

The Slippery Earth

*Nahua-Christian Moral Dialogue
in Sixteenth-Century Mexico*

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SUMMARY

Orientation in space and time was an important aspect of Nahua morality. It was less important in Christianity outside of the heaven/earth/hell structure of vertical space. On the whole, Christian teaching reinforced Nahua understandings more than it contradicted them: the underworld, the horizontal periphery, and the night were presented as dangerous and chaotic; world destruction loomed in the future. Christianity phrased the immoral aspects of peripheries directly in terms of sin. For the Nahuas these places and times bore more general implications of chaos and disintegration, of which human misdeeds were one aspect, but with sin as *tlatlacolli* Christianity became more compatible with this view.

Symbolism of centrality was applied to Christianity's sacred beings and places in ways which surely increased their appeal to the Nahua mind; likewise, the peripherality of the Devil and his cohorts suited Nahua conceptions. A stronger differentiation between morally positive and morally negative supernatural beings may have been achieved in this way.

Colonial resettlement and town planning policies joined with Christian teaching to reinforce the importance of the center in Nahua thought. The basic horizontal organization of space was retained, with the church and its *patio* at the axis in place of the temple and its plaza. The dangers of the periphery—the home of sorcerers, wild animals, and immoral people (whether Spaniards or Indians)—were more or less what they had always been.

CHAPTER 4

Purity and Pollution

The Nahuas frequently expressed moral values in terms of purity and impurity. Immorality is identified with dirt or filth. Immoral behavior is itself dirty; it also has the effect of polluting the participant. These concepts are closely related to the idea of damage: moral pollution is a form of damage; the polluting acts are *tlatlacolli*. Certain kinds of acts are emphasized, however, and there is a stronger sense of personal consequence. One does not merely damage things but becomes polluted, contagious; the acts actively disturb order rather than contributing in some general way to the entropy of the universe. Sexual transgressions are most stressed, though moral discourse can apply this terminology to any act it is seeking to discourage.

The friars found here a means of expressing their ideas of good and evil, moral and immoral, in terms which seemed to concord with their own concepts of purity and impurity.

FILTH

The basic Nahua pollution concept is *tlatzalli*, defined by Molina (1970:II, 118v) as "rubbish which they throw on the dungheap." *Tlatzalli* derives from the verb *izolihui* 'for things to get old, wear out,' with the reflexive or transitive form *izolohā* 'to abase oneself, to mistreat, wear out

things like clothes, books, mats, etc.' (Karttunen 1983:102). *Tlazolli* is also related to the verb *zola* 'to become old and worn out' and the noun suffix *-zoli* 'old and worn out.' The most literal meaning, then, is of something useless, used up, something that has lost its original order or structure and has been rendered loose and undifferentiated matter. The term is used broadly to denote any sort of dirt or "matter out of place": chaff, straw, twigs, bits of hair or fiber, excrement, muck. What one sweeps up with a broom is *tlazolli*.¹

In general, *tlazolli* consists of little bits and pieces of things, which might once have belonged somewhere but now, through processes of decay, deterioration, or digestion, have become formless and unconnected; these fragments are now scattered about, interfering with things that are new and tidy. The term *tlazolli* covers a whole series of impurities used in moral discourse to connote negativity. Rags, potsherds, cobwebs, dust, mud, straw or grass, charcoal, disheveled hair, excrement, urine, vomit, nasal mucus, sweat, pus, coagulated semen, niter or saltpeter (*tequixquilit*), the dregs of pulque—anything of unpleasant odor, of rotten or formless composition, is included. The Nahuas conceived of the human body's internal structure in such a way that all parts were internally connected—what entered at one place could exit at another (López Austin 1980:I, 186; Sahagún 1953–82:XI, 152, 154, 183). This idea reinforced the symbolic connection among the various body secretions.² By extension, small creatures that live down in the dirt carried the same symbolic connotations: spiders, worms, scorpions, centipedes, toads, lizards.

The general effect of this symbolism is to induce moral repugnance by association with what is cognitively disturbing and/or physically repulsive. This kind of moral discourse uses verbal symbols the way the Ndembu, in Turner's analyses, use ritual symbols. The materials chosen as symbols are things which by their very nature attract attention because of a violation of a basic principle of order, or because of a universal human fascination with body products. These correspond to what Turner labels a sensory, organic, or orrectic pole of meaning. Such materials evoke emotional responses which, through the process of ritual, become attached by juxtaposition to ideological, sociomoral, or normative concerns of the society. The moral and the material become intimately united (Turner 1967:28, 54; 1969:49; 1974:55). This association accomplishes what Durkheim (1953:36) set forth as the essential feature of moral rules: they are both obligatory and desirable.

Turner's analysis deals with cognitive and social factors of positive

moral value; the physiological factors associated with them come principally from the realm of reproduction. The *tlazolli* complex draws materials principally from the realms of excretion and decay to associate them, through the process of moral rhetoric, with negatively valued behaviors. Some of these substances have fertilizing, creative roles as well: manure used to fertilize crops was still called *tlazolli* (Molina 1970:II, 137r). But in the context of moral discourse these substances exist in excess or out of place. The forbidden is rendered undesirable, leaving the obligatory desirable by comparison. There are elements here of Turner's "liminality" and "anti-structure," not in the sense of an inversion of normal structure or a creation of "communitas," but of a very dangerous lack of structure. It is like what he describes the world of witchcraft to be: "a world of decay, where all that is normal, healthy, and ordered is reduced to chaos and 'primordial slime'" (Turner 1967:125). More strongly than *tlailacalli*, *tlazolli* expresses the character of nature's chaotic side.

The process of living inevitably brought one into contact with *tlazolli*. Maize grew from mud, from the body of the tainted earth deity. One linked oneself with the earth by eating cultivated foods and also by acts of *tlailtlapacayotl* 'earthliness'—sexual activity. The souls of unwedded children free from these contaminations could go back up to the creator deity's heaven; others were in effect claimed by the earth and had to go down into *mictlan* (López Austin 1980:I, 357–59).

A preoccupation with filth runs through the records of Nahua culture. This appears in far too broad a range of contexts to be a product of Christian moral education; however, the friars' interest in applying native moral discourse to their own purposes accounts for the preservation of some of this information.

Abasement by association with filth was standard in ritualized discourse. A newly installed ruler would express his unworthiness by stating: *ca cujlatitlan, ca tlaçuiltlan nonemija* 'indeed, I was living in the excrement, in the filth' (Sahagún 1953–82:VI, 61). Sahagún's list of insults used by the common folk includes *tatapacuitlapol* and *tzotzomaciuicuitlapol*, synonyms which may be translated as "big old ragged worn-out piece of feces" (Sahagún 1905–08:VI, 174).

When the Mexica dwelt at Tizapan under Colhua supremacy (prior to the founding of Tenochtitlan), the ruler of Colhuacan sent them an offering for their new temple. According to the *Codex Aubin* (1979:45), the offering consisted of excrement. Torquemada's more extended version describes it as "a little excrement, hairs, and a dead *bobo* bird,³ all covered

with spit and phlegm and wrapped up in a dirty rag" (Torquemada 1975-83:I, 131). In the *Historia de los mexicanos por sus pinturas*, the Colhuas simply mock the Mexica by throwing straw and dirt into the new temple (in Garibay 1979:34). This pollution of sacred space, which also symbolized both moral and political superiority on the part of the Colhuas, precipitated (and justified) the outbreak of hostilities between the two groups.

Temple officials listed in the *Florentine Codex* include the *tlacalquacajili*, guardian of the Mecatlan temple, responsible for seizing and punishing anyone who defiled the temple by urinating there (Sahagún 1933-82:II, 211-12). When the sexually corrupt Moquiuhix, ruler of Tlatelolco, was defeated by the Mexica emperor Axayacatl, it was ordered that his temple and palace remain forever torn down, dirty and covered with manure (*Anales de Cuauhtitlan* 1975:55; Alvarado Tezozomoc 1975:397).

When couriers returned to report the outcome of a battle, they came with disheveled hair in the case of defeat, tied hair and a white mantle in the case of victory (Clavijero 1982:211). The *Codex Telleriano-Remensis* (1964:171) depicts a woman executed for adultery; her hair is wildly matted. One of the metaphors for misbehavior that Sahagún extracted from moral discourse is *tzompachpūl*, *cuytlanexpūl* 'big mossy-hair,' 'big excrement-ashes'; in other words, disheveled and filthy (Sahagún 1933-82:243). The suffix *-pūl* (or *-pūl*) 'big' is derogatory. The illustration accompanying this metaphor shows the rhetorician addressing an oversized and underdressed individual with unkempt hair (Fig. 9).

Girls in temple service were taught that their flesh would rot if they violated the chastity demanded of their office (Motolinia 1941:62). Such violations also manifested themselves as dust on mirrors, called the "eyes of Huitzilopochtli," kept for the purpose of ascertaining the girls' purity (Kubler and Gibson 1951:30).

Persons of noble class were considered purer (or considered themselves purer) than their vassals, who in turn were purer than slaves (López Austin 1980:I, 452). The Tlaxcalans claimed that the souls of lords became clouds, birds, and the like; the souls of commoners became weasels, stinking beetles, creatures that gave off very foul-smelling urine, and other creeping animals (Mendieta 1980:97). It was the duty of rulers to protect the purity of the state, a function expressed metaphorically as "bathing" the vassals or even as combing their hair (for example, Bautista 1600b:37v).

Inauspicious day-signs in the *tonalpohualli* were considered full of filth and dust; people born then would exhibit various moral deficiencies (Sa-



Figure 9. Admonishing the *Tzompachpūl*, the big mossy-haired one. Illustration in the Florentine Codex, Book VI, 201r. (Photo from Sahagún 1979.)

hagún 1933-82:IV). Immoral people attracted dirt. If filth, cobwebs, hair, or charcoal was found in the special jars of water used in the ceremony to Ixtlilton, it was a message from the god that the sponsor of the rite was an adulterer or thief (Sahagún 1933-82:I, 35). Even this limited number of examples shows that all sorts of social relations and moral states could be expressed in the symbolic terms of dirt.

Moral uprightness was associated with cleanliness and physical perfection. Esteva-Fabregat (1962:680) notes the Nahuas' preoccupation with cleanliness as a means of physical and spiritual well-being (though Nahuas would not have used these categories). *Chitpāhua*, meaning both "to clean" and "to purify," is a principal term here. Purity could also be defined in negative terms as the absence of any dirt. For example, the celibate lifestyle followed in the *calmecāc*, the school for noble youths, is described thus: *can nīmā hatzoio, haterubio* 'there was no sweatiness, no dustiness at all' (Sahagún 1933-82:III, 61).

Tlazolli was the province of the deities Tezcatlipoca and Tlazoltéotl. Thus, it was ultimately the gods who were responsible for sex and sexual transgressions (López Austin 1980:I, 250). In Nahuatl ideology, male/female

deity pairs often split a single function between them; Estrada Quevedo (1962:163) suggests that the pairing of Tezcatlipoca and Tlazolteotl in this context is an expression of this principle.

Tezcatlipoca 'The Mirror's Smoke' was the Nahuas' major deity. A complex being, in many of his aspects—nocturnal sorcerer, shape-changer, destroyer of kingdoms, seducer of maidens, and generally lord of all disorder—he bore an obvious relationship to the forces of pollution and chaos. Sahagún's *Memoriales en tres columnas* lists among this god's attributes *teubtli* and *tlazolli*, dust and filth (Sahagún 1905-08:VII, 2). The corresponding entry in the *Florentine* states: *In jhuac nemja tlalticpac, ieboatl qujolitajia, in teubtli tlaçolli* 'when he used to go about on the earth, he would bring to life dust and filth' (Sahagún 1953-82:I, 5).

To be in this god's presence is to be in a dangerous place, a slippery place: *tlalaona, tlaptzcani* 'it is slippery, it is slick' (Sahagún 1933-82:VI, 10). The skunk, a *tezabnuitl* that invaded people's houses and sickened them with its odor, was Tezcatlipoca's image or impersonator (*ixiptla*; Sahagún 1933-82:V, 171). When Tezcatlipoca descended to earth to wreak havoc upon Quetzalcoatl's ordered kingdom, he came down on a spider web—a bit of *tlazolli* (Mendieta 1980:82).

Tezcatlipoca was also god of penitence—of punishment and justice—punishing people for the very acts he incited. With his magician's mirror he could see into people's hearts and determine their hidden deeds; people did penance to him lest he reveal this knowledge and subject them to public shame (Durán 1967:I, 38).

Tlazolteotl 'Filth Deity,' associated with the sensuous Huastecs, was the patroness of dust and filth, and of adulterers and promiscuous women—persons who were especially tainted with the stuff (Sahagún 1933-82:I, 23; Sullivan 1982). She was called Tlaelcuani 'Eater of Foul Things' because she removed people's filth from them in the indigenous confession rite. This rite, as described in the *Florentine* *Codex*, was conducted by her diviners, the oral confession being directed to Tezcatlipoca (Sahagún 1933-82:I, 23-27; VI, chap. 7). Tezcatlipoca and Tlazolteotl together had the power to cause immorality, punish immoral people, and remove their impurities from them. In Christian theology the Devil held sway over the first two of these activities but had nothing to do with the third.

Tlazolteotl was closely related to others of the earth-deity complex: the five Cihuaterco, whose function according to the *Primeros memoriales* was *tehlaximaliztli* 'adultery' (Sahagún 1905-08:VI, 43); the fourfold Ixcuina, defender of adulterers (*Codex Ríos* 1964:plate 39); and Cihuacoatl, the childless wanderer who seduced and killed young men (Mendieta 1980:91).

Tlazolteotl's day-sign was Nine Reed; the person born then was *motquijica tlaçolli* 'entirely filth' (Sahagún 1953-82:IV, 74). People executed for adultery were dressed in her insignia (López Austin 1980:I, 379; Motolinía 1971:307).

The goddess wears unspun cotton in her headdress and carries a broom. The broom was a symbol of *tlazolli* and its removal. The unspun cotton connotes an association with spinning and weaving—activities rich in sexual connotations, though they are more properly the province of the goddess Xochiquetzal. The fact that the cotton is unspun is significant: it is soft, incoherent, unformed, but with creative potential. It is *tlazolli*. Selser (1963:I, 16) observes that, like unspun cotton, the downy legs of the vulture (an eater of rotten things) are depicted in the codices as white with acute angles painted on in black. This motif, called *tlaitzcopintli*, adorns Tlazolteotl's brooms and garments and also those of other goddesses of the earth. Figure 10 shows the *Florentine* *Codex*'s portrait of Tlazolteotl, with her broom, unspun-cotton headdress, and the *tlaitzcopintli* design on her clothing. Participants in Tlazolteotl's confession rite went to do penance at the crossroads shrine of the Cihuaterco, wearing a paper skirt painted in this design. They left the skirt at the shrine, symbolically abandoning their *tlazolli* at the crossroads (an appropriate place for it) and returned home denuded of filth as well as of clothing (see Sahagún 1933-82:I, 27).

Sahagún describes Tlazolteotl as "another Venus" (1981:I, 51; also Figure 10). Torquemada (1975-83:III, 100) makes the same identification, adding that she is very well named, for "a goddess of loves and sensualities, what can she be but a dirty, filthy and stained goddess?" Friars connected her with Eve, the woman who first sinned, and who like Cihuacoatl had serpent associations (for example, *Codex Ríos* 1964:plate 39). The symbolism accorded rather well with Christianity. In medieval art lust was portrayed as the "Woman with the Snakes," described by Cohn (1981:101) as a stock figure who was at once a visual embodiment of carnal desire and an earth demon—a denizen . . . of that dark world where dwelt Satan and the Beast of the Apocalypse with their companion snakes, scorpions and toads.

Understandably, Tlazolteotl and her ilk struck the friars as morally repugnant manifestations of the Devil. Mendieta (1980:91) explained Cihuacoatl's nocturnal apparitions as "a thing which Our Lord may have permitted because of the sins of those people, giving license to the demon to transform himself."⁵

The *tlazolli* concept was connected with that of *tezabnuitl*, the omens

and auguries that also represented an invasion of chaos into order. *Tlazolli* could augur death: a long spider web borne on the wind indicated the imminent demise of the person to whom it adhered (*Códice Carolino* 1967:55). There was a series of nocturnal phantasms called *tetzabuitl*. Some of these were said to be manifestations of Tezcatlipoca, acting in his role of nocturnal sorcerer and trickster (Sahagún 1953-82:V)—here paralleling the Devil's role as master of disguises and possibly reflecting a general "diabolization" of Tezcatlipoca as the friars tried to merge his identity with that of Lucifer.

One of these *tetzabuitl* was Cuitlapanton 'Little One on the Excrement,' a squat female naked figure, mashed down like dung (Fig. 11). She crept along the earth's surface, haunting the trash heaps and the places where people went to urinate. To see her when one went out at night for that purpose meant that one would die. One could try to chase her and catch her, as the young man in the illustration appears to be doing, but she would only disappear and reappear farther off (Sahagún 1953-82:V, 179). She was a personification of *tlazolli*.

From this sort of information emerges a broader sense of *tlazolli*'s danger. Death, cosmic disturbance, filth, and immorality were intermingled in such a way that harmful forces, once unleashed, could affect anyone or anything in their path. Brooms had to be kept outside the house and away from children because of the *tlazolli* they carried; a man could seduce an unwilling woman if he collected the straws that fell from her broom when she swept (*Códice Carolino* 1967:36-37). *Tlazolli* did not necessarily attach itself only to the corrupt; it was an active force in its own right as well as an indicator of immorality.

Tlazolli was so powerful that foul odors alone could bring on sickness, loss of reason, and death. A skunk's spray made people sick (Sahagún 1953-82:V, 171). The legends surrounding the fall of Tollan mention an anomalous being—a sorcerer in the *Florentine Codex*, in other texts a tall man lacking internal organs—which when killed by the Toltecs emitted such a terrible stench that all who smelled it died (*Leyenda de los soles* 1975:125; Sahagún 1953-82:III, 25; Torquemada 1975-83:I, 57). During the Conquest, the smoke from the Spaniard's arquebuses was thought to stupefy people by its smell (Sahagún 1953-82:XII, 38).

This contagious aspect of pollution is quite evident in the concept of *tlazolmiquiztli* 'filth death' or *tlazolmiquiztli* 'dying of filth.' The *Códice Carolino* (1967:46) and Ruiz de Alarcón (1982:191-92) provide the

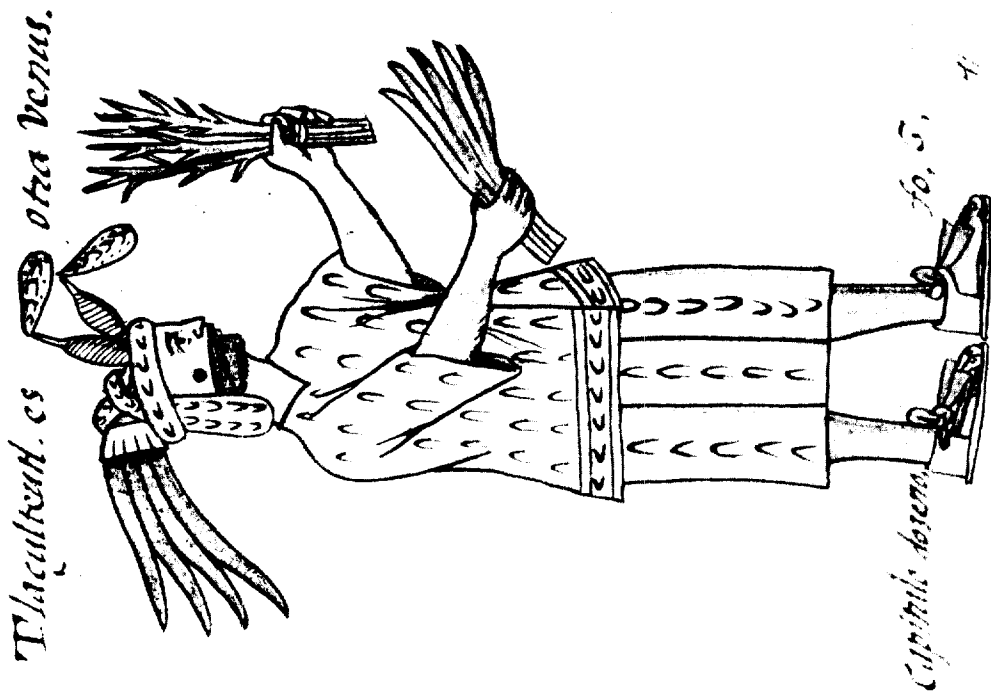


Figure 10. *Tlazolteotl*. Illustration in the Florentine Codex, Book I. (Photo from Sahagún 1979.)

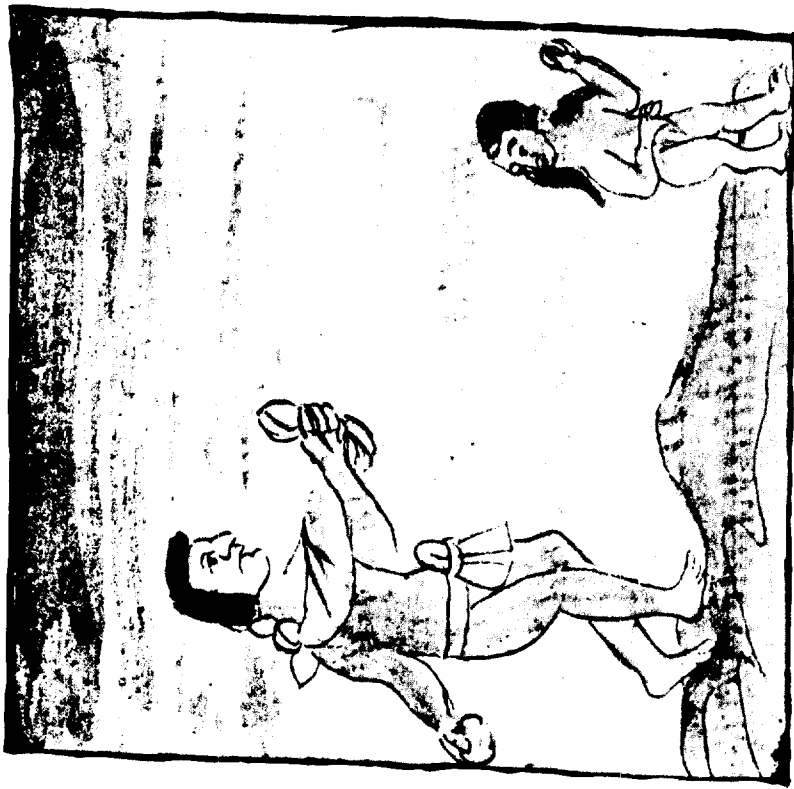


Figure 11. Man encountering the nocturnal apparition Cuicilapantlan. Illustration in the Florentine Codex, Book V, 13r. (Photo from Sahagún 1979.)

fullest explanations of the concept; López Austin (1980:I, 261, 287–99) summarizes the data. Various misfortunes, including property damage, poverty, illness, and death, were explained as *tetzahuitl* caused by persons in a state of *tlazolli* contamination: adulterers or sexually promiscuous persons, thieves, gamblers, drunkards, or even twins and their parents. The contamination resulting from their transgressions lodged in the livers of these persons, the seat of the *ihiyotl* 'breath'—a sort of aura or emanation that could pass out of the body through breathing (López Austin 1980:I, 261). These emanations from dirty-livered individuals were harmful to anything around them, especially the very young, and offensive to the

deities. Newly hatched turkey chicks would fall over dead if someone involved in an illicit love affair entered their coop (Sahagún 1953–82:V, 191–92). A child's illness or even excessive crying would be blamed on a parent's misdeed (*Códice Carolino* 1967:46). The spouse of such a person might also become ill and waste away (Ruiz de Alarcón 1982:192). Sexual activity during a period of ritual abstinence ruined the fast by *tiazolmi-quiztli* (Sahagún 1953–82:I, 13). Damage to merchants' goods was *tiazolmi-quiztli* caused by someone's fornication (*Códice Carolino* 1967:44–45; merchants were supposed to abstain from sex while on their travels into the periphery). If a mouse gnawed an article of clothing, or a mouse or bat entered a temple, this was interpreted as *tiazolmi-quiztli* caused by unchastity (*Códice Carolino* 1967:52; Durán 1967:I, 27). Immoral behavior could ruin by *tiazolmi-quiztli* the good fortune associated with certain day-signs; a bad ruler could harm the city with filth (Sahagún 1953–82:VI, 1, 54, 70; VI, 43). Such beliefs, in addition to explaining misfortunes, gave everyone a stake in the moral behavior of others. Social pressures could help to uphold the moral code.

In many cultures, contact with polluting forces, when these are properly manipulated, can be a source of power (Douglas 1966). The texts on Nahuatl culture contain much information on the ritual manipulation of dirt and cleanliness. One allowed oneself to accumulate bodily dirt, or actively dirtied oneself with specified substances (such as the black unguent employed by priests); then after a certain period of time one bathed, though perhaps only in a certain way, or at a certain place, or only certain parts of the body. The descriptions of the festivals in Sahagún (1953–82:II) and Durán (1967:I) are especially replete with this sort of material. Observations connected with mourning and with the absences of warriors or merchants also placed considerable emphasis on dirt (Alvarado Tezozomoc 1975:311, 339–40; Durán 1967:II, 155, 164–65, 288–90, 358; Sahagún 1953–82:IV, 69; IX, 9). Here dirt expresses liminality in the sense of transitional states—death and mourning, persons who leave and then return, ritual participation. These are interstices in the social and temporal fabric. Dirt and liminality are integrated with cleanliness and order in an alternating, shifting pattern, reflective of cosmic processes in general.

A full analysis of all these data would constitute a study in itself. For present purposes it suffices to note that dirt had positive functions in establishing desired ritual states—to be dirty was not necessarily to be immoral. However, the plethora of rules and taboos surrounding these practices shows that this was a very risky business. One had to be in a ritually

and morally pure state or the danger multiplied: one who was already tainted with *tlazolli* could not exert control over it. The sexual abstinence, fasting, and carefully structured activities of priests enabled them safely to encounter chaotic forces and endure states of intoxication, actions likely to send ordinary people "over the precipice."

DIRT AND CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

Christianity also used filth and purity as a conceptual mode in moral discourse. The state of sin was a state of pollution, sickness, and decay. The purity, splendor, and fragrance of Christ, Mary, angels, and saints contrasted with the filthiness, blackness, and stench of sinners and demons. Scorpions, toads, lizards, spiders, and the like were associated with the earth, dirt, and, by extension, demonic powers (Cohn 1981:86–87, 101). European witches were believed to dwell in rundown old huts, dressed in rags with their hair disheveled (Aguirre Beltrán 1963:111). Thus, the friars found in Nahua discourse familiar symbols which they avidly appropriated for their teaching, perceiving correctly that this symbolism could be effective in evoking the desired moral attitudes in their converts.

But when one examines the premises underlying these symbolic expressions, two crucial differences emerge. First, Nahuas did not distinguish between cause and effect in the same way as Christianity. In Christian doctrine, where sin is defined as the transgression of divine law, the corruption associated with sin is an effect of the sin and not the sin itself. Furthermore, this corruption is not inherent in the nature of the sin but is a sanction, a punishment imposed from above (Augustine 1973:263). Sin is itself described as spiritual filth and corruption, but this is essentially a metonymic expression, a substitution of effect for cause. This relationship was often left implicit, such that Indians (or European peasants, for that matter) would not necessarily understand the difference.

Nahua thought mapped out a domain of *tlazolli*, contact with any part of which was intrinsically contaminating. A proscribed act did not bring on *tlazolli* as a result, let alone as an arbitrary punishment imposed from above. Rather, it was the fact that the act entailed contact with *tlazolli* which justified its prohibition or restriction. Moreover, any element or aspect of *tlazolli* could symbolize the whole domain by a synecdochic substitution of whole for part. Based on this sort of symbolic manipulation, moral discourse could argue that contact with any type of *tlazolli* could

bring the full range of *tlazolli*'s polluting impact crashing down upon the wrongdoer. Moral discourse operated not on the assumption that acts had polluting effects but on the assumption that the pollution resulting obviously and directly from the act would bring with it a host of other nasty effects.

The second difference is that Christianity treated the symbolic relationship between physical and moral pollution primarily as metaphor while Nahua ideology treated it primarily as metonymy. The friars used the condition of the body as a metaphor for that of the soul. Here corruption and sickness act as metaphors for the state of the soul (extended metonymically to acts that produced that state); since the soul is immaterial, the relationship can only be metaphorical. Dirt is to the body as sin is to the soul—an analogy is drawn between separate domains.

Real dirt could in fact connote spiritual exaltation: hermits and holy beggars revealed by their filthy rags that they had achieved a spiritually sublime state. Saint Francis's fascination with poverty was of this order. For Turner (1969:96–97), such figures "symbolize the moral values of *communitas* as against the coercive power of supreme rank and office"; in his view, such symbolism is very common cross-culturally. But while aspects of it can be found in Nahua thought, Christianity's equation of a soul/body dichotomy with a good/evil dichotomy laid a particularly strong emphasis on the link between abased bodies and exalted souls. The body—created from earth and dust—is intrinsically polluted; one must reject it, striving to free oneself from its confines and demands. This difference explains why the Indians at first misunderstood Mendicant poverty, saying of the Dominicans that "they must have been great sinners, to have to live in such arduous mortification" (Alberro 1972:488, citing Dávila Padilla).

Saint Thomas Aquinas (1974:5) treats the "stain" of sin in explicitly metaphorical terms:

In its literal sense the word "stain" [*macula*] refers to physical objects, as where one bright object loses its lustre by rubbing against another object. It is by simile with this use that the term should be applied to spiritual realities.

Aquinas, in keeping with scholasticism's reduction of evil to the privation of good, considers this stain not as something added to the soul but as something removed, a reduction in the soul's natural radiance. The contrast with *tlazolli*—real, gross physical stuff that adheres to one—could hardly be more striking.

In certain contexts Christianity's body/soul analogy could be partially transformed into metonymy. Spiritual pollution could be expressed in physical illness, though at least in theory the illness was a punishment for the sin and not a natural outcome of it (see Chapter Six). Sexual sins were considered physically as well as morally polluting. It was in attitudes toward sex that Christianity's abasement of the flesh found its strongest expression. Though the medieval Church paid relatively more attention to nonsexual sins than does modern Catholicism, it was nevertheless "inordinately concerned with the sexual" (Tentler 1977:165). Sex was considered physically harmful, debilitating the body and rendering it susceptible to illness. This physical aspect could pass over into the spiritual realm: there was a "fear of moral contamination from natural physiological functions" (Tentler 1977:226-28). This is quite similar to Nahua belief—sexual excess is the class of behavior to which *tlazolli* tropes were most frequently applied.

The friars, especially the Franciscans, were at least somewhat inclined to blur the distinction between soul and body. They shared the widespread belief that the corpses of saintly individuals do not decay but remain intact and emit a pleasant "odor of sanctity." The Franciscans, notably Mendieta (1980), ascribed this phenomenon to the more illustrious among them; Grijalva (1624), however, emphasized instead that honored Augustinians died as virgins and/or were found to have been wearing chains or hair shirts against their skin.

In Nahua thought, the physical and the spiritual were not such separate domains that they could only be compared through analogy. Immaterial, nonphenomenal things were not set off from the material world but were continuous with it, integrated into a single, monist conception of reality. Abasement of the body was abasement of the whole self, not of the body without the soul. This is not to imply that they considered moral pollution exactly the same thing as physical dirt, or that moral purity could be achieved merely by frequent bathing. But the relationship among these factors was metonymic: there was a domain of dirt—*tlazolli*—which included moral pollution along with ordinary dirt. The belief that transgressions actually dirtied the liver expresses the closeness and even overlap of physical and moral pollution. Similarly, the human being constituted a single domain encompassing spiritual as well as fleshy components. Within these domains, elements were linked symbolically in such a way that, not only were some conceptualized in terms of the others (like moral pollution and physical dirt), but operations upon some could affect the

others by the "magical" principle of contiguity—Frazer's "law of contact." Elements in metonymic or synecdochic association were made to "stand for" each other as if they were metaphors. Straw or grass (*zacatl*), for example, was a synecdoche for the general domain of *tlazolli* and a metonym for moral pollution, another kind of *tlazolli*. Straws were passed through the tongue and then burned as a way of purifying oneself of misdeeds, each straw representing a single act (Durán 1967:1, 157). One's own *tlazolli*, represented metonymically by the straws, was transferred onto them through the symbolic action of the ritual of tongue sacrifice, the coating of the straws with one's own blood. This identified the straws metaphorically with the acts; the straws and the acts could then be destroyed by fire.

The sweeping up of straw was a purificatory act in a broader sense than housecleaning because straw represented the entire domain of *tlazolli* by a synecdochic substitution of part for whole. It was also a moral act in that straw, one type of *tlazolli*, represented moral pollution, another type of *tlazolli*, by a metonymic substitution of one element for another within the semantic domain of *tlazolli*. It is by such symbolic transformations that expressive acts are felt to have real effects.

A contrast with Christian usage may help to clarify these associations. The trope "you wallow in excrement" might be interpreted by a Christian to mean: "Your soul is as contaminated from your sinful acts as your body would be if you rolled around in a dungheap." A Nahua interpretation would be: "You are in a state of pollution; there is filth attached to you which is of the same order as excrement." If the situation were not remedied, this *tlazolli* might bring with it various other elements of *tlazolli*: the person might, according to moral discourse, quite literally end up poor, homeless, clad in rags, covered with dust and sweat, lying in a pile of ordure, and oozing from all orifices.

For the Nahuas, the link between the moral and physical, normative and sensory, idea and emotion, was more direct than in Christian ideology. Human beings themselves were more closely integrated with, and subject to, general cosmic processes: the Nahua self was a fragile construction whose integrity was easily disrupted by the same forces that threatened all ordered entities.⁶ The symbolic processes involved in this Nahua "closeness to nature" may from a Western perspective seem intellectually more "primitive," but they make for moral rhetoric which, because it is more emotionally and physiologically evocative, is more effective.

In the friars' hands this symbolism became Christianized to the extent

that it was applied to the soul as something distinct from the body. Friars used the term *ihiqui* 'like' or 'as if' to set up metaphorical relationships, or referred to tropes as *nezayotl* or *machiyotl* 'manifestations' or 'signs,' with the implication that they were not to be taken literally. But such caveats are occasional—there was little to prevent an Indian attending a series of sermons from interpreting the symbolism the same way it would have been interpreted in traditional moral discourse.

Another common method for setting up these metaphors was to use the term *teyotica* 'in a sacred way' or 'in a divine sense,' from *teyotl*, the abstract noun form of *teotl* 'deity' or 'sacred thing' and the instrumental suffix *-(t)ca*. *Teyotica* could be more literally translated as "with sacredness." It implies that something is being done in accordance with divinity or through the agency of divinity. It does not do what the friars wanted it to do: to cause a statement phrased in earthly terms to apply to a separate spiritual realm. At best, the use of *teyotica* could cast a holy aura over certain things of this world, separating things associated with the Church from less sacred referents.

There is reduction and redirection in the friars' adoption of the *tlazolliz* complex: simple terms of cleanliness and dirt appear constantly while the more complex or esoteric tropes, especially those lacking Christian parallels, are less common or are absent. Thus, there is a loss of richness, a failure to exploit the full expressive (and hence persuasive) capacity of Nahuatl. The symbols are redirected toward Christian significata: the *tlazolliz* of sin, devils, hell; the purity (*chipahuiztli*) of virtue, God, heaven. But the rhetorical method is the same: moral persuasion via the linkage of negatively valued phenomena with negative affect and positively valued phenomena with positive affect.

The Nahuas' use of the vocabulary of filth for expressing self-abasement and deviance was easily adopted by the friars. Fray Andrés de Olmos's collection of oratory is rich in this imagery (Bautista 1600b). Though not published until 1600, long after Olmos's death, the metaphorical expressions he gleaned from the texts constitute the eighth chapter of his important 1547 grammar (Olmos 1875). The orations are basically native texts from generally nonreligious contexts, but they reflect Nahuatl-Christian religious dialogue in that "idolatrous" references are suppressed and Christian references are added. They are not sermons but rather a reference collection for the development of a Christian preaching style consistent with native linguistic formulas. Such skilled use of Nahuatl oratory would, Olmos hoped, facilitate the introduction of Christianity (Baudot 1983:232–34).

A daughter deferring to her mother's wisdom speaks as follows (Bautista 1600b:21v–22r):

ca oc nipiltonli ca oc niconetonli, ca oc nitlalolohua nitapalcamahuiltia, ca oc nicanahuiltia in naxix in nocuitl, ca oc nomac niquicuia in notéqualac in noyacacuitli:

Indeed, I am still a little child, I am still a little kid. Indeed, I still make dirtballs, I play with posherds. Indeed, I still play with my urine, my feces. Indeed, I still roll in my hand my saliva, my nasal mucus.

This sort of self-abasement appealed to the friars because of their own emphasis on the humiliation and mortification of the flesh. That the Nahuas would not have made the same equation between debased flesh and exalted spirit was not particularly troubling to them.

Olmos included more heavily Christianized texts as well as speeches like the one cited above. An old man speaking the word of "the sole god" sounds rather like a priest (Bautista 1600b:35r):

inic ticpohuaco ticchipahuaco in amanima, inic quitlaçaz in izzooyo in itrehuo in iyaca in ipalanca in itech oquitlalique in tilitique in catzahuaque i tzizimi in tlatlacatecolo:

[God's word enters us,] so we came to clean, we came to purify your souls, in order that they cast off their sweatiness, their dustiness, their stench, their rottenness, which the black ones, the dirty ones, the Tzizimime, the *tlatlacatecolo* placed with them.

Here the soul, not the whole self, is the contaminated element.

In Olmos's grammar (1875:218) the expression "the dirty and obstinate sinner is like the pig with mud" is rendered in Nahuatl as:

Tlaçulli, teuhitli quimauiltia, nextepeualli quimotlalilia, quimocuitlauia in çuquitl, in tapalhcat inic moçoquipuloa, inic motapalhcanceloa, in yuh coyametl mocuitlanexpuloa.

He (or she) plays with filth, dust; puts himself in charge of the ash-heap, occupies himself with mud, posherds; thus he mixes himself with mud, thus he mixes himself with posherds; like a peccary he rolls in excrement and ashes.

The peccary was chosen for its similarity to the pig, not for its moral connotations in Nahuatl.

Some examples from the doctrinal texts will give an idea of how the friars used such symbolism. Escalona, sermonizing on the preparation for Jesus during Advent, creates a simile between clean clothing and spiritual purity. Just as a great ruler's vassals cast off their old, worn-out mantles

and don clean ones in preparation for their lord's arrival, so must people do to be ready for Christ:

yn totlatcol, ca yulmagol, in tanima: yehica ca yn tanima çenca tlatlacolteca ca-
tçauatica.

Our sins are the old, worn-out mantles of our souls, because our souls are very dirty with sin.

When these old mantles have been cast off, people's souls will be purified and they will be able to meet their lord (Escalona n.d.:124v).

For Ash Wednesday, Escalona (n.d.:159r) translates a text from Job (2:8) as: *yn iquac tlaçolpan omotlalli, caxtapalcatia⁸ quipooçana yn temalli* 'then he sat in the filth, cleaning the pus with a potsherd.' Escalona's exegesis of the passage explains that, when one considers oneself a sinner before God, then one throws oneself in the filth. But when one does penance, one cleans the *tlatlacoltemalli* 'sin pus' with a potsherd. The potsherd is *mezaa yn tlamaçnaliztli* 'the sign (or manifestation) of penitence.' Three symbols from the *tlazolli* complex—*tlazolli*, pus, and potsherd—appear in a passage based entirely on a biblical model.

Olmos's oration for the boys coming to school at the monasteries admonishes them not to return to the ways of their parents: *yehual in teçolo in tecazuab imic nemohuaya ye hucauab* 'that which makes people old and worn out, that which dirties people, how people used to live long ago' (Bautista 1600b:63r).

The Dominican *doctrina* (1944:75v) chastises those who go about dirty with sin (*tlatlacolteca caçauatinemi*). They offend God, or Ipalnemohuani ('He by Whom One Lives'), and they dirty, they blacken their souls and their bodies with sin (*quicacaua quitilopa in imanima: yuan in inaacuo tlatlacolteca*). Molina (1569:18r) describes sins to be confessed as *motilitica, mocatzahuaca* 'your blackness, your dirtiness.' This pairing of *tilitic* and *cazahuac* is very frequent, occurring more often than the more evocative "filth, dust" pair.

Christ's manger becomes a very Nahuatl symbol of humility in Sahagún's *Exercicio* (1574:10r): *çauatl tiazolli yn mopelhetzin omochiub* 'straw, filth became your bed.' In Escalona (n.d.:127r) the newborn Christ is wrapped in little rages (*tzotzomatzinñiti*).

In his sermons, Sahagún tells the sinner (1563:21r):

Auh in revatl titlatlacoani çéca tepinauhti, çéca retlaelti in itech ca māia, in yevatl tlatlacolli: ý māia yuhqui tlatlacolteca papalani, tlatlacolteca temalli ytech quicā, hiyac, retlaelti remava.

But you, you sinner, very shameful, very revolting is the sin which is with your soul. It is as if your soul is covered with wounds by sin; pus issues from it because of sin, it stinks, it disgusts people, it infects people.

The relationship is metaphorical; the imagery physiological. In another sermon (1563:1v), he compares the sinner to a pig that lies rolling "in the sin-mud" (*tlatlacolçauititla*). Sin as mud was a familiar idea, though the Christian use of the pig as a symbol of gross carnality had to be learned.

Elsewhere Sahagún uses an agricultural metaphor. The heart of a person who has not confessed sins is rocky and grassy; his or her soul is black and dirty. This person must line up the sins and tell them to the priest, thus clearing the field of grass. Living a good Christian life is like the sowing and growing of young maize plants—but these must be weeded, as one must avoid taking pride in one's good life. Such pride is like a weed, like dust (1563:26r–26v). The same metaphor is used in Sahagún's *Exercicio*: sin is like weeds, grass, datura, thistles; virtue is like food crops (1574:2r–2v).

Lust was typically called *tlayelpaquiliztli* 'foul happiness.' *Tlayelli* refers to 'something foul' or to dysentery; it derives from the verb *iyaya* 'to stink' (Karttunen 1983:102, 271). The friars may have coined the compound term; in any case, the typical expressions in native discourse were *ahnulnemiliztli* 'pleasurable living' and *tlatitpacayotl* 'earthliness.' The friars showed much concern over sexual matters, partly because of their ascetic orientation and the Church's horror of sodomy and such acts, and partly because of the difficulty of imposing monogamy on a polygynous nobility—polygyny appearing to the friars as an expression of lust and greed rather than as an alternative pattern of family or economic organization. For example, Motolinia (1941:18s) states that men find it hard to give up this custom because of their sensuality and because of the women's economic contributions.

Sexual sins were emphasized in the indigenous confession rite, probably because they were the type of *tlatlacolli* most strongly conceived of as *tiazolli*, and confession was primarily a rite of purification. As Elzey notes (1976:321–22), this has led some scholars to identify the Aztec concept of sin with sexual transgression (e.g. Petrazzoni 1926, 1930). The impurity associated with sex was especially noted, but proscribed sexual acts were not the only important category of *tlatlacolli* (see also Estrada Quevedo 1962:171).⁹

Sahagún stresses how angered God becomes over "foul happiness" (*tlayelpaquiliztli*) and how everywhere in the holy words God's angry

words and punishments are cast toward those who love dust and filth. According to Saint Paul, while many sins dirty people's souls, "foul happiness" dirties our body as well as our soul (Sahagún 1579b:3v-4v). Christ hates people who occupy themselves with "foul happiness"; such persons are black and dirty (Sahagún 1574:13r). In one of his sermons Sahagún addresses himself to five categories of sinners: the proud person, the covetous person, the person who disobeys and maligns a pious spouse,¹⁰ the lustful person, and the idolatrous person who consults a diviner when his or her child is sick. The lustful one is spoken to in terms of filth (Sahagún 1563:18r-18v):

Auh in tevatl in tilitlic y' ticatzavac in tlaelpaquilizca ticpaquiltia monacayo, ipampa y' motlaepaquiliz ticmoyolitlcalhua in r' auh y' monamic ytech ticchiva in achivaloni yvā ticchivaitia in tilitlic, i' catzavac, ticlamatoq'lia yvā ticcuitlavilitia inic miztlamatoq'liz, etc. ic titlatlacoa yvā tlatlacolli ypan ticclāca, ticmorelchivilia in dios y' miztcavaltia tlaelpaquiliztli in ipampa ca tlavellitocayotl etc.

And you black one, you dirty one, you please your body with foul happiness, because of your foul happiness you harm the heart of our lord. And you do to your spouse that which is undoable, and you make her (or him) black, dirty, you touch things for her and you oblige her to touch things for you, etc. Thus you sin, and you cast her into sin, you scorn God who prohibits you from foul happiness because it is wickedness.

Of exactly what this undoable act and illicit touching consisted the manuals for confessors were more explicit (such as Molina 1569), but the friars often referred to sexual acts, particularly sodomy, in terms which, though standard in European usage, would have seemed vague to the Nahuas.

According to Olmos, the Devil mocks people the most with sex (Baudot 1979:131).¹¹ He describes desire for women as enjoying *yn teubtli yn tlaqolli yn axixtli in cuitlatl* 'dust, filth, urine, excrement' (Baudot 1979:49). Preaching against lust, Olmos advises (in Baudot 1976:42):

Quimonequiltia Dios ca yn yuh ce tlacatl quimocuitlauya yn ytilhma chipauac ynic amo motlilhuiz mocatzaoaz, cenca tlapauia yn yuh monetequi quimoculauiuz yn yyolia yuan yn inacayo ynic amo axispa, cuitlapa, yn aqualhecan yn ayeccan uetziz.

God wishes that, as a person cares for his (or her) clean mantle so that it does not become black, become dirty, it is much more important that he care for his soul and his body, so that they not fall into urine, into excrement, into a bad place, into a wrong place.

Here the idea of sex as physical as well as moral pollution is expressed. Baudot (1983:240) observes how Olmos, translating directly from Latin

sermons by Saint Vincent Ferrer, substitutes the trope "urine, excrement" for Ferrer's "evil"; Olmos (with his Nahua assistants) must have recognized that *tlaqolli* tropes were more meaningful to the Nahuas than any abstract concept of evil.

Fray Domingo de la Anunciación's *doctrina* (1565:21v) states that people must keep themselves from sin lest they stain or dirty the being and dignity of their souls and bodies. The Dominican catechism of 1548 makes an interesting use of the soul/body distinction. Instructing the Indians to hate dirtiness (*catpauiliztli*) because God hates it, it tells them not to dirty their souls with sin or their bodies with blood-letting, painting, or ear-piercing (*Doctrina cristiana* 1944:137r-137v). Different conceptions of physical cleanliness, let alone moral cleanliness, are clearly evident.

Fray Juan de la Anunciación also presents physical pollution as sin. Christ's ascension shows that he values earthly flesh; therefore, one must not dirty one's body with sexual sin (1577:76r). He uses the same argument in preaching about Christ's birth: since Christ thus honored our body, you must not dirty and blacken it with "foul happiness" and dirtiness (13r). However, in another of his sermons he distinguishes between purity of the body and purity of the soul. All desire the former even though it is worthless, while the purity of a soul free from sin is precious to God (189r). Elsewhere he compares the sinner to a cripple rolling in the *teubtli tlaqolli*, the dust and filth (7r). He describes sin as dirty and ragged clothing (117r). Sins cause one to stink and rot; they rise up to God like smoke, angering him (62r-62v). Anunciación compares the heart with which there is mortal sin to a chamber pot: *ynin axixcomil in cuitlacomiltl* 'this is a urine-jar, an excrement-jar.' It must be cleansed so that God can fill it with his fragrant perfume or *xochiatl* 'flower-water,' which is his love (81r-81v). Upholding the native nobles' view of their own relative purity, he says that, although vassals are like feet, which go about on the ground in the dust and mud, rulers should love them and not scorn them (97r). The person who lives in sin is like a pig lying submerged in the mud (165v).

A prayer to Christ, which Anunciación suggests for the person about to receive communion, expresses ritual self-abasement in the tradition of Nahua oratory (86v):

Auh ac nehautl ac ninomati, ynic nimitznoceliliz yn ipan y sanctissimo Sacramento? ca in nehautl ca niçoquiltl ca nitlalli ca atle ypan nipohui, quenun ninotlapalo? ynic nimitznoceliliz? cuix nolhuil? cuix nomacual? ca nimā amo. Ca cenca nitatzauac, ca cenca nihyac, ca cenca nitlilitic tlatlacoltica.

But who am I, who, I wonder, that I will receive you in the most holy-Sacrament? Indeed I am mud, I am earth, I am worth nothing. How will I dare to receive

you? Is it perhaps my desert? Is it perhaps my merit? Not at all. For I am very dirty, I am very fetid, I am very black with sin.

For the friars the association of the body with earth and mud was not a rhetorical device but a literal description.¹² Sahagún (1563:30r) states that one should not love one's body because it is just earth and the food of worms. Anunciación's sermons for Ash Wednesday explain that the ash is a reminder that we are earth, dust, mud, and will become so again (1577:38v). In his preaching for the festival of Saint Lawrence, martyred for his faith by being roasted over a fire, Anunciación uses a metaphor of strengthening and purifying by fire. Before it is fired, a pot is weak, black, and dirty; afterwards, it is strong and pure. Similarly,

ca timochintin ticoquime, ticnenuilia in çoquitl amo tichicauaque in toçoquio ca yehuatl in tonacayo, yuan ca tlalcoltica titlitique ticzauaque.

indeed we all are mud, we equal mud, we are not strong. Our muddiness, indeed it is our body, and with sin we are black, we are dirty.

Therefore we must be strengthened and purified by fire (1577:176r). Anunciación also describes God as a craftsman, a *toltetzimtlí*, who fashions people from earth and mud like a potter makes pots (91r). In his sermon on Saint Andrew, he states that all that pertains to the body—mantles, garments, food, drink, wealth—pertains to earth, dust, filth (21rv).

It was considered a sign of the Indians' devotion that those who were admitted to communion always wore clean clothes when they took it. They were encouraged to do this. Fray Pedro de Gante tells his reader to say (1553:120r):

nicchipauaz nicpacaz yn nonacayo: yhuan yn notlatqui atle catzauac notech yez yn iquac nicceliz yn sancto sacramento.

I will purify, I will wash my body and my garments. Nothing dirty will be on me when I receive the holy sacrament.

When one eats the food of the soul, the "blessed little tortilla" (*tlateochihuali tlaxcalzimtlí*), one must be pure within oneself and on the surface (Gante 1553:43r). Molina (1569:71r) gives similar instructions. Dávila Padilla (1555:83), the Dominican chronicler, describes this as "procuring not only the cleanliness of the soul . . . but also that of the body." During the rite they "pray for a long time, asking God to purify their consciences." According to the *Códice franciscano* (1941:92), this exterior cleanliness had little to do with what God sought from people, but nevertheless it was

good that the Indians showed this reverence and set such an example for others (see also Torquemada 1975–83:V, 282).

Thus, physical cleanliness was approved as an outward expression of inward purity, a reminder of how one's soul should be, a show of devotion and respect. The link in the Nahuas' mind was likely to have been much more direct: to eat the god one must be ritually pure in all ways. The friars' attention to outward purity would have acted to inhibit the development in Nahua Christianity of the same sort of soul/body distinction that characterized formal Christian doctrine.

An excellent example of how the Nahuas made Christian purification rites their own is provided by the creole chronicler Suárez de Peralta (1878:31). He observes that Indians, on the day they are to confess, wear very dirty clothes and the women do not wash their legs as they customarily would. After the rite they wash all over very well and say that with the dirtiness they remove the sins. They go home clean, and, if they have clean clothes, they put them on. He also mentions the wearing of new or borrowed clean clothes for communion. Of all this Suárez de Peralta (1878:32) concludes, "whether what they do is true or not, God knows, but at least the appearance is good."

Since they were limited to a single soul concept, one seated in the heart, the friars could not exploit directly the Nahuas' belief in pollution of the liver and *ihiyotl*. But the close identification of the *teyolia* with the heart, similar to that of the liver with its *ihiyotl* emanations, provided a mechanism for a direct link between "spiritual" pollution and actual filth in the body. Fray Juan de la Anunciación (1577:205r) attempts to explain how one may know if one's soul is dirty, since it is not visible. He recommends a rather vague procedure: one should look into one's heart as into a mirror; there one will see that one's soul is dirty and black with sin or else one will see our lord God. The dualistic opposition between the fleshly heart and the spiritual soul, contradictory to Nahua concepts of the body, was not likely to be accepted when the friars themselves made such close identifications.

The *tlazolmiquiztli* concept was not accepted by the friars. The emotionally charged idea that one's misdeeds might harm anything around one, even one's innocent and beloved children, not through divine punishment but by creating harmful emanations, was not something the friars could appropriate despite its force as a deterrent. It was too obviously at odds with Christian doctrine. The anonymous priest whose notes on Molina's dictionary constitute the *Códice Carolino* suggests to priests that they

examine the Indians about this belief by treating it as a violation of the first and eighth commandments. False testimony is raised against innocent people in blaming them for misfortunes; even if the individuals involved had sinned, it is wrong to believe that the misfortunes were caused by their acts. Even worse, the cure for the condition involved sorcery—which automatically involved Devil-worship and hence violated the first commandment (*Códice Carolino* 1067:46).

Despite this rejection, the Nahuatl doctrinal texts examined in this study do not actively condemn the concept. They sometimes refer to the contagious power of sin (see Chapter Six), playing—perhaps intentionally—upon the fear of *tlazolli* contamination. Escalona (n.d.:233r) comes close to using the term when he states that the Devil *otechilatlacolmicti* 'killed us with *tlatlacolli*' when Adam ate the apple; the line between *tlatlacolli* and *tlazolli* was hardly firm. However, Escalona wrote early and was perhaps less cautious in his terminology than later homilizers. But even with *tlaolmiquiztli* left outside the pale of Nahuatlized Christianity, it was not something that would (or did) easily go away by itself. Spanish belief in the "evil eye"—a phenomenon accepted by mainstream scholastic theology—may even have reinforced indigenous belief (Aguirre Beltrán 1963:24). Modern-day Nahuas retain the concept; the belief in "bad airs" or "garbage air" still evident throughout indigenous Mesoamerica stems from the same symbolic complex (Ingham 1986:165; López Austin 1972:402, 1980:1, 294; Madsen 1965:102; Montoya Briones 1964:162, 178, 189).

BATHING AND SWEEPING

Nahua rites of purification centered on the removal of *tlazolli* by washing and sweeping. *Tlazolli* associated with body products was most obviously counteracted by bathing; the *tlazolli* of dust, straw, and other bits of out-of-place matter was effectively controlled with brooms.

Langer (1942:161), noting how sacred meaning so often attaches to the simple act of washing away dirt, suggests that the symbolic value of washing is so obvious that the act could be said to have a "natural meaning." It is felt to have genuine efficacy, to be magical as well as expressive and simply physical. For the Nahuas, ritual bathing could remove at least some of the stains of immoral acts, though more complex rites were required for serious faults (Durán 1967:1, 156, 171-72). Prisoners who had been

wrongly held or who had done nothing serious bathed upon their release from jail in the clean waters of Chapultepec, Tenochtitlan's lakeshore source of pure drinking water; thus, they left off their *tlatlacolli* (Sahagún 1953-82:IV, 91). But one who committed a serious misdeed such as theft or adultery was told: *Acan atl ic timaltiz, ic timochipaas* 'nowhere is there water with which you will wash yourself, with which you will purify yourself' (Sahagún 1953-82:VI, 257).

Rites of passage often involved washing, to remove the pollution accruing to the liminal stage of the rite, or to the lower social status from which the individual was being elevated. Hence, slaves were bathed before sacrifice or when they gained their freedom, new rulers as part of their installation rite (Durán 1967:1, 185; Motolinia 1971:342; Ruiz de Alarcón 1982:70).

A woman about to give birth was washed and shampooed, and her house was cleaned (Sahagún 1953-82:VI, 167). In this way cleanliness and order were affirmed in preparation for the filth and danger associated with childbirth.

Divine pardon for offenses was conceived of as a metaphorical bathing. Nappatecuhtli, one of the rain gods and patron of the mat-makers, was said to bathe people and sprinkle dew upon them, pardoning their faults (Sahagún 1953-82:1, 45; Torquemada 1975-83:III, 97). The obvious purificatory action of rain was the source of this metaphorical usage. Without rain, the crops in the fields became tainted with *tlazolli*. The prayer to Tlaloc in time of drought states: *in tomacauitl ca ie teuhpachihuitoc, ca ie tocatzaoolqumjinhuitoc* 'the crops, indeed now they lie covered with dust, they lie wrapped in spider webs' (Sahagún 1953-82:VI, 35).

An elderly dignitary spoke of divine favor in the following way, employing symbolism of the periphery as well as of dirt (Sahagún 1953-82:VI, 84):

in qujtitlan, in quauhuitlan motcinomachitia in torecujo: auh in manel cujtlatitlan, tlaquilit[an] ca vmpa moteanilia in cloque, naoaque ca motepapaqujlia, ca moteahaltilia:

Our lord has pity on people among the plants, among the trees, and the Possessor of the Near, Possessor of the Surrounding takes people even from amid the excrement, the filth; indeed, he bathes people, he washes people.

The prayer to Tezcatlipoca for wealth uses the same figure (Sahagún 1953-82:VI, 9).

The ruler shared this role: a representative of the deities and of the

purity of the noble class, he upheld the moral well-being of the state. On the death of a ruler, mourners beseeched Tezcatlipoca (Sahagún 1953-82:VI, 23):

motolinia in teuhio, in tlacullo ac quipapacaz, ac cahaltiz, ac quijcujliz, ac canjiliz in jhaca, in ipalanca, ac qujquanjiz, ac chico tlanaoac qujviqujiz:

The afflicted one who is full of dust, full of filth—who will bathe, who will wash him (or her)? Who will rake, who will seize his stretch, his rottenness? Who will take it from him, who will put it aside, away?

Funerary customs, the rites of passage into death, involved washing. Water was poured over the corpse's head. After cremation, the foul smell from the burning was ritually cleansed by pouring water on the coals. When this dried, the remains were buried (Sahagún 1953-82:III, 40-42).

The Nahuas' beliefs about the purifying effects of water interested the friars. Durán, who ascribed to the view that the Indians had undergone a previous evangelization, stated that native belief was not far wrong (Durán 1967:I, 173),

because God placed in the substance of water the virtue of the sacrament of baptism, with which we are cleansed of original sin, and in this it is seen that they had news of the things of our faith.

Torquemada (1975-83:IV, 198), however, was sure that these "blind idolaters had no knowledge of original sin." Mendieta (1980:428) was impressed by the Indians' devotion to holy water; the priests were hard pressed to keep enough in supply, as the Indians would carry it home by the jarful.

There was concern, however, over the distinction between physical and spiritual effect. Christianity's soul/body metaphor required the purificatory effect of baptism to be not a mechanical outcome of washing; rather, the presence of the Holy Spirit in the water imparted to it a spiritual efficacy distinct from the physical result (Fisher 1965:14). Torquemada (1975-83:IV, 206-9) observed that pagans—New World and Old World—believed water, because it purifies the body, purified the soul as well. This is erroneous, he stated, because sin is spiritual—it cannot be removed by something which does not touch the soul. This insistence on metaphor over metonymy deprives bathing of some of its "natural meaning."

One point in the dispute over the early baptisms, in which the Franciscans omitted some of the ritual elements generally required by the Church, was that without the full ceremony the Indians would not understand the

difference between the "washing of holy baptism" and the washings that they used in their own rites. A papal bull of 1537 established that although previous baptisms were valid, thenceforward the full ceremony had to be observed (Mendieta 1980:271).

The Nahua infant bathing rite demonstrates very well the differences between Nahua and Christian pollution beliefs. Christian baptism functioned to remove original sin, the guilt of Adam that was passed to all infants through their father's semen. Baptism eliminated the guilt, leaving the soul pure, but the propensity toward sin—often called concupiscentia—remained (Aquinas 1965:11-25; Brownlee 1842:9). Nahua infant bathing also removed pollution of the forebears, leaving the child pure, but here the pollution is simply the *tlazolli* associated with the parents' sexual activity. Like all growth, conception resulted from a process of corruption, the creation of fertile filth and its transformation into new life: here, sexual fluids are transformed into fetus (López Austin 1980:I, 326, 336). In the Nahua rite, depicted in Figure 12, the midwife bathed the infant while invoking Chalchiuhtlicue, the goddess of fresh water (Sahagún 1953-82:VI, 175):

Ma mjzomapaqujili, ma mjzmahatlili: ma chico, tlanaoac qjvica, qujteca in ca-tzaoacaiutl, in jtechpa tiqualcujc in monan, in mota:

May she bathe you, may she wash you. May she take aside, may she put away the dirtiness which you have brought forth from your mother, your father.

Similar phrases occur throughout the midwife's address.

Concern for the effects of sexual intercourse on the fetus was expressed in the belief that, though sexual fluids were needed to form and strengthen the fetus, an excess would cause it to become coated with filth (as *tlayelli*: *oallachmeluhitiaz*) and possibly to adhere to the womb. The mother would then die in childbirth (Sahagún 1953-82:VI, 142; also López Austin 1980:I, 336). Here semen is the pollution itself, not the vehicle for its transmission.

Filth could also come to a child from its *tonalli*, the spiritual component associated with the ritual calendar. Infants born on inauspicious days would be bathed on a better day to try to incorporate its beneficial effects. This rite involved the pouring of water on the middle of the baby's head (*iquanpanila conteqjilia in ati*; Sahagún 1953-82:VI, 202). Since the *tonalli* was seated in the head and could enter and exit through the fontanelle (López Austin 1980:I, 224-25), this may have been an attempt to purify the filth from the *tonalli* as it entered the child.

The friars called baptism *necuantequiliztli* "pouring water on one's head."



Figure 12. The midwife bathes the baby boy. Illustration in the Florentine Codex, Book VI, 170r. (Photo from Sahagún 1979.)

The similarity to the native rite was unmistakable, even though the Christian rite was supposed to cleanse the *ánima* or *teyolia* and not the *tonalli*. The filth that was cleansed came from Adam and Eve. This primordial couple was referred to as *achto tonan*, *achto tota* 'our first mother, our first father' or even simply *tonan*, *tota* 'our mother, our father' (as by Escalona n.d.:244f).

Rather awkward terms were coined to express the concept of original sin: *tlatlacolpehuayotl* 'the beginning of sin' or 'the sinful beginning,' *tlatlacolnelhuayotl* 'the origin of sin,' *achto tlatlacolli* 'first sin,' *huehuetlatlacolli* 'old sin.' The latter term was the name given to a type of slavery in which some member of the original slave's family was obligated to serve the owner or his or her heir through the generations (Motolinia 1971:369). It

corresponded, however, to actual Christian usage, Adam's sin being called *peccatum vetus* 'old sin,' in reference to the "old" state of humanity represented by Adam but altered by Christ, the "new" Adam (Lukken 1973:355-60).

Original sin was an alien concept in that life on earth without *tlatlacolli* was inconceivable. To originate sin could not be a freely willed choice of the first humans because to live on earth, eating its fruits and reproducing, involved one inextricably in the entropic forces of nature. Babies could be cleansed of the filth of their birth, rendering them pure for a time, but this was not the original or natural condition of adults. In Christianity, complete freedom from sin is extremely difficult to achieve but it is possible.

Escalona (n.d.:149r) describes how Christ, when baptized by John the Baptist, gave water the power to destroy sins:

atlan motemoui ynic qualtiaz yn atl ynic moteochivaz, ynic poliviz yn totlatlacol. He lowered himself under the water so that the water would become good, so that it would become holy, so our sins would be destroyed.

Commenting on Paul's statement to the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 4:7), "for God hath not called us unto uncleanness but unto holiness," Escalona (n.d.:168v) states:

ca yn tote° omritzlixilli yn motlatlacol nequaatequiliztica ynic omritzchiphahuili yn manuma. Auh yntla oceppa ticatzaua yn manima: ca oceppa tiqua yn miçotlal: tle itechpa tiquitaz yn monçatequiliz? ca niman atley:

Indeed our lord cast from you your sins with baptism; thus he purified your soul for you. But if again you dirty your soul, indeed again you eat your vomit, then of what advantage is your baptism? None at all.

It is purity of the soul specifically with which Escalona is concerned here. The Dominican *Doctrina cristiana* (1944:136v), explaining the elements of the baptismal rite (the Dominicans were careful to do it properly), describes the white cloth placed over the recipient's head as

ynezca in ichipauaca yn amanima ca cenca oquimochipauili in motechipauiliani in Dios yca in iatzin.

the manifestation of the purity of your souls, which indeed God who purifies people purified with his water.

God, the text continues, who is wholly pure has purified you; now *an-chipauanemizque nican tlatitpac: ytechpa in amanima yuan ytechpa in*

amamaciao 'you will live purely here on earth, in regard to your soul and in regard to your body' (137T). The main concern is purity of the soul, but purity of the body is also an issue.

Fray Pedro de Gante uses physical cleansing as a simile for baptism (1533:7T):

In yuhqui atl in quipacpa in quichipahua in tenacayo in tiquitta çan no yuhqui in tequateçqiztli in ica in ipassion in torçeuivo Jesu xpo huet ompa quichipahua i teanman.

As water washes, purifies people's bodies that we see, just so does baptism with the passion of our lord Jesus Christ then purify people's souls very well.

The visible condition of the body is distinguished from the invisible condition of the soul; the relationship between them is metaphorical.

According to Molina (1569:90T), Christ on the cross washed our souls with his precious blood; similarly, with the baptism he established, our souls are purified.

Olmos's treatise on sorcery describes how baptism places one in God's home—a symbolic center—and purifies one; thus one is saved from the *tlazollitl*-laden, peripheral devils (Baudot 1979:32):

Yntla nelli yn otimoquatequi yn otimocellili yn iyatçin yn iceltçin nelli Dios yn itoca baptismo sancto ynic ychantçinco omitçmotlacatili omitçmochipahuili omitçmotlacollili: Yoan ucl yc omitçmomaquixtli yn inmacpa yn moyauhuan in tçonpachpopol yn cuiñanexpopol in tequanime yn tlatlacatecolo in Diablome.

If you were truly baptized, you received the water of the sole true God, called "holy baptism." Thus in his home he caused you to be born, he purified you, he had mercy on you. And thus indeed he saved you from the hands of your enemies, the big mossy-heads, the big excrement-ashes, the wild beasts, the *tlatlacatecolo*, the devils.

A sermon of Sahagún's (1563:55V) explains how the *tlacatecolotl* enslaved all of us when Adam sinned. But when Christ died, he tied up and imprisoned the *tlacatecolotl*, saving us. When we are baptized, the *tlacatecolotl* dies under the water and we are saved. There is an attempt to link a primordial, mythical context with the individual's life, imparting a cosmic significance to the simple act of baptism.

The *Exalmodia christiana*, with its typically skillful use of Nahuatl, describes baptism as *chalchimmatlatali* 'jade-green water,' playing upon native symbolism of centrality, perfection, and wholeness represented by jade, and the purifying role of the jade-skirted water goddess Chalchiuhtlicue

(Sahagún 1583:IV). In the Nahuatl infant bathing rite, the midwife cleansed the infant with the green and yellow waters. These are the same waters used by Tlazoltéotl in removing people's *tlazollitl* and by rulers in purifying their vassals; in one of Olmos's orations the ruler holds these waters in a jade vessel (Bautista 1600b:37V; Sahagún 1953-82:I, 23; VI, 76, 88, 108, 176). The *Exalmodia* (Sahagún 1583:131r) also describes baptism as a sweat-house, *temazcalli*.

For Fray Juan de la Anunciación, baptism is *teyotica nealtliztli nechipauiliztli* 'bathing oneself, purifying oneself in a sacred way' (1577:43T); he uses *teyotica* to distinguish this act from ordinary bathing, though the Nahuas undoubtedly would have conceived of their own bathing rites as "sacred." He praises the purity of little children, urging his audience to be like them. They are pure of heart, *chippauitica yn inyollo*; they do not get drunk or have lovers. They are like angels. They have no sin, no dirtiness, but are very pure in soul and body (1577:197V-198T). Sahagún, in the *Apenitiz*, recounts the old men's (the Nahuatl elders') belief in the purity of children and refutes it. These children were not pure because they had not been baptized. If they died, they did not become jades and turquoise, because of original sin (*neutlatlaculli yn itoca peccado original* 'old sin, its name is "original sin"'). The souls of unbaptized children are like coal, like clods of earth, and God imprisons them in limbo because of the sin that is with them. However, today little children who are baptized do become jades and turquoise in heaven if they die, because God washed them with his water, destroying the "old sin" (Sahagún 1579b:2r). Here Sahagún actually reinforces indigenous belief, merely inserting Christian baptism.

Sweeping was a second, and more characteristically Mesoamerican, mode of expressing the removal of *tlazollitl*. Sweeping effectively moved dust, garbage, straw, ash, and similar offending substances away from the center toward the periphery where they belonged. Along with fasting and bathing—which purified the body—the sweeping of domestic and sacred spaces was a universal and indispensable element of penitential exercises.

Women and children swept the family courtyard every morning before dawn, removing the *tlazollitl* that blew in during the disordered period of nighttime. This was considered a form of offering (Sahagún 1933-82:II, 199) or, in Durán's view (1967:I, 65), it was "based on some superstition." The small broom placed in an infant girl's hands during part of the Nahuatl rite of infant bathing symbolized her future responsibility for sweeping (Mendieta 1980:267). City streets and causeways were kept swept and clean

not one bit of filth lay fallen about (*atle vetztoz, ce tlazolli*; Sahagún 1953:82:I, 45). The ritual created an ordered center—with the four-sided mat corresponding to the four directions and with the removal of all trash—appropriate to the service of this god of cleansing rain.

The renewal of world order demanded the removal of *tlazolli*, lest the new structure be contaminated even at its inception. Therefore, during the New Fire Ceremony that ushered in a new 52-year cycle (Sahagún 1953:82:VII, 25):

nouian tlátlachpanoia, tlaretzcalolo, tlanaoac tlaunico, aocle uetztoia in techachan.

Everywhere things were swept, things were swept smooth, things were carried aside, no longer did anything lie fallen in people's houses.

After the ceremony the houses were resupplied with all new utensils, mats, clothing, and so forth (Sahagún 1953:82:VII, 31).

Sweeping was intimately linked with female fertility, since *tlazolli* was a fertile force derived from the maternal earth. Goddesses conceived magically while sweeping: Huitzilopochtli, the Mexicas' tutelary deity, was conceived when Coatlicue, an aspect of the earth goddess, tucked into her skirt a clump of feathers—a bit of *tlazolli*—which she should have swept up; Quetzalcoatl was conceived when Chimalman found and swallowed a piece of jade—a symbol of purity and centrality, a result of sweeping rather than something to be swept up (Mendieta 1980:82–83; Sahagún 1953:82:III, 2). The character of the offspring expresses the same opposition: the warlike, portentous Huitzilopochtli, under whom the wild Mexica migrate from the periphery to the center; and the priestly penitent Quetzalcoatl, embodiment of the moral and social order of Tollan.

Brooms were integral to the accoutrements, and sweeping to the rites, of the earth goddesses. This could only remind the friars of European witches, who in late medieval and Renaissance descriptions had the same association with broomsticks that they have today (Caro Baroja 1965). This would have reinforced the connection the friars made between these deities and the demonic powers.

Tlazoltéotl wielded a broom as well as the cleansing waters. The association is strongest in regard to Toci 'Our Grandmother,' regent of the 20-day period called Ochpaniztli 'Sweeping the Roads.' During the Ochpaniztli rites, not only was there fervent sweeping of buildings and roads, but there were mock battles in which swords (*macuahuitl*) and brooms were symbolically equated, the brooms being inverted and brandished like

swords (Durán 1967:I, 144–49; Sahagún 1953:82:II, 112). By the sweeping, it was believed, "all the evils of the town would go away" (*Cótex Telleriano-Remensis* 1964:3r; according to this text the festival honored Tlazoltéotl). The broom may be seen to occupy the same place in the female domain that the sword occupies in the male domain: a weapon against peripheral dangers, a means of defending the ordered, settled space of the city. There are similarities here to the equivalences between bearing a child and taking a captive, and between death in battle and in childbirth. (Heyden 1972 discusses the Ochpaniztli rites and their emphasis on sweeping and mock battles.)

The efficacy of brooms had to do with the fact that they were themselves made of *tlazolli*—grass or straw. Filth wards off filth: one way to cure the "filth death" was to commit transgressions even worse than those of the offending party (Ruiz de Alarcón 1982:195).¹⁵

During Ochpaniztli a bundle of grass was used to represent the goddess—she was a thing of impurities. The use of straws to represent misdeeds expelled from the body was mentioned earlier in this chapter. Ochpaniztli was a harvest rite, maize an offspring of the earth. Selser (1963:I, 123) interprets the purificatory aspects of the rite as a symbolic purification of the maize, an attempt to rid it of the taint it picked up from the earth, to make it safer for human consumption. It parallels the removal of the parents' *tlazolli* from the child in the infant bathing rite.

This orientation toward sweeping continued after Christianization. Durán (1967:I, 65) complained that women were still getting up at dawn to sweep, as indeed they still do today. Mendieta (1980:419, 429) admired the reverence shown by old people, even nobles, who kept the churches and churchyards well swept, "keeping the custom of their ancestors in the time of their unbelief, who showed their devotion by sweeping the temples." Motolinia (1971:90) recorded that when a priest took communion to a sick person's home, Indians would walk ahead to sweep the road.¹⁶ Serna (1953:312, 323) observed that Indians swept and cleaned their houses in preparation for deer-hunting and fishing. Montoya Briones (1964:112) relates that the present-day Nahuas of Atla bury a small broom with their dead so that they may sweep in heaven; Ingham (1986:168) has also observed ritual uses of brooms.¹⁷

Friars used the image of sweeping in their preaching, but only rarely, considering its potency as a symbol of virtue. It was easily worked into Christian thought. Motolinia, for example, approved (naively, according to later writers) of the indigenous baptismal rite, seeing the little broom

as a symbol that the baptized must "sweep and clean their consciences and souls so that Christ could come to enter through baptism" (1971:207).

The religious play of the Final Judgment ascribed to Olmos, presumably a very early text, uses the image of sweeping quite effectively (in Horcasitas 1974). Allegorical figures represent Penitence, Time, the Church, Confession, and Death; Horcasitas (1974:565) notes that this sort of personification was rare in Nahuatl theater. The representation of confession bears the name *Tlachpanaliztli* 'Sweeping.' This figure speaks of how it daily calls upon people to reform their sinful ways (Horcasitas 1974:570):

momoztlave niqincuitlahuiltia ma tlachpanaca; ma ixtozocan, ma yohuatzinco mehuacan, ma tlamacehuacan, ma cecemiquican quitoznequi, ma teoyotica quitlachpanilican in inyollia in imanima ma mozahuacan, ma tlacualizahuaca.

Every day I urge them that they sweep things; that they examine themselves, that they arise at dawn, that they do penance, that they prepare for death; which means, may they in a sacred way sweep their souls, their "souls,"¹⁸ may they fast, may they abstain from food.

Here sweeping as a devotional act is made to stand as a metaphor for confession, the spiritual "sweeping" of the soul. Because people persist in their corruption, Christ decides that it is time for the Final Judgment. He announces to Saint Michael (Horcasitas 1974:578):

ca nitlachpanaz, ca niechipahuaz in ilhuicac ihuan in tlaticpacitli. Ca huel otlacatzahuque in tlaticpatlaca in yolque ihuan i mimique; pampa in imacualnemiliz.

Indeed, I shall sweep, I shall purify heaven and earth. For greatly the people of earth, the living and the dead, have dirtied things, because of their bad life.

Like Quetzalcoatl, Christ appears as a sweeper of the cosmos.

Later texts exhibit less direct adoption of the image. In Sahagún's *Exorcismo* (1574:38v) preparation for communion includes sweeping, not literally but "within" the penitent, to clear away sins:

norech monequi mochi nictopehuaz in notlahuacol huel nitlaechpanaz huel nitlacuicuz in nihitic yhuan nitlahahuiliz nitlaatzelhuiz yn nihitic nixayotica.

It is necessary that I push away all of my sins, that I sweep well, that I pick things up well within myself and that I water things, that I sprinkle water [as if preparatory to sweeping] within myself with my tears.

Nahua ritual sweeping loses its status as a purificatory, or even a devotional act, and is converted into a metaphor for spiritual purification.¹⁹

Later in the same meditation the fate of those who fail to do this is described (Sahagún 1574:41r-41v):

ca yn aquique yn quimocellia yn sanctissimo sacramento yn amo huel omocencauhque yn amo huel otlachpāque amo huel otlacuicuique yn imihitic yn ocecequi temiciani tlaticcolli çan ocquicauhç ca niman ic miqui yn imanima niman ymac huetzi yn tlacatecolotl Judas yhuampohuam mochihua.

Indeed, those who receive the most holy sacrament who have not prepared themselves well, who have not swept well, who have not picked things up well within themselves, who have just left some mortal sin, indeed thereby their souls then die, then they fall into the hands of the *tlacatecolotl*, they become the companions of Judas.

In his sermons Sahagún tells the sinner to "sweep the road of your soul" (*xochpanitli y mīāā*): the way is obstructed with sins as if it were a road blocked with stones and trees (1563:6r-6v). Since *teitl* and *cuahuitl*, stone and tree or wood, symbolized punishment for transgressions, the image is particularly rich. In the *Psalmódia christiana* Sahagún describes Saint Clare, founder of the women's branch of the Franciscan order, as a hard worker whose activities, like those of a virtuous Nahua woman, included sweeping and washing things (*tlachpanania, tlapacua*)—an example of a usage not restricted to the spiritual metaphor (Sahagún 1583:147r).

Molina, citing David in Psalm 17, uses an image of sweeping in regard to the spiritual strengthening resulting from Confirmation: God "swept all my roads" so that I may make war on my enemies (Molina 1569:87v). The passage implies a relationship between sweeping and warfare, such as was expressed in the Ochpaniztli rites. It associates the virtuous act of sweeping with the Christian God.

The Dominican *doctrina* (1944:87r) and Fray Juan de la Anunciación (1577:11v) describe the way to heaven as a swept road, *ochpanitli*.

An unwillingness to accept a native concept which, unlike bathing, did not have a parallel in Christian ideology may explain why this usage is relatively rare. In native thought sweeping was felt to have a real effect in upholding moral order. In Christian thought it could be a metaphor for spiritual action, but actual sweeping could only be the show of devotion to the sacred which Mendieta so admired. An awareness of the same in regard to washing did not prevent the friars from adopting its imagery. The symbolism of bathing was inherent in orthodox Christian doctrine; symbolism of sweeping was not. Although bathing and sweeping operated in the Nahua mind on the same symbolic principles, the fact that one was

familiar to the friars and the other was not led to a more widespread acceptance and usage of the former.

CLEANLINESS AS GODLINESS

As they denigrated the devils for their filth and rotteness, the friars extolled the purity of the Christian sacred. Although in native practice one had to be ritually pure in order to approach or impersonate deities, the gods themselves were not in general conceived of as pure. The rift that Christian teaching tried to open between good God and evil Devil was likewise a rift between cleanliness and filthiness. Sacred beings are credited with a degree of purity alien to the native gods; indeed, for them to have been so pure would have robbed them of their power to disrupt and create. But as a means of attaching to the Christian beings symbolism of moral order and authority, this rhetorical mode was very useful.

Escalona describes heaven as a pure place (n.d.:128v). As Saint John says in Revelation 21:27, *ca atle tilitic ca atle catzauac calaquiz yn ihluicac* 'nothing black, nothing dirty will enter heaven' (159v). Citing the Beatitudes from the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:8), he says (148r):

quemach uel yevantin yn chipauacayolloque, ca uel yeuatin quimortilzque yn yntouch yn dios.

Fortunate are they who are possessors of pure hearts; indeed, they will be able to see their deity, God.

One must purify one's heart with faith so that one will see Christ. The Dominican *doctrina* describes God, his home, and all who dwell there as *chipahuac* 'pure.' God is so pure that all purity in heaven and earth appears dirty (*catzauac*) by comparison (*Doctrina cristiana* 1944:14v, 15r, 16v-17r). This text also includes Saint John's statement about heaven (137v):

ca amo tley catcaualiztli amo no tley tetlaheti opa calaquiz in itlatocachanzinco in dios in ihluicac.

Indeed, nothing dirty nor anything revolting will enter there in God's royal home in heaven.

The Devil, who is black, dirty, and stinking, is served with sin and dirt; however (129v):

in toucytlatoauh nelli Dios ca occentlamantli inic tlavecuttulo: ca yieuantin in itercinco poui ca chipauacemilzica quimotlayecultilia: yuan chipauacatlalna-

Purity and Pollution

miquilzica: yuan chipauacatlaltolica: yehica ca cenquizeca chipauac in toueyreyo-cuxcatzin.

Our great ruler the true God, indeed he is served by other things. Indeed, they who pertain to him serve him with pure lives, and pure thoughts, and pure words, because our great creator is completely pure.

Fray Pedro de Gante (1533:159r) teaches that only the pure of heart may say the responses during mass. Those who go about dirty with sin—the drunkards, thieves, liars, and all who devote themselves to wickedness—may not even approach the altar until they abandon their sins.

Fray Juan de la Anunciación, in his sermons for Candlemas, includes the popular passages from Revelation 21 and the Sermon on the Mount (1577:138r):

ca amo tle tilitic, atle catzahuac, atle tetlayelti, calaquiz yn ichatzinco totecuioy DIOS. . . . Quemmach vel yehuantin yn chipauatica yn inyollo, ca yehuantin quimachhuazque, ynic quimortilzque in totecuioy DIOS.

Indeed, nothing black, nothing dirty, nothing revolting will enter the home of our lord God. . . . Fortunate are they whose hearts are pure; indeed, they will merit that they see our lord God.

This equation of purity of heart with purity of soul was possible because the heart was the seat of the soul and could represent it by a metonymic substitution. For the Nahuas also, the heart was the seat of the animate force or *teyolia*, though the relationship was more complex than that between container and contained. To provide life force was a function of the heart itself as well as of the animate principle dwelling within it. *Tolloti* 'heart' is an abstraction of the verb *yoli* 'to come to life'; this verb is the root of *teyolia* as well. The two elements share somewhat in each other's nature.

Anunciación plays upon Nahuá aesthetics, using *teyotica* to relate the physical with the spiritual (1577:39r):

yn iquac aca anquira in cenca chipauac in atle ytech neci catcaualiztli, ca vel an-quinauioa vel anquipaccayra yn ichipaualiz. çan no yuh mochia teyotica, ca in totecuioy DIOS, yn iquac quimotilia in ca chipauati ca in amanima, in atle ypan ca temicniani tlatlacolli, vel quimopaccaytilia, yuan vel quomotiaçotilia.

When you see someone who is very pure, on whom no dirtiness appears, indeed you marvel at, you see with pleasure his or her purity. Likewise it happens in a sacred way; indeed our lord God, when he sees that your souls are pure, that there is no mortal sin on them, he sees them with great pleasure, and he loves them well.

In a similar passage, Anunciación (1577:189r) notes how all desire purity of the body, thinking that no one will want to look at them if they are black and dirty. In the same way, purity of the soul—which does not appear on the surface—is precious to God. The Nahuas' admiration for physical purity became a metaphor for God's attitude toward spiritual purity, with an attempt to transfer that admiration from the former object to the latter.

In the *Psalmódia christiana* God, speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai, declares himself completely pure (*nienquizca chipaoc*; Sahagún 1583:9v). Christ is described as pure and fragrant (18v). After death, Saint Francis's body remained very pure and did not rot (*amo palan*; 193v).

Among the heavenly beings, the popularity of the Marian cult ensured that Mary was particularly exalted for her purity, owing to her conception free from original sin and her perpetual virginity. This theme appears again and again in the texts. Fray Pedro de Gante (1553:73r) defines her status:

In tonantzín yn sancta María cenqzca ichpochtli, amo teotl çan cenqzca chipahuacachiupilli, ca yeuatzin yn toé. Jesu xpo oqmopepenili ynic quimonantzino mochipa cenqzca chipahuacayotica qmopielaiya: atley yn manel çan achitzin ytech quimaxitili in tlatlacoli.

Our revered mother Saint Mary is completely virgin: she is not a god, just a completely pure noblewoman. It is she whom our lord Jesus Christ chose to become his mother. Always he kept her completely pure. No sin, not even a little one, reached her.

Fray Juan de la Anunciación's sermon (1577:179r) on the Assumption of Mary distinguishes between her nature and that of ordinary humans:

ca tímuchintin ticauhthui in totlalnacayo tiallan mocauhthuh oncan palani in yaya, tlalli mocuepa.

Indeed, we all, when we go to leave our earthen body it is placed under the ground; there it rots, it stinks, it turns into earth.

But in Mary's case, after she had been dead a little while she came back to life. She was very shiny and resplendent. Her body

amo palá amo oculioac amono tlalli mocuep, amo yhyax amono ytlacauh:

did not rot, did not fill with worms, did not turn into earth, did not stink, nor did it become corrupt.

God performed this wondrous thing because of the complete purity (*icenzquizachipaualiz*) of her soul and body. The friar goes on to apply this lesson to his audience, exhorting them to live purely in soul and body, in order to attain favors from God. The *Psalmódia christiana*, in its songs for the Assumption, states simply that Mary's body did not become like the body of a dead person but was very pure and resplendent. When she came back to life, she was so resplendent that she outshone the moon and the sun (Sahagún 1583:153r–154r). The song for the Conception of Mary explains how she, metaphorically identified with the symbolic center terrestrial paradise,²⁰ escaped contamination with original sin (Sahagún 1583:224f–225r):

SEGVNDO Psalmo

YN iquac oapachiuh in cemaocac: ca chichicat, ca teouatl ipan omaman in tlal-típacatl, ic cenca oitlacauh in tlalli, aocmo cenca vel itech muchiua in tonacauti.

Vei tlatequipanoliztli itech monequi inic muchiaz in tonacauti: amo iuhqui in vmpa Parayso terrenal, ca çan monomachiua in isquich vmpa muchiuhtoc.

In tlatlaculli, in oquichuih in achto tota, in itoca Peccado original, iuhquin ma tequisquiad, tlaelatl in ipan poui, inic oapachiuhque in isquichti Animasmte.

Oquitlacauh in toeliz, amo iuhca in tanima: auh in tonacaio mocucuan, iniquini: in tanima tlatlacoani, vetzini.

In manel veucinti Sanctome, ipan ouetzque in tequisquiad, in tlaelatl, in itoca Peccado original.

çan izeltzi in iteusuchitlatzin Dios, in iehoatzi cuiapilli sancta Maria, amo itez-zinco oacic in tequisquiad, in tlaelatl, in Peccado original.

TERCERO Psalmo

YN iuh quimopiali in Dios Parayso terrenal, in amo itech acic in tequisquiad: çan no iuh quimopiali in totecui Dios, in itlaçoanima, in iehoatzi cuiapilli sancta Maria.

Iehica, ca in isquich qualli, iectli, itechzinco cenquiztoc, in isquich virtudes, yoan in itrelauhitzin in Spiritu sancto: auh in teutzopeliliztli, in teauiaializtli, itechzinco cenquiztoc.

Second Psalm

When the world was inundated, indeed bitter water, sea water spread upon the earth, thus the land was very damaged. Crops can no longer grow upon it well.

Great labor is required so that crops will grow. It is not so there in terrestrial Paradise, for everything that lies growing there just grows by itself.

The sin which our first father did, which is called "original sin," is considered as nitrous water, foul water, with which all souls were inundated.

It damaged our being, not so our soul, but our flesh is prone to sickness, is mortal. Our soul is a sinner, prone to fall.

Even the great saints fell into the nitrous water, the foul water, which is called "original sin." Her alone, God's sacred flower garden, the noblewoman Saint Mary, the nitrous water, the foul water, "original sin," did not reach.

Third Psalm

God so guarded terrestrial Paradise that the nitrous water did not reach it; likewise our lord God guarded the precious soul of the noblewoman Saint Mary.

Therefore, all that is good, right, lies all together with her; all the virtues, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and sacred sweetness, sacred fragrance lie all together with her.

She is, "in a sacred way," like a flower, perfectly pure. The praises of various saints, which were part of the readings for this day in many sixteenth-century editions of the Roman breviary, are included. Saint Bernard is quoted as stating (Sahagún 1583:225v):

in inacaiotzi in cuiapilli, maciui in itech oquiz in Adam, çan amo itech oacic in icatzaoaliz in Adam.

The body of the noblewoman, although it derived from Adam, Adam's dirt just did not reach it.

The sacred is set apart by its purity. Nahua imagery of polluting substances, in indigenous usage a means of persuading people to live rightly, is manipulated to encourage respect toward the sacred beings of Christianity.

SUMMARY

Symbolism of pollution, because of the emotive force it had in native usage, was perhaps the friars' most potent rhetorical tool for impressing their moral concepts on the Nahua mind. However, as with the *tlatlaçalli* concept, the adoption of the *tlazalli* complex into Christianity created a strong continuity between native and Christian thought. The friars' association of the moral with the pure, and the immoral with the tainted, was fully consistent with Nahua thought. Their attempt utterly to reject the impure violated the Nahua sense of balance between purity and filth, but, since this rejection depended on an underlying good/evil dichotomy, it may not have come across to the Nahuas at all convincingly. Perhaps more successful was their effort to link filth with the devils and purity to morally positive Christian beings. As with center and periphery symbolism, such usage may have furthered a distinction between morally positive and morally negative supernatural beings, even if such a good/evil distinction did not pervade the whole cosmos.

The friars attempted to use filth as a metaphor for an intangible moral

pollution having no physical manifestation but pertaining to an immaterial, spiritual level of reality which existed in a dichotomous relationship with a physical world. The use of such tropes to describe a moral condition was easily accepted, but the monist character of Nahua reality and the very physiological nature of Nahua pollution beliefs caused the figures to be translated into metonymic expressions operating within a single domain of existence. Within this domain, metaphors drawn between the realms of moral and physical pollution slipped easily into metonymy because of the close links among all varieties of *tlazalli*. Persuasive as the friars' usage of pollution symbolism was—and the Nahuas' acceptance of baptism and confession as purification rites suggests that it was convincing—such tropes were operating within a Nahua frame of reference.