

## “THE ANIMIST IS ALWAYS THE OTHER”: THE ENCHANTMENT OF OBJECTS AND THE ANALYTICAL EXPERIENCE

---

THAIS KLEIN<sup>1</sup>; FERNANDA PACHECO FERREIRA<sup>1</sup>; JULIO SERGIO VERZTMAN<sup>1</sup>

### Thais Klein<sup>1</sup>

Psicanalista. Doutora em Teoria Psicanalítica pela Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ). Doutora em Saúde Coletiva (IMS-UERJ). Professora adjunta da Universidade Federal Fluminense e da Pós-Graduação em Teoria Psicanalítica (UFRJ).

### Fernanda Pacheco Ferreira<sup>2</sup>

Doutora em Teoria Psicanalítica pela Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ). Professora do curso de Psicologia da Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro e do Programa de Pós-Graduação em Teoria Psicanalítica da UFRJ.

### Julio Sergio Verztman<sup>2</sup>

Psicanalista, psiquiatra, professor permanente do Programa de Pós-Graduação em Teoria Psicanalítica da UFRJ e do MEPPSO IPUB.

<sup>1</sup>Universidade Federal Fluminense. Rio de Janeiro/RJ, Brasil.

<sup>2</sup>Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro. Rio de Janeiro/RJ, Brasil.

**ABSTRACT:** This article aimed to revisit the concept of animism in psychoanalysis through the provocations of Amerindian perspectivism. This involves creating space to conceive forms of alterity not solely anchored in totemism and the modern division between nature and culture. Winnicott's considerations on the self and objects serve as a fulcrum to resonate within psychoanalytic theory and practice the twists in our own foundations rooted in animism and totemism. The intention is to interpose the psychoanalytic anchoring in modern colonialist thought and, through the enchantment of objects, glimpse something that eludes our own reflection. After all, the animist is not always the other.

**Keywords:** animism; totemism; psychoanalysis; anthropology; perspectivism.

**RESUMO: “O animista é sempre o outro”: o encantamento dos objetos e a experiência analítica.** O objetivo do artigo é revisitar a noção de animismo em psicanálise a partir das provocações do perspectivismo ameríndio. Trata-se de abrir espaço para conceber formas de alteridade não apenas ancoradas no totemismo e na divisão moderna entre natureza e cultura. As considerações de Winnicott sobre o *self* e os objetos servirão de ponto de apoio para reverberar na teoria e na clínica psicanalíticas as torções em nossas próprias bases sustentadas no animismo e no totemismo. Espera-se interpolar a ancoragem psicanalítica no pensamento moderno colonialista e, pelo encantamento dos objetos, entrever algo que escapa ao nosso próprio espelho – afinal, o animista nem sempre é o outro.

**Palavras-chave:** animismo; totemismo; psicanálise; antropologia; perspectivismo.

DOI - <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/1809-4414-2023-019>

All content in this journal, except where otherwise identified, is licensed under license Creative Commons (cc by 4.0)

It does not seem wrong to assert that “the market went into a frenzy” or that “artificial intelligence provided a certain solution to a problem.” In both statements, those endowed with intentionality<sup>1</sup> do not coincide with human agents - they are, in general, things. What a strange possibility in a world governed by enlightened reason that inanimate objects are supposedly granted with intentionality. As an exclusive attribute of humans, intentionality belongs to the universal subject of knowledge, considered a neutral observer of the world that, as an object, must be known. Consciousness is animated, but things are inert in this equation - each in its place: subject and object. Endowing things with intentionality exceeds the scope of science. The perspectives supporting this attitude end up being relegated to the condition of primitive, magical, or exotic cosmologies. From the perspective of objectivist or naturalistic epistemology, the intentional attitude of the world indicates a mistaken or simplistic solution that ignores elementary scientific processes and laws - the word animism is often synonymous with primitivism. Even though the market is in a frenzy, the animist is always the other.

In this context, the supposed universality of the subject of modern knowledge is anchored in the delegitimization of other cosmologies. Its consolidation was associated with the bourgeois secularization of European thought and the experience of the Eurocentric capitalist mode of production that supported the modern knowledge imposed on the global South. Therefore, modern epistemology is closely linked to colonialism, becoming globally hegemonic in conjunction with colonial dominance. Its supposed neutrality, anchored in a separation between the subject and object of knowledge and other pairs of opposites, is part of the construction of a strongly racist hegemonic discourse that consecrated Europe as the epicenter of enunciation from which patterns of civilization and knowledge production were outlined. It is a division between modern reason and other reasons, modern man and other existences - existences of bodies and places subordinated by coloniality (FANON, 1952/2008). The denial of epistemic otherness is, therefore, one of the important aspects of colonialism that continues to this day (CASTRO-GÓMEZ, 2005).

The issue of alterity is central in this context: for Viveiros de Castro (1992), if Europeans were interested in indigenous peoples because they saw in them objects to be exploited, the Tupi, on the other hand, approached them “in their full alterity” (p. 26). In other words, the presence of Europeans may have been experienced as a possibility of self-transformation, that is, of broadening conceptions of oneself and the world. A well-known parable by Lévi-Strauss (1952/1993; 1955/2020) helps to outline differences in these perspectives regarding alterity. According to the author (LÉVI-STRAUSS, 1952/1993), in the Antilles, while the Spaniards investigated the absence or presence of a soul in indigenous bodies through conversion, the indigenous people set out to submerge the whites to see if their bodies rotted like those of their counterparts. While for the Europeans, the possibilities of similarity and difference were attributes of the soul, for the indigenous people, the issue resided in the body. The Europeans seem not to have questioned the body; after all, animals also have it. Regarding indigenous peoples, the soul of Europeans was not the point of doubt - animals, some artifacts, and specters of the dead are also animated (VIVEIROS DE CASTRO, 2015a). As Viveiros de Castro (2015a) indicates, “despite an equal ignorance regarding the other, the other of the Other was not exactly the same as the other of the Same” (p.36).

The term “soul” comes from the Latin “anima,” meaning breath or vital principle. For the colonizer, the only one animated by the divine breath, there was nothing more “natural” than to explore the surrounding world, which, when objectified, comes to life through the actions of the “men of merchandise” to use an expression by Kopenawa (KOPENAWA & ALBERT, 2015). In contrast, the possibility of attributing a vital principle to other beings was circumscribed by evolutionary anthropology as a “primitive” form of thought called animism, as described by Edward Tylor (STUTZMAN, 2023). The shifting of the vital breath away from the human figure went against the evolutionary ideas that marked anthropology at the time, relegating animism to primitivism, i.e., to a belief inferior to modern European scientific thought.

Now, psychoanalysis is part of an epistemological framework that bears the mark of modernity inseparable from coloniality (PAVÓN-CUÉLLAR, 2021). On the other hand, it also reveals and upholds the inherent limit of modern European rationality, in the face of which Freud’s discovery appears as a rift – this tension will not be different regarding animism. Freud’s considerations on animism and totemism paradoxically hint at lines of continuity and rupture with the modern tradition. With the subtitle “Some Points of Agreement between the Mental Life of Savages and Neurotics,” “Totem and Taboo” (FREUD, 1913/2012), a Freudian text in which the presence of evolutionary anthropology<sup>2</sup> is notable, concerns

---

<sup>1</sup> It is important to highlight that the notion of intentionality used throughout this article refers to the phenomenological tradition, more specifically to the considerations of Merleau-Ponty, which marks lines of continuity and difference with Husserl’s phenomenology. The philosophical project initiated by Husserl emerges as an alternative to philosophies centered on the activity of consciousness understood as a power or thinking substance distanced from the world. The conceptions of the so-called ‘second Husserl,’ consolidated around the notion of *Lebenswelt*, make room for a philosophy of lived experience and contact before predicative or pre-reflective engagement with the world. The conception of an intentionality of consciousness goes against the idea of consciousness in a pure state and is articulated with the very act of knowledge. Merleau-Ponty, in turn, especially in his later writings, engaged in a frank dialogue with psychoanalysis, shifting a philosophy originating from the tradition of consciousness philosophies toward a philosophy of intercorporeality and the unconscious. For a deeper understanding of the definition of intentionality and the dialogue between psychoanalysis and Merleau-Ponty, see Coelho Jr. (1991).

<sup>2</sup> Domiciano and Dunker (2021) conducted a study on the German index of names mentioned by Freud, considering his entire body of work, and revealed a profusion of citations, especially of authors from so-called evolutionary anthropology. They found two citations to Lewis Morgan (1818-1881), six to Edward Tylor (1832-1917), thirteen to William Robertson Smith (1846-1894), and thirty-one to James Frazer (1854-1941), with twenty-seven of those citations found in “Totem and Taboo.”

an important example of support for modern colonialist thinking. On the other hand, it also opens up possibilities for a shift away from the teleological developmental logic that aims to overcome primitivism. This is because, by indicating that the “comparison between the psychology of primitive peoples and the psychology of neurotics is destined to find numerous points of agreement” (1913/2012, p. 20), Freud maintains that animism, present in “primitive peoples,” this other stranger to the modern European subject, is not overcome but continues to produce effects, as seen in neurotic symptoms. Endowing things with a soul would not only refer to another stranger but to all of us. Strangeness is more familiar than modern European thought can conceive.

Freud’s commitments to evolutionary theorists, in turn, reveal the central point of his considerations anchored in the modern and neurotic subject. In this context, animism, considered a system of thought like religion and science, would be the most primitive of these. Magic, as an animistic technique, would, in his words, lead to a “mistake that leads it to replace the laws of nature with psychological laws” (FREUD, 1913/2012, p. 106). This mechanism is analogous to the hallucinatory satisfaction of desires and the omnipotence of thought; “to summarize, it can be said that the principle guiding magic, the technique of the animistic mode of thought, is the principle of ‘omnipotence of thought’” (FREUD, 1913/2012, p. 108). In animistic logic, omnipotence serves itself: attributing a soul to things is analogous to the attempt to control them. Although the text on narcissism was published only the following year, in “Totem and Taboo” (FREUD, 1913/2012):

The animistic phase would correspond to the narcissistic phase, both chronologically and in its content; the religious phase would correspond to the phase of object choice, characterized by the child’s attachment to their parents; while the scientific phase would find an exact counterpart in the phase in which the individual reaches maturity, renounces the pleasure principle, adapts to reality, and turns to the external world in pursuit of the object of their desires (p. 113).

For the man of science, intentionality cannot refer to an external object – the attribution of enchantment to things is considered a primitive attitude, a self-centeredness projected onto the world. In this context, the possibility of a relationship with objects depends on an operation analogous to scientific thought, which considers them immovable externality, separate from the subject of knowledge. The animists would be trapped in their own mirror – the ‘soul’ of things would reflect an omnipotent attempt to dominate them. In Freud’s words: ‘In the animistic era, the reflection of the internal world is destined to obscure the other representation of the world, the one that we seem to perceive’ (p.108).

In “Totem and Taboo” (FREUD, 1913/2012), animism is therefore considered analogous to primitive thought, being overlapped but not eliminated by totemic organization, which establishes the order of the symbol and creates a division between nature and culture. It is the murder of the father of the primal horde and the establishment of a totemic fraternity that limits omnipotence - the operation of identification with the murdered father, represented by the totemic meal, marks the overlap of primitivism. Phylogenetically, animism gives way to totemism; in ontogeny, omnipotence is blocked by the paternal law, but neurotic symptoms reveal its persistence. Evolutionary anthropology serves as an anchor point to trace the points of agreement as indicated in the subtitle between “the mental life of savages and neurotics.”

The anthropology developed by authors mentioned by Freud, such as Tylor and Frazer, was, in turn, questioned by different figures in this field throughout the 20th century, especially with the advent of ethnography, which had Malinowski as one of its main proponents. One of the strongly criticized aspects concerns the ethnocentric starting point, which, by taking the modern European man as a reference, ends up circumscribing other forms of thought as primitive – those trapped in their own mirror were not exactly the animists... However, despite these criticisms, the dialogue between psychoanalysis and anthropology remained central for both fields. This is how, years later, Lévi-Strauss provided a way forward for the impasse raised earlier by Malinowski, reconfiguring the very notion of totemism by shifting it away from evolutionary anthropology. In Lévi-Strauss’s structural anthropology, totemism ceased to be an institution and became a method of classification and a system of meaning. This, in turn, was one of the main theoretical foundations from which Lacan operated a return to Freud’s work, delineating the paternal law as a symbolic order articulated with language.

While Lévi-Strauss mainly focused on a revision of totemism, the concept of animism remained outside the spotlight in both anthropology and psychoanalysis. An important rehabilitation of animism came with Philippe Descola (1986) in his monograph on the Achuar of the Ecuadorian Amazon. Descola (1986) argues that animism, and not just totemism, reveals a form of social relationship, a form that extends the field of human relations to a much broader sphere than that of humans alone - implying questions about the modern division between nature and culture, updated in the conceptions of animism and totemism (DESCOLA, 2016).

However, from the discussion sparked by Viveiros de Castro about Amerindian perspectivism, animism is interrogated concerning discontinuities between the natural and cultural realms, highlighting its grounding in modern and colonialist epistemology. Starting from the division between the sensitive body and the soul, animism, interpreted as the projection of human sociality onto the non-human world, remains captive to a “totemic” or classificatory reading. In other words, the idea that humans and animals are linked by a common sociability paradoxically depends on a primary ontological discontinuity that considers human exceptionalism as the starting point – in this sense, “human” is synonymous with the modern white European man, capable of moving away from primitivism. Therefore, animism and totemism are two sides of the same coin – a coin made of gold stained with the blood of colonialism.

The critique of the concept of animism, especially when linked to narcissism, as proposed by Viveiros de Castro, provides

an open path for the decolonization of thought, as it questions human exceptionalism and the claim of an exclusive ontology of the modern, white, European man. According to the author (Viveiros de Castro, 1996), neither animism, which asserts a substantial or analogical similarity between animals and humans, nor totemism, which maintains a formal or homological similarity between inter-specific differences, are adequate. Amerindian perspectivism evokes both the economy of corporeality within indigenous ontologies and the possibility of circumscribing some of the implications of the unmarked status of the virtual dimension (the soul) of beings as a powerful indigenous intellectual structure capable of counter-describing their own image projected by Western anthropology and, through this, returning to us “an image of ourselves in which we do not recognize ourselves” (p. 41). Perspectivism is a kind of ethno-epistemological corollary of animism and points toward an anti-narcissism, at least when thought of as omnipotence, as the perspective of the other returns to us a different form of ourselves – the mirror is never identical to itself.

Now, regarding these considerations, by ignoring the questions posed by contemporary anthropology, wouldn't we be endorsing modern and colonialist thinking within psychoanalysis? How can we rethink animism in Freud's work and its relationship with narcissism based on the provocations engendered by Amerindian perspectivism? We, psychoanalysts, have had the indication since Freud that the image in the mirror will always contain the strangeness of another. What if we look at our metapsychology from the perspective of other fields of knowledge, other cosmologies, or even other beings?

The aim of this article was to revisit the concept of animism in psychoanalysis based on the provocations of Amerindian perspectivism. It aims to make room for conceiving other forms of alterity that include not only a dimension based on a symbolic regime anchored in totemism but also linked to the intentionality of the objects themselves. The path is still long, the trails dangerous and inhabited by unknown beings. As a starting point for this journey, we will delve into some of the considerations of Amerindian perspectivism that allow a shift in the articulation between animism and primitivism. Then, Winnicott's considerations about the self and objects will serve as a point of support to make the twists engendered by Amerindian perspectivism resonate in psychoanalytic theory and practice, which is based on animism and totemism. We hope that through this path, we, psychoanalysts, can gain access to the counter-description of our own metapsychology projected in conjunction with modern colonialist thought. Also, through the enchantment of objects, we may catch a glimpse of something that escapes from our own mirror – after all, the animist is not always the other.

### **Perspectivism: An Ethno-Epistemological Corollary of Animism**

If animism is a concept that originates from evolutionary anthropology to describe a form of thought different from that generated by European modernity, it is, as we've seen, a product of modern cosmology itself, with the white European man as its reference point. In this sense, the animist is always the other, i.e., the primitive, the one who attributes a soul to things and differs from the man of science. It is interesting to note that in the preface to Kopenawa and Albert's book, “The Falling Sky,” Viveiros de Castro (2015b) asserts that the Yanomami world, like other forms of thought, especially among Amazonian peoples, is a “plenum of animism” (p. 14) capable of being a sort of “sharp and sardonic counter-anthropology of the Whites” (p. 27). Perspectivism, as an ethno-epistemological corollary of animism, ends up generating an “asymmetric twist” (p.15): while animism presupposes the attribution of a characteristic supposedly unique to the human species to things, perspectivism starts from the assumption that intentionality is what is common to all beings. In this sense, the shifts brought about by Amerindian perspectivism regarding the concept of animism are mainly based on the fundamental issue of the difference between what is “proper to man” and what, on the contrary, is a property existing in general - a problem that relates to the modern division between nature and culture.

Moving away from animism conceived as a form of primitive thought, perspectivism, as a transindividual intellectual device, turns thought into an activity and an effect of the relationship between the thinker and the thought. Based on ethnographies of Amazonian peoples, Viveiros de Castro (2013) claims that perspectivist theories provoke a kind of inversion of modern heritage anthropology, an anthropology in reverse, which escapes being reduced to just another case of an anthropologist's artificial systematization or a caricatured portrayal of one of the many possible cultures. However, it is not an absolute break from the anthropology that preceded it. The considerations brought by Amerindian perspectivism, although marking a difference, maintain a line of continuity with Lévi-Strauss's structural anthropology. According to Viveiros de Castro (2013), antipodes of structuralism can be found within Lévi-Strauss's work, and this issue lies precisely in the discussion about totemism. The paradigmatic contrast between “totemism” and “sacrifice,” supported both in “Totemism Today” (Lévi-Strauss, 2018) and in “The Savage Mind” (Lévi-Strauss, 1990), relates to a generalized opposition between myth and ritual. While totemism postulates a homology between two parallel series (nature and social groups), i.e., a metaphoric division; sacrifice refers to metonymy (and one can easily discern the discussions carried forward by Lacan). The real and non-reversible mediation between two terms, humans and deities, performed by sacrifice constitutes a kind of system of operations. The path outlined by Viveiros de Castro, supported by the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari, seeks to rethink anthropology along similar lines, starting from sacrifice. In other words, just as the philosophers sustained criticism of the neurotic and Oedipal paradigm, the aim is to shift the reference from myth to sacrifice in anthropology, emphasizing the field of dynamic virtualities that sacrifice mobilizes as a process.

Viveiros de Castro's anti-narcissism is part of a reevaluation of animism as perspectivism, seen as a “true anti-totemic operator” (2015a, p.101). For the author, the ritual cannibalism of the Tupinambá people is an important supporting point for this thesis, as it virtually entails a reciprocal transformation, involving the creation of a zone of indistinctness between killers and victims, eaters and the eaten. This undefined zone is upheld by the mixture of different, incompatible points

of view, in his words: “the view that humans have of themselves and their surroundings is different from the view that animals have of humans, as the view that animals have of themselves (and their environment) is different from the view that humans have of animals, and so on” (p. 102).

While anthropologists typically make an explicit comparison between different worldviews based on what they consider cultural aspects of the natives, Amerindian perspectivism presupposes “...an implicit comparison between how different species of bodies naturally experience the world as affective multiplicity” (p. 104). The differences between points of view or bodies lie precisely in the factor that sustains the multiplicity of perspectives. However, this is not multiculturalism that asserts a subjective point of view for different species: “What it affirms is not the existence of a multiplicity of points of view but the existence of the point of view as multiplicity” (Viveiros de Castro, 2013, p.105). The discourse of the so-called natives does not only speak of their needs or their minds and does not reflect a specific way of conceiving nature or concepts represented by a particular cultural framework, but rather, they are ways of creating worlds that should be considered essentially distinct from our own.

This diversity of perspectives results in a concept called multinaturalism, which means not the affirmation of the variety of natures but the naturalness of variation. In the mononaturalism that characterizes modernity, the subject and object are distinct poles regarding intentionality, whereas multinaturalism conceives the object as “an incompletely interpreted subject” (Viveiros de Castro, 2013, p. 360). The point of view does not create the object but the subject itself. In other words, it is not the subject that creates the perspective but the perspective that creates the subject. In this sense, everyone knows the world, but the world they know is not the same. Epistemology is constant, but ontology is variable. The concept of animism is therefore put into perspective: it is not about attributing a soul to things but about questioning the existence of things themselves. In other words, it’s not about a subject that, separate from the object, can know the world through thought, but about perspectives that shift the positions of subject and object – everything that exists in the cosmos can be a subject, but not simultaneously.

Perspectivism serves as an anti-narcissistic operator for anthropology itself, hinting that the concept of animism, a legacy of evolutionary anthropology, when linked to narcissistic omnipotence, keeps us trapped in our own mirrors. Anthropology is considered a kind of experimental, or rather experiential, metaphysics, as it takes place in the experience of thought with the other. It involves questioning both your (the anthropologist’s) point of view and the other’s (the native’s) point of view – aspects that can only be conceived in relation. Permanent decolonization involves ceasing to regard the perspective of the other as a form of primitive thought but rather in its full alterity, which means it has the potential to transform our own image and displace our worlds.

### **Self and object in Winnicott’s thought – human nature and its paradoxes**

From the impossibility of dispensing with decentering oneself as a solely intentional pole for the constitution of self and the world, as present in Amerindian perspectivism, we will make connections with Winnicott’s thought to reveal some paths opened for the displacement, in psychoanalysis, of references to animism and totemism as a basis. This is the first step in a long and ongoing journey that other psychoanalysts can join to achieve the permanent decolonization of thought.

As we have seen, for Freud (1913/2012), animism and narcissism have certain reciprocal affinities. Open to many interpretations, we can say that the concept of narcissism carries with it the issue of alterity, as it reveals the indivisibility of the other in the formation of oneself. Unlike a solipsistic and internalized notion of narcissism, linked to certain ideas about primary narcissism (Balint, 1993), the path opened by Freud when he focuses on the role of parental narcissism in the narcissistic constitution of the infant encourages us to shift the terrain of self-experience to a field of indeterminacy in the interplay of relational terrain. In this direction, Winnicott offers a perspective on the beginning of life and subject/object relationships that differs from the Freudian view in some aspects that serve our discussion. Although little referred to and developed in the Brazilian academic context, which is predominantly dominated by Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis – literature in which we find criticisms related to a supposed developmental and oversimplified view of the psyche – Winnicott’s ideas have been revisited by various authors in the field of social and political sciences (Kellond, 2019).

In his book “Human Nature”<sup>3</sup>, recognized by some authors as having a pivotal<sup>4</sup> reflective function, symmetrically to Freud’s metapsychology, Winnicott insists on deflecting classic binaries such as nature and nurture, internal and external, body and psyche, to present an idea of human nature that accommodates these terms in a different way, which are conventionally considered conflicting or polar. He is not trying to propose an artificial complementarity between these possible poles; instead, he emphasizes maintaining a field of indeterminacy that keeps certain paradoxes alive. This is evident in his conception of the self as an emergent form constituted by the initial interaction between a baby and its environment. For Winnicott, in general terms, while this emergence is produced by interaction with the surroundings, what emerges from this interaction acquires the ability to transform the world, even at very early stages of life. It is important to remember that, in Winnicott’s case, development is not synonymous with the automatic fulfillment of a sequential program of stages with a predictable end; the self emerges as a product of the individual’s journey in its interaction with

---

<sup>3</sup> Winnicott’s book “Human Nature” had its first version started and completed in 1954, with many revisions and modifications made until his death in 1971. It remained unfinished. It is the only one of Winnicott’s works explicitly conceived to be a book, as his other books are collections of separate articles directed at different audiences.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Assoun, 2006, p. 63.

the world, but this journey is not automatic or programmed. His thinking includes the idea of processual emergences as the basis for a progressive relative separation or a relative union with the environment, valuing the acquisition of potentialities that require and depend on the facilitating quality of the latter.

In this perspective, the text highlights the elaborative mobility of the self, which, in turn, depends on potentialities developed in specific environmental conditions, always at the risk of not occurring. In this sense, David-Ménard (2006) suggests that the expression “human nature,” as used by Winnicott, aligns with what Hannah Arendt referred to as “the human condition,” which she proposes to translate as “the condition of the human.” “The insistence on conditions is so decisive and subtle for the psychoanalyst that the teleological character of potentiality is almost forgotten” (DAVID-MÉNARD, 2006, p. 161-2).

By focusing on what he termed ‘human nature,’ Winnicott initiated a significant reconfiguration in the conceptual structure of psychoanalysis. It is pertinent to note that his naturalistic approach significantly differs from Freudian naturalism, which mainly concentrates on describing a psychic apparatus governed by drives and psychic mechanisms in conflict with cultural demands.

However, Winnicott describes a structural coupling between these two poles, expressed in the natural processes of a biological individual’s maturation toward constructing the social being, primarily through the mother-infant dyad. The mother embodies both the natural aspects universally present in the constitution of a human individual and what differentiates human nature from the Darwinian natural universe, i.e., everything related to the symbolization and signification of experience (BEZERRA, 2007, p. 41).

According to Phillips (1988), Winnicott reverses the Darwinian equation, suggesting that human development, instead of being an imperative need for adaptation, also involves a struggle against conformity or submission to the environment. With the idea that the environment must adapt and facilitate the child’s development through its facilitating response, he introduces the possibility of reciprocity and mutuality in human development, thus revising a part of Darwin’s contribution.

Therefore, subjectivity is not merely a product of the ‘environment’ or the ‘mother’s’ subjectivity, and the experience of relative undifferentiation in early life does not imply union or fusion between subject and object. Instead, the suggested experience is that of a state in which the self and the other are both present, equal, and unequal (MILNER, 1987, p.290, cited in Orli, 2017). Union and fusion express the idea that subject and object are united from the perspective of a secondary process, which already presupposes distinct entities and a more stable sense for these figures. Communicating and interpreting undifferentiated sensory experience, which occurs before consolidating the notion of separation, represents a challenging task. Hence, specific terminologies like “going on being” (the experience of persisting over time) are adopted, significantly distant from the principles of classical Freudian metapsychology. This expression, as Ogden (2006) points out, is intentionally without a subject, emphasizing the presence of a feeling of being alive before the moment when the baby will become a subject.

The gradual discontinuity regarding the other, the fundamental source of the differentiation process in this future subject in the world, can be inferred to occur over permanent possibilities of sharing and mingling with the other, without implying fusion or risks to individualization, under favorable conditions. Sharing establishes a relational field and cannot be abandoned as the primary terrain of experience. This makes Winnicott a thinker of dependency forms determined by this foundational sharing and, in our view, contributes to rethinking a critique of subjectivity models based on individualistic autonomy stemming from coloniality.

In this sense, even though Winnicott frequently uses the term ‘primary narcissism’ to characterize the beginning of emotional development, it is essential to remember that, for him, the beginning of psychic life is marked by a kind of experience that could be described as pre-subjective, and its specificities are better understood in reference to the concepts of subjective object and primary creativity, introduced as an interpolation into Freud’s theory of primary satisfaction, referring to a kind of hallucination.

In Winnicott’s view, it would be more interesting to think in terms of illusion rather than hallucination of the object for the unfolding of the desired dynamics or the experience of being alive. In his theory of primary creativity, the baby cannot merely be an object of excitation from within or outside (even though the baby cannot yet distinguish this “where”). The significant objects for the baby will be those whose existence somehow symbolizes their active participation in creation. This is where the notion of illusion proves to be accurate. Illusion, unlike hallucination, is characterized by a transformation of the sensory-perceptual field from a previous object perceived as real or shareable. The baby has the illusion of creating the object (taking the breast as a paradigm), but something is genuinely offered to them for the illusion experience to thrive as a source of vitality. A “perception without an object,” as hallucination is often defined, would exhaust the infant in their task of creating an object on an empty sensory-perceptual field. Thus, a subjective object is created (a name given to this operation), which is not yet distinguishable from the subject since they do not possess a set of representations, sensations, and experiences capable of making an operative distinction between themselves and the object. It is this way of conceiving the initial relations between the baby and the environment that allows Winnicott to make his famous assertion that the baby does not exist.

In this context, it is appropriate to revisit our discussion of animism. According to Winnicott, the beginning of life is experienced as a kind of magical universe, a superposition of dream and reality in which the baby, having the functions

of protection and support reliably guaranteed by the environment, has the illusion that they find in the world exactly what they need. Thus, the intentionality of things is one of the bases of our vitality and creativity if we take Winnicott's hypotheses seriously. A common ground needs to be created, and sharing must remain available and operational for a personal world to be stabilized and enjoyed. The premise of the intentionality of human and non-human objects, whether animate or inanimate, defining the animistic logic, has nothing primitive in its pejorative, simplistic, or depreciated sense. On the contrary, it is a complex and sophisticated way of living the interactions with the world that displaces and transforms the subject and the object. The enchantment of things in this perspective creates an open universe in which we can blend and differentiate. It cannot be abandoned, lest life loses all its freshness because we do not live inside or outside ourselves. The temporalized space of the flow of life is different.

For Winnicott, the self does not emerge from the instinctual life but from the initial relationship of mutuality, i.e., from sustenance in which the "main thing is communication between the baby and the mother in terms of the anatomy and physiology of living bodies" (Winnicott, 1969, p.200). It can be seen that Winnicott conceives the existence of the true self, this kind of living quality of a body, even before the self-integration has stabilized. A psychosomatic body can experience being even before what Winnicott defines as the process of personalization. Moreover, the true self, as accurately defined by Bollas (1996), is not an entity (with an unconscious meaning), it is the very experience it depends on for its expression, as it exists solely through it. It is likely that the true experience of the self never loses its connection to the earliest experiences of relative undifferentiation and mixing with the other. This means that, throughout life, our deepest understanding of ourselves is still connected to the early experiences in which we could not clearly distinguish between the self and the non-self, between the self and the external world. Unlike the connotations of fusion or union, the reference to undifferentiation and disintegration does not deny the child's experience of an "interpersonal world" (STERN, 1991).

Here we must ask ourselves what this interpersonal world is, or to remain faithful to our purpose in this article, what culture is for Winnicott. Later in his life, Winnicott devoted part of his research to what he called "cultural experience." In his words, "using the word 'culture,' I am thinking of inherited tradition. I am thinking of something that belongs to the common background of humanity, to which individuals and groups can contribute, and from which all of us can derive enjoyment if we have a place to store what we find" (WINNICOTT, (1971/1975b, p. 137-138). Winnicott insists that cultural experiences are in direct continuity with playing, emphasizing that he takes care to stress that this is the play of those who have not yet heard of games! Play and creativity are a lifelong continuation of something related to the baby's initial experience: the ability to create the world.

The interest does not lie in a theoretical or canonical definition of what human culture would be as opposed to a supposed nature in which we are rooted. His prosaic definition of culture as heritage based on tradition, without the concern to define it more artificially robustly, is the famous example in which "less is more." By deflating culture, a decisive Freudian pole of the second topic in opposition to instincts, in favor of cultural experience, certain dualisms lose their seductive power, and areas of psychic transition are focused on, which we can call transitional areas. When Winnicott (1971/1975a) published his seminal study, *Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena*, there was no psychoanalytic literature regarding the space between the inner and the outer, the subjective and the objective. Freud's explanation of the transition from the pleasure principle to the reality principle did not address this path, which, in Winnicott's view, characterizes transitional processes. The concept of transitional phenomenon concerns a dimension of living that depends on neither inner reality nor external reality; more precisely, it is the space where both realities meet and separate from the inner and the outer. Winnicott uses different terms to refer to this dimension - third area, intermediate area, potential space, resting place, and location of cultural experience that brings together the past, the present, and the future, preserving time and space. According to Winnicott, psychoanalytic literature does not provide an answer to the question of where we spend most of our everyday lives. "It is not just about what we do. Another question needs to be asked: where are we (if we are somewhere at all)? We use the concepts of the inner and the outer, but now we want one more concept. Where are we when we do what, in reality, occupies a large part of our time?" (WINNICOTT, 1971/1975d, p. 170)

This is the "place" where we are most of the time when we experience life. It is not always that we can enjoy being alive. On the contrary, we may be imprisoned within ourselves, with little hope of encountering others, or remain completely reactive to what the environment demands of us without respite. Our creative possibilities, including what Winnicott defines as a cultural experience, are very limited under these conditions. It is only in the potentiality opened by the transitional that the boundaries are less required, allowing us to rest from the demands of being radically separated from others or satisfying their demands defensively. Thus, we can experience the continued being that unites us and separates us from the tradition we have inherited. In this configuration, the question "Are we beings of nature or culture?" loses all interest. And we are released to enjoy the encounters and disconnections inherent in the presence of a body in the world.

The process of meeting and mismatching a dimension that we can call, borrowing Donna Haraway's (2021) expression, sensitive materiality, reveals the constant possibility of transforming oneself and the world, making both always in tension, inconstant, much like wild thought.

### **Enchanted Objects and the Analytical Experience: Opening Paths to Other Alterities**

Contrary to Max Weber's notion of the disenchantment of the world, enchanted objects constitute a powerful way to

create paths different from objectification and universalist generalization, decentering the modern, white, and European subjects from their own mirror. These considerations have interesting implications for the analytical experience and its political dimension.

It is interesting to note that David-Ménard (2022) reminds us that the frenzied market is only one layer of a denied animistic perspective but is at the foundation of modernity, namely the conception that the notion of private property subsidizes an individual who is self-identically separated from others. Seeking to move away from naïve realism, the author reclaims the potency of the materiality of enchanted objects and their political effects. Ascribing intentionality to objects implies an understanding of the permeability between the bodies and beings that compose different political agents in the constitution of ourselves and the world.

Just as Amerindian perspectivism ends up engendering an anthropology—and consequently, an ethnography—in reverse, attributing intentionality to objects in psychoanalysis involves expanding the analytical experience into transformative boundaries between different agents. It is, therefore, about rethinking the legacies of modern epistemology, conceiving a process in which the analyst and the analysand, and why not other beings, are engaged in the possibility of becoming more fully themselves through alterity shifts.

To do so, it is necessary to move away from a universality that no longer responds to the particularities of different ontologies and is not willing to reformulate itself based on the social and cultural conditions included in its scope of application. Universality, in this context, can assume a character of violence. Not for nothing, Winnicott states that the experience of illusion can become a mark of madness when adults force others' credulity. For the psychoanalyst, "the dictator (...) exercises his power by offering a life free of doubts" (WINNICOTT, 1989/1950, p. 204) —the abstract universality of coloniality promises the end of the paradox of world creation—it only promises similarity in a process that is necessarily one of difference and similarity.

Returning to the narratives of the colonizers about the Tupinambá, it is interesting to bring up the metaphor used by Father Antônio Vieira about marble and myrtle statues, through which Viveros de Castro (1992) provides power for the inconstancy of the wild soul. While marble statues are carved only once, myrtle statues need constant pruning to maintain their form. The colonization of the Tupis was compared by the Jesuit to myrtle statues: a constant activity of violent actions to shape habits—after all, European customs were absorbed and transformed by indigenous people.

The idea of culture sustained by European modern thought, in turn, is set in Carrara marble, or as the expression was transformed in Brazilian soil: it presupposes that the other be carved and spat upon. Culture is conceived as a preservation of the customs of collective subjects imposed on the world, carving a rough stone. Without the sculptor, the rough stone is of no use since intentionality is in the subject that shapes the object. Myrtle, on the other hand, spreads its branches, involving and taking shapes along with things. The Tupinambá thought encompasses a constant openness to the other.

Now, who knows the provocations engendered by Amerindian perspectivism may not only make us conceive some points of agreement between the mental life of savages and neurotics but also describe our own image projected onto the "mental life of savages" in this other animistic and primitive form, returning us an image of ourselves in which we did not recognize ourselves. To do so, it is necessary to stop considering the other's perspective as a form of primitive, abnormal, pathological, immoral, or perverse thinking but take it in its full alterity, which is capable of transforming our own image, our own concepts, in short, our own world. In contrast to significant dividers—us and others, humans and animals, nature and culture, animism, and totemism—it is about proliferating multiplicities. In the opposite direction of the narcissism of small differences, which relegates primitiveness to the other, the bet is on the path of the "anti-narcissism of infinitesimal variations" (VIVEIROS DE CASTRO, 2015a, p. 23).

As Ailton Krenak (2019) writes, "When we depersonalize the river, the mountain, when we take away their senses, considering that this is an exclusive attribute of humans, we release these places to become residues of industrial and extractive activity" (p. 34). In other words, when we disenchant the world, we leave it at the mercy of a deadly power. To interpolate its colonialist legacy, the analytical experience must truly involve an openness to unsettling strangeness, not only of our image in the mirror but of the assemblage between different enchanted beings, both intelligible and radically other.

**Received:** September, 14 2023. **Approved:** November, 18 2023.

#### REFERENCES

- ASSOUN, P.L. Le symptôme humain: Winnicott a-métapsychologue. In: CYSSAU et al (org.). *La nature humaine à l'épreuve de Winnicott*. Paris: PUF, 2006, pp. 61-78.
- BALINT, M. *A falha básica*. Porto Alegre: Artes Médicas, 1993.
- BEZERRA JR, B. Winnicott e Merleau-Ponty: o continuum da experiência subjetiva. In: BEZERRA Jr., B.; ORTEGA, F. (orgs.) *Winnicott e seus interlocutores*. Rio de Janeiro: Relume Dumará, 2007, pp.35-65.
- BOLLAS, C. *Les forces de la destinée*. Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1996.
- CASTRO-GÓMEZ, S. *La poscolonialidad explicada a los niños*. Popayán: Editorial Universidad del Cauca, 2005.
- COELHO JR, N. O inconsciente em Merleau-Ponty. In: KNOBLOCH, F. Org.). *O inconsciente: várias leituras*. São Paulo, 2005, p. 123-146.

- DAVID-MÉNARD, M. Human Nature or Human Condition? In: CYSSAU et al (org.) *La nature humaine à l'épreuve de Winnicott*. Paris: PUF, 2006. pp. 159-164.
- DAVID-MÉNARD, M. *A vontade das coisas: O animismo e os objetos*. São Paulo: Ubu Editora, 2022.
- DELEUZE, G.; GUATTARI, F. (1972). *O anti-Édipo*. São Paulo: Editora 34, 2010.
- DESCOLA, P. *La nature domestique: Symbolisme et praxis dans l'écologie des Achuar*. Paris: Maison des Sciences de l'Homme/Fondation Singer-Polignac, 1986.
- DESCOLA, P. *Outras naturezas, outras culturas*. São Paulo: Editora 34, 2016.
- DOMICIANO, J. F. G. M. S.; DUNKER, C. I. L. Encontros e ruídos entre a psicanálise freudiana e a antropologia de Franz Boas: da Clark University a Totem e Tabu. In: *Memorandum: Memória E História Em Psicologia*, 38, 2021.
- FANON, F. *Peles negras, máscaras brancas* (1952). Salvador: EDUFBA, 2018.
- FREUD, S. Totem e tabu (1913). In: FREUD, S. *Totem e Tabu, Contribuição à história do movimento psicanalítico e outros textos* (1912-1914). São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2008 (Obras completas, 11).
- HARAWAY, D. *O manifesto das espécies companheiras – Cachorros, pessoas e alteridade significativa*. Tradução de Pê Moreira. Rio de Janeiro: Bazar do Tempo, 2021.
- KELLOND, J. 'Present-day troubles': Winnicott, counter-culture and critical theory today. *Psychoanalysis, Culture and Society*, v. 24, n. 3, p. 323-343, 2019.
- KOPENAWA, A.; BRUCE, D. *A queda do céu: Palavras de um xamã yanomami*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2015.
- KRENAK, A. *Ideias para adiar o fim do mundo*. São Paulo: Editora: Companhia das Letras, 2019.
- LÉVI-STRAUSS, C. *O pensamento selvagem*. São Paulo: Papyrus editora, 1990.
- LÉVI-STRAUSS, C. *O Totemismo hoje*. São Paulo: Edições 70, 2018.
- LÉVI-STRAUSS, C. Raça e história (1952). In: LÉVI-STRAUSS, C. *Antropologia estrutural dois*. Rio de Janeiro: Tempo Brasileiro, 1993. p. 328-366.
- LÉVI-STRAUSS, C. *Tristes Trópicos* (1955). Trad. Rosa Freire D'Aguiar. São Paulo: Rio de Janeiro, 2020.
- OGDEN, T.H. Maintenir et contenir, être et rêver. In: GREEN, A (dir). *Les voies nouvelles de la thérapie psychanalytique*. Le dedans et le dehors. Paris: PUF, 2006, p. 860-877.
- ORLIE, M. The Psychoanalytic Winnicott We Need Now: On the Way to a Real Ecological Thought. In: BOWKER, M.H.; BUZBY, A. (eds). *D.W. Winnicott and Political Theory*. Londres: Palgrave MacMillian, 2017.
- PAVÓN-CUÉLLAR, D. Rumo a uma descolonização da psicologia latino-americana: condição pós-colonial, virada decolonial e luta anticolonial. *Cad. PROLAM/USP*, vol. 20, n. 39, p. 95-127, 2021.
- PHILLIPS, A. *Winnicott*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998.
- RICHARD, F. Winnicott: métapsychologie et pensée de la complexité. In: CYSSAU et al (org.) *La nature humaine à l'épreuve de Winnicott*. Paris: PUF, 2006, p. 117-134.
- STERN, D. *El mundo interpersonal del infante*. Buenos Aires: Paidós, 1991.
- STUTZMAN, R. O Animismo hoje. *Revista Cult*. Ed. 273. São Paulo. Disponível em: <https://revistacult.uol.com.br/home/o-animismo-hoje/>. Acesso em: 22 ago. 2023.
- VIVEIROS DE CASTRO, E. O mármore e a murta: sobre a inconstância da alma selvagem. *Revista de Antropologia*, [S. l.], v. 35, p. 21-74, 1992.
- VIVEIROS DE CASTRO, E. Os pronomes cosmológicos e o perspectivismo ameríndio. *Mana*, Rio de Janeiro, v. 2, n. 2, p. 115-144, 1996.
- VIVEIROS DE CASTRO, E. *Metafísicas Canibais - elementos para uma antropologia pós-estrutural* (2015a). São Paulo: Cosac & Naify, 2015.
- VIVEIROS DE CASTRO, E. Who's afraid of the ontological wolf: some comments on an ongoing anthropological debate (2015b). *Cambridge Anthropology*, v. 33, n. 1, p. 2-17, 2015.
- VIVEIROS DE CASTRO, E. Xamanismo transversa: Lévi-Strauss e a cosmopolítica amazônica". In: LÉVI-STRAUSS, C. (2013). *Leituras brasileiras*. Belo Horizonte: Editora UFMG, 2013.
- WINNICOTT, D. W. A criatividade e suas origens (1971). In: WINNICOTT, D. W. *O Brincar e a Realidade*. Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Imago, 1975.
- WINNICOTT, D. W. A experiência mãe-bebê de mutualidade (1989). In: WINNICOTT, D. W. *Explorações psicanalíticas*. Porto Alegre: Artes médicas, 1994.
- WINNICOTT, D. W. Algumas reflexões sobre o significado da palavra "democracia" (1950). In: WINNICOTT, D. W. *Tudo começa em casa*. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 1989.
- WINNICOTT, D. W. Objetos transicionais e fenômenos transicionais (1971). In: WINNICOTT, D. W. *O Brincar e a Realidade*. Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Imago, 1975.
- WINNICOTT, D. W. O lugar em que vivemos (1971). In: WINNICOTT, D. W. *O Brincar e a Realidade*. Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Imago. 1975.

**Thais Klein**

thaisklein@id.uff.br

**Fernanda Pacheco Ferreira**

fpachecoferreira@gmail.com

**Julio Sergio Verztman**

juverztman@gmail.com