

The Treatise on Human Freedom¹

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On contemporary spiritual illiteracy

There are books that appear just in time, responding to the needs of the moment and the concerns of contemporary man. This is the case of “The Language of Creation” by Matthieu Pageau. In such cases, one fears that we are being offered a book of recipes for good living, similar to those that abound in New Age literature, whose validity barely exceeds a few years, so quickly do times change. However, the author anchors his proposals in the depths of the biblical tradition and especially in its first book, Genesis. From there, the reader may hesitate, fearing a kind of obscure archaeology of ancient thought with little implications for his daily life and the current era. Once again, the author surprises us, linking, with ease that he shares with us, the affiliation of our experiences today with the foundations of the dawn of humanity. To this end, he reveals to us the perennial and universal structures of the dynamics of life, from the cosmological level to the individual level, passing through the collective and inter-collective scales of humanity over the centuries.

Rightly and generously, the author offers us a kind of manual for the spiritually illiterate, aware of the desacralization of contemporary Western society. If to read it is first necessary to learn the letters, to carry out a reading of the dimensions of human existence integrated into the cosmos, it is necessary to know the basic elements of the structure of creation, which includes us. The author helps us with short chapters, concise language, simple examples, and illustrations with visual pedagogical diagrams that facilitate understanding. The proof of the accessibility thus allowed to the symbolic language in this work lies in the fact that by reading it, it makes us feel intelligent.

Simplicity does not mean simplism, because the seeds offered can be chewed in the manner of the meditative "manducation" of the word of God by the Fathers of the desert (Marcel Jousse²), in order to extract ever more delicate flavors. The Word was made flesh (John 1:14) and this "flesh" was given to us to nourish us and reveal to us the manifestation of the presence of God.

The elementary structures indicated, the alphabet of symbolic language, apply to different scales of reality, from the macrocosm to the microcosm, from the most earthly to the most spiritual reality. They can therefore be declined in an infinite manner in the thousand fields of thought and human activity, from theology and philosophy to cooking and music. It is up to each person, according to his capacity and desire, to broaden the proposal to the areas that correspond to them or interest them. To this end, the principle of analogy recommended by the biblical sage is used (Wisdom 13:1-9), which allows us to establish a community of meaning based on the existence of similar attributes in different beings or things, at different levels of reality. This principle constitutes the tool par excellence of the symbolic function, to which the author introduces us. Similarly, symbolic language, while protecting the mystery, allows it to be expressed through concrete images accessible to all.

¹ Prologue and epilogue of the book “The Language of Creation: Cosmic Symbolism in Genesis: A Commentary”, author: Matthieu Pageau, 2018, 354p. Link: <https://www.amazon.com/Language-Creation-Symbolism-Genesis-Commentary/dp/1981549331>

² Marcel Jousse (1975) *La Manducation de la Parole*, Collection Voies ouvertes, Gallimard.

Biblical Cosmology versus the Scientific Worldview

The author performs a work of healing by wanting to get us out of the hypnotism exerted on contemporary thought by the scientific vision of the world. The technical discoveries of modern science exert such a fascination that they capture human consciousness, to the point of subjugating it and leading it to alienation. The hegemony of materialism and rationalism claims to be applied to the reading of the Bible in a reductionist and literal approach, ignoring its symbolic language, thus giving the impression of dealing it a fatal blow. However, the answers of science to the “*how*” of life can never answer its “*why*”. To the simple question of the child “why does the sun shine?”, the scientists remain mute, unless they claim to offer a misleading answer to the child's naivety with explanations of how the sun shines. Noting a fact, they cannot account for its origin. “It's like explaining how you write a word instead of what it means.” The enigmas of the mystery of life and death preoccupy every human being, pushing him to consult oracles and soothsayers, before these are illusory replaced by scientists. Certainly, science answers the enigmas concerning matter, but with regard to the mysteries of the spiritual world and the meaning of life, it places itself in a position of arrogance by confusing knowledge with wisdom. Humble scientists recognize this and limit themselves to data, while the proud ones misuse this data to feed scientific theories dominated by an ideology that denies any design to Creation, preaching an absurd vision of the world, in their ignorance and despair.

However, it could be that in our time, the recent discoveries of the most advanced sciences become the best defenders of the need to go beyond the positivist materialist model, by demonstrating its limits. Many scientists, particularly in the field of neuroscience, advocate the development of a post-materialist paradigm (Mario Beauregard³). Conventional models cannot account for all of reality, particularly with regard to human consciousness. The same is true, for example, for many so-called paranormal phenomena, observed and recorded, but without a valid explanation, and left on the fringes of the corpus of formal research. It is precisely these “marginal” elements that are likely to induce a paradigm shift, as Edgar Morin suggests in his theory of complexity and the re-enchantment of the world.

The great pillars of the modern scientific vision of the world, assumed almost as dogmas, are called into question by new discoveries. This is the case of the Pasteurian theory, of carbon-14 dating, or of evolutionism or Darwinism. For example, contradicting the evolutionary dogma, a publication by David Thaler⁴ in 2018 reveals, from a vast genetic study on mitochondrial DNA, that nine out of ten animal species would have appeared simultaneously with the appearance of the human being, “each according to its kind” (Gen 1:11). Science based on classical logic, objectivity and sufficient reason, with the Cartesian reductionist method, do not fully coincide with the principles of the theory of relativity or quantum physics. In quantum mechanics, the Heisenberg indeterminacy relation or uncertainty principle reintroduces doubt about a stable and absolute truth, such as positivism claimed to possess.

However, the author does not fall into a sterile opposition between two models that would be contradictory or exclusive. Rather, he finds a similarity in the four categories that underlie each vision

³ See <http://opensciences.org/>

⁴ Thaler, David. (2018). *Why should mitochondria define species?* Human Evolution. 33. 10.14673/HE2018121037.

of the world, whether materialist or spiritual. The first describes the phenomena of the natural world in terms of energy, matter, space and time, while the second refers to the spiritual world with the terms "sky", "earth", "space" and "time", the latter having a definition different from that of materialism and being endowed with a symbolic quality. Knowledge would thus reveal a similar quaternary structure of reality, offering a new epistemology capable of accounting for material and spiritual realities. This quaternary structure was described by the exegete Jean-François Froger and the mathematician Robert Lutz⁵, who demonstrated its coherence in both areas, to develop a logical model to "complete Aristotle's model".

The coincidence of the quaternary structure of the two worldviews, however, does not reveal a location at the same horizontal level of reality, but a vertical relationship, where the scale of spiritual reality transcends material reality. It would therefore be wrong to establish a false equivalence between ancient spiritual models and current models of the universe. The symbolic function, based on analogy, allows these structures of matter to be linked to the spirit. Therefore, knowledge of material reality through the analogical symbolic function can provide access to spiritual truths, but without ever exhausting them. On the other hand, spiritual knowledge covers all of material reality. Froger and Lutz demonstrated this when the former, from the knowledge of spiritual truths extracted from the quaternary structure of the Bible, was able to guide Lutz's scientific research and find mathematical or physical solutions to the enigmas of science. Traditional cosmology does not directly describe the natural world, but at an incarnational level or scale of material reality, it is consistent with it. Over the centuries, the Bible's "scientific" judgment has been repeatedly refuted by new discoveries. Before our modern age and its impressive technological developments, in 1892, Pope Leo XIII observed: "Many objections have long been made against the Scriptures in all the sciences. They are now forgotten: they were worthless... Just as time does justice to false opinions, so the truth remains and is strengthened eternally" (Providentissimus Deus).

The priestly or mediating vocation of the human being

From the individual to the cosmic, from "earth" to "heaven", an axis of coherence is established, and the greater the spiritual elevation, the greater the coherence between the levels of knowledge or divine manifestation, and consequently, the synchronicities become more evident. Thus, knowledge is gradually achieved through a progressive rise on a hierarchical scale of ever greater coherence, crossing a "series of nested microcosms where the same cosmic principles are expressed at different scales of reality". This pattern echoes fractal figures, which also present a similar structure at all scales, where paradoxically, the part "contains" the whole.

In this metacognitive model of the universe, which transcends the scientific vision of the world or metascientific model, human consciousness mediates between spiritual and corporeal realities. The knowledge of God defines the goal of human existence and is achieved when the human being assumes his vocation to unite spiritual and corporeal realities, which represents a priestly function proper to his species: to "lower" inspirations or revelations into concrete facts, and to "raise" the offerings of the "earth" towards the "heaven". The human being, recapitulating in himself all the

⁵ Jean-François Froger et Robert Lutz (2003) *Structure de la connaissance*, Editions DésIris.

dimensions of creation⁶, has the vocation to assume this mediating function, represented in the homunculus, where he can potentially resolve the "squaring of the circle", that is to say, answer the enigmas of creation.

This vertical function of the priesthood is also exercised in the horizontality of the corporeal manifestation, where it is necessary to assume the fruitful tension between opposites. This tension is particularly manifested between the masculine and feminine aspects of Adam, which represent the whole of humanity. When these two aspects fertilize each other and, ideally, are perfectly balanced, the relationship flourishes and bears fruit. When one aspect claims to dominate the other with a hegemonic pretension, disaster arises (dis-astres), disorientation sets in, and the "north" is lost. Without correction, this inevitably leads to the absorption of one opposite by the other in a fusional relationship, or to separation when the division between the opposites becomes insurmountable.

The fertile tension between the feminine and the masculine

Among the many binomials that the author proposes to illustrate the dual and paradoxical tension of pairs of opposites, that of the feminine/masculine offers a universal dimension that is particularly important in the current era of sexual (in)decision. The cold/hot binomial is not perceived in the same way by a person from the tropics and a person from the frozen lands; similarly, the light/dark binomial is perceived differently by an inhabitant of the boreal regions and an Ecuadorian... This allows us to address the frequent confusion between sexual determinations (female/male, woman/man) and feminine/masculine functions, which do not overlap with the former.

Managing a balanced tension between opposites applies both on a collective scale (sexual couples) and on an individual scale, in the balance between the masculine and feminine forces that inhabit each human being, man or woman. At this individual level, the "feminine" is associated with goodness, generosity, intuition, mercy, interiority, while the "masculine" is linked to rectitude, demand, reasoning, gratitude, exteriority. In more universal and biblical terms, femininity and masculinity are found in the binomials moon/sun, undifferentiated/differentiated, wet/dry, time/space. In the same way that a fetus is immersed in a world of matter-water (feminine) and must come out "into the light" and air (masculine) at birth, the different subsequent births – psychic, affective, social, spiritual – pass from the "feminine" to the "masculine". This supposes an exit from the "feminine" undifferentiation of the successive matrices (physical, psychic, social and spiritual) towards the differentiation of "masculine" values. In this sense, the "feminine" human soul becomes "masculinized" as it climbs the steps of differentiation, gradually establishing stability in "space" (masculine, square) by emerging from the instability of "time" (feminine, circular). When it comes to being fertilized by higher spiritual realities ("masculine"), every human soul adopts a "feminine" mode of welcoming and accepting the "spouse," as celebrated in the Song of Songs. In other words, circular time inside the womb becomes "masculinized" outside, like an arrow from the past to the future, and human life gradually finds its direction.

⁶ "Man shares existence with stones, life with plants, sensation with animals, knowledge with angels, and if this is so, it is because, in some way, he is each of them", Saint Gregory the Great.

However, like the labyrinth, human beings rarely proceed in a straight and immediate manner; they need to wander, to make detours, and sometimes to go back and take breaks. After work comes rest, which offers the possibility of integrating the work accomplished, of meditating on it in floating attention, free association or daydreaming. This supposes on the one hand that there is prior work to metabolize, and on the other hand that the break is temporary, with limits, in order to then resume the work begun. In the absence of these conditions, rest turns into idleness, "mother of all vices", as the proverb says. The Bible illustrates this universal truth in the figure of the Sabbath, which the author develops at length. It is notable that the asymmetry between the feminine and the masculine, between work and rest, is manifested by the fact that there is not the same number of days of work and rest: one against six. Furthermore, the Sabbath recreation time is only possible because there has been six days of prior work and because it is a sacred time. It is this consecration that allows the work of the following six days to be resumed, and that gives meaning and purpose to the work.

In the absence of consecration of the recreation time, it is transformed into a form of regression to earlier stages of the differentiation process, with the danger of remaining trapped there and not being able to resume the work. On the psychic level, this is equivalent to an immersion in the dark waters of the unconscious, an undifferentiation that the author, showing the coherence of the different scales of reality, associates at the collective level with a flood, and at the cosmic level with the deluge. The recreation time is also that of inspiring dreams, of teaching dreams, of direct revelation where God manifests himself through his angels, messengers or inspirers. In the Catholic tradition, the phenomena of divine revelation through dreams are called *somnia a Deo missa* – meaning dreams sent by God – in line with the biblical prophetic function: "I will appear to him in visions, and in dreams I will speak to him" (Numbers 12:6-8). Prophetic messages then arise outside the limits of the (masculine) Law, which must then be taken up again to interpret these messages. In the absence of consecration of this time, dreams are transformed into senseless ramblings, nightmares, and loss of direction. On a collective level, this rambling translates into the wandering life of the exile, lost in a foreign land.

The workspace is structured around the masculine energy of construction and formation, while playtime is carried out immersed in the feminine energies of renewal and transformation. To build a house, plans are needed with concepts of construction, functionality and aesthetics, masculine functions (air). However, without the raw material of bricks (earth), no house will be built. But a pile of bricks remains as it is if no prior idea presides over its arrangement to raise a building. A house built improvised, without secure foundations guaranteeing its stability, will not be able to stand (Matthew 7:21-29).

Similarly, temporary memory is revealed to be feminine and spatial memory masculine. As a recreational activity, everyone knows that women have no sense of direction, but they remember the details of a meeting held decades ago... This macho joke that I allow myself is precisely to emphasize that, although we cannot identify feminine functions with "women", since function and identity do not exactly overlap, there remains a coherence with the elementary structures described. In the same way, we cannot identify men with brutality and physical violence, although it is obvious that soldiers are mostly men. This slip also allows us to emphasize that recreation time is a playful time, where the laws of morality are temporarily erased and where it is allowed to be "funny" or "witty", to receive

grace or to be inspired by a "genius"⁷. We find it as much in the carnival, like an inverted epiphany, as in the mockery of the king's jester forbidden to the other courtiers. However, this time of joke or inversion of values and hierarchies must be contained in a delimited space so as not to become destructive: "the best jokes are the shortest" and "brevity is the soul of wit."

Consecration also aims to maintain a balance between feminine and masculine virtues that we can synthesize at the collective level in the binomial mercy/justice and at the individual level in that of forgiveness-kindness/demand-rigor. An excessive solarization by masculine virtues leads to a drying up of feeling, kindness, benevolence. In this dehydrated, desert terrain, no seed can grow. The man who, by fleeing his internal femininity, identifies with these masculine virtues transforms them into defects, rigor becomes rigidity, authority turns into authoritarianism, verticality into lack of sensitivity... On the other hand, excessive feminine humility in a woman who rejects her masculine dimension transforms her into a stifling protector, drowning her children in her "limitless love", possessing the other in symbiotic relationships where the exclusion of verticality would castrate psycho-spiritual elevation. Between desert and swamp, when feminine and masculine virtues are properly fertilized, the masculine sun evaporates the excess of emotional water of the feminine swamp, and the feminine waters irrigate the sterile dryness of the masculine desert.

At the collective level, the rigor of the Law is softened by forgiveness, mercy and benevolence. They are translated, for example, at the judicial level by amnesty, pardon or substitute sentences. Extreme indulgence rather favors irresponsibility and allows the release of the basest instincts, in the overprotective matrix of a gang, a clan, a mafia or a sect. Socially, this can translate into harassment, vandalism, sexual abuse or other acts "outside the law". The law in turn curbs the excesses of laxity and false compassion. It is worth noting that the exercise of the law is done in a ritualized space with its procedures and protocols that give it legitimacy. Even gang members assimilate themselves to "new tribes" and sects such as mafias equip themselves with codes, hierarchy, "liturgical" expressions and initiation rites. However, this "sectarian" symbolism, in the sense of a group separated from the community and the purpose of the common good, will be either ineffective or operational for the purposes of the "sect", but will not be able to accomplish the goal of humanity in the universe which is to know God as the perfect answer to the enigma of life and death.

Coherence and effectiveness of ritual consecration

The manipulation of the laws of life, their deformation into operations deviated from the goal assigned to humanity, constitute practices of magic or idolatry, according to biblical language. Similarly, improvised rituals elaborated for purely aesthetic or relaxation reasons, that is, "feminine", contradict the purpose of a true ritual operation. As we have seen, the ritual represents a space of confinement where the established laws and limits (masculine) allow one to recreate oneself in a way that favors renewal and transformation (positive feminine), avoiding dissolution in a lasting undifferentiated dimension (negative feminine). Consequently, one cannot arbitrarily attribute meaning to things, but there are established models in the law of life.

⁷ In French, a comedian is someone who "makes spirit".

The positivity or negativity of any instance, material or spiritual, is not a fixed attribute of the object, but depends on its contextual characteristics at a given moment. A "good" sun heats and illuminates, a "bad" (excessive) sun burns and dazzles. "Good" water hydrates and refreshes, "bad" (excessive) water floods and suffocates. What is produced by excess also occurs by deficiency. The pairs of opposites in the dual manifestation, both physical (dualities of the sensible world) and spiritual (metaphysical dualities of the invisible world), do not exist ontologically, that is, with a reality of their own, in the higher and transcendent principles of the one divinity. Thus, there is no cold or heat in itself, but varying degrees of temperature depending on the perceiver. There is no darkness opposed to light, but varying degrees of luminosity. In Genesis, God created light on the first day and the sun on the third day. What was this light that preceded the creation of the sun if not a principle prior to dual manifestation?

In this sense, Evil does not exist in itself, it was not created, but it manifests a lack of the supreme Good, the source and purpose of both creation and the ritual process. Consequently, it is located outside of creation. Christian theology that translates the biblical worldview will use respectively the terms *Privatio boni* (privation of good) and *Summum bonum* (supreme good), based on doctrinal rectitude (masculine) and the inspiration of tradition (feminine), brought together and interpreted by the magisterial function of the Church. In the metaphysical duality of invisible creation, only incorporeal angelic beings are endowed with an ontological existence: if "Evil" in itself has no consistency, the Evil One (devil) has, on the other hand, a real malignant consistency.

The ritual consecration then establishes a meta-space-time that allows one to escape the coordinates of ordinary space-time and thus access a non-ordinary space-time that escapes the contingencies of ordinary life and opens to higher realities in a safe and fruitful manner. This process ensures that one does not remain trapped in the regressive undifferentiation of cyclical time or subject to the domain of malignant spiritual entities. The ritual offers access to metacognition by establishing a meta-space-time where all particular space-times coexist without canceling each other out. Past and future, exterior and interior, distant and near, coincide without confusion in the specific physical place where the ritual is performed and in the present of the ritual determined by a clearly marked beginning and end. The participants in the ritual strip themselves of their ordinary individuality to put on (cover the nakedness of their ignorance) visible clothes or distinctions that manifest their function and position in the ritual dynamic. The priest, shaman or therapist cease to be any person to become temporarily mediators of a function that transcends them as particular individuals. The patient, imploring or learning, conforms to his determined role in this dynamic, temporarily setting aside his possible social function as a religious, doctor or teacher, and his specific family or friendly ties with other participants.

Apart from the spatio-temporal definition and the function assumed by each participant, the ritual acquires its effectiveness and orientation according to the inner intentionality formulated in the declared objectives, both by each participant and by the "masters of ceremony". It is understood that the masculine function of the objective is more in line with the "masculine" virtues of rectitude and sincerity. Individual requests for healing, teaching, guidance may lack foundation or express a certain ignorance or excess that must be "covered" by the objective of the master or initiator. The latter thus places, with a higher objective that ensures its function, a device that allows both to contain the excess of the individual objectives of the participants and to cover itself, and consequently the participants,

from the deficiencies of the symbolic order that can arise from human weakness: errors, forgetfulness, ignorance or negligence.

A greater degree in the scale of differentiation by a closer conformity to the higher spiritual principles allows to elaborate an ad hoc symbolic structure that finally translates into a more effective and safe ritual action. With this explanation, it is obvious that an incomplete ritual, badly done, performed without a clear goal, by simple curiosity or pretension (recreational or playful), will prove useless in the best of cases and very dangerous in the worst. The absence of the superorder normally established by an adequate ritual, in conformity with the spiritual principles, generates a disorder which is source of physical, psychic or spiritual disorders.

Ritual prevention of incest

Regression in chronological time and to previously undifferentiated states is then permitted as long as it does not constitute a violation of the incest taboo. The author warns us that "the incest taboo protects against what is too familiar." The incestuous context, with or without overt sexual acts, undermines the hierarchical integrity of the family space, establishes contradiction, uncertainty and confusion of status, generating irrational and infertile regressive acts. It constitutes a space of self-referentiality, with cyclical feedback loops that "devour and deny" each other. However, the regressive return to more undifferentiated states may be necessary to rectify or repair previous unresolved blockages in the differentiation process. It is a matter of undoing the badly tied knots that alter the harmony of the fabric of the evolutionary process. "When these knots are undone, the point is lost and spatial stability is undone while the body regains its primitive nudity," as the author points out. Sacred rituality represents a controlled regression that allows discernment between what must be abandoned (confession-renunciation) and what deserves commitment and dedication (rectification-proclamation). The ritual allows one to undo and reorder the knots (masculine aspect), without getting lost in the confusion of regression (feminine aspect), in order to finally be able to "resume" the development of one's life. Consequently, the therapeutic, restorative and healing purpose of the ritual must prevail over its temporary recreational or playful aspects. The orientation of the goal supplants the temporal disorientation of regression, a necessary condition for it to be a space of renewal and transformation. In other words, ritual space-time offers a temporal matrix of death-rebirth.

As we have indicated above, the arrow of spiritual elevation and the process of differentiation determines a transit of the feminine virtues or characteristics towards the masculine ones. The latter, masculine, do not cancel or annul the value of the previous, feminine ones, but integrate and surpass them in a wider space. Learning rigor and rectitude does not imply losing goodness and generosity; on the contrary, they necessarily fertilize each other. This orientation is clearly established in biblical cosmology when God blesses Adam and Eve by saying, "Be fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 1:28), or when he invites Abram to pass from one womb to another, larger and higher: "Leave your country, your kindred, and your father's house" (Genesis 12:1-5).

The ritual space becomes necessary to rediscover the primordial paradisiacal harmony lost due to sin represented by the transgression of Adam and Eve. They remained in the configuration to the desires of God as long as they remained in trust and obedience to the Creator. It is appropriate to say that

there was no solution of continuity between their corporeal and spiritual existence, so a ritual space-time was not necessary. Their growth to be raised to divine consciousness (theosis) simply required feeding on all the trees in the garden, except one. The appropriation of the fruits of the tree of life, the only forbidden one, without going through the preliminary stages of progressive nutrition represents the Promethean leap of the theft of the divine fire. Between the corporeal and spiritual realities, crossed their path the superior intelligence of a being of the intermediate world, spiritual and incorporeal, devil (adversary) or Satan (opponent), whose purpose is to divide and confuse. They ignored the divine warning, the etymology of the term obedience meaning "to listen or understand." They willingly and freely detached themselves from God. In a way, by their decision, they self-exiled themselves from Eden, to go to the barren desert moistened only by "the tears of this valley." The author emphasizes this unpreparedness of Adam and Eve to access plenary knowledge that led to this recurring theme of exile in the Bible, with the expected return to the promised land. The "fall" into corporeal and material reality (the earth), and the consequent exile from spiritual realities (heaven), is reactivated daily by every "sinful" human being. Thus, this reading of traditional cosmology is not a simple obsolete biblical archaeology but a description of our perpetual human status. Since the fall, the ritual operation becomes necessary to temporarily and partially reestablish, in a pedagogical manner, contact with the higher truths of the spiritual world. In this way, the spiritual poison of the serpent, properly used and controlled, becomes a remedy as it happens consistently in the material scale.

Drunkenness or intoxication

The "snake poison" invites us to revisit the notion of toxicity, which does not qualify a substance, but describes a negative relationship between it and its receiver. In the absence of knowledge of the context and characteristics of the two elements, the notion of toxicity is meaningless. Thus, hemlock does not affect sparrows nor does hellebore on quails. On the other hand, water ingested in large quantities at once can kill a human being. It is the strangeness of the substance, in quality or quantity, in relation to the constitution of the receiver who cannot integrate it, which can prove toxic.

This statement, due to the coherence of structures at different scales of reality, applies to psychoactive substances. Because of their potential to connect with higher spiritual realities, they require an appropriate ritual framework in order to elevate the human spirit. In its absence, they "awaken another type of vision that gives preeminence to the natural world" and, in this case, the intoxication produces "symptoms of death, illness, exile and flood". Depending on this insertion or not in a ritually established meta-space-time, the knowledge that is accessed informs and rectifies the soul, or generates a hallucinatory, deceptive and illusory world, "artificial paradises" or "bad trips".

In the biblical cosmology of the Old Testament, it is clearly specified that the frequent notion of trance or transport occurs under the influence of "the Spirit of the Lord" as in the case of the 70 elders who then begin to prophesy (Nm 11:25-29) or as Ezekiel describes when he tells how "this figure stretched out his hand and took me by the hair of my head; and the Spirit lifted me up between heaven and earth, and brought me in visions of God to Jerusalem" (Ezekiel 8:3). To raise him to the holy city (kingdom of God), he was seized by the "head" representing the upper part of his ontological being.

Conversely, profane intoxication becomes "an important representation of the influences of time and flood on a human scale" and "awakens those Dionysian emotions in which intensification makes the subjective disappear until the complete forgetfulness of the self..." as Nietzsche confesses⁸. However, in his self-referentiality, the philosopher of the "will to power" wrongly claims that "under the magic of the Dionysian not only is the alliance between human beings renewed: also alienated, hostile or enslaved nature celebrates its feast of reconciliation with its lost son, man...". Human being is for him "son of nature" (mother nature) and he does not recognize his paternal (heavenly) orphanhood. Leaving aside submissive humility, through a vain pretension to be situated "beyond good and evil", in the incestuous or intra-uterine undifferentiated, his intuition and his desire for reconciliation, for an exit from exile, lead to absurdity, self-destruction and madness.

Many biblical passages evoke drunkenness, bad drunkenness, the forces of dissolution, wine as serpent poison (Proverbs 23:31-33), while others present it associated with abundance and God's blessings (Deuteronomy 32:14, Ecclesiastes 2:3), a symbol of joy and celebration (Psalms 104:15-23). In the book of Genesis, the profane intoxication of wine "is tantamount to submitting to the powers of the flood," while the sacred covenant with God leads Noah to plant a vineyard after the Flood and to become intoxicated with a wine of recreation (nakedness), reconciliation, celebration, and rejoicing (Genesis 9:20-22).

Wine, like all psychoactive substances, is both poison and medicine, and it is the context of the ritual or its absence, once again, that will direct the induced modification of consciousness towards its expansion (illumination and coherence) or its harmful alteration (obscurization and absurdity). Failed initiation with misused visionary substances leads to an inflation of the ego (vanity) which is erroneously equated with an expansion of consciousness (humility). These are the same plants called sacred that, in their profane and playful use, lead to addiction (tobacco, poppy, cannabis, coca, etc.). The Bible mentions more than 200 types of plants for medicinal uses, as well as the ways to use them, including powerful psychoactive plants such as *Datura stramonium* or *Solanum nigrum*. The uncontrolled incestuous regression in the profane use of these plants or substances generates the cyclical loops of dependence and self-destruction. It is not enough to decree the sacredness of plants, it is necessary to establish the ritual framework that sanctifies their use.

We find illustrative binomials of this duality in opposing concepts related to intoxication: addiction/initiation, destruction/construction, inflation/expansion, work/play, intentionality/absurdity...

The desacralization (profanation) of the modern world goes hand in hand with the increase in massive intoxication with psychotropic substances (alcohol, drugs, medications). The "strategic approach to this intoxication has been expelled from our cultural space"⁹. In this total change of perspective, the psychotropic drug becomes a religious substitute, allowing access through intoxication, escape and anesthesia to a "lower form of mysticism" as Philippe De Felice already formulated it in 1936 and

⁸ Nietzsche, Friedrich. (2003). *La naissance de la tragédie*. 5e réimpression. Madrid : Alianza, p. 45.

⁹ Albrecht, Pierre-Yves (1998) *Le Devoir D'Ivresse*. Les Itinérances Du Thérapeute, Georg Editeur.

which he rightly considers, paraphrasing Karl Marx, that "it is not so much religion that is the opium of the people today, but opium that has become the religion of the people"¹⁰.

The teachings of traditional Amazonian medicines

Traditional Amazonian medicines demonstrate expertise in the induction, control and management of altered states of consciousness induced by psychoactive plants or beverages. We will limit ourselves here to considering the ancestral ritual management of ayahuasca (*Banisteriopsis caapi*) as an illustration of this ancient knowledge. It should be noted that all "toxic" plants are potential medicines and that their symbolic representation is almost always linked to the snake in its two aspects of poison or remedy. This dual role is particularly illustrated by the yawar panga ("blood leaves"), a blood purifier, which is also called "machacuy huasca" (machacuy: venomous snake, huasca: rope) and also "huanchahui sacha" which means "plant equivalent (sacha) of huanchahui", a bird that eats snakes. Thus, depending on its use, this plant reveals itself as a poison (poisonous snake) or a remedy against poison (the bird symbolizing a spiritual power capable of destroying toxic forces).

With good reason, the author repeatedly refers to elements of traditional wisdom that resonate with his reading of biblical cosmology.

Thus, the waves of the ocean symbolize a cyclical and oscillating back and forth that creates a certain uncertainty, since each statement can hide a contrary intention. This manifests an unstable state as "this happens in the story of the flood, when spatial stability is completely lost because of the primordial waves". The undulations of the sea evoke the crawling of a "colossal sea serpent". The waves are then associated in biblical cosmology with the "feminine", non-rational side, with dissolution, renovation, death. Precisely, the psychoactive effects of ayahuasca manifest as the succession of waves of intoxication that the natives call "*mareación*" in reference to the ocean tide.

There are multiple similarities between the symbolic attributes of the sea waves and the sea serpent and the characteristics of ayahuasca as described by Amazonian healers, which is why the author is not wrong to consider that "the waves can be interpreted as wild vines".

The same term ayahuasca (aya: death, huasca: rope) underlines the role of link with death. Ayahuasca reestablishes a kind of umbilical cord that allows the return to the primitive womb, a kind of regression in a matrix that allows renovation and transformation. It is the ritual framework that will prevent this regression from being a transgression of the incest taboo and will facilitate the transition from temporary death to rebirth. The confrontation with the fear of death, and its overcoming, is then an integral part of the experience. The temporary dissolution of rational resources and subjective identity with the self allows, in a second stage, the reformulation of a new identity with a higher self.

The feminine dimension of ayahuasca is highlighted in the name of "mother" attributed to it by the indigenous people and its traditional visionary perception as "a woman without a head" (femininity without masculine and mental rationality), or as a non-venomous snake (boa), but capable of causing

¹⁰ Philippe de Félice (1936) Poisons sacrés, Ivresses divines. Essai sur quelques formes inférieures de la mystique, Paris.

asphyxiation by strangulation or compression, like an overprotective mother. Healers warn participants that they must learn "not to let themselves be dominated by ayahuasca".

In its bodily manifestation, ayahuasca is a liana or vine that cannot rise without supporting itself on a tree that serves as its tutor. It should be noted that it develops horizontally and requires a masculine vertical support to fully express its power of connection with higher realities (sky). Otherwise, it will only recreate elements of nature (earth). In the ritual context, indigenous experts provide this masculine complement with their own virile masculinity and the addition of tobacco, the "masculine" plant par excellence. If ayahuasca is of earth and water (liquid, boa), tobacco is of air and fire (smoke).

Women healers do not express their therapeutic power directly but internalize it silently, "in the shadow" of their husbands who externalize the therapeutic operations. The indigenous consider that women have an easier and more direct connection with ayahuasca, being of the same feminine nature, but, in the absence of masculine support, "they twist faster." In other words, without masculine restraint and verticalization, there is a risk that they will access misleading and dangerous knowledge that, ultimately, lead to witchcraft practices.

The dissolving recreation of the lunar cycle of menstruation represents another difficulty in association with an ayahuasca session since two feminine forces (menstrual blood and the feminine identity of ayahuasca) combine, whose synergy jeopardizes the masculine restraint of the session.

The exclusion in the indigenous world of women as "ayahuasqueras" healers and, during sessions, of menstruating women, is attributed to the feminine/masculine schemas of Amazonian cosmology that coincide with biblical cosmology in terms of the recognition of a transcendent order of creation that cannot be transgressed without harmful consequences. The clinic of its practices confirms the validity of these schemas. The interpretation of these concepts as sexist results from the symbolic illiteracy of modernity to which this work attempts to respond.

Uncontrolled ayahuasca intake promotes "idleness and rest that indirectly cause a return to more primitive stages of creation." If masculine cuts have not occurred, the "tentacles" of the vine extend to the point of knocking down walls. Similarly, ayahuasca ends up killing the tree that supports it if its exuberance is not controlled by preventive pruning. Similarly, in its psychoactive effects, the healer will be led to "cut" the intoxication by "masculine" procedures with tobacco, such as blowing its smoke or inhaling its powder in grated form. The ayahuasca vine represents cyclical time, while tobacco, with the masculine healer and the ritual structure, recreates space.

In the process of intoxication induced by ayahuasca, at the somatic level, the autonomic nervous system with its two complementary branches, the sympathetic (stimulation, acceleration) and parasympathetic (relaxation, deceleration) is solicited. These two instances that regulate balance at the unconscious level extend like two intertwined snakes around the central axis of the spine. The functions of the base of the brain, called the archaic brain or reptilian brain, are also activated. Thus, without going into further detail, we see that ayahuasca resonates with many reptilian psychic and bodily instances.

The correct use of ayahuasca, especially with an appropriate ritual form, will guide towards the stimulation of the healing serpent and thus allow access to "good knowledge". By comparison, as God recommends to Moses in the middle of the desert (Numbers 21:8-10), one must look towards

the healing and elevated serpent (non-venomous boa ayahuasca erected on a tree) to protect oneself from the poison of the venomous crawling serpents (personal perversities or arrows of the sorcerer).

The act of “being eaten by the serpent” can symbolize “the devouring powers of ‘time’” as the author warns, but at the same time, in the appropriate ritual context, can respond to a purpose of renovation. In uncontrolled regressive differentiation, the engulfment by the serpent refers to a form of possession or subjugation, that is, a form of infestation by a malignant parasitic entity, whether human or angelic. On the other hand, when an alliance is established between the consumer and ayahuasca, the serpent appears opening its mouth and inviting the supplicant to be engulfed by it. This is a very classic vision of an initiatory stage in traditional Amazonian medicine. This visionary situation does not generate any fear and results in a pleasant incorporation into a restorative matrix. Master healers say it as proof that “ayahuasca loves you.” Ayahuasca thus offers a matrix of transformation and rebirth that reminds us of how Jonah, fleeing God and the mission entrusted to him, finds himself "asleep" (anesthetized, unconscious) in the middle of the storm, thrown into the tumultuous waves of the sea (dissolution, perdition), to then be "swallowed by the whale". In this matrix of death-rebirth, he remembers God who finally restores him to "dry lands" (Jonah 1-2).

The classic traditional ayahuasca session takes place at night and in the "womb" of the maloca or circular communal house (feminine), supported by a central pillar (spatial axis, cosmic tree), framed in a ritual, the intentionality of the master healer and the participants (masculine). It is preceded by a cleansing preparation with purgative plants and baths of aromatic plants, and followed the next day by the interpretation or symbolic reading by the master of the visions that have occurred (masculine integration).

The microcosm of the ayahuasca plant, upon encountering the microcosm of the human being, activates its external function as universal mediator between heaven and earth (priestly function), and internally reestablishes the heart as mediator between its body (earth) and its spirit (heaven). The author rightly concludes that this is "without a doubt the principle underlying the homunculus in traditional medicine and folklore."

The Tribal Context

The Amazonian and Biblical cosmologies of the Old Testament share the fact of being revealed in a tribal context.

The tribal structure places the clan or the extended family as a collective spatial referent, which enters into dual tension with the other tribes. This social organization is built on a civilizational horizon supported by the founding myth of Justice as the supreme value. Stability with the "other", whether another individual, another tribe, external nature, spiritual entities or the divinity itself, is maintained by the regulation of exchanges based on reciprocity. The principle of retributive justice is applied in the Mosaic law of retaliation ("Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot") which is found in an identical way, although unwritten, among the Amazonian ethnic groups.

In this sense, traditional Amazonian medicines have constitutive practices of witchcraft, considered necessary and justified to defend against possible aggressions from the foreign "other". But their use

against members of the clan of belonging represents a more serious betrayal deserving the death penalty.

This system, in Amazonian cosmology, is expressed in the feedback loops of the equivalent and proportional retribution of gifts or favors, of the kidnappings of women between ethnic groups, of blood revenge and of the invisible struggles between healer-sorcerers. The invisible aggressions with "magic arrows" (*virotas*) deserve to be "sent back" in an endless back and forth. Envy and betrayal of "trust" between members of the same community represent in this context the worst sins. Not trusting someone outside the social group does not necessarily represent a sin but rather a manifest naivety. If an outsider to the group betrays, the fault is that of the one who "trusted him too much", as the Amazonian peoples say. The trust granted to an outsider to the group must be established in a formal commitment, a pact, such as the *compadrazgo* (godfatherhood), whose betrayal constitutes the lowest vileness. Similarly, circumcision was practiced ancestrally in the Amazonian ethnic groups as a mark of belonging to the group.

Moses gave the tribes of Israel the Law of the Decalogue where the ninth commandment refers to the betrayal of trust ("You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor") and the tenth to envy ("You shall not covet your neighbor's house, you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his cattle, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's"), (Exodus 20:1-17).

It is also noteworthy that the Amazonian peoples are reluctant to eat rare meat, like the kosher food of the Hebrew people.

Thus, the similarities between the Amazonian and biblical cosmologies of the Old Testament testify to an identical system of values based on their tribal structure and the founding myth of Justice. However, without canceling the identified perennial basic structures, their application or manifestation in chronological time requires an evolution. The implicit revelation of the models of life takes on renewed and broader dimensions to reveal themselves in the spatio-temporal evolutionary manifestation of changing material realities and chronological time. The limitations of this civilizational model emerge in the Old Testament and allow us to visualize the progressive divine pedagogy exercised towards the Hebrew people in a process of progressive differentiation. This collective epic educates us individually as a symbol of personal evolution towards a greater awareness of our spiritual vocation.

The Universality of Biblical Language

Beyond the mythological horizon of Justice, the Old Testament announces the future myth of Love that will be fully realized with the coming of Jesus Christ. The tribal structure as a reference will be overcome by universality as a broader horizon. The next one passes from member of the ethnic community to member of the human community, so that every human being is recognized as a brother.

Solomon announces the replacement of the Just by the Wise. Solomonic justice introduces mercy and demonstrates its ability to surpass blind retributive justice, thus becoming a higher level of justice (1 Kings 3:16-28). Love surpasses Justice without canceling it.

The ten commandments of the Mosaic law, without being canceled, will be surpassed by the eight beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:1; 7:28). The teachings of the Nazarene, son of David, extend those of Moses, claiming his lineage: "For if you had believed in Moses, you would also have believed in me" (John 5:46). Jesus Christ embodies the law of Moses (John 1:17); he did not come to annul it but to fulfill it (Matthew 5:17), with a higher degree of requirement (Mt 5:20-37). This new perspective replaces vengeance with legal justice, reciprocity with mercy and forgiveness, the bread of heaven (mana) with the bread of God, genital circumcision with that of the heart, sexual adultery with adultery committed in the heart, the Sabbath made for man and not the man made for the Sabbath...

If the revelation of the Father is manifested in Creation, that of the Son in the Word, the contemporary revelation of the Spirit and the emergence of the myth of Freedom are prefigured in the events of our time. In this collective exploration towards an adequate understanding of Freedom and a definition of our spiritual identity, our humanity experiences all the symptoms of "re-creation" with its aspects of dissolution and death, expressed in absurd and vain ideologies where relativity, "fluidity", confusion and even the substitution of opposites predominate, an extreme mercy exempt from law. The author formulates it as a way of "invoking time", a forbidden act announcing a new flood. In a reactive manner, others petrify themselves by looking back like Lot's wife (Genesis 19:26-29), clinging to ancient precepts where they confuse rigor with rigidity, authority with authoritarianism, law with legalism.

This spiritual literacy manual provides us with the structural keys to decipher our current events based on perennial and universal patterns. Sticking primarily to the first book of the Bible and more broadly to the Old Testament, it allows us to anticipate the wealth yet to be revealed in the other books of the Holy Scriptures.

The goal of humanity in the universe is to know God as the perfect answer to the enigma of life and death. However, in the story of the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were not fully prepared to face this paradox on a larger scale. In their exile, which is ours, the return home implies knowing the possible and safe paths. The full use of freedom goes hand in hand with the knowledge of the options and their final destiny. Freedom implies Knowledge.

In this sense, this work, more than a manual, represents a "Treatise on Human Freedom".

God leaves man free, but whispers to him the right option, the path to choose, without imposing it: "See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, blessing and curse; therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live." (Deuteronomy 30:15-19). God reveals himself sufficiently to bring us out of our confusion, and hides himself sufficiently not to impose himself. To ironically paraphrase the popular saying, we could say that, paradoxically, "God proposes, man disposes".

Thus, beyond the quest for knowledge, it is a question of restoring trust in God, betrayed in the Garden of Eden, by making faith and obedience prevail. This is why "the ordinances of the Lord are faithful, making wise the simple, a great reward to those who obey them" (Psalm 19:7-12) and if they are hidden from the wise and intelligent, they are revealed to babes (Matthew 11:25).

“The Lord... seek him with all your heart. He is found by those who do not ask for proof, and he reveals himself to those who do not doubt” (Wisdom 1:1-7).

