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Fits Like a Glove: AEDP and Brazilian Culture

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Chegou um tempo em que não adianta morrer.
Chegou um tempo em que a vida é uma ordem.
A vida apenas, sem mistificação.

Carlos Drummond de Andrade (1940)[1]

Abstract: This article has two main objectives: to introduce readers to aspects of Brazilian culture, particularly the culture of Rio de Janeiro (Carioca culture); and, through these cultural elements, to explore points of convergence between theory and practice in AEDP. It is common for foreigners to lack a full understanding of what it means to refer to Brazilian culture or its Carioca variation, which is why we begin with a brief overview. Next, we highlight how this culture, in its context and essence, connects with AEDP. We observe throughout our writing that, although AEDP Psychotherapy was not designed for this specific purpose, it can be a useful tool in decolonization processes, helping to validate and heal both personal and collective experiences, as well as promote empowerment and awareness of diverse identities and cultural contexts. Finally, we offer reflections that we believe are useful when considering the status of AEDP's development in our country—its extraordinary potential for growth and flourishing, as well as its challenges—through a multicultural and creative dialogue that serves as a catalyst for a new perspective in the field of psychotherapeutic praxis.

[1] "*There came a time when dying is pointless. /There came a time when life is an order. / Life itself, without mystification." (Carlos Drummond de Andrade, 1940, [own translation])*\

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Introduction

Twenty-five years have passed since Diana Fosha, the creator of AEDP psychotherapy, defined it as a therapeutic approach oriented toward the innate potential for healing within all of us. This model prioritizes a secure context in which affective experiences, deeply felt within the dyadic therapist-patient relationship, serve as fertile ground for therapeutic work. It integrates mind and body, systematically activating the positive neuroplasticity of new experiences, fundamentally based on the 9+1 mechanisms of change (Fosha, 2018; 2000b; Russell, 2015; Yeung & Fosha, 2015).

As an experiential, affective, and relational approach deeply rooted in neurobiology and affective neuroscience, AEDP fosters a secure attachment between therapist and patient. It seeks to help patients express and integrate emotions that were previously experienced in states of unwanted aloneness leaving a profound impact on their sense of self.

The language and process of AEDP psychotherapy guide individuals on a journey toward a rich and fulfilling life, nourished by emotions that align with lived experiences. Through this specific dialogue, the aim is to achieve a deeper integration of affective experiences, following AEDP's core mantra: "Making the implicit explicit, the explicit experiential, the experiential relational, and the relational transformational." Experiencing this process with another person perceived as trustworthy and genuine—the True Other (Fosha, 2000; 2013) becomes an intense and unique experience, often unlike anything previously encountered.

AEDP is an emergent approach, as described by Fosha in her seminal 2000 work, allowing for continuous growth and refinement precisely because it does not see itself as a finished or static model—it is a living theory. Life itself is dynamic and evolving, so why not have a living theory to care for living humans? While remaining grounded in its core foundations, AEDP is open to incorporating new, relevant insights that can be assimilated—keeping in mind that the model is an assimilative-integrative one (Fosha, 2018; 2023), always working toward its ultimate goals. A clear example of this is its integration of perspectives from authors who emphasize the mind-body connection in therapy, such as Stephen Porges (2011), Louis Cozolino (2017), Daniel Siegel (2010), and Allan Schore (2003).

Due to AEDP's unique approach, the growing body of affective neuroscience research validating its theoretical and methodological consistency, and the remarkable

therapeutic outcomes observed over the past twenty-five years, interest in research and training in the model has significantly expanded.

Since 2000, AEDP psychotherapy has crossed continents. It has moved beyond its American origins, reaching distant regions where its application and further development continue to thrive. Today, according to Fosha (2021), AEDP is practiced across six continents, with professionals using the approach in over 21 languages, making it accessible to diverse populations with distinct languages and cultural backgrounds.

From our perspective, this expansion is largely due to AEDP's fundamental values, reflected in its ethos: a deep belief in human potential and the ever-present orientation toward healing—an inner drive that may be temporarily weakened but is always waiting to be activated, nurtured, and realized. This openness extends to diversity, equality, belonging, continuous growth, and the exploration of human connection. It embraces the genuine dyadic engagement between therapist and patient and the integration of mind and heart. Additionally, AEDP maintains a rigorous theoretical foundation anchored in the lived experience and phenomenology of the clinical process. With these guiding principles, it fosters a secure environment in which therapist and patient move toward transformation and the emergence of new possibilities. Thus, multiplicity, integration, and transformation are ever-present—not only in AEDP's theoretical and methodological framework but also in the lived experience of clinical work, revealing how naturally and organically everything unfolds. At this point, we pose some important questions that shape the development of this article: What has made such a relatively new approach gain such relevance in such a short period? And: What has allowed it to spread so rapidly across the world and into different cultures? With these questions in mind, we aim to explore possible answers through the lens of the Brazilian context.

The Brazilian cultural context

What is Brazil?

[...] sublime & picturesque. — The colours were intense & the prevailing tint a dark blue, the sky & calm waters of the bay vied with each other in splendor. — After passing through some cultivated country we entered a Forest, which in

the grandeur of all its parts could not be exceeded. [...] I was at an utter loss how sufficiently to admire this scene.[2]

Before we begin exploring how AEDP is experienced within the Brazilian context, it may be useful to provide some insight into what Brazil is and its vast dimensions. Brazil is a country of continental proportions, covering a total area of approximately 8,510,000 km². The territory is divided into five major regions—North, Northeast, Central-West, Southeast, and South—which together encompass 26 states and 5,570 municipalities. According to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE, 2024) Approximately 87% of the Brazilian population lives in urban areas. The composition of the Brazilian people has been shaped by centuries of encounters between Indigenous peoples and Europeans (including Portuguese and other groups such as Jews), Africans, and Asians. The Brazilian census categorizes the population into five main racial/ethnic groups, however, these classifications only scratch the surface of Brazil's complexity, as many Brazilians have mixed ancestry.

The country's official language is Portuguese**,** but there are significant regional variations that reflect Brazil's vast geographic and cultural diversity. Some examples include Northeastern, *Gaúcho* (Southern), and *Mineiro* (Minas Gerais) dialects, among others. Additionally, Brazil is home to a rich linguistic heritage of Indigenous languages—an estimated 274 Indigenous languages are still spoken today. According to the National Foundation of Indigenous Peoples (October 2022)**,** around 305 Indigenous ethnic groups have existed since before Portuguese colonization in the 1500s.

Beyond Indigenous languages, Brazil also harbors 30 languages spoken by immigrant communities that have preserved their cultural heritage, such as Italian, German, Japanese, and Spanish. In some regions, these languages have blended into unique local dialects spoken exclusively within certain communities. Moreover, there are Creole and Afro-Brazilian linguistic communities, as well as two sign languages officially recognized in Brazil: Libras (Brazilian Sign Language) and Kaapor Brazilian Sign Language**.**

In terms of religion**,** although the most up-to-date figures may vary, the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) (2021/2022 demographic census) reported 579,800 religious temples, surpassing the combined number of schools (264,400) and healthcare facilities (247,500) in the country (IBGE, 2022). As of October 2022, religious affiliation in Brazil was distributed as follows: 49.9% identified as Catholic;

[2] Darwin, C. (1839). *The voyage of the Beagle*. Henry Colburn.

31.8% identified as Evangelical, encompassing various denominations such as Baptists, Pentecostals, and other Protestant groups; 3% identified as Spiritists; 0.3% identified as Jewish; 14% identified as having no religion, including atheists and agnostics; 2% identified as followers of Afro-Brazilian religions (such as Umbanda and Candomblé). A small percentage of the population adheres to other religions, including Indigenous spiritual practices and Eastern religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism.

However, religious identity in Brazil is often fluid, blending multiple traditions in everyday practice. It is common to find Catholics who visit Spiritist centers, Spiritists who attend Buddhist temples, and Catholics who sing Evangelical hymns. This dynamic illustrates how religious diversity in Brazil is not just statistical but also deeply interwoven into cultural and social life.

Ultimately, Brazil's linguistic, cultural, and religious diversity reflects of its complex history—one shaped by the many encounters between different peoples who contributed to the formation of the nation. While this overview provides a broad perspective, the reality is even richer and more varied.

So, who are we as Brazilians?

Given the vast and multifaceted overview presented above, answering this question is far from simple. However, we can start from a key premise: multiplicity, integration, and transformation. These elements help outline a vision of Brazil. Migration has always played a crucial role in shaping Brazilian identity, bringing people into contact with cultural diversity. Brazil is a living example of this dynamic, built upon countless intercultural exchanges and interactions (Capuano de Oliveira, 2019). This ongoing process of contact and transformation has continuously shaped—and continues to shape—a Brazilian identity that is constantly evolving.

Since the arrival of the Portuguese, Brazil has been a prominent migratory destination. Sylvia Duarte Dantas (2012) asserts that migration in Brazil extends beyond the post-slavery period or the 19th-century European immigration wave; it remains a continuously expanding and diversifying phenomenon. The constant movement between different cultures and subcultures has profound psychological and social implications, providing deeper insights into the process of Brazilian identity formation and shaping the way Brazilians perceive the world, interact with it, and cultivate a sense of belonging.

Like any historical narrative, Brazil's past has both light and shadow. The work of Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, a sociologist, historian, writer, and literary critic, helps us understand the "Lusitanian heritage," primarily expressed in his influential work *Raízes do Brasil* (1936). This analysis remains crucial for comprehending the formation of Brazilian society and the obstacles to effective decolonization. The Portuguese had a paternalistic relationship with power, which was reflected in a social structure where hierarchies were largely informal and based on personal and family ties rather than impersonal legal systems. As a result, Brazilian social identity has been fundamentally shaped by a private appropriation of public power, tracing back to colonial times from 1500 until Brazil's independence in 1888. There was no clear separation between public and private spheres.

In his precise analysis, Holanda (1936) concludes that due to the agrarian structure, political clientelism, and racial and social inequality, Brazil lacks full and impersonal citizenship. In other words, political decolonization was not accompanied by social, economic, and cultural decolonization. This continuity of the "Lusitanian heritage" has hindered the construction of a modern and democratic state capable of promoting universal equality and social justice.

Today, many voices contribute to this ongoing process of decolonization, not only in Brazil but globally. One of the most prominent is Aílton Krenak, a leader of the Krenak people, environmentalist, writer, philosopher, and activist. He is the first Indigenous person to join the Brazilian Academy of Letters and holds a profound sense of connection with the land and the planet. In his book *Ideas to Postpone the End of the World* (2019), he proposes the "decolonization of the world." Humanity must abandon the anthropocentric view—which sees humans as separate and superior to nature—and adopt a more integrated and respectful perspective, recognizing the interdependence of all forms of life. This paradigm shift requires learning from Indigenous cultures, which have historically maintained a relationship of balance and reciprocity with the environment. Reconfiguring humanity's relationship with the Earth involves reconstructing an ethical framework that respects Indigenous cultures and ancestral knowledge. This deep understanding of non-separability emphasizes the interconnectedness of all things as part of a larger and more complex whole.

In resonance with Krenak, Congolese-born sociologist and anthropologist Kabengele Munanga (2019), who resides in Brazil, advocates for the "decolonization of minds," focusing on educational and cultural practices while highlighting the resistance of Black communities and their cultural heritage. Another key scholar contributing to the understanding of Brazilian identity is Roberto DaMatta, a Brazilian anthropologist, journalist, and writer who has extensively studied Brazilian culture.

Reflecting on Brazilian culture and society, DaMatta explores various characteristics that, according to his analysis, define Brazilian identity in his books (1984, 1987, 1990) and articles published up to 2002. He highlights a fundamental ambivalence in Brazilian society: the ability to amalgamate different influences across multiple dimensions.

Key aspects of Brazilian identity

1. A mixture of traditions

Brazil has a unique ability to merge different cultural influences, embracing both tradition and modernity while integrating European, African, and Indigenous elements into its social, religious, and artistic practices. Brazilian identity is built upon this diversity, shaping a pluralistic, creative, and multifaceted cultural character. This capacity for integration and assimilation manifests in various aspects of daily life.

For instance, in Brazilian cuisine, the Russian *stroganov* has been adapted with local ingredients and even changed in name to *strogonoff*; Italian pizza, traditionally savory, has evolved to include sweet variations featuring Brazilian ingredients. Capoeira, now a recognized cultural heritage of Brazil, originated as an African martial art brought by enslaved Africans and transformed into a unique fusion of martial arts, music, and dance, creating the "capoeira game" that retains the spirit of resistance.

2. Moral and ethical relativism

Brazilians often navigate a complex range of ethical norms that may appear contradictory. While this fosters flexibility and adaptability, it can also create internal conflicts regarding what is considered right or wrong. One globally recognized expression of this phenomenon is the *jeitinho brasileiro* (Brazilian way of being and navigating life's challenges).

The *jeitinho brasileiro* is closely tied to the concept of *malandragem* (cunning), a non-confrontational, persuasive, and highly creative way of overcoming daily hardships. Faced with an often-unclear legal system, a bureaucratic and oppressive reality, and corruptible institutions, Brazilians frequently resort to improvisation as a means of survival. Even with a strong work ethic and determination, they often appeal to emotional arguments or seek common ground with authority figures to secure exceptions based on personal connections.

Sérgio Buarque de Holanda (1994) introduced the concept of *homem cordial* (cordial man), which describes a set of traits including warmth, affectivity, and informality in social, emotional, and political interactions. His analysis was a milestone in Brazilian sociology, providing a deeper understanding of the country's complex social dynamics.

The *jeitinho brasileiro* exists on a fine line between adherence to laws and bending them when necessary.

It is also worth noting that due to deep social inequality, many Brazilians invest significant time and effort into demanding work schedules. Compared to other societies, including the United States, where rules are strictly followed (″you either can or you cannot″), Brazil operates in a realm of "it may or may not be possible.″ This reflects a relativistic cultural attitude.

3. Sociability and Individualism

Following DaMatta's (1997) analysis and Holanda's (1994) concept of the "cordial man," Brazil's culture of cordiality presents an intriguing paradox. Brazilians are known for their warmth and hospitality but can also exhibit individualism in competitive or personal decision-making situations. On one hand, Brazilians highly value collectivism, often displaying solidarity and generosity in times of crisis. On the other hand, deep social inequalities and a strained relationship with public institutions lead to strategies that prioritize personal advantage for those who feel marginalized. At times, this manifests as violence. Fortunately, the predominant cultural inclination is towards connection and collaboration, as seen in everyday interactions. For example, Brazilians invite friends to run errands at the supermarket just as they would for a government-related appointment. They are traditionally known to dislike being alone, and are expressive, expansive, and loud in their conversations and interactions. Brazilian culture is dynamic and effervescent, reflecting the nation's rich complexity.

4. Informality

This is a crucial aspect of our social interactions. Roberto DaMatta (1997) argues that Brazilians tend to value flexibility in social interactions, seeking closer and friendlier contact even in environments that traditionally demand formality. This can be a source of surprise for many. Hugging a stranger or greeting them with two kisses on the cheek, complimenting a pregnant woman passing by on the street, playing and conversing with a child accompanied by an unfamiliar family, helping someone who did not explicitly ask for assistance but whom we believe needs it—such as an elderly woman crossing the street in a wheelchair—and joking to lighten serious or tense moments are all examples that may seem strange, intrusive, or even discourteous to other cultures. However, they are deeply embedded in our cultural norms. What belongs to the public sphere is often perceived as an extension of our own living room. We are highly communicative, spontaneous, and "intimate" even with people we met just this morning, sharing personal situations, offering advice, and providing unsolicited tips.

5. Syncretism

Another focal point of DaMatta's (1986) analysis is religious and cultural syncretism, which is visible in festivals, religious practices, cuisine, music, literature, and customs. As mentioned earlier, with such a vast variety and abundance of elements, we merge, create, and reinvent. Indeed, we are a creative people.

6. Festivals and Recreation

Recreation and festivities are precious moments in Brazilian culture. Carnival is undoubtedly our greatest celebration, occurring in almost every Brazilian state. The most famous are in Salvador (Bahia), Rio de Janeiro (Rio de Janeiro) and Olinda (Pernambuco). With their unique music and rhythms—samba, frevo, and maracatu—these celebrations emphasize playfulness, the body, and social and political critique. Additionally, Carnival is a major economic enterprise, generating substantial employment. In Rio de Janeiro, where approximately six million people participate, the most traditional samba schools comprise thousands of members—around 3,000 to 4,000 people each. Many jobs are created within this industry: theme creators, set designers, builders, choreographers, musicians, seamstresses crafting costumes, parade coordinators, and many others, all working year-round to bring this grand spectacle to life. Religious festivals also hold a prominent place, particularly in Brazil's northern and northeastern regions, reflecting joy, community spirit, and a deep appreciation for dance, regional culinary traditions, and socialization, all of which are central to Brazilian identity. Notable examples include the Parintins Fstival in Amazonas, the Círio de Nazaré in Pará, and the June Festivals (Festas Juninas) honoring Saints John, Anthony, and Peter, widely celebrated in the northeast and southeast. We are joyful, deeply devout, and celebratory.

7. Games and Performance

Roberto DaMatta also highlights Brazilians' relationship with games (such as soccer and other competitions) and performance. This characteristic reflects how Brazilians approach life, often adopting a relaxed and playful attitude. We are inherently playful.

8. Culture of Tenderness

One of the strongest traits of the Brazilian people, as DaMatta (1997) describes, is our "culture of tenderness." What does this mean? Affection is a defining feature of Brazilian identity, deeply present in interpersonal relationships. Brazilians express care through physical gestures, reflecting an essential emotional component in social interactions and collective life. Physical touch is a natural part of our communication—we hug strangers, caress children in parks, and touch the bellies of pregnant women. We are affectionate. We seek closeness and connection. Unfortunately, in today's world,

where emotions often run high, our natural expressiveness and warmth have also been affected, sometimes subdued by social and moral crises. Yet, despite this, we continuously demonstrate our profound resilience.

Brazil and psychology are young

Looking back at the history of psychology in Brazil, we must acknowledge that our country is

young and has inherited a strong colonial, slave owners and patrimonialist structure. Much of this legacy is still visible today. Since 1500, we have experienced significant historical developments, but the arrival of the Portuguese Court in 1808 notably placed us on the map of the Modern Age. The political and cultural center was Rio de Janeiro, which underwent substantial transformation to accommodate Portuguese nobility and experienced exponential growth. It was as if a "civilizing process" had begun in a land seen by Europeans as both rich and primitive. However, the overwhelming presence of the local population was perceived as an obstacle to achieving European standards of civilization. The process of acculturation introduced many physical, emotional, and mental illnesses and ingrained in us the belief that foreign culture is inherently superior. Colonialism leaves deep marks.

Following the Proclamation of the Republic in 1889, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo became the epicenters of national progress. Yet, social inequality, a central issue in Brazilian society, remained profound. Many undesirable elements were systematically excluded from broader development efforts. Only a few years later, psychology began to be recognized as a potential tool for improving the educational system, which was far from ideal—public schools were weak, and there were only two universities in the entire country: one in Rio de Janeiro (1920, UFRJ) and another in São Paulo (1934, USP).

By the late 1940s, following World War II, Brazil entered a period of national development. In 1953, the first undergraduate psychology program was established at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (PUC-Rio), but it was not until 1962 that psychology was officially recognized as a profession. The inauguration of Brasília – a city built to be the new capital of Brazil, in 1960 - shifted the nation's political center, yet Rio de Janeiro remained a "cultural capital." Today, São Paulo has assumed the role of Brazil's primary cultural hub. From 1964 to 1985, Brazil endured a difficult period marked by dictatorship. The post-dictatorship era saw efforts toward reconstruction, economic and political oscillations, and advancements in various fields,

including psychology. Psychology programs flourished, particularly in the fastest-growing regions: the Southeast and South.

Where is the AEDP Institute in Brazil?

We are in the Southeast Region, in the city of Rio de Janeiro, or simply "Rio." With nearly seven million residents, our city boasts an unparalleled geography—situated between the ocean and the mountains, it blends urbanization with preserved natural areas. Rio is one of the few major cities in the world with a rainforest within its boundaries: the Tijuca Forest. This unique setting integrates nature into our daily lives, as leisure and relaxation often occur outdoors. However, alongside breathtaking landscapes, we face stark contrasts: affluent areas and major tourist attractions coexist with favelas – urban low-income communities - where despite significant hardships, a rich cultural tradition thrives, particularly in music and dance.

Our economy has faced structural challenges in recent years. A large public debt has affected public services and investment capacity (BRASIL, 2017). Since 2017, Rio has been undergoing fiscal recovery, struggling with administrative difficulties (AGÊNCIA BRASIL, 2023). Nevertheless, due to its beauty, climate, and the hospitality of its people, Rio continues to host major global events—though at significant costs.

For a long time, we have been dealing with highly challenging issues—tackling persistent social inequality, urban violence, and public security concerns that directly impact quality of life and mental health. On the other hand, the inhabitants of this city are named *carioca*, a term derived from the indigenous Tupi-Guarani language, meaning "house of the man." The *carioca* has an identity deeply intertwined with a complex cultural dynamic, characterized by a unique energy yet immersed in a blend of contrasts.

In general, *cariocas* are optimistic, joyful, lighthearted, and highly resilient. They breathe the beach—there is an intimate connection with the sea, a social space for interaction and sports. The *carioca* lifestyle embraces outdoor physical activity, a culture of body appreciation, and a tropical climate with high summer temperatures, which naturally leads to lighter and more revealing clothing. Music and dance are also fundamental elements of this identity—samba, rooted in African rhythms; *funk carioca*, born in the favelas and the northern zone, serving as the voice of the city's peripheral youth; and *bossa nova*, immortalized by the iconic figures of Tom Jobim and João Gilberto, who celebrated Ipanema Beach, the Brazilian woman's grace, and her unique sway: "Olha que coisa mais linda, mais cheia de graça..." (Tall and tan and young and

lovely/The girl from Ipanema goes walking/And when she passes, each one she passes goes "ah" …).[3] The festive spirit is epitomized in the world-renowned *Carnaval Carioca*, featuring the dazzling parades of *escolas de samba* (samba schools) and vibrant street Carnival *blocos*[4] that bring millions of people together in joyful song and dance throughout the city.

Another defining trait of Rio is football (soccer). More than just a sport, it is a true passion that evokes a full spectrum of emotions—intense excitement, strong bonds of unity and loyalty, and, at the same time, fierce rivalries. Football reflects the culture of collectivity and belonging.

The *carioca* is also known for their openness, warmth, and hospitality. Despite the challenges mentioned earlier, Rio de Janeiro has a long-standing tradition of welcoming people from different parts of Brazil and the world, resulting in a distinctively cosmopolitan way of life. The famous expression *jeitinho carioca*, an offshoot of the broader *jeitinho brasileiro*, refers to a relaxed, flexible, and humorous approach to handling difficulties and everyday relationships. It embodies a city that, despite its inequalities, carries a spirit of resilience, reinvention, humor, creativity, and transformation.

It was in this city, with these characteristics and this population, that AEDP arrived 25 years ago.

The relationship between Our culture and AEDP principles

Vygotsky (1998), a psychologist and education theorist, states that "Psychological functioning is based on social relations between the individual and the external world, which develop through a historical process." Similarly, Chilean biologist and renowned thinker Humberto Maturana, in his book *Habitar Humano* (2008), reflects on human existence by linking biology, culture, and the interconnection between living beings and their habitats. He emphasizes that humanity is not an isolated entity but rather part of a broader ecosystem. Maturana explores the idea that togetherness and coexistence are fundamental to the continuity of human beings as a species and that our relationships influence not only our identity but also the environment we inhabit. Along with

[3] Jobim, A. C., & de Moraes, V. (1962). *The Girl from Ipanema* [Recorded by João Gilberto, Stan Getz, & Astrud Gilberto]. Verve Records.
[4] A Bloco de Carnaval (or simply *Bloco*) is a street carnival group or parade in Brazil, typically made up of a band or musical ensemble that plays samba, marchinhas (traditional carnival songs), or other popular rhythms.

Francisco Varela, Maturana (1987) describes living systems as continuously regenerating through the production, transformation, and destruction of their components. In the 1970s, they coined the term *autopoiesis* to define this process.

The concept of *autopoiesis* resonates strongly with AEDP's framework, as it underscores the human capacity for self-healing and self-regulation, which can lead to significant unfolding of one's psychological processes, i. e., *Transformance*. As Lilia Schwarcz stated in her 2024 inaugural speech at the Brazilian Academy of Letters, "Nations, like people, carry their traumas."

If we also consider that the methodology proposed by AEDP prioritizes the co-creation of a secure, attuned, and moment-to-moment metaprocessed relational space—capable of fostering transformational creative dynamics—we can draw parallels with aspects of Brazilian culture, particularly in Rio de Janeiro. This correlation aligns with AEDP's four states of affective processing:

1. *Relational Co-Creation that Promotes Safety*
2. *Adaptive Core Affective Experiences*
3. *The Spiral of Transformational Experience*
4. *The Expansive Path—Integration and the New Narrative*

State 1: Safety and connection

AEDP, establishing a safe environment and building a trusting relationship between therapist and patient are foundational for the expression of deep emotions. When these emotions are shared, they shield the patient from loneliness and enable the release of traumatic energy (Fosha, 2000, 2021).

Our ways of communicating extend beyond verbal language. From an evolutionary perspective, the development of skills for social bonding begins with mimicry and imitation and later evolves into verbal language. In this trajectory, it is essential to recognize that emotions are innate and universal, and their phenomenology brings nonverbal communication to life. The creation of an intersubjective field for a secure relationship, according to AEDP principles and methodology, focuses on illuminating the phenomenological expressions present in the patient *from the very first moment*. An interesting point to highlight is that while we may recognize these conditions, familiarity with our bodies does not automatically grant us access to our internal bodily states. There is often a sense of estrangement in accepting the invitation to attune to the subtleties of bodily language.

Safety, protection, shared experiences, bonding, and growth are fundamental to human existence and are deeply rooted in our neurophysiology. As Cacioppo (2008) reminds us, humans are "ultrasocial" and complex beings who organize themselves around the biological need for connection. The human brain has evolved to seek social bonds, making isolation a significant risk factor for survival and well-being. Interdependence, collaboration, and sociability are fundamental—cooperation offers an evolutionary advantage that enables the development of complex societies, fostering culture, technology, and shared knowledge, from daily interactions to the formation of social institutions.

If we integrate Humberto Maturana's (1987) *post-postmodernity* perspective into a dialogue with AEDP and the cultural aspects of Rio de Janeiro, we open a space for reflection on how emerging paradigms of coexistence, co-creation, and intersubjectivity manifest in the city's social, artistic, and community dynamics. People seek to minimize loneliness not only in times of adversity but also in moments of joy. The favelas of Rio exemplify the creation of strong community networks based on coexistence and co-creation, fostering spaces of belonging, emotional connection, and support. Cultural projects such as AfroReggae[5] and the Central Única das Favelas (CUFA)[6] promote art, music, and dialogue as tools to integrate marginalized communities into the urban fabric. Warm human interactions are central elements of everyday life in Rio. These cultural and social gatherings, where individuals from diverse backgrounds come together, serve as intersubjective spaces where participants collectively create moments of connection and joy. In this shared experience of loving and collaborative coexistence, individual and collective loneliness dissolves. The appreciation of the subjective and emotional experience of the individual, embraced in a space of trust and a secure therapeutic relationship – with a genuinely present, empathetic and attuned therapist – can be crucial for individuals who, due to "colonization", are marginalized.

State 2: The experience of core affective states

The second State of the AEDP process aims to access and safely experience intense, previously repressed adaptive emotions, allowing new states to emerge. It is in this State that we can see the expression of collective traumas, in marginalized communities that suffer from oppression. This is a fundamental aspect of the decolonization process, as many individuals deal with wounds that span generations. In this process, working with

[5] The AfroReggae Project is a Brazilian cultural and social organization that originated in Rio de Janeiro's favelas. Founded in 1993, its mission is to use music, arts, and education as tools for social transformation, providing opportunities for young people in marginalized communities.
[6] The Central Única das Favelas (CUFA) is a Brazilian non-governmental organization (NGO) that promotes social, cultural, and economic development in favelas (urban low-income communities)

complex emotions in State 2 helps to bring forth feelings of anger, sadness, and confusion regarding identity and cultural heritage.

If we turn to Barbara Fredrickson's (2015, p. 27) definition of love, she states: *"Love resides in connections, in bonds. It transcends personal boundaries to characterize the vibration that pulses between people."* With deep relational attunement, the therapist employs co-regulation to accompany the patient, making the dissolution of loneliness an act of love. The therapist takes shared responsibility in processing pathogenic affects, performing one of the most significant and active tasks in therapy: slowing down and providing loving, finely attuned support through the painful journey.

Cariocas, with their spontaneity and strong desire for connection, bring their natural warmth and relational expansiveness into both work and daily life. In the therapeutic setting, this capacity for present-moment dyadic engagement is activated. There is an intrinsic motivation to share and take risks in new and different experiences—one that, within the therapeutic relationship, awaits activation and expression, encompassing the full intensity of joy, passion, pain, and struggle. However, overcoming pathogenic affects requires confronting ingrained self-states locked in maladaptive dynamics. Being from Rio does not necessarily make this process easier. This is where dyadic regulation becomes crucial, aided by the well-known carioca resources of lightness and humor—powerful tools for moving forward in therapy.

State 3: The spiral of transformational experience

Experiencing previously excluded emotions leads to a new State, where patients feel relief and renewal as they access healing affects (Fosha, 2000, 2020). Gratitude, tenderness, and a sense of being deeply moved emerge, alongside vitality, enthusiasm, and a newfound sense of affective mastery.

In daily life, Rio's signature humor transforms adversity into a source of laughter, creating space for new solutions and possibilities. The inherently hopeful and affirmative nature of Brazilians—especially Cariocas—serves as a force that, once the transformational spiral is activated, propels it forward with momentum. This resilience is encapsulated in the popular saying: *"We are Brazilian. We never give up."* The expression of these healing affects can also be seen in the fervor of religious festivals, which draw massive crowds seeking relief from suffering and offering gratitude for fulfilled prayers.

By integrating, exploring and validating our cultural experiences and traditions - alongside solidarity movements, social resistance, and pathways to resilience – we enhance our sense of pride and belonging. This, in turn, deepens our purpose and foster

the healing and transformative affects characteristic of State 3, with its natural reflections in the process of decolonization.

State 4: The expansive path

The Transformational Spiral ultimately leads us to State 4, which focuses on fostering a continuous cycle of experience, reflection, experience, reflection, and so forth—allowing individuals to fully claim their sense of truth. In this state, emotional experiences that have been lived and shared are integrated, enabling the patient to attain a new, profound, and enriching understanding of themselves. The deep sense of identity truth emerges with clarity and strength—this is the new, felt sense of the neurobiological self (Fosha, 2013).

State 4 supports us in experiencing access to a vibrant core of the self—an unshakable understanding that *we are who we are, period*. If we consider the plasticity and flexibility of living systems, we recognize our inherent capacity for self-regulation and self-organization. As Capra (1982, p. 263) emphasizes, self-organization encompasses "two main phenomena… self-renewal—the ability of living systems to continuously renew and recycle their components while maintaining the integrity of their overall structure—and self-transcendence—the capacity to move creatively beyond physical and mental boundaries in learning, development, and evolution."

In considering Brazilian and Carioca identity, a crucial question arises: do we possess an intrinsic center that offers a unique affirmation of our Brazilian and Carioca way of life? At the same time, we struggle to fully recognize this truth due to the enduring legacies of colonial history. As a result, we often experience a profound sense of being an imperfect imitation of foreign ideals.

In this sense, AEDP aims to empower individuals by helping them reconnect with their authentic feelings and needs. This reconnection can be an important step in decolonization, allowing people to recognize their power and their voice in contexts that were previously dominated or silenced. Then we can hear: *"This is who I am. This is who we are."* This is an important way to reduce suffering and foster both individual and collective growth. Self-regulation, self-renewal, and self-transcendence are foundational human values—intrinsic tendencies of our nature. In embracing these, we fully step into State 4.

Conclusion

We are a global community. We are shaped by a systemic field where cosmic, evolutionary, and historical conditions—both individual and collective—intertwine. Within this field, the transformations that have defined human existence since the beginning of time take shape. With this awareness, we can ask ourselves: What do we want for ourselves, for our communities, for our places of belonging, and for our interconnected world? What aspects of our lived experiences, constructed realities, and acquired knowledge should we preserve, and what should we discard?

Our present era, when carefully examined, raises profound and often unsettling questions. However, the paths we choose to navigate these questions could be approached with less suffering. As victims of our own era—one characterized by increasing human disconnection in favor of machine interactions—we are beginning to recognize that we are moving in a direction that is misaligned with our nature. Nevertheless, Humberto Maturana's (2009) systemic thinking offers a route back to re-humanization. He states, *"The worlds we inhabit emerge from our way of living within the biosphere, constituting an anthroposphere that includes everything we do—from reflective contemplation to technology, from joy to anguish over the divine."* Maturana defines the anthroposphere as everything that constitutes and pertains to human existence, emphasizing that, like all living beings, we are inherently embedded within the biosphere. He further argues that recognizing this interconnection, and focusing on the kind of beings we are, can be liberating. This biological-cultural dialogical existence can give rise to *"a natural ethical lineage that guides us toward a new psychic era of co-inspiration and collaboration."*

In this sense, AEDP fits us like a glove. It provides a conceptual framework that embraces the correlation between biology, culture, and the interconnection of living beings, allowing us to explore and honor the diverse elements that shape our existence. Moreover, it expands our awareness of the larger context of *inter-being*, as highlighted by Tarchin Hearn (2018).

We are a Brazil that works, that exudes joy, that builds relationships, that is affectionate, and that possesses a unique vitality and creativity. The biodiversity of our geography and the socio-diversity of our history are perhaps our greatest strengths in the face of a civilization in crisis. We live in an era of relational fragility and escalating urban violence. It is painful to acknowledge that we have embarked on a path that is increasingly difficult to reverse, as social and economic disorder and discrimination

intensify. We are living in an era of ambivalence—oscillating between moments of despair and hope.

Our experience with AEDP has provided us with escape routes from crises and despair. As relational facilitators, we work with our natural resources of *brasilidade*[7]—bringing forth genuine presence, spontaneity, and affective vitality that allow us to truly *exist in each other's minds and hearts* (Fosha, 2000). In doing so, we see how AEDP amplifies our innate tendencies and desire for connection, encounter, closeness, and co-creation. We are intertwined through both hardship and joy. Reinvention walks hand in hand with us. Additionally, we recognize that the methodology's design not only respects but actively facilitates the continuous and attainable access to the experience of the *best version of the self*. This speaks to one of our most natural resources—the ability to pursue resilience pathways.

To walk the path of affective processing with openness, calmness, and connection appears to be a secure course of action. Thus, adopting the stance of a therapist who confidently guides the process—without necessarily knowing in advance where it will lead—while stepping back and moving forward as needed, provides the sense of safety and protection essential to therapeutic work.

[7] The term *brasilidade* became widely used in the early 20th century, especially in the context of Brazilian Modernism, to describe the search for an authentic national identity in literature, art, and culture. Writers such as Oswald de Andrade and Mário de Andrade helped solidify the concept, particularly with the *Manifesto Antropofágico* (1928), which proposed "digesting" foreign influences to create something uniquely Brazilian.

We would like to conclude this reflection with the closing remarks from a lecture given by educator, philosopher, and economist Eduardo Giannetti:

O futuro se redefine sem cessar. Ele responde à força e à ousadia do nosso querer: 'Tupi[8] *or not tupi, that's the question." É como propõe a conhecida fórmula antropofágica. "Tupi and not Tupi", eis a possível resposta que vem do breu da noite espessa ao raiar da manhã.* [9]

[8] A reference to a figure of speech (paronomasia) used by Oswald de Andrade in his *Manifesto Antropofágico* (Anthropophagic Manifesto) of 1928, as a critique of colonization and Brazilian cultural identity. The Anthropophagic Movement proposed a break with European models, asserting that Brazilian culture should "devour" external influences and transform them into something new. This movement was influenced by modernism and the philosophy of Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

The Tupis were one of the main Indigenous groups in pre-colonial Brazil. They formed a large linguistic family, the Tupi language, and were spread across various regions of the country in tribal subgroups. It is believed that they have been present in the territory for thousands of years. They were the first to have contact with Europeans and had a significant influence on Brazilian culture.

The Anthropophagic Movement was an artistic and cultural movement that redefined Brazilian cultural identity. Emerging in 1928, it was led by the poet Oswald de Andrade.

[9] *The future is constantly being redefined. It responds to the strength and boldness of our will: 'Tupi* or not Tupi, that's the question.' This is how the well-known anthropophagic formula proposes it.** 'Tupi and not Tupi'—this is the possible answer that emerges from the depths of the thick night as morning breaks.* Giannetti (2024) [own translation]

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