

SEMINAL THOUGHTS FOR A POSSIBLE TECNOSHAMANISM

*By Fabiane M. Borges**

Translated by Carsten Agger⁺

Many people have an idea as to what "technoshamanism" means. These ideas are generic and point towards something between science and religion, or between technology and ecstasy. I prefer to present it as a subject which is under construction - a challenge we are all currently facing, and to which we need to find solutions.

This text will cover a small number of ecological, anthropological and philosophical concepts which I will try to delineate clearly, even if they may seem shrouded in mist. For reference I will use such thinkers as Viveiros de Castro, Bruno Latour, Fabián Ludueña, among others. It is important to emphasize that the concept of technoshamanism is open and means many things to many people. This text is only an attempt to bring about a few clarifications in the apparent deadlock between two seemingly opposed forces.

I will divide the text into seven parts:

- 1- The tragedy of the Guarani Kaiowa
- 2- The Maracanã Village
- 3- Earthbound versus Humans
- 4- Xawara and the Falling Sky
- 5- Perspectivism and ontological inversion
- 6- Transversal shamanism, dirty or noisy
- 7- Technoshamanism

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1. THE TRAGEDY OF THE GUARANI-KAIOWÁ

I will begin by presenting a contemporary tragedy. I am talking about a community of 12,000 Guarani-Kaiowá indigenous people from the village Bororo in Mato Grosso do Sul, situated in the city of Dourados. The lands that the Brazilian government had given to the Guarani-Kaiowá in previous decades became disputed during the military dictatorship (1964-1985). These indigenous lands became the objects of barter between the State and rural businesses. The lands were invaded by industrial farming, destroyed by monoculture and surrounded by barbed wire, and the Guarani-Kaiowá either lost their homes altogether or were relocated.

The Kaiowá have an enormous mortality rate due to fights between indigenous and white people as well as malnutrition, alcoholism, and excessive drug use. What really frightens these indigenous people and their supporters, however, is the alarming number of suicides of young people. I believe that the word "epidemic" is the one best suited to qualify the very great numbers of suicides (at the end of the 2000 decade the norm was between fifty and sixty suicides every year, and it still going on). The majority of those who practise *jejuvy* (death by hanging or strangulation) are adolescents - these also account for a large percentage of the community.

I will proceed to describe these deaths as an epidemic. At the same time I'd like to make it absolutely clear that what is killing the Guarani-Kaiowá is the same Xawara that is affecting the lands of the Yamomami, since xawara means "epidemic", a sickness caused by the pollution accompanying mining after gold, the very symbol of development.



Scene from the film *Terra Vermelha - "Birdwatchers"* (2008)

I wish to make it clear that Jejuvy is a *ritual* form of suicide deeply rooted in the Guarani-Kaiowá's cultural behaviour. According to the Guarani, the soul resides in the word, and if the word cannot be expressed, if there is no space for it to be uttered, it will be suffocated. For this reason, the suicides are by strangulation or hanging, so that the word will not be lost and may return at some other time. The Guarani believe in a kind of reincarnation or, rather, in a concentrated energy which does not disintegrate. In the Guarani worldview, death by cutting or stabbing implies the total loss of the word, since it fades away and its form loses its consistency. When they commit jejuvy, it is because there still exists a cultural belief that some day it will once again be possible to express oneself, since suicide by cutting or stabbing would imply a complete nihilism and abandonment of their ancestral culture. The ritual character of these suicides does not mean that the village does not suffer. These practices fill the village with sorrow and nourish the pessimism of the Guarani¹.

In 2008, the Italian-raised Chilean director Marco Bechis was shooting the film "Birdwatchers". For that movie, Bechis used people from that very village as actors, including political leaders. I recommend that everybody should watch this film. It is a visually and narratively very interesting movie; as a work of documentary fiction, it is one of the greatest films about the indigenous people of Brazil. It explores the questions concerning the struggle for the ancestral lands and the suicides as well as the complicated lives of the contemporary Guarani, suspended as they are between the indigenous culture and the white people's city. It follows a young man's initiation into shamanism and does a good job of exposing the cultural beliefs that underlie the suicides. The film is not without malice and presents a number of strategies of the Guarani for

¹Text about this subject by Verenilde Pereira and Fabiane Borges: Guarani: do jejuvy à palavra recuperada <https://www.diplomatique.org.br/acervo.php?id=2473>

survival, for relating to the market, and for sexuality between indigenous and non-indigenous. It stands out as an important film within the cinema concerned with indigenous matters.



Image taken from the internet – indigenous leader Ambrósio Guarani Kaiowa is a main character in the film “Birdwatchers”

Ambrósio Kaiowá, who was one of the leading characters in the film, was murdered in December 2013. Was that because the film was gradually gaining popularity? Because Ambrósio had become well-known as an actor and thus had more credibility and bargaining power in the struggle for land? Because he had become more empowered? It is presently unknown if this was the ultimate reason of his death. The reasons are not very clear, but his death represents an enormous loss for the Guarani Kaiowá and their supporters.

In the second half of 2013, before Ambrósio's death, a group of Guarani Kaiowá sent an open letter declaring that if their lands were not given back to them, they were ready to die on them. They were threatening to commit collective suicide or even starve themselves to death on their ancestral lands (on this point, the letter is not very clear²) if the government would not intervene and bring about the devolution of their lands which are now occupied by agrobusiness. The response to this threat from social networks was enormous. Thousands of Brazilians added the surname Guarani Kaiowá to their name on social networks, and there were many demonstrations all over the country by indigenous as well as non-indigenous people in support of the struggle of the Guarani.

²Open letter from the Guarani Kaiowa - https://secure.avaaz.org/po/petition/Salvemos_os_indios_GuaraniKaiowa_URGENTE/?pv=96

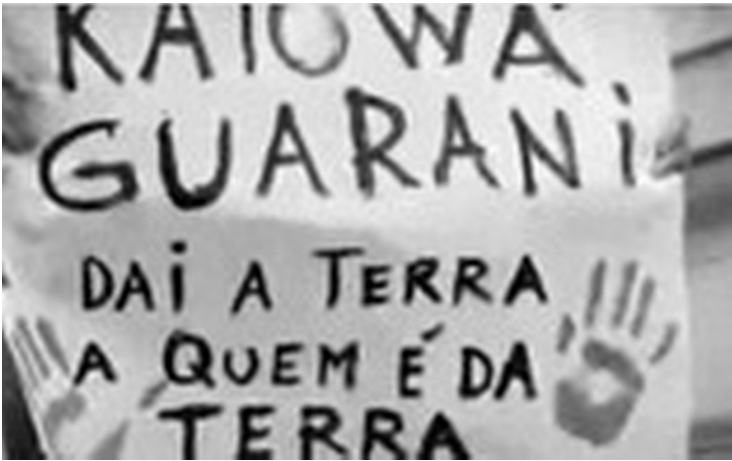


Image taken from the internet, author unknown

The Guaraní are loosing their word *and* their world, the former to strangulation and the latter to environmental devastation. Viveiros de Castro likes to say that the Guaraní are specialists in the end of the world, since they have been loosing more and more of the world since the 16th century. They are losing the kind of world with biodiversity, forests and clean rivers, to one that is modern, paved, full of factories and cars, polluted, and completely explored.

In spite of the fact that a large number of indigenous people agree with the modern ways of production and take part in the destruction of their lands and their customs, and whether this is due to the allure of the marketplace or because of the new religions which are constantly harassing them and demonizing their customs and beliefs, there is still a strong resistance from many groups who want to continue to live according to their traditions. This can even turn into a survival strategy given the strong and insistent prejudice faced by indigenous people that have been evicted from their lands. From the point of view of the average white person, indigenous people and their descendants are always seen as half beast, backwards, lazy, vagabonds. This is one of the reasons why their elders often admonish the young people to wear their traditional costumes and paint and walk around in groups, since in that way they became stronger, almost like a force of nature and have more appeal in their quest for land and historical repairs, as opposed to what happens if they adhere to the white man's project and become marginalized in the big cities.

2: THE MARACANÃ INDIGENOUS VILLAGE



(Photo taken from the Internet – author unknown)

Simultaneously with this great national commotion in support of the Guaraní tragedy, which made so many people change their names, also in 2013 the Maracanã village in Rio de Janeiro received eviction notices, being the target of much interest from government and business. For the World Cup to happen it is necessary to obey the standards of FIFA, and this followed a wave of gentrification in large urban centers all over the world; cities are attending to the interests of the marketplace and not those of their inhabitants. Thus was established a major conflict between the State and activists over the possession of the Maracanã Indian Village.

This village has 150 years of history. It was originally donated by the Duke of Saxony³ to be a centre for the study of indigenous societies and plants. Later, it became the first headquarters of SPI (*Serviço de Proteção aos índios*, the former Brazilian service for Indigenous affairs). In 1953, it became the country's first museum of indigenous culture. In 1978, the museum was transferred to Botafogo in Rio De Janeiro. Slowly, the now-defunct museum was occupied by indigenous people from various ethnic groups from Brazil and South America, and thus became the Maracanã Indigenous Village. In 2013, 17 different ethnic groups were found living in the village.

Instead of focusing on cultural diversity and on the difference between Brazil and other countries and thus investing money to gain value from the fact that our country "still" has indigenous people in its territory, all of which could enable a different kind of tourism and a more ecological and

³Translator's note: Prince Ludwig August of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, a German nobleman who rose to prominence in Brazil in the 19th century. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prince_Ludwig_August_of_Saxe-Coburg_and_Gotha

democratic vision for the future, the state has opted to rely on the standard proceedings of FIFA and offer the Indians money for leaving the Aldeia Maracanã for some distant place outside the city with no historical or other connection with their culture, and where they are unable to survive in the long term.

For many of the Maracanã Village's indigenous inhabitants and supporters, having an indigenous, multi-ethnic space in a major city such as Rio de Janeiro is something that strengthens the cultural foundations of the Brazilian people itself while creating a bridge between civil society, especially young people and students, and a part of Brazilian history which predates the European colonization. Many of the young people who frequent the village have radically changed their way of thinking about the world as well as their actions in life because of the rituals, the dances and the music they learned in the village while experiencing processes of collective work, interethnic collaboration, a new conception of time, and a connection to the practice of magic⁴.

It is obvious that when so many ethnic groups are united, things will become complicated and there will be disagreements and disputes. That is part of the process, however, and it is possible to create a consensus and make political decisions. What is impossible to understand is that this is not allowed to happen, that the indigenous people are prevented from creating a unique space in the city, that they cannot be allowed to bring their knowledge to the city and bring the indigenous conception of the world closer to civil society. This is also true of the Afro-Brazilian communities which have been evicted from the major cities, and of other groups like the Roma, the homeless movement, etc. All of these groups represent ways of life that are being eliminated by the financial power of the marketplace. The ongoing fight is precisely the struggle between diversity and utilitarianism. The winner always seems to be the homogenization promoted by the market.

I give these two examples, of the Guarani-Kaiowá and the Maracanã Village, in order to highlight two tragedies. On the one hand we have the indigenous people who want to stay in the countryside within their closed ethnic group to preserve their customs and rituals, invest in the maintenance of land and nature and fight for the land of their ancestors (which is true of a considerable part of the Guarani- Kaiowá); on the other hand we have those who want to mix with urban life but do so in order to create a space for the appraisal of and immersion in the indigenous cultures of Brazil, opening a space of reference between countryside and city in a desire to

⁴An interesting video that does a good job of explaining the fight for the Maracanã Village and the involvement of urban youth with the indigenous question is “História da Aldeia Maracanã, de Cabral a Cabral: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0W5BVt2N6uo>

construct new forms of sustainability from the ancestral teachings as well as from traditional knowledge about handcraft production, agriculture, nutrition and clothing, among other things⁵.

3- EARTHBOUND VERSUS HUMANS

Bruno Latour⁶ speaks of a war of values between the earthbound and the humans, between those who are committed to the Earth and those more committed to modernity. It is a war over the world in which we wish to live. An ecological minority dismissed as apocalyptic fanatics on one side, and on the other the worshippers of Xawara, the lovers of metal, those who guarantee that our current geological period is the anthropocene and bring about the end of biodiversity, forests and rivers, those who actively promote the human tattoo on the face of the Earth.

The tragedy of the Guaraní and the tragedy of the Maracanã Village are the tragedy of the earthbound. It is a tragedy because it is set up as a heroic death on the background of many years of struggle and resistance which they are constantly losing. The lovers of the Earth are losing to the worshippers of development at all costs. Both of these stories, the one about the Guaraní-Kaiowá and the one about the Maracanã village, contain an element of the war of which Latour is speaking. On one side we have the poor, dirty bums: lazy, retarded, subjectivist, infantile, hippies, losers, misfits, spiritualists, barbarians. On the other side we have the urban people, committed to modernity, growth, development, enrichment, security, productivity, objectivity, and expansionism. These opposed camps are, in spite of not being very clearly defined, fighting over modes of existence and ways of relating to Earth and to Life itself. One is the antithesis of the other, and it should not be necessary to enlarge this image too much in order to see the disproportion between the two sides.

4- XAWARA AND THE FALLING SKY

Now I want to speak about another indigenous group, the Yanomami. The Yanomami shaman Davi Kopenawa wrote the book *A Queda do Céu* (The Falling Sky/2013⁷). In that book he describes what the Yanomami shamans talk about when they meet in order to discuss the future of the world. In his

⁵ Here one may think of other examples of indigenous spaces in urban centres, like the Santuário dos Pajés in Brasília - <http://santuariodospajes.blogspot.com.br/>

⁶ Cfe. Bruno Latour - War and peace in an age of ecological conflicts Paris - Lecture prepared for the Peter Wall Institute, Vancouver - 2013 <http://www.bruno-latour.fr/sites/default/files/130-VANCOUVER-RJE-14pdf.pdf>

⁷ Davi Kopenawa and Bruce Albert – The Falling Sky – Ed. Harvard University Press. USA/2013

book, he describes the Xawara (which means disease or epidemic). Once again the word "epidemic" appears, and that is why I noted above that this is an important word. The epidemic of suicides among the Guaraní is also provoked by the Xawara. It is a kind of living entity, a force of destruction. The Xawara⁸ is the fumes emitted by gold when it is exhumed from the ground. Actually, it is the fumes emitted by metals in general. For the Yanomami, gold and other metals are the skeleton of the Earth. If they are withdrawn from the entrails of the Earth, it will lose its structural support and may sink.



A Yanomami longhouse. Foto: Survival

Some of the Yanomami have a somewhat more privileged position than the Guaraní-Kaiowá or the urban indigenous people of the Maracanã village, since they live in a large reservation between Roraima, Amazonas and Venezuela, which is actually larger than Holland. In spite of that, they are unable to contain the Xawara. The area in question is rich in minerals and has a lot of gold. Gold-digging is forbidden there, but there is no way to control the borders of the whole reservation. If the government removes the mining operations from one location, they are immediately reestablished some other place, since the government does not take any heed of the future of the gold-diggers. These people, importantly, are accustomed to a life of high risk in the hope of great earnings. If there is no access to gold, what will become of the culture that surrounds gold mining? This is a complex problem, but from the point of view of the forest and of the people living in the forest, gold mining is just as damaging as monoculture and cattle farming. The damages reach much further than the areas where these industries are performed - they pollute rivers, kill fish, cut down the forest and cause contagious diseases through the invisible fumes that

8 See the book by Laymert Garcia dos Santos - "Amazônia transcultural – xamanismo e tecnociência na ópera". Ed. N-1, SP/2013

are constantly spread, attacking the hearts of indigenous people, of white people, of the elements and of the sky itself.

Davi says that Xawara, the epidemic, is in his village and is leading his people to its end. Hekurabe are the familiar spirits of the *pajés* or healers. It is they who support the heart of the sky, but even the very sky's heart is infected by the Xawara. When a *pajé* dies the Hekurabe get very angry, and a lot of *pajés* have died. When the last tree has fallen and there are no more *pajés*, there will be no more Hekurabe to support the sky, and it will break in half and start dropping pieces on the Earth, which bereft of its former skeletal structure will open up enormous sink holes into which white people and Indigenous alike will fall. Humankind will become extinct, as it has happened many times before.

I wish to insist on this prophecy, not as the words of an exotic shaman unable to express philosophical ideas, but as an insight that points to a very concrete situation.

For the Yanomami to see means to dream, and according to Davi white people only dream about themselves. They are unable to dream about anything else. This means that they are unable to see what other elements of nature see, they are only concerned with themselves. Viveiros qualifies this as a kind of narcissistic condition, people who are so self-centered that they are unable to even dream of anything other than themselves. White people can only dream about themselves. They sleep, but they see nothing. This is why they think that what the Indians say is false or a bunch of lies, because they do not see anything but themselves.

There are two key points in this prophecy: 1) Humankind will become extinct, as has already happened many times, and 2) White people can only dream about themselves.

5- PERSPECTIVISM AND ONTOLOGICAL INVERSION

Perspectivism is the irresponsibility of Viveiros de Castro, as he tells us in his book *Inconstância da Alma Selvagem* (2013). An "irresponsibility", because he had the audacity to create a universal theory that could give a unified explanation of Amerindian thought. I like it when he terms it his irresponsibility, because he recognizes that attempting to create a single foundation of thoughts for different peoples that neither speak the same language nor share the same beliefs is a somewhat

megalomaniac gesture. In his book *Metafísicas Canibales*⁹, he attempts to work with the idea of a flat geography, of the temperature and other geographic characteristics that could justify this cohesion of Amerindian thought, which seems to be remarkably consistent. If perspectivism were only a philosophical speculation, because it failed to contemplate the diversity of Amerindian thought, I would say that it is a necessary fiction that it makes perfect sense to consider in the times we are living in right now (anthropocene). Perspectivism contemplates the numerous battles and somehow sustains the issues particular for each group and for every ethnicity, precisely because its proposition challenges an imaginary colonizer from the dominant group. It proposes a different perspective, where the cultural difference should not only be respected, but also transformed. It proposes a different ontology which demands its own place in the human imagination.

Perspectivism is thus the proposal of an ontological inversion, a change of philosophical paradigm. It is a scathing criticism of European anthropocentrism; it is a world view which questions the structure of Western thinking. It questions the privileged position given to human beings at the expense of so many other beings.

Viveiros tells us that an Amerindian has a predatory way of thinking. He knows that he is a predator of certain animals, and he knows that he is the prey of certain other animals, so he knows that he is part of a natural cycle, not the master of the universe. Apart from that, there is a notion of horizontality with respect to other elements, other kinds of things. Amerindian nomad thought contains an ecological way of thinking. It will not endure the enslavement of the elements, which is crucial in building a civilization. Instead of subjugating the elements in categorical formats (buildings, temples, cities), they use the elements to fulfill their own necessities and afterwards leave so that nature can reclaim them. Material things serve for a while and afterwards they are given back to Nature. This is the reason for all the moving around, the constant exile: When they return to the same spot, Nature has already reclaimed it. It is an ecological methodology, a technology based on coexistence with biodiversity. The dead are among us just like other invisible elements. Your deceased mother could be a stone or a fish. There is no superiority over death, nor over matter.

If we continue with Viveiros, the difference between the evolutionary and the Amerindian perspective is that the former believes that there is one nature and many cultures, while the latter thinks of it as many natures and one culture. For the Indian, the only culture that exists is human

9 Cfe. Eduardo Viveiros de Castro. *Metafísica Canibales*. Ed. Kats. Espanha. 2010

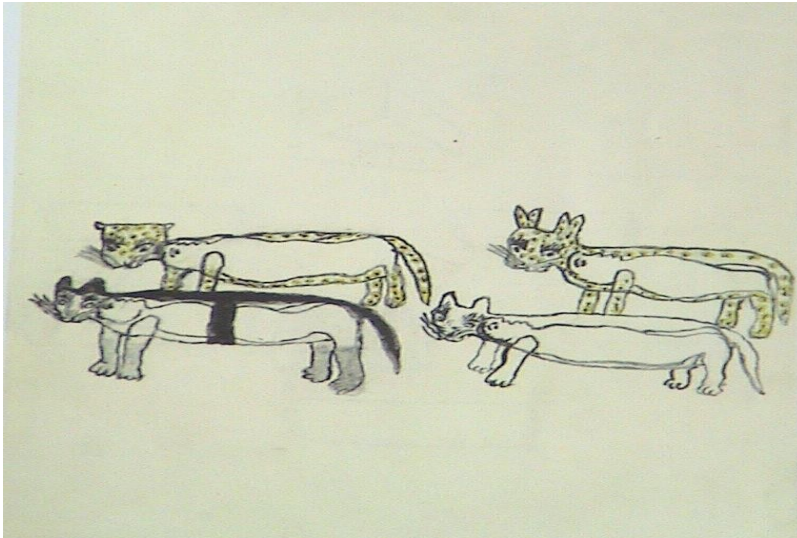
culture. Everything that exists is human. A stone, the moon, a river, a jaguar, the deceased - all of these are human, but they are dressed in different clothes, behave differently and have different views on reality. For the Indians, a meeting of shamans may mean the same thing as that of a congregation of tapirs in a mudhole - each group is performing its own rituals.

Of course, if we delve into the differences between groups, we will find different priorities for each species and a particular creation myth for each of them, but the important thing here is to understand that the human foundation shared by all beings also serves to connect them and keeps them in a state of constant communication. This understanding is very important: behind the nature of a stone lies a human culture which is also the basis for inter-species communication.

The indigenous animism produces a conception of alliances and groupings between different elements or species. A human being and an animal, a river and a tree. For example, one kind of human could have more in common with a cold, rocky and hard nature than with an Indian. The nature of a thing is not related to that thing by similarity, but by disposition. Belonging to one kind of animal rather than another says something about the nature of each, but the culture is the same. Basically, all are human and think, dream, expresses themselves and have a life in common. This allows them to communicate and to associate with each other. This is the opposite of anthropocentrism precisely because humans have no privileges relative to everything else that exists.

The shaman is a kind of diplomat who has the ability to assume several of these points of view. He is able to contact all those different forms; he can change his clothes and visit the points of view of many different beings. There may be a pact between him and those beings, a mutual affinity but also a repulsion. He is able to leave his own point of view behind and see himself from the outside and see the Indians of his tribe from the point of view of the tree or of the birds, the moon, the stars, or any other object or material. This ability means that the shaman has a deeper insight into the nature of things than most Indigenous, because he has improved this technique by intense training. That is why his madness, his schizophrenia and his perceptual deviation is considered to be wisdom. He returns so that he can tell about the things that he has seen and heard. Depending on the extent of his training, he can assume more than one point of view at the same time. He is able to incarnate in other beings. This is an ability that he has because he worked hard to achieve it. There are techniques of ecstasy, of sensibility and of inter-species communication that allow him to perceive that which is behind things and appearances so that he may reconnect his human

foundation with the human foundation of any other element. But the shamans of other species also have the ability to do this to him, and that is why he suffers himself incarnations and becomes possessed. In the image below it is shown how indigenous painters represent the incarnation of the pajé: he is lying on his back as if he was carried on the bodies of the animals.



Drawing by Feliciano Desâna, published in Luiz Lana's book: *Antes o Mundo não Existia*. Donated by Larissa Menendez, anthropologist who has researched Desâna cosmogony.

It is important to view shamanism as a methodology, as a technology for the production of knowledge. It is also very important for technoshamanism: The realization that apart from any possible encounter between technology and shamanism, shamanism is itself a technology. It is not just about ecstasy, but about transhuman communication.

After gaining a deeper understanding of shamanism as a technology, we may have found some clues as to how to think about technoshamanism:

- 1- Shamanism is a technology wich allows shamans to leave themselves behind and assume points of view that is different from their own.
- 2- Shamanism is an ecological theory that is capable of coexisting with a general biodiversity.
- 3- Shamanism is a technology of guidance and control of hallucination.

Jeremy Narby, a Canadian anthropologist who was raised in Switzerland and has done much research on the medical knowledge of indigenous people in Peru, has done a thorough investigation of the idea of hallucinations as knowledge. In his book "The Cosmic Serpent"¹⁰ he tells us that when he went to Peru to study plants with the Asháninka, he always asked them how they came to know all these things about plants, and they always gave the same answer: The plant teaches them. He had to take a lot of ayahuasca to realize that the teachers of the forest is the forest itself, that there was a living intelligence in all that existed there - living things that coexisted and possessed subjectivity and intelligence. The forest and life itself had their own "networking", they would negotiate, improvise, structure and restructure themselves. The Indian in the midst of all this is more of a participant in a massive interaction between living beings.

This notion of intelligent elements and material objects being sentient and possessing a subjectivity is actually being considered by contemporary speculative philosophy. This is directly related to the scientific research in physics and biology, among others. For the Amerindian, this connection is the humanity which all elements have in common, it is the common foundation. It should be noted that this common, all-pervading humanity is not necessarily identical to the humanity of the anthropocentric white man, it is another paradigm. It is still, however, a humanity which is able to feel, think and watch out for things and which possesses humor, feelings, sensations, experience and similar attributes. For some currents of Amerindian thought, this city-building and world-destroying white human is something that they once were and no longer want to be¹¹. This is in opposition to the Western idea that there is an animal nature which is common to humans and animals, and that humans have step by step removed themselves from Nature to become human through their *anthropotechnics*. Anthropotechnics are human techniques which have historically been used to produce humans. Ludueña analyzes these techniques in his book *Comunidade dos Espectros*¹², where he especially analyzed theology and law, which he considers to be two strong sources of anthropotechnics for the manufacturing of humanity. He raises the question of biopower and affirms that it did not come about through the evolution of a control society but was already present in the very first approaches to the formation of a civilized humanity. Anthro-technology will always presuppose a zoo-politics to control and domesticate animal nature which in European thought would be the place from which humanity has emerged.

10 Cfe. Jeremy Narby. "The Cosmic Serpent: DNA and the Origins of Knowledge". Ed. Georg. França/1998

11Talk by Eduardo Viveiros de Castro where he develops the idea that the Indians were once white, but escaped because they did not wish to remain that way. "Filosofia, Antropologia e o Fim do Mundo" - <https://vimeo.com/78892524>

12 Cfe. Fabian Ludueña Romandini. *Comunidade dos Espectros; I Antropotecnica*. Ed. Cultura e Barbárie. Florianópolis SC/2012-2013

If we want to insist on this concept of Ludueña's we can say that according to the view of the Amerindians, the separation between them and the white people occurred in exactly that very moment when humans began inventing their anthropotechnics of civility and thus they turned away from us, because this civility implies something which nature does not want to become. Some indigenous groups believe that their ancestors fled from these assembly lines for the production of humans, that they seceded and rejected these techniques, because to them they represented the end of the world. And, they add, as it happened before, it will happen again.

And so, when the prophecy of the Yanomami pajés resurfaces by the mouth of Davi Kopenawa, saying that humanity will become extinct, as has happened before and will happen again, I ask myself: How many worlds are we talking about, and who are our ancestors? These indigenous people say that our ancestors are the people from whom they departed, along with nature. There is an ontological hostility between indigenous and white people which is basically unrelated to, or maybe even contrary to, the evolution of the species since (and this is pure speculation on my part) that which white people call evolution the Indigenous might perceive as a tendency of some groups to impose themselves on other beings. That is, it is not civilization but something else, maybe a tendency to exploit others.

But for the purposes of discussion, I ask: How can it be that the Amerindians report the end of the world so precisely? Why do they insist with such conviction that this already happened before? What exactly did they have to turn away and escape from? The colonizers, maybe, or something before that? There is not much we can do except speculate, since these societies mostly do not have any written language. The Yanomami still say that white people write their thoughts on the treetops. We write when we dream. White people need to write because they can't dream; they only dream about themselves and about their goods.

But white people can only dream about themselves. They only think about themselves, and that is exactly why they cannot see the human foundation of everything that exists. They are narcissist, egocentric, arrogant and irresponsible, unable to hear other voices which are not their own. From the Amerindian point of view, the words "see" and "dream" are practically interchangeable. It is in dreams that one learns things and where mysteries are revealed. This common human foundation enables a general understanding, but it is necessary to dream in order to see; one must dream while sleeping, dream while using entheogens, and dream while awake. Dreaming is a fundamental

technology for Amerindians and should be considered a technique of emancipation which is very different from the civilizing anthropotechnics.

6- TRANSVERSAL SHAMANISM, DIRTY OR NOISY

To think of technoshamanism it is essential to understand its association with garbage, with filth, with excess, with overabundance. “Dirty” shamanism¹³ thus surfaces as a complex concept which at first might seem offensive to those who think of shamanism as something sacred. I will, however, now make an effort to change that idea.

In his book *Metafísicas Canibales* Viveiros de Castro talks about the relation between profecy and horizontal shamanism, and similarly between priesthood and vertical shamanism. He attempts to create an approximation between Amerindian shamanism and Judeo-Christian religion. Horizontal shamanism (profecy) is roughly defined as a state of presence in and belonging to Nature and the mystery behind things. It happened before the arrival of the colonist, when Indians and (obviously) their shamans would have a balanced relationship with knowledge, which would be promoted and expressed at the same time, intuitively and openly, without restraint and without promoting the powers that be. This is what happened with the prophets who guided the people through their conversations with gods and angels - through intuition and clairvoyance. Transversal shamanism began with the arrival of the white man who reconfigured the pajé's power, introduced the idea of a personal identity, built a hierarchy between subjects and imposed their imperial and monotheist concepts on the indigenous beliefs. Human beings were placed vertically above all other things and thus created a place for vigilance, for a law to govern knowledge and morality. This is exactly how it is with priesthood, which in the Judeo-Christian religions precisely had the role of controlling the people, the laws and the religious hierarchy.

According to this reasoning, transversal shamanism is a mixture of all this; a mixture of profecy and priesthood, of shamanism and priesthood, of polytheism and Catholic lithurgy, of humanizing policies with the power of herbs and rituals, of polytheism and the ten commandments, of the Holy Fathers and the African cults, of all those beliefs which are half one and half the other and the minority Christians. The Amerindian shamanhood was penetrated by all these ideas and created a state of syncretism where ancestral beliefs blend with theological categories.

13 Video about dirty or noisy transversal shamanism: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hj3TOIesxPw>

All these things then blended with the white people's own transversal and syncretist ways of life - the heathen festivals, orgies, drunkenness, assassinations, firearms, city-building, garbage-production; with the diseases, the misery, the betrayals of Empire, the devastation of the Earth, the irresponsible abuse of the environment - the concept of the Earth as a repository of resources for the unrestricted use of mankind.

This whirlpool of mixed information is *noiseocracy*. Dirty shamanism could mean the capacity to produce ecstasy and transcommunication within this universe of noises where everything is perceived to sound, where everything vibrates and emits sounds, where everything converges and diverges for moments at a time, and where this enables listening rather than deafness. The experience of radical noiseocracy is an important state in technoshamanism.

7- TECHNOSHAMANISM

Estamira, the heroine of Marcos Prados' eponymous film¹⁴, is a good example of technoshamanism: She is the pajé of garbage, the schizophrenic prophetess of refuse. She is a woman who represents the state of putrefaction, the explosions of gas, who literally cohabitates with the "leftovers" of mankind. It is from civilization's garbage dump that this "dirty shaman" speaks to us of other times and their accomplishments. She hallucinates about garbage. What method could be more effective if you want to know about a planet's population? Her shamanism is more than transversal, it is motivated by the power of excess, by the misplaced, by the leftovers. I will not deny that she did recycle things, but it is all the filth that turned her into something special, a specialist on the spectrum of exclusion. If she had not been surrounded by all that garbage, she probably would never have gone so far with the schizophrenic connections that she produced. She became a historic figure in the hands of the director Marcos Prado, whose deep insight emphasized the connection between Estamira and all the world's refuse. She talks about the smell of the garbage, of its internal implosions, of its constant transformation, of the satellites connected to the antennas erected in the landfill by arrogant authorities; she speaks about control and about the illusions which create control. Although at some point in the documentary the director creates a link between her profecies and her mental illness which seemed to be caused by a trauma and thus presents us with a psychoanalytic explanation of her mental problems, there are readings of the film which ignore these attempts. In Estamira's case, what cannot be denied is her fluent relationship with the Earth's garbage.

14 **Translator's note:** *Estamira*, a documentary by Marcos Prado. Brazil 2004:
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0427221/>

This is equivalent to saying that technoshamanism, apart from arising directly from a transversal shamanism, is also dirty and noiseocratic. It belongs in the garbage dump, is unclean. A significant part of what technoshamanism affirms originates in the leftovers of scientific thinking, from precarious laboratories, uncertain knowledge, hacking, electronic garbage, workarounds, originates from the recycling of materials, from the duplication of already thoroughly tested scientific results. To this we may add particular questions from social movements related to feminism, to the movements of or for queers, blacks, free software, the landless, indigenous people, river communities, homeless people and the unemployed among countless others who also perceive through their own noises, their own dissidency, their own garbage. To all this I want to add the exploration of the relationship between the body and technology, interspecies communication with material objects, elements and plants, as well as interception of electromagnetic waves from the most remote spaces, from the north and the south poles, from the buildings destroyed by war, from those that survived, who tell passive stories that can be recorded by DIY instruments. Not to mention the issues of the environment, space, extraterrestrial space, space culture, fiction, our relationship with the cosmos, astronomy and astrology using mechatronic devices and signage.

What I want to say with all of this, is:

- 1) Technoshamanism originates in a wastebin of excess, leftovers, remains, noises, discontinuous processes, from transversalised and syncretist shamanisms, from the incorporation of ideas, cultures, from social and cultural cannibalism, from workarounds, overlapping political ideologies, from electronic mining.
- 2) Technoshamanism recycles materials and subjectivities; it recycles environments, reconnects human beings with the Earth as well as the universe; it is a reconnection (a "religare") without any representation or univocity, a kind of perceptual opening, an expansion of our attention, an opening towards the full spectrum of phenomena which surrounds us, towards mystery; it is a lesson in humility regarding the existence of things.
- 3) Technoshamanism is dirty because its origin is in humankind's material and subjective garbage dumps. This does not mean, however, that one should underestimate the power of shamanism, on the contrary: It means that we attribute powers to the garbage beyond those of industrial recycling which organizes, separates, withholds and exploits the garbage collector. But technoshamanism

attributes powers to garbage precisely because it is from this confluence of misery that we are able to perceive which kind of species we are, and from that specific condition we can begin to extend some fields of convergence in order to transform ourselves into something more interesting.

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