



## De-Centering the Organism: Psychedelic Therapies, Fungi and the Body without Organs

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### Abstract

The encounter of clinical psychology with psychedelic compounds, plants, and mushrooms opens up new possibilities for psychotherapy practices. In the Schizoanalysis of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, conceptual and experimental tools are found that not only assist in thinking about the psychedelic experience but also enrich clinical practice. The concept of the Body without Organs, which partly stems from Antonin Artaud's psychedelic experience with peyote in the Mexican deserts, is central to this approach. The philosophical question of "how to create for oneself a Body without Organs?" involves an ethical, aesthetic, and political task. A shift is proposed, dissociating psychology from the neuroscience linked to the organic body, body-form, reified in the image of the organism. By revisiting the anatomophysiological paradigm, based on Foucault's analyses of disciplinary power and biopower, rigid

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definitions of the body are questioned, and the field of experience is broadened to include other possible narratives and decompositions. The psychedelic experience is not limited to the organic body, but involves an intensive body, body as force. Psychedelic mushrooms can act as powerful intermediaries, deconstructing fixed forms of subject and body, while the mycelium, decentralized and non-binary, unfolds new possibilities. The implications for psychedelic therapies must be approached with caution and awareness of the risks, as Deleuze and Guattari warn. Presenting a framework that shifts the focus away from human-centered views, capturing the “humusity” of Donna Haraway, a fertile ground is proposed for new narratives and fabulations, where mycelium, rhizomes and seeds can thrive in the folds.

**Keywords:** Psychedelics. Schizoanalysis. Fungi. Psychology. Anthropocene.

## **Descentrando el Organismo: Terapias Psicodélicas, Hongos y el Cuerpo sin Órganos**

### **Resumen**

El encuentro de la psicología clínica con los compuestos psicodélicos, las plantas y los hongos abre nuevas posibilidades para las prácticas psicoterapéuticas. En la esquizoanálisis de Gilles Deleuze y Félix Guattari, se encuentran herramientas conceptuales y experimentales que no solo ayudan a pensar la experiencia psicodélica, sino que también enriquecen la práctica clínica. El concepto del Cuerpo sin Órganos, que en parte proviene de la experiencia psicodélica de Antonin Artaud con peyote en los desiertos mexicanos, es central en este enfoque. La cuestión filosófica de "¿cómo crear para uno mismo un Cuerpo sin Órganos?" implica una tarea ética, estética y política. Se propone un cambio, disociando la psicología de la neurociencia vinculada al cuerpo orgánico, a la forma del cuerpo, reificada en la imagen del organismo. Al revisar el paradigma anatomofisiológico, basado en los análisis de Foucault sobre el poder disciplinario y la biopolítica, se cuestionan las definiciones rígidas del cuerpo, y el campo de la experiencia se amplía para incluir otras posibles narrativas y decomposiciones. La experiencia psicodélica no se limita al cuerpo orgánico, sino que

implica un cuerpo intensivo, un cuerpo-fuerza. Los hongos psicodélicos pueden actuar como poderosos intermediarios, deconstruyendo las formas fijas de sujeto y cuerpo, mientras que el micelio, descentralizado y no binario, despliega nuevas posibilidades. Las implicaciones para las terapias psicodélicas deben ser abordadas con cautela y atención a los riesgos, como advierten Deleuze y Guattari. Presentando un marco que desplaza el enfoque de visiones centradas en el ser humano, capturando la "humanidad" de Donna Haraway, se propone un terreno fértil para nuevas narrativas y fabulación, donde los micelios, los rizomas y las semillas pueden prosperar en los pliegues.

**Palabras clave:** Psicodélicos. Esquizoanálisis. Hongos. Psicología. Antropoceno.

## I.

Why have we kept our own names? Out of habit, purely out of habit. To make ourselves unrecognizable in turn. To render imperceptible, not ourselves, but what makes us act, feel, and think. [...] To reach, not the point where one no longer says I, but the point where it is no longer of any importance whether one says I.  
Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari

If we preserve our names out of habit, we should ask ourselves what they circumscribe. Which organization do they refer to? What do we understand and perceive as "me"? Our names, given to us by those who raised us, tell the stories of those who preceded us: characters from world history, popular art and media, old loves, forgotten or still living relatives. Names designed to define a supposed individuality, generally based on binary criteria linked to biological sex, to circumscribe *a body*. An organic body, understood and perceived as a unique organism in the world. A body that I call my own, delimited by my skin. A body made up of cells, organs, systems, veins and valves. But that's just one way of talking about the *body*.

This essay aims to walk through conceptions of the body that, before being understood as antagonistic, refer to different planes that emerge in psychedelic experiences and in their possible clinical listening. One, the plane of organization, the plane of forms, of subjects, of rigid, binary lines; the other, the plane of consistency, the plane of forces, thresholds, of speed and flows, of supple lines and lines of flight (DELEUZE; GUATTARI, 1987).

The body-form, identified with the image of the organism, is the reference plane of the anatomo-physiological paradigm, as described by Michel Foucault (2003). This paradigm permeates psychological clinical practice, particularly within biologizing approaches linked to medicine and the accompanying discourses of power. Medicine, with its approach centered on the physical body and its functions, reiterates and reaffirms a model that aims to reduce human experience to biological and physiological processes. Neuroscience feeds this paradigm with its supposed theories and discoveries about the brain, while psychologists and "*neurolovers*"<sup>5</sup> seek answers and diagnoses based on the workings of the nervous system. At this level of the body-form organization, different studies in medicine aim to objectively describe, from a neurological perspective, the effects of the human body's interactions with fungi, plants, and psychedelic compounds.

However, the body of primary interest in the clinical perspective we propose, in its encounter with psychedelics, is not limited to the body-form—the organic body analyzed through traditional medical methods and identified by name. Instead, it refers to a body that displaces this definition, incorporating forces, zones of intensity, and the complex social and historical relations that shape it. What, then, constitutes the "I" in this context? What defines this "I" in relation to the body? These questions prompt a reconsideration of the narratives we construct and the ways in which we articulate our experiences.

In this direction, this text intends to intensify the discussions proposed in a previous work (RABELLO; DA SILVA; PROTTI, 2024) about the critique of the capture of psychedelics by capitalism, involving a critical analysis of desire, of the unconscious, of freedom and the way in which capitalism is defined as a process of production of subjectivity by the exploitation of our vital forces. Here, we will seek both a critical analysis of the perspective of the biological body linked to capitalism, and also the proposition of a political therapeutic/clinical perspective that interests us, allied to the concept of the *Body without Organs* (BwO), by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. The methodological approach will follow a path proposed by Anna Tsing

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<sup>5</sup> "*Neurolover*" has become a common term, a social media hashtag, used by patient profiles and professionals working with neuroscience-based diagnoses.

(2015): through a profusion of small texts, like mushrooms sprouting in the woods after rain.

## II.

In *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*, Michel Foucault (2003) traces a genealogy of medicine, aiming to elucidate how the body was observed and treated, especially from the end of the 18th century onwards, when new ways of categorizing the organic body emerged. Foucault describes how, during the period of the Scientific Revolution and with the advent of the biological sciences, the medical perception was transformed. Medicine increasingly focused on the anatomy and physiology of the body, leading to the emergence of a paradigm that positions the body as an object of scientific observation and technical intervention. The "anatomo-physiological paradigm" refers to this model of understanding the human body, focusing on the detailed analysis of its functions and structures, and at the same time delimiting the body as a space for medical intervention and as an individual political surface for the incidence of power. The doctor gradually became a regulator of the body and health through diagnoses, prescriptions and interventions, in the practice of a disciplinary power and, later and complementarily, biopower (FOUCAULT, 1979; 2008).

Foucault (2003) argues that this clinical gaze, which is based on direct, systematic and scientific observation, leads to the production of knowledge about the body that not only describes diseases, but also categorizes bodies as "normal" or "pathological". This view is also a reflection of the disciplinary power that affects bodies, regulating their functions and seeking to separate the organic, supposedly universal body from its subjective, social and political layers. This is a crucial point: the body becomes the site of intervention by the medical specialist, where techniques are applied and discourses of truth establish as valid that which can be objectively proven. As Foucault (1979, p. 149) asserts, "it is from a power over the body that physiological, organic knowledge has become possible".

What is of interest here is to highlight, based on Foucault's work (2003), that modern medicine, which emerged in the 18th century, established a new way of narrating the body. It defined new grammars and languages, distinguishing between

signs and symptoms, with purported biological foundations. This narrative created a set of discourses on health and illness, addressing not only the sick individual but also a presumed healthy "model" upon which normative prescriptions would be applied, thereby linking "normality" and "health". It produced discourses grounded in a world of increasing visibility, establishing new relationships between the visible and the invisible, and constructing scientific discourses of rational objectivity concerning the individual. Furthermore, it issued discourses that perform a diagnostic reduction of the being of the disease, which Foucault terms "nominalist". It also applied a nosography of organs and systems, based on cadaver dissections, leading to the creation of general pathological forms. In this process, the medical clinic emerged, closely linked to the concept of the body-organism, defining this body as an object of positive knowledge.

Simultaneously with the emergence of the medical clinic and the establishment of the practices and discourses that supported it, there was a suppression of different narratives and ways of relating to the body and illness. Foucault (2003) notes that as early as 1707, France attempted to regulate medical practice and education, although the most rigorous institutionalization of medical teaching did not occur until the late 18th century, with its formal organization within universities. This 1707 regulation "was then about fighting charlatans, empiricists 'and untitled and unqualified persons who practiced medicine'" (FOUCAULT, 2003, p. 47). Thus, no one could practice medicine or administer remedies without having obtained a degree. Gradually, scientific medicine began to distance itself from other conceptions of the body that were considered invalid, linked to the philosophical, artistic, spiritual or traditional practices of native peoples.

In this process, and this is important, there was a disqualification of all other knowledge that was not based on this same perspective of Western medicine that was being organized. The biomedical powers and knowledges defined the reference images of a supposed "ideal healthy model man", a white, clean, Western, heterosexual man, and these were the images from which european standards of normality and pathology were established. A complex set of colonial, social, racial, and gendered definitions and criteria emerged from the medical scrutiny of the biological body, the organism. The pursuit of a supposed "biological basis" for diseases has historically served as justification for a range of eugenic practices, genocides, and both physical and epistemological violence against marginalized populations and bodies.

In contemporary times, we see medical practices and neuroscientific research reiterating the image of the organic body as a place of intervention and response to the crises of psychiatry and the pharmaceutical industry (LANGLITZ, 2013; 2022). The isolated brain, the great contemporary figure of the promises of healing, gains privileged status. Scientific research begins to look for the neural structures responsible for psychedelic effects (DE VOS et. al., 2021), with the aim of understanding these effects in the brain itself after using the compounds, and different models are proposed<sup>6</sup> to explain the effects of the substances and why they should be approved as cutting-edge treatments to treat "mental illnesses".

Patricia Kubala (2023) and Christian Dunker (2021) note how psychiatry has become increasingly associated with cognitive-behavioral therapies and neuroscience, as seen in the latest version of the DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders). Both authors point out that the current dominant view of psychiatry continues to be that of "mental illness" as neurological dysfunction. Given the failure of the hypothesis that mental illness is caused by serotonergic deficiencies and chemical imbalances (a theory that positioned serotonin reuptake drugs as a potential cure), the focus has shifted, as we see it, to current hypotheses concerning the neuroplasticity of neural circuits, with psychedelics now emerging as the proposed solution.

This is the domain of the hard sciences, which Isabelle Stengers (2023) refers to as the "speculative economy of promise": the way in which industry produces innovations, creating demands and expectations; sponsors research and researchers, aiming to produce patents; reconfigures the public, segmenting it into specific consumer markets; and defines relationships with knowledge based on bibliometric procedures of citations and article production in hierarchical scientific journals, in the "publish or perish" style. For the author, neuroscience is a clear example of how this works, characterized by "the speed with which publications pile up, bearing all the signs of laboratory 'success', presenting 'facts that demonstrate'. And some of these demonstrations have major media repercussions in the mode of 'once we believed, now we know'..." (STENGER, 2023, p. 90). In fact, many of the publications have no effect

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<sup>6</sup> This is the case with the REBUS model proposed by Robert Carhart-Harris and his research group (2019).

even for fellow researchers in the field, accumulating "objective facts" that only confer visibility in the media.

A certain "psychedelic science" is thus being produced. Psychedelics become the new fever of industry, the new gold rush of science: we see the colonization and extraction of the powers of fungi, plants and animals, just as we see the colonization and extraction of the precious metals of the Earth. We see non-psychedelic psychedelics<sup>7</sup> being developed rapidly in laboratories using artificial intelligence, both to minimize the supposed "adverse effects"<sup>8</sup> of the substances on bodies, and for other purposes also (SARRIS et. al., 2023). We are also seeing the development of enhanced virtual reality technologies to induce visions in the users of clinical trials (SEKULA et al., 2022) and, in this way, more and more research seems to meet the economic needs of the large companies that produce the new drugs. We are reminded here of Brazilian thinker Antonio Bispo dos Santos' (2023) critique of Western sciences: these are technologies produced with de-involvement. Highlighting the negation prefix of the word, Antonio Bispo help us think about the distancing in the involvement of science with psychedelic experiences themselves, as well as with the Earth.

Theories about the brain under the effects of psychedelics largely aim to justify that the compounds produce structural and plastic changes in the nervous system on their own, dispensing with social and historical elements, as well as shamans or psychotherapists in intervention settings. Until very recently, several authors saw the current "psychedelic renaissance" as a "rebirth of psychotherapy", but perhaps the mainstream movement is not moving in this direction. Some current discussions are based mainly on the moment in the United States: after the rejection, for various reasons, of the clinical trials of Lykos Therapeutics (formerly MAPS<sup>9</sup>), it is assumed that the market trend will be to exclude the element of "therapy" from research, with an

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<sup>7</sup> Available at:

<https://news.unchealthcare.org/2022/09/scientists-create-non-psychedelic-compound-with-same-anti-dep-ressant-effect/> . Accessed on: 04/12/2024.

<sup>8</sup> "Adverse effect' is a biomedical definition for effects that may be experienced during encounters with psychedelics, such as nausea, vomiting, or other challenging experiences. However, many times the people and different ethnic groups who seek contact with these compounds and use them in various contexts are precisely seeking these effects, considering them to be very important or essential for their experience and meaning-making. It is common for these challenging experiences to be the central axis through which some psychedelic experiences unfold. We will not delve into this discussion in the present text. For now, it is only important to state our position against the reductionist biomedical view that these effects are 'adverse'.

<sup>9</sup> *Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies.*



even more biomedical and reductionist approach to the new "psychedelic drugs" (LAMBERT, 2024).

The following questions arise: in what ways do psychedelic science and clinical psychology reiterate the same anatomophysiological paradigm? What direction is our relationship with fungi, plants, and power animals taking within the context of contemporary capitalism? These questions were initially addressed in a previous article (RABELLO; DA SILVA; PROTTI, 2024), through a dialogue with relevant authors in the field. To further explore, we ask: what social and clinical roles can the psychedelic experience occupy, and what conception of the body is involved in this process?

There has been an excessive focus on the brain. The organic body increasingly appears to be reduced to the primacy of the brain, as if all answers lie within this remarkable and enigmatic organ. It is no longer sufficient to examine the organ through anatomical dissection; there is a drive to explore it more deeply, mapping its structure with advanced imaging technologies and artificial intelligence, visualizing its internal workings, and attempting to uncover its smallest physical and functional units. The reductionist tendencies of hegemonic science are evident. It appears that Western science has overlooked the fact that the brain is only one organ among many, and that the body consists of multiple interconnected layers. Furthermore, reductionist neuroscience seems to disregard the contributions of contemporary Western thinkers such as Stanley Keleman, Alexander Lowen, Humberto Maturana, Francisco Varela, Donna Haraway, and Isabelle Stengers, among others, who view the body as an experience of being alive in the world and producing that world. Additionally, this perspective seems to neglect the body conceptions and practices found in other traditional systems of knowledge, such as the Indian Ayurveda or the care practices of different indigenous peoples.

As Isabelle Stengers (2023) suggests, a deceleration of science is necessary. A reinvention of its philosophical foundations, a redirection of its perspectives: a slow science, she says, is a bet, understanding that fast and accelerated science does not pay off and only serves market profits. And it is in this sense that psychedelic experiences have been reduced, in our perspective, under what Stengers (2023) calls the "imperative of reproducibility", when singular moments of personal or collective experiences are forcibly disconnected from context, subjected to general categories or judged

inadequate for knowledge and relegated to the "irrational". We therefore need to learn together not to define and categorize these moments, but to cultivate them: "we need to discover what supports and sustains them and what blocks and poisons them, in order to gain something like the slow knowledge of the gardener, as opposed to the fast knowledge of 'rationalized' industrial agriculture" (STENGERS, 2023, p. 169). Antonio Bispo (2023) also points in the same direction: to make a shared knowledge, with involvement, at the confluence of different ways of life that expand our potentials.

The aim here is not to reject neuroscience but to advocate for a decelerated approach to neuroscience, one that is articulated through lateral relationships with other regimes of knowledge production and epistemologies, including counter-hegemonic perspectives. This is not a matter of denying Western medicine or biology, but rather encouraging reflection on how the reductionism inherent in science and medicine posits the biological foundations of vital processes as the sole explanations for life, while neglecting the potential transversalities and complementarities between diverse forms of knowledge. Challenging the objectivism of contemporary science requires engaging both with philosophy and the knowledge systems of indigenous peoples (FREITAS; SHANENAWA; MAIA, 2024).

We advance the proposal of an "aesthetic paradigm", as articulated by psychoanalyst Félix Guattari (1995), which transversalizes technoscience, ethics, biology, computer science, social sciences, philosophy, traditional knowledge, art, and so on. It has become increasingly common within anthropology to view shamans as scientists of indigenous peoples, as experimenters and sages within alternative epistemologies (NETO; GIL; RAMOS, 2024). In this context, we adopt the perspective that "the functional equivalent of indigenous shamanism is science. It is the scientist, the high-energy physics laboratory, the particle accelerator. The shaman's rattle is a particle accelerator" (VIVEIROS DE CASTRO, 1999, p. 45). We propose that hard science (and psychology) should establish zones of proximity (DELEUZE; GUATTARI, 1987), sympathy (DELEUZE; PARNET, 1987), confluence (BISPO DOS SANTOS, 2023), or sympoiesis (HARAWAY, 2016) with these forms of knowledge.

### III.

Dismantling the organism has never meant killing yourself, but rather opening the body to connections.  
Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari

So what is this we call an organism? Following the line of analysis of Michel Foucault's work and crossed by criticism of contemporary capitalist psychedelic science, we point out that the organism is a stratum, that is, "a phenomenon of accumulation, coagulation, and sedimentation that, in order to extract useful labor from the BwO, imposes upon it forms, functions, bonds, dominant and hierarchized organizations, organized transcendence" (DELEUZE; GUATTARI, 1987, p. 159). The organism is a product of power, exploited by doctors and capitalism. The organism is hierarchized, and the brain is placed as the centralizing organ. The organism is defined by predetermined relationships, with defined functions: the mouth is for eating, the anus is for shitting. Don't connect your mouth to anything but food, don't connect your anus to any other body: you'll be a deprived.

The organism is articulated on the plane of organization: the plane of constituted forms, molar orders, hierarchies and rigid lines. The plane on which stable and reproducible social structures operate, the plane of the great institutions: work, school, marriage, gender. The plane of organization inscribes bodies binarily through the operation of faciality: are you a man or a woman, are you a boss or an employee, are you "x or y", who are you? Deeply colonial, the Western figure of faciality is Christ, it's the average white man's face, reference figure from whom everyone will be racialized and inscribed in the plan of organization. The plan thus operates from a center that hierarchizes and spatializes, that produces a grammar, that distributes flows and determines social functions, Chronos, the State apparatus, the role of computation of normalities (DELEUZE; GUATTARI, 1987). In the context of geography and urbanism, the centers of South America's colonial cities were established around religious missions, which marked Chronos with their bells and served as the point of origin for all addresses, with the cross of Christ at the center of everything. Consequently, we are segmented not only in a binary manner but also circularly (e.g., my apartment, my building, my street, my neighborhood, my city, my country) and linearly (e.g., from family to school, from school to the army, from the army to work, etc.). For

schizoanalysis, the plane of organization is closely tied to the processes of stratification and subjectification that shape and express social formations, determining or restricting the flows that are valid within a given system.

We are back to the anatomico-physiological paradigm: a description of the body-form, objectified and defined by pre-established functions that distinguish between what is considered normal and pathological. Well, use the anus for pleasure and you'll be an abnormal, we know this story and where it leads. Each thing with its only function. In this plane of organization, we therefore consider the three great strata that define us and give us social and molar forms, imposed by power agencies: the organism, signifiacances and subjectifications (DELEUZE; GUATTARI, 1987). It is here that we recognize ourselves and are recognized, that we say “I” and keep our names out of habit, that we know ourselves and that we imagine we live in the comfort of our identities, establishing ourselves in the world and also where we fight for rights and against molar oppressions. We are therefore talking about a molar “I”, a subject produced according to the binary parameters of hard lines; “I” in the traditional sense, as a self-conscious entity, autonomous and separate from the world, limited by social conventions and systems of power.

But how hard it would be to live in the plane of organization! To take reality as pure molar organization! As Deleuze (1992, p. 131) states, “Give me the possible, or else I’ll suffocate”. The questions arise: how can we escape, and how can we trace lines of flight in response to the segmented plan that continually seeks to position us within the networks of power? How can we dismantle faciality and disorganize the organism? The issue raised in this text is that, in the face of the organism, we must create avenues for escape and desire, tracing lines of flight, combining different flows, and evading planes of control and serialization. It is not about fleeing from life but about creating life through active experimentation with different aesthetic compositions, thus making immanence.

#### IV.

In 1947, Antonin Artaud declared war on organs. *To have done with the judgement of God*, his radio experimentation caused a furor. Artaud's artistic exploration extended to theater, writing, and a closer engagement with mescaline, particularly

during a trip to Mexico where he participated in peyote ceremonies with the Tarahumara indigenous people. Which body is intensified through Artaud's experimentation? The Body without Organs (BwO), a body produced through experimentation, shaped by a set of practices. It is a body-intensity that arises from the dismantling of strata, the disorganization of the organism, and the undoing of significances and subjectifications. “Why not walk on your head, sing with your sinuses, see through your skin, breathe with your belly: the simple Thing, the Entity, the full Body, the stationary Voyage, Anorexia, cutaneous Vision, Yoga, Krishna, Love, Experimentation” (DELEUZE; GUATTARI, 1987, p.151). In other words, the concept of the Body without Organs emerges as a conceptual tool from a field of artistic and psychedelic experimentation. It presents itself as a valuable philosophical and clinical tool for engaging with the psychedelic experience, particularly in contexts where scientific and traditional Western medical knowledge encounter their limitations.

What happens when we no longer say "I", when we disorganize the organism, when we free desire from the limitations of hard segmentarities? CsO, "connections of desires, conjunction of flows, continuum of intensities" (DELEUZE; GUATTARI, 1987, p. 161). Thus, the notion of CsO expresses a plane of intensities, of consistency or immanence, where desire is freed from specific forms or functions that try to overcode it. Unlike the plane of organization, sustained by hard or molar lines, the plane of immanence or consistency is characterized by molecular movements, supple lines and lines of flight, becomings and Bodies without Organs, Aion.

To discuss the plane of consistency, Deleuze and Guattari frequently reference the sorcerous apprenticeship experiences narrated by Carlos Castañeda with Don Juan, a Yaqui Indian from Sonora, Mexico. What occurs when Castañeda experiments with plants and mushrooms under Don Juan's guidance? He produces for himself a Body without Organs, within conditions directed by the sorcerer. This process involves inhabiting a plane that is no longer structured by names, identities, and meanings that are typically grasped through ordinary, everyday perception. When Don Juan instructs Castañeda to set aside his notebook and seek a specific place, he is urging him: “go beyond—beyond the known, beyond the name, beyond the organism, beyond what you recognize as yourself. Conjugate yourself with other flows, become one with plants, animals, minerals, and molecules. Find a safe space to experiment”. In this context,

mushrooms and plants function as agents of becoming, where the imperceptible becomes perceptible (DELEUZE; GUATTARI, 1987).

As we move through Carlos Castañeda's work, we realize that the use of plant teachers is just one stage in the teachings of Don Juan, who uses them to help the sorcerer's apprentice access other ways of connecting with the world. Castañeda meticulously learns that the plane of ordinary cognition, the plane of the organism, of significances and subjectifications, the plane of molar organization is the *tonal*: the "I", the person, the identity, the body with its established functions. But the *tonal*, which is everything, is just an island. Because sorcery, *enchantment*, happens in relation to the *nagual*, which is also everything. But it is everything in another, molecular order, in the plane of immanence where perception takes in flows of intensities, fibres of light and energy, micro-perceptions and becomings, color and sound. The *nagual* is the world of spirits, where plants and animals communicate directly, where everything has agency. The *nagual* cannot be described or understood with the categories of the *tonal*, such as words or names, a dimension that cannot be fixed by binary logic. Don Juan describes the *tonal* as "everything we know about ourselves and our world" (CASTAÑEDA, 1974, p. 119), thus representing the domain of what is known, described and understood through language and everyday experience. In contrast, the *nagual* is characterized as "the part of us that we don't deal with at all" (Ibid., p. 119).

When Castañeda seeks greater clarity, Don Juan emphasizes that the *nagual* is in a different field from words, names, sensations or any form of descriptive knowledge. He says: "the *nagual* is the part of us for which there is no description - no words, no names, no sensations, no knowledge" (ibid., p. 119). Castañeda, however, finds this conception paradoxical. He argues that, in his view, "if it can't be felt or described or mentioned, it can't exist". Don Juan's response at this point reveals the limitations of an exclusively rational perspective: "it's only a contradiction in your opinion. I warned you, don't end up trying to understand it" (Ibid., p. 119).

Based on Castañeda's question, Don Juan expands his explanation of the *tonal* and the *nagual*, even reinforcing that God, often understood as absolute and all-powerful, belongs to the domain of the *tonal*. He says: "God is part of our personal *tonal* and the *tonal* of the times. The *tonal*, as I said, is everything we think makes up the world, including God, of course" (Ibid., 120). By pointing out that "the *nagual* is not

God, because God is part of our *tonal*” (Ibid., p. 120), Don Juan criticizes the human tendency to reduce everything to binary logic and to apply tonal categories to the ineffable: “we say that our two parts are the soul and the body. Or spirit and matter. Or good and evil. But we never understand that we are just putting things together on the island” (ibid., p. 121). The explanation culminates in a criticism of the attempt to fix the *nagual* as just another object of the *tonal*: “if I said 'nothing', I would only make the *nagual* part of the *tonal*” (Ibid., p. 121). The nature of the *nagual* is paradoxical, since it can only be known through direct experience, but never fully understood or described in words.

Finally, Don Juan offers a reflection on how the *tonal* somehow monopolizes our perception: “the *tonal* takes over the baton and, as a conductor, is very petty and zealous. It dazzles us with its cleverness and forces us to obliterate the slightest glimpse of the other part of the true pair, the *nagual*” (Ibid, p. 122). This statement echoes the idea that the tonal, however useful, creates limits to our ability to access certain dimensions of experience.

The *tonal* is presented as a plane that organizes and gives meaning to human experience, while the *nagual* is described as an inexpressible force or dimension that is beyond control or description. The metaphor of the island surrounded by the *nagual* is particularly useful for exploring this idea. The *tonal* acts as a "contour" that delimits the known space, while the *nagual* represents the vast unknown which, if unmediated, could be disruptive. The *tonal*, therefore, acts as a mediator, preserving a certain balance between the known world and the disruptive forces of the unknown. We are dealing with the planes of organization and consistency.

However, there are always risks. The *tonal* cannot simply be destroyed abruptly or completely. It is essential for our survival, since it allows us to organize our experiences into words, creating social bonds and relationships with other beings. Don Juan himself emphasizes the importance of a sorcerer maintaining an impeccable, well-kept *tonal*. In this regard, we highlight Deleuze and Guattari’s assertion that “the human being is a segmentary animal” (1987, p. 208), noting that our experience of existence is both spatially segmented and socially organized. Therefore, it is necessary to cultivate a careful and meticulous relationship with the strata and the plane of organization.

The important thing is not to dismantle the *tonal* by destroying it all of a sudden. You have to diminish it, shrink it, clean it, and that only at certain moments. You have to keep it in order to survive, to ward off the assault of the *nagual*. For a *nagual* that erupts, that destroys the *tonal*, a body without organs that shatters all the strata, turns immediately into a body of nothingness, pure self-destruction whose only outcome is death: "The *tonal* must be protected at any cost" (DELEUZE; GUATTARI, 1987, p. 162).

Therefore, it is not enough to merely oppose or destroy the *tonal*, just as it is not enough to oppose the strata to the Body without Organs or to oppose the molar to the molecular: these poles or planes are both important and always invested by social production<sup>10</sup>. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari multiply the need for cautiousness in the active experimentation of life. For the authors, establishing a careful relationship with the strata is essential for tracing lines of flight; without this, there is a risk of accessing the plane of imperceptible forces too abruptly, particularly in experiments involving fungi, plants, and psychedelic substances. As Deleuze and Guattari (2009, p. 330) state, "every intensity controls within its own life the experience of death, and envelops it".

Ethical learning through experimentation with psychedelics requires caution, precisely because it always involves risks. An abrupt and reckless de-stratification can lead to devastating consequences such as psychic collapse, further hardening of the strata that were intended to be made more flexible or even self-destruction. For this reason, cautiousness plays an important role in this philosophical (and clinical) proposal, functioning as a certain ethical compass of care for experimentation.

You have to keep enough of the organism for it to reform each dawn; and you have to keep small supplies of signifiante and subjectification, if only to turn them against their own systems when the circumstances demand it, when things, persons, even situations, force you to; and you have to keep small rations of subjectivity in sufficient quantity to enable you to respond to the dominant reality. Mimic the strata. You don't reach the BwO, and its plane of consistency, by wildly destratifying (DELEUZE; GUATTARI, 1987, p. 160).

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<sup>10</sup> "What is the meaning of this distinction between two regions: one molecular and other molar; one micropsychic or micrological, the other statistical and gregarious? Is this anything more than a metaphor lending the unconscious a distinction grounded in physics, when we speak of an apposition between intra-atomic phenomena and the mass phenomena that operate through statistical accumulation, obeying the laws of aggregates? But in reality the unconscious belongs to the realm of physics; the body without organs and its intensities are not metaphors, but matter itself" (DELEUZE; GUATTARI, 2009, p. 283).



Caution does not entail avoiding transformation, but rather managing it through the “art of doses”, tracing lines of flight without completely dismantling the strata. This is where the politics of care and harm reduction strategies are relevant. In this sense, a psychological clinical approach should involve carefully understanding of how the social formation in which we are situated is stratified, recognizing its modes of subjectivity production, and then identifying a favorable space for experimentation.

From this perspective, psychedelic experiences can serve as catalysts, facilitating the emergence of new forms of sensibility, relationships, and perception. The body is not viewed as a fixed entity or confined to its biological dimension; rather, it is understood as a network of interactions and potentials within dynamic fields of forces. The concept of *agency*, as symbiosis, penetration between different types of bodies, helps us understand this complexity. Spinoza inspiration: “bodies maybe be physical, biological, psychic, social, verbal: they are always bodies or *corpora*” (DELEUZE; PARNET, 1987, p. 52). The crucial question here is: what can a body do? And not just what it is, but what it can do, what affects it can generate, both in passions and actions (DELEUZE; GUATTARI, 1987). We don't know what a body can do. What can we compose ourselves with? What compositions and decompositions are possible and desirable in order to transform ourselves? Nor do we know. Because knowing is in the domain of the plane of organization of forms. To access these other possible compositions and decompositions, we need to experiment with new connections. Undoing the organism, the body-form is not, therefore, killing oneself, but opening up the body to new connections, as Deleuze and Guattari (1987) would say.

We will continue in this direction, focusing on the effects and experiences that emerge from engaging with alternative planes and compositions that extend beyond the limitations of the organism, beyond a singularly central organ like the brain, or beyond the conventional understanding of the human body as an isolated individual. What kinds of compositions and decompositions can a body assemble? What forms of connection and agency are activated when encountering a psychedelic agent such as a fungus? In line with Donna Haraway's (2016) perspective, we propose that space should be made for complex entanglements and uncomfortable topics, as this essay seeks to explore. How can we form associations with fungi in a way that challenges and deconstructs the concepts of “self” and “organism” that underlie Western scientific discourse?

## V.

What do you do when your world starts to fall apart? I go for a  
walk and if I'm really lucky, I find mushrooms.  
Anna Tsing

Donna Haraway (2016) offers a framework for deepening the critique of the notion of an internalized central self, the concept of a universal human, and, more broadly, the idea of humanity itself. She introduces the concept of “*humusities*” to propose an alternative understanding of collectivity that challenges traditional views of humanity. Drawing on the metaphor of humus, Haraway evokes the process of decomposition—organic material enriched by minerals—that nourishes the soil and creates the conditions for new possibilities of growth and regeneration.

Composing psychedelic experiences with mushrooms can lead to the decomposition of hard lines, becoming-*humus*. The decomposition of rigid boundaries—such as the organism, significations, and subjectifications—leads to the emergence of an experience of death. In this context, we approach what Deleuze and Guattari (2009, p.19) describe as a “burning, living center of matter”. However, this should not be understood as death in the traditional sense of an endless abyss or a cessation of possibilities. Instead, we view death as part of a continuum of life, challenging linear and fatalistic conceptions that dominate Western thought, which is deeply influenced by colonial and capitalist frameworks. This approach calls for the undoing of the human as *Homo*, reimagining it as *humus*. Vinciane Despret (2023) also explores alternative engagements with death, questioning the reductive, disenchanting worldview that compels us to conform to the rigid structures of contemporary power networks.

Brazilian scholars Luiz Antonio Simas and Luiz Rufino (2018) present a framework that engages with the ideas of Haraway and Despret. They argue that “people, stones, rivers, plants, words—everything that exists—can be under the condition of enchantment or disenchantment” (Ibid., p. 31). We contend that by establishing relationships of agency with psychedelic fungi, we can facilitate an enchanted experience with life and death. This aligns with the nagualist perspective of Don Juan, as presented by Castañeda. In this sense, disorganization becomes a means to

open new possibilities of being—more enchanted ways of being, in alliance with diverse entities: fungi, beings that have passed, or non-human entities and forces of nature. “All of this is tied to the attitude often described as ‘animism’, which embodies the pre-conceptual assumption or intuition (the plane of immanence, as Deleuze would term it) that the universal foundation of reality is spirit” (VIVEIROS DE CASTRO, 1999, p. 33).

Ailton Krenak (2020) also prompts us to reflect on “are we really one humanity?”, questioning how the globalized institutional model has captured the idea of collectivity. He provokes us to question the concept of humanity that serves institutions whose policy is the exploitation of the Earth and the extraction of its potencies. Krenak's questions open up space for debate on the impacts of this concept of humanity in our time, which we call the Anthropocene. “These are times of refusal to know and to cultivate the capacity for response-ability, refusal to be present in the face of the catastrophe that is precipitating itself in time, shifting our gaze in an unprecedented way” (HARAWAY, 2016, p. 66). Faced with the destruction of the Earth, what kind of humanity is this? What courses of action are we choosing in response to the whole-living? “Worlds are always more than human, and we need to pay attention to the relationships between species; other forms of life can teach us something, and fungi seem to be good allies for dealing with a world that is falling apart” (OLIVEIRA, 2023, p. 10). In this sense, Paul Stamets (2005) also proposes thinking about how fungi, in all their complexity, can help regenerate the world.

In a world facing collapse, it is crucial that destruction serves as a catalyst for transformation. Drawing inspiration from Haraway, we propose composting as an ethical framework for clinical practice: an awareness of organic material in constant decomposition, in relation to various other materials and both human and non-human beings, living and dead. A body that cannot engage in the process of composting is unable to navigate the processes of living and dying, cultivate “response-ability”, or live with the consequences of its existence in the world (HARAWAY, 2016). By shifting the focus away from the primacy of the human body, we advocate for perceiving ourselves as *humus*, in agency with diverse beings. Psychedelic fungi can facilitate this process: they enable us to become-other—animals, plants, minerals, molecules, light, and fibers.

As key agents in composting, fungi transform waste into nutrients, enriching the soil to foster new growth and sustain life.

With appropriate caution, we must ask: what aspects of ourselves must die in order to foster new connections? What new existences might be possible in the face of the possibilities of human-fungus assemblages? What cosmic perceptions of connection with everything that is more-than-human and escapes the limitations of the organism and God's judgment? What can connect us with the web of life, in its rhizome of infinite connections? The fungal mycelium is decentered, a-significant, and non-binary. Like the rhizome, as Deleuze and Guattari (1987) describe, it “has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle (milieu) from which it grows and which it overflows” (p. 21), allowing for the formation of connections between heterogeneous elements. Couldn't the psychedelic experience be a dive into this mycelium of multiplicities and infinite connections? Such connections may link bodies, intertwining sexuality, the unconscious, the animal, the plant, books, stories—indeed, all things and beings, facilitating a variety of becomings.

Decomposition fosters fertile environments in which new forms of existence can emerge. The earth serves as a foundation upon which we tread and where rhizomes can take root. Decomposition thus creates space for what may follow, as fertile soil never remains empty. It becomes a medium for seeds, carried by the wind, to take root and sprout. As Antônio Bispo (2023) emphasizes, we must sow new words that cultivate relationships with the living world, generating new practices of involvement.

In considering the composition between bodies, we assert that the psychedelic experience does not require an opposition between the body as organism and the body as force. Rather, it is about identifying passages and continuities between various planes, such as the *tonal* and the *nagual*. The body is not just a functioning organism, but a vibrant, open, interconnected field where social, artistic, political and biological forces intersect. It is essential to acknowledge that the anatomo-physiological framework alone fails to fully capture the richness of reality's expressiveness. From this standpoint, clinical psychology can be seen as an opportunity to deconstruct rigid molar organizations, dissolve the boundaries between the self and the world, and transform the ways we relate to both our bodies and others. In alignment with feminist thought, Donna Haraway (2000, p. 98) contends, “we have all been injured, profoundly. We need

regeneration, not rebirth”, nor, one might add, a *renaissance*. These words prompt us to ask: should we not also apply them to psychedelic science?

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