

## TRANSLATORS' INTRODUCTION

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There is a cluster of central words in *Indigenous and Popular Thinking in América*. Their meaning is organically embedded in an indigenous cosmology that Kusch sees as a powerful undercurrent in American popular thinking and daily living. What words themselves do is to be understood in relation to this cosmology. *Estar, utcatha, habitat, así, uma, nayra, pacha, guauque, kuty* are some of these words. Kusch himself often did not translate words from Aymara and Quechua. He left them to be understood in their centrality to the cosmology. Instead of translating these words, we also will seek in this introduction to situate them within the cosmology and in relation to each other, in a network. This performs an intervention in the English language that we hope will be useful, particularly in expressing the possibility of liberation in América.

This introduction does not seek to explain Kusch's text. Rather, the question it addresses is one of translation. As translators, we have come to understand that to translate the central cluster of words would reduce, deform, and even colonize Kusch's meaning. So how do we avoid backhanded ways of performing the reduction, such as providing a glossary? We introduce the relevant words through a movement: we move from using them to embedding them in their network, coming back to them, each time deepening their place in the Kuschian

text, and finally, extending their use outside of Kusch's particular experience, but not outside his reach, keeping the network in mind. The pivotal word in the cluster is *estar*.

Kusch's own intervention takes the form of a journey from an urban, educated, Western-centered thinking to a popular American thinking, deeply tied to indigenous thinking. This is a journey from scientific rationality to an affective sensing of the world in its instability, a journey from *ser* to *estar*, from individualism and enterprise to an *estar bien* in community. The journey is not an individual personal one. Kusch performs it from within a social sense that itself becomes transformed as he enters indigenous cosmology.

*Estar siendo* indicates passivity—not paralysis, not reduction to object, not inactivity, but the absence of a particular form of activity: enterprise. It indicates the absence of an approach to the world in which one takes the world instrumentally, objectifying it, controlling it as something outside oneself, thus producing an external, separate reality.<sup>1</sup> *Estar siendo* enacts a rejection of that separation. Thus, it does not externalize solutions, as is evident in an incident Kusch describes, wherein a grandfather turns away from Kusch and his colleagues and their suggestion to use a water pump to respond to a drought.<sup>2</sup>

Kusch contrasts *estar* and *ser* (to be). He connects *ser* with what is Western and urban. *Ser* marks a relation between subject and objects understood as definable, fixed, having an essence, ordered in relations of cause and effect. Objects are manipulated instrumentally with an efficacious intention, the subject using technology and science. There is a quality of fiction about this Western *ser* when considered from the *estar*: *estar haciendo*, *estar sentado*, *estar bien*, or *estar nomás*. *To be* and *to have* stand with respect to *estar* as irreconcilable ways of situating oneself in the world. The enterprising attitude objectifies the world, creates objects as separate, essentially unchanging. Objects are a construction of the Western imagination that makes possible the project of possession and control. *Estar* instead situates one within the world, where one senses its volatility, its mutability, its instability, its bearing fruit. Thus, the logic of *estar siendo* is incompatible with essentializing things and relations. The logical movement of *estar siendo* is connected to seminal activity and to the logic of seminality, life sources, growth.

In light of the contemporary internal critique of essentialism within the

European tradition, it is interesting that in the logic of *estar*, *essence* lacks meaning. But this way of inhabiting the world is very different from the one issuing from the postmodern rejection of essences precisely because the *estar* way of inhabiting the world is generative, that is, germination is one of its affective moments and movements. Its economy is seminal.

*Estar bien* is a peopled way of being with respect to a world that is constantly unstable and where the possibility of a *vuelco*, a *kuty*, is always present. The community holds together and constitutes a habitat in equilibrium. It balances the instability, but it does not make it disappear. Aymara and Quechua cosmologies, in Kusch's understanding, exhibit an inseparability between subject and world, and between subject and community. The relation between *estar* and *utcatha* is key in this extension to peopled space. If the subject is to *estar bien*, the subject must be embedded practically in, be of, a habitat, community, *plaza*, dwelling, *nayra*, *amu*, or place of equilibrium in an unstable world. The alienation of the urban dweller lies precisely in this lack of a community that constitutes a habitat structured so that one can contribute toward an equilibrium in the unstable cosmos. The urban dweller seeks to remedy this lack, this alienation, through the home of the nuclear family or the abstraction of the nation. But their very constitution fails as a communal habitat.

The indigenous cosmos is an organism, an "organic totality" in a state of instability, fluctuating toward the two extremes of growth and disintegration. This duality, a tearing, is fundamental or original to the cosmos. The subject who takes the cosmos, the world, non-inferentially, in its immediacy, in its *así*, senses this movement affectively. Since there is no separation between world and subject, the relation can be approximated by thinking that the world in its instability invades or permeates the subject who is of it. The subject takes the world in contemplatively, passively, in his lack of separation.<sup>3</sup> Thus the subject does not understand (*conocer*) the world in the sense of positing an external reality which is explained rationally and modified instrumentally. Rather, the subject knows (*saber*) the world through contemplation of its *así*. The subject takes the world as "pure succession of events and not as a stage populated by things" (41). The subject senses the affective favorable or unfavorable tonality of this succession, of this movement. Man's interiority, *uk'u*, is an opening to affectivity, the inward direction that enables one to seek solutions to the instability of one's reality without positing external solutions.

Because there is always instability and the inauspicious possibility of a rending or tearing, fear is always present, and it is an important affective state in the face of a possible unfavorable turn. Sickness, the loss of one's job, drought, the loss of one's land are the result of a *kuty*, "an inversion from the auspicious to the inauspicious" (44). Earthquakes, wars, cataclysms are also turns to the inauspicious. A turn, *vuelco*, *kuty* is a renovation of time, a revolution in time, a metamorphosis in the-reality-in-which-I-live tending to turn. Such a revolution in time in a cosmos that is torn is a source of life, the auspicious and inauspicious inseparably constituting the original tear in the cosmos.

*Estar* points to the unstable relation among the elements of the cosmos and the search for stability. Thus *kuty* and the seminal spring which is also the center of equilibrium are expressed through *estar*. Good and bad possibilities are not realized through technological manipulation but are instead inhabited, the subject interacting in the unstable situation with a contemplative attitude that moves the affective tone of the circumstances and is central to the seminal economy.

As one lives daily in this unstable reality, one senses the favorable and unfavorable possibilities, one *está*.<sup>4</sup> Though the cosmos is unstable, being pulled towards extremes, the possibility of its internal equilibrium is both a communal affair and central to *estar bien*. While the internal balance depends on each person, each person is in relation to a habitat, a center, a community, without which one is disoriented, sensing the *así*, but without the complex communal centering that gives the world its possibilities of flowering. This communal center is thus a seed, a seminal source. The attempt to inhabit the intersubjective pull toward this center of equilibrium guided the construction of Cuzco in accordance with a theological architecture. From the center radiated lines (*ceques*) which were oriented to the four directions and in the care of different *ayllus* (communities). In each *ceque* were the shrines (*guacas*). There were over three hundred shrines in Cuzco, attesting to the important symbiosis of peopled community, ritual, and spatiality. They constituted a habitat in which the collectivity's intersubjective balancing of the instability of the cosmos was highly structured. The sense of community in this cosmology is not one of an inferred community, an abstraction, but rather the concrete, peopled, past-before-us sense of the world given to us with all its instability, its movement and fluctuation, its danger. The community steadies us. It is

this organic habitat that does not take itself as something to be consumed, controlled. It is a structured, peopled spatiality, peopled both by human beings and by nameable and unnameable beings, able to grow the pressing necessities.

The one that *está, está* within circumstances that are always unstable, within the constant turning that includes the overturn, the *vuelco*, the *kuty*. Given the instability constitutive of the cosmos, neither object nor subject are definable or static. Nothing in the cosmos has an essence, no matter at what level of concreteness—neither at the level of the tactile, visible, nameable, the *guaunque*, nor at the level of the unnameable—for all levels are inseparable from each other. Because nothing is fixed, static, essentially constructed, words point rather than connote. Words name, and to name is to point rather than define. To say that the *pachayachachic* or the *guanacauri* are unnameable is to say that one cannot point to them.

Only through ritual can the tear in the cosmos be pulled toward germination. In the exercise of ritual knowledge, the subject enters within himself, inhabiting and contemplating the *así* of the world, with its possibility of a turn in time that may spring germinative possibilities. Knowing (*saber*) is related to ritual, and it grows in the person's interiority (*uk'u*) so that the person "does not go around empty." This knowledge is not in relation to abstraction. The one who knows is able to transcend beyond the visible, the nameable, the "here and now of existence" (*pacha*), to an understanding of the structure of the cosmos, its rhythm, and the unnameable extremes. This transcendence is not a question of abstraction. The tearing which is fundamental to the cosmos is structured rhythmically at different levels. Kusch gives us a cosmology articulated not in terms of abstraction but in terms of different levels of concreteness. The contrast is not between concreteness and abstraction, but between *dimensions* of the concrete which are in productive tension or contradiction with each other and which result in a next level. One way to think about dimensions is in terms of beings within and beyond the limits of what is nameable. The logic here has something of the dialectical, but the third term is not a synthesis of the other two. The third term, the visible, nameable, of the here and now (the *pacha*) is a *guaque*, a visible presence of the divine, the tactile, physical plane of the sacred object.

One *está* in the immediacy of the here and now in the physical, nameable, visible plane, the level of the *guaunque*. Inward access to the planes

that would enable one to go towards a seminal center—and thus also the intersubjective creation of a seminal habitat at the level of the visible—is possible through this knowledge for living that accesses the level of the unnameable, the structure of the cosmos, the tearing that is the seed and source of life. This is the knowledge of ritual. So this knowing is important to the arranging of the habitat (*pacha*) that will give the community its possibility of pulling toward germination, life, metamorphosis. Another facet of the intersubjective quality of ritual inscribed in the habitat is that each subject who is empty can become full, through ritual, through this knowledge for living. Ritual balances the cosmos and maintains the habitat. Balance of the cosmos is constantly created through ritual repetition. It is a daily enactment that touches every aspect of life. The community or habitat is constantly re-created through this balancing of the cosmos.

It is precisely this re-creation of community, of habitat, in the here and now of producing life that we can rethink with Kusch's rendition of Andean cosmology. Kusch reads the terror in the daily living of urban people who are also "pueblo" as a lack of habitat, community, plaza, dwelling, womb, *nayra*, *uma*. Each of these words is threaded affectively for those who have them and for those who lack them, who have a negative affective sense of the instability of the world. We can bring with us into liberatory, nonreformist, de-colonial, intercultural, grassroots moving Kusch's understanding of the infantile seminality of the urban inhabitant who *está*, but does not *está bien*. As we attempt engagement in insurgent, resistant, liberatory, collective movement, we can come to understand the extent to which we have been adversely affected by the tools that alter intersubjective inwardness, which have been impersonally imposed by colonial and imperial power. We can come to feel affectively the absence of community, and feel it as a sense of disorientation and a fear of being trapped in a reality built to disaggregate us from each other and from nature. As we seek liberatory, nonreformist, de-colonial, intercultural, from the grassroots moving among each other, Kusch uncovers for us the possibility of *estar bien*, of community, of solidarity, and of our coming to sense it as our possibility, instead of being inspired by charismatic leaders or abstract understandings of collectivity. We can come to feel the poverty in subjects isolated from others, which creates an abstract, ideology-bound sense of group or organization or even "movement." And we understand the process of an abstract, ideology-bound way of building collectivity as guided by a logic of control. That process obscures our affective disengagement. A more

organic, what Kusch calls “seminal” logic is needed for the sense of community integral to the indigenous cosmology he relates to us. *Pueblo* points not to “the people” as an abstraction, but to the concrete, disoriented human manyness that contains the possibility of community.

In the history of identity politics in the United States, “identifying” has meant not just becoming conscious of the mark of oppressions on oneself. It has, most importantly, meant the formation of a person’s sense of relation to insurgent collectivities. These collectivities forged ways, practices, histories, perceptions, knowledges that constituted them in a tense relation to their oppressors. Critiques of “the politics of identity” have been both inward, within the collectivities, and external, not always clearly positioned in relations to structures and practices of oppression. One such critique, which has taken both inward and external forms, has critiqued the homogeneity and fixity of insurgent identities. The most external of critiques has appealed to the problem of essences. The most internal of critiques has rejected the tendency to reduce collectivities of resistance and their creative potentials to copies of oppressive patriarchal and heterosexual understandings of the insurgent social. It has also rejected the unity of reality. Both critiques reject a modern Western understanding of reality, though the rejection takes them to different lived positions. The external critique leaves the critical subject outside any collectivity. The inward critique moves toward a remaking of the insurgent social in a complex vein that affirms a more open, in creation, multiple understanding of the relations among all elements of reality.

The language of *estar siendo* fits this remaking. The logic of *estar siendo* involves one in a concrete re-creation of community and habitat in the here and now of producing life. Consider Cherríe Moraga’s play, *The Hungry Woman*.

An ethnic civil war has “balkanized” about half of the United States into several smaller nations of people. These include: Africa-America located in the southern states of the U.S. (excluding Florida); the Mechicano Nation of Aztlán which includes parts of the Southwest and the border states of what was once Northern Mexico; the Union of Indian Nations which shares, in an uneasy alliance with its Chicano neighbors, much of the Southwest and also occupies the Great Plains and Rocky Mountain regions; the Hawaii Nations; and the confederacy of First Nations Peoples in the former state of Alaska. The revolutionaries that founded these independent nations seceded from the United States in order to put a halt

to its relentless political and economic expansion, as well as the Euro-American cultural domination of all societal matters including language, religion, family and tribal structures, ethics, art-making, and more. The revolution established economic and political sovereignty for seceding nations with the ultimate goal of defending aboriginal rights throughout the globe. Rebels scorned the ballot box and made alliance with any man or woman of any race or sexuality that would lift arms in their defense. When the Civil War was over, anyone, regardless of blood quantum, who shared political affinities with these independent nations was permitted to reside within their territories; however, the right to hold title to land was determined differently within each nation. Several years after the revolution, a counterrevolution followed in most of the newly-independent nations. Hierarchies were established between male and female; and queer folk were unilaterally sent into exile.

The play's main character, who served as a leader in the Chicano Revolt and was exiled from Aztlán, along with her son and her lesbian lover, now resides in what remains of Phoenix, Arizona, located in a kind of metaphysical border region between Gringolandia (U.S.A.) and Aztlán (Mechicano country). Phoenix is now a city-in-ruin, the dumping site of every kind of poison and person unwanted by its neighbors. . . . Phoenix is represented by the ceaseless racket of a city out of control.<sup>5</sup>

Moraga's play expresses the internal critique both starkly and spatially. The spatiality, not of Phoenix, but the intersubjective spatiality of the revolt, which produces the metaphysical border region where the unwanted live, is distinctly at odds with the logic of *estar-utcatha*. The sense of identity that moves the rebellion fractures the social with the logic of abstraction and control. The Chicanismo that places both women into exile fixes and simplifies identity.

The logic of *estar siendo Chicana/o* concretizes identity as inseparable from community and is always in the making. It is not just in the making, but is also always unfixed, unstable, capable of metamorphosis or transformations: a danger as well as a promise, not a fixed, univocal identity. *Estar siendo Chicana/o* points to a subject inhabiting the instability of the cosmos and the social instability, affectively tuned into its possibilities, intersubjectively making a stabilizing, peopled, germinative habitat (*estar-utcatha*). The subject that *esta siendo* is not a separate, distancing subject that has an inferential or causal approach to reality, but rather it takes in



the *así* of the world non-inferentially; it is invaded by it; it presses itself on the affectively open subject without separation. The one that *esta siendo Chicana* does not develop a sense of her community as external to herself. *Estar siendo Chicana* is political because it is life affirming in the face of destruction and oppression. It makes a future facing the past, remembering. It re-inhabits its place and its space, invoking, reconceiving, reviving collectivity through a seminal, fertile renovation. Peopled spaces, venues, pathways are the texture of a praxical, life-affirming knowing: a *senti-pensamiento*.<sup>6</sup> Cognition cannot be separate from spatial moving with and in the daily production of life's necessities, in ways that do not destroy the intersubjective habitat.

Kusch's understanding of *estar siendo* thus provides us with a liberatory sense of identity, one lived not in an imaginary spatiality, but in concrete terms, enacted concretely, one that senses the spatiality of life as intersubjectively maintained. Identity politics fractures space by eschewing the complexities of the lived social. Instead, *estar siendo* is a moving-together that captures the density of living our lives that peopled-space presents as a challenge in our lives. The challenge lies in the urgency of the question of community, of from-below solidarity, of the how to of generating communal space, collective space. If the grammar of identity can be a grammar of generating solidarity, how do we understand this grammar in a way that does not ignore the question of habitat and seminal interknowing? *Estar siendo* becomes political, intercultural, intersubjective living. *Estar siendo* gives us a not-definable, on the move, body-to-body collective activity that pulls the cosmos toward a renovation of life understanding of identity. The political question becomes: what are the elements of our lived spatiality that constantly revive balance, which is never permanent but constantly in need of being maintained?<sup>7</sup> How does the inward liberatory collectivity gather changing practices into traditions that we carry into the future?

#### METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTION: A SENSE OF DISPOSSESSION

In setting the stage for an opposition that structures the entire work, the first lines of Kusch's book pose a methodological contrast between a scientific investigation and a search to recuperate a thinking rooted in América. Kusch's own motivation lies closer to the latter. In seeking to understand Kusch's exploration, the reader is invited in, to join Kusch. In

that sense, Kusch's text could be more fruitfully read not as a representation of indigenous thinking, not as ethnography, not as a diagram or explanation, nor as philosophical treatise; it could be taken as a passage-way, a crossing, an entrance.

A woman from a working-class suburb of Buenos Aires, whose father was dying from an undiagnosed ailment, wrote to one of us. She was exasperated by doctors who ran ever more tests on her father. The doctors seem to have faith in the tests, she noted with bitter irony. They turn to them when they do not know what is wrong with him or what to do.

This turn to medical tests, an almost metaphysical faith in them and the truths they seem to provide, betrayed for her a desire to solve the problem through technology, a psychological necessity for clarity, for empirical truth. The doctors want, need, try to establish a chimerical order and illusive stability through medicine and science.

Instead, Kusch might argue, one can dwell in that moment of uncertainty, confront the reality of the dying father, that is, one can labor to stabilize one's world, to stop things from falling apart through confronting that brute reality with all of the emotional tonalities intact, even as one sees the possibility of one's entire universe becoming undone. This latter stance approaches what is for Kusch more like "understanding" from the indigenous point of view. This dwelling is evaded by people from the city, the bourgeoisie, and Westernized people generally. They fill their world with activities, seek to find the cause, require external solutions. Indigenous people face down fear and engage in ritual activity to stave off the overturn, or *pachacuty*.

Kusch sees this as a binary that cuts through América: between indigenous modalities and an impulse to try and elude the instability of a shifting, turning universe through appeal to technology and Western reason. The binary was created by colonization; European colonizers imposed their way of knowing. Everything associated with the colonized, with the indigenous, including indigenous thinking, is condemned, suppressed, erased, and devalued by the West.

Nevertheless, an indigenous rhythm of thinking, as Kusch puts it, continues to beat at the base of América and has endured since before Columbus. Repressed by colonization, it manifests itself only in fractured form. This rhythmic thinking eschews the colonizer's split between reason and emotion, mind and body. Consequently, indigenous thinking cannot

be forced into the categories of Western thinking without the utmost distortion. Kusch looks at Western philosophy as a philosophy of control, of domination. Causal thinking, the emphasis on the individual, on voluntarism, on enterprise, Western rationality, on essences and definition are aspects of that domination. The problems posed and lived from within indigenous thinking intervene in showing “civilizing,” “modern” thinking as resisted at the depth of American life. As Walter Mignolo has remarked, the problems press for a restitution of indigenous knowledge.

Caught in this historical bind of colonization, the Latin American middle class—and Kusch includes people from across the political spectrum, including leftist activists, folklorists, urban professionals, intellectuals, and so on—skirt the crucial questions, cover the disquiet or lack they feel by trying to compensate with externalities that may partly mollify or defer, but will not ultimately resolve, their inner conflict. The conflict is in part an uncertainty built into the cosmos, the *kuty*, but it is also a social condition, a psychic restiveness, based on their own unresolved ambivalent relationship to living in América and situating themselves there.

For Kusch, this split structures social practices, ways of thinking and acting, hopes, fears, investments, and desires. Through daily interactions, fragments of conversation, interviews, interpretation of historical texts, monuments, myths, beliefs, and his own observations, he reads how people maneuver this split.

In a key episode in an early chapter, Kusch and a group of his students ask an *abuelo*, a grandfather, an older indigenous man, why he does not acquire a hydraulic pump from the agricultural extension office to help him irrigate. Kusch notes that at that point the grandfather withdraws a bit into himself, growing taciturn and distant. Later, after they leave, one of Kusch's group calls the grandfather “ignorant.” Kusch reflects on the exchange.

Evidently the grandfather does not complete all the stages of understanding. The problem of understanding, according to our Western point of view, seems to have four stages. First, a reality that is given outside of us. Second, an understanding of that reality. Third, a knowledge or science that is the outcome of the administration of understandings, and fourth, an action that returns to reality in order to modify it.

For Kusch, indigenous thinking has an affective content and does not posit an external reality as Western thinking does. According to him, the indige-

nous approach, with its reliance on magical ritual and its seeming passivity, is generally treated with contempt by the middle class, the city-dweller, the Westernized intellectual. “We wield ignorance like a metric stick which measures what those of us in the middle class have and what the peasant lacks, but which does not reveal what really is the case with the latter. This is because the peasant’s personality, just like his cultural world, rotates around a different axis.” Kusch reads the contempt of the urban middle class in psychological terms. He suggests that Westernized Latin Americans feel vulnerable when faced with bald rejection of their way of reasoning. Feeling dispossessed, they develop a tendency to condemn the indigenous people as ignorant, instead of reflecting on their sense of dispossession.

Kusch, too, feels dispossessed of his own techniques of understanding, but he does not deprecate the indigenous people. Rather, he begins to think about knowledge and understanding as such, and the interaction or opposition between the way a city dweller copes and how an indigenous person confronts a problem posed by reality. For Kusch, the Western technique of making an appeal to an external reality does not fare well in the comparison. In this way, the interaction between the *abuelo* and Kusch’s students indicates not merely the differences in understanding the world and the way in which the indigenous practices are dismissed. Ultimately, Kusch frames the interaction within a broader picture of a dilemma facing the entire continent: “Here one can adumbrate the crisis, not of the Indian, but our own.” Drawing this larger conclusion is of a piece with his method. Kusch sees the continent as marked by a basic cognitive split that anticipates a certain crisis, a crossroads. This moment can be evaded, or it can be embraced. Kusch does not appeal to facile techniques to reject or reduce indigenous people. Instead he takes his own sense of dispossession as the occasion for dwelling on that moment and for trying to get inside the indigenous framework of understanding and interacting with the world, and to see it in terms of a larger divide.

It is important to note that on his journey, Kusch does not attempt to translate indigenous culture or to try to make it transparent to the Western reader. This is one way in which he is not engaged in the conventional anthropological task of rendering the foreign in familiar terms. As he retells myths, explains symbols, and interprets customs, they retain some of their opacity. In this sense, his descriptions are not so much an eth-

nographic inventory as an insertion without translating himself to the familiar. He is not offering us an ethnographic, archaeological, or otherwise social-science description of Andean life. He is not attempting to offer an understanding of the Andean cosmos in terms that fulfill the requirements of Western rationality. Rather, he inhabits the Andean culture and cosmos and indigenous life in its density, and seeks to dwell on the questions, paths, possibilities that do not yield easily to Western philosophy and its requirements. He is rejecting in part the rationality of a Western cosmology preoccupied with causes and explanations. What he gives us instead is a record of his attempt to work into another world and worldview. This world is not entirely other, since Kusch is Latin American. His access to its wellsprings, however, is clogged and blocked by his training as an intellectual.

The consequent methodology he fashions as part of this journey contains elements that resemble the conventional notion of the "field" in ethnographic work. In fact, he does fieldwork by going to speak with and observe indigenous people, witches, and mestizos in Peru, Bolivia, and Argentina. He questions them about their agricultural practices, their economic decisions; he observes rituals; he asks women in the market the meaning of indigenous talismans; he interviews shamans; he describes the spatial arrangement and the contents of shrines, altars, and temples; and he reproduces diagrams of archaeological sites, which he then interprets at length. Yet the fieldwork does not treat all of these things as objects for ethnographic explanation. The part of his research that appears to be ethnographic inquiry is a manner of probing and entering an indigenous way of working. The result is not a text that retains the aim of representing a "them" to a putative "us." It is not a representation.

Nor does he paint his work as indigenous philosophy: Kusch points out that his questions are not what indigenous people might ask, nor is the knowledge he generates indigenous knowledge; rather, it is *of* indigenous knowledge. Drawing on that knowledge, he challenges the organization of the social, of the subject, the externalization of life. By a difficult and tortured path, he comes to challenge his own intellectual inheritance as an intellectual of German descent from Buenos Aires.

From that position, outside of conventional disciplinary knowledge, he poses questions of Western understanding. Thus, Kusch offers his description not as an enhancement, supplement, or adjunct to Western philoso-

phy, nor as an analogous or homologous system of “indigenous philosophy” in counterpart to European or Western systems. Instead, he discusses indigenous thinking as a way of living that spans many domains that are usually separate within the West: metaphysics, religion, epistemology, everyday practices, the realm of the emotions, the body, ontology, technology, physics (causality, matter), time (the past, the future), the subjective and the objective, the relation to the natural world (earth, animals, natural history, and so on). Indigenous life is not conceived in terms of separate domains in this sense. As Kusch understands them, some of the practices, conventions, and tendencies associated with Western social science and philosophy are irrelevant within indigenous thinking, such as the formulation of hypotheses; striving to universal claims; the very practice of making abstract claims; defining, verifying, and so on. In this sense, Kusch’s intervention is transdisciplinary. It challenges the terms by which “philosophy,” “anthropology,” “psychology,” and other disciplines operate and are constituted. Kusch disrupts the policing of knowledge-borders that define the disciplines.

Yet his work is also, crucially, not just an intervention in the realm of abstract knowledge. Because many of the Western practices speak to another, external reality, they block a way of knowing and living that takes in the cosmos in its terrible and fecund possibilities. Indigenous thinking is a way of living in which people govern their lives in an affectively rich, often tense engagement with the material world around them by performing rituals, through which they seek to hold off the overturn. It is a practical knowledge that determines activities of the everyday.

Kusch’s approach to that knowledge marks the inroad to a different way of thinking and being that precisely does not follow the rules, logics, and reasons of Western social science and philosophy. He enters alternative logics, ways of being and thinking, through the concrete, the specific, the detail, and, significantly, through what he learns from exchanges with the indigenous peoples he highlights, including deracinated rural people living in the capital. He explores his own initial ambivalence, and the psychologically convoluted justifications the middle class has to vindicate the idea of progress.

Our translation, correspondingly, seeks to resist the impulse to “translate” Kusch by making him into either an ethnographer or a philosopher in the Western disciplinary sense. To give in to the tendency to read Kusch as

an ethnographer is to translate his work into something that is in great tension with his own sense of the project.

## AMÉRICA

Why retain the accent in *América*? When Kusch describes “América,” he depicts a repressed reality, a form of thinking that furnishes and connotes the authentic but suppressed experience of millions of people in their everyday lives. We have kept *América* because the accent marks a difference from what would be known and familiar to the English-language reader. It provides a certain textual resistance to the reader, a defamiliarization with the continent as she or he knows it. The accent makes the word, and its referent, harder to assimilate to a pre-existing understanding of this continent. Like a fish bone, the accent may make the text a bit harder to digest, which is our intention, just as the thinking itself cannot be absorbed by a body that wants to enrich itself through the obliteration of all traces of this other thinking.<sup>8</sup>

*América* for Kusch houses a metaphysic, a form of life that moves according to its own rhythm. In keeping with his desire to uncover, we would like to expand the conceptual possibilities in English for this *other* América without incorporating it within a dominant understanding of the continent. Some of the alternatives for translating the term *América* bear this out. Despite Los Tigres del Norte’s biting admonition that “somos todos americanos,” *America* in English too often connotes the United States, and *Americans* is usually taken to mean people from the United States, often in contrast to people from other parts of the continent, as in, “We’re not Mexicans, we’re Americans.” Since Kusch emphasizes his own criticism of and departure from North American philosophy and theory, this rendering would deceive.

Although *Latin America* would seem to capture Kusch’s attempt to seat his text primarily within Latin America, the term has clear problems. For example, Kusch approvingly cites Whorf on the Hopi, a group indigenous to what is now North America, yet the Hopi are clearly included in Kusch’s *América*. Furthermore, Kusch contrasts indigenous thinking to the urban, middle class of Lima or Buenos Aires, but these groups are obviously Latin Americans; the contrast between the urban and the indigenous, the founding and fundamental distinction in *Indigenous and Popular Thinking in*

*América*, would be compromised if we rendered *América* as *Latin America*. Finally, non-indigenous North Americans have an ambiguous status in Kusch's text. Though Kusch argues that North American thinking, like European thinking, is an imposition, it is not entirely clear whether or how North Americans themselves fit in. Rendering *América* as "Latin America" would dissipate this ambiguity and exclude North Americans.

We also contemplated translating *América* as "the Americas." Presumably, this would have included the entire continent. However, *the Americas* is embedded in a European optic of the continent, and perhaps preserves the antiquated tone which suggests European "discovery" of new lands. *América*, on the other hand, keeps the reader within another optic, an alternative set of perceptions and understandings that the English reader must grope for, because *América* is not so readily within one's grasp.