

# Globalization and Global Thought: An Anthropological Extension of Non-Philosophy

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**Abstract:** Non-philosophy is a theoretical practice that provides an alternative account of universality in an age of globalization and cultural homogenization. In this article, the author conjoins non-philosophy and ontological anthropology to think a uni-versalist globality against particularist, nationalist, and ethnocentric reactions to globalization. In making an anthropological usage of non-philosophy, the author intends to extend François Laruelle's notion of philosophy as "Greco-Judaic transcendence" beyond its Eurocentric relativity and toward the global field of ontologies. A non-philosophical treatment of Eduardo Viveiros de Castro's concept of Amerindian Perspectivism prepares the way for a unified theory of philosophy and anthropology, a discipline simultaneously transcendental and empirical. In trying to articulate a variational and matrixial approach to indigenous ontologies, the author aims at a decolonial and generic extension of non-philosophy.

Adam Louis-Klein has an M.A in anthropology from the University of Chicago and an M.A in philosophy from the New School for Social Research. His work focuses on cosmopolitics, comparative ontology, non-philosophy, and Northwest Amazonian cosmologies. He is interested in studying ontologies empirically in order to develop a non-modern and cosmic style of thought. He is inspired by indigenous cosmology and ancient forms of shamanism, while engaging directly with thinkers of the Western tradition of philosophy, such as Parmenides, Plato, Hegel, Heidegger, or Deleuze. Louis-Klein seeks to make use of Non-philosophy in order to further the ontological turn in anthropology's project of formalizing the open multiplicity of transcendental worlds and in expanding the domain of the thinkable.

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## Introduction

The dialectic of the global and the local poses a question simultaneously logical and political, at once philosophical and anthropological. As Capital extends its domination upon practically all living humans, it produces a combined reaction in the form of particularisms, nationalisms, and ethnocentrisms, limiting the global scope it unfolds. The question of relativism or universalism becomes a pertinent one, and it begins to make sense again, at least in some way, to ask about the meaning of universal humanity as an idea and as a global project.

The scientific means of non-philosophy are well-posed to confront such issues for they make possible a properly *transcendental* usage of anthropological materials, that is, a combination of both empirical data on human beings in their immense diversity and a philosophical concept-space that takes “relativism” beyond itself through unfolding the symmetrical equality of ontological worlds. In disciplinary terms, non-philosophy provides the first part of the equation, the ontological turn in anthropology the second.

The ontological turn in anthropology is a theoretical approach that has developed means to compare ontologies from all over the world while attempting to maintain their radical conceptual autonomy. Transforming anthropology from a discipline that studies a plurality of cultures while assuming the basic naturalist ontology of Western thought in the form of the nature/culture dualism, thinkers in the ontological turn recursively critique Western naturalism from the standpoint of non-Western ontologies that do not recognize the same dualism. The ontological turn has achieved such pluralism through constructing inventive, comparative matrices, as so many fictions in which putatively incompatible ontological worlds can co-exist. Non-phi-

losophy also takes a variational approach and decomposes philosophy into a set of possible variants, such as “philosophies of difference” or “philosophies of multiplicity,” or the Judaic vs. Greek experiences of Being and the Other. Non-philosophy has not, however, thus far been expanded towards non-Western ontologies, and remains limited by a provisional Western localism of self-critique, in danger of repeating Europe’s critical over-reflexivity that it has tried to challenge. This article combines these two discourses in order to perform an extension of non-philosophy towards the global field of varying ontologies, while also developing a criticism of the ontological turn that isolates its own premature modalities of closure, despite its theoretical advances. While non-philosophy so far has limited treatment of philosophy to that of European “Greco-Judaic transcendence,”<sup>1</sup> the goal in this article is to expand the discipline toward the global field of ontologies as a plural space of ontologies that is *uni-versal* and irreducible to reactive, identificatory typologies that accompany the contemporary processes of globalization. As I develop below, non-philosophical tools allow us to situate *local transcendentals* as consisting within a *global(-without-globalization) matrix* of thought, under-determining those sorts of closure that either confuse the domains of the local and the global or pre-maturely localize a global field of possibility. I focus on Viveiros de Castro’s concept of Amerindian Perspectivism<sup>2</sup> as an instance of localizing closure even as it makes crucial advances in thinking an unbound multiplicity of transcendental worlds.

The extension of Non-Philosophy towards a global matrix of ontology requires defining

<sup>1</sup> Cf. François Laruelle, *Christo-Fiction: The Ruins of Athens and Jerusalem*, trans. Robin Mackay (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).

<sup>2</sup> In this article, I treat Amerindian Perspectivism as a concept developed by Viveiros de Castro on the basis of ethnographic accounts of Amerindian systems of thought, later expanded to a general ontological theory and method of anthropological comparison. My capitalization of the term aims to highlight a certain distance between this concept and the ideas of Amerindians themselves.

the notion of “transcendental world” or “local transcendental” as exceeding European “Greco-Judaic transcendence,” and simultaneously developing the non-philosophical formalism. I introduce the concept of the “local transcendental” to refine the concept of ontology to include the aspect of an ontology that renders it lived, constitutive, and bounded by conceptual limits. I also link the local transcendental to non-philosophy as a transcendental thought that works upon existent transcendental structures. Following methodologies laid out in Martin Holbraad’s *Truth in Motion: The Recursive Anthropology of Cuban Divination*<sup>3</sup>, the anthropologist in the field confronts *ethnographic alterity*, inconsistencies of conceptualization that demand comparative matrices to render alien ontological worlds intelligible. Building on Holbraad’s methodology of ethnographic alterity, but also anticipating the transcendental formalization that I develop in this article, I define alter-transcendental worlds as follows: 1) transcendental *limits* to the ethnographer’s indigenous transcendentials, 2) phenomenological “fields,” “spaces” or “worlds” as much as conceptual systems “lived through” by really existing humans, 3) consisting of (relatively) autonomous semantic contents and structures.

## Non-Philosophical Formalism

What follows is a description of non-philosophy that places non-philosophy in dialogue with the concepts of ontological anthropology, and paves the way for a unified formalization of these two discourses. I offer this formalization as a new usage and illustration of non-philosophy that expands its operations to the domain of non-Western ontologies and anthropological matrices of comparison. The key innovation is the decomposition of philosophy into discrete units termed *logemes* and *philosophemes*, which I un-

derstand to be analogous to *mythemes* as defined by Claude Lévi-Strauss in his structural analysis of mythology.<sup>4</sup> In principle, there should be *transformational relations*, formal relationships that transform one variant into another or “generate” a total set, between these units and the various *semes/semantic contents* of non-Western ontologies. The terms *logeme* and *philosopheme* suggest a rooting in Western philosophy but these hypothesized transformations (which would also be *trans-lations*) extend the non-philosophical concept of philosophy to full-scale alter-ontologies composed of such *semes*.<sup>5</sup>

According to Laruelle, philosophy *qua a priori* invariant is defined by *auto-position*. Philosophy divides “reality” into at least two terms that can be called “thought” and “being” and it aims to *correlate* and *synthesize* the two terms by one of them, “thought.” Since thought is responsible for both division and synthesis, auto-position is the transcendental “loop” of conceptual thought: a *circular* and *tautological* self-sufficiency.<sup>6</sup> This self-relation can be called a 3/2 or 2/3 transcendental arithmetic of terms and relations, two terms by a relation, provided that terms may

<sup>4</sup> Lévi-Strauss defines the *mytheme* on analogy with the phoneme as a bundle of distinctive features, distinguished from other mythemes on multiple, qualitative axes (such as compact/diffuse, grave/acute for phonemes, or raw/cooked, dry/wet for mythemes). However, whereas the phoneme serves to differentiate meaning without necessarily possessing any semantic content itself, the *mytheme* is *intrinsically semantic* and imposes a “grid of intelligibility” upon experience. The *logeme* is like the *mytheme* in being both semantically-saturated and an organizer of experience, the term *logeme* simply highlighting the *transcendental* function of *logemes*. In the end, mythology may be equally transcendental, a point which, however, cannot be sufficiently demonstrated in this article. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Jealous Potter* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 142-148. See also Roman Jakobson, *Fundamentals of Language* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2002).

<sup>5</sup> *Semes* is the general concept, *logemes* and *philosophemes* being cases of “semes” (see footnote 4).

<sup>6</sup> François Laruelle, *The Dictionary of Non-Philosophy*, trans. Taylor Adkins (Minneapolis: Univocal Publishing, 2013), 39.

<sup>3</sup> Martin Holbraad, *Truth in Motion: The Recursive Anthropology of Cuban Divination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 237-259.

also act as relations and relations as terms; that is, “term” and “relation” are here reversible.<sup>7</sup> In my usage of non-philosophy, 3/2 will mean that the synthesis is termed explicitly, 2/3 that it is performed implicitly.

I call the *terms* of the invariant structure of philosophy *philosophemes* or *logemes*. *Logemes* are the onto-logical concepts that might form the general stock of any formal and/or fundamental ontology. In Western philosophy, their semantic status and function serve as the subject of perennial “debates.” An improvised list might feature: Quantity, Quality, Relation, Property, Substance, Form, Content, Class, Extension, Intension, Sense, Reference, Subject, Object, Sameness, Difference, Opposition, Discrete, Continuous, Essence, Existence, and so on. The invariant philosophical structure is a set of *relations* between *logemes* that stand under a central *philosopheme*, itself a *logeme*. The *philosopheme* is the *operator of unification* for the *logemes*, or the “principle” of their *relation*. Synthesis by “thought” is *due to the philosopheme*. Generally, the *philosopheme* is that *logeme* which itself describes the *relation* between *logemes*, such as Opposition, or Difference (e.g. in Viveiros de Castro) as various figures of “Relation” itself.

*Every philosopheme is a logeme.* Philosophy splits reality into “thought” (a set of *logemes*) and “being” (inhering in the Real-One, but the concept of which is a *logeme*). The central *philosopheme* is either explicit or implicit, in one case, as a centrally stated term of a philosophy, in the other, implicit in the performances or “gestures” of that philosophy. *The statement that every philosopheme is a logeme is equivalent to the statement that philosophy is a structure of double transcendence or 3/2 (2/3) transcendental arithmetic.*

<sup>7</sup> Anthropologists may recognize in the 3/2 or 2/3 structure of philosophy something similar to Louis Dumont’s concept of “hierarchical encompassment.” Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and its Implications* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970).

Non-philosophy starts with an axiom that posits the Real as irreducible to, and distinct from, the act of division internal to philosophy: the One is *given as radically undivided*.<sup>8</sup> This statement effects an *epoché* or bracketing of the philosophical “relating” of terms and relations insofar as any *relation* presupposes at least a *division* of terms to be related. Every philosophy involves a pre-posed de-cision (related to the idea of scission or dividing) to effect itself as philosophical auto-position.<sup>9</sup> Granted that thinking involves relation or transcendence (as in the very act of thought as it transcends toward an “object of thought” or “the world” generally), the One is *foreclosed* to thought. The Real-One being taken, however, as a *given*, I develop a “hypothetico-deductive” *modelling* using operationally defined concepts themselves drawn from the now transcendental-reduced discourse of philosophy. I also show below how non-Western ontological worlds can be modeled in a similar way.

The axiom of the One’s indivision implies that the diverse forms of Philosophy reduce to an *a priori* invariant of division and auto-positional synthesis, an induction warranted from the perspective of the One.<sup>10</sup> If the basic structure of Philosophy is invariant, one can construct at the same time systems of *variants* as combinatorial transformations (permutations of *logemes*) of an isomorphic form (each permutation remains 3/2). The science of ontologies takes each ontology (= philosophy, in its minimal form and

<sup>8</sup> Note that this makes non-philosophical formalism essentially different from a logico-mathematical formalism in which the syntactical constraints of the language are given *prior* to the stating of axioms. Non-Philosophy relies on certain axioms that themselves condition the rules of a conceptual (i.e. intrinsically semantic) syntax.

<sup>9</sup> François Laruelle, *Principles of Non-Philosophy*, 231-244.

<sup>10</sup> An *induction* because philosophies appear in their empirical diversity, from which is extracted an *a priori identity*. “Induction” moves *from the empirical* to the *a priori*, or at least to the general; *deduction* moves fully within the *a priori* (developed below in the form of the clone).

definition)<sup>11</sup> as a *local model* of the One, or to use another first name, the Human. Indeed, these are already the sorts of ontologies that thinkers of the ontological turn have begun to isolate. In terms of non-philosophy, the matrix of ontologies constructed here will be *global*, rooted in the axiom of the Human *indifferent to the auto-position of any particular, local ontology, or any given decision*. The “relation” between local ontologies is non-local or global by being immanently “in-One,” for the One is the immanent and non-relational core of any relational matrix, in which the matrix “inheres.” In other words, the reduction of the diversity of philosophies to the identical philosophical invariant, now linked to the One, *unbinds* the closure that each philosophy effects, while at the same time making it uniquely intelligible in terms of an invariant formalism.

### Anthropological Matrices of Comparison

Decomposing philosophy into a structure of relations and terms allows me to connect the non-philosophical concept of philosophy explicitly to the models of non-Western ontologies proposed by the ontological turn. The problem of relations and terms has been an important theme in the ontological turn. For example, in Marilyn Strathern’s matrix of Western versus Melanesian ontologies of the person, a gift/commodity duality frames an inversion between a Western schema that takes individuals as given terms to be deliberately “relationized,” in the form of “society” (relations as compositionally structuring the social whole) and a Melanesian conceptuality that takes relations as given, and in which (in)dividuals emerge through purposeful acts of exhibition and exchange.<sup>12</sup> She con-

structs an inversion between term/relation, two possibilities of a 2x2 matrix *term/relation vs. given/produced*. The *comparanda* are different articulations of relation/term: Westerners take terms as given and relations as produced, Melanesians would take terms as produced and relations as given.<sup>13</sup> The comparison is *itself* a relation, what Viveiros de Castro calls “the relation of anthropological comparison.”<sup>14</sup> In this case, the terms of this relation are themselves relations of relation and term: the relation of anthropological comparison inverts the relation between term/relation in each case.

The relation of anthropological comparison in certain ways poses the same problem as the 3/2 (or 2/3) structure of philosophy that non-philosophy isolates. Viveiros de Castro writes how anthropology constructs itself as a relation between two discourses, that of “the anthropologist” and that of “the native,” as two structural positions.<sup>15</sup> The position of the anthropologist is in general “doubled” because the anthropologist not only produces the relation but attempts to determine the common horizon of its two objects. Generally, the anthropologist and the native confront one another as members of two different “cultures,” but it is the anthropologist who, in the last instance, refers the relation to the referential background of “nature” of which the former knows but the latter is held to be ignorant.

I hope to underdetermine as much as possible the over-determining effects of the relation of anthropological comparison using both non-philosophical tools and the anthropological concept of *symmetrization*. Symmetrization is a way of rendering Western and Non-Western

<sup>11</sup> The concept of philosophy in non-philosophy is extended to global ontologies, in terms of the formal definition of philosophy as auto-position and the minimal definition of alter-transcendentals described above.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Marilyn Strathern, *The Gender of the Gift: Problems with Women and Problems with Society in Melanesia* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010).

<sup>13</sup> This is of course a very formal rendering that does not capture what is specific to Strathern’s description of Melanesian personhood, but I offer it here to work out the basic structural moves needed to develop the unified theory of anthropology and philosophy.

<sup>14</sup> Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, “Perspectival Anthropology and The Method of Controlled Equivocation,” *Tipiti: Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America* 2, no. 1 (2004): 3-22.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

conceptual frames as inverse variants of each other, thus in a non-hierarchical relation of equality. An important instance of symmetrization links it to the criticism of the nature/culture dualism. If it is “the anthropologist” who refers relations between cultures to a common substrate of “nature” and arbitrates this relation through a “third” instance or meta-language, many thinkers in the ontological turn have found a way to *invert* the dualism. In Viveiros de Castro’s thinking, if Western naturalist ontology can be described as a position of “mononaturalism and multiculturalism” (multiple perspectives on a single nature), the confrontation with the ethnographic alterity of Amazonian ontology reveals an inverted structure of “monoculturalism and multinaturalism” (a single form of personhood but a multiplicity of kinds of bodies).

However, for Viveiros de Castro, relationality ends up being an ontology in itself *via* the ontologization of alterity. Rather than a modelling of plural ontologies, Viveiros de Castro’s perspectivism is an “ontology of ontologies” as the ontology that accounts for the relation between ontologies themselves. On the contrary, I follow Levi-Strauss’s method in the *Mythologiques*<sup>16</sup> in rendering the structure of relations and terms open and untotalizable in the last instance, irreducible to a single ontology of ontologies.<sup>17</sup> In

<sup>16</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Mythologiques*, 4 vols. (Paris: Plon, 1964, 1966, 1968, 1971).

<sup>17</sup> This strategy suggests a different relationship between the ontological turn and Levi-Strauss’s work than that developed by Viveiros de Castro. The untotalizability of the matrix of ontologies arises from the application of transformational method to ontologies in their multiplicity and plurivocity, rather than a local ontologization of “transformation” as “Becoming” or “Difference.” Viveiros de Castro highlights Levi-Strauss’s emphasis upon untotalizability and disequilibrium in the generativity of mythology, but he seems to think this feature of Levi-Strauss’s method derives entirely from its *content* (Amerindian mythology or Amerindian ontology itself), as if the dynamic disequilibrium of *the model* could be simply identified with *perspectivist ontology*. Viveiros de Castro here typically *fuses model and thing* – the method of transformational analysis as *explanans* and Amerindian thought as *explanandum* – whereas it was precisely Lévi-Strauss’s contention that the untotalizability of myth results from the inability of thinking to subsume the Real.

other words, *the relations between ontologies themselves must remain non-local*.

## A Symptomatic Reading of Viveiros de Castro’s Concept of Perspectivism

I will now trace Viveiros de Castro’s development of the concept of Amerindian perspectivism to determine precisely where and how his differential ontology winds up in auto-position. I develop a “symptomatic reading” of Viveiros de Castro’s trajectory that locates the uncontrolled generalizability of Amerindian Perspectivism – initially an intra-Amazonian ethnographic heuristic but then expanded to a general ontological theory – as a symptom of auto-positional structure, after which I isolate the tautological structure of his developed theory through the thought experiment of a dialogue between a perspectivist and a naturalist. I thus critique the premature localism of Viveiros de Castro’s concept of perspectivism, while attempting to build on it as a method to think the multiplicity of local transcendentals, a global matrix of ontologies.

The trajectory starts from Viveiros de Castro’s early ethnography on the Tupian Arawaté in a study titled, *From the Enemy’s Point of View*.<sup>18</sup> In this work, Viveiros de Castro unveils an ontology essentially “open to the outside,” a *socius* structured by radical alterity, but here he does so *via* a comparison *internal* to the field of Amazonian ethnology. A distinction between Tupi and Ge societies underlies the conceptual scheme of the study. Viveiros de Castro considers Tupi societies to be “metonymic” and “sacrificial,” founded on historicity and the diachronic unfolding of a series, while the Ge, he claims, are metaphoric and “totemic,” characterized by synchronic classifications and analogical relationships. While Arawaté society roots itself in an individualist eschatology of destiny and futurity, exemplified by the “killer-singer” who tries to

<sup>18</sup> Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, *From the Enemy’s Point of View: Humanity and Divinity in an Amazonian Society* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992).

attain the status of *Mai* cannibal gods of sky, Ge societies, with their cross-cutting dualisms and concentric village structures, interiorize social totality through a mirror-like dialectic of self and other. Whereas the Tupi *socius* opens itself essentially to alterity and vehemently desires the Other, Ge society attempts closure. I sense that part of what underlies this comparison is not merely the metonymic/metaphoric and sacrificial/totemic oppositions, but a sort of Amazonian variant of Deleuze against Hegel, *difference vs. identity*.

Viveiros de Castro's 1998 article, "Along the Spider Thread: Virtuality, Actualization, and the Kinship Process in Amazonia" provides substantial evidence that it is the Tupi side of the comparison that he has generalized.<sup>19</sup> In this later essay, Viveiros de Castro aims to show that *Amazonian societies in general* exist through a kinship process that attenuates diffuse and virtual relations of affinity through socializing acts of kinship, rooted in a cosmology in which affinity precedes and encompasses kinship. Amazonian societies actively work over kinship from the background of a potentially threatening otherness that extends beyond the human, an open multiplicity of animals, spirits, and the dead, the spiritualized realm of "virtual affinity."<sup>20</sup> Viveiros de Castro reverses the classic matrix of kinship:affinity::nature:culture in the sense of kinship as *given* blood relations or descent groups and *produced* affinal alliances and reciprocities, arguing that Amazonian sociality is a kind of "pre-elementary" kinship structure, supplementing the typology of the *Elementary Structures of Kinship* ("elementary" as rooted in prescriptive alliance, "pre-elementary" in so far as alliance is prior to kinship).<sup>21</sup> In the Amazon, affinity comes first as a given and kinship reveals itself as a corporeal labor, the active molding of

the body. If affinity is prior to kinship, Viveiros de Castro explicitly interprets this as the notion that difference is prior to identity:

The real significance of the idea of affinity as the given...is that it constitutes a privileged instantiation of the ontological premises of Amazonian life-worlds. The first and foremost of these premises is: identity is a particular case of difference. Just as cold is the relative absence of heat, but not vice-versa (heat is a quantity with no negative state), so identity is the relative absence of difference, but not vice-versa. Put otherwise, only difference exists in greater or lesser intensity: this is the nature of the measured value. Transposing this analogy to the domain of kinship - and taking "kinship" as a convenient abbreviation for what, in Amazonia, would be better to call a theory of *generalized relationality* - I could say that consanguinity is a limit value of affinity.<sup>22</sup>

So, the structure of Amazonian *sociality* is a kind of *ontology*, a set of "premises" in which difference precedes identity as analogous to affinity preceding kinship. The primacy of alterity will later become the primacy of *divergent perspectives* in the concept of "equivocation," the model expanding far beyond its specific utility as a heuristic to understand Amazonian societies at the local level. Eduardo Viveiros de Castro moves from the level of Tupi-Ge comparison to Amazonian kinship and ultimately a transcendental theory of "generalized relationality" in the mode of "equivocation."

The Ge societies appear to have dropped out from the model, perhaps symptomatic of a widening and uncontrolled generalizability. Viveiros de Castro gives only minute indications that the

<sup>19</sup> Eduardo Viveiros De Castro, *The Relative Native: Essays on Indigenous Conceptual Worlds* (Chicago: Hau, 2015), 97-138.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

<sup>21</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969).

<sup>22</sup> Italics added. Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, *The Relative Native*, 111-112.

Ge can be fitted into this model, when he refers to Elizabeth Ewart's dissertation on the Panara, *Space and Society in Central Brazil: A Panara Ethnography*.<sup>23</sup> Ewart does much to show the degree to which the anthropologists of the Ge, such as those of the *Dialectical Societies* collection,<sup>24</sup> may have exaggerated the self-sufficient and stabilizing function of the concentric and dyadic organization of Ge societies.<sup>25</sup> In an admirable reading of Levi-Strauss's reflections on the relation between concentric and asymmetrical dualisms, Ewart shows how the center of a Ge village might be a locus exteriority and transformation, while it is the periphery which represents the "we" of Panara society. In addition, Ewart understands the moiety relations of Panara within the broader category of *hipe* ("others") as a mode of exteriority. It is not clear, however, that Ewart's thesis is enough to settle the question as to the comparability of Ge and Tupi societies. At the very least, the relation of her work to the specificities of Viveiros de Castro's model is not explicit.

Viveiros de Castro's Arawaté-inspired model privileges Tupinamba asymmetry over the symmetrical or mirror-like dialectic of Ge societies, a move that has consequences for the further development of the model. In my view, Viveiros de Castro appears to reduce *dualistic opposition* to *divergent difference*, and he subsumes *opposites* within the general idea of *perspectival divergence*. In his work on the Arawaté, Viveiros de Castro describes a practice in which the aim of the killer-singer is to see himself from the enemy's point of view. The killer's songs take on

the voice of his victim as he describes, as in one haunting case, the enemy seeing his killer before him as he lies dying in the "great patio" of the vultures (the clearing in the forest where they descend upon their carrion).<sup>26</sup> But all of this is through the mouth of the killer who thereby sees *himself*, but through the vision of his enemy. The killer treats himself as an enemy in the sense of *an enemy to the enemy* (his divinization and approximation to the *Mai*). Viveiros de Castro describes the "becoming-other" at the heart of Tupi eschatology as a movement of *the othering of the other* (seeing oneself as other to the other, by *becoming that other*). Yet, if one accepts the contrast between the "dialectical" self-mirroring of self and other of the Ge and Tupian "metonymic" historicity, then it seems that this othering of the other must be in a sense *without symmetry, without reflection*.<sup>27</sup> Viveiros de Castro can only see such symmetry as a "narcissism," and Tupinamba cannibalism, as the Dionysian divinization of "the raw" (external to "culture"), can only be a torsion without reflection, the undoing of all symmetry:

I shall attain fullness of being only after...I have devoured (slain) an enemy on earth, which turns me into an enemy, then a god. The system is like a twisted circular band with no side: the deceased

<sup>26</sup> Viveiros de Castro, *From the Enemy's Point of View*, 243.

<sup>27</sup> Contrast the example of Bororo cosmology, in which a "becoming-other" is central to the experience of the *aroe* souls (timeless categorical, or "totemic" forms that define clan-belonging), whereby persons of different moieties impersonate the deceased of the other moiety, truly "becoming" them, incarnating their souls, and taking on their social personality upon death. In general, in Bororo cosmology, I can encounter my own personal identity only in the other, through members of the other moiety who adorn themselves with my own clan-specific ornamentation and symbolic paraphernalia and impersonate me upon death. But all of this takes place thoroughly within a *reciprocal* cycle of prestations, founded on the *symmetrical* relation of the two moieties in a system of "restricted exchange." Christopher J. Crocker, *Vital Souls: Bororo Cosmology, Natural Symbolism, and Shamanism* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1985).

<sup>23</sup> In a footnote, no. 46, p. 137 of *The Relative Native*, Viveiros de Castro cites Elizabeth Ewart, *Space and Society in Central Brazil: A Panara Ethnography* (London: A&C Black, 2013).

<sup>24</sup> *Dialectical Societies: The Gê and Bororo of Central Brazil*, ed. David Maybury-Lewis (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979).

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Terence Turner, "Kinship, Household, and Community among the Kayapó," in *Dialectical Societies: The Gê and Bororo of Central Brazil*, ed. by David Maybury-Lewis (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 179 - 214.



is the enemy, the enemy is the god, the god IS the deceased, and the deceased is the self. *The cannibal cogito does not express the narcissistic geometry of representation, but the topological torsion of other-becoming.* The peculiar inversion of Arawaté perspectivism, which posits the human subject as the object of divine anthropophagy, suggests something that was already evident in the Tupinamba case: that Tupi-Guarani cannibalism is the opposite of a narcissistic incorporation; it is an alteration, a becoming.<sup>28</sup> (my emphasis)

Viveiros de Castro claims fidelity to Levi-Strauss's concept of the dynamic disequilibrium of Amerindian mythology, an influence on the model of virtual affinity in its foregrounding of asymmetry and the primacy of difference. Levi-Strauss did not extract the problem of duality from a complex "interplay" between asymmetry and symmetry, however. Indeed, if symmetrization thinks the equality of local ontologies, for Viveiros de Castro, this symmetry *appears to be reduced to the specific asymmetry of Amerindian perspectivism.* Thus, Viveiros de Castro's perspectivism treats ontologies not equally or "symmetrically" but hierarchically, in terms of the asymmetry of perspectivism itself. A symptom of this hierarchy is the way the model oscillates between an empirically specific heuristic and a global-transcendental internalization of plurality and multiplicity as "perspectival divergence" and "generalized relationality:" perspectivism always seems capable of doing too much, expanding itself as an unbounded generality to relate all ontologies to each other in terms of divergence. In contrast, the non-philosophical approach emphasizes the asymmetry or unilaterality between *thinking and the real* as the basic asymmetry, and as a means to *underdetermine* the auto-position of the model.

Viveiros de Castro gives the most explicit elaboration of the theory of Amerindian perspectivism

<sup>28</sup> Viveiros de Castro, *From the Enemy's Point of View*, 254.

ism in his texts on cosmological deixis and on the concept of equivocation. I will summarize the basic and schematic points of this theory, in order to then locate as precisely as possible its tautological structure and complete my critique.

In the West, nature and culture relate to each other in a natural manner (culture being a break from nature while also an extension of it), while in the Amazon, they do so culturally; this is an inversion of "encompassment" of the nature/culture dualism by one or the other of its terms.<sup>29</sup> According to Western naturalism, humans differ from non-human beings *via* their distinctive predicates of mindedness and culture, while sharing with those beings a physical consubstantiality on the given plane of Nature (e.g. in the universality of physical laws). Inversely, in the Amazon, humans and animals share common *humanity* in the form of personhood and perspective, though differing in corporeal forms, habits, and affects. This inversion of encompassment is analogous to the inversion of the given and the produced, the conditions of agential action versus the intentions of those agents, as in Marilyn Strathern's matrix. Westerners take Nature and natural beings as *givens* (e.g. the genetic code), but aim to produce or "construct" culture (e.g. "cultural norms"), differentiating "customs" and "points of view" from a generalized background of physical reality. In other words, nature as a *ground* makes way for cultures as differentiating *figures*. However, in Amazonia, culture is a given (potential humanity lurks everywhere in the multiplicity of animals, spirits, and the dead) while "nature" must be produced through the work of differentiating bodies, as in practices of body modification, face paint-

<sup>29</sup> It is inherent in Western naturalism to oscillate between the discontinuity and continuity of culture with nature. Marilyn Strathern, "No Nature, No Culture: The Hagen Case," in *Nature, Culture and Gender*, ed. Carol P. McCormack and Marilyn Strathern (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 174-222.

ing, masks/ornamentation, the *couvade*, etc.<sup>30</sup> Everything in the Amazonian ontology carries a potential “point of view,” figured in the idiom of cultural relationships – animals have kin and affines, drink beer, live in houses – while bodies are specified as figures, an application of Roy Wagner’s concept of a figure-ground inversion, transformed in this case from a perceptual-semiotic inversion to a fully ontological one.<sup>31</sup>

In the Western ontology, natural beings are given, so the problem is how to correctly perform “cultural constructs” which are “adequate” to them. Multiple cultures elaborate different interpretations or worldviews, but a common field of *referents* act as the objective poles and standards of such interpretations. On the other hand, in the Amazonian ontology, while every entity might see itself as human, not everything these beings see is itself the same. Subjects perceive through a common cultural idiom, but *the content* of that perception is different, for each subjectivity is to be specified by differing bodily habits and affects. The *sense* of what subjects see is the same, a culturalized field of meanings, but the *referents* differ: what I see as blood, a jaguar sees as manioc beer; what I see as a termite hill, an ant-eater sees as lunch.<sup>32</sup> “Blood” would be a “homonym,” hiding an equivocation of two referents (two different *entities* being referred to), as opposed to a mere polysemy relative to a referential pole (two different ways of looking at the same thing). The “morning star” and the “evening star” are simply “synonyms,” multiple senses of a single referent.<sup>33</sup>

“Cultural relativism” is part of the Western schema, for the unifying referent of a “thing in-itself” underlies the difference between cultural

points of view as an epistemological limit of knowledge. Amazonian perspectivism, according to Viveiros de Castro, rejects a thing-in-itself and the epistemology of representation that goes along with it, instead positively ontologizing perspective as the basic substrate of reality. Amazonian ontology abounds in the disjunctive divergence of equivocal meanings, a multiplicity not of worldviews but *genuinely different ontic worlds*. The method of controlled equivocation treats positively the inherent tendency to misunderstanding between conceptual frameworks and ontologies. If alter-transcendentals pose limits to our conceptualities, these limits are differential relations of equivocation. “Being” is an infinite field of such limits, the divergent continuum itself. For Viveiros de Castro, the limit of the Other is ontologized and transcendence remixed with immanence.

### The Tautology of Equivocation, A Thought Experiment

I offer the thought experiment of a dialogue between a perspectivist and naturalist to demonstrate the tautological quality of Viveiros de Castro’s concept of Amerindian Perspectivism. The naturalist enters the dialogue simply by offering a counter-ontology to perspectivism, thus proposing a *limit* to perspectivist ontology. There are two possibilities to how the dialogue could unfold: first, the proponents begin a “genuine” dialogue in which some criteria of decidability between such ontologies is available; second, the proponents realize the equivocal and radically incommensurable relationship of their two positions, embracing a productive equivocation. In the first case, *the very conditions* of the dialogue should be *rejected* by the perspectivist. The dialogue presupposes a *naturalist* ontology of common reference, a criterion of referential “truth” and “falsity” for various “worldviews” that aim to cognize a pre-given objectivity. The consistent perspectivist should reject the dialogue altogether and instead propose an “anti-dialogue,”

<sup>30</sup> Aparecida Villaça, “Making Kin out of Others in Amazonia,” *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 8, no. 2 (2002): 347-365.

<sup>31</sup> Roy Wagner, *Symbols That Stand for Themselves* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

<sup>32</sup> Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, “Cosmological Deixis and Amerindian Perspectivism,” *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 4, no. 3 (1998): 469-488.

<sup>33</sup> Viveiros de Castro, “Perspectival Anthropology.”

the result of which is the productive equivocation. According to the conditions of the anti-dialogue, the perspectivist has *won by fiat*: the perspectivist's ontology describes the relationship between the two ontologies themselves, *the structure of the anti-dialogue itself*. While, on the other hand, the conditions of the *dialogue* might be said to have guaranteed victory for *the naturalist* by fiat since a "genuine" dialogue means nothing but the mutual presupposition of common referents or some universal standard of evaluation. Each schema demonstrates its horizon of circular, auto-positional foundation and the result might be described as an *aporia*. The authority of any given philosophy reveals itself as radically *undecidable* and, from the standpoint of non-philosophy, each de-cision is to be taken as equivalent.

One of the great strengths of Viveiros de Castro's model, nevertheless, is the way it asks us to consider how Amazonian perspectivism might transform our ontological premises. Perhaps trying to think the purely symmetrical equality of global ontologies risks losing the benefits of allowing the native's ontology to transform that of the anthropologist, the "rebalancing" return-effect of native thought upon the analyst, what Holbraad calls the "meta-recursive" step.<sup>34</sup> The neutrality and balance of symmetrizing strategies seem to conceal the constitutive *imbalance* of the relation of anthropological comparison, for is it not after all the anthropologist who constructs the putatively "neutral" relation?

The dilemma of a return-effect versus neutral equivalence captures nicely the difference between Viveiros de Castro's and Philippe Descola's respective approaches to the ontological turn. Looking at the differences between these two approaches and the possible aporias they create will allow me to reconsider the question of the hierarchical or non-hierarchical relations between ontologies.

<sup>34</sup> Martin Holbraad, *Truth in Motion*, 237-259.

Instead of generalizing an ontology of ontologies on the basis of a local model, Descola constructs a 2x2 table of four different possible ontologies as four symmetrical variants, though leaving the performative status of his method relatively unexplicated.<sup>35</sup> By means of the *logemes* (my interpretation) physicality/interiority and continuity/discontinuity in the relation between humans and non-humans, there are four possible ontologies, which Descola claims are ethnographically attested: analogism, based on the discontinuity of both physicality and interiority between humans and non-humans; totemism (*locus classicus*, Australia) on the basis of their continuity; naturalism (*locus classicus*, Modernism) with physicality continuous and interiority discontinuous; and animism (*locus classicus*, Indigenous America) with interiority continuous and physicality discontinuous.

Nonetheless, Descola's model seems to risk a similar relativity, or re-localization of the matrix, and a hierarchical privileging of its perspective. Indeed, the table represents the logic of classification, one tied to the naturalist ontology that insists on constituting the field of phenomena as consisting of objectifiable "natural kinds." The work of scientific classification in the naturalist ontology aims to "construct" models that correspond (*adequatio intellectus et rei*) to the pre-given types (in part the very epistemology of "representation" that Viveiros de Castro finds issue with). "Scientific constructions" should "make the right cuts" that pick out natural units.<sup>36</sup> Classification, however, is not completely alien to the operations of transformation: for Descola, a set of transformational inversions characterize the

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Philippe Descola, *Beyond Nature and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014).

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Elizabeth Povinelli, *The Cunning of Recognition: Indigenous Alterities and the Making of Australian Multiculturalism* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2002). See also Adam Louis-Klein, "The Paradoxes of Identity Politics: A Critique of Recognition," *Public Seminar* (October 2018), <http://www.publicseminar.org/2018/10/the-paradoxes-of-identity-politics/>.

*differencia specifica* of the four ontologies. Yet, as long as the models are conceived of as “generalizing constructions” to capture “existent kinds,” the local ontology of naturalism risks prevailing as implicit in the performance of its method (2/3). I propose to radicalize the method of operational transformation at the level of ontologies and afford transformation a greater power of genericity and performativity, extracting the matrix of variance from a reduction to the logic of classification.

Indeed, an aporia arises between these two options: a reduction of the matrix of local ontologies to a hierarchically privileged ontology which would think their relation, such as perspectivism, and second, a neutralizing taxonomic table that would implicitly reassert Western naturalism at the performative level. The solution must involve allowing a transformation of the anthropologist by the native, as Viveiros de Castro proposes, while avoiding the tautological and re-localizing structure of Amerindian Perspectivism. I navigate these two alternatives by means of the non-philosophical concepts of the clone and the force-(of)-thought. The key here is to see how these operations of Non-Philosophy generalize the concept of transformation as it applies to symmetrizing classification (Descola), while at the same time realizing each ontology as a concrete thought-possibility that affects the subject of anthropological thought (Viveiros de Castro).

### Local Transcendentals as Clones of Human Immanence

Following Laruelle in *Principles of Non-Philosophy*, the force-(of)-thought should be understood as a dual structure composed out of two “causes:” the first, the causality of the Real, operating by simple indifference of the Real; the second, an *occasional* cause, the contingently given conceptual material that philosophy or ontology pro-

vides as a means for thought.<sup>37</sup> The Real causes Non-Philosophy to be “seen-in-One” as a *clone* of the One: the performance of thinking *adds nothing* to the One (idempotency or  $1+1=1$ ). The “identity” of thinking is exactly that it “adds nothing,” allowing theory to be related to the One as irreducible to it in-the-last-instance. This complex structure clarifies the syntax of unilateral duality. It becomes possible to affirm indivision as the status of the clone’s relationship to the One, while also affirming duality as the discrete division operated by transcendence, the characteristic of occasional material. The clone is, in fact, just the identity (with the one) of the discrete material. The relationship between clone and material is *unilateral*, working *from* the One, which is given-(to)-itself in radical autonomy. The axiomatic statements of this knowledge condense the dual structure described above, indexing the identity of transcendence with the basic immanence of the One, while composed out of occasional material as a set of operationally defined concepts (*logemes/philosophemes* or *semes*). At the end of this article, the reader will find a set of axioms that can be read in the way explicated here.

Since the One does not admit division into discrete units, to speak of syntax is to speak, in fact, from the point of view of transcendence. Seeing syntactical matrices or transformation groups in-One (i.e. from the perspective of the clone) suggests a sort of “non-structuralism.” The term “non-structuralism” understands the cross-cutting character of the relation of unilateral duality in its submission to a *non-relational and thus pre-syntactical* core. The uni-tax opens the un-totalizability of the syntax of ontologies, rendered as a grammar of transformation. A non-structuralist understanding of variance, ultimately seen-in-One as a uni-tax, is a kind of generalized structuralism.

The non-structuralist concept of variance relies neither on a differential (or relational) ontology

<sup>37</sup> François Laruelle, *Principles of Non-Philosophy*, 23.

nor on classification. Rather, both forms themselves reduce to *local transcendentals* (e.g. “perspectivism” or “naturalism/naturalistic taxonomy”) which possess relative autonomy as *clones* of the One. The relative autonomy of transcendence derives from the relative autonomy of *the Other as limit* (ethnographic alterity), the limit being transcendence both of a given transcendental and of the purely immanent One, which is irreducible to the transcendental. There is a positional status to *transcendence* – positional in the sense of structuralist positional value (transcendental structures are thus *positional variants* within the grammar).<sup>38</sup> The relative autonomy of the Other when it enters the structures of non-philosophy is the performative manifestation of the force-(of)-thought, the subject of non-philosophical thinking or the Stranger, *its virtual existence or consistency within the model but with its sufficiency reduced*. The Stranger is the Other seen in-immanence, the Other which we immanently “are.”

The unified theory of anthropology and philosophy remains a perspectivism then, as it aims to comprehend the compatibility of transcendental stranger-perspectives as *clones of human immanence*. As identical in-the-last-instance to the One, each local transcendental is a way in which the force-(of)-thought might manifest when transcendence is localized there as a positional variant within the immanent matrix. The unified theory of anthropology and philosophy meets Patrice Maniglier’s apt description of anthropology as “the formal ontology of ourselves as variants.”<sup>39</sup> Its modelizations are so many “anthro-fictions”<sup>40</sup> of what the human can mean, be, or become, as so many variations

on alter-transcendental worlds. Native ontology affects the anthropologist through seeing perspectivism in-One, recalibrating the matrix of ontologies and expanding one’s lived and conceptual possibilities. The One, in its immanent indifference and lack of transcendent unity, opens an unbounded chaos of anthropological inventions, each relatively autonomous, though consistent and compatible. Perspectivism affects thought, but the relation between ontologies remains symmetrical: the aporia between Viveiros de Castro and Descola is reconciled.

### Conclusion: The Fractal Structure of the Global

In this final section, I clarify the global(-without-globalization) structure of the matrix of ontologies. Making the classificatory table but one local possibility, and with it the ruses of identity and its politics of recognition, the unified theory does not tell indigenote people, or anyone for that matter, “what they are.” *Subtracted from the taxonomic relation of the universal and particular*, anthro-fictions are *singularities*, immanent “particles” of ontological creativity. If every ontology is a local and singular particle of theoretical consistency, then the “relation” between these ontologies is fractal as the level-decomposition of the logical hierarchy implicit in the universal/particular relation: gross units like “Amazonian ontology” and “Melanesian personhood” are “fictions” without any essential difference at the level of subsumption or scale, a *fractal identity* between the thought of Davi Kopenawa, Yanomami thought, or Amazonian thought *rather than a “containment hierarchy.”*

The fractal structure of global(-without-globalization) also clarifies the specifically spatial, geographical and mereological modalities of the local/global problematic, with which I started this article. If scale, and the accompanying distinction between the micro and the macro, relies on a containment hierarchy of the par-

<sup>38</sup> That is, each transcendental is defined – from the point of view of the model – solely by its relative position to others, without supposing a relational ontology.

<sup>39</sup> *Comparative Metaphysics: Ontology After Anthropology*, ed. Pierre Charbonnier, Gildas Salmon and Peter Skafish (New York: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2016), 109-133.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Bogna Konior, “Generic Humanity: Interspecies Technologies, Climate Change & Non-Standard Animism,” *Transformations: Journal of Media, Culture and Technology* 30 (2017): 109-126.

ticular and the universal converted into space and sub-space, set and sub-set, part and whole, singularity eludes these processes of scaling: *the global is not a whole of which localities are parts, not a superior instance that generalizes them spatially*; it is not “the globe” as an encompassing Whole. While particularism and ethnocentrism assume a kind of universalism to *subsume* the particular (even if denied or repressed), *uni-versalism* revels in a superpositional chaos. Uni-veralist *a priori*s are identities attained through the One, identities-(of)-variation.<sup>41</sup> According to this *non-logic*, an *identity of the micro and the macro* emerges and spatial scale collapses with logical level. To speak of the global-without-globalization is to speak of an open uni-verse and a future science, unbound from today’s parochialisms.

#### Statements of a Unified Theory of Anthropology and Philosophy

- The One (or The Human) has nothing Greek about it, nothing Amazonian, nothing Melanesian, nothing Totemist, nothing Analogist, etc.
- The One in its radical autonomy admits a relative autonomy of the entire sphere of the Other. It admits an unbounded sphere of stranger-subjects and anthro-fictions at any scale.
- The chaos of anthro-fictions does not compose a classificatory table, a differential relation, or a holographic metaphor, etc.
- There is an identity (according to the One) of the micro and the macro, such that anthro-fictions form singularities.
- This chaos of singularities is a uni-verse, a space in which multiple cosmologies mingle without mixture.
- The global-without-globalization is not a transcendent and objectifying “world-picture,” but is seen in-immanence. Our unified theory is an ecology.
- All thoughts are equal, not by general equiv-

alence, but by singularity. Our unified theory is a symmetrical anthropology.

<sup>41</sup> Correlative to the uni-tactic reduction of syntax or syntactical transformations (the “grammar” of the transformation group).