

## ON A CERTAIN NOTION OF POINT OF VIEW: THE INCIDENCE OF DELEUZE &amp; GUATTARI'S THOUGHT ON AMERINDIAN ETHNOLOGY

*SOBRE UMA CERTA NOÇÃO DE PONTO DE VISTA: A INCIDÊNCIA DO PENSAMENTO DE DELEUZE & GUATTARI NA ETNOLOGIA AMERÍNDIA**SOBRE UNA CIERTA NOCIÓN DE PUNTO DE VISTA: EL IMPACTO DEL PENSAMIENTO DE DELEUZE & GUATTARI EN LA ETNOLOGÍA AMERINDIA*Vicente Cretton PEREIRA<sup>1</sup>  
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**ABSTRACT:** The article seeks to systematize some of the links between ethnological research in the South American Lowlands and the philosophy of Deleuze & Guattari, pointing out the main concepts and the ways in which they have been used to justify these connections. Above all, it tries to answer the following questions: why and how has the philosophy of difference been good for certain ethnologists in the South American lowlands to think about the worldviews of the peoples they research? How can we map the use of this tool, the philosophy of difference? What has ethnology proposed in terms of the production (and translation) of concepts based on the thinking of Deleuze & Guattari? In the course of this journey, we also arrive at a division of the encounter between indigenous ethnology and the philosophy of difference into three main moments. The first in the work of Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, the second with the work of Tania Stolze Lima, and the third, more recent, in which researchers are once again looking for conceptual resources directly in the philosophy of difference based on perspectivism.

**KEYWORDS:** Indigenous ethnology. Amerindian perspectivism. Philosophy of difference.

**RESUMO:** *O artigo busca sistematizar alguns dos elos existentes entre as pesquisas em etnologia nas Terras Baixas da América do Sul e a filosofia de Deleuze & Guattari, apontando os principais conceitos e as formas com que foram utilizados de modo a justificar tais conexões. Principalmente tenta-se responder às seguintes questões: porque e como a filosofia da diferença têm sido boa para que certos etnólogos das terras baixas sul-americanas pensem as visões de mundo dos povos junto aos quais pesquisam? Como mapear o uso desta ferramenta que é a filosofia da diferença? O que a etnologia propôs em termos de produção (e tradução) de conceitos a partir do pensamento de Deleuze & Guattari? Durante este percurso, chega-se, ainda, a uma divisão do encontro entre etnologia indígena e filosofia da diferença em três momentos principais. A primeira na obra de Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, a segunda com o trabalho de Tania Stolze Lima, a terceira, mais recente, na qual os pesquisadores voltam a buscar recursos conceituais diretamente na filosofia da diferença a partir do perspectivismo.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Etnologia indígena. Perspectivismo ameríndio. Filosofia da diferença.*

**RESUMEN:** *El artículo busca sistematizar algunos de los vínculos entre la investigación etnológica en las tierras bajas sudamericanas y la filosofía de Deleuze & Guattari, señalando los principales conceptos y las formas en que han sido utilizados para justificar estas conexiones. Sobre todo, intenta responder a las siguientes preguntas: ¿por qué y cómo la filosofía de la diferencia ha servido a ciertos etnólogos de las tierras bajas sudamericanas para pensar las cosmovisiones de los pueblos que investigan? ¿Cómo podemos mapear el uso de esta herramienta, la filosofía de la diferencia? ¿Qué ha propuesto la etnología en términos de producción (y traducción) de conceptos a partir del pensamiento de Deleuze & Guattari? Durante este recorrido, el encuentro entre la etnología indígena y la filosofía de la diferencia se dividió en tres momentos principales. El primero en el trabajo de Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, el segundo con el trabajo de Tania Stolze Lima, y el tercero, más reciente, en el que los investigadores vuelven a buscar recursos conceptuales directamente en la filosofía de la diferencia a partir del perspectivismo.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *Etnología indígena. Perspectivismo ameríndio. Filosofía de la diferencia.*

## Introduction

The subject addressed in this research has already been the subject of previous analysis by some of the authors who serve as our reference, especially Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (in his 2015 book *Metafísicas Canibais* ("Cannibal Metaphysics") and in other articles<sup>2</sup>). The link between Gilles Deleuze and ethnology has also been explored in non-indigenous contexts, for example in relation to the quilombola societies of the Ribeira Valley (see CUNHA 2016). Our main concern should therefore be to systematize (without exhausting the subject, of course) some of the links that exist, in the history of ethnology of the South American Lowlands, between this discipline and the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari (henceforth D&G) - whose work would be as relevant to anthropology as those of Foucault or Derrida, as Viveiros de Castro writes (2007, p. 92) -, pointing out the main concepts and uses of the same that were most responsible for this connection. Some of the questions that guide us are: why and how has the philosophy of difference been good for certain ethnologists from the South American lowlands to think about the worldviews of the peoples they research? How can we map the use of this tool, the philosophy of difference? What has ethnology proposed in terms of the production (and translation) of concepts based on the thinking of D&G?

The text is divided into three main parts, each exploring a specific phase of the encounter between D&G and ethnology. We start with Eduardo Viveiros de Castro's work with the Araweté, where indigenous ethnology explicitly expressed the need for a *different* philosophy from that from which so-called modern rationality represents itself (in a Cartesian lineage, so to speak). We then move on to Tania Stolze Lima's<sup>3</sup> work with the Yudjá, where she consolidates Amerindian notions of point-of-view and asymmetry based on Deleuzeguattarian concepts. Finally, we present resonances of their work in more recent ethnographies that return to the work of D&G, after a period in which the discipline, although

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<sup>2</sup> Notably in his *Intensive Affiliation and Demonic Alliance* (*Filiação Intensiva e Aliança Demoníaca*, VIVEIROS DE CASTRO, 2007), where the author explores a part of the "contemporary conceptual aesthetic", whose sedimentation was decisively influenced by the work of D&G.

<sup>3</sup> Together with Lima and Viveiros de Castro, Aparecida Vilaça co-authored the theory of perspectivism based on her research into Wari' hunting, shamanism and cannibalism. Although her article *Fazendo corpos* ("Making bodies") (1998) was published two years after the first two seminal articles on perspectivism (both from 1996), her ethnography of the Wari', supervised by Viveiros de Castro (defended in 1989 and published in 1992), was a fundamental database for discussions on a point of view situated in the body and on the difference between beings. As her ethnography completely dispenses with the philosophy of D&G, her work would be better placed alongside that of authors such as Antonio Gonçalves, Carlos Fausto, Philippe Descola, Anne-Christine Taylor, Bruce Albert, Philippe Erikson, Jean-Pierre Chaumeil, Patrick Menget (among others) - in which difference is treated as an operator, but not in a Deleuzian way.

gravitating around Amerindian perspectivism, no longer cited it directly.

### The Tupi-Guarani and the constitutive difference

It is known that the initial moments of Viveiros de Castro's career, in the 1970s, were marked by the construction of an anthropological theory on Tupi-Guarani societies, with studies on the Jê of Central Brazil as a kind of backdrop, a certain "writing against", as the author puts it (VIVEIROS DE CASTRO; SZTUTMAN, 2008, p. 27-8), that is, against the predominant landscape in which they were formed at the time. In contrast to the Jê social organization, which presents societies that strive to remain identical to themselves by conjuring and freezing the future (VIVEIROS DE CASTRO, 1986, p. 27), Viveiros de Castro would contrast the Araweté society, a society without an interior, about whose notion of person the author wrote at the time that it could be said that it *did not really exist*: "as becoming it is not; as a mobile relationship between terms, it is an 'in-between' (an in-between-two) and not an entity" (VIVEIROS DE CASTRO, 1986, p. 118, our translation).

It's only on page 122 of "*Os deuses canibais*" (The Cannibal Gods) that the author tries to justify and detail what he himself calls his insistence on the concept of becoming<sup>4</sup> - which is opposed to the concept of Being - and to do so he evokes a quote about Guarani philosophy from the work of Helène Clastres: "a logic that refuses the principle of contradiction seems to operate in this thought which, at the same time, opposes extremes and aims to make them compatible" (CLASTRES, 1978, p. 89 *apud* VIVEIROS CASTRO, 1986, p. 122-3, our translation), says the passage he highlights. Extending the French anthropologist's intuition, Viveiros de Castro states that extremes oppose each other only to be dissolved as extremes and then goes on to clarify the concept of becoming. Thus, in note 21, we start from the canonical analysis of totemism constructed by Lévi-Strauss based on the notion of series (cosmological, sociological), where metonymy would be the prevailing process within each series and metaphor the process of articulating at least two series, in order to affirm the insufficiency of both processes for understanding the articulation between cosmology and society among the Tupi-Guarani. The use of this "heterogeneous notion", that of becoming, is justified in order to qualify processes that are neither interior to the series nor an articulation between them, but rather processes of transformation: the passage from one

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<sup>4</sup> Further clarification on the concept can be found in Viveiros de Castro, 2007 (especially from page 115 onwards).

series to another, such as the metamorphosis of Araweté death or cannibal transubstantiation, for example. The concept then seemed to serve as an escape from structuralism.

The philosophical notion of becoming was being used by Viveiros de Castro in two senses "that partially overlap", as he explains later in the same note: the first refers us to the opposition between Being and Becoming that is the foundation of Western metaphysics ("the part of Becoming is much heavier in Tupi-Guarani philosophy than it has been in the history of Western thought," he explains); the second refers us to the dual author D&G and designates pre-representative processes, prior to the generation of identities by position in a structure of oppositions through the metonymic-metaphoric operation:

In this sense, Devir speaks of processes that take place in the Real before the reality/representation distinction; and I use the concept to indicate that the being of the Araweté person is a becoming-other: becoming-god, -enemy, -jaguar, where if the Other, as the object of becoming, is imaginary, the becoming is real, and otherness is a quality of the verb, not a predicate of it (...). If in the first sense "becoming" is (or is not) anterior and encompassing in relation to being seen as substance and term, in the second sense it is opposed to "being" as an identity copula (VIVEIROS DE CASTRO, 1986, p. 124, our translation).

Finally, still in the same note, Viveiros de Castro justifies his choices in relation to the philosophical tools used by saying that they are not personal or ideological preferences placed a priori in the analysis, but rather a language that during the investigation appeared to be the most appropriate for an intuitive description of Tupi-Guarani and Araweté cosmology. The first connection between ethnology and the philosophy of difference thus arises from a need that arose during the course of the research, where anthropological tools (structuralism, Jê ethnology, the work of Clastres, etc.) probably proved insufficient to provide a *dense description* of Araweté material.

At the same time, in an article written together with Manuela Carneiro da Cunha, Viveiros de Castro (VIVEIROS CASTRO; CARNEIRO DA CUNHA, 1985) promoted a fundamental debate about the foundations of Tupinambá society, opposing himself not so much to the ethnology of the Jê peoples, but to Florestan Fernandes' ideas about the role of war for these people. If Fernandes, placing war at the service of religion, considered Tupinambá vengeance as a manifestation of the intention to satisfy the need for a sacrificial relationship with a dead relative or mythical ancestor (FERNANDES, 2006[1952], p. 371), Viveiros de Castro & Carneiro da Cunha emphasize the productive and founding role of these same phenomena, that is, war and vengeance as constituting the engine of Tupinambá society.

The challenge, then, was to think about the extent to which war produces a society that exists only because of it, through it. To understand how the memory of past vengeance and the promise of future vengeance acted not as ends, but as motors that made the persistence of the relationship with enemies a basic condition of existence: "it is not a question of having vengeance because people die and need to be rescued from the destructive flow of time; it is a question of dying so that there can be vengeance, and thus a future" (VIVEIROS CASTRO; CARNEIRO DA CUNHA, p. 201). War would no longer have a social function, as Florestan Fernandes argued, but would be the very nexus of Tupinambá society, where the victim killed in the yard of the enemy village was the pledge of new vendettas and the result of previous vendettas. A society constituted in the temporal dimension, and therefore dependent on what is external to it, that is, its enemies. In contrast to Jê studies, in which the existence of society was substantiated in space, in Tupinambá morphogenesis spatiality was subordinated to temporality and the perpetual circulation of memory between enemy groups was responsible for opening up the *socius* to the beyond, to others, to what was different from itself. We find echoes of the idea of becoming here, that is, of a difference that is constitutive, and this idea will underpin the *intuitive description* of both society and the Tupi person.

This "opening up of the socius" will reappear in three conferences and a seminar held in France in May 1992, which will give rise to one of the articles in "*A inconstância da alma selvagem*" (The inconstancy of the savage soul) (VIVEIROS DE CASTRO, 2011[2002]), namely "*A imanência do inimigo*" (The immanence of the enemy), where the person's mode of subjectivation takes the place of the morphogenesis of society and the circulation of memory gives way to the exchange of perspectives between killer and victim, in a fusion of points of view. Thus, the Araweté slayer receives from the dead enemy chants characterized by an enunciative regime marked by the enemy's point of view, in other words, a citational style where the subject of enunciation is the victim himself, after his death (VIVEIROS DE CASTRO, 2011[2002], p. 275). Furthermore, the fusion between the killer and his dead enemy presupposes an *other-becoming* of the former, who will never cease to be accompanied by the spirit of his victim, thus differentiating himself not only from himself but from any other Araweté who has not killed anyone. The final destiny of the Araweté killer is to become Iraparadî, which means that his soul will not be devoured by the gods when it reaches the celestial heights, like the soul of the ordinary Araweté (who, after being devoured, also become gods themselves), in other words, he is already a kind of anticipated god, and this

conclusion evokes the condition of the Tupinambá warrior for whom access to the "land without evil" would be precisely death in an enemy's yard.

In fact, Viveiros de Castro can only perceive the continuity between the Tupinambá and Araweté materials by considering a movement of translation he observed in the latter's cosmology: many of the symbolic contents conveyed in war by other Amazonian peoples (such as the Jívaro and Munduruku, for example), in the case of the Araweté, are displaced to the relationship between gods and men (VIVEIROS DE CASTRO, 2011[2002], p. 288), in other words, the space and function of exteriority has been occupied by the gods, who are both affinities and enemies (devourers) of the Araweté (VIVEIROS DE CASTRO, 2011[2002], p. 288). The other-becoming of the slayer is an example of a process that can be widely generalized as a "ritual transformation of the Self" (a term the author takes from Melanesian ethnology) based on the relationship with an enemy reduced to a state of extreme subjectivity and producing a movement of "fusional approximation" and "immanentization of difference". This relationship created by the suppression of one of the (related) terms that is introjected by the other makes predation a mode of subjectivation<sup>5</sup>: Introjecting the Other (the difference) produces the subject as a transformation of itself.

We have seen so far that the Deleuzeguattarian concept of becoming - a type of relational synthesis that differs from a connection or conjunction of terms and does not have similarity or identity as its cause, called by D&G as *disjunctive synthesis* or *inclusive disjunction* (VIVEIROS DE CASTRO, 2007, p. 99) - accompanied Viveiros de Castro in important works, making it possible to describe Araweté society as *between* and not *being* (that is, more as a process and less as something that exists by itself) and, as a result, helping to construct a Tupinambá social morphology in which temporality would be the main support, and revenge would come to be understood as an exchange of the *Enemy's perspective*. Later, the same change of perspective, now back to the Araweté, is evoked to show the condition of the Araweté slayer as a subject who differs from himself.

In 1996, in dialog with Tania Stolze Lima (VIVEIROS DE CASTRO, 2011[2002], p. 347), he wrote an important article on Amerindian perspectivism, which would become an

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<sup>5</sup> It is quite likely that the term subjectivation, for Viveiros de Castro, has its origins in Michel Foucault's use of it: "I sought above all to produce a history of the different modes of subjectivation of human beings in our culture; I dealt, in this perspective, with three modes of objectivization that transform human beings into subjects. [...] It is not power, then, but the subject that constitutes the general theme of my investigations" (DREYFUS; RABINOW, 1984: 297-298 *apud* ADORNO, 2017, p. 36, our translation). It should be noted that Foucault is cited by Viveiros de Castro as one of the main names in what would be an "anthropology of complex societies", alongside Louis Dumont, Bruno Latour and Marilyn Strathern (VIVEIROS DE CASTRO; SZTUTMAN [org.], 2008, p. 45).

influential anthropological theory in Brazil and abroad in the following years. Two epigraphs indicate the paths taken by the author: the first is taken from a Matsiguenga ethnography (BAER, 1994 *apud* VIVEIROS DE CASTRO, 1996, p. 115) and the second from a work by Gilles Deleuze on Leibniz. In other words, from the outset it is suggested that this is a theory strongly based on Amerindian ethnology, but on which the philosophy of difference has a decisive impact. Considering Tim Ingold's well-known phrase, "anthropology for me is philosophy with people in it" (INGOLD, 2014), one might think that the ontology (i.e. the discourse on existence) of peoples like the Matsiguenga, Araweté and perhaps more directly the Yudjá (or Juruna, studied by LIMA, 1996) provided concrete material for a certain lineage of European philosophical thought whose last fold is the work of Deleuze (much of it written, as we know, in partnership with Guattari).

But before that, Amerindian perspectivism is a necessary attempt to "take seriously" (VIVEIROS DE CASTRO, 2002, p. 134, our translation) statements such as "the peccaries are human", "humans are seen as tapirs by snakes", "people are jaguar monkeys", "what we see as worms in a corpse the vultures see as fish jumping in a river", "blood is cauim for the jaguar", etc. Take them seriously without, however, treating them literally or disqualifying them as mere fantasy, but considering them as belonging to the *world of Another*. The concept, which acts here in defense of a more symmetrical methodology for anthropological fieldwork, is also Deleuzian (*A Lógica do Sentido* (The Logic of Meaning) is the reference here). The *operative metaphors* of perspectivism make up a world that does not exist except within itself, as the author explains:

*Another is the expression of a possible world. A possible that really exists, but does not currently exist outside of its expression in someone else. The expressed possible is involved or implicated in the expressive (which remains heterogeneous to it), and is realized in language or in the sign, which is the reality of the possible as such - meaning. The "I" then appears as an explanation of this implication, an actualization of this possible, by taking its rightful place (that of "I") in the language game. The subject is thus an effect, not a cause; it is the result of the internalization of a relationship that is external to it - or rather, of a relationship to which it is internal: the relationships are originally external to the terms, because the terms are internal to the relationships (VIVEIROS DE CASTRO 2002, p. 118, author's emphasis, our translation).*

Such metaphors generally refer to the double meaning of animals and plants in general (but some in a special way, such as psychotropic plants, large mammals and dangerous predators: tapir, jaguar, boa constrictor, datura, tobacco, etc.) as having an external form that



differs qualitatively from their internal form: there would be like an "animal garment" covering a subjectivity or intentionality identical to the human one (VIVEIROS DE CASTRO, 2011[2002], p. 351). The constitutive dimension, the author suggests, of perspective inversions concerns the relative and relational status of predator and prey, so that "personity" (quality of being a person) and "perspectivity" (ability to occupy a point of view) would be a matter of degree and situation and not diacritical properties of certain species (VIVEIROS DE CASTRO, 2011[2002], p. 353). In other words, for this ontology, the human or animal quality of an animal is something that can only be verified a posteriori: "the possibility of a hitherto insignificant being revealing itself as a prosopomorphic agent capable of affecting human affairs is always open; personal experience, one's own or that of others, is more decisive than any substantive cosmological dogma" (VIVEIROS DE CASTRO, 2011[2002], p. 353, our translation). When the Yudjá go out hunting bush pigs, they do not know at first whether their point of view will prevail, since fear (and other affections) in front of the animal can cause someone to lose their human perspective: feeling afraid, this person reveals the event from the point of view of the pigs, who see the hunt as a war ( see LIMA, 1996). It is human to feel fear in the face of the enemy in a war, but not in the face of the animal that will be your food, so it is an affection that produces an exchange of points of view, the bush pig presenting itself in its human form and the Yudjá person adhering to the world of the bush pigs, thus becoming an animal herself: "on the hunt, however, the hunter's soul, if it occurs to him to abandon his place due to the fear that strikes the subject, is not only visible to the pigs but is captured and goes to live with them, gaining, over time, a pig's body, visible to the human gaze" (VIVEIROS DE CASTRO, 2011[2002], p. 36, our translation). In other words, the body of such a hunter becomes a "pig's body" for humans, in other words, with hair, tusks, a tail, etc.

The perspectivism presented in this way by the Amerindians, which can be observed in general in the three Americas (with contextual and specific modulations, of course<sup>6</sup>), raises the question of *what a subject can be* (VIVEIROS DE CASTRO, 2002, p. 118). This is an effectively new question, since it escapes the duality between subject and object that is the

<sup>6</sup> As an Amerindian theory, variations of perspectivism can be found among many indigenous peoples of the Americas, such as the Wari' (VILAÇA, 1992; 1998), the Parakanã (FAUSTO, 2014[2001]), the Paumari (BONILLA, 2005), the Ikpeng (RODGERS, 2002), the Guajá (CORMIER, 2003), the Kanamari (COSTA, 2017), the Guarani (PEREIRA, 2016), the Mebengokré (COHN, 2011), the Kaxinawá (LAGROU, 2007), the Nahua (ROMERO, 2007), the Runa (KOHN, 2013) and many others, which leads us to think of a "cosmological background" common to most of these peoples. As an anthropological theory, perspectivism has found resonance in ethnographies of indigenous peoples from other regions of the world, such as Siberia (WILLERSLEV, 2007) e Ásia (HOLBRAAD; WILLERSLEV, 2007), for example.

foundation of European thought, and which is answered by Amerindian thought in the following way: *the subject is whoever occupies the point of view*. It is not a question of affirming the relativity of the true, but rather the truth of the relative, an idea according to Viveiros de Castro, who defines perspectivism as "perspectivism - that of Leibniz and Nietzsche as well as that of the Tukano or Juruna - is not a relativism, that is, an affirmation of the relativity of the true, but a relationalism, by which it is affirmed that *the truth of the relative is the relation*" (VIVEIROS DE CASTRO, 2002, p. 129, our translation). What initially made it possible to perceive an opening up of the Tupi-Guarani socius and person to the outside world, also began to act in the construction of a general (and Amerindian) theory of the point of view. The exchange of perspective now no longer concerns only the relationship between enemies (as in the case of the Tupinambá or Araweté), but also the relationship between species, each of which is potentially the subject of a singular world.

Tools made available by the philosophy of difference were thus used by Viveiros de Castro throughout his work to update a properly anthropological research program, suggested many years earlier by Lévi-Strauss from his long study of Amerindian myths, as Viveiros de Castro rightly quotes (2011[2002], p. 347, our translation) in the epigraph to the revised version of the 1996 article: "(...), the reciprocity of perspectives that I saw as the characteristic feature of mythical thought can claim a much broader domain of explanation". A Lévi-Strauss who, starting with *Mythologies*, established the guidelines for a "philosophy of the future" marked by the seal of interminability and virtuality (perhaps having founded post-structuralism itself in a way, as VIVEIROS DE CASTRO, 2015, p. 30 suggests) and who lived to comment, back in the 2000s, that "Brazilian colleagues", based on a critical analysis of the notion of affinity, ended up bringing philosophy back to the center of the anthropological debate: "no longer our philosophy, the one that my generation wanted to get rid of with the help of exotic peoples; but, in a remarkable twist, their" (LÉVI-STRAUS, 2000 *apud* VIVEIROS DE CASTRO, 2015, p. 30-1, our translation). In fact, on more than one occasion, as already pointed out in the introduction to this work, Viveiros de Castro himself has established the necessary parallels between the works of D&G and Lévi-Strauss (see for example VIVEIROS DE CASTRO, 2007 and VIVEIROS DE CASTRO, 2015), explaining the ways in which perspectivism is heir to these two lines of thought, in other words, an intersection between philosophy and anthropology.

## Asymmetry and power in Amerindian cosmologies

In Tania Stolze Lima's ethnography of the Yudjá, the first reference to the conceptual framework of D&G appears in the presentation of the myth with which the author begins the text and whose main character is the figure of Sena'ã, a so-called "chromatic" being who in his acts of creation generates a "well-seasoned" sociality (LIMA, 2005, p. 53). The thought that is expressed through the myth is then characterized by the author, through D&G, as a *thought of a popular type*<sup>7</sup>, that is, a thought that works with analogies of proportion: "similarities that differ throughout a series, or from one series to another", according to the different degree to which they approach or move away from an eminent term, given as the reason for the series" (LIMA, 2005, p. 53). Such thinking (in other words, thinking in its popular form) requires the application of a careful imagination that takes into account branches of the series, apparent ruptures, true and false similarities, progressions and regressions, etc. Imagination that the Amerindians possess and use, often leaving ethnologists with the impression of a "fluid" social organization. Echoing observations by Pierre Clastres and Anne-Christine Taylor, the author explains:

Clastres, for whom the fluid societies of the region are not immediately more transparent than those of Europe and have an essential temporal dimension, said that they "know how to perfectly manage the possibility of difference in identity, of alterity in the homogeneous; and in this refusal of mechanism we can read the sign of their creativity (...). Taylor, on the other hand, pointed out that the main idea of Jivaro sociological thinking - more of a fluid society - consists precisely in "situating at a great distance an other who is neither completely exotic nor completely the same, but is both at the same time (...)" (LIMA, 2005, p. 53-4, our translation).

Amerindian societies thus present a sociological model that contrasts with the one that D&G characterized by bringing together the attributes of discreteness, extension and totalization. These societies, like that of the Yudjá, do not think about the emergence of a system of extensive and complementary collective identities, but "the passage from an inertial, undifferentiated continuum to an active, differentiating continuum, creating intensive, qualitative differential positions (...)" (LIMA, 2005, p. 54, our translation).

In all this *differentiating* regime to which the Amerindian social form is subjected, many authors have observed a political intention, with Pierre Clastres perhaps being the most famous among them. However, for Lima, the question raised by this author about the political

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<sup>7</sup> As opposed to regal thinking (*royale*).

philosophy and social constitution of indigenous peoples involved a broader issue that was better formulated by Félix Guattari, a friend of his, as we know. This is the distinction proposed by this author between subjected groups and subject-groups, not as types of groups, but as poles or states of any group (LIMA, 2005, p. 114). If for any group subjection is an ever-present risk, the group-subject activates "transversality coefficients" to assume the meaning of its praxis and hold real power, in other words, neither egalitarian horizontality nor a verticalizing hierarchy, but a group that, deliberately or not, puts itself in the position of "assuming itself as the agent of its own death" (GUATTARI, 1987 *apud* LIMA, 2005, p. 114, our translation). The problem is important because it allows us to escape the double Clastrean option "for a theory of *society* and a *type* of society" (LIMA, 2005, p. 115, authors highlights), in other words, Guattari allows us to understand why notions of equality and hierarchy (most often put at the service of theories of society), for example, do not satisfactorily capture the processes underway in Amazonian societies ("in all of them, as Overing pointed out, one can see the presence of hierarchy, and all seem to be egalitarian", notes LIMA, 2005, p. 115, our translation) and also in Amerindian societies in general.

In the Yudjá material, two of these processes appear strategically in the author's argument: one is the asymmetrical social formation indicated by the notion of function-I and the other is a sociocosmological system marked by the Yudjá notion of point of view (called function-Other, LIMA, 2005, p. 212). The first develops from the reflection on social groups in the Amazon, then thought of as groups of bodily or corporeal descent (the main reference here is ANTHONY SEEGER, 1980 *apud* LIMA, 2005, p. 81), that is, groups composed of bodily identity given by the sharing of the same substances by people who are related. Not suitable for analysis by examining bilateral kinship or by inventorying kinship relations, the formation of Yudjá groups takes place through an asymmetrical relationship between a prominent figure (the "chief") and the other members, in other words, a group is always someone's "personal" (away). The function of "boss" then corresponds to the function of subject, or rather to the momentary and contextual focus of this function-I that results from the relationship between non-equivalent (i.e. asymmetrical) terms: a man and his wife and children, an uncle and a nephew, a boss and his group, etc. Thus, internally, the Yudjá social form has an asymmetrical constitution, with the function-I always being appropriated by one person "making it the collective and making the collective that person" (LIMA, 2005, p. 94, our translation).

What the author calls the function-I is very directly related to the idea of "owner" (*iwa*,

in Yudjá), which is very common among Amerindian peoples in general. She explains: "One is *iwa* of a thing because one owns it (...) or because one shows a predilection for it (...). You are *iwa* of what you make exist. As well as that which protects or guarantees existence" (LIMA, 2005, p. 95). The idea is "good for thinking about" both the type of agency that makes the most mundane and everyday events possible and also the creation of the universe, of existence: for example, if Sena'ã is *iwa* of this world because he created it, the Yudjá person who attracts others by offering *cauim* (and the feast that accompanies its consumption) is also *iwa* of the *cauim*.

The notion of *iwa* is equivalent to the notion of "subject position", since the *iwa* is always the subject in relation to the things and people he owns. This position circulates between people (for example, anyone can become the "owner of the *cauim*" on a given occasion), but it also crystallizes in certain elements (usually the oldest member of a cognatic group, who articulates the function-I with their seniority). Halfway between the circulating function and its crystallization, there is also the "village owner" (or chief, in the indigenous gloss [LIMA, 2005, p. 96]). With all this, we arrive at a general outline of the configuration of the Yudjá *socius*, made up of groups that are internally organized through an asymmetrical relationship (i.e. the "chief" and the others) and externally through a symmetrical relationship between two "chiefs". This configuration is also open to events, so it can present alternating states of asymmetry (such as when one chief works for another).

What the author calls the function-Other is apparently the transposition of this political constitution of the Yudjá social form into the cosmos, and to discuss it, she evokes her 1996 article on perspectivism, listing some fundamental ideas (LIMA, 2005, p. 213), namely: perspectivism is not the same thing as relativism; animism (or rather, the opposition between appearance and essence) is insufficient to characterize this indigenous notion<sup>8</sup>; the shaman does not have a privileged point of view on native life and cosmology and, finally, for this indigenous notion, a point of view of the whole is inconceivable. In other words, it is an indigenous notion of point of view which, by making the absolute spectator flee, is against the State (to quote Clastres) and more specifically against the State form of thought (to quote D&G).

We are thus faced with a sociocosmological system that operates a continuum between states of subjectivity and properties of the cosmos (LIMA, 2005, p. 214), so that "it is proper

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<sup>8</sup> There are two main ways of treating perspectivism: as a corollary of animism (SÁEZ, 2012) or as a particular case of animism (DESCOLA, 2015).

to the human person to be endowed with a perspective that contains others" (LIMA, 2005, p. 216). The double movement of the gaze, which transforms a person into an animal or spirit (via drunkenness, for example) or an animal (or spirit) appearing to someone as a person, raises the question: is the cosmos a fractal person (WAGNER, 1991 *apud* LIMA 2005, p. 217)? Or to put it in the Yudjá way, is the sky, this *maloca* where we are all sheltered, the skin of the world?

In a 1999 article, which is perhaps one of the most didactic texts on perspectivism ever written, Lima effectively draws on D&G to characterize the indigenous cosmological regime based on different types of difference between certain animals, spirits and humans (LIMA, 1999, p. 48). According to our dual author, there are two ways of treating a variable, "making it operate as a constant or placing it in a state of continuous variation" (LIMA, 1999): the second way is especially appropriate for dealing with the subject focused on in the article at hand (i.e. the relationship between culture and nature), since we are dealing with a cosmology in which "the significant difference between humans and pigs, (...), is not the same as that which exists with the caïtítu, the jaguar or the guariba" (LIMA, 1999). Understanding such a cosmology would thus be made impossible by an analysis based on concentric, hierarchical and timeless schemes (the watertight separation between nature and culture, for example) whose corollary is precisely the treatment of the distance between humans and animals as a constant.

Amerindian perspectivism makes the identity between humanity and animality a condition for thinking about the difference between the two, so that while we create classification systems that try to deal with the whole at once by distinguishing between man, nature and supernature, the Juruna proceed in parts, making an inventory of each case in order to then distinguish what is human, divine or animal within the class of humans, animals and spirits. Thus, we have three oppositions - human/non-human; animal/non-animal; spirit/non-spirit - which are applied to each entity or type of being (LIMA, 1999, p. 47). Here the asymmetry appears in the capacity that each entity or type of being has to impose its point of view, that is, to impose itself as the subject of the relationship (which is then a reversible relationship, since the position of subject is something that circulates), which implies that in perspectivism the hierarchy is codified *a posteriori*.

It is a theory of the relationship between points of view that are both analogous and contextually determined as asymmetrical. If the point of view of the definition of the categories of alterity belongs to the terms themselves, then we have the absence of a point of

view of the whole, or rather, we have a Deleuzeguattarian idea of the whole, which is precisely opposed to the idea of a transcendent totality: "a part alongside the parts, (...) applies to them, establishing only aberrant communications between non-communicating vessels, transversal unities between elements that keep all their difference in their own dimensions" (D&G 1976 *apud* LIMA, 1999, p. 50).

The theoretical-conceptual undertaking of perspectivism fulfills a double role in its relationship with structuralism, namely that of being one of its main heirs, but also that of sliding the main gears set in motion by Lévi-Strauss. This seems to be one of the desired effects of using D&G's ideas in ethnographic analyses such as those we have seen so far. In 2011, in a more general text (Lima refers there to Amerindians, and no longer to the Yudjá or Juruna specifically), the author associates structuralism with a certain State-form of thought whose relations with indigenous thought end up disarming its concepts of power ("relations that we no longer wish to have", emphasizes LIMA, 2011, p. 627, our translation). From the late structuralism (or even post-structuralism, as Viveiros de Castro puts it, see above) of Lévi-Strauss himself to a political anthropology committed to the principle of identity in the brief and intense work of Clastres and from there to a "cartography of power and difference in Amerindian cosmologies" informed by the philosophy of difference and a certain indigenous notion of point of view. Here are some of the key points of the author's work.

Recently, after new fieldwork among the Yudjá, Lima (2018) presents us with a new indigenous device that will change the problem of perspectivism for her, moving from a relational cosmology (or an ontology) to a speculative pragmatics (LIMA, 2018, p. 119). The device is the entry of ayahuasca into the lives of the Yudjá, which took place around 2012 through the *União do Vegetal* (UDV) in Cuiabá, but whose use by the indigenous people in their territory was not guided by the rituals of this religious organization, acquiring, as was to be expected, new meanings and especially new results. In fact, the author's fieldwork in 2016 contrasts with that carried out in the 1980s, when there were no shamans among the Yudjá and their shamanism was somewhat dormant. Now, with ayahuasca, ritual and oneiric experimentation intensifies and shamanism flourishes. With it the mythical tales and other narratives about ayahuasca:

The sequence of actions and interactions involving a team of doctors from the UDV in the arrival of ayahuasca among the Yudjá in Tubatuba and the ritual and oneiric experimentation that this triggered, that is, the machinic face of the agency, if it has its formalization independent of the expressive face, both are inseparable, in the sense that the enunciations, motivated by

the old speeches, anticipate, prepare or promote the rearrangement of the agency, giving rise to the operation of retaking the past, the reoccupation of the spiritual worlds and the processes of resingularization of *pajelança* among the Yudjá (LIMA, 2018, p. 128, our translation).

The fundamental issue here is to account for this process of creation without subordinating it to constituted cultural forms, that is, taking into account the affections that make the adoption of ayahuasca an open and vital problem (LIMA, 2018, p. 135). In order to convey something of this "procedural re-appropriation of the production of the world", Lima combines the experience of the Yudjá with their discourse on this same experience, and brings both closer to the Spinozist doctrine (which makes joy a political affect) and certain developments of it (D&G, Guattari and Debaise & Stengers, mainly).

### **Developments in perspectivism**

Contemporary to the work of Viveiros de Castro and Tania Stolze Lima are the ethnographies of Aparecida Vilaça (1992), Carlos Fausto (2014[2001]), Marco Antonio Gonçalves (2001), among others, in which, although the reciprocity of perspectives appears, in one way or another, as a key point in the argument, there is no concern to associate it with the philosophical concepts of D&G. Later, Viveiros de Castro and Lima (plus Márcio Goldman, but this was outside the field of Amerindian ethnology) delved deeper into D&G's work in their papers, at the same time that perspectivism was gaining theoretical weight worldwide, which led a new wave of researchers to start looking for Deleuzeguattarian tools as well. We will use, out of personal preference, the works of David Rodgers (2002) and Valéria Macedo (2013) to deal with this new wave of researchers, recognizing that other names could also appear here, such as Renato Sztutman, Pedro Cesarino, Marina Vanzolini, among others.

In Rodgers' text, D&G and the philosophy of difference are openly cited and used as a preferred tool for thinking about perspectivism itself, mainly through the notions of "affects and becomings" (2002, p. 102, our translation). The argument develops around shamanism and menstruation among the Ikpeng (a people of the Upper Xingu) and draws a socius in which a certain behavioral mode constitutes a fluid and heterogeneous social block, capable of capturing new elements by fabricating itself as a singular figure: a population anomaly, without political power and with cosmological potency (RODGERS, 2002, p. 116). This behavioral mode is based on the different functions of men and women as something that



holds cosmopolitical power, that is, a male function of architectural containment and a female function as content or population matrix engender a vision of the Ikpeng as multiplicity<sup>9</sup>, or a people that contains other peoples.

In this way, the potential anomaly of men ejects them from the female socius, transforming them into allies or visitors to their own people. Driven by the desire of the women, who appropriate the products obtained by them abroad through hunting, war and capture, the men engage in "return visits". Everything happens as if, for the Ikpeng, the male species in general were something like a tree shelter for a female population or flock, in the same way that the breakdown of the shaman's body (after his death) is a kind of "cosmic menstruation" (RODGERS, 2002, p. 113, our translation) that releases contained shamanic agencies, which then spread through the forest. These agencies will be summoned by the living shamans, and will be put at the service of healing, health and life.

According to Rodgers, Ikpeng rituals show ways in which they instill themselves as a people through an impure mixture of dissolved elements (RODGERS, 2002, p. 94). In the same way that the ikpeng masks and dancers cause a "human-animal confusion", the "ant" and "wasp" phases indicate modes of the people (and there are several exclusive modes, i.e. not totalized):

The people compare the ant-phase (*arayo*) of gathering and nesting on the ground to their own production of swiddens and malocas; while the wasp-phase (*turum*), associated with warrior nomadism and collective hunting, alternates between the predatory swarm and the arboreal nest, which corresponds to an ikpeng alternation between the attacks themselves and the base in the camps, whether it's war or hunting (war has been discontinued for some time, but the threat of its re-emergence remains latent). It is therefore less a self-designation than a self-apellation - an ethological description of what the population circumscribed only precariously as a "we-exclusive" (*t̃simna*) would be capable of (RODGERS, 2002, p. 94, our translation).

The fact that life has to be extracted from the forest (in other words, from outside the *socius*) is thought of by the Ikpeng as a violence that causes the wrath of the demon spirits, but men are enchanted by the danger. Faced with their precarious and transitory condition,

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<sup>9</sup> As Viveiros de Castro (2007, p.97) notes, multiplicity is, in D&G's work, a "meta-concept that defines a certain type of entity" whose concrete image is the famous "rhizome" from the introduction to *A Thousand Plateaus*. The rhizome is an acentric reticular system formed by "becomings" or intensive relations between heterogeneous singularities (VIVEIROS DE CASTRO, 2007, p. 98, our translation). The idea of multiplicity is the result of a decision by the authors to "dethrone the classical metaphysical notions of essence and type", and in this sense, the corollary of this reasoning, on the following page, is very significant: "In short, there are no points of view *on* things; it is things and beings that *are* the points of view. If there is no entity without identity, there is no multiplicity without perspectivism" (author's emphasis, our translation).

their culture presupposes the "vital effect of the toxic" (RODGERS, 2002, p. 97, our translation). The act of surviving adverse conditions or resurrecting from multiple deaths (*imere*) decisively affects the world of the Ikpeng, but particularly menstruating women and shamans. Rodgers draws a parallel here between the "diluted girl" and the "submerged boy", in other words, the figures of the pubescent girl and the boy who begins shamanism.

On the one hand, it is necessary to "undo" the dangerous outflow of blood that results from the reversed process of "making children", so that the menstruating woman's body needs to be neutralized or emptied while remaining enveloped by relatives and a domestic architecture that will manufacture a new body for her as a hollow space, that is, defined by its "sheltering exterior" (RODGERS, 2002, p. 108, our translation). On the other hand, the neophyte is emptied and their contact with the outside world is reduced to a minimum (the author speaks here of "somatic closure"), in a process that results in the shaman's body as a receptacle for filth and stench, a conduit for inhuman affection - a spoiled person or an ex-person - whose fate after death is not to be cannibalized by the dead who inhabit heaven<sup>10</sup> (RODGERS, 2002, p. 112). Surviving potentially harmful encounters is here a condition of life, and becoming intoxicated thus constitutes a type of bodily absorption that alters the "I/we" by expanding its capacity to be affected (RODGERS, 2002, p. 98).

At this point in the text, the author considers the perspectivism of Viveiros de Castro and Tania Stolze Lima as a necessary abstraction to understand the process of resizing the molecular plane to the cosmic plane that the Ikpeng operate when they say that "the spit of the shamans is a vast and impenetrable lake for spirits", or that "a torch lit in their hands is a devastating forest fire" or that "the wooden ear is the kiss of the dead" (RODGERS, 2002, p. 100, our translation). For Rodgers, in general, the Amerindians describe a diversity of sources of evaluation within the same world, constituting a very subtle perception of it, based on the transit, movements and affections between different species based on a so-called "logic of the sensible" (RODGERS, 2002, p. 100, our translation).

Given the anthropological moral imperative to recognize the human, perspectivism would be the logical way for social science to understand the Amerindian worlds in a non-symbolic and also non-real way (RODGERS, 2002, p. 101). Thus, the shaman's becoming a jaguar forces us to shift our notion of what a "real jaguar" is, since when the Amerindians talk about it, they do not mean that the shaman has metaphorically become a jaguar, nor are they

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<sup>10</sup> The same image presented by the Araweté material to describe the killer's fate, as we saw earlier.

delirious or fantasizing. What is happening is what the author calls an "ontological tension", in which becoming (in ikpeng, "disappearing" - *aluku*) is not equivalent to transformation, since there is not (yet) any passage to a new defined morphology (RODGERS, 2002, p. 103). Affections and becomings would thus be vectors that always open up to a potential coming from the new, from outside, triggering mixed particles, but always coupled to a type or mode: bee affection, peccary becoming, enemy affection, etc.

In a world similar in many ways to the one described for (and by) the Ikpeng live the Mbya Guarani of the south and southeast of the country studied by Valéria Macedo (2013), where a multiplicity of powers can also be found that can sometimes cause illness and sometimes heal people. Once again, the conceptual apparatus of D&G is explicitly called upon, especially in its interface with the work of Spinoza (MACEDO, 2013, p. 185), in which evil is always a bad encounter that breaks down part of the relationships that make up a body. In other words, a body that acts on another can destroy part of the relationships that make it up or it can also enhance these relationships by composing with them (MACEDO, 2013, p. 185). This results in two main types of affect, sadness and joy, respectively. For the Mbya, joy is directly associated with the closeness of the body to the "soul" (*nhe'ë*), and sadness, on the other hand, with the withering away of the body as a result of the distance from the "soul". When the *nhe'ë* moves away, the subject's body becomes susceptible to all kinds of agencies, i.e. other "souls" that can join the person<sup>11</sup>, causing in the most extreme situation *-jepota*, i.e. transformation into an animal.

The good encounters between the bodies of the Mbya people and the *nhe'ë* happen in a privileged way in the prayer houses (*opy'i*), where through dances, prayers and the use of the pipe the Mbya strengthen, encourage and produce light bodies for themselves (MACEDO, 2013, p. 190):

The stronger the connection between the subject and their *nhe'e*, the greater their ability to move through the world and with others. In fact, the stronger the connection, the more the *nhe'e* can move away from the body, in dreams, chants and visions, expanding the subject's shamanic capacity. Making or strengthening the body, however, must be a repeated quest because there is always the danger of the body being undone. Hence the ever-present danger of illness and incantations such as the *jepota* (MACEDO, 2013, p. 191, our translation).

At the same time, a whole series of subjectivities (and bodies) compete with Mbya

<sup>11</sup> For similar, but not Deleuzian, descriptions of agencies that come to "walk together" with the mbya person, see Pissolato (2007) and Pereira (2019).

people, such as spirits of the dead, beings of the night, owners of animals and places, among others (MACEDO, 2013, p.192). Just as the Mbya can abuse objects, places and animals, offending their owners, they can hit their bodies with stones or other small objects, causing illness, or even becoming sexual partners of the Mbya people, as in the case of the *-jepota*. In fact, here we talk about “becoming an animal”, but in the sense of having the body affected or occupied by an animal affection, and the author quotes D&G: “becoming can and should be qualified as becoming-animal without having a term which would be the animal it became” (D&G, 1997, p. 18 *apud* MACEDO, 2013, p. 195, our translation), or as one mbya says to the author, “because of the spirits of the forest, attracted by the smell of the meat, spirits Animals penetrate a young person's body and he begins to eat differently. (...). He eats like an animal, eats raw meat, does not want rice and beans anymore” (MACEDO, 2013, p. 195, our translation). The challenge of living on this earth would then be to appropriate resources and incorporate capabilities from a multiplicity of others, in relationships that can either make bodies (strengthen, brighten etc.) or unmake them (or make another body, metamorphose -lo, etc.), being crucial for humans to be able to reiterate their perspective as a subject, - *nhemboete* (MACEDO, 2013, p. 203).

The reading of the Ikpeng and Mbya Guarani material by Rodgers and Macedo, respectively, can be situated in a Deleuzeguattarian universe, however, to a large extent this is due to the perspectivist approach that these authors adopted. Even in the face of distinct ethnological landscapes such as Upper Xingu and São Paulo, we see the mobilization of categories such as “affection”, “illness” and “becoming” as privileged ways of talking about the opening of the *socius* (or the person) to the outside, capable of operating transformations or passages “from one series to another”, as Viveiros de Castro writes (see above). “Pregnant” shamans with their shamanic agencies, a people that contains a multiplicity of peoples within themselves, a universe of bodies (humans, animals, owners etc.) that compose and decompose the relationships they maintain among themselves, sexual encounters with animals resulting in animal people, all of this makes the use of the philosophical framework created by D&G more than justifiable.

## Final considerations

In general, we conclude, after the brief journey so far, that D&G's work has been good for thinking about Amerindian cosmologies due to its internal effort in developing a line of thought guided by the concept of difference. Our exercise of locating the use of Deleuzeguattarian tools throughout the development of ethnology, and more specifically of perspectivism, suggests that if, on the one hand, concepts such as becoming seem to be quite adequate to describe certain *Amerindian realities*, on the other hand, their use by authors of weight in the field (Viveiros de Castro and Tania Stolze Lima, mainly) contributed greatly to its direct or indirect proliferation. Finally, we consider that through notions such as Other, becoming, illness, affection among others we can get closer to the meaning given to the Amerindians for terms such as *-jepota*, *aluku*, *iwa* etc. as well as advancing in our understanding of their sociability, creating ideas such as that Araweté society would be a *between and not a being* or even that Tupinambá morphology occurred in temporality and not in spatiality.

Throughout this text we observe some particular moments in the use of Deleuzeguattarian concepts by ethnology, starting with total marginality in the 1980s, when Viveiros de Castro brings the notion of becoming into his ethnography of the Araweté. But even with this, the philosophy of difference did not become widespread among ethnologists and Amazonians. Viveiros de Castro's first generation of students, among them Tania Stolze Lima, Aparecida Vilaça, Carlos Fausto and Marco Antonio Gonçalves, either contributed to the theory of perspectivism with ethnographic data, or did not work with the Amerindian notion of perspective (in part because this was still being formulated at the time of his research). With a Deleuzeguattarian formulation of Amerindian perspectivism, advanced by Viveiros de Castro and Tania Stolze Lima, a new wave of researchers began to “deleuzianize” ethnology, among them Pedro Cesarino, Renato Sztutman, Marina Vanzolini, the aforementioned David Rodgers and Valéria Macedo, among others. At this time, some ethnologists became interested in the conceptual tools of D&G again, recovering notions such as “becoming” or “affection” to provide more detailed or, let's say, faithful descriptions of indigenous worlds.

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