

ELEMENTAL BEINGS CLAIM FOR HELP: HOW ANTHROPOGENIC ACTIONS IMPACT THE SUBTLE WORLD AND ITS INHABITANTS

DOI: 10.17234/SEC.36.11
 Preliminary communication
 Received:
 17th January 2024
 Accepted:
 25th October 2024

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This research uses a non-Cartesian theoretical basis to present the consequences of the ecological disasters on elementals, also known as fairy beings, who live in the subtle earthly world. As a matter of fact, catastrophes around the world have had a huge impact on elementals, bringing illnesses, deformities and death. The aim of this paper is not only to introduce liminal biology as an area of research in spiritual ecology, and to emphasize the importance of fairy beings in the ecological maintenance of the planet, but also to report how ecological changes have impact on their living conditions.

Keywords: supernatural ecology, spiritual ecology, folklore, human–fae people interaction

INTRODUCTION

This paper presents some of the consequences of the ecological disturbances on elementals, also known as liminal beings, which include fairies, elves, gnomes, brownies, goblins, sirens, mermaids, banshees, dryads, devas, trolls, leprechauns, nymphs, salamanders and others who live in the subtle earthly world (Rowland 2020). As both scholarly literature and oral traditions throughout the world give examples of elemental

beings that are commonly connected to ordinary, material things, such as rocks, lakes, fungi, plants, animals, as well as humans' dwellings, any environmental disaster can cause damages on them. As a matter of fact, man-made environmental changes around the world have had a huge impact on elementals' habitats and ways of life, both physical (terrestrial ecosystems) and subtle (supernatural ecology), bringing illnesses, deformities and even disappearances (Andrews 2020).

There is a rich tradition about spiritual entities of nature¹ that makes it possible to discuss the central thesis of spiritual ecology which attests to the reciprocal associations between these etheric entities and human beings, arising from an animist and vitalist vision of Nature that represents an ideological shield to prevent deforestation and social dissimilarity caused by modern agriculture (Wright 1983; Hoefle 2009; Taylor 2010; Shepard and Daly 2022). As some of these records are registered in novels and poems, literature is also used as a research resource. According to Pasco (2004), one should not expect literature to serve as an exact mirror or to have a direct relationship with objective reality, which he refers to as a mimetic fallacy. However, he argues that the historian or critic can find great utility in literature, as it is a response to reality, whether through reflection or reaction. When a subject is largely unknown to scientists, but widespread in a huge number of cultures overtime, literature –as well as painting, sculpture and other artistic expressions – can help in understanding the process of capturing the phenomena, believing in them and their changing behaviors.

Having an ecological spirituality and believing in beings of nature with magical-spiritual powers, or respecting and venerating certain sacred places and elements, are attitudes directly involved with the conservation of the natural space and its integral biological and abiotic elements (Berkes 1999; Bortolamiol et al. 2018; Zent and Zent 2022). As Hunter (2019) states, the soft study of religious experience may significantly influence humanity's response to the ecological crisis, potentially helping to reverse some of the harm caused by our perceived separation from nature. This approach could lead to the development of what Mark A. Schroll (2013) describes as “transpersonal ecosophical consciousness”, which is characterized as an ecstatic visionary philosophy of ecological harmony (Hunter 2019:8).

Liminal biology² is a new field of spiritual ecology that deals with the subtle earthly world and its inhabitants, which are 'fictional' not because they do not exist, but because

¹ We can perceive these nature entities as incorporeal beings that inhabit our environment, often categorized within the spiritual or supernatural realm depending on our worldview. Commonly referred to as nature spirits, they are not strictly spirits, as they possess a corporeality that enables them to exist within their own unique environments (Mayer 2021).

² The term 'liminal biology' was coined by Costa Neto and Lins (2022). However, the term 'liminal

their existence cannot be proven yet. The concept of “liminal biology” can be connected to “spiritual ecology” in order to highlight how both explore transitional states and the interplay between the natural world and spiritual dimensions. Liminal biology examines the different threshold domains, where a myriad of beings, with a biological constitution very different from what we are used to, live, adapt, transform and evolve (Tompkins 1997; Varner 2007; Mayer 2021; Costa Neto and Lins 2022). Similarly, spiritual ecology focuses on the interconnectedness of the environment and spirituality, advocating for a deeper understanding of our relationship with nature (Sponsel 2012). Together, they invite us to reflect on how these transitions can foster a greater sense of responsibility and reverence for the ecological systems we inhabit and for all forms of life (tangible or intangible) that share the world with us.

In this regard, this paper will consider liminal beings as subtle living beings that have their own characteristics and are bound to Earth and its ontological entities – living beings, mountains, rivers, streams, caves, sacred sites – so that they suffer as them and together with them (Rowland 2020; Costa Neto and Lins 2022). Marshall Sahlins calls them ‘metapersons’ or ‘metahumans’, designations that comprise all gods and spirits, and explain who they are by describing their environment: “It is a world filled with other-than-human persons endowed with greater-than-human powers. Such is the enchanted universe of the cultures of immanence” (Sahlins 2022:70).

Spiritual ecology is a field based on non-Cartesian theory, which means that some of its subjects have not yet been demonstrated by scientists using the Cartesian method and patterns. Leslie Sponsel defines ‘spiritual ecology’ as “the vast, diverse, complex, and dynamic arena of interactions of religions and spiritualities with environments, ecologies, and environmentalists” (Sponsel 2022:21). He remarks that it has emerged in the 1990s and has expanded since then as ‘a quiet revolution’. For this anthropologist, the study of animistic cultures includes elementals: “In Animism, humans are spiritual beings, but among many other spiritual persons in nature, involving ‘things’ that many others would consider inanimate lacking sentience and agency” (Sponsel 2022:24). Given the serious socio-environmental crisis caused by the human species, the philosophical and pragmatic approach of spiritual ecology (Sponsel 2012; Vaughan-Lee 2013) calls for a new ethics based on an ecological spirituality.

The various entities that make up the liminal world occasionally manifest themselves to humans by turning materially visible to them as appearances, visions, hauntings, etc. (commonly personified, anthropomorphized and with magical powers),

world' emerged in the early 1990s and refers to the intermediation of many supernatural creatures and beings with the so-called ordinary world (Rowland 2020).

or through intangible characteristics associated with them, such as whistles, blows, screams, roars, etc. (Andrews 2020; Aguiar et al. 2023). The diverse relationships that human beings establish with such beings are living manifestations of the ancestral, cultural and emotional bond with nature and natural resources, that is, to the territory (Kala 2017). Sahlins (2022:174) asserts that "it would be a mistake to say that the people 'invented' the 'spirits', [...] *they only hypostatized the forces that were already conditions of their existence*".

Being aware of these liminal beings and even establishing interactions with them is a very old and geographically widespread transcultural phenomenon (Varner 2012). Fairies and other liminal beings have always manifested themselves in all regions of the world, at all times, and can be identified in very different ways (Young 2019). In *Creatures in the Mist: Little People, Wild Men and Spirit Beings around the World*, Varner (2007) reveals that these 'supernatural' beings appear in the folklore of almost all cultures and on all continents. There is plentiful information about the existence of ethereal realms alongside our own in all parts of the world (Mooney 1995; Andrews 2020). In European tradition, the realms of fairy beings are known through myths and legends. First, we have the examples of Tir Nan Og, from Irish mythology, and the Garden of the Hesperides, which comes from Greek mythology (gr. *Ἑσπερίδες*, meaning nymphs). In the second case, there is Avalon, whose origin is the Arthurian legend. Literature is also a source of places where these beings live, such as Middle Earth, which was created by Tolkien, and Neverland, which belongs to the story of Peter Pan (Andrews 2020; Tolkien 2009; Barrie 2024). J. R. R. Tolkien (1892-1973) was a philologist, but his novels were inspired by some folklore beliefs that occupied his imagination. When he was 23 years old and stationed in a camp, training as a fusilier, he wrote a poem featuring holy fairies and immortal elves, named "Kortirion among the Trees", based on memories of the place where his fiancée Edith Bratt was living. Some twenty years later, he wrote to his publisher that safety is not an ingredient that grants verisimilitude to fairyland (Carpenter 1981).

In Brazil, and especially in the Amazonian region, these refuges are known as *Encantes* (Costa Neto et al. 2023). It is a domain, place or realm that can either be geographically located on Earth or in some reality that is usually hidden from us. When recognized and located in our physical dimension, such places are enfolded in supernaturalism and magic and are the sources of stories and legends. Many are held to be sacred natural sites and thus inaccessible to the uninitiated or sought with all the reverence and care that is necessary.

Often referred to as spirits of nature, they are in fact not spirits *stricto sensu*, as they have a corporeality that allows them to live in their own environments. Biology therefore needs to strip away its materialist, reductionist and prejudiced conception, to broaden

its vision and investigate the constitution of their bodies, their habits and ways of life. In this sense, it is urgent to recognize their existence and carry out investigations into the ecology of the various species that inhabit the liminal world (Rowland 2020). But how can we contact and experience this world and its inhabitants? Can anyone consciously make this happen? And how to distinguish truth from fantasy? With these questions in mind, Thomas Mayer offers us a methodology for achieving objectivity through the experience carried out by individuals, so that one can truly talk about spiritual research or science (Mayer 2021). For him, supersensitive and conscious perception happens in four concrete steps: preparation; imaginative vision; inspired cognition; and intuitive cognition.

The aim of this paper is, therefore, not only to introduce liminal biology as an area of research in spiritual ecology that is supported by folklore, and to emphasize the importance of elemental beings in the maintenance of ecosystems, but also to report how environmental changes have impacted their living conditions.

METHODOLOGY BACKGROUND

This research is grounded in a non-Cartesian theoretical framework inspired by the ideas of Portuguese sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos, a professor at the University of Coimbra; a collective of qualitative researchers who support the *Manifesto for a Post-Materialist Science* proposed by Mario Beauregard from the University of Arizona; and the ecosystemic discourse analysis advanced by Hildo Honório do Couto from the University of Brasília, who examines the mental and social ecosystems of language. Literature review also includes the ideas and terms developed by Marshall Sahlins, professor of Anthropology at the University of Chicago, Leslie Sponsel, professor of Anthropology at the University of Hawaii, the work of writer Alexandra Rowland, as well as other researchers of folklore, religion and mythological history, some of them from Brazil.

Research on elemental beings and liminal biology, which is intertwined with spiritual ecology, can only be developed if accepted by some of the premises about the independence of research found in Santos's ideas about epistemology. Having drawn attention to the decolonization of knowledge in some of his books, such as *Cognitive Justice in a Global World: Prudent Knowledges for a Decent Life* (2007) and *The End of the Cognitive Empire: The Coming of Age of Epistemologies of the South* (2018), Santos discusses the *epistemicide* of local knowledges by foreign scientists and argues that in order to confront it "transgressive methodology had been based on a 'spontaneous', hidden, undeveloped, and largely 'intuitive' transgressive theory" (Santos 2021:780). Although he focuses on social science, which is his field of research, his ideas could be

extended to biological sciences, with the great advantage of a wider debate.

Santos and Garavito (2005) explain the sociology of emergence as a forthcoming scientific perspective of what is still disregarded by science, so that the concept of reality is extended to include subjects that science still cannot prove exist. According to them, the starting point of critical theory is the idea that reality cannot be reduced to mere existence. They argue that a realist analysis should include both an exploration of what is real and necessary, as well as a prospective account of what is possible.

During a summit held at Canyon Ranch in Tucson, Arizona in February 2014, scientists such as Mario Beauregard, Gary E. Schwartz, Lisa Miller, Rupert Sheldrake, Charles Tart, among others, defended a more advanced statement inserted in the *Manifesto for a Post-Materialist Science*. They perceived and declared that

“[...] the nearly absolute dominance of materialism in the academic world has seriously constricted the sciences and hampered the development of the scientific study of mind and spirituality. Faith in this ideology, as an exclusive explanatory framework for reality, has compelled scientists to neglect the subjective dimension of human experience. This has led to a severely distorted and impoverished understanding of ourselves and our place in nature [...]” (Beauregard et al. 2014:1)

This *Manifesto* brings a more ample conception of science that states a non-dogmatic, open-minded method of acquiring knowledge about nature must evolve through observation, experimental investigation, and theoretical explanation of phenomena (Beauregard et al. 2014). It also alerts us not to succumb to inquisitor's feelings about unknown perspectives:

“Some materialistically inclined scientists and philosophers refuse to acknowledge these phenomena because they are not consistent with their exclusive conception of the world. Rejection of post-materialist investigation of nature or refusal to publish strong science findings supporting a post-materialist framework are antithetical to the true spirit of scientific inquiry, which is that empirical data must always be adequately dealt with. Data which do not fit favored theories and beliefs cannot be dismissed a priori. Such dismissal is the realm of ideology, not science.” (Beauregard et al. 2014:2)

Santos and Garavito (2005) stand out against this position and restrain its limits to what could be conceivable for them. The sociology of emergence, according to these authors, avoids the undermining of emerging options promoted both by structuralist conceptions supported by the international system and “the disenchanting and celebratory

views of hyper-deconstructive postmodern legal analysis” (Santos and Garavito 2005:17–18). This statement is highlighted precisely because liminal biology is one of the new post-materialist research fields that

“alters the vision we have of ourselves, giving us back our dignity and power, as humans and as scientists [...] [,] promotes environmental awareness and the preservation of our biosphere [...] [and brings] a lived transmaterial understanding [that] may be the cornerstone of health and wellness, as it has been held and preserved in ancient mind-body-spirit practices, religious traditions, and contemplative approaches.” (Beauregard et al. 2014:3)

Ecosystemic Discourse Analysis (EDA) “is situated inside the ecological view of the world” and includes “[n]ot only biological ecology, but also philosophical ecology, or ecosophy, as is the case with deep ecology” (Couto et al. 2021:7). So, this approach is entirely related to spiritual ecology and a symbiotic (if not sacred) connection with the Earth and all the elements that make it up. Bron Taylor explains that this form of spirituality, which emerges from the land itself, is “generally deep ecological, biocentric, or ecocentric, considering all species to be intrinsically valuable [...] apart from their usefulness to human beings” (Taylor 2010:13).

THE SUBTLE EARTHLY WORLD

This research introduces an uncommon topic, followed by only a few fellows, so it is necessary to define some of the words that make up its lexical field.

“Supernatural ecology” is a recently conceived expression derived from “ecology”, that is “[t]he study of the interrelationships between organisms and their natural environment, both living and no living” (Oxford 2010:264), and from “supernatural”, which means, as an adjective, “1. Of or pertaining to existence outside the natural world. 2. Attributed to a power that seems to violate or go beyond natural laws” (Morris 1976:1221). So “supernatural ecology” is the study of interrelationships between living beings and other phenomena that are not considered of the natural world. “The subtle earthly world” is, in fact, this space where these phenomena occur, appraised as a world not commonly seen by many beings, but interconnected with all of them.

The “supernaturality” of nature is present in different sociocultural contexts, in which a myriad of fairy-like beings, many of which have been elevated to the category of divinities, have maintained and still maintain various types of interactions with humans.

Many of these entities are associated with landscapes, forests, mountains and even certain species of plants and animals considered sacred. These relationships are living manifestations of the ancestral, cultural and emotional attachment of human beings to nature and natural resources, that is, to the territory (Kala 2017). In order to deal with such information, researchers must nurture an interdisciplinary approach that brings together different fields of sciences.

“Liminal biology” is another recently conceived term coined from “biology”, meaning “[t]he study of living organisms, which includes their structure (gross and microscopical), functioning, origin and evolution, classification, interrelationships, and distribution” (Oxford 2010:94), and “liminal”, a word derived from the French *liminaire* or *liminal*, which is an adjective whose Latin origin is *limen*, meaning “threshold”, in the sense of boundary. It was first used in psychology (Maubourguet 1992:586). In order to ignite the discussion, it is interesting to show that “threshold” means “1. (in physics) The minimum value of a parameter or variable that will produce a specified effect. 2. (in physiology) The minimum intensity of a stimulus that is necessary to initiate a response” (Oxford 2010:820). As a fact, liminal biology deals with the smallest responses to almost invisible phenomena of the subtle earthly world, sometimes perceived only by some physical or psychological side effects, such as shivers.

The various entities that make up the kingdom of the elementals or liminal world occasionally manifest themselves to humans, making themselves materially visible (apparitions, visions, ghosts, etc.) – commonly personified, anthropomorphized and with magical powers – or through intangible characteristics associated with them, such as whistling, blowing, screams, roars, etc. This is, in fact, a geographically widespread and historically ancient transcultural phenomenon, forming part of the traditional philosophies (cosmoperceptions) of the most diverse peoples (Sponsel 2012, 2019).

“Elementals”, “fairy beings” and “fae people” can be taken as synonyms. The word “elemental” has been commonly used as an adjective that means “1. Of, pertaining to, or being an element. 2. a. Fundamental or essential; basic. [...] c. Belonging to inherently. 3. Resembling a force of nature in power or effect” (Morris 1976:445). Fairy beings are so close to nature that they merge with these beings, assuming some of their subtle characteristics.

The presence of liminal beings, often considered mythical or spiritual, is effective in terms of conserving nature and its constituent elements. For example, fishermen from the Tofinu ethnic group (Benin, Africa) are prohibited from carrying out their activities in certain corners of the Nokoue Lagoon, as these are resting places of the goddess Anasi Gbégu. This prohibition is justified because research has shown that it is precisely in these places that species captured in other areas of the lagoon reproduce (Waldman 2006). In Bhutan, the widespread belief in deities and spirits that inhabit the landscapes results in

approximately two-thirds of the nation remaining under forest cover (Allison 2017).

Although most humans think they have no contact with fairy beings, they live everywhere and are closer to us than we could imagine. According to Rowland (2020), the patterns of proliferation of these beings across the globe are a result of human migration patterns. Very often, the guardian function of these entities may be directed towards the protection of a specific element, activity or place according to the worldview of the group in question. These protective liminal beings, who live in forests, bodies of water or specific points in nature (from another reading, who live in different strata of particular worldviews), protect the flora and fungi of interest, as well as the animal species involved in hunting and fishing activities, or the natural space as a whole (Fernández-Llamazares and Virtanen 2020). The fairies usually adopt a human corporeal form to punish those individuals who enter sacred places without permission (in most cases, a payment/offering is required); or who go too far in hunting or fishing and do not comply with certain rules; or who invade and destroy forests, among other situations (Smith 1982; Oliveira and Borges 2010).

According to different human cultures, elementals, also known as fairy beings, are named elves, gnomes, brownies, goblins, sirens, mermaids, banshees, dryads, devas, trolls, leprechauns, nymphs, salamanders, mermaids and many others, depending on their semblance to those who view them.

As most humans do not see elementals, what are real entities for a few are imaginative, literary, symbolic, or mythological beings for the rest. Consequently, most cultures nowadays consider fae people 'fictional', but despite the lack of elements to materially prove their existence, research can be driven, as it has just been done with a lot of phenomena in social sciences and in formal or in natural sciences. For scientists deal not only with certainty, but mainly with reflections over what is questionable and still without clear evidence, such as the emergence of conscience regarding the brain, the composition of the inner core of Earth or the functioning of all types of neurons. And to prove that some visions about elementals are true, science must first improve investigations into the human brain.

CONSEQUENCES OF ANTHROPOGENIC ACTIONS AND BEHAVIORS ON ELEMENTALS

The impacts of ecological disturbances on "elementals" or liminal beings cannot be directly seen by humans. There are only a few people that claim to be able of perceiving these beings and can testify upon their situation. So, to discuss this subject, researchers

go after many types of records, blending folklore, spirituality, and environmental science. This is what happens when new paths are being taken without tools to check results. The clues may be in what seems merely imaginative, but can be the first steps to highlight the interconnectedness of elementals with humanity and nature.

Since the Industrial Revolution, environmental problems have worsened: deforestation, eutrophication, depletion of fisheries, radioactive waste, nuclear accidents, destruction of wetlands, genetic pollution, toxic waste, pharmaceutical pollution, electromagnetic pollution, destruction of all types of habitats, depletion and pollution of aquifers and fresh water, soil erosion, extinction of species, loss of biodiversity. The consequences for the planet are deeply visible (but invisible to those who do not care about the future of the Earth) and felt by all its inhabitants.

In human history, successive religious reforms, and finally, the emergence of materialist and quantitative science, promoted ideological disenchantment that, firstly, eliminated the belief in the spirits of the forest and beyond, and then cut off direct relations with them. At a later point, universal education promoted the indoctrination of the masses with a mechanistic and reductionist scientific vision that progressively ridicules and finally eliminates 'superstitious belief' or transforms it into harmless 'folklore'. Without spiritual orientation in relationships towards nature, homocentric environmental ethics emerge, allowing rampant deforestation (Sotillos 2022). Such a situation paves the way for individualistic values and use of resources, establishing an egocentric environmental ethic, which is associated with the adoption of technological innovations based on capital accumulation and human exploitation (Bonefeld 2023). Le Guen et al. (2013) describe how economic, demographic and social changes relate to the loss of a system of beliefs and behaviors that once promoted sustainable agroforestry practices. These changes coincide with the overexploitation of common pool resources.

Anthropogenic actions to maintain capitalists' interests are global, as shown in *The 2084 Report*, a novel by James Lawrence Powell (2022), PhD in Geochemistry. As a matter of fact, literature can help convey essential technical or academic knowledge to people that usually do not search for them. This book, whose title is an allusion to the famous novel *1984* by George Orwell, was first published in 2011. The narrator introduces himself as an old historian, who researches significant events of human history that led to destruction, putting the whole civilization at risk. It should come as a warning that the problems pointed out in *The 2084 Report* are currently happening: internet, as well as all urban infrastructure, is not safe nor trustworthy; war, famine, mass migrations, floods, diseases and wildfires have become worse with the acceleration of climate change that affects the entire world. Powell uses his fiction to warn that half the world's human population and mainly the politicians that represent them have denied these problems to

support the ideology of the great corporations.

In such degraded environments, animals and plants suffer with contamination, deforestation, pollution, which greatly worsens the risk of extinction. Some decades ago, Rachel Carson had warned people that this would happen, as mentioned in the chapter *A fable for tomorrow* of her book *Silent Spring* (1962):

“There was a strange stillness. The birds, for example—where had they gone? Many people spoke of them, puzzled and disturbed. The feeding stations in the backyards were deserted. The few birds seen anywhere were moribund; they trembled violently and could not fly. It was a spring without voices. On the mornings that had once throbbed with the dawn chorus of robins, catbirds, doves, jays, wrens, and scores of other bird voices there was now no sound; only silence lay over the fields and woods and marsh.” (Carson 2002:2)

The climate scientist in Powell's novel indirectly leads us to a significant question: Is it a criminal case not to take the needed actions to prevent the global increase in temperatures (among other avoidable catastrophes) which leads to the death of many people? According to Human Rights Watch (2018:3), individuals engaged in their daily routines are often exposed to toxic substances due to pesticide applications that commonly take place near their homes, schools, and workplaces. These individuals face exposure when pesticide sprays drift from their intended target crops. Are these actions legal?

Some elemental beings are seen as planetary guardians and green protectors (Wright 2021). It has been suggested that there is a significant body of evidence linking faeries to nature conservation and environmental causes for a considerable period (Kruse 2020). So, this crisis affects all of them, especially those species that have a vital affinity with living beings.

There are many examples of folk and contemporary beliefs about relations between faeries, nature and human actions. In the folklore of South Slavic peoples, faeries usually take revenge on people if they polluted their source or cut down their tree (Medojevic 2023). Punishment also occurs when the Curupira, a Brazilian liminal being, lures the hunter with a magical prey that cannot be caught; thus, exhausted from chasing the prey, the hunter ends up getting lost in the forest, unable to find his way back or even dying from exhaustion. Sometimes the Curupira lets the hunter catch the magical prey, but when he approaches the dead animal, the face of the prey appears to him as the face of a friend, his son or his own wife, and he is terrified by the image of a dead loved one (Costa Neto et al. 2023).

The issue of getting lost wherever one is, unable to find their way back home, probably results from the fact that the energies emanated by elemental beings are

very stimulating, with an ability to induce altered states of consciousness. According to Andrews (2020), mythical entities from English folklore known as pixies are often blamed for travelers getting lost, as their energy is so intense that it can confuse the senses, causing someone to lose a familiar landmark.

Regarding the kidnapping of children by such beings, it is mentioned that, as they have the ability to change shape, they can appear as a familiar person or relative and then transform the kidnapped children into similar beings or trick them and leave them lost in the depths of the woods (Burton 2018). It is said that “after enchanting them and teaching them about the secrets of the forest for seven years, the young people are returned to their families, but they are never the same after having lived in the forest and being enchanted by the vision” (Pereira 2001:38). The term ‘sociology of emergence’ (Santos and Garavito 2005) can be used in these cases to explore embryonic experiences upheld by subjective dimension of human experience that include the existence of elementals and the rapport with them.

In a psychographed Brazilian novel by Carlos Baccelli named *Espíritos elementais* (“Elemental Spirits”), a group of human spirits engage in a conversation about environmental problems, perpetrated by human actions that bring consequences for elemental beings, with an elemental leader who says: “People crossed the line, Doctor; the whole so-called ecosystem is compromised [...] the reactions triggered will not be controlled in a short period of time; we ourselves feel lost and many have emigrated to regions that are more difficult to access [...]” (Baccelli 2004:73). At another point of this Kardecist spiritualist story the elemental being, identified as Labélius, says:

“Our community has been reduced to 400 members; a few years ago, there were more than 5,000 of us in this region [...]. We have resisted. However, work with Nature has been reduced to such an extent that we spend most of the day in indolence—a bad human habit! If I continue like this, you won’t find me soon. The Earth is becoming unsuitable for us, yet it is evolution [...]. I know that we tend to disappear or, on the other hand, to look for another habitat, perhaps outside the System [...]” (Baccelli 2004:75)

In Brazil, Kardecism is a type of spiritualist religion widely spread so that its ideas, often written as psychographed messages, reach many people of this and other religious approaches.

When describing the ecology and biology of liminal entities in North America (and other parts of the world), Rowland (2020) says that European colonizers brought with them not only invasive species of plants and animals, but also exotic species of faerie, which had as much impact on local supernatural ecology as their mundane

counterparts. Elementals usually migrate with human beings to which they are related, as is the case with leprechauns that went to Boston, mermaids that spread around the world, and many others linked to plants and animals that accompanied indigenous people. So, the urban phenomenon caused their migration to cities. Scholars are currently investigating some of the effects of urban environments on fairy beings that have migrated to cities (Rowland 2020:xiii).

Because of their level of development and the tasks they perform, many of these beings are destined to suffer the consequences of humanity's mistreatment of the environment. Thus, a polluted stream will affect such beings, poisoning them and often disfiguring them, as they are linked to human karma and to the effects of this pollution (Andrews 2020). In fact, human progress has caused considerable changes in the ecosystems of the liminal world, as highlighted by Rowland (2020) and Estrela et al. (2014). Human disturbances that affect them are not only due to lifestyle changes, but also to the impact on the whole planet's ecosystems:

"The changes in the rhythm and arrangement of human life have not been the only factor impacting the supernatural ecology—beings that were once extraordinarily rare have found niches in which to thrive in abundance, while formerly commonplace native species have been driven out by urban sprawl, technological advancements, climate change, and especially by their invasive counterparts." (Rowland 2020:xiii)

Estrela et al. (2014) focus on indigenous peoples who worship the elementals called *encantados* and observe that:

"For these groups, water is not only a natural resource, but also home for the spiritual forces they worship, which structure their worldview and their daily identity processes. Aggressions suffered by rivers are also a threat to the processes of physical, cultural, social and symbolic reproductions of indigenous groups [...]. The destruction of waterfalls and cascades [...] is interpreted by them as the destruction of the abodes of the enchanted forces of the *encantados*." (Estrela et al. 2014:33)

Considering that EDA studies are developed from the point of view of eco-ideology, the ideology of life, and that "it defends life and fights any form of suffering by a living being" (Couto et al. 2021:8), we can expand the notion of 'life' and 'ecosystem' to include the defense for the vital continuity of the natural environments that elemental beings require for their survival. Nevertheless:

"It is true that suffering and pain are a kind of protection living beings have

against death. Were it not for them, living beings would not mind if their body were mutilated. For this reason, all of them are always looking for their own self-realization or well-being, as can be seen in Deep Ecology. Death exists to give continuity to life, so that nature can recycle the matter of one being into another. Notwithstanding all this, whenever pain, suffering and death are avoidable they must be avoided.” (Couto et al. 2021:8)

So, the ideology of life does not pretend to resist human development, as much as human development should not challenge the continuity of fairies' domains. As Marshall Sahlins (2022:123) asseverates about 'enspirited societies', “human political relations are metahuman relations”.

Rachel Carson (2002:277) concludes: “We stand now where two roads diverge. [...] The road we have long been traveling is deceptively easy, a smooth superhighway on which we progress with high speed, but at its end lies disaster. The other fork of the road [...] offers our last, our only chance [...]”.

CONCLUSION

This paper explains the concept of liminal biology as an area of research in spiritual ecology, introduces some of the various fairies that still exist and warns about harms they suffer.

It emphasizes the importance of fairy beings in the ecological maintenance of the planet, but also mentions how human actions affect elementals for bringing damage to the terrestrial ecosystems they must care for and to the subtle domains. In fact, the increasing disconnection from nature due to urbanization and exponential growth of human-induced stresses on natural ecosystems cause severe environmental degradation and loss of biodiversity. Therefore, the destiny of elementals is, in some way, attached to human destiny. Even though, if mankind perishes, some plants, animals, and fairies will survive.

Instead of a dystopian view, the aim of this paper is a claim for help, showing that if human beings take care of elementals and their habitat and surroundings – which in turn can balance their lives– they can still adjust their behavior so as to survive.

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Elementalna bića traže pomoć: kako antropogene aktivnosti utječu na suptilni svijet i njegove stanovnike

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Ovo se istraživanje koristi nekartezijanskom teorijskom osnovom kako bi prikazalo posljedice ekoloških katastrofa na elementale, poznate i kao vilinska bića, koja žive u suptilnom zemaljskom svijetu. Zapravo, katastrofe diljem svijeta imale su golem utjecaj na elementale, donoseći bolesti, deformacije i smrt. Cilj ovoga rada nije samo uvesti liminalnu biologiju kao područje istraživanja spiritualne ekologije, te naglasiti važnost vilinskih bića u ekološkom očuvanju planeta, već i izvijestiti o tome kako ekološke promjene utječu na njihove životne uvjete.

Ključne riječi: *nadnaravna ekologija, duhovna ekologija, folklor, interakcija ljudi i vila*



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