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## Dreaming the social: Disavowal and reparation in the age of environmental and social disasters

MONICA LUCI  & FANNY GUGLIELMUCCI

### Abstract

Amid intensifying ecological crises and global unrest, this paper examines whether dreaming can be reimagined as an ethical and political act. While psychoanalysis has long valued dreams for their revelatory power, they also function as symbolic vessels through which the collective unconscious expresses grief, hope, and resistance. Drawing on psychoanalytic theory, analytical psychology, philosophy, and ecocriticism, we argue that dreams are not merely personal residues but inherently political and relational phenomena. We introduce *oneiricopolitics*, the transformative and political potential of dream life in an era marked by planetary precarity and widespread psychic disavowal. Dreaming becomes symbolic resistance, a gesture of love, and a form of ecological reparation. The paper is developed into three parts. First, it explores psychic mechanisms underlying environmental denial and trauma disavowal, drawing on Ferenczi's view of trauma as relational rupture and on symbolization as a path to healing. Second, it reinterprets regression through Ferenczi's thalassal metaphor and Neumann's uroboric consciousness, presenting these as symbolic movements vital to ecological reattunement. Finally, it situates dreams within the "language of the soul," integrating Jungian and post-Jungian thought with the notion of a cosmic unconscious. The paper concludes by proposing oneiricopolitics as a psychopolitical insurgency animated by hope and ecological care.

**Key words:** *ecological crisis, environmental negationism, trauma, thalassal regression, anima mundi, oneiricopolitics, dreaming.*

In times of escalating ecological crisis and global unrest, we wondered whether dreaming – a process once considered private, nocturnal, and introspective – can be reimagined as a mode of ethical and political engagement. Dreams, long honored in the psychoanalytic tradition for their revelatory power, are not only about inner life; they are symbolic vessels through which the collective unconscious speaks, grieves, and hopes.

Drawing on psychoanalytic theory, philosophy, and ecocritical thought, this paper argues that dreams are not merely the residuals of individual mental activity but are fundamentally political and relational acts. It examines the complex relationship between dreams, ecological catastrophe, and what we define as *oneiricopolitics*, i.e., the political and transformative dimensions of dream life in an era marked by planetary precarity, psychic disavowal, and the erosion of imagination. We propose that

dreaming, far from being a retreat from the world, is a radically engaged activity: a form of symbolic resistance, a gesture of love, and an act of ecological reparation, which sustain what we may call the *symbolic life of the world* – through which meaning, care, and transformation become possible again.

The structure unfolds in three interdependent sections. First, we explore the psychic mechanisms underlying environmental negationism and trauma disavowal, drawing on Ferenczi's legacy on trauma as relational rupture and healing as a process that requires recognition, presence, and symbolization. It aims to contribute to a contemporary psychoanalytic ecological theory, building on the philosophical and Jungian idea of *anima mundi*. The second section reconsiders the notion of regression through the lens of Ferenczi's thalassal metaphor and Neumann's uroboric consciousness, interpreting them as necessary symbolic movements and phases for

healing and reattunement with Gaia, and in a broader sense for humankind's evolution. Finally, the third section articulates dreams as part of the "language of soul," blending Jungian and post-Jungian concepts, and the idea of an environmental and even cosmic unconscious. The section closes with the ethics of oneiricopolitics – a field in which dreaming becomes both a psychopolitical insurgency and a reparative force of hope, animated by the sacred eros of imagination.

### **Environmental negationism and the disavowal of ecological trauma**

In the contemporary deteriorating ecological landscape, perhaps one of the most insidious phenomena is not only the destruction itself, but our *failure to recognize* it as such. This disavowal is neither accidental nor merely cognitive – it is, as Sándor Ferenczi would suggest, a psychic mechanism rooted in trauma, a collective defense forged in the crucible of unbearable affect. Ferenczi's ground-breaking work on the dynamics of denial, trauma, and identification with the aggressor provides a conceptual framework for understanding the widespread phenomenon of *environmental negationism*: the persistent refusal to acknowledge the depth and urgency of the ecological catastrophe.

Ferenczi (1932/1988) understood trauma as not only an event, but also a failure of recognition – a collapse of relational meaning when the caregiver refuses to acknowledge and validate the child's suffering. In such moments, the traumatized subject splits, internalizing the aggressor's denial as a condition of psychic survival. Environmental negationism, we argue, is based on a similar dynamic: the repeated exposure to environmental harm – rising seas, scorched forests, displaced populations – coupled with cultural and political denial, leads to a fragmentation of the ecological subjectivity (Bellamy, 2019; Schinaia, 2024; Searles, 1960, 1972). The planet is abused, and we, as bystanders, perpetrators, and victims (Luci, 2017), depending on the case and our position, rely on dissociative mechanisms to survive psychologically.

This saturation generates a new kind of numbness – one that blocks mourning, symbolization, and action. As viewers, we slide into anesthetic consumption of planetary grief. Thus, while the Earth burns, we scroll down in our e-devices – not because we do not care, but because we cannot bear to feel. Ferenczi's idea of trauma as fragmentation becomes particularly relevant. Our failure to tell the story of ecological destruction is not simply a communicative gap but a sign of deeper dissociation: the disintegration of a shared symbolic space in which the

planet could be protected, loved, defended, and, eventually, mourned.

Weintrobe (2013) introduced a nuanced and clinically grounded understanding of the psychological mechanisms underlying climate change denial, which may be used in a broader way to understand the contemporary natural and man-made disasters we encounter every day. She proposes a taxonomy that distinguishes three interrelated but distinct psychic processes – denialism, disavowal, and negationism – each with different levels of conscious and unconscious involvement, and each carrying distinct ethical and political implications.

Denialism refers to the outright rejection of climate science and empirical reality. This form is often ideologically or economically motivated and driven by powerful interests that profit from extractive systems. Denialism weaponizes doubt, creating the illusion of debate where there is consensus, and it functions as a deliberate strategy to paralyze policy, public response, and collective imagination. It is not rooted in ignorance, but in active distortion, what Weintrobe identifies as a disowned and systemically supported form of psychopathy.

Disavowal, by contrast, is more pervasive, subtle, and insidious. It involves an acknowledgement of ecological transition on the cognitive level – "Yes, I know it's real" – while maintaining emotional detachment and behavioral inaction. This split between thought and affect generates a form of psychic numbing. It is a socially accepted form of ecological dissociation that allows individuals to continue high-carbon lifestyles while intellectually conceding their consequences. Drawing on Freud's idea of *Verleugnung* (1925), disavowal is sustained by cultural narratives that normalize excess, deflect guilt, and offer temporary psychological relief at the cost of long-term engagement. It is often bolstered by consumerist logics and neo-liberal ideologies that reframe structural problems as individual failings.

Finally, negationism represents a deeper and more unconscious defense, akin to what Ferenczi described in trauma contexts as autohypnosis or psychic splitting. Here, the individual repudiates unbearable realities not through willful ignorance but through unconscious withdrawal. Ecological catastrophe becomes not just intolerable but unthinkable. This psychic recoil is driven by anxiety, helplessness, and a sense of futility. In this state, the mind regresses to earlier developmental modes of functioning, where magical thinking, manic omnipotence, or dissociation dominate. It is in this terrain that we find what Weintrobe (2021) called the *internalized neo-liberal self*, structured around entitlement, denial of dependency, and hostility toward

vulnerability, including that of the Earth. This tripartite model is particularly valuable because it avoids simplistic attributions of ignorance or bad faith. Instead, it recognizes that denial – as in trauma – is multilayered, affectively complex, and socially reinforced by a collectively maintained structure of disavowal, embedded in culture, media, and economic systems (Di Basilio et al., 2021).

These cultural matrices of denial and domination, as ecofeminist philosopher Plumwood (1993) has shown, are not accidental but historically structured by the logic of mastery – a symbolic regime built upon the denial of vulnerability, interdependence, and embodiment. According to Plumwood, “the logic of mastery depends crucially on the denial of dependency and the backgrounding of those who provide support” (p. 4). This framework helps illuminate why ecological destruction is so often naturalized or rendered invisible: it threatens the Western fantasy of the autonomous, disembodied subject. Dualism, she writes, “involves a process of separation, polarization and often hierarchy, and the construction of the devalued and inferiorised other” (p. 47). The environment, like the feminine, is backgrounded – used but not seen, depended upon but denied.

From this perspective, the ecological crisis becomes not only a material, but also a symbolic failure: a collapse of recognition that mirrors Ferenczi’s insight into the trauma of misattunement. As Plumwood poignantly observes, “The denial of the body and the emotions, the assumption that reason must be disembodied, transcendent and external to nature, are key themes in the Western construction of the human” (1993, p. 143). What emerges, then, is a split subject who disowns both the Earth and the psyche as sites of dependency and care. The psychic foreclosure Ferenczi described is here replicated on a civilizational scale.

Recently, Schinaia (2025), building on the work of Ferenczi and Ogden, offered a compelling framework for understanding this psychic disconnection. He suggested that our response to environmental catastrophe often evokes the autistic-contiguous position – a presymbolic psychic configuration where sensorial experience is overwhelming and the capacity to process trauma collapses. In this condition, the subject is neither indifferent nor unaware, but flooded, defensively withdrawn, as if encased in a psychic shell. Exposure to relentless ecological trauma – through media images of wildfires, floods, and extinction – does not provoke deeper engagement, but instead induces a dissociative retreat. This saturation of perception paradoxically renders the catastrophe invisible. The more we see, the less we feel.

This notion is echoed by the Brazilian activist and psychoanalyst Farias (2025), who, in response to Schinaia’s reflections, elaborated the concept of screen trauma. She argued that contemporary spectatorship – especially through digital and media exposure to ecological devastation – generates not awareness, but psychic anaesthesia/numbness. We are engulfed in catastrophic imagery that cannot be metabolized. Rather than facilitating reflection or action, this excessive representation leads to affective deadness. Her insight complements Schinaia’s psychoanalytic reading: both suggest that contemporary ecological trauma, when hypermediated and unprocessed, induces psychic collapse rather than mobilization.

What both authors bring to the fore is a nuanced psychoanalytic reading of our ecological inaction as the outcome of overwhelming exposure, symbolic overload, and regressed defenses. From this angle, disavowal becomes a structure sustained not only by ideological denial, but also by emotional paralysis, affective saturation, and symbolic foreclosure. Such psychic responses to ecological crisis are not just individual adaptations, but symptoms of a larger cultural matrix – a shared defense system in the face of unbearable planetary loss (Farias, 2025; Schinaia, 2025).

The sociopolitical dimension of this process is further illuminated by Rob Nixon’s concept of “slow violence” – a form of attritional harm that unfolds gradually and invisibly, “a violence of delayed destruction dispersed across time and space” (Nixon, 2011, p. 2). Unlike immediate trauma, slow violence lacks the spectacle necessary to mobilize attention; it is diffuse, normalized, and systematically disavowed.

Ferenczi’s (1932/1988) insight into the “Confusion of tongues” – a traumatic breakdown of parent–child communication that produces silence, psychic splitting, and forced adaptation for survival – offers a disturbing parallel to contemporary societal responses to ecological catastrophe. The Earth speaks in the traumatic language of flood, fire, and extinction, yet the dominant culture responds with denial, delay, or cold rationalism, enacting a collective dissociation not unlike that of the abused child. In this light, environmental negationism is not merely a cognitive distortion or ideological tool – it is a trauma structure, reinforced by affective defenses, symbolic collapse, and sociopolitical machinery. This view allows for a *psychoanalytic ecology*: an understanding that the planetary and the psychical are not merely parallel, but mutually entangled.

Here, the Jungian concept of *anima mundi* becomes particularly illuminating. Jung never wrote about ecology, but he recognized the existence of an *anima mundi*, the world soul (Jung, 1954/1969,

para. 759), as the presence of spirit within matter (1944/1968, para. 229). In 1927, Jung gave a lecture at a philosophical society in Darmstadt, with the title “The dependence of the psyche on the Earth,” from which four years later he published “Mind and Earth.”

Jung described the soul as “a system of adaptation determined by the conditions of an earthly environment” (Jung, 1931/1964, para. 49). To understand the dependence of the mind on the Earth, he explains how it is necessary to deepen the problem of the structure of the collective unconscious. The contents of the collective unconscious are what he called the “archetypes,” i.e., *a priori* structures, or conditioning factors that represent a special, psychological instance of the biological “patterns of behavior” that gives all living organisms their specific qualities (Jacobi, 1959, pp. 31–73; Jung, 1938/1966):

Archetypes are systems of readiness for action, and at the same time images and emotions. They are inherited with the brain-structure – indeed, they are its psychic aspect. they represent, on the one hand, a very strong instinctive conservatism, while on the other hand they are the most effective means conceivable of instinctive adaptation. They are thus, essentially, the chthonic portion of the psyche, ... that portion through which the psyche is attached to nature, or in which its link with the earth and the world appears at its most tangible. (Jung, 1931/1964, para. 53)

The archetypes themselves are not represented by content because an original image can only be determined by content when it is conscious. The archetype is rather the *form* of content, or rather, as Jung explains, a *facultas praeformandi* (Jung, 1938/1966, para. 155). Jung seems to put archetypes at the core of the connection between the environment and the collective unconscious. It is not our intent to deepen the discourse about the debated and today controversial concept of archetype (Carta, 2025; Roesler, 2021), but we want to emphasize that Jung noticed and theorized on such a connection between the environment and the unconscious and their intertwinement. He wrote:

The development of Western philosophy during the last two centuries has succeeded in isolating the mind in its own sphere and in severing it from its primordial oneness with the universe. Man himself has ceased to be the microcosm and eidolon of the cosmos, and his “anima” is no longer the con-substantial scintilla or spark of the Anima Mundi, the World Soul. (Jung, 1954/1969, para. 759)

Hillman (1982) elaborated creatively on the idea of *anima mundi*. For him, the psyche is not contained within the boundaries of the individual but is diffused

throughout the world, alive in landscapes, cities, animals, and artifacts. According to him, the process of “soul-making” becomes more attainable when we shift our focus away from the purely human perspective; when we broaden our viewpoint beyond humanity, we reawaken within the psyche of the world. Soul-making involves reflection, the formation of ideas, images, and myths; it is a dynamic activity. Engaging in soul-making – making an effort to comprehend our own complexities along with those of the world – can be therapeutic (Hillman, 1975).

Federici (2025) reminded us that religious traditions not only differentiate the immortal soul from the mortal human, but also, in philosophy, from Plato to Hegel, the idea of psyche is more expansive than that of human. The soul transcends mere humanity; much of the psyche extends beyond human nature. Although we typically view the soul as something internal, this notion merely hints at the private nature of psychic life and does not imply a literal internality in a spatial sense; it is rather an imaginal metaphor. As we broaden our perspective beyond humanity, the soul becomes more apparent to us in its richness and expansiveness, and we discover expressions of psyche in other forms of animal and plant life, leading us to suggest that environmental vitality is inherently psychological.

The psyche, Hillman (1975) argued, is not a possession of the subject but a mode of presence in the world, a way the world itself becomes animated and meaningful. From this imaginal perspective, environmental devastation is not merely a physical crisis but a profound psychological rupture – what we might call a *wound in the soul of the world*. The extinction of species, the burning of forests, the acidification of oceans – these are not only ecological losses, but also symbolic and affective traumas that destabilize the human psyche because they tear the very fabric of meaning.

### **Uroboric stage, thalassal pull, and planetary womb**

The image of the Earth as a living being, with its breath and soul, is nothing new in the history of humanity. Across centuries and civilizations, we find the recurring narrative of a primordial maternal presence – Gaia – who, on one hand, nourishes her children with food, shelter, and love, while on the other, shows all her cruel power and destructiveness. Jung writes extensively about the mother archetype, which forms the foundation of the most moving

and unforgettable experiences in the life of the human species.

The qualities associated with it are maternal solicitude and sympathy: the magic authority of the female; the wisdom and spiritual exaltation that transcend reason; any helpful instinct or impulse; all that is benign, all that cherishes and sustains, that fosters growth and fertility. The place of magic transformation and rebirth. On the negative side, the mother archetype may connote anything secret, hidden, dark; the abyss, the world of the dead, anything that devours, seduces, and poisons, that is terrifying and inescapable like fate. She is the first world, the first home, the first embrace. She can be nourishing or devouring, creative or destructive. (Jung, 1938/1966, para. 158)

The archetype of the “Great Mother” is probably the most known contribution of Neumann (1955). However, in our view it is probably his monumental work *The origins and history of consciousness* (Neumann, 1954) that merits our attention here, bridging the personal and the collective, the fate of the individual to that of humanity. In retracing the evolution of human consciousness – through a vision that unfolds in uncannily close proximity to Ferenczi’s *Thalassa* (1938), written decades earlier, and whose conceptual comparison would warrant a study of its own – Neumann (1954) identifies a series of developmental stages.

The first, which he names the *uroboric stage of consciousness*, is anchored in the ancient symbol of the uroboros, the serpent devouring its own tail. This circular, self-consuming figure speaks to a state of undivided unity, where birth and death, inside and outside, subject and object are not yet split, but fused in a primordial continuum. The uroboric stage is not merely a myth: it is a psychic condition describing an early phase of life in which no separation exists between psyche and cosmos. Neumann wrote, “Uroboros represents infinity and unity before separation and differentiation, self and world are one, fused” (p. 298). In this *pre-egoic* space, the individual dwells within the maternal matrix: the Great Mother, Gaia, the amniotic ocean of life. This is not yet the time of language or boundary, but of fluid resonance. Here, all things are connected, co-emergent, mutually enfolded.

From an ecological standpoint, this stage evokes the deep embeddedness of the human soul within the planetary body – a time before alienation, before the modern delusion of mastery. The rupture that characterizes our current ecological crisis can be read as the result of a big inflation, the *hybris* of humankind, which exploiting the Earth till a point of rupture, entered what is now called the Anthropocene, the proposed geological epoch that highlights the significant impact of human activity

on the Earth’s geology and ecosystems, characterized by climate change, biodiversity loss, and global food insecurity resulting from industrialization and human activities (Steffen, 2021).

In this stage, the atmosphere is marked by an overwhelming tendency toward narcissism. The conflict between personal narcissism and the wider community underpins the concept of being “exceptional” – anthropocentrism – and highlights contemporary humans’ challenges in relating to the environment (Orange, 2017). Kassouf (2023) opts to refer to the term “more-than-human,” echoing Searle’s brilliant earlier notion about the significance of the “non-human” environment (Searles, 1960), and proposes a self-object link to the more-than-human that could enhance our awareness of how the self interacts with the environment and deepen our empathetic understanding of our shared interconnectedness.

In the name of progress and autonomy, we have denied the very ground that sustains us, forgetting our *ontological interdependence* with the more-than-human world. How can we view the current ecological and social catastrophe we are experiencing? Ferenczi’s concept of “thalassal regression” (1938) offers a possible imaginative reparative pathway out of this crisis. It suggests that the desire to return to the tranquillity of the maternal womb parallels a response to a traumatic prehistoric extinction event undergone by organic life once forced to abandon its aquatic existence. According to him the longing for the return to the water is nothing other than a longing for the womb. It is the unconscious desire to regain the original intrauterine existence, and in a phylogenetic sense, a desire to return to the ocean from which all life once emerged (1938, pp. 52–9). It is a longing for the preverbal, oceanic rhythm of the Gaia womb, as a site not of fusion but of *reciprocal interbeing*.

It is not a call to passivity or infantilization, but a symbolic gesture: a desire to return, to *reattune* – to remember the original fluidity and wholeness from which we all come. The Ferenczian perspective offers a profound departure from Freud’s Darwinian-influenced view of regression as a pathological return to earlier developmental stages. Instead, drawing upon Lamarckian evolutionary theory, which posits that evolution is not just adaptation or a linear process, Ferenczi suggests that sometimes a step back is necessary to move forward. Jung also conceived regression as “a linking back with the world of natural instincts” (Jung, 1912/1956, para. 631), a “morbid condition” (Jung, 1937/1969, para. 105) but one that is “not necessarily a retrograde step in the sense of a degeneration, but rather represents a necessary phase of development” (Jung, 1948/1960, para. 69). He referred to this

psychic movement also as “*reculer pour mieux sauter*, an amassing and integration of powers that will develop into a new order” (Jung, 1935/1966a, para. 19).

Nonetheless, this does not imply that regression will inevitably lead to progress. As he noted, symbols play a vital role during periods of regression. Jung highly valued the transformative power of symbols (Jung, 1921/1971, para. 201). In the Jungian sense, symbols are ultimately mysterious, that is, their meaning can never be fully unpacked, but exactly for their being unsaturated objects of meaning, they have the power to transform regression into progression (Jung, 1921/1971, para. 201). One falls back so as to achieve better footing as well as to be able to advance more surely. Jung approached regression “from the teleological point of view” (Jung, 1935/1966b, para. 239), that is, regarding the psyche as having some sort of goal or direction. What is it aiming at? A “reactivation and reorganization of its contents [of the conscious mind]” (Jung, 1912/1956, para. 631).

In the same spirit, we offer here the image of a spring – tightly coiled, compressed, but never static, to describe this dynamic psychic movement. To wind the spring, it is necessary to go back along the spirals: it circles back to earlier psychic states to retrieve vital elements for transformation. This is the psychic movement Jung called *circumambulation*. Circumambulation refers to a type of movement associated with a ritual dance. This movement often takes on a circular form, thereby establishing a separation between a sacred area (the interior) and a mundane area (the exterior). In other instances, the dance’s movement forms a spiral, symbolizing the union of elements as they converge from the edges toward a central point. Originating from alchemical practices (Jung, 1944/1968), the term specifically refers to the creation of a “fence” or *temenos* that designates a sacred space, serving as a transformative container. This motion is a means of crafting space.

In *Memories, dreams, reflections* (1965), he writes, referring to the development of the self,

the goal of psychic development is the self. There is no linear evolution; there is only a circumambulation of the self. Uniform development exists, at most, only in the beginning; later, everything points toward the center, finding the mandala [sacred circle] as an expression of the self was for me the ultimate. (Jung, 1965, pp. 196–197)

In Ferenczi’s Lamarckian vision of evolution, a symbolic return to origin – such as the oceanic womb – is an arc of reconfiguration. The spiral here becomes an image of psychic becoming: a recursive unfolding where each loop deepens awareness rather than merely repeating it. For these reasons, we propose

to name this dynamic a *thalassal pull* rather than regression, a forward-moving process where returning to origins serves as a means of psychic and somatic renewal, and we argue here for a humankind evolution. The thalassal pull acts like this spring: it gathers tension through ecological alienation, accumulates longing through disconnection, and releases toward the fluid origin – the primordial oceanic matrix. It is a push–pull dynamic: the more the psyche is drawn into fragmentation, the more urgent becomes the tension toward reintegration. Like the spring, this movement is kinetic, full of psychic potential.

Thus, what we call here *thalassal pull* is not a regressive fantasy but a psychic readiness – a coiled invitation to return to Gaia, not in fusion but in fluid reciprocity. The psyche does not merely dream of water; it retains it as a trace, a cellular memory, a mythopoetic call. To yield to the thalassal pull is to listen to that call. It is to honor the maternal ground of being, not in nostalgic return, but in active, ethical participation in planetary repair. It is a return to a psychic and *ecological state of primary omnipotence* – not as domination, but as interdependence; not as confusion, but as communion and “total potentiality.” In this thalassal mode, the boundaries between self and Earth dissolve into a fluid reciprocity, where care, nourishment, and mutual recognition become the conditions of life, and where we may find not only a memory of psychic wholeness, but also a model for rethinking relationality in an age of ecological collapse.

The current crisis of the Anthropocene – marked by droughts, floods, extinctions, and viral contagion – demands us to reconsider the role of regression not as a retreat from progress, but as a symbolic return to a mode of being that honors our embeddedness in the living Earth. We are not in the world, echoing Hillman (1992), but the world is in us. This imaginal perspective dismantles the dualism between psyche and environment, restoring the world’s interiority, and invites us to reintegrate the sacred dimension, once present and now lost.

At an individual level, Ferenczi (1913/1980) calls this intrauterine psychic state the “Period of unconditional omnipotence,” re-envisioning the concept of omnipotence not as the feeling or belief that desires and thoughts gain form in the external world, but as state of absolute plenitude where the *fetus* felt a sense of wholeness, of being provided for without having to strive. In this state of complete gratification, all its instinctual needs are automatically met, and the fetus lacks desire because it lacks lack – it exists in a condition of total sufficiency, without any conscious wants. To imagine reconnection with Gaia in these terms is to remember a time

when being and world were not split, and to seek, symbolically, a re-entry into the rhythm of interconnectedness.

This evolutionary dance – an affective pull toward the liquefaction of boundaries – can be understood as both a trauma response and an evolutionary necessity. In other words, ecological degradation is not only catastrophic, but also dissolving: it wears down memory, what Soreanu (2020) has poetically called an “orphyic time.” Orphyic time is a temporal structure intimately tied to trauma, recognition, and symbolic reparation,

is not linear time. It is not clock time. Orphyic time is a time that opens a break in the symbolic texture, and that creates the possibility for new acts of symbolisation. It is not just an aftermath; it can also be a time of opportunity for renewal and re-attunement. It is a time that ‘listens back’. (Soreanu, 2020, p. 199)

To reclaim regression as a psychic movement toward ecological reconnection requires that we also depathologize softness, liquidity, and dissolution. This is particularly important in confronting the gendered coding of such traits.

The symbolic return to water – so often dismissed in clinical discourse as infantile fantasy – can instead be honored as a vital gesture of interspecies remembrance. As Haraway (2016) reminds us, we must “make kin” in the face of extinction – not only with other humans, but also with the oceans, forests, and microbial ancestors who formed us. This act of kin-making requires, as Haraway urges, a Bionian capability to “stay with the trouble,” to inhabit the complexity, ambiguity, and pain of ecological and psychic collapse without dissociating or simplifying. We may say that the possibility of the collective to evolve relies on the individual, groupal, and social ability to remain in a state of uncertainty, of not-knowing, without rushing to premature closure or mastery. This tolerance for ambiguity is not passivity, but a fertile psychic stance – a space of symbolic incubation from which new forms of relation and meaning can emerge.

In this light, Slavin (2016) suggested that the capacity to sustain longing and dependency dimensions often associated with the maternal complex is not a sign of weakness, but a precondition for relational agency. Opening to what he calls the “tragic-existential dimension of human life” means bearing the tensions of loss, finitude, and unconscious conflict without foreclosing the psychic field. From this perspective, the return to Gaia is not a collapse into presymbolic fusion, but an ethical stance of “response-ability” (Haraway, 2016): the courage to remain in relation with the more-than-human world, to be affected by it, and to desire within it.

Here, agency is not to be understood as the assertion of will or domination, but as a relational and affective capacity rooted in attunement (Slavin, 2016), which may lead to a participatory presence that sustains symbolic life precisely where meaning is most fragile. This kind of agency, we argue, finds its deepest expression not in action *per se*, but in the act of dreaming, a psychic, poetic, and ethical movement that holds space for the emergence of the not-yet-symbolized.

### **Dreaming as an act of love: oneiricopolitics, poetic ecology, and the imaginal turn**

In a time marked by planetary collapse, psychic desensitization, and the affective foreclosure of the future, dreaming may be the most subversive unconscious gesture left. In this section, following the insight of Brazilian psychoanalyst and educator Rose Gursky, we propose a political view of dreaming, describing the oneiric activity as poetic resistance against necropolitics – the systemic annihilation of desire, relation, and futurity held by capitalistic and neo-liberal contemporary scenarios, following Walter Benjamin’s idea that “there is a not-yet-conscious knowledge of what has been: its advancement has the structure of awakening” (Benjamin, 2006, p. 456).

Gurski and Perrone (2021) proposed a broader use of dreams as a political awakening – an oneiric praxis that allows for the emergence of collective memory, symbolic repair, and emancipatory imagination. Moving forward, this being-toward-life insurgency is the symbolic and ethical force of dreaming in contemporary times of environmental collapse, a force that fiercely opposes the slow cancellation of the future by sustaining the ability to desire, to imagine, and to symbolically generate meaning. In this sense, dreaming enacts what Fachinelli (1971) called a “dissident desire” that resists adaptation to the dominant symbolic order, opposing not only external forms of oppression, but also the internalized mechanisms that silence the psyche’s generative drive.

Just as Fachinelli (1971) envisioned desire as a force of rupture and invention, capable of undermining the anesthetic effects of ideological control, so too does the dream function as a subversive gesture: an oneiric act that reclaims the capacity to feel, to signify, to link, and to open new paths of psychic and political existence. Within this frame, oneiricopolitics becomes a dissident grammar of the soul (Guglielmucci, 2025; Perrone & Gurski, 2022), a field in which images, affects, and memories conspire for the possibility of keeping ourselves alive and desiring, which requires keeping oneself ethical and

able to relate. This is what Jung called “anima” function, meaning the relational function of psyche, the attitude of consciousness towards the unconscious, or a function of relating (Jung, 1921/1971, para. 803), which is a tension never fully accomplished.

Against the backdrop of what Fisher (2009) calls “capitalist realism” – the pervasive belief that “there is no alternative” to the current system – dreaming presents itself as a subversive movement of survivorship. If neo-liberalism colonizes not only economies and ecologies, but also psychic architectures, then to dream is to trespass the inner frontiers of realism itself. In contrast to the disenchanting ontology of radical capitalism, the political use of dreams is rooted instead in an imaginal humanism: a vision of the human grounded not in domination or control, but in the symbolic, poetic, and relational capacities of the psyche (Guglielmucci, 2025; Perrone & Gurski, 2022).

Imaginal humanism affirms that the capacity to dream is not ornamental – it is ontological. It reconnects us to the deep soul of the world and to what we may define as the “aesthetic unconscious” – a space where the psyche does not merely reflect reality but actively generates it through symbolic and affective resonance. In this poetic place of creation, dreaming must be understood as a broader symbolic gesture that operates within the collective unconscious, and more broadly within the ecological and cosmic dimensions of psychic life. In this new paradigm, an ecological unconscious is the psychic expression of the living Earth. It is how climate collapse, extinction, and planetary grief appear not only as events, but also as symbolic disturbances in the soul. To dream of floods, of disappearing animals, of scorched forests, Gaia is speaking with, within, and through us.

In Bernstein’s terms (2005), this is a “borderland” event: a communication from the deep entanglement of the subject and the world, breaking through the defenses of dissociation and reawakening symbolic attunement. This expanded version of the unconscious, in turn, names a more radical vision; it carries a transcendental dimension, while remaining immanent in all that lives and suffers. It is a poetic field that functions simultaneously as energy and container, space and force. It constitutes the ultimate ontological layer in which all other layers – individual, collective, ecological – are nested and dynamically interwoven. It is not a metaphorical “beyond,” but rather the very matrix within which all psychic life unfolds.

Its topology is not vertical, but spherical and recursive: a total field of immanence, or what we might call the *anima universi*. As Shakespeare evokes in *The Tempest*, “We are such stuff as dreams are made on and our little life is rounded with a sleep” (2019, p.

4.1.156–158). This poetic insight gestures toward a deeper ontological truth: we are woven from the same symbolic and affective fabric that constitutes the dream itself. The dream reminds us that we are not apart from the world but composed of its same matter, its same longing, its same vulnerability and beauty. It is in this symbolic resonance that the dream becomes a medium of cosmic kinship.

This unconscious is not merely a background process but a living field animated by a specific affective atmosphere: love. This love is not sentimental or romantic, but what Fromm (1964) called “biophilia”: the fundamental psychic orientation toward life, connection, and care. Dreaming thus assumes an existential relevance, becoming a kind of fidelity to life which refuses to conform to either catastrophism or numbness (Schinaia, 2025), a liminal space sustained by a vital longing still alive within the subject, a desiring spark of hope that resists annihilation.

This hope is not naïve optimism, but a radical psychic stance that dares to envision alternative realities even in the face of devastation. As Bloch (1954/1986) reminds us, “In hope, the soul sets out on its path toward what is to come. It does not flee into dreams, but dreams ahead” (p. 12). The oneiric activity, in this light, is a prefigurative gesture – a symbolic rehearsal of futures that do not yet exist but insist nonetheless. Jung (1940/1966, paras. 498–499) emphasized the prospective function of dreams that are not only relying on the past but also anticipating possible future scenarios.

As in the legacy of the philosopher Zambrano (1950), dreaming is a reveling process in which our soul thinks with the heart; it is through dreaming that the soul reveals itself, re-membering what has been dissociated: The Earth, the other, the self. Building on this, we propose that dreaming reveals a universal intentionality, a cosmic will toward life phylogenetically predetermined, which resists the impersonal destiny of alienation and loss. This vital force for Zambrano – and for us with her – can only speak the language of the heart, which is, in its ultimate essence, the language of love (Guglielmucci, 2025).

The dream becomes, then, a field of spiritual resonance and existential guidance through which the soul seeks not only truth, but also connection, care, and, revisiting Ferenczi (1932/1988), an attempt to heal both individual and ecological wounds. In this light, dreaming becomes a gesture of care without conquest – a psychic offering rather than a hermeneutic extraction. It reclaims the ethical principle of interdependence, which ecofeminist thinkers such as Val Plumwood, Silvia Federici, and Donna Haraway have long emphasized. Against a masculine logic built on the denial of vulnerability,

interconnection, and embodiment, the bravery of dreaming insists on the sacredness of relation. It revives a poetic cosmology in which a new modality of knowledge emerges through unveiling, along with an epistemology of tenderness, and an ethics of recognition and reciprocity.

## Conclusion

We would like to close our talk by offering the audience a simple yet radical idea: that this is the ontological task of the dream is to keep the world symbolically alive. To care, to feel, to transform. To love when love seems impossible. In this sense, the dream becomes not only a psychic function, but also a spiritual gesture, a poetic ecology, and a political practice.

Earlier, we spoke of a desiring spark of hope – a vital and original impulse of the subject toward that which is not yet, but could be. It is an expression of desire as a constitutive force of subjectivity, a spark that emerges from the psyche's imaginative and generative capacity. In Blochian terms, it points to the activation of the *Noch-Nicht-Bewusstes* – the “not-yet-conscious” – which orients action toward the emergence of the possible. It is thus a form of dynamic ontology, in which the subject is constituted in the tension between what is and what might become.

We would like to close by proposing one further step: a spark of faith that precedes language itself – a pre-reflective entrustment that may take the form of love, desire, or hope, yet cannot be reduced to any of them. We might say it is a modality of the soul that precedes intention – a way in which the subject inhabits the unknown without being overwhelmed by it. Zambrano would call this “*luz oscura*” – a dark light that illuminates without blinding, that guides without guaranteeing. It is this *scintilla fidei*, which so powerfully evokes the thought of Bion and the post-Bionians, that constitutes what the Spanish philosopher has called “a knowledge of the soul” – rather than of the ego – a non-knowledge-based form of knowing that underlies the very possibility of knowledge itself (Zambrano, 1950). It is a sense of “being carried by” something, rather than “moving toward” something. Perhaps, then, to dream – as we have explored in this paper – is precisely this: loosening the grip of the ego, and being fully in the essence of the self as part of *anima mundi*, to surrender to its biophilic intentionality, which recognizes the benevolence at the heart of existence, and letting ourselves be dreamed by it.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

## Patient anonymization

Potentially personally identifying information presented in this article that relates directly or indirectly to an individual, or individuals, has been changed to disguise and safeguard the confidentiality, privacy and data protection rights of those concerned, in accordance with the journal's anonymization policy.

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