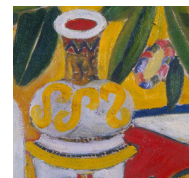


JUNGIAN AND PSYCHEDELICS: a dialogue under construction

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Article



ABSTRACT

This article introduces the debate on psychedelics in Jungian literature, reviewing the main comments of C. G. Jung, Aniela Jaffé, and Marie-Louise von Franz on the subject, as well as the works of Ronald Sandison, Margot Cutner, Michael Fordham, and Betty Eisner, Jungians who used psychedelics in a therapeutic context between the 1950s and 1970s. Disagreeing with Jung's negative opinion of this model of psychotherapy, these Jungian pioneers found therapeutic use for psychedelics, emphasizing the work of integrating the unconscious materials accessed. Although Jung was against the clinical use of psychedelics, his theory and psychological concepts proved to be easily applicable in understanding the psychedelic experience, contributing to a broadening of the debates within the Psychedelic Renaissance. The text aims to be a theoretical and bibliographical reference to stimulate further clinical and theoretical work on the use of psychedelics based on Jungian psychology.

Keywords: Jung; Analytical Psychology; Psychedelic Renaissance; Psychedelic Therapy; Psycholytic Therapy

INTRODUCTION

Between the late 1990s and early 2000s, we observed a global movement to resume research involving clinical trials with psychedelic substances in humans. This movement has been called the Psychedelic Renaissance (SESSA, 2013), referring to the resumption of efforts initiated in the 1950s and 1960s, giving rise to the discipline that we now call Psychedelic Science. Psychedelic substances have been promoted, mainly by the mass media, as possible promises for global mental health crises, and in academic circles, as a hope for a new paradigm in the field of psychotherapies associated with psychoactive substances. However, it is still a field under construction, or perhaps, we could say, in dispute.

As a rule, Psychedelic Science is the knowledge produced within an academic and biomedical context, which does not always value the subjective and social factors of the psychedelic experience. Psychology has not been as prominent in this scenario, but, little by little, the category has been called upon to think about the different contexts of psychedelic use, which are increasingly appearing in clinical practices as clinical demands: either as a space for developing an experience with some psychedelic substance, or as a space for preparation and monitoring for these experiences.

Although Jung's reticent stance toward psychedelics seems to have influenced the Jungian field to this day, the invitation from the Jungian Association of Brazil to write this article and to participate in a panel on psychedelics, alongside Prof. Dartiu Xavier, at the XXVII Congress of the AJB (11-14/09/24), in Salvador, shows a change in perspective on these substances. In this text, based on a literature review, I will demonstrate the different positions adopted by Jungians on psychedelic substances and their therapeutic uses, proposing a rapprochement between the fields and suggesting themes for future work.

1. JUNG AND MESCALINE

We could not begin this conversation from Jung's writings on the subject. Having died in 1961, it would have been difficult for Jung not to have heard about the experiments with psychedelics that were growing among European and North American intellectuals and writers at least since the 1920s. Psychedelics would become even more popular in scientific circles after the discovery of the psychoactive effects of LSD in 1943.

The only writings by Jung that directly mention psychedelics are found in five personal letters and two chapters of *Psychogenesis of Mental Illness*, between 1953 and 1959. Considering these texts, Jung had contact with research on psychedelics carried out during the period known as the First Psychedelic Era (SESSA, 2013), between the 1880s and 1930s, when the main psychoactive substances studied were opium, hashish, and mescaline. As we will see later in the text, although he read works on LSD, Jung seems to have consolidated his impressions about the psychotherapeutic uses of psychedelics from reading research and reports on mescaline (the active ingredient found in the peyote and wachuma cacti).

The psychotomimetic paradigm (a word derived from the term mimesis, imitation) predominated in this First Psychedelic Era, since the synthesis of mescaline in 1919 and the invention.¹ of LSD in

¹ We chose the word "invention" and not "discovery" to emphasize an active aspect of Hoffman's unconscious in the process of developing the LSD molecule, since there is a hypothesis that

1943. This paradigm proposed the use of these substances as tools for inducing psychotic states, to understand the phenomenological experience of madness, as well as to discover its possible causes. In the psychotomimetic paradigm, therefore, the clinical potential of psychedelics was not yet recognized or investigated (RODRIGUES, 2019, p. 17), which may also have influenced Jung's view.

Jung's first direct reference to psychedelics is in a 1953 letter written in response to parapsychologist Joseph Rhine [1895–1980] (JUNG, 2015a). In an earlier letter, Rhine, in addition to suggesting that Jung write down his recollections of experiences and observations of extrasensory phenomena, comments on the experiments of the British writer Aldous Huxley [1894–1963] and a group of scientists that included “[...] an Englishman and a Canadian psychiatrist using the alkaloid mescaline as a method of giving them access to unconscious operations.” Jung responds by saying that the researcher in Canada is Dr. Smythies, but he cannot see what contributions his work would make to the understanding of extrasensory phenomena.

In *The Doors of Perception*, where Huxley recounts his personal experiences with mescaline, the writer refers to the work of John Smythies [1920-2019], stating that “[...] at least one professional philosopher has taken mescaline to shed light on old unsolved enigmas, such as the place of mind in nature and the relationship between the brain and consciousness” (HUXLEY, 2022, p. 10). Immersed in the psychotomimetic paradigm, the psychiatrist began to argue that schizophrenia could be caused by the abnormal production of some endogenous substance similar to mescaline, such as catecholamine (SMYTHIES, 1953).

In another letter (JUNG, 2015c), Jung says that around 1925 he became acquainted with the work of Dr. Prinzhorn [1886-1933], a psychiatrist and art historian who conducted experiments with mescaline in Germany – almost 20 years after LSD was invented. From these accounts, we can conclude that Jung was introduced to psychedelics through contact with research on mescaline, of a psychotomimetic nature, which emphasized the symptoms and states induced by the psychedelic, mistakenly comparing them to pathological ones and ignoring its possible clinical uses.

raises an important intuitive component in this story: the chemist “father of LSD” believes that the hypothesis raised by chemist David Nichols is “entirely possible”: Hoffman had in fact “a spontaneous mystical experience, from a synchronistic connection, which would explain both the ‘peculiar premonition’ that persisted with the chemist [after abandoning the initial studies of the new molecule], and his decision to resynthesize the molecule, even against the opinion of his supervisors”. Nichols’ hypothesis is based on the well-known fact that “the chemist ‘had a predisposition to altered states of consciousness’, having even reported an experience of this type during his childhood”. The history of the creation of LSD and the hypothesis raised by Nichols is described by me and colleagues in the chapter “Sweet, bitter and tasteless: LSD, adulterants and management of adverse effects”, published in the book *Harm reduction in the context of parties* (LÔBO et al., 2021).

As early as 1954, Jung acknowledged that he did not know much about mescaline-type substances. Father Victor White [1902-1960] wrote to Jung saying that he had been invited to a mental hospital to provide support to the team regarding archetypal and religious materials experienced by patients under the influence of LSD. Jung questioned whether the drug that the priest called LSD was mescaline and confessed that he knew “very little” about the subject and what its psychotherapeutic value could be for neurotics or psychotics (JUNG, 2015b). Even though he knew that he was not very up-to-date on psychedelic research, Jung demonstrated how he viewed the experiments of the still recent psychedelic science negatively, stating that “[...] It is horrible that the alienists have found a new poison to play with, without the slightest knowledge or feeling of responsibility” (JUNG, 2015b, p. 173).

While he compares alienists to a surgeon who has never learned more than how to open a patient’s belly and leave things in the same place, Jung compares Huxley to the character in Goethe’s poem, who learns from the master how to summon ghosts, but does not know how to get rid of them (JUNG, 2015b, p. 173). Although we cannot deny the existence of serious bioethical and methodological errors in the first research with psychedelics (GEORGE et al., 2020), we agree with Jungian psychologist Fernando Beserra (2011, p. 48) when he says that Huxley “[...] cannot be accused of ‘lack of moral development’ corresponding to his ‘invention’, since his entire work seeks to respond to the society of his time, the political, moral, and philosophical questions that were then constellated”.

In the letter to White, Jung (2015c, p. 222) explains the reason for his “doubts and hesitations” regarding the use of psychedelics, understanding that, by providing contact with the unconscious, the psychedelic experience would necessarily demand work on the consciousness that he did not believe was possible.

I only know there is no point in wanting to know about the collective unconscious than what can be achieved through dreams and intuition. The more you know about it, the greater and heavier your moral burden becomes, because unconscious contents become personal tasks and duties as soon as they begin to become conscious (JUNG, 2015b, p. 172).

In a 1955 letter in response to LSD enthusiast Alfred Hubbard [1901-1982], Jung admits to never having taken psychedelics or given them to anyone; despite this, he understands that he has dedicated at least 40 years of study to “[...] the psychic sphere that is opened by this drug: that is, the sphere of numinous experiences” (JUNG, 2015c, p. 222). When comparing mescaline to active imagination and other analytical techniques, Jung believes that they achieve similar results: the “[...] complete realization of complexes, and numinous visions and dreams”. The difference with mescaline, however, would

be that it “[...] reveals such psychic facts at any time and space, when and where there is no certainty that the individual is mature enough to integrate them”, while in the analytical process, this encounter would occur “[...] in due time and space, in the course of treatment” (JUNG, 2015c, p. 222).

Mescaline abruptly removes the veil of the selective process and reveals the underlying layer of perceptual variations, apparently a world of infinite richness. Thus, the individual gains an insight and a complete vision of psychic possibilities that otherwise (e.g. through active imagination) he would only attain through assiduous work and relatively long and difficult training. But if he attains and experiences them [in this way], he has not only acquired them through legitimate effort but has also arrived at the same time at a mental position in which he can integrate the meaning of his experience. Mescaline is a shortcut and therefore produces a perhaps inspiring aesthetic impression, which remains an isolated and unintegrated experience, contributing very little to the development of the human personality (JUNG, 2015c, p. 223).

As early as 1957, in response to a letter from Betty Eisner [1915-2004], a Jungian pioneer in psychotherapy with psychedelics, Jung almost seems to recognize some benefit in the use of psychedelics, when he states that “[...] it is a fact that you obtain certain perceptions and experiences of things that appear both in mystical states and in the analysis of unconscious phenomena, just as primitives do in their orgiastic conditions or intoxications” (JUNG, 2015d). But, in the sequence, his concerns about the integration of experience once again appear.

In the chapters “Schizophrenia” and “New Considerations on Schizophrenia”, included in *Psychogenesis of Mental Disease*, Jung (2015f, 2015g) explains how he understands the psychodynamic functioning of psychedelics. For him, the psychedelic experience would be similar to the schizophrenic experience, as a “disintegration” or “fragmentation of apperception” resulting from an “*extremo abaissement du niveau mental*” (§569).

This drug and similar drugs, as is known, cause an *abaissement* that makes unconscious variations in perception perceptible, through the fall in the threshold of consciousness, enriching, on the one hand, perception in an astonishing way and, on the other, making integration into the general orientation of consciousness impossible (§569).

During this period, even as he continued his observations and comparisons between a “toxic disorder” (§570) and schizophrenia, Jung seems to have already begun to distance himself from the psychotomimetic paradigm – and also from the notion of an organic or toxic cause for psychosis. After recognizing that “[...] the discontinuous, abrupt, rigid and stagnant behavior of schizophrenic apperception differs from the fluid and mobile continuity of the symptoms produced

by mescaline”, he claims to have already abandoned “[...] the possibility [elaborated 50 years earlier] of the existence of a specific metabolic toxin”, going on to observe that “[...] the psychogenic cause of the disease is more likely than the toxic one” (§570). Coincidentally or not, in this same year of 1958, the results of an international study group organized by the World Health Organization were released, which reported being in favor of continuing research with psychedelics, and suggesting that the term psychotomimetic, “[...] until replaced by a happier one, should not be used”, given the significant differences in psychotic symptoms (WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION, 1958).

A sixth exchange of correspondence deserves mention here, although Jung does not directly address psychedelics, due to its historical value: Jung’s (1961) letter to Bill Wilson [1895-1971], founder of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), became a reference in Jungian circles for studies on chemical dependency (especially alcoholism). Jung stated that some alcoholics could recover “[...] through spiritual experiences, better known as religious conversions” (LATTIN, 2012, p. 61), summarizing the idea in the maxim *spiritus contra spiritum*: “The same word is used for both religious experience and the most depraved poison” (JUNG, 1961, p. 625). For Jung, alcoholism would be an inferior deviation on the path of seeking spiritual connection.

Jung died, however, before receiving Wilson’s reply letter, in which he reported having had a mystical experience in a hospital room that had contributed to his treatment for alcoholism. Wilson, more than 20 years later, relived this experience by taking LSD with psychiatrist Humphry Osmond [1917-2004] and began to advocate the use of LSD as a preparation for alcoholics who had difficulty understanding the spiritual aspect of the 12 steps of the AA program (LATTIN, 2020; MCDONNEL et al., 2024).

2. JUNGIANIS AND PSYCHEDELICS

As we have seen, Jung seems to have adopted a conservative, or cautious, stance regarding the use of psychedelics. Although he agreed that “[...] the lowering of consciousness provided by the drug [mescaline] offers no resistance to the unconscious” (JUNG, 2015e, p. 300), he understood that this contact with the unconscious could not be beneficial to the individual or the culture without equivalent work on the consciousness. For him, contacts with the unconscious provided spontaneously (through dreams, synchronicities, symbols, etc.) would be sufficient, to be elaborated in the analytical work. Important disciples, such as Marie-Louise von Franz and Aniela Jaffé, followed him in this way of understanding the phenomenon of drugs, reinforcing a prohibitionist perspective within Jungian theory.

Jaffé [1903-1991], a close disciple of Jung and editor of *Memoirs, Dreams, and Reflections*, wrote in 1971 about mescaline in a short passage from her book *The Myth of Meaning in the Work of Carl G. Jung* (JAFFÉ, 2021). In the text, Jung was her main reference for developing the theme he writes about, postulating what the position adopted by the master would be:

Jung showed great interest in the mescaline experiments. He saw in them the confirmation of his research on the manifestations of the unconscious and its numinosity. He repudiated the use of drugs in psychotherapy or as a means for spiritual experience and a “religious reharmonization” of man, which could not be otherwise, given his respect for nature and its rhythms and laws. An artificially induced experience is not, in general, following the development and maturity of the personality. This discrepancy poses a danger because any content that emerges from the unconscious to consciousness implies a spiritual or moral duty, which, if not fulfilled, will lead to misunderstandings, complications, suffering and illness (JAFFÉ, 2021, p. 62).

For the author, the growing interest in the use of psychedelic substances could be explained as an unconscious movement of compensation in the face of the overwhelming action of external reality and the excessive rationality of our culture. Although she considered that the psychedelic experience “is no different from a psychosis”, Jaffé (2021, p. 60) was able to perceive that “[...] as in the fantasies of the waking state, the ego’s function of perceiving, experiencing and discerning is preserved”, as well as that specific contexts, such as use within a religious tradition, “[...] offer protection against the irruption of the unconscious caused by the toxic substance” (JAFFÉ, 2021, p. 62). Brazilian research carried out within the scope of the Psychedelic Renaissance, under the guidance of Professor Dartiu Xavier, with adolescent members of the ayahuasca religion, reinforces this observation by demonstrating that the volunteers presented physical and mental health conditions similar to those of the control group, in addition to a lower prevalence of psychiatric symptoms (SILVEIRA et al., 2005); Although objective evidence is lacking, researchers have considered that religious affiliation and group and family support may be protective factors for psychopathologies and problematic use of psychoactive substances (SILVEIRA et al., 2005; GROB, 1999).

In the citations, we can see that Jaffé bases his thinking on psychedelics almost exclusively on Jung’s writings contained in the work *Psychogenesis of Mental Disease* (cited above), and in the classic letter to Father Victor White. Von Franz [1915-1998], in turn, also elaborates on the dreams of “drugged” patients, showing that he may have had more direct clinical contact with psychedelic users than Jaffé or Jung. In her text *Drugs in the View of C. G. Jung*, she reaffirms that the Swiss “[...] was deeply disturbed by our current tendency to explore these discoveries out of mere curiosity, without recognizing

the growing moral responsibility to which we expose ourselves" (VON FRANZ, 1999, p. 323).

We notice a mistake, or a bias, in Von Franz's analysis already in her premises, when she speaks of "drugs" and "drug addicts" in a generic way, without recognizing the pharmacological specificities of each substance and their contexts of use: for her, drugs with effects and classifications as distinct from each other as hashish, LSD and heroin, would have the same basic effect, which is, "[...] a decline in perception, that is, the decomposition of the conscious synthesis and perception of *gestalts*" (VON FRANZ, 1999, p. 323-324). What is interesting, however, in Von Franz's work, is that the analysis of the dreams of psychedelic users seems to show that the use of these substances seems to have facilitated the conscious understanding of the unconscious motives and symbols constellated in dreams.

In one case, the analyst reports that "[...] a young woman, highly gifted artistically, but who had been extremely restricted psychically" (VON FRANZ, 1999, p. 327), took LSD and then "[...] dreamed that she had had a lovely 'trip' but now had to take a different approach", and then entered analysis. In another case, a regular LSD user, who had always had positive experiences, after entering the analysis experienced a "bad trip" when he took the substance again. In both cases, she seems to point to analysis as the most legitimate route to access the unconscious: "It is evident that now that he knew a better way to the unconscious, the trips resulting from drug use had become in a way illegitimate, and the unconscious beneficially frightened him" (VON FRANZ, 1999, p. 326).

For Jungian Fernando Beserra, co-founder of the Brazilian Psychedelic Association, "[...] Unfortunately, Von Franz, an eminent Jungian researcher, falls into a terrible ethnocentrism and a lack of sociocultural, psychological and chemical relativization in her commentary" (BESERRA, 2014, p. 228). According to Beserra, "[...] Franz is clear [...] about the radical difference between users, their uses and their choices of substances used, as well as the difference in the reaction of the unconscious and the 'transpersonal' psyche"; despite this, according to him, she ends the chapter with a "reactionary and illogical perspective":

Humanity has often advanced towards new achievements by passing through mistakes. It seems to me quite understandable, and more than forgivable, that many people of the younger generation are unable to bear the intellectual emptiness and dehumanization of our technological unculture and resort to drugs. But then, for each individual, the time comes when he must decide whether he wants to immerse forever in this inexpressiveness or to pass through it, as through a gate, and advance towards the great work of objective self-knowledge (VON FRANZ, 1999, p. 330).

Reactionary perspectives that equate drug users with sick people or drug addicts are not uncommon in the Jungian debate on the use of psychoactive substances, as can be seen in the work of Luigi Zoja [1943-], one of the main Jungian references on the subject. Zoja (1992) argues that the Western world has moved away from initiation rituals, but, as an archetypal need, it would tend to return negatively. For him, drug use would be an expression of an unconscious need for initiation, and one of the ways that young Westerners find to initiate into a complete and adult identity would be through drug use. The author even replaces the term “drug addiction” with “drug initiation” (BESERRA, 2014, p. 230), which would assume a negative, destructive, and unconscious quality, guaranteeing the loss of the previous condition, but without contributing to the emergence of a new consciousness, and having its realization in symbolic or factual death (ZOJA, 1992, p. 58).

I hypothesize that every attempt at initiation, when it is not sufficiently conscious, nor protected by rituals, nor inserted in a coherent cultural complex, mobilizes the archetypal model, especially the process of death, either because it is the first and simplest, or because, unlike regeneration, it is easily achievable in a literal way, as organic death; and the need, frustrated in its symbolic expression, tends to become literalized (ZOJA, 1992, p. 58).

Although it brings up a significant debate, Zoja also seems to make some exaggerations in the pejorative and moralizing tone when he analyzes the use of psychoactive substances. For the author, pathological use would begin when the consumption of the substance moves away from its archetypal function, which would include, for example, all types of recreational use, including legalized substances such as alcohol or tobacco. For Jungians Fernando Beserra and Andrew Soares, this statement is exaggerated, since most recreational drug users do not develop an abusive relationship or even health problems related to use (BESERRA, 2014, p. 232); in addition, the emphasis given by the author to the importance of ritualizing the use of substances as a form of psychic containment of the experience “[...] can contribute to the stigmatization of the use of psychedelics for recreational purposes” (SOARES et al., 2022).

Other Jungians have written about drug use, and specifically about psychedelic drugs, without starting from a position of reticence and caution, perhaps precisely because they theorized based on their clinical practice with patients and users. During the same period in which Jung, Jaffé, and Von Franz were writing the works in which they address psychedelics presented above, other Jungians were also elaborating on the subject, but based on the psychedelic science of that time, based on their participation in research mainly with LSD, and supported by Jungian theory. We will address some of these works and their important contributions in the following section.

3. JUNGIAN PSYCHEDELIC PIONEERS

As stated earlier, Jung appears to have had contact with psychedelics during the period Ben Sessa (2013) calls the First Psychedelic Era. This era is characterized by research into mescaline (the first psychedelic to be isolated and synthesized in a laboratory) and a psychotomimetic paradigm that did not prioritize the investigation of its therapeutic properties. This is evident in the references Jung mentions, namely Aldous Huxley's (2022) accounts of his visionary experiences with mescaline, and the research of psychiatrists John Smythies and Hans Prinzhorn, who administered mescaline to patients admitted to the hospitals where they worked.

Jungians Marie-Louise von Franz and Aniella Jaffé wrote about the subject in the 1970s, during the so-called Second Psychedelic Era (SESSA, 2013), which we can also understand as the period of birth of Psychedelic Science, marked by research with LSD and psilocybin, the overlap of the psychotomimetic paradigm with the psychedelic and psycholytic paradigms (which began to investigate different psychotherapeutic applications) and the beginning of the social uses of psychedelics. These important advances in psychedelic science provided information and contacts to the two authors, which were not accessed by Jung: Von Franz analyzes dreams of social users of LSD and Jaffé even cites the work of the important and controversial psychedelic pioneer Timothy Leary. This contact was not enough, however, to produce analyses that were less chemically mistaken and morally stigmatizing.

In this section, we will discuss the contributions made by Jungians who worked within the psychedelic scientific production, mainly related to LSD, and are recognized in the psychedelic field as pioneers in the area. Although not as close to Jung, some even had contact with him via letters, questioning him about his views on these substances. In contrast to Jung's "frank and critical opinion" (JUNG, 2015c, p. 224), they constructed their analyses of psychedelic experiences based on their clinical experiences, but without distancing from Jungian theory, contributing with detailed descriptions of clinical cases, Jungian analyses, recommendations for psychotherapists who work with LSD, and reflections on the transference relationship. Among the Jungian psychedelic pioneers, we will highlight here the work of Ronald Sandison, Michael Fordham, Margot Cutner, and Betty Eisner.

Ronald Sandison [1916-2010] was chief psychiatrist at Powick Hospital in England when he first came into contact with psychedelics (HILL, 2013, p. 24), and became known for developing the psycholytic model (derived from the Greek term *lutikos* for lysis, breaking), which consisted of using low doses of psychedelics to break down the patient's ego defenses and facilitate analysis – but not replace it. The term psycholytic was used to refer to both the low-dose therapeutic

model and the drugs, before the term “psychedelic” gained popularity among scientists and users. Although Sandison is recognized as the coiner of the term “psycholytic” (BISBEE et al., 2018; HILL, 2013, p. 25; BESERRA, 2022, p. 64), Eisner claims that it was actually coined in 1961, at a meeting of the now-defunct Royal-Medico Psychological Association of London, at Sandison’s home, by her colleague Hanscarl Leuner [1919-1996] (EISNER, 1997, p. 213-214). According to Eisner, the psycholytic model was developed simultaneously and independently by her and Sandison (EISNER, 1997, p. 213-214).

Still in 1954, Sandison (1954, p. 508) made one of the first phenomenological descriptions of the psychedelic experience based on Jungian principles, mapping three main presentations: 1) non-specific generic images; 2) the recollection and reliving of forgotten memories and experiences from childhood; and 3) the experience of archetypal and impersonal images. The latter would have, for the author, “[...] a similar nature to those experiences of contact with the collective unconscious that patients have through the analysis of dreams, images and fantasies” (SANDISON, 1954, p. 508), and would be the most important, since the archetypal experience would provide symbols of healing (SANDISON, 1963, p. 34).

The immediate result of LSD administration is to produce a deepening of the patient’s emotional tone, a change in thinking, sometimes a regression to an earlier emotional and intellectual period, and the revivification of emotionally charged memories. There may be a release of deeper unconscious material, resulting in impersonal experiences manifested by dreamlike impressions, illusions, and hallucinations (SANDISON, 1963, p. 33).

For Sandison (1954, p. 508), any of these experiences could occur independently of a psychotherapeutic context and could be beneficial to the user by providing contact with repressed aspects of their emotional lives. In a clinical context, according to the author, the success of the treatment of obsessive neurosis disorders, character disorders, and psychopaths would be certain (SANDISON, 1963, p. 33). For him

In many cases, the rigid conscious barriers and resistances the patient offers are too great to overcome. LSD gives such people some real, tangible experience of their unconscious and rekindles their faith in their spirit at a comparatively early stage of the treatment, helping them proceed more rapidly (SANDISON, 1954, p. 509).

² Psychologist Humphry Osmond coined the term *psychedeli* in an exchange of letters with Aldous Huxley in 1957 (BISBEE et al., 2018). The term is derived from the Greek words *psyche* and *deílos*, commonly translated as “manifesters of the mind,” but here I propose a more Jungian understanding: “manifesters of the soul.”

Sandison (1954, p. 512-513) even compared the effects of LSD and active imagination, stating that the therapist “[...] must bring the patient to the point where he can actively influence the images produced by LSD so that he can consciously explore his mind and learn something of the great wisdom of the unconscious”. This comparison was criticized by the British Jungian analyst Michael Fordham [1905-1963], who believed that psychedelics would decrease the capacity for conscious engagement in the analytical process, drawing attention to the passive aspect of the experience caused “[...] by involuntary biochemical means” by LSD (HILL, 2013, p. 25).

[...] the similarity is superficial and the differences considerable. [...] in active imagination the archetypes in the unconscious are given form by the deliberate activity of the patient. This is why the imagination described by Jung is called active, in contrast to other types of imagination in which passive, often defensive, participation is more characteristic. The activity in LSD fantasy is different from that found in active imagination and resembles the second passive type of imagination which I have proposed should be grouped under the term “imaginative activity” (FORDHAM, 1963, p. 125).

In the text in which he makes this argument, Fordham also criticizes Jungian analyst Margot Cutner [1905-1987], who agreed with Sandison regarding the comparison of the effects of LSD with those of active imagination (CUTNER, 1959, p. 716). While Cutner emphasized the psychotherapeutic importance of the emergence of the unconscious, Fordham drew attention to the defensive aspect that the conscious can assume in the face of unconscious images, defending integration as an essential point of the analytical process: “[...] it is fallacious to assume that making patients conscious of unconscious fantasies, repressed memories, etc., is necessarily therapeutic. Therapy depends more on the integration of previously unconscious products into the ego” (FORDHAM, 1963, p. 125).

In his conclusions, Fordham (1963, p. 130) states that “[...] To think that the hallucinatory process can complement the results of analysis results from confusion because the ego is not mobilized, but divided and the relationship of the ego to the image is essentially different from that of active imagination”. Agreeing with Jung on the importance of integrating the psychedelic experience, he disagrees with him on the impossibility of this stage: “[...] The case material presented shows that he exaggerates when he uses the word ‘impossible’, because case two [...] integrated some of the experiences, giving them a meaning” (FORDHAM, 1963, p. 129).

Cutner, born Kuttner in Germany, a Jungian with experience in body therapies, joined Sandison’s department at Powick Hospital in 1955, when she began participating in the LSD research conducted there (DUBUS, 2020). In 1959, in the article “Analytical work with LSD 25” (CUTNER, 1959, p. 721), she presents her therapeutic method,

developed over three years of work with LSD with Powick patients. Cutner proposes that psychedelics could mobilize a compensatory, or complementary, movement in consciousness, through the activation of lower functions, or by the reversal of attitudes of introversion and extroversion.

[...] the material emerging from LSD, far from being chaotic, reveals, on the contrary, a definite relation to the psychological needs of the patient at the time he takes the drug. If we believe, with Jung, that the activities of the unconscious are, to a large extent, complementary to those of consciousness, it is not surprising to find that the unconscious activity observed under the influence of the drug reveals its compensatory character – in a way similar to dreams, visions (including active imagination) and other manifestations of the unconscious in general (CUTNER, 1959, p. 720).

Based on this premise, she explains the mystical experiences provided by psychedelics as a momentary realization of the archetype of the Self: “[...] a successful completion, through the momentary joint working of all four functions, is achieved, to result in a momentary experience of wholeness” (CUTNER, 1959, p. 721). In addition to mystical experiences, she highlights four others in which it is also possible to observe action of unconscious compensation: 1) sudden activation of one or more inferior functions and inversion of attitudes (introversion-extroversion); 2) emergence of repressed material from the personal unconscious; 3) changes in body image (with emphasis on parts of the body neglected by the patient’s consciousness); and 4) activation of healing symbolisms, also experienced in the transference relationship.

Cutner comments that the characteristic that most concerns LSD researchers is its “unpredictability” (p. 716), agreeing that (except for some basic patterns) a person will have the same experience twice, nor will two people have the same experience under the influence of LSD. The author confidently states that these expressions may seem arbitrary to anyone, except to an analyst: for Cutner, the explanation for this supposed unpredictability would be in the teleological factor of the nature of the psyche, pointed out by Jung.

[...] the phenomena observable under the effect of LSD seem to confirm, even more clearly than those observed in the general analysis, Jung’s idea of the psyche as a self-regulating system in which unconscious activities function as compensatory factors in the service of a striving for wholeness. The teleological factor introduced by Jung into the conception of the unconscious seems to become even more obvious when one has the opportunity to observe reactions to LSD in a fairly large number of patients over several years. Looking at the material obtained in this way, it seems that something like an autonomous selective process is at work, determining the sequence of the emerging material purposefully - as if everything that emerges were exactly what is “needed” for

a given patient at a given moment, as a factor that complements the conscious personality (CUTNER, 1959, p. 720).

Cutner's interpretation of the teleological functioning of the unconscious during psychedelic experiences is similar to the idea of the inner healer, widely disseminated in the psychedelic field of psychedelic therapies, as well as a theme present in various mythologies. This factor, or agent, would be the protagonist in the states of consciousness called by the Czech psychiatrist Stanislav Grof [1931-] holotropic ("oriented towards the whole", in his translation) (GROF, 2015, p. 25): a subgroup of non-ordinary states of consciousness

[...] that has heuristic, healing, transformative, and even revolutionary potential. This includes the experiences of shamans and their clients, of initiates in native rites of passage or ancient mysteries of death and rebirth, of spiritual healers and mystics of all ages, and of individuals in psychospiritual crises ("spiritual emergencies") (GROF, 2015, p. 25).

Grof is one of the founders of Transpersonal Psychology, named the "godfather of LSD" by Albert Hoffman [1906-2008] (the "father of LSD"), for his contributions to the understanding of the clinical applications of LSD, having conducted more than 4,000 psychotherapeutic sessions with LSD in his career, before the prohibition of the substance (GROF, 2008b). The legacy of his work is visible today, for example, in the dissemination of the theme of the inner healer, both in underground circles and in clinical trials with psychedelics (PEILL et al., 2024). The article by Joseph Peill and team (2024) points out that, in the MDMA-assisted psychotherapy model developed and used by MAPS (Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies), the postures recommended to therapists and the instructions given to patients to "listen" or "let go" of the inner healer during psychedelic sessions (MITHOEFER et al., 2008), for example, are inspired by Grof's holotropic works. Thus, teleological philosophies, such as those assumed by Jung in the unconscious (Jung) and Cutner in the psychedelic experience, remain present in the psychedelic field – "[...] following Jung's idea of the psyche as a self-regulating system, 'striving' for 'wholeness'" (CUTNER, 1959, p. 756).

Another recognized pioneer in the psychedelic field is Jungian analyst Betty Eisner [1915-2004], whose theoretical contributions remain important today. In a 1997 article, Eisner reported 22 years of practice with psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy; in the text, she recognizes a "[...] current revival of interest and research on psychedelics" (EISNER, 1997, p. 213) – a movement that would later be recognized as the Psychedelic Renaissance (SESSA, 2013). During her career, Eisner even accompanied the first LSD experience in psychotherapy by Bill Wilson, one of the founders of Alcoholics Anonymous, in 1956, together with psychiatrist Sidney Cohen [1910-

1987] (POLLAN, 2018, p. 152) – she was also Cohen’s first guinea pig (DUBUS, 2020). She openly defended the importance of personal experience with psychedelics for anyone who wants to work with these substances (EISNER, 1963, p. 141) – a debate that is still alive and without absolute consensus in the psychedelic field (VILLIGER, 2024).

Eisner believed that the most important process in psychedelic therapy is to allow the patient’s unconscious to reveal in its sequence (EISNER, 1963, p. 143). To do this, it would be essential to consider the set and setting in which the treatment was taking place, in addition to the therapist’s suggestion that the patient symbolically “[...] move toward the problem” and “[...] allow the process to happen” (“allow it (whatever) happens”) (EISNER, 1997, p. 214). This voluntary and active stance of the patient would be fundamental, according to Eisner, for the success of the therapy:

LSD treatments are placed within the context of psychotherapy and are used as an aid to speed up the process of therapy. The criterion for choosing the patient seems to depend more on motivation and readiness than on the diagnostic category: it is far preferable to have a patient who knows that something is wrong, that it must change, and is willing to make an effort to do so, than to have any specific diagnostic category (EISNER, 1963, p. 142).

Although the notions of set and setting are present in the work of other authors who studied the use of psychoactive substances (OLIVENSTEIN, 1983; ZINBERG, 1984; HART, 2014), Timothy Leary is credited with introducing these terms into the psychedelic field in the 1960s (POLLAN, 2018, p. 190): set referred to the subject; setting, to the environment of the psychedelic session; and matrix “[...] is the environment from which the subject comes: the environment that surrounds the subject before and after the session, and the broader environment to which the subject returns” (EISNER, 1997, p. 214). For Eisner, the idea of matrix had not yet been considered in the psychedelic field, or elements of it were included as part of the set or setting.

Matrix means the environment from which the subject comes, such as the family and the living situation; the environment in which the subject lives during the sessions; and the environment to which the patient returns after successful therapy—the everyday space. A good matrix, like a good group or a good marriage, is a place where the best possible for individuals is served within the creative context of the larger relationship. [...] When a matrix functions properly, it also becomes a process: the environment becomes one in which individuals can change and mature, and as they grow, the matrix expands to contain further growth (EISNER, 1997, p. 215).

Eisner’s work has indeed attracted interest in the current Psychedelic Renaissance, particularly through his idea of the matrix and its applications in psychedelic therapies. Mateo Petrement has

studied the transition from psychedelia linked to countercultural values to supposed political neutrality, analyzing it as an effect of a neoliberal matrix, which has shifted the focus of social debate to the individual to combat the promise of psychedelics of “[...] a revolution of consciousness that could inform a more humane culture, free from hierarchical social divisions and the compulsion to work and consume” (PETREMENT, 2023, p. 10).

Tal Davidson (2017) demonstrated how Eisner, in an attempt to manipulate the matrix to favor therapeutic work, created a therapeutic community (EISNER, 1997, p. 215) composed of houses and apartments for her group of clients, allowing her to dictate different life situations for them and eliminate environmental aspects that would inhibit their growth (DAVIDSON, 2017, p. 109). After the death of one of these clients, however, other members of the community denounced Eisner for manipulative and extortionate attitudes, in addition to physical and sexual abuse, and she ended up losing her medical license (DAVIDSON, 2017, p. 24). Eisner (1963, p. 141) seems to have lost her way in the analysis of the transference relationship and exaggerated in her proposal to control psychedelic journeys through “[...] manipulation of the environment, dosage and conditions of the patient”.

Based on Davidson (2017) and Petrement (2023), the musician and psychologist, co-founder of the Brazilian Psychedelic Association, Sandro Rodrigues (2024, p. 13), defends incorporation of the concept within the psychedelic paradigm of set and setting, further expanding the recognition of the beyond-pharmacological effects of psychedelics and the power of the matrix in “[...] giving name and place to the web of the real that escapes control”.

Incorporating the matrix into the drug-set-setting paradigm is a methodological proposal to invert the priority and commitment of the psychedelic renaissance, recovering its revolutionary potential and the possibility of positive social transformations that serve not only a small and privileged portion of the population but that value the voices of different social actors and prioritize the universality of access to resources for promoting collective health, autonomy, and well-being (RODRIGUES, 2024, p. 20).

In addition to the Jungian pioneers who worked with psychedelics, other important actors in the psychedelic scene valued Jung's contributions in this context. Grof (2020, p. 125) only came into contact with Jung's work in 1967, when he immigrated to the USA, confirming his observations: while his insights into consciousness and its transpersonal domains came from his sessions with high doses of LSD, Jung's came from his spiritual crisis (which Grof calls “spiritual emergency”), which gave rise to the Red Book and his Depth Psychology. For Grof & Grof (1992, p. 12), “[...] modern depth psychology and consciousness research owe a great debt to the Swiss

psychiatrist”, having he “[...] demonstrated the objective nature of the historical and archetypal domains of the collective unconscious [...] years before psychedelic research and new experiential therapies accumulated evidence to confirm this” (GROF, 2008a, p. 49).

Timothy Leary [1920-1996], a pioneer of psychedelic research at Harvard and later called “the most dangerous man in America” by Richard Nixon (POLLAN, 2018, p. 58), also paid “homage” to Jung in 1964 in his classic *The Psychedelic Experience: A Manual Based on the Tibetan Book of the Dead* (LEARY et al., 2022). Although he disagrees with Jung’s (1992) commentary on the Tibetan Book of the Dead, Leary considers him one of the great psychologists of the 20th century, along with William James, another important pioneer in the study of consciousness-altering drugs. Commenting on the passage in which Jaffé (2021, p. 61-62) speaks of Leary, Beserra (2011) denies the fact that he was removed from the university for having become “addicted” and having been “legally held responsible for the sale of marijuana”, demonstrating once again his distance from the researcher’s work and contributions.

The work of these pioneers in the psychedelic field demonstrates the possible dialogue between Jungian theory and clinical practice and the use of psychedelic substances. Even though he had no direct experience with psychedelics, Jung was a pioneer in the work with archetypal images and their clinical management (FORDHAM, 1963, p. 129) – as he acknowledges:

Although I have never taken the drug nor given it to anyone else, I have devoted at least 40 years of my life to the study of the psychic sphere that is revealed by this drug; this is the sphere of numinous experiences (JUNG, 2015c).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Knowing that it is not possible to exhaust the entire debate surrounding the connection between Jungian psychology and psychedelic substances in a single article, the text sought to present a timeline of Jungian contributions to psychedelics in the last century, creating a bridge with contemporary concepts and debates to the current Psychedelic Renaissance, and introducing the Jungian field to psychedelics. As demonstrated, the theoretical foundations of C. G. Jung’s Depth Psychology prove to be easily applicable in understanding the psychedelic experience, through the accumulated clinical experience with symbols, images, and archetypes, and recognizes the healing aspect of the integration of the conscious-unconscious relationship and the teleological quality of the psyche.

The Psychedelic Renaissance has led to a gradual movement of Jungian analysts and psychologists toward psychedelics, identifying the contributions that analytical psychology can offer theoretically and clinically. Specific psychedelic Jungian literature is growing, with recent productions rescuing texts little discussed in Brazil (LÔBO, 2017) and discussing the confrontation with the shadow and the clinical management of difficult psychedelic experiences (HILL, 2013), the process of integrating the psychedelic experience (COHEN, 2017), the entheogenic and sacred uses of psychedelics (MELLO, 2015), harm reduction in psychedelic-induced crises (BESERRA, 2022) and the contributions of indigenous cosmologies and shamanic perspectives (SOARES et al., 2022; BOECHAT; MENEZES, 2023). I hope to contribute to the fertilization of Brazilian Jungian soil with psychedelic spores and feed the underground mycelial matrix for the flourishing of a critical and accessible psychedelic analytical psychology.

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