Christianity + Schooling on Nature versus Culture in Amazonia

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Introduction

Stephen Hugh-Jones, along with Jean Jackson, was a precursor in identifying original themes that would come to frame discussions within Amazonian ethnology, one of them being the effects of school education on indigenous practices and conceptions, especially with respect to the problems caused by the introduction of a Western notion of culture. In an article published twenty years ago, entitled "Éducation et Culture" (Hugh-Jones 1997), the author addressed the emergence of so-called ethnoeducation in the Vaupés following legislation introduced in 1991 that gave indigenous peoples greater autonomy after decades of missionary-school (Salesian) influence, which was directed precisely toward suppressing native culture and imposing Western customs, especially the Spanish language. The same theme was also explored by the author in a pathbreaking ethnographic film called *War of the Gods* (Moser 1971). In his article, Hugh-Jones (1997:105) focuses on the paradoxes experienced by the indigenous population faced with the confrontation between their conception of culture, with its specific modes of transmission, and the ideas and experiences conveyed in the school environment, where learning is a formal and abstract process and role of the parents and the shaman are marginalized (see also Jackson 1984 and 1995).

My objective in this article is to illustrate the same type of conflict in another Amazonia region—situated in the state of Rondônia, close to the border with Bolivia—through the ethnography of the Wari', an indigenous people of around three thousand persons, who are speakers of a language belonging to the Txapakura family. Today the Wari' frequent schools similar to the one Hugh-Jones described for the Tukano, and the idea of culture brought to them contrasts radically with native conceptions. In the classroom, the Wari' are introduced to a notion of culture as something that is exclusive to humans. Previously, social practices, narratives, and language itself, rather than differentiating humans from animals, as a Western idea of culture presumes, were the basis for continuity between them. Having distinct bodies and affects, humans and animals nonetheless had in common precisely these practices and customs. The introduction of the idea that culture is unique to humans is indissociable from other influences, notably that of Christianity, that have desubjectivized animals, segregating them within a domain with defined limits, analogous to a Western idea of nature (see Vilaça 2008, 2009, 2013, and 2015). The Wari' have been continuously subject to Christian, and especially Evangelical, catechesis since their first peaceful contacts with white people in 1956. One of the aims of this article is to demonstrate the conceptual continuities between Christian catechesis and school education, even its relativist variant, "intercultural" education.[1]

The analysis will focus on Evangelical biblical translations, based on the so-called "Lesson Books" and on hymnbooks, that circulate widely in the villages, as well as on the school writing of Wari' students, produced in indigenous secondary school classrooms and at an intercultural university, where I've been doing fieldwork recently. My aim is to show how, in both church and school, a nature separate from humans is invented with which students should relate in a utilitarian and contemplative way. Simultaneously nature's opposite is invented—a culture that excludes animals and subjects them. The initial foundation of this separation, as we shall see, is the biblical Genesis, which narrates divine creation and the establishment of utilitarian relations between humans and animals. Since the majority of analyzed texts have a version in Portuguese and another in Wari', we shall observe the limits the Wari' language imposes on school notions of nature as a contemplative landscape (nonutilitarian) and an object for conservation.

Catechesis

Until 1956, the Wari' had never had any kind of peaceful contact with white people. Even with other indigenous groups, their neighbors, the relation was strictly one of warfare. The intensification of war with the white population following the second rubber boom during the Second World War, led the government agency responsible for protecting the indigenous population, the Serviço de Proteção aos Índios (SPI), to organize contact and pacification expeditions. From the 1950s, these included the participation of missionaries, both Evangelicals from the New Tribes Mission (NTM), which had at this time been recently founded in the United States, and Catholics from the Prelacy of Guajará-Mirim, located in the city closest to the Wari' villages (see Vilaça 2006, 2010).

Catholic and Evangelical approaches diverged from the outset as the religious rivals tried to exclude one another other from pacification expeditions and openly criticized each other's strategies. The Evangelicals, better equipped and trained for contact with "wild" Indians, quickly allied themselves with the SPI, and after 1961, by which time most of the Wari' had been contacted by the expeditions, they began to reside in the villages and devote themselves to systematically learning the native language, so as to begin work translating the Bible and catechizing, activities that continue today.

For this to be possible, although it did not interest them, Evangelicals had to learn something about indigenous "culture". They view culture as a set of practices and beliefs in accordance with an evolutionist conception that supposes both the separateness of cultures' constitutive elements and the localization of any particular set of elements on an evolutionary scale with Euro-American civilization at its apex (see Schieffelin 2007). This vision is expressed in value judgments about particular indigenous beliefs and practices being defined as "wrong," justifying urgent missionary action to eradicate them.[2]

Like everything else, the Evangelical missionaries' view of culture is subsumed by the idea of faith as knowledge of God and his word. The words of NTM missionary Royal Taylor about the Wari' make this clear: "We weren't particularly interested in their development in civilization. We wanted to learn the language so we could communicate the word of God" (pers. comm. 1992).

Systematically excluded from continuous contact with the Wari', it was only in 1965 that the Catholics managed to gather some Wari' in a village called Sagarana, at the confluence of the Mamoré and Guaporé Rivers, outside the traditional territory of the Wari'. In this Catholic village, the Wari' began to live with members of other indigenous groups like the Makurap and the Tupari. Unlike the villages of the Evangelicals, the priests—as is true today—did not live in Sagarana, undertaking sporadic visits to the locale instead.

While Evangelical activities remain the same through today, the Catholic activities have undergone important changes. During the first period of the Catholic village of Sagarana, the Wari' were subject to rigid timetables and discipline, as well as chastisements and punishments, like in the seventeenth-century missions of colonial Brazil. The Catholics' primary interest was to "civilize" the people, and religious proselytism was almost nonexistent. This is reflected in the fact that, in contrast to the Evangelical missionaries, the Catholics never invested in learning the language (see Vilaça 2002 and 2014).

Following the Second Vatican Council (1962–65), the work of the Catholic Church underwent a radical change of perspective, beginning a phase called the "second" or "new evangelization." This reached Sagarana at the end of the 1970s (see Orta 2004:73, 82; Durston 2007; Rufino 2006:147). The church determined that marginalized peoples, indigenous communities included, were closer to Christian ideals than mainstream Catholics. From barbaric humans, the images of Indians were transformed into those of exemplary Christians, and the activity of the missionary became based on the principle of "incarnation" or "inculturation." This meant that the missionary should do as Jesus had done and live with the Indians, and in this way divulge the "good news" (see Shapiro 1981; Viveiros de Castro 2002a; Rufino 2006:134, 149; and Orta 2004). Thus the Catholics sought the means to reveal the underlying similarities between indigenous culture and Christian conventions.[3]

From the Catholic point of view the past actions of the church had been one of the main causes for "culture loss." Thus, "recuperating culture" was an explicit imperative for the Council of Missionary Indigenists (Conselho Indigenista Missionário, CIMI) since they depend on

culture to transmit the Christian message.[4] As we shall see, this Catholic conception is at the root of the relativist school education labeled "intercultural" (see also Hugh-Jones 1997:99).

Although it undoubtedly has important positive political effects, the respect for culture on the part of the Catholics tends to involve the same ethnocentric conceptions held by the Evangelicals. Investing little in learning the Wari' language, it never occurred to the Catholics—aside from what they saw as metaphoric lucubrations of the myths—that animals were also part of, and participants in, this culture. Moreover, their attribution to the Indians of a duty to "recuperate" their own cultures was imbued with the same notion of guilt that motivated the Catholic missionaries (Vilaça 2014). The Evangelicals, for their part, had no interest in "recuperating culture." Nevertheless, they quickly realized the myths were actualized in everyday shamanic practices related to curing diseases caused by humanized animals, and identified a serious problem: the Wari' did not comprehend what humanity signified. It would be up to catechesis to delimit this notion: they would have to teach the Indians the difference between culture and nature.

School Education

As occurs the world over, the missionaries were responsible for introducing writing and schooling among the Wari'; they did so here in two distinct forms, with the Evangelicals focusing on bilingual teaching and the Catholics on teaching Portuguese.

Looking to train translators, the Evangelicals were pioneers in teaching literacy skills to adults in their own language. Some years later, after the creation of a proper school, literacy classes began to be limited to children. Until three decades ago, resident missionaries exclusively taught these classes. Only after becoming literate in their own language would students begin to learn Portuguese. In the 1980s, the first secular white teachers arrived, hired by Fundação Nacional do Índio (FUNAI), the government agency that eventually replaced the SPI. These teachers continued the missionary literacy classes to the end of primary education but had no interest in the native language, teaching the different subjects on the curriculum—Portuguese, mathematics, sciences (including history and geography)—exclusively in Portuguese, based on textbooks produced for nonindigenous schools.

Predictably, the topics discussed in the classroom were entirely alien to the experience of the Wari'. The examples that I witnessed during my first stay in the field in 1986, when I lived in the teacher's house built adjacent to the school, are enlightening. One time I heard her explaining the meaning of the colors of traffic lights, while another time she explained that the purpose of cacao, a native fruit greatly enjoyed by the Wari', was to make chocolate, a product with which few people were familiar at the time.

There was no school in the Catholic village of Sagarana during the early years. When it was eventually introduced, religious teachers (nuns from the neighboring town of Surpresa) and lay teachers, who did not speak the native language and repeated the practices of their peers in other villages, ran the school by teaching solely in Portuguese using textbooks produced for nonindigenous children. This does not mean that the Wari' disapproved of this kind of teaching. In fact, I frequently heard adults from Negro-Ocaia village, when the Evangelicals were still responsible for running the literacy courses there, complain about bilingual education, arguing that their children were at school to learn Portuguese, not the Wari' language, which they already knew. They would compare the bilingual teaching unfavorably with that available at Sagarana, which was seen to be producing much more proficient speakers of Portuguese (see Hugh-Jones 1997 for the same argument voiced by the Tukano).

In 1991, a new Law of Directives and Bases for National Education was drafted to accord with the new emphasis on the valorization of indigenous culture in the 1988 Constitution. Following this, there was a gradual change in the dominant educational model, although it only reached Rondônia, and the Wari' as a whole, at the end of the 1990s. Indigenous education ceased to be the responsibility of FUNAI and was transferred to state education departments, which began to develop school curricula on a relativist foundation, aiming to provide room for indigenous languages and knowledge, even though the textbooks, in the absence of alternative materials, remained those designed for nonindigenous schools. The new books at least shifted the focus from life in the cities to the rural world, displaying greater attentiveness to nonurban practices, such as cultivation of the land and the measurements related to it.

The Evangelical missionaries were now removed from the classrooms, though they remained in the villages. In their place, literate indigenous youths, those who had completed basic education, were placed in the classrooms to teach younger students in the primary grades. Indigenous teachers also began to be trained, with the creation of the Açaí Project, a high school professional course available to diverse indigenous peoples of Rondônia. Concentrated in two-month modules in the city of Ji-Paraná, where indigenous peoples from diverse municipalities converge, the classes are taught by nonindigenous teachers with experience of working in rural schools, or as pedagogical coordinators for the municipalities involved. Like the students, the teachers travel to a rural school, or more recently to a hotel farm, where they stay for the duration of the module in which they are participating.

The subjects taught today are Portuguese, mathematics, history, geography, biology, philosophy, sociology, English, pedagogy and didactics, arts, and the maternal language. The teachers elaborate all the teaching material to be used on all their courses in the form of workbooks in Portuguese that are distributed to students, containing the basic concepts, extracts of texts by various authors, and exercises. The tone of the classes is one of respect for what the teachers understand to be the cultural particularities of the Indians, though they do not differentiate between the various cultures present in the classroom. Even the maternal language course is taught today to multiethnic classes by a lecturer from just one of the ethnicities of indigenous students present in the classroom.

While the Evangelical missionaries had no influence on this change in direction of formal education, perceiving it rather as an interference in their work of catechesis, the same cannot be said of the Catholic missionaries. The germ of the idea of a culturally sensitive and intercultural education is in the "theology of inculturation" (see Rufino 2002, 2006; Shapiro 1981, 1987). The first teacher training courses in Rondônia were organized by CIMI and by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) connected to the Catholic Church. Furthermore, progressive Catholic missionaries played a key role in the discussion groups that influenced the elaboration of those clauses of the 1988 Constitution that related to indigenous and minority peoples. These then fed directly into the education legislation introduced in 1991. In other words, with rare exceptions, the Catholic Church played a key role in transforming the formal education of indigenous populations in Brazil as a whole, with teacher training courses of very similar formats still being taught today in practically all Brazilian states inhabited by Indians.

As an extension of this policy, an intercultural teaching degree program was created in 2009, based at the Ji-Paraná campus of the University of Rondônia. The program brings together indigenous students from different municipalities of Rondônia, and follows the same model as other programs of this type across Brazil. Similar to the Açaí Project at the high school level, the university-level program is based on modules lasting two months, a duration that aims to avoid removing students from their families for long periods of time. Unlike the Açaí Project, though, here the students are not housed in dormitories inside the farm-campus Instead they receive grants to live in the city during the period of classes which they use to rent shared houses and buy food.[5]

The classes are taught by qualified teachers assigned to the Department of Intercultural Education (Deinter), all of them possessing MAs or PhDs in their respective disciplines. The high school courses are supplemented by others related to pedagogy and administration, forming sets grouped by areas of training, which must be chosen by the students during the selection process for entry to the university. There are four such areas: mathematics and natural sciences, linguistic sciences, social sciences, and school administration. As in the classes of the Açaí Project, use is made of specific didactic material produced by the teachers in the form of workbooks. All of these are in Portuguese, partly because this is the lingua franca of these two multiethnic and multilingual environments (the high school Açaí Project and the University of Rondônia program), and partly because the teachers, all of them nonindigenous, are unfamiliar with the native languages. The university course also adopts a relativist approach, and the classes' aim is to provide space to talk about the native cultures, very often through teachers' explicit requests for the students to translate what they are learning into the terms of their "culture." Before turning to the details of these translations, we need to examine the Wari' concepts key to the translation of "nature" and "culture" in both church and school contexts.

Wari' and *Karawa*

The Wari' generally classify all things into two mutually exclusive categories: *wari'* and *karawa*. *Wari'* (written in italics) is the emphatic personal pronoun of the first person plural inclusive and signifies "we." *Wari'* traditionally signifies "human being," meaning that its core referents are those who I call here Wari' (without italics). All other Indians, as well as whites, were, until recently, called *wijam*, "enemies," thus classified as a subspecies of the category *karawa*. *Karawa* can be translated as "animal," "game," or "food." In its narrowest sense, *karawa* refers to any terrestrial animal, and this is the word used to designate such mammals as a category (at this level of contrast, *me* designates birds as a whole, and *hwam*, fish).

However, the category *karawa* is much more inclusive, serving to designate each and any nonhuman entity. In its broadest sense, the question "*ma' karawa?*" (ma' = "what"), one of the first I learnt in the Wari' language, signifies "What's this?" or "What's happening?" or "What is it?" Hence, in answer to the question "*ma' karawa?*" one may reply "stone," "basket," "tree," and so forth. In this sense *karawa* just means "nonhuman."

From the viewpoint of their comprehension, the categories *wari'* and *karawa* are mutually exclusive: something is either *wari'* or *karawa*. But from the viewpoint of its extension, the situation is more complicated: beings that are *karawa* under certain aspects are *wari'* under others, and vice versa. In other words, many *karawa*, as animals, are only so from the viewpoint of the Wari'. From their own viewpoint they are *wari'*, human, and share the practices of the Wari': they construct houses, care for their children, perform rituals, and all speak the same language, the Wari' language. So, for example, the tapir, capuchin monkey, white-lipped peccary, collared peccary, and all the fish—to take some examples from the main prey of the Wari'—when they hunt, they use a bow and arrow, and afterwards roast their prey and offer the food to their family members. Only shamans can see them in this human form, however, and must describe the animals' customs to other Wari'; the latter thus try to avoid turning into prey themselves (as a consequence of being preyed upon by the humanized animals) because it is as *karawa*, or as enemies, *wijam*, that the animals usually see the Wari' (see Vilaça 1992 and 2017).

In sum, this amounts to an essentially *relative*, reciprocal definition of these categories: *wari'* is the *subject* position, schematized as the eater position; *karawa* is the *object* position, archetypically the position of prey or food. It is precisely this complexity that the Christian and school teachings tend to eliminate.[6]

Perspectivism

Considering, according to some authors (see Ellen 1996a:10, 1996b:103) who propose a "cognitive geometry of nature," that some kind of idea of nature exists among all human groups, encompassing, among other possibilities, everything classified as a thing, we could say that *karawa* is "nature" for the Wari', and the *wari'–karawa* pair could be taken as an equivalent to a Western culture–nature one (Ellen 1996b:113). However, the dynamic of the Wari' classificatory opposition is not readily transposable onto the Western pair, and its alienness cannot be minimized by the recognition that the contents of native categories analogous to nature can vary significantly (for similar critiques, see Strathern 1980 and Howell 1996).[7]

In the Wari' case, we do not have categories with variable dimensions and contents, but positions that, when assumed by determined beings, have the effect of redefining the world. In other words, in some sense it is the very notion of nature that is defined by these positions. So, for example, while the jaguar, the tapir, and the Wari' see themselves as human and therefore have properly cultural practices, the world in which they live differs radically: beer, the preferred drink of all humans, is blood for the jaguar, mud for the tapir, and maize chicha for the Wari'.

The Wari' are paradigmatic examples of the ontology termed "Amerindian perspectivism" by Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (1996, 2002b, 2004, 2012). In this, as in animism, one of the four ontologies identified by Philippe Descola (2005), there is a continuity between humans and nonhumans in terms of their "interiority," and a discontinuity in their "physicalities." Unlike animism, however, perspectivism is defined precisely by the instability of these relations: in other words, sometimes a human and an animal have the same "physicality," since they see

each other as people, *wari'*, differentiating themselves from other animals, *karawa*. These are the cases of dangerous encounters in the forest and abductions of humans by animals, which make themselves appear as people to attract the victim. Those who succeed in imposing their perspective, through predation, remain in the human position. This dynamic is precisely what defines perspectivism.

Explicating the difference between perspectivist ontologies and modern Western naturalism, Viveiros de Castro (1997) suggests that instead of the cultural relativism associated with naturalist universalism, the correlate of perspectivism is "multinaturalism," since what varies here are not cultures and their imposition of particular visions on the given universe, but the universe itself, what we call nature. The nature–culture pairing, as the given–constructed (Wagner 1975), is thus recuperated by the author but with the poles inverted: among perspectivist peoples, culture is the given, that which preexists human action, while nature—the world of things and bodies—is precisely that which is produced through action, or more precisely, through the relations that are established: if I see a jaguar as a person, for example, I shall see blood as chicha. The "variable geometry" of Roy F. Ellen (1996a) refers here to the world as a whole, not to an instability of the limits of categories, just as Signe Howell (1996:135–40) has shown in a clearly "perspectivist" presentation of the Chewong (Malaysia) and in the context, precisely, of a discussion of the universality of the concept of nature. A Wari' swidden can be an animal's forest.

Evangelical Translations

This classificatory dynamic was rapidly perceived by the missionaries, who immediately sought to stabilize it. They did so by fixing the content of *karawa*, which, although used in the translations to cover the same broad spectrum that spans from mammals to food and things in general, ceases to be a position and instead becomes a fixed category that by definition excludes humans. The *karawa*—which I maintain in the Wari' language in my translations of both Christian and school texts)—are, as a whole, differentiated from humans by being subject to them as utilitarian beings.

The first book of catechism produced by the missionaries, *Lesson Book 1* (Missão Novas Tribos do Brasil 1998) all in the Wari' language, is entirely dedicated to Genesis. It is composed of biblical excerpts interspersed with additional explanations from the missionaries and was translated from Portuguese to Wari' with the help of native translators, young or middle-aged men with different levels of bilingualism.

Even nowadays, fifty years after the beginning of catechesis, Genesis plays a central role in Wari' church services. Along with commenting regularly on divine creation in their sermons and prayers, preachers also display posters on the church walls with verses taken from Genesis and translated into the Wari' language, such as Genesis 1:26, 1:28, and 1:30, where it describes how God created humans as predators and eaters of all animals.[8] With the adoption of Genesis as their creation myth, and with the increasing capacity, given by prayer and appropriate behavior, to share the divine perspective concerning the status of animals, the Wari' have abandoned the food taboos and other precautions related to animals. As my Wari' father Paletó explained to me:

> It was as though they were God. We believed in the animals for no reason. We didn't step in armadillo holes. In the past we were scared of the animals. We didn't eat traíra or piau fish. Today we eat piau . . . The animals stopped causing diseases. Everyone eats eagle. It was God who created them. When you didn't believe in God, you didn't eat coati because it made children go crazy. Today animals are animals. We're no longer afraid of animals. Their doubles ended. (Paletó, pers. comm., 2009, all translations from Wari' are my own)

In *Lesson Book 1*, where the Portuguese Bible says that before creation there was nothing, the Wari' translation says the following:

> There was still nothing [there was no *oro karawa jimao*; oro is a collectivizer; jimao/ximao means "aimlessly," "without reason," "indiscriminately," here

with the sense of "all the kinds"] in the true beginning. There was really noth-
ing, there was no land, there was no sky [*pawin* = high] . . . So God made *oro
karawa jimao* exist through speech . . . God [*Iri' Jam*] said to exist [*ma'*] every
kind of thing, everything [oro *karawa* jimao]. There is no other type of spirit
[jam] that knows how to make *karawa* exist through speech. (*Lesson Book 1*,
lesson 5:19)

In line with the first book of Genesis, the text of the catechism book insists on the use-
fulness of the elements of creation for humans, with this being the function intended by God
for the different beings:

He didn't do it for himself, he did it for us. If there were no trees we would
not be able to protect ourselves from the heat when we work. (*Lesson Book
1*:26)

As well as submitting them to exploitation, humans are separated from animals by being,
unlike the latter, created in the likeness of God. In the words of the creator mediated by the
missionaries:

karawa don't look like us [where the plural refers to the three divine persons],
only Wari' look like us. We are different because we know how to want [*param
taxi'*]." (*Lesson Book 1*:33)

The same process of translation to the Wari' language was applied to hymns of North
American origin, previously translated to Portuguese, resulting in a bilingual hymnbook which
is used in all church services. Extracts of the hymns are reproduced in the table below:

	Portuguese	Wari'
Hymn 15	God is good, God is the father, God is love. The rain falls, falls, falls, falls. The sun shines brightly . . .	He is very good, our father *Iri' Jam*. He made the *karawa* exist through his speech to give them us to eat . . .
Hymn 7	When I recall this creation of the sun, the moon, and every star . . .	So he made every kind of *karawa*. He made the sun, stars, moon, in the ancient past.
Hymn 89	Who made the beautiful flowers? I know full well it wasn't me. Who made the beautiful flowers? It was our father in heaven. Who made the little birds? I know full well it wasn't me. Who made the little birds? It was our father in heaven. Who made the little monkeys? . . . Who made the rivers and lakes? … Who made the green forest? . . . Who made you and me?	Let's look at the *karawa*. Who made them? Was it the Wari'? It was God! Let's look at the forest . . . Let's look at the birds . . . Let's look at the streams . . . Let's look at the moon. [*Note*: The passage with "you and me" is absent from the Wari' version].
Hymn 39	How good it is to be a believer. How good it is. Amen. How good it is on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, all day, how good it is.	It's good to be a believer [*crente*]. It's good. It's good on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday completely too. It's good.
Hymn 88	One, two, three, how many stars are there altogether? I don't know, I can`t even count them, but God knows very well. He counted all the stars. He called them all by name. He knows my name too. The Bible says so.	How many stars are there? Can we count [*contar*] them? [Perhaps] there are many. We don't count them. God knows completely. He knows the name of them all. He knows our name too. That's what he told me.

Table 1. Excerpts from the Portuguese- Wari' bilingual hymnbook used in the village church

In the hymnbook, the same analogies to a Western concept of nature, as the opposite of the human, appear to be signified by the term *karawa*, from its narrower sense of animal to things in general. It is also notable that the contemplative idea of nature in the Portuguese version is replaced, in the Wari' version, by a utilitarian vision related to game, as in Hymn 15, which, as we shall see, also occurs in the school productions. Christianity also introduces new notions of temporality, as in Hymn 39, where the days of the week are named in Portuguese, even in the Wari' version, as are the ideas of numbers and counting.[9]

Nature in School Translations

Conceptions conveyed at school and university do not differ substantially from the Christian ideas, save for the emphasis on divine creation and the notion of sin. Sin does have parallels in school texts with the idea of destroying nature (and culture) as intrinsic to human action (including that of the Indians), penitence for which will be achieved by rescuing or recuperating nature and culture. In the school texts, nature is taken as the preexisting world (divine creation is implicit) to be managed and utilized by humans, the only beings with culture. Like the Christian texts, the school texts emphasize the utilitarian character of nature or "the environment," adding to this a contemplative function, emphasizing the nonutilitarian and beautiful side of animals, flowers, and natural phenomena.

Analyzing school texts as I have analyzed hymnbooks above, I begin by reproducing here highly illustrative segments from the workbook on geography produced by a teacher and given to the students in the Açai Project high school course in April 2015. All didactic materials were kindly given to me by the teachers. Although the general intention of the text is to show the interdependence of nature and culture, the two components of this pair are clearly differentiated, with the same Christian emphasis on the superiority of humans and on the utilitarian relation with nature. At no point were the meanings of the terms "culture" and "nature" for the students ever questioned; they were taken as self-evident.

Man and Nature

> Culture makes men abdicate their natural condition, acquiring a set of meanings, habits, conducts and values that help us in the search for a collective life . . . Understanding this complexity is a challenge that reveals to us the signs of *our fundamental task in nature, namely that of assuming our rational position as a special and leading element in shaping the reality in which we live.* Hence the knowledge concerning these three pillars is essential to reflecting on a harmonious and balanced coexistence.

The Natural Environment and the Cultural Environment

> In this conception, we form part of an environment constituted by interdependent components: the natural environment and the cultural environment, but are whole as one environment, as a unique place for the life of humanity. For Almeida (1988), *the differentiating factor of the man/nature relation is consciousness, an example of human singularity composed of culture and reasoning . . .* And if we ask any human being about the existence of things, the usual answer is that *everything in nature was created for our benefit and practical use. The entire magnificent setting supplied by the natural elements is daily and confidently seen to be destined for the particular convenience of the human species.* (*Workbook Açai II, module I, Geography*:126–27; my translation from Portuguese, emphasis added)

Man and Society

> *Inserted in this nature, man makes his presence felt as a rational being, creator of culture.* (*Workbook Açai II module I, Geography*:133; my translation and emphasis)

We can turn now to some of the school compositions in Portuguese written by young men and women between the ages of seventeen and twenty, whose first language is Wari'. The

texts reproduced below were written in the context of Açai Project high school classes and of the Intercultural University degree course of the University of Rondônia (UNIR), Ji-Paraná campus.
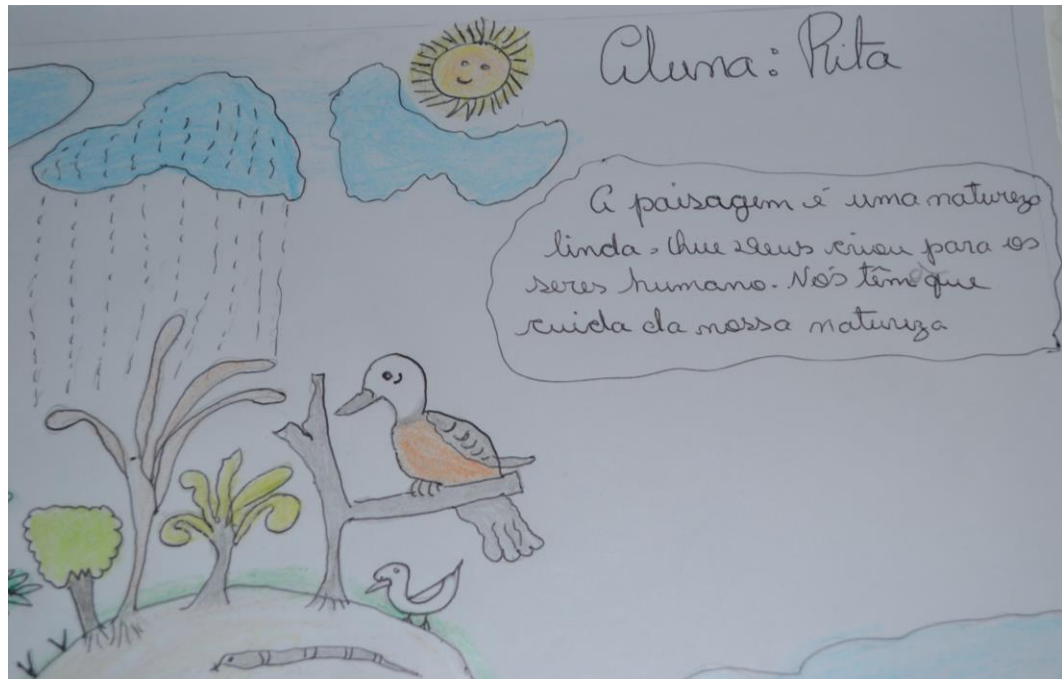

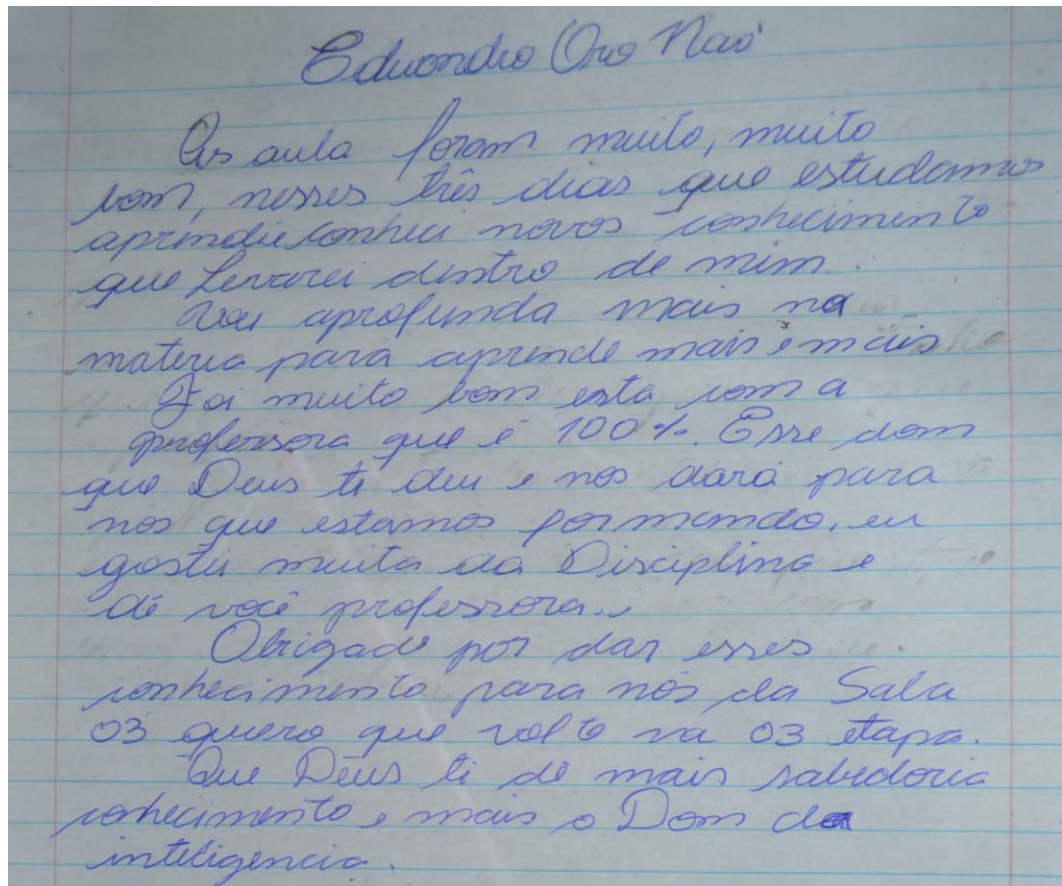**Figure 1**. "The landscape" by an intercultural high-school student

Figure 2. Evaluation of the teacher by an intercultural high-school student

In Figure 1, we can note the close similarity to the Christian hymns, with some of them explicitly mentioning divine creation, as in the drawing accompanied by the phrases: "The

landscape is a beautiful nature, which God created for human beings. We have to take care of our nature."

In a teaching assessment report written by a student from the Açaí Project, her didactic capacity is praised as a divine gift. The text from Figure 2 ends with the phrase: "May God give you more wisdom, knowledge and more of the Gift of intelligence."

The teacher who wrote and circulated the above text on man and nature to the pupils then asked them to write a composition called "The Beauty and Geography of My Village," initially in Portuguese, to be translated into Wari' afterwards. Some fragments extracted from the students' essays are shown in the table below.

Essay	Portuguese	Wari'
1. G. OroAt	The beauty of my village, it is pretty and has a natural landscape . . . If we destroy nature and pollute the rivers, how can we live, and the animals suffer in search of food, because in my village there is a lot of space for the animals to live. Geography forms part of my environment.	My land is good, it is very good. When we look at the forest, we see all the trees with pleasure. If perhaps the trees disappeared after being cut down, perhaps the fruit for the animals [*karawa*] to suck would disappear. In the land in which I live, the forest is very large. It's there that the animals [*karawa*] live.
2. C. OroWaram	The beauty of my village is that marvelous waterfall and the space where we live. Every morning the blue macaws flying around the village and the birds singing every marvelous morning and the relatives went to the forest hunting and fishing on that beautiful day . . . How are we going to live without nature, how will the animals live. That's why we're going to preserve our mother nature.	I see with pleasure the place where I live . . . Early morning the birds sing. The macaws fly high above. On good days, the Wari' invite each other to hunt and kill fish . . . If we kill all the forest, there will be no forest for the animals [*karawa*] to go.
3. A. OroEo	The beauty of my village is that it has space and places where there are beaches, rivers and forest . . . This is the landscape that I like in my village. And the culture of my people. Body painting, dance.	The land where I live is very good. You can look very far [*ka noro mao wa*] . . . There are all kinds of good animal [*karawa*]. In the water, there is fish and all kinds of animals [*karawa*] in the forest . . . I see our elders who paint themselves with genipap.

Table 2. Comparison between Portuguese and Wari' versions of school assignment "The Beauty and Geography of My Village"

As I observed earlier, we can note that the translation into Wari' imposes limits on the expression of an idyllic and contemplative idea of landscape, stressing the alimentary aspect of the *karawa* and hunting as a central activity. Along these lines, a difference is established between birds, which are an object of contemplation, and the other animals, with only the latter called *karawa*, which constitute an object of predation. Furthermore, every affirmation about the future demands the adverb "perhaps," indissociable from this verbal tense in the Wari' language, since one cannot affirm something that has not happened. This lends a relative quality to the conservationist ideas categorically asserted in the Portuguese version. In the final essay, we can note the "confusion" made by the student between nature and culture, also seen in another essay, which states: "It is really important to preserve nature because they form part of our life. I love the beauty of my village. With culture, festivals, history, music."

The collection *Teia de Conhecimentos* (*Web of Knowledge*) was published in 2018 by Kécio Leite, an Intercultural University professor, from assembled texts produced by students. In the book, texts in Portuguese are placed next to translations into native languages and it is interesting to observe the texts composed by the Wari'. These translations once again reveal the limits that their native language imposes on the expression of some of the new notions conveyed in classes, like the idea of preservation, but also on the foreign concepts of dividing and measuring time and fixed quantities.

One of the book's articles, given a Portuguese title that translates as "The Forest in Sotério Village," states the following:

> In Sotério village, we still have much native forest, because we preserve the plants of the forest. We use all the plants existing in the forest. We preserve the plants because we need their fruits to eat, and the wood to make canoes and use as firewood.

In Wari', the title becomes "The Forest Located in Sotério" and reads somewhat differently:

> I shall speak about the forest that we still see, all the fruit trees, all the fruit trees located in the forest and that we suck. There are many trees in the forest that are not good, there are trees that are good too. (José Maria OroNao', in Leite 2018: 110–113)

In another article from the same book, whose title translates from Portuguese as "How the Community of Deolinda Village Lives," numerical values relating to measurements are included. The text says:

> When the time comes to work, people cooperate with food, supplying some foods like five kilos of flour, ten kilos of rice, one kilo of beans, ten fish, twenty liters of chicha.

Given the absence of these measurements (and numbers), the Wari' version says:

> All the Wari' of Deolinda: If you want to do something [*karawa*], come together to do it. There are Wari' who give fish, there are Wari' who give *maxiram* seed [referring here to beans], there are Wari' who give chicha. (Saul OroNao' in Leite 2018:198–199)

In the same way, the time of the day shows up in Portuguese. The article's title translates from Portuguese as "Time Markers of the OroNao' People" and "How They Said Where the Sun Is" in Wari' (where the word "Indian" appears as the translation of *wari'*), deserves closer examination. The Portuguese version states:

> In the village, the Indian tends to leave early to go hunting. He leaves home at more or less six in the morning and goes to the forest, where he hunts all day . . . Today the indigenous youths use watches a lot to tell the time, especially when hunting. The village elders don't use non-indigenous watches because they have the traditional knowledge based on the sun's position. For example: six in the morning (*iri' xo xek*), nine o'clock (*pawin na xina*), twelve o'clock (*tokon xina*), three in the afternoon (*kiji na xina*), six in the afternoon (*irawin na*), eight at night (*hwara pin na xim*), midnight (*ximiyain xim*), three in the morning (*xek pin ta na*). The elder prefer to use these time markers.[10]

The text in Wari' is fairly different, since the part on the different times of day is completely absent:

> Where all the Wari' live, they leave very early to hunt [kill *karawa*], they trek in the forest, searching for *karawa* . . . Today all the young men use that

> strange thing of the whites that knows where the sun is [referring to watches].
> In the forest, the elders didn't use them. As if they didn't know how to walk
> in the forest seeing the sun. (Saul OroNao' in Leite 2018: 200-201)

As in the Christian texts, *karawa* ceases to be a relational concept to become a category that encompasses everything opposed to humans (both animals as a whole and things in general), and also extended to new notions learned in the classroom, like "space" and "geometry." This can be observed in two articles from the cited book. The first, entitled "Human Body," in extending the utilitarian aspect of nature to the human body, states:

> The head serves to think, the hair serves to protect the head, the outer ear
> protects the inner ear, the eye serves to see space." (Cao Orowaje in Leite
> 2018:51–52)

In the Wari' translation, "space" appears as *oro karawa* (every kind of *karawa* or all the *karawa*). In the second article, entitled "OroNao' traditional counting system," the Portuguese version tells us:

> Today, young people, children and adolescents[11] almost never pronounce the
> traditional form of counting any more, and almost no longer know the words
> for the geometric forms present in OroNao' culture.

The text appears as follows in the Wari' version:

> People no longer say how many *karawa* there are ["traditional form of count-
> ing," in Portuguese] in their own language. They don't know the names of
> what there is in the body of *karawa* [the "geometric forms" in Portuguese],
> they only speak the enemy's language. (Mauricio OroNao' in Leite 2018:154-
> 157)

A Perspectivist School?

Ethnographers typically analyze the effects of formal Western education on indigenous Amazonian peoples in a somewhat dichotomous fashion. Either they focus on its oppressive effects, the ways in which it promotes the devaluation and obliteration of indigenous cultures, or they emphasize its empowering effects in the political arena, relating it to the Lévi-Straussian theme of an "opening to the other" or to the mythical theme of the "bad choice," where the school enables indigenous peoples to finally correct the power balance between themselves and whites (e.g. Lasmar 2009).

Important ethnographic studies of the colonization of schooling by indigenous groups, including recent works by Hugh-Jones (2010, 2012) and Hugh-Jones and Hildegard Diemberger (2012), can be added to these perspectives. Such ethnographies focus not only on the school's transformation into a place for the transmission of traditional culture, as mentioned above, but also on how knowledge of whites is appropriated according to a native model of learning, which involves mimicry and the body experience related to it.[12]

Despite these approaches, something seems to have been forgotten, especially when we focus on the more advanced levels of formal education. Somehow the reader is left with the feeling that indigenous students look at blackboards filled with mathematical equations, or hear a talk on Newton's laws, without actually seeing or listening, limited to the reproduction of the formal aspects of learning, and thus keeping their minds in another place, aimed at another goals—namely, acquisition of the capacities needed to deal with whites or even to become white. This lapse is not very different from what we find in several studies on the Christianization of indigenous peoples, where little attention is given to details of the dialogue between themselves and the missionaries, and to the changes that Christian culture effects in native thought.[13] These cannot be adequately explored with a dichotomous good/bad assessment. As in school education, the focus on form supplants the attention given to the content of Christian teachings, especially the new notions of personhood and world implicated within them.

As the written texts analyzed here make evident, Christianity and science find themselves interconnected in all kinds of ways.[14] Like Christianity, science turned its focus to a rational and univocal vision of the world through a process of conventionalization that, according to Roy Wagner (1975), characterizes the mode of invention of modern urban peoples in contrast to the work of differentiation, the incessant multiplication of ideas, forms, and explanations that characterize the mode of invention of native peoples and other minorities. As Jean-Pierre Vernant (1972:95–102) argues, the Greek geometry and mathematics that gave rise to modern science of the kind taught in classrooms developed through the fixing of a point of view for observing celestial bodies, whose orbit became measurable and predictable in a world conceived in spherical terms (see also Caveing 1998; Seidengart 2006). By contrast, diverse Amazonian universes, like those of the Wari' and the Pirahã (Gonçalves 2001), among others, are composed of superimposed layers and, therefore, largely incompatible with the unification of perspective implied in the notion of center. In these universes, each layer constitutes a world apart, inhabited by beings with distinct viewpoints whose interaction involves a complex play of perspectives.

In the translations examined here, the two central concepts of the Wari' classificatory system, *wari'* and *karawa*, lose their positional character to become fixed categories, even though *karawa* maintains its characteristic extended spectrum. Hence the possibility vanishes of passing from one category to another, in other words, from *wari'* to *karawa*, and vice versa.

Even in the face of these important ontological transformations, we can see that the Wari' language imposes some limit on the adoption of new notions, and its use in daily interaction and bilingual productions allows speakers to experience the alternation of perspectives that characterizes the mode of shamanic and perspectivist action. Through speaking and writing, however, Wari' move the oscillation between the human and animal perspectives to the one of the Wari' and the whites (who, as we have seen, the Wari' traditionally classify as *wijam*, a subcategory of *karawa*; see Vilaça 2010; 2017). In an earlier work (Vilaça 2016), I showed that some Christian translations, such as *Iri' Jam* ("the true invisible"), which became the term for "God," and the verb "to love" (the Wari' translate it as "not-dislike"), point to their traditional world when pronounced during church services. In the first case, the term raises the problem of invisibility as an intrinsic quality of the divine person, something alien to their shamanic world where invisibility is relative and positional. In the second case, love as not-dislike relates to difference (and dislike) as the constitutive quality of the Wari' primordial world, whose attenuation is a central dimension of human agency. Likewise, in the school, the Wari' term for the number one, which has the meaning of "alone" and points to absence (expressible as something like -1 or $-x$),[15] evokes their anti-identificatory and nonindividualist world in which the single unit lacks any positive value (see Vilaça 2018, 2019).

In 2014, I was asked to give a lecture on the intercultural high school program, and I decided to demonstrate the complexity of Wari' thought embedded in their conception of quantity. Their language only has counting terms for one and a pair, while other numerical terms are relative quantities, expressed by the term "few" or various terms for many (which include "full"). The relational aspect of quantities is foregrounded: if hunters return with five peccaries for a community of, say, two hundred people, it is said that they killed little game. For a community of twenty people, however, these five animals become many. The Wari' students present quickly understood what I wanted to say, but I am unsure whether this understanding was shared by the other students and the professors. A relativist quantification, varying according to point of view and relational context, is alien to the Newtonian physics and Euclidian mathematics in which the teachers were trained, and which serve as a grounding for classroom instruction.

In another attempt, discussing the illustration of a food chain in a science book where arrows indicated the direction of predation, I showed some Wari' young men who work as teachers in village schools, how the shamanic and perspectivist view—which they know well— implied a proliferation of arrows in opposite directions. In other words, the human ceases to be at the apex of the food chain and can become the prey of a peccary or a capuchin monkey, for instance. Together, we traced other arrows and drew other chains. They enjoyed this greatly. The diagram shown in the book therefore ceased to be the only configuration possible, becoming instead one among others, with the coexistence of lines in opposite directions that recuperate, precisely, the reversibility of the *wari'* and *karawa* positions.

These multiple lines of connection are hindered, though, by the association between church and school, especially since many of the students—and certainly most of the nonindigenous high school teachers—declare themselves Christian and attend Evangelical church services. How to multiply nature without excluding God and his unifying and encompassing point of view? Venturing a simplistic and limited hypothesis, one possible path, it seems to me, would be to stimulate the alternation of perspectives already implied in the translations, allowing individuals to comprehend the world either from the divine–school perspective, or from the traditional perspective, without necessarily presuming a dichotomy of the school/village type. In other words, the possibility of different perspectives could be proposed and explored within the school itself, making special use of the oscillation enabled by the bilingualism of native students and teachers.

At this point I recalled the American cartoonist Gary Larson and a conversation that I had, about ten years ago, with Eduardo Viveiros de Castro on the perspectival character of Larson's cartoons (browse https://www.thefarside.com/ for examples). At the time, Viveiros de Castro (I think) pointed to the striking difference between his cartoons and those of Disney characters, which, although taking an animal form, like those of Larson, shared the human perspective. I imagine that the cartoons of Larson, author of *The Far Side* (which, indeed, could equally be termed "The Other Side"), would be rapidly comprehended by young Wari' students, offering a playful way of making visible to these "paper readers" the possibility of an inversion of perspectives. The cartoons imply precisely the interchanging of *wari'* and *karawa* positions, illustrating the consequences of this in the lived world.

Notes

[1] See Vilaça 2019 on the effects of intercultural education in the political arena.

[2] See Vilaça 2016; Gallois and Grupioni 1999:106–7; and Gallois 2012; see also Fernandes 1980 and Almeida 2002:126.

[3] See Cabalzar Filho 1999 on the Salesians among the Tukano; see also Hugh-Jones 1997; Shapiro, 1981:143, 146; Vilaça 2002, 2014; and Viveiros de Castro, 2002a:193.

[4] CIMI is linked to the National Council of Bishops of Brazil (Conselho Nacional de Bispos do Brasil, CNBB), which today gathers the religious leaders working in regions with indigenous populations. On the relation between "culture," "property," and "recuperation," see Carneiro da Cunha 2009:317, 364; and Hugh-Jones 1997:100.

[5] On public policies for culturally sensitive education and indigenous university education in Brazil, see Luciano 2012, 2014; Souza Lima 2012; Souza Lima and Hoffman 2008; Menezes and Rodrigues 2014.

[6] Even the animals that cannot assume the human position, *wari'*, have a recognized cognitive capacity, "thought," which the Wari' situate in the heart (*ximixi'*). Hence, for example, the spider monkey, considered a simple animal, has intelligence and the capacity to reflect and take decisions, which, as we shall see, they lose in the Christian world.

[7] On this discussion, see Descola 1986, 1996; Dwyer 1996; Ingold 1988, 2000; Latour 1993, 1999; and Lenoble 1990, among others.

[8] On the subjugation of animals, also see Genesis 9:2–3, where God speaks to Noah: "And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be on every beast of the earth, on every bird of the air, on all that moves on the earth, and on all the fish of the sea. They are given into your hand. Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs" (New King James Bible). This passage is translated into Wari' in *Lesson Book 1*: 123.

[9] As we shall see, this new conception of time would be deepened in the school. It is also worth observing that the last hymn (129) from the hymnbook, included only in Portuguese, is the Brazilian national anthem.

[10] The terms in the Wari' language used as equivalents of the hours of the day are included in the Portuguese text in parentheses, as shown here, and can be translated as follows: six in the morning = the true beginning of the day; nine o'clock = the sun is high; twelve o'clock = face of the sun; three in the afternoon = the sun descends; six in the afternoon = twilight; eight in the evening = the night grew; midnight = the middle of the night; three in the morning = it is going to dawn. See Anthony Seeger (1981:62) on the different times of the day among the Suyá.

[11] This difference in age groups between "youths" and "adolescents" is nonexistent in the Wari' language.

[12] See Lopes da Silva 2002; Weber 2006 on the Kaxinawá, Cohn 2004, 2014 on the Xikrin; Collet 2006 on the Bakairi; Alvares 2005 on the Maxacali; Gomes 2006; Gomes and Miranda 2014 on the Xakriabá and Pataxó; Macedo 2006, 2009 on the Wayãpi; Paladino 2010 on the Tikuna; Luciano 2012, 2014; Lasmar 2009 on the Upper Rio Negro; Colares 2014 on the Ashaninka; Benites 2012 on the Kaiowá; and Tassinari 2001 on the Karipuna.

[13] For important exceptions see, among others, Durston 2007; Fienup-Riordam 1991; Gallois 2012; Gow 2006; Grotti 2009; Handman 2015; Hanks 2010; Keane 2007; Laugrand 1997; T. Leite 2018; Oliveira 2010; Oppas 2008; Orta 2004; Schieffelin 2007; Shapiro 1981; Taylor 1981; Van der Geest 1990; Viveiros de Castro 2002a.

[14] As Alexandre Koyré (2006) showed, scientific debates in the seventeenth century, such as that between Newton and Leibniz, which ended up giving precedence to Newtonian conceptions in the constitution of the paradigms of modern science, centered their discussion on divine immanence or transcendence and its power over the world. The notion of the infinite—so important to these debates and to the constitution of mathematics—is indissociable from the comprehension of God.

[15] Anthony Pickles (pers. comm., 2017) suggested the following mathematical translation: $2 : 1 :: x : x - (x - n)$.

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