


On the emergence of peoples: Schelling's Philosophy of Mythology and Amazonian Cosmology

Sobre a emergência dos povos: A Filosofia da Mitologia de Schelling e a cosmologia amazônica

Wagner Félix ^[a] 

Maringá, PR, Brasil

^[a] Universidade Estadual de Maringá

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Abstract

In the Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology, Schelling develops the intuition that what is common to all mythologies is the fact they are a theogony that narrates the actual becoming of Gods in consciousness. Mythology therefore has a commonality with nature, as it is a world closed off in itself, and to consciousness, it is that which has been formed in the past. Schelling postulates a relative monotheism as such past, preceding the polytheistic moment of the gods to which mythologies bear witness. This is understood as an inaugural moment in the formation of the consciousness of divinity, and the transition from relative monotheism to polytheism is seen as a necessary development towards absolute, non-mythological monotheism in the history of peoples. If we are to conclude that the positivity of mythology is the production of consciousness itself from a singular principle, we must

[a] PhD in Philosophy by the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, e-mail: wdcfelix@uem.br

ask whether it is not only necessary for this principle to assume that there is a relationship between consciousness and divinity, but also whether the “natural history of consciousness”, and consequently the very emergence of peoples from a common humanity, necessarily unfolds according to this principle, or whether it is possible to suppose that radically different cosmological conceptions imply the emergence of other consciousnesses, whose theogony is radically distinct. Such experience is arguably found among Amazonian peoples, whose cosmologies reveals an understanding of the differentiation of human and non-human peoples according to the perspective in which oneself is in relation with those they share “humanity” and the others. To establish a comparison, we will examine the role of a presumed spiritual crisis at the root of the emergence of peoples according to Schelling's account of mythology in general and in the account of the cosmology of the Yanomami people by David Kopenawa and Bruce Albert.

Keywords: Idealism. Mythology. Amazonian Cosmology. Consciousness. Theogony.

Resumo

Na Introdução Histórico-Crítica à Filosofia da Mitologia, Schelling desenvolve a intuição de que o que é comum a todas as mitologias é o fato de serem uma teogonia, que narra o próprio devir dos deuses na consciência. A mitologia tem, portanto, um ponto em comum com a natureza, pois é um mundo fechado em si mesmo, e para a consciência, é aquilo que se formou no passado. Schelling postula um monoteísmo relativo como tal passado, precedendo o momento politeísta dos deuses de que as mitologias dão testemunho. Este é entendido como um momento inaugural na formação da consciência da divindade, e a transição do monoteísmo relativo para o politeísmo é vista como uma evolução necessária para o monoteísmo absoluto, não mitológico, na história dos povos. Se quisermos concluir que a positividade da mitologia é a produção da própria consciência a partir de um princípio singular, devemos perguntar se não é apenas necessário que esse princípio assuma que existe uma relação entre consciência e divindade, mas também se a “história natural da consciência”, e consequentemente a própria emergência dos povos a partir de uma humanidade comum, se desenrola necessariamente de acordo com esse princípio, ou se é possível supor que concepções cosmológicas radicalmente diferentes implicam a emergência de outras consciências, cuja teogonia é radicalmente distinta. Tal experiência pode ser encontrada entre os povos amazônicos, cujas cosmologias revelam uma compreensão da diferenciação entre povos humanos e não-humanos de acordo com a perspectiva em que se está em relação com aqueles que partilham a “humanidade” e os outros. Para estabelecer uma comparação, examinaremos o papel de uma suposta crise espiritual na origem da emergência dos povos, de acordo com o relato de Schelling sobre a mitologia em geral e com o relato da cosmologia do povo Ianomâmi por David Kopenawa e Bruce Albert.

Palavras-chave: Idealismo. Mitologia. Cosmologia Amazônica. Consciência. Teogonia.

Introduction

In the *Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, Schelling articulates the insight that all mythologies share a common thread – at their core, they are fundamentally a theogony, “an actual becoming of God in consciousness, to which the gods are only related as the individual, productive moments” (SW XI, 198).¹ From this perspective, mythology has a commonality with nature, “to be a world closed off in itself, and to be a past in relation to us” (SW XI, 223). Schelling postulates a relative monotheism as such past, preceding the polytheistic moment of the gods to which mythologies bear witness. This preceding monotheism is understood as an inaugural moment in the formation of the consciousness of divinity, a god-positing consciousness previous to the act of self-consciousness, and the transition to polytheism is seen as a necessary development towards the absolute, non-mythological monotheism in the history of peoples. This historical monotheism, according to Schelling, “could have been preserved through nothing so decisively as through the consciousness of One universal God common to all humanity” (SW XI, 199), which is not identical with the idea of the one revealed God, but is nevertheless an “unconditioned, absolute One, which will subsequently be the first God of the successive polytheism”, and dominates the consciousness of the universal, unified humanity (XI, 181).

The contemporary debate on Schelling's philosophy of mythology is situated within the broader interpretive conflict concerning his late philosophy, primarily framed by the dispute between Walter Schulz and Horst Fuhrmans (Gabriel, 2006, 13). Schulz advocates for a radicalized idealist reading, viewing the late system as the completion of German Idealism through the mediated self-mediation of reason, which incorporates its own otherness. In this context, mythology could be seen as a necessary moment in reason's historical self-appropriation of a transcendent, unthinkable being. Conversely, Fuhrmans posits a decisive break with idealism, subordinating reason to an ontotheological project concerned with the historical essence of being itself, which would align mythology more directly with a theory of divine self-revelation independent of reason's autonomous movement. This fundamental division informs readings of the *Philosophy of Mythology*. A dominant ontotheological current, acknowledged by both sides, interprets the mythological process as the historical unfolding of the absolute's self-realization, often with a Christian-revelatory endpoint. We intend to engage this framework not through the internal tensions within the history of European philosophy, but by testing its universalist claim of a necessary theogonic development against anthropological data from Amazonian cosmologies. This move echoes earlier existentialist receptions that emphasized facticity and the limits of reason but pushes them into a new, cross-cultural comparative domain, questioning if the Schellingian principle is the sole possible path for consciousness or merely one specific historical manifestation.

This historical ground of consciousness is proposed by Schelling in the *Historical-Critical Introduction* as the idea of relative monotheism, which is the true content of mythology, and which is thus capable of explaining mythology as something in itself proper and autonomous; a content that is therefore fundamentally religious, but not immediately doctrinal. To propose his thesis, Schelling first

¹ We use the following edition for Schelling's works: Schelling, F. W. J. (1856). *Sämmtliche Werke. I Abtheilung Vols. 1–10, II Abtheilung Vols. 1–4*. Cotta, referenced by the acronym “SW”, followed by volume number in Roman numerals and page number in Arabic numerals. The translation of the passages from the *Historical-critical introduction to the philosophy of mythology* are from Mason Richey and Markus Zisselsberger (Schelling, 2008).

thoroughly examines traditional ancient and modern interpretations of mythology in the first lectures of the work with the intent to discard them all. He criticizes the previous attempts to explain mythology as either a product of philosophy or poetry, or a combination of both. The poetic origin would explain mythology as deriving from an original impetus of poetic creation, and since poetry is “the natural antithesis of truth” (SW XI, 10), the gods would be in this view the mere expression of human ingenuity and contain nothing true. The philosophical hypotheses, on the other hand, attribute truth to mythology only insofar as a moral doctrine or a state of things is introduced into the story of the gods, who would serve as a veil that would conceal the truth that is either merely historical and elevated to the status of legend, or a moral doctrine, or speculative knowledge about the nature of natural phenomena, which, however, would be knowledge that for some reason could not be communicated directly, but only allegorically. Schelling carefully constructs the case that mythology must be considered on its own, and not as something emerging from fully developed forms of either philosophy or poetry, or either both working jointly as content and form.² Mythology should also be distinguished from straightforward religion, a *Gotteslehre*, a collection and theory of practices and teachings. Schelling's negative reasoning in his path to assert to singularity of mythology is convincingly successful, and we are left with no choice other than acknowledge its discrete nature; otherwise, the philosophy of mythology could never be elevated from being a subset from a philosophy of art, or even a form of literary criticism of historical interest. But then, the question remains: if mythology is radically distinct from all human endeavours, may it be poetry, religion, or philosophy, what is then left for it?

Mythology as the system of the gods

Schelling's fundamental insight is that mythology is not allegorical, i.e., a discourse that means something else than it says, but *tautegorical*, i.e., it manifests the “inherence of meaning in being” (Whistler, 2015, p. 126): “To mythology the gods are actually existing essences, gods that are not something else, do not mean something else, but rather mean only what they are” (SW XI, 196). Mythology as the history of the becoming of gods is therefore concurrent with the natural history of consciousness, not in the sense that this history is reflectively investigated and narrated, but as the movement through which consciousness experiences its own organic formation, and most of all, as the expression of the authentic temporality of this becoming. Mythology is the tautegorical, i.e., properly symbolic, posit of time, as the consciousness of the peoples project the horizon of its meaningfulness from the remembrance of their past and reaffirms the “ewige Anfang”, the eternal beginning of its entrance in the world, or its authentic potentiality for being (*eigentlich Seynkönnen*), what Schelling understands as the first potency. According to Markus Gabriel,

As the possibility of all that exists, the first potency is thus everything, but in such a way that it is not everything as such, namely it is not. It follows from this that the first power cannot possibly already be

² Beach (1994) offers a detailed account of Schelling's arguments against the traditional interpretations of mythology, discussing Schelling's own criticism of the euhemeristic tradition and the modern attempts of Christian Heyne and Gottfried Hermann to decipher the supposed allegorical character of Greek myths. Beach further shows how ingrained the allegorical view of mythology had become by the 18th century, through authors such as Samuel Bochart, Pierre Huet and Thomas Carlyle, who each in his way sought to connect the Greek gods to natural phenomena or ancient Jewish historical figures.

the whole of being that metaphysics has always sought, which Schelling wanted to show with his brief historical outline, but only a moment of 'what is being in every sense' [...] (Gabriel, 2006, p. 125).

The god-positing consciousness is as such the fundamental moment in the emergence of consciousness, that cannot derive from any other experience because it sets the very possibility of meaning for each and every experience, not in an abstract, universal sense, but tautegorically, i.e., as the synthesis of the universal and the particular, of the Godhead in itself as it manifests in the singular figure of a god. Mythology "represents a communion of meaning and being" (Gabriel, 2006, p. 262) that supports Schelling's argument that asserts mythology was meant as truth and therefore, has an authentic religious core. This view must contend with the varied interpretations that in one form or other presupposes a religious doctrine that was later corrupted or obscured by various factors, in such a way that mythology as we receive it through its poetic forms is not itself capable of representing authentic religious ideas, but would have in its background some sort of innate understanding of actual gods. The author examines the different ways that the religious meaning of mythology can be conceived and rejects the idea that it is based on a fear of natural forces or a projection of human attributes onto invisible beings, as these explanations do not account for the concept of the gods as actual and feared beings. Another examined theory holds that God is only a latent presence in mythology, a potential being that is not fully expressed. According to this theory, if we assume that there is an innate law of instinct that guides the development of mythology, then we can imagine that humanity has gradually explored different aspects of nature, finding and losing God at each stage, until it reaches the highest level of God, who transcends and surpasses all the lower levels. In this way, God would be the ultimate goal and meaning of the ascending movement of mythology, and the various gods of polytheism would be only partial expressions of God (SW XI, 77).

However, this theory faces a serious objection: how could such a humanity have ever conceived of God as a pure spirit, an omniscient, omnipotent, and infinite being, rather than as a limited, passionate, and corporeal being like themselves? Would it not be more plausible to think that humanity started with simple and concrete ideas and then progressed to more abstract and complex ones, rather than the other way around? (SW XI, 80) If mythology, however, is a corruption of the revealed truth, that that would not be enough to presuppose a general idea of God for its origin, but only a specific and determinate one. Such a claim would imply that God has revealed himself as the true and only God, and that this revelation was initially preserved and transmitted by a chosen people but, as the revelation spread to other peoples, or as time and tradition altered its original form, the unity and purity of the idea of God was gradually lost, and the various elements of the revelation became more independent and developed into separate gods. In this way, mythology would be a degenerated form of monotheism, which, according to Schelling, is the most advanced stage of the views on mythology (SW XI, 90).

The author then considers the possibility of having a religious doctrine precede polytheism and distinguishes between the notion of an inborn lore of God (the *notitia insita*, or the doctrine of natural revelation), which is a vague and potential consciousness of God that seeks to find him in nature, and the notion of a formal doctrine, which is a clear and rational concept of God that is derived from reason or revelation. The author argues that the former notion is more plausible and compatible with the emergence of polytheism, as it allows for a gradual and diverse development of the religious instinct in different peoples

and cultures, whereas the latter notion is more problematic and requires a divine revelation that is either preserved or distorted. Schelling then reviews the historical attempts to explain mythology as a corruption of a revealed truth and criticizes them for being based on a limited and literal reading of the Christian Old Testament, or on a fanciful and arbitrary identification of biblical figures with mythological ones. Finally, Schelling presents in his view the most recent and sophisticated view, which is based on the discovery of the affinity and correspondence of the various mythological systems, and which posits a common and original system of representations that contains a monotheistic unity and a multiplicity of divine manifestations, derived from a primordial revelation – as distinct as it is from true revelation – given to the whole of the human species. Explaining how this system was gradually lost or transformed by the separation and diversification of the peoples, it is stated that it resulted in different degrees and forms of polytheism, ranging from the more doctrinal and monstrous, to the more poetic and beautiful, which Schelling identifies with the Hindu and Greek traditions respectively (SW XI, 91).

For the author, the only satisfactory explanation for the emergence of polytheism is that it presupposes a historical monotheism before the separation of peoples. He claims that there is no other cause for the division of humanity into different nations than the appearance of various gods in the previously unified consciousness. Schelling further contends that the unity of the human species, which he regards as a positive fact that requires a cause, could have been maintained only by the consciousness of one universal God common to all humanity, raising the question of whether this universal God was necessarily the one true God of revealed monotheism, or whether he could have been a different kind of God that allowed for some degree of mythological representation; to answer this question, Schelling introduces the notion of a *successive polytheism*, different from a system that involves a multiplicity of gods subordinated to a single highest God, instead involving a succession of gods that replace each other as the highest and dominating ones (SW XI, 122). He asserts that only the second type of polytheism is the true and authentic one, and that it implies a radical break from the previous unity and singularity of God.

Successive polytheism emerges as the authentic explanation of mythology because, as a system of the generation of gods, the temporal relationship between the dominant gods that succeed each other can only be understood as a real succession that attests to the historical fact of mythology, and not an imagined past projected from contemporary speculation of a people seeking for explanations for its own origin. The real, past god is effectively the memory of the moment of its domination in the spiritual consciousness of a people, and it is from the crisis from which the present god emerges as the dominant force that that god can become the past god:

Such a sequence of the gods cannot be merely imagined, and it cannot be invented; whoever fashions a god for himself or others at least makes a present one for himself and others. It violates nature that something be immediately posited as past; it can only become what is past; thus it must have initially been present. Whatever I am supposed to perceive as what is past, I must first have perceived as something present. What never had reality for us can never become for us a stage, a moment; the earlier god, however, must be really held firmly as a stage, a moment; otherwise no successive polytheism could emerge. At one time it must have dominated and even entirely captured consciousness; and when it has disappeared, it could not have disappeared without resistance and struggle, for otherwise it would not have been retained (SW, XI 123).

The becoming of the gods in mythical narratives is grounded in the temporality of the consciousness of divinity. What Schelling makes clear is that the temporality of the generation of the gods does not occur in consciousness as a mere representation of a past but are the real moments of the formation of the consciousness of divinity, and, by extension, of the formation of the spiritual life of a people. The question of spiritual crisis as the basis for the separation of peoples, as elaborated by Schelling, presupposes a historical event that has been overcome and that establishes a definitive division: on the one hand, peoples who have overcome the trauma of the loss of primordial unity and have constituted themselves as nations with language, law, and religion; on the other, those who, unable to overcome their fear, became "secondary products" of the crisis, relegated to a prehistoric existence and deprived of the constituent elements of a people. As Wirtz writes, "The crisis thus divided humanity into two groups: the first developed into peoples; the second remained excluded from history" (Wirtz, 2022, p. 184). This view establishes a clear line of temporal overcoming, where the crisis is a founding event located in the past, whose outcome determines the historical status or otherwise of a group. The testimony of Spanish naturalist Félix Azara, on which Schelling largely relies for historical confirmation of his conception of the emergence of peoples, through his account of the Guarani people in the late 18th century, provides the empirical justification for this very division, classifying certain groups as lacking the necessary historical consciousness to be considered a "people," thereby exemplifying the exclusionary consequence of Schelling's philosophical system. We intend to counter Schelling's position by arguing that a people's consciousness can emerge in a radically different form than his concept of historical consciousness. The contemporary critique of Schelling's ethnological views constitutes a multi-layered scholarly effort to confront the profound exclusionary principles within his philosophy of mythology. Beyond simply condemning Schelling's reliance on biased sources like Félix de Azara, current scholarship, exemplified by Depew (2015), Wirtz (2022) and Félix (2024) engages philosophically by interrogating Schelling's very definition of "humanity" as a historical condition achieved through a specific theogonic process rather than as a biological species. This framework is then productively contrasted with Amerindian perspectivism, as analyzed by anthropologists like Viveiros de Castro and Descola, which posits a radically different cosmological principle where "humanity" is a relational condition inhabited by multiple types of subjects, and divinity is plural and non-teleological.

In contrast to Schelling's conception of a spiritual crisis that establishes a definitive historical division – where consciousness, once established in the substantial unity of a people, subordinates the mythical past to an overcome and inactive position – Yanomami cosmology articulates crisis as a permanent and inescapable condition of the cosmos, which requires continuous negotiation. For Schelling, the mythical-historical crisis is a founding event which, once resolved, allows consciousness to position itself on a new level of unity and mastery, subordinating previous powers in a teleological process. The emergence of the gods and the constitution of peoples are thus phenomena inextricably linked to the objectification of a substantial divine consciousness and the definitive overcoming of a monstrous origin. In radical opposition to this teleology, the crisis in the Yanomami narrative, as expressed by Davi Kopenawa, is not an event that has been overcome, but the very relational fabric of a cosmos in perpetual struggle.

In Schelling's account, the presence of the gods is entirely founded on their having come to be, on the realisation of their potentiality from a real crisis in which the obscured past is preserved in the memory of its monstrosity. The overcoming of the crisis and the becoming of the gods is the establishment of the present time of a people. The spiritual crisis as remembered in mythology is the testimony of the act through

which the temporal caesura that grounds the emergence of the peoples is given voice. The relationship between the consciousness of the past gods and the present divinity that dominates consciousness could not be explained by the idea of linear time, but itself reveals the actualization of the historicity of a people in which its origin and destiny are formed. It is essential to notice that the temporal actualization of the consciousness of divinity remembers the past gods as that which has been overcome; the crisis itself is not an active crisis, and the history of the gods, as much as of the peoples themselves, has been told, as Schelling states:

However, the time of the crisis of the peoples precedes the completed separation. This time of crisis, as transition to the historical time, is to this extent properly pre-historical, but yet, to the extent that something happens and occurs in it too, it is only pre-historical in relation to the so-called historical time in the strictest sense—and so is in itself also historical; thus it is only relatively the pre-historical or historical time (SW XI, 181).

This is even more noticeably in the history of the non-mythological god, the revealed god, whose history is intertwined with that of freedom. As we understand it from Schelling's 1809 *Treatise on human freedom*, known as the *Freiheitsschrift*, free will is not a faculty of the subject, in the sense of a modification of its substance, but the existence of which I am is, in fact, a property of freedom; the human being, a free, rational subject, is the mediation through which freedom is realised on the horizon of history. The history of practical freedom, of our actions, decisions, and motives, however, will be the reflection of its own temporality that goes back to the original synthesis that does not allow itself to be completely grasped by a conceptual discourse. The history of freedom Schelling envisages in the *Freiheitsschrift* is the theological narrative of the creation and the fall, and the task of philosophy will be, in his understanding, since the *Freiheitsschrift*, the investigation of the will of God understood as the rupture of freedom *in the world* and *as the world*, that is, as the conscious and unconscious activity of the spirit – in other words, as Nature itself. As the various unfinished versions of the project that closely followed the *Freiheitschrift*, that of the *Ages of the World (die Weltalter)* attest, the investigation of freedom becomes the question of why God creates space and time, and thereby withdraws from creation, and gives way to the natural world, which Schelling calls “the new world of movement” (SW VIII, 230). The parallel between the becoming of the gods and the emergence of the natural world is a recurrent theme throughout the *Philosophy of Mythology*, and, although, again, not a linear, chronological succession, it is an exponential one in which each epoch overcomes the antecedent and consciousness posits itself anew, ever so capable to look into itself from its elevated position.³ “No time, no power is erased in each epoch: it continues to exist but subordinating itself to the one prevailing in this time”⁴; as nonlinear as Schelling's comprehension of historicity may be, and consequently, of successive

³ “The transition from that homogenous concrete being to that which is higher and more developed—where peoples already exist, that is, the whole of spiritual differences—fashions itself of itself just as little as, for example, the transition from the inorganic to organic nature, with which that transition is indeed comparable. For if in the realm [XI 130] of the inorganic all bodies still repose in common heaviness, and even warmth, electricity, and everything similar is still common to them, then along with the organic beings emerge self-sufficient central points, entities existing for themselves, which possess all of this as their own and employ the heaviness itself — which they have received in their power—as free force of movement. Accordingly, the principle that preserved humanity in its unity could not be an absolute one; it had to be one that another was able to follow and by which it was moved, transformed, ultimately even conquered.” (SW XI, 129-130)

⁴ Ana Carrasco-Conde offers an insightful overview of Schelling's schematic temporality: “The problem of the historicity (*Geschichlichkeit*) of the Absolute, of time and of the becoming of history, in Schelling's view, turns every scientific exposition of the Absolute into a story in which

polytheism, it constitutes a processual, historical totality, grounded on the substantiality of the unifying principle that dominates each moment of the history of the gods, and, according to Schelling, necessarily presupposes a further grounding principle as “the one god” that “remains unsublated in consciousness”, and is fundamentally related to the concept of a unifying humanity, to the point that the “original man” located on “suprahistorical time”, I quote, “can only be consciousness of God, not bound up with an *Actus*, [...] thus the purely substantial consciousness of God” (SW XI, 184).

Schelling's concept of the god-positing consciousness as the core character of mythology and theogony in general is therefore grounded on the conception of a substantial consciousness of divinity, i.e., its objectivation in a particular form that can be represented as the coming into being of the gods as past, complete, non-active, even if the Godhead itself refuses, according to Schelling, its possible determination as a particular substance: “If God were already everything from necessity, then God would be nothing through freedom. And yet God is, according to general consensus, the most voluntaristic being” (SW VIII, 210). This non-substantial God, however, can only be thought of from the perspective of the revealed God, and is clear that Schelling can only understand the mythological gods as particular substances that nevertheless, as tautegorical figures, contains the universal divinity as the symbolic indifference of their simultaneous finite and infinite nature. The emergence of such mythological consciousness, for Schelling, assumes that the relative absolute God that precedes the polytheistic generation of gods grounds the substantiality of their being; the presentification of divinity in the figures of the particular gods anticipates the work of freedom that is only fully realised in the revelation of the absolute God, as much as the productive moments of the formation of consciousness are only meaningfully understood from the perspective of the act of self-determination of consciousness that is simultaneously the absolute act of freedom.

Spirits, animals, and other consciousness

The question remains, however, if this is a *necessary* history of consciousness, i.e., that a god-positing consciousness unfolds itself through successive polytheism and revelation to the self-determining I from the unifying idea of a God “who kept the development of the human race on the first level of Being that is divided by mere *natural* or tribal differences, but which otherwise is *completely uniform* [...]” (SW XI, 175), or if this assertion could be challenged by radically distinct experiences of mythology.

In a stark contrast, in the amazonian cosmologies we take as reference for this discussion, we would certainly recognize the becoming of gods and the formation of the world in mythical narratives that expresses a spiritual crisis as a foundational moment of their own coming into being as peoples. Fundamentally, however, we would arguably not find in such cosmologies the idea that such crisis has been

Past, Present and Future form the reverberations of a processual, historical totality that has to be narrated epically. These reverberations point to an understanding of time that, far from being understood as a succession of “now-points”, presents the Past (*Vergangenheit*) as that which has never ceased to be: *tò tì ên êinai* (*quod quid erat esse*), that is, the past that has never been present but only for which “was”, “is” and “will be” are possible; the Present (*Gegenwart*) for its part shows itself literally as “*Gegenwart*”, that is, as a “being vigilant” (*warten*) “against” (*gegen*), so that it is to be understood in its opposition to a past from which it draws its own force and which remains as that which is hidden in the background, but in the mode of a latency, of an absolute power; and the Future (*Zukunft*) is that which the present attains by taking force from the past itself: it is the to-be (*Zu-kunft*). No time, no power is erased in each Age: it continues to exist but subordinating itself to the one prevailing in this time” (Conde, 2009, p. 99).

overcome, and that the dominance of consciousness by a substantial figure of divinity has been established in opposition to a monstrous origin. A common trait in these cosmologies is the role of the shaman as incessant negotiator of an ever present “spiritual crisis”. The difference between shamans and lay people is a matter of degree, not of nature. According to Viveiros de Castro, “[...] the words we translate as ‘shaman’ do not designate something that one “is,” but something that one “has” — an adjectival and relational quality or capacity rather than a substantive attribute, a quality that can be intensely present in many non-human entities, which abounds, needless to say, in “spirits,” and which can even constitute the generic potential of being” (Viveiros de Castro, 2006, p. 322).

To let a original testimony be heard about what constitutes a spiritual crisis in a mythological account alien to the european traditions familiar to Schelling, in the words of the Yanomami shaman Davi Kopenawa, *Omama*, the demiurge of earth and forest, of wind and waters, became furious with his brother *Yoasi* because the latter, against his will, had caused the evil beings of disease, the *ně wāri*, in Yanomami language, to appear in the forest, as well as those of the *xawara* epidemic, who, like them, are eaters of human flesh. “But it was too late, the damage had been done. Yoasi had taught us to die forever” (Kopenawa; Albert, 2013, p. 82). Kopenawa further narrates that the introduction of death met with a response from *Omama*, who then created the *xapiri*, the shamanic spirits through which the Yanomami people could take revenge for the diseases and protect themselves from death. *Omama* then taught his son to make the *xapiri*, come down and dance, to chase the evil beings away, becoming the first shaman.

Omama's son listened attentively to his father's words and concentrated his thoughts on the xapiri. He entered a ghostly state and became another. He was then able to contemplate the beauty of the dance in which the spirits performed. He quickly became a shaman because he knew how to show friendship to everyone. The xapiri had stared at him since he was very young and his father had often spoken about them. Now he had grown up and they had finally come in large numbers. He could see them descending, glowing with light, and hear their melodious songs. Then he exclaimed: "Father! Now I know the spirits and they have joined my side! From now on, humans will be able to multiply and fight disease!". Omama was the only one to know the xapiri and he gave them to his son because, if he died without having taught them his words, there would never have been any shamans in the forest (Kopenawa; Albert, 2013, p. 85).

The role of the shaman is to negotiate the points of view and divergences of beings between the peoples; not the historic constituted peoples, and not as messenger between divided worlds of nature and spirits, but as a transversal medium in the struggle of the cosmos in which humans and non-humans find themselves; the crisis is not past, neither is it “constantly present”. The temporality of the becoming of gods and peoples has not been resolved, and will not be, in the sense that no perspective could ever become the dominant in consciousness; in the becoming of the shamanic consciousness, reigns “an absolute fluent intensive difference, which affects each point of a heterogeneous continuum, where transformation is prior to form, the relationship is superior to the terms and the interval is interior to being” (Viveiros de Castro, 2006, p. 324). This cosmogonic process refuses the formation of a *subjectum* capable of subsuming the difference and could not be understood to be derived from a primordial consciousness that ultimately can only be the past for the consciousness that is in relation to the one God as it is “revealed”.

If we are to conclude with Schelling that the positivity of mythology is the production of consciousness from a singular principle, we must ask whether it is not only necessary for this principle to assume that there is, in general, a relationship between consciousness and divinity, but also whether the "natural history of consciousness", and consequently the very emergence of peoples from a common humanity, necessarily unfolds according to this principle, or whether it is possible to suppose that radically different cosmological conceptions do not imply, precisely, assuming the emergence of other consciousnesses, for which the experience of divinity is different. Such radical distinct experience as we find it among Amazonian peoples reveals a cosmological understanding of the differentiation of human and non-human peoples according to the perspective in which oneself is in relation with those they share "humanity" and the others. Anthropologists have proposed the concept of "perspectivism" to describe the aspect, common to many peoples of the American continent, according to which the world is inhabited by different kinds of subjects or people, human and non-human, who apprehend it from different points of view (Viveiros de Castro, 2004a).

Mythical narratives are populated by beings whose form, name and behaviour inextricably blend human and non-human attributes, in a common context of intercommunicability identical to that which defines the intra-human world today. Amerindian perspectivism then finds in myth a place, geometric as it were, where the difference between points of view is both cancelled and exacerbated. In this absolute discourse, each species of being appears to other beings as it appears to itself – as human – and yet acts as if it were already manifesting its distinctive and definitive nature as an animal, plant or spirit. In a way, all the characters that populate mythology are shamans, which is also affirmed by some Amazonian cultures. Discourse without a subject, Lévi-Strauss once said of myth; discourse 'only subject', we could also say, this time talking not about the enunciation of the discourse, but its enunciation. A universal vanishing point from perspectivism, myth speaks of a state of being where bodies and names, souls and actions, the self and the other interpenetrate, immersed in the same pre-subjective and pre-objective milieu. A milieu whose end mythology sets out to tell (Viveiros de Castro, 2004b, p. 229).

The notion of perspectivism in no way locates the debate on Amazonian cosmological conceptions in the schematism of our dual concepts and the critique of the history of our own thinking, opposing universalism and relativism. As Viveiros de Castro concludes, the classic distinction between Nature and Culture, or Nature and Spirit, cannot be used to describe dimensions or domains internal to non-Western cosmologies without first undergoing a rigorous ethnological critique. We could not reduce the differences between the cosmological accounts of Western and Amerindian traditions to a naturalistic explanation that would be inclined to acknowledge their experience of divinity as fundamentally the same, and only distinct through the externality of how their particular environments shape their language. Schelling's concept of the tautegorical character of mythology offers us the possibility of understanding myth as the immediate, authentic account of the symbolic, spiritual life of a people; an affirmation of the singularity and dignity of their existence that simply means they *exist*.

Final thoughts

Marc Richir, in his introduction to the French translation of Schelling's *Philosophy of Mythology*, proposes a distinction between mythology as a "narrative of the founding of the cosmic and socio-political order" and "mythical thought", coextensive with the types of society that Pierre Clastres rightly called

"societies against the State" (Richir, 1994, p. 7), and more importantly, societies against monotheistic thought, whether Jewish or philosophical monotheism, in modern times as in among the ancient Greeks. In his comparison, Richir starts by identifying several closely interrelated features: "the original multiplicity of myths, the locality of the symbolic problem that is dealt with each time" (Richir, 1994, p. 7) that we usually associate with mythical wonder, the generation and metamorphosis of beings one into another. Fundamentally, mythical thought

[...] is indeed the thought of human beings who think "against the State", that is, against the One: The One (and coercive power) constituting for them the risk of the implosion of the symbolic institution into the black hole of a chaos from which there is a risk of never being able to return, it is against this risk that mythical thought never ceases to recapture itself, right to the infinite, by multiplying its 'thought experiments' where each time, each time, on the occasion of a particular problem, it acts as if the symbolic institution preceded itself in order to re-engender itself, by recoding itself within itself, that is, by re-determining the terms of the symbolic problem which, by so doing, are likely to lead the problem to its resolution (Richir, 1994, p. 8).

According to Richir, Greek mythology tends towards the stability achieved by the domination of consciousness by a divine power in opposition to the monstrous past behind it, in order to avoid the "horror of anarchy" caused by a society "without power and without authority"; Amerindian myth, on the other hand, works against the risk of implosion of "the original multiplicity of the symbolic framework" by the coercive power of the One (Richir, 1994, p. 9); their cosmology actively refuses the settlement of their spiritual crisis, as it would mean to remove themselves from the potency of their origin. The teleology of Greek myth towards order, that Schelling expands to encompass the whole of consciousness, is in a sense as alien to Amerindian myth as Amerindian peoples are alien to Schelling, to the point that the author, in the *Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, infamously denies the Amerindians peoples their humanity, most of them nothing other than the blind faith in the words of the Spanish military engineer Felix Azara that Schelling inexplicably takes for an authority in what is and is not human, what is and is not language, what is and is not religion (SW XI, 40). The case, however, perhaps should not be that Schelling's, or the occidental, idea of humanity should be expanded and reformed to accommodate those who are, today, still subjected to its most cruel forms of domination, i.e., the annihilation of their possibility of being through its assimilation into the anthropotechnological *ethos* of western thought. The acknowledgment of the irreducibility of the forms of consciousness to a unifying principle should, at least, be considered as a beginning of a renewed, productive *philosophy of mythology* as a comparative method of experiences of thought that do not subordinate one to another.

Data availability statement

The main focus of this article is contributions of a theoretical or methodological nature, without the use of empirical data sets. Therefore, in accordance with the journal's editorial guidelines, the article is exempt from being deposited in SciELO Data.

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