This paper offers a comprehensive, epistemological reading of the ways of knowing regarding mental disorders that are characteristic of the traditional healers (curanderas and curanderos) of an indigenous group in Mexico – together with some consideration of similarities and differences when compared with contemporary Western psychology and psychiatry. The study is based on numerous ethnographic interviews with traditional P’urepecha healers in rural Michoacán, interviews focused on local conceptions of emotional and mental disorder, especially nervios, susto, and locura (nerves, fright, and madness). The highly metaphorical, often magical modes of understanding characteristic of these healers have affinities with the Renaissance episteme described in Michel Foucault’s classic study of modes of knowing in Western thought, The Order of Things. Also discussed is what cultural and psychological anthropologists term the “rationality debate”: the precise nature of native peoples’ belief in supernatural phenomena, and the role of epistemological skepticism in their accounts. The paper raises several classic issues in cultural anthropology, issues also central to the current “ontological turn” in the field.