

Artaud and the Tarahumara: A Mythopoetic Reinterpretation

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Abstract

It is observed that the work of Antonin Artaud holds a relevant place in contemporary thought, as its striking expression enables interdisciplinary dialogues. The peculiarities of his work point to different forms of analysis and interpretation. One of the challenges in understanding his work stems from the fact that Artaud does not usually ground his ideas in a strictly linear, objective, and rational manner. In this sense, specialized literature raises questions about the validity of this artist's narratives. Faced with this scenario, the present study proposes an analysis that takes into account some of these singularities, especially emphasizing the role of the imaginative faculty in Artaud's work. For this research, writings related to his journey to Mexico and his experience among the tarahumara people were selected. This study is theoretically grounded in analytical psychology, considering the two types of thinking outlined by Carl Gustav Jung: directed or linguistic thinking and mythological or fantasy thinking. Furthermore, analyses were carried out on the projective and compensatory contents that emerge from Artaud's fantasies in his relationship with the tarahumaras, and on the importance of the solar myth that permeates this encounter.

Descriptors

Jungian psychology; mythology; imagination; symbol.

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The authors state no professional or personal interest that may create a conflict of interests regarding this manuscript.

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Artaud e os tarahumaras: uma releitura mitopoética

Resumo

Observa-se que a obra de Antonin Artaud possui um lugar relevante no pensamento contemporâneo, pois sua marcante expressão possibilita diálogos interdisciplinares. As peculiaridades de sua obra apontam para diferentes formas de análise e interpretação. Um dos desafios enfrentados para a compreensão de sua obra decorre do fato de que Artaud não costumava fundamentar suas ideias de modo estritamente linear, objetivo e racional. Nesse sentido, emergem na literatura especializada questionamentos sobre a validade das narrativas desse artista. Diante desse cenário, o presente estudo propõe uma análise que leva em consideração algumas singularidades, sobretudo enfatizando o lugar da faculdade imaginativa na obra artaudiana. Para esta pesquisa, foram selecionados os escritos relacionados à viagem ao México e à experiência entre os povos tarahumaras. Este estudo embasou-se na teoria da psicologia analítica, considerando os dois tipos de pensamento delineados por Carl Gustav Jung: o pensamento dirigido ou linguístico e o mitológico ou de fantasia. Além disso, foram analisados os conteúdos projetivos e compensatórios que emergem das fantasias de Artaud na relação que estabeleceu com os tarahumaras e a importância do mito solar que permeia esse encontro.

Descritores

psicologia junguiana; mitologia; imaginação; símbolo.

Artaud y los Tarahumaras: una relectura mitopoética

Resumen

Se observa que la obra Antonin Artaud tiene un lugar relevante en el pensamiento contemporáneo, pues su acentuada expresión hace posibles los diálogos interdisciplinarios. Las peculiaridades de su obra apuntan para diferentes formas de análisis e interpretación. Uno de los retos enfrentados para comprender su obra surge del hecho de que Artaud no suele fundamentar sus ideas de modo estrictamente lineal, objetivo y racional. En este sentido, surgen cuestiones en la literatura especializada a respecto de la validez de sus narrativas. Ante esto, este estudio propone un análisis que tenga en cuenta algunas singularidades, sobre todo enfatizando el lugar de la facultad imaginativa en la obra artaudiana. Para esta investigación, se seleccionaron los escritos relacionados al viaje a

México y a la experiencia entre los pueblos tarahumaras. Este estudio, basado en la teoría de la psicología, consideró los dos tipos de pensamiento delineados por Carl Gustav Jung: el pensamiento dirigido o lingüístico y el mitológico o de fantasía. Además, se analizaron los contenidos proyectivos y compensatorios que surgen de las fantasías de Artaud en la relación que estableció con los tarahumaras y la importancia del mito solar que envuelve ese encuentro.

Descritores:

psicología junguiana; mitología; imaginación; símbolo.

Introduction

In February 1936, Antonin Artaud arrived in Mexico, where he remained for nine months. At the beginning of his stay, he gave three lectures at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), discussing the social and cultural problems of Europe, Surrealism in France, and his participation in this artistic movement, from its initial stages of fervor to the reasons that culminated in its rupture. Then, at the Alliance Française, he gave a lecture on postwar Parisian theater (Mérédiu, 2006/2011). Furthermore, he expressed appreciation for Mexican culture and hoped to discover in Mexico elements capable of reviving the impetus of European culture, which he considered decadent (Artaud, 1936/2021a).

Artaud became significantly involved with Mexican culture, showing interest in the knowledge developed by the indigenous peoples. In this sense, he observed the traditions, geographical landscape, rituals, and ways of life of the tarahumara or Rarámuri indigenous communities, as they are called among the natives. He argued that his trip to Mexico, to the tarahumara peoples, was related to the desire to find a basis for the renewal of European culture, which he understood as bankrupt in perpetuating a rationalist vision, whose application in life, in its different spheres, generates what he called the problem of separate consciousness.

And we think that, for four hundred years, European consciousness has lived on an immense factual error. This fact is the rationalist conception of the world which, applied to our everyday life in the world, generates what I will call the **separated consciousness** (Artaud, 1936/2021b, p. 24, author's emphasis)

Beyond rationalism, Artaud (1936/2021b) identified other conceptions overvalued by the collective consciousness, such as dualism and mechanism, which perpetuate a partial view of life. Artaud's work presents itself as compensatory to the collective consciousness of his time, as it configures the search for a vision of

totality and integration, in the face of the fragmentary perspective within culture, provoking a fundamental division between opposites. What Artaud brings to light with his nonconformity, whose power is expressed in his work, are the latent divisions in the collective consciousness (spirit/matter, consciousness/unconscious, science/religion, man/nature):

For youth, it was reason that invented contemporary despair and the material anarchy of the world, separating the elements of the world that a true culture brought together.

If we have a false idea of destiny, and of its course in nature, it is because we no longer know how to look at nature, to feel life in its totality (Artaud, 1936/2021b, p. 26).

The concerns of his time generated several artistic and literary movements, such as Surrealism, which, among its various purposes, sought to break with the rigid values of collective consciousness. Artaud had an intense participation in this movement, with which he broke because he considered that Surrealism had deviated from its initial purposes. According to Schwartz (2008), Surrealism flourished not only in Europe, but also in some Latin American countries, especially those visited by Surrealist artists. Mexico emerged as a significant destination, as they found a source of inspiration in the country. Among those who participated in the Surrealist movement, Artaud was one of the pioneers to arrive in that country. However, Mexico served as a destination for many other artists, including André Breton, one of the main Surrealist leaders. These artists nurtured a remarkable fascination with indigenous cultures. The relentless search for unadulterated elements fueled the imagination, and these traditions were seen as a source of originality and authenticity, a fertile ground for exploring new creative horizons: "The defense of these cultures is part of the denunciation of European decadence" (Mêredieu, 2006/2011, p. 525).

During his trip to Mexico, Artaud had already broken with the Surrealists, but he still maintained the revolutionary impetus typical of that movement. In this way, he continued to seek a possible path of integration between dream and reality. Furthermore, he maintained a critical stance towards the social, political, and cultural norms of the time, deeply aspiring to a radical transformation of society through the liberation of the creative forces of the unconscious.

During his time in Mexico, Antonin Artaud established a diverse network of interactions, always making his objectives clear: "I came to Mexico in search of political men, not artists. (. . .) And since political men have replaced artists in conducting public affairs, this

task is their responsibility and not that of the artists" (Artaud, 1936/2021c, p. 63). In Artaud's view, artists had lost ground in the public sphere, and thus, influence over cultural matters had become concentrated in the hands of politicians. The author then decided to engage in dialogue with politicians, even considering that engaged artists have the capacity to promote transformations, as they are the true agents of cultural renewal. In this way, he reveals his indignation about the devaluation of artists.

In his relationships with artists, indigenous peoples, and politicians, he sought to denounce the European cultural crisis and, broadening the discussion, also pointed to the negative influence of Europe on Mexican culture. Furthermore, he began to assert his intention to make contact with native peoples to seek the lost "secret."

The indigenous blood of Mexico holds an ancient racial secret, and, before the race is lost, I think it is necessary to ask it about the strength of this ancient secret. While present-day Mexico copies Europe, I believe it is European civilization that should ask Mexico for a secret. The rationalist culture of Europe has failed, and I came to the land of Mexico to seek the foundations of a magical culture that can still spring from the forces of the indigenous soil (Artaud, 1936/2021b, p. 23).

To understand the search for the secret, it is important to recall and reaffirm Artaud's (1936/2021b) thoughts on European culture, which guided him on his journey to Mexico: "we no longer know how to look at nature, to feel life in its totality" (p. 26). The search for the lost secret, a secret that perhaps enabled integration with nature, led Artaud to embark, fundamentally, on a journey among the native peoples to discover something he believed had the potential to revitalize European culture, which, in his view, was in its most profound decline. Thus, the blood that ran in the veins of the tarahumara carried not only oxygen and nutrients, but was also full of ritualistic culture, cultivating the land, planting and harvesting peyote (Artaud, 1937/2020). Artaud (1936/2020) considered these rites so ancient that their origins were unknown, being "older than the Flood" (p. 37). In this way, they were characterized as something unknown, as a secret that needed to be recovered.

In this sense, we present Antonin Artaud's unique perspective on the tarahumara people and his experience among them, considering their peculiar way of portraying the world through a combination of reality and mythopoetic vision, which refers to the psyche's capacity to spontaneously create myths (Boechat, 2009). This activity is related to mythological or fantasy thought (Jung, 1911-1912/2013).

Methodology

We adopted a qualitative, comprehensive approach, grounded in an interpretative phenomenological perspective. The methodological path encompassed the following stages: selection of the books "Revolutionary Messages" and "The tarahumaras," by Antonin Artaud, as they address various aspects of the trip to Mexico, mainly perceptions about the culture and native peoples of that country. Next, secondary literature was selected, consisting of two articles that allowed for dialogue between different readings and interpretations of Artaud's experience in Mexico (Kurt, 2014; Mendonça, 2016).

The data analysis, guided by a phenomenological and interpretative perspective (Breakwell et al., 2010), was developed in four stages: (i) immersion in primary and secondary sources, through attentive and reflective readings, aiming to identify symbolic and experiential aspects; (ii) analytical notes, recording observations arising from the readings; (iii) identification of units of meaning that expressed central aspects of Artaud's lived experience among the tarahumara; and (iv) hermeneutic construction, elaborating interpretations that articulated the emerging themes to the theoretical framework of the study, using symbolic analysis as a parameter, understanding the combined expression of internal and external experiences.

Based on the analysis of primary and secondary sources, the aim was to establish a critical dialogue between different perspectives in order to broaden the interpretative possibilities of Artaud's work. This acknowledges both the singularity and subjectivity of the individual and their experiences, as well as the interpretative activity of the researcher (Breakwell et al., 2010). The analysis of secondary sources, in the hermeneutic stage, assumed a dual perspective: the first refers to the interpretations proposed by Kurt (2014) and Mendonça (2016) on Artaud's work; the second consists of a critical analysis of these interpretations in light of analytical psychology.

Antonin Artaud's relationship with the tarahumara people was analyzed from the perspective of the two modes of thought described by Jung (1911-1912/2013): directed thought and fantasy thought. Considering that Artaud's writing is non-linear, characterized by the presence of imagistic content, the heuristic character of projection (Gambini, 1988; Jung, 1944/2013; von Franz, 1988/1999) and the importance of the solar myth that permeates the relationship between this European artist and the indigenous peoples of Mexico were addressed (Silveira, 1981, 1989).

A mythopoetic reinterpretation

Kurt (2014) questions the authenticity of Artaud's experiences in Mexico, arguing that there is a mixture between what was lived and what was imagined, suggesting that the artist fabricated the "truth" of these experiences. In this case, factual aspects serve as the sole parameter:

In fact, it may be said that the Western tradition of the drug pilgrimage to Mexico may have found its origin in Artaud, and not Carlos Castaneda. But many questions remain concerning Artaud's purported journey to the Sierra Tarahumara, including the veracity of his observations on the Rarámuri themselves. In order to reveal the factual limits of Artaud's reportage, this paper situates his literary works on the Tarahumara within a larger ethnographic and anthropological framework in order to suggest that he fabricated, exaggerated, and embellished the "truth" of his experiences among these mystical people. (Kurt, 2014, pp. 28-29).

Mendonça (2016), in turn, conducts a historiographical analysis of Artaud's trip to Mexico, seeking to observe Artaud's theatrical conceptions of that period, as well as the contradictions present in his travelogue. In this case, the interpretation of Artaud's work is one-sided, as it addresses the way he constructed his arguments as something bordering on delirium and contradicting modern positions, thus disregarding precisely the objectives of renewing European culture through contact with the tarahumara:

The sensational claim made by Artaud was that in Mexico, during the period in which he was writing this text, a movement had arisen to reconquer this secret and, when the country conquered it, there would be no weapon that could stand against it. This comment could be considered almost a "delirium" on the part of the French artist in the face of a country going through a political context about which he knew almost nothing. And if, on the one hand, he was modern in his artistic conceptions, he became anti-modern because of his almost conservative desire to find an ideal indigenous culture, without crises, transformations and external influences (Mendonça, 2016, p. 75).

The perspectives presented should be taken into consideration, but it is important to emphasize that Antonin Artaud's work challenges conventional representations, as it explores emotional intensity and subjective content. Therefore, literal interpretations can lead to the loss of important nuances in the author's arguments and proposals.

In our view, the possible ambiguities present in his work do not diminish its impact, as they allow for the recognition of impulses and content that arise from the boundary between the tangible and the imagined, that is, the unconscious. This requires other ways of observing phenomena. Thus, when Artaud (1936/2021b) refers to Mexico, he goes beyond the concrete Mexican territory, also addressing imaginary aspects:

Unlike modern European culture, which has become senselessly fragmented into forms and aspects, the eternal culture of Mexico possesses a unique aspect. This is precisely what I wanted to get to: every culture of synthesis has a secret. Over time, and under the external influence of European civilization, Mexico abandoned the knowledge and use of this secret, but – and this is the sensational event of the time – we have seen a movement emerge in Mexico to reclaim it.

When Mexico has truly reclaimed and resurrected its culture, cannons or airplanes will be powerless against it.

Pay attention to what I am about to say; these are not lines from a pamphlet. Beneath a childish appearance, this statement holds a fundamental truth (Artaud, 1936/2021b, p. 65).

Although Artaud deepened his knowledge of the culture of these indigenous peoples through his experience with the tarahumara, examining their customs, beliefs, mythology, and other aspects, his work is not limited to the academic sphere, so as to strictly frame it within the contexts of anthropological or historical research. It is important to note that the trip to Mexico continued to be a source of creative inspiration until the end of his life, especially in his "Tutuguri," written in 1947 and reformulated in 1948 (Artaud, 1947/2020), the year of his death. By situating his work within the context of the artwork, it is possible to include his aesthetic and psychic experience, without being confined to a logical, explanatory, and factual perspective. On the contrary, the creative expression of ideas, feelings, and even the fantastic elements of the narratives is acknowledged.

At the heart of his artistic and revolutionary vision was the dimension of interiority as something of great relevance. In this way, his subjective expressions could never be excluded, and his experiences could not be understood solely through the external dimension to which facts relate. Artaud draws attention to a poetics of thought. By examining his words, one can observe some of the paths followed in his creative process:

Like life, like nature, thought goes from the inside out before going from the outside in. I begin to think in

emptiness and from emptiness I go towards fullness, and when I reach fullness I can fall back into emptiness. I go from the abstract to the concrete and not from the concrete to the abstract. To block thought in the exterior and study it in what it can do is to misunderstand the internal and dynamic nature of thought. It is to not want to feel thought in the movement of its internal destiny, which no experience can capture. I call poetry, nowadays, the knowledge of this internal and dynamic destiny of thought. To rediscover its profound nature, to feel alive in its thought, life rejects the spirit of analysis where Europe lost itself.

Poetic knowledge is internal, poetic quality is internal. There is a movement today to identify the poetry of poets with the internal magical force that provides a path to life and that allows one to act upon it (Artaud, 1936/2021b, p. 30).

We therefore highlight the psychic aspects of the work of art, considering Antonin Artaud's accounts to be of great importance in understanding his creative trajectory. As we have already said, we cannot understand Artaud's trip to Mexico within the field of academic research, but as an artistic experience, that is, within the dimension of poiesis, a word of Greek origin, from which the term poetry derives and which reflects a more comprehensive vision related to the creative act. Thus, we can affirm that the poetic is rooted in action, in the poetic act, whose power culminates in creation, production, that is, in the expression of the authenticity inherent in each individual through the creative act. This action is outside the sphere of automatism, mechanization or functionality, permeating the dimension of meaning:

In and through "poiesis," reality itself is destined for man so that he may realize it in a fullness that reality itself cannot achieve. In and through "poiesis," reality itself is constituted as language, world, truth, meaning, time, and history, in any culture (Castro, 2009, p. 12, author's emphasis).

In this sense, Castro (2015) situates poiesis as a mediator of both what is and what is not, whose movement encompasses the continuity and metamorphosis of the surrounding reality. Similarly, Artaud highlights poetry as a path that allows action upon life, as something capable of recreating the inner and outer worlds.

Artaud does not exclude the use of imagination in the creative process. On the contrary, his approach situates imagination within the realm of poetic knowledge, not as something merely fantastical, but as an intrapsychic immersion that offers a deeper

understanding of the unconscious dimension. At various points in his writings, Artaud mentions the use of the imaginative faculty, indicating a recognition of this process, but at no point does he even suggest that one should establish control over the imagination. With this, he is not intentionally deceiving or distorting reality. His goal is to explore the imaginative faculty intensely, embedded in a poiesis capable of establishing a dialogue between inner and outer realities. The use of this faculty becomes a path or method of creation.

I know almost everything that history teaches about the diverse races of Mexico, and I confess to having allowed myself to dream, like a poet, about the things it doesn't teach. Between the known historical facts and the real life of the Mexican soul, there is an immense margin where imagination – and I would even dare to say, personal intuition – can freely indulge itself (Artaud, 1936/2021d, p. 69).

In his text "The Peyotl Ritual Among the Tarahumara," Artaud points out:

"To re-establish yourself in the godless entity that assimilates and produces you as if you were producing yourself, and as if you were producing yourself in the Void and against it, at every instant, you reproduce yourself." These are the exact words of the indigenous chief, and I am content to reproduce them, not as he pronounced them, but as I have **reconstructed** them under the effect of Ciguri's fantastic illuminations (Artaud, 1936/2020, p. 8, author's emphasis).

Ciguri is the "apex of the Tarahumara religion" (Artaud, 1936/2020, p. 13). It is a rite in which peyote is ingested, a rite of annihilation and creation. This duality placed Artaud within rituals about which he knew nothing, creating fertile ground for projections (Gambini, 1988; von Franz, 1988/1999; Jung, 1944/2013) related to the context of the myths of death/rebirth of the Sun God (Silveira, 1981, 1989; Jung, 1911-1912/2023). Artaud does not reproduce the words of the indigenous leader, but reconstructs them.

The heuristic character of projection

At the end of August 1936, Artaud began his journey to the tarahumara mountains, largely undertaken on horseback. Amidst the slow pace and the changing light throughout the day, Artaud perceived a variety of signs in the mountains: a man being tortured, faces of gods, a naked man at a window, drowned men, a statue of Death holding a child: "What fascinates Artaud is the teeming

world of signs and the fact that the marvelous is everywhere there" (M eredieu, 2006/2011, p. 551). This marvelous world is described in its duality, factual and imaginary: the signs were imprinted on the mountains by the first human beings who served there; the signs would relate to Artaud's subjective aspects. He himself comments: "I cannot say what, in the mountain or in myself, had been cursed, but I saw analogous optical miracles manifest themselves at least once a day during my journey through the mountain" (Artaud, 1936/2020, p. 34). Artaud could not say whether what was cursed was the mountain or himself, but he did not deny that there was escape and curse. Thus, observe the free flow of unconscious processes and the use that Artaud makes of his imaginative faculty, so that conscious psychic experience can be dimensioned from its double: the unconscious.

Artaud's work is a protest against separation, as he considers that division conceives death and leads to stagnation. Artaud emphasizes the importance of the internal movement of thought, of a reality mediated by subjective inner processes in connection with external reality. These arguments are aligned with Jung's (1921/2013) view that reality is not simply perceived, but is valued by the psyche, making reality "alive." In this sense, the psyche creates realities, mediated above all by fantasy. Fantasy would therefore play a fundamental role in the psyche, acting as a conciliatory force, capable of uniting the inner and outer worlds, establishing a connection between the opposing tendencies that separate subject and object.

In this context, it is important to emphasize that Artaud (1936/2021b) sought to engage dialectically with the scientific paradigm of his time, criticizing above all the fragmented view of science, with its specializations that prevent a more integrated perception of reality. He also pointed out that science has petrified reason. And, in a way, reason has obscured science. His criticisms of the academic sphere aimed to reconcile the other aspects denied by the rationalist worldview.

Regarding self-knowledge, it is important to revisit the point discussed earlier about the process of fantasy formation. Jung (1911-1912/2013) distinguishes two types of thought that occur in psychic dynamics: directed or linguistic thought and mythological or fantasy thought. Directed thought concerns the processes of consciousness; therefore, it is logical and adaptive, directed outward, towards external reality. Connected to the linguistic dimension, it seeks to explain reality in a causal and linear way. On the other hand, when directed thought is suspended, a loosening occurs that allows thought to break with the logic of linearity, adopting a circular perspective. Mythological or fantasy thought, in turn, operates through a succession of images that arise

spontaneously, which arouse sensations, feeding the processes of fantasy, so that external reality loses its primacy and, in many moments, is not shaped according to how it presents itself tangibly, but according to internal images. Fantasy thinking is governed by the unconscious dimension, being spontaneous creations of the psyche. Regarding this type of thinking, Jung (1911-1912/2013) emphasizes that: "the common language calls this thinking 'dreaming'" (p. 39, author's emphasis). According to Boechat (2009), the two forms of thinking mentioned are in constant alternation in the psychic dynamics of the individual.

This connection between the inner and outer worlds can occur through projection. This is an indirect path to knowledge, because, in truth, we do not project; it is the unconscious that projects (Jung, 1944/2013). This phenomenon can occur in clinical settings through transference and countertransference relationships (Jung, 1945/2013), in the production of knowledge (Jung, 1911-1912/2013), and in encounters between different peoples (Gambini, 1988). In the latter case, these encounters can lead to domination and massacre. In the specific case of the relationship established between Artaud and the tarahumara (Artaud, 1937/2020, 1936/2020), there was a search for characteristics that could rescue Europe from complete decadence. In this way, there was the possibility of convergence between self-knowledge and knowledge of the world.

The way an individual relates to fantasy not only reveals aspects of their connection to the unconscious, but is also shaped by the influence of the spirit of their time. Thus, in a predominantly rationalist era, fantasy tends to be underestimated (Jung, 1921/2013). Artaud's work, to a certain extent, seeks to go against the values cherished by the collective consciousness of his time, which was predominantly rationalist. His intention is to include the unconscious and its manifestations. It cannot be ignored that the reconciliation between "dream and reality" was a premise of the Surrealist artistic and literary movement, which claimed the alliance of the unconscious and conscious dimensions. Fantasy is an activity related to the unconscious that, in a way, seeks the integration between objective reality and psychic reality. Jung (1921/2013) describes fantasy as "the mother of all possibilities" (p. 66), emphasizing its creative potential. While its contents are influenced by consciousness, they are predominantly unconscious and therefore evoke a certain strangeness. To prevent understanding them from becoming a Herculean task, one way to comprehend fantasy is to avoid interpreting it literally. Instead, one must emphasize its possible meanings. In this sense, fantasy is often considered taboo within the scientific field. Even though psychology is embedded in this context averse to understanding

the processes of fantasy, Jung believes it is its role to recognize and understand it.

The mythical theme of the Sun God

In Artaud's work, a strong presence of mythological thought or fantasy can be observed. Through images, Artaud "dreamed" of the possibility of a revolution of consciousness, which could culminate, more broadly, in a revolution in culture. It is, above all, a conciliatory "dream" between inner and outer realities, something that begins from within and culminates outside. It concerns a search for unity, in which integration with an original past, the ancient, can become a channel for the emergence of a new culture. In this way, he portrays:

To a greater or lesser degree, and according to the strength of their own genius, the unconscious of each human being possesses a treasure of archaic images that the ancient races of Mexico had covered with a mantle of impenetrable allegories. Along with the indispensable social and economic revolution, we all hope for a revolution of consciousness that will allow us to heal life (Artaud, 1936/2021e, p. 81).

In many cases, rational thought and explanatory language become insufficient to express the truths of the soul. Myths are associated with what cannot be expressed solely through logical discourse (Boechat, 2009). From this perspective, Jung (1961/2016) points out that mythical imagination is present everywhere, but is often neglected, resulting in the loss of the capacity for confabulation, so that the mythical side becomes weakened or denied. This reflects the diminished power of the universe of symbols. This tendency is driven by the strong cult of critical reason and the unilateral identification with consciousness, resulting in the rejection of unconscious processes and their contents, due to their symbolic character and almost always obscure nature according to the standards of logic. However, Jung emphasizes that mythologizing is a vital activity, despite appearing to be mere speculation.

Mythological thinking, contrary to what is often assumed, is not something infantilized, rather, it pertains to processes inherent to the human being and to the world. Therefore, we can conclude that creative fantasy has not only personal origins, but also suprapersonal ones, a theme studied meticulously by Jung (1911-1912/2013). For him, fantasies, dreams, and myths intertwine, revealing the fabric of the collective unconscious. Among ancient peoples, mythological thought predominated, characterizing itself as a way of understanding oneself and the world around them.

This activity of the ancient spirit acted in an essentially artistic way. The aim of interest does not seem to have been to understand the “how” of the real world with the greatest possible objectivity and accuracy, but rather to adapt it aesthetically to fantasy and subjective hopes (Jung, 1911-1912/2013, p. 41, author's emphasis).

Regarding the function of myths, Campbell (1949/2007) states that they provide symbols that propel the human spirit forward, both personally and culturally. Following this line of reasoning, it is understood that Artaud, moved by the European cultural crisis, felt drawn to the symbolic and spiritual richness of the tarahumara. Thus, he could find the source from which collective symbols spring, through a movement seeking to reclaim the power of the mythical universe, that is, an ordering function of myth capable of restructuring culture:

For if the Mexican revolution is not exclusively Indianist in the sense understood by the young intellectuals of France, it nonetheless attempts to resurrect the principles and forms of pre-Cortesian culture. The thought of the French youth, and in this respect it is certainly a universal thought, desires a return to the sources, is entirely imbued with the dreams of the primitive unconscious, and seeks to transform this dream into reality. This is why it sees, in the buried traditions of Mexico, a means of saving life (Artaud, 1936/2021f, p. 83).

Through creative fantasy rooted in mythical thought, the human psyche plays a fundamental role in the “re-creation” of the world. In its mythopoetic capacity, that is, in its spontaneous way of creating myths, lies the possibility of reconstructing meaning and rescuing the ordering function of the psyche and the world (Boechat, 2009). This approach reflects a valuing of creativity embedded in artistic manifestations, which allow for an understanding of the world and oneself. Recreation would therefore occur through its poesis. In this sense, Artaud's literary work, related to the tarahumara, is not focused solely on the purpose of factually reporting how the world is, but, above all, on the possibility of recreating the world with threads of hope.

In Jung's (1961/2016) encounter with the Pueblos in New Mexico, the importance of the mythical theme of the Sun God is highlighted, who, in his first rays, presents himself as a divinity:

No one can escape the powerful impression that the Sun makes; however, watching these mature, extremely dignified men, overcome with irrepressible emotion when speaking of the Sun, was a new experience for me, one that touched me deeply (Jung, 1961/2016 p. 252).

In Kenya and Uganda, the elgonys spat into their hands and extended them towards the sun, which was venerated at the moment it rose, receiving the name "Adhista." The sun's rays appeased the anguish caused by the possibility of the end of the world, typical of the nocturnal experience. Jung's account evokes the feeling caused by the auroras, which he was able to experience in those days:

At that latitude, dawn was an event that always captivated me. It was less the bursting forth, magnificent in itself, of the first rays, than what followed. (. . .) Initially, everything was a violent contrast between light and dark; then, everything took shape and form in the light that filled the entire valley with a compact clarity. Higher up, the horizon radiated a white light. Little by little the light ascended, seeming to insinuate itself into the very objects that were illuminated from within and ended up becoming transparent like colored glass, transforming everything into shimmering crystal. (. . .) My impression, at those moments, was that I was in a temple. It was the most sacred hour of the day. Before this splendor, I experienced an insatiable admiration, or rather, a timeless ecstasy (Jung, 1961/2016, p. 269).

In Artaud, we can recognize that "figures connected with the sun strongly attracted him" (Silveira, 1989, p. 13). Thus, he wrote about Montezuma, emperor of the Aztecs; about Heliogabalus, king of Ephesus (Artaud, 1934/1991) and the poem "Tutuguri" (1947/2020). The mythical theme of the Sun-God appears as a vital center for the tarahumara and their rituals structured in numerical signs and in the celebration of the Sun's victory over darkness. Underlying Artaud's tragic life is the solar myth of hope for renewal (Silveira, 1981, 1989).

According to Boechat (2009), the mythopoetic process allows the psyche to act both through linear thought and through the circular process of fantasy. These two modes of thought are directly related, alternating between dream and reality, in an adaptive sense to the world and to unconscious processes. This conjunction characterizes symbolic thought, as an elliptical form of thought, which activates the symbolic function of the unconscious. Artaud's writing about the tarahumara alternates directed, linear, descriptive processes with mythical thought, in which fantasy takes precedence. This characteristic may hinder the comprehension of readers who seek to grasp phenomena in a homogeneous way. However, we consider that Antonin Artaud's work requires the conjunction of the two forms of thought – directed and fantasy – to be understood in its entirety.

Final considerations

This study sought to contribute to critical reflection on how literary works can be observed from different theoretical, methodological, and interpretative lenses; more specifically, it hopes to enrich and broaden the understanding of Antonin Artaud's work, particularly regarding his trip to Mexico. To this end, we considered the symbolic and prospective aspects of fantasy, beyond the literal and causal framework that can restrict the analysis of his texts to a reductive perspective.

Thus, we begin with some questions: was Artaud only talking about an external reality? Or was he approaching the tarahumara people through a symbolic understanding? Given the creative complexity of Antonin Artaud, which is symbolic and non-linear, interpretative models are needed that combine a causal perspective with one that takes into account fantasy and its symbolic aspects, including the prospective dimension which, in the specific case of Artaud's trip to Mexico, concerns the search for the secrets of the native peoples for the renewal of European culture, secrets based on the yearning for the mythical theme of the Sun God.

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