

NATURAL PHILO-THEOLOGIES: ECO-METAPHYSICS IN TRADITIONAL SHAMANISM AND ENTHEOGENIC RELIGIONS

FILO-TEOLOGIAS NATURAIS: ECO-METAFÍSICA NO XAMANISMO TRADICIONAL E NAS RELIGIÕES ENTEOGÊNICAS

Jan Clefferson Costa de Freitas¹

Abstract

The central purpose of this work is to present a correlation of forces established between metaphysics and ecology in traditional shamanism and entheogenic religions: in order to show how the respective wisdom traditions work together towards the sustainability and regeneration of planet Earth. Using an analytical-descriptive methodology that combines a bibliographical review of renowned authors, phenomenological experience in the field of research, close reading and creative writing on the themes listed, the aim of this article is to highlight the extent to which the shamanic cosmovisions of North and South America, as well as their contemporary offshoots, namely Santo Daime and the Native American Church, open up space not only for thinking about a *philo-theology*, but also an *eco-metaphysics* – ideas that will be elucidated in the course of this paper. In general lines, the reflections raised here idealize to introduce, from the perspective of contemporaneity, a philosophical reading of the plural ontologies and natural ethics stemming from the primordial wisdoms.

Keywords: decolonial philosophy; plural ontologies; natural ethics; traditional shamanism; entheogenic religions.

Resumo

O propósito geral deste trabalho vem a ser apresentar uma correlação de forças estabelecida entre a metafísica e a ecologia no xamanismo tradicional e nas religiões enteogênicas: para fins de evidenciar como as respectivas tradições de sabedoria caminham juntas em direção da sustentabilidade e regeneração do planeta Terra. Através de uma metodologia analítico-descritiva que interliga revisão bibliográfica de autores consagrados, experiência fenomenológica no campo de pesquisa, leitura aproximada e escrita criativa sobre os temas elencados, o presente artigo tem por finalidade evidenciar em que medida as cosmovisões xamânicas das Américas do Sul e do Norte, bem como os seus desdobramentos contemporâneos, a saber, o Santo Daime e a Igreja Nativo-Americana, abrem espaço não apenas para se pensar em uma *filo-teologia*, mas também em uma *eco-metáfísica* – ideias que serão elucidadas no decorrer desta tessitura. Em linhas gerais, as reflexões aqui suscitadas idealizam apresentar como resultado, desde o prisma da contemporaneidade, uma leitura filosófica das ontologias plurais e das éticas naturais provenientes das sabedorias primordiais.

Palavras-chave: filosofia decolonial; ontologias plurais; ética natural; xamanismo tradicional; religiões enteogênicas.

¹ BA, MA and PhD in Philosophy from the Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte. Post-Doctorate in Philosophy from the Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte. Licensed in Philosophy and Specialist in Neurosciences from Faculdade Única de Minas Gerais. Email: jancleffersonphil@gmail.com

Introduction: Entheogens, Philo-Theologies, and Eco-Metaphysics

Throughout human history, the interaction among entheogens, visionary metaphysics, and the vastness of nature has held both immanent and transcendent significance, from ancient times to the modern era. Based on this understanding: “In some cultures, this direct experience of the sacred was available to everyone, or to members of special bodies of initiates, through the sacramental use of psychoactive plants and preparations” (Jesse, 2012, p. 25). According to the etymology of the concept, *entheogen*, from the greek ἐν [*en*/within], θεός [*Theos*/God], γεννᾶν [*gennan*/generate], can be considered a chemical compound of natural origin that produces a divine movement within individuals, in other words, a key to the awakening of inner divinity:

This is one of the most mysterious and important subjects in all religious history. Entheogens have figured prominently in the mystical practices of some of the world’s greatest civilizations. They have been widely employed in shamanic societies, and their use continues today throughout the world. They alter consciousness in such a profound way that, depending on the set and setting, their effects can range from states resembling psychosis to what are perhaps the ultimate human experiences: union with God or revelation of other mystical realities. Though they affect the psyche so powerfully, entheogens are among the biologically safest drugs known (Forte, 2012, p. 18).

In other words, entheogens can also be thought of as a superabundant force from nature that leads human beings from self-consciousness to super-consciousness, or even as substances that expand perception and guide humanity towards union with divinity: “As a matter of fact, under specific internal and external conditions, this class of drugs, whether called hallucinogens, psychedelics, or entheogens, is capable of producing a totality experience, the *unio mystica*” (Hofmann, 2012, p. 61). Therefore, this very brief philosophical, theological, ecological, and scientific paper proposes an attempt investigation into the intrinsic relationships that connect these three spheres, namely naturalness, metaphysics, and entheogeny, by mapping the evolution of the perceptions, practices, and meanings associated with the aforementioned correlations established both at the heart of the traditions of shamanism and in the rituals of contemporary religiosity.

From ancient civilisations to modern societies, the use of entheogens as catalysts for visionary experiences has been a global phenomenon. In various cultural traditions, such as Amazonian and Native American shamanism, these substances have been used to access metaphysical dimensions, as they facilitate transcendental journeys and broaden the horizons of human consciousness: “Ecstatic transports of this type are not uncommon in shamanic rites that utilize entheogens, vigorous dancing, or other techniques to induce altered states of

consciousness” (Riedlinger, 2012, p. 127). Based on a close reading of renowned authors, this study proposes a diachronic analysis of some of these practices, which involve music, dance, singing, dreaming, ecstasy, trance, among other extraordinary states of perceptivity and art forms, by investigating their manifestations in different cultures and contextualising them within the historical frameworks that have shaped the human understanding of philosophy, ecology, and mysticism. From this perspective:

We can talk about entheogens or, as an adjective, entheogenic plants or substances. In a narrow sense, only drugs that produce visions and that can be shown to have appeared in religious or shamanic rites would be called entheogens; but in a broader sense, the term could also be applied to other drugs, both natural and artificial, that induce alterations in consciousness similar to those that have been documented in relation to the ritual ingestion of traditional entheogens (Ruck; Bigwood; Staples et al, 2013, p. 202, our translation).²

For the reasons described above, the connection between entheogens, metaphysics, and nature will be approached from a phenomenological, epistemological, ethical, ecological, and ontological angle. The 21st century has witnessed a resurgence of philosophical, theological and scientific interest in the therapeutic and visionary properties of these substances, with significant implications for mental health and the search for a deeper understanding of the Self and the Cosmos: “As medicine, science, and religion enter the next millennium of the Christian era, it also is a good time to consider how best to assess the religious or spiritual aspects of the psychedelic experience” (Strasman, 2012, p. 194). In this way, this paper aims to examine how contemporary narratives around entheogeny, that is, practices involving the ritualisation of so-called Plants of the Gods, such as those of the Santo Daime with Ayahuasca and Native American Church with Peyote, reflect or challenge ancient traditions, by describing the various nuances, shades, colours, layers, overlaps, complementarities, and analogies identified in the social, legal and cultural transformations that delineate the elements of the intersection between divinity and the natural whole within the mystique of shamanism in present times.

Thus, by interweaving the threads of the history of shamanic religions that consider the Plants of the Gods to be divinities endowed with their own personality in alignment with philosophical, theological, and ecological ideas; using an analytical-descriptive methodology

² Podemos hablar de enteógenos o, como adjetivo, de plantas o de sustancias enteogénicas. En un sentido estricto, sólo aquellas drogas que producen visiones y de las cuales pueda mostrarse que han figurado en ritos religiosos o chamánicos serían llamadas enteógenos; pero en un sentido más amplio, el término podría también ser aplicado a otras drogas, lo mismo naturales que artificiales, que inducen alteraciones de la conciencia similares a las que se han documentado a respecto a la ingestión ritual de los enteógenos tradicionales (Ruck; Bigwood; Staples et al, 2013, p. 202).

strengthened by both a solid bibliographical review and phenomenological experimentation in the field; this article, written in the terms of creative writing, aims to elucidate, without apologising or proselytising, the complex relationships established between entheogens, metaphysics and nature in the context of the wisdom traditions of South and North America (Mckenna, 1993; Eliade, 2002; Costa de Freitas, 2023a). The central purpose of this conceptual adventure is to highlight not only the permanence of these connections throughout past places and times, but also their adaptability and resilience in the face of cultural dynamics in a constant process of transformation in the present: movements of affirmation of the ontological plurality and freedom of belief through which the institutionalised religions for the ritual use of entheogenic sacraments came into light (Polari de Alverga, 2010; Maroukis, 2012; Costa de Freitas; Shanenawa; Maia, 2024). Moreover, through the concepts of *philo-theology* and *eco-metaphysics*, this work aims to show how the entheogenic wisdoms are derived from mystical experience, as well as to what extent they are connected to the sacredness of our sphere of belonging, namely, the Earth.³ This is, in general terms, an indication of a sensitive, intelligible, and transcendental journey that crosses space-time barriers: a signal to the enthusiasm that drives contemplation of the symphony of spheres reverberating between the human consciousness, mysticism, and natural horizon through the contemporary prism.

1 - Philo-Theologies of Ayahuasca: Eco-Metaphysics from South America

Over the centuries Ayahuasca, the sacramental drink of the indigenous traditions of the Amazon, recognised by the presence of the psychoactive substance dimethyltryptamine, has played a decisive role in ritualistic practices, serving as a natural means of communicating with the divine and journeying between the dimensions of consciousness (Carneiro da Cunha, 1998; Costa de Freitas; Shanenawa; Maia, 2024). The native Amazonian peoples, such as the Shipibo, the Huni Kuin and the Shanenawa, immemorial guardians of this wealth of wisdom, have incorporated Ayahuasca into shamanic ceremonies: ‘through these practices, the shaman penetrates the “non-ordinary realities” in search of the knowledge and healing power of the

³ We understand *philo-theology* as the study that seeks to integrate the foundations of philosophy with the principles of theology. In the present context, the goal of the philo-theological reflections is to analyse in depth the wisdoms coming from the ecstatic experimentation in order to present the understandings of traditional shamanism and entheogenic religions on the relations established between self-consciousness and super-consciousness. The *eco-metaphysics* aims to locate the intersection between ecological ideas and metaphysical concepts in order to examine and explain the ontological and epistemological bases of nature and existence, with emphasis on the interrelationship of all living beings. In the horizon of this work, the concepts in question underlines the importance of an environmental ethics based on ontological plurality, as well as represents a holistic worldview that aligns ecological debates with philosophical meditation on being, space, time, life and consciousness.

spirits who inhabit these worlds' (Metzner, 2002, p. 2, our translation).⁴ Rooted deeply in indigenous cosmovisions, this spirituality presents Ayahuasca as more than a psychoactive substance; it is revered as a 'plant teacher' – a living entity with a guiding soul that leads participants on transcendental journeys during traditional rituals.⁵ Let's take a look at the origins of Ayahuasca:

The origins of ayahuasca use in the Amazon basin are lost in the mists of prehistory. No one can say for sure where this practice began, although it can be said with some certainty that its use spread through countless indigenous tribes in the Amazon basin, and that it came to the attention of Western ethnographers in the mid-19th century. This fact attests to its antiquity, despite the minimal knowledge we have about it. Ecuadorian ethnographer Plutarco Naranjo summarised the little information available on the prehistory of ayahuasca. There is abundant archaeological evidence - ceramic pots, anthropomorphic statuettes and other artefacts - that the use of this hallucinogenic plant became established in the Ecuadorian Amazon around 1500-2000 BC (Mckenna, 2002, p. 174, our translation).⁶

The spread of Ayahuasca beyond its territories of origin marked a subsequent phase in its historiography. In the 20th century, syncretic religious movements such as Santo Daime and União do Vegetal emerged on the outskirts of cities coexisting with the rainforest and interconnected elements of indigenous traditions with African, esoteric, Eastern and Western worldviews through constitutional channels: “Today, the Santo Daime and the UDV diaspora has grown large indeed and involves transnational networks and alliances, raising intriguing questions about cultural tradition, language, and religious diasporas” (Labate; Loures de Assis, 2018, p. 20). The plural ontologies and ancestral epistemologies of the Amazon have always been based on the integration of metaphysics and ecology: ways of being and producing knowledge that underpin the entheogenic religions of the present time, since they articulate

⁴ Através destas práticas o xamã penetra nas “realidades não-ordinárias”, em busca do conhecimento e do poder de cura próprio dos espíritos que habitam nestes mundos (Metzner, 2002, p. 2).

⁵ In Amazonian shamanism, the perception that the forest and its inhabitants – are these animals, vegetables or even minerals – are endowed with consciousness reflects a deep understanding of existence as an indissociable network of connections between the natural kingdoms. In this perspective, shamans or *pajés* from the Clan of the Condor – the bird that symbolises the primordial peoples of the South – act as mediators amid the ecological and metaphysical worlds, by using entheogenic plants in traditional rituals to maintain the balance between humans and the forces of nature. These ancient epistemologies and multi-millenarian therapeutic practices emphasize that human well-being is intrinsically linked to the health of biosphere, a notion based on the principles of *eco-metaphysics* that recognizes the ontological interconnectivity of all beings.

⁶ As origens do uso da ayahuasca na bacia amazônica estão perdidas por entre as névoas da pré-história. Ninguém pode afirmar com certeza onde se deu o início desta prática, embora se possa dizer com alguma certeza que a sua utilização disseminou-se por inúmeras tribos indígenas da bacia amazônica, e que ela acabou chamando atenção dos etnógrafos ocidentais na metade do século XIX. Este fato atesta a antiguidade, apesar do mínimo conhecimento que se tem a respeito. O etnógrafo equatoriano Plutarco Naranjo sumariou a pouca informação disponível sobre a pré-história da ayahuasca. Existem evidências arqueológicas abundantes – vasos de cerâmica, estatuetas antropomórficas, e outros artefatos – de que o uso desta planta alucinógena se estabeleceu na Amazônia Equatoriana por volta de 1.500-2000 a. C. (Mckenna, 2002, p. 174).

highly complex symbolic systems where reciprocity between creatures and creation are indispensable to the continuity of life (Mckenna, 1993; Costa de Freitas; Shanenawa; Maia, 2024). These organisations have contributed to the internationalisation of Ayahuasca by promoting it as a religious sacrament and a tool for the spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical development of human beings. Ayahuasca thus transcends geographical and socio-cultural boundaries, while at the same time becoming an emblematic expression of connectivity between the individual, the sacred, and nature. This diaspora shapes not only the cultural history of the Amazon in a very significant way, but also influences contemporary movements in the search for self-knowledge through entheogens all over the world.

The main characteristic of the rituals of the Santo Daime doctrine, founded by Mestre Raimundo Irineu Serra [1892-1971] and expanded by Padrinho Sebastião Mota de Melo [1920-1990], is the sacramental ingestion of Ayahuasca, known in this context as Daime. Santo Daime ceremonies are conducted in groups under the guidance of leaders known as Godfathers and Godmothers, who supervise the work and support the participants on their visionary journey (Macrae, 2000; Costa de Freitas, 2023b). The members of this respected religion generally meet in a natural environment, often in the forest itself, as they recognise the sacredness of nature as an indispensable element in ritualistic practice: “This remarkable human community sings and dances its heart out for the love of God and Goddess deep in the deepest forest of the world. Theirs is a song of universal brotherhood and compassion, respect for nature, and good will toward all creatures” (Larsen, 2010, p. 15). During the Santo Daime works, which are poetic, musical, and choreographic, the hymns play a central role, being sung to instruct everyone present and provide a truer connection with the divine. In addition, the *mirações*, that is, the aesthetic, phenomenological, and metaphysical flashes resulting from the consecration of the Daime, are fundamental elements in the composition of the rites, as they provide an experience of expanding consciousness and the self-improvement of practitioners. In the words of the author's Godfather who is writing here:

The hymns contain basic information, enabling us to understand the doctrine. They embody the essence, the spiritual synthesis of the *miração*, and are messages directed to all brothers and sisters. Regardless of their origin, the hymns are considered the property of the community, cared for by all. During the Daime's force and *miração*, our understanding is elevated, and everything that happens in the works is transformed. Like a flaming battering ram knocking down all the walls of illusion, true knowledge penetrates our hearts. It is in this state that the music of the spheres resounds within our beings and the celestial messengers bring to our consciousness their words, praises, and warnings. Our souls become exposed to each other's sight, allowing a clear view of what is happening in the interior of each person (Polari de Alverga, 2010, p. 126).

Daime practice promotes values such as compassion, universal love, and respect for life, as well as encouraging practitioners to cultivate an intimate relationship with the divine and to live according to higher ethical principles. *Miração*, an intensified state of ecstatic vision and metaphysical openness, can be considered a key to unlocking the deepest understanding of existence and divine nature.⁷ In addition: “To the Santo Daime people, forest preservation and harmony with it are a basic condition, for in the forest sprout the two plants from which our sacrament is made” (Goldman, 2010, p. 37). In other words, the forest doctrine teaches that the search for the truth of the heart is an individual journey, which urges enthusiasts to examine their own conscience and connect with the divinity within. The lessons learnt in the Santo Daime religion are intrinsically connected to the experiences lived during the ceremonies. Through the rituals, hymns play a crucial function, as they constitute the doctrinal body of teachings that guide participants on the path of self-transformation (Fernandes, 1986; Costa de Freitas, 2023b). This knowledge often reflects a holistic view of the world, as it emphasises the interconnectedness between all living beings and the importance of dwelling in harmony with the natural sphere. This comprehension of sacredness is transmitted through ritualistic practices, *mirações*, sacred hymns, and the guidance of Godfathers and Godmothers, in order to provide a consistent framework for the development of the spirit and to favour the expansion of consciousness through entheogenic pathways.

2 - Philo-Theologies of Peyote: Eco-Metaphysics from North America

The rich cultural history of Peyote, a small sacred cactus notable for the presence of the psychoactive substance mescaline, is directly related to the indigenous traditions of North America, being widely mentioned in narratives about native deities, myths, and legends (Erdoes; Ortiz, 1984; Schaefer, 2023). This entheogen plays a central role in the religious practices of various American tribes, including the Huichol, the Navajo, and the Cheyenne.⁸

⁷ The *philo-theology* of the Santo Daime evidences a worldview where nature comes to be sacred and human beings are conceived as parts of a great whole, which reflects the eco-metaphysical premisses of the plural ontologies, of an integral reality and a coexistence based on interspecific reciprocity – besides presenting vivid examples of how the entheogenic mysticism can transform the relationship of the human being with the environment and point to a natural ethics, alterity and mutual support.

⁸ The cosmovisions of North American shamanism establish a deep resonance with the practices of reverence for nature and respect for all beings present in the world. In this context, shamans or healers from the Clan of the Eagle – the bird that symbolises the primordial peoples of the North – mediate the relationship between sensitive and meta-sensitive reality through ceremonies that often involve the consecration of entheogenic plants, as well as the approximate interaction with natural and cosmic forces. This shamanic worldview considers the human being as an inseparable part of the web of life and individual well-being as a consequence of planetary health: an understanding indispensable to the conception of *eco-metaphysics* that has as its ballast the ontological plurality and interconnection between all forms of existence.

The shamanism of these peoples includes Peyote as a sacrament for contact with the divine, integration with nature and human improvement: “Plant entheogens such as peyote are ingested to depersonalize the experience of reality without loss of consciousness; rather, they act to help expand consciousness into multidimensional universes with infinite possibilities and realities” (Endredy, 2015, p. 31). Analysing historical records, the oldest of which date back to the 16th century, indicates that the knowledge and use of this sacred plant remits to periods long before contact was established between the natives and Europeans. Archaeological finds in rock shelters and dry caves in Texas offer further validation of this antiquity, as they present specimens of Peyote in ceremonial contexts dating back more than three millennia, evidence that denotes its deep rootedness in native culture. In this sequence:

How old is the cult of Peyote? One of the first Spanish chroniclers, Friar Bernardino de Sahagún, estimates, based on various historical accounts taken from indigenous chronology, that the Toltecs and Chichimecas knew about peyote at least 1890 years before the arrival of the Europeans. This estimate suggests that Mexico's ‘divine plant’ has a history spanning at least two millennia [...] Recent archaeological discoveries in rock shelters and dry caves in Texas have revealed the presence of peyote specimens. These specimens found in a context that suggests ceremonial utility indicate that its use dates back more than three thousand years (Schultes; Hofmann, 1982, p. 48, our translation)⁹

The internationalisation of Peyote culture played a major role in the founding and development of the Native American Church at the beginning of the 20th century. This religious and philosophical organisation syncretised and institutionalised the sacramental use of the sacred cactus with Western elements in order to ensure the preservation of the traditions of native shamanism in a culturally challenging environment. In this complex context, the legitimacy of the right to religious belief was challenged: “The Native American Church fulfilled its burden of showing that it was sincere in pursuing its constitutional claim and was not just trying to trick its way through a legal loophole” (Soni, 2016, p. 107). The subsequent cultural history of Peyote has thus come to be marked by the constitutional overcoming of the strong tension between safeguarding traditional practices and the legal challenges faced by indigenous communities in exercising freedom of religion (Tekpankalli, 1996; Rosenberg, 2021). The resilience and adaptability of the Peyote culture is evident in its continuity as a

⁹ Qué tan antiguo es el culto del peyote? Uno de los primeros cronistas españoles, fray Bernardino de Sahagún, estima, basándose en varios relatos históricos tomados de la cronología indígena, que los toltecas y chichimecas conocían el peyote por lo menos 1890 años antes de la llegada de los europeos. Este cálculo indica que la “divina planta” de México tiene una historia que se extiende por lo menos durante un periodo de dos milenios [...] Recientemente, descubrimientos arqueológicos en refugios de piedra y cuevas secas de Texas revelaron la presencia de especímenes de peyote. Estos especímenes hallados en un contexto que sugiere un uso ceremonial, indican que su uso se remonta a más de tres mil años de antigüedad (Schultes; Hofmann, 1982, p. 48).

visionary sacrament of far-reaching significance. This plant teacher, even at the risk of becoming extinct, continues to have immense importance both for the formation of native peoples and for the improvement of those who seek the expansion of consciousness and entheogenic connection in a more integrated relationship with nature.

The Native American Church, an institution centred on the sacramental use of Peyote, preconised by Chief Quanah Parker [1845-1911] and established by ethnologist James Mooney [1861-1921], practices rituals that incorporate elements of visionary communion, respect for nature and deep connection with the most diverse indigenous traditions (Tekpankalli, 1996; Rosenberg, 2021). The activities of this remarkable organisation involve nocturnal ceremonies, coordinated by leaders called Roadmen or Roadwomen, and are often held in natural environments with symbolic meaning, such as the vastness of the desert or equally sacred places: “the aims of the ritual are to strengthen the harmony between man and the powers and between the humans reciprocally, and to achieve the individual purposes for which the meeting has been arranged” (Hultkrantz, 1997, p. 37). During the meetings, the participants sit in circles, often inside sweat lodges or tipis, in front of an altar, where Peyote is distributed as a sacrament. The ritualisation involves chants, music, and silent contemplation that beckon the collective search for a deeper understanding of existence and a greater connection with divinity. The experience with the sacred cactus often leads to personal revelations, metaphysical visions, and a sense of unity with the universe and the community. With a broader precision of detail:

The modern peyote ceremony is an all-night meeting in which participants sit inside a tipi or other structure facing a fire and a crescent-shaped altar. The ceremony consists basically of four parts: praying, singing, eating peyote, and quietly contemplating. Usually those who are present participate in all parts of the long and tiring ceremony, but it seems that most of the time an individual just sits quietly looking at the fire and the “Father Peyote” — and contemplating. It is, however, a collective rite, and although in a sense the individuals are isolated from the other members in their own personal thoughts and prayers, they quickly respond when it is their turn to sing or drum. The prayers, songs, and quiet contemplation, coupled with the effects of peyote, frequently lead to personal revelations. These are often in the form of visions and audible messages directly from Peyote or the Great Spirit (Anderson, 1999, p. 49).

The teachings of the Native American Church emphasise fundamental values, which include respect for the earth, harmony with natural cycles, and a holistic understanding of existence.¹⁰ Peyote, considered a mediator between the metaphysical forces and the participants

¹⁰ The Native American Church’s *philo-theology* expresses a holistic perspective of existence where all the constituent elements of the sensible and suprasensible spheres are inextricably related through bonds of mutual support. From this angle of view, the set of principles of that institution establishes a resonance with the foundations of *eco-metaphysics*, to have in mind that the entheogenic rites provide the awakening of collective

in the ceremonies, provides enlightenment that guides the latter, his elected, in their daily lives through visions, dreams, chants, and music: “Indigenous healers and shamans have known since antiquity that plants possess a spirit essence that can communicate through light, sound, and vibration” (Prue, 2016, p. 177). The importance of interconnectedness between all living beings and reverence for nature are key principles that permeate the teachings of this institution. In addition, ritual practice, often accompanied by oral narratives describing deities, myths, and stories from the tradition, enriches the world knowledge of those present (Erdoes; Ortiz, 1984; Schaefer, 2023). Thus, the ritual practices and wisdom of the Native American Church with the Peyote, overseen by the Roadmen and Roadwomen, can be seen as intrinsic to the preservation of indigenous cultural heritage and the promotion of a mystique that honours the interconnection between human beings, divine forces, and the natural sphere.

Conclusion: "The Eternal Spirit of Nature and the Nature of Eternal Spirit

In today's time, the interplay among entheogeny, metaphysics, and the natural environment remains a focus for researchers in social epistemology and enthusiasts of perceptual phenomenology worldwide (Forte, 2012; Costa de Freitas; Shanenawa; Maia, 2024). Shamanism, this ancient mystique found in cultures all over the world, often involves the use of entheogens as a tool to facilitate contact with the divinity residing in each human being. In other words: “Tribal societies make use of these plants and plant preparations because they see them embodied by beings of intelligent consciousness [...], capable of functioning as spiritual masters and rich sources of healing power and knowledge” (Metzner, 2002, p. 2-3, our translation).¹¹ These sacramental plants, together with their respective quintessences, considered to be mediators between immanent and transcendental reality, enable their appreciators to access expanded states of consciousness and achieve profound self-transformations. In these forms of religiosity, nature plays a central role as a source of healing, inspiration and visionary connection, being seen as a repository of primordial wisdom and a tangible manifestation of the divine:

Meanwhile, quietly and outside of history, shamanism has pursued its dialogue with an invisible world. Shamanism's legacy can act as a steadying force to redirect our awareness toward the collective fate of the biosphere. The shamanic faith is that humanity is not without allies. There are forces friendly to our struggle to birth

consciousness for the importance of natural ethics, regeneration of the ecosystems and recognition of the ontological interdependence between all forms of life.

¹¹ As sociedades tribais fazem uso destas plantas e preparados vegetais porque os veem incorporados por seres de consciência inteligente [...], capazes de funcionar como mestres espirituais e ricas fontes de poder de cura e de conhecimento” (Metzner, 2002, p. 2-3).

ourselves as an intelligent species. But they are quiet and shy; they are to be sought, not in the arrival of alien star fleets in the skies of earth, but nearby, in wilderness solitude, in the ambience of waterfalls, and yes, in the grasslands and pastures now too rarely beneath our feet (Mckenna, 1993, p. 14).

The interconnection between entheogens, metaphysics, and nature in contemporary times reflects a growing awareness of the importance of environmental preservation and respect for life (Hofmann, 2012; Costa de Freitas; Shanenawa; Maia, 2024). Many practitioners and scholars of shamanism, as it was in the beginning, now and always, emphasise the need for a more harmonious and sustainable relationship with the environment, recognising the biosphere of this planet as the starting point for visionary inspiration to rebuild and cross the bridge established between worlds: “Sometimes this set of religious practices and ideas seems to be related to the myth of the existence of a remote time when communication between Heaven and Earth was much easier” (Eliade, 2002, p. 166, our translation).¹² The responsible use of sacred plants within the shamanic context is often associated with practices of restoration and regeneration of ecosystems in a critical state, as well as the exercise of gratitude for the natural resources that sustain terrestrial life (Mckenna, 1993; Forte, 2012). In this regenerative line of thought, contemporary religions that follow on from shamanic wisdom, such as the Santo Daime and Native American Church, also recommend that their members do not limit themselves to expanding their perception, but that they keep amplifying their understanding in everyday reality, and encourage a greater spread of ecological consciousness among their fellow human beings, for the benefit of future generations.

The religion of the Santo Daime, in that it is centred on the ritual use of Ayahuasca, establishes an intrinsic relationship between nature and the sacred, evidence of a high spirituality based on interaction with the environment (Polari de Alverga, 2010; Costa de Freitas, 2023b). The entheogenic sacrament, prepared from two plants from the Amazon forest, the Jagube vine [*Banisteriopsis caapi*] and the shrub Chacrona [*Psychotria viridis*], constitutes in its alchemy an intelligence that interconnects the union with the divine to the biodiversity of the region: “It is the experience of Daime practitioners that there is a vastly intelligent Divine Being embodied in the tea. It is simultaneously a Being and a gateway to other dimensions where other Beings reside” (Larsen, 2010, p. 20). This symbiosis resonates with the indigenous traditions that consider the entheogens as propitiating agents of human communication with cosmic forces. The daimist doctrine, by incorporating natural elements into its ritualistic,

¹² Às vezes esse conjunto de práticas e ideias religiosas parece ter relação com o mito da existência de uma época remota em que a comunicação entre o Céu e a Terra era muito mais fácil (ELIADE, 2002, p. 166).

suggests a vision of immanent divinity, where the transcendental experience is inextricably linked to the Amazon biome itself. All these teachings are in the hymns of the Santo Daime:

The hymns express requests for strength and spiritual help, praise the forest that provides the raw material of the ritual drink and also express feelings of brotherhood and union among brothers. The hymn is the embodiment of music inspired by the Santo Daime, with lyrics and melody. They are rhymed verses, mainly the second with the fourth of each stanza and each melodic phrase corresponds to one verse of the stanza. As the whole melody corresponds to the length of each stanza, it repeats itself until it exhausts the subject matter of the hymn, changing its rhythmic division to adapt the words of the new verses (Fernandes, 1986, p. 97-98, our translation)¹³.

As stated in the preceding quote, the community of the Santo Daime attaches a sacred meaning to the forest itself, as a natural temple that houses not only the sacramental plants, but the phenomenological manifestation of the Supreme Being (Larsen, 2010; Costa de Freitas, 2023b). The daimist doctrine encourages environmental preservation and respect for life as an integral part of ritualistic practice, in order to establish an ecological ethics inherent to religion: “The natural world is the habitat of an enormous spiritual energy that remains untouched to this day. Each living pulsation of the forest produces a profound therapeutic effect on the people connected to it” (Goldman, 2010, p. 38). The understanding of nature as sacred and intrinsically linked to mysticism implies a commitment to sustainability, the correlation of forces between religious practice and environmental protection (Macrae, 2000; Polari de Alverga, 2010). *Miração*, the expansive state of the spirit achieved during ceremonies, is described as an immersion in interdimensional reality where the barriers between human and divine dissolve, so that both can unite. In this context, the relationship between humanity, divinity, and entheogenic experience in the Santo Daime transcends the simple use of natural elements in rituals, in order to constitute an integrated worldview that honours and preserves the biodiversity as an indispensable part of consciousness expansion.

The relationship between nature and religion in the Native American Church transcends the ritualistic sphere of the use of entheogens and extends more broadly to an ecological ethics (Tekpankalli, 1996; Rosenberg, 2021). The regeneration of the earth and natural resources appears in this context not only as a practical responsibility, but as a spiritual imperative for the

¹³ Os hinos manifestam pedidos de força e ajuda espiritual, louvam a floresta que fornece a matéria-prima da bebida ritual e exprimem também sentimentos de fraternidade e união entre os irmãos. O hino é a concretização da música inspirada pelo Santo Daime, possuindo letra e melodia. São versos rimados, principalmente o segundo com o quarto de cada estrofe e cada frase melódica corresponde a um verso da estrofe. Como a melodia toda corresponde ao tamanho de cada estrofe, ele se repete até esgotar o conteúdo de assunto do hino, mudando a sua divisão rítmica para se adaptar as palavras dos novos versos (Fernandes, 1986, p. 97-98).

maintenance of the community: “At the communal level, peyote is primarily ingested by the spiritual leader during a ceremony so he or her can communicate with the deities, ensure good crops, cure the sick, and protect the community from future illnesses” (Maroukis, 2010, p. 19). The sacredness of the natural sphere implies an interdependence between human beings and the environment, in the sense of promoting a holistic approach to religiosity that values the sustainable integrity of the planet and the preservation of the Peyote [*Lophophora williamsii*]. Thus, the Native American Church presents a religious vision that recognises the existence of all life forms as an essential part of the experience of the sacred: which is in alignment with the traditions of indigenous communities. Nevertheless:

Right now the problem that concerns me the most is that while a good portion of the medicine is being inadvertently protected by these fences, there is not enough medicine for the people. The roadmen of the Native American Church, the leaders of the peyote ceremonies, need the sacrament for the people. It cures them of the alcohol, and it relieves them from the depression of life on the reservations as it puts them in direct contact with the Mothers and Fathers. This contact revives their sacred connection to the divine, to the land, to their family, and their tribe (Andredy, 2012, p. 240).

The Native American Church, by adopting elements such as Peyote in its rituals, integrates the sacramental properties of nature with visionary experience (Tekpankalli, 1996; Rosenberg, 2021). At the heart of this cosmivision is the understanding that the natural sphere is not only a scenario for religious exercise, but a living expression of divine sacredness which must thus be preserved: “Native American Church members themselves need to consciously monitor their consumption and institute conservation methods for self-regulation that sustain the peyote population while maintaining the sacrament for ceremonial purposes” (Williams, 2012, p. 14). The earth, the heavens, the mountains, the rivers, and all creatures are considered as eco-metaphysical entities, fathers, and mothers of humanity, each to play a role of fundamental importance in the native cosmologies (Erdoes; Ortiz, 1984; Schaefer, 2023). The beatific cactus, for example, understood in the ceremonies as an external intelligence that awakens the inner divinity of the participants, opens the doors of human perception to a phenomenological manifestation that illustrates the interconnection between creatures and creation. In this perspective, the biosphere is seen as a sacred book, a work where each ecosystem constitutes a distinct page, with clippings that reveal philosophical ideas and give important lessons about life.

As a conclusion of this work, it was possible to verify that in the contemporary context, a remarkable convergence between traditional shamanism, the Santo Daime, and the Native

American Church is established: this is evidenced by the result of the intersection of sets that host entheogenic, natural, and metaphysical elements (Anderson, 1999; Polari de Alverga, 2010; Costa de Freitas; Shanenawa; Maia, 2024). The shamanic traditions of the south and north of the Americas, through their eco-metaphysics and methods of ecstatic induction, present a timeless perspective on the correlation between humanity and divinity that reverberates in contemporaneity, as a way of connection with the sacredness of the biosphere (Mckenna, 1993; Eliade, 2002). The Santo Daime, by interrelating the Amazonian spirituality with a series of transcultural contents, identifies in Ayahuasca a divine intelligence that crosses several dimensions while providing an expansion of consciousness essential to the survival of ecosystems (Fernandes, 1986; Goldman, 2010; Costa de Freitas, 2023b). The Native American Church, shaped by indigenous worldviews and western influences, uses Peyote as a sacrament for health promotion purposes, well-being, sense of community, and the restoration of the sacred relation of the human being with nature (Maroukis, 2010; Williams, 2012). In the development of these narratives, the natural sphere can be considered central, not only because it constitutes an ideal scenario for mystical practices, but because it can be thought as the physical substance of metaphysical forces, fundamental to the experience of unity between inner and outer pluriverse (Forte, 2012; Hofmann, 2012; Costa de Freitas, 2023a). In short, the philo-theological interactions described and analysed here show, with their synthesis, the recognition of the importance of entheogens in the revaluing of naturalness as a manifestation of sacred, as well as in the discovery of the various senses of life.

References

ANDERSON, Edward Frederick. *Peyote: the Divine Cactus*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1999.

ANDREY, James. *Teachings of the Peyote Shamans: Five Points of Attention*. Rochester/Vermont: Park Street Press, 2012.

CARNEIRO DA CUNHA, Manuela. “Pontos de Vista sobre a Floresta Amazônica: Xamanismo e Tradução”. *Revista Mana*, v. 4, n. 1, p. 7-22, 1998. Available in: <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0104-93131998000100001>

COSTA DE FREITAS, Jan Clefferson; SHANENAWA, Markone Brandão da Silva; MAIA, Nathália Cristina Medeiros. “Enteogenia e Psicodelia: as Filosofias da Ancestralidade nas Revoluções Científicas”. *Revista Kalagatos*, v. 21, n. 2, p. 1-28, 2024. Available in: <https://revistas.uece.br/index.php/kalagatos/article/view/13187>

COSTA DE FREITAS, Jan Clefferson. “Que é isto – a Filopsicodelia?: o Reflorescimento da Filosofia Psicodélica”. *Revista Princípios*, v. 30, n. 62, p. 159-200, 2023a. Available in: <https://periodicos.ufrn.br/principios/article/view/31841>

COSTA DE FREITAS, Jan Clefferson. “Sabedorias do Santo Daime: a Filosofia nos Hinos de Mestre Irineu e Padrinho Sebastião”. *Revista Muiraquitã*, v. 11, n. 1, p. 52-76, 2023b. Available in: <https://periodicos.ufac.br/index.php/mui/article/view/6777>

ELIADE, Mircea. *O Xamanismo e as Técnicas Arcaicas do Êxtase*. Trad. Beatriz Perrone-Moisés e Ivone Castilho Benedetti. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2002.

ERDOES, Richard; ORTIZ, Alfonso. *American Indian: Myths and Legends*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984.

FERNANDES, Vera Froés. *História do Povo de Juramidam: Introdução à Cultura do Santo Daime*. Manaus: SUFRAMA, 1986.

FORTE, Robert (Org.). *Entheogens and the Future of Religion*. Rochester/Vermont: Park Street Press, 2012.

GOLDMAN, Jonathan. “Preface to The Religion of Ayahuasca”. In: POLARI DE ALVERGA, Alex. *The Religion of Ayahuasca: the Teachings of the Church of Santo Daime*. Trad. Rosana Workman. Rochester/Vermont: Park Street Press, 2010.

HOFMANN, Albert. “The Message of the Eleusinian Mysteries for Today’s World”. In: FORTE, Robert (Org.). *Entheogens and the Future of Religion*. Rochester/Vermont: Park Street Press, 2012.

HULTKRANTZ, Ake. *The Attraction of Peyote: an Inquiry into the Basic Conditions for the Diffusion of the Peyote Religion in North America*. Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell International: 1997.

JESSE, Robert. “Testimony of the Council on Spiritual Practices”. In: FORTE, Robert (Org.). *Entheogens and the Future of Religion*. Rochester/Vermont: Park Street Press, 2012.

LABATE, Beatriz Caiuby; LOURES DE ASSIS, Glauber. “A Critical Review of the Literature on the Diaspora of Brazilian Ayahuasca Religions”. In: LABATE, Beatriz Caiuby; CAVNAR, Clancy (Orgs.). *The Expanding World Ayahuasca Diaspore*. New York: Routledge Press, 2018.

LABATE, Beatriz Caiuby; CAVNAR, Clancy (Orgs.). *The Expanding World Ayahuasca Diaspore*. New York: Routledge Press, 2018.

LABATE, Beatriz Caiuby; CAVNAR, Clancy (Orgs.). *Peyote: History, Traditions, Politics, and Conservation*. California: Praeger, 2016.

LARSEN, Stephen. “Foreword to The Religion of Ayahuasca”. In: POLARI DE ALVERGA, Alex. *The Religion of Ayahuasca: the Teachings of the Church of Santo Daime*. Trad. Rosana Workman. Rochester/Vermont: Park Street Press, 2010.

MACRAE, Edward. *El Santo Daime y la Espiritualidad Brasileña*. Quito: Ediciones Abya-Yala, 2000.

MAROUKIS, Thomas Constantine. *The Peyote Road: Religious Freedom and the Native American Church*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010.

MCKENNA, Dennis Jon. “Ayahuasca: uma História Etnofarmacológica”. In: METZNER, Ralph (Org.). *Ayahuasca: Alucinógenos, Consciência e o Espírito da Natureza*. Trad. Márcia Frazão. Rio de Janeiro: Gryphus, 2002.

MCKENNA, Terence Jon. *Food of the Gods*. New York: Random House Publishing Group, 1993.

METZNER, Ralph (Org.). *Ayahuasca: Alucinógenos, Consciência e o Espírito da Natureza*. Trad. Márcia Frazão. Rio de Janeiro: Gryphus, 2002.

METZNER, Ralph. “O Cipó Amazônico das Visões”. In: METZNER, Ralph (Org.). *Ayahuasca: Alucinógenos, Consciência e o Espírito da Natureza*. Trad. Márcia Frazão. Rio de Janeiro: Gryphus, 2002.

POLARI DE ALVERGA, Alex. *The Religion of Ayahuasca: the Teachings of the Church of Santo Daime*. Trad. Rosana Workman. Rochester/Vermont: Park Street Press, 2010.

PRUE, Bob. “Protecting the Peyote for Future Generations”. In: LABATE, Beatriz Caiuby; CAVNAR, Clancy (Orgs.). *Peyote: History, Traditions, Politics, and Conservation*. California: Praeger, 2016.

RIEDLINGER, Thomas. “Sacred Mushroom Pentecost”. In; FORTE, Robert (Org.). *Entheogens and the Future of Religion*. Rochester/Vermont: Park Street Press, 2012.

ROSENBERG, Harrison Charles. *Peyote: a Decolonial Analysis of Religious Freedom and Indigeneity*. 99 p. Master’s Thesis. Tempe: Arizona State University, 2021.

RUCK, Carl Anton Paul; BIGWOOD, Jeremy; STAPLES, Blaise Daniel (Et al). “Enteógenos”. In: WASSON, Robert Gordon; HOFMANN, Albert; RUCK, Carl Anton Paul. *El Camino a*

Eleusis: una Solución al Enigma de los Misterios. Trad. Felipe Garrido. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2013.

SCHAEFER, Stacy. “Huichol Shamanism: Traditional Wisdom in a Modern World”. *Boletín del Museo Chileno de Arte Precolombino*, v. 28, n. 1, 2023. Available in: <http://dx.doi.org/10.56522/bmchap.0060010280003>

SCHULTES, Richard Evans; HOFMANN, Albert. *Las Plantas de los Dioses*. Trad. Alberto Blanco. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1982.

STRASSMAN, Rick. “Biomedical Research with Psychedelics”. In: FORTE, Robert (Org.). *Entheogens and the Future of Religion*. Rochester/Vermont: Park Street Press, 2012.

SONI, Varun. “Peyote, Christianity, and Constitutional Law: Toward an Antisubordination Jurisprudence”. In: LABATE, Beatriz Caiuby; CAVNAR, Clancy (Orgs.). *Peyote: History, Traditions, Politics, and Conservation*. California: Praeger, 2016.

TEKPANKALLI, Aurelio Díaz. *Una Voz para los Hijos de la Tierra: Tradición Oral del Camino Rojo*, Iglesia Nativa Americana de Itzachilatlan. Illinois: Bedford Park, 1996.

WASSON, Robert Gordon; HOFMANN, Albert; RUCK, Carl Anton Paul. *El Camino a Eleusis: una Solución al Enigma de los Misterios*. Trad. Felipe Garrido. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2013.

WILLIAMS, Dawn. *Preservation and Sustainability of the Peyote Sacrament in the Reverence of the Native American Church*. Master’s Report. 67 pp. Tucson: Faculty of American Indian Studies, 2012.

Recebido em: 24/07/2024.

Aprovado em: 10/11/2024.