

Ethics of Nature in Native Peoples of Colombia*

[Artículos]

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Abstract

This work aims to show the ancestral thinking, specifically what has been called by the West an “Environmental” or “Natural” ethic, from the integrity and concern of natural forces and gods to the biocentric conception of life and reality and the cyclical representations of time and space. In ancestral communities such as the Pastos, Arhuacos, and Nükák Makú we can find ontological conceptions which are related to the cultural modalities and ways of life underlining ethics for all living beings of the planet. This legacy, which is still a living heritage in many places of our America, has social and cultural functions that should not only be treated as antique objects, but also as systems of (moral) values that open an intercultural dialogue and illustrate different lifestyles, ways of being, and alternative paths through decolonization processes. These kinds of ethics belong to a matrix that accepts diversity and differences as basic constituents of reality. Life, in its amplitude (not just human life), as a central articulator of the social, cultural, and political dimensions of the community of origin is one of the primary proposals of Ethics of Nature. Despite the differences among the native communities considered in this article, the results of the research have found shared significant themes that constitute the key elements of that ethic: life, death, space, time, responsibility, nature, and ancestrality.

Keywords: ethic, nature, native peoples, Colombia.

Ética de la naturaleza en pueblos originarios de Colombia

Resumen

Este trabajo tiene como objetivo reflexionar sobre el pensamiento ancestral, en lo que respecta a una ética ambiental o natural, desde la integridad y preocupación por las fuerzas naturales y los dioses hasta la concepción biocéntrica de la vida y la realidad, y las representaciones cíclicas del tiempo y el espacio. En comunidades ancestrales como los Pastos, Arhuacos y Nükak Makú se encuentran concepciones ontológicas que están relacionadas con las modalidades culturales y las formas de vida basadas en una ética para todos los seres vivos del planeta. Este legado sigue siendo un patrimonio vivo en América con funciones sociales y culturales que deben ser tratadas no solo como antigüedades sino como sistemas de valores (morales) que abren un diálogo intercultural y señalan diferentes estilos de vida, formas de ser y nuevos caminos a través de procesos de decolonización. Este tipo de ética pertenece a una matriz que acepta la diversidad y las diferencias como constituyentes básicos de la realidad. La vida, en su amplitud (no sólo la vida humana), como articuladora central de las dimensiones sociales, culturales y políticas de la comunidad de origen es una de las principales propuestas de la ética de la naturaleza. A pesar de las diferencias entre las comunidades abarcadas en este artículo, los resultados de la investigación arrojan temas compartidos que constituyen la base de su ética: vida, muerte, espacio, tiempo, responsabilidad, naturaleza y ancestralidad.

Palabras clave: ética, naturaleza, pueblos originarios, Colombia.

Introduction

Recognizing the multiplicity of historical agents in Latin America implies the possibility of breaking with the hegemonic cultural structure of a dominant worldview (Hobsbawn, 2014). This is feasible by analyzing the

diversity of logical action, lifestyles, and world conceptions that have not been consumed by the logical epistemology and contemporary capitalist political system. This kind of experience of expulsion, or historic negation of voice (Dussel, 1994, 2005, and 2015) from one's place of knowledge, is opposite to the critical proposal of the modern/colonial analysis of the matrix in which those other truths emerge from the beginning of the colonization of the native, afro-descendant, and mestizo cultures. The decolonial proposal permits us to subscribe to a critical Latin American perspective, which understands the importance of this culturally hidden ethical externality. Therefore, we need to focus on those experiences of externality that Latin American historical agents embody as places of knowledge production and alternative decolonial political practices.

However, one of the most powerful and effective strategies of the West's binary machine of segregation and sociocultural discrimination has been focused on the colonization of knowledge, which has monopolized thought. In the case of traditional philosophy, which traveled from Greece to Germany, through England and France, and later to the United States, systematic argumentation, methodization, and, ultimately, the yearning to become scientific knowledge, has put aside all mythical symbolic expression and communal ancestral knowledge, thereby relegating them and pointing them out as falsehoods, subjecting them to marginal spaces in our Latin American reality. We have been taught that native people have no philosophy and that, at most, they have mythical or narrative myths which lack (as if it were a congenital disease) abstract and logical thought, therefore denominating as illogical or irrational their ways of life. These European or societally capitalist ideas are, in part, what is being justified by such conceptions.

Nevertheless, the native presence in our society is undeniable and central to two contemporary issues that always go hand in hand with the cultural

dimension of peoples: practice or action with political purpose and the identity or sense of belonging to a collective project. As José Bengoa (2016) and Mato (2018) stated, we are at one of the crucial historical moments of the indigenous emergence in Latin American societies: “perhaps one of the most important sociocultural phenomena of the last period of our history” (Bengoa, 2016, p. 17), in which originates, from collective action and sentiment, one of the strongest criticisms of the homogenous hegemonic modern Republican state.

It has been said that native peoples are a problem, but it must be clarified that they have only been seen as a problem from two perspectives: first, from the perspective of the elites of most Latin American countries, since for more than 200 years they have despised the original element as if it were a waste to eliminate in order to achieve the whole social environment of the supposed model of European cultural and racial superiority from the more traditional liberal vision. The second perspective points out they are a problem from the subaltern view of native agents because their historical invisibilization and the misinterpretation of identity and demands by the mixed and white society represent a struggle caused by political and cultural resistance. As they affront resistance against economic and state factors, a collective identity is consolidated as a way of being a community (ethos) inside the conglomerate and national life, and it is at this problematic juncture where identity and recognition can clash.

This nonessential identity is transformed as it meets the challenges of continuing to be historically and socially valid, and, ultimately of being at the center of demands to be visible and to have a voice of their own. But the fact that there has been a historical invisibilization and silent concealment of actors and cultures does not mean that what emerges today is the untouched essence of what was there at the beginning of Aboriginal times. Any identity is a social elaboration that is transformed by

the passage of needs and materials, or as Bengoa says: “like all human identities, being native is also a social structure. A set of communication processes that has been creating an image, a concept, a classification. Also borders a ‘we’ and an ‘other’” (2016, p. 15). Some critics of Indigenism have thought that to deal with the issue of the indigenous is to go back immediately to an attitude of romanticization of an undisturbed idyllic past where those good Rousseuvian savages inhabited.

The native peoples of Latin America and Colombia remain, but in other ways and other senses (contradictory, complementary, conflictive). The original settlers have not been the same in the last five centuries: not now, and not before. Carrying out academic recovery processes of knowledge and worldviews does not mean that the problems these communities face or the degree of internal conflict they possess are being ignored.

The objective of this work is to inquire into those ways or modes of an ethic of the native peoples and communities given through the reconstruction of some conceptions of spatiality and territoriality at stake in native communities such as the Arhuacos, Pastos, and Nükák Makú as praxis of cultural resistance. And, in this attempt, evidence the relevance to our society and our era of a biocentric approach that takes nature seriously and responsibly. This ethic breaks with the classic Western anthropocentrism of a superior ontological assessment of the human and puts in the same plane of value all living things in a logic of complementarity, holism, and confrontation.

This work comes as an outcome from the research project entitled *Decolonial analysis of the ontological, ethical-political, and intercultural questions regarding the philosophy of the Colombian native peoples*, which was conceived as a hermeneutical analysis of the underlining

philosophies present in the Arhuaco, the Nükák Makú, and the Pastos native peoples in Colombia. A comparative analysis of the cores of cultural signification was carried out through an interpretative methodology of anthropological, sociological, literary, and historical texts (triangulation of disciplinary sources). This exercise should not be taken as ethno-philosophy (minor and of second level), but as a legitimate philosophy in terms of conceptualization of categories that are still alive in the native peoples and make an important part of their cultural, social, and political reality.

A qualitative hermeneutical paradigm was undertaken intended for the comprehension and interpretation of the meanings in terms of space and time, as well as in terms of the sacred. As H.G. Gadamer (1991) clearly stated, comprehension is in itself a dialogue and a translation among traditions and ways of thinking, which lead to the meaning of the concepts. In this way, the hermeneutical exercise is understood as an attempt of dialogue between categories of thought executed from a holistic and systemic point of view (Stake, 2007, p. 47). An exercise aimed at the comprehension of concepts was performed based on the hermeneutic paradigm, whose purpose was to have closure in the interpretation of the consulted texts with the intention of a continuous creative update, either by the development of meaning or by its theoretical signification.

Space as a Radical Cultural Difference

The following questions begin the discussion: How is it possible that the native peoples and societies have not remained hidden or protected from modern society? How is it that western economic, cultural, and political forces have not been able to eliminate the native peoples and societies? To say it another way, how have the native peoples survived in Latin America in an adverse historic context? All the answers will come through

an ethno-political analysis of various ontological and mythical elements of long-surviving towns in Colombia that have maintained and celebrated their history.

The logic of action of some native communities in Colombia is varied and diverse; just as varied and diverse as most historical identities. Being only logical that they have read and understood modern capitalist emergences, they have learned to change and adapt, politically and culturally, to the modern world. However, their ancestral principles and motives demand continuity and ontological and ethical stability. As we have said, ancestry is not a synonym for essentialism. This constant reference to the past, or ancestry, is a political strategy of refuge to construct a sense of practices that communities utilize for survival and a better life. What we could call “essence” is an effect of recurrence to elements that provide coherence to present projects and look out for the future of the community.

Since the previous concepts and clarifications have been established, it is necessary to mention that one of the more interesting resistance models of native communities crosses cultural borders to articulate that the general concept of reality is one of space. Space is a fundamental aspect that would seem to be far from what could be thought of as a form of resistance, but it is in this concept grade where we base the difference that makes other resistances possible on more social and political levels. The respect for nature as an ontological value subject equivalent to the human being is based on spatial conceptions, foundations of the same reality. Between the complex framework of meanings concerning the concept of “space” that some of these communities have developed, we see part of the ethics of cultural resistance.

In multiple mythological stories, space is defined as “that big one” (Niño, 2015, pp. 230-231), which provides sense and coherence to reality.

Relationality is one of the constitutive characteristics of space.

Josef Estermann said that the maximum of the original concept will be established as: “Everything has a relationship with everything,” where the basic entity is the relationship and not the entities themselves, that after being, enter a relationship. Relationships possess an ontological preeminence over the individual. In Philosophy, this will be something like a “relational being.” The “relational being” governs above all: things, states, and people. To govern them is to be inside of them, to transfer them, to increase and constitute them. This relationality is represented from multiple images and is outlined on various metaphors and symbolisms: the circle, for example, is one of the figures that synthetizes that space where everything comes back to the beginning in a different form, or the water and rivers, which articulate the rest of the existence. Just like the sun that is the energy source, necessary for everything else to exist. From the Andean worldviews, specifically in the Quechua language, the relationality of space is constructed by the *hanaq*, the *kay*, and the *uray pacha*, along with the *llocque* and the *paña*. In other words, the top, the bottom, the here, left, right, north, and south as points that symbolically configure the spatial reality. Or from the Amazonic worldview of the Nükák Makú, the *hea* or “top level,” where spirits live and where there is no death or illness; the *jee* or “intermediate level,” where the Nükák live; and the “bottom level” or *bak*, where the first Nükák came and, after them, the first whites (Cabrera Becerra, 1999, p. 150). It is impossible to imagine the spatial reality homogenously because every point or direction is in charge of an ontological and social valuation, which is constitutively and qualitatively heterogeneous.

By getting immersed in the world of the Pasto community, we can corroborate this relationship in the Mamián own words:

[...] because for him [for the Pasto man] that *chakra* is the universe and the universe is the *chakra*. The *chakra* is the *pacha*, where they join, cross, and, above all, gather different spaces, times, and vital powers represented as the bottom world, the top, and this world, or inside and outside; therefore, the pluriecolological community, the pluriethnic community, the social community, and the telluric and stellar deities plural community live in reciprocity. (1990, p. 112)

Relationality, or *chakana*, is seen here as a congregation, a meeting place of multiple dimensions. *Chakra*, universe, and *pacha* are synonyms of that invoking totality. Space, land, and territory could be translated as the meeting of the communitarian elements of social reality (Beuclair, 2013). As it is said by the Arhuacos, space is given by the metaphor: “knitted world which emulates a big loom” (Zapata, 2010 p. 5). Individuality is a post-result in which the fragmentation or disintegration is a kind of illness or imbalance that has to be overcome by different ritualistic strategies, and where the word is fundamental to rebuilding damaged ties and broken relationships.

From the oral tradition of the Andes, the mythical narrative of Los Pastos refers to that fundamental spatiality from the account of the two partridges:

[...] these two powerful old Indians; one: the white partridge, symbolizes the day, the other: the black partridge, symbolizes the night; the one is active energy and the other is passive energy; the one is the male, and the other is the female, which represent the father and mother; the masculine and the feminine; the top and the bottom, etc.; hence, dancing and dances were creating and recreating the mother territory. (Mamián, 1990, p. 60).

Here we can see that the myth has the important function of ordering things, of distributing them under the "logic" of complementarity. The mother territory, or *pacha mama*, presents itself by the dance and the celebration as a constituent act, a generator of the real. In another version of the myth, it reads:

[the two partridges], also called the Shispas and the Guangas came from different places, one from the west and the other from the east. It was these sacred and mysterious beings who danced and talked, met and fought, in that way villages were formed; they gave way to the physical forms of the mountainous relief, organizing where the forest, fertile lands, lagoons, rivers, volcanoes, and different climates should remain. But also, the sacred and spiritual spaces, the world of the dead and the living, the world where the mysteries and secrets of Mother Nature reside. (Mamián, 1990, p. 64)

Space is given from the celebration act, but at the same time as a result of a battle of forces. Therefore, la *chakana*, or meeting, implies conflict; from this, the reliefs, weathers, organized regions, sacred places (as the Huaca nude on the Cumbal region), and agricultural zones are built. The Shispas and the Guangas, both kinds of partridges, are representations of these forces which join to generate territory, diversity of places, and spaces, which are on top and bottom. A diversity that is always given in a complementary way: day/night, top/bottom, wet/dry, moon/sun, living world/death world, land/water. The basic structure of the relationship is given by the complementarity feature.

On the other hand, the world of the Arhuaco goes a little further and the mood of the universe is stated, that is, space is a living being that is not only something inert, but continues to reproduce, it is still in the process of being, or better, of "being." We have an: "Organic, living, and spiritual universe in creation and constant renewal in which all beings are qualified

in function of the relations that occur among the worlds and the communities that inhabit them” (Zapata, 2010, p. 3). The dynamics of spatiality generate qualifications, and this is what becomes imperative to understand. The variety of interactions or relationships involve a constant renewal of reality and being.

At this point, the original concepts depart sharply from modern Western conceptions: the universe is not a machine composed of inert parts and fragments that need to be divided and reconstituted to understand its function, but a living organism that is in constant interaction and has a sense that is being constructed in relation to the complexity of conflicting opposites.

The foundational myth of the Tukanos world can be interpreted similarly to the intrinsic or complementarity articulation, not just between natural forces but between nature and humanity.

The primordial boa, which travels by the rivers and provides for the ancestors of the people. The Tukano myth draws the territory to narrate the way of the big snake from the strain of the world —a big lake on the universe’s edge, where waters emerge— to the actual rivers. From that original source arises the sun, rivers, land, and the ones from the bottom world [...] the sun, from its celestial path, rose from the Milky Way to the Anaconda, which parts were transformed into the peoples (Correa, 2005).

The water and the sun are the most important elements of space that order reality in its entirety. It must be emphasized that human beings appear as one more part of the mythical dynamic. There is no privileged place for “the people”; they come from the forces, and in a process of transformation they become people. Animality, naturality, and the human world coexist in the representation of their origins.

Up to this point, space, in some cases named as territory, has not been defined as a universal and homogeneous receiver, but as a cultural representation that radically initiates and inaugurates a conception of differentiation that deviates from what we know in the Western world as space. This zero ontological point, that of the distribution of space, bases modes of action (ethical) for the communities themselves and modes of resistance (political) against actors that become a detriment of the native being.

Despite having said that the principal determining agent of the social order in modern Western societies is the State as a legitimate monopolist of coercion in a specific territory, with clear limits on its bureaucratic organizational action, the State actor needs a homogeneous spatiality or territory in which to implement “universal” policies and make effective its sovereignty. To put it in another unorthodox way, power and domination are exercised much better on flat and objective surfaces than on striated and subjective surfaces, which implies a greater capacity of localization and determination of the social forces.

The relation between sovereignty, territory, and population requires a well-defined space; the locality or basic principle of localization of the constituent elements of the country (inhabitants) is given from a uniform conception of clear and homogeneous space.

The Concept of Space as a Limit to Modern Anthropocentrism

One of the clearest and specific traits to understand space in these original worldviews is the development of the dimension of sacredness. The sacred must be thought of beyond the borders of common Judaic religion and beyond the institutional enclosure that Western culture has provided on its spiritual transcendence of metaphysical meaning. The sacred is given to

the aboriginal on a plane of absolute imminence in present. In a secular world disenchanted by rationality and the objective calculus of everything, to talk about sacredness could be seen as an act of lie or as simply words. However, this trait of the sacredness of space is key to establishing the relationship between ethologic and ethics.

The natural and human world is not torn nor disjoined from the vision of the Colombian aboriginal villages. Human action is restricted by natural limits: they belong to... it is contained in, that is to say, restricted by forces and the world. The human being is not facing the natural world in an oppositional condition nor in a condition where this is the primary belief.

Crispín Izquierdo confirms the characteristics of the sacredness of space:

The Sierra Nevada is our sacred home, the way it is geographically distributed with its water sources, mountain system, mineral types, botanic species, and animals, forms a complete living body that is the relationship of our logical reasoning with nature. In a deeper and more sacred concept, here began the human family, that is, Sierra is the father and humanity is the mother. The first father is defined as the force or energy of the earthly Ñiankwa and Serankwa. (AAVV, 1997, p. 5)

The previous quote is evidence of the deep respect that native peoples and societies keep for the world, nature, and the resources that exist on it. For the Eurocentric capitalist ideology, nature is a set of things to be exploited, unlimited, used for the mercantile production process; it is the place of the primary resources that needs to be transformed into value on the production lines. Opposite to this, in the aboriginal communities prevails an idea of the sacredness of the natural: mountains, rivers, stones, caves, lakes, and the sea are special places, with a superlative social and cultural value. "Mounts which first born, are allfathers: animals, villages, plants,

waters; on these the universe is represented, on the mounts different races were born, the different towns” (AAVV, 1997, p. 18).

This point is very difficult to understand for modern western cultures because the anthropocentrism of the Western worldview has prevented us from transferring this characteristic life to supposedly inorganic forms of reality. As Mircea Eliade mentioned: “The modern western experiences a certain discomfort to some manifestations of the sacred: it is hard to accept that, in order to identify us as human beings, the sacred can be manifested on the stones or trees” (1981, p. 4). The sacred aspect seems to comfort us with a more complex conception than the dichotomic division between life and no inner life, the organic and inorganic.

This sacredness of territories implies a differential way of understanding spaces and places to which the human being belongs. There are not the same places for cultivation and harvest, but more places for celebration and rituality, for resting and speaking than for working. The previous by the Nükák Makú, as they understand space as a place where there exist three different types of places or spaces, depending on their function:

- 1) Private places: inhabited by creators, such as streams, lakes, ponds, gorges, mountains, graveyards, hills, or mineral deposits. These are: “Reserved zones in which there are no hunting, fishing, foraging, harvesting, clearing, or wood-cutting activities” (Nükák Makú town: The last green nomads).
- 2) Enchanting places: Zones where someone can access with the “correct permission of the spiritual begins through cleaning, purification, and harmonization rituals” (idem.). Specifically, some of these “Enchanting” places are for the Nükák, the Inírida River, the Caparroal Canyon, the Pavón Lake, the Guaviare River, or the Huecadas.
- 3) Communal places: places designated to “develop productive and conservation activities, renovation rituals, sanctification or commemoration festivities” (idem) in which the territory is for everyone,

that is, there is no concept of collective property, as it has been seen in other aboriginal communities.

It can be demonstrated that the concept of differentiated spaces or places sets the way of assuming the activities and practices of the community, producing some communitarian or communal codices that establish what to do or not to. The sacred sites “establish a social behavior and a relationship system where it is built and the tradition is reconstructed” (Correa, 2005, p. 277). In contrast with complex symbolic systems, the values and activities gradually made and done in each are evidence of the deep respect for nature and the absence of anthropocentricity in these spatial systems. It is also understood that not all is allowed in this symbolic universe, that is, there exists a strict limitation of the activities that human beings can perform in these spaces and it would seem that the main orientation criteria of the communitarian action are the sacred differentiation of the spaces. However, the main difference between the Nükák Makú tribe and the other communities (being nomads, and by consequence having a different worldview of the earth, movement, and time) is that there exists respect for nature and a fundamental telluric symbolization for these communities.

Mountains, trees, stones, and rivers are representations of the relationship between the spiritual and the real. Two spheres of reality are joined; there is no manner of seeing these as separate or disjointed paths; there is no divide between transcendent and imminent. The spiritual dimension functions as a guide of the shamans, grandfathers, and Wisemans’ actions to the common right, to focus on the best interest of the community. Places and spaces that speak or are manifested, must be heard by the *runa* (Andine, Amazonic, and Caribbean human beings). We are facing sacred geography which is presented as unnegotiable because it is there to be respected, what in the Pastos’ world would be interpreted as aboriginal law

(Rappaport, 1990). The *pacha* gives signals, shows paths and possibilities that connect the spiritualities of the cosmic forces with a mundane reality (social). The *runa* (human being) needs that capacity of listening and interaction with the world where aboriginal natives' practical wisdom resides. A capacity that seems to be extinct in the hegemonic western cosmovision because there prevails anthropocentrism and extreme rationalism, blind to the cosmic. Eliade states:

Cosmos, completely desecrated, is a recent finding of the human spirit. It is not our purpose to show why historic processes are the consequence of the modifications of spiritual behaviorisms that have desecrated the modern human world and assumed a profane existence. Sufficient to allow consistency to the fact that the desacralization gives characteristics of the total experience of the no-religious men of modern societies. (1981, p. 4)

The ontological thinking which is implicit in different narrations of these aboriginal communities influences a deep ethical reflection about limits of human actions which are disproportionate to everything else. We can say that there exists a kind of hypertrophy and megalomania of humanity that has taken the environmental crisis at the worst moment of life systems on the planet. This evidence would be given as the reason for aboriginal towns in their attitude towards nature in which there is a critical model for human action as part of the universe or *pacha*.

The Circular Temporality in Relation to Space

Inside the complex and stifling symbolic world that operates these communities, space is closely related to time and dictates what constitutes the spatial symbols that directly refer to temporality. As established by Francois Correa (2005), Astros as symbolic operators have the capability of explaining social truths: the sun and the moon are images-forces-powers

that create reality and provide order and spatial and temporal structure. As Arhuacos mentioned:

The sun's laws are fatherly forces, are day forces, are health and life forces- Kaku-Arwa Viku- and the moon forces are those of the mother, vegetational forces of the harvest, are night forces, are dark forces, of silence, illness, of the living death and these are governed by the father laws *Seykukuy*. (Idem, pp. 5-6)

It can be easily inferred that what is stated here is a circular or cyclical idea of time. There is not a linear and progressive representation, like the one that we are accustomed to in Western society, but short and huge cycles parting from those forces which regulate reality. Social life depends directly on the influence of the sun and moon. A long sun season can produce drought and death; but also, it is a symbol of life. The sun is “the big weaving of life” (Zapata, 2010, p. 6). Furthermore, this happens with water and earth, being synonyms of fertility, these can, by their influence and variability in community life, end up meaning desolation and destruction. In this way, for Arhuacos: “Indigenous peoples keep the importance of water as part of the connections between different worlds and zones [...] through networks that link lower zones with the ones who are middle and higher” (ibidem, p. 12.). The water “makes part of the uncertainty that knits all thermic floors since their birth in the highest to its outlet” (ibidem, p. 10). Also, for Los Pastos: “The Mother Water is not just a fountain of life for Humanity, but is a spirituality that holds life to the territory as a living organism that feels, suffers, and cries” (Tapie, 2015, p. 16). Force-symbols reproduce a cyclical dynamic of time; these are articulators and disarticulators of practical reality in the native vision. As it was established by Niño Murcia, *territory* is “a chronotype that includes, in its variations on time, conditions on time, conditions on the

environment, population patterns, people living on it, the products used, and community reproduction” (2015, p. 228).

The holistic character of space is shown in its connection with time. It is impossible to think of a space with no relationship with time. All territory is given on “historic coordinates.” It is convenient to understand time, not as a succession of instants but as a determinate kind of experience, of living experiences that occur situationally, presented in a specific context.

Places, in their diversity and meaning, provide sense to the experiences, what we call in western society: time. There is not just a succession of juxtaposed moments that can be chronologically added. Time as the chronotype of which Niño Murcia calls the temporal space unity of experiences differentiated from the different territorialities. The space-territory is always a different way of having experiences. From this statement, we could affirm that the cyclical experience of aboriginal time is not just an eternal repetition of the same, but that comes back aimed at a cosmically renewed form. Probably the more adequate image here will be the spiral that dynamically shows a point that never sets in the place of the other but keeps the same logic of temporal development.

A Few Conceptual References on Eastern Bioethics

It is possible to find links to all the conceptual cores of the communities/peoples that originated in Colombia taking as a starting point the field of social bioethics, which comes from an eastern cultural matrix. Thus, the theory of Latin American postdevelopment points out the geopolitical interests and manipulations that underpin the dominant ideology that has developed as the priority for all peoples. Bearing in mind the contributions of Arturo Escobar (1999, 2012, and 2018), Enrique Dussel (1994, 2005, and 2015), and Eduardo Gudynas (2010, 2017, and 2020) the developmental fallacy consists of believing that “all countries

have to undergo the same stages the West underwent, until being like the West, by force, if necessary” (Escobar, 1999). The categorization of the first, second, and third world is nothing but a political invention of the North-Atlantic States to justify intervention actions and allow the entrance of multinational companies to apply extractionist and neocolonial policies, which widen the markets from the industrialization and modernization criteria.

In the same way, in the western contemporary epistemic field nature is conceived as nonanthropocentric. The postdevelopment conceptions are connected with the biocentric conceptions, starting with the criticism of anthropocentrism. The modern colonial-western perspective implies the overestimation of the humane, relegating the biosphere and everything on it to a second and third place of moral importance. As Bilbeny clearly showed, the defining traces of the anthropocentric perspective are an unobjectionable and unavoidable priority of the humane, moral concerns of the human world exclusively and, in this measure, the human being has preeminence in front of the rest (Bilbeny, as cited by Uribe, 2016).

Nevertheless, from the perspective of biocentric ethics, every natural being is subject to rights that are at the same ontological level of reality as human beings. That is to say, modern and traditional anthropocentrism is being left aside: nature is not meant to be exploited and in the service of humanity. Human beings are part of the web of life and, consequently, all beings must have rights. Biocentrism affirms that:

Some attributes are independent of human beings and remain even in their absence. In a world with no humans, plants and animals will continue their evolutionary course and will be immersed in the ecological contexts, and that manifestation of life is a value itself (Gudynas, 2020, p. 17).

The aforementioned does not mean that the humane is belittled in front of the natural. Instead, the dominance of production and wealth economic

values have to be relativized, constrained, so that cultural values are equally important for native communities. For example, the desire for wealth and accumulation implies that nature has to be revalued (it has a value itself). Human beings are not the center of anything in the universe, we are just another form of life among millions of forms of life. And this conception can create a greater balance than the instrumentalist and objectivist anthropocentric conception of nature.

The biocentric perspective recontextualizes and resignifies nature, same with the biotic systems as systems of life that contain the subsystem of human life, whilst being a dependent variable of the greater systems. Some authors understand this resignification as the necessary process of “re-enchantment of the world” (Noguera, 2004, Federici, 2020). This re-enchantment means returning to the land as a show of deep respect towards it. Opposing directly to the capitalist logic of appropriating the common things, emerges the fact of going back to the materiality of the land as a model of action and values that refer to equality, social justice, the commonality in terms of poetics, and ethical-poetic geographies (Noguera, Bernal, and Echeverri, 2019). The rationalization of the modern world has led to the absolute calculation of assets and benefits in the actions, which impoverishes the experiences of people with their world and their existential horizon. The re-enchantment is then a proposal to recover the mythical dimension of inhabiting the land through a significant consciousness and environmental education.

Conclusions: Nature as a Critical Action Model

At this point, some questions will allow us to close the reflection. These are What can nature teach human beings? Does an ethic where nature is a responsible action model for the human world exist? Can the natural world be treated as a rights subject and an individual with the capacity of

teaching us balance and perseverance? In general, the answers are affirmative, and they are developed according to the following:

1. The idea of constant progress and unlimited reach of all aspects of human life must be questioned. The actual environmental crisis is showing that the exponential development of the forces unleashed by capitalism is facing the return of potentiality and the danger of insisting on a higher consumption of energies that breaks with the stability of biotic systems. This potential return means self-destruction of the bases from which the system is generated and the reduction of possibilities to change.
2. The generation of conscience on the limits of predatory and unlimited human action has been emerging more clearly. This has happened due to the incremental rise in the critical discourses inside the capitalist structure and from those in the exterior with decolonial ancestral ways of thought. Nowadays, it is understood that one of the most critical and urgent points of political and cultural action from a global perspective is environmental conservation and practices; transformations that take the necessary action principles and lifestyles for the survival of life on earth.
3. It becomes more evident with time that the anthropocentric posture has conducted humanity to a dead end of the unlimited development, a self-destructive, auto-predatory end, or as Franz Hinkelamert (2005) said, to “collective suicide.” That is why it is necessary to erase anthropocentrism and learn about nature as a limitation model and disproportional contraction: even when technical possibilities exist, not all can be performed. That something can be technically feasible or developed, does not mean that it be ethically justified or that it should exist for political reasons.

4. One of the tasks derived from what ancestral thinking shows, originated from Colombian communities as what could be called the “re-enchantment” of the world and life in general. In other words, acceptance and recognition of diversity and alternatives as principal constituent factors of life on earth. The re-enchantment is based on respecting ontological and cultural differences to understand that not everything must be rationalized by logic and efficiency in the capitalist calculus. The rationalist logic of capitalism is generalized or globalized to reduce the ontological horizon of reality and make us believe that if things are not treated as resources that can provide monetary richness then those will not be of any value. The world’s “re-enchantment” will mean, in the beginning, accepting the values of diversity, functions, and uses that people and nature can have in their respective spaces and times.
5. The sacredness of space conceived by villages originating from Colombia is a clear example to promote and establish a cultural resistance that will later be translated into territorial fights of political strategies against social actors who had presented a danger to other communities. The mythic-symbolic complexity set on the ground and in circulation allows the emerging of collective ways of being which had come to represent biodiversity. It is this diversity, the one that will have to preserve, along what we call the world, in its depth and amplitude.

Natural ethics presented in the discourses and praxis of aboriginal Colombian communities are useful and possible teachings that we can adopt in that necessary intellectual dialogue that we demand, and it is thanks to these discourses and praxis that the native peoples remain in Latin America and Colombia.

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