

In: Amaryll Chanady, *Latin American Identity and Constructions of Difference*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, Vol. 10, 1994, pp. 104-129.

## Chapter 6

### A Nahuatl Interpretation of the Conquest: From the "Parousia" of the Gods to the "Invasion"

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(translated by Amaryll Chanady)

*In teteu inan in tetu ita, in Huehueteutl  
[Mother of the gods, Father of the gods, the Old God],  
lying on the navel of the Earth,  
enclosed in a refuge of turquoises.  
He who lives in the waters the color of a blue  
bird, he who is surrounded by clouds,  
the Old God, he who lives in the shadows  
of the realm of the dead,  
the lord of fire and time.*

-Song to Ometeótl, the originary being  
of the Aztec *Tlamatinime*<sup>1</sup>

I would like to examine the "meaning of 1492," which is nothing else but "the first experience of modern Europeans," from the perspective of the "world" of the Aztecs, as the conquest in the literal sense of the term started in Mexico. In some cases I will refer to other cultures in order to suggest additional interpretations, although I am aware that these are only a few of the many possible examples, and that they are a mere "indication" of the problematic. Also, in the desire to continue an intercultural dialogue initiated in Freiburg with Karl-Otto Apel in 1989, I will refer primarily to the existence of reflexive abstract thought on our continent.<sup>2</sup>

#### **The *tlamatini***

In nomadic societies (of the first level) or societies of rural planters (like the Guaranis), social differentiation was not developed sufficiently to identify a function akin to that of the "philosopher", although in urban society this social figure acquires a distinct profile.<sup>3</sup> As we can read in Garcilaso de la Vega's *Comentarios reales de los Incas*:



Demás de adorar al Sol por dios visible, a quien ofrecieron sacrificios e hicieron grandes fiestas,... los Reyes Incas y sus *amautas*, que eran como filósofos, rastrearon con lumbre natural al verdadero sumo Dios y Señor Nuestro, que crió el cielo y la tierra... al cual llamaron Pachacámac: es nombre compuesto de *Pacha*, que es mundo universo, y de *Cámac*, participio presente del verbo *cama*, que es animar, el cual verbo se deduce del nombre *cama*, que es alma. Pachacámac quiere decir el que da anima al mundo universo, y en toda su propia y entera significación quiere decir el que hace con el universo lo que el anima con el cuerpo... Tuvieron al Pachacámac en mayor veneración interior que al Sol, que, como he dicho, no osaban tomar su nombre en la boca... y por esto no le hacían templos ni le ofrecían sacrificios, mas que lo adoraban en su corazón (esto es, mentalmente) y le tenían por Dios no conocido. (Book 2, chap. 2: 74; emphasis added)

Besides worshipping the sun as a visible god, to whom they offered sacrifices and in whose honor they organized great festivities, ...the Inca Kings and their *amautas*, who were like philosophers, traced with natural lucidity the true supreme God and Our Lord, who created heaven and earth. ...and whom they called Pachacámac. It is a name composed of *Pacha*, which is the universe, and *Cámac*, present participle of the verb *cama*, which means to animate; that verb comes from the noun *cama*, which means soul. Pachacámac means he who gives a soul to the universe, and in its proper and complete signification, it means he who does to the universe what the soul does to the body. ...They held Pachacámac in greater internal veneration than the Sun; they did not dare pronounce his name. ...and thus built no temples and offered no sacrifices, but they worshiped him in their hearts (that is, mentally) and considered him as an unknown God. (Emphasis added)<sup>4</sup>.

The *amautas* had specific functions in the empire and proposed Pachacámac (from coastal Peru), the *Illa- Ticsi Huiracocha Pachayachic* (Originary Splendor, Lord, Master of the Universe), as the first principle of the universe. From the Aztecs we have more testimony: the *tlatimini* has a much clearer social definition.<sup>5</sup> In his *Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España*, Bernardino de

Sahagún refers to the *tlamatini* when he speaks of the various occupations, after his descriptions of the carpenter, the stonecutter, the mason, the painter, and the singer (Book 10; chap. 7: 555).<sup>6</sup> Thus, there were perfectly defined classes, functions, and occupations—the governors, judges, warriors, priests, and, specifically identified as such, the "wise men" ("sabios"; Sahagún writes "philosophers" in the margin), of whom Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl tells us:

Los filósofos o sabios que tenían entre ellos [los aztecas] a su cargo pintar todas las ciencias que sabían y alcanzaban a enseñar de memoria todos los cantos que conservaban sus ciencias e historias. (2: 18)

The philosophers or wise men who among them [the Aztecs] had the duty of painting all the knowledge that they knew and managed to teach from memory all the songs that preserved their knowledge and stories.

We have a splendid definition of the *tlamatinime*, who were educated in the *Calmécac* (a scrupulously regulated school of wise men, and as such a strong argument for the demonstration of the existence of Aztec philosophy):

El *tlamatini*, una luz, una tea, una gruesa tea que no ahuma. Espejo horadado, un espejo agujereado de ambos lados. Suya es la tinta negra y roja ... El mismo es escritura y sabiduría. Es camino y guía veraz para otros ... El sabio verdadero es cuidadoso y guarda la tradición. Suya es la sabiduría transmitida, el es quien la enseña, sigue la verdad. Maestro de la verdad, no deja de amonestar. Hace sabios los rostros de los otros, hace a los otros tomar un rostro, los hace desarrollarlo ... Pone un espejo delante de los otros ... Hace que aparezca su propio rostro ... Aplica su luz sobre el mundo ... Gracias a ella gente humaniza su querer y recibe una disciplinada enseñanza. (León Portilla 1979: 65-74)

The *tlamatini*, a light, a torch, a big torch that does not smoke. A pierced mirror, a mirror perforated on both sides. His is the black and red ink ... He himself is writing and wisdom. He is a path and a true guide for others. ... The genuine wise man is careful and preserves tradition. His is transmitted wisdom, he is the

one who teaches it, he follows truth. A master of truth, he does not cease admonishing. He makes the countenances of the others wise, he makes others assume a countenance, he makes them develop it. .. He places a mirror in front of the others. ..He makes his own face appear in it. ..He applies his light to the world. ..Thanks to him the people humanize their love and receive a disciplined education.<sup>7</sup>

Just as important as the positive description of the wise man is the negative description of the "false wise man" ("falso sabio"),<sup>8</sup> which confirms my opinion that a form of thought existed that was not only mythical, but strictly "conceptual," although based on metaphors (conceptual, and not merely mythical, metaphors).<sup>9</sup>

One element that must also be taken into consideration is the existence of a particular social institution: the *Calmécac*, a school of *momachtique* (students). There the young boys, who left their families between the ages of seven and nine to be integrated into a "community" (*Icniuhyotl*), had an absolutely regimented life,<sup>10</sup> whose center consisted of "dialogues" or "conversations" among the wise men (*Huehuetlatom*).<sup>11</sup> The purpose of schooling was to learn "knowledge that was already known" ("la sabiduría ya sabida"; *momachtique*), in order to be able to produce "adequate speech" ("palabra adecuada"; *in quam tlatolli*) with rhetorical discipline (as in the Academy or the *Liceo*). This knowledge was articulated in the major work of the *Calmécac*, the "flor y canto" (*in xóchitl in cuícatl*). Expressed aloud or written in the codices (*amates*), the "flor y canto" was recited or sung with or without music, rhythmically punctuated, and even accompanied by dance; it was the place par excellence of communication between "the terrestrial" (*tlaltícpac*) and the divine, for which the interpretation of dreams was also used.<sup>12</sup>

I believe that among the Aztecs in the fifteenth century a great tension existed between what we could call the "sacrificial myth" of Tlacaélel, a myth of domination and militarism (which was replaced by the "myth of Modernity"), and the "protophilosophy" of the *tlamatinime* (which was ignored by the emancipation movement of the Enlightenment in Europe and Latin America).<sup>13</sup> This explains the vacillation of Moctezuma-who

was more a *tlamatini* than a soldier. The admiration accompanying the "discovery" by the European navigators and cartographers can be correlated with the interpretative confusion of the *tlamatinime*, who initially interpreted the "discovery" as a "parousia" of the gods. The sacrificial violence of the "conquest" can be correlated with the inevitable acceptance by the vanquished of the brutal experience of "invasion"; "colonization" can be correlated with the "sixth sun" or the period of servitude; the "spiritual conquest" with the "death of the gods"; and so forth.

### The "Parousia" of the Gods

Many of the beliefs of the *tlamatinime* coincided with popular ones and those of the dominant political, warrior, and commercial classes (as is the case, for example, with the belief in the existence of the "five suns").<sup>14</sup> Other beliefs, however, were the product of the highly conceptualized and abstract rationalization that was developed by the *tlamatinime* in the *Calmécac*, and I will briefly summarize this rationalization in order to understand "how" the *tlamatinime* interpreted the arrival of the travelers from the East, where the Sun rises every morning (*Huitzilopochtli*).

Beyond any myth, Aztec rationality affirmed, as the absolute and eternal origin of everything, not the "One," but the "Two" (*Ome*).<sup>15</sup> At the beginning, there was the "place of duality" (*Omeyocan*) in the thirteenth sky, where the "Divine-Duality" (*Ometeótl*), or simply the "Duality" (*Oméyotl*), resided.<sup>16</sup> It was not as it was for Hegel: first Being and Nothingness, and then becoming movement in second place, Being-there or *Ente (Dasein)*. For the *tlamatinime* the origin is already codetermined (*i-námic* means "shares"),<sup>17</sup> in the metaphorical<sup>18</sup> sense of "woman-man,"<sup>19</sup> but it received other meanings of a high degree of conceptual abstraction: " And they also called it (1) *Moyucayatzin*; (2) *ayac oquiyocux*; and (3) *ayac oquipic*, which means that nobody created or formed it" (Mendieta 95). Mendieta could not imagine the level of ontological abstraction of these terms (because mythical reason had clearly been exceeded, it must therefore be called strict philosophical reason). The first term means "the

Lord who invents himself" ("Senor que se inventa a sí mismo"),<sup>20</sup> the second indicates that "nobody made him" ("nadie lo hizo a él"); and the third means "nobody gave him form" ("nadie le dió su forma"). Only the "flor y canto" of the *tlamatini* can provide an expression for *Ometeótl* that is more or less comprehensible: "night-wind" (*Yohualli-Ehecátl*);<sup>21</sup> "he who is close and surrounds us" (*in Tloque in Nahuaque*);<sup>22</sup> "he who gives us life" (*Ipalnemohuani*). It is now possible to read the text quoted as the epigraph of this essay, although it is necessary to continue the explanation in order to understand the passage.

How did the *tlamatinime* explain the relation between the "Divine Duality" (an absolute ontological principle) and "phenomenal," "temporal," and "terrestrial" reality (*tlalticpac*), in which we live "as if in a dream" ("como en sueños")? The autopoietic Divine Duality then unfolds itself, operating a *Diremption*<sup>23</sup> or *Explicatio* (like the pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite or John Scotus Erigena): "This god-goddess engendered four sons. ..." "Ete dios-diosa engendraron cuatro hijos..." (García Icazbalceta 228ff.), each of whom was called Tezcatlipoca.<sup>24</sup> They are the originary concrete principles of the universe, and are situated at the "four cardinal points" (as in Chinese ontology, Polynesian traditions, and American cultures, from the Eskimos to the Incas and Araucanos): that of the East, which is red; that of the North, which is black, the realm of the dead; that of the West, white Quetzalcóatl, fertility and life; that of the South, blue Huitzilopochtli of the Aztecs. As with the pre-Socratics, there are four ruling principles: earth, air, water, and fire. Each one also dominated an "epoch" of the world. Five epochs had already passed, "five Suns." The present age was that of the "Sun in movement," the age of Huitzilopochtli, the warrior god of the Aztecs:

Este Sol, su nombre 4 *movimiento*, este es nuestro Sol, en el que *vivimos* ahora... El quinto Sol... se llama Sol de *movimiento* porque se mueve, sigue su camino. (León Portilla 1979: 103, 333)

This Sun, whose name is 4 *movement*, this is our Sun, in which we now *live*. ..The fifth Sun. ..is called the Sun of *movement* because it moves, it follows its path. (Emphasis in the original)

"Movement" (Y-*olli*) is related to "heart" (Y-*ollo-ti*) and to "life" (Y-*oliliztli*).<sup>25</sup> It is for Ometeótl that "all live" (*lpalnemohuani*), but they worship him through the Sun (one of the faces of Tezcatlipoca). Furthermore, these four "principles" are in continual "conflict." Humans, the *macehuales*,<sup>26</sup> enter this battle to preserve whatever they can from the existence of the "fifth Sun" in which they live; they lend their support and become accomplices of the reigning Sun. Human existence is always regulated, *necessarily* ruled by the rhythm of time or "of the years." The Aztecs had a "tragic" vision of existence, as there was no room for any freedom in human events and everything was predetermined in advance, according to the "old rule of life" ("vieja regla de vida"; *Huehuetlamaniliztli*).

On the earth (*tlalticpac*), everything is regulated according to Ometeótl's wishes:

Nuestro Señor, el Señor que está cerca y nos rodea (*in Tloque in Nahuaque*), determina lo que quiere, lo planifica, se divierte. Como el quiere, así querrá. En el centro de la palma de su mano nos tiene colocados, nos está moviendo a su antojo. (*Códice Florentino*, book 6, folio 43: v; León Portilla 1979: 199-200, 349)

Our Lord, the Lord who is close and surrounds us (*in Tloque in Nahuaque*), determines what he wants, plans it, muses himself. As he wants it, he will want it. He has us placed in the center of the palm of his hand, he is moving us according to his whim.<sup>27</sup>

In the heavens above the stars continue their necessary "path" (*camino*), as do human beings.<sup>28</sup> That explains the obsession with finding the "ground" (*fundamento*) of things,<sup>29</sup> which constituted truth: "Are men perhaps *real*? Therefore our song is no longer *true*? What is left *standing*, by chance?" ("¿Acaso son *verdad* los hombres? ¿Por tanto ya no es *verdad* nuestro canto? ¿*Que está de pie* por ventura?") (Ms. *Cantares Mexicanos*, folio 10: v; León Portilla 1979: 61).<sup>30</sup> For the *tlamatini*, the "flor y canto" (communicating with the divinity in the community of wise men) is finally "lo único *verdadero en la tierra*" ("the only *true thing on earth*") (*nelli in tlalticpac*) (Ms. *Cantares Mexicanos*, folio 9v: 142). But if the wise man can live the mystical-philosophical experience of grounding himself in the divinity, or the "world of



life" (*Lebenswelt*), there were other ways of attaining the desired grounding, such as through the structuring of the divisions of time according to the divine calendar. That is why the Aztecs had an exact knowledge of the measurement of sacred time: the time of day, the days, the weeks (thirteen days each), and the years (the lunar year, the solar year, the year of Venus).<sup>31</sup> Each day had a tutelary divinity as did each week, month, type of year, and their extremely complex combinations. An entire "procession" a hierarchical multitude of divinities "moved" along the "path" of the sky every day, from dawn to nightfall, and even during the night. It was necessary to worship these divinities (with songs, rituals, sacrifices, and so forth), in order to appease them and ward off their possible evil actions. That explains the festivals and celebrations<sup>32</sup> and the entirely "regulated" life. Furthermore, and this is fundamental, the "eternal return of the same" was completed by "astrology"<sup>33</sup> and by the "interpretation" (in fact, a hermeneutics) of "signs" that gave meaning to the events that were "apparently" not "grounded" in "truth."<sup>34</sup> Astrology was an a priori "divine" rule that was applied to every event in time (*in tlalticpac*); the hermeneutics of "omens" was an a posteriori explanation of a concrete, empirical, and "apparently" new sign, in order to apply to it (the sign) an a priori rule and thus discover a "contingent" meaning. The "omens" predicted future (and past) events, but ones that were always "necessary" ("that cannot be otherwise," as Aristotle would say). In this way, the tragic Aztec conscience, from the oppressed masses to the ruling or warrior classes and even the *tlamatinime*, had the "grounding" of their existence "secured" in the "truth" of Ometeótl.

We can now attempt a certain understanding of what must have happened to Moctezuma when he heard the "news" of the appearance of the recent arrivals on the coast of *Cemanáhuac* ("the entire earth") from the infinite *Teoatl* (Atlantic):

Y cuando fueron vistos los que vinieron por el mar  
(*teoatl*), en barcas van viniendo... y cuando estuvieron  
cerca de los hombres de Castilla, al momento frente a  
ellos hicieron ceremonia de tocar la tierra y los labios. ...  
Tuvieron la opinión de que era Nuestro Señor  
Quetzalcóatl que había venido. (León Portilla 1978: 32-33)

And when those who came from the sea (*teotl*) were seen, they were arriving in ships. ...And when they [the Aztecs] were close to the men from Castille, they immediately conducted a ceremony in front of them of touching the earth and their lips. ...They believed it was Our Lord Quetzalcóatl who had arrived.<sup>35</sup>

Even when he receives Cortés in the City of Mexico, Moctezuma believes (because of a conclusion he arrived at for strategic reasons, as we will see) that he is Quetzalcoatl. The attitude of the emperor has been considered vacillating, contradictory, and scarcely comprehensible (the reasons given by Todorov, Wachtel, León Portilla, Octavio Paz, J. Lafaye, and others do not explain the "rationality" of Moctezuma's behavior).<sup>36</sup> He received Cortés with these words:

Señor nuestro: te has fatigado, te has dado cansancio: ya a esta tierra tú has llegado. Has arribado a *tu ciudad: México. Aquí has venido a sentarte en tu solio, en tu trono*. Oh, por tiempo breve te lo reservaron, te lo conservaron, los que ya se fueron, *tus sustitutos*. Los señores reyes, Itzcaotzin, Motecuhzomatzin el viejo, Axayácac, Tízoc, Ahuítzotl. Oh, que breve tiempo tan solo guardaron *para tí*, dominaron la ciudad de México. ...No, no es que yo sueño, no me levanto del sueño adormilado: no lo veo en sueños, no estoy soñando. Es que ya te he visto, ¡es que ya te he puesto mis ojos *en tu rostro!* Ha cinco, ha diez días yo estaba angustiado: tenía fija la mirada en la Región de los Muertos (*topan mictlan*). Y tú has venido entre nubes, entre nieblas. Como que esto era lo que nos habían dejado dicho los reyes, los que rigieron, los que gobernaron *tu ciudad*: que habrías de instalarte en *tu asiento, en tu sitial* ...Yen y descansa; toma posesión de *tus casas reales*; da refrigerio a tu cuerpo. (León Portilla 1978: 38; emphasis added)

Our Lord: you have tired yourself, you have given yourself trouble: now you have already arrived in this land. You have arrived in *your city*: Mexico. Here you have come to sit on *your royal seat, on your throne*. Oh, for a short period they who have already left, *your substitutes*, reserved it, conserved it for you. The kings and masters, Itzcaotzin, Motecuhzomatzin the elder, Axayácac, Tízoc, Ahuítzotl. Oh, for what a short time

did they keep it *for you*, and ruled the city of Mexico. ...No, it is not that I am dreaming, I am not arising still half asleep: I am not seeing this in dreams, I am not dreaming. I have already seen you, I have already set my eyes *on your face!* Five, ten days ago, I was worried: I had my gaze fixed on the Realm of the Dead (*topan mictlan*). And you arrived among clouds, among fog. Just as the kings, those who governed, those who ruled *your city*, told us: that you were to settle into *your seat*, into *your chair of honor*. ..Come and rest; take possession of *your royal houses*; give your body sustenance. (Emphasis added)

Moctezuma offers the recent arrival nothing less than the throne, the government, and dominion over the Aztecs! Was this not exactly what Cortés wanted? On the contrary: Cortés does not understand this offer and furthermore has no intention of occupying the throne. This produces a new confusion in Moctezuma -but it is neither the first nor the last, and that is why he will continue to react to each "novelty" in a way that disconcerted successive interpreters. Is Moctezuma's behavior rational? I answer clearly and unambiguously: Yes! It was entirely rational and the most convenient, *if we take into consideration Moctezuma's "world" and do not project a Eurocentric perspective onto him* (as even the above-mentioned authors have done, in spite of being the most critical ones we could encounter).<sup>37</sup> Let us carefully analyze the various "possibilities" (in the Heideggerian sense of *Möglichkeit*; see Dussel 1973: 65ff., "Las posibilidades ónticas," and Luhmann); that is, what was possible for Moctezuma from the perspective of his "world" (correctly situated), the world of an Aztec emperor, who was a good warrior but an even better *tlamatini* of austere moral education in the best tradition of the Toltec wise men. Moctezuma, that "cultivated" and refined emperor, who was not in the least cowardly (contrary to the inadequate interpretation of him that was incorporated into history), was faced with the following "possibilities," after having informed himself with all the means provided him by his civilization.<sup>38</sup>

1. The recent arrivals were a group of human beings, which was the least probable "possibility"<sup>39</sup>-from the nahuatl

hermeneutic perspective-and would have to be confirmed by other events that had not yet occurred, and were thus "reasonably" to be discarded, at that time. It would turn out to be the beginning of an "invasion," but only on the basis of new data that Moctezuma necessarily did not have available at that time.<sup>40</sup>

2. Only one rational possibility remained: they were gods. If that was so, which ones? Everything indicated (according to the counsel of the astrologers as much as to that of the *tlamatinime*) that it had to be Quetzalcoatl. One possibility considered by the *tlamatinime* was Quetzalcóatl's return, after having been expelled from Tula by the Toltecs or other ethnic groups.<sup>41</sup>
3. The third "possibility," in the form of another alternative to the second, was that although Quetzalcóatl was returning, the prince was now fused with the divine principle, as one of the faces of Omoteótl. This was really disastrous, as it would be the "end of the Fifth Sun."<sup>42</sup>

Confronting these "possibilities," Moctezuma doubted, but he continued to make "rational" decisions. In the first place, it would be good to pay homage to the recent arrivals with gifts and propose to them that they return to their place of origin (whatever that may be). Moctezuma did not want to meet them "face to face," because that would be his end. This is what has not been interpreted correctly:

Ahora bien, Moctezuma cavilaba en aquellas cosas, estaba preocupado; lleno de terror, de miedo: cavilaba que iba a acontecer con la ciudad. (*Informantes de Sahagun*; Leon Portilla 1979: 35)

Now, Moctezuma reflected deeply on these matters, he was preoccupied, filled with terror, with fear: he was wondering what was going to happen to the city .

And he had good reason for doing so. For the enemies of the empire, the oppressed (such as the people of Zempoala or Tlaxcala-and the same would happen to Atahualpa with the Incas), Cortés was an ally (whether he was a man or a god) who could emancipate them from Aztec domination.<sup>43</sup> The warriors

faithful to Huitzilopochtli would "fight" as collaborators of their god, but they would have to act alone if Cortés's men were really human beings (the first possibility), or if Quetzalcóatl tried to put an end to the "Fifth Sun" (third possibility). The people of Mexico-Tenochtitlan did not stand to lose anything if Quetzalcóatl resumed rule in "his" empire (second possibility). Everyone thus judged the possibilities in different ways, but only Moctezuma had to face an extreme decision.<sup>44</sup> He had very little room for maneuver: if Quetzalcóatl wanted to resume the rule of the empire, he would have to abdicate (second possibility); in all other cases Moctezuma could take his chance with his warriors (but only after making sure that the second possibility did not correspond to reality). That is why Moctezuma, the great *tlamantini*, "rationally" and with clearly strategic reason, makes the decision of giving up the empire and leaving in his place Quetzalcóatl-Cortés: "Take possession of your royal houses!"<sup>45</sup>

Naturally the recent arrivals confuse him again. When the Aztecs offer them food with blood, these strange gods scorn it. They appeared even stranger when they became ecstatic at the sight of gold; they irrationally transformed precious jewels into ingots, thus destroying the immense work of refined goldsmiths (artistry that later would be admired by Dürer in Holland). Also, they absurdly killed enemies in battle instead of taking them prisoner and sacrificing them to the gods. Once again, Cortés does not assume power in Mexico! But at least Moctezuma comes to a first conclusion: Cortés is not prince Quetzalcóatl who wants to resume temporal power (*in tlalticpac*). The other possibilities still remain, but the situation must be analyzed carefully, for Cortés could act in the name of the god and bring about the end of the Fifth Sun. This was the supreme danger, and that is why Moctezuma bore humiliation knowing that, if Cortés and his men were human, in the worst case his life was in danger, but it would only be his end as monarch, and the city of Mexico would not suffer.

### **The "Invasion" of the Empire**

A new event, which could not be considered by Moctezuma previously because it had not yet occurred (and therefore could not

be a historical or real "possibility" at that earlier time),<sup>46</sup> started to create a situation that would permit the posterior development of the "first possibility" (although the "third possibility" still continued to be a supreme danger):

No fue bien llegado con el armada, cuando Motecuhzuma fue dello avisado a tiempo. [Y el emperador llamando a Cortés le dijo]: "Señor capitán, sabed que son venidos navíos de vuestra tierra, en que podréis [part]ir, por tanto aderezaos con brevedad que así conviene." (Torquemada, chap. 59: 184)  
 He had hardly arrived with the armada [that of Pánfilo Narváez, who was sent from Cuba against Cortés], when Motecuhzuma was apprised of it on time. [And the emperor called Cortés, saying to him]: "Captain, Sir, you know that ships have come from your land, in which you can leave, so prepare them quickly, for that is the way it should be."

Now Moctezuma, knowing that the Spaniards are human beings,<sup>47</sup> is aware for the first time that there are others like Cortés, with numerous new soldiers accompanying them. If they return to where they came from, everything will turn out well (and the empire, traditions, gods, the Fifth Sun, and Moctezuma himself will be out of danger). But two new events (soon to be three) make him aware of an unexpected development of the "first possibility" (and really it is a new "fourth possibility" he never considered before): first, that Cortés did not only not return to his place of origin, but that, defeating Narváez, he reinforced his army (with which he returned triumphantly to Mexico); and second, and no less important, the massacre that Pedro de Alvarado perpetrated against the Aztec elite. These two facts "proved" that Moctezuma had been in error,<sup>48</sup> and inclined the balance in favor of the warriors inspired by the sacrificial myth of Tlacaélel, who, considering the Spaniards merely as human beings, had thought from the very beginning that it was necessary to fight against them. Moctezuma was finished. Cortés, who had understood nothing of the "argumentative world" of the Other,<sup>49</sup> of the highly developed world of Moctezuma, tries to use him as he did before, and thus loses precious time for his own cause.<sup>50</sup> It is now late; all the Aztecs have discovered,

clearly and *for the first time*, that Cortés and his men are only a group of human warriors, and that they are the vanguard of an "invasion": the "invasion of *Cemanáhuac*," of the entire world "known" to the Aztecs.

The wisdom of the *tlamatinime* had been negated, destroyed; their entire "worldview" (*weltanschauung*) was now proved inadequate and incapable of accounting for reality. Moctezuma, in his function as *tlamatini*, had died. His physical death was a matter of hours. Thus ended the "Parousia of the gods." Pánfilo Narváez, and not Cortés (just as Amerigo Vespucci and not Columbus had discovered America), proved that the events were part of an invasion, and this was not known before that point.

Tlacaélel, the Romulus and Remus of the Aztecs,<sup>51</sup> had been born in the year 10-Rabbit (*10-Conejo*) (1398), defeated the Tepanecas of Azcapotzalco, the Albalonga of Mexico- Tenochtitlan, in the year 1-Flint (*1-Pedernal*) (1428), and was called the "Conqueror of the World" (*in cemanáhuac Tepehuan*) (Alvarado Tezozómoc 121; on Tlacaélel see León Portilla 1979: 247ff.; and León Portilla 1990: 46ff., 92ff.). To him the Aztecs owed the "reforms" that gave the empire its great cosmopolitan vision, and its interpretation from the sacrificial paradigm of the dominating power in Mexico:

Este es el oficio de Huitzilopochtli, nuestro dios, a esto fue venido a reunir y trae as! a su servicio a todas las naciones, con la fortaleza de su pecho y de su cabeza.  
(Duran 95)

This is the function of Huitzilopochtli, our god, for this he had come to unite and thus he brings all nations to his service, with the strength of his breast and head.

Ometeótl reveals himself for the Tezcatlipocas; the god of the "Fifth Sun," Quetzalcóatl, was reinterpreted by the Aztecs in a sacrificial paradigm: "And here is his sign, how the Sun fell into the fire, into the divine blaze, there in Teotihuacán" ("Y aquí esta su señal, cómo cayó en el fuego el Sol, en el fogón divino, allá en Teotihuacán") (*Documento de 1558*; León Portilla 1979: 103-9). The small hummingbird god (*dios colibri*), Nanahuatzin, offered his life in sacrifice, immolated himself for the salvation of all; then burnt in the divine fire, he appeared, after a long night,

as the rising Sun, which the Aztecs considered as their tribal god: Huitzilopochtli. This secondary warrior god would become, because of the "Reform of Tlacaélel," the main god of all Anáhuac. Tlacaélel would end up burning all the sacred codices of the dominated people, and write them anew. It was a veritable domination of theogonies. The empire was now "grounded" as the servant of the existence and life of the Sun. That is why "movement" (of the Sun and all reality), "life," and the "heart" are related to "blood" (*chalchihuitl*): the life of the sun-Huitzilopochtli depends on human sacrifice. The victims are obtained in the "flowery wars" (*guerras floridas*), justifying the existence of the empire:

Allí donde se tiñen los dardos, donde se tiñen los escudos, están las blancas flores perfumadas, las flores del corazón: abren sus corolas las flores del que da la vida, cuyo perfume aspiran en el mundo los príncipes: es Tenochtitlan. (Ms. *Cantares Mexicanos*, folio 20v; León Portilla 1979: 257)

There where the spears are dyed, where the shields are dyed, are the white perfumed flowers, the flowers of the heart: the flowers of the one who gives life open their corollas, whose perfume is inhaled by princes on earth: it is Tenochtitlan.<sup>52</sup>

Through the myth of the necessity of human sacrifice, proclaimed from the main temple of Huitzilopochtli, Tlacaélel thus manages to transform the empire into a collaborator for the continuing existence of the universe and the prolongation of the life of the "Fifth Sun." The discovery that Cortés was not Quetzalcóatl was the moment when the warriors tried to prolong the "Fifth Sun" by defeating the intruders:

En consecuencia luego salieron de noche. En la fiesta de Techílhuitl salieron; fue cuando murieron en el Canal de los Toltecas. Allí furiosamente los atacamos. [*Anonymous Ms. from Tlatelolco* (1528); León Portilla 1978: 43]  
Consequently they then went out at night. They went out during the festival of Techílhuitl; that was when they died in the Canal of the Toltecs. There we attacked them furiously.



It was of little avail to them to drive Cortés out of the city during the "Noche Triste" ("Sad Night"-sad for the Spaniards, of course).<sup>53</sup> The worse for Mexico, the plague breaks out, and this is interpreted as a bad omen for the empire. From Tlaxcala the invaders reorganized their forces, and Cortés started to "weaken" Mexico, as the Catholic Monarchs had done with Granada. The siege of Tenochtitlan lasts for months. Finally the Spaniards drive the Aztecs out of the city and surround them in Tlatelolco. They are defeated.

En los caminos yacen dardos rotos; los caballos están esparcidos. Destechadas están las casas, enrojecidos tienen sus muros. Gusanos pululan por calles y plazas y están las paredes manchadas de sesos. Rojas están las aguas, cual si las hubieran teñido, y si las bebíamos, eran agua de salitre. (*Anonymous Ms. from Tlatelolco*; Leon Portilla 1978: 53)

On the roads lie broken spears; the horses are scattered. The houses are without roofs, their walls are red. Worms teem in the streets and squares, and the walls are splashed with brains. Red are the waters, as if they had been dyed, and if we drank them they were saltpeter .

El llanto se extiende, las lágrimas gotean allí} en Tlatelolco. Por agua se fueron ya los mexicanos; semejan mujeres; la huída es general. ¿A dónde vamos? ¡Oh amigos! Luego ¿*fue verdad?* Ya abandonan la ciudad de México: el humo se está levando, la niebla se esta extendiendo... Esto es lo que ha hecho el Dador-de-la-Vida en Tlatelolco. (*Cantares Mexicanos*; León Portilla 1979: 62)

The wailing spreads, the tears are falling there in Tlatelolco. The Mexicans already left by water; they are like women; the flight is general. Where are we going? Oh friends! Then was it *true?* They are already abandoning the city of Mexico: the smoke is lifting, the fog is spreading. ..This is what the Giver-of-Life in Tlatelolco has done.<sup>54</sup>

The "invasion" has ended. The warriors have been routed. The same was to happen to the Mayas, to the Incas of Atahualpa ... right to the confines of Patagonia in the South, or Alaska in the North, during the following years.<sup>55</sup> Modernity has been in-

stalled. ...it has emancipated the people oppressed by the Aztecs and victims of their bloodthirsty gods. ...and like a "Sixth Sun" that rises on the horizon of Humanity I a new god (capital) is inaugurating a new "sacrificial myth": the "myth" of Tlacaélel is replaced by the no less sacrificial "myth" of the provident "hand of Cod" that regulates Adam Smith's harmony of market forces.

## Notes

1. In teteu inan in tetu ita, in Huehuetatl  
 [Madre de los dioses, Padre de los dioses, el Dios viejo],  
 yaciendo en el ombligo de la Tierra,  
 metido en un encierro de turquesas.  
 El que esta en las aguas color de pájaro  
 azul, el que esta encerrado en nubes,  
 el Dios viejo, el que habita en las sombras  
 de la región de los muertos,  
 el señor del fuego y del año. (León Portilla 1979: 93)

In the second line, the "Old God" is Ometeótl, a dual originary principle: Mother-Father, like the "Alom-Qaholam" (originary Mother-Father) of the Mayas (see *Popol Vuh* 23 and 164). It is the originary "divine duality" (reminding us of the "twins" of all other American cultures, from the North American prairies to the Caribbean, the Amazon, and even Patagonia). Heraclitus's dual principle refers to the same thing.

In the third line, "lying": this "being stretched out," "resting," or "lying down" gives the idea of being below, of grounding, or being the ultimate reference in the sense of the Absolute as foundation (*als Grund*, in Hegel's major and minor treatise on Logic). "To be lying (down or below)" (*ónoc*) as the foundation of the universe means to provide it with its "truth."

In the fourth line, "enclosed in a refuge" could be the concept of the "in itself" (*in sich*).

In the fifth line, the "waters" are the ocean, or the North and South Seas of the Aztec empire.

At the end of the sixth line, "clouds" refers to the sky "above," as the same waters "below," the oceans, continue in the sky as the waters above.

The eighth line refers to the "nether world," the realm that completes the trilogy: Sky-Earth-Hades, as in the Mesopotamian cults. This nether world (*topan mictlan*) was the "realm of the dead," which must be distinguished from Tllocan or the paradise of the just.

2. In Mexico in 1991, I discussed with Karl-Otto Apel the existence or inexistence of philosophy in American protohistory before the arrival of the Europeans, and the possibility or impossibility of an "Enlightenment" (*Aufklärung*), at least in Jaspers's sense of an "axis time" (*edad eje, Achsenzeit*).

3. I am using the term "philosopher" in the original Greek sense of "one who loves knowledge," and thus in the present sense of the philosopher-theologian, before the secularization (a product of Christianity) that since the third

century A.D. transformed the philosopher into someone who was not a Christian theologian.

4. Garcilaso, the Inca, adds shortly thereafter: "which means that the God of the Christians and Pachacámac are one and the same" (75). He criticizes the interpretation given by Pedro de Cieza, who, "because he was Spanish, did not know the language as well as I do, I who am an Inca Indian" (74).

5. The word comes from *mati*, he knows; *tla*, a thing or something; and *ni* which substantivizes *he who* knows. Thus *tlamatini* means "he who knows something."

6. It is important to point out that the occupation of painter was essential, because it meant painting the sacred codices. Also crucial was the singer, who had to intonate the "song," as with the Guaranis, but ritualized with a splendor that cannot be compared to the songs of the simple and poor villages of the tropical rain forests.

7. León Portilla (1979) indicates the extensive meaning of each word in nahuatl; I will provide commentary on only selected words and phrases.

"a big torch that does not smoke": because it does not smoke, it is clear, transparent, and lucid.

"a mirror perforated on both sides": the gods looked through a hole to see the earth, but the astronomers also observed the skies through a perforated object. "Perforated on both sides" signifies discovering the meaning of what is human from the perspective of the gods, and the meaning of the gods from a human point of view.

"he follows truth": truth is *Neltiliztli*, from the root *nelhuáyotl*, meaning cement or foundation (as in the Guaraní "foundation of the word"), and also from *tla-nél-huatl*, meaning root. León Portilla writes: "We can conclude that the nahuatl preoccupation when inquiring whether something *was true* or *standing* (as in the case of the Guaranis) was directed toward wanting to know whether there was something fixed, well cemented, that escaped the *only a little here [sólo un poco aquí]*, the vanity of things that are on earth (*tlalticpac*), which appear as a dream" (1979: 61; emphasis in the original). That is the entire question of "grounding": "Are men perhaps real? Therefore our song is no longer true? What is left standing by chance?" (Ms. *Cantares Mexicanos*, folio 10: v; León Portilla 1979: 61).

"He makes the countenances of the others wise": *Teixtlamachtiani*, the person who makes rich or communicates something to somebody. *Ix* (from *ixtli*), meaning face, countenance; *te*, meaning the other. The expression *teixcuitiani* is still stronger, meaning: to make others acquire their own "face" or "countenance" (he or she personalizes or individualizes them). Finally, *teixtomani*, meaning developing the face of the other. A person "without face" is ignorant, drifting, does not find meaning in anything, not even in the self. The educated person "has a face," and can discover a critical sense that transcends mere *tlalticpac* ("on the earth," the ephemeral, the "phenomenal," the Platonic "doxa"): "as in dreams." All wisdom consists of going beyond *tlalticpac* (the terrestrial) in order to attain "what surpasses us" (*topan mictlán*), the transcendental. There is an explicit "Enlightenment" (*Aufklärung*) here. We are at least on the level of Parmenides's poems and Heraclitus's oracles (or in Jaspers's *Achsenzeit*), as with the pre-Socratics. León Portilla proves this abundantly and extensively; because of

the limited space of this essay I cannot develop his arguments in greater depth here.

"He places a mirror in front of the others": *Tetzcaviani*, from *tezcatl* and *tez-cavia*, meaning to place a mirror in front of others. The "mirror" is evidently critical reflection, the "speculative," the ability to look at oneself, the overcoming of meaninglessness. The *tlamatini* thus places a mirror before the face of the other in order to discover oneself, to reconstruct the face and develop it.

"He applies his light to the world": The world is a fundamental concept. *Cemanáhuac*, meaning the complete circuit of water, comes from *cem*, meaning entirely, completely; *a(tl)*, meaning water; and *náhuac*, meaning circuit. It is the whole "world," Mexico, from the North Sea (the Caribbean, the Atlantic) to the South Sea (the Pacific). The Ocean (*teócatl*) is divine water, which meets the sky (*ilhuicaatl*), which is also divine water, because both are identical (see Seler 3). To apply one's light to the world thus means to observe and discover with one's light, or one's intelligence, the mystery or the appearance of the world. *Tla-ix-imantini* means: he who with his face-appearance knows things.

"Thanks to him the people humanize their love": *Itech netlacaneco*. From *netlaca-neco*: *-neco* (he is beloved), *tlácatl* (human being), *ne-* (impersonal prefix), meaning: "the people are loved humanely" thanks to him (*itech*). In other words, he humanizes, makes civilized, educates, makes loving or love morally defensible.

8. Besides other meanings, this term referred to "the sorcerer who made the other's face turn around" (*teixcuepani*), that is to say, instead of showing the other his face so that he can fulfill it, he shows him the nape of the neck, so that he cannot see his face. We could say that the Europeans in their "discovery" of America only saw "a face turned backward" (concealed), or that they "made others lose their face" (*teixpoloa*) (León Portilla 1979: 73).

9. "All the songs of these people were composed of such obscure *metaphors* that there is hardly anyone who understands them without studying them and discussing them with the specific purpose of understanding their meaning. I started listening on purpose and with great attention to what they sing, including the words and terms of *metaphor*, and it seemed nonsense to me, and then, discussing and conferring with the people, I perceived their songs as *admirable maxims*, as much in the divine works they now compose, as in their popular songs" (Duran 21; emphasis in the original).

10. "They all cleaned the houses at four in the morning... The food that they prepared was cooked in the building of the *Calmécac* ...Every night at midnight they got up to pray, and he who did not wake up and get up was punished by pricking the ears, the chest, the thighs, and the legs" (Sahagún 327).

11. In nahuatl a "philosophical treatise" should be translated by "dialogue" or "conversation" (like the Platonic Dialogues). These were essentially *Teutlatolli*, or "discourses on the divine," and had their discursive rules, their method of argumentation, and their required forms of articulation.

12. This was much more than a work of poetry: it was an expression of wisdom, a work in which the human communicated with the divine and vice versa, in short, the culmination of the entire nahuatl culture. It resembled the sacred "word" of the Guaranis, but was much more elaborate.

Regarding "the interpretation of dreams": "They were taught the *tonalhua-lli*, the book of dreams (*temiclimatl*) and the book of years (*xiuhámatl*)" (*Códice Florentino*, book 3: 65; quoted by León Portilla 1979: 228).

13. In eighteenth-century Mexico, Clavijero recuperated these traditions and explicitly considered them as "philosophy."

14. As can be seen in the *Popol Vuh* and in the existence of four types of humanity preceding the Mayas, who constitute the fifth, the Mayas, as well as the Toltecs (who were to the Aztecs as the Greeks were to the Romans), had the same sacrificial vision of Tlacaélel. They believed that they were living in a "fifth age," and that "four ages" had already passed, each of which had a different "Sun."

15. The "One" was affirmed by Plato in *Parmenides*, Plotinus in the *Eneid*, Hindu thought, and Chinese Taoism. In all of these systems the problem was how to determine the "One" in order to attain "plurality," that is, the question of "matter."

16. According to the Aztecs, there were thirteen skies (remember that for Aristotle there were up to sixty skies or spheres). The first was that of the moon, the second of the stars (for the Greeks, this was the last sphere, that of "fixed" things), the third of the Sun, and so on. Ometeótl lived in the last sky, the thirteenth.

17. "There lives the founded [*fundado*] god and his co-principle" (León Portilla 1979: 151). The "Old God" always has his own co-principle.

18. The "metaphor" is no longer simply mythical, but "conceptually" metaphoric.

19. There were different ways of saying this term: *Omecítuatl* (Dual Lady); *Ometecuhtli* (Dual Lord); *Tonacacihuatl* (Lady of Our Flesh); *In Teteu Inan* (Mother of the Gods); *In Teteu Ita* (Father of the Gods).

20. This would be a case of absolute autopoiesis. What is most relevant is that the "self-production" occurs through thought (*yucoya* means to produce through thought).

21. In the originary "night" everything is invisible and mysterious; in the originary "wind" everything is impalpable, imperceptible, not present to the senses. It is a case of absolute transcendence.

22. This may be the most extraordinary attribute of Ometeótl. *Tloc*, near; *náhuac*, surrounds, like a ring; the ending *-e* indicates abstraction (similar to *-dad* in Spanish or *-heit* in German): "closeness-surrounding." The originary "divine duality," Ometeótl, is the absolute in which we live. It is near, it surrounds us, and the *tlamatini*, who is close to it, has the mystical-ontological experience of the great thinkers of the great civilizations in their "axis time" (*Achsenzeit*). It is similar to Augustine's expression: "In him we live and exist."

23. We could not apply Hegel's concept *Entzweiung* (becoming two) to this process, because they are already "two" at the beginning. *Entvierung* (becoming four) would be more correct. According to Hegel: "The absolute is the night and the light preceding it, the difference between both" (1962: 65). See Dusse11974: 89ff. It is interesting that the metaphors are identical ("night," "light"). I hope to analyze all these elements of the ontological reflection of the nahuatl culture in more detail in the future, in order to demonstrate more convincingly before

skeptics the existence of an explicit formal beginning of philosophy in Latin American protohistory before 1492.

24. "Smoked mirror," one that does not reflect, or that does not allow one to see because it is dark. The opposite is *Tezcatlanextia*, "a mirror that makes things appear" (a quality of Ometeótl, who produces things as their reflection). The "mirror" fulfills the function of "reflection:" of "divinity's turning upon itself," or of the philosophical subjectivity of the *tlamatini*: "he who is conversing with his own heart" (*Mayolnonotzani*).

25. "Life," in fact, means "mobility" (*Bewegenheit*)-as Marcuse demonstrated in his thesis on the meaning of Being for Hegel. Life, for the Aztecs, was "mobility"; the heart was the organ that "moved." The Sun moved in the sky as it followed its "path" (*Iohltatoquiliz*), "moving" or giving life to all living beings (those that move on their own). The latter had to offer their lives in sacrifice so that the Sun could live. It was a "vital-sacrificial" circle (as in the metaphors concerning capital in Marx's interpretation).

26. "Those that were worthy," because Quetzalcóatl resuscitated them when he "bled his member" (*Manuscrito de 1558*; León Portilla 1979: 184). *Mazehualtin* thus means "those whom the god merited through his bloody self-sacrifice." All humanity is thus born with a blood debt to Quetzalcóatl (who is like a Prometheus, but divine and not in chains, or like a Christ covered in blood).

27. "Our Lord... determines what he wants": *Moyocoia* indicates that the "plans" of the divinity produce what it wants. This is very similar to the concept of "providence."

28. *Iohltatoquiliz* means "movement along the path of the sky." The "path" (*ohltl*) is necessary, and in a certain way each person also follows his or her "path" from the day of birth; each person's "name" was astrologically chosen according to the "signs" of the day, and the person's entire life was already "marked" in advance.

29. *Anáhuac* (the earth surrounded by the Ocean: *Teoatl*), like the known world (*Cemaáihuac*), was "grounded," placed on the "navel of the earth" (*Tlalx-icco*), which rested on Ometeótl, who "was lying" (*ónoc*) below.

30. *Nelli* (truth) has a particular meaning in Nahuatl: it is what is "grounded," what has permanence, what exists forever. The first question has the following meaning: Do humans have something stable in their being, something well rooted? For Hegel, this would be a question about the "essence" (ground, foundation) in its dialectic-ontological sense (and not in its traditional ontic or metaphysical one).

Regarding the third question, for the Guaranis, "standing" means being "grounded" in Ometeótl, or the Absolute.

31. The solar year corresponded to a cycle of 4 times 13, or 52, years, which the Aztecs considered a century, or a time period after which a new story was added to all the existing temples, with the lighting of the "new fire."

Every 104th solar year coincided with a Venus year, and this was called "an old age" ("una vejez"; *huehueliztli*).

32. Bernardino de Sahagún dedicates his entire book 2 to this subject: "Which deals with the calendar, festivals and ceremonies, sacrifices and solemnities" (73ff.).

33. See "About judicial astrology and the art of divination" (Sahagún, book 4: 221ff.). "Astrology" determined the content of each day of the year, and of the time of year, for the purpose of births or consultation concerning events situated in time, and therefore valid forever.

34. "Which deals with omens and predictions, which these natives took from some birds, animals, and insects, in order to predict future things" (Sahagún, book 5: 267ff.). In a way Sahagún is incorrect, because these omens and predictions were used to discover present events "as past events," not as "future things." In the cycle of the eternal return of the Same, every "future" event was for the Aztecs a "past" event (in the circle the future point is simultaneously a past event of a future present, but a future present that will be identical to the present present and all the present pasts). There is no historical sense of events, and this is the difference between the tragic (Promethean) conscience of Moctezuma, and the dramatic conscience (Christian and modern; see Paul Ricoeur's *La symbolique du mal*, or my *El humanismo semita*) of Hernán Cortés.

35. The *Códice Florentino*, book 6, chapter 2 (León Portilla 1979), gives the names of the Aztecs who climbed onto the ships: Píntol huasteco, Yoatzin de Nuclancuahtla, the man from Teuciniyocan, and Cuitlapiltoc and Téntitl, who were guides. This is a story seen "from the other side": with names and "real" people.

36. Todorov's *La conquête de l'Amérique*, especially the chapter entitled "Moctezuma et les signes," is close to my interpretation, but Todorov attributes Moctezuma's vacillation to the fact that the Aztecs had a different type of "communication." He does not draw adequate conclusions from his hypothesis that everything had always already been determined. Tzvetan Todorov and Georges Baudot (1983) have published a collection of Aztec narratives of the conquest, which also appeared in an excellent Italian edition (1988), and which includes the *Códice Florentino*, the *Anales históricos de Tlatelolco*, and the *Códice Aubin*, in nahuatl; and the *Códice Ramirez*, Diego Muñoz Camargo's *Historia de Tlaxcala*, and Diego Duran's *Historia*, in Spanish.

Wachtel admits that he does not know the reason why Moctezuma should receive "The Whites as gods" (45).

In *El reverso de la conquista* (20), León Portilla indicates some of the "possibilities" that Moctezuma considered, but does not explain the "rationality" of his decisions.

For Paz, see *El laberinto de la soledad* (85): "The arrival of the Spaniards was interpreted by Moctezuma—at least at the beginning—not so much as an external danger but as the internal persecution of a cosmic age." In fact, the "end of the world" was a third possibility, but it was not what Moctezuma considered, "at least at the beginning." In *Posdata* (126-43) Paz discusses the subject in greater detail, but he does not identify the "possibilities" that I will discuss in my essay.

In *Quetzalcóatl y Guadalupe* (219-24), Jacques Lafaye does not clarify the situation at all.

37. I say "most critical" because for Edmundo O'Gorman this was not even mentioned as a working hypothesis; which means, scientifically speaking, that he adopted a "unilateral" Eurocentric position in the name of "objectivity" (but an objectivity constituted on the basis of European "subjectivity"). Here I would

like to take Moctezuma's "subjectivity" seriously, and describe it while taking into account the conditions of possibility of a rigorous hermeneutics.

38. These means were the following; (1) listen to the opinions of the warriors in the tradition of Tlacaélel (who would only act in the second "figure"); (2) ask the opinions of the *tlamatinime*, or philosophers; (3) listen to the counsel of the astrologers, who informed him that Quetzalcóatl would come from the East one *ceacatl* (date that coincided with the arrival of the Spaniards); (4) sound those who deciphered "omens" or presages (all eight of these-which included events related to fire, earth, air, and water, the four fundamental elements for the Aztecs as well as for the pre-Socratics-indicated necessary dire "futures"). See the eight "Presagios funestos" (dire presages), León Portilla 1978; 29ff.

39. The "abnormal" (such as a birth defect in a child) was either eliminated as in the case of the Spartans) or deified (as in the case of the handicapped and infirm who were placed as gods on Monte Albán, in the Zapotec culture of Mexico). That humans should "appear" on the Great Ocean was the "least probable."

40. This "possibility" was the least dangerous; the reduced number of the arrivals could not be a military danger, even with their techniques of war. Furthermore, it is necessary to eliminate, in the analysis of the strategic rationality of Moctezuma, the possibility of an "invasion." This had no sense yet; it was not a real "possibility," given the empirical data obtained in Moctezuma's concrete "world."

41. I have already mentioned that the Toltecs were to the Aztecs like the Greeks to the Romans. The ancient cultivated people were a model in everything. The Aztec tradition was in fact the *Toltecayotl* (*toltequidad*, like the *romanitas* for the Romans, or the *christianitas* for the Christians, or the *Deutschum* for the Germans). The historical figure Quetzalcóatl was the priest and wise man *Ce Acatl Topilzin* (ninth century B.C. ?), "he who was born on day 1-Cane (*l-Caña*), Our Prince" (see Lehmann 1938). Because he was a solitary young man living close to Tulancingo, he was sought as king of Tula. A great thinker who formulated the ontology of Ometeótl, he was opposed in advance to the cult of Tlacaélel; "It is said that when Quetzalcóatl lived there, the sorcerers tried to deceive him many times, so that he would sacrifice men. But he never wanted to, for he greatly loved his people, who were the Toltecs" (*Anales de Cuauhtitlán*, Códice Chimalpopoca, folio 5; León Portilla 1979; 307-8). It is certain that they expelled Quetzalcóatl unjustly, but he promised to return. The Aztecs, and especially Moctezuma, had many reasons to be afraid; first, because the Aztecs had cruelly subjugated the rest of the Toltec people; second, because the sacrificial myth of Huitzilopochtli was contrary to Quetzalcóatl's way of thinking; third, because, being a deposed king, he could try to take Moctezuma's place (we will see that this is the "rational" conclusion of the emperor, as is "explicit" in the text about Cortés's reception in Mexico). It is interesting that Cortés advised Moctezuma "not to sacrifice men. And the next day [Moctezuma] called his main priest and asked him to pretend for a few days not to sacrifice men in the presence of the Spaniards" (Torquemada, book 4, chap. 40: 173). This was a sign indicating the connection between Cortés and Quetzalcóatl, the wise man of Tula.



42. We can read the following about the "Fifth Sun": "The Sun was also that of our prince in Tula, that is, of Quetzalcóatl" (*Documento de 1558*; León Portilla 1979: 103). In that case, the predictions of "the earth moving, there will be hunger, and from that we will perish" (*ibid.*) would indicate the end of the "Fifth Sun." This was the most generalized interpretation.

Octavio Paz (1976: 85) thinks that this possibility was the first that Moctezuma considered, but that is not correct.

43. Actually, Moctezuma's enemies never completely supported Cortés, because if he was defeated by the Aztecs, they would have something on which to base their acceptance of Aztec domination again.

44. Moctezuma had only one positive possibility, in fact: that the recent arrivals were human beings, and, in this case, he would subsequently be able to destroy them with his warriors faithful to Huitzilopochtli, as Cortés had only a few dozen soldiers. Because this was the weakest possibility, it had to be left to the end, after the lack of fulfillment of the other more important ones had been "rationally" proved.

45. Moctezuma demonstrates the ethos of the *Calmécac*, the temperament of heroes and wise men. This explains his address to Cortés (who did not have any possibility of "interpreting" the immense ethical greatness of the man he faced, and in no way, as merely a good soldier and able politician, had the stature of Moctezuma): "Five, ten days ago, I was worried: I had my gaze fixed on the Realm of the Dead. ." (quoted above). The *tlamatini* contemplates what was beyond the merely "terrestrial" (*in tlalticpac*), the transcendent (*topan mictlan*). And there he resolved, thinking like Quetzalcóatl, that "he liked his people very much"; and "he was wondering what was going to happen to the city" (*Informantes de Sahagún*; León Portilla 1979: 35). In abdicating, Moctezuma avoided (at least as far as was in his power) more suffering for his people. He stepped aside and abdicated. .as Quetzalcóatl had done in Tula. Quetzalcóatl-Cortés should have understood this argument! Moctezuma was the new Quetzalcóatl of his Mexico and sacrificed himself for it.

46. Inverting O'Gorman's profound hypothesis that Columbus "could not discover America," we can now say that Moctezuma "could not discover an invasion" before the arrival of Pánfilo Narváez.

47. The Aztecs saw horses and Spanish soldiers die, they lived together with the Spaniards for many weeks in Mexico, they did not see other extraordinary "signs", and so forth.

48. Clearly an a posteriori, and not an a priori, error .

49. "Modern" man never understands the "reasons of the Other" (Dussel 1992; emphasis in the original).

50. Cortés should have left the city of Mexico immediately after his return from the coast with the reinforcements he managed to obtain from the defeated forces of Narváez. However, because he had not understood Moctezuma's "reasons," he believed that he could continue "using" him (apparently Moctezuma had let himself be "used," as he had to continue until the very end to "prove" each one of the "possibilities," which were not "possibilities" for Cortés). The same happened to Alvarado, who thought that he could strengthen his position by showing great aggressivity, not understanding that what had protected the Spaniards in Mexico was not their courage, but the "worldview" (weltan-

schauung) of the *tlamatinime*. When this perspective was discarded, the logic of war had to begin; thus Alvarado inclined the balance against him with his action.

51. Theoretically, he was a little like the Hegel of *The Philosophy of Right*, as well as a theoretician of war like Clausewitz and a politician like Bismarck of the German empire. He never wanted to be king of the Aztec empire, although four kings were his proteges.

52. Only Karl Marx in his "theological metaphors" (see Dussel, 1993), inspired by Judeo-Christian Semitic-biblical thought, shows how "capital," the new Moloch, lives off the life of the oppressed and sucks their blood: the circulation of value is a "circulation of the blood" (*Blutzirkulation, circulación de sangre*).

53. The Spaniards attributed their salvation to the *Virgen de los Remedios*. Therefore, Hidalgo hoisted the Virgin of Guadalupe as a banner of the Americans in 1810, and the Spaniards (*gachupines*) adopted that of the *Virgen de los Remedios*. It was a battle of virgins, a battle of gods, and a battle of classes (see Dussel 1980).

54. The question "Then was it *true*?" is essential: was it *true* that the gods abandoned us, that the empire would be destroyed? This is a strange and profound question that demonstrates the tragedy of the moment. The "Fifth Sun" has come to an end.

55. One should not think that there was little resistance to the invasion. Resistance was heroic and uninterrupted.

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