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Amazona vittata: Notes on cosmopolitics and xenocide

Amazona vittata: Notas sobre cosmopolítica e xenocídio

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Abstract

The essay seeks to expose philosophically the concept of xenocide by questioning the difference between cosmopolitics and cosmopolitanism as divergent policies as regards to the modes of articulation between humanity and extra-humanity. In particular, the problem of the ontological-political status of extra-human foreignness is developed through a comparison between the figures of the “dark forest”, derived from the science fiction, and of the “crystal forest”, from Yanomami shamanism. Its conclusion consists of a brief commentary on the refutation of Fermi’s paradox by the parrot *Amazona vittata* in Chiang’s story “The Great Silence.”

Keywords: Xenocide; Cosmopolitics; Extra-humanity.

Resumo

O ensaio procura expor filosoficamente o conceito de xenocídio questionando a diferença entre cosmopolítica e cosmopolitismo enquanto políticas divergentes no que se refere aos modos de articulação entre humanidade e extra-humanidade. Em particular, o problema do estatuto ontológico-político da estrangeiridade extra-humana é desenvolvido através de uma comparação entre as figuras da “floresta sombria”, oriunda da ficção científica, e da “floresta de cristal”, derivada do xamanismo yanomami. Sua conclusão consiste em um breve comentário à refutação do paradoxo de Fermi pelo papagaio *Amazona vittata* na estória “O grande silêncio”, de Chiang.

Palavras-chave: Xenocídio; Cosmopolítica; Extra-humanidade.

"what are they? [...] An alien life form that's capable of destroying all of humanity [...] an alien species that we cannot live with [...] in that case war is unavoidable [...] If an alien species seems bent on destroying us and we can't communicate with them, can't understand them [...] then we are justified in any action necessary to save ourselves [...] the complete destruction of the other species."

—Card¹

Where is everybody?

—Fermi

"Continuous when divergent"

Coming from science fiction, the concept of *xenocide* - created to designate the extermination of altermundane humanities and even aloespecific ones by Man (Card 2013) - emphasizes the confrontation between different people like a conflict of cosmic order. Stengers conceives it, considering its form, in the following terms:

The "cosmos", as I hope to explain it, bears little relation to the world in which citizens of antiquity asserted themselves everywhere on their home ground, nor to an earth finally united, in which everyone is a citizen. [...] Nor does it refer to a project designed to encompass them all, for it is always a bad idea to designate something to encompass those that refuse to be encompassed by something else. In the term cosmopolitical, cosmos refers to the unknown constituted by these multiple, divergent worlds, and to the articulations of which they could eventually be capable, as opposed to the temptation of a peace intended to be final, ecumenical: a transcendent peace with the power to ask anything that diverges to recognize itself as a purely individual expression of what constitutes the point of convergence of all.. (2005)

The philosopher stands against the unification of peoples on Earth, in favor of another kind of articulation between them, because, she says, the multiplicity and divergence between their worlds is "irreducible." The "unknown" to which she refers is not a totality capable of understanding the many worlds in one, however ideal and utopian it may be. In contrast, it is a plan in which all those who resist being "encompassed by something else" are articulated, against any and all ultimate encompassment. Sustaining that convergence is not the only form of articulation between peoples as worlds, Stengers assumes the divergence *positively*, as an element

¹ N.T. CARD, Orson Scott. *Xenocide*, New York, Tor Books, 1991.

of a refractory policy both to "final and ecumenical peace" and to the absolute and totalitarian dominion of the universal people, in relation to whom all others would be nothing more than "merely individual expressions".

This positive divergence differs from contradiction, since "it does not presuppose homogeneous terms, but refers to the encounter of heterogeneous ones, who become others while remaining the same, becoming self-different" (De la Cadena 2015: 280). Instead of imposing an insurmountable obstacle, divergence is what makes the encounter possible: "The place where the heterogeneous connect themselves is also the link of their divergence, their becoming with what they are not without becoming what they are not" (2015: 280). If the encounter implies autodifference, *estrangement*, for both sides, the other becomes indispensable, constitutive, and can never be removed without also annihilating the subject of reference itself, which coincides with itself only as "another of the Other" (Viveiros de Castro 2015: 36). There is only "continuity" with another, passing between worlds, in and by divergence: "A strange set of thoughts [is] *continuous* to ours *when divergent* from it and *discontinuous when convergent*" (Skafish 2018: 88). By contrast, the "point of convergence of all" takes self-identification as fundamental, postulating an original discontinuity between worlds that diverge. From this point of view, where the stranger needs to be neutralized, divergence takes a negative value or, at best, only an instrumental one.

In reclaiming the concept of cosmos to designate the plane of political articulation between multiple and divergent worlds - *cosmopolitics* - Stengers proposes an intentional misunderstanding of the Kantian concept of "cosmopolitanism", producing "a disagreement that may be capable of affecting the politics of modern politics itself" (De la Cadena 2015: 280). Undoubtedly, the terms "unified earth", "universal citizenship", "final peace", "transcendent power", "convergence point of all", all refer directly to the "court of reason" established by the *Critique*. But cosmopolitics is not the same as cosmopolitanism: strictly speaking, there is no common basic meaning between these concepts, although there is a complex and tense continuity between them. The act of conceptual equivocation performed by the philosopher constitutes a politically effective affirmation, a genuine actualization, of cosmic divergence.

Cosmopolis

Kant's Critique consists, as we know, in the spiritual discipline of Man. This discipline is both cosmological and political. It is the greatest science fiction of modern philosophy, a "*cosmopolitan filosofiction*" (Szendy 2011). Let us start with the second of these aspects. Regarding the status of the foreigner in the "legal social state", the project of *Perpetual peace* establishes:

It is usually accepted that a man may not take hostile steps against any one, unless the latter has already injures him by act. This is quite accurate, if both are citizens of a law-governed state. For, in becoming a member of this community, each gives the other the security exercising control over them both. The individual, however, (or nation) who remains in a mere state of nature deprives me of this security and does me injury by mere proximity. There is perhaps no active (*facto*) molestation, but there is a state of lawlessness (*status injustus*) which, by its very existence, offers a continual menace to me. I can therefore compel him, either to enter into relations with me under which we are both subject to law, or to withdraw from my neighbourhood.²

"Security" is the value that operates as a criterion to distinguish, to separate by judgment, the supposed natural state of war and the legal social state. In order to securely enjoy their "wild freedom" in the face of the ever-imminent threat posed by others by their mere existence, men must "become discouraged," progressing rationally in the direction of their necessary agreement under the same State. To this end, they experience, as a species, the favors of Nature, which only imposes obstacles on them to better discipline them (Kant 1986). But the same proposition, also and above all, presents the "state of peace" - *Cosmopolis* - as a regime of radical exclusion of the foreigner: "I am constantly threatened" by those who exist outside the legal state, so I have the right to "force" them to agree with me, encompassing their "world" into mine, or, if they refuse to do so, to ban them from my coexistence, depriving them of all the rights enjoyed by my fellow citizens. Peace or extermination; therefore, xenocide.

Does this mean, then, that Kant does not conceive the existence of any other species of people as politically valid as that of the cosmopolitan man? But how to determine "what is Man", if he is taken as the only person as such? Is it possible to establish what is proper to a species or people by lowering all foreigners to their

² N.T. KANT, Immanuel. *Perpetual peace: a philosophical essay*, New York, Cosimo, Inc., 2010, p.7

subform or antiform (discontinuous, convergent) and, therefore, dispensing any positive nexus of foreignness (divergent, continuous)?

In *Anthropology from a pragmatic point of view*, Kant confronts this capital problem by appealing to extraterrestrial rational beings as a term of comparison to determine the specificity of the human being:

In order to characterize a species of beings, two things are required: we have to apprehend it together with other species we are acquainted with under one concept, and to state its characteristic property (*proprietas*) – the quality by which it differs from the other species – and use this as our basis for distinguishing it from them. – But if we are comparing a kind of being that we know (A) with another that we do not know (non-A), how can we expect or demand to state the character of the one we know, when we have no middle term for the comparison (*tertium comparationis*)? – Let the highest specific concept be that of a *terrestrial* rational being: we cannot name its character because we have no knowledge of *non-terrestrial* rational beings that would enable us to indicate their characteristic property and so to characterize terrestrial rational beings among rational beings in general. – It seems, then, that the problem of indicating the character of the human species is quite insoluble; for to set about solving it, we should have to compare two *species* of rational beings through *experience*, and experience does not present us with a second such species.³

Comparison with others, taken as a "foundation of differentiation", is a condition for determining the identity and character of a subject. However, according to Kant, in the case of the human species, considered as the only rational on Earth, comparison is impossible because it would lack "experience". Due to the scarcity of rationality among terrestrial species, only beings from outside the Earth could represent the foundation capable of assuring humanity of its complete determination. As long as no contact with extraterrestrial beings was established (by invading their worlds or being visited by them?), the anthropological question would remain "absolutely insoluble."

It is remarkable that Kant simply excludes the possibility of defining the character of humanity by reference to other living species on Earth. As if, although the human world is part of the whole of life, the planet was outside the Kantian Cosmopolis. As absurd as it may be, the philosopher is unequivocal on this point, even going so far as to identify cosmology with anthropology: if "in the world, the most important object to which man can apply them is the *human being*, because he is his own ultimate end", if

³ N.T. KANT, Immanuel. *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1974, p.182-183

man "is, by his position and dignity [as a single person], distinct from things, such as irrational animals, which are at his disposal", then "to know the human being according to his species, as an earthly being endowed with reason, deserves in particular to be called *knowledge of the world*, although it is only a part of earthly creatures" (Kant 2006: 21, 27). The use of alien rational beings is thus a consequence of the exclusion of rationality from non-human beings (things, animals) or differently human (wild, primitive) indigenous; or else, extraterrestrial rationality, that is, human, is a necessary counterpart of terrestrial, extrahuman "irrationality". But it also means that "the extraterrestrial and the extrahuman" (Nodari 2013) are *double specular, divergent one each other*, of cosmopolitan humanity: the extra-terrestrial as a sublime double, for whom men expect to be recognized as peers, and the extrahuman as their monstrous double, to whom they refuse all recognition. With this, the mere possibility of extraterrestrial rational existence seals human dominion over terrestrial creatures.

ETs

Aimed at producing the agreement of theology with astrophysics, the *Theory of Heaven* involves an exercise in "free ethnocosmological speculation" (Szendy 2011: 73), in which Kant seeks to deduce the laws that would regulate the structure and settlement of the solar system. To deduce the character of the population of other worlds, the philosopher starts from the following principle: "The ability to think rationally, and the movement of the body that obeys it, is restricted by the conditions provided by the distance from the Sun to the matter to which [the spirit] is bound" (1946: 169). The more the matter is enlivened by the influence of sunlight, the more it empowers and conditions the human soul to the "workings of the animal economy," imposing limits on the fulfillment of its rational destination. This implies, for example, that the inhabitants of Jupiter and Saturn, of bodies constituted by "much lighter and fleeting matters", would possess a psychic character more sublime and perfect than those of the inhabitants of the lower planets. Such a "more than probable assumption" is proposed as a law: the "clarity and liveliness of the concepts" of the planetary inhabitants is all the more intense the greater the distance of their residences from the Sun (1946: 171-173). Kantian anthropocentrism, its speciesism/racism, thus achieves stellar proportions:

Human nature, which in the scale of being holds, as it were, the middle rung, is located between the two absolute outer limits of perfection, equidistante from both. If the idea of the most sublime classes of sensible creatures living on Jupiter or Saturn provokes the jealousy of human beings and discourages them with the knowledge of their own humble position, a glance at the lower stages brings contentment and calms them again. The beings on the planets Venus and Mercury are reduced far below the perfection of human nature. What a view worthy of our astonishment! On one side we see thinking creatures among whom a Greenlander or a Göttergatte would be a Newton; on the other side we see people who would admire Newton as if he were an ape.⁴

In this way, Kant maximizes the asymmetry between humanity and nonhumanity, establishing a cosmopolitanism, extra-terrestrial, sidereal, in which beings of the different planets of the solar system would be as much celestial and rational as less terrestrial and animal. The Man, his sublime "object", is thought in terms of his destiny outside the Earth, as hypothetical as it is catastrophic, consisting, therefore, in an extraterrestrial philosophical fiction (Valentine 2018: 241-251).

It is precisely here that cosmopolitanism reveals its properly xenocidal aspect. According to Derrida, the dominion of Man "over" terrestrial animals is, in fact, "hatred" turned against them. Commenting on Adorno's words about "the most powerful humanistic and idealistic tradition of philosophy," he subscribes to them in a rather harsh manner:

Adorno specifies here. He particularly blames Kant, whom he respects too much from another point of view, for not giving any place in his concept of dignity (*Würde*) and the "autonomy" of man to any compassion (*Mitleid*) between man, and the animal. Nothing is more odious (*verhastet*) to Kantian man, says Adorno, than remembering a resemblance or affinity between man and animality (*die Erinnerung an die Tierähnlichkeit des Menschen*). The Kantian feels only hate for human animality. This is even his taboo. Adorno speaks of *Tabuierung* and goes a very long way straight off: for an idealist system, animals play a role virtually the same as the Jews in a fascist system (*die Tiere spielen fürs idealistische System virtuell die gleiche Rolle wie die Juden fürs faschistische*). Animals are the Jews of idealists, who are thus just virtual fascists. Fascism begins when you insult an animal, including the animal in man.⁵

Convinced to validate spiritually the humanistic insult to the extrahuman peoples of Earth, ETs may be much closer than we usually imagine: in fact, "they" are among us.

⁴ N.T. KANT, Immanuel. *Universal Natural History and Theory of Heaven*, United Kingdom, Delphi Classics, 2017

⁵ N.T. DERRIDA, Jacques. *Paper Machine*, California, Stanford University Press, p. 180-181

So let us not hesitate to ask, however abstruse this may sound: Was Kant an alien? Are we, late sub-cosmopolitans, his hosts? As always, yes and no:

And now let the reader imagine that this has already happened, and that the alien race is, in fact, "we ourselves." We were taken over by a species disguised as human, and they have won: we are they. Or are there in fact two different species of human, as Latour suggests - an indigenous and an alien one? Maybe it is the species as a whole and each one of us individually that is split in two, the alien and the indigenous living side by side in the same body: suppose a small shi in sensibility has suddenly made that self-colonization visible to us. We would thus all be indigenous, that is, Terrans, invaded by Europeans, that is, Humans; all of us, of course, including Europeans, who were after all the first Terrans to be invaded. A perfect intensive doubling (plus intra!), the end of extensive partitions: the invaders are the invaded, the colonized are the colonizers. We have woken up to an incomprehensible nightmare.⁶

Far from diluting a potential of radical alterity, to the specific unity of humanity, the recognition that "we are them" causes the collapse of that unity. "The invaders are the invaded, the colonized are the colonizers": not only do humans divide, both externally and internally, between indigenous and alien, "Humans" and "Terrans", "Indians" and "Europeans", but there is also passage and conflict between such cosmopolitan polarities. The divergences between peoples around the human condition and its relation to the Earth - for example, whether man is the "lord of nature" (Kant 2002a: 271) or another "symbiote" of Gaia (Haraway 2016: 30, 173) - are so profoundly, both culturally and "naturally", politically and cosmically, that their irreducibility testifies, against the fundamental assumption of Kantian anthropology, to the original multiplicity of differently human worlds, unfathomable under a specific common character. As Latour states about the "*Anthropos* of the Anthropocene", it is the "dangerous fiction of a universalized agent capable of acting as a unique humanity", since the new epoch of the deep history of the planet "puts an end not only to anthropocentrism but as well as to any premature unification of the human species, just as it makes possible to imagine a new understanding of the very notion of species"(2017: 246). Is it then the *species* of the human - as indeed happens with other living species (Haraway 2016: 59 et seq.) - rather a relational difference than a substantial identity?

⁶ N.T. DANOWSKI, Déborah; VIVEIROS DE CASTRO, Eduardo. *The Ends of the World*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2017, p.108

In any case, the Kantian example shows how science fiction is embedded in the heart of philosophy itself. If it is by *speculation*, by the imagination at the service of judgment, that the cosmopolitan conception of humanity befalls itself, it will only be by speculation, but by the imagination turned against the judgment, that will be possible subverted it, in opposition to xenocide.

Foris

No matter how Hannah Arendt follows Kant in other contexts, she strongly questions the constitutional extraterrestrial drift of modern cosmopolitanism, intensified by the Cold War arms race in the middle of the last century:

In 1957, an earth-born object made by man was launched into the universe, where for some weeks it circled the earth according to the same laws of gravitation that swing and keep in motion the celestial bodies—the sun, the moon, and the stars. [...] But, curiously enough, this joy was not triumphal; it was not pride or awe at the tremendousness of human power and mastery which filled the hearts of men, who now, when they looked up from the earth toward the skies, could behold there a thing of their own making. The immediate reaction, expressed on the spur of the moment, was relief about the first “step toward escape from men’s imprisonment to the earth. [...] Should the emancipation and secularization of the modern age, which began with a turning-away, not necessarily from God, but from a god who was the Father of men in heaven, end with an even more fateful repudiation of an Earth who was the Mother of all living creatures under the sky? The earth is the very quintessence of the human condition, and earthly nature, for all we know, may be unique in the universe in providing human beings with a habitat in which they can move and breathe without effort and without artifice. The human artifice of the world separates human existence from all mere animal environment, but life itself is outside this artificial world, and through life man remains related to all other living organisms.⁷

In denouncing the “disgusting repudiation” of the Earth as the birthplace of humanity, the philosopher argues that historical progress unfolds through the separation of the world, in which the human being isolates himself from other living beings in relation to life, by which irrevocably connected to them. Abandoning the Earth would be the same as renouncing the “human condition”. This is a point of radical divergence towards Kantian cosmopolitanism, which assumes the very destiny of Man

⁷ N.T. ARENDT, Hannah. *The human condition*, London, The University of Chiicago Press, 1998, *prologue*

as an alien. *The world within life and life outside the world*: the same paradox that affects, on a planetary scale, the relation between humanity in general and the environment reproduces itself in the scale of the life of each human being, with the increasing division between labor and action (political life) on the one hand and work on the other (artificial world).

If the extraterrestrials take part in the aforementioned cosmopolitan conflict, it is certain that it happens on Earth. In fact, perhaps the conflict between the city and the forest has never been so intense and decisive, as it is today:

The forest (*foris* - that which is outside the gates) presents itself as exteriority to the city (state), habitat of the *silvaticus*, the wild (the Out of the forest is also an out of the civilized condition), which can only be eliminated completely and effectively with the modification or annihilation of the geographic-political space that he occupies. As long as there are forests, there are spaces for desertion, for escape, for civil disobedience. The effective elimination of forests thus appears as a project of colonization from the outside, elimination of what is external to the State, expansion of the city walls - or, in current terms, of the *agricultural frontier*. Therefore, if we carry forward Hobbes's reasoning and image (which the states seem to do with pleasure), the state of nature would only be overcome with a universal city, a great cosmopolitan empire, with the domestication or destruction of what (who) is out there (here) (Nodari 2013: 255-256, nota 3).⁸

It is convenient to distinguish between two "Outs": the outside of the Earth, and the outside of the city. The city is *out of* the Earth - Cosmopolis -, and the forest is *on* Earth - Gaia (Stengers 2015; Latour 2017). These Outs demarcate distinct topologies: on the one hand, the transcendent exteriority of isolation - alienation of foreignness as a factor of annihilation -, on the other, the *immanent exteriority* of belonging - welcomed foreignness as a factor of constitution: "If the extraterrestrial is the human projected cosmic, the extrahuman is the terrain projecting the cosmos" (Nodari 2013: 269). It is, therefore, not one forest, but at least *two*. Among other characteristics, they contrast with each other by the way species and worlds, earth and sky, are arranged in each one, configuring radically divergent policies and cosmologies, in a maximally tense continuity. Their divergence reveals the "multidimensionality" of the Earth itself (Skafish 2018).

Shadows

⁸ N.T. Livremente traduzido pelas tradutoras.

In *The Dark Forest*, Cixin Liu presents the character of Luo Ji discussing, at a crucial moment in the story, Fermi's paradox, from the point of view of a "cosmic sociology":

The universe is a dark forest. Every civilization is an armed hunter stalking through the trees like a ghost, gently pushing aside branches that block the path and trying to tread without sound. Even breathing is done with care. The hunter has to be careful, because everywhere in the forest are stealthy hunters like him. If he finds other life—another hunter, an angel or a demon, a delicate infant or a tottering old man, a fairy or a demigod—there's only one thing he can do: open fire and eliminate them. In this forest, hell is other people. An eternal threat that any life that exposes its own existence will be swiftly wiped out. This is the picture of cosmic civilization. It's the explanation for the Fermi Paradox.⁹

The paradox concerns a set of hypotheses about the existence of alien societies on other planets raised by Enrico Fermi, a physicist who created the first nuclear reactor and was called the "atomic bomb architect". Broadly speaking, it consists in the following: given the incalculable immobility of the universe, its existence measured in tens of billions of years, as well as the unimaginable myriad of stars and stellar systems, the statistical possibility that terrestrial humanity is the only intelligent species in the universe is practically nil. But, if so, "where is everyone?" Attempts to solve the paradox have resulted in numerous responses (Webb 2015). The hypothesis of Luo Ji is one of the most surprising and profound: "They are all hidden", *hidden by their own shadows*. There would be no chance of an encounter between alien species that did not immediately result in their mutual annihilation. Because "cosmic civilization" does not admit coexistence, being an anti-community par excellence: "dark forest," says Ji, in which "hell is the others".

Such a response is justified by a complex reasoning that starts from two basic premises, the "two axioms of cosmic sociology": "First axiom: the main need of a civilization is survival. Second axiom: civilization grows and expands continually, but the total matter of the universe remains constant" (Liu 2017: 441). Together, they lead to the hypothetical realization that the encounter between two wholly foreign civilizations of one another, both guided by the need to watch over their own survival above anything else and characterized by a "technological explosion", can only destroy themselves, being "benevolent" or "malicious" in relation to one another, due to a staggering, unstoppable effect of "chain mistrust" (2017: 443-444). Paradoxical, but very

⁹ N.T. LIU, CIXIN. *The dark forest*, New York, A Tor Book, 2015, p.484-485

likely, there would not be enough room in the universe for the existence of more than one civilization!

We may be tempted to compare this "dark forest" to the space outside (of) the cosmopolitan city. But let's face it: Ji describes the impossible encounter between technologically advanced civilizations, organized according to principles typical of cosmopolitanism. Instead of out of town, it is the meeting space between different cities, so to speak, projected as cosmic civilizations separated by light-years away. It is the maximum extrapolation of cosmopolitanism, not its total suppression.

In December 2012, Liu wrote an afterword to the first book, *The Three-Body Problem*, from the series to which *The Dark Forest* belongs. The text ends like this:

On Earth, humankind can step onto another continent, and without a thought, destroy the kindred civilizations found there through warfare and disease. But when they gaze up at the stars, they turn sentimental and believe that if extraterrestrial intelligences exist, they must be civilizations bound by universal, noble, moral constraints, as if cherishing and loving different forms of life are parts of a self-evident universal code of conduct. I think it should be precisely the opposite: Let's turn the kindness we show toward the stars to members of the human race on Earth and build up the trust and understanding between the different peoples and civilizations that make up humanity. But for the universe outside the solar system, we should be ever vigilant, and be ready to attribute the worst of intentions to any Others that might exist in space. For a fragile civilization like ours, this is without a doubt the most responsible path (2016: 316).

Liu proposes "exactly the opposite" of Kant, imagining the aliens as irrational and antihuman, instead of representing a sublime image of humanity. According to him, it would be a naively xenocidal attitude to presuppose a "universal code of conduct" to which the extraterrestrial intelligences, precisely because they are intelligences, obeyed spontaneously, as a "*faktum* of Reason" (Kant 2002b). In addition, the author accuses the hypocrisy that governs the sentimentality of human beings who imagine the aliens as angels: those same humans are those who "can enter into another continent and, without thinking twice, to destroy by war and disease the sister civilization that they find". The dark forest is thus the dystopian "light-city", revealed in its monstrous face.

Crystals

On the other hand, the image of hunting induces that disastrous comparison, as if the dark forest, understood as the space outside the State, was equivalent to the forest inhabited by the so-called savage peoples. This comparison would be xenocidal by itself. But let's give it a chance... After all, it is not true that predatory relationships play a major role, symbolically and truly, both in the thinking and in the life of the forest peoples?

Let us see how Viveiros de Castro describes the "typical supernatural situation in the Amerindian world":

It is the encounter, in the forest, between a human - always alone - and a being who, seen first as a mere animal or a person, reveals himself as a spirit or a dead man, and speaks with man. These encounters are often lethal to the interlocutor, who, subjugated by nonhuman subjectivity, passes on to his side, transforming into a being of the same species as the announcer: dead, spirit or animal. Whoever responds to a you said by a nonhuman accepts the condition of being his "second person," and by assuming, in turn, the position of I, will already do it as a nonhuman. (Only shamans, multinational people by definition and trade, are able to pass through the perspectives, *tuteando* and being *tuteados* by extra-human agencies without losing their own condition of subject.) The canonical form of these supernatural encounters consists, then, in the sudden intuition that the other is human, it is understood that he is the human, which automatically dehumanizes and alienates the interlocutor, transforming him into prey - into an animal. And this, in short, would be the true meaning of Amerindian restlessness about what lies behind appearances. Appearances are deceptive because one can never be certain about which is the dominant point of view, that is, which world is in effect when interacting with others. Everything is dangerous; especially when everything is people, and we maybe are not (2002: 397).

The most flagrant divergences between the "picture of cosmic civilization" and the "supernatural encounter in the forest" seem to be: (i) in the first case, an impossible encounter between civilizations; in the second case, an intensive encounter between worlds; (ii) in the first, radical denial of the humanity of others; in the second, loss of humanity itself by the inevitable recognition that "the other is the human"; (iii) in the first, the mutual annihilation of the subjects; in the second, the reciprocal transformation of perspectives.

To reinforce the contrast, these are the words with which David Kopenawa describes his "crystal forest" (Viveiros de Castro 2006), resplendent with the mirrors of the spirits:

The xapiri who live there are the true masters of the neighboring forest, which is their home's outdoor space. They move around and frolic and rest from their games here. A great many mirrors surround this rocky massif and existed long before our arrival! This is why our ancient shamans had to carefully move them aside when they built our house, after telling the spirits their intentions in a friendly manner. The Watoriki site is surrounded by paths belonging to animal, tree, and water spirits. Ordinary people do not see their mirrors, but the xapiri see them as clearly as we see the central plaza of our own house. They cover the entire forest, as far as it stretches, and we humans live among them. The spirits constantly twirl and chase each other joyfully through the forest, making a cool breeze that we feel without seeing them. It is so. The wind does not rise up alone in the forest, as those who do not know of the xapiri's existence believe. It is the movement from the invisible flight of the spirits who live there!

Wherever human beings live, the forest is populated with animal spirits. These are the images of all the beings who walk on the ground, climb on branches, or have wings, the images of all the tapirs, the deer, the jaguars, the ocelots, the spider monkeys and howler monkeys, the coatis, the toucans, the macaws, the guans, and the agamis! The animals we hunt only move through the parts of the forest where the mirrors and paths of their ancestors' images that became xapiri are. White people never think of that when they look at the forest. Even when they fly over it in their planes, they don't see anything. They must think the soil and its mountains are placed there without reason and that the forest is just a great quantity of trees. But the shamans know it belongs to the xapiri and that it is made of their countless mirrors! There are far more xapiri than humans in the forest, and all its other inhabitants know them!¹⁰

Viveiros de Castro argues that, by emanating light instead of reflecting images, "supernatural mirrors are not representational devices, reflectors or 'reflective' mirrors, but crystals, multiplier instruments of a pure luminous experience, fragments flashing" (2006: 333). Thanks to their mirrors, spirits are not seen images, but images that see and make visible. The anthropologist adds to his exegesis an additional explanation of Kopenawa who accuses the inadequacy of western aesthetic conceptuality to account for the crystalline virtuality of the *xapiri*: "You would say 'mirrors'. But they are not mirrors to look at, they are mirrors that shine" (2006: 334). Then, the important conclusion: "The crystal forest, therefore, does not reflect or reproduce images, but obfuscates, glows and shines" (2006: 319). Instead of the trenches that form the

¹⁰ N.T. KOPENAWA, David; ALBERT, Bruce. *The falling sky: words of a Yanomami shaman*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2013, p. 64-65

shadowy forest of Liu, the crystal forest is made up of multiplying infinity screens, as in a "cinematic" multiverse (Gow 1997).

But let us speculate, in what way Kopenawa would answer Fermi's question: "Where is everyone?" Perhaps one possible answer was: "They are all there, seeing and making see, but invisible in the eyes of a ghost". The forest described by David is a network of encounters: it is not simply inhabited by many people, but made up of people, from the most varied species and worlds. Of human people, but especially of other people, much more numerous: people extrahuman, animal-people, people-spirits. In the eyes of the latter, humans, incapable under normal conditions of seeing them, are "little ghost people", "foreign ghosts" (Kopenawa & Albert 2015: 111). "Everything is dangerous": not because *xénos* are always incommunicable, but because there is excess of *xenological* communication.

Thus, in opposition to Liu's cosmic sociology, the axioms of Kopenawa's cosmopolitics are also totally different. Which, can we speculate? First, *the main need of a species-people is transformation*. Second, *cosmic matter becomes inconstant as a species-people become transformed in relation to other foreign species-peoples*. Thus, instead of "chain mistrust" and "technological explosion" as operators of the mutual annihilation of cosmopolitan civilizations (Liu 2017: 441-444), we would have, for example, *sympoiesis* network (Haraway 2016) and creation "involutionary" (Hustak & Myers 2012) as modes of reciprocal transformation of cosmopolitan collectives. The two forests could not be more distinct: while, as Liu observes, between the cosmic forest and the terrestrial city an abyss opens up, as if they were two separate worlds (and it is this separation that makes humans to do war on others on Earth, while they dream of heavenly peace), in the crystal forest, in turn, heaven and earth are confused: "*Xapiri* glitter like stars moving in the forest" (Kopenawa & Albert 2015: 113). Interstellar stars, *crystals*, the spirits are the sky of the earth, the earth as sky.

After all, as Kopenawa explains, the present earth itself is a fallen sky, having pushed the previous land into the underworld (2015: 193-217). The different cosmic levels - sky above, sky below, earth above, land below - are in such an intrinsic and dynamic relation that the various populations that inhabit them - *xapiri*, dead, humans, monsters - remain in constant intercourse and metamorphosis:

The people of the beginning of time were not as wise. Yet they worked hard to prevent its fall. But they were overwhelmed by fear, so they cut overly fragile stays from the soft hollow wood of the *tokori* and *kahu usihi* trees to

sustain it. Most of these ancestors were crushed or thrown under- ground, except in one place where the sky nally came to rest on a wild cacao tree, which bent under its weight but did not break. This happened in the center of our forest, where you nd the hill region we call *horepě* a. Finally, a *werehe* parrot slowly gnawed at the surface of the sky, lying on the cacao tree canopy, and made a hole through which these rst peo- ple nally escaped. They went out into the new forest on the back of the old sky and continued to live there. The shamans call them *hutu mosi horiepě t^hëri pě*, the people who came out of the sky. Yet later these ancestors also died. They metamorphosed and were carried away by the waters or were burned when the entire forest went up in ames long ago. This is what I know. We came into existence after them and we too have grown in number. So we are their ghosts.¹¹

One last ghost

Another parrot, reminiscent of a species critically endangered by Man's predatory action - *Amazona vittata* - uses Ted Chiang's pen to respond to Fermi's paradox. From the "telescopic" observation of the human desire to connect with civilizations of other planets, his reflection shows, with more than enough reasons, the xenocidal imposture that there is in asking "where is everybody", in the midst of a planet yet, but perhaps for a short time, bustling with intelligent species:

The humans use Arecibo to look for extraterrestrial intelligence. Their desire to make a connection is so strong that they've created an ear capable of hearing across the universe.

But I and my fellow parrots are right here. Why aren't they interested in listening to our voices?

We're a non-human species capable of communicating with them. Aren't we exactly what humans are looking for?

The universe is so vast that intelligent life must surely have arisen many times. The universe is also so old that even one technological species would have had time to expand and fill the galaxy. Yet there is no sign of life anywhere except on Earth. Humans call this the Fermi paradox.

One proposed solution to the Fermi paradox is that intelligent species actively try to conceal their presence, to avoid being targeted by hostile invaders.

Speaking as a member of a species that has been driven nearly to extinction by humans, I can attest that this is a wise strategy.

It makes sense to remain quiet and avoid attracting attention.

The Fermi paradox is sometimes known as the Great Silence. The universe ought to be a cacophony of voices, but instead it's disconcertingly quiet.

¹¹ N.T. KOPENAWA, Davi; ALBERT, Bruce. *The falling sky: words of a Yanomami shaman*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2013, p.131

Some humans theorize that intelligent species go extinct before they can expand into outer space. If they're correct, then the hush of the night sky is the silence of a graveyard.

Hundreds of years ago, my kind was so plentiful that the Rio Abajo forest resounded with our voices. Now we're almost gone. Soon this rainforest may be as silent as the rest of the universe. (Chiang 2015: 1).

Member of a people of the "polyglot forest" (Albert 2016), Alex's cousin (Pepperberg 2009) fears that the human Cosmopolis install on Earth the supposed celestial "great silence". If "it makes sense to be quiet and avoid attracting attention", it is not because the land forest would be the stage of the war of all against all, but because cosmopolitan humanity, faithful to the purpose of progressive expansion through the elimination of the Out, makes permanent war to all living species on the planet. Moreover, by its interspecific transposition to the word act - "I Speak, so I Am" -, the parrot proves that the Earth is inhabited by extrahuman peoples endowed with their own languages: "We do not simply scream. We pronounce. We enunciate" (Chiang 2015: 2). Nevertheless, as a result of sympoietic collaboration - a work of "*xenogenesis*" (Butler 2000) -, the spectral testimony of *Amazona vittata* shows that the silence can always be broken when, against the nefarious dogma that "the proper study of mankind is Man" (Pope apud Le Guin 2009: 40), the word is given to the extrahuman.

When anthropology becomes xenology (Card 2013): "One has the impression of a fictitious world, strange, alien, seen by other creatures; but also the presentiment that this world is already ours and that we ourselves are these other creatures" (Deleuze 2006: 211). There is no world without its own alien: the world is another-world or no world at all. Because every xenocide leads to the annihilation of the same world in the name of which it is perpetrated:

What the world has lost, and what truly matters, is a part of what invents and maintains it as world. The world dies from each absence; the world bursts from absence. For the universe, as the great and good philosophers have said, the entire universe thinks and feels itself, and each being matters in the fabric of its sensations. Every sensation of every being of the world is a mode through which the world lives and feels itself, and through which it exists. And every sensation of every being of the world causes all the beings of the world to feel and think themselves differently. When a being is no more, the world narrows all of a sudden, and a part of reality collapses. Each time an existence disappears, it is a piece of the universe of sensations that fades away. (Despret 2017: 219-220).

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