

Ayahuasca: Medicine with Incredible Potential.

Interview with Dr. Jacques Mabit: Western Medical Doctor and Amazonian Shaman¹

Hernán Dinamarca²

Dr. Jacques Mabit is an astounding character. He is warm and gentle. Mabit walks tiredly, almost timidly, but with eyes at attention. He is a worldly personality; a creative and curious man. Mabit has built an intercultural bridge between western allopathic medicine and traditional Amazonian medicine. A shaman and practicing Christian, Dr. Mabit is French by birth, but has been adopted by the Peruvian rainforest.

Globally, he is one of the most prominent doctors working in the field of addiction treatment. In 1992, he founded the Takiwasi Center in Tarapoto, Peru³. Today, he remains as the executive president of Takiwasi.

*Takiwasi, “The House that Sings”, in Quechua, uses western medical techniques such as transpersonal psychotherapy alongside a gamut of shamanic plant-based medicines. Among them is the psychotropic preparation Ayahuasca, or Yagé. Ayahuasca is a potion prepared with the Ayahuasca vine (*Banisteriopsis caapi*), which acts as a monoamine oxidase inhibitor (MAOI), mixed with the Chacruna (*Psychotria viridis*) shrub that contains active amounts of the entheogen Dimethyltryptamine (DMT). Also known as “the Spirit Molecule” or “the God Molecule”, DMT is present in trace amounts in human urine and the human brain. According to some scientists, DMT is also released from the brain upon death.*

At Takiwasi, an international and multidisciplinary team of allopathic doctors, psychologists, curanderos⁴, and scientific investigators seeking knowledge about plants known as “master plants” comes together. The a priori diagnosis is that the use and abuse of drugs in adolescents expresses a search for meaning, a search for personal abundance that is oriented in the wrong direction. This search, especially within a society where personal meaning and spiritual wholeness is lacking can eventually lead to drug addiction. The antidote is the use of these “master plants”, along with psychotherapy, community living, and rigor. Along with these plants, the Ayahuasca potion serves as a cornerstone of the treatment at Takiwasi. Ayahuasca works through dreams, visions, and regressions that open what Carl Jung referred to as, “the inner voice”.

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² www.hernandinamarca.cl

³ www.takiwasi.com

⁴ *Curandero*, literally means, “healer” in Spanish. It is a commonly used title for a medicine-man/medicine-woman otherwise known as shamans.

Besides the rehabilitation services that take require a period of 9-month inpatient treatment, Takiwasi offers rigorous dietas⁵. These weeklong retreats require medical and motivational evaluations and are offered to people who would like to realize a spiritual, emotional, and physical journey want to acquire self-knowledge.

Takiwasi is an intercultural space with the mission of healing. This mission is based on a hybridization of medicine and spirituality, a mix of western medicine, western psychology, Christianity, and Shamanic ritualism.

Mabit states, “When I was young, I lived in Africa and Oceania. I lived and studied with boys and girls of various different cultural origins. I enjoyed it a lot.” Surely, this experience brought about the respect towards cultural diversity and the healing and spiritual calling that Mabit emanates.

Hernán Dinamarca: When was the first encounter between the French doctor and Shamanic medicine?

Jacques Mabit: I came to Peru with Doctors Without Borders in 1980. I was based in the Andean region, near Lake Titicaca. It was there that I saw the efficiency of traditional medicine. I saw the interesting work of healers, midwives, and bonesetters with very cost-efficient, and socially accepted results. It is after all, a part of their native culture. As a doctor working in a small hospital with very few resources, I decided to work alongside them.

HD: How old were you?

JM: I was 25 at the time. I would ask them where they learned these techniques and how it is that they acquire new knowledge. They gave me explanations that are foreign to western understanding. Anthropologists and doctors would qualify these explanations as folkloric beliefs. Nevertheless, as a clinical physician, if a technique works, especially in the area of health, then it should be understood and investigated. I eventually settled in the jungle, where the healers mentioned that their knowledge came from the spirits of the plants. The only way to access this knowledge would be to live the experience that the plants offer, the plants themselves would teach me.

HD: And this is where Ayahuasca comes into play, among other plants.

JM: Yes. I was caught between, “Should I, or shouldn’t I?” To continue this process would be to leave western objectivity. Before coming to Peru, I had realized medical supervision in India, Bangladesh, the Philippines, and Africa. I had met with similar shamanic encounters in these places as well. Moreover, I had explored psychology and

⁵ The *dieta* is a retreat into the jungle to spend one week in isolation with a very restricted diet. During this retreat, the participant ingests large doses of master plants and cuts salt from his/her diet to be able to do spiritual and personal work.

psychotherapy that includes a spiritual realm. With this previous experience under my belt, I decided to “dive right in”. At 25 I had never taken anything that would alter my consciousness, not even alcohol. The idea I had at this time was to learn. The first step I had to take was to have an encounter with Ayahuasca. I drank Ayahuasca in 1986 and it was truly eye opening. Ayahuasca is medicine with great-unsuspected potential to westerners. In one night, I was able to understand more than I had through exploring psychotherapy and philosophical lectures. Ayahuasca’s capacity to clear the mind and allow one to confront oneself is unbelievable. I told myself, “This is what I’m looking for.”

HD: Were there other explorations?

JM: I worked with healers in Peru, learning about plants for *dietas* and purges, learning about flower baths and water songs, etc. Afterwards, I wanted to broaden my gaze, so I looked to healers in various continents. While every tradition has its own particular language, they all participate in the same spiritual basis. Moreover, I discovered that a dialog could be opened up between these ancient traditions and western spiritual traditions. Christian Patristics, for example, coincides with what healers all over the world say. At this point, I saw an intercultural bridge; I began to put it all together.

HD: In a video of yours, you mention that you were invited to what would be your life’s calling in an Ayahuasca session.

JM: That’s true. My process with Ayahuasca quickly elicited visions. The guardian spirits of the jungle, that I did not even know existed, would speak to me and tell me that if I wanted to work with plants, then I would have to assume the mission of working with addicts. They designated me for that.

HD: An assertive instruction.

JM: It was a total surprise to me. I had never thought about that road, nor did it particularly interest me. I knew that working with addicts is complex and frustrating. I resisted for three years, until I eventually accepted the mission.

HD: Did you work systematically with any master healer?

JM: I worked with various masters until 2010.

HD: So it was a longer apprenticeship than one goes through to be a western physician.

JM: It took 20 years for me to become a healer capable of somewhat dominating the complexity of the world of plants and to be able to control the experiences that emerge with these plants.

HD: We’ll get back to the treatment of addictions later. First, I have a philosophical question. During one of your conferences, I found a very suggestive distinction in three myths that would have historically animated humanity. First comes the myth of Justice in

primitive, animist, pre-monotheistic societies, the world of the warrior, of “an eye for an eye”. Afterwards comes the myth of Love, a western myth that arrives with Christianity. This is the myth that we should love one another, and turn the other cheek. Finally comes the myth of Freedom that comes today as an evolutionary challenge. I would like to expand on this last myth. To simplify a bit, we have operated on two different understandings of freedom in our modern times. One of which is the liberal and conventional. This is a sort of abstract freedom, with no restrictions, the freedom of the Promethean individual, alone and isolated. The other is the more concrete and complex understanding of freedom. This is the freedom that Hegel intuited: freedom as the comprehension of the necessity. What level of freedom do we enjoy when we understand the limits of certain laws of physics that inevitably occur in the world. What do you understand from the myth of Freedom?

JM: In the same way that an individual will pass through the stages of childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and old age: humanity also passes through stages and from each of them emerge important myths. These myths are at the zenith of expression when it comes to what human beings can conceive in the moment given their relationship with the earth. Each of these myths can be connected with the elements of earth, water, air, and fire. The myth of Justice is associated with the earth, in which the earth is not only matter and a ground for us to walk in, but Mother Earth. This Mother Earth carries along with her emotional, psychological, and spiritual connotations. The myth of Love, a myth brought about within the last 2,000 years, is linked to water. Water has to do with emotions and sentiment. The myth of freedom is associated with air, because freedom is spiritual. During the transition from the myth of Love to the myth of Freedom, we begin to discover what freedom is by starting to probe at its concepts. For example, we search erroneously for freedom in the material dimension and we tend to understand it as, “I do what I want, however I want.” “I buy whatever I like.” “I travel wherever I like.” This attitude explains the hedonism within our current society.

HD: It also explains the environmental crisis. The situation of our eventual ecocide.

JM: Exactly. Another mistake we made was looking for freedom in the myth of Love. We end up with “free love” in the scope of intimacy of our interpersonal relationships that manifests itself as, “I can sleep with whomever I want to.” This is to say that sometimes, our process of discovering and probing freedom is experienced as debauchery. Therefore it is lived without understanding the fullness of freedom, because the myth of freedom is one of spirituality.

HD: What does that mean?

JM: It means that the fullness of freedom is in recognizing the spiritual within the context of “my singularity”, of the circumstances and laws of the world and *my* world – This coincides with Hegel’s freedom which says that I will be totally free when I can recognize who I am and where I am. Recognizing these things allows me to realize that within the concerto of life, I am unique. There has never been anyone like me before and there never will be anyone like me when I depart from this world. Due to this, to find freedom is to find my place, my vocation as a human being, and to shed all that does not correspond to

me. For example, if my calling is artistic, then I should probably not seek to be a mechanical engineer, since I will not be able to properly fulfill myself in that field. Genuine freedom implies reduction. It implies discarding things that do not correspond to me, whereas being a libertine suggests that I should try and take hold of any and every possibility presented to me. According to the myth of freedom, if I find the right woman, then I will not need any other woman, because within the woman that corresponds to me I will find my lover, my wife, my mother, my sister, my goddess, my healer. In summary, I will find the feminine. Therefore, being truly free would imply that I had found my calling, not just professionally, but what calls me from the depths of my being, the thing that I can always celebrate and praise spiritually, wherever I may be.

HD: The current crisis for meaning, of institutions, and the ecological crisis without comparison caused by a predatory lifestyle includes 7.5 billion human beings. Do you see social, institutional, or practical changes emerging that point in the direction of facilitating the unfolding of the myth of Freedom as ideal?

JM: It will probably not unfold at the base of new social institutions, since freedom is personal. There are, however, certain players in the game working towards the awareness of freedom who could create social ties and share their experiences with others. This is important, since we are not isolated egos. One lives along with fellow humans, nature, and the animals on earth. In sum, one lives with the creation that is God. This is what makes me retreat from selfishness, narcissism, from being centered in my small self. Those things obviously do occur, but freedom is fundamentally founded on a personal search.

HD: Neo-spirituality, which integrates various perennial philosophical traditions, invites people in that same direction.

JM: There is a search. Unfortunately, sometimes we do not realize the freedom that is inherent to us. In the Judeo-Christian west, people are at war with themselves. They reject their roots and they look towards other cultures for something that already exists in our tradition. We should reconcile ourselves with our roots, with our ancestors. Without a doubt, criticism is necessary, but not in total opposition to one's heritage, culture, religion, language, and ancestry. Movement in two directions is necessary. On one end, we must be thankful for the life that has been transmitted to us with everything good that we experience. On the other hand, we must also forgive for the unpleasant things that we were also brought into.

HD: So, we must declare "mea culpa" in the west, which is nothing trivial.

JM: True, although I must reiterate that the challenge in the west is reconciliation with our roots. For example, within Christianity, people reject everything. Just because darkness exists within the church does not mean that we should deny the church's entire history as an institution. If your mother is old and sickly and you find out that she has made a mistake, you do not stop loving her. You can criticize her without renouncing what you and she feel in your hearts. The problem ends up being that we are at war with a tradition that impregnates our very being; therefore we must reconcile or continue living in a

schizophrenic manner. Within this framework, it is good to return to the beginning of Christianity, to the Patristics, to the mystics.

HD: That is what neo-spirituality does. It recovers Christian mysticism while also opening up to other traditions, causing hybrid spiritual practices to emerge.

JM: Recognizing our heritage does not mean being imprisoned by it. It is like telling your parents, “Thank you mother and father for what you have given me. These things correspond to me and I will keep them. These other things do not correspond to me and I will let them go. I would also like to incorporate these things which are new.” This is complete freedom.

HD: Ayahuasca usage occurs in shamanic societies. They dwell in the myth of Justice, where the individual does not exist as such, but as something belonging to the community (The individual self does not exist). At Takiwasi, however, Ayahuasca is used to get to know oneself better within processes of individualization, inspired by the myth of Liberty.

JM: The plant is simply a plant; it does not have any cultural agency. It adapts to the uses that evolution has in store for it. Ayahuasca does not create anything; it merely reveals what is already within someone according to his or her personal history. Westerners are stuck in their minds, and live according to their intellectual ideals. Ayahuasca makes you return to your body, it reminds us that we are spirits incarnated, and that all that belongs to us is our body. We are born into a body that we lose when we die. Our body contains our memories, emotions, and subconscious, which are all sources of self-exploration. When used appropriately, Ayahuasca helps the user achieve certain progressive revelations to be able to discover their true calling, their personal freedom. This transition to consciousness is very important.

HD: Therefore, part of Ayahuasca’s role as medicine, is to reconnect us with our body and heart, with our emotions.

JM: The body, the heart, and the spirit. Currently, the western world does not believe in the spirit, not even in the religious world. They speak about the spiritual, but they are confusing the spiritual with something that is in the mind, something psychological. When westerners take psychoactive substances and have an encounter with nature, some will say, “I had a spiritual experience.” This is not a spiritual experience; it is a “psychological orgasm”.

HD: What would be spiritual, then?

JM: Spirituality is a relationship with the unseen world. This unseen world is alive, and inhabited by incorporeal beings, and beyond that is a relationship with the divine world. It is a personal relationship. The *new age*, with its rejection of a personalized God has turned the spiritual into something energetic, impersonal, and vague. Just as there are laws of physics, there are also psychological and spiritual laws.

HD: An example of a psychological law?

JM: The prohibition of incest, for example, is a law that human societies base themselves upon.

HD: And a spiritual law?

JM: The multiplication of something that is shared, for example. In the physical world, if I share something, the object that I am sharing diminishes. In the spiritual world, however, if I share love, then the amount of love increases both in myself and in the general ambient due to the resonance of love.

HD: Are there “laws” in place when using Ayahuasca as well?

JM: Sure there are. Recently, westerners were demonizing Ayahuasca. Today, many westerners idealize it. Something that I can be sure of is that it is medicine with great potential, but it is not a religion. I am critical of its idealized and indiscriminate use. It should be used within a ritual context, something therapeutic and contained, with laws in place. When I lead an Ayahuasca ceremony, I don’t do it just because and choose to put a light here, or an incense holder there, I don’t simply choose to sing an *icaro* because I like it. Ayahuasca sessions just don’t work that way. An Ayahuasca ceremony is like a musical score, based upon a ritual that obeys universal symbolic laws. It is not a creation based on aesthetic or personal preferences. Every instrument should contribute its own specificity, and each musician his own musical ability.

HD: I can see certain coherence in your life. The myth of Justice applied in your warrior’s attitude towards starting the Takiwasi project, with your Christian compassion and the myth of Love, as well as your practice of healing and individualization and the myth of Freedom. Do you identify with this?

JM: My calling of becoming a cultural bridge has crossed with my clinical practice. When transitioning from the myth of Love and the myth of Freedom, people need places to be able to experiment. Freedom is not conceptual because it is an experience. On the other hand, Christianity causes a complete change in perspective. Until Christ, we believed that there existed many spirits and gods who were benevolent as well and spirits and gods that were malevolent. We had to negotiate with, or make sacrifices to the malevolent gods to protect ourselves. Human beings were up against evil and we did not understand why we suffered so much. Jesus, however, brought with him a revolutionary message. “Only good exists, and evil has already been defeated.” With this, good can prevail over evil.

HD: Considering the evil that has persisted during these last two thousand years, it is challenging to accept that “good has prevailed”. The image that I drum up from this is that heaven and hell are in our hearts. The defiance would be that within our heart, through a process of individualization, ends up hegemonizing “good”. This could be the same as integrating or taming evil, whose shadow emerges due to wounds that every child and person encounters during their life.

JM: What is being proposed to us is that we each relive the passion of Christ. Jesus endured evil as an innocent man, and won. Each one of us is the image of Christ. Committing ourselves to this personal process of transformation involves spiritual tension. This is when problems may emerge.

HD: During these last few days at Takiwasi, I have learned about the biophysical role of salt. I've learned that when salt is not ingested, we tend to open an energetic plane within the human body revealing the body's relationship with "otherness". When salt is ingested, this plane closes. This seems very interesting to me when in context of reflection upon the historicity of human consciousness. I'll explain. Massive consumption of salt begins with the first civilizations (narrowing our energetic plane), from this emerges the separability of consciousness. This is in contrast to what occurred in primitive animism, which lived in a state of fusion (with our energetic planes very much opened), within an integrated consciousness with the "other".

JM: This nexus exists without a doubt. Historically, human beings have evolved from an undifferentiated fusion with nature. Eventually, two elements come into the picture and intervene in this process. These elements are salt, and fire, both of which are masculine. With fire comes the hearth, the fireplace in the home. This is a major revolution. Fire brings warmth, light, and the ability to cook food. Salt, another major revolution, allows mankind to come out of the lack of differentiation between his biological mother and mother earth. The evolution of the species is similar to the evolution of an individual human. When a child begins to separate from the fusion that is mother-child he goes through a process of individualization, and experiences his own differences. Historically, the same thing occurred within the human species. Biophysically, salt creates an energetic field, the aura (there exist instruments today that can see and measure the aura). As a result, man begins to create distance in respect to his instincts. He can begin to dominate the primitive, learn to say no, and thus appears the free self.

HD: One could say that in the present, as in history, the excess of salt has stretched the consciousness of separativity (and the consumerism of the "small self"), further distancing us from "otherness".

JM: The fact is that an excess of salt brings about rigidity and halts life. This is why meat and fish are salted, to prevent them from spoiling. If there is too much salt (salt being a masculine element), life dies. Here lies the biblical image of Lot who turns into a statue made of salt. At Takiwasi, we use a retreat into isolation within ritualized context and eliminate all salt ingestion so that the person can achieve a circumstantial regression, undifferentiated from the rest of their life. Doing so, the person can resolve issues that have not been dealt with and therefore go forward, evolve.

HD: Accepting that we cannot go back to fusion, I have noticed that today in age, more and more people are moving towards a change which tends to moderate the separativity of consciousness that have been exacerbated in modernity. We advance to a conscious

awareness of otherness. This way, we can reintegrate ourselves into nature, in respect to the network of life.

JM: Sure. We must broaden our consciousness. Life is not about rejection. The progression of stages of separativity does not imply a rejection of the previous stage. It is simply an upgrade. The options are either a regression to fusion or evolution towards union. Union implies being different, in union we work according to our own free will.

HD: How marvelous! We unite ourselves consciously because fusion is pre-consciousness. Union would be true freedom.

JM: Exactly.

HD: Takiwasi's mission is to rehabilitate people from drug addiction while using plants that can also be considered drugs. How does the therapy at Takiwasi work?

JM: Mankind's subconscious knows that the world is not limited to the physical or material plane. This instinct is very prevalent within adolescents when they ask themselves, "Who am I?" All traditions except in the contemporary westernized world had rites of passage either with or without plants. These rites included fasting, isolation, pain, and extreme situations that were often nearly fatal for the participant. They were a way to establish contact with the spiritual world. The modern western world nullified these rites. In turn, when adolescents seek something more than what the visible world has to offer, they have nowhere to turn. What do they do? They find substitutes while spending time with their friends such as marijuana or other drugs that offer modified states of consciousness. Through these modified states of consciousness, they discover that there exists another dimension that they were previously unaware of. The problem is that they do it in hiding, often with harmful substances, and with inadequate dosages, without proper accompaniment or guidance. As a result, this desperate search for meaning can end up being catastrophic. Takiwasi's mission is to tell these young addicts, "Your impulse to search for meaning, to auto regulate, to heal yourself, is legitimate. What went wrong is that you did not have the proper circumstances or guidance to orient your search. Here at Takiwasi, we ask you to return to that search with the proper accompaniment this time. There are rules in place and you must also undergo adequate therapy. I will drink Ayahuasca with you so we can go back to basics together and integrate what we have learned by applying it in our day-to-day lives.

HD: A very creative proposal.

JM: Most drugs originate from or are derived from sacred plants (marijuana, tobacco, cocaine, opium poppy) that have been improperly used. They have been defiled and taken out of their sacred context. These plants have psychoactive compounds, which mimic certain neurotransmitters in our brains that can also be consciously activated through meditation, isolation, ritual dances etc. When exploring our inner world with these methods, there is no dependence or addiction. We work with these principles at Takiwasi in order to heal addictions. These plants are the poison and the remedy at the same time.

Nothing that appears in nature is inherently bad or evil. What is bad is the inadequate use of something good.

HD: “Nothing in excess”, like it says at the entrance of the Temple of Apollo. What are the key aspects of the work at Takiwasi?

JM: The end goal here is not to simply detoxify, that is simple and can be done in one month. In the long run, however, it does not solve anything. What we do here is try to get to the bottom of the drug use. We see what is truly behind the addiction, whether it is a series of emotional or affective problems, etc. People can detoxify themselves, yes, although if they do not get to the root of their addiction they will simply fall back into old behaviors and most likely start using again when reintegrated into day-to-day life. A key aspect for treatment here to work properly is that the patient must want to be here, he must want to heal. This is a voluntary program. He will be the protagonist in his own story. With that being said, there are three elements in play when it comes to the treatment at Takiwasi. First comes the use of plants to clean, purge, and explore the subconscious so that the patients can learn through their own experiences of visions and dreams. Secondly, the patients begin to process and integrate their experiences through psychotherapy and workshops where they can work on their own personal goals. For example, they can confront their impulsivity or their lack of communicative skills. Ayahuasca provides very precise indications that should be applied daily within the community of patients who stay here for a period of nine months. This brings me to the third element which is community living. This is a common space shared by patients where they eat, sleep, and live among each other. The team of psychologists keeps tabs on the patients’ behavior and interaction with each other within this space.

HD: How many residents do you have doing the nine-month treatment?

JM: We allow a maximum of 15 residents.

HD: Do you have any statistics measuring Takiwasi’s therapeutic success?

JM: Of every three patients we receive, one patient heals completely. Upon discharge, he will radically restructure his lifestyle and addiction will no longer be an issue. One patient will recover drastically, change his lifestyle although he may or may not experience a relapse. This is why Takiwasi offers reinforcement in the shape of follow-up sessions via Skype or arranging *dietas* in the future to keep working on personal aspects. The third of these patients will abandon the treatment process completely. There are more than 50 theses published about the work we do at Takiwasi. We hold our progress and scientific evaluations to a very high standard; we also work in conjunction with The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health in Canada. We have also compared the profiles of our patients with those in the United States. This was important because beforehand people would criticize our patients and label them as privileged with affluent parents that have no trouble giving any and all financial support. The comparison, however, resulted in showing that the patients that arrive at Takiwasi often come with more serious issues in aspects spanning

from psychiatric problems to family problems at home and with a more serious level of drug use.

HD: And do you have any indicators of the *dieta*'s success in people who seek self-knowledge?

JM: The *dieta* is also part of the investigation that is in progress, but we do not have concrete scientific data yet. We only have clinical evidence. It is difficult to evaluate or standardize, since it is a period in isolation for a week, which is focused mostly on the emotional aspect.

HD: As a *curandero*, you perform a sort of “exorcism” on some people during some Ayahuasca sessions. What exactly is this? Is it eradicating demonic possession or eradicating bad energy, some sort of psycho-emotional shadow?

JM: There is the visible world, the manifested reality of creation, and there is the invisible world of creation, where spirits inhabit. It is an intermediary world, because the divinity is beyond it, it is uncreated. Usually, when a ritual is performed, there is an aperture opened into this world so that the plants and spirits can teach, guide, and protect us. Now, just as we can encounter benevolent spirits, there is also the possibility of making contact with malevolent spirits. It is the ritual itself that allows this aperture to channel in a certain way so that we can make contact with benevolent spirits while also being protected from malevolent ones. Oftentimes people consume drugs, or even sacred plants like Ayahuasca without the proper protection or in total ignorance of what they are doing. What they do not understand is that by doing so, they open a portal for malevolent spirits to enter. These entities act as parasites on the spirit of the person they have infested. There are various ways for infestation to occur: magic and esotericism, having been in places with bad energy (for example, at a house where crimes were committed), drug use, certain sexual practices, and trans-generational inheritance, which is to say the infestation was transmitted through you by your relatives. Well, these malevolent spirits or malevolent entities that we perceive as bad energy can be removed, but their entry point must also be closed. These entry points tend to open as a result of emotional wounds such as abandonment, sexual abuse, or incest. That is why we place so much importance on the accompanying therapeutic process.

HD: How do you recognize them?

JM: There are very clear physical and energetic signs when in an Ayahuasca session. For example, malevolent spirits will almost always manifest as freezing cold in the person they inhabit. They will have goose bumps and often discharge particular odors. As a result of my experience, I can perceive these energies simply by touching the person.

HD: I know that Jeremy Narby, Dr. of Anthropology from Stanford University and author of two cult academic works; *The Cosmic Serpent: DNA and the Origins of Knowledge*, and *Intelligence in Nature* is a friend of Takiwasi. The first of these works, in fact, was co-edited into Spanish by Takiwasi. Do you coincide with Narby's hypothesis in *The Cosmic Serpent* in reference to the communication between plants and human being mediated

through shamanic knowledge? That it is possible because as living beings we all share DNA, the “four letters” whose information is the common denominator of life that has not changed since the beginning?

JM: Yes and no. I concur with the aspect that there is without a doubt a form of communication between plants and humans. The problem is that Jeremy doesn't have faith. His reduction of attributing everything to DNA completely denies the spiritual dimension's autonomy and freedom. It is one thing to say that the “cosmic serpent” looks like DNA, but it is wholly another to say that they are the same thing. A similarity does not make two things identical. Two twins may look alike but they are not the same person. Jeremy is afraid of facing this because it goes against his materialist postulations that are so common in western thinking.