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Resistance And the Sacred: An Approach to the Various Meanings of the “Right to the Sacred” in Mexico Today

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Abstract: This article analyses a certain philosophical (ethical and political) interpretation of “the sacred” as brought up by native world views of indigenous peoples in the American continent from a decolonial approach. Translation is used as resistance that resounds in the social-environmental struggles in our continent nowadays, particularly in Mexico. The appropriation of the term “sacred” by native peoples reveals the colonial political theory of the State. By challenging consumerism and ecological destruction, the translation of the indigenous concept of “sacred” into an ecological conception of intrinsic link between people and “nature” enables a dialogue between those cultures and the warning of modern science about global warming and the over-exploitation of the earth’s resources.

Keywords: religion in Mexico; right to the sacred; resistance; translation; native peoples; decolonial; heteronomy

This earth is our grandmother
all of it is sacred, stone by stone
Mahmoud Darwish¹

...for them, the mountains and rocks are the bones in their bodies; the wind is the breath and air that comes in their bodies and gives them life, the soil in their land is the skin of their bodies and the territory at large is their body, with the Tiburon Island as their heart. (...) they know how to interpret when the Tiburon Island is happy or angry, depending on the way that the wind blows or shelters them from a storm, or in times of drought or rains, fishing and hunting good seasons or hunger times. That is why the Comcaac worship and respect everything in their territories.

Comcaac community work group, Tiburon islands management subprogram-San Esteban, 2000, preliminary version.²

The natural ecosystems are considered by indigenous peoples as the habitat of the deities that protect life diversity, and thanks to them, the integrity and balance of the woods, the rivers, the lakes and the soil fertility are maintained, allowing plants and animals to live and multiply.

Statement at the Discussion forum for a legislative bill: “Wirikuta, the right to the sacred”, Mexican Senate, April 18-19, 2012.³

¹ Darwish, “The “Red Indian’s” Penultimate Speech to the White Man”, 73.

² Quoted in Luque and Robles Torres, *Naturaleza, saberes y territorio; Comcaac (Seri), Diversidad cultural y sustentabilidad ambiental*, 233.

³ Pronunciamiento Foro “Wirikuta: el derecho a lo sagrado”. [Statement at the Discussion forum for a legislative bill: “Wirikuta, the right to the sacred”, Mexican Senate, 2012].

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1 Some meanings of the sacred

In his book *Dictionary of Indo-European Concepts and Society*,⁴ Émile Benveniste says that the concept of “the sacred” has a two-fold designation: one positive, which refers to what is charged with divine presence; and one negative, which refers to “what is forbidden for men to contact”. This article is not about linguistics.⁵ It analyses a certain philosophical (ethical and political) interpretation of the sacred — and this two-fold designation— that resounds in the social-environmental struggles in our continent nowadays, particularly in Mexico.

Given the territorial breakthrough by multinational corporations, the indigenous peoples resist in various ways and a frequent argument of this resistance is the *sacred* nature of the territory. I will try to approach the meanings and potentialities of this characterization, which was submitted as a bill to regulate the “right to the sacred” to the Mexican Senate — legislative body of a modern State, that as such, boasts strict separation from religion.

I reject the simplistic explanation that reduces the argument of the sacred to a legal strategy by the affected party since I think it shows an enormous ignorance of the indigenous cultures’ worldview. Reducing the sacred to mere legal tactics is a mean calculation, typical of the instrumental reason of the so-called “West”.⁶ In the attempt to address the meanings “the sacred” evokes when invoked in relation to territorial defense, we will divert from the expected question “what it means” (the sacred) to a different, more intriguing question, namely: “For whom” it is said and what the addressee should understand. Then, we will address the concept of translation that is generated by this operation and how this concept can help us approach the different meanings from a heteronomous perspective. Let’s point out that heteronomy is more radical than altruism. The latter patronizingly seeks justice *for* the other; whereas the former lends itself to be questioned by the justice *of* the other.

1.1 Sacred or saint?

Mahmud Darwish’s epigraph of the poem “*The “Red Indian’s” Penultimate Speech to the White Man*” describes the land as “sacred” (مُقَدَّسَةٌ) in the same way as it is described in Mexico. In Romance languages, there are two different words: *sacer*, as opposed to profane, is worthy of veneration and evoking horror⁷ (and the priest or “*sacerdos*” is the intermediary that connects the mundane with the divine in the act of sacrifice-*sacrificium*); whereas *sanctus* is something *sanctioned* as prohibited for human beings. Benveniste concludes that this difference evolves to distinguish *sacer* as the implicit sacredness (an absolute quality: something is exclusively either sacred or profane), from *sanctus* as the explicit sacredness (a superhuman virtue that is relative: there are degrees of sanctity).

All these differences apply to Romance languages only (Arabic and other Semitic languages only have one root to designate the sacred and the holy)⁸. However, in many indigenous languages in our continent, the sacred and the holy are usually designated with terms borrowed from the languages of the conquest (or produced in that context). From a decolonial perspective, Abdennur Prado⁹ emphasizes the fact that

⁴ Benveniste, *Dictionary of Indo-European Concepts and Society*, Book VI, Chapter 1, 453ff.

⁵ I am neither competent in linguistics, nor specialist in indigenous languages. My philosophical approach stands at the crossroads of ethics and politics.

⁶ Cf. Horkheimer, *Crítica de la razón instrumental*, 102ff.

⁷ Cf. Benveniste, *Dictionary of Indo-European Concepts and Society*, 460-463.

⁸ This is the case of Hebrew and Aramaic, this root is shared by the three languages.

⁹ Prado, *Genealogía del monoteísmo. La religión como dispositivo colonial*.

religion as a colonial device reduced the way of life (not “religion”)¹⁰ of the conquered peoples to fit the categories of the Catholic church, forcing them to express themselves in terms of *sacred* and *profane*.

In his book *Los hombres verdaderos. Voces y testimonios tojolabales*,¹¹ Carlos Lenkersdorf writes: “The Tojolabal worldview is not compatible with a dualist division of reality into two realms: the sacred and the profane. The reason is we are living in a single cosmic and sacred community for which we are all responsible for whatever we do.” Those who experience the world as sacred do not worship it as a transcendent, distant thing, but rather respect it in the same way they respect the immanent dignity of everything that is alive. Animism? This tag does not fit entirely because it lacks the humility needed to approach a worldview that we fail to decipher. The immanent spirituality of certain cultures is often regarded in a patronizing, Orientalist way as exotic and lacking abstraction power.

Perceiving that everything around us lives induces us to an intersubjective relationship with the environment. Since it does not consist of just objects —much less “resources”— that are available to us, we are forced to acknowledge that we cannot own the environment. This perspective radically questions our anthropocentrism and its correlative concept of private property. For instance, the Comcaac say that if you get up at night, you should not go back to bed because the warmth you left there was surely needed by a spirit and if you go back to “your” bed, you could bother it. The perception of space is closely related to perception of time through the word *Hant* which, in the Cmiique iitom language, refers to the territory (including the sea, the desert, the islands, the mountains) as well as to the ancestors and to time.¹² The space-time unity points to the coexistence of present, past and future generations, which persist in several forms and compel everyone to act carefully, with utmost attention to and responsibility for the other, an analogous behavior to that of the Judeo-Christianism heirs regarding what we call “sacred”.

From the theological-political point of view, by reading the Journal of Columbus, Prado¹³ explains America’s conquest as a continuation of the seizing of Granada and the expulsion of the Jews: in 1492, the colonization of America starts and the colonization of Al-Ándalus culminates. According to this author, Columbus’ explicit motivation was to “evangelize the natives and extract gold to fund the conquest of Jerusalem, as a step prior to the destruction of the Antichrist”.¹⁴

I am interested in the appropriation of the term by the indigenous peoples in order to invoke the “right to the sacred”. That is, I would like to analyze the counter-hegemonic and decolonial use of the term, which comes from the religion field, in *secular* times. It is worth highlighting that “secular” is a word that was created by Christianity. Today, it reveals the political theology that is inherent to the State, which is supposed to be free from religion. This appropriation is a kind of “translation”.

¹⁰ Far from denying them the right to a religion, this author points to the fact that the separation of the religious aspect of life results from the Christian differentiation of a spiritual realm that is separated from the physical realm. It is worth adding that Judaism was conceived as a way of life which pivoted around the compliance with precepts (an *ethos*, we could say in Greek) until the Middle Ages, when it was questioned about the principles of its faith and Maimonides had to invent them. Prado considers Islam cannot be defined as a religion either but rather as a way of life. In this decolonial sense, this author considers “religion” is not the most accurate term to refer to the indigenous peoples’ experience.

¹¹ Lenkersdorf, *Los hombres verdaderos. Voces y testimonios tojolabales*, 171.

¹² Cf. Luque, and Robles Torres, *Naturaleza, saberes y territorio Comcaac (Seri), Diversidad cultural y sustentabilidad ambiental*, 81-82: “It is worth pointing out that, as puzzling as it may be for Western eyes, the term *Hant* of the Cmiique iitom language of the Comcaac, is used simultaneously to make time and space descriptions, for example: *Hant comcaac* (the Comcaac territory), *Hant iix ipot inohcö* (place on the coast of the Tiburon Island); *Hant cmpacö heque* (Place, at the sea, located at Canal del Infiernillo or “Hell’s Channel”); *Hantx mocat* (ancestors); *Hant iha cöacomx* (the old who have the voice of the past); *hant yail iháat iizax* (August); *hant ihüpe* (good weather).

¹³ Prado, *Genealogía del monoteísmo. La religión como dispositivo colonial*, 55.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 61. From The Journal of the First Voyage of Columbus, entry of December 26th, 1492, p. 205 (The Journal is written in the third person because it is supposed to have been written by Bartolomé de las Casas): “He trusted in God that, when he returned from Spain, according to his intention, he would find a tun of gold, collected by barter by those he was to leave behind, and that they would have find the mine, and spices in such quantities that the Sovereigns would, in three years, be able to undertake and fit out an expedition to go and conquer the Holy Sepulchre. ‘With this in view’, he says, ‘I protested to your Highnesses that all the profits of this my enterprise should be spent in the conquest of Jerusalem, and your Highnesses laughed and said it pleased them, and that, without this, they entertained that desire’.”

2 Translation and the art of resistance

Columbus the free searches for a language he did not find here,
and for gold in our kind ancestors' skulls, he did
as he pleased with the dead and the living in us. Then
why does he still see this annihilation from his grave to its end?
(Mahmoud Darwish)¹⁵

They only pay attention to their own speeches, and it never crosses their mind that the same epidemic smoke poison devours their children. Their great men continue to send their sons-in-law and sons to tear out of the earth's darkness the evil things that spread these diseases from which we all suffer. (...) The white people will make the earth and the sky sick with the smoke from their minerals, oil, bombs, and atomic things. Then the winds and the storms will enter into a ghost state. In the end, even the *xapiri* and *Omama's* image will be affected!
(Davi Kopenawa)¹⁶

As the poet said, Columbus crossed the ocean to find the words... that his own language had. With ears closed to the unexpected, he could not understand those who welcomed him and there was no interpreter capable of guaranteeing understanding of the *other*. Which are the words that could explain a conqueror that the land is an integral part of the inhabitants' body? Columbus ignored the fact that our bones are stardust¹⁷... It was unconceivable for him that the Comcaac considered the territory as their body: the mountains were their bones, the soil was their skin, the wind was their breath and the Tiburon Island was their heart. In the native languages there is a poetics related to the earth that refers to the sacred and believes in *translation*.

Yanomami Shaman Davi Kopenawa is aware of the deafness affecting our civilization, and he believes that in order to stop the mining mega-extractivism and overproduction of commodities, to avoid a new “fall of the sky”,¹⁸ it is necessary to attempt to *translate*. That is why, even though he does not trust the drawings that Columbus' descendants do on “paper skins”, he decided to give his word to Bruce Albert: “Maybe they will finally lend an ear to the inhabitants of the forest's words and start thinking about them in a more upright manner?” According to his diagnosis, commodities are the epidemic of our civilization and its most evident symptom is the euphoria for accumulation. In order to explain his concern, he says that, according to the Amazonian knowledge, the demiurge *Omama* hid the hardest metals in the ground so that they could support what lives on it, thus maintaining the “sky roots” there. After mentioning that gold and oil are not food and adding that the gold we know is not *Omama's* “father of gold” (the shaman warns us that the attempt to extract those “sky roots” is very dangerous: “if the white people were able to reach *Omama's* metal one day, the powerful yellowish fumes of its breath would spread everywhere like a poison as deadly as the one they call an atomic bomb”).¹⁹ When will our merchandise-loving civilization understand that “when it is still in the form of a stone, gold is a living being”?²⁰

Darwish raises his bet on translation: 500 years later, from the longing of Granada and in the language of exile, the poet echoes the pains of the other side of the ocean caused in 1492. The “Red Indian” says that Columbus searched for gold in the skulls of his ancestors... The earth is a transgenerational body: grandmother, mother, pregnant of the upcoming generations:

¹⁵ Darwish, “The “Red Indian's” Penultimate Speech to the White Man”, 70.

¹⁶ Kopenawa and Albert, *The Falling Sky. Words of a Yanomami Shaman*, 295.

¹⁷ The ancient proverb “Be humble for you are made of earth. Be noble for you are made of stars” was scientifically demonstrated during the twentieth century. Before Carl Sagan made the phrase “We are made of starstuff” famous, back in 1918, the proverb was quoted by astronomer Albert Durrant Watson during his farewell speech at the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada. In 1921, Dr. William E. Barton also quoted the proverb in *The Evening News* of Michigan. And in 1929, astronomer Harlow Shapley described the close relationships between humans, the earth stones and the winds.

¹⁸ The first “fall of the sky” in the Yanomami worldview explains the appearance of the forest as we know it, which they call the ancient sky. The inhabitants of the ancient forest were transformed into other beings, of which the current inhabitants consider themselves “ghosts”. “The back of this sky that fell in the beginning of time is now the forest where we live and the ground that we walk on”. In order to consolidate it, *Omama* put “rods of his metal inside it, which he also buried like roots in the ground” (Kopenawa and Albert, *The Falling Sky. Words of a Yanomami Shaman*, 131).

¹⁹ Kopenawa and Albert, *The Falling Sky. Words of a Yanomami Shaman*, 284-285.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 288.

Do not dig the earth any deeper! Do not wound the turtle whose back
the earth, our grandmother the earth, sleeps upon, our trees are her hair,
and our adornment her flower. “There is no death in this earth,” do not change
her fragile creation! Do not break the mirrors of her gardens,
or startle her, do not hurt the earth. Our rivers are her waist
and we are her grandchildren, we and you, so do not kill her...²¹

From the North to the South of the continent, this clamor is voiced in all the native languages. In Standing Rock in 2016, the Sioux nations protested against the oil pipeline in North Dakota to defend the water and the sacred sites and they succeeded in stopping it temporarily, including some symbolically important milestones. On December 4, 2016, thousands of US war veterans went there to support the native Americans movement resistance and to ask the Lakota spiritual leader Leonard Crow Dog for forgiveness for the perpetrated genocide, the land seizures, the profanation of sacred mountains by robbing their metals, the appropriation of their children and the destruction of their languages.²² The answer was: We do not own the land, the land owns us... By dint of saying so in so many languages, invoking the status of “sacred”, little by little some ears are listening. Of course, not all of them, especially those of the decision-makers: in 2017, Donald Trump totally disregarded the massive clamor.

In the south of the continent, the Mapuches are defending their territory, called Wallmapu: the sacred sites are threatened by hydro-electric power stations, deforestation. The power stations stagnate the waters bringing disease and expelling communities due to floods and the deforestation desertifies the land. The fierce defense of the sacred site Ngen Kintuante in Chile and the criminalization of the opposition even though it is using legal channels to defend the river stand out.²³

All over the continent, native peoples are warning about the suicidal, genocidal, ecocidal and deicidal nature of the frenzy for “progress” sustained by accumulation. They show that the State political theology disposes of “nature” as if it managed an inexhaustible Eden. With remarkable poetics, coming from diverse experiences, natives reach an analysis depth that unveils our civilization’s fragility (and brutalities). They *translate* for us: they pronounce the words that Columbus searched for, but they return an image in which we do not recognize ourselves.

Thus, the translation that *others* make of us is presented to us as a mirror. The mirror reflects the word “sacred” —as experienced by those who invoke it in the non-Latin sense—, which is used to show the “secular” State that in spite of the efforts to deny it, the colonial political theology is inherent to it. In Mexico, at the Senate, the Wirikuta speech ended with the words attributed to the Wurrárikas gods, communicated by them to their people in February 2012:

The word of the gods asks us not to make any changes in their spiritual Olympuses, in the four cardinal points, the sacred places or the ceremonial centers. Also, the gods ask us to look for what made them sprout in this life, what made them strong and enabled them to evolve. They ask us to be the midwives of our ancestral deities, and they warn us against the changes so that nothing comes in the way of their birth. They ask us to have a clean spirit, not to be afraid, to maintain the balance of our beings to be able to receive the new heavenly universe of the deities. They ask us to avoid fear because it may bring just the opposite and we would attract spiritual illnesses to the body and soul.²⁴

1492 more than five centuries later: the moorish-marrano translation-amulet hides “the other side of the mirror”, protecting the discretion of the native peoples against the attempt of the State to profanate their way of life, trying to “modernize” them, and in extreme cases, make them sedentary... In the 16th century, it is said that The Spaniards deceived the natives with little mirrors that they bartered for the wealth of the land. Now the native peoples are defending their territories from plunder and one of their strategies

²¹ Darwish, “The “Red Indian’s” Penultimate Speech to the White Man”, 73.

²² Cf. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hx3K6ZZulys>

²³ Cf. Maldonado Ledezma “Neoextractivismo y derecho a lo sagrado: el pueblo mapuche en el Chile neoliberal”.

²⁴ Cf. Pronunciamiento Foro “Wirikuta: el derecho a lo sagrado” [Statement at the Discussion forum for a legislative bill: “Wirikuta, the right to the sacred”, Mexican Senate, 2012]

consists of dazzling us with the powerful mirror or translation. We are so fond of sight that we have stopped listening, maybe the dazzling of a decolonial mirror could help us recover our sense of hearing so as to perceive, as Kopenawa says, the sound of the engines that make us deaf. The title of this section sounds as a paraphrase of *Persecution and the Art of Writing* by Leo Strauss. In that book, the author described the disguising strategies of writing as a defense against the persecution suffered by some philosophers. Here, we are trying to suggest translation as an art of resistance. The mirror of translation, a resistance strategy that tries to refract the State violence exerted on native peoples, is a powerful weapon they use to reflect a different justice, the justice *of* the other.

3 Heteronomy: the justice of the other (so that the sky does not smash against the earth)

The stranger says strange words, and digs a well in the earth
To bury the sky in it (...)
Mahmoud Darwish

The forest is alive. It can only die if the white people persist in destroying it. If they succeed, the rivers will disappear underground, the soil will crumble, the trees will shrivel up, and the stones will crack in the heat. The dried-up earth will become empty and silent. The *xapiri* spirits who come down from the mountains to play on their mirrors in the forest will escape far away. Their shaman fathers will no longer be able to call them and make them dance to protect us. They will be powerless to repel the epidemic fumes which devour us. They will no longer be able to hold back the evil beings who will turn the forest to chaos. We will die one after the other, the white people as well as us. All the shamans will finally perish. Then, none of them survive to hold it up, the sky will fall
Davi Kopenawa

How should we *translate* the experience of the “fall of the sky” or its “burial” to approach the justice *of* the other? Apparently, the different concepts of justice clash, they are inversely proportional: on “our side” it seems only the economic growth stemming from a voracious mega-extractivism would bring the desired consumers’ equity; on “the side of the other”, they are warning us that the sky is about to smash on the earth and that overexploitation kills...). The accumulation political theology features a sacrificial aspect and it is obvious who the scapegoat is...²⁵

Bruno Latour points to the apocalyptic sense of this political-economic theology: “By believing oneself to be a bearer of salvation, one becomes the apocalypse for others. Do you understand why we have to be suspicious of those who accuse ecological discourse of being too often apocalyptic? They are the ones that, on the contrary, by refusing to continue to live in the time of the end, have imposed a violent end on all the other civilizations.”²⁶

Unlike the communities’ spiritual immanence, the so-called West tried to maintain an imperative of humility represented by a transcendent god. The illustrated modernity strove for adulthood (*sapere aude*) by trying to overcome transcendence and reach autarchy. Thus, modern *hybris* was unleashed, multiplying commodities at the same time as poverty. However, in the process of the Western secularization, Carl Schmitt showed how the political concepts derive from religious concepts.²⁷

Within this secularizing framework, we can understand the deafness of our ruling leaders that support mega-extractivism with the excuse of “the growth of the economy” and give the big corporations the territories that belong to the communities like real estate agents. This program is backed by scientific research that minimizes or neglects the threats of an undeniable climatic change (described by Kopenawa very clearly in his Amazonic language). However, for decades, there have been other voices striving to be heard in the scientific world that call for humility. These voices are more receptive to the criticism by peoples

²⁵ In the title of this article the book *Violence and the sacred* by René Girard. His analysis about the scapegoat underlie this article. In the context of our sacrificial (colonial) economy, the native peoples communities are destined to be victims (*sacer*).

²⁶ Latour, *Face à Gaïa. Huit conférences sur le nouveau régime climatique*, 267.

²⁷ Schmitt, *Teologia politica*.

that consider there is only one single cosmic community. For example, astronomer Harlow Shapley warned half a century ago: “In our complex situation one simple requirement stands out: we must link ourselves with all the others that participate in life; we must go beyond life and associate ourselves continually and insistently with the solid rocks of the earth, the gaseous winds of the sky.”²⁸ In its own way, this call is a translation, not because it renders the *same* content and intention, but because it shows some kind of understanding. Understanding does not mean assimilating the other. Understanding may occur when you reach a common ground that points to the divergence. The point of divergence, from a heteronomous stand, forces us to reposition ourselves and attend to the justice of the other. Attending to the justice of the other does not mean to adopt it for ourselves, but rather to accept it as foreign and acknowledge the divergence to avoid antagonism. Antagonism has to do with the Same, whereas divergence is a refraction point that creates a hospitable position towards the Other.²⁹

An example could be what our scientists call “greenhouse effect”. It has to do with the fossil fuels gases that were buried and, when released, remain in the sky, turning it into a ceiling that does not let the sun rays come through, and then falls on us...³⁰ Here’s a translation to the justice of the other. Davi Kopenawa explains it as follows:

The minerals are kept in the coolness of the ground, under the earth, forest, and waters. They are covered by big hard rocks, little hollow pebbles, shiny stones, gravel and sand. All this contain their heat, like a vaccine refrigerator. I have said that these things fallen from the first sky are very hot. If exposed, they would set the earth ablaze. Yet by cooling in the ground, they exhale an invisible breath that spreads in its depths like a humid breeze. But when the forest warms up under the sun, this breath can become dangerous. This is why it must remain captive in the cold of the ground where stones and sand hold its evil vapor in and prevent it from a escaping like a pot’s lid does.³¹

We are free to choose either the scientists’ or the shaman’s language, but these words in translation show that we cannot longer keep closing our eyes and ears to the emergency state we are inflicting to the world.

In an effort to translate their claim for justice, the native peoples articulate the right to the sacred (appealing to the opposition sacred/profane learned from the colonizers we mentioned before). In the translation arena, when antagonism prevails, there are battles to fight. In the language of the State, the language of the law, the dichotomy sacred/profane operates in the territorial sphere, making a difference between production spaces (profane) and preservation spaces (sacred).³² When a territorial defense takes place, the State recognizes there are important ecologic resources and frequently decides to displace the native peoples who reside there to declare that the area is a national park. However, the traditional mode of production —based on self-consumption— is not predatory and, consequently, does not need to confine spaces. For instance, when the Comcaac nation was given Tiburon Island (where they had lived for generations) in custody by the government in 1963, they accepted this separation that declares this territory as a Nature Reserve Area and National Wildlife Refuge (Official Gazette of the Federation 03/15/1963).³³ Now, their former inhabitants may visit it for ritual purposes mainly, but they are not allowed to live there and, for its “protection”, there is a Secretariat of the Navy (Secretaría de la Marina, SEMAR) detachment there since the mid 70’s...³⁴ This is one example that serves the purpose of understanding the need to decolonize justice through a heteronomous translation that would let us come nearer the justice of the other.

Now, how should we position ourselves before the justice of the other?

In the economic realm, anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro —using the mirror-amulet of

²⁸ In Shapley, Harlow, *Of Stars and Men. The Human Response to an Expanding Universe*, 124.

²⁹ The meanings of “the Same” and “the Other”, as well as the idea of hospitality refer to Levinas. Although he emphasizes transcendence as a condition of possibility of alterity, he does so from a self-contraction capable of embracing the call for humility of the native peoples spiritual immanentism.

³⁰ I thank Omar Arach for the suggestion of mentioning this topic and its explanation.

³¹ Kopenawa and Albert, *The Falling Sky. Words of a Yanomami Shaman*, 285.

³² I thank Omar Arach for this remark.

³³ Luque and Robles Torres, *Naturaleza, saberes y territorio Comcaac (Seri), Diversidad cultural y sustentabilidad ambiental*, 171.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 191.

translation that we mentioned before— proposes replacing the reigning theology of necessity, supported by the economism of the needed development with a cosmo-pragmatics of sufficiency and sufficient action. In other words, from the *more of the necessary* to the *strictly necessary*). This author concludes that it is easier for the natives, “masters of immanence”,³⁵ to liberate us than for us to liberate them “at least in spirit”.³⁶

In the political realm, Marisol de la Cadena, following Helen Verran, proposes: instead of recognition, “cultivating epistemic disconcertment”.³⁷ This is possible in the framework of alter-politics, that would not pursue “translating difference into sameness”³⁸ as imposed by modern politics, but rather work on the divergences, to make them fruitful. Translation as an art of resistance is a politics of *divergence* rather than antagonism. By eluding contradiction—which is based on sameness—, divergence, far from relativism, accounts for the differences. This author proposes a cosmo-politics: “relations among divergent worlds as a decolonial practice of politics with no other guarantee than the absence of ontological sameness”.³⁹

In this divergent sense, the translation of the “sacred” in the native peoples resistance in Mexico unravels its decolonial potential.⁴⁰

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³⁵ Unlike religions based on transcendence, they conceive the spirit as an immanent part of our world.

³⁶ Viveiros de Castro, “O Brasil é grande, mas o mundo é pequeno”

³⁷ Quoted in de la Cadena, *Earth Beings. Ecologies of Practice across Andean Worlds*, 276.

³⁸ de la Cadena, *Earth Beings. Ecologies of Practice across Andean Worlds*, 279.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 281.

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