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Immanence and fear
Stranger-events and subjects in Amazonia

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This article proposes to explore the political correlates of Amazonian perspectival ontologies. From a Taulipang mythical narrative about the origin of the anus (as transcribed by Koch-Grünberg) to a Nambikwara explanation of Brazilian I.D. cards (as reported by Joana Miller), Amazonian ethnography allows us to perceive how "bodily" affects and "spiritual" encounters conspire to project a particular conception of power, sociality and truth.

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Things being thus arranged,
as for those who rise, in their totality,
it is to their future nourishment they turn the attention
of their gaze, all of them;
and as the attention of their gaze is turned to their future
nourishment,
so they are those who exist, all of them.

Mbyá prayer, *in* Pierre Clastres,
Society against the state, 1989

"Imagine you are standing at the podium about to deliver a public lecture. Your voice cuts into the silence and you begin. No moment is so sheer, so existentially chilling." Our colleague Michael Lambek opened an inaugural lecture at the LSE with these words a short time ago (Lambek 2007: 19). This situation, and the fear that consumes us as we face the problem of a beginning, is overwhelmingly familiar to any academic, however seasoned and however sure he or she may be of the quality of the lecture about to be delivered. If the speaker is an anthropologist, perhaps at this moment another fear at (or of) beginning will come to mind, one

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situated at the outset of the sequence of circumstances that led to him or her standing at the podium "now":

> Imagine yourself suddenly set down surrounded by all your gear, alone on a tropical beach close to a native village, while the launch or dinghy which has brought you sails away out of sight. (Malinowski 1922: 4)

The sequence of circumstances is self-similar—ontogenesis repeats phylogenesis—in the same way that this famous "imagine" of Malinowski takes all of us back to the anxiety-ridden initial moments of our own field research, marking the historical instauration of the very idea of fieldwork, its originary, and hence radically imaginary, narrative moment.

I highlight the "imagine" in the two quotations above because both convey the intrinsic connection between fear, origin and imagination. As we know, a minimal amount of imagination is needed to be afraid. Even the so-called instinctive fears, the "animal fears," are but acts of imagination embedded in the ethogram of our species through a painful originary and immemorial learning, as we have learned from Friedrich Nietzsche and Samuel Butler. Since we need to learn, to have learned, to be afraid. For example, I have recently learned to be afraid of the fear that others have of me when I manifest my intention to cross some of the multiple fractal borders constituting the geopolitical ecology of the present. (I am no longer afraid of planes; I am now afraid of airports.) If the border is, in diverse ways, the place of danger and fear *par excellence*, it is equally clear today that the contemporary world is anything but a world without borders—the famous "final frontier" of *Star Trek* is the universal molecularization of the frontier. Crapanzano (2003: 14) suggests that today everywhere is a frontier, that is, a border or limit that cannot be crossed. Imagine the fear that constitutes living today in the "centre" of a world that is nothing but frontiers and terms, horizons and closure. The end of the world is now everywhere, while its true centre is nowhere, which happens to be the inverse of the classical definition of the infinite. It is thus to be concluded that we are approaching the anthropological zero—as a limit.

But it is possible to laugh about some fears and, even more so, about some imaginations. In fact, if there is an idea that can be thought of as truly comical today with its mixture of naiveté and presumption it is the belief of our immediate ancestors, the "moderns," that Progress—the advancement of technology and science, the revelation of the mysteries of the cosmos and the organism, the expansion in the free circulation of things, people and ideas, the spread of literacy and the state of law—would dissipate the pervasive state of fear in which our more distant ancestors (or our contemporary "pre-moderns") lived. As is well-known, they lived in fear: fear of other humans, fear of nature, fear of death, fear of the dead, fear of whatever is new, fear of everything. The light of reason, arriving to dispel the darkness of superstition and its imaginary terrors, and science, arriving to lessen the impotence of humans in the face of the real dangers of the world, would finally allow us to attain a state of safety and knowledge, a calm state of non-fear. We would fear nothing because we understood everything; and what could be improved, would be. It is unnecessary to dwell on the point that this prophecy has proven to be relentlessly and tragicomically wrong.

Other people's real fears of imaginary monsters have given way to a frightening proliferation of imaginary fears of real monsters among us. These fears are "imaginary" insofar as they are generated and managed by a gigantic political

economy of the image, the "cinematic mode of production" that defines late capitalism (Beller 2006)—the monsters and dangers among us being "real" insofar as they are capable of constantly escaping images. We have even started to define our civilization as a true Fear System. Take, for example, Ulrich Beck's "risk society" (1992). This is a society organized around risks created by itself, frightened of its capacity to annihilate its own conditions of existence—a society, that is, which is afraid of itself (this, I believe, is what is dubbed reflexive modernization). It seems that the spread of "Reason" has ruthlessly increased our reasons for being afraid. That is, if reason has not itself become the very thing to be feared. And it was we who enjoyed the pleasure of complacently ironizing the fears of the "poor primitives": they were afraid of other men, afraid of the natural forces. Precisely we, who are in perpetual—if justified—panic of the fierce fourth-world immigrants as well as of the inexorable global warming. An unexpected proof of Latour's thesis: we have really never been modern.

I have no intention of using my remaining pages to entertain you with images of all too familiar fears. Instead, I wish to talk about a "risk society" of an entirely different kind, a risk society in which risk is experienced not as a threat to the conditions of existence of a social form but as an existential condition of the social form itself—an existential condition of possibility: its reason for being, its mode of becoming. In short, I wish to talk about the forms of fear in the native societies of Amazonia, or more precisely, about another way of relating to fear exemplified by these societies.

In a marvellous article published in *Society against the State*, Pierre Clastres (1989: 129–50) asked: what do Indians laugh about? By analogy, I wish to ask: what are Indians afraid of? The response is, in principle (and only ever in principle...), simple: they laugh at and fear the same things, the same ones indicated by Clastres: things such as jaguars, shamans, whites and spirits—that is, beings defined by their radical alterity. And they are afraid because alterity is the object of an equally radical desire on the part of the Self. This is a form of fear that, far from demanding the exclusion or disappearance of the other in order for the peace of self-identity to be recuperated, necessarily implies the inclusion or incorporation *of* the other or *by* the other (*by* also in the sense of "through"), as a form of perpetuation of the becoming-other that is the process of desire in Amazonian socialities. Without the dangerous influx of forces and forms that people the exterior of the *socius*, the latter would inevitably perish from a lack of difference. In order to live according to desire—to "lead a good life"(vivir bien) as it is said that Indians like to say—it is first necessary to enjoy living on the edge.

Pudenda origo

Let us begin again. If, as Nietzsche claimed, all historical beginnings are lowly or despicable, then it makes sense to begin down below—precisely with the "bodily lower stratum," in the Bakhtinian sense. I recommence then with a venerable Brazilian proverb (Iberian, I believe) which tells us, *mirabile dictu*, that: "*Quem tem cu tem medo*," "Anyone with an asshole feels fear." What this saying means is not completely agreed upon. I have already found various extravagant hypotheses (on the internet, where else?) concerning, for example, the need to be continually on the lookout for the risk of being raped and sodomized. Personally, I have never heard it used in a sexually paranoid sense. What the proverb underlines is actually

the common human predicament defined by the sufficient relation between being anatomically equipped with an anus and being subject to the emotion of fear. Presumably, this is a way of saying that fear (like the anus) is not something we are likely to be proud of or parade, yet it remains undeniably part of us and fulfils the humble but indispensable function of helping in the afflictions of life. This profound definition of fear through its juxtaposed correlation with a literally fundamental anatomical condition is, we should note, unmarked from the viewpoint of gender. The anus is that "private part" equally shared by males and females; having balls makes no difference when one is afraid... It is also unmarked from the viewpoint of species, given that the anus (or its equivalent) is part of the body plan of many animal orders. This suggests an image of fear as an essentially democratic emotion: organic, corporeal, animal, universal. Everyone is afraid of something—the mouth of the enemy, for example, and perhaps above all else the mouths of animals that prey on our own species:

> The Arawaks [of the Guiana region] have a saying, *hamáro kamungka turuwati* (lit. 'everything has [its own] tiger [jaguar]'), as a reminder of the fact that we should be circumspect, and on our guard, there always being some enemy about. (Roth 1915: 367)

But while anyone with an asshole feels fear, we have not all always possessed this remarkably convenient organ. There is an anus origin myth, told by the Taulipang Indians of Guiana and recorded in 1905 by Koch-Grünberg (in Medeiros 2002: 57), which is well worth retelling here. It will lead us back to fear along some unexpected paths.

Pu'iito, how people and animals received their anus

> In the deep past, animals and people lacked an anus with which to defecate. I think they defecated through their mouths. Pu'iito, the anus, wandered around, slowly and cautiously, farting in the faces of animals and people, and then running away. So the animals said: "Let's grab Pu'iito, so we can divide him up between us!" Many gathered and said: "We'll pretend that we're asleep! When he arrives, we'll catch him!" So that's what they did. Pu'iito arrived and farted in the face of one of them. They ran after Pu'iito, but couldn't catch him and were left trailing behind.
>
> The parrots Kuliwaí and Kaliká got close to Pu'iito. They ran and ran. Finally they caught him and tied him up. Then the others who had been left behind arrived: tapir, deer, curassow, Spix's guan, piping guan, dove. . . . They began to share him out. Tapir eagerly asked for a piece. The parrots cut a large piece and threw it to the other animals. Tapir immediately grabbed it. That's why his anus is so huge.
>
> The parrot cut a small, appropriately-sized piece for himself. The deer received a smaller piece than tapir's. The doves took a little piece. Toad arrived and asked them to give him a piece too. The parrots threw a piece in his direction, which stuck on his back: that's why even today the toad's anus is on his back.
>
> That was how we acquired our anuses. Were we without them today, we'd have to defecate through our mouths, or explode.

Koch-Grünberg makes the following comment about this story: "Pu'iito is undoubtedly the weirdest personification of which we have record," an observation likely to receive the hearty endorsement of any reader.

The myth of Pu'iito immediately brings to mind a passage from *Anti-Oedipus* on the collective investment of the organs in the primitive territorial machine:

> The mythologies sing of organs-partial objects and their relations with a full body that repels or attracts them: vaginas riveted on the woman's body, an immense penis shared by the men, an independent anus that assigns itself a body without anus. . . . (Deleuze & Guattari 1972: 142–3)

Deleuze and Guattari add that "it is the collective investment of the organs that plug desire into the socius," and that:

> [o]ur modern societies have instead undertaken a vast privatization of the organs. . . . The first organ to suffer privatization, removal from the social field, was the anus. It was the anus that offered itself as a model for privatization. (Ibid.)

Pu'iito is one of the many Amerindian myths relating to speciation, that is, the process through which a virtual proto-humanity separates out into the different corporalities of the contemporary world. The history of Pu'iito describes the original, common condition of mythic beings in their pre-corporal, or rather, pre-organic—and yet an anthropo-morphic and anthropo-logical state—a state in which the anus was a person (a spiritual angelic anus, so to speak). It narrates the moment when the organ in question leaves its "intensive" existence, as a part identical to its own (w)hole, and is "extensified," collectively invested and distributed (shared) among the animal species. (In this sense, the Brazilian proverb with which I began refers to the socialized, intermediary phase of the anus, its post-actualized yet pre-privatized moment.) We should note that the myth does not involve giving each individual an identical anus that is his/her *own* in the sense of his/her private property; instead it involves giving the representatives of each future species an organ that is *specific* to it—in other words, one that characterizes each species as a distinct multiplicity. We are not yet within the regime of general equivalence. Still, every species shall have an anus because, as the myth endeavours to explain *in fine*, every species has a mouth. And it is through the mouth that the most decisive relations between the species in the post-mythic world take place—through inter-corporal predation.

An eye for a tooth, a tooth for an eye

The pre-cosmological world described by Amerindian myths is a world completely saturated with personhood. A Yawanawa (Panoan of Western Amazonia) story begins: "in that time there was nothing, but people already existed" (Carid Naveira 1999). The emergence of the species and the stabilization of the food chain (processes described in the myths), have not extinguished this originary universal personhood; they have merely put it into a state of dangerous non-appearance, that is, a state of latency or potentiality. Every being encountered by a human over the course of producing his or her own life may suddenly allow its "other side" (a common idiom in indigenous cosmologies) to eclipse its usual non-human appearance, actualizing its latent humanoid condition and automatically placing at risk the life of the human interlocutor. The problem is particularly acute because it

passes through the mouth: "A shaman in Iglulik once told Birket-Smith: '*Life's greatest danger lies in the fact that man's food consists entirely of souls*'" (Bodenhorn 1988: 1; my emphasis).

This is not, then, equivalent to the contemporary fear that our food is composed of "transgenic organisms," but a fear of the latency—of quite other hybrids, transontological intentionalities, non-organic lives—that are just as dangerous as our modern poisons (or even more) as inducers of corporal metamorphoses, as abductors of souls. The theme is fairly well known. Cannibalism is, for the native peoples of America, an inevitable component of every act of manducation because everything is human, in the sense of *capable of being* human: background humanity is less a predicate of all beings than a constitutive uncertainty concerning the predicates of any being. This uncertainty does not implicate merely the "objects" of perception, and it is not a problem of attributive judgment; still less is it a problem of "classification." The uncertainty includes the subject, in other words, it includes the subject condition of the human actant who is exposed to contact with the radical alterity of these other people, people who, like any other people, claim for themselves a sovereign point of view. Here we approach one of the origins of Amerindian metaphysical fear. It is impossible not to be a cannibal; but it is equally impossible to establish a consistently one-way active cannibal relation with any other species—they are bound to strike back. Everything one eats is "soul-food" in the Amerindian world, and therefore threatens life: those who eat souls shall be eaten by souls.

In sum, these are worlds where humanity is immanent, as R. Wagner puts it; that is, worlds where the primordial takes human form; which does not make it in any sense comforting, much the opposite: there where all things are human, the human is something else entirely. And there where all things are human, nobody can be certain of being unconditionally human, because nobody is—including ourselves. In fact, humans have to be capable of "deconditioning" their humanity in certain conditions, since the influx of the non-human and becoming-other-than-human are obligatory moments of a fully human condition. The world of immanent humanity is also (and for the same reasons) a world of the immanence of the enemy.

Irving Hallowell (1960: 69–70) makes an observation that recurs in many Amerindian ethnographies:

> My Ojibwa friends often cautioned me against judging by appearances. . . I have since concluded that the advice given me in a common sense fashion provides one of the major clues to a generalized attitude towards the objects of their behavioural environment—particularly people. It makes them cautious and suspicious in interpersonal relations of all kinds. The possibility of metamorphosis must be one of the determining factors in this attitude; it is a concrete manifestation of the deceptiveness of appearances.

Do not judge by appearances. . . I presume this warning is issued in virtually all cultural traditions since it belongs to that universal fund of popular wisdom that includes many similar maxims. This wisdom is well grounded in a sense, or rather, in many different culturally specific senses. But Hallowell is saying a bit more than "appearances deceive" in the abstract: he says that the caution about the deceptiveness of appearances applies especially to dealings with persons, and

further, that the notion of metamorphosis is a crucial factor. Indeed, if persons are the epitome of what should not be judged by appearances, and if all (or almost all) types of beings are people, we can never take appearances at face value. What appears to be a human may be an animal or a spirit; what appears to be an animal or human may be a spirit, and so on. Things change—especially when they are persons. This has very little to do with our own familiar epistemological warning, "not to trust our senses." What cannot be "trusted" is people, not our senses. Appearances deceive not because they differ from the essences presumed (by us) to be concealed behind them, but because they are, precisely, appearances, i.e. apparitions. Every apparition demands a recipient, a subject to whom it appears. And where there is a subject, there is a point of view. Appearances deceive because they carry embedded within themselves a particular point of view. Every appearance is a perspective, and every perspective "deceives."

The question of distrusting appearances introduces to us the third organ relevant to determining what we could call the "transcendental conditions" of fear in Amerindian socialities: the eye. Here I need to return to a typical motif of indigenous cosmopraxis, one about which I have already written so exhaustively that the reader might be already familiar with it. I refer to Amerindian "cosmological perspectivism," the idea according to which each species or type of being is endowed with a prosopomorphic or anthropomorphic apperception, seeing itself as a "person," while it sees the other components of its own eco-system as non-persons or non-humans. Some are seen as prey animals or predatory animals (everything has its own jaguar), or as spirits (invariably cannibal, or sexually voracious). Other components of the eco-system are seen as artefacts of one's self-own culture: jaguars see humans as peccaries, and see the blood of the prey that they kill as maize beer; the dead see the crickets as fish, the tapirs see the salt licks where they gather as large ceremonial houses, etc. (Much of what I say here about animals can also be said about the dead since, in various aspects, animals are like the dead and the dead are like animals. That is, the dead are not human.) Thus, each species occupies "in" culture the position that humans (that is, the humans' humans) see themselves as occupying in relation to the rest of the cosmos. Hence, it is not just a question of each species identifying itself as a culturally defined humanity: perspectivism also means that each species possesses a particular way of perceiving alterity, a "consensual hallucination" device which makes it see the world in a characteristic way.

This perspectival divergence of the species is frequently attributed to the quality of eyes possessed by each species. The Ye'kuana of Venezuela say: "Each people have their own eyes. . . . The people [humans] can't understand the anacondas because they have different eyes . . ." (Civrieux 1985: 65–66). The theme is omnipresent in mythology, where magical eyewashes, the swapping of eyeballs and other ophthalmological tricks produce effects out of radical transformations of the perceived world—a sure sign that the protagonists have crossed some kind of ontological barrier (from species to species, living to dead, etc.).

Having different eyes, however, does not mean seeing "the same things" in a different "way"; it means that you don't know what the other is seeing when he "says" that he is seeing the same thing as you: we do not understand anacondas. The problem is one of perceptive "homonymy," not "synonymy." Perspectivism is not a trans-specific multiculturalism stating that each species possesses a particular subjective "point of view" of a real objective, unique and self-subsistent world. It is

not Anthropology 101—"various cultures and one nature." Perspectivism does not state the existence of a multiplicity of points of view, but the existence of the point of view as a multiplicity. There is just "one" point of view, the one which humans share—like the anus—with every other species of being: the point of view of culture. What varies is the objective correlative of the point of view: what passes through the optic nerve (or digestive tube) of each species, so to speak. In other words, perspectivism does not presume a Thing-in-Itself partially apprehended by the categories of understanding proper to each species. I do not believe that the Indians imagine that there is a thing-in-itself which humans see as blood and jaguars see as beer. There are not differently categorized self-identical substances, but immediately relational multiplicities of the blood-beer, salt lick-ceremonial-house, cricket-fish type. There is no *x* which is blood for one species and beer for the other: there exists a blood-beer which is one of the singularities characteristic of the human-jaguar multiplicity.

What *defines* these perspectival multiplicities is their incompatibility. A human and a jaguar cannot be people at the same time; it is impossible to experience blood as beer without having-already-become a jaguar. Perspectivism states that each species sees itself as people. However, it also states that two species cannot see each other simultaneously as people. Each species has to be capable of not losing sight, so to speak, of the fact that the others see themselves as people and, simultaneously, capable of forgetting this fact—that is, of "no longer seeing it." This is a particularly important point for humans when they kill to eat. But although we need to be able "not to see" the animals that we eat as they see themselves, sometimes it might be interesting, useful, and even necessary to see how certain animals see and to see them as they are seen by other animals: to cure humans made sick by the spirit of a certain animal species (when the shaman must negotiate with the members of the aggressor species); to invest oneself with the predatory capacities of the jaguar or anaconda in order to attack enemies; to know how our world appears when seen from above (the sky) or below (the depths of the river), and so on.

George Mentore (1993: 29) provides a concise formula for the cosmopraxis of the Waiwai of the Guianas: "the primary dialectic is one between seeing and eating." This observation reminds us of that perspectival multiplicity is the correlate of the generalized cannibalism that defines the indigenous cosmopolitical economy. This complex combination between seeing and being seen, eating and being eaten, commensality and inter-perceptuality is abundantly illustrated in the ethnographic record. Consider, for example, the following:

> According to the informant, a jaguar of any species that devours a human being, firstly eats the eyes of its victim, and very often is content with this. In actuality, the eye here does not represent the organ of vision, but a seminal principle which the jaguar thereby incorporates into itself. (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1973: 245)

That this really involves eating the "seminal principle" is not something I would unhesitatingly swear by. However it is quite a good example of the "primary dialectic between seeing and eating." Consider also, from Eduardo Kohn's thesis on the Ávila Runa of Peru:

> Several myth images explore how perspectivism can reveal moments of alienation and the break down of self-knowledge. This is evident in the

> myth regarding juri juri demons [*Aotus* sp., nocturnal primates with enormous bulging eyes]... This myth begins with an episode in which ten hunters make fun of the monkeys they have hunted and are punished for this by the juri juri demon. This demon eats their eyes out while they are sleeping. (Kohn 2002: 133)

The author also records:

> When [jaguars] encounter people in the forest they are always said to make eye contact... I should also note that one of the ways in which people acquire jaguar souls is through an application of a jaguar canine or incisor tooth dipped in hot peppers to the tear duct. Jaguar teeth that are intact and have not yet developed hairline fractures contain the souls of jaguars. People can absorb this—with the aid of hot peppers—through the conduit of the eyes. (Ibid.: 203)

In other words: an eye for a tooth, a tooth for an eye. Miguel Alexiades (1999: 194), discussing the *edosikiana*, spirits encountered by the Ese Eja of Bolivia, writes: "the *edosikiana* are invisible to everyone except the shaman: anyone who sees an *edosikiana* is devoured by it." Interestingly, "seeing" here is "being seen" and, consequently, being devoured. In other cases, it is necessary to see so as not to be seen. This theme is frequent in the Amazonian hunting folklore, indeed, it is a Pan-Amerindian theme, which is also found in the popular tradition of many other peoples. In circumpolar cultures it is, as we know, fundamental. It also appears in Medieval Europe:

> [A] man who encounters a wolf has one chance in two of escaping: he needs to see the wolf first. The latter then loses its aggressiveness and flees. If the wolf perceives the presence of the man first, though, the latter will become paralyzed and will end up being devoured; even if, with a stroke of luck, he manages to escape, he will remain dumb for the rest of his days. (Pastoureau 1989: 167)

An interesting permutation of the senses: if you are seen first instead of seeing, you will become mute. . . . What needs to be remembered is that there is more in perspectivism than meets the eye; there is an entire theory of the sign and communication.

The heart of the lonely hunter

Joana Miller, in her recent dissertation defended at the Museu Nacional in which she analyzes the importance of body decorations in the constitution of human personhood among the Nambikwara of Central Brazil, cites an indigenous explanation for the danger of a person losing his or her body ornaments. Asked for the reason behind this fear, a young man with some experience of city life replied that his ornaments,

> were like white people's ID cards. When white people lose their ID, the police arrest them, arguing that without their identity card, they are nobody. The same happens when the spirits of the forest steal the ornaments of the Nambiquara. They hide them in holes in the forest and the soul (*yauptidu*) of the person becomes stuck in the hole as a result. The person becomes sick and no longer recognizes his or her kin. Without their ornaments, they are nobody. (Miller 2007: 171)

"No longer recognizing kin" means no longer occupying the human perspective; one of the most important signs of metamorphosis (and every illness is a metamorphosis, especially when caused by soul abduction) is not so much the change in appearance of the self in the eyes of others, but the change in the perception by the self of the appearance of others, detectable by these others by a change in the behaviour of the subject in question: the sick person loses the capacity to see others as conspecifics, that is, kin, and begins to see them as the animal/spirit who captured his or her soul sees them—typically, as prey. This is one of the reasons why a sick person is dangerous.

But the point of more interest to me in this explanation is the relation between indigenous ornaments and the ID card, a fundamental object in the Brazilian state's system for controlling the population. The Nambikwara necklaces and bracelets are "like" the ID cards of white people because this document, as the Indians perspicaciously perceived, is "like" an ornament—it is a humanization device. While the person who "lost" her ornaments, that is, had them stolen by the spirits, no longer recognizes her kin, the person who lost her ID card is no longer recognized by the state, and can thus be "stolen"—arrested—by the police and separated from her kin.

The crucial comparison made by the young Nambikwara man, I suggest, is that between the police and the spirits. The police, like the spirits, are always on the lookout for the chance to transform *somebody* into a *nobody* and then make them disappear. Here we are approaching what seems to me to be the context *par excellence* for experiencing fear in indigenous Amazonia: entry into a "supernatural" regime. I use this term to designate a situation in which the subject of a perspective, or "self," is suddenly transformed into an object in the perspective of another being. Irrespective of its apparent species-specific identity this other being is revealed to be a spirit by the act of assuming the master position of the dominant perspective, thus submitting the human to its definition of reality. This definition of reality is one in which the human, by definition, is not human—it is a prey animal of the spirit, which devours the ex-subject in order to redefine the latter as its conspecific (a sexual partner, or an adopted child).

This is the "war of the worlds" that forms the backdrop to Amerindian cosmo-praxis. The typical confrontation takes place in the encounter outside the village between a person who is alone (a hunter, a woman collecting firewood, etc.) and a being that at first sight looks like an animal or person—sometimes a relative (living or dead) of the subject. The entity then interpellates the human: the animal, for example, speaks to the hunter, protesting against his treatment of itself as prey; or it looks "strangely" at him, while the hunter's arrows fail to injure it; the pseudo-relative invites the subject to follow it, or to eat something it is carrying. The reaction to the entity's initiative is decisive. If the human accepts the dialogue or the invitation, if he or she responds to the interpellation, the person is lost: he/she will be inevitably overpowered by the non-human subjectivity, passing over to its side, transforming him/herself into a being of the same species as the speaker. Anyone responding to a "you" spoken by a non-human accepts the condition of being its "second person" and when assuming, in turn, the position of "I" does so already as a non-human. The canonical form of these encounters, then, consists in suddenly finding out that the other is "human," or rather, that *it is the other that is human*, which automatically dehumanizes and alienates the interlocutor. As a context in which a human subject is captured by another cosmologically dominant

point of view, where he/she becomes the "you" of a non-human perspective, Supernature is the form of the Other as Subject, implying an objectification of the human "I" as a "you" for this Other.

This, in sum, would be the true meaning of the Amerindian disquiet over what is hidden behind appearances. Appearances deceive because one can never be sure whose or which is the dominant point of view. One can never be sure, that is, which world is in force when one interacts with the Other.

I spoke of the lethal "interpellation" of the subject by a spirit. The Althusserian allusion is deliberate. I see these supernatural encounters in the forest, where the self is captured by an other, and defined by it as its "second person," as a kind of indigenous proto-experience of the State. That is, a premonition of the fateful experience of finding out that you are a "citizen" of a State (death and taxes. . .). In an earlier work, I argued that the constitutive problem of Western modernity, namely, solipsism—the supposition that the other is merely a body, that it does not harbour a soul like that of the self: the absence of communication as an anxiety-ridden horizon of the self—had as its Amazonian equivalent the (positive or negative) obsession with cannibalism and the affirmation of the latent transformability of bodies. In a cosmos totally impregnated with subjecthood, the dominant supposition-fear is that what we eat are always, in the final analysis, souls: an excess of communication, the dangerous transparency of the world.

Here I wish to suggest that the true equivalent of the "indigenous category of the supernatural" are not "our" extraordinary or paranormal experiences (alien abductions, ESP, mediumship, premonition), but the quotidian experience, perfectly terrifying in its very normality, of existing under a State. The famous poster of Uncle Sam with his finger pointing in your face, looking directly at anyone who allowed their gaze to be captured by him, is for me the perfect icon of the State: "I want you." An Amazonian Indian would immediately know what this evil spirit is talking about, and, pretending not to hear, would look elsewhere.

I do not know what the presuppositional experience of citizenship is like in Canada or Japan, but in today's Brazil, I can assure you, everyone (still!) feel a tingle of fear on being stopped by the police—a highway patrol, for example—and asked to hand over his/her "documents" for inspection. Maybe "authorities" and the really rich do not experience such a fear; but these are not people: they are functions and officials of the State and/or Capital. This is quite different for a common mortal (and the more common one is, the more mortal one gets). Even if his/her documents are perfectly in order, even if you are a completely innocent person (and who is completely innocent?), it is impossible not to feel a cold shiver down your spine (i.e., right down to another part of the body mentioned earlier) upon being confronted by the Forces of Order. This is not simply derived from the fact that the police in Brazil are often corrupt and brutal, and that the citizen's innocence and a clean record do not guarantee very much there. Since we feel the same fear (once more, I can only speak of my own experience and of the environment familiar to me) on having our passport examined by Immigration in a foreign country, on crossing the metal detectors found in public buildings across the planet, on disembarking in an absolute non-place such as an international airport, on seeing the banknote we used to make a purchase checked for its authenticity by the shop assistant, on seeing yourself caught by a CCTV camera, and so on. Clearly, all of us almost always escape. Almost always nothing happens: or more exactly, *something always almost-happens*. This is precisely how the

subjectivities that wander the forest are typically experienced by the Indians—they are usually only almost-seen, communication is almost-established, and the result is always an almost-death. The almost-event is the Supernatural's default mode of existence. We need to have almost-died to be able to tell.

But what is this experience of uncertainty and helplessness that we feel when faced by the incarnations of the State or, in the case of the Indians, the incarnations of spirits? We could begin by establishing that the modern State is the absence of kinship; this is effectively its principle. Peter Gow observed that the jaguar, the typical antagonist of the natives of Amazonia in these (almost-) lethal supernatural encounters is, for the Piro, "the very antithesis of kinship" (2001: 106). Old people tell Piro children:

> You should never joke about the jaguar. That one is not like our mothers and fathers, who are always saying, 'Watch out, I'm going to hit you, I'll hit you,' but never do. No, the jaguar is not like that. That one just kills you! (Ibid.: 110)

And here we are. It is no mere coincidence that the large felines are found as imperial symbols just about everywhere, including in indigenous America. And, if the Jaguar-State is the antithesis of kinship it is because kinship is, somehow, the antithesis of the State. Even where kinship groups and networks are firmly ensconced in the State it is through these very networks that powerful lines of flight enable an escape from the state apparatus. In regions where, on the contrary, kinship is assembled into a machine capable of blocking the coagulation of a separate power, as in the Clastrean societies of Amazonia, it (kinship) is less the expression of an "egalitarian" molar philosophy than a perspectivist cosmology where the humanity of the subject is always molecularly at risk, and where the ever-present challenge is to capture inhuman potencies without allowing oneself to be totally dehumanized by them. The problem is "how to make kin out of others" (as Vilaça 2002 put it)—because kin can only be made out of others; conversely, one must become-other to make kin. While the Piro say that you should never joke about the jaguar, we have mentioned Clastres's observation that the myths that make the Indians laugh the most tend to put the jaguars in particularly grotesque situations. The jaguar is the antithesis of kinship and yet, at the same time, the epitome of beauty for the Piro—the beauty of alterity and the alterity of beauty. To avoid being devoured by the jaguar, one need know how to assume its point of view as the point of view of the Self. And here is the crux of the problem: how to let yourself be invested with alterity without this becoming a seed of transcendence, a basis of power, a symbol of the State, a symbol, that is, of a symbol.

The enemy as immanence

If we accept my recontextualization of the concept of Supernature, much of what traditionally falls under this rubric must be left out. "Spirits" or "souls," for instance, do not belong to this category, as such; everything that performs the role of antagonist in the perspectival war of the worlds "becomes" a spirit or soul. From this perspective, much of what would not normally be classed as supernatural (for us), must be thus so redefined.

We can take our earlier example of hunting. Hunting is, in a sense, the supreme supernatural context—from the perspective of both animals (when the hunter succeeds) and humans (when things go wrong and the hunter becomes

prey). Warfare and cannibalism are other obvious contexts that can be construed as "supernatural." The analogy between shamans and warriors has often been highlighted in Amerindian ethnographies. Warriors are to the human world what shamans are to the wider universe: commutators or conductors of perspectives. Shamanism is indeed warfare writ large: this has nothing to do with killing as such (though shamans often act as spiritual warriors in a very literal sense), but rather with the commuting of ontological perspectives; another kind of violence, a "self-positivized violence," in the words of D. Rodgers (2004).

Indigenous warfare belongs to the same cosmological complex as shamanism insofar as it involves the embodiment, by the self, of the enemy's point of view. Likewise, the intention behind Amazonian ritual exo-cannibalism is to incorporate the subject-aspect of the enemy who, rather than being shamanistically de-subjectified as in the case of game animals, is hyper-subjectified. Sahlins (1983: 88) writes that "cannibalism is always 'symbolic', even when it is 'real'." With his leave I rewrite the formula thus—all cannibalism is "spiritual", especially when it is "corporeal."

The subjectification of human enemies is a complex ritual process. Suffice to say here that it supposes the complete identification of the killer with the victim, precisely in the same way as shamans become the animals whose bodies they procure for the rest of the group. Killers obtain crucial aspects of their social and metaphysical identities from the person of the victim—names, surplus souls, songs, trophies, ritual prerogatives—but in order to do this, they must first become the enemy. A telling example of this enemy-becoming can be found in Araweté war songs, in which a killer repeats words taught to him by the spirit of the victim during the ritual seclusion that follows the killing: the killer speaks from the enemy's point of view, saying "I" to refer to the self of the enemy and "him" to refer to himself. In order to become a full subject (for the killing of an enemy is a precondition to adult male status in many an Amerindian society), the killer must apprehend the enemy "from the inside," that is, as a subject. The analogy with the perspectival theory, according to which non-human subjectivities see humans as non-humans and vice-versa, is obvious. The killer must be able to see himself as the enemy sees him—as, precisely, an enemy in order to become "himself," or rather, a "myself."

The prototypical manifestation of the Other in Western philosophical tradition is the Friend. The Friend is an other but an other as a "moment" of the self. If the self finds its essential political determination in the condition of friendship this is only because the friend, in the well-known Aristotelian definition, is an other self. The self is there from the start, at the origin, and as origin. The friend is the condition of alterity back-projected, as it were, under the conditioned form of the subject. As Francis Wolff (2000: 169) remarks, "the Aristotelian definition supposes a theory according to which every relation with an Other, and hence every mode of friendship, finds its grounding in the relationship of man to himself." The social nexus presupposes self-relation as its origin and model. The connection with modern ideas of property is obvious. To quote Marilyn Strathern quoting someone else quoting yet another source:

> Davis and Naffine (2001: 9) quote the observation, for instance, that western property is based on self possession as a primordial property right which grounds all others. This axiom holds whether or not the

> self-owning individual is given in the world (being ultimately owned by God, Locke) or has to fashion that condition out of it (through its owns struggling, Hegel). (Strathern 2006: 23n57)

The Friend, however, does not ground an "anthropology" only. Given the historical conditions of constitution of Greek philosophy, the Friend emerges as intrinsically implied in a certain relationship to truth. The Friend is a condition of possibility for thought in general, an "intrinsic presence, a live category, a transcendental lived condition" (Deleuze and Guattari 1991: 9). Philosophy requires the Friend, *philia* is the constitutive relation of knowledge.

Very well. The problem, from the standpoint of Amerindian thought—or rather, from the standpoint of our understanding of this thought, is the following: what does a world where it is the foe, not the friend, that functions as a transcendental lived condition look like? That was, after all, the real question behind the theme of perspectivism: if the concept of "perspectivism" is nothing but the idea of the Other as such, what is it like to live in a world constituted by the enemy's point of view? A world where enmity is not a mere privative complement of "amity", a simple negative facticity, but a *de jure* structure of thought, a positivity in its own right? And then—what regime of truth can thrive in this world where distance connects and difference relates?

The Other has another important incarnation in our intellectual tradition besides that of the Friend. It is consubstantial to a very special, actually, a very singular personage: God. God is the proper name of the Other in our tradition (interestingly, "the Other"—"the enemy"—is one of the euphemisms for the devil; this goes a long way to explaining how otherness is conceived by us). God is the Great Other, being at the same time the one who guarantees the absolute reality of reality (the Given) against the solipsism of consciousness; and the Great Self, the one who warrants the relative intelligibility of what is perceived (the Constructed) by the subject. God's major role, as far as the destiny of Western thought is concerned, was that of establishing the fundamental divide between the Given and the Constructed, since, as Creator, he is the origin point of this divide, that is, its point of indifferentiation. It is here, I believe, that the true Fear of God originates—philosophically speaking of course.

It is true that God no longer enjoys the limelight of history (rumour has it he is preparing a triumphal return). But before he died, he took two providential measures: he migrated to the inner sanctum of every individual as the intensive, intelligible form of the Subject (Kant's Moral Law), and he exteriorized himself as Object, that is, as the infinite extensive field of Nature (Kant's starry heaven). Culture and Nature, in short, the two worlds in which Supernature as originary otherness divided itself.

Well then, to conclude. What is the truth regime proper to a radically non-monotheistic world such as the Amerindian worlds? What is the form of the Great Other in a world which is foreign to any theology of creation? I am not referring to a world created by the retreat of the Creator, such as our modern world, but a radically uncreated world, a world without a transcendent divinity. My answer to these difficult questions, given the space I have to develop it, will be mercifully short, and will simply repeat the gist of everything I said so far: the world of immanent humanity is also a world of immanent divinity, a world where divinity is distributed under the form of a potential infinity of non-human subjects. This is a

world where hosts of minuscule gods wander the earth; a "myriatheism," to use a word coined by the French micro-sociologist Gabriel Tarde, Durkheim's fiercest—precisely—enemy. This is the world that has been called animist, that is, now to use the terms of our inanimist tradition, a world where the object is a particular case of the subject, where every object is a subject *in potentia*. Instead of the solipsistic formula "I think, therefore I am" the indigenous cogito must be articulated in animistc terms, as in, "It exists, therefore it thinks." But there, where on top of this the Self is a particular case of the Other, such "animism" must necessarily take the form of—if you excuse the pun—an "enemism": an animism altered by alterity, an alterity that gets animated insofar as it is thought of as an enemy interiority: a Self that is radically Other. Hence the danger, and the brilliance, of such worlds.

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Immanence et peur. Événements-étrangers et sujets en Amazonie

Résumé : Cet article se propose d'explorer les corrélats politiques des ontologies perspectivistes amazoniennes. À partir d'un récit mythique Taulipang portant sur l'origine de l'anus (tel que transcrit par Koch-Grünberg), puis d'une explication Nambikware des cartes d'identité brésiliennes (tel que rapportée par Joanna Miller), l'ethnographie amazonienne nous permet de percevoir comment les affections « corporelles » et les rencontres « spirituelles » projètent une conception particulière du pouvoir, de la socialité et de la vérité.

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