

# Between plants, trees and dreams — the regenerative nature of the psyche and the climate chaos

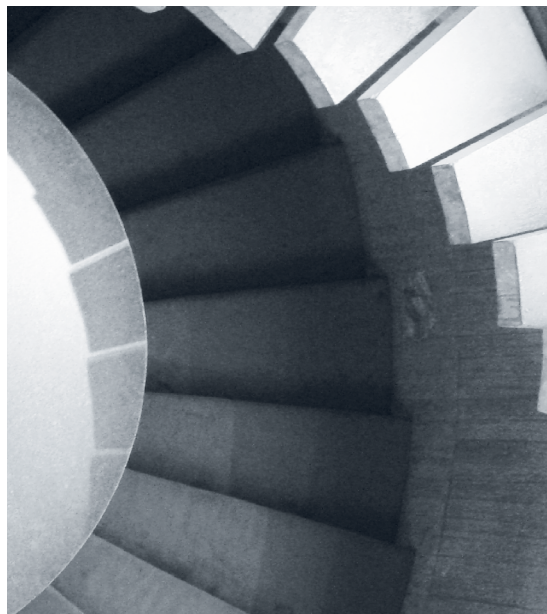
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## Abstract

The paper reflects on the regenerative function of the psyche invoked by the archetypal image of the tree. Especially facing the climate chaos and its effects on mental health, I point out the importance of paying attention to the climate debate in the psychological field. Starting from personal and clinical experience, I evoke a collective field of the psyche: trees, plants, and its symbolic processes of renovation, resistance and cure. In this path, I return to Jung's ideas about nature, *Unus Mundus* and the alchemy of the Philosophical Tree. I interweave it with contemporary thinkers, such as Byung-Chul Han and Emanuele Coccia, as well as with the indigenous thought of Ailton Krenak, and the worldview of the Yanomami, especially on the collective value of dreams. Just like trees, we are connected to life through an in-

tricate collaborative web among species. Through dreams, the return to the collective unconsciousness as an originary driving force, power of vital energy, and path to restoration may point out and feed the creation of future paths. ■

**Keywords**  
tree,  
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regenerative  
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*Unus mundus*,  
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## Introduction

Psyche is nature — this idea, which is present in all of Jung's works, has always reached deep inside of me, in a way in which work, personal life and comprehension of the psyche walk organically side by side. It is something I know and live. During a heavy rain, a strong gust of wind or a storm, I catch myself watching the movements of treetops around me and, at the same time, I admire the strength and firmness of the trunks. Walking around the city, the small flowers that bloom from the cracks on the pavement, sidewalks and walls impress me and I end up remembering the poetry of Drummond and a certain flower that broke the pavement, the boredom, the disgust and the hatred. I know those are not metaphors alone; maybe they are the living symbol manifesting itself in me, but what matters to me is describing the experience, a way of being in the world, in which things reveal multiple meanings. Life happens and strengthens itself in this moment, in the tissue woven between the perception of the wind shaking the trees, of the flower that blooms in cracks of the pavement, and in the way of mental images, thoughts, memories, and even poetry, in blessed moments. Not the poem, pain and delight of the ones who commit to the art of being a poet, but the poetic experience accessible to the ones who are alive, I think. I reap what sprouts on its own and absorb it. Hope, compassion, faith in life, vital energy or the many other ways of naming what these images bring me. From this tangent, we enter the field of the psyche and its symbolic processes of renovation, resistance, and/or healing.

In the last few years, there has been a return to nature in a larger field of society, be it due to the urgent environmental issues, be it due to the pandemic that raised alarm bells. In addition,

the indigenous community has been raising their voices with their cosmivision. While being a global threat to humankind, the pandemic highlighted the urgency of the environmental issues for life on Earth. A dystopic world, in ruins, threatened in many ways, by a virus as well, became annoying evidence, a nightmare invading vigil, a recurring topic in media, in conversations, in scientific and cultural productions. This topic was also present, in many emotional tones, in clinical practice and in supervision of professionals.

In this paper, I start with daydreams about plant life and wander through places, subjective and objective clippings, findings and ideas, between dream and reality. A circumambulation from daily mediations that lead to the exploration of the topic in Analytical Psychology to other pieces of knowledge and the climatic issue. This way, resuming the paper, I present some objective data on the environmental state, specifically on mental health and Psychology. I take up Jung's ideas on the psyche as nature and the tree as a symbol of individuation. After that, I return to the present post-pandemic moment and find affinities and possibilities of dialogue with contemporary thinkers and with the indigenous thought that, in another collective, social and political context, recovers the dream as a way of resistance and of building the future, in a similar manner to Jung's ideas about dream on the individual psyche.

## Climate Chaos and Mental Health

“In spite of our proud domination of nature we are still her victims as much as ever and have not even learnt to control our own nature, which slowly and inevitably courts disaster.”

(Jung, 2013c, par. 597)

Jung's quote above sounds visionary in the Anthropocene, the current geologic period that is characterized by the impact of human actions on the climate. On the 28<sup>th</sup> United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28), which was held in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates, from November 30<sup>th</sup> to December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2023, the secretary general of the UN, António Guterres, labeled the present moment as an environmental collapse, with record-breaking temperatures, and devastating storms, floods and wildfires. New denominations are used, such as climate chaos, climate catastrophe or collapse, suggesting a point of no return supported by data about a climate emergency that was shown during the conference, such as the increase in premature deaths due to air pollution, the increase in deaths due to extreme heat and the increase in displacement of victims of disasters related to the climate. The data is overwhelming (Talamone, 2023).

In 2009, a paper published in *The Lancet* pointed to climate change as potentially the bigger global threat to health in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Costello et. al, 2009), and in recent years, the amount of research related to climate change and mental health has increased. A paper published by the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* makes a review of research done in multiple areas of the planet and finds evidence that points to a negative association between climate change and mental health, such as the worsening of psychological suffering and mental health, increase in psychiatric hospital stays and the increase in suicides (Charlson et. al, 2021). The researchers acknowledge that this is a research field growing exponentially, even if it has limitations, and reinforce the importance of more investigation and more consistent scientific evidence about the link between mental health and climate change. The implementation of political actions can potentially reduce this impact.

The climate chaos certainly affects mental health in a broad spectrum, demanding diverse

perspectives and social action. In a more direct manner, there is the emotional impact resulting from extreme climate phenomena, the emotional effects of disruption, losses, displacement of affected populations, as well as a bigger incidence of distress and anxiety about the future (Fritze et al, 2008). The climate anxiety and dissatisfaction with the government's responses are widespread among children and youth in countries all around the world and have an impact on their daily functioning (Hickman et al, 2021). As mental health professionals, even the ones that do not work in the public sector or in environmental movements, it is necessary to be aware of that situation, in which we are both victims and perpetrators. The term "ecoanxiety" is now widely recognized in scientific circles, being addressed in numerous studies. Faced with the seriousness of the environmental issue, part of our work is to recognize the psychic defenses present in facing this condition, a kind of collective shadow to be transformed.

### **Psychology and ecology**

In the United States academia, a mix of Ecology and Psychology has been going on since the 1960s, but the term "Ecopsychology" was coined by Theodore Roszak, an American historian, writer, and essayist, in his book *The Voice of the Earth* (1992). Roszak was a known author already and was skillful in coining new terms. The concept of counterculture came from him, as the main topic of his 1969 book *The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and Its Youthful Opposition*, published in Brazil by Editora Vozes in 1972. Bathed in the spirit of counterculture, in which the critical view permeates ideas and actions, Ecopsychology is born, an area that gathers and articulates Psychology and the environment. As a field of research and practice, Ecopsychology aims to promote a deeper comprehension of the relationship between the human psyche and the environment, taking into consideration that this comprehension may influence attitudes and fu-

ture behavior. At the same time, Ecopsychology criticizes the dissociated and destructive posture of a huge part of society when it comes to the state of the environment. In Brazil, an important representative is Marco Aurélio Bilibio Carvalho, a psychologist that works in Brasília, founder and president of the Brazilian Institute of Ecopsychology, that wittily highlights the importance of Ecopsychology:

In a mix of science and political engagement and assuming the indissociability of both, Ecopsychology takes a viewpoint that is naive and radical at the same time. Naive when it goes against the common sense of what is accepted as reality, daring to make visceral questions that would be hidden and, through which, common sense may be questioned. And radical because, when making those questions, it does not respect any agreement with current normality, looking to the core of dysfunctional beliefs of culture and committing only to its overcoming. If it was not for this radical element, Ecopsychology would not be necessary. It happens that, even though it is not found in Eco psychological literature, the more proper term to define its point of view of the current normality is normosis — the normality that carries a hidden neurosis that is not recognized nor noticed. (Carvalho, 2013)

However, the climate crisis is so devastating that it needs everyone's attention, be it from those who are committed or not to Ecopsychology. Analytical Psychology is present in this field, with multiple books of Jungian authors on the topic, of which very few have been translated and published in Brazil. The American climate scientist and Jungian analyst Dr. Jeffrey Kiehl explores the topic in multiple books and papers. In the paper "Climate Chaos: A Complex Issue", he discusses the psychological defense mech-

anisms present in the environmental issue and thinks about how we can work these complexes — both personal and collective (Kiehl, 2023).<sup>1</sup> The Journal of Analytical Psychology (JAP) dedicated a special issue to the topic in November 2022: "Special Issue: Our environmental and climate crisis", volume 67, issue 5. Robin B. Zeiger (2022), in his paper "Dark feet and dark wings: penetrating the depths of the Earth", brings attention to how we, analysts, need to be aware of the issue so we can notice its signs in the practice.

The acute state of climate disturbances that we live in requires care, awareness and attention to our pathological relationship with the planet and with environmental issues. This may not change the terrible reality we have to face, but it may heal our dissociations and denialism, opening up new paths. And which nature and culture we talk about, since there are so many? As Ailton Krenak states: "I do not notice one thing that is not nature. Everything is nature. The cosmos is nature. All I can think about is nature" (Krenak e Batalha, 2019). Now we can recover the symbolic, cyclical language between the logical and the symbolic thought, between an individual emotional sustainability and a collective one, in a dance in which both can move freely, not only throughout the practice but the world as well.

### Analytical psychology and cosmivision

"Nature is a continuum, and so our psyche is very probably a continuum."

(Jung, 2013a par. 181)

"[...] the dream is a living thing, by no means a dead thing that rustles like dry paper. It is a living situation, it is like an

<sup>1</sup> There are some videos of Kiehl in <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P3XrdDmP9KQ> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ldkumSzO8uM>

animal with feelers, or with many umbilical cords. We don't realize that while we are talking of it, it is producing."  
(Jung, 2014)

Jung's consideration of the human being and the psyche as not isolated from the cosmos was based on the alchemical worldview. The term *unus mundus*, a medieval conception by alchemist Gerhard Dorn, literally means unitary or unified world, and proposes a conception of the world in which psyche and matter, human being and world exist and interact in continuity. Jung relied on this conception to later formulate the concept of synchronicity. At the same time, he was also influenced by romantic thinkers, such as Schiller and Schelling, who denounced and lamented the lost unity:

Through scientific understanding, our world has become dehumanized. Man feels himself isolated in the cosmos. He is no longer involved in nature and has lost his emotional participation in natural events, which hitherto had a symbolic meaning for him. Thunder is no longer the voice of a god, nor is lightning his avenging missile. No river contains a spirit, no tree means a man's life, no snake is the embodiment of wisdom, and no mountain still harbors a great demon. Neither do things speak to him nor can he speak to things, like stones, springs, plants, and animals. He no longer has a bush-soul identifying him with a wild animal. His immediate communication with nature is gone forever, and the emotional energy it generated has sunk into the unconscious.

This enormous loss is compensated by the symbols in our dreams. They bring up our original nature, its instincts and its peculiar thinking. (Jung, 2013a, par. 585-586)

On the limits of its historical context but representing a huge advancement for Psychiatry and Psychology of the time, Jung placed the core of the entire view of disease in the dissociation between conscious and unconscious, nature and culture. And in what he called excessive scientific rationalism in Western society that, according to Jung, has deprived us of a more healthy and balanced contact with our inner and wild nature, the unconscious psyche. All of his therapeutic methods aim at looking for and recovering a bigger connection with our nature, the collective unconsciousness, highlighting the idea of a nature that is not only manifested and materialized, but is the nature of the psyche.

In his seminars about the analysis of dreams held from 1928 and 1930, when analyzing a dream of a patient, Jung comments on the bath of nature as a reconnection and purification of "civilization in excess". And maybe due to the contagious excitement of those seminars, aligned to the critical romantic model, it exaggerated the oppositions of the civilized *versus* the wild world as well as the combination of nature with pureness and civilization with dirtiness. Drawing on the collective unconsciousness, he comments on the ancient roots of those practices. He states how this strength can occur from inside as well, through the connection with dreams, which is very important in the comprehension of the regenerative strength of the psychic image:

Whenever we touch nature, we get clean. Savages are not dirty —only we are dirty. Domesticated animals are dirty, but never wild animals. Matter in the wrong place is dirt. People who have got dirty through too much civilization take a walk in the woods, or a bath in the sea. They may rationalize it in this or that way, but they shake off the fetters and allow nature to touch them. It can be done within or with-

out. Walking in the woods, lying on the grass, taking a bath in the sea, are from the outside; entering the unconscious, entering yourself through dreams, is touching nature from the inside and this is the same thing, things are put right again. All these things have been used in initiations in past ages. They are all in the old mysteries, the loneliness of nature, the contemplation of the stars, the incubation sleep in the temple. (Jung, 2014, p.148)

I come across a new thesis for the concepts of nature and culture and of the division between human and non-human, in which deconstructions and hybridisms change such hegemonic concepts, calling for transdisciplinarity. Those are innovative propositions, that take us out of the commonplace and make us think about our worldview, as I believe may have happened with Jung's ideas at the time and his boldness in mixing themes outside the field of the Western academic thinking of the time. I find similarities between Jungian thought and the thought of current indigenous philosophers, anthropologists and scholars, especially when it comes to dreams and life as a single fabric. The return to the ancient roots has been happening in multiple areas of contemporary knowledge, whether it relates or not to the Jungian concept of collective unconsciousness.

At the core of Jungian thought we have the conception of an *unus mundus*, in which world, human being and psyche form an inseparable single thing. It is a transcendent view of the psyche, in which consciousness is born from the collective unconscious, that spreads beyond us, nature and cosmos. We are part of this whole, and the idea of development and health implies keeping alive and active the connection with totality. In the *Visions Seminars*, Jung talks about continuity and cooperation between species, giving an example of the coexistence between the trees and the ants:

(...) we must assume that life is a kind of unit, that it is really a continuum and meant to be as it is, namely, all one tissue in which things live through or by means of each other. Therefore, trees cannot be without animals, nor animals without plants, and perhaps animals cannot be without man, and man cannot be without animals and plants — and so on. The whole thing is one tissue and so no wonder that all the parts function together, as the cells in our bodies function together, because they are of the same living continuum. (Jung, 1997, p. 754)

Such conception of the psyche and of human beings is crucial to the comprehension of the Jungian theory and of Jung's therapeutical proposal. The collective unconscious in its entirety contains an ancient knowledge that manifests itself in a mythical and symbolic manner in dreams, daydreams and other spontaneous expressions of the psyche. Keeping the connection between the conscious and unconscious world through psychic work is the base of a more balanced state of mental health and path to individuation, which to Jung meant something dynamic, an eternal power play. On a conference held on 1927, Jung pointed out that Psychology was not a *Weltanschauung* but a science that could provide us with tools to build up, torn down or even reconstruct our worldview (Jung, 2013a, par. 730). In the same text, he concludes:

Thus, we come back to the question of *Weltanschauung* — a *Weltanschauung* that will help us to get into harmony with the historical man in us, in such a way that the deeper chords in him are not drowned by the shrill strains of rationalism, and the precious light of individual consciousness is not extinguished in the infinite darkneses of the natural psyche. (Jung, 2013a, par. 740).

My job as an analyst keeps me in contact with the lives and intimacy of a lot of people daily and allows me to go through multiple worlds throughout the day. Jung is more than a professional reference. Being in front of someone in my entirety, tuning my soul to listen to another soul throughout the years changed not only my way of working but also my way of being in the world, of feeling and thinking about life. My personal and professional fields, my academic and worldly interests, my place in the world and the world around me are all in communication with each other, making their alchemy in me. Meditating about life, mediated by an affinity for plants, I got used to listening to whispers and recognizing signs, a knowledge that trees and plants can send out in this world of lights and shadows. I learn, in a knowledge that comes from the “entire experience”, as Jung would call it, warning to the tendency of favoring rational thought in the face of a sensory apprehension, of intuition, of feelings.

### Tree — Living symbol

“A tree says: A kernel is hidden in me, a spark, a thought, I am life from eternal life”  
(Hesse, 1990)

“No tree, it is said, can grow to heaven unless its roots reach down to hell.”  
(Jung, 1982, par. 78)

The individuation process is conceived as a way or as a goal in the analytical work, releasing or revealing strengths of becoming in the collective unconscious that are unknown or repressed by consciousness. The Self as a part of the collective unconscious brings the strength to be developed through existence. This way, the development of personality is a work that it is not limited to a certain period, but lasts throughout

the entire life. An illustration made by Jung, present in his Red Book, expresses this idea and gathers visually two important symbols in its theoretical development that will be present throughout his entire work. A cosmogonic egg, inside the egg there is a tree whose roots connect to an underground world and its scary animals. The tree grows to heaven and from its top a bluish-white light beams, forming a halo. (Jung, 2010, p. 135).

Looking at this illustration of Jung, or even at other pictures he drew for the Red Book, we can assume at first that such images — tree, animals, a cosmogonic egg — are metaphors, analogies and figures of speech used by him to expose his ideas. But the Jungian perspective is more complex, in a way in which metaphor and illustrations are more than figures of speech and pictorial representation, they are living symbols.

Something I have found important in Jung ever since his first writings is the search for a symbolic language that expresses in a living manner the dynamic of the psyche. In this sense, its definition of an archetypal image is close to an animist view of the psyche and the dream-like images convey an ancient knowledge as in many indigenous traditions. Through psychic dynamic unconscious images get to consciousness charged with energy and move the soul, in a living, pulsating manner, reaching the symbolic dimension. It is a creative process inherent to psychic life, this way we constitute ourselves, psychologically and symbolically, in this creative alchemy of continuous communication and transformation between inner and outer worlds, conscious and unconscious.

Images of natural landscapes, more specifically plants and trees, seem to have the potential to evoke in many of us, maybe by psychic affinity, our nature and our vital representations. And in regards to the evoking, it matters to me from a psychological standpoint, the process, the moving of images, the activated

psychic energy, the inner life searching ways of expression and direction. Besides accessing consciousness, the symbolic experience provides a comprehension and an experience of the unconscious contents that is not restricted to intellectual knowledge, it is the entire experience that incorporates our existence and the way of being in the world. This vital process of development and direction is also a “tree”, our path of individuation, I think.

In *Philosophical Tree*, Jung (2013b) makes a big amplification of the tree theme in Hermetic philosophy in medieval alchemic treats, according to him, a philosophy made in most part by physicians, since many alchemists were doctors. The essay was originally written in 1945 in tribute to the 70<sup>th</sup> birthday of Gustav Senn, a friend of Jung and a professor of Botany at the University of Basel, and it was later expanded and published in 1954. Jung compares and discusses the representations of trees in alchemy, in Western and Eastern religious traditions, in shamanic representations and myths and in spontaneous representations of patients.

In thirty-two illustrations, we see drawings and paintings, most of them done by Jung’s patients during the therapeutic process with him, and some other images produced by people outside the therapeutic process. It is worth noting that most of those pictorial productions happened before the publication of Jung’s first book about alchemy, *Psychology and Alchemy*, in 1944. All drawings bring out the diversity and complexity of the theme of trees: a tree with flowers and fruits; a tree growing from a globe, in the water; a tree cracking the soil or sprouting from a feminine figure; the tree with candles, fire or lit spheres; the tree surrounded by reptiles, dragons or snakes; the tree that hides a gem (sapphire) inside its roots; the dead tree on the ground; a tree with human figures sprouting from its trunk or a tree made out of human figures, usually female figures in a state of fullness; the tree whose top forms a flower, from which a

female figure blooms. Those are images that, to this day, cause a strong impact be it due to their beauty or the expressive power of the psyche.

The archetypal theme of the tree is present throughout history in different periods and cultures: the tree of life, the tree of knowledge, the image of Christ as a fruit or as a redeeming tree itself, the Christmas tree with a star on the top and globes that represent celestial bodies and announce a time of redemption, the tree of life and fate named Yggdrasil on Norse mythology, the rituals of fertility and celebration of Spring, surrounded by mythical trees or plants. The tree of dreams of the Yanomami, Mari Hi, is planted on the ends of the Earth and sends dreams to the Yanomami through the blooming of its flowers (Limulja, 2022). There are so many associations and examples of mythical trees, as well as the fertility inherent to the theme. The Jungian analyst Erich Neumann (1996) highlights the intimate relationship between the renovation and the transformation processes with the symbolism of the plant world and the feminine world in his book *The Great Mother: An Analysis of the Archetype*. To Mircea Eliade (2019), it is the religious view of Life that allows us to “decipher” other meanings following the plant’s pace, especially in ideas of regeneration, eternal youth, health and immortality. This way, the image of the tree was not only chosen to represent the Cosmos, but to express Life, youth, immortality, and wisdom.

From a comparative study of the symbols of trees in *The Philosophical Tree*, Jung comments on archaic texts and ideas, that talk about men that were born from trees and trees that were born from primordial men like a metamorphosis. Those are ideas that had greater and smaller force in determinate periods and cultures. What matters to me is highlighting the background of the human imagination, making it possible to observe the archetypal dimension and strength of those images. The diversity of forms, manifestations and meanings of the mythical theme



of the tree expresses the vitality and richness of the symbol. Tree and human being in continuity, one containing the other, reveal a symbolism of the processes of renovation and transformation as a vital system of great range that reverberates physical and psychic aspects.

In this moment, in a contemporary context, the search for salvation on the Earth to all of us, living, human and non-human, refers to the search for a miraculous cure for a sick planet. The theme of miraculous cure arises from multiple myths and in medieval alchemy as a substance or elixir created from the miraculous fruit or sap produced by a tree, usually placed in a garden or somewhere hard to get to (Jung, 2013b). In the Yanomami vision, reported on the precious book *The Falling Sky* (2015), a product of a collaboration between Davi Kopenawa and anthropologist Bruce Albert, we need the entire forest to prevent the sky from falling over us. To the Yanomami, the dream dimension is crucial for knowing, manifesting and building the world.

### From life among ruins

“A flower bloomed on the street!”

(The Flower and the Nausea, Carlos Drummond de Andrade, 2012)

“The background of the psyche is nature and nature is creating life. Nature itself indeed destroys what it builds, but it will rebuild again”

(Jung, 2011, par. 187b, our translation)<sup>2</sup>

If the psyche is a continuum, how to think about mental health, especially in large cities? Besides the polluted air and many other environmental issues, we also live under an atmosphere contaminated by rush, traffic, unsafety, professional and financial demands and other

toxic ingredients of contemporary society. Images of scorched, hopeless, earth populate psychologists’ offices. There is a dryness in the inner world, experienced as a desert, the emptiness of the soul, loss of vitality and meaning of life. We know, due to clinical experience, that those are typical images of depressive states, no matter if they are acute or chronic, light or major.

Discouragement, chronic fatigue and burn-out are also symptoms related to a lifestyle and a social organization that prioritizes work, productivity and performance according to the philosopher Byung-Chul Han (2015). In addition to the symptoms above, I see in my practice a certain struggle to internalize experiences, inattention, forgetfulness, a decrease in the ability to symbolize, an anesthetized state, most likely defensive, of acting, a literalization of life that automatically cuts or inhibits the self-regenerative creative and potential of the psyche. It is a kind of robotization of the human being, a destruction of the inner nature, as I observed. I think: if we are trees in our process of individuation, we are trees that are not connected to the roots in our existence in a society that is also disconnected and unrooted.

Interestingly, Byung-Chul Han, who has studied and questioned the conditions of psychic illness in contemporary society, permeated by technology and the violence of the demand for performance, published in 2020 a more personal book. *Praise to the Earth: A Trip to the Garden* (published in Brazil by Editora Vozes), the South Korean author who lives in Germany takes some time away from his judgmental and pessimistic tone concerning the “burnout society” and looks for happiness that being in contact with nature may bring us. In the book, he describes his experience taking care of his garden as a way of cultivating his humanity, which takes time and patience, time to meditate and contemplate. The garden allows the author to be present, a way of reconnecting with the Earth, a moment for redemption and transcendence. On a lyrical tone, Byung-Chul Han demonstrates that contempla-

<sup>2</sup> This paragraph is not included in the English edition of the book.

tion and poetry are siblings and may meet in the art of gardening. Our humanity as well. By the way, the word human comes from the Latin *humus*, earth. And both, Earth and humanity, are in danger of extinction.

Another contemporary philosopher has been making instigating new propositions from the perspective of plant life, what he calls in a provoking manner “point of life”, and not point of view, in what is called a “plant turn” of philosophy. Emanuele Coccia is a philosophy professor of the *École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales* in Paris since 2011. He *has published Sensible Life* (2010), *The Life of Plants: A Metaphysics of Mixture* (2018), an awarded book that has been translated into several languages, and *Metamorphoses* (2020), among other works. He focused initially on Medieval Philosophy and later dedicated himself to the research of theory of image and nature of life. Coccia thinks about a world that has been created by plants, considered a cosmogonic force that makes this place habitable, containing and content of life.

One cannot separate the plant — neither physically nor metaphysically — from the world that accommodates it. It is the most intense, radical and paradigmatic form of being in the world. To interrogate plants means to understand what it means to be in the world. Plants embody the most direct and elementary connection that life can establish with the world. The opposite is equally true: the plant is the purest observer when it comes to contemplating the world in its totality. (Coccia, 2018, p. 13)

In *Ideas to Postpone the End of the World* (2019), the thinker, activist and Brazilian indigenous leader Ailton Krenak makes wise reflections on the environment and the current times. He makes contributions drawing on indigenous

knowledge and culture, providing new perspectives that implicate the rescue of ancient knowledge. Ailton Krenak, Emanuele Coccia and the anthropologist Hanna Limulja met in 2022, at “Environment and images of contemporaneity”, a transdisciplinary investigation program promoted by Tomie Ohtake Institute in cooperation with the French embassy in Brazil/ General French consulate in São Paulo aiming to debate the current statute of relations between culture and nature through a dive in images.

At the panel “The coexistence of life”, Ailton Krenak pointed out the need to rethink our concept of humanity and of the sense and experience of being alive, returning to the themes developed in his book *Ideas to Postpone the End of the World*. He reinforced the importance of being awake and aware of the images that sprout from dreams as a recovery of trust and of hope for life regarding all living things on the planet. The anthropologist Hanna Limulja expatiated on her long experience with the dream life of the Yanomami, which she wrote about in the book *The Desire of Others: an ethnography of the Yanomami Dreams*. The world of dream images was highlighted in the talks, and at one point Emanuele Coccia returned to the Jungian contribution in the comprehension of dreams as a space of living experience of image and its power, where each aspect of the dream is a manifestation of the dreamer beyond its dream-self; we are image, background, objects and characters of the dream and through the dream we live another life and the continuity of other life forms, a similar experience to the account of dreams of the Yanomami.

### **Final Thoughts: Tree, Forest and Dream — A circular path**

“When we truly want to know things, we people of the forest try to see them in dream.

This is our way of studying; I have said so. I also learned to see by following these ways.”

(Kopenawa, 2015, p. 465)

“Even though we do not understand the dream, it is working and causing changes. If we understand, however, we have the privilege of working with the timeless spirit in ourselves.”

(Jung, 2014, p. 222)

The experience of death and destruction affects the collective and individual psyche on the constellation of its opposite, life. It is what I observe in my practice in smaller or bigger doses. Where we find disease, we can also find cure, which permeates the method of working with the psyche. Viral vaccines are based on a similar principle, produced by attenuated, inactive forms of infectious agents or by its subunits. On a moment of huge changes in the world and many expressions of the conflict between life and death on the planet, on humankind and on the psyche, I wonder if we can still evoke and take back this regenerative power of the image of trees and plants on a time when nature is so threatened.

At the beginning of the pandemic, in the face of the need for adaptation to the climate changes during the lockdown, I created a daily morning ritual: I would make a yoga pose, known as the tree pose, and during this practice, I would repeat an imaginative work: “I connect to the sap that arises from the earth and that feeds the chestnut tree on the living room next to me, the trees on the street and the park on the back and all plants and trees in the planet. The sap climbs up through my feet and runs through my body and soul, nourishing and sustaining me.” According to time or need, I would follow this practice daily. The sense of emergency activated a search for con-

nection with vitality symbols as a way of keeping the psychic balance. It was something that imposed itself, not only by individual need, but due to an ethical issue that, even though is always present, became more vital during the pandemic: we are all on the same boat, in danger, how should I take care of myself so I am able to take care of people who ask me for help? The image of the tree as a daily “drug” sprouted on its own, I can testify to its power and am thankful for the benefits I have received. I learned with the trees how to endure storms. This experience drove my interest in the theme of trees, plant life and the environment and it was a seed for this paper and its sharing.

Psyche is nature and the collective unconsciousness is nature in us. Our human nature has a power that is not only destructive but also creative, self-policing and self-regenerative. With its power to make life sprout from unlikely cracks, the human soul is potentially creative, be it to create illness or to create the cure. We have to follow life as a continuous thread shared with the environment and other living things, listen to the dreams, source of knowledge, of self-regulation and of the remaking of life. We have to tune the sensibility to notice life sprouting from daily spaces, even though crowded, polluted and devitalized. We have to encourage this life force that insists on finding a way to find new paths.

It’s time to sow and share dreams, a time to welcome perspectives that allow us to recycle our way of being in this world, promoting a way of enchanting ourselves with life again. Dream is a creative nature, every human being is creative by nature and sensible listening to the soul is changing, renewing the quality and sense of our existence. We need to pay attention to this symbolic function of the psyche, even in moments where it is unnoticeable, apparently intangible.

Rethinking the forest as a symbol of the collective unconscious and the tree as a symbol

of the path to individuation, we are connected to life as a cosmic totality and we communicate with this totality, the same way trees communicate through their roots in an intricate collaborative web between species. Our life path is a route that is not only ascendent but cyclic, in a spiral, providing for a return to the collec-

tive unconsciousness as an original source, power of vital energy, way to restoration and balance in pointing and feeding the building of future paths. We are tree in communion with the forest. ■

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## Resumo

### *Entre plantas, árvores e sonhos — a natureza regenerativa da psique e o caos climático*

*O artigo traz reflexões sobre a função regenerativa da psique mobilizada pela imagem arquetípica da árvore. Frente ao caos climático e aos efeitos dele na saúde mental, aponto a importância da atenção ao debate climático no campo psicológico. Partindo da vivência pessoal e clínica, evoco um território coletivo da psique: a árvore e as plantas e seus processos simbólicos de resistência, renovação e cura. Nesse percurso, retomo ideias de Jung sobre a natureza, o Unus mundus e sobre a alquimia*

*da Árvore filosófica e entrelaço-as com pensadores contemporâneos, como Byung-Chul Han e Emanuele Coccia, com o pensamento indígena de Ailton Krenak e com a visão de mundo do povo Yanomami, especialmente do valor coletivo do sonho. Como as árvores, somos ligados à vida por uma intrincada teia colaborativa entre espécies. Via sonho, o retorno ao inconsciente coletivo como fonte matriz originária, potência de energia vital e via de restauração pode apontar para a construção de caminhos futuros. ■*

Palavras-chave: árvore, psicologia analítica, função regenerativa da psique, Unus mundus, caos climático

## Resumen

### *Entre plantas, árboles y sueños: la naturaleza regenerativa de la psique y el caos climático*

*El artículo trae reflexiones sobre la función regenerativa de la psique invocada por la imagen arquetípica del árbol. Especialmente ante el caos climático y sus efectos en la salud mental, señalo la importancia de prestar atención al debate climático en el ámbito psicológico. A partir de la experiencia personal y clínica, evoco un campo colectivo de la psique: árboles, plantas y sus procesos simbólicos de renovación, resistencia y curación. En este camino, retomo las ideas de Jung sobre la naturaleza, el Unus Mundus y la alquimia del Árbol Filosófico, y*

*las entretrejo con pensadores contemporâneos, como Byung-Chul Han y Emanuele Coccia, y el pensamiento indígena de Ailton Krenak, y la cosmovisión de los yanomamis, especialmente sobre el valor colectivo de los sueños. Al igual que los árboles, estamos conectados con la vida a través de una intrincada red colaborativa entre especies. A través de los sueños, el retorno al inconsciente colectivo como fuente matriz original, poder de energía vital y vía hacia la restauración puede apuntar a la construcción de caminos futuros. ■*

Palabras-clave: árbol, psicologia analítica, función regenerativa de la psique, Unus mundus, caos climático

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