

# Hermes in the fields of Apollo: Deidealization and eccentricity in neurodivergent pattern

Fabio C. C. E. Villar\*

## Abstract

The article presents the beginning of an investigation about neurodiversity, specifically about certain aspects of the arrival of a neurodivergent child in a family, and it seeks to raise experiential reflections about neurodiversity in the world, homes, schools, and medical offices. This investigation starts from both personal and clinical experiences to elaborate, under an archetypal lens, relationships between the imagination of the trickster and two psychic phenomena present in the occurrence of neurodivergence in a family: deidealization and eccentricity. ■



**Keywords**  
neurodiversity,  
trickster,  
fatherhood,  
deidealization,  
analytical  
psychology.

\* Psychiatrist, analyst candidate-in-training at IJUSC/AJB/IAAP.  
e-mail: drfabiovillar@gmail.com

## Hermes in the fields of Apollo: Deidealization and eccentricity in neurodivergent pattern

### Introduction

Neurodiversity is a term coined in the 1990s by Australian sociologist Judy Singer, who places herself as someone located somewhere in the autistic spectrum (ABREU, 2021), as a political rather than scientific term, and “describes the idea that people experience and interact with the world around them in many different ways; [...] and differences are not viewed as deficits.” (BAUMER, 2021, p. 1). The concept of neurodiversity has spread throughout the world and has helped dissolve the belief that “we all more or less see, feel, touch, hear, smell, and sort information, in more or less the same way, (unless visibly disabled)” (SINGER, 2019, p. 1). According to Singer, neurodiversity is inclusive and is a heritage of all humanity, making no distinction between “normal” and “neurodiverse” because the term points out exactly the fact that, in varying degrees and dimensions, every human being is unique and distinct in their way of processing the world’s data, whether closer or farther from a supposed imaginary “average”. The term neurodiversity is also used in a more specific context to refer to the sociopolitical movement where people with unusual neurological conditions fight for their rights, their place of speech, and their legitimate way of being in the world.

Neurodivergent refers to the individual who is furthest from the hypothetical “typical” human, and for which the term *neuroatypical* is also often used as a synonym. Since the “typical” does not actually exist, I prefer to use the term *neurodivergent*, for the reason that it provides us with a more interesting image for our reflection, in which the central phenomenon is when parents and children *diverge* neurologically from each other more markedly, culminating in the phenomena of eccentricity and deidealization. In-

dividuals in the autistic spectrum or with ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia, and other conditions are possibilities of neurodivergence (SINGER, 2019).

### Tricksterian incidences: deidealization and eccentricity

Exu killed a bird yesterday, with a stone he only threw today (OURO PRETO, FIÓTI, 2020) - Yoruba traditional saying.

The finding of neurodivergence in a child is a potentially conflicting situation, in which we, fathers, mothers and family members, are driven to a crossroads, from which we can take different paths: denying difference and the conflict itself, fighting heroically against evil, paralyzing in the face of the unknown or, who knows, to follow the path of the unusual that life has presented us with this “deviation” of course, opening up to neurodiversity. Such “normal” routes are fictitious, creations of our idealizing apollonian impulse, both from a personal and cultural perspective. This idealization assumes which are the appropriate measures for our traits, which are the harmonious contours for our way of being, what is correct and what is crooked. I propose that, as parents, we can welcome such conflict in our lives as the arrival of Hermes, younger brother of the idealist Apollo, who subverts a certain order and inaugurates a new cosmos with his arrival in the world. The archetypal path of Hermes can also be an alternative in the elaboration of such conflicts and an interesting attitude to tread the “deviant” paths that present themselves, displacing a supposed center of normality. The trickster’s imagination invites us to adopt another perspective on what is eccentric, leading us to de-idealization and, further on, to the acceptance of novelty.

Upon receiving the autism<sup>1</sup> diagnosis of my youngest son, I felt life was “pulling the rug<sup>2</sup> from under my feet. Since then, I have heard several similar phrases from other parents of neurodivergent children: “life played a trick on me”, “the ground opened under my feet”, “my world turned upside down”. The realization of neurodivergence in a child brings about a rupture with an entire idealized image, whether we are more aware or less aware of that idealization. Not only there is a break with the image of the child, but there is also a break with the idealized role of father or mother, the fantasies of what would it be like to be a father, or a mother, vanish in thin air because this child, who is different from everything I could imagine with my repertoire, requires another type of parenthood, which is also diverse. When we talk in terms such as *rupture*, *change*, *reverse*, *inverse*, *diverse*, we are talking about the trickster, this figure that, in itself, also represents *deconstruction*. It is noteworthy that the term “idealized” is used here to designate a psychic image formed in an autonomous and unconscious way, which projects itself over the facts and casts on them the colors we tend to see in the world and in life.

Regarding the various possible human diversities, I hear nonsense such as “my son is dead to me,” said by parents who do not accept their children’s sexuality, political stance, or unusual professional choices; we have all witnessed, or heard about, how a parent would deny a child because of the truth expressed by that child’s soul. In autism, I observe a similar phenome-

non, but with a medical-spiritual implication (as well still happens in the scope of sexuality), exemplified in the phrase “autism stole my child”. This expression represents a departure from reality, a defensive (and offensive) artificialism that seeks to separate the “being” from their “way of being”, as if the latter was the result of the simple interference of a process external to the *being*, which invades and possesses them. Autism is then elevated to the category of entity *per se*, as if it were something that took over the perfect child and damaged them, something that must be ripped out from them so that they can again be *that* child. There is a ceaseless quest for the medical or spiritual healing for that malady which is robbing the child from the parents. We can imagine the countless psychic wounds that stem from this position of denial and take over a family’s soul: a real child who is not seen, an ideal child cultivated with nostalgia, fathers and mothers sunken in guilt, anger, fear, and resistance to the grieving processes that must come to pass.

Neurodivergence is not caused by external events that can be extinguished, nor by the presence of a ghostly entity that, if excised, would reveal a neurotypical child beneath that interference. Nothing could be more unfamiliar with reality than that understanding. Autism is the expression of a diverse neurological organization, that is, the way the brain and the entire nervous system have developed is diverse. The neural pathways, the organization of neural networks, the most dominant and least dominant brain areas, all of this constituted in a diverse way, along with the development of the being, for *it is* their manner of development, and therefore inseparable from one’s own being. This makes the idea of curing autism as surreal as the idea of turning the water dry or turning the fire cold. When trying to level off the differences from the autistic person, one achieves at most a denial of their legitimate way of being, because their difference is constituent, as we are told by Temple Grandin (2021): “But I myself didn’t actually

<sup>1</sup> *Autistic spectrum* refers to the plural and vast field in which each individual uniquely presents differences in communication, language, social behavior, and sensory perception and processing. People in the autistic spectrum may have a wide range of strengths, abilities, needs and challenges, and while some may be able to communicate verbally, have a normal or above average IQ, and live independently; others might not be able to communicate their needs or feelings, may struggle with impairing and harmful behaviors that impact their safety and well-being, and may be dependent on support in all areas of their life. In addition to intrinsic characteristics of each individual, people on the autistic spectrum and neurodivergent people in general suffer from barriers imposed by societal norms, causing social exclusion and inequity (BAUMER, 2021).

hear the word *autistic* applied to me until I was about twelve or thirteen; I remember thinking, *Oh, it's me that's different*" (p. 18). In fact, there is the theft of *one* child, when we come across their neurodivergence, just as it happened in our home with our youngest son. But which child did autism steal?

### Hermes and Apollo

I resort here to the first adventures of Hermes shortly after his birth, but to do so it is necessary to delimit the differences between the specific figure of Hermes and a more general figure of the trickster, as presented to us by Karl Kerényi (1972 apud RADIN, 1972) in his commentary on the writings of Paul Radin (1972), in which he contrasts Hermes, Olympian god with trickster features, and Wakdjunkaga, the "player of pranks", which is the trickster hero of the Winnebago. Both carry attributes in common, like movement, lying, mischief, deception, theft, subversion, cunning, and the phallic aspect; Hermes, however, presents other attributes that are not shared by the trickster hero, such as trade, communication, and the guiding of souls. Hermes presents a cosmos of his own, well characterized as the *Guide of Souls* (KERÉNYI, 2015). Despite exceeding the trickster semantics, Hermes' guidance of souls does not lack tricksterian tones, since "it is not something unilateral or linear; he guides, indeed, misguiding, bewildering" (BARCELLOS, 2019, p. 107). In the unfolding of deconstruction, paths are presented to us unusually, and we are invited to cultivate the soul in new and necessary directions; in other words, it is through "errors" and "deviations" that Hermes guides the soul to its destiny (BARCELLOS, 2019).

According to the Homeric Hymns (RIBEIRO, 2010), Hermes steals the sacred cows herded by Apollo, his ideals. Apollo is "the one who hurts from afar", whose arrow "fly straight to its clearly visible destination, the truth", through which "the chaotic must take shape, the impetuous must march in time, the contradictory must bal-

ance itself in the harmony", the "institutor of the order of the world and of human life", the one who "does not want the soul, but the spirit, that is, the movement that gets rid of proximity and its weight" (OTTO, 2005). Apollo inspires us to idealize, to trace the supposedly adequate measures, to choose the appropriate traits, to seek the harmonious composition. His younger brother, Hermes, subverts this scenario and opens another path, which proves to be as valuable and necessary as the Apollonian, being more appropriate for certain occasions; when it comes to the diverse, the unusual, the singular, Apollo's semantics is of little use, since "the meaning of his revelation does not concern the dignity of the being of each one in particular, nor the interior depth of individual souls; it concerns what is above the person, the unalterable, the eternal forms" (OTTO, 2005).

The change focuses on an idealized field, such as the arrival of Hermes altering the stability of Apollo's pastures, subverting the order by stealing the cattle and guiding them backwards, to then make a sacrifice in offering to the gods, taking a place for himself among the Olympians, and permanently altering the divine order. Hermes invades an immutable field where the "scythe has never come", where the cattle of the gods were grazing, and places himself eternally within the divine order, he arrives to stay – at least as a possibility, since this tricksterian feature is always arriving and leaving, never dwelling for too long in the same place; his abode is at the crossroads of possibilities, through the pathways of movement, deconstructing his surroundings wherever he goes.

The ideal child is not only robbed by autism, but they are also, like the cows of Apollo, sacrificed. Any previous idea one could have about a child is sabotaged by autism. Here, at this point, parents are faced with a crossroads. We are invited to understand autism *as an evil in itself*, to be fought against for the sake of good by heroic parents, warriors of normality, who seek to return their children to the tracks of typical

development or, on the other hand, we can take the route of opening ourselves to the unknown; being this a crossroads, it would be convenient to be aware of Hermes. We are incited by them to walk the path of the *new*, of the unimagined, out of the bounds of moral judgment of good and evil, in openness to experience and acceptance of the real child, but only if we can withstand the grieving for the ideal child. This might be an interesting way for all of us to welcome our children, but in the autism phenomenon, it is imperative. We end up being forced to do that with greater intensity, or else we will be condemned to have no relationship with that child who deviated from the idealized path.

When a child is born, idealization makes itself present – be it with greater rigidity and specificity or greater flexibility and generality, but it is present. As much as I was a father who was open-minded as to the characteristics my son would express in his personality, the values he would profess and the choices he would make in his life, I did not have a shadow of a doubt about whether he would develop, and to what degree, his verbal communication, the basic skills of social relationships, the symbolic level of understanding about the world, sensory regulation and so on and so forth. When one finds out they have an autistic child, these new questions arise as if they were the “discovery” of the Americas and their peoples: something *seemingly* outside of reality, but that has always been here in our world, with all its life and history.

But the guidance of Hermes, as we have seen, deviates us from our precious ideals cultivated by throwing ourselves into the tortuosity of life, once “lost” from the path that we previously believed to be destined, we have the possibility of a real opening to what is revealed as our fate indeed. It was not other children, but precisely these, that fate had in store for me. Neurodivergence, in this sense, allows us to “get lost” to reach new lands, new fields to be cultivated, more favorable to the grains we receive from destiny. The metaphor of guiding is a subject also

shared by brother Apollo, but unlike the trickster, the guiding of the solar archer shows the colonizers the way to a new homeland” (OTTO, 2005, p. 62). The imagination of “colonialism” is interesting for thinking about neurodiversity, because it is precisely in a decolonial attitude that one can see how much human diversity and its singularities tend to be flattened and shaped by the force of “higher” values, imposed from above down, distancing them from the organic and pulsating truth of each being. The political field of neurodiversity is currently disputed by several discourses, but one can easily observe those with a greater hermetic accent and those with a greater Apollonian accent, at least in terms of the valorization of singularity (Hermes) or impersonal ordering (Apollo).

### Trickster

We can understand the imagery of the trickster figure as that which evokes disorder, subversion, cheating, and deception. The comedians, the scammers, the rogues, the “crazy”, the “eccentrics”, the marginal; all evoke trickster dynamics.

The *core* of the trickster archetype is deconstruction in itself: the changing, the turning, the crossroads, the hole, the inversion. When such a change involves unimaginable levels of existence, the world as we know it is suddenly taken away. By looking with sincere eyes at the diverse reality of a child (in a broad sense, considering the wide diversity of characteristics that an individual can express), the first impact caused by this sight is actually the loss of an image, the loss of an ideal. No matter how healthy, it will still be deconstructed (or destroyed, depending on how we open ourselves to change). What is inescapable, however, is that this change robs us of that child, leaving at first emptiness, an unknown and unrecognizable scenario. We feel the blow dealt by life, which is taking away one child, while inviting us to legitimize the birth of another, in a process of rebirth as an internal image of the parents being updated.

In the Winnebago mythical cycle (RADIN, 1972), we have two passages in which parents lose their children to the trickster, something one can imagine as akin to losing their children to *change*. In one of the adventures, the trickster wants for himself the children of an attached and zealous father, a giant father who keeps tiny children in a bag that hangs from his shoulder, dosing precisely the food his children can eat because they could die if they eat in excess, like the child who dies by growing up, turning into an adult. The trickster seduces the children's father and convinces him to leave them in his care, showing himself as lonely and in need of affection, which shows a theme of attachment behind the father's overzealousness. As expected, the trickster gives too much food to the children, and they die, so he has to flee from the furious father who chases him around the world. He zigzags to escape the blows of the offended father, and finally saves himself by plunging into the middle of the ocean, as if temporarily returning to the unconscious, just to soon come back to mess up everyone's life in broad daylight. In this story, the trickster kills them incidentally, indicating that there is no return - those children no longer exist. Inevitably, as Lewis Hyde (2017) points out in his work on the figure of the trickster, "The father who loves his son is bound to fail in his attempt to keep the boy from all harm. In this world, people die; animals die. To desire the contrary is to desire a changeless perfection, a heaven, an ideal" (p. 44).

In another passage (RADIN, 1972), the trickster sees beautiful plums in the water and dives to pick them up, but he bumps into the stones at the bottom of the river, tries a few more times to catch the plums, until finally realizing that he is dealing with the reflection of fruit in water, it is not the plums themselves, but an illusion, for the desired plums are, in fact, inaccessible, high up in the tree. Trickster uses this discovery to trick two raccoon mothers: promising them a bountiful and tasty harvest of the fruit, he offers

to look after their children until they return, with the true intention of devouring the little raccoons. The mothers, deceived by the trickster for trying to provide the best for their children, accept the help of the Trickster, as they need to keep their children always within the protection of the house. It is as if, through their desire to keep the children safe, they end up exposing them to the trickster. Psychically, I imagine that sometimes this is the way of transformation for children so overwatched and protected; crystallization and immutability invite the trickster to exercise his deconstructing role. After the mothers leave, the Trickster dismembers the children, beheads one of them and puts the smiling head in front of the house to deceive the mothers who watched from afar. After devouring the children, he flees to the hill and there digs a tunnel to use as an ambush. Pretending to be someone else, he returns to the raccoon house and finds his mother's crying and furious. The deceiver mourns the terrible loss, but says he saw the trickster hide in the newly dug hole in the hill. The mothers go into the hole looking for revenge, but are killed by the trickster who sets fire to both exits from the hole, an image that reminds us of how inescapable the situation is. Thus, the mothers, sickened by the loss of their children, also end up dead in an attempt to capture the agent of change.

This passage brings us to the fact that not only the image of children is deidealized (deconstructed), but also that of fathers and mothers, who try in vain to exercise their power of control over the situation, hoping to curb the constant mutability of life. The parent's figure is shattered, devoured, and digested; there is the dissolution of the former structure, which regresses to an undifferentiated stage, from which the *new* can emerge. Jung approaches the trickster as

[...] an archetypal psychic structure of extreme antiquity. In his clearest manifestations, he is a faithful reflection of an absolutely undifferentiated human con-

sciousness, corresponding to a psyche that has hardly left the animal level (JUNG, 2011a. par. 361).

About the transformation of the children's image, I share a dream that occurred to me at a time when I was going through a period of intense resignification regarding my children's neurodivergence. The dream begins with two acrobat clowns, dressed in the manner of Pierrot, who invade my house; one of them walked upside-down, marching on his hands, while the other walked upright, and so they were inverted in relation to one another. Their clothes were half black and half white, as well as the cone-shaped hat they wore, with their faces painted in half and colorful buttons on their overalls. I soon understood that it was a robbery, then their boss appeared, a huge man with Mori features, resembling the Disney version of the trickster Maui, a transforming demigod of Polynesian mythology. He goes to my children's room and comes out carrying my youngest in his arms, still asleep. The boss wants to take him as collateral, but I intervene and start arguing about his autism, his crises, and the need for special care. He finally agrees to leave my son with me, but demands that I photograph them, the boss and my youngest, together under the water running from the shower head, along with my other son who had been brought into the scene.

The dream begins with a strong Tricksterian aesthetics, when it presents the two acrobat clowns dressed à la Pierro. One of the attributes of clowns, and similar figures, is to convey to us "immoral" content (from moralistic perspective), which would normally be rejected, but end up penetrating the gaps that open up through humor, wonder and magic. In the same way, the trickster archetype favors that contents barred by our defenses slip into consciousness and fertilize it, finding its way in through disguise, numbness, accident, and especially humor. Despite realizing the invasion of my home and the nature of the situation, I remain stunned

by the adventures of the costumed duo; there is no time to arm yourself, defenses are rolled up by tricksterian tricks. Then the big thief chief appears, obese, strong and good-natured (also referring to a Momo king), walks with tranquility and good humor while carrying my sleeping son in his arms intending to taking him away. We can associate Trickster's voracity with its enormous size (HYDE, 2017), the change that devours everything, transforming food into a body, destroying and recreating life. On the other hand, we can consider this shadowy figure as an unconscious correspondent of the paternal inflation, the unconscious counterpart of the pretension to defend and protect the son from all harm, as we observe in the huge father figure who has his children dead in the Winnegabo myth discussed above.

In any case, the dream clarifies that the child will be taken away, in some dimension, either his body or his previous image. In this sense, the scene in which I am required to photograph them underwater refers us to a record, an observation, the coagulation of the reality of a scene. The trickster is placed together with my children, underwater, a medium that brings together everyone who is immersed in a single continuity. To a certain extent, the trickster is incorporated into the image of the diverse children. A change was made, or rather, a previous scene was deconstructed, stolen. When this dream occurred, we had not yet realized our eldest son's neurodivergence; this awareness was anticipated by the dream. In my first investigation of the dream, I could not understand my eldest son's coming to the scene, but as the months went by, as my son matured, so did the sensitivity in us to see him through a more appropriate lens, revealing a more trustworthy image of his being. His neurodivergence, being less disruptive and salient, went unnoticed for a longer time.

The theme of "theft of the child", present in the speech of several parents, appeared in the dream in the literal form of a kidnapper-thief. When I had this dream, I had not yet studied

the subject of neurodivergence and this speech about “the theft of the child” by autism was not familiar to me. Nor was I aware of the fact that in 2007 a media campaign by the New York University Center for the Study of Children portrayed autism as a child abductor. We realize that the images of robbery and kidnapping spontaneously emerge in the face of this event, revealing that archetypically there is indeed a robbery, but what is stolen is the idealized image of the child, thus being a necessary robbery. It is precisely through this theft that the space for the development of the real image of the child emerges, faithful to its uniqueness. Being robbed is an effective way to get rid of what you are defensively attached to.

The father must let the ideal image of the child be wounded and marked by the trickster, for when that ideal image is the one which remains protected by the father, it is the actual child who suffers the wound. The child is wounded by the ideal image of the father, when the father refuses to let his idealized child die. Lewis Hyde (2017) comments on a passage from the tsimshian myth about the trickster Raven, regarding this matter:

Raven is not the father’s hoped-for ideal youth who has escaped this world; he is, rather, a restless, hungry beast who is in this world precisely because his father’s idealism wounded him, and he has tasted the fruit of that wound (p. 45).

The Raven’s insatiable hunger reminds us of the irreparable emptiness inhabiting the child who is unrecognized and delegitimized in their way of being, an emptiness that devours all the food of a village and remains unsatisfied, leading the father to expel the Raven, setting off the wanderings of the young man who embodies the figure of the trickster to recreate the world and himself. Free from the image held up by his parents, the Raven would have a better chance, but he carries with him the wound already inflicted. Unrealized, the grieving for the ideal image can culminate in rejection, to a greater or lesser de-

gree, of the child’s reality, preventing a relationship of souls, as they remain separated by the defenses of a father who still cares for the ideal image of the child. The father can’t see the real child as he’s blinded by the ideal image he projects, such is the glare of what’s dissociated from its shadow. The trickster creates a new world by freeing us from the sterile crystallization of the ideal: The trickster creates the world, gives it sunlight, fish, and fruits, but creates it “as it is”, a world of constancy need, labor, limitation and death” (HYDE, 2017, p. 47).

\*

Insisting on the idealized image, and forcing it on the child, can lead parents to an unrelenting search for a cure or for behavioral normalization, so that the child *looks* normal. Assisting the individual to find ways out of the suffering caused by sensory-affective-cognitive dysregulation involves supporting and fostering the development of creative paths in the face of questions posed by the neurodivergent constitution itself: twirl until one calms down, wedge oneself into tight spaces, sing and jump frantically, repeat a certain sound and a certain movement - this way, the child looks exactly like someone who is finding their unique response to a unique and neurodivergent event: singular.

When I welcome the neurodivergence of the child as a legitimate way of being, I foster their understanding of their intrinsic reality, providing the ground so that they can tread their path. To deny this understanding is to deny reality, hindering their “being in the world” in a way that could both transform them and be transformed by them. In the presence of any diversity, we are invited to a deidealization of the image of a child who naturally inhabits our psyches since long before the conception of the actual child. Not only does the image of the child require deidealization, but also the very image of the parents themselves, since the imagined parents won’t be prepared for the demands involved in raising the diverse child. I’m speaking



specifically about autism, and its place in the realm of neurodiversity, but in different ways these reflections should apply to the various ways of being diverse in this world. The image of the child cultivated in the soul of the parents is, by definition, idealized, since it is devoid of real matter. It comes before the possibility of knowing the child. Occasionally the idealization of parents approaches the field of possibilities of the child, which will then require little deidealization on the part of the parents. However, parents who had normatively idealized their future children will have to accept the deconstruction of those images if their child brings to the world any sort of diversity and, to a greater or lesser extent, will have to go through a process of bereavement for the child and for themselves, as parents of a child who did not come.

Comparatively, the autistic child is, to some degree, eccentric, which etymologically means that which is outside the (supposed) center. If we imagine a sphere inhabited by countless points, each representing an individual, and ordered from characteristics shared in common among all, we will find autistic people probably on the periphery of this sphere, as well as individuals representing other forms of diversity in the world. The region of *normal* does not exist, because each individual occupies their own singular space in this sphere, but there is a more commonly inhabited region, where there is a greater concentration of points close to each other which, by approximation, allows our rational gaze to divide the sphere between those who inhabit such a *common zone* and the peripheral ones – the *normal* and the *eccentric*. A parallel image would be that of our galaxy, where we perceive highly concentrated zones of stars near the center and others, more rarefied, towards the periphery. The gravitational center of this organization is a supermassive black hole, an area where no star can be, as it would be immediately swallowed. This image is interesting to us because, as in the galaxy, an individual who artificially places themselves, or is placed by others,

at the center of our imaginary sphere will have their singularity swallowed by normality, losing touch with their own soul.

The health of the autistic person, as well as that of each one of us, actually requires such eccentricity to be welcomed by their affective network, being the task of parents to cultivate an open field in which many possibilities may unfold, like when you are in a soiree, and it is not known if the next attraction will be a dance performance, a song, poetry reading, a stage play, a circus number or whatever else. However, it is not possible to be free of any idealization beforehand, especially when the child is diverse to the point of expressing characteristics that could not be sincerely imagined by parents. This reminds me of the time when it was completely uncertain whether my son, by then aged four, would ever be able to develop speech or not, and if so, how and to what degree this would be - something that is still uncertain today, when he is five years old. To allow this deconstruction to happen, it is to allow oneself to be wounded both by the loss of the image that was projected on that child, and by the loss of oneself as a parent. The wound caused by this diversity, deconstructing the established ideas, has its *healing* in the treading of diverse paths. Diversity calls for diversity, wounding and healing share the same nature: “His ‘approximation to the savior’ is an obvious consequence of this, in confirmation of the mythological truth that the wounded wounder is the agent of healing, and that the sufferer takes away suffering” (JUNG, 2011a, par. 457).

The trickster in general and, more specifically, the figure of Hermes, with his boldness and disobedience, offers us the opportunity to open new paths that can grant a space of existence to his way of being. The parenting required by each child, in detail, is always unique because every child is different from the other. But I understand that, in the realm of neurodivergence, we are called to deviate very substantially from the norm, moving much farther away from the usual

ways of acting in *typical* parenthood. The trickster offers us not only the chance to *deconstruct*, but also the opportunity of improvisation, of new and intuitive movements that result from direct experimentation with living matter, giving up the abstractions condensed through accumulated experiences: all those things that “have always worked.” We can thereby understand that the arrival of the trickster, at first highly disruptive, starts to present itself as a sensible and creative process of transformation that offers archetypal elaboration paths to the parents.

This movement, however, can be so challenging as to cause a stop halfway through the process, stagnating in a limbo, a psychic place where an ideal child is still sought after but cannot be found, as they are not in reality, and where the real child is not seen, as they do not fit the idealized image of the parent. This process culminates in the inescapable attempt to force on the child the ideal garments the parent has to offer, something also commonly done by school, therapists and any institution or social group one is part of. To fit this image offered to them, the individual loses their soul, which remains on the periphery of our imaginary sphere, while the individual forces themselves towards the center of normality, the all-consuming black hole, from where nothing escapes and where creativity does not take place.

### Stims

*Stims*, the self-stimulatory methods used by autistic people as a form of psychic self-regulation, are often repressed by parents, teachers, therapists, and other adults of the autistic child’s circle of relations, a process that can be incorporated by the individual themselves, who then begins to mask such behaviors in an attempt to fit into the norm. More often than not, this repression is intended to camouflage eccentricity, simulating a “normal” appearance. The stim is a direct bridge through which the autistic person can reunite with themselves, keeping they whole, putting back together the parts that are

scattered during the crises so often experienced by autistic individuals. Psychiatry uses another term for stim, *stereotyping*. However, I prefer to use the term chosen by the autistic community itself, which is organically formed and has been making their voice heard in the world for years now, reclaiming their rightful space that was previously totally taken by medical discourse and echoed by parents searching for normalization. The eccentricity of the diverse child is a valuable image for us, since we understand the soul as whatever is unique, authentic, and spontaneous about us. The soul inhabits the secluded periphery of our personality, the valleys of our psychic topography, and the gaps in the structures of our consciousness.

The stim is a signaling that the autistic person can and should present to the world a new poetics, in which their diversity is legitimately exercised aesthetically: “I understand as aesthetic experience an awakening of consciousness to the unknown, unautomated, non-ordinary, a perspective that is obliterated by the time of the neurosis” (PALOMO, 2022). The attempt at normalization is neurotic, as if forcing the individual into a war against themselves could ever be an interesting gain in development. Suppressing the stims (stereotyped movements), forcing themselves to look into someone’s eyes, policing themselves so as not to seem different, are all exhaustive and anxiogenic attitudes, which generate anguish and psychic disorganization because such “eccentric” behaviors emerge as organic strategies of sensory and psychic regulation. To curb such behaviors, as one patient once told me, would be the same as blocking the release valve of a boiling pressure cooker: whoever is on the outside stops hearing the whistle and assumes there is peace, but the cooker feels the pressure rising and forcing its structure from the inside out, finally exploding into meltdown or shutdown crises (crises with expansive or withdrawn behavior) that can last from minutes to weeks, as we hear from our patients’ reports.

### Final considerations

Appreciating and celebrating uniqueness is not the same as romanticizing any condition, neglecting the care necessary for the individual's well-being and tools capable of providing their best development. If a stim poses a risk to the child, as it involves some behavior that is dangerous to one or others, it will obviously require care and referrals. If there is no effort on the part of parents, therapists, teachers, many autistic will be below their potential, but none of this is specific, as it is valid for any human being. The necessary question to ask before any therapeutic or educational proposal is: "Who does this intervention serve? To the child's development, or to the parent's narcissism? To the apprenticeship of the student, or to the authoritarianism of the teacher? To the patient's process, or to the theory defended by the therapist?" Widespread and seemingly innocent "therapeutic" actions, such as conditioning children to look them in the eye as they interact, seem to serve any purpose but an intrinsic need for the child's development. The justifications given for such interventions do not stand against the slightest breeze of questioning.

It is in this attitude of "intelligence about contingency" that we can best traverse a neurodivergent scenario, where what may or may not happen is uncertain and open, since the singularity of the individual is accentuated as it moves away from the norm. Obviously, maintaining this attitude is quite challenging because the "more settled neighbors" are bothered by the wanderings and jumbles of the trickster, frequently trying to immobilize him (HYDE, 2017). We will always need the other gods, each one delivering their contribution to the psychic world, but when it comes to what is *diverse*, we will be in a new field, and *innovation* starts with deconstruction, the tricksterian gift.

The act of learning, in addition to studying what has already been established, proven, and

theorized, can also be an empirical one, where the "absent-minded" walk provides the pieces that spontaneously start fitting together while one tests what works or what does not work. Inattentive to the guidelines, we can pay attention to the results of the movements, gradually building up our own understanding along with our children. A necessarily open understanding, as it will always be insufficient and potentially out of date, because even if we could fully understand a child today, tomorrow this understanding may no longer be of use.

It is always necessary to emphasize that welcoming the need for tricksterian attitude is not to make an ode to chaos. Every movement requires structure to happen, deconstruction is a way to adapt this creatively, providing organicity. The psychic structure depends on the trickster to maintain its vitality, as the earth depends on earthworms to maintain its oxygenation: it is through their holes and tunnels that air, water, and heat circulate to sustain underground life. A structure without its deconstructive agents will not be vivacious, just as the lack of structure will also be a loss, not the emphasis of vivacity.

The theme of neurodivergence needs every god with their own cosmos, especially of love, of reasonableness, of organization, of routine, of constancy, of a certain dose of tenacity, themes so necessary to be addressed in future reflections; but as long as homes, schools and offices stay trapped in the insistence of normalization of what is different, be it by repression of behavior, be it by denying the difference, it will remain necessary to speak first of openness to change, to speak first of deconstruction because as we have observed in Yoruba mythology, it is Exu who eats first, it is through him that every path begins (PRANDI, 2001). ■

Received: 05/08/2022

Revised: 12/14/2022

## Resumo

### *Hermes nos campos de Apolo: desidealização e excentricidade na paternidade neurodivergente*

*O artigo apresenta o início de uma investigação a respeito da neurodiversidade numa perspectiva arquetípica, especificamente sobre certos aspectos da chegada de um filho neurodivergente em uma família, buscando levantar reflexões vivenciais a respeito da diversidade no mundo, lares, escolas e consul-*

*tórios. Essa investigação parte de experiências tanto pessoais quanto clínicas e elabora, sob uma lente arquetípica, relações entre a imaginação do trickster e dois fenômenos psíquicos presentes na ocorrência da neurodivergência em uma família: a desidealização e a excentricidade. ■*

**Palavras-chave:** neurodiversidade, trickster, paternidade, desidealização, psicologia analítica.

## Resumen

### *Hermes en los campos de Apolo: desidealización y excentricidad en la paternidad neurodivergente*

*El artículo presenta el inicio de una investigación sobre la neurodiversidad desde una perspectiva arquetípica, específicamente sobre ciertos aspectos de la llegada de un niño neurodivergente a una familia, buscando plantear reflexiones experienciales sobre la diversidad en el mundo, los hogares, las escuelas y los con-*

*sultorios. Esta investigación parte de experiencias tanto personales como clínicas y elabora, bajo una lente arquetípica, las relaciones entre la imaginación del trickster y dos fenómenos psíquicos presentes en la ocurrencia de la neurodivergencia en una familia: la desidealización y la excentricidad. ■*

**Palabras clave:** neurodiversidad, trickster, paternidad, desidealización, psicología analítica.

## References

- ABREU, T. *O que é neurodiversidade?* Goiânia: Cênone, 2021.
- BARCELLOS, G. *Mitologias arquetípicas: figuras divinas e configurações humanas*. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2019.
- BAUMER, N. *What is Neurodiversity?* Harvard: Harvard Health, 2021. Available from: <<https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/what-is-neurodiversity-202111232645>>. Accessed: Mar. 01, 2022.
- GRANDIN, T. *O cérebro autista*. Rio de Janeiro: Record, 2021.
- HYDE, L. *A astúcia cria o mundo: Trickster trapaça, mito e arte*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2017.
- JUNG, C. G. *Os arquétipos e o inconsciente coletivo*. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2011a. (Obras completas de C. G. Jung v. 9, n. 1).
- KERÉNYI, K. *Arquétipos da religião grega*. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2015.
- OTTO, W. F. *Os deuses da Grécia: a imagem do divino na visão do espírito grego*. São Paulo: Odysseus, 2005.
- OURO PRETO, F.; FIÓTI, E. (Dirs.). *Amarelo: é tudo pra ontem*. São Paulo: Netflix, 2020.
- PALOMO, V. The wounded creator: the role of the analyst in confinement. In: INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR ANALYTICAL PSYCHOLOGY CONGRESS, 2., 2002, Buenos Aires. Proceedings... Buenos Aires: International Association for Analytical Psychology, 2002.
- PRANDI, R. *Mitologia dos Orixás*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2001.
- RADIN, P. *The trickster: a study in american indian mythology*. New York: Schocken, 1972.
- RIBEIRO JR., W. (Ed.). *Hinos Homéricos: tradução, notas e estudo*. São Paulo: Universidade Estadual Paulista, 2010.
- SINGER, J. Neurodivergent from what, exactly? *Reflections on Neurodiversity*, Oct. 10, 2019. Available from: <<https://neurodiversity2.blogspot.com/search?q=neurodivergent>>. Accessed: Mar. 03, 2022.