

A testimony on the action of psychotropic plants and their link with the spiritual world

Presentation

It's common to find in articles, books or on the internet many descriptions of ayahuasca sessions, mainly presented by Westerners. Paradoxically these testimonies are almost never accompanied by a reflection on their content from the western categories of thought and culture. These stories remain exotic, even fantastic, dominated by subjectivity, self-referentiality and the attempt to link them to "shamanism", whether in its traditional version or in its neo-shamanic version influenced by the New Age movement. The essential work of integrating the symbolism of visionary and experiential material is thus very often discarded or distorted, which sometimes is not without very damaging consequences.

Moreover, in view of the loss of the symbolic function among Westerners and the denial of their spiritual roots, even of the very existence of a spiritual dimension in human beings, the possibility of spiritual teaching brought by this work of exploration with the ritualized use of Amazonian plants, is not taken into consideration or it is simply rejected when it offers elements attached to the Christian pantheon which is considered obsolete. Moreover, many believers and religious consider a priori that this "mystical" approach is unacceptable, contrary to doctrine, suspect of occult, magic or witchcraft practices.

The testimony presented here of Father W., a Catholic priest, is therefore all the more interesting in that it provides information on the richness of this approach when it is placed in an appropriate context. His erudition allows him to point out the links with Christian doctrine, scriptural sources and the oldest writings of the nascent Church. Finally, from an eminently subjective and personal experience, he identifies the perspectives for access to universal knowledge which is relevant with Christian anthropology and theology.

This text only asks to be shared, continued and deepened.

Dr. Jacques Mabit

Medical doctor, founder of the Takiwasi Center – Peru.

The few lines that follow, written by a Catholic priest, have nothing to do with a treatise on dogmatic and theology. They are presented both as a personal testimony and as a free reflection based on experiences that no "scientific demonstration", in the contemporary sense of the term, will ever come to corroborate, and even less to clarify, but which proceed from an actual background. They in no way impede the work of reason and logic. Some assertions put forward to explain these experiences are often hypothetical, they will have to be deepened and perhaps modified as people put their intelligence to work to better understand this way/voice of plants. The pioneer, of Western origin, who was the first to commit to it was Dr. Jacques Mabit, a medical doctor trained in the classic way in French universities and also an authentic shaman, having followed the complete "course" of a training essentially consisting in dietas, fasts and prolonged stays in the forest, while ingesting psychotropic plants. Dr. Jacques was trained and then recognized as a shaman by Amazonian healers whose authority was indisputable in Peru and elsewhere in South America; men who healed using plants from the Amazonian "selva". It is indeed the effectiveness of these that intrigued the young French doctor when he arrived in Peru working for "Doctors Without Borders" and which encouraged him to enter into an initiatory process by starting a shamanic training. At the end of this unprecedented and courageous exploration,

he opened a healing center (Takiwasi) for young drug addict men whom he treats with the help of therapeutic plants with notable success, far superior to the very disappointing results of the detoxification therapies based on pills which flourish in Western society.

Beyond this charitable action, it is important to be aware of a key fact in connection with Dr Jacques' approach: coming from a European culture very marked by the work of reason, he was able to translate his experiences with plants in the mental categories specific to this civilization and, consequently, to initiate a critical reflection based on a rigorous observation of the effects of this medicine which he was entitled to practice. This has never been done by local shamans from the Amazonian world, where perception plays a much more important role than rational discourse. For them, the experience of plants speaks for itself. A Peruvian shaman will invite the person to take the plants, but he will leave it to them to discover their action themselves, which he will not comment on or very little afterwards.

For Dr. Jacques, the "plant clinic", the nocturnal ayahuasca sessions have clearly established a link with a completely new world for a Westerner, where the spiritual dimension holds a cardinal place. Amazonian medicine is not linked to a local religion, which we would risk qualifying as "primitive", but it gives access to a world dominated by the presence and action of spirits, as we will see below. Today, the very existence of a spiritual world is denied and ignored by all Western culture and science. But its existence and its manifestations come to the fore in Takiwasi, thanks to the work of the plants that many people from Europe and North America are now discovering and who often did not even suspect its existence. Faced with the evidence of the facts experienced during ayahuasca sessions and prolonged dietas in the forest, many of them undertook a spiritual process that radically changed their behavior and their vision of the world.

Brief biographical details

I was ordained a Catholic priest in Germanic land, after three years of theological study in Austria, more than forty years ago, in a generalized context of ecclesial decadence. We were then witnessing a regular liquidation of the old liturgical forms and of the doctrinal structure built by the Council of Trent to give way to a complete vagueness, a debilitating creativity at the level of the celebrations resulting from liturgical reforms made hastily and remarkable for their total poverty. Worse still, the faith was deeply affected in many clerics. It was therefore not surprising that, in such a context, my priestly journey seemed very bumpy in its beginnings. I was forced to leave the diocese to which I belonged, a few months after having received priestly ordination, because of a financial scandal in connection with the buildings which were to accommodate a community of Oratorians of St Philippe Néri, for which I had been made a priest.

The diocese had had a million deutschmarks extorted from by the architect responsible for the renovation of the buildings. The whole project suddenly collapsed following opposition from the Episcopal Council, which no longer agreed to finance it. Abandoned by the bishop, who, aged and tired, resigned at that moment, left to my own devices, my journey ended, after several fruitless attempts to find a regular ecclesial position, in a Benedictine monastery in the south of France. The community had been founded by a former monk detached from his community. He received me very charitably, thanks to the kindness of his prior. Still under construction when I arrived, the monastery was attached to the traditionalist movement inaugurated by the Archbishop Emeritus of Dakar (Senegal), Marcel Lefebvre, faithful to the liturgy before the Second Vatican Council. The monks, for their part, had completely kept the traditional structure of the liturgy sung in Gregorian and they celebrated the mass in Latin according to the secular rite of the Church, in the form codified by the Council of Trent (16th century), but whose most of the texts dated back to apostolic times.

After having lived a few months in the orbit of the monastery, I applied for admission to the novitiate. The prior agreed to try the experiment. This caused him some problems of conscience, because I was already a priest and had reached the age of thirty. But he ended up accepting. The experience was short-lived because, understanding after a full two-year novitiate that my place was not in the ranks of the monastic militia, I left the monastery and after a year's stay near a place of appearance in Vendée and having been able to have access to the writings of a mystic who had been blessed with many visions and revelations, Claire Ferchaud, I found myself in Switzerland, at the seminary of Econe, founded by Mgr Marcel Lefebvre. He was still living there when I arrived. I was able to benefit from his paternal and spiritual assistance during my stay.

After six months, I was asked to exercise a ministry in France within the framework of the traditionalist movement. To this end, the best solution for me was to join the priestly society founded by Archbishop Lefebvre: the Priestly Fraternity of St. Pius X (FSSPX). I found myself appointed to Nantes where I stayed for two years. I was then assigned to Geneva in Switzerland, where I served as prior for nine years. Then in Grenoble for two years, in Innsbruck (Austria) for three years and finally, in Toulon for one year. After that I left the FSSPX, noting increasingly clear ideological drifts and serious shortcomings in the exercise of authority.

A new stage in my spiritual journey was opening before me. This was placed under the auspices of Orthodoxy which I discovered, curiously, from a pilgrimage to Lourdes, just before my departure from Toulon. I had discovered, following my Benedictine experience, the ancient Eastern monastic literature, writings which report the spirituality of the Desert Fathers and I had become deeply impregnated with it. I bought in the bookshop of the Sanctuary of Lourdes a recent book on Mt Athos reporting, in the form of anthologies, astonishing miracles which still occur today on the Holy Mountain. I immediately made the connection with ancient monastic literature. I rediscovered the same spirit, the same spiritual vein as that of the Sayings of the Desert Fathers. It was a revelation for me. From that moment, I immersed myself in the books of Orthodox spirituality and I quickly convinced myself that Orthodox Christianity, described as "schismatic" by Catholics, still possessed a living spirituality, carried by an extremely engaging liturgy and choral singing. I made several stays in Mt Athos, I lived several months in the monastery of Putna in Romania, where I was received into Orthodoxy. At the same time, I began to frequent the monastery of St Antoine le Grand, founded in the Vercors by the former Cistercian monk who had become Orthodox, Father Placide Deseille, well known for his numerous French translations of the written monuments of this ancient spirituality (St Jean Climacus, St Macarius the Great, St Isaac the Syrian). A man of great erudition and great charity, Father Placide received me within the walls of his monastery without my becoming a monk, but by participating daily in the duties and by ensuring guided tours of the church, decorated with sumptuous frescoes, in particular depicting scenes from the Book of Revelation by St John the Theologian. I lived in a small house not far from the monastery.

The path of Takiwasi

It was towards the end of my stay at St Antoine that, feeling in my flesh an impasse also very present in Orthodoxy, thanks to a friend I heard about the center of Takiwasi and Amazonian herbal medicine based on psychotropic plants therapy. This center was founded by a French doctor, Dr. Jacques Mabit, whom I mentioned above, and its primary purpose was to welcome patients afflicted with drug addiction. They were treated only with Amazonian plants, most often with success. Takiwasi also organized two-week French-speaking seminars, open to people wishing to initiate a process of better self-knowledge through plants and to find lights to guide their existence and the choices it imposes. The Takiwasi center is rather oriented towards the work with ayahuasca, "the creeper of death", a visionary plant with very powerful effects and very suitable for existential introspection. It should be noted that Amazonian plants work simultaneously on several levels, unlike Western medicine

focused solely on the rehabilitation of body mechanics. They act simultaneously on the physical, psychic and spiritual domain, the three anthropological dimensions that constitute human being. The spiritual component which is essential and specific to our nature is totally rejected by our culture and by Western science, as we have said, which largely explains the current decadence of our civilization, but the work of the Amazonian plants often comes as a reminder to this or that individual into existence, sometimes in a very brutal and surprising way. Intrigued by the story of my friend's experience and visions, I signed up for a summer seminar with about twenty other participants. It should be noted that ayahuasca is taken in groups and is part of a very rigorous ritual framework that must be scrupulously respected, because of the connection that the plant establishes with the world of spirits. Precautions are necessary. The session was led by a shaman (Dr Jacques) and he was surrounded by three other "curanderos" ("healers": Rosa, Jaime, Fabienne) who intervened with songs (ikaros) and individual treatments. The chants, whose words and music are directly inspired by the spirit of the plants, potentiate in an impressive way the effect of the latter. Through the conjunction of singing and the intoxication caused by ayahuasca, a real work of bringing light and inner cleansing is carried out, sometimes resulting in vomiting and other physical reactions. The first three ayahuasca sessions reported below were experienced at this first seminar.

One might be surprised that a Catholic priest can thus free himself from a usual parochial ministry, from his presence in the sacristy and leave the security offered by the emoluments linked to his function, to embark on the experience, at first sight risky, of plant intake. But the Catholic Church is currently experiencing a crisis of such a magnitude that places into question the philosophical foundations supporting its theology on which it has relied for centuries. This forces us to seek new and unprecedented paths with all the necessary discernment. Even if the first Spanish missionaries landed in South America qualified the sessions of ayahuasca and the medicine of plants as practices in connection with the demons, it seems to me that the personal experience that I am going to present in the following text sheds light on this question in a completely different way. It was necessary for that to test oneself the action of the plants to be able to exercise a corrective judgment compared to the assertions of the first missionaries, who were satisfied to emit judgments a priori and to draw up safeguards based on a very intellectualized theology, by demonizing from the outset a medicine which seemed to them to disturb their conceptions. The other motivations that led me to undertake the process remain intimate matters that I do not believe it is useful to disclose. They are linked to an atypical priestly journey and to this deep spiritual crisis that the Catholic Church is currently going through. Nevertheless, thanks to the plants, I understood that I had to reintegrate the Catholic priesthood, after my escapade in Orthodoxy.

First session (July 2015)

A true Walpurgis night! The visions started fairly quickly: after a cold shock to the back in connection with a mental fold of voluntary refusal to let go, there was darkness. And very soon kaleidoscopic visions of demonic figures and forms manifested on a very luminous blue background. Surprisingly shaped figures appeared and disappeared very quickly. Some seemed to be made up like the musicians of the rock group "Kiss" and other similar bands, all very much in tune with the diabolical world. At first, they seemed strange, not too hostile and repulsive. Then the intensification of the vision increased, and in parallel also the demonic character of the apparitions. Now it was legions that swept over me, speechless. Dumb demons! They were running towards me, but they just passed by. It was their number that was impressive. However, I kept control of my thoughts to face them. As the ceremony progressed, the attacks became more violent. Each chant aroused a different context of apparitions: the infernal landscape changed according to the ikaros! But the surge continued inexorably.

The observation: these demons emerged from inside me, they had taken over my body. And I was really immersed in a combat context: every inch of my body was the object of a fierce fight with aggressions sometimes bordering on loss of consciousness. But that didn't happen!

During this terrifying tumult, I began to raise my arms and lower them while waving my hands. At that moment, I felt like some kind of diabolical fluid running through my hands, like some kind of electric current. As soon as I made the sign of the cross, this energy disappeared, but then it came back. Then I realized that my hands were those of a priest and that, having become Orthodox, I had not celebrated the holy mysteries for two years. Those hands had somehow become useless.

A second indication: in the face of the increasing violence, I began to make the sign of the cross at full speed, in the orthodox manner, from right to left, but without much effect. At some point, something inside me corrected this orthodox way. I had to do it Catholic style, from left to right. Suddenly the sign of the cross became more effective, the devilish attacks weakened. I mechanically repeated the invocation: "Most Holy Mother of God, save us!" I understood then that I had to put more conviction into it. Sometimes I said the invocation out loud and the healers called me to order. I understood towards the end what was really at stake in this gigantic fight: it was the possession of the body. And, in fact, I realized that the love of God must take possession of every cell in the body. And this presupposes an important and lasting preliminary purification. The same that I began to live.

I also had the vision of young Peruvian couples naked and embracing, but without this scene giving off the slightest erotic character. The genitals were not shown to me. The presence of the bodies and their evolution in loving embraces evoked in their movement the slithering of the snake, the animal linked to the ayahuasca plant.

The demonic presence had left an indelible mark on my first session. Towards the end I had the intimate conviction of having participated in the terrible battles of the Apocalypse at the end of time, when Satan must be thrown in chains into hell by Saint Michael the Archangel. This was playing on me. No doubt I had benefited throughout the session from the assistance of the good angels who cast out the demons. But without my realizing it at the time.

Obviously, after that experience, how to understand these demonic apparitions that had affected me so violently? I had never practiced magic or rituals to communicate with spirits in my life. During my youth, I never deliberately committed sins of exceptional gravity which could explain these infestations. But the answer to the enigma posed by such visions still had to be sought in my past. In my early twenties, deeply tormented by a spiritual quest and finding no light in the Protestantism that came from my family background, I was drawn, along with a few other young men of my age, to the solitary investigations of a man (Ray) into the origins of Christianity. Ray claimed to have rediscovered a dimension of Christianity that he described as "esoteric", that according to him had been lost over the centuries; a dimension whose premises had to be sought in the religions that preceded Christianity (Egypt, Mesopotamia, etc.). Although he pretended it to be a facade Catholicism, without any repercussion in his personal life, he involved us in an intellectual process that materialized through university studies in connection with these fields of research related to the sciences of antiquity. However, the motivation given for this approach, based on false foundations, was very strong. It captured our young energies and made us believe that we could access the vision of a dead and sleeping God who had to be "resurrected", "awakened" by an inner questioning aimed at reconnecting this divinity, assimilated to the Egyptian Osiris, to his sleeping memory. This god was then obviously identified with Christ. This delusional vision, the result of Ray's amazing imagination, was justified on the basis of misunderstood sacred texts, but discernment was not yet available to us young people without much life experience. We were literally under the control of this mysterious character with a probably Masonic past.

Still Ray was convinced that his thought was called to fertilize the Church and that is why he committed us to the path of priesthood. After searching for a sympathetic bishop for a long time and having found him in Germany, we undertook theological studies at a discount, then received the priesthood in an extraordinarily confrontational situation: then I realized the hiatus between the approach inaugurated by Ray, and that had attracted us toward him, and the demands of the Catholic priesthood, especially in relation to the ecclesial context in which it was exercised. Ray's sudden and providential death two years after my ordination fostered this awareness in me. It was a real shock, the realization of a kind of schizophrenia, and it took me an incredible dose of perseverance not to abandon this priesthood that in no way corresponded to the approach inaugurated by Ray, both in terms of thinking and specific requirements to the priestly ministry, which little by little I was discovering. I decided to remain faithful to my priesthood against all odds and I resolved, as far as possible, to detach myself from the past linked to Ray by striving to immerse myself in the teachings of traditional Catholic theology. In my mind, this was to replace Ray's thinking in the long-term and make the harmful elements of him disappear. The reasoning was fundamentally correct, but the realization of the program turned out to be much more complex for two reasons: 1. Ray's thinking, despite its aberrant principles, carried fragments of light of penetrating intuitions, which had touched something very deep in us and that was inscribed in me in an indelible way. The efforts I made to get out of it definitively by immersing myself in the thought of Saint Thomas Aquinas (after having immersed myself in the spirituality of the Eastern monks), could do nothing about it. I did not find the echo of the imprint, in traditional theology, even patristic, of what Ray had impressed on me and that imperatively demanded considerable critical elucidation. 2. For all its intelligence, Catholic theology was imprisoned in a way of thinking inherited from the Greek philosophy of Aristotle that it had never been able to overcome since the Middle Ages. This did not fit well with the revelation and language of the Bible of the Hebrew world. Little by little I realized this. Furthermore, Western theology could no longer respond to all the current demands posed by the development of the sciences in particular. I felt it deep inside of me, but then I couldn't fully articulate it. Studying it left an aftertaste of dissatisfaction, even frustration. Therefore, I could not fully adhere to it, despite all my good will. However, it corrected in me the delusional aspects of Ray's thinking. This was not the least of his merits.

What this first ayahuasca session showed me and what can be deduced from it: the demonic aspect of Ray's thought, as he mixed in an extraordinary intertwining many true intuitions with a completely false background, which is the result of the influences of a personal past marked by Masonic-type initiations, in all likelihood. This thought of Ray, the rapprochement that it initiated, scarred me deep inside, I had swallowed it whole. That is why my subsequent effort to want to adhere to the traditional theology of the Church created enormous tension in me, because I had to tear myself overnight from a seductive spiritual approach, in which I had fully committed myself for more than four years, to a reason for living that would ultimately lead to a total dead end, a path that ultimately proved fruitless. The mixture of the true and the false constitutes a diabolical mark, as Saint Anthony points out in the life of him narrated by Saint Athanasius. The diabolical appearances and surges during that first ayahuasca session clearly showed the presence of this tension that I had been carrying for years. The previous work and the will to achieve an intellectual purification together with the present action of the plant allowed the beginning of the evacuation of all the demons inherited from Ray's thought.

The day after the session a group debriefing was held. All were invited to tell the other participants what they had experienced during the six hours that the session lasted. This contribution of each one was commented and analyzed by Dr. Jacques for the benefit of all. Because the role of the shaman and the healers during the session is not limited to singing and doing some individual healing. The curandero actually directs the session and perceives, thanks to the ayahuasca that he himself has ingested, the obstacles that each participant faces, and works to evacuate them. He directs the course of the session and truly operates from within, in the immersion of a palpable spiritual world, thus enabling a therapeutic action of the first order. The comments that he made following everyone's story were not just from what he was told, his judgment was based on his vast experience as well as what he

himself had experienced during the session that concerned the person who was talking. They were twice as relevant.

Second session

If in the 1st session the demonic action was concentrated in the head, in the second it was located from the upper part of the chest to the genitals. The battlefield had changed. At first, few demonic images, some on a dark background. Then, little by little, the infernal sarabande began again and I understood that the challenge of the fight was going to be in the region of the heart and abdomen. It was terrible: the feeling that every cell in the body was the object of a fierce struggle. I understood that I had to make an act of offering this body to the Virgin Mary.

That's when I realized that all of these parts had been offered to Ray. I had given him my whole being, my intelligence and my affectivity. It was necessary to undo everything again, to untie all the knots that this donation of my being had woven in me. And suddenly, Ray appeared in the session as a warlock, a being filled with all the spells of his thought that he had entwined us with. I prayed for all those who had been caught in those terrible nets. Together with the ikaros, ayahuasca visited every organ of my "contaminated" body, exposed the evil and brought awareness of the nature of this evil, then freed it from its influence. A kind of purifying surgery, but spiritual. This is how an awareness of the life of this body was made, completely offered to the deleterious influence of Ray.

I also visited my childhood, my parents. I had been a wanted child, then a loved one. I apologized to my mother, the one who carried me in her womb. I saw my ingratitude towards them afterwards. The whole Ray thing had put me at odds with them.

In the second ayahuasca shot, Dr. Jacques added tobacco after asking me about what I had experienced in the first part of the session. I understood that I had to humiliate myself in front of my body and concentrate on the chants. Hell's attack became more and more violent. The demons clung to my body from which they did not want to leave, and, through my voice, they let out moans and pitiful growls. To some extent, I had been able to hold these manifestations out of myself in some way, but as the session progressed, I found myself completely overwhelmed by an angry horde who seemed to understand that they had to empty the places, but who clung on with all their strength. I realized that I could no longer rely on myself to drive them away, but only on the work of the healers. I could only cling to my cross and my rosary that I clutched tightly. At the end of the session, Dr. Jacques told me to lie down on the floor and put a blanket over me. I was totally exhausted, unable to get up and go back to my tambo (individual cabin in the forest). This session was the most violent and stressful of all. It took place in the *maloka* (covered space reserved for ayahuasca sessions) in the jungle.

A dieta in the jungle followed this second session. It consisted of each participant in the seminar isolating himself individually for four days in a cabin in the forest (tambo) taking a plant called "maestra" morning, afternoon and night. This plant, chosen by the healer according to the needs perceived in each person, has its own therapeutic action. The participant must then take it, dieting, during the entire stay in the forest. Amazonian medicine knows several "master" plants (tobacco, coca, palos, ajo sachá, chuchuwasi...). The therapeutic effects of these plants are varied, but the action of each one is beneficial and acts in its own way on a physical, mental and spiritual level. They work a lot on the oneiric plane, the dream is an essential source of self-knowledge, as long as you know how to interpret it.

What I experienced during this second session was not without emotional effects. This was no doubt due to the increasing violence of the devilish attacks. I was able to pour my thoughts with Fabienne who came to visit me at my cabin and I told her about my family. She ordered me to rest and put aside spiritual warfare. Something almost impossible, because that came to me, I did nothing to provoke it. It was imposed on me with an incredible force, absolutely uncontrollable. Subsequent sessions confirmed this.

Third session

After the first intake, the demonic attacks resumed with the same violence as before, but with a greater awareness of the different parts of this body and internally asserting my right to “own my home”. As I did this, the devilish visions faded a bit. I ended the first part of the session with the feeling of having regained possession of this body. But after the second intake of ayahuasca, there was an intensification of the demonic attacks with simultaneous work on the different parts of the body that were visited by the plant. Dr. Jacques came to tell me to make less noise, I was disturbing others, and he told me that I did not know how to listen. It is true that I did not realize that I was noisy and that I did not take enough into account the presence of others. Despite the violence of the attacks, I managed to contain myself a little better. At the end of the session, I was completely in a daze.

The worst thing I saw in these hellish visions was the image of a huge diabolical spider web, probably intended to show me how much I was held in it, although I didn't see myself as a prisoner inside. I saw it in perspective, in front of me, but it showed me, like a mirror, that I was trapped in it.

This session closes this first seminar.

An extremely rich balance of lessons can be drawn from these very difficult first three sessions. The first realization that emerged was that of a sensible experience of the reality of spiritual combat as described in the literature known as the "Fathers of the Desert", that is, of the ancient Eastern monasticism (Egypt, Syria, Palestine from the fourth century AD). Fortunately, I was familiar with these writings and could easily make connections between the teachings and what I had experienced. Saint Anthony the Great, father of the monks, also relates the demonic waves in fantastic forms that he had to suffer, this was the first surprise for me: how was it that, in a context so different from that of the first monks who lived in caves and cabins in very inhospitable and desert places, I had access to similar experiences using mind-altering plants in the humid environment of the rain forest? It certainly wasn't because of personal saintliness, evident in the early monks, but not in me. At first one might think that a very ascetic life, marked by continuous fasting and prayer, could have aroused in these fathers modified states of consciousness, characterized also by demonic visions, but also by appearances of good angels. With plants, we take a kind of shortcut to achieve similar results.

With ayahuasca, I was immediately immersed in a known reality of Christianity, certainly not absent from the experiences lived by generations of Amazonian healers, but about which they generally remained discreet, perhaps without having sufficient tools, concepts and points of reference offered by the Scriptures and the Christian Tradition to account for them. Most of the participants of this first seminar reported, during the debriefing, visions related to plants and personal issues. The spiritual dimension did not appear in the foreground for them. Dr. Jacques told us that ayahuasca always acts according to the priorities it detects in each person. The plant goes to the most urgent. They can be physical, mental or spiritual problems. For my part, I was faced with visions that clearly exceeded the usual Amazonian context in relation to the spirit of plants, but were well attested in Christianity. They

were connected to the spiritual world. A strange connection between two worlds at first sight, but already established several years before by the experience of Dr. Jacques and integrated into his clinical practice.

Indeed, when he began to learn about the practice of indigenous medicines as a doctor with Western training, Dr. Jacques did not imagine that the Christian dimension could be integrated into a medicine that he discovered and explored in every corner. The conferences that he gave each year in France testify that were focused solely on Amazonian plants and their effects. Nevertheless, his shamanic approach never called into question the Christian faith that he had never abandoned, but the link between the two worlds was not immediately established. It was according to the circumstances, having been confronted during a session with a case of diabolical possession (pig growls in a participant in a seminar), that he came to the inspiration to pray to the Archangel Saint Michael, specially invoked against the attacks of evil. The effect was immediate, the possessed calmed down and the session resumed its normal course. From that moment on, the Christian dimension became part of his therapeutic practice with an exorcist orientation that prevailed: Dr. Jacques began to systematically recite the exorcism of Pope Leo XIII at the beginning of each session, the words of various *ikaros* had Christian content, personal treatments were accompanied by traditional prayers to the Virgin. What stands out above all is that the nature of the sessions changed somewhat: the Christian dimension that the *ayahuasca* sessions took on revealed numerous infestations among many participants in the seminars who did not even remotely suspect it. I attest to this myself. Patients with drug addiction problems who stayed in Takiwasi for a period of generally nine months were not the only ones affected. I was in a good position to know! The exorcist dimension was being perfectly integrated into Amazonian medicine; Over time, it became increasingly important. In addition, through *ayahuasca* many non-Christians or non-practitioners lived experiences related to the great Christian mysteries: the vision of Christ on the cross, of the Virgin and of the saints. These visions changed the existence of many of them, making them experience the greatest spiritual realities.

A clarification is necessary at this point: the exorcist dimension linked to *ayahuasca* is not only due to the late introduction of Christian prayers and songs. These certainly played an important role in this new orientation, but the plants themselves possess this exorcist virtue. In fact, each species of plant is linked to a healing spirit that is activated when this plant is ingested in an appropriate ritual context, as is the case with Takiwasi. The exorcist action exists on a natural level and this is very well understood: God's Creation is entirely good and plants are given to us to cure our mental ailments and illnesses. A civilization as distant geographically as in time from the Amazonian world, that of ancient Mesopotamia, which I studied at university, knew many invocations to plants to rid people of influences due, among other things, to witchcraft. And many plants from that region - difficult to identify today - were used to make potions intended to rid patients of physical ailments and demonic influences. Furthermore, the border between disease and diabolical infestation does not seem as clear as the prejudices of Western atheistic science, which separates them completely, would like us to believe. The gospel itself testifies to this.

After this first seminar, at the suggestion of Dr. Jacques, I returned to Takiwasi at the beginning of the following year for a three-month stay. I had a kind of outpatient status: I did not live in Takiwasi, I did not participate in the common life of the patients, but I took plants with them during the night sessions.

Fourth session (26.01.2016)

I received a small dose of ayahuasca, which made it difficult for me to reach the *mareación* (dizziness generated by the plant, with visions). And after a moment, the infernal sarabande resumed, as violent as the previous times. I observed that the demons parodied, with grotesque gestures, the prayer that I addressed to the Virgin and also what they could capture from my positive thoughts. They imitated acts of piety. What could be observed is that they were in fact autonomous spirits, and not projections of the unconscious imaginary. A few times under Ray's influence I have blasphemed this piety and now I understand where that came from. It is probable that the plant has shown me the origin of this disposition.

Then I thought of my body and felt that it was precisely through my body that the process of expelling these evil entities should take place. It was difficult for me to vomit, because I was, as in the first sessions, completely dehydrated. Instead, I burped and sometimes a little bile came out. Dr. Jacques gave me a prolonged treatment.

He adamantly refused to give me ayahuasca a second time, but he did give me some tobacco juice. Suddenly, the demonic visions lost their intensity, but the phenomenon of expelling demons from the body continued. Every time I burped, I felt like I was removing hellish presences. Tobacco had taken over from ayahuasca and enhanced its effect. I realized that it was precisely the body that, thanks to the plants, expelled these undesirable presences. I observed the very powerful effect of tobacco on the mind.

The spiritual cleansing process that ayahuasca engaged me in highlighted a well-known fact from Christian literature on spiritual combat: demonic action is inherently occult. The demon always works in the shadows, which means that his action is carried out by way of suggestion in an invisible way. Unless we are endowed with a spiritual sensitivity that favored certain saints (Saint Pachomius, for example), we do not perceive at all the moment when we are struck by a thought suggested by an evil spirit. And most of the time, once we are aware, we believe that this thought comes from within us and we eat it like sacred bread, when, in reality, it is foreign to us and always hides a trap, not easily detectable. When the effects and fruits of these strange thoughts begin to manifest themselves, through the actions we do and the words we say, then we can become aware that we have deceived ourselves and, at times, been deceived. Returning in this way to the cause and looking for the motivation of the acts that we have put under the influence of a thought, we can achieve, through a work of reflection, what the Church calls an "examination of conscience", to grasp something of this diabolical action and, then, learn from it so as not to fall into the same potholes again. This work was carried out by the first Eastern monks who identified a series of specific strategies of the demons. Its universal character is evident. The reading of this spiritual literature brings very beneficial knowledge, because it joins our own experience that we can easily identify through real stories and reflections resulting from these confrontations. This is how the science of "discernment of spirits" was developed, a major virtue for those who chose to live in solitude, but which everyone is called to acquire, whatever their lifestyle. The monk's fight is at the level of thoughts, because these are at the root of the actions we carry out. One went to the desert to purify oneself and fight against demonic influences.

This hidden action of the evil spirits was deactivated by the ayahuasca visions that showed their presence in broad daylight, because I saw them evolve into very different human forms! Darkness is the preferred field of action for demons. They always operate in the shadows. But as soon as a light is cast on them and their actions, they lose all their harmful energy and become inoperative. And as for me, thanks to ayahuasca, I perfectly visualized this wave of infernal legions. The plant, together with the "ikaros", acted like a lamp that illuminated the dark areas of my being and forced those who had taken possession of it to clear, like cockroaches hidden under the furniture and that we evicted. My body was literally throwing out legions of demons. "The whole world is in the power of the Evil One",



says the Apostle Saint John, but people deliberately ignores this. Amazonian medicine, combined with a Christian practice, is a timely reminder of the existence of this essential reality and the need for purification from these evil influences.

Fifth session (12.02.2016)

I did what Dr. Jacques told me: to concentrate on Christ before taking ayahuasca. And that immediately created a distance from the demonic visions that manifested as soon as the ikaros began. I managed to keep the thread of prayer despite the violence at the beginning. Because I have noticed that many times, when I pray to drive away demons, the words get confused in my head and I can only attribute this phenomenon to an unseen and disturbing demonic action that I feel perfectly. I stopped trying to force myself to throw up while burping. I noticed that a deprogramming work was being carried out on the body that has recorded all the bad folds linked to my temperament and the past. There is a moral dimension to this work, but it concerns the body: it has registered bad dispositions that it must get rid of. In fact, it is the bearer of our existential memory.

I cried a little and tried to humiliate myself as much as possible. The ikaros continued to unearth legions of demons, but these appearances lessened as the session progressed. What was remarkable was the very strong sensation of a liberation of the head: I felt a powerful irrigation of the brain, especially in the right hemisphere and the lower part of the occiput (archaic brain). I did not take ayahuasca for the second time. I observed how my thoughts were terribly mobile, unable to fixate permanently on an object unless captured by a subject that attracted them.

This session is important because it shows a specific reality of spiritual combat, whatever the context in which it takes place. In other words, the diabolical attacks are provoked by the exorcist prayers that force the demons to leave the place, that is, the body, of which they have taken partial or, more rarely, total possession. To the extent that they are confronted and resisted, by taking ayahuasca and by the strength of the ikaros, their resistance loses intensity and strength. The demons gradually loosened up, allowing the liberation of certain areas of the body that were under their control. The body is really what is at stake in this spiritual war. What was experienced during this session demonstrates this: in Western society, the left hemisphere of the brain, related to rational capacities, is hypertrophied compared to the right hemisphere, the place of intuitions and inspirations. Through its action on the pineal gland that connects the two hemispheres, Ayahuasca restores balance. Therefore, we can see that the liberation process begins with the head. But the main target is the heart. For a Westerner, thought comes from the brain, while the heart is the place of feelings and affections. According to the materialist conception that dominates all of Western science, it is the brain that "makes" the thoughts we have. This perspective is false and stupid, because it would have to be said that the heart "makes" the love that we can feel for a person or a thing! What is central in the human being is the intelligence, and this is similarly linked to the heart, because its action and its location in the body are central. The heart, by pulsing the blood, irrigates the entire body, in the same way that our thoughts, the fruit of our intelligence, influence our actions that require an engagement from our entire body.



Dieta in the jungle after the ayahuasca session that has just been described

Master plant: ajo sachá. An important dream during the *dieta*: I am in the corridor of a house, on the second floor, and this corridor leads to the bedrooms. The duvet needed to be changed, so I burned mine knowing it was going to be changed. But it was too early, so I went to look for another one in one of the bedrooms. At that moment, two characters appeared at the end of the corridor, carrying a devilish rage, with a homicidal intent towards me. Many times in the past (not now!) I have seen in dreams these demonic presences that I did not visualize, rather that I did not feel capable of facing, but that always approached me. My reflex then was to run away from them and this often resulted in an awakening. This time I face them and grab one by the neck using a robe belt and immediately the evil rage drops completely. And then I realize that the character I had grabbed by the neck was a woman carrying someone (?) or a cushion. And her left breast appeared.

Ajo Sachá is a luminous and very active master plant on the emotional plane. It acted powerfully on me in the oneiric plane, the dream mentioned above testifies to this. This is located at the psychic level, also at the spiritual level, which shows that the action of the plant extends to all the components of human nature. This dream describes a problem related to the mother, a relationship with the mother hiding an inner anger that was exorcised in the dream, anger undoubtedly due to the excessive influence of an affection towards the newborn (the oldest), elevated to the rank of passive object manipulated in maternal hands, having to go through this situation without being able to react (the symbolic meaning of the cushion, body devoid of limbs). In a way, I was my mother's doll and as a child I felt this role as an aggression exerted on me. Therefore, it was necessary for this reality, shown in a dream by this demonic presence, to reveal its true face. The neutralized demon showing a female identity, the vision of the left breast showing an affective imbalance on the female side, all this comes from a disturbance in the mother that is first projected onto the child, then introjected by him. This acts as a strange and harmful energy for the child, not easily identifiable. It can also cause an emotional wound, constituting an open door to infestations. But this is very unconscious on the part of the mother, convinced that she has "given a lot of love" to her son.

The boundary between the spiritual plane and the psychic plane is not easy to establish, because they often mix and intertwine with each other. This problem arose very quickly during ayahuasca sessions and during dietas in the jungle. But the two planes are, however, different, which requires knowledge in both fields to be able to exercise correct discernment. We are still a long way from grasping the ins and outs of the interaction between these two planes. A research topic of the future!

Sixth session (14.03. 2016)

Strong demonic attacks, visions of goat-headed demons, but less violent than before: the body is more and more controlled. The head and upper chest are free. But what is at stake is the heart. The abdominal part is also taken. This reappropriation of the body facilitates prayer, as well as awareness of the reality of the body (before it was too monopolized by infernal visions). The heart is truly connected to Christ. A lot of yawning during dizziness (a rebalancing of the energetic body, according to Rosa). Then, while I was fighting with the demons, the energy of light went through my body from the bottom to the top and made me see a thousand stars as it passed through my head. It finally came out of the top of the head. Something like the *kundalini*? Then the demonic visions gradually gave way to visions related to real life. Jaime came to give me a special treatment by spraying me with a strong and penetrating perfume. Throughout the session I perceived many smells, some frankly hellish, probably coming from me, but perhaps also from some participants, because on a collective level this

session was very hard.

The process of releasing infestations, initiated by the plant, proves, once again, that it is all about the body. This session no longer focused strictly on the demonic presences and on the work of their expulsion, it showed other forms of purification of the body that the plant operated on me: thus yawns can be observed that were of a different nature than those we produce when we are tired. They had a therapeutic action at the energetic level. Likewise, the smells perceived during a session are mysterious. They are nothing like the ones we feel in the outside world and which we generally identify quite easily. It was almost impossible for me to see where these smells were coming from. They appeared mysteriously and disappeared almost immediately. I couldn't relate them to anything known. Many of them were hellish, really horrible. Did they come from me? Or were they evacuations from other patients present at the session, very powerful purifications? Or both? Impossible to know. I smelled once, in another session after this one, a very sweet and refreshing smell reminiscent of jasmine tea. During the debriefing the next day, I asked if other people had felt the same way. No one responded, suggesting that these scents are essentially personal purification. And, as far as I am concerned, having been so vividly confronted with demonic action, it is not impossible that the disappearance of these evil spirits left behind a trace that could be detected by smell, a fleeting olfactory trace of their bound presence to a precise place in the now liberated body, because they had had to leave it after the exorcism. If this interpretation is correct, it indicates that the smell certifies that a diabolical expulsion really took place. So it is a very positive signal, which testifies a posteriori that a liberation has occurred.

Seventh session (30.03.2016)

Dizziness came after half an hour. Demonic visions again, but less strong and less significant. The connection between the body and the apparitions was felt more strongly, which means the session was very physical. Emotional and respiratory unblocking. The heart was still enslaved. Evacuation of bad energies through scents characterized, but not identified. The dizziness lasted the entire session, the grip was very strong.

Ayahuasca sessions are generally very physically demanding. They require attention and constant presence to the living information that the plant provides in continuous flows and also because of the emotional movement that it provokes. There is no possible distraction. We are "glued" to the vision as a show that absorbs us completely. This information is not mental, it is somehow "intelligent", assimilated by the body and many times it escapes consciousness, which is mental. It is like a movie whose content would consist, for the most part, of a succession or a series of subliminal messages. Therefore, the body integrates important information that travels very quickly. There is a kind of paradox here: we visualize, in a way, information that we carry and that is prior to its manifestation made possible by the plant. But what is visualized in this way, even unconsciously, constitutes an acquisition, it is a gain, and this information will not fail to influence the rest of existence. There is therefore a form of consciousness, not mental, but bodily and very real. The body carries our existential memory, everything we have experienced since we were born is recorded. And a memory is necessarily intelligent in itself, because it restores in an orderly and wise manner what belongs to the past. The plant comes to request this memory in its deepest layers, which are inaccessible in the waking state. It allows a real exploration of the unconscious. Therefore, we can postulate the existence of an intelligence of the body, different from the common one that we use in a waking state and that is located in the head. This has to do not only with what is linked to the functioning of the vital organs that occurs in a prodigious way outside of any awareness on our part (digestion, blood circulation, respiration,

etc.), but also, very probably, has an impact in our conscious capacity for analogy and symbolism. Without forgetting the dream world that mixes recent and very old memories. There are still more paths to explore!

Eighth session (Portugal: 28.09.2016)

I meet my demons as always. A small period where a feeling of cold spreads throughout my body. Ayahuasca visits all my weaknesses with special work at the intestinal level.

The sensation of cold is characteristic of the infernal world, while the authentic spiritual world is related to heat. Let us remember that Saint Serafim of Sarov, an 18th century Russian hermit who lived in a hut in the middle of a forest where temperatures could drop to -20°, was inhabited by a permanent sensation of heat. He never suffered from cold. Other examples can be cited. In the literature of the ancient Eastern Christian monks, cold is the mark of spiritual insensitivity about which they spoke much. This results from the absence of any communication with the invisible world, of any spiritual life, of any aspiration to rise above the vagaries of the human condition. The result of such a disposition, very characteristic of contemporary Western society, is emotional poverty, the inability to be moved, to open up to joy and suffering, to feel compassion for others. We live in a state of indifference to the outside world. It is true that insensitivity can have important psychological causes, linked to childhood wounds and mistreatment. Plants, like the "chiric sanango", bring to light those internal wounds that are healed and evacuated by those sensations of cold that affect many patients.

Ninth session (Portugal: 02.10.2016)

Terrribly hectic session. Demon waves. What is at stake seems to be the birth of a new man, a man who no longer knows things through his head, but through his body. The dizziness lasted well beyond the session.

What was experienced during this session does not fail to pose a problem of considerable importance. In fact, the spiritual process of Christianity as a whole can be summed up in this simple phrase: putting off the old man to put on the new man. This teaching is particularly developed by the Apostle Paul in his epistles: the old man is affected by the effects of what theology calls "original sin", that is, a major constitutive weakness of all human nature, in the physical, psychic and spiritual planes. This tragic disposition has its origin in the beginnings of humanity and is transmitted through the lineage to which we belong, by genealogy, as theology teaches. It is inscribed in us from birth and condemns us to sickness and death. From it emanate all the disorders of humanity: wars, conflicts, psychological disorders, addictions of all kinds, the search for power and money, etc. The consequence is the rupture of a living relationship between human beings and God. It places us under the power of the devil, instigator of this original sin, as the book of Genesis tells us. But the death on the cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ come to break this fatality. Through baptism, we clothe ourselves with Christ Jesus conforming to the mystery of his death and resurrection. Which means that we enter a new life that must find its fulfillment after we have left this present life. Since now we support a new man, in the image of the perfect humanity of Jesus Christ, and this has a considerable impact on our way of life.

How to explain then that during an ayahuasca session an Amazonian plant updates in such a clear way the central mystery of Christianity? Because the plant made me experience for a brief moment the state of a renewed humanity. I have put on this new man, I was in his skin, so to speak, for a few seconds. Clearly, the plant has shown me holistic healing, which goes far beyond what bodywork-focused medicine can offer. It did not make it effective, as this state did not last, but it made me experience it. The action of the plant is fully in line with the essentials of the Christian approach.

Tenth session (Takiwasi: 03.02.2017)

Low intensity in visions that went hand in hand with the devilish attacks that were much weaker than the previous times. I noticed a great liberation at the level of the abdomen and also a kind of awakening of the heart. The second shot of ayahuasca did not really revive the vision. I tried to vomit without success. Dr. Jacques gave me a treatment for quite some time. A desire to lay down came over me and I gave in to this desire at the end of the session. A kind of bodily depression came over me: I finished the session completely exhausted. I couldn't stand up, I went outside completely dazed, supported by two women that I didn't identify at the time and who took me by the arms. I lost track of the place, I no longer knew where I was. I managed to vomit. Dr. Jacques took me back and escorted me to my room. There, I literally shit myself, with a terrible and persistent smell.

It seems to me that this session carries out a deep cleansing of the whole body, which evacuates "toxins" of all kinds, somatized and accumulated without a doubt for many years. Probably related to the devilish infestations that have been inhabiting my body for years. Perhaps the bodily relaxation, characterized by a disappearance of all vital energy, a complete atony on the physical plane, caused by the plant and made possible by the weakening of demonic attacks, favored this beneficial elimination. It is as if these demonic presences have siphoned this energy for their own benefit for many years and are somehow forced to let go by being expelled from the body. This weakness would then be the consequence of an energy that must be oriented in another way and that is forced to change mode. It must first withdraw and then take another direction.

It is the physical dimension that is fundamental during this session, but in connection with the spiritual one, which shows once again the deep connection between all the components of our complex human nature. Ayahuasca strikingly contradicts the important limits of all Western science, prisoner of Aristotle's Greek philosophical thought, which proceeds by abstracting from what we perceive through the senses, namely, external and material reality. For it, then, there is nothing outside observable external reality. This approach, essential for the so-called "exact" sciences, is also applied to modern psychology coming from Freud & Co, which observes from the outside the internal phenomena of human beings, those that come from their psyche. Then, after repeated observations of certain characteristic and consecutive behaviors and reactions to these psychological disorders, it enumerates and theorizes them (this is the process of abstraction!), which then allows to quickly name, describe and detect them, but it gives no explanation as to why they occur. Where does, for example, this willingness to be affected by psychic injuries that generate certain pathological behaviors come from? What is a psychic wound? Where does it come from? From early childhood only? Why is human being from the beginning of his existence potentially prey to disturbances that affect his development? Science does not provide an answer (at the anthropological level, because these questions are fully part of a search for knowledge about the human being) that accounts for the drama of the human condition and its origin. In fact this discipline (we hesitate to speak of science, because psychic phenomena cannot be reduced to equations, although we are trying today, no doubt to facilitate the application of medicinal

tablet-based treatments for all paranoiacs and manic depressives!) denies a priori any influence and any intervention that may come from the invisible and non-quantifiable world of spirits, it can have no other purpose than to indefinitely refine the observations on repetitive phenomena and related to human behavior already known. Spiritual causes are excluded from the outset, leaving everything spiritual relegated to the sphere of subjectivity, human fantasies and evanescent projections, however constantly reactivated by the search for a "place" different from the present world, without us really understanding where such a persistent disposition comes from.

Eleventh session (09.02.2017)

Dr. Jacques gave me a stronger dose. Strong demonic pressure at first, but then it faded away. A lot of smell, the session was very moved by the vomiting of many people. An urge to vomit that did not occur for me. Dizziness continued beyond the session. The work of ayahuasca was performed much more at the level of the body. The visions were much less intense and less colorful. During the session, I had a strong impression that a true leap of faith in the intervening power of Christ had yet to be made. I am looking for this leap of faith, but it seems very difficult. Faith is a gift from God.

We note once again that the visions due to the plant give access to the deepest truths of Christianity. The requested "act of faith" is the same that Christ asked of those who came to Him to implore a miracle or a cure. This was perhaps facilitated by the bodily presence of the Savior, but ayahuasca demonstrated that the efficacy of such an act of faith is still valid. Unfortunately, in us, in my case in particular, we do not make sufficient use of this power of intervention. Why? Because the reality of the presence and action of Christ, to whom, however, we incorporate ourselves through baptism, are still too far away, alien to us. For lack of faith, lack that Jesus already reproached the apostles of him. What would he say about me that I am his priest? But, nevertheless, I am shown the way.

Another very important lesson that the plant gives during this session is that the act of faith is in itself an exorcism. Christ cast out demons with a simple word. According to Catholic theology, faith is a "theological virtue", which means that its act does not depend only on the intelligence and the will on our part to adhere to the gospel and its revealed content, but that God himself communicates something of himself in that same act. Faith is a beginning of the vision of God. But this is still a chiaroscuro, in the sense that it is not or is barely perceptible. However, it is easy to understand that if God intervenes, the powers of evil are necessarily repelled. Now, faith is at the foundation of the Christian life and is particularly linked to the baptism that gives it to us, if we are well disposed. Hence its importance and that of educating oneself about it. This is particularly missing today.

Twelfth session (14.02.2017)

Dizziness appeared even before the ikaros started. The vision was much clearer than the previous times. Lots of demonic attacks, but a few flashes of light broke through. First of all, the word "sorry" that was imposed on my mind and that I repeated. Then the revelation of the fact that I existed as a human being. I am, but who am I exactly? The recourse to the Immaculate Virgin was constant. I did not take a second dose, the dizziness being quite strong. I was less oppressed by demonic apparitions.



In the second part, Dr. Jacques gave me a healing that freed me a lot. First in my head. Suddenly, the hellish visions disappeared. I found myself in my body. I saw that the last stronghold of the demons is at the abdominal level. This is the focus of resistance. At the end of the session, I perceived well-being in the plexus and abdomen. I gave thanks to God. A note too: many nervous discharges that, from the beginning of the session, shook my whole body. A tactic of the devil: to induce sleep, a torpor that makes you yawn and tends to put you to sleep, so that you are no longer present to the information given by the plant!

The need for forgiveness appears in many ayahuasca sessions. But true forgiveness is difficult: we can make the decision to forgive someone who has wronged us through an act of will. It is a good resolution, however, this act must come from the depths of ourselves, from the guts in a way! And it's not easy! But only on this condition is forgiveness truly realized. It means that it is liberating for us. The word "sorry" that I heard during the session was not linked to any person. The plant did not give any name associated with the spoken word. I think it was up to me to decide who to forgive, but I didn't think about it at the time. "Forgiveness" must become a disposition in us that must intervene in all situations of conflict with others. Resentment and the spirit of revenge constitute a great internal obstacle, very harmful to ourselves. They keep us prisoners.

In previous sessions I often prayed the rosary, the prayer of Mary, to face the diabolical attacks. This time, the reference was more of an inner order. In one of the sessions the following year, I experienced a ceremony where the Virgin Mary somehow substituted the spirit of the plant, which is a female spirit, sometimes visualized as a woman dressed in white whose face we cannot see. I was given the meaning of this substitution: it was a work to conform to her, with a view to acquiring her virtues and her dispositions. Among them, compassion and intercession for others. This work of the plant was thus enhanced by this constant Marian presence.

We can certainly say that this information about the willingness to forgive, linked to the presence of the Virgin, as well as the nervous discharges that indicate a liberation at the corporal level, constitute the signs and the announcement of a forthcoming liberation. The next session will witness the disappearance of the infestations.

Thirteenth session (23.03.2017)

The demonic attacks disappeared! VICTORY! There were waves of demons, but they were external to me, they were no longer expelled from my body like before, and they only lasted for a few seconds. They didn't affect me. These waves are part of the perspective of preparation for the coming of the Antichrist by all the cohorts of hell.

Conclusion

This short text constitutes a testimony. However, to be credible, it must not be content with recounting only the experiences lived by a particular individual, it must also speak to others. This means that it is necessary, through a process of reflection, to identify the elements that are likely to be universal, so that everyone can feel involved, even minimally. But this requirement poses an underlying problem of great importance: at first glance, one would tend to think that the visions experienced with ayahuasca are only a matter of subjectivity. They would only be worth and make sense to the person who is the beneficiary. Apparently, this is confirmed during the "debriefings" after the first ayahuasca

session during the seminars. What each one tells is linked to personal issues that the person seeks to clarify through the intake of plants: their near or distant past, their life trajectory, their family and cultural environment, their important existential decisions, their good or bad experiences, their failures and their successes, etc. These themes sometimes overlap with those of other participants and patients. While they have similarities, they also keep a unique specificity, the plant treats them in a particular way, because each person is unique. And the visions color them differently for each one through mysterious scenarios whose mechanisms largely escape us. They depend on the good will of the spirit of the plant and its therapeutic action. This seems to reinforce the subjective nature of the visions: each one is on his "journey", immersed in his inner world with which one only rubs shoulders. What one lives there is difficult to communicate. It is difficult to find the words to express the experience.

It so happened that the sessions, which I described as best I could, were clearly related to the spiritual dimension that we all carry. It is at this level that for me the urgency of a therapy through the plant resided. However, it turns out, without my having investigated it or inferred it in any way, that what I experienced reveals, or rather confirms, a teaching that already figured in the Christian literature of the first centuries of our time. A teaching consisting of a demonology (discourse on demons), in relation to spiritual combat, which is at the foundation of all Christian spirituality, whether Eastern or Western. I have alluded several times to the ancient monks of the deserts of Egypt and Syria and their frequent confrontations with the spirits of darkness. It happens that the information that these lonely men give about the demons often coincides with what I experienced during the ayahuasca sessions. That is why it seems important to me to identify the points of convergence between the texts of ancient literature with my own experience. Which will show, by recurrence, that the existence of the invisible world, that of the spirits, was well known in the first centuries of our era, when Christianity was spreading around the world.

The convergences are related to essential points:

- These demonic apparitions constitute a true internal torture, an ordeal, probably because they make us part of something related to their reprobation. Demons are fallen angels, forever set in a decline that they seek to share with the human beings seduced by them. Through ayahuasca, this reprobation is experienced at the level of the body, which seems paradoxical, because demons are by nature spirits. It is really the body that suffers and is tortured, which shows the importance of the body that seems to be the main theme in the Christian religion. Did not God Himself take on a body, and it is through this Body, and Him alone, that we have access to Him?

“One of the Fathers (monk) who was a little careless, saw, when the time came for his departure (death), demons that had made themselves masters of him and by which he was carried away; he also saw the (good) angels who had abandoned him and departed from him, and who stood in the distance on the heights with sadness and did not help him, as the old man recounted: 'out of great fear, my soul was at fainting point'; after the old man made, in this vision, a long prayer, with supplication and groans, he also said this: 'May it be by your hands, Lord, that I be punished, and not by the hand of your enemies! For if the sight of them is so harsh, how can I bear to stay with them!'" (Dadisho Qatraya, *Commentary on the Book of Abba Isaiah*, logos 15, 6; CSCO, Vol. 327, Volume 145, p. 192).

It is the very sight of the demons that causes suffering, which can almost amount to loss of consciousness, as the above story attests. I do not wish anyone to have such an experience.

“...the demons burst in (in the little house of St Anthony), metamorphosed into beasts and reptiles; the whole place was filled with ghosts of lions, bears, leopards, bulls, snakes, asps, scorpions, and wolves. The lion roared wanting to attack him, the bull seemed to gore, the snake crawled but did not approach, the wolf pounced, but was contained. Absolutely terrible was the fury of all these phenomena, coupled with the howling of their screams. Anthony, whipped and spurred on by them, felt an increasingly unbearable pain. Fearless and soul awake, he lay groaning in physical pain, but his soul alert” (Saint Athanasius of Alexandria, *Life of Saint Anthony*, 9, 5-7, *Sources Chrétiennes* n° 400, Paris, 2004, pp. 160 -161).

Apart from some goat-headed demons (cf. 6th session), the demonic apparitions that I saw under the effects of ayahuasca did not show me demons in animal form. Also, all the ones I encountered made no sound at all. They were mute demons, like the one in the Gospel (St. Matthew, chap. 12, v. 22). But this passage from Saint Anthony's life makes it clear that, although he had no bodily contact with these apparition ghosts that only brushed past him, the pain experienced by the saint was indeed reflected at the bodily level. I experienced something similar: the demons rushed towards me in continuous streams, but without me feeling the slightest contact. It is the vision itself that causes suffering. The world of demons is terribly on the move and thereby seeks to destabilize. These attempts, even if unsuccessful, are very difficult to live with. They create great inner turmoil, because one looks for a way to evacuate this disturbing action.

- At the beginning of the first session, I saw the first demonic apparitions standing out against a blue background: it was the image of the sky and the apparitions were clearly located in space above me, before plummeting down on me from above. Now, the entire Christian tradition speaks of the air as the proper domain of demons.

"I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven" (Gospel of Saint Luke, chap. 10, v. 18. These words are those of Christ).

"And you who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once lived, according to the spirit of this world, according to the Prince of the empire of the air..." (Letter of Saint Paul to the Ephesians, chap. 2, v. two).

"Numerous is his troop in the air that surrounds us, they are not far from us" (Saint Athanasius of Alexandria, *Life of Saint Anthony*, 21, 4, *Christian Sources* n° 400, Ed. Du Cerf, Paris 2004, pp 194-195).

The air, the space between heaven and earth, is the proper place for demons. But it also means by analogy that is the place where the devil can fascinate the human being, that is, by his highest faculties, located in the head and in the heart. It is from this space, from above, that the devil can exercise tyranny over the human being, a domain that only those who have become aware of the importance of spiritual combat can escape.

- The emergence of a multitude of demons is also attested in the life of Saint Anthony.
"...in fact they appear, but they disappear immediately" (Saint Athanasius, 24, 9; opus cited, pp. 204-205).

This observation of St. Anthony irresistibly refers to the experience of smells mentioned in the 6th session: they are simply passing through. Therefore, these odors are linked to the presence of demons. The underlying tactic is to want to scare. The disgust produced by these demonic presences is absolute. Another passage from the life of St. Anthony specifies, in addition:

"The demons, unable to do anything, play as if on a stage, they change shape and scare children with imaginary crowds and disguises" (San Athanasius, 28, 9; opus cited, pp. 214-215).

I spoke in the first session of demons dressed and floured. There is an evident *mise-en-scène* in the diabolical action to which the life of Saint Anthony gives ample testimony. This is a clear indication that they have the power to metamorphose and take on very different appearances.

- The pestilential odors experienced in various sessions (cf. the 6th) are also attested in Eastern patristic literature:

"He (St. Anthony) went down again to the outer hermitages and was invited to get on a boat and pray with the monks. Only he then perceived a horrible and very pungent odor. The people on the boat said that they had fish and brine in the boat and that the smell was coming from that, but he told them the bad smell was something else. While he was still speaking, a demon-possessed youth who had previously boarded the boat and was hiding there immediately shouted. Summoned in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the demon came out. The man was healed and everyone recognized that the bad smell came from the devil" (Saint Athanasius, 63, 1-3, opus cited, pp. 300-303).

Many people perceived odors during the sessions. It would be interesting to identify the different types of odors that participants in seminars and patients at Takiwasi smell and see if there are links between these and their visions of ayahuasca. As far as I am concerned, I noticed that the perception of smells is not accompanied by visions. The requested sense of smell suspends vision, which resumes later. But the episode from Saint Anthony's life related here, where the odor is smelled in a waking state, seems to indicate that the perception of a particular odor concerns only one person. In any case, if it is of demonic origin, and certainly also if it is sweet (cf. session 6). Saint Anthony also confirms that the odor he perceived is not like the stench emanating from a decomposing dead animal or rotting plant. Odors may be perceived by several participants in the same session, but they are likely to differ by individual.

A more profound study of ancient monastic literature would allow other connections to what I experienced. What has been said here is enough to affirm that my experience also includes objective elements that join that of the great spiritual figures of the past. The appearances of demons with which the ancient monks of the desert were gratified, usually occur at the end of an important stage reached during spiritual warfare. The monk who sees demons testifies to the fact that he has won a decisive victory over himself, over his fallen nature, which was under the influence of the demon. A demon that shows himself, appears in full light, is torn from his "ideal environment" where he passed incognito, that of darkness, it is the sign that he is going to leave. He is evicted. Saint Anthony attests to the truth of this teaching in the words that he addresses to his disciple Saint Macarius, after the latter has known the attacks of the demons, as recounted in the life of the latter:

“A little longer and the Lord will give you rest from the excessive burden of evil thoughts, and then they (the demons) will fight you openly, as they fought me; but be strong and cheer up, the Lord is with you to help you...”

Life of Saint Macarius of Scete in: The Spiritual Homilies of Saint Macarius, 15; Oriental Spirituality No. 40, Bellefontaine Editions, 1984, p. 72).

Bad thoughts are suggested by demons without us being aware of their origin. We believe that they come from our own being and receive them as such. This is where the danger lies. And they consist, in this case, of all kinds of temptations that Saint Macarius had to face:

“And so the demons cast evil thoughts into his heart and 'like a table', he said, covered with all good food, so thoughts began for me, fornication, greed, anxiety, sorrow, pride, vainglory, the fear, the mourning, the praise, the honor, the disbelief, the blasphemy, the despair in God that distances from every path of piety, in a word, the whole set of actions of the demons in thoughts, fought me, as my father Abbé Antonio had announced” (*Life of Saint Macarius, work cited, p. 71*).

The Life of Saint Anthony written by Saint Athanasius shows, through the saint's open and visible confrontations with them, that each one of the victories achieved by him constitutes as many stages that lead him to the highest sainthood. A point of clarification is necessary at this stage: the battles waged by these two great saints (Anthony and Macarius) were directed against demons seeking to exploit their fallen background. A purely moral view would tend to say that it is because of the saint's virtues that he is attacked by demons. I mean by this that the virtues would precede the demonic interventions. This is a misconception, because these men belong to the same condition as us, they were infected by original sin in the same way as us and this is marked by a demonic influence that affects all human nature. And this precedes the acquisition of the virtues that are the fruit of their struggles. A phrase from the Fathers expresses this truth:

“A great anchorite having asked: 'Satan, why do you fight me?' he heard Satan answer him: 'It is you who fight me with force'” (*Anonymous series, n ° 1035, Eastern Spirituality n ° 43, Solesmes-Bellefontaine, 1985, pp. 22*).

Saint Anthony and Saint Macarius were not born saints, they achieved it after very hard battles to free themselves from this yoke. Wanting liberation is a decision and a free personal choice, because then it is necessary to accept facing the powers of evil that have taken hold of us. As the apostle Saint John says:

“The whole world lies in the power of the Evil One” (*1st Epistle, chap. 5, v. 19*).

But then the question arises: why is the experience of an open and visualized confrontation of demons not the destiny of all those who belong to Christ through baptism and who agree to embark on the path of spiritual combat? As for me, I had to free myself from demonic clutches that were greatly enhanced by hanging out with an individual with misguided intelligence, a youthful experience that I discussed in connection with the first session. God certainly wanted to show the priest that I am the satanic source of such thinking. And the plants were the providentially chosen instrument to show it to me. As for Saints Anthony and Macarius, the battles they had to endure prepared them for their future mission, as it is said of the latter:

“Be strong and take courage, because this is how God has decided to test you in every contrary work (temptations in thought), so that you can also help others; for you have been destined to be the father of a multitude of tribes that will love the true wisdom of monasticism...” (*Life of Saint Macarius, work cited, p. 72*).

In fact, Saint Macarius was the founder of a monastic center in the desert near Alexandria, Scete, which saw the birth of the largest number of saints that Christianity has ever known. As for Saint Anthony, during his lifetime he was called "father of monks", a title he still holds today. The answer to the question posed derives from the fact that the visualization of the spiritual struggle is not a compulsory passage, although everyone is called to participate in it, but rather this visualization constitutes a useful teaching for all. It shows, through a few selected individuals, the normally invisible, but very real reality to encourage participation in this battle, which depends on a personal decision, a choice that the ancient monks had made by going to the deserts. Going to the desert or to the monastery constitutes a declaration of war against the devil.

Nevertheless, the subjective dimension of what I have experienced does not disappear. My experience with ayahuasca, this visualization of multitudes of demons, the way they impacted me, has something unique linked to my family lineage, my Western culture that comes from Christianity, my life. The demons certainly have behaviors that can be enumerated, like the ancient monks, their tactics always turn out to be the same, but, due to their ability to metamorphose, to mold themselves according to the contours of the person they have in their power, to know their weak points, having exploited them on numerous occasions, all this indicates that the way in which they manifest themselves, their strategies, their annoyances, vary according to the person. And that makes the experience unique. But their desire to harm all of humanity remains. Unfortunately it is universal.

By way of conclusion, the mission assigned to the Takiwasi Center and the experience reported and commented on here show beyond any doubt the truth of authentic Christianity: namely, its ability to naturally integrate the good and useful elements of a culture originally not Christian. In this case, Amazonian medicine. We said it above, the progressive introduction of prayers and songs with Christian elements in ayahuasca sessions almost imposed itself. And these new elements, which have been grafted onto the practice of plants, have made it possible to enhance the effectiveness of this exorcist (in the broad sense of the term) medicine, already present before. My experience, and that of others before me, allows us to go even further: it confirms a fundamental truth of Christianity, that of spiritual combat, by bringing it to light through these diabolical visions. Therefore, it is an eminent point of doctrine that unexpectedly receives confirmation thanks to ayahuasca.

This ability of true Christianity to integrate heterogeneous elements in its revealed message is observed on numerous occasions: for example, the oldest church in Iraq is called the "Assyrian church", which refers to the ancient pagan civilization of Mesopotamia. This denomination of one of the oldest churches shows the ability of Christianity to open up to the elements of this ancient culture and that it is able to integrate them in relation to Revelation. Take on the legacy of the past. Islam, through Daesh, has found nothing better to do than to destroy, in Mosul's museums, the venerable biblical and artistic testimonies left by this civilization. Islam always proceeds with a general cleansing of the past (just like communism, with which it shares the same nihilism!). While Christianity has always protected and integrated testimonies coming from antiquity: the Platonic heritage passed into Christianity through the Greek Fathers (Saint Basil, Saint Gregory of Nazianzus, Saint Gregory of Nyssa), Neoplatonism through Saint Augustine and more late Aristotelianism through Saint Thomas Aquinas. All these monuments of human thought have been the object of profound reflection in the light of Christian Revelation and have enriched it in its most essential, the theological expression of the deposit of faith. Therefore, it is not surprising that a medicine that gives access to psychotropic experiences can take place in a Christian context, and even bring elements that are very beneficial for him, not only on a physical level, but also on a spiritual level. Above all, because this very old medicine still retains all its effectiveness today.

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