

## **In *Huehue Tlamaniliztli* and *la Verdad*: Nahua and European Philosophies in Fray Bernardino de Sahagún's *Colloquios y doctrina cristiana***

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### **English Abstract**

Bernardino de Sahagún's *Colloquios y doctrina cristiana* reproduces an exchange that occurred in 1524 between the first twelve Franciscans sent to the New World and a group of Nahua elite. I argue the *Colloquios* contains no syllogistic debate and little genuine dialogue. Nahuas and Franciscans talk past one another in a case of what James Lockhart calls "double mistaken identity." Nahuas and Franciscans address one another from two, alternative philosophical orientations: what I call "path-oriented" and "truth-oriented" (respectively). These consist of two constellations of alternatively defined notions of wisdom, knowledge, reasoning, belief, language, morality, religion, and in the end, how to live. Truth-oriented philosophies define these notions in terms of truth. Path-oriented philosophies define these notions in terms of finding, making, and extending a lifeway.

### **Resumen en español**

El texto *Colloquios y doctrina cristiana* de Bernardino de Sahagún reproduce un intercambio que ocurre en el año 1524 entre los primeros doce franciscanos enviados al Nuevo Mundo y un grupo de élites Nahua. Propongo que *Colloquios* no contiene debate silogístico e incluye poco diálogo genuino. Los Nahua y los franciscanos hablan sin realmente comunicarse en un caso de lo que James Lockhart llama una "doble identidad equivocada" (double mistaken identity). Los Nahua y los franciscanos se dirigen los unos a los otros desde dos orientaciones filosóficas alternativas: las cuales yo llamo, respectivamente, las filosofías "orientadas por senderos" (path-oriented) y las que son "orientadas por la verdad" (truth-oriented). Éstas consisten en dos constelaciones de nociones alternativamente definidas de la sabiduría, el conocimiento, el razonamiento, la creencia, la lengua, la moral, la religión y, a fin de cuentas, cómo vivir. Las filosofías orientadas por la verdad definen tales nociones en términos de la verdad. Las filosofías orientadas por senderos definen tales nociones en términos de encontrar, hacer y extender una forma de vivir.

### **Resumo em português**

A obra *Colóquios e Doutrina Cristã*, de Bernardino de Sahagún, expõe um contato ocorrido em 1524 entre os primeiros doze franciscanos enviados ao Novo Mundo e um grupo da elite Nahua. Minha tese é que os *Colóquios* não contêm debate silogístico e apresentam breve diálogo autêntico. Tanto os franciscanos quanto os Nahuas discutiam sem se ouvir mutuamente, ocorrência a que James Lockhart chama de 'duplo equívoco de identidade'. Os franciscanos e os Nahuas dirigiam-se uns aos outros do

ponto de vista de duas orientações filosóficas diferentes: são as que eu designo como, respectivamente, 'caminho orientado' e 'verdade orientada'. Estas orientações consistem em dois grupos de noções definidas de maneira distinta sobre sabedoria, conhecimento, raciocínio, crença, linguagem, moralidade, religião e, enfim, sobre como viver. As filosofias baseadas em 'verdades orientadas' definem tais noções em termos de uma verdade. Filosofias baseadas em 'caminhos orientados' definem as mesmas em termos de descoberta, criação e prolongação de um modo de vida.

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I think it shows a remarkable deadness of imagination to suppose that philosophy [must] revolve within the scope of the problems and systems that two thousand years of European history have bequeathed to us. - John Dewey[1]

### The Nahuas Speak

In 1524 a group of indigenous rulers and priests from Tenochtitlan and Tlatelolco – whom I will call “Nahuas” – are alleged to have spoken as follows:

But as for us, whatever will we say to you now? Even though we are lords, we are people's mothers, we are people's fathers, perhaps then we, here before you, we shall destroy the ancient lifeway (*in huehue tlamaniliztli*)? That which our grandfathers, our grandmothers, considered great? That which the lords, the rulers condoned, admired?

And this, oh our lords: there are still those who guide us (*techiacana*), who carry us (*techitqui*), who bear us upon their backs (*intechmama*), because of their service to our gods, of whom we are penitents, tails, wings. It is said that they are wise in words (*tlatolmatinime*). And they attend their duties by night, by day. ... They observe, they attend to the journey, the steady movement of the sky, the way night divides in the middle. And they look at, they read, they lay out the books (*in amoxtli*), the black ink, the red ink. They are in charge of the writings. They are in charge of us. They guide us (*techiacana*), they tell us the path (*techotlatoltia*). They arrange in order (*quitecpana*) how a year falls, how the day count follows its path (*otlatoca in tonalpohualli*)...

But these words that you say are new. And so we are confused, so we are astonished. For our engenderers, who came to be, who came to live on the earth, they did not go speaking in this way. They gave us their lifeways (*intlamaniliz*). They steadfastly followed (*quineltocatihui*), they served, they venerated the gods. They taught us all their ways of serving, their ways of doing reverence; thus in their presence we eat earth, thus we bleed ourselves, thus we discharge our debts, thus we cast incense, and thus we kill things...

The poor old men, the poor old women, how will they forget, how will they destroy, that which was their education (*inezcatiliz*), their upbringing (*inehuapahualiz*)?

And perhaps, we will now destroy the ancient lifeway (*in huehue tlamaniliztli*)? The Chichimec lifeway? The Toltec lifeway? The Colhua lifeway? The Tepanec lifeway?...

We cannot find peace, and we do not yet go along, we do not yet make [what you say] rooted and authentic for ourselves (*titonelchiua*) even if we cause injury to your heart.[2]

These utterances emphasize a cluster of interrelated concepts that offers us a glimpse into the heart of contact-era Nahua philosophy: ancestors; ancient lifeways, customs, ceremonies, and traditions; education and upbringing; guiding; arranging and ordering; following a path; rootedness and authenticity; religion as a path and way of life; and lastly, the plurality of paths or lifeways.

## The Colloquios

Fray Bernardino de Sahagún presented these speeches in his *Colloquios y doctrina cristiana*.<sup>[3]</sup> The *Colloquios* is divided into two books. The first reproduces conversations that occurred between the first twelve Franciscans sent to the New World and a group of Nahua elite. Here the Franciscans focus on conversion, i.e., convincing the Nahuas of the universal and absolute truth of Christian doctrine. The second book contains a systematic exposition of sixteenth-century Catholic doctrine and catechism. It provides the theological foundations for the Franciscans' speeches in the first book.<sup>[4]</sup>

Sahagún cast the *Colloquios* in the genre of a colloquy consisting of a series of questions and answers. This dialogical format was modeled on a longstanding Christian conception of catechism, which in turn was based on both the Church's conception of the early conversations of the twelve apostles with intended converts, and on the dialogues of Socrates. Catechism standardly refers to oral instruction, especially where this involves the dialogue of questioning and answering. It is employed for instructing someone in the elements of religion and for preparing her for initiation into Christianity. Its goal is doctrinal and moral. It should lead to knowledge, yet this knowledge should lead to action. The dialogue of the *Colloquios* pivots on the truth of three revealed doctrines: the God of the Scripture is the one and only true God, creator of the universe; Scripture is true; Jesus is the Son of God.<sup>[5]</sup>

## The Franciscans Speak

The Franciscans speak as follows:

We ... bring the Sacred Scripture where are written the words of the only true God, Lord of the heaven and earth, who gives life to all things, of whom you have never known... Beloved friends, you have already heard that we have been encharged by the great Priest who sent us here that we preach to you, and declare to you the sacred scripture that through it you be illuminated and informed in the understanding of the one true God and Lord of Heaven and earth and hell. ... The one true God and Lord of all things many times appeared and spoke to his friends and loyal servants... To them he revealed the secret doctrine

and he commanded them to write it down so that here in the world it would be kept, and with it the inhabitants here in the world would be taught of divine things... These divine words and Sacred Scripture surpass all the doctrine and scripture that exist in the world... Being divine words they are very true, you should believe with every firmness and no single one of all the wise men in the world is sufficient to dispute or find fault with them... This Sacred Scripture...is an ancient thing; they are very true words, most certain, worthy of all belief.[6]

These statements emphasize a cluster of interrelated concepts that offers us a window into the heart of Franciscan philosophy: belief, doctrine, indoctrination, scripture, truth as a property of spoken and written word, epistemological certainty, and finally, the singularity, absoluteness and universality of Christian truth.

### What's Going On?

The *Colloquios* is an extremely rich document that allows numerous avenues of interrogation, analysis, and deconstruction.[7] I focus here on just one. I believe the *Colloquios* highlights the unstable “dialogical frontier” (as Tedlock[8] puts it elsewhere) between two alternative philosophical orientations: Franciscan and Nahua. Despite being forcibly seized and put into the ideological service of a “heavily controlled text” (to borrow from Ginsburg[9]) of hegemonic European catechism, the philosophical orientation of the Nahua ‘other’ nevertheless “leaks out” (Ginsburg[10]). Rather than reproducing a Socratic-style debate consisting of syllogistic arguments defending the truth versus falsity of logically incompatible theological doctrines and knowledge claims as León-Portilla maintains,[11] I contend the *Colloquios* contains no syllogistic debate and little, if any, genuine dialogue. Nahuas and Franciscans simply talk past one another in a case of what Lockhart calls “double mistaken identity.”[12] The philosophical borderland that emerges in the *Colloquios* is occupied not so much by two parties who make contradictory truth claims as it is by two parties who fundamentally misunderstand and fail to communicate with one another. Pace León-Portilla, I believe it is a twofold error to read the Nahuas as mounting a last-ditch, syllogistic defense of the truth of their religious beliefs since they neither (a) advance syllogistic arguments nor (b) conceive of religion as consisting of a corpus of beliefs, the truth of which permits syllogistic defense.

Claiming the *Colloquios* involves a failure to communicate is not novel. Dehouve cogently characterizes the *Colloquios* as “*un diálogo de sordos*” (dialogue of the deaf) on the grounds that the two parties enact alternative linguistic ideologies. The Franciscans’ “didactic speech” (*discursos didáctos*) aims “to convert, convince and indoctrinate” whereas the Nahuas’ “ceremonial speech” (*la antigua palabra*) aims “to reestablish harmony.”[13] I agree. However, I believe the explanation for this *diálogo de sordos* rests on something far more profound and comprehensive than alternative linguistic ideologies; indeed, something that incorporates linguistic ideologies. Franciscans and Nahuas speak from two alternative conceptions of philosophical inquiry: truth oriented (or veritistic) and path oriented (or right way), respectively.[14] Like León-Portilla, I therefore believe the Nahuas engaged in philosophical inquiry, yet

unlike León-Portilla I believe they practiced a distinctly non-European form of philosophy.[15]

The *Colloquios* presents a mutual encountering of “others.” At this critical meeting, how did each side choose to talk, what did each side choose to talk about, and why? The Franciscans speak of truth (*verdad*), God, transcendent reality, doctrine (*doctrina*), conversion, belief (*creencia*), creed, and the true written and spoken word. They speak comparatively little of the Christian way of life. They mean for the Nahuas to follow the path of Jesus but only logically posterior to accepting the truth of the word of Jesus. The Christian path is founded on Christian truth. The Nahuas, by contrast, speak of “*in huehue tlamaniliztli*” (the lifeway established by the ancients), “*neltiztli*” (rootedness), “*ohtli*” (path), and “*ohtlatoca*” (following a path).[16] They speak neither of the objective truth of their beliefs nor of the foundation of their lifeway in transcendent truth. They speak of following a path and the well-rootedness of that path.

These two clusters of concepts by no means logically entail alternative philosophical orientations, yet I suggest they are nevertheless strongly suggestive of them. The difference between truth-oriented and path-oriented philosophies consists in defining orientation and emphasis. Although the Franciscans obviously care deeply about following the Christian path, they nevertheless orient themselves first and foremost toward Biblical truth. They predicate the Christian path on revealed Christian truth. Although the Nahuas care deeply about their sacred books regarding the significance and movement of time-place, the *tonalpohualli*, they nevertheless orient themselves first and foremost toward finding, following, and furthering a path or lifeway. In short: the Franciscans privilege truth; the Nahuas privilege the path.

This difference cuts broadly and deeply. The Franciscans’ truth-oriented and the Nahuas’ path-oriented philosophies represent two alternative ways of doing philosophy that involve two parallel constellations of alternatively conceived notions of knowledge, thinking, belief, language, morality, religion, philosophy, and, in the end, how to live. Truth-oriented philosophies define these notions in terms of truth (e.g., apprehending, representing, believing, and basing one’s actions on truth). Philosophy is first and foremost a theoretical endeavor aimed at truth. Path-oriented philosophies understand these notions in terms of finding, following, making, and extending the path. Knowledge, reason, language, morality, and so on are about path making. Philosophy, like life itself, is first and foremost creative and practical.

The “double mistaken identity” that occurs in the *Colloquios* thus consists of the Franciscans interpreting the Nahuas as truth seekers, and the Nahuas interpreting the Franciscans as path seekers. When the Franciscans speak of “*la verdad*” (truth understood semantically in terms of correspondence), for example, the Nahuas hear “*neltiztli*” (well rootedness, self-disclosingness, authenticity) or “*nelli ohtli*” (rooted, true, or genuine path). The Nahuas are therefore understandably nonplussed when hearing the Franciscans proclaim that their Nahua lifeway is not well rooted. At the same time,

when the Aztecs speak of “*neltiliztli*,” the Franciscans hear “*verdad*.” Each side is deaf to the other. In what follows I examine these two alternative philosophical orientations.

Let us begin, however, by visiting Buddhism's Parable of the Poison Arrow as I believe it poignantly highlights the fundamental difference separating these two philosophical orientations.[17] While out walking one day, a surgeon comes upon a man lying on the ground with a poison arrow lodged in his back. He approaches the man saying, “I know how to remove the arrow in your back that is slowly poisoning you. May I do so and save your life?” The man replies, “Yes, but first you must tell me the truth about the man who shot the arrow -- his name, age, height, caste, and motivations -- and about the poison itself -- its name, origin, and composition.” The man perishes. The appropriate response, according to the Buddha, is to act: to remove the arrow and live. Truth is a fatal distraction. The human existential condition is one of always already suffering. Buddhism offers us a way to end our suffering, not a corpus of metaphysical truths. We do not need truth to solve the problem of *dukkha* (suffering, struggle, clinging). We need a way. Buddhism accordingly teaches a how, not a what, a method, not a theory.[18]

### Truth-oriented Philosophies

Truth-oriented (veritistic) philosophies -- including Franciscan Christianity and the lion's share of European philosophy since Plato -- are concerned first and foremost with answering theoretical questions such as “What is the truth?” and “What is real?”[19] Ogilvie writes, “Western thought, ever since the birth of philosophy in ancient Greece, has made truth the pivot of its activity, to the detriment of every other undertaking.”[20] It is said that Aristotle once remarked, “Plato is dear to me, but truth even more so.” Ogilvie sees this anecdote as highlighting a “decisive turning point” in Greek thought and Western philosophy. Aristotle subordinates the person of Plato to the problem of truth. He divorces truth from traditional sites of authority -- ancestors, sages, teachers, priests, and custom -- and makes truth the primary concern. Truth becomes the defining orientation and reference point of Western philosophical inquiry.[21]

Truth-oriented philosophies strive to get to the bottom of things by establishing axiomatic first principles, laws, or truths that characterize the way things *really* are. They standardly assume these truths form a single consistent system. There is a single way the world is, and the object of inquiry is to “cut the world at the joints,” as Plato famously put it. Once apprehended, truth-oriented philosophies express these truths linguistically, organizing them into theories intended to mirror the order of things. The order of truthful language thus re-presents the order of reality. Truth-oriented philosophies also emphasize orthodoxy or right belief, where right belief is defined in terms of truth. Truth-oriented epistemology assesses beliefs in terms of maximizing truth and minimizing falsehood. Once apprehended, truth serves as the logical and metaphysical foundation for practical prescriptions regarding proper conduct and living. Like the man wounded with the poison arrow, truth seekers insist on knowing the truth before acting. For the Franciscans, one must accept the truth of Christian doctrine before having the poison



arrow of sin removed and receiving salvation. The Christian way of life is founded on Christian truth.

Plato's Allegory of the Cave (*Republic*, Book VII) functions for truth seekers in the same way that the Parable of the Poison Arrow functions for path seekers, and therefore offers insight into truth-oriented philosophies.[22] Plato portrays humans living within a dim, fire-lit cave, i.e., within an illusory world of appearances where nothing is fully real, nothing is what it appears to be, and no truth exists. This is the physical world, the world of the senses, where humans live out their lives. In order for humans to live genuinely human lives, lives characterized by rationality, justice, goodness, balance, and *eudaimonia*, they must first apprehend universal, timeless transcendent metaphysical truths (the Forms) about the nature of things. This requires that someone – the philosopher – leave the cave, acquire knowledge (*noesis*) of transcendent truth outside the cave, and return to the cave with the light provided by truth. There is no possibility of humans' living properly without the light provided by ultimate truth: viz. the Form of the Good (the sun). Without this humans are condemned to stumble around miserably, slavishly, and irrationally -- misguided by belief (*pistis*) and imagination (*eikasia*) within the cave's dim shadows. For Plato, truth serves as the logical, metaphysical, and epistemological foundation of right belief and action. The contrast with Buddhism's parable could not be clearer. According to Plato, alleviating human suffering requires the prior apprehension of truth.

Let us return to the Franciscans. Although clearly more *praxis*-oriented and more devoted to instruction by concrete, living example than many other Christian orders, the Franciscans nevertheless "laid great claims to orthodoxy" (Burkhart), and insisted on instruction by word.[23] The twelve claimed knowledge (truthful apprehension) of the nature of God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and of the meaning of Holy Scripture. They claimed to know and communicate God's truth, and based their practical prescriptions on this foundation. They saw themselves as messengers of God and the Pope and hence of truth. The Franciscan Order's devotion to truth is evidenced by the fact that two of the foremost theologians of the late Middle Ages, John Duns Scotus and William of Ockham, were Franciscans. In New Spain the Franciscans sought to spread truth and impart orthodoxy through various venues, including the *Colegio de Santa Cruz*, which aimed at giving indigenous youths a sophisticated education in theology, logic, rhetoric, philosophy, grammar, history, jurisprudence, Latin classics, and Biblical studies.[24]

Truth-oriented philosophies conceive theoretical inquiry as logically fundamental and prior to practical inquiry. The proper end of theoretical inquiry is truth. As Heidegger observed, Western philosophy has overwhelmingly embraced a semantic-correspondence theory of truth, i.e., one that conceives truth in terms of a metaphysical relationship between the meaning (content) of a sentence, utterance, proposition, or mental state (e.g., belief), on the one hand, and reality (facts, states of affairs) on the other – the *adaequatio intellectus et rei*. The former are true if and only if they

“correspond to,” “agree with,” “mirror” or successfully “represent” or “describe” reality. [25]

Truth-oriented philosophies employ language first and foremost to represent, describe, report, or communicate information. Language is conceived as primarily descriptive and only secondarily performative, expressive, poetic, or enactive. What matters most is the relation between words and reality. They privilege the literal over the figurative, poetic, and metaphorical since the literal alone is capable of successfully mirroring reality.[26] Poetry and artful expression are ill-suited to this task. Thus Plato, for example, consigns poetry to the Cave since it is a mimetic art that imitates images and appearances, and consequently directs the soul away from transcendent truth.[27]

Truth-oriented philosophies commonly embrace a dualistic metaphysics that draws a distinction between appearance and reality as well as a hierarchical metaphysics that draws metaphysical distinctions between higher and lower levels (or degrees) of reality, transcendent and immanent, supernatural and natural, and sacred and profane. They also commonly embrace a substance metaphysics that conceives the ultimate constituents of reality as entities and that defines reality in terms of being, immutability, and permanence. That which is characterized by becoming and change, by contrast, is deemed apparent and only partially real.[28]

Truth-oriented philosophies embrace veritistic epistemologies. Knowledge, evidence, and justification are defined in terms of truth. Knowledge consists of the successful theoretical apprehension of principles, laws, facts, or states of affairs. Veritistic epistemologies understand knowledge theoretically as *know that*, i.e., as knowledge that such and such is the case (e.g., that Caesar crossed the Rubicon). They pursue orthodoxy. Knowledge requires right belief where right belief is defined in terms of truth. Knowledge, belief, acceptance, doubt, certainty, and so on are understood intellectualistically as states occurring within the inner sanctum of the mind or soul. They are intentional attitudes regarding the truth or falsity of propositions where the latter are, in turn, defined in terms of content or representation.

Truth seekers standardly embrace what Deleuze (following Spinoza and Nietzsche) calls a “morality” as opposed to an “ethics.”[29] Moralities posit the existence of transcendent, universal moral truths, ideals, laws, codes, principles, or commandments, and they evaluate the rightness versus wrongness of behavior in terms of these standards. They commonly speak in terms of transcendent good versus evil. Moral knowledge consists of apprehending these higher moral principles, rules, or facts. Moralities standardly reason syllogistically from premises that include statements of general moral truths to conclusions prescribing concrete behavior.

The Franciscans speak of the truth of their beliefs and the foundation of their Christian lifeway in universal, transcendent truth. Christian creed and praxis are grounded on universal truth that all people must recognize and follow. More generally, because they see their beliefs and lifeways as metaphysically anchored in universal



reality, truth seekers – be they secular or religious -- tend to be hostile to pluralism and intolerant of diversity.

Finally, truth-oriented religions such as Christianity emphasize orthodoxy.[30] Religion requires right belief defined in terms of truth. They conceive religion first and foremost as an intellectual affair consisting of a set of beliefs. As Campanini explains, "Religion is the depository of a universal message" consisting of the "fundamental truths...of faith." [31] One's religious identity consists first and foremost of what one believes, of one's creed, and only secondarily of how one acts. Truth-oriented religions also tend to be prophetic and evangelistic. Not surprisingly, so do truth-oriented philosophies. As Dewey argues in *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, the truth-oriented secular philosopher replaces the truth-oriented religious prophet as the person who accesses esoteric, transcendent truth and delivers it to the unenlightened.[32] Plato's Allegory of the Cave neatly illustrates Dewey's point.

### **Path-oriented Philosophies**

Path-oriented (right-way) philosophies are concerned first and foremost with answering questions such as "Where is the path?" and "How shall we act?" [33] They find themselves always already in a problematic situation that demands immediate practical attention. They primarily seek the right kinds of skills, behavior, thinking, emotions, and practices that lead one along or that create a path. Path-oriented philosophies accordingly proffer a how, not a what. They stress orthopraxy. They tend to be concrete, this-worldly, and action oriented. They also tend to eschew abstract concepts and principles as well as metaphysical speculation. Truth-oriented inquiry, if pursued, is logically ancillary and posterior to path-oriented inquiry. Wisdom, reasoning, knowledge, belief, language, and behavior (along with religion and culture) are understood without reference to semantic truth, mental content, or representation. Philosophy is about making and performing the path – not about truth. It is first and foremost a creative endeavor, not an intellectual or theoretical one. The path serves as its primary orientation and reference point.

Nahua philosophy begins with the observation that humans are always already navigating their way along a jagged mountain peak, and always already losing their balance, slipping, and consequently suffering pain, sorrow, hunger, disease, and death. [34] The Nahuas conceive the earth as a perilous place. Its name, *tlalticpac*, means "on the point or summit of the earth," suggesting a narrow, harpoon-sharp place surrounded by constant dangers.[35] Sahagún records in his *Historia General de Las Cosas de la Nueva España* a Nahua proverb expressing this theme: "*Tlaalahui, tlapetzcahui in tlalticpac*," "It is slippery, it is slick on the earth." Sahagún's Nahua informants explain that the proverb was said of a person who had lived an upright, balanced life only to lose her balance and fall into wrongdoing, as if slipping in slick mud.[36] Repeating this theme, a father advises his coming-of-age son: "On earth we walk, we live, on the ridge of a mountain peak... To the one side is an abyss, to the other side is another abyss. If you go here, or if you go there, you will fall; only through the middle can one go, or

live.”[37] The existential scenario of humans walking down a treacherously narrow and slippery path is the Nahua equivalent of Buddhism’s man shot with a poison arrow. Humans need immediate guidance concerning how to walk in balance. Like skilled mountaineers, humans need immediate guidance concerning how to keep their balance while walking on the slippery surface of the earth. Euro-American philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson (influenced according to Pratt by the pragmatic, path-oriented philosophies of the indigenous Delaware and Haudenosaunee peoples of North America) expressed a kindred outlook when writing “We live amid surfaces, and the true art of life is to skate well on them.”[38]

The Nahuas understand the learning and performing of a lifepath not as discovering and passively following a preexisting path but as learning how to extend creatively an existing path. The right pathway is not logically or metaphysically grounded in transcendent truth as it is for truth seekers.[39] The Nahuas seek a way to live as well as a way to extend their way of life into the future. They are looking to learn how to act, not what to believe. They conceive the *raison d'être* of philosophy in terms of the foregoing situation, and look to Nahua *tlamatinime* (plural; *tlamatini* singular) -- “knowers of things, sages, philosophers” -- for practical mastery of what they saw as the defining question of inquiry: “How can humans maintain their balance on the slippery earth?” This existential situation and this question jointly constitute the defining problematic of Nahua philosophy. The preeminent aim of Nahua philosophy is helping humans walk in balance, and it defines right conduct in terms of this aim. It defines right-way reasoning, decision making, acting, feeling, and living in terms of the practical goal of maintaining balance. Prudentially, ethically, epistemically, and aesthetically appropriate human activity are likewise defined in terms of this goal. Like Buddhism, Nahua philosophy offers us a how, not a what. Faced with Buddhism’s Parable of the Poison Arrow, the Nahuas would request that the arrow be removed without prior requirement of truth.

Contact-era Nahua philosophers seek the *nelli ohtli* (the rooted, true, genuine path) just as contemporary Nahuatl speakers of San Martín Zinacapan, México, seek the “*cualli ohtli*” (the good path).[40] What is the *nelli ohtli*, the *cualli ohtli*? The *nelli ohtli* is the well-rooted, well-arranged, well-centered, and middled path.[41] It is the true path in the sense of being the genuine and authentic path for humans. It involves behavior that is *in quallotl in yecyotl*, i.e., “fitting for” and “assimilable by” humans; behavior that helps humans “assume a face” and “develop a heart”; behavior that balances individuals, families, communities, and the cosmos.[42] As expressed by contemporary Nahuatl-speakers in the communities of Chignautla, Amatlán, and San Martín Zinacapan respectively, it is the path that makes the world “safe for existence,”[43] “makes life possible,”[44] and enables humans to “live well” (*cualli nehnemi*).[45]

The Nahuas speak in the *Colloquios* of “in huehue tlamaniliztli,” i.e., the “old, old lifeways.”[46] “Tlamaniliztli” refers not simply to customs, rules, traditions, and rites but more profoundly to an all-encompassing arranging and ordering of a way of life, including thinking, feeling, eating, speaking, sleeping, walking, raising children, growing

old, giving birth, dying, waging war, growing crops, building temples, reading time-place, and practicing ceremonies. The Nahuas speak not of doctrine but of *ohlatoca* (following a path). They do not however insist that theirs is the only path. Consequently, they despair at the Franciscans' insistence that they abandon the lifeway of their ancestors since they regard doing so as tantamount to abandoning a well-arranged and well-centered way of life in favor of one that is disorderly, imbalanced, and aimless. To cease practicing one's grandparents' lifeways is "to make oneself into a rabbit, to make oneself a into a deer" (i.e., make oneself aimless, uncentered, unrooted, inauthentic, and untrue [*ahnelli*]) as a Nahuatl *machiotlatolli* (comparison[47]) recorded by Sahagún puts it.[48] To do so is tantamount to losing one's "face and heart," one's humanness, and one's way.

The Nahuas also speak of *cualnemiliztli* or "the good life," i.e., a life that is "fitting for or assimilable by" (*in quallotl, in yecyotl*) humans. They speak of the ancestors and the sages as "torches," "guides," and "teachers of a way of life" – not as truthbearers, truth speakers, or truth knowers. In short, what concerns the Nahuas is not the truth of a corpus of theological propositions but the practicability of a way of life here on the slippery surface of the earth.

Nahuatl philosophy speaks in terms of a monistic and nonhierarchical metaphysics according to which there is no ontological distinction between sacred and profane, appearance and reality, natural and supernatural, or "higher" and "lower" realities. The various layers of the cosmos are clothlike folds in a single, homogeneous medium. Metaphysics, cosmology, and cosmogony function for the Nahuas as instructional action guides for right-way living -- not as syllogistically organized theories, "myths," or protoscientific explanations. The *tonalpohualli*, the Nahuas' sacred book of pictographs pertaining to time-place, for example, functions as a practical action guide – "*una guía para vivir*," as Boone puts it – rather than as a repository of theoretical truths. [49] Such texts, adds Gruzinski, consist of a nonalphabetic, nonrepresentational vocabulary that is at one and the same time "architectural, iconographic, choreographic, liturgical, musical [and] ornamental." [50] The Nahuas' pictorial "histories," in turn, are "closer to being scripts, and their relation to their readers is closer to being that of a play's script to its actors. ...[They] were painted specifically to be the rough text of a performance." [51] Nahuatl *tlamatimime* reflect critically on actions and events using histories, stories, myths, and ceremonies with an eye toward creatively applying them in extending the path. They reason narratively and allegorically, not syllogistically. [52]

The Nahuas embrace a path-oriented epistemology. Right-way knowing (*tlamatiliztli*) consists of knowing the way, i.e., knowing how to find and map one's way through life; knowing how to live properly, to participate in the cosmos, and to live an authentically Nahuatl life; and finally, knowing how to extend this way of life into the future. [53] Right-path knowing is active, enactive, performative, participatory, and creative. It is understood in terms of skill, competence, and the ability to make things happen, not in terms of the intellectual apprehension of truths or states of affairs (what Yazdhi calls "knowledge by correspondence"). [54] Knowledge consists of knowing how,

not knowing that. It is neither discursive nor propositional. Nahuatl epistemology conceives knowing in terms of *neltiliztli*, i.e., well rootedness, nonreferential *alēthia* (disclosure, unconcealedness, and unhiddenness), and authenticity. What knowing discloses is the right way to proceed and the authentic path. Truth as correspondence, representation, mirroring, or aboutness plays no role.[55] One becomes knowledgeable at creating and furthering the path by firmly rooting oneself in the ancient lifeways, practices, and guidebooks handed down from the “old ones.” The Nahuas characterize utterances, persons, human hearts, behavior, works of art, and paths univocally in terms of *neltiliztli*. [56] True people, true ceremonies, true works of art, true acts, true feelings, and true speech disclose, enact, further, and create the way.

Path-oriented philosophies understand mental concepts pragmatically in terms of behavior and conduct. Consider, for example, the Nahuatl verb *neltoca*. Although standardly translated as “to hold a belief, to believe in something,” [57] I suggest we are more faithful to its etymology of “*toca*” and “*ne-ll*” by translating it as “to rootedly and steadfastly follow [something].” [58] *Neltoca* consists in acting a certain way. Belief is a way of acting, not a representational state in the inner theatre of the mind. Beliefs are maps or action guides. [59]

Path-oriented philosophies embrace an enactive, performative, regulative, and pragmatic conception of language. [60] Right-path speech aims first and foremost to disclose the path as well as to create, nurture, sustain, and perform relationships between humans, nonhumans, and the cosmos that further the path. Speech acts are judged appropriate or not relative to this goal. Right-path language aims neither at representing reality nor conveying semantically true content. Contemporary Nahuatl speakers, according to Hill, “feel that language consists, not in words with proper reference that matches reality, but in highly ritualized dialogues with proper usage matched to a social order that manifests an ideal of deference.” [61] They value neither plain language nor literalism. Speech emphasizes “not denotation, but performance: the proper accomplishment of human relationships as constituted through stereotyped moments of dialogue.” [62] It is “inattentive to the referential dimension.” [63] For this reason, the “forms of behavior appropriate to various roles were encoded in memorized speeches, [such as] the *heuheutlahtolli*, ‘sayings of the elders.’” [64] Contact-era Nahuas see well ordered speech as a creative, causally efficacious metaphysical force alongside well ordered singing, weaving, dancing, and featherworking.

In light of the foregoing, the Nahuas would appear to draw no semantic distinction between literal speech on the one hand, and figurative, artistic, metaphorical, and poetic speech on the other. The literal versus nonliteral meaning binary is a truth seeker’s distinction, not a path seeker’s. What matters to the Nahuas is whether language is rooted and whether it sustains, promotes, and advances the path. They distinguish between different speech genres – e.g., highly cultivated, well-balanced, and well-arranged manners of speaking (e.g., ceremonial speech, *huehuetlatolli*, and *in xochitl in cuicatl* [flower and song]) from less highly cultivated manners of speaking (e.g., everyday statements such as “This ear of corn is rotten”). And they see these

different genres as having different consequences in terms of furthering the path. But they do not define them in terms of the binary of literal versus poetic meaning.[65] Well-arranged spoken words are cut from the same cloth as well-arranged musical notes, dance steps, drum beats, ritual offerings, and feathers. One and all are avenues of arranging, securing, and extending into the future a way of life.

Path seekers embrace what Deleuze calls an “ethics.” Nahua ethics eschews abstract, transcendent universal norms, laws, and commandments. It rejects not only the existence of a fundamental metaphysical opposition between good and evil but the very concepts of goodness and evil per se. This fact does not mean, however, that there are not good and bad actions. Nahua ethics evaluates human behavior concretely, contextually, and consequentially in terms of furthering versus occluding the path (or what amounts to the same thing, furthering versus occluding human and cosmic balance). Ethically right behavior involves the creative negotiation and balancing of competing yet mutually complementary paired forces – what the Nahuas called “inamics” -- as they emerge in the concrete circumstances of our everyday lives.[66]

The Nahuas do not speak in the *Colloquios* of the universal truth of their beliefs or the rational foundation of their lifeway in universal truth; they speak of following a path and the well rootedness of that path. They do not see their lifeway as serving some overarching end or telos. The point is simply to continue walking; to keep their lifepath going. Because path seekers do not see their lifeway as metaphysically anchored in a realm of universal truth, they tend to be more pluralistic and tolerant of difference than do truth seekers. In the *Colloquios*, for example, the Nahuas speak of their lifeway as one among many alongside the Toltec, Chichimec, and Tepanec lifeways. Each group has its own lifeway, its own praxis, ethics, epistemics, and so on. The Nahuas appear equally worried about the fate of each of these at the hands of the Christians' exclusive truth.

Equipped with universal truth – one that transcends local lifeways, practices, and circumstances – the truth seeker's way is the *only* way. As Tedlock writes, the truth-bearing “missionary starts from a single story, supposed to apply to all mankind, and tries to persuade all mankind to tell that one single story to the exclusion of all other, competing stories.”[67] López Austin adds, “Christianity is characterized as a religion with universal pretensions, exclusive and intolerant of other creeds.”[68] Everyone must accept Christian truth on pain of violence. Both remarks apply equally to the secular, Hegelian-inspired “missionary of civilization” (Dussel[69]) bent on spreading universal truth at the expense of local lifeway. As the history of positivism in Latin America amply demonstrates, the truth of reason and science is equally universal, exclusive, intolerant, and, in the end, violent.[70]

Path-oriented religions are conceived in performative, not intellectual, terms. Religion is a matter of practice and lifeway, not doctrine or belief.[71] Shrine Shinto, for example, teaches no theology, doctrine, or beliefs; it teaches a method. Eliade relates the anecdote of an American philosopher who asked a Shinto priest why Japanese



Shinto lacks a theology. The priest responded, "We have no theology. We dance." [72] I read the Nahuas in the *Colloquios* as saying the same thing to the twelve Franciscans: "We have no theology. We sacrifice. We sweep. We arrange things. We bleed ourselves. We discharge our debts. We perform 'flower and song.' We read 'the red ink, the back ink.' In short, we practice a way of life." The Nahuas accordingly construe their identity not in terms of creed but in terms of lineage (*mecayotl*) with their ancestors' lifeway along with their ongoing shared, socially enacted lifeway. [73]

The Nahuas do not, therefore, interpret their defeat at the hands of the Spaniards and the Spaniards' indigenous allies as a logical refutation of their theology. Because they understood their religion as path oriented, they did not conceive of religion as consisting of a corpus of theological assertions, the truth of which permits logical refutation. They see their defeat as a practical demonstration of the greater power of the Spaniards' god, not a logical demonstration of the truth of Christian theology. Defeat means that they have to align themselves with the Spaniards' god and pay tribute to the Spaniards, not that they must abandon their way of life and identity as the Franciscans so strenuously insist. [74]

### Concluding Remarks

Sahagún's *Colloquios* contains little if any genuine disputation. The Nahuas speak the language of path seeking, the Franciscans the language of truth seeking. The two groups talk past one another, never fully understanding one another, never realizing that the other speaks a different philosophical language. Yet this should not surprise us. Viewed abstractly, we have no more reason to expect similarity between European and Nahua philosophy than we do between European and Nahua music or dance. [75]

One doubts the Franciscans ever intended to engage the Nahuas in a meaningful and open-minded exchange of ideas. Their aim was to instruct and convert, and if that failed, coerce. Enacting what Fabian calls "the denial of coevalness," [76] the Franciscans (and Europeans generally) rejected the idea that indigenous peoples were their contemporaries in virtually every way: philosophically, intellectually, religiously, culturally, morally, and epistemologically. In order to avoid repeating this error, I propose we see Nahua and European philosophies as two alternative philosophical orientations and trajectories rooted in two alternative forms of life or ways of being human in the world. Nahua philosophy need not imitate European philosophy in order to count as "real" philosophy. As Bernasconi and Mignolo urge, we must resist converting difference into value: i.e., convert being different from Western philosophy into being inferior to Western philosophy, or worse, not counting as philosophy at all. [77] Nahua philosophy does not need to look to European philosophy for legitimation. At the same time, we must reject the Hegelian evolutionary myth of the unfolding of reason in history. There is no law of reason, thought, or culture requiring that all peoples think alike or follow the same path of philosophical development. Nahua philosophy does not represent an earlier stage of Western philosophy. Nezahualcoyotl, Xayacamach, and Tochihuitzin

Coyolchihqui are not (pace León-Portilla) the Nahua counterparts of Parmenides, Heraclitus, and Socrates.[78]

“Seen in the long perspective of the future,” writes Dewey, “the whole of western European philosophy is a provincial episode.”[79] If we agree, then we must acknowledge the fact that the philosophical orientation, aims, questions, style of reasoning, and concepts of European philosophy are provincial, not universal. Truth-oriented European philosophy is merely one among many local ethnophilosophies. The events recorded in Sahagún's *Colloquios y doctrina cristiana* testify to this fact.

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## Notes

[1] L. A. Hickman and T. A. Alexander, eds. *The Essential Dewey*, vol. 1. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 21.

[2] *Colloquios y doctrina cristiana*, lines 758-1042, translation by Louise M. Burkhart, *Colloquios y doctrina cristiana, English translation of the Nahuatl paleography* (unpublished manuscript, 1982), J. Jorge Klor de Alva, ed. and trans., “The Aztec-Spanish Dialogue of 1524” *Alcheringa/ Ethnopoetics* 4 (1980), 52-193, William Bright, “‘With One Lip, with Two Lips’: Parallelism in Nahuatl” *Language* 66 (1990), 437-52, and the author.

[3] The full title is *Colloquios y doctrina cristiana con que los doze frayles de San Francisco enbiados por el papa Adriano Sesto y por el Emperador Carlos Quinto convertieron a los indios de la Nueva Espana en lengua Mexicana y Espanola*. Sahagún composed the *Colloquios* in 1564. He was not present at the 1524 encounter.

[4] For discussion of the genre, production, and the authorship of the *Colloquios*, or for discussion of Franciscan missionary goals see Robert Ricard, *The Spiritual Conquest of Mexico: An Essay on the Apostolate and the Evangelizing Methods of the Mendicant Orders in New Spain: 1523-1572*, trans. Lesley Byrd Simpson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966); Miguel León-Portilla, *Bernardino de Sahagún: First Anthropologist*, trans. Mauricio J. Mixco (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002); John Leddy Phelan, *The Millennial Kingdom of the Franciscans in the New World*, 2nd ed., revised (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970); Louise M. Burkhart, “Moral Deviance in the Sixteenth Century: The Rabbit and the Deer,” *Journal of Latin American Lore* 12 (1986): 107-39; Louise M. Burkhart, “Doctrinal Aspects of Sahagún's *Colloquios*,” in *The Work of Bernardino de Sahagún: Pioneer Ethnographer of the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Klor de Alva et al (Albany: Institute for Mesoamerican Studies and SUNY Press, 1988), 656-82; Louise M. Burkhart, “The Amanuenses 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), 339-55; Louise M. Burkhart, *Holy Wednesday: A Nahuatl Drama from Early Colonial Mexico* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996); J. Jorge Klor de Alva, "La Historicidad de los Coloquios de Sahagún" *Estudios de Cultura Náhuatl* 15 (1982):172-84; idem, "Sahagún and the Birth of Modern Ethnography: Representing, Confessing, and Inscribing the Native Other," in *The Work of Bernardino de Sahagún: Pioneer Ethnographer of the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Klor de Alva et al (Albany: Institute for Mesoamerican Studies and SUNY Press, 1988a), 31-52; idem, "Sahagún's Misguided Introduction to Ethnography and the Failure of the Colloquios Project," in *The Work of Bernardino de Sahagún: Pioneer Ethnographer of the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Klor de Alva et al (Albany: Institute for Mesoamerican Studies and SUNY Press, 1988b), 83- 92; J. Jorge Klor de Alva, H. B. Nicholson, and Eloise Quiñones Keber, eds. *The Work of Bernardino de Sahagún: Pioneer Ethnographer of the Sixteenth Century* (Albany: Institute for Mesoamerican Studies and SUNY Press, 1988); Francisco Morales, "Los Coloquios de Sahagún: el Marco Teológico de su Contenido" *Estudios de Cultura Náhuatl* 32 (2001):175-88, Walden Browne, *Sahagún and the Transition to Modernity* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000).

[5] See Ricard, *The Spiritual Conquest of Mexico*; León-Portilla, *Bernardino de Sahagún: First Anthropologist*; Phelan, *The Millennial Kingdom of the Franciscans in the New World*; and Burkhart, *Holy Wednesday*. According to Sahagún the twelve sought to convince the Nahuas of the truth of four "fundamentos" (foundations): "(1) the friars are messengers of God and the Pope and have come to save the Nahuas' souls; (2) the Pope is only motivated by the Nahuas' salvation; (3) the doctrine that the friars teach is divine, not human; and (4) God's kingdom is in Heaven, and the Pope represents him on Earth through the church" (Browne, *Sahagún and the Transition to Modernity*, 83). According to Ricard, *The Spiritual Conquest of Mexico*, 82, conversion included "acceptance in principle of the more important dogmas, briefly explained, baptism, and catechism."

[6] *Colloquios y doctrina cristiana*, lines 10, 23, 25, 28, 88, translation by Joanna Sánchez, "Language Ideologies in an Idealized Discourse of Context: *Los Coloquios de los doce*" (Master's thesis, Department of Anthropology, SUNY Buffalo, 2000), 68-71, 82.

[7] Other approaches to the *Colloquios* include Klor de Alva, "La Historicidad de los Coloquios de Sahagún"; León-Portilla, *Bernardino de Sahagún*; Burkhart, "Moral Deviance in the Sixteenth Century"; idem, *Holy Wednesday*; Klor de Alva, Nicholson, and Quiñones Keber, eds. *The Work of Bernardino de Sahagún*; Sánchez, "Language Ideologies in an Idealized Discourse of Context"; and Daniëlle Dehouve, "Un Diálogo de Sordos: Los Coloquios de Sahagún." *Estudios de Cultura Náhuatl* 33 (2002): 185-216.

[8] Dennis Tedlock, *The Spoken Word and the Work of Interpretation* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), 334.

[9] Carlo Ginsburg, "The Inquisitor as Anthropologist," in Carlos Ginsburg, *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method*, trans. John and Anne Tedeschi (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1989), 156-64.

[10] Ginsburg, "The Inquisitor as Anthropologist," 161.

[11] León-Portilla, *Aztec Thought and Culture*, 62-69. León-Portilla casts the exchange as a straightforward philosophical debate (as standardly defined by Western philosophy) over the truth of the contradictory “theological doctrines” and theological knowledge claims of Nahua and Christian religion. He construes the Nahuas as truth seekers who claim to possess deliberative and “active theological knowledge” (69). The Nahua *tlamatinime* defend the “validity” and “truth” of their religious beliefs from what they see as “the unjustified attacks” of the twelve. León-Portilla also interprets them as presenting “a series of varied and profound arguments” (67).

[12] James Lockhart, *The Nahuas After the Conquest* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 477.

[13] Dehouve, “*Un Diálogo de Sordos: Los Coloquios de Sahagún*,” 207, 214.

[14] This distinction is introduced by Angus Graham, *Disputers of the Tao: Philosophical Argument in Ancient China* (La Salle, IL: Open Court Publishing Co., 1989). and developed by David L. Hall and Roger T. Ames. *Thinking Through Confucius* (Albany: State University Press of New York, 1987); idem, *Thinking from the Han: Self, Truth and Transcendence in Chinese and Western Culture* (Buffalo: SUNY Press) 1998; David L. Hall, “The Way and the Truth,” in *A Companion to World Philosophies*, ed. Eliot Deutsch and Ron Bontekoe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 214-24; idem, “Just how provincial is Western philosophy? ‘Truth’ in comparative context” *Social Epistemology* 15 (2001): 285-97. They contrast “way-seeking” with “truth-seeking” since “way” is the more common translation of the Chinese word *dao*. Chad Hansen, *Language and Logic in Ancient China* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1983); idem, “Chinese Language, Chinese Philosophy, and ‘Truth,’” *Journal of Asian Studies* 44 (1985): 491-519; and idem, *A Daoist Theory of Chinese Thought: A Philosophical Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992) also defends a nonveritistic interpretation of classical East Asian philosophy.

The distinction between truth- and path-oriented philosophies should not be construed as a mutually exclusive or mutually exhaustive binary. There may certainly be other philosophical orientations in addition to these two. What’s more, path-oriented philosophies may contain truth-oriented elements, and truth-oriented philosophies may contain path-oriented elements. I see this distinction as mainly one of emphasis and of what is valued most highly. I thus suggest we see the two as opposite poles of a continuum along which different philosophies may fall. Daoism and indigenous Australian philosophies appear to fall on the path-oriented end of the continuum, while Hinduism appears to fall in the middle of the continuum. Franciscan thought appears to represent a clear and rather unmixed case of truth seeking, and Aztec thought a clear and rather unmixed case of path seeking.

[15] In his groundbreaking *La Filosofía Náhuatl: Estudiada en sus fuentes con nuevo apéndice; prólogo de Ángel María Garibay K., edición novena* (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México 2001 [1956]), León-Portilla contends that Nahua culture included individuals who were just as philosophical as the Greek pre-Socratics. Nezahualcoyotl, Tochiuhitzin Coyoilchihuiqui and others reflected self-consciously, critically, and generally on the nature of existence, truth, knowledge, and the reigning mythical-religious views of their day.



[16] There is debate regarding the authorship of the Nahuas' speech. On the one hand, León-Portilla (*Bernardino de Sahagún*) and John Schwaller (personal conversation) argue Sahagún composed the Nahuas' speech on the basis of his fellow Franciscans' recollections and records as well as his own personal experiences in the field of conversion. On the other hand, Burkhardt ("Doctrinal Aspects of Sahagún's *Colloquios*" and *Holy Wednesday*), Klor de Alva ("*La Historicidad de los Coloquios de Sahagún*," and "Sahagún's Misguided Introduction to Ethnography and the Failure of the *Colloquios* Project"), and Dehouve ("*Un Diálogo de Sordos*") contend the speeches were composed by Sahagún's Nahua *Collegio* assistants with the help of surviving Nahua elders.

[17] For the original version see:

<http://www.sinc.sunysb.edu/clubs/buddhism/story/index.html>

[18] The Buddha originally advocated a method only, and steadfastly refused to speculate on metaphysical matters. Scholars commonly view the subsequent development of Buddhist metaphysics and logic (due to the influence of Hinduism) as a deviation from the Buddha's original intent.

[19] For discussion of Franciscan philosophy, see Ricard, *The Spiritual Conquest of Mexico*; León-Portilla, *Bernardino de Sahagún*; Phelan, *The Millennial Kingdom of the Franciscans in the New World*; Ernest A. Moody, "William of Ockham," in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, vol. 8, editor in chief Paul Edwards (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., and The Free Press, 1967), 306-17; James A. Weisheipl, "John Duns Scotus," in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, vol. 2, editor in chief Paul Edwards (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., and The Free Press, 1967), 427-37; Burkhardt, "Moral Deviance in the Sixteenth Century," idem, "Doctrinal Aspects of Sahagún's *Colloquios*," idem, *Holy Wednesday*; Inga Clendinnen, "Disciplining the Indians: Franciscan Ideology and Missionary Values in Sixteenth-Century Yucatán," *Past and Present* 94 (1982): 27-48; G. Lucas, "Creed," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1908) Retrieved March 18, 2009, from New Advent: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04478a.htm>; J. Wynne, "Articles of Faith," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1907) Retrieved March 18, 2009, from New Advent: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01755d.htm>; L. Walker, "Truth," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912). Retrieved March 18, 2009, from New Advent: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15073a.htm>; T. Scannell, "Christian Doctrine," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1909. Retrieved March 16, 2009, from New Advent: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05075b.htm>; P. Robinson, "Franciscan Order," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1909) Retrieved March 23, 2009, from New Advent: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06217a.htm>; B. Guldner, "Conversion," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1908). Retrieved March 18, 2009, from New Advent: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04347a.htm>; William B. Carter, "Scotus, Ockham, and the Conquest of the Americas," paper delivered at American Philosophical Association-Pacific Division Meeting, San Francisco, April 2007; M. Bihl, "Order of Friars Minor," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1909). Retrieved March 18, 2009 from New Advent: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06281a.htm>; D. Coghlan, "Dogma," in *The*



*Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1909). Retrieved March 18, 2009 from New Advent: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05089a.htm>.; and Morales, "Los Colloquios de Sahagún: el Marco Teológico de su Contenido."

[20] Bertrand Ogilvie, "Truth in France," in *Keywords: Truth*, ed. Deborah Posel et al. (New York: Other Press, 2004), 103. See also Charles B. Guignon, *Heidegger and the Problem of Knowledge* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1983); Hall and Ames, *Thinking Through Confucius*; idem, *Thinking from the Han*; Hall, "The Way and the Truth"; idem, "Just how provincial is Western philosophy?"; Hansen, *A Daoist Theory of Chinese Thought*; and Huston Smith, "Western and Comparative Perspectives on Truth" *Philosophy East and West* 30, no. 4 (1980): 425-37.

[21] Ogilvie, "Truth in France," 103-105. See also Smith, "Western and Comparative Perspectives on Truth" and Ben-Ami Scharfstein "How important is truth to epistemology and knowledge? Some answers from comparative philosophy" *Social Epistemology* 15, no. 4 (2001): 275-84.

[22] Plato, *Plato: The Collected Dialogues including the Letters*. Ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961).

[23] Burkhart, "Moral Deviance in the Sixteenth Century," 134. See also León-Portilla, *Bernardino de Sahagún*; Burkhart, "Doctrinal Aspects of Sahagún's *Colloquios*;" idem, *Holy Wednesday*; and Morales, "Los Colloquios de Sahagún: el Marco Teológico de su Contenido."

[24] León-Portilla, *Bernardino de Sahagún*, 95-96. According to León-Portilla, Bishop Juan de Zumárraga and Sebastián Ramírez de Fuenleal -- both "men of the Spanish Renaissance" -- had the idea of founding such a college for native youths. Bihl ("Order of Friars Minor") contends that the Franciscans has always been committed to the pursuit of higher academic learning and the sciences. See also Ricard, *The Spiritual Conquest of Mexico*; Carter "Scotus, Ockham, and the Conquest of the Americas;" Moody, "William of Ockham;" and Weisheipl, "John Duns Scotus."

[25] See Guignon, *Heidegger and the Problem of Knowledge*; Smith, "Western and Comparative Perspectives on Truth;" and Nicholas Rescher, *Process Metaphysics: An Introduction to Process Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996).

[26] Richard Grice (*Studies in the Way of Words* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989], 26-27) argues that conversation is a cooperative endeavor that ought to follow several maxims: try to make your contribution truthful, informative, perspicuous, and relevant. Truth is the guiding principle here, seeing as the latter three are defined in terms of truth.

[27] Plato, *Plato: The Collected Dialogues including the Letters (Republic, Book X)*.

[28] See Rescher, *Process Metaphysics* for supporting discussion.

[29] The distinction between ethics and morality is first introduced by Spinoza, transfigured by Nietzsche, and then developed by Giles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*. Trans. Robert Hurley (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1988) and idem, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*. Trans. Martin Jouhin (New York: Zone Books, 1990). For related discussion see Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985); James Boyd and Ronald 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 Stausberg (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 137-51, and Philip Turetzky, "Rhythm: Assemblage and Event" *Strategies* 15, no. 1 (2002), 121-38. Hansen (*A Daoist Theory of Chinese Thought*) draws a similar distinction with regard to East Asian philosophy.

[30] See Chad Hansen, "Chinese Confucianism and Daoism," in *A Companion to the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Philip L. Quinn and Charles Taliaferro (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 25-33. Talal Asad (*Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* [Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1993], 48) writes, "It is preeminently the Christian Church that has occupied itself with identifying cultivating and testing belief as a verbalized inner condition of true religion."

[31] Massimo Campanini, *An Introduction to Islamic Philosophy* (Edinburg: Edinburg University Press, 2004), 53.

[32] John Dewey, *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, enlarged ed., intro by John Dewey. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1948), ch.1.

[33] Path-oriented philosophies and religions include Daoism, Confucianism, some forms of Buddhism, and many indigenous philosophies of the Americas. The pragmatism of John Dewey, *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, and Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979) are likewise path oriented. See Scott Pratt, *Native Pragmatism: Rethinking the Roots of American Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002) for related discussion.

[34] See Bernardino de Sahagún, *Florentine Codex: General History of the Things of New Spain*, 12 vols. ed and trans Arthur J. O. Anderson and Charles Dibble. 12 vols. (Santa Fe: School of American Research and University of Utah, 1953-82), VI, 228, and Louise Burkhart, *The Slippery Earth: Nahua-Christian Dialogue in Sixteenth-Century Mexico* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1989).

[35] Michael Launey, quoted in Burkhart, *The Slippery Earth*, 58. See also Willard Gingerich, "Chipahuacanemiliztli, 'The Purified Life,' in the Discourses of Book VI, Florentine Codex" in *Smoke and Mist: Mesoamerican Studies in Memory of Thelma D. Sullivan*, Part II, ed J. Kathryn Josserand and Karen Dakin (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 1988), 517-43.

[36] Sahagún, *Florentine Codex*, VI, 228, trans. Burkhart, *The Slippery Earth*.

[37] Sahagún, *Florentine Codex*, VI, 101, trans. Gingerich, "Chipahuacanemiliztli, 'The Purified Life,' in the Discourses of Book VI, Florentine Codex," 522; see also op.cit., VI, 125).

[38] Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Selected Essays, Lectures and Poems of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Ed. and intro R. E. Spiller (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1955), 303. See Pratt, *Native Pragmatism*, 214-15 for discussion.

[39] See Dewey, *Reconstruction in Philosophy*.

[40] Timothy Knab, *The Dialogue between Earth and Sky* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2004). In "Moral Deviance in the Sixteenth Century" and *The Slippery Earth*, Burkhart discusses how Aztec philosophy distinguishes the path of "the rabbit, the deer" on the one hand from the centered path, the straight and narrow path, and the

way to be a human on the other. See also James Maffie, "To Walk in Balance: An Encounter between Contemporary Western Science and Pre-Conquest Nahua Philosophy," in *Science and Other Cultures: Issues in Philosophies of Science and Technology*; ed. Robert Figueroa and Sandra Harding (New York: Routledge, 2003): 70-91; idem, "The Centrality of Nepantla in Conquest-era Nahua Philosophy" *The Nahua Newsletter* 44 (2007): 11-31, idem, "Flourishing on Earth: Nahua Philosophy in the Era of the Conquest" *The Nahua Newsletter* 40 (2005): 18-23.

[41] As a conquest-era Nahuatl proverb proclaims, *tlacoqualli in monequi* ("the center good is required," "the middle good is necessary") (Sahagún, *Florentine Codex*, VI, 231, trans. Burkhart, *The Slippery Earth*, 134). It avoids excess and imbalance – i.e., the path of "the rabbit, the deer" – and hence misstepping, misfortune, ill-being, and destruction (personal, social and cosmic). For further discussion, see Maffie, "To Walk in Balance," idem, "Flourishing on Earth," and idem, "The Centrality of Nepantla in Conquest-era Nahua Philosophy."

[42] See León-Portilla, *Aztec Thought and Culture*, 147; Burkhart, *The Slippery Earth*; Maffie, "To Walk in Balance," idem, "Flourishing on Earth," and idem, "The Centrality of Nepantla in Conquest-era Nahua Philosophy."

[43] Doren L. Slade, *Making the World Safe for Existence: Celebration of the Saints among the Sierra Nahuatl of Chignautla*, Mexico (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992).

[44] Alan Sandstrom, "Blood Sacrifice, Curing, and Ethnic Identity among Contemporary Nahua of Northern Veracruz, Mexico," in *Ethnic Identity in Nahua Mesoamerica: The View from Archaeology, Art History, Ethnohistory, and Contemporary Ethnography*, ed. Frances F. Berdan, John K. Chance, Alan R. Sandstrom, Barbara L. Stark, James M. Taggart, and Emily Umberger (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2008), 180 and passim (trans. Sandstrom).

[45] Knab, *The Dialogue between Earth and Sky*, 15, 71.

[46] See Bright, "'With One Lip, with Two Lips,'" and Francis Karttunen, *An Analytical Dictionary of Nahuatl* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983), 280.

[47] Alonso de Molina, *Vocabulario en Lengua Castellano y Mexicana y Mexicana y Castellana*, 4th ed. (Mexico City: Porrúa. Facsimile of 1571 edition, 2001), II, 50r.

[48] Sahagún (1953-1982), VI, 253. See Burkhart, "Moral Deviance in the Sixteenth Century," idem, *The Slippery Earth*, and Maffie, *A World in Motion* for discussion.

[49] Elizabeth Hill Boone, "Guías Para Vivir: Los Manuscritos Adivinatorios Pintados de México" *Azteca Mexica* (1992):333-38, and Eloise Quiñones Keber, *Codex Telleriano-Remensis: Ritual, Divination, and History in a Pictorial Aztec Manuscript* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995) argue that the *tonalpohualli* functions as a practical guide or road map for living well. Richard F. Townsend, *The Aztecs* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992), 126 likens the *tonalpohualli* to the Chinese *Book of Changes* or *I Ching*. One turns to the *I Ching* not with theoretical questions concerning what is true but rather with practical questions concerning how one should act. According to Margaret Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 20,

“indigenous theory” is a contested term among indigenous scholars since many argue that theory is an inherently Western idea inapplicable to indigenous thinking. See also Maffie, *A World in Motion*.

[50] Serge Gruzinski, *Man-Gods in the Mexican Highlands*, trans. Eileen Corrigan (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), 18.

[51] Elizabeth Hill Boone, “Aztec Pictorial Histories: Records without Words,” in *Writing Without Words: Alternative Literacies in Mesoamerican and the Andes*, ed. Elizabeth Hill Boone and Walter D. Mignolo (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994), 71. See also Gary Tomlinson, *The Singing of the New World: Indigenous Voice in the Era of European Contact* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[52] See Gingerich (1987, 1988); Susan Gillespie, *The Aztec Kings: The Construction of Rulership in Mexica History* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1989); Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies*, ch. 5; and Pratt, *Native Pragmatism*, 18 for supporting discussion. It is not clear that as path seekers the Nahuas drew a distinction between history on the one hand, and myth and stories on the other (see James Taggart, *Remembering Victoria: A tragic Nahuatl love story* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007).

[53] See also Maffie, “Why Care about Nezahualcoyotl?”. According to Hansen, *A Daoist Theory of Chinese Thought*, and Roger Ames, “Zhi (Chih): To Know, To Realize,” in *Encyclopedia of Chinese Philosophy*, ed. Antonio S. Cua (New York: Routledge, 2003), 874-76, classical Confucianism and Daoism embrace right-way conceptions of knowing. Hansen, *A Daoist Theory of Chinese Thought*, 8, translates *zhi* as “know-how, know-to, or know-about.” Lee Hester and Jim Cheney, “Truth and Native American Epistemology,” *Social Epistemology* 15 (2001): 319-34, and Pratt, *Native Pragmatism*, maintain that indigenous North American philosophies conceive knowing in terms of knowing how, not knowing that.

[54] Mehdi Ha`iri Yazdi, *The Principles of Epistemology in Islamic Philosophy: Knowledge by Presence* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992).

[55] See Willard Gingerich, “Heidegger and the Aztecs: The Poetics of Knowing in Pre-Hispanic Nahuatl Poetry,” in *Recovering the Word: Essays on Native American Literature*, ed. B. Swann and A. Krupat (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 102, 103-104; León-Portilla, *Aztec Thought and Culture*, 8; Maffie, “Why Care about Nezahualcoyotl?”, and Guignon, *Heidegger and the Problem of Knowledge*. Hester and Cheney, “Truth and Native American Epistemology,” Vine Deloria, Jr., *God is Red: A Native View of Religion* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 1994) and Barbara Deloria, Kristen Foehner, and Sam Scinta (eds.). *Spirit and Reason: The Vine Deloria Jr., Reader* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 1999), and Pratt, *Native Pragmatism* discuss indigenous North American understandings of knowledge and truth.

[56] See Scharfstein, “How important is truth to epistemology and knowledge?”; Smith, “Western and Comparative Perspectives on Truth;” Hall, “Just how provincial is Western philosophy?”; and Maffie, “Why Care about Nezahualcoyotl?”

[57] Karttunen, *An Analytical Dictionary of Nahuatl*, 165.

[58] This translation is more faithful to the etymological roots of *neltoca*: “*nel-li*” and “*toca*.” See Karttunen, *An Analytical Dictionary of Nahuatl*, 165, 242. See also León-Portilla, *Aztec Thought and Culture*, 8.



[59] Hester and Cheney, "Truth and Native American Epistemology," and Deloria, Jr. (e.g., *God is Red: A Native View of Religion* [Golden: Fulcrum Publishing, 1994] and *Spirit and Reason: The Vine Deloria Jr., Reader*) contend that indigenous North American philosophies conceive beliefs as action-guiding maps.

[60] See Hall and Ames, *Thinking Through Confucius*, and idem, *Thinking from the Han*; Hansen, *A Daoist Theory of Chinese Thought*; and Alan Rumsey, "Wording, Meaning, and Linguistic Ideology," *American Anthropologist* NS 92, no. 2 (1990): 346-61, for relevant discussion.

[61] Jane Hill, "'Today There Is No Respect': Nostalgia, 'Respect,' and Oppositional Discourse in Mexicano (Nahuatl) Language Ideology," in *Language Ideologies: Practice and Theory*, ed. Bambi Schieffelin, Kathryn A. Woolard, and Paul Kroskrity (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 82.

[62] Hill, "'Today There is No Respect,'" 61. See also Dehouve, "*Un Diálogo de Sordos*," and Sánchez, "Language Ideologies in an Idealized Discourse of Context."

[63] Hill, "'Today There Is No Respect,'" 82.

[64] Hill, "'Today There Is No Respect,'" 61. See also Willard Gingerich, "Critical Models for the Study of Native American Literature: The Case of Nahuatl," in *Smoothing the Ground: Essays in Native American Oral Literature*, ed. B. Swann (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 112-25, and Francis Karttunen and James Lockhart, "*La Estructura de la Poesía Náhuatl vista por sus Variantes*," *Estudios de Cultura Náhuatl* 14 (1980): 15-65.

[65] See Gingerich, "Heidegger and the Aztecs" and idem, "Critical Models for the Study of Native American Literature: The Case of Nahuatl"; Karttunen and Lockhart, "*La Estructura de la Poesía Náhuatl vista por sus Variantes*"; James Lockhart, *The Nahuas After the Conquest: A Social and Cultural History of the Indians of Central Mexico, Sixteenth through Eighteenth Centuries* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992); León-Portilla, *Aztec Thought and Culture*; Rumsey, "Wording, Meaning, and Linguistic Ideology"; Maffie, "Why Care about Nezahualcoyotl?"; and Tomlinson, *The Singing of the New World*, for relevant discussion.

[66] For discussion of Nahua ethics, see Burkhart, *The Slippery Earth*; León-Portilla, *Aztec Thought and Culture*; Gingerich, "Heidegger and the Aztecs" and idem, "*Chiphuacanemiliztli*, 'The Purified Life'; and Maffie, "To Walk in Balance." For discussion of *inamics*, see Alfredo López Austin, "*Complementos y composiciones*" *Ojarasca* 5 (1992):40-42, León-Portilla, *La Filosofía Náhuatl*, and Maffie, *A World in Motion*.

[67] Tedlock, *The Spoken Word and the Work of Interpretation*, 334.

[68] Alfredo López Austin, "Guidelines for the study of Mesoamerican religious traditions," in *Beyond Primitivism: Indigenous Religious Traditions and Modernity*, ed. Jacob K. Olupona (London: Routledge, 2004), 126; Lockhart, *The Nahuas After the Conquest*, 203; and Gillespie, *The Aztec Kings*.

[69] Enrique Dussel, *Philosophy of Liberation*, trans. Aquilina Martinez and Christine Morkovsky (New York: Orbis Books, 1985), 5, and idem, "Eurocentricism and Modernity (Introduction to the Frankfurt Lectures)" *Boundary 2* 20 (1993):73.

[70] See Dussel, *Philosophy of Liberation*, idem, "Eurocentricism and Modernity" and Walter D. Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005). For the



history of positivism in Latin American, see Edwin Williamson, *The Penguin History of Latin America* (London: The Penguin Press, 1992).

[71] See Jace Weaver, "Preface," in *Native American Religious Identity: Unforgotten Gods*, ed. Jace Weaver (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1988), ix-xiii; Hester and Cheney, "Truth and Native American Epistemology"; Deloria, Jr., *God is Red*; and Barbara Deloria et al (ed.) *Spirit and Reason: The Vine Deloria Jr., Reader*.

[72] Mircea Eliade, *No Souvenirs: Journal 1957–1969*, trans. F. H. Johnson Jr. (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 31.

[73] Sandstrom, "Blood Sacrifice, Curing, and Ethnic Identity among Contemporary Nahua of Northern Veracruz, Mexico," argues that contemporary Nahua identity in northern Veracruz is conceived pragmatically in terms of ritual practice. Hester claims indigenous North American identity is defined in terms of praxis, not belief or race (Hester and Cheney, "Truth and Native American Epistemology," 327).

[74] See López Austin, "Guidelines for the study of Mesoamerican religious traditions," 127, and Lockhart, *The Nahuas After the Conquest*.

[75] Hansen, *A Daoist Theory of Chinese Thought*, 29, makes a similar point regarding Chinese and Western philosophy.

[76] Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).

[77] Robert Bernasconi, "African Philosophy's Challenge to Continental Philosophy," in *Postcolonial African Philosophy*, ed Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 183-96, and Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America*.

[78] See León-Portilla, *Aztec Thought and Culture*, and idem, *Fifteen Poets of the Aztec World* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992). This move amounts to rejecting the reigning Eurocentric definition of philosophy and at the same time decolonizing Nahua philosophy. See also Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America* (2005).

[79] Hickman and Alexander (eds.) *The Essential Dewey*, vol. 1, 21.

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In *Huehue Tlamaniliztli and la Verdad: Nahua and European Philosophies in Fray Bernardino de Sahagún's Colloquios y doctrina cristiana* by James Maffie

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La informaci3n contenida permite rastrear la cultura nahua en la que se desenvuelve fray Bernardino, con especial atenci3n a su formaci3n humanística y a la labor franciscana en Am3rica, y sirve de testimonio documental sobre la finalidad lingüística de la obra, adem3s de constatar la vitalidad y la funci3n social de cada t3rmino indio recogido. Asimismo, se revisan las teorías sustratistas del espa±ol de Am3rica, centradas en el nivel I3xico, y los trabajos de car3cter hist3rico que tienen como objeto el estudio de la introducci3n y pervivencia del I3xico amerindio en el espa±ol. Fray Bernardino de Sahag3n wrote in Spanish in approximately 1577 a non-literal translation of the chronicle written in Nahuatl The Universal History of the Things of New Spain (Florentine Codex). In Huehue Tlamaniliztli and la Verdad : Nahuatl and European Philosophies in Fray Bernardino de Sahag3n's Colloquios y doctrina cristiana by James Maffie English Abstract Bernardino de Sahag3n's Colloquios y doctrina cristiana reproduces an exchange that occurred in 1524 between the first twelve Franciscans sent to the New World and a group of Nahuatl elite. I argue the Colloquios contains no syllogistic debate and little genuine dialogue. Nahuatl and Franciscans talk past one another in a case of what James Lockhart calls "double mistaken identity." Nahuatl and Franciscans address one another fro