

**Ayahuasca: Memory and Consciousness.**  
New Applications of an Ancient Indigenous Practice<sup>1</sup>

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## **1. Introduction**

My presence here is not due to the fact that I am a great scientist, neurophysiologic specialist, nor a distinguished philosopher of consciousness, rather, I believe, due to the fact that I can testify to the common experience of the auto-exploration of consciousness and its therapeutic applications. And this illustrates from the start the current situation of the contemporary debate revolving around the phenomenon of consciousness: the implicit acceptance or intuition that we should pass from a discourse "about" the consciousness to a direct experimentation of it and its modifications. Of course I am a doctor, a specialist in natural medicine from the University of Paris, a specialist in Tropical Pathology in Antwerp (Belgium), an associate professor at the Scientific University of the South in Lima, but these titles alone are not the reasons for, but rather the fact that with them, or in spite of them, I personally went into the practice of Amazonian shamanism. And from there I extracted a therapeutic application, through the elaboration of an attention protocol, to patients with addictions. In other words, I dared to cross certain borders, cultural, mental, and scientific, for various circumstances of my life and there is a feeling that this position "between-borders" is globalizing for many Westerners called to cross a similar threshold in their search, to take on a qualitative jump in the venture of their life. So today I find myself a Westerner who directs other Westerners to testify to personal experience and to reflect on the basis of that experience. Allow me, therefore, to part from the

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formalities of academia in order to simply share my thoughts on a language that is not only linear and rational, but also analogical and metaphorical.

## 2. Definition of the Conscience

In order to understand each other, it is first necessary to define what consciousness is and here begins the first obstacle: no one knows what consciousness is and there is currently no standard scientific theory that exists about the subject! The greatest mystery of scientific and human knowledge is the nature of consciousness and consequently of human nature. We would be extremely pretentious to think that we are going to unveil this mystery today my friends!

The physicist Nick Herbert<sup>i</sup> dares to say that “the only thing that we believe to know is that consciousness has more to do with the head than the feet”!

We can risk saying that which we know for certain is not consciousness: it is not a formal system; it is not an isolated psychic function; it is not simply the subjective face of the neurological world as Freudian materialistic thinking postulates; it is not analogous to the “I” because it exceeds it; it is not limited to the individual because of the existence of interpersonal consciousness; it cannot be a system of auto-reference because it would become self enclosed when live systems are always open; it cannot be a mere rational function because it would be auto-contradictory (for example, what grade of veracity would the affirmation “I lie” have?)...

I will attempt to say that I am familiar with different states of consciousness that appeal to a global perception of my presence to myself and to the world and that define a subject: I. Neither does this allow me to define this “I” as a kind of precise nucleus located in me whose illusion was postulated by Hindu philosophy (Shankarâ and Nâgârjuna) and advanced ever since the introduction of Buddhist teaching<sup>ii</sup>. These states of consciousness, however, include not only auto-perception that seems to come from inside me but also experiences that seem to reveal conscious realities, internal and external, autonomous in relation to my “I.”

### 3. The Limits of Science

Before continuing, I think it is necessary to propose a quick panorama of the current state of science. In fact, the question that immediately arises is one of knowing if we can expect answers about our human nature and our consciousness from scientific progress. A basic verification is necessary with respect to the dominant model of modern science: it proves to be ineffective in telling us who we are.

Today, science reaches great complexities in its factual data that is unattainable to individuals. It is worth saying that an individual cannot find out for him/herself the affirmations of science and should be content in simply believing those affirmations to such a point that a system develops where information is repeated in a way of verbal memorization which is dangerous because it is easy to manipulate. For example, it is amazing how the circulation of theories about HIV spread in the popular press before being examined in scientific magazines, bypassing the demands for proof and habitual investigations, without, until now, having been able to confirm causality between the HIV virus and AIDS<sup>iii</sup>.

Science behaves as if we knew perfectly well how the world functions and with a false certainty when in reality what we ignore by far exceeds what we believe to know about our universe. It permits industry, for example, to dare to take extremely high risks, discarding the principle of precaution in biotechnologies or genetic genius. We pretend to dominate the course of events giving posterior rational explanations to events that cannot be controlled nor foreseen. It corresponds to commerce and to the permanent spectacle that a consumerist society offers us. Science feeds commerce and consumerism and is reciprocally nurtured by them.

In reality, if we revise a few star themes that illustrate scientific, conventional, and globalized thought, we realize for example:

- That the theory of general relativity and quantum mechanics are incompatible
- That the Big Bang Theory is exceedingly questioned
- That missing “links” in the theory of evolution continue to exist

- That the scientific principle of measurement contradicts quantum indeterminacy (the velocity and position of a particle cannot be determined at the same time)
- That the development of time is not linear as a mere cause and effect system and the rational structure of scientific language suggest
- That the famous scientific objectivity does not hold true when you consider that:
  - o Particles adopt wave or corpuscle behaviors (what “object” are we talking about?)
  - o That all acts of measurement interfere with the object: it annuls the notion of strict objectivity with which the dominate model attempts to support itself
  - o That according to the variety of answers to the same experience (supposed reproducibility), “physical causality” is not longer discussed but rather “statistical causality,” in order words, of “probable” facts
  - o That we do not know what a photon or electron is except “a kind of package of fluctuating energy”

In the mathematical field, the formal systems of Gödel touch on other conceptual limits.

The Cartesian explanation of the total by means of the analysis of its parts also contradicts the “holistic” observations that demonstrate the interrelation of all phenomena and objects of the universe. The total is greater than the sum of its parts and the part can contain the totality of the initial object. By this same logic, it can be doubted that the breaking of particles in accelerators permits the detection of the profound nature of the material, just as the child takes apart his toy in order to understand that it is he/she who gives it life.

The paintings of Dali gave us an idea of the fractal structures in which the change of scale reveals other underlying structures. Consciousness could function according to this model, discovering new realities as one changes his/her level of comprehension, without one level denying or overturning the other.

Physics had to introduce the “uncertainty principle”: the establishment of uncertainty in principle perfectly illustrates the lack of certainties of current science which is believed to be stable and well founded. There exists a margin of incapacity for predicting events, a fundamental irresolution. This body of incapacities, of uncertainties, gives us a measure of the current ignorance of science.

However, it is not surprising that despite these extreme limitations for rendering account of our universe, science is often imposed as a means of declaring what is real or true. The same postulates of scientific logic do not authorize this audacity given that science itself cannot say what is real but rather only formulate “that which is not considered as false in a given moment.” The same scientific process supposes the constant superseding of formulated theories by other more broad theories in a subsequent time. At the moment of its elaboration, a theory contains the seed of the following theory that will replace it: a final point will never be able to establish itself against this collision.

And science can only respond, at least partially to the “how” of things and not to the “why”. This abusive appropriation of the “why” constitutes an unacceptable conceptual jump, a serious logical transgression, and entails regrettable consequences that profoundly reverberate in current western psychology. Science claims, therefore, the status of religion and its worship arrives at such extremes that declare irrational that which it cannot explain and which put in danger its claims. Reason is its goddess as in the worst times of the French Revolution where they paraded the Goddess of Reason in the streets of Paris with much wooing and Robespierre in the lead dressed in priestly clothing! That identification of science with reason, in reality hides a serious lack of judgment given that science becomes foolish, precisely “losing reason”, because the essence of its function gets lost: to establish or give meaning.

Adding more contradictions, science responds to the “why”, which it dares tackle, saying that everything is due to chance, in other words that precisely “it does not have meaning.” Therefore, the dominant model describes itself as “foolish.”



In a certain way, the scientific model has taken the post of the great foundational myths of our society in order to try to explain contemporary reality and permit us to reorganize global information. However, these days, the conventional model just cannot account for a series of events or phenomena. The hard, dry, categorical language of exact science cannot account for with sufficient coherence the information brought about by experience.

This is the case, for example, of the body of paranormal phenomena, extrasensory, or “psi” phenomena. In this field there exists an enormous body of information that the conventional model simply leaves aside. The same thing occurs in all therapeutic practices described roughly as “energetic” and that demonstrate at length their efficacy without being coherent in relation to the dominant model: homeopathy, osteopathy, cellular therapy, etc. When the French scientist Jacques Benveniste dared to demonstrate the memory of water in dilutions at powers superior to the number of Avogadro he was simply ridiculed by the scientific community before they had even looked into his experiences. The scientific dogma said that without particles information could not be stored in water and the experience was rejected because the reality of the facts did not coincide with the theory. The same thing occurred with treatments using the dilutions of fetal animal cells injected into humans (Niehans) which collided with immunologic theory and were prohibited in France despite the fact that the clinical and biological experience showed that there had not been a reaction of physiological rejection and that the meta-organs reacted to the injections. Not even the famous cardiac surgeon Dr. Christian Barnard who treated his incapacitating rheumatism with these medicines in Switzerland could lift this ban.

We find the same limitations with the observation of non-rational psychic abilities such as telepathy, precognition, clairvoyance, psychokinesis, etc.

During the last 20 years, knowledge has been accumulating about NDE (Near Death Experience) that brings forth new information that does not fit with the prevailing model (Raymond Moody, Elizabeth Kübler-Ross, Kenneth Ring, etc.).



Many ancient medical and spiritual traditions provide information about unusual MSC (modified states of consciousness) that deserve much attention such as deep states of meditation, the control of pain by yogis or fakirs, resistance to sleep, hunger, or thirst by ascetics from diverse cultures. Few studies exist about the neurobiology of contemplation, ecstasy, deep meditation, trance...It begs to be stated that brain recordings of deep meditation correspond to the same recordings as those qualified as “brain dead” by current science and that serve as the official determination of death (especially for the possible extraction of the organs for grafts).

Our same spiritual Western tradition offers ample information about extraordinary phenomena of Christian mystics such as anedia (complete absence of food during the course of many years), stigmata (Father Pio, Marthe Robin, etc.), incorruptible corpses, emanation of oils and smells from the bodies of saints that have been examined by few scientists such as the thanatologist Dr. Hubert Larcher<sup>iv</sup> who never managed to be taken seriously by the whole of the scientific community.

#### **4. Consciousness and Psychotherapy**

Since the 60's attempts at self-induced modification of consciousness has grown at an exponential rate, basically with the use of psychoactive substances of all kinds. This chemical inducement manifested in a manner that was unorganized, without control, with no frame of reference or context for restraint, without guides...and it culminated in the extensive phenomenon of drug addiction. At the same time, it gave access to powerful individual experiences opposite to those for which there were no answers from the scientific community apart from the psychiatrization of the subject of delirious patients.

If consciousness escapes the observation of the exact sciences, it could be supposed that it was a central theme of the sciences of the mind. However, since Freud, the materialist school indicates that consciousness is no more than the subjective face of neurological problems, located at the periphery of the interior world and of the systems of memory. Therefore, no real knowledge exists relating to the “I”. In other words, consciousness is reduced to the brain which

is in turn reduced to biological phenomena which is then finally reduced to fine molecular mechanisms: it takes shape with the evidence that classical psychiatry has as its only future the prescription of pharmaceuticals destined to reestablish biochemical brain imbalances indicative of mental disturbances and therefore individual behaviors. In the end, the individual is reduced to a genetic-neurophysiologic determinism.

With this same logic all non-rational phenomena is labeled as hallucinatory by psychiatry and as such the question of meaning is automatically removed. This dogmatic exclusion of the trans-rational dimension of reality corresponds to the negation by the body of rationalist science to take into consideration a transcendental or spiritual dimension of the human experience. The religious or the sacred constitute the new taboos of a science converted into a religion. This Western rationalist reductionism establishes a blind spot in the observation of phenomena, a conceptual bias, and maintains conclusively that the spiritual would be a mere sub-product of the mind, a production of the psyche.

Dr. Larson<sup>v</sup> of Oxford University indicates that psychiatric studies that take into count the spiritual or religious variable in its measurements are limited. In a retrospective study, in five years, between 1978 and 1982, less than 1% of the quantitative studies on psychiatry published in four of the major Anglo-Saxon psychiatry journals included one or various measurements of the religious commitment of patients: only 3 of the 2348 studies examined were centered around a religious variable. This is true, despite the fact that the WHO has introduced in the list of essential factors for complete health the spiritual dimension in the first 6 essential factors for the quality of life in all cultures.

The same classification of mental pathologies by the DSM sorts all “mystical” phenomena into the category of psychiatric disturbances. As such, the list of pathologies continues to progressively grow and went from 180 identified mental disturbances in 1952 to 320 in 1995 with the inevitable consequence that 100% of the North American population suffers from at least one profound psychiatric disturbance. The second immediate consequence is that the whole population will come to permanently consume some type of psycho-





pharmaceutical...possibly various per day, to wake up and to fall asleep, to energize and to unwind...

The insinuations of sociologists especially regarding the “fabrication” of insanity and disorder as cultural concepts (Foucault) and dogmatic social attitudes are relegated by the impositions of the neuro-biological model.

It could even be supposed that certain syndromes such as depression are voluntarily created and amplified with the objective of opening up new markets to the pharmaceutical industry.

Dr. Ronald Kesler has published a study in the “Journal of the American Medical Association” about depression in the world. He reveals that there are around 150 million people suffering from depression in the world and that this pathology affects both the countries of the north as well as the countries of the south. Its figures reach 10% of the total population in the United States as well as in Russia and India. Unipolar depression would be the first source of disability on a worldwide level.

This alarming news deserved to be featured on the front page of the magazine Newsweek (June 21, 2004) with the title: “Sad Planet: Depression Has Become a Global Illness”<sup>vi</sup>. The magazine takes on the coverage of this subject, stressing the universal character of this exceedingly invalid pathology.

It is worth noting that the somber perspectives of a world without meaning, without stable values, generate a collective depression. The functionality of a materialist life does not satisfy spiritual needs.

In November of 2003 the Vatican conducted the 18<sup>th</sup> International Conference of the Pontifical Council for Pastoral Health Care on the subject of nervous depression, in consideration that it is currently “the most deadly illness of humanity, primary cause of death”. But Pope John Paul II added that in his opinion “depression is always a spiritual test”.

In fact, depression raises urgent personal questionings about the meaning of life itself and there is a fear that treating this syndrome medically without further consideration takes away from the patient the opportunity to gain access to the meaning of the crisis that they are faced with and therefore its successful resolution. This tendency to erase all discomfort without access to its profound significance seems to be a characteristic of Western schema. In a congress on pain in France in November 2003 (SETD, Montpellier), it was indicated:

- That the selling of analgesic medications covered around 30% of the pharmaceutical market
- That the “right” of all patients to be free from suffering was being promoted!

The disappearance of physical suffering, the disappearance of psychic suffering...is paid for with the disappearance of the access to the meaning of life and is prone to feed the myth of chemical happiness offered by different types of anesthetics.

## **5. The Road to Revelation and the Reappropriation of Subjectivity**

So we see that the current situation, the classic model of science, does not respond to the necessities of handling the growing information that greatly exceeds the limits of its field. A qualitative jump is required based on an epistemological revision that permits access to a science of complexity and that formulates a new paradigm. In the same way that Einstein introduced in the Euclidean model the variable of time in order to formulate his theory of relativity, we need to introduce in the contemporary models the variable of consciousness in order to obtain a more ample and unifying proposal.

Since 1905 and Einstein’s proposal, there has not been any other fundamental introduction in physics and in our manner of conceiving the world. A century has now passed in which a notable advance in the western cosmovision of the universe and of life has not been shown. The overwhelming development of generated technologies based on this new concept

makes us think that science has advanced. But it is about diverse applications of a single fundamental contribution.

A system cannot completely justify itself, rather, it would be self-concerning, in other words, closed around itself, and in live systems we know that they are not closed, but rather, open by definition. In explaining a system, passing to a superior level with the help of a meta-theory that goes beyond that system is assumed. However, a formal theory resorts to another meta-theory in order to justify it completely...but the latter equally requires another meta-theory to justify it, and so on and so forth. In such a system, the real is ultimately unknowable.

In this way, the human being could not know him/herself by his/her own efforts. How could the human being contain him/herself in self-description? How can he/she overcome his/her own limits? How can he/she avoid falling into the illusion of the “I” that seems to self generate?

Insofar as consciousness as a concept is broader than that of the “I,” in that it covers the transcendent I and the universe itself, in that in a certain way it transcends the visible world or the manifested world, it signals a road of access to knowledge through revelation. It would not be the “I” which transcendental consciousness looks for, but rather that which would come to reveal itself to this “I” as a dynamic and intelligent reality. In other words, consciousness would have a degree of autonomy in relation to the “I” or of independence in relation to the individual that thinks and feels...And it’s an innate experience within ourselves to not be able to conceive of ourselves as just a sort of psychosomatic complex called “John” or “Anna”. We know without proof that the essence does not reside in that which the senses can describe, nor in the formality of the social being. It is worth saying that we realize that ultimate knowledge resides in metaphysical dimensions.

The essence of things seems to escape our immediate senses: phenomena, appearances, expression of feeling...they only go to show this hidden “something”. Our most profound experiences in life feature something indescribable, they are internal (or that is how we perceive them), invisible on the outside, and yet are fundamental. Since Plato with his theory of Forms, Jung with the “numen” dimension (numinous experiences), or of the anthropology of archetypal



forms that preside in the expression of feeling, man has sensed the existence of an invisible reality. For the aborigines of Australia, this invisible world is more real than our reality of the here and now. The Hindus evoked the great illusion (maya) of the habitual perception of our existence. It's that underlying and founding world that would come to reveal itself to our consciousness. The mystics of every culture cannot say much about their ecstasy that takes them to a supra-verbal universe.

This order of revelation could exist by means of inspiration or by means of nature. From the means of inspiration there have emerged, for example, the monotheisms of Abraham (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) based on books (Talmud, Bible, Koran). However, the institutionalization of the churches brought the clergy to an increasing distrust toward direct experiences of revelation that stood in the way of their authority, all mystical stances being categorized as suspect from the onset. In this way, a confiscation was produced on the part of the churches toward the direct access to knowledge. Contemporary science proceeds in much the same way when it adopts equally institutionalized stances that transform it into a dogmatic religion. It often asks that the individual accept whatever the “wise ones” affirm without being able to gain access to self exploration of the advanced. In the same way that science contradicts its own stances and denies individual exploration, religion also contradicts its stances since faith is theologically defined as “the adhesion of intelligence to true revelations”. In other words, it is supposed that the believer can in some way explore the veracity of the content of his/her faith and not simply jeopardize his/her critical being or spirit in order to blindly submit to a creed.

This confiscation currently leads many westerners to dare to go in search of themselves, jumping over all scientific or religious dogmas. There can be seen here a legitimate intent towards the recovery of the right to direct knowledge, to the exploration of revelation, to a reappropriation of the freedom for an individual to access his/her own consciousness.

Another order of revelation starts from the observation of nature as a place for the manifestation of knowledge.



Western science dealt with this idea from a perspective of objective knowledge, leaving aside the subjective dimension that deals with nature. For the models of classical mechanics, even of thermodynamics, this information was sufficient and efficient. However, the advent of the molecular era, and later of the atomic and subatomic era, reveals the inadequacy of these models.

Meanwhile, towns of ancestral culture focused their exploration of the world precisely on subjective knowledge by means of nature. That subjectivity, devalued and denigrated by the aims of objective Western thinking, today regains full validity. Because the indigenous peoples not only elaborated valuable descriptions of non-visible realities of a metaphysical character (which are often scoffed at by many Westerners imprisoned by their prejudices and arrogance), but also demonstrated that the coherency of their methods permitted them to also reach knowledge about tangible reality.

Modern medicine has previously equipped itself with a substantial amount of ancestral knowledge on which to base itself. Quinine (the Quina tree is a symbol of Peru) permitted a defense against malaria which arrived along with the Spanish. Digitalis was an essential contribution for cardiology. Curare allowed internal surgical operations to be carried out. Coca provided local anesthetics for ocular surgery...the list is very long and up to 70% of medicines are derived from the knowledge of traditional phytotherapy. It is not an exaggeration to say that modern medicine would not exist without the considerable contributions of empirical ancestral knowledge. And it is necessary to stress the fact that this knowledge could not be the result of chance given its extreme complexity as in the case of the elaboration of curare that requires a procedure of various days, the mixing of 40 species of plants to prevent lethal vapors, and to invent the means of non-toxic, subcutaneous injection, etc. The probabilities that all necessary factors require of their production totally escape coincidence and the trial and error method and rather reveal a production that is both intelligent and “inspired”.

This necessary initial “inspiration” to the elaborate access to knowledge should not seem strange to us if we also consider the roots of great Western discoveries as such as Archimedes discovering buoyancy in his bathtub, Newton and his apple for gravity, Poincare and his

“mathematical dreams”, or the winner of the Nobel Prize in Chemistry of 1993, Kary B. Mullis, who discovered the PCR (Polymerase Chain Reaction) method thanks to, according to Mullis, his LSD trips<sup>vii</sup>. Even the prophet of reason, Descartes, deserves this title for having been inspired by an angel, as he himself recounts, in order to write “The Discourse on Method”!

The channels of non-Western ancestral knowledge would permit us to recover and revalue our subjectivity in the process of accessing knowledge. Indigenous peoples not only observed external nature but also explored in great depth the interior world, using their own bodies as a location for the here and now of their consciousness. They developed extremely sophisticated techniques for inducing states of altered consciousness, acting on the senses through techniques that reduce (hypo) or increase (hyper) the sensory stimuli. They range from the use of rhythms, dances, fasts, sensory isolation, physical exhaustion, sexual techniques, induction of pain, sleep alteration, and the enormous potential of resources of psychoactive plants and other animal or mineral substances.

These induced modifications of consciousness permit the individual to incorporate experiences of the quantum dimension into life. These experiences are not accessible to common sense or to immediate perceptions.

We are made of a body that has consciously not surpassed experiences of a molecular level but of a mind that has information of a quantum level. Our somatic memory finds itself disassociated with our psychic memory. This divorce is extremely painful and disturbing, even going so far as to generate a dissociative state in our mental pathology generator.

We touch and see dense material which tells us that there is only emptiness...and the air of emptiness we see tells us that it is full of waves. How can we integrate the reversibility of time when we live attached to clocks that run inexorably in a manner that is linear in time and that structure our daily lives?

The cerebral structures offer us a schematic support of our internal functionality. And I say schematic being that it is no more than a metaphor that illustrates our intention but that does not enclose or exhaust all of its meanings. In fact, the brain can be described as two hemispheres

unified by a bridge. MacLean proposes also the description of the triune brain that does not exclude the validity of the former description.

If the left brain satisfies the cerebral functions of conceptual logic, rationality, linear, categorical, and epicritical thinking, the right brain appeals to the transrational, emotional, melodic, metaphorical, and analogous functions...For every 10 studies done concerning the left brain, there is only one concerning the right brain<sup>viii</sup>. This illustrates perfectly the clear orientation of Western science toward a unilateral form of observation of life. Dominate rational thinking tends to ignore the data that corresponds to the non-rational cerebral functions, and this is engrained starting in early childhood. However, emotional and environmental “coloration” integrated by the right brain accompanies all praxis, gnosis, or mnesis of the left brain and is indispensable to the correct integration of these functions, although they be generally unconscious in our cultural space. We find ourselves then with a left hemisphere that is very well developed but with a functional atrophy of the right brain.

On the other hand, traditional towns exercise since birth analogous functions, metaphoric language, and tend to leave to the side the development of rational function. We have already seen that a fruitful interchange can be established between cultural spaces for the mutual training of the psychic functions lacking in the other.

The bridge between both hemispheres is precisely the limbic part that corresponds to the regulation of humor and vitality. The interchange requires then this empathy towards “the other” with the aim of recognizing it and discovering it. The corpus callosum, the base of psychic “humor”, reactivated by the fertilization of both live hemispheres as complementary and not opposites, reestablishing the dynamic of open and therefore live systems, gives us the hope to change the prevailing deadly sadness into a life giving happiness.

The description of MacLean of the triune brain reveals three levels of the integration of information:

- The superior cortical region deals with symbolic integration and infers access to rational phenomena and the acquisition of language up until rational human discourse. Integration



by means of logos. Corresponds to molecular structures and classical allopathic medicine. Region of the gnosis or rational knowledge. Conceptual memory.

- The sub-cortical region is present in superior mammals and gives access to the subconscious with a non-linear language, transrational, metaphorical, region of dreams, the elaboration of myths, of integration by means of emotion. Corresponds to psychocorporal and energetic medicines, the atomic level. Region of praxis or action or development of thought through affection. Emotional memory.
- The deep brain, old brain, or reptilian brain, corresponds to the deep unconscious, the unconscious functions of survival, analogous rhythmic language (ikaros, lullabies), integration by means of the body, somatic memories that affect basic physiological functions such as reproduction, nutrition, temperature, and defenses. Corresponds to shamanic medicine and subatomic structures. Region of mnesis.

According to this schema it is understood that shamanic medicines permit access to the most hidden of memories. The experiences induced at this level will give place to new engrammations in the body that allow previous matrixes to be corrected. These experiences of induced MSC will permit the individual to directly experience phenomena of a quantum nature and in as such integrate that dimension into his/her psychic-emotional sphere. The latest studies by Rick Strassman on DMT show that the substance that we find in ayahuasca is also secreted by the pineal gland located in the base of the brain and present in mystic states or to situations similar to NDE for example<sup>ix</sup>. Indigenous peoples have known about this for thousands of years.

They also knew that the use of perfumes and subliminal odors could transform the liveliness of a person and is used at great length in their psychic therapy which is not strange now that we know about the direct connection between the olfactory nerve and this brain region. The Nobel Prize of 2004 was attributed to Richard Axel and Linda B. Buck for their important discoveries about the functionality of smell, described by the Norwegian Academy as the “most enigmatic of our senses”.



This deep brain is not reached by means of rational words (cerebral cortex, superior mammals, conscious ego), nor in the psycho-emotional functions (midbrain of inferior mammals, individual unconscious) but rather by means of modified states of consciousness and the psycho-spiritual functions of the physical body (reptilian brain, paleo or archaic-brain, collective unconscious).

## 6. Scientific Models Consistent with Ancestral Wisdom

So, as with MacLean's neuro-anatomic model, I think it is useful to point out how lately there have emerged numerous bridges from the advances of Western science that permit the establishment of possible coherent models with shamanic experiences, weaving a network or bridges between ancestral knowledge and Western science.

Quantum physics does not contradict shamanic practices but rather coincides with them, especially during MSC when it states:

- The inexistence of the observer-observed separation, therefore there is no absolute objectivity and the subjectivity of the individual that observes an experience always intervenes. The shaman that takes Ayahuasca is the observer and the observed at the same time.
- The development of time is not linear but rather circular, ellipsoid, distortable, reversible.
- Involves a live system, always open, with a degree of uncertainty or partial impossibility with respect to prediction.
- The probabilities never enclose a sole obligation (everything is possible in every moment, the "possible" coexist).
- Allows for the possibility of the existence of parallel universes.



- The matter-energy interchange ( $E=mc^2$ ) allows a glimpse of the possibility of phenomena of the processes of materialization and dematerialization.

Other contemporary models or disciplines demonstrate a coherency with the conceptual framework (or rather experiential) of traditional indigenous medicine. This resonance continues to call attention and spark interest. I would like to briefly cite below a few of these models.

Neurophysiological Models: see for example the concept of “controlled hallucinations” by the Englishman Richard Gregory that brings us closer to the notion of perception by contrast and the interest of the procedures of dis-focalization (with Ayahuasca for example) in order to better see every day reality.

Models of Chaos Theory by the Nobel Prize winner Ilya Prigogine that were reintroduced by doctor of psychology Manuel Almendro in his “Chaos Psychology”, located in the field of the transpersonal. It offers perspectives about the possibility of qualitative leaps in an emerging crisis when a live and open system arrives at a maximum point of instability. It offers, in terms of the human being as an open system, a negentropic exit to psychological and spiritual crises.

Models of transpersonal psychology of Stan Grof with his peri-natal matrices (Grof, S., 1983, 1984) or of Ken Wilber (Wilber, K., 1900, 1996).

Models of the structural analysis of dreams for the interpretation of phenomena of consciousness and especially of visions induced in initiation rituals.

Models of molecular biology that give evidence of similarities between DNA and the “cosmic serpent” (Narby, J. 1999).

Models of animal biology with the morpho-genetic fields of the British biologist Rupert Sheldrake that present themselves to clarify in particular the methods of traditional learning and

transmission of knowledge such as the operational capacity of the matrices of medicinal plants (or “mother spirits”)<sup>x</sup>.

Cybernetic models of systems of information, open and live. These models permit the understanding of the human being as a system in charge of the management of the quantity of information that it receives at every instant, especially at the psychic level. They clarify the function of intent in ritual practice as a support for the reorganization of information.

Model of psychoneuroimmunology that link the biological identity with the psychic identity (Andrea Márquez López Mato, 2002).

## 7. The Contribution of Ayahuasca

So, we have stated that:

- The dominate classical model of Western science reveals itself to be both inadequate and insufficient when taking into account objective information measured by its own experiences
- Nor is it capable of doing so in view of the epistemological framework of Western rational thought
- Neither is it able to give an account of the subjective dimension that involves the collection of this experiential information, nor of that which is lived by human beings in its internal forum and that escapes to the phenomenological world as is consciousness
- However, in the most advanced fields of contemporary science, models that claim the validity of the subjective dimension of being are proposed and systems that require metaphysical space to be approached and that introduce the variable of consciousness into their equations are being provided

- Those models prove to be consistent with the proposals of traditional medicines or practices classified as shamanic and at the same time can be enriched by them, especially in the mastery of the induction of modified states of consciousness (MSC).

It is precisely at this point that we wish to now carefully consider the example of the use of the brew known as Ayahuasca in the context of shamanic practices of Amazonia.

We believe the use of Ayahuasca is an illustration of a more general process of the practices of ancestral communities that maintain certain characteristics throughout time, space, and culture. The principles constant with the induction of modified states of consciousness are the following:

- The existence of intent on the part of the individual experiencing the MSC: the purpose is never simply recreational or one of mere curiosity
- The induction is guided by an initiated and experienced expert (teacher)
- A degree of preparation is required of the experimenter (in other words, the experience is not improvised)
- A context is established for the induction that includes precise rules, especially in the energetic management of the body (diet, sexual behavior, postures...) and the management of the immediate environment (location of the experience in an adequate time and place)
- The body is the essential instrument of the induction of MSC and therefore of the initiation, everything else constituting as secondary and variable logistics
- As one begins to dominate the techniques of induction, the intensity of the inductor stimulus is reduced in order to achieve the same effect

Although the mode of induction may vary from the use of psychoactive substances to techniques of hyper or hypo stimulation as we have already discussed (music, rhythms,

hyperventilation, extreme exertion, intense pain, sensory isolation, etc.), the elements of the framework of induction, according to the above constants, manifest through ritual procedures.

The ritual is the setting of the stage in the sensory world of the relation with the invisible world. It establishes a door between the phenomenic world of manifestation and the noumenal world of the essence of things or invisible universe of Forms. In other words, it links “this world” with the “other world” and permits passage from one to the other. It is recognized as fundamental the fact that in this incarnation we have to be in the here and now and that all passage to the other world requires a careful and respectful procedure that allows a return enriched by the acquired information. Contact with noumenal dimensions supposes the assimilation of psychic loads of high energy and therefore can be potentially destabilizing. To approach transcendental realities demands in an absolutely indispensable way a context of restraint and of the post-integration of the lived experiences. Peak-experiences are easy to provoke using whatever substance but their integration is conditioned with respect to ritual forms. Transgression of these forms provokes a violent irruption of energetic loads that neither the mind nor the body can withstand: the consequence is physical or mental illness.

The body represents our only permanent wellbeing in this life. The integration of the fundamental perceptual or sensory world is carried out as we see it at the level of the paleocortex and has to do with what we conceptualize as our presence regarding ourselves and the world. It is precisely the definition of basic fundamental consciousness. We find ourselves at the opposite end of the usual Western concept of a consciousness whose origin lies in the superior cortex. Underlying consciousness arises before all of our corporal existence and proceeds to integrate itself level by level, first on an emotional level and then at the level of the superior cortex, or on a symbolic and rational level. In other words, our body “knows” before our heart and our head! Certain psychiatric schools recognize that symbolic function is a psychic function and, as in shamanism and ancestral traditions, accepts consequently that the human body assumes a psychic function of the integration of order in the world<sup>xi</sup>. The human body as a microcosm is the image of the macrocosm and as Saint Gregory the Great says “Man shares his existence with

stones, life with plants, sensation with animals, knowledge with angels, and if this is so it is because in a certain way he is each one of these things.”

MSC permit us to take off from the rational conceptual world and land in emotions and later in the body, crossing through the successive thresholds that isolate us from our somatic memory. In Western context, often the mental world takes the form of a prison where consciousness is reduced to a rational reasoning.

Our conceptualization of the world is made up on the basis of the somatic experience we have acquired since conception. The senses bring us information about the reality of the environment that it joins together inside a perceptual specter defined by the habitual use of our senses and cultural and educational transmission. The Aguaruna that live submerged in the plant world distinguish many more varieties of the color green than the average Westerner. Rational Western repression of extrasensory perceptions in children by their parents induces in them a self-censorship and negation of these mental faculties common to all human beings. If in ordinary states of consciousness we generally see according to the luminous frequencies of red to violet, techniques for the induction of perceptual modification generate the consciousness of other colors on the fringe of infrared and ultraviolet. The visual map of our reality extends, therefore, and acquires greater richness: the invisible world becomes visible. The same can occur in relation to the rest of the fundamental senses and as such the expansion of our usual perceptual specter of reality allows us to gain access to a reality that is much broader or in some ways to other realities. On the other hand, discontinuity between our senses does not exist and crossed perceptions can be experienced: the “hearing of a color”, “seeing of a sound”, “touching of a smell”...In the same way, added to these classic senses that orient us toward external reality are all the internal physiological functions (propioception) and their integration in diverse mental faculties: noetic sense of reality, corporal schema, sense of passing through chronological time, location in space, etc. The induction of modified states of consciousness can affect all this information in our internal reality and as such allow us to gain access to an internal “other world” beyond suspicion.



The experimenter of MSC quickly realizes that their experience also exceeds the spectrum covered by habitual language. When this occurs, there are no adequate words to be found that can express the internal experience. Beyond the verbalized space, ecstatic, indescribable forms are reached, accessing in full consciousness a supra-verbal world. This state would have to differentiate itself from the silence of the addict that rather explores a fusional, primitive, infra-verbal world, of which no account can be given because the experiences occur in full unconsciousness.

The clinical experience, furthermore, allows us to add that somatic memories do not include only the experiences of individual biography but rather are carriers of ancestral mnemonic inheritance. Beyond this familial heritage, cultural, ethnic, religious, or national heritage is also added...and still beyond this lie the memories of our biological origin and finally of our origin as humans. In other words, we are carriers of universal memory.

Thus, the induced expansion of consciousness can give us access to many painful, individual, familial, collective, and even universal memories. It is understood therefore that there does not exist an authentic initiation to the interior universe of the self, to the consciousness of the reality of things, or of our being without confronting suffering. The ritual context allows for an organization of experience in such a way that one does not access loads that he/she is not prepared to handle. Different preparations aim this and at purifying the body according to conditions which will permit the registering and recording of this new information without destabilizing itself. It is not strange therefore the fact that the indigenous people of Amazonia classify Ayahuasca above all as a “purge”.

The ritual context is double. At the same time, it occurs in the moment of the experience of the modification of consciousness and also inside the cultural space in which the experience is realized. In this sense, indigenous people have elaborated throughout the years a view of the world that gives them an innate framework for integrating experiences that arise in non-ordinary states of consciousness induced through the techniques that they dominate. In this way, the transference of techniques or the use of substances from one cultural context to another requires precautions. Tobacco, master plant of the Amazon, has become a powerful Western poison while

the wine that structures Mediterranean cultures destroys aboriginal and Indian cultures. We could say the same about the Andean coca plant versus Western cocaine, or about Asiatic poppy versus Western heroine...

It is evident that Westerners, with the functions of the superior cortex being dominant, attribute to “vision” an essential function without taking into account that it comes as the result of the gradual integration of first somatic and then later emotional information. The desire to directly access cortical integration without respecting the natural processes generates a dangerous sense of audacity. Westerners tend to be unconcerned about the physical preparation and later psycho-emotional preparation at the moment of inducing a modification of consciousness. They believe they can abstain from ritual forms that they attribute to mere cultural obligations that do not correspond to them. Their loss of the symbolic dimension as active, effective, and operational, makes them think that it is about virtual recreation without great importance and of which they can exonerate themselves.

Indigenous people remind us then, that there are universal invariants and that if visible laws of nature exist, then invisible laws of nature exist as well. In other words, they remind us that the world is organized and that the worst that could happen to the human being is to become self-concerned and forget about the existence of the “other”. The experience of MSC then, aims at reconnecting ourselves with this ontological memory and therefore reintegrates our internal order with the heart of great universal order, that which is profoundly curative and healing. During the Ayahuasca session, the teacher/curandero reestablishes a super-order that permits the patient to pass through a phase of relative disorder in the process of the exploration of his/her internal confusion and later to reintegrate him/herself with him/herself, enriched by the experience. The intentionality of the individual echoes then, with the intentionality of the person who directs the experience. This refers us to the descriptions of live systems as systems of open information where the accumulation of information manages to activate the system that takes it to a pre-chaotic stage. In this phase of the hyper-activation of the system, a crisis is presented where a possible junction is offered towards the entropy (degeneration and death) of the system or a qualitative negentropic (vital) jump towards a new integral order. For example, a physical





illness can be solved or at least relieved through the integration of the sense of this somatic pathology at the psycho-emotional level. In this same way, for a psycho-somatic pathology like depression, the qualitative jump can be found in the transcendental order of the spiritual dimension. In each one of these steps, there exists for the human being a moment of internal deliberation where he/she finds him/herself alone with only deep consciousness, ontological I would say, in order to freely opt towards entropy or negentropy, towards death or towards life.

The Western world today lacks a shared view of the world and rather finds itself in this state of emergent crisis where a junction offers in its path: the individual and collective choice for life or for death. This absence of a conceptual framework that serves as a universal reference imposes a transference of the indigenous practices of MSC without caution. The frequent temptation of the abandonment of Western roots to adopt models belonging to foreign cultures, from the start plants incoherence in that it seeks the reintegration of its profound nature, denying from the start an essential component of that same nature. The self-denial of a part of one's self, in fact, impedes the resolving of the dissociative processes that are a characteristic of the collective Western pathology. Also at this level, intercultural encounters require the discovery of bridges that reach universal dimensions or invariants of human nature after cultural borders. Many anthropologists established as impossible this task, closing indigenous practices inside a supposedly insurmountable space for the West. This is owed essentially to its approach to these practices, marked by the distancing of false and obliged scientific objectivity whose absurdity we have already indicated. The fear of losing academic status that their Western context grants them, maintains them on the other shore where they exclude themselves from direct and live experiences. However, we already know that superior cortex integration in these cases cannot avoid a personal commitment to the body and psyche. This risk awakens in Western minds a great fear, one of the loss of control and therefore of insanity. At the same time it reveals the unconscious presence of the dissociative fracture of thought and of a way of living in the West with schizophrenic tendencies, and signals with reason the need to establish systems of contention and integration of consciousness. It becomes problematic the fact that many academic, religious, and political authorities faced with this personal fear (or even terror), decide to establish a collective contention, projecting their fears on the masses and taking away from

them access to their interior worlds. The myth of zero risk constitutes an almost delirious fantasy that obsesses numerous Westerners and leads them to choose death as the only place that is permanently safe.

Intercultural bridges find themselves in the symbolic dimension of cultures, expressed in art and all religious expressions. In this sense, our Western culture possesses powerful religious roots that can be reencountered in the mystical dimensions of its spiritual tradition. The lives of numerous ascetics or mystics amply demonstrate how they lived an experienced spirituality that included the body and the psycho-emotional part of their personality. They experienced non-ordinary states of consciousness similar to those of the shamans of indigenous cultures. Seraphim of Sarov would eat herbs in the Russian forest, he connected with the animals, experienced illuminated phenomena, saw realities in space and time, had dowries of ubiquity, telepathy, etc.<sup>xii</sup>. It is enough for the Westerner to investigate the rich spiritual legacy of his/her culture to encounter all that is necessary to explore his/her internal world. However, to add shamanic techniques provides him/her with a powerful instrument with which to face up to the urgency of his/her rebellion towards life or death in a situation of emerging crisis that demands immediate answers. A growing number of individuals in the West come to experience on a personal level this crisis of “spiritual emergency” to such a point that the school of transpersonal psychology felt obligated to define criteria for identifying these crises in order to differentiate them from psychotic outbreaks or delirious dissociation. The possible junction towards a regressive or evolutionary statute in all crises with delirious aspects deserves a discernment being that it could frustrate a curative process and enclose the individual in a chemical straight jacket for life. The indiscriminate use of psychoactive substances induces a multiplication of these crises, especially with cannabis where more and more youth are seen to have “cannabinoid psychosis”. In these cases, the youth crosses the threshold of mental-cultural contention without spiritual preparation and finds him/herself with information about essential Forms from the other-world that tries to integrate itself at the psychic-emotional level. The overwhelmed mind partially breaks down and formulates truths about the other-world that it knows to be certain but that assimilate to the egotistic, childlike dimension. The expansion of consciousness transforms into inflation of the ego: it takes on as its own transcendental and transpersonal realities. The extreme power of these



realities generates a state of fascination that alienates the individual. The individual is not crazy in the sense that what he/she says is not in essence true, but rather for the fact that he/she interprets these realities with limited capability and locates them the wrong place.

## **8. MSC in Drug Addicts**

We recognize here the mechanism of addictions or drug dependencies that exemplify, in our opinion, all the contradictions of the Western model of life. We now know that this mechanism of dependency covers more than the use of substances, as for example with addictions to gambling, shopping, internet, television, food, etc. In this process the human being invests his/her hopes of happiness into the ingestion or physical or psychic incorporation of something considered foreign to one's self and that is supposedly a carrier of that which one lacks. He/she does not listen to the voice of Tradition that has taught throughout the centuries that knowledge and wisdom are to be found within one's self: he/she looks for it externally. The exterior object (substance, money, TV or computer screens...etc) is worshiped as a fountain of plenty in order to calm the exceedingly distressing sensation of interior vacancy. They cease to be logistical instruments for the fulfillment of life and transform themselves into carriers of transcendental significance that human being projects onto them. This model has ended up completely invading Western society and makes all of its individuals active, often unconscious, addicts. It would be enough to cancel for a few days the consumption of refined sugar and anxiolytics, for example, to realize the importance of the abstinence syndrome that would generate at the collective level, convincing proof of collective addiction. In fact, drug dependencies arise inside the context of Western society and are almost absent from traditional ancestral societies. And it must be specified that this Western paradigm in its degeneration exceeds at great length the geographic limits of the countries of the north and of "whites" and that have contaminated almost all of the planet and have infiltrated the most foreign of cultures. The power of the universalization of the Western model is a considerable force that now affects all humanity to diverse degrees.



In systemic therapies an individual is identified that unconsciously expresses dysfunction of a familial dynamic. In this same way, addicts today reveal the collective Western illness that basically consists of the negation of subjectivity and the transcendental nature of the human reality. Spirituality is rejected as being a sub-product of the mind and a “free” spirit would be an individual without roots, without obligations, without memory, without limits, without attachments. In reality, this idealized individual, in a system of closed self-reference would find him/herself a prisoner of self and given over to all the unconscious psychic forces, individual and collective. In other words, the individual would be referred to as a “savage” being. This represents an individual who is easily manipulated by mercantile interests that in the insatiable eagerness for profit try to standardize the individual in order to facilitate a market of vast distribution. Lacking in interior strength and deceived by pseudo-liberty, one takes part in the standardization of the market just as one takes part in sects or political systems or religious authorities. We have here a good candidate for fanaticism and for all forms of dogmatism. Therefore, when we say “the addict” we are referring to the Western individual just as it is structured within each of us: it is not about the “other”, but rather about the I, the you, the he, or the she.

The addict finds him/herself free from all limits, he/she breaks all barriers and can arrive at all aberrations...being, in fact, a prisoner of the drug. And looking closely, it is not the drug, a simple substance, that encloses the individual but rather the potentiation of his/her egotistic imagination by psychic energies that are not integrated with the fundamental I (the Self) and that behave as autonomous forces that seize the infantile I. In a way, the individual finds him/herself in a state of possession, inhabited by psychic energies that enslave him/her and escape from his/her control.

The loss of psychic identity is reflected in the similar loss of the spiritual, cultural, and later sexual and somatic, identity. Individual differentiation, the individual process, and the recognition of the uniqueness of being all disappear. The individual tends to regress to functional forms in all spheres of his/her life. It translates to the physical level through the exponential increase of degenerative pathologies or immunodeficiency. It manifests at the psycho-emotional



level through the incessant growth of dissociative processes and especially through crises of psychotic outbreak. The enormous market of psychotropic drugs and analgics paints for us a picture of a society that lives under permanent anesthesia and rejects all effort toward individual growth and the inevitable passage through suffering.

## **9. Application for Ayahuasca in the Western Context**

Traditional practices of MSC teach us to access the knowledge of self without appropriating elements of support that permit access to a non-ordinary consciousness. Indigenous communities have an enormous reverence for plants or elements of nature that reveal hidden realities to ordinary consciousness. However, their uses are not set up in religions which deify Ayahuasca, Peyote, or Iboga which are considered manifestations of a divine, transcendental, and unknowable dimension. The creation of new churches linked to the use of a master plant (Santo Daime, Native American Church, Bwiti...) lack ancestral roots and are syncretic forms that include some element of the Western world. They are generally attempts at recovering the cultural origins or individual spirituals already inscribed in a Westernized context.

Ayahuasca and all master plants, give access to realities from the invisible world that are made visible to consciousness. They are visionary plants. Western scientists, disconnected from the profound I and ignorant of the realities of the other-world, did not know how to recognize in these visions manifestations of the world of Forms or Numen. In their incapability to identify the risen symbolic material, they projected their dissociative perception of reality in order to qualify these visions as “hallucinations” and these plants as “hallucinogenic”. The hallucination assumes the absence of a real object and therefore the production of an image based on the falsification of perception. The clinic demonstrates that this is not so and that the visions induced by Ayahuasca possess a high degree of coherence in relation to the life of the individual. They require a process of interpretation much like the symbolic reading of dreams.

Patients with a low capacity for symbolization like many drug addicts usefully benefit from the visionary induction. In fact, the invasion of the psyche with overwhelming experiences causes the patient to regress to pre-verbal, functional states, not allowing him/her to access real words. The awareness of his/her problems through seeing, gives him/her the possibility of gathering consciousness without the use of language. Later, access to the descriptive verbs of the visualized symbolic scenes is achieved and the patient gradually begins to readjust to authentic verbs that are connected to emotion.

Ayahuasca is presented as a psychic matrix where, in an adequate context, an individual can review the files of his/her conceptual, emotional, and somatic memory. In this exploration the patient will encounter painful individual, collective, and even universal knots that can liberate him/her through cathartic crises that span the body (vomiting, diarrhea), emotions (crying), and the consciousness of the superior cortex (gathering of consciousness). Being the protagonist of his/her own exploration where he/she is both the observer and the observed at the same time, he/she could decide in these emerging mini crises which path of life to opt for. The intensity of the experience generates a new profound anchorage, a reparation of painful memories integrated in a broader sense of life. The well conducted Ayahuasca session, therefore, is lived as a semantic experience, a bearer of meaning, and as such extremely healing.

The individual can discover for him/herself the veracity of the affirmations of the traditions expressed in the myths, legends, and symbolic stories of his/her culture. From there, his/her faith becomes based on direct knowledge and not on the blind acceptance of that which is merely proposed to him/her. The faith that expresses an adhesion of intelligence to revealed truths constitutes a true wisdom as in the case of indigenous initiation teachings. It does not share unattainable information as is observed in Western academic teachings where the individual does not have the technical means to discover that which is presented to him/her and to which he/she should lend blind credit. This individual will later repeat the same to his/her students, creating in this way a repetitive chain that is similar to a form of verbal psittacism that can easily degenerate. At the psychotherapy level, Ayahuasca authorizes the patient to access for him/herself the contemplation of his/her interior world and discover with certainty the

interpretive proposals of the psychotherapist. The patient should not believe in the diagnosis of the psychologist but rather discover it and eventually correct it, contemplate it, and even reject it. The force of conviction of such a procedure where the individual is a full participant in his/her therapy is clinically admirable. It is not uncommon to see a patient at the end of an Ayahuasca session humbly confess the mistakes which were made so evident that he/she could not but recognize them, ask for forgiveness, and correct his/her course of life.

Ayahuasca acts as a truth serum but without ever violating the intimacy of the individual, being that, as we indicated before, inside a ritual context of symbolic contention the intent of the individual is primordial and institutes an underlying order to the experience. If a person truly does not want to access their interior world, they will not be able to do so no matter the quantity of Ayahuasca that they ingest. Simply nothing will happen. It is common to observe patients that hide certain key aspects of their past for fear or embarrassment...in this case, the individual will receive no effect from the brew. Because of this, in many ethnic groups, the initial confession of mistakes, faults, and transgressions in relation to the universal laws of life constitutes a preliminary step to the ingestion of the plant of initiation. Lack of sincerity is the principle caution when taking Ayahuasca. The motivation of the patient is gradually constructed as they realize they are not advancing in progress while others are able to advance and participate in the same therapies.

In the indigenous context the view of the world that permanently pervades culture and daily life permits the immediate location of ritual experiences with MSC. In the absence of a coherent and unified cosmovision in the Western world, the inductions of MSC of necessity must be followed by processes of cortical integration, especially through the verbalization of the lived experience and feed-back from the guide, therapist, or whoever it is that directs the session. The fundamental task of the therapist in this case is to uncover the fountain of information from the individual in order to distinguish between arising information from the profound I and that which is elaborated by the superficial egotistic I. The connection with this profound I is often surprising for the individual who from his/her localization of the mental I does not recognize the expression of Self and perceives it as a foreign source. The sensation lived by the individual is therefore one





of an arising teaching from a source of great wisdom and of great rigor and intelligence. This Self connects the individual with the collective psyche, with universal archetypes, and with the transcendental dimensions of life, the world of Forms or the numinous world. It is not uncommon to see illiterate individuals access knowledge foreign to their culture and describe mystic figures portrayed in Greek myths for example. This “surprise” from the source of teachings has lead indigenous people to qualify Ayahuasca as a “master plant” in the same tone as Graf Durckheim in the West signaled the existence of the “internal teacher”.

The profound or transcendental I, inside a ritual context of adequate symbolic contention, is not perceived as threatening and stays under the regulation of the super-order established by the teacher or therapist. This system permits the individual to approach the famous “psychotic nucleus” without producing dangerous dissociative phenomena. The eventual psychic hiatus can be explored to deactivate the disintegrating power of the patient in order to later recover his/her integrity inside of the cohesion established by the ritual form and the persona of the guide of the ceremony that obviously requires for him/herself mental stability and emotional serenity.

Ayahuasca permits the rejection of the experiential problems of the patients in the setting of the imagination in order to allow the re-elaboration of his/her intra-psychic conflicts. Psychic elements therefore arise that escape the control of the patient, rising up from sources foreign to his/her habitual I and that allow the discovery of new options for resolution. Ayahuasca activates processes of psychic reparation such as:

- Increased intellectual acuity
- Increased concentration capacities
- The flourishing of memories and of the memory
- Reformulation of conflicts
- Reduced anxiety
- Identification of the “shadows” that then cease to possess the individual





- Reduction of projective phenomena
- Rapid gratification of effort with increased tolerance to frustration
- Improved self-esteem through the discovery of a transcendental dimension unique to the I

Ayahuasca is ingested orally and respects the natural digestive barriers of the organism. Furthermore, its alkaloids are found in the blood and the human brain and describe that which is called a “endo-ayahuasca”. The pineal gland, the third eye of esoteric traditions, secretes tryptamine alkaloids that provoke luminous phenomena and are found to be very increased in extreme experiences of the human consciousness such as NDE or mystic states<sup>xiii</sup>. It has nothing to do with active principles foreign to our nature. The taking of Ayahuasca therefore, reproduces and amplifies natural physiological mechanisms. It is admirable to observe the coincidence between the manifestations of the reptilian brain and the very high frequencies of serpent visions even in people with no link to wildlife. Ayahuasca generates in the mind a structure-energy like the morphogenetic fields of Rupert Sheldrake<sup>xiv</sup> that correspond to the visible form of liana coiled around itself, in conformity with the theory of the subject. The sensitive Form reflects the insensitive Form.

The intensity of the experience and its dramatic quality raise strong questions about the meaning and the nature of that which is real, about life, illness, death, and the entire universe that surrounds us. It gives us a measure of our ignorance about ourselves and the world and reestablishes a state of healthy humility opposite the transcendental mystery of the human existence.

Ayahuasca, therefore, simultaneously combines various functions:

- Somatic effects of rebalance of the sympathetic autonomic nervous system
- Refreshing effects in psychotherapeutic processes
- Reintegration of the semantic dimension of human existence

- Purifying, purgative, and cathartic effects in all these levels

Ayahuasca, therefore, represents a powerful healing instrument for human beings in their diverse dimensions, reestablishing order and harmony. Its essential function consists in realizing processes of RECONCILIATION. Reconciliation with our biography, our familial and cultural origins, with our body, and our individual and collective history. The reordering of our diverse requests is effective and lasting if registered inside Universal Order where fundamental reconciliation must be made with our human nature which is revealed as the carrier of divine source. In the Westernized world, that also dramatically globalizes its deficiencies and fractures, the reestablishing of conciliatory bridges has become an emergency: the correct use of Ayahuasca and of ancestral wisdom can powerfully contribute to reaching this goal.

The human being knows who he/she is in the depths of his/her soul, but has simply forgotten. Recovering memory means recovering origins. We are threatened by the collective forgetfulness so clearly illustrated by the current endemic senile dementia or the Alzheimer illness that seems to be a regression in infantile unconsciousness. A language highly symbolic and sacred as Hebrew reveals to us that the structure of the word “remember” is the same as that of the word “human being”.

The human being in its prime recognizes itself by remembering the source from which it came.



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