

# **Aztec Philosophy**

UNDERSTANDING A WORLD IN MOTION

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(i.e., perception of the thing) and perception *de dicto* (i.e., perception under a description; perception that the thing is such-and-such; perception of what is said or of the proposition).<sup>98</sup> Successful *de re* perception does not entail successful *de dicto* perception. For example, I may have seen *de re* President Obama entering a black limousine earlier today without having seen at the time *that* it was Obama, that is, without having seen Obama *de dicto*. What I saw *de dicto* was simply a tall, thin man entering a black limousine.

Applying this distinction to the present case, humans perceive *teotl de re* via ordinary sense perception. Why? Because according to ontological monism there exists only one thing to perceive *de re*: *teotl*. When humans look about themselves, there is only one thing: *teotl*. However, from this it does *not* follow that humans perceive *teotl de dicto*, that is, that they *recognize* what they see around themselves *as teotl*, as *fitting the description of teotl*, or that it is *teotl*. What they see *de dicto* are sun, birds, flowers, and flint knives. What they ordinarily see *de dicto* is *teotl's* natural. But since they do not know that the cosmos and *teotl* are one and the same (just as I did not know that the man entering the limousine and Obama were one and the same), they do not see *de dicto teotl*. Deception is thus understood *epistemologically* in terms of what a perceiver is able to recognize or discern when she perceives. Deception is *not* understood *metaphysically* in terms of the existence of two distinct things: mask and person behind the mask.

That Aztec metaphysics understands *teotl* in terms of shaman transformation and artistic creativity is not accidental, for shamanism and artistic creation commonly go hand-in-hand in Mesoamerica thought. Shamans commonly double as artists whose creations reflect their out-of-body visions. In their study of papermaking and cut-paper figures among contemporary Nahuá, Oromí, and Tepehuá peoples, Alan Sandstrom and Pamela Effein Sandstrom discuss “shaman-artists” who create the various paper figures used in religious rituals.<sup>99</sup> Regarded as a “person of knowledge” (*tlamtliquetl* in modern Nahuatl), the shaman cuts paper figures that reflect his out-of-body visions of the life-and-death forces operating in the cosmos.<sup>100</sup> The ritual efficacy of a shaman’s paper-cut figures depends largely upon the accuracy of his or her visions. Sandstrom and Sandstrom write, “No shaman can establish a positive reputation without first becoming a master paper cutter.”<sup>101</sup> Stacy Schaefer explains how Wixárika women weavers conceive weaving as a shamanic-like creative process that relies upon the weaver’s out-of-body visions and apprehensions of sacred forces operating in the cosmos. Schaefer writes, “Weaving and shamanism share a basic element in common: transformation.”<sup>102</sup>

#### 14. SOME IMPLICATIONS OF AND OBJECTIONS AGAINST SEVERAL ASPECTS OF THIS INTERPRETATION OF AZTEC METAPHYSICS

##### METAPHYSICS OF BECOMING: AN IMPLICATION

I consider now some implications of and objections against the preceding interpretation of Aztec metaphysics. First, Aztec philosophy’s metaphysics of Becoming maintains that that which is real is that which becomes, changes, transmutes, and moves. Reality is characterized essentially by becoming – not by being or *is-ness*. Aztec metaphysics embraces flux, evanescence, expiry, and change by making them defining characteristics of reality – rather than marginalizing them as mere illusion and unreality. This implies that Aztec metaphysics does not condemn something as unreal, semi-real, or illusory solely on the grounds that it is impermanent, evanescent, and changeable.

To think that Aztec metaphysics *does* condemn something as unreal or illusory solely on the grounds that it is impermanent is to attribute a Platonic-style metaphysics of Being to Aztec philosophy. Unfortunately, this is precisely what Miguel León-Portilla does when interpreting several song-poems collected in the *Cantares mexicanos* and *Romances de los señores de la Nueva España*.<sup>103</sup> Consider the following two song-poems commonly attributed to Nezahualcoyotl:

I, Nezahualcoyotl, ask this:  
Is it true one really lives on the earth?  
Not forever on earth,  
only a little while here.  
Though it be of jade it falls apart,  
though it be gold it wears away,  
though it be quetzal plumage it is torn asunder.  
Not forever on earth,  
Only a little while here.<sup>104</sup>

And:  
I comprehend the secret, the hidden:  
O my lords!  
Thus we are,  
we are mortal,  
humans through and through  
we all will have to go away,  
we all will have to die on earth . . .  
Like a painting  
we will be erased.

(i.e., perception of the thing) and perception *de dicto* (i.e., perception under a description; perception that the thing is such-and-such; perception of what is said or of the proposition).<sup>98</sup> Successful *de re* perception does not entail successful *de dicto* perception. For example, I may have seen *de re* President Obama entering a black limousine earlier today without having seen at the time *that* it was Obama, that is, without having seen Obama *de dicto*. What I saw *de dicto*, was simply a tall, thin man entering a black limousine.

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#### 1.4. SOME IMPLICATIONS OF AND OBJECTIONS AGAINST SEVERAL ASPECTS OF THIS INTERPRETATION OF AZTEC METAPHYSICS

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we all will have to go away,  
we all will have to die on earth . . .  
Like a painting  
we will be erased.

Like a flower,  
 we will dry up  
 here on earth.  
 Like the plumed vestment of the precious bird,  
 that precious bird with the agile neck,  
 we will all come to an end . . . .  
 Think on this, o lords,  
 eagles and tigers,  
 though you be of jade,  
 though you be of gold,  
 you will also go there,  
 to the place of the fleshless.  
 We will have to disappear,  
 no one can remain.<sup>95</sup>

León-Portilla interprets these and other song-poems attributed to Nezahualcoyotl as expressing Nezahualcoyotl's doubt about the reality of earthly existence; doubts based on the widespread observation that everything earthly is evanescent, perishable, and impermanent. Quetzal plumes are torn asunder. Jade is broken. Gold is crushed. All earthly things appear and then quickly disappear like a delicate flower in the hot summer sun. Nezahualcoyotl's "keen awareness of time and change" and of the ephemerality of everything earthly, writes León-Portilla, not only causes him profound sorrow and anguish, but, more significantly, causes him to doubt the very reality of everything earthly.<sup>96</sup> Because earthly existence is evanescent, León-Portilla's Nezahualcoyotl reasons, it is *not* real. Nezahualcoyotl yearns for something enduring and stable – that is, something genuinely real.<sup>97</sup>

León-Portilla thus attributes the following syllogism to Nezahualcoyotl:

1. PREMISE: Earthly existence is evanescent, impermanent, perishable.
2. PREMISE: If something is evanescent, etc., then it is not real.
3. CONCLUSION: Hence earthly existence is not real.

Note that in order to make this song-poem express any syllogism at all, León-Portilla must supply a conclusion indicator such as "hence." In order to make it express the specific syllogism he wants, he must supply a suppressed premise: premise 2. And in order to make this song-poem express a syllogism with the conclusion he wants, León-Portilla must supply a quite specific premise drawn from the metaphysics of Being: "If something is evanescent, etc., then it is not real." None of these, however, is present in the original text.

I do not dispute León-Portilla's claim that Nezahualcoyotl expresses sorrow and anguish over the facts that human life is fleeting and that human beings ineluctably perish. Nor do I dispute León-Portilla's claim that Nezahualcoyotl yearns for a way to escape this destiny; that he yearns for something ever-lasting. What I do dispute however is the legitimacy of León-Portilla's interpretation of these song-poems in terms of a metaphysics of Being, that is, that in these song-poems Nezahualcoyotl advances a syllogism with a premise that equates reality *per se* with being, immutability, imperishability, and permanence. These song-poems state nothing that logically implies a metaphysics of Being. After all, Nezahualcoyotl can wish things were otherwise while woefully acknowledging that they are not. He can wish that reality were not defined by change while painfully acknowledging its inevitability. Indeed, doing so is an even greater source of sorrow and anguish than finding an escape.

León-Portilla and John Bierhorst attribute the selfsame metaphysics of Being and syllogistic reasoning to a song-poem attributed to Tochihuitzin Coyolchihqui.<sup>98</sup> It reads:

We only rise from sleep,  
 we come only to dream,  
 it is not true, it is not true,  
 that we come on earth to live.  
 As an herb in springtime,  
 so is our nature.  
 Our hearts give birth, make sprout,  
 the flowers of our flesh.  
 Some open their corollas,  
 then they become dry.<sup>99</sup>

They interpret the song-poem as advancing the metaphysical argument that human life on earth is a dream (or dreamlike) and therefore not fully real: life is not real, for life is but a dream. León-Portilla reconstructs Tochihuitzin Coyolchihqui's reasoning as follows: "We have come to earth only to dream, and our dream vanishes quickly."<sup>100</sup> That which is transitory is illusion.<sup>101</sup> And "[s]ince what one finds on earth (*in tlalhuac*) is transitory," it follows that what one finds on earth is "a world of illusion."<sup>102</sup> That is:

1. PREMISE: Life (human existence on earth) is a dream.
2. PREMISE: Dreams are transitory.
3. PREMISE: If something is transitory, then it is illusion (illusory).

4. CONCLUSION/PREMISE: Therefore dreams are illusions (illusory).
5. PREMISE: If something is an illusion, then it is transitory.
6. PREMISE: If something is transitory, then it is not real.
7. CONCLUSION/PREMISE: Therefore illusions and dreams are not real.
8. CONCLUSION: Therefore life (human existence) on earth is not real.

In order to make this song-poem express any kind of syllogism whatsoever, León-Portilla and Bierhorst must supply conclusion indicators such as "therefore." And in order to make it express the specific syllogism they desire, they must supply several suppressed premises: premises 2, 3, 5, and 6. In order to make the song-poem express a syllogism with the precise conclusion they seek, Bierhorst and León-Portilla must supply a premise drawn specifically from the metaphysics of Being, namely premise 6: "If something is transitory, then it is not real." Yet none of this is present in the original text.

Interpreting the song-poems collected in the *Cantares mexicanos* and *Romances de las señoras de Nueva España* is a dicey business into which I prefer not to enter at this time. As Bierhorst observes, in their present form the song-poems gathered in the *Cantares* appear to derive mostly from the generation beginning around 1550.<sup>13</sup> Before being gathered and written down, the song-poems were orally transmitted. Many clearly refer to post-Conquest events and persons, treat Christian themes, and so appear to be colonial compositions. Others clearly appear rooted in the precolonial past. As scholars recognize, teasing out the pre-Conquest from the post-Conquest is a daunting task. I suggest that drawing conclusions about the metaphysical views espoused by their composers is equally if not more daunting.

Defending a new interpretation of these song-poems is not my aim. Rather, my aim is simply to cast sufficient doubt upon León-Portilla's and Bierhorst's interpretation so as to defuse the song-poems as a potential objections against my reconstruction of Aztec metaphysics as one of Becoming rather than Being. It is still possible, of course, that León-Portilla is correct when asserting that Nezahualcoyotl and Tochihuitzin Coyolchihqui are Socrates-like skeptics questioning the reigning ideas of their age (which if I am correct, would be a metaphysics of Becoming). And it is possible, too, that in so doing they presupposes a metaphysics of Being.<sup>14</sup> However, León-Portilla gives us no reasons for thinking that Tochihuitzin Coyolchihqui and Nezahualcoyotl were such skeptics. Furthermore, nothing stated explicitly in the song-poems entails a metaphysics of Being. I thus suggest León-Portilla and Bierhorst are guilty of unwittingly importing their own metaphysics of Being into their interpretation of these poems. Rather than doubting the reigning metaphysics of their

day, Nezahualcoyotl and Tochihuitzin Coyolchihqui might have been doing nothing more (or less) philosophically profound than agonizing over the consequences for human existence implied by that metaphysics. With no after-life obvious, yet also caught in a world beset by famine, disease, and war, they wished to live as long as possible. And so they bemoaned the fragility, evanescence, and brevity of life.

Before moving on, let's revisit Natalio Hernández Hernández's song-poem. It continues:

We are all transient,  
all of us will go;  
for this reason we must respect,  
for this reason we must work;  
for this reason we must gather,  
respect and conserve  
the things of life:  
the flower and the song.<sup>15</sup>

Here is a response to the observation that earthly existence is transient that differs significantly from the response attributed to Nezahualcoyotl and others by León-Portilla and Bierhorst. Life is transient; therefore we must work, gather, respect, and conserve "the things of life: the flower and the song." Hernández Hernández suggests an alternative way of interpreting the song-poems of the *Romances* and *Cantares*.

In conclusion, if Aztec philosophy embraces a metaphysics of Becoming as I maintain, then it appears we may well have to revisit existing interpretations and translations of Aztec song-poems as well as many of the assumptions underlying contemporary scholarship regarding Aztec thought.

#### *Constitutional Monism: Implication 1*

Aztec constitutional monism claims reality and hence the cosmos and all its contents consist of *essentially one kind of stuff*: always active, actualized, and actualizing energy. Aztec metaphysics thus rejects constitutional dualism, that is, the thesis that reality consists of *two essentially distinct and mutually exclusive kinds of stuff*: for example, mind versus matter, soul versus body, or spiritual versus physical. Unlike most versions of constitutional monism in world philosophy, Aztec constitutional monism does not maintain that reality consists of one *or* the other of the foregoing dualities. Unlike materialism, it does not claim reality consists exclusively of matter and does not aim to reduce mind to matter. Unlike idealism, it does not claim reality consists exclusively of mind and

does not aim to reduce matter to mind. Aztec constitutional monism affirms that reality consists of a tertium quid, a *third kind* of stuff that is *neither* mind nor matter (as customarily conceived by dualists). This third kind of stuff is electricity-like energy or power. Aztec metaphysics intentionally confounds or cuts across the above dualisms since it regards them as false dualisms. As a consequence reality appears ineliminably and irreducibly ambiguous from the perspective of these nonautochthonous dualisms.

So, what about that which we customarily think of as mind and body, soul and matter, and spiritual and physical? Briefly put, they are simply two different facets or aspects of teotl. As Serge Gruzinski puts it, the Christian dualism of mind and body is replaced by an indigenous notion of a pluralism of vital forces.<sup>116</sup> The physical (material, corporeal) and the spiritual (mental, conscious) are simply two of the many different ways in which teotl presents itself. The Nahuatl concept of *ixtli* nicely captures this idea. The concept of *ixtli* is polysyllabic and terribly complex, and I cannot fully explore it here. For our purposes, however, what is relevant is that among its meanings are “face,” “countenance,” “visage,” “surface,” “identity,” “character,” “eye,” and “nature.”<sup>117</sup> According to Alfredo López Austin, *ixtli* refers generally to the surface of things.<sup>118</sup> I submit mind is one *ixtli* of teotl, body, another. I call this view *dual aspect monism* for short.

Something like the Aztec conceptual complex of face-surface-visage-identity-character appears in other Mesoamerican conceptual systems. According to Barbara Tedlock, contemporary Quiché Maya believe each of the twenty Day Lords of the 260-day calendar has its own *uwäch uk'ij*, which she translates as “face of his day” or “his character.”<sup>119</sup> Each day imparts its own face or character to children born on that day. The word *k'ij* in the languages of the Quiché and almost all Highland Maya, like the word *kin* in the language of the Maya of Yucatán, means not only “day” but also “sun,” “time,” and “aeon.”<sup>120</sup> Each Day Lord presents one of twenty “faces” or “characters” of sun-day-time.

According to León-Portilla the Postclassic Maya notion of *kinh* (from which the contemporary Yucatec word *kin* derives) has the meaning of sun-day-time.<sup>121</sup> In the Postclassic period, *kinh* is associated closely with various “advocations of one and the same deity,” sometimes called *Kinich Ahau* (“Lord of the solar eye or countenance”), other times, *Kinich Kak Moo* (“Lord of the solar countenance, fire macaw”),<sup>122</sup> In the course of his tireless travels through the cosmos, *kinh* presents many faces, that is, personalities, attributes, and influences. Significant divisions of time – days, months, and years – are presentations of *kinh*. Throughout all these changes, however, *kinh* himself remains unchanged. León-Portilla writes, “The divine nature of *kinh* . . . can be distinguished in

numerable moments, each with its own face [and] attributes. Among the faces . . . are those of the solar deity in all its forms and those of the gods and goddesses of rain, earth, corn, death, sacrifice, the great star, the moon, and hunting.”<sup>123</sup>

Mixtec-speaking Nuyootecos embrace a like-minded view. Nuyooteco thought starts from the assumption that everything is vivified by a single, generalized life force called *yzi*,<sup>124</sup> which Monaghan translates as “potency, vitality, fecundity.”<sup>125</sup> Nuyootecos liken *yzi* to electricity. *Yzi* is characterized by generative fecundity, transformative power, self-preservation, and vital heat – properties represented by the Sun, Rain, Wind, and Earth. These, in turn, have a variety of specific manifestations or “faces” (as Monaghan puts it) that are distinguished by the places where they are manifest and their associated properties.<sup>126</sup> Nuyootecos thus appear to embrace both constitutional and ontological monism. Reality consists of just one kind of stuff: *yzi*. *Yzi*'s singularity and uniformity is compatible with the fact that *yzi* manifests itself in a variety of different faces.

Farther from home, Deloria, Weaver, Cordova, Burkhardt, and other native North American thinkers interpret many indigenous North American philosophies as upholding a like-minded constitutional monism according to which reality consists of a single, uniform, homogeneous energy or power – *usen*, *natioji*, *wakan tanka*, *yowa*, *orenda*, or *ničhi* – that is neutral between spirit and matter, mind and body, and so on. Even farther from home, Benedict de Spinoza's ontological and constitutional monism and in particular what scholars call his “two-aspect theory” resonate with Aztec metaphysics. Spinoza asserts that mind and matter are not two different kinds of substance but merely two aspects, facets, modes of a single substance, namely, God, who is neither. For Spinoza, writes Genevieve Lloyd, mind and matter “are the same reality, though expressed in different ways.”<sup>127</sup> As Jaegwon Kim understands the view, mind and matter are “simply two . . . aspects of a single underlying substance that is neither mental nor material.”<sup>128</sup> The Chinese theory of *qi* likewise holds that both body (matter) and spirit (mind, psyche) emerge from *qi*, the single energy-stuff of reality. They are merely two different concentrations of *qi* – just as steam, liquid, and ice are merely different condensations of water.<sup>129</sup> Lastly, Aztec monism resonates with what Anglo-American metaphysicians call *neutral monism*. Neutral monism claims reality consists of just one kind of stuff that is neutral between mind and matter. Mind and matter are different combinations of this neutral stuff – not essentially different kinds of stuff. David Hume, for example, maintained that “perceptions” constituted this neutral stuff, and that minds and bodies are nothing more than “bundles” of sense perceptions.<sup>130</sup> William James saw the neutral stuff as “pure experience,” while Bertrand Russell saw it as “sensibilia.”<sup>131</sup>

*An Objection*

My interpretation of Aztec metaphysics lies in the face of the well-respected and longstanding interpretation of López Austin. López Austin argues Mesoamerican thinkers generally and Aztec thinkers specifically embraced what I call constitutional dualism. He writes, "Mesoamerican thought was profoundly binary . . . Everything – including the gods – consisted of two types of substance . . . matter [or] essence."<sup>52</sup> One of these two substances is light, the other is heavy. Light substance is "divine," "subtle," and "imperceptible to humans under normal conditions." Heavy substance is "hard" and "perceptible to humans" under normal conditions. Heavy and light substances are essentially different. Uncreated things such as the gods are composed entirely of light substance. Created things – humans, trees, and insects along with rocks, copal, and musical instruments, for example – are composed of a mixture of heavy and light substances. The light substance making up created things gives them their "spirit," while the heavy component gives them their "covering" (apparently as a corn husk covers the life-sustaining corn inside). This heavy covering links created things to decay, destruction, and death.<sup>53</sup> Although essentially different, light and heavy substances are complementary. Indeed, the substantive dualism of light and heavy matter overlaps with the complementary dualisms of masculine/feminine, hot/cold, vital/mortal, dry/wet, and so on.<sup>54</sup>

*Reply*

I do not dispute López Austin's assertion concerning the centrality of binary, complementary categories such as heavy/light and male/female in Aztec metaphysics. What I do dispute is López Austin's interpretation of these binary categories as designating two essentially different kinds of metaphysical substance. López Austin offers us no compelling reasons for thinking these differences must be *essential* differences and therefore no compelling reasons for thinking the Aztecs embraced constitutional dualism.

For starters, the mere existence of binary complementary properties does not entail the existence of essentially different binary substances. Why not? Because not every difference – not even every significant difference – is necessarily an essential difference. Not every difference need be rooted in a metaphysical difference between essentially different kinds of stuff. More argument is thus required. This is a simple point of formal logic. Yet this criticism is not fatal to López Austin seeing as no empirical theory – and I see all interpretations of Aztec metaphysics as empirical theories – is ever logically entailed by its data. Rival empirical theories are adjudicated in terms of a number of criteria including empirical adequacy, simplicity, internal coherence, predictive accuracy,

and what I consider most pertinent here, explanatory power – that is, which theory enables us to make most sense of the phenomena in question.<sup>55</sup>

I believe constitutional monism offers us a better understanding of complementary binary properties than does constitutional dualism. My constitutional monism treats López Austin's heavy and light "substances" as ultimately derivable from and understandable in terms of the single stuff of teotl. Heavy and light are simply two different intensities, coagulations, or condensations of teotl's energy-in-motion. They are no more substantively different from one another than are blue and red. Colors, after all, are nothing more than different intensities of a single stuff: electromagnetic radiation. Alternatively, heavy and light are no more substantively different from one another than are vaporous, liquid, and frozen water. Heavy and light simply refer to two different aspects, facets, or faces of teotl; hence the title *dual aspect monism*.

According to the *Historia de los mexicanos por sus pinturas*, argues López Austin, light and heavy "substances" originated in Tezcatlipocá's and Quetzalcoatl's splitting of Cipactli (the primordial caiman; in the *Histoire du Mexique*, they split Tlaltecuhli [Earth Lord-Lady, the great earth monster]), creating the heavens and surface of the earth. The gods that emerged from Cipactli's upper half were light, luminous, hot, and dry; those emerging from Cipactli's lower half were heavy, dark, cold, and wet.<sup>56</sup> López Austin alternately tells us that heavy and light substances have a common origin in the single, primordial divine Father-Mother unity, Ometecuhli-Omechnual ("Two-Lord-Two-Lady"), who is also called Ometeotl ("Two-Teotl"). Ometecuhli-Omechnual dwells in Omeycocan ("two-place or place of unified twoness").<sup>57</sup>

Yet as I see it, the fact that heavy and light substances derive from a common, single source, Ometecuhli-Omechnual or Ometeotl, suggests instead that they consist ultimately of the same stuff and that they are therefore ultimately reducible to and explainable in terms of this single stuff. Their common origin and constitution also help explain why they are inextricably bound together as well as why they are mutually arising and mutually interdependent. Constitutional dualism appears to fall short on this score, since we customarily understand essentially distinct substances as able to exist independently of and apart from one another and therefore *not* as mutually arising and interdependent. Aztec binaries appear instead to be two aspects of a single thing. Moreover, if Ometecuhli-Omechnual and Ometeotl are (as I argue in chapter 2) monikers for teotl, then heavy and light are clearly derivable from the single stuff of teotl. They are nothing more than two facets or presentations of teotl. The relationship between teotl, on the one hand, and heavy and light, on the other, is analogous to the relationship (according to Spinoza) between God, on the

one hand, and thought and extension, on the other; the relationship (according to Hume's neutral monism) between perceptions, on the one hand, and mind and body as bundles of perceptions, on the other; and lastly, the relationship between qi, on the one hand, and blood and breath as different concentrations of qi, on the other.

The heavy component of created things, according to López Austin, serves as a "covering" around their light component. He apparently believes this fact also suggests, if not also entails, constitutional dualism. Yet this fact alone is no more decisive than is the fact that the liquid interior of a partially frozen ice cube has a frozen covering, or the soft interior of baked bread is covered with a hard crust. Both covering and interior may consist of one and the same kind of stuff.

In *Tamoanchan*, Talocan López Austin relates another myth according to which a single, great, swollen, hollow tree exists in *Tamoanchan*, the "primordial" place of origins and creation. (According to another variant, Tamoanchan is the tree itself.)<sup>38</sup> The tree contains two streams, one consisting of light, hot, dry substance, the other, heavy, cold, wet substance. The two streams twist around one another in helical fashion. In other accounts, the single tree consists of two trunks similarly constituted and similarly intertwining. The gods residing in Tamoanchan eventually violate this divine order, causing the tree to rupture into two halves, causing the two substances to flow like blood from the tree. This event created human time and the current cosmos.

Yet this myth does not unequivocally support constitutional dualism, either. It appears instead far more consonant with and intelligible in terms of constitutional monism. I take it as profoundly significant that both light and heavy streams are components of and hence derive from one and the same tree, that is, from singularity. They do not derive from two essentially distinct trees. What's more, if the two streams were essentially different, then they should be capable of existing without each other. Yet they are not. Indeed, the unity and inseparability of the two streams appears to be a fundamental and essential feature of the myth. They emerge from and remain tied to a single source.

López Austin appears to rest his case for the essential distinction between light and heavy substances upon the further fact that heavy matter is perceptible by humans "in their normal state of awareness" but light matter is not. How metaphysically probative is this? Not very. This distinction is *epistemological*, not metaphysical. That is, it concerns what human beings are or are not able to perceive "in their normal state of awareness" – not the way the nonhuman world is actually put together. It concerns the nature of human sense perception – not the nature of reality. And at least by the norms of Western logic, one cannot validly deduce metaphysical conclusions about the way the world

is from epistemological premises about human perceptual abilities. Therefore without additional premises López Austin is not logically entitled to infer that this epistemological distinction entails – much less presupposes – a metaphysical distinction between two essentially different kinds of substance. For example, both tables and microbes consist of matter yet the former are perceptible by humans "in their normal state of awareness" yet the latter are not. In short, that which is imperceptible is not necessarily metaphysically different from that which is perceptible.

The distinction between what is and is not perceptible by humans "in their normal state of awareness" is wholly compatible with constitutional monism's claim that heavy and light are two aspects of teotl. There is perceptible energy and there is imperceptible energy. And this assertion no more entails constitutional dualism than the assertion by contemporary physics that electromagnetic radiation of certain wavelengths is visible to the naked eye (e.g., as colors) while electromagnetic radiation of other wavelengths (e.g., infrared and ultraviolet) is not. Both are constituted by one and the same stuff: electromagnetic radiation. Like the Aztecs, we are awash in a single energy, some intensities of which we are able to perceive, others of which we are not.

I see the foregoing as one of the lessons of the Quiché Maya myth of human creation: we live amidst a single stuff some of aspects of which we are ordinarily able to perceive, other aspects of which we are not. According to the *Popol Vuh*, the gods gave the first four human beings the ability to see and thereby know everything. Yet the gods later realized this enabled humans to become gods, so they decided to weaken the visual and epistemological powers of humans.

Perfectly [the first humans] saw, perfectly they knew everything under the sky, whenever they looked. The moment they turned around and looked around in the sky, on the earth, everything was seen without any obstruction....

As they looked, their knowledge became intense. Their sight passed through trees, through rocks, through lakes, through seas, through mountains, through plains. [They] were truly gifted people....

They understood everything perfectly, they sighted the four sides, the four corners in the sky, on the earth, and this didn't sound good to the [gods]:

"What our works and designs have said is no good:

'We have understood everything, great and small,' [the humans] say." And so the [gods] took back their knowledge....

[The first humans] were [consequently] *blinded as the face of a mirror is breathed upon*. Their eyes were weakened. Now it was only when they looked nearby that things were clear.



And such was the loss of the means of understanding, along with the means of knowing everything, by the four humans.<sup>139</sup>

I interpret this passage as saying that humans are unable to perceive what López Austin calls “light matter” not because it consists of a substantially different kind of stuff from “heavy matter” but because humans are simply blind to certain aspects of the single stuff constituting reality. That which distinguishes light and heavy matter is not a metaphysical difference but an epistemological difference. What explains this discrepancy is something about the makeup of humans as perceivers – not something about the make-up of reality.<sup>140</sup>

In conclusion, López Austin offers us insufficient reasons for thinking the centrality of binary categories in Aztec thought entails or is even better explained by constitutional dualism. Constitutional monism maintains all binaries are derivable from *teotl*. This interpretation obviously requires further argument. The remainder of this book endeavors to do this.

*Ontological Monism, the Multiplicity of Things, and the Distinction between Appearance (Illusion) and Reality: Implication 2*

Aztec ontological monism maintains that there exists just one thing: *teotl*. From this it follows that there cannot also exist a multiplicity of discrete, independently existing things such as houses, censers, and tortillas. Simply put, if there exists only one thing, then there cannot also exist many things. However, this implication appears to contradict both ordinary sense experience and common sense, for when we look around ourselves, there certainly appears to be a multiplicity of independently existing individual things. How does Aztec metaphysics reconcile these two? How does ontological monism account for the apparent plurality of things?<sup>141</sup> What’s more, the foregoing seems to entail that reality (*teotl*) is *not* as it appears to be. But if so, then it would seem that appearance and reality are not identical, that is, that they are two distinct kinds of things. But then what kind of thing are appearances? And similarly with illusion: if reality is single, then multiplicity must be an illusion. But if illusion differs from reality, then it would seem illusion and reality must be two distinct things. But then what kind of a thing is illusion? In short, what is the ontological status of appearance and illusion, and how do we account for them? (For present purposes I equate illusion and appearance and use the term *appearance* for both.)

Generally speaking, Western and non-Western philosophers commonly pursue one of two strategies for making sense of the distinction between reality and appearance: metaphysical and epistemological. The metaphysical strategy

introduces an ontological distinction between appearance and reality and defends an *ontological dualism* of appearance and reality. Reality and appearance are *two different kinds of things*. There are two general categories or kinds of existents: the real and the apparent. The metaphysical strategy takes its cue from the statement, “Reality is not *what* it appears to be,” as this suggests that appearance is a “what,” that is, an existing thing of some sort. But what kind of thing is an appearance or illusion?

Plato in Book VI of *The Republic* advances what is perhaps the most famous and influential metaphysical answer to this question in Western philosophy and theology. Plato argues appearance and reality are two different kinds of existents or things. Appearances exist but do so in a less robust manner than does reality (or real things), which exists in the most robust manner possible. Appearances are only partially real or semireal, whereas reality (real things) is fully and completely real. Appearances enjoy a lower amount of being or is-ness than does reality, which possesses the highest possible amount of being or is-ness. Plato proposes a graded ontological hierarchy that he illustrates using a divided vertical line. At the top of the line sits reality (the real). Reality enjoys complete being and is-ness. It is completely, fully, or wholly real. Since Plato also adopts a metaphysics of Being, he concludes that that which is real is perfect, timeless, immutable, and permanent. In the middle of the line sit appearances (the merely apparent). Appearances enjoy only incomplete being or is-ness. They are only partially real or semireal. Plato’s metaphysics of Being claims appearances are therefore imperfect, timed, mutable, and impermanent. Finally, at the bottom of the divided line sits nothingness. Nothingness represents the total absence and negation of being. It is literally no thing. Nothingness is wholly unreal since it partakes of no amount of being or is-ness whatsoever. It simply is not.<sup>142</sup>

In sum, Plato explains the difference between how things appear and how things really are by positing the existence of an ontological distinction between appearance and reality. In so doing, he introduces an *ontological dualism* into his metaphysics. Plato uses the notion of appearance (illusion) to characterize an inferior or lower grade of reality and existence – the semi- or partially real – and to distinguish this inferior grade of reality from a superior, higher one – the fully real. The realm of appearances is not only distinct from but also ontologically inferior to the realm of the real. His metaphysical strategy *reifies* appearances (and illusions). Appearances are a kind of thing albeit an inferior one.

As intuitive as it may be, the metaphysical strategy is not an option for ontological monists since they cannot on pain of logical inconsistency admit the existence of a plurality of things, even if those things enjoy only partial reality.

Ontological monists must therefore look elsewhere for a solution to this puzzle. They commonly pursue what I call the epistemological strategy. "Reality is not

The epistemological strategy takes its cue from the statement, "Reality is not *how* it appears to be," as this suggests that appearance is a "how" rather than a "what." But what, exactly, does it mean to say that appearance is a "how"? It means that appearances and illusions are a function of *how* humans perceive the single reality around them. They are a function of our *misperception* of reality. Appearance and illusion are not distinct existents or things of any kind, semirational or otherwise. They are shortcomings in *how* humans perceive – not ontologically standard objects that we perceive. As such they are to be understood in *adverbial* rather than *substantive* terms. The fact that *teotl* is not how it appears thus says something about how we perceive *teotl*, not something about the existence of some discrete, independently existing things called appearances or illusions.

South Asian Advaita Vedānta likewise espouses an ontological monism (or nondualism) and so faces the same challenge of explaining the compatibility of ontological monism with the apparent multiplicity of things. Śaṅkara (Śaṅkara), the eight-century South Asian philosopher and exponent of Advaita Vedānta, pursued an epistemological strategy for dissolving this apparent contradiction. He advanced the following analogy for understanding the relationship between appearance and reality, and a fortiori the relationship between the apparent multiplicity of things and the singularity (or nonduality) of Brahman.<sup>143</sup> Walking down a path a man approaches a rope slung upon the ground. At first he perceives the rope as a serpent. Since there is no serpent present to his consciousness, this is obviously a case of *misperception*. The man mistakenly perceives the rope *as* a snake. Yet the man's (mis)perception is not entirely illusory, since there is, after all, a rope on the ground before him. He does perceive *something*. Upon closer examination, the man realizes his mistake. The appearance of a serpent ceases.<sup>144</sup>

Śaṅkara's point may be expressed using the distinction between perception *de re* (perception of the thing) and perception *de dicto* (perception of what is said or of the proposition; or perception under a description) introduced earlier. The man in Śaṅkara's example perceives *de re* the rope during the episode. The rope is physically present before him, his eyes are directed toward it, and electromagnetic waves reflected by the rope causally impinge upon his retinas and affect his nervous system. *De re* speaking, there is no illusion. In fact, there can be no illusion since illusions do not exist. This notwithstanding, the man initially perceives *de dicto* a snake. He perceives the rope *as* a snake; perceives that it *is* a snake; or perceives the rope *under a description* (which in this case is

false). We might say that he *imposes* or *projects* a subjective description or set of categories. The snake, after all, does not exist; it is not real. Perceiving "snakey" however does.

Analogously, Śaṅkara reasoned that since there exists only one thing – Brahman – it follows that humans cannot perceive *de re* anything but Brahman. There simply is nothing else to perceive *de re*. This notwithstanding, humans impose various descriptions upon their *de re* perceptions of Brahman, and as a consequence perceive Brahman *de dicto as* a multiplicity of discrete physical objects and personal selves. Illusion and appearance are therefore functions of *how* humans perceive – *not things* that humans perceive. Appearance and illusion do exist in their own right.

Dōgen, the famous thirteenth-century Japanese Zen Master, pursued a similar epistemological strategy. He maintained there are no illusions: "there are only the *délusions* we inflict upon ourselves."<sup>145</sup> Illusion resides in our interpretation and judgment, not in the things themselves. What's more, an illusion is "true" or real in the sense of being an actually occurring *mental* phenomena. What is "false" is our misinterpretation of the content of the mental phenomenon. This is how illusion arises. It arises in the cognitive activity of perceiving and judging. In short, there are not two things in the world: illusion and reality. Illusion does not refer to a separate kind of entity or level of existence. Dōgen explains illusion in terms of *how* we perceive, not *what* we perceive.

Śaṅkara's and Dōgen's treatments of misperception, appearance, and illusion anticipate in significant respects the treatment of illusions proffered by contemporary Gestalt psychology. Consider the stock duck/rabbit image discussed by contemporary Gestalt psychology (see Figure 1.1).<sup>146</sup> Strictly speaking, the figure is neither the figure of a duck nor the figure of a rabbit. And since the figure itself is objectively neither duck nor rabbit, what we perceive *de re* is neither duck nor rabbit. This notwithstanding, we perceive the figure *as* a duck or *as* a rabbit. That is, we perceive the figure *de dicto as* a duck or *de dicto as* a rabbit. However, since the figure itself is neither duck nor rabbit, it follows that our *de dicto* perceptions of a rabbit and of a duck are both illusions. We are guilty of imposing (albeit unconsciously) our own *de dicto* interpretations upon the figure. Perceiving the figure as a duck or as a rabbit is matter of *how* we perceive, not *what* we perceive. The illusion, in other words, is explained epistemologically, not metaphysically. We see "ducky" or "rabbity."

The metaphysical strategy is incompatible with ontological monism. Like Śaṅkara, Dōgen, and Gestalt psychology, Aztec metaphysics refuses to rify appearances and illusions. Like them, it interprets illusion and appearance *adverbially*. Aztec metaphysics employs an epistemological strategy, the details

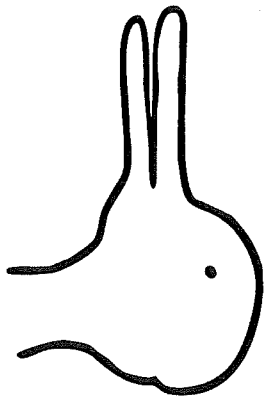


FIGURE 1.1. *Duck/Rabbit* (Author's drawing)

of which are dictated by conceiving teotl as shaman and cosmos as teotl's nahual. I call it a shamanic-epistemological strategy.

The shamanic-epistemological strategy consists of the following seven claims. First, the multiplicity of things is real. Individual humans, reed mats, fishing nets, birds, temples, and lakes are fully real. They are not illusions; they are not mere appearances.

Second, the multiplicity of things is real because individual things are identical with teotl's shamanic self-transformations. As we've seen, teotl is identical with its shamanic self-transformation just as a shaman is identical with his self-transformation (e.g., a jaguar). Teotl literally becomes the myriad of individual things just as the shaman literally becomes the jaguar. Individual things exist and have reality as aspects of teotl.

Third, Aztec ontological monism entails the metaphysical impossibility of humans perceiving de re anything but teotl. Teotl is the only thing that exists and hence the only thing that is perceived de re. Therefore, when humans look around themselves, they perceive de re teotl and only teotl. However, since the multiplicity of things is identical with teotl, it follows that humans also perceive de re the multiplicity of things.

Fourth, the foregoing notwithstanding, humans ordinarily neglect both to perceive the identity of individual things with teotl and fail to perceive teotl itself. That is, although they perceive teotl de re, they do not perceive teotl de dicto. They do not perceive the myriad things *as aspects of teotl*. They do not perceive *that* the myriad of things and teotl are one and the same.

Fifth, what is illusory or merely appearance is the discrete, independent existence of individual things – not their existence per se. Their existence per se is not illusory since they are fully real, and they are fully real because they are self-transformative aspects of teotl and hence identical with teotl. What is illusory is their discreteness and independent existence from teotl (and one another). Although humans, dogs, and clay pots do certainly exist, they do *not* exist as discrete, independent things.

Sixth, Aztec philosophy employs an epistemological strategy for understanding this illusion and appearance. Illusion and appearance are functions of *how* humans perceive, not *what* they perceive.

Seventh, as functions of how humans perceive, illusion and appearance are fully real since they are actually occurring *mental* events in human perceivers. Human perceivers are fully real since identical with teotl. Here we arrive at another significant yet counterintuitive consequence of ontological monism. Given the identity of humans and the one – in our case, teotl – it follows that all human perception, both veridical and nonveridical, ultimately consists of teotl perceiving itself!

The epistemological approach is elegantly expressed in the passage quoted above from the *Popol Vuh*. The *Popol Vuh* tells us that the gods gave the first four human beings the ability to see and so know everything. Yet upon realizing that doing so enabled humans to become gods, the gods decided to weaken humans' visual and epistemological powers. And so humans were "*blinded as the face of a mirror is breathed upon*."<sup>47</sup> I suggest that the first four humans continued perceiving de re but no longer had the ability to recognize what they perceived de re since they were blinded by a mist of de dicto misperception. I suggest this analogy applies mutatis mutandis to Aztec metaphysics. For the latter, the breath on the mirror consists of the illusion that individual things exist independently of and discretely from teotl. Under normal circumstances humans are unable to see de dicto that which is right in front of them, namely, teotl. Their perceptual powers have become befogged by "a cloud of unknowing" (as the anonymous fourteenth century English mystical text by the same title puts it).<sup>48</sup>

The *Popol Vuh* analogy neatly demonstrates how the epistemological approach is compatible with ontological monism. Imagine looking at yourself in a clean bathroom mirror. You see your face and its features clearly. Upon turning on the hot water, the bathroom fills with steam and the mirror gradually becomes more and more befogged. You continue looking at yourself while this is occurring, and as you do so you become increasingly less able to see your face clearly. Although you are still looking at yourself, you become less able to recognize yourself. How shall we understand this? Ontological monists contend you do not perceive two different faces, one clear and one obscure; rather you see the same face, first clearly and then obscurely. The difference consists of *how* you perceive *one and the same face*. Blurry face and clear face are ontologically identical and equally real.

### *Ontological Monism and the Nature of Dreams: Implication 3*

But what about dreams? Surely dreams are not real, and so surely dreams demand a metaphysical explanation incompatible with ontological monism. How does Aztec metaphysics handle dreams? First, when one declares dreams not to be real, one does not mean that dreams do not occur, or that dreams

are not actually occurring events or processes in the world. What one means is something like this: the experiences that occur while dreaming or within dreams are not real; what happens in dreams does not really happen; things are not really as they seem in dreams; or the contents of dreams are not true. Now reconsider the song-poem of Tochihuitzin Coyolchihqui:

We merely come to stand sleeping, we merely come to dream. It is not true, not true that we come to live on earth.<sup>59</sup>

A second, anonymous song-poem collected in the *Cantares Mexicanos* expresses the same theme:

But can what I say be real, O Life Giver? We must sleep, we were merely born to dream, and though I say it here on earth it falls on no one's ears.<sup>58</sup>

Earlier I discussed León-Portilla's and Bierhorst's argument that dreams are not real because dreams are ephemeral. Let's set aside that argument and focus now on the claim that life is a dream and its consequences. León-Portilla finds the following syllogism implicit in the preceding two song-poems:

1. PREMISE: Dreams are not real.
2. PREMISE: Human existence on earth is a dream.
3. CONCLUSION: Therefore human existence on earth is not real.<sup>57</sup>

I do not believe Aztec metaphysics subscribes to premise 1 and do not believe this syllogism is consistent with Aztec metaphysics.<sup>58</sup> Aztec metaphysics considers dreams (i.e., dream experiences or contents of dreams) to be real, and indeed every bit as real as waking experiences. Although it may seem patently true to those of us raised on Western science that the contents of dreams do not really occur, we are not entitled to assume the Aztecs shared our view. Therefore we are not entitled to assume the Aztecs regarded dreams as ontologically unreal or inferior to waking experiences, or that the Aztecs regarded dreams as epistemologically nonprobative.

In fact, quite the opposite seems true. According to López Austin, the Aztecs believed three animistic forces or energies occupy the living human body: *tonalli*, *teyolia*, and *ihiyotl*.<sup>55</sup> These reside in the head, heart, and liver (respectively). Tonalli is capable of temporarily leaving the body. This happens most frequently and normally during sleep. Dreaming consists of one's tonalli leaving one's body during sleep. According to López Austin, the Aztecs considered dreams "to be a perception of reality at places far removed from the one occupied by the sleeping body."<sup>54</sup> Dream experiences are real, and indeed just as real as waking experiences – notwithstanding the fact that the import of dreaming experiences is

harder to discern than that of waking experiences. Furthermore, during dreams one's tonalli is able to communicate with the sacred as well as acquire certain kinds of knowledge. The reality of out-of-body experiences and travels during dreams is further demonstrated by the fact that they are dangerous and potentially fatal. One's tonalli might become trapped and unable to return to one's body. Finally, López Austin maintains the literal meaning of the Nahuatl verb meaning "to awaken" (*za* or *hualizā*) is "to be here" or "to come to be here."<sup>55</sup> He argues this supports the notion that one's tonalli undertakes bona fide out-of-body experiences and adventures during sleep.

The first line of Tochihuitzin Coyolchihqui's song-poem reads "*za tōochihhuaco za tontemiquico*," which Bierhorst translates as "We merely come to stand sleeping, we merely come to dream." Bierhorst translates the Nahuatl word *tōochihhuaco* as "we come to stand sleeping." López Austin notes that although Siméon translates *cochihhuaciztli* as "dream," the word means etymologically "arising when one is asleep."<sup>56</sup> Dibble and Anderson translate *cochihhuac* as "to start up in one's sleep" but more often translate it as "to see in dreams."<sup>57</sup> The other word in the song-poem, *tontemiquico* ("we come to dream"), derives from *temiqui* ("to dream something").<sup>58</sup>

The verbs *temiqui* and *cochihhuac* (and their derivations) occur together throughout the speeches recorded in Sahagún's *Florentine Codex*, apparently functioning as a couplet.<sup>59</sup> Dibble and Anderson consistently translate the two as "to dream, to see in dreams" (e.g., *temiqui tōochihhuac* as "we dream, we see in dreams").<sup>60</sup> The Nahuatl word *ontemictlamati*, which Dibble and Anderson translate as "they know in dreams,"<sup>61</sup> is also telling. For it strongly suggests the Aztecs regarded dreams as a potential source of knowledge, and in addition (assuming knowledge concerns that which is true) suggests they regarded dream experiences as at least sometimes truthful. Consistent with this, Molina contains multiple entries that distinguish between truthful dreams and false dreams: *iztliaca temictli* ("vain and nontruthful dream")<sup>62</sup> and *melahuacatemictli* ("truthful dream").<sup>63</sup> Pace León-Portilla, the fact that some kind of knowledge is attainable in dreams strongly implies that the Aztecs did *not* regard dreams as by definition unreal, illusory, false, or untrustworthy.

The Aztecs apparently regarded the ability to dream, to see in one's dreams, and to acquire knowledge through dreams as a sacred gift. A prayer addressed to Tezcatlipoca states, "And now, O master, O our lord, O lord of the near, of the night, may thou incline thy heart, that by thy grace for yet a while they see in dreams (*oncochihhuac*), know in dreams (*ontemictlamati*)."<sup>64</sup> The Aztecs devoted great energy to *temic iximati* and *temicmanicita*, that is, to interpreting and understanding the significance of the contents of dreams.<sup>65</sup> As Timothy Knab

writes in his ethnography of contemporary Nahuatl-speakers in Sierra Norte de Puebla, "In a world where dreams are real, they are potent tools for interpretation. They are also potent explanations of the events of everyday life."<sup>166</sup> The fact that the significance of dreams is obscure and difficult to discern does not gainsay their veracity or their reality. The Aztecs standardized and recorded their understandings of dreams in their *temicamali* ("book of dreams"). In Book X of the *Florentine Codex*, Sahagún's informants speak of the wise Toltecs having recorded their knowledge of dreams in their *temicamali*.<sup>167</sup> Sahagún's informants also speak of the four wise men, Oxomoco, Cipactonal, Tlaltecui, and Xochihuaca, drafting a new *temicamali* during the Mexica (Aztec) migration from the land of the Chichimeca. The book of dreams ranked in importance with the book of days (*tonalpohualli*), the book of years (*xicamali*), and the count of the years (*xiphoalli*).<sup>168</sup> Sahagún's *Primeros memoriales* includes a standardized list of dream interpretation.<sup>169</sup>

In sum, if the Aztecs considered dreams to be unreal, illusory, and false as León-Portilla and Bierhorst maintain, why then would the Aztecs devote so much effort to composing books aimed at interpreting dreams? Why would they revere these books? These practices clearly support the idea that the Aztecs regarded dreams as epistemologically probative because ontologically real.<sup>170</sup>

What then does Tochimuitzin Coyolchihqui mean when he says, "*za tocochitlhuaco za tontemiquico abnelli abnelli tinemico in thalitchac*" ("We merely come to stand sleeping, we merely come to dream; it is not true, not true that we come to live on earth"?). It's difficult to say. If indeed he is likening earthly existence to dreaming, the foregoing discussion suggests that he is not attributing unreality or illusoriness to earthly existence but perhaps simply stating that life is as ephemeral as dreams. We come and go in the blink of an eye. Alternatively, he might be stating that the meaning of life on earth is as elusive as the meaning of dreams. Dreams function in these song-poems as a trope for that which is obscure and mysterious – not for that which is unreal.

### 1.5. CONCLUSION

Aztec metaphysics maintains there exists just one thing: the sacred energy-in-motion that is teotl. The cosmos and its inhabitants are not only constituted by but also ultimately identical with the sacred electricity-like force of teotl. Reality is defined by process, becoming, change, impermanence, and transformation. As teotl's ongoing "flower and song," the cosmos and all its inhabitants are teotl's grand, artistic-shamanic, kaleidoscopic self-presentation; teotl's ongoing work of performance art.

### NOTES

1. See Alasdair MacIntyre, "Ontology," in Paul Edwards, ed. *in-chief, Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 8 vols. (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1967), 5:542–43; Robert Audi, ed., *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); and Jaegwon Kim and Ernest Sosa, eds., *A Companion to Metaphysics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995).
2. John D. Monaghan, *The Covenant with Earth and Rain: Exchange, Sacrifice and Revolution in Mexican Society* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), 198.
3. I borrow this phrase from Vine Deloria Jr., *God Is Red: A Native View of Religion* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 1994), 88.
4. I borrow this from Henry's characterization of traditional African metaphysics (Peggy Henry, *Caliban's Reason: Introducing Afro-Caribbean Philosophy* [London, UK: Routledge, 2000]), 26.
5. In this respect, teotl resembles Spinoza's understanding of God. See Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* (San Francisco, CA: City Lights Books, 1988), 97; Stuart Hampshire, *Spinoza* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1957); Genevieve Lloyd, *Spinoza and the Ethics* (London, UK: Routledge, 1996); and Michael Levine, *Pantheism: A Non-Theistic Concept of Deity* (London, UK: Routledge, 1994).
6. I refer to teotl as *teotl* rather than *Teotl* in order to help remind us that teotl is more akin to electricity than to a deity.
7. Spinoza writes, "The power of God is . . . His essence," and God's power is to create (Benedict de Spinoza, *Ethics*, ed. James Gutman [New York: Hafner Publishing, 1949], Part I, Proposition XXXIV). For discussion, see Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, Hampshire, *Spinoza*.
8. Dennis Tedlock, "Creation in the Popol Vuh: A Hermeneutical Approach," in *Symbol and Meaning beyond the Closed Community: Essays in Mesoamerican Ideas*, ed. Gary H. Gossen (Albany, NY: Institute for Mesoamerican Studies, SUNY Press, 1986), 79. For further discussion, see Alfredo López Austin, *Tamanchan, Tlalcan: Places of Mist*, trans. Bernard R. Ortiz de Montellano and Thelma Ortiz de Montellano (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1997); and Kay A. Read, *Time and Sacrifice in the Aztec Cosmos* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998). Carlsen and Prechtel as well as Monaghan offer useful discussions of the role of transformation and renewal in Highland Maya religion and Nuyooteco thought (respectively). (Robert S. Carlsen and Martin Prechtel, "The Flowering of the Dead: An Interpretation of Highland Maya Culture," *Man* 26, no. 1 [1991]: 23–42; Monaghan, *Covenant with Earth and Rain*). Furst suggests this idea is rooted in Mesoamerican shamanism with its emphasis upon transformation as shamans are consummate form-changers; see Peter T. Furst, "Shamanistic Survivals in Mesoamerican Religion," *Actas del XII Congreso Internacional de Americanistas* (Mexico: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1976), 3:149–57; and Furst,

"Introduction: An Overview of Shamanism," in *Ancient Traditions: Shamanism in Central Asia and the Americas*, ed. Gary Seaman and Jane S. Day (Niwot: Denver Museum of Natural History and University Press of Colorado, 1994), 1-28.

9. David A. Cooper, *God Is a Verb: Kabbalah and the Practice of Mystical Judaism* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1997), 69-73.

10. David L. Hall, "Just How Provincial Is Western Philosophy? 'Truth' in Comparative Context," *Social Epistemology* 15, no. 4 (2001): 293. Ames and Rosemont argue the verb-noun distinction thus gives way to a "gerundial" language: for example, *being properly* replaces *to live properly and proper life* (Roger T. Ames and Henry Rosemont Jr., *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation* [New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 1998]).

11. Borrowing Rescher's terminology, I suggest we see *teotl* as a "verb-entity" (like "tornado" or "heat wave") rather than as a "noun-entity" (like "cannel" or "bottle.") (Nicholas Rescher, *Process Metaphysics: An Introduction to Process Philosophy* [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1966], 29).

12. In this respect Aztec metaphysics resembles Confucianism, Shinto, and Taoism. For discussion see Roger T. Ames, "Putting the *Te* Back into Taoism," in *Nature in Asian Traditions of Thought: Essays in Environmental Philosophy*, ed. J. Baird Callicott and Roger T. Ames (Albany: State University Press of New York, 1989), 113-43; James W. Boyd and Ron G. Williams, "Japanese Shinto: An Interpretation of a Priestly Perspective," *Philosophy East and West* 55, no. 1 (2005): 33-63; David L. Hall and Roger T. Ames, "Understanding Order: The Chinese Perspective," in *From Africa to Zen*, ed. Robert Solomon and Kathleen Higgins (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1993), 1-23; David L. Hall and Roger T. Ames, *Anticipating China: Thinking through the Narratives of Chinese and Western Culture* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995); and David L. Hall and Roger T. Ames, *Thinking from the Han: Self, Truth and Transcendence in Chinese and Western Culture* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1998).

13. For discussion see Richard Lewis Nettleship, *Lectures on the Republic of Plato*, 2nd ed. (London, UK: Macmillan and Co., 1963). Plato's Being-oriented metaphysics is clearly illustrated by his "divided line" and allegory of the cave in Books VI and VII of *The Republic* (Plato, *Plato: The Collected Dialogues including the Letters*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961]).

14. Quoted in Barbara Deloria, Kristen Foehner, and Sam Scinta, eds., *Spirit and Reason: The Vine Deloria Jr. Reader* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishers, 1999), 356, emphasis in original. Spores argues Mixtec religion conceives the universe as "a force field" (Ronald L. Spores, "Mixtec Religion," in *The Cloud People: Divergent Evolution of the Zapotec and Mixtec Civilizations*, ed. Kent Flannery and Joyce Marcus [New York: Academic Press, 1983], 345). According to Deloria Jr., the "tribal peoples" of North America equate power and existence (Deloria et al., *Spirit and Reason*, 356; see also

Deloria, *God Is Real*, 88). Hollowell argues the Ojibway regarded metamorphosis as an "earthmark" of power (A. Irving Hollowell, *Contributions to Anthropology, Selected Papers of A. Irving Hollowell* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976], 377). Describing the Chinese notions of *qi* and *yin*, Stanley Murashige ("Philosophy of Art," in *Encyclopedia of Chinese Philosophy*, ed. Antonio S. Cua [New York: Routledge, 2003], 513) writes, "Power lives in motion." According to Placide Temples, the Banru-speaking Baluba of the former Belgian Congo define existence in terms of force (Henry, *Caliban's Reason*, 26). Lastly, Henri Frankfort and H. A. Frankfort ("Myth and Reality," in *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man*, Henri Frankfort, H. A. Frankfort, John A. Wilson, Thorkild Jacobsen, and William A. Irwin [Chicago: University of Chicago, 1977], 12) write "to be effective" is equivalent to "to be."

15. Nicholas Rescher, "Process Philosophy," in *A Companion to Metaphysics*, ed. Jaegwon Kim and Ernest Sosa (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 417.

16. Chapter 4 distinguishes between the cosmos per se, the Fifth Era, and the cosmos of the Fifth Era (i.e. the combination of middle region unique to the Fifth Era plus the upper and lower realms of the cosmos). Alan Sandstrom (personal correspondence, 8/20/11) cautions against equating *teotl* with (what Westerners think of as) nature since contemporary Nahaut-speakers in eastern Mexico translate "nature" as *hahhiqua*, that is, as the earth's surface and all things on the earth's surface. I see *teotl* as far broader than this since *teotl* is identical with not only *hahhiqua* but also the realms above (*ihhuiana*) and below (*mitlitan*) tlalticpac as well as the cosmos before the creation of the Fifth Age.

17. I owe my understanding of process philosophy to Rescher, "Process Philosophy"; Rescher, *Process Metaphysics*; and Dorothy Emmet, *The Passage of Nature* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992).

18. See Read, *Time and Sacrifice*.

19. For supporting discussion of Aztec metaphysics, see Read, *Time and Sacrifice*; Bernard R. Ortiz de Montellano, *Aztec Medicine, Health, and Nutrition* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990); and López Austin, *Tamamchan, Tlalocan*. For discussion of Nuyooteco metaphysics, see Mongghan, *Covenants with Earth and Rain*. Deloria (Deloria et al., *Spirit and Reason*) and Brian Yazzie Burkhart ("The Physics of the Spirit: The Indigenous Continuity of Science and Religion," in *The Routledge Companion to Religion and Science*, ed. James W. Hogg, Gregory R. Peterson, and Michael L. Spezio [New York: Routledge, 2011], 34-42) contend that indigenous North American philosophies likewise embrace holistic metaphysics. Lloyd characterizes Spinoza's closely similar metaphysics as an "ecosystem - an interconnected totality of organisms and their environment" (Genevieve Lloyd, *Part of Nature: Self-Knowledge in Spinoza's Ethics* [Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994], 13). Hindu metaphysics defends a similar holism called "Indra's net" that Loy characterizes as a seamless, "all-

encompassing web of causal conditions" (David Loy, *Nondualism: A Study in Comparative Philosophy* [Amherst, NY: Humanities Books, 1988], 235). I borrow the notion of correlationality from Ames, "Putting the *Te* Back into Taoism"; Ames and Rosemont, *The Analects of Confucius*; Hall and Ames, *Anticipating China*; and Hall and Ames, *Thinking from the Han*.

20. I borrow this from Rescher, *Process Metaphysics*, 83.

21. Read, *Time and Sacrifice*, viii.

22. I use the definitions of immanence and transcendence in Audi, ed., *Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, 361, 807.

23. For supporting ethnographic work, see John D. Monaghan, "Theology and History in the Study of Mesoamerican Religions," in *Supplement to the Handbook of Middle American Indians*, ed. John D. Monaghan (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000), 6:27. See also Burkhardt, "The Physics of the Spirit"; Deloria, *God Is Red*; and Deloria et al., *Spirit and Reason*.

24. Contrasting Christian and native Mesoamerican views of the supernatural, Andrews and Hassig write, "the native view saw supernatural power everywhere"; J. Richard Andrews and Ross Hassig, "Editor's Introduction," in *Treatise on the Heavens: Superstitions that Today Live among the Indians Native to This New Spain*, Hernando Ruiz de Alarcón (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984), 24.

25. For related discussion, see Hall and Ames, *Anticipating China*, 124; James W. Boyd and Ron G. Williams, "The Art of Ritual in Comparative Context," in *Zoroastrian Rituals in Context: Proceedings of the Conference at the Internationales Wissenschaftsforum, University of Heidelberg*, April 2002, ed. Michael Sausberg (Leiden: Brill, 2004); and Boyd and Williams, "Japanese Shinto."

26. See Netzleship, *Lectures*. Plato's vertical metaphysics is dramatically illustrated by his divided line and allegory of the cave in Books VI and VII of *The Republic*; Plato, *Plato: The Collected Dialogues*. Gossen briefly contrasts Platonic metaphysics with Quiché Maya metaphysics of the *Popol Vuh*. His contrast applies *mutatis mutandis* to Aztec metaphysics. See Gary H. Gossen, "The Religious Traditions of Mesoamerica," in *The Legacy of Mesoamerica: History and Culture of a Native American Civilization*, ed. Robert Carmack, Janine Gasco, and Gary H. Gossen (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1996), 532.

27. Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1960).

28. Louise M. Burkhardt, "The Amannuenses Have Appropriated the Text: Interpreting a Nahuatl Song of Santiago," in *On the Translation of Native American Literatures*, ed. Brian Swann (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), 345.

29. *Historia de los mexicanos por sus pinturas*, in *Teogonia e historia de los mexicanos: Tres opúsculos del siglo XVI*, 1st ed., ed. Angel María Garibay K. (México: Editorial Por-

ría, 1965), 23; *Historie du Mexique*, in *Teogonia e historia de los mexicanos: Tres opúsculos del siglo XVI*, 1st ed., ed. Angel María Garibay K. (México, DF: Editorial Porrúa, 1965), 102-3. For discussion, see Henry B. Nicholson, "Religion in Pre-Hispanic Central Mexico," in *Handbook of Middle American Indians*, vol. 10, ed. Robert Wauchope, Gordon F. Ekholm, and Ignacio Bernal (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971), 407; Miguel León-Portilla, *Aztec Thought and Culture: A Study of the Ancient Nahuatl Mind*, trans. Jack Emory Davis (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963), 59; and López Austin, *Tamoanchan, Tlalocan*, 17.

30. See, for example, León-Portilla, *Aztec Thought and Culture*, 59; David Carrasco with Scott Sessions, *Daily Life of the Aztecs: People of the Sun and Earth* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998); and Eduardo Matos Moctezuma, *Life and Death in the Temple Mayor*, trans. Bernard R. Ortiz de Montellano and Thelma Ortiz de Montellano (New York: University Press of Colorado, 1993). To my knowledge, Read alone questions this interpretation; Read, *Time and Sacrifice*, 137-44, 269n26.

31. Arild Hvidtfeldt, *Teotl and \*Txiptlatl: Some Central Conceptions in Ancient Mexican Religion* (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1958), 77-78.

32. *Ibid.*, 78n1.

33. *Ibid.*, 100, 140; see also 25-35.

34. Richard F. Townsend, *State and Cosmos in the Art of Teotihuacan* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1979), 28. See also Burr Cartwright Brundage, *The Fifth Sun: Aztec Gods, Aztec World* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979), 137-144, 269n26.

35. Townsend, *State and Cosmos*, 30-31.

36. *Ibid.*, 28.

37. Richard F. Townsend, *The Aztecs* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992), 115.

38. *Ibid.*, 115-16.

39. *Ibid.*, 116.

40. *Ibid.*

41. Quoted in John Bowker, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 598; see also 699.

42. Quoted in Hvidtfeldt, *Teotl and \*Txiptlatl*, 20.

43. Quoted in *Ibid.*

44. J. Jorge Klor de Alva, "Christianity and the Aztecs," *San Jose Studies* 5 (1979): 7.

45. Elizabeth Hill Boone, *The Aztec World* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Books, 1994), 105.

46. Elizabeth Hill Boone, *Incarnations of the Aztec Supernatural: The Image of Huitzilopochtli in Mexico and Europe* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1989), 4.

47. *Ibid.*

48. Louise M. Burkhardt, *The Slippery Earth: Nahuatl-Christian Dialogue in Sixteenth-Century Mexico* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1989), 37.

49. *Ibid.*, 102. See also Thelma D. Sullivan, "Tlazolteotl-Ixcuina: The Great Spinner and Weaver," in *The Art and Iconography of Late Post-Classical Central Mexico*, ed. Elizabeth Hill Boone (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1982), 7.
50. Read, *Time and Sacrifice*, 206 and 145, respectively. Read notes that Walter Krickenberg glossed *teotl* as "kraft."
51. Read, *Time and Sacrifice*, 271n41; brackets mine.
52. *Ibid.*, 146, 206.
53. David Carrasco, "The Sacrifice of Women in the Florentine Codex: The Hearts of Plants and Players in War Games," in *Representing Aztec Ritual Performance, Text, and Image in the Work of Sahagún*, ed. Eloise Quiñones Keber (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2002), 200.
54. Alan R. Sandstrom, "Sacred Mountains and Miniature Worlds: Altar Design among the Nahua of Northern Veracruz, Mexico," in *Messes and Cosmologies in Mesoamerica*, ed. Douglas Sharon, San Diego Museum of Man Papers 42 (San Diego: San Diego Museum of Man, 2003), 56. See also Alan Sandstrom and Pamela Effrein Sandstrom, *Traditional Papermaking and Paper Cult Figures of Mexico* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986), 276; and Alan R. Sandstrom, *Corn Is Our Blood: Culture and Ethnic Identity in a Contemporary Aztec Indian Village* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 238–39.
55. *Ibid.* See also Sandstrom and Sandstrom, *Traditional Papermaking*.
56. Monaghan, *Covenants with Earth and Rain*, 98–99.
57. *Ibid.*, 127.
58. *Ibid.*, 198.
59. *Ibid.*, 97.
60. *Ibid.*, 104.
61. Monaghan, "Theology and History," 25.
62. *Ibid.*, 26.
63. Arthur A. Joyce, *Mixtecs, Zapotecs, and Chontans: Ancient Peoples of Southern Mexico* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 56.
64. Joyce Marcus, "Zapotec Religion," in *The Cloud People: Divergent Evolution of the Zapotec and Mixtec Civilizations*, ed. Kent Flannery and Joyce Marcus (New York: Academic Press, 1983). See also Monaghan, "Theology and History," 27–28. Hunt claims Zinacantanos view this sacred principle as transcending gendered divisions (Eva Hunt, *The Transformation of the Hummingbird: Cultural Roots of a Zinacatan Mythical Poem* [Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977], 234). See also Dennis Tedlock, *The Spoken Word and the Work of Interpretation* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), 268. Munro Edmondson characterizes Mike metaphysics as a "pluralistic monism" (Munro S. Edmondson, "Foreword," in Frank J. Lipp, *The Mize of Oaxaca: Religion, Ritual and Healing* [Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991], vii).

65. David Stuart, "Kings of Stone: A Consideration of Stelae in Ancient Maya Ritual and Representation," *RES* 29/30 Spring/Autumn (1996): 162–64.
66. Stuart, "Kings of Stone," 164.
67. Stephen Houston and David Stuart, "Of Gods, Glyphs, and Kings: Divinity and Rulership among the Classic Maya," *Antiquity* 70 (1996): 292; see also Stephen Houston and David Stuart, "The Ancient Maya Self: Personhood and Portraiture in the Classic Period," *RES* 33 (1998): 92.
68. *Ibid.* See also Munro S. Edmondson, "The Mayan Faith," in *South and Mesoamerican Spirituality: From the Cult of the Feathered Serpent to the Theology of Liberation*, ed. Gary H. Gossen in collaboration with Miguel León-Portilla (New York: Crossroads, 1993), 65–85.
69. Linda Schele and Ellen Miller, *The Blood of Kings: Dynasty and Ritual in Maya Art* (Fort Worth: Kimbell Art Museum, 1986), 301. See also Nancy M. Farris, *Maya Society under Colonial Rule: The Collective Enterprise of Survival* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 301ff.
70. Quoted in Deloria et al., *Spirit and Reason*, 356; see also 40–60 and Deloria, *God Is Red*.
71. *Ibid.* See also Vine Deloria Jr. and Daniel R. Wildcat, *Power and Place* (Golden, CO: American Indian Graduate Center and Fulcrum Resources, 2002); George Tinker, "Jesus, Corn Mother, and Conquest: Christianity and Colonialism," in *Native American Religious Identity: Unforgotten Gods*, ed. Jace Weaver (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1998), 134–54; Clara Sue Kidwell, Homer Noley, and George E. "Tink" Tinker, *A Native American Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002), 14, 89–93; and Burkhardt, "The Physics of the Spirit," 72. Keith H. Basso, *The Cibicue Apache* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1970), 36.
73. Deloria et al., *Spirit and Reason*, 357. Spores claims Mixtec religion sees the universe as "a force field to be revered, honored, and influenced for the benefit of humankind" (Spores, "Mixtec Religion," 345).
74. Viola Cordova, "The European Concept of *Usen*: An American Aboriginal Text," in *Native American Religious Identity: Unforgotten Gods*, ed. Jace Weaver (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998), 26–28.
75. Quoted in Kathleen Dean Moore, Kurt Peters, Ted Jojola, and Amber Lacy, eds., *How It Is: The Native American Philosophy of V. F. Cordova* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007), 117.
76. See Cordova, "The European Concept of *Usen*," 27; Willie Ermine, "Aboriginal Epistemology," in *First Nations Education in Canada: The Circle Unfolded*, ed. Marie Barte and Jean Barman (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1995), 101–111; Jace Weaver, "Introduction: Notes from a Miner's Canary," in *Defending Mother Earth: Native American Perspectives on Environmental Justice*, ed. Jace Weaver (Maryknoll, NY:



- Orbis Books, 1996), 10-12; Viola Cordova, "Ethics: The We and the I," in *American Indian Thought*, ed. Anne Waters (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 173-85; Gregory Cajete, *Native Science: Natural Laws of Interdependence* (Sana Fe, NM: Clear Light Publishers); Tinker, "Jesus, Corn Mother, and Conquest"; and Kidwell, Noley, and Tinker, *A Native American Theology*, 57.
77. Leroy N. Meyer and Tony Ramirez, "Wakinyan Hotari" ("The Thunder Brings Call Out"): The Inscrutability of Lakota/Dakota Metaphysics," in *From Our Eyes: Learning from Indigenous Peoples*, ed. Sylvia O'Meara and Douglas A. West (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1996), 96.
78. See Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, *How Natives Think*, trans. Lilian A. Clare (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966); Henri Frankfort and H. A. Frankfort, "The Emancipation of Thought from Myth," in *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man*, ed. Henri Frankfort et al. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), published 1960 by Penguin Press as *Before Philosophy*, 363-88; Henri Frankfort and H. A. Frankfort, "Myth and Reality," in *Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man*, ed. Henri Frankfort et al., 3-30; and Benjamin Keen, *The Aztec Image in Western Thought* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1971).
79. Chad Hansen, *A Daoist Theory of Chinese Thought: A Philosophical Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 156.
80. Hall, "Just How Provincial Is Western Philosophy?", 290.
81. Ben-Ami Scharfstein, *A Comparative History of World Philosophy: From the Upanishads to Kant* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1998), 150, 290.
82. Hall and Ames, *Anticipating China*, 188. See also Roger T. Ames, "Yin and Yang" in *Encyclopedia of Chinese Philosophy*, ed. Antonio S. Cua (New York: Routledge, 2003), 846-47.
83. François Julien, *Vital Nourishment: Departing from Happiness*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge: Zone Books, 2007), 76.
84. Hall, "Just How Provincial Is Western Philosophy?", 290.
85. Alan Watts, *Tao: The Watercourse Way* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1975), 54. See also Ku-ying Chien, *Lao Tzu: Text, Notes, and Comments*, intro, adapt., and transl. Rhett Y.W. Young and Roger T. Ames (San Francisco: Chinese Materials Center, 1977); David L. Hall, "Process and Anarchy: A Taoist View of Creativity," *Philosophy East and West* 38 (1978): 271-86; Roger T. Ames, "Putting the Te Back into Taoism," in *Nature in Asian Traditions of Thought: Essays in Environmental Philosophy*, ed. J. Baird Callicott and Roger T. Ames (Albany: State University Press of New York, 1989), 113-43; and Ames, "Yin and Yang."
86. Boyd and Williams, "Japanese Shinto," 34. See also James W. Boyd and Ron G. Williams, "Artful Means: An Aesthetic View of Shinto Purification Rituals," *Journal of Religious Studies* 13, no. 1 (1999): 37-52.
87. *Romanes de los señores de la Nueva España*, fol. 35r-v, quoted in and trans. John Bierhorst, *Ballads of the Lords of New Spain: The codex romanés de los señores de la Nueva España* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009), 149. León-Portilla attributes this song-poem to Nezahualcoyotl (Miguel León-Portilla, *Fifteen Poets of the Aztec World* [Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992], 83).
88. *Cantares mexicanos*, fol. 10v, quoted in and trans. León-Portilla, *Fifteen Poets*, 282.
89. *Cantares mexicanos*, fol. 11v, quoted in and trans. León-Portilla, *Fifteen Poets*, 228.
90. Quoted in and trans. Sandstrom, *Corn Is Our Blood*, 229.
91. See Alfonso Caso, *The Aztecs: People of the Sun*, trans. Lowell Dunham (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985), 14, 39, 51; Mary Miller and Karl Taube, *An Illustrated Dictionary of the Gods and Symbols of Ancient Mexico and the Maya* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1993), 122, 172; Nicholson, "Religion," 439; Alfredo López Austin, *The Human Body and Ideology: Concepts of the Ancient Nahuas*, 2 vols., trans. Thelma Ortiz de Montellano and Bernard R. Ortiz de Montellano (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1988), I:362-75; II:292; Furst, "Shamanistic Survivals in Mesoamerican Religion"; Read, *Time and Saçifia*; and Willard Gingerich, "Chipahuacnemiliztli, 'the Purified Life,' in the Discourses of Book VI, Florentine Codex," in *Smoke and Mirrors: Mesoamerican Studies in Memory of Tezuma D. Sullivan*, Part 2, ed. J. Kathryn Josserand and Karen Dakin (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 1988), 517-43. Eliade writes, "Embodying an animal during seance is less a possession than a magical transformation of the shaman into that animal" (Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1964], 99).
92. See Guilhem Olivier, *Mockeries and Metamorphoses of an Aztec God: Tezcatlipoca, Lord of the Smoking Mirror*, trans. Michel Besson (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 2003).
93. Andrews and Hassig, in *Treatise, Appendix C*, 246.
94. Raymond D. Fogelson, "Parson, Self, and Identity: Some Anthropological Reflections, Circumpects, and Prospects," in *Psychosocial Theories of the Self*, ed. Benjamin Lee (New York: Plenum Press, 1982), 76, emphasis mine. See also Raymond D. Fogelson and Amelia B. Walker, "Self and Other in Cherokee Booger Masks," *Journal of Cherokee Studies* 5 (1980): 88-102.
95. Sam D. Gill, *Native American Religions: An Introduction* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing, 1982), 69.
96. *Ibid.*, 70-71.
97. *Ibid.*, 71-72; see also Sam D. Gill, *Native American Religions Action: A Performative Approach to Religion* (Columbia: University South Carolina Press, 1987), 42-44.
98. See Audi, *Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, 183.
99. Sandstrom and Sandstrom, *Traditional Papermaking*, 260; see also Sandstrom, *Corn Is Our Blood*, and Peter T. Furst, "The Roots and Continuities of Shamanism," in

*Stones, Bones, and Skin: Ritual and Shamanic Art*, ed. Anne T. Bodsky, Rose Danesewich, and Nick Johnson (Toronto: Society for Art Publications, 1977), 1-28.

100. Sandstrom, *Corn Is Our Blood*, 233-35; see also Sandstrom and Sandstrom, *Traditional Papermaking*.

101. Sandstrom and Sandstrom, *Traditional Papermaking*, 259.

102. Stacy B. Schaefer, *To Think with a Good Heart: Wixárika Women, Weavers, and Shamans* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2002), 242. See also Gingerich, "Chibhuacnemiliztli"; Barbara G. Myerhoff, *Peyote Hunt: The Sacred Journey of the Haihóhó Indians* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974); Barbara G. Myerhoff, "The Huichol and the Quest for Paradise," *Parabola* 1, no. 1 (1976): 22-29; Barbara G. Myerhoff, "Balancing Between Worlds: The Shamans Calling," *Parabola* 1, no. 2 (1976): 6-13; and Nathaniel Tam and Martin Prechtel, *Scandals in the House of Birds: Shamans and Priests on Lake Atitlán* (New York: Marsilio Publishers, 1979), 279.

103. See John Bierhorst, ed., intro., and commentary, *Cantares Mexicanos: Songs of the Aztecs* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1985); and John Bierhorst, transcription and trans., *Ballads of the Lords of New Spain: The Codex Romances de los Señores de la Nueva España* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009).

104. *Cantares Mexicanos*, fol. 17r, trans. León-Portilla, *Fifteen Poets*, 80. Bierhorst's translation is not significantly different and therefore has no impact upon my argument (Bierhorst, *Cantares Mexicanos*).

105. *Romances de los señores*, fol. 35r-36r, trans. León-Portilla, *Fifteen Poets*, 80-81. Bierhorst's translation is not significantly different and so has no impact upon my argument (Bierhorst, *Ballads of the Lords of New Spain*).

106. León-Portilla, *Fifteen Poets*, 80, 81-98; see also León-Portilla, *Aztec Thought and Culture*, 7.

107. León-Portilla, *Fifteen Poets*, 82; see also León-Portilla, *Aztec Thought and Culture*, 7-76.

108. León-Portilla, *Aztec Thought and Culture*, 71-72; León-Portilla, *Fifteen Poets*, 153; Bierhorst, *Cantares Mexicanos*, 49.

109. *Cantares mexicanos*, fol. 14 v, trans. León-Portilla, *Fifteen Poets*, 153, numbering mine. León-Portilla (*Aztec Thought and Culture*, 72) offers a slightly different translation of the crucial, first five lines: "It is not true, it is not true, That we come to this earth to live. We come only to sleep. Only to dream." Bierhorst translates the passage similarly: "We merely come to stand sleeping; we merely come to dream. It is not true, not true that we come to live on earth" (Bierhorst, *Cantares Mexicanos*, 175).

110. León-Portilla, *Fifteen Poets*, 152.

111. León-Portilla, *Aztec Thought and Culture*, 71.

112. *Ibid.*; see also Bierhorst, *Cantares Mexicanos*, 49.

113. Bierhorst, *Cantares Mexicanos*. Bierhorst's interpretation that the *Cantares Mexicanos* consist of post-Conquest "ghost songs" has met with severe criticism at the pens of León-Portilla (*Fifteen Poets*, 16-34, and "Hay composiciones de origen prehispánico en el manuscrito de cantares Mexicanos?," *Estudios de cultura náhuatl* 33 [2002]: 141-47) and James Lockhart (*Nahuas and Spaniards: Postconquest Central Mexican History and Philology*, UCLA Latin American Studies, vol. 76, Nahuatl Studies Series 3 [Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991], 141-57).

114. León-Portilla interprets Nezahualcoyotl and other authors of song-poems as Socrates-like figures who skeptically challenged the religious views of their day (León-Portilla, *Aztec Thought and Culture*, and León-Portilla, *Fifteen Poets*).

115. Quoted in and trans. Sandstrom, *Corn Is Our Blood*, 229.

116. Serge Gruzinski, *Man-Gods in the Mexican Highlands: Indian Power and Colonial Society, 1520-1800*, trans. Eileen Corrigan (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1989), 181.

117. See Read, *Time and Sacrifice*, 86, 130, 202; Frances Karttunen, *An Analytical Dictionary of Nahuatl* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983), 121; R. Joe Campbell, *A Morphological Dictionary of Classical Nahuatl: A Morpheme Index to the Vocabulario en lengua mexicana y castellana of Fray Alonso de Molina* (Madison: Hispanic Seminary of Medieval Studies, 1985), 143-53; and León-Portilla, *Aztec Thought and Culture*, 12-13. The most insightful treatment of *ixtl* is López Austin, *Human Body and Ideology*, 1:195-96, II:158, 200.

118. López Austin, *Human Body and Ideology*, II:200.

119. Barbara Tedlock, *Time and the Highland Maya*, rev. ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1992 [1982]), 2, 108, 110.

120. *Ibid.*, 2.

121. Miguel León-Portilla, *Time and Reality in the Thought of the Maya*, 2nd enlarged ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 16-17.

122. *Ibid.*, 24; see also 33, 49.

123. *Ibid.*, 54.

124. Monaghan, *Covenants with Earth and Rain*, 98-99.

125. *Ibid.*, 127.

126. *Ibid.*, 98-112, 137-38.

127. Lloyd, *Spinoza and the Ethics*, 6-7. See also Lloyd, *Part of Nature*, and Scharfstein, *Comparative History of World Philosophy*.

128. Jaegwon Kim, *Philosophy of Mind* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996), 51.

129. Jullien, *Vital Nourishment*, 76.

130. David Hume, *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1902).

131. Brian P. McLaughlin, "Philosophy of Mind," in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, gen. ed. Robert Audi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 597–606.
132. Alfredo López Austin, "The Natural World," in *Aztec*, ed. Eduardo Matos Moctezuma and Felipe Solís Olguín (London: Royal Academy of the Arts, 2002), 270. See also Alfredo López Austin, *The Myths of the Opossum: Pathways of Mesoamerican Mythology*, trans. Bernard R. Ortiz de Montellano and Thelma Ortiz de Montellano (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993), 126–27; López Austin, *Tamoanchan, Tlalocan*, 12–13, 28–31; and López Austin, "Cosmopolitan," trans. Scott Sessions, in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Mesoamerican Cultures: The Civilizations of Mexico and Central America*, ed. David Carrasco (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1: 268–74.
133. López Austin, *Myths of the Opossum*, 126–27; López Austin, *Tamoanchan, Tlalocan*, 12–13; López Austin, "The Natural World," 270.
134. López Austin, "The Natural World," 270.
135. See W.V.O. Quine, *Word and Object* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1960); W.V.O. Quine, *From a Logical Point of View*, 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1961); Philip Kitcher, *Abusing Science: The Case against Scientific Creationism* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982); and W. H. Newton-Smith, ed., *A Companion to the Philosophy of Science* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000).
136. López Austin, *Tamoanchan, Tlalocan*, 22–23.
137. See López Austin, "The Natural World," 270. López Austin, *Human Body and Ideology*, I: 57–59, 208–9; López Austin, *Rabbit on the Face of the Moon*, 112; López Austin, *Tamoanchan, Tlalocan*, 3, 40, 101–20; and León-Portilla, *Aztec Thought and Culture*, 52–53, 80–103.
138. López Austin, *Tamoanchan, Tlalocan*, 84–122, 46–47n9.
139. *Popol Vuh: The Definitive Edition of the Mayan Book of the Dawn of Life and the Glories of Gods and Kings*, intro., trans., and commentary by Dennis Tedlock (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985), 160–67, italics mine.
140. López Austin's earlier interpretation of the Quiché myth of human creation appears to contradict this interpretation of the myth of Tamoanchan. He argues the Quiché myth "indicates that the southern Maya perceived the supernatural *more* as a condition brought about by a reduction in man's perception than as a characteristic, distinct sector of the universe" (López Austin, *Human Body and Ideology*, I: 383, emphasis mine. The "supernatural" — which I assume is equivalent to "light matter" — surrounds us but we simply cannot see it. Similarly, for the Aztecs the supernatural is "remote . . . because of man's limitations" — what I would call epistemologically remote — not because it is physically removed and existing in a sui generis realm. James Dow defends a view similar to mine when writing of indigenous Mesoamerican animism: "People believe that an animating force is contained within all living things and moving objects . . .

Animating forces are the essence of life . . . [T]he forces are part of the present world [but] the average person is just insensitive to them" (James W. Dow, "Central and North Mexican Shamans," in *Mesoamerican Healers*, ed. Brad R. Huber and Alan R. Sandstrom [Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001], 71). Shamans are able to perceive and manipulate these invisible powers.

141. Despite its obvious discordance with commonsense and ordinary sense perception, ontological monisms have been defended by philosophers as varied as Lao Tzu, Spinoza, Parmenides, and Śamkara. For discussion, see Scharfstein, *Comparative History of World Philosophy*; Lloyd, *Part of Nature*; Lloyd, *Spinoza and the Ethics*; Ames and Rosemont, *The Analects of Confucius*; Eliot Deutsch, *Advaita Vedānta: A Philosophical Reconstruction* (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1969); David Loy, *Nondualism: A Study in Comparative Philosophy* (Amherst, NY: Humanities Books, 1988); and Jonathan Barnes, *The Presocratic Philosophers* (London: Routledge, 1979).

142. Plato, *Plato: The Collected Dialogues*. For discussion, see Plato, *The Republic*, and Richard Lewis Nertleship, *Lectures on the Republic of Plato*, 2nd ed. (London: MacMillan & Co., 1963). Plato assigns less is-ness to illusion than to appearances. I ignore this difference for present purposes. I believe it is this sort of Platonic thinking about appearance (illusion) versus reality that underwrites Bierhorst's and León-Portilla's interpretations of the song-poems discussed above.

143. My understanding is indebted to Deutsch, *Advaita Vedānta*; Scharfstein, *Comparative History of World Philosophy*; and Loy, *Nondualism*. Advaita Vedānta claims there is only one thing: Brahman. Everything else that exists is identical with Brahman. Brahman is a single unified state of Being. It is unitary, whole, plain, formless, seamless, undivided and indivisible, without parts, without shape or structure, infinite, permanent, immutable, eternal, unmoving, omnipresent, unborn and undying, within everything, constant, and the self of everything. It lacks all differences, including those that depend upon space and time. Advaita Vedānta treats the following intuition as axiomatic: reality (or the real) is that which is permanent, eternal, immutable, and infinite. That which is real is characterized by, and is identical with *being* as such. It is that which *is*. Conversely, it claims that that which becomes, changes, moves, and divides is not real. Thus despite their other differences, Śamkara and Plato both embrace a metaphysics of Being, sharing the axiomatic intuition that that which is real does not change, and that which does change is not real. In this important respect, both differ fundamentally from Aztec philosophy's metaphysics of Becoming.

144. See Deutsch, *Advaita Vedānta*, 33.

145. Quoted in T. P. Kasulis, "Truth and Zen," *Philosophy East and West* 30 (1980): 460.

146. For discussion, see Julian Hochberg, "Gestalt Theory," in *The Oxford Companion to the Mind*, ed. Richard L. Gregory (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 288–91.

147. Tedlock, *Popol Vuh*, 167, emphasis mine.

148. Clifton Wolters, trans., *The Cloud of Unknowing* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1961).
149. *Cantares Mexicanos*, fol. 14 v, trans. Bierhorst (*Cantares Mexicanos*, 175). A thorough analysis of this song-poem would require examining the concept of *ahnelli*. I argue that *ahnelli* is best understood as untrue in the sense of being unrooted and inauthentic (Maffei, "Why Care about Nezahualcoyotl? Veritism and Nahua Philosophy," *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 32, no. 1 [2002]: 71–91).
150. *Cantares Mexicanos*, fol. 5v, trans. Bierhorst (*Cantares Mexicanos*, 149).
151. León-Portilla, *Aztec Thought and Culture*, 71–72; León-Portilla, *Fifteen Poets*, 153. León-Portilla advances this interpretation in the course of arguing that Aztec culture contained philosophers and philosophical inquiry commensurate with pre-Socratic Greece. Here he attributes to Tochihuitzin Coyolichiqui a Cartesian-like skeptical doubt about the reality of existence based upon the possibility that we are dreaming. Bierhorst (*Cantares Mexicanos*, 49–50) raises the possibility of Christian influence in these song-poems and urges caution in interpreting their metaphysical significance.
152. It is still possible, of course, that Tochihuitzin Coyolichiqui subscribes to premise 1 and that he is breaking away from the Aztec philosophical mainstream. León-Portilla however gives no reasons for thinking this is so.
153. López Austin, *Human Body and Ideology*, I:chapter 6.
154. López Austin, *Human Body and Ideology*, I:222–23; see also Jill Leslie McKeever Furst, *The Natural History of the Soul in Ancient Mexico* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), chapter 16; and Timothy J. Knab, *A War of Witches: A Journey into the Underworld of the Contemporary Aztecs* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995).
155. López Austin, *Human Body and Ideology*, I:224.
156. *Ibid.* Molina translates *cocitihua* as "for someone who has been sleeping to leap out of bed" (Alonso de Molina, *Vocabulario en lengua castellana y mexicana y mexicana y castellana*, 4th ed. [Mexico City: Porrúa, 2001], 2:23r). The word's root verbs are *cobi*, "to dream" (Molina, *Vocabulario*, 2:23r), and *shua*, "to get up, to get out of bed" (Frances Karttunen, *An Analytical Dictionary of Nahuatl* [Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983], 36, 76). Because the sections are paginated differently, scholars cite the Spanish-to-Nahuatl section of Molina's dictionary as Part 1 and the Nahuatl-to-Spanish section as Part 2.
157. For the former see Bernardino de Sahagún, *Florentine Codex: General History of the Things of New Spain*, ed. and trans. Arthur J. O. Anderson and Charles Dibble (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research and University of Utah, 1953–82), VI:82; for the latter, Sahagún, *Florentine Codex*, VI:8, 25, 44, 45, 47, 49, 52, 65, 64, 138.
158. Molina, *Vocabulario*, 2:97v, see also Karttunen, *Analytical Dictionary*, 223. Molina (*Vocabulario*, 2:97v) translates *temiquiliztli* as "dream."
159. See Sahagún, *Florentine Codex*, VI:8, 25, 44, 45, 47, 49, 52, 65, 64, 138.
160. For example, see Sahagún, *Florentine Codex*, VI:25, 44, 45, 47, 49, 52, 65, 64, 138.)
161. Sahagún, *Florentine Codex*, VI: 9.
162. "sueño vano y no verdadero" (Molina, *Vocabulario*, 2:49v).
163. "sueño verdadero" (Molina, *Vocabulario*, 2:55r).
164. Sahagún, *Florentine Codex*, VI:9; see also 8, 181. My discussion of dreams is indebted to R. Joe Campbell's unpublished concordance of instances of *temiqui* in the *Florentine Codex* (Campbell, personal correspondence, 8/4/2005).
165. Campbell, *Morphological Dictionary*, 307.
166. Timothy J. Knab, *The Dialogue of Earth and Sky: Dreams, Souls, Curing and the Modern Aztec Underworld* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2004), 55.
167. Sahagún, *Florentine Codex*, XI:168.
168. *Ibid.*, XI:191.
169. Bernardino de Sahagún, *Primeros memoriales*. Paleography of Nahuatl Text and English Translation by Thelma Sullivan (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), fol. 85v.
170. The view that dreams are real and epistemological probative is upheld by contemporary Nahuatl-speakers and other indigenous peoples in Mexico. See Knab, *Dialogue of Earth and Sky*; Sandstrom, *Corn Is Our Blood*; and Brad R. Huber and Alan R. Sandstrom, eds., *Mesoamerican Healers* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001).