 2010, 2021), naming the current moment a "psychedelic renaissance" is an overly colonialist and simplistic position (FREITAS, SHANENAWA & MAIA, 2024; HAUSKELLER *at el.*, 2023; WILLIAMS *et al.*, 2022). Given that modernity and its rational bias do not align with ecstasy and loss of control over oneself, rapture and transcendence, and the experiences of non-ordinary consciousness observed in research border on the shameful or the pathological (EVANS, 2018; NARANJO, 2005; WINKELMAN, 2010).

Studies to develop new treatments for various mental health conditions move away from a broader and more spiritualized understanding in favor of the search for the saving molecule. It is currently estimated that around one billion people live with some diagnosable mental health condition. If we take just one diagnosis as an example, there are 300 million people in the world with depression, of which 11.5 million are in Brazil alone (WHO, 2022). Depression is considered a serious mood disorder and can cause disabling and dysfunctional physical and emotional symptoms, in addition to behavioral changes, compromising quality of life in several dimensions. In Latin America, Brazil is the country with the highest prevalence of depression and, among the 71 countries investigated by Sapien Labs (2024), Brazil ranks fourth in the world for the worst mental health rate, with approximately 34% of respondents reporting symptoms related to depression. It is known that depression has several etiological factors, including genetic, biochemical, and lived episodes (MACHADO & CASIRAGHI, 2021). Considered a multifactorial disease, depression can be triggered by cultural, economic, social, psychological, and physiological factors, and configures a way of relating to the world that compromises several dimensions of life, such as family relationships, work aspects, among others (DALGALARRONDO, 2019). And even though the influence of social psychiatry considers in its conception of psychopathology that environmentality (both territorial and social dimensions) affects the person and is a co-participant in their subjective experience, the natural world is seen as res extensa devoid of subjectivity and intentionality (APFFEL-MARGLIN & GONZALES, 2024). In other words, the multifactoriality that we find in psychopathology manuals is empty and does not consider the beyond-human dimension.

Depression is identified by the World Health Organization as one of the world's leading debilitating diseases and is often underdiagnosed, having insufficient treatment and clinical interventions (WHO, 2022). If we consider other forms of illnesses, more than 10% of the world's population suffers health repercussions due to lifestyle – a result of modernity and the consequent separation from Nature, the collapse of community support networks, labor exploitation, precarious work, lack of access to public policies and many other ills. Traditional psychiatric treatment is generally carried out on an outpatient basis, focusing mainly on the prescription of psychotropic drugs for continuous use and a multifaceted approach, which considers the combination of medications, psychotherapy, social support and changes in lifestyle habits, such as regular sleep, healthy eating and physical exercise (LEICHSENRING *et al.*, 2022). However, this range of strategies does not guarantee satisfactory and lasting

results for all patients and each year more scientific institutions are dedicating themselves to the study of psychedelic drugs and their benefits for mental health as an alternative to current treatments.

Survey conducted by Aday, Bloesch & Davoli (2020) reports the advancement of psychedelic research, as well as a growth in interest and investment by the pharmaceutical industry. Tullis (2021) and Lobo (2022) highlighted the recognition of the potential of psychedelics by leading scientific institutions and the growing number of clinical trials conducted between 2017 and 2021 investigating the use of psilocybin, MDMA and LSD in the treatment of psychiatric conditions such as depression, drug addiction and anorexia nervosa, among others. In PubMed (2024) alone, we found more than 1400 articles related to psychedelics and mental health in the last decade. In this sense, psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy, including psilocybin, emerges as a promising alternative, as it allows patients to obtain better clinical results in the sustained reduction of symptoms and in the resumption of quality of life. However, we understand that it is not enough to administer a molecule to achieve full remission of the illness and suffering, since a broader perspective is necessary if we consider that this is not just something that affects the person due to their physiology. The solution is to return to Nature.

Medicus curat de salute non anima⁷: psilocybin as an adjuvant for psychotherapy

Psychedelics are a pharmacological category of psychotropic substances, compounds that have selective affinity for receptors in the central nervous system and their effects can be analyzed at molecular, cellular and brain network levels (PONTIERI, 2024). They act as partial agonists of serotonin receptors, mainly the 5-HT2A subtype, activating excitatory and inhibitory pathways in different regions of the brain and contributing to the rapid and lasting increase in neural plasticity (LOBO, 2022; MARCELLO, 2022). The term psychedelic was first used by the psychiatrist Humphry Osmond in 1956 during an exchange of letters with the writer Aldous Huxley. This neologism combines *psyche* (mind, self, spirit, psyche) and *delos* (manifestation, revelation, vision) to refer to the idea of manifestation of the spirit, expansion of consciousness and transformation through reduction of egoic control (BISBEE *et al.*, 2018; RODRIGUES, 2019). Psychedelic substances are part of History and have been used for millennia in spiritual, recreational or medicinal contexts. However, it was from the 20th

⁷ The doctor cures our health, not our soul.

century onwards that the therapeutic effects of psychedelics began to arouse the interest of the Western scientific community.

Psilocybin was introduced into the scientific context in the 1950s after mycologist Gordon Wasson published in Life magazine his experiences with *Psilocybe* mushrooms during a Mazatec ritual with healer Maria Sabina (RODRIGUES, 2019). These experiences culminated in the publication of the book The Wondrous Mushroom, which explores mycology in historical and cultural contexts. The magazine article and the book attracted attention and interest not only from a curious audience but also from researchers and scientists (PONTIERI, 2024). In the following decade, with the identification and synthesis of the active ingredient of these mushrooms by Albert Hofmann at Sandoz, the first clinical studies with psilocybin were carried out. Sandoz then began to produce and market the drug Indocybin for psychotherapeutic purposes (SOARES, 2021).

After decades of research being halted due to the reclassification of several psychedelics as *Schedule I* substances for political reasons and a strong campaign to stigmatize them, clinical interest was resumed at the beginning of the 21st century. Research has demonstrated their therapeutic potential in different mental health conditions and in diverse populations, such as chronic pain, post-traumatic stress disorder, resistant depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, drug abuse, migraine, Alzheimer's disease, among others (SCHENBERG, 2018; VOLLENWEIDER & KOMETER, 2010). Psychiatry is currently facing a crisis due to its inability to respond to the increase and worsening of mental disorders. Traditional pharmaceutical treatments are often ineffective, worsening an already difficult situation, especially in the face of issues such as increasingly prevalent depression and anxiety (LOBO, 2022). Given this scenario, it is necessary to seek new ways to find alternatives for mental health treatment.

In this context, psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy (PAP) emerges as a promising therapeutic approach for difficult-to-respond psychiatric cases, being a safer and more effective option than traditional treatments with psychotropic drugs and psychotherapies, associated to other medicines or as a single prescription. According to Schenberg (2018), PAP promotes a temporary change in the way the brain functions, modulating the patient's state of consciousness. It is a psychotherapeutic approach that requires a safe and monitored environment, with the presence of well-trained and qualified specialists for the patient to delve into their emotions, thoughts and physical sensations to gain a better understanding of

their suffering (AVANCEÑA, KAHN & MARSEILLE, 2022). Investigations suggest PAP as a fast and safe clinical strategy, according to the evidence found in the research.

Currently the most advanced guidelines and recommendations for psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy are available in manuals such as the Yale Manual for Psilocybin-Assisted Therapy of Depression (GUSS, KRAUSE & SLOSHWER, 2020). These protocols suggest a three-stage follow-up: preparation, the session with the substance, and integration. The preparation stage consists of sessions in which the patient is prepared, receives guidance, and discusses expectations and possible topics to be addressed during psychotherapy. This first phase also strengthens the therapeutic bond, which is important for the safety, comfort, and smooth running of the experience. The second stage is the session with the psychedelic substance, in which the substance is administered in a safe and controlled environment, always with the therapist present. Finally, there is the integration phase, sessions that take place after the use of the psychedelic and in which what is experienced during the session is discussed and integrated with daily life and other issues addressed in psychotherapy.

It is also necessary that some control measures are followed by qualified professionals through the combination of three essential elements for the good result of the assisted psychotherapy treatment: set, setting and drug. Guss and collaborators (2020) and Rodrigues (2019) explain set as the patient's physiological and mental state, their attitude and intention before, during and after the PAP session. Since the psychedelic experience is highly influenced by the individual's mental state (their beliefs, emotions and expectations), preparing the set is of utmost importance to avoid unpleasant or traumatic experiences. The authors detail the setting as the physical and social environment of substance use, valuing safety, privacy, comfort and support in the drug administration session. By drug we refer to the technical aspects of the prescribed medicine, such as its origin, dosage and composition. These two dimensions, internal and external, as well as the psychoactive substance, complement each other and are essential for a successful psychotherapeutic experience. In addition to these three elements mentioned, a fourth dimension must be considered, since it affects the dynamics of the other three. Matrix is another dimension that influences the results of PAP because it concerns the patient's environment, their territoriality and their sociocultural ties. It is the matrix experienced before and during PAP sessions and to which we return after their completion (EISNER, 1997). The matrix concerns the material and social relationships that affect us all, such as economic and sociological relationships, spirituality, ancestry, rituals, and culture (EISNER, 1997; RODRIGUES, 2024).

The literature has reported on the therapeutic potential of psilocybin and the limitations that need to be addressed in future research (BIENEMANN et al., 2024; LOWE et al., 2021; NOGUEIRA et al., 2024). Despite the favorable perception of PAP with psilocybin by mental health professionals, they need more training and access to information on that matter (MEIR et al., 2022; MEYER et al., 2022; SCHMIDT et al., 2022). Carhart-Harris & Goodwin (2017) reinforce that, in addition to knowledge of the pharmacological effects and the dynamics of PAP, it is important to have in-depth knowledge of therapeutic techniques and management, understanding of the patient's needs, and the ability to change and adapt therapeutic strategies throughout the process of assisted psychotherapy. Carneiro (2021) also draws our attention to the importance of preparing and training professionals who intend to monitor psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy sessions and highlights ethical and empathetic attitudes, clinical sensitivity, and knowledge of the physical and psychological effects of the substance to be used as some of the essential factors that the team must have to ensure patient safety and treatment effectiveness. Finally, Pereira (2024) questions whether the clinical training currently offered is sufficient and whether it prepares psychotherapists properly for this emerging paradigm that may soon become a reality, given the possibility of PAP being regulated in several countries in the near future. One of the arguments offered by the author is the need to broaden the perspective in this training to change attitudes, that is, to recover the ancestral matrix of psychedelics, something already highlighted to a certain extent by Gestalt therapy and Ecopsychology. Another issue we raise is the non-spiritual and medicinal uses in recreational or social contexts that are also integrative and promote well-being and quality of life.

Ad naturam⁸: for a Psychology that considers life beyond humans

Media and the scientific community have been informing us about the consequences of dualistic egocentrism and, why not say ecocidal, of modernity and capitalism. We are concerned about the process of distancing ourselves from Nature and its reification by humans. Our contemporary global society has been moving towards the unbridled consumption of "natural resources", guided mainly by a discourse of "technological-scientific evolution" in the last two centuries (APFFEL-MARGLIN & GONZALES, 2024; BILIBIO,

⁸ Back to nature.

2010; BILIBIO & FITTIPALDI, 2021; KRENAK, 2019). Bilibio (2010) invites us to understand this "evolution" based on two more recent historical moments: a) the industrial revolution in the 18th and 19th centuries, marking the beginning of a new relationship with natural resources, social relations and the way we live; and, b) the post-war period in the mid-1940s, when we observed an acceleration of the consumer-oriented lifestyle, distanced from Nature.

In this sense, the massive imbalance of life promoted by the usurpation of the environment as a mere resource for the sake of unscrupulous profit and uncontrolled development, and the result of the illusion of dualistic separation, comes up against limits that are becoming increasingly present, as we have illustrated with some examples above. The crisis installed in environmental, psychological and economic instances in a global context announces how unsustainable contemporary forms of intra and inter-individual relationships are. There is, therefore, an urgent need to update the current onto-epistemology or, better said, to reestablish our ties with Nature so that the future may once again be ancestral.

This unsustainable modus operandi produces, in turn, harmful consequences that extend beyond damage stricto sensu to fauna, flora and funga, directly impacting the quality of life of humans themselves due to the impoverished relationship we establish with other beings in the hylozoic pluriverse. Hence, to do justice to a true decolonial stance, we can go back a few more centuries to locate the transition from the feudal to the colonial and later to the modern period, in which relevant changes imprinted referential values for the onto-epistemological transformation that lasts to the present day, its ethical-political consequences and its socioecological unsustainability (APFFEL-MARGLIN & GONZALES, 2024; **KOPENAWA** & ALBERT, 2019; MACY & JOHNSTONE. 2020; MALDONADO-TORRES, 2022).

Paradigmatic changes in several instances contributed to the illusion of Human-Nature separation, which would later culminate in the current crisis, in particular: a) new philosophical conceptions, such as Cartesian thought and Rationalism, emerging in the 17th century, which definitively separated spirit and matter, restricted Nature to its material dimension and encouraged its unscrupulous exploitation as a goal and means for technological advancement and its fostering of quality of life (APFFEL-MARGLIN & GONZALES, 2024; BILIBIO & FITTIPALDI, 2021; MALDONADO-TORRES, 2022); b) new spiritual/religious conceptions, which broke the ecological ties between human beings and Nature (APFFEL-MARGLIN & GONZALES, 2024; MALDONADO-TORRES, 2022);

and, c) new cultural conceptions, in which schools, churches, individuals and organizations contribute decisively to the construction of a consumerist mentality for the maintenance of the market and "economic progress" (BILIBIO, 2010; HAN, 2015; MACY & JOHNSTONE, 2020; MALDONADO-TORRES, 2022).

We recall that there was a period in History in which physical health, mental health, and spirituality were understood as dimensions of holistic individual and collective lives (APFFEL-MARGLIN & GONZALES, 2024; HAUSKELLER *et al.*, 2023; KOPENAWA & ALBERT, 2019; NARANJO, 2000, 2020; WILLIAMS *et al.*, 2022; WINKELMAN, 2010). The first to suffer the effects of colonialism were European peoples who maintained their closeness to the forces of Nature. For modernity to establish its scientific references, it was necessary to erase vitalist narratives and exterminate the "heretics" who prevented the advancement of its onto-epistemology first in European territory and then in the rest of the world (APFFEL-MARGLIN & GONZALES, 2024). Thus, over the course of five centuries we have separated ourselves from the cosmos and its beings, producing a dangerously dualistic humanism (APFFEL-MARGLIN & GONZALES, 2024; GRAY, 2006; RIBEIRO, 2009; CASTRO, 2018). The idea that Nature is at our disposal and that it should be explored and exploited by humans has led to the degradation of ecosystems, the enslavement of peoples, misogyny and patriarchy, and the separation between matter, subjective processes and spirituality.

In its effort to establish itself as a field of scientific knowledge, Psychology reproduced the laboratory-experimental model with an organismic focus that was current in 19th dualistic, materialistic, the century. This mechanistic and mercantilist onto-epistemological alignment has persisted for almost two centuries, but it has faced criticism and challenges within its own academic and professional body. Comprehensive or humanistic-existential psychotherapeutic schools, such as Gestalt therapy, a reference for this text, emerged in the mid-20th century in order to recover the centrality of human experience in its environmentality, although few authors openly speak of spirituality and spiritualized environmentality. The technologies of psychotherapy and spirituality diverge in their foundations, but they also share intersections, so that they are not mutually exclusive. In fact, there are authors who consider psychotherapy and spirituality as a single path with the same objective, but with different nuances (DELACROIX, 2021, 2022; NARANJO, 2000, 2013, 2020; RIBEIRO, 2009; WINKELMAN, 2010). We identify various links between these paths when considering the investigation of intra- and interpersonal phenomenologies, the search for self-knowledge, personal development and well-being, connection with oneself, the community and Nature, learning to deal with difficult personal and collective memories, reclaiming a sense of purpose, feeling fully present and going through challenging moments. We refer to spirituality as a broad spectrum of beliefs, meanings, narratives, practices and technologies aimed at connecting with something greater or transpersonal, more-than-human, whether religious or non-religious. In contrast, religion also refers to the intention of reconnecting with something transcendental, transpersonal, but in an institutionalized context, with its own culture and identity aspects. Spirituality, in turn, is not always aligned with institutionalized references and is often used as an umbrella term to encompass transpersonal and transcendental experiences.

As for Psychology, as it is a scientific discipline, its foundations and instruments are, at least formally, aligned with biomedical models. Even if we explain the phenomena observed and/or reported in psychotherapy in a different way and the intervention instruments are different, there are spaces for intersections regarding reconnection with something greater and beyond-the-human. This is mainly because no narrative will be sufficient to encompass every lived experience. Clinical practice reveals to us that spirituality *lato sensu* will be the theme of psychotherapy, since it is inherent to our human nature (DELACROIX, 2022; NARANJO, 2000; RIBEIRO, 2009). We recognize that some psychotherapeutic traditions propose themselves to be more or less transpersonal and in dialogue with spirituality (DELACROIX, 2021, 2022; NARANJO, 2000; RIBEIRO, 2009). The gaps not covered by the scientific narrative in these ineffable experiences suggest the need to change our stance. Psychotherapy based on evidence and observable behavior practiced by professionals qualified to work within a legally regulated and scientifically proven scope cannot deny the spirituality brought precisely by those who ask these same professionals for help. Otherwise, it would be unethical to impose an onto-epistemology on a vulnerable person, i.e. the scientific one. Psychotherapy that aims to be transpersonal and in dialogue with spirituality must encompass personal beliefs and experiences in search of profound transformation, whether intervening with those who ask for help, their community and/or the territory they inhabit. We are faced with different onto-epistemologies, different ways of understanding and relating to life when we talk about psychotherapy and shamanism. Medicine people, shamans and spiritual guides receive extensive training in their traditions to understand phenomena from a matrix of knowledge transmitted orally and assimilated through direct experimentation with Nature and non-human beings and more-than-human dimensions.

Carl Jung and William James asserted the need to study non-ordinary experiences, unlike Sigmund Freud, who was more tied to the modern context and averse to these phenomena (APFFEL-MARGLIN & GONZALES, 2024; CARHART-HARRIS et al., 2014; WINKELMAN, 2010). Despite the efforts of colonial thought and modernity to exterminate hylozoic onto-epistemologies and their relationship with the Sacred, we continue to search for solutions beyond rationality and res extensa for everyday problems. We seek and produce meanings to overcome obstacles using values and purposes that transcend human dimension as a reference. Modern Psychology has never been able to take the place of spirituality and religiosity because each narrative, we reiterate in affirming, will have its limits. In mechanistic and dualistic onto-epistemology (and why not say to a certain extent, modern humanist), ineffable phenomena are not the object of study (APFFEL-MARGLIN & GONZALES, 2024; EVANS, 2018; GRAY, 2006). This is a position that has been questioned by research on near-death experiences (APFFEL-MARGLIN; GONZALES, 2024) and psychedelics (LETHEBY, 2022; LETHEBY & MATTU, 2021; JOHNSON, 2022). Scientific Psychology has restricted its proposal to the ego (DELACROIX, 2022) or the "small mind" (NARANJO, 2000) instead of the relationship with the whole, often reducing us to isolated neural and biochemical phenomena and processes (APFFEL-MARGLIN & GONZALES, 2024), and stimulating egotistic values (DELACROIX, 2022; RIBEIRO, 2009). Pereira (2024) suggests that psychotherapists should come closer to ancestral onto-epistemologies and change their stance to resemble that adopted by shamans, that is, one of diplomacy and moderation with the transcendent rather than mere behavioral modification. Something that has been lost in modern societies and is still observed in indigenous peoples

ALBERT, 2019; WILLIAMS et al., 2022).

Psychology is subdivided according to epistemological and ideological aspects that underpin its methods, theories, techniques, and objects of study. Gestalt therapy is one of several traditions in its methodological diversity of psychotherapies, an approach that focuses on the here-and-now, helping people to connect and integrate thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and other vital processes active at a given moment (DELACROIX, 2021, 2022). This tradition understands that life happens in the dialogical contact between organism and its environment, from which we feel, think, and act (DELACROIX, 2021, 2022; PERLS, HEFFERLINE & GOODMAN, 1998), but few authors speak openly about spirituality or ecology (for example, DELACROIX, 2021, 2022; NARANJO, 2000, 2020; RIBEIRO, 2009). One of the most

(APFFEL-MARGLIN & GONZALES, 2024; HAUSKELLER et al., 2023; KOPENAWA &

precious lessons we receive from Gestalt therapy is that, "paradoxically," we change when we recognize who we are after turning ourselves to the present experience (DELACROIX, 2021, 2022; PERLS, HEFFERLINE & GOODMAN, 1998; NARANJO, 2013). Only by recovering who we really are can we use our full individual and collective creative potential. Paul Goodman, one of the initial developers of this psychotherapeutic approach, was an anarchist thinker and opposed to the contractual salvation of the modern State as much as to the naivety of a naturally good humanity (GOODMAN, 1991, 2010a, 2010c). The good use of science and technology is possible, according to the author, in a decentralized society in which power/ knowledge is not used as an instrument of social coercion, but to foster autonomy (GOODMAN, 1973, 2010b).

Ecopsychology, in turn, consolidated itself as a field in the last three decades of the 20th century. It seeks to overcome the modern gap between the individual and restricted psychological dimension and the broader and collective ecological dimension. This discipline understands the needs of the planet and peoples as a complex *continuum* of complementarities (ROSZAK, 1992) and proposes the restoration of their connection through the development of an awareness of belonging and the promotion of an ethical and supportive vision with all forms of life (BILIBIO & FITIPALDI, 2021; MACY & JOHNSTONE, 2020). The ecopsychological perspective focuses on the relationships between Humans and the Web of Life, knowing that these are strongly mediated by culture. Bilibio (2013) argues that the current civilizational crisis is a paradigmatic crisis, i.e. a crisis of perception of reality. This author states that such perception is not incorrect, but incomplete due to its modern dualistic foundation. Ecopsychology is not just another psychological approach, but a set of ideas and practices that support the paradigmatic transition we need, supported by science and the ethics of valuing life through a cooperative attitude.

Gestalt therapy was born in the context of counterculture and has dialogued with psychedelia since its beginnings, especially with Claudio Naranjo's Gestalt Viva, one of the authors cited in our text and a pioneer in psycholytic psychotherapy and psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy. However, Gestalt therapy's main theoretical axis moved away from these discussions due to the social stigma of such psychoactive drugs. Likewise, Jean-Marie Delacroix has a long experience with Ethnopsychology and ayahuasca (see DELACROIX, 2004a, 2004b), an important author of this psychotherapeutic approach we would like to highlight. Two other authors to be remembered because of their work bridging Gestalt therapy and Ecopsychology are Jorge Ponciano Ribeiro and Marco Aurélio Bilibio. Last but not least,

another author who stands out for his efforts to pave intersections between Ecology, Ethnography, Neurophysiology and Anthropology is Winkelman (2013, 2021), whom we invite you to read.

We have observed numerous intersections and connections between their contributions. We could cite several other authors, and we have restricted ourselves to those we have cited throughout this text. There are many voices that try to make themselves heard and draw our attention to the need for a change in attitude. However, the biomedical research currently being conducted moves away from this matrix, echoing the interest in isolating molecules to cure physiological aspects and consequently changing behaviors and improving mental health. Ongoing research insist on hierarchizing power/ knowledge, disregarding or appropriating indigenous wisdom without due retribution and recognition of its origin. Both Gestalt therapy and Ecopsychology do not claim to be anti-technological, as they invite us to overcome this paradigm in favor of the reintegration of humans into Nature and our capacity to be enchanted by life. As pointed out by Freitas, Shanenawa & Maia (2024), we are faced with the need for reparation and a historic opportunity in the face of the "psychedelic renaissance" to foster ethics of resistance and policies of freedom that also promote social and ecological justice.

Medicus curat, natura sanat⁹: for an onto-epistemology beyond molecules

The euphoric climate of the "psychedelic renaissance" boasts benefits for mental health, which is indeed suggested by research, including pointing to a greater connection with Nature (IRVINE *et al.*, 2023; KETTNER *et al.*, 2019). However, there is no guarantee that a *stricto sensu* pharmacological approach can change a paradigm that is well-established and defended by the current structure. The molecule studied is just a vehicle for us to delve deeper into the matrix we inhabit. Thus, we are left with an important question: which matrix are we talking about? Let us not be naive and forget the invasion of the Capitol in January 2021 (HORRIE, 2021) and the psychedelic liberalism of Silicon Valley (TVORUN-DUNN, 2022).

In a paradigm focused solely on neuroscience and meritocracy, in which Nature is separated from us, at our disposal as a resource to be exploited, and in which science and its technologies are used as instruments of power/ knowledge for alienation and social control, psychedelic technology used will take us even further away from ancestry and the pluriverse of *anima mundi*. Disregarding the broad relationships established with the more-than-human

⁹ Doctor cures, nature heals.

dimension will lead us off the path to *Moksha* (HUXLEY, 2022) and will recklessly direct us towards *Brave New World* (HUXLEY, 2008).

We get sick because we have separated ourselves from Nature and community, because we deny who we are and we prioritize the performance we make in front of others, denying our history, our roots, our desires and our dreams. We get sick because we separate ourselves from the *anima mundi* and from ourselves. Therefore, there is no molecule that can save us beyond the cure of symptoms, since there is no integral health and life in an unhealthy, unjust world, without appreciation for the community and for Nature, and without autonomy.

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