



APA NEWSLETTER ON

# *American Indians in Philosophy*

Anne Waters and V.F. Cordova, Co-editors      Spring 2001

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## LETTER FROM CO-EDITORS

### V.F. Cordova

Until 1992 no university in the United States had granted the Ph.D in Philosophy to an indigenous American. That year, two were granted, at the University of New Mexico and at Purdue University.

Since that time there are many indigenous students enrolled in philosophy programs, from the undergraduate to the graduate level. The indigenous student, however, does not come unprepared for a study of philosophy. A cultural experience of 500 years has exposed indigenous peoples to the collision of incommensurable world views. The onus of this collision is on the indigenous person. No American of European ancestry was forced to adopt a Native American perspective, except in unusual circumstances (e.g., captives). All indigenous persons were subjected to a forced educational experience that emphasized, not only the learning of new facts, but the learning of a new format which granted meaning to those facts.

The indigenous student was assumed to have no valid information that would enhance his/her studies. He/She was seen as a nearly blank slate upon which must be written an epistemology, a logic, and, even though unconsciously promoted, a new metaphysics and ethics. At the same time, the indigenous student was exposed to his/her own perspectives on the world: these included methods of learning; languages with references to aspects of the world that did not figure into the languages of European teachers; and, ethics that often offered values and mores in contradiction to individualistic based system.

The survival of indigenous persons in the United States bears testimony to our adaptability, flexibility, in learning to cope with incommensurable world views. We were, in other words, "primed" to become adept at a practice of "comparative philosophy." At the same time that a native philosophy student was learning the differences between a Kantian perspective and one put forth by Spinoza, that student was also learning to articulate the differences between one world view and another; one learning methodology and another.

Anne Waters, in her article dealing with the "interstitial" existence of native peoples, explores the problematic of learning to live with an intact identity in a world that wants to collapse one into another. Lee Hester examines the

approaches of two distinct peoples in being in the world. One stresses the importance of an abstract "truth"; another the Aristotelean sense of philosophy as "practice." V.F. Cordova offers an insight into the problems confronted by native philosophers in turning the lense of philosophical examination on views often held to be sacrosanct. Richard Simonelli's conversation with Greg Cajete shows how an indigenous intellectual parses the two worlds of "Indian" and "Western" science. Cajete is at the forefront of indigenous persons incorporating the observation techniques of the West with an indigenous perspective of science as a means to an end rather than as an end in itself.

Waters, too, offers a book review—this the story of a Lakota healer. The review proposes Joseph Eagle Elk as offering an insight into the "infrastructure" of indigenous thought.

The inclusion of Native American philosophers in the American Philosophical Association's newsletter rounds out the attempt of the APA to broaden its own perspectives. The task remains now to foster some cross-communication between the variously identified groups. To that end, discussions on the articles here are certainly welcomed.

## COMMENTS FROM CHAIR

### of the APA Committee on American Indians in Philosophy

#### Anne Waters, J.D., Ph.D.

After three years of struggle for recognition, the APA Committee on American Indians in Philosophy was approved by the APA Board of Officers in November 1999 to become effective immediately; the official terms of office began July 2000. Committee members included: Chair, Anne Waters (3 yrs), John Dufour (3 yrs), Lee Hester (1 yr), Iris Young (3 yrs), James Sterba (2 yrs), Judith Green (1 yr), and Scott Pratt (2 yrs). As of July 2001 new members include Lee Stauffer (3 yrs) and Thomas Norton-Smith (3 yrs). The inaugural committee meeting of the APA Committee on American Indians in Philosophy was held at the APA Pacific Division Meeting in Albuquerque, April 2000. For American Indians attending, the status of American Indian Philosophers in Academe was a pivotal issue throughout the conference. There are no American Indians teaching in a Ph.D. program in philosophy. There are currently no programs to recruit,

train, or mentor American Indians interested in pursuing an academic career in professional philosophy.

Despite the negative ambiance of attaining tenure track positions for American Indians in Philosophy Departments, "we" continue research and writing American Indian Philosophy, which remains a lively field. Last summer the Society to Advance American Philosophy Summer Institute in Vermont included in their program a presentation about how to teach a course in American Indian Philosophy; I taught this seminar, and sessions were well attended and received. Another American Indian Philosophy scholar has been promised for a follow-up seminar in the summer of 2001. A new book is forthcoming from Blackwell Publishers in 2001, *American Indian Thought: A Philosophical Reader*, Anne Waters, ed. Because this book can be used to teach courses in the field of American Indian Philosophy, the Committee encourages faculty to use it to develop courses in American Indian Philosophy. To the best of our knowledge all American Indians currently with a Ph.D. in Philosophy will be represented in this text.

The Committee on American Indians in Philosophy, in conjunction with the American Indian Philosophy Association, the Radical Philosophy Association, and the Society for Women in Philosophy, arranged to have five APA-National Science Foundation sponsored sessions at the 2000-2001 APA Divisional Conferences. The Committee sessions have generally been well attended, and the recent Eastern Division Conference in New York was no exception. The field of American Indian Philosophy is articulating significant aspects of American Indian thought, making the visibility of America's indigenous philosophical traditions relevant to contemporary philosophy and philosophers. The historic and contemporary philosophical issues that confront American Indians as we respond to the demands of the 21st Century are being identified, described, discussed, analyzed, compared, and explored by both Indian and nonIndian in the APA. It is my hope that these engagements will continue via this newsletter, and that more philosophers, in time, will come to envision American Indian Philosophy as a conceptual philosophical framework in which to do philosophy. As well, I hope that it operates as a framework that, in addition to Western European Philosophy, backgrounds the development of American Philosophy in the Americas. As this committee moves forward with our charge, we invite everyone, whether self or other classified as analytic, continental, pragmatic, or postmodern, to visit the American Indian Philosophy Association website at <http://www.csub.edu/~awaters/aipa/aipa.html> and hope that this webpage will be helpful to and representative of our collective efforts to center this field in traditional indigenous philosophy. In visiting this website we hope that respecting the discursive intellectual roots of American Indian scholars, elders, and communities, as we approach America's indigenous understandings of the world, and our interdependence as human people in that world, will assist in developing our seventh generation scholars to mentor the eighth generation American Indian academic intellectuals. Our faith is that Philosophy as a discipline, and American Indian philosophers, as part of that discipline, will fulfill our obligations to the next seven generations, and take our places within that profession, with accountability to, and understanding with, our elders and community.

Our wish this year is that we will soon find American Indians trained in philosophy accepting tenure track positions in Philosophy Departments that can produce American Indian Ph.D.'s in Philosophy, and Ph.D.'s specializing in American Indian Philosophy. Only in this way will we have an opportunity to mentor a new generation of American Indian Philosophy scholars, a much needed requirement for building the field. Second on our wish list might be an opportunity to mentor undergraduate students interested in a Ph.D. in the field of American Indian philosophy. Our third wish might be that we sponsor NEH summer institutes addressing American Indian philosophy. If all of these wishes are met, more publications, exciting scholarship, and hopefully benefit will flow to our communities. Thank you all for supporting our committee and our American Indian philosophy scholars over these past 4 years.

## CHARGE OF THE COMMITTEE

The Committee is charged with assessing and reporting on the status of American Indians in the profession and with exploring the sources and supporting the development of American Indian Philosophy. Among its main responsibilities are to identify unfair or discriminatory practices affecting American Indian philosophers in their professional work and to apprise the Board and members of the Association of ways in which such practices may be rectified; to inform American Indian philosophers concerning means of overcoming discrimination that they may encounter in the profession; and to make reports and recommendations to the Board concerning ways in which full and meaningful equality of opportunity can be provided to all individuals who seek to study, teach or conduct research in philosophy. Further, the Committee is concerned with the teaching and research of American Indian philosophers and those interested in American Indian philosophy. It seeks to facilitate philosophical understanding of tribal identity and diversity and of different views of American Indian cultures and traditions.

## American Indian Philosophy Takes a Seat at the University

by Richard Simonelli

Albuquerque, New Mexico (NFIC)

AMERICAN INDIANS



Native American contributors to the new book of American Indian Philosophy, to be published in 2001, assembled at the AIPA conference in Albuquerque.

The second annual meeting of the American Indian Philosophy Association (AIPA) was held in Albuquerque April 5-8, as part of the larger 74th annual Pacific Division American Philosophical Association conference.

Although one of the exciting things about Native American philosophy is that it is a lived philosophy, requirements of the American Philosophical Association, of which AIPA is a sub-group, means that AIPA members need Ph.D.s, good academic credentials, and the ability to "write academic."

AIPA has two ground breaking book projects scheduled for publication in 2001. The first is a multicultural book, with African American and Native American authors, aimed at redefining the whole field of American philosophy.

The second book, scheduled for publication in the spring of 2001, is a reader on American Indian philosophy, intended

for use with Native and non-Native philosophy students nation wide. The text book covers an array of philosophical topics authored by Native writers, including elder/mentor Vine Deloria, Jr.

Present at the conference as senior American Indian philosopher, Deloria told the attendees, "I think all of you in the whole room have got to recognize that there's a glass ceiling. Unless you deal with really substantial concepts and break through that, white racism's not going to let you go too far with any of this. So you have to be very clever in how you're going to be involved with any levels too deep for them to understand."

He concluded by saying, "I'm very pleased, and it's really worth the trip stopping by here to see young people doing so well and grappling with these kinds of issues."

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## **Summary of Eastern Division 2000 APA Sessions**

**by Brian Burkhart and Anne Waters**

Members of the American Indian Philosophy Association participated in a number of rich and philosophically interesting sessions during the recent Eastern APA in New York. The first of these, sponsored by the American Indian Philosophy Association (AIPA), saw John Ladd present work on the challenge of American Indian philosophy, much of this consisted of background regarding his work on Navajo Ethics. Marilyn Notah Verney, a native Navajo philosopher, raised serious questions, in her commentary, regarding the efficacy and ethicality of non-native people working on the philosophy of American Indian people. One of the main points was that as long as we think of American Indian philosophy as a branch of Anthropology, then we will continue to run into troubling political and philosophical issues (sovereignty and misunderstanding as examples). If we think of American Indian philosophy as simply philosophy done from a particular perspective, then these troubling issues disappear. (It would seem rather odd for someone to think of doing Christian philosophy, for example, as a sort of Anthropology).

In a session, which was part of "Philosophical Explorations of Science, Technology, and Diversity," an APA American Indians in Philosophy Committee project funded by a grant from the National Science Foundation, Anne Waters and J.L. Vest presented work on American Indian philosophy of science. Here interesting issues were raised regarding the epistemological status of native science. Much of the discussion centered on the methodology of native science, specifically as it regards knowledge and theory construction. One of the interesting claims that was put forth was that for American Indian thinkers/philosophers/scientists knowledge comes through lived experience, the embodiment of perception, and is not thought to have, at least in any essential way, proposition form and thus must be maintained in and through lived experience. It then follows in course, that theory construction is not a desirable end in American Indian science since such requires the cessation of observation and the formation of propositions, which exist outside of lived experience. Issues were raised regarding how scientific notions impact sustainability and ethicality vis-à-vis human beings and the world we inhabit.

In a third session, co-sponsored by the Radical Philosophy Association and the AIPA, Anne Waters presented an analysis of sustainable cultures and American Indian reproductive issues. Waters explained how reproductive problems can undermine a community, giving rise to chronic health problems including low birth weight children, who, when undernourished for years enter into intergenerational cycles of illness that endanger community sustainability. Elucidating her point, she explored how an indigenous historical reality of communal interdependence upon a land base was incompatible with the many years of forced diaspora across the continent. Indigenous experiences of living through extremes of near starvation and deadly diseases gave rise to poor health conditions that are only now beginning to be evaluated and treated with a view toward improving holistic relations. As contemporary

interdependent sustainable relations with a land base are once again becoming a possibility for indigenous communities, they present an opportunity for American Indians to renew autonomous interdependencies among all relations. Treating all people (animate beings) as equals in sharing an inter-webbed environment is becoming a life choice in Indian Country. Because these systems of sustainable agriculture will require healthy reproductive cycles for women to nourish a community of growers, women and children's health may need to become an axis of sustainable cultures. Waters suggested that placing reproduction of all our relations at the center of sustainable culture carries with it the potential to deepen respect for human reproduction, and for women as lead participants in that culture.

In one of several other sessions sponsored by the AIPA, Dale Turner presented work on oral traditions and the politics of "(mis)recognition." Turner pointed to the historical fact that American Indians have been forced to support our political claims on the basis of metaphysical and epistemological ones that seem to only make sense from within the oral traditions of which we are a part. This leads to what he calls an "asymmetry of justification." Regarding a recent Canadian Supreme Court case, Turner detailed just how this asymmetry serves to undermine the political claim put forth by the native group. In order to strengthen American Indian political claims regarding sovereignty and so forth in the face of such asymmetry, Turner claimed that American Indians ought to force a separation between the political discourse and the philosophical discourse. By doing this American Indians assert from the start that in the legal and political relationship our ways of knowing the world are not negotiable and maintain the ability to protect our political sovereignty within the dominant culture's existing legal and political discourse of rights. Brian Burkhart, in commenting on Turner's paper, defended in contrast, the importance of explaining American Indian ways of knowing in a way that reflects the reality of American Indian traditions. In supporting this Burkhart claimed that the actual stories and so forth of American Indian oral tradition are not by themselves ways of knowing. American Indian philosophy consists in the nature of the relationship American Indians have to these stories. American Indians can, then, he claimed, participate in the discourse of metaphysical and epistemological justification without betraying their oral traditions. Further, Burkhart claimed, that nothing short of this will do in the long run. Without changing the nature of the discourse all the way down to its metaphysical and epistemological base, we cannot expect even superficial change. In order to be merely political and not metaphysical, Burkhart claimed, we must think of ourselves as merely citizen in the political area, but even the concept of a citizen implies a certain notion of the nature of a person. Burkhart, concluded, that if this is correct then American Indians must engage in metaphysical and epistemological discourse on pains of accepting not only Western politics but Western metaphysics and epistemology as well.

## ARTICLES

### *Native American Philosopher*

**V.F. Cordova**

*Independent Scholar (Ph.D; University of New Mexico). Resident of Idaho.*

Does a Native American, by virtue of being granted a degree in Philosophy, become something other than a philosopher? A Native American philosopher, for example? Does a Norwegian with a degree in Philosophy become a Norwegian philosopher?

The relevance of these questions is important. A call for "Native American" philosophers is quite different than a call for someone who "does" Native American philosophy. There is an underlying assumption implied in the term 'Native American philosopher' that is absent in labelling someone a 'Norwegian' philosopher. The Norwegian may be merely someone who happens to have studied philosophy (without a label) and may have scholarly interests in Kant, Spinoza, or "Native American" philosophy. He would not be expected to have an interest only in something called "Norwegian philosophy." Nor would his viewpoint be expected to be colored by the fact that he is of Norwegian ancestry.

The fact that something called 'Native American Philosophy' is being offered in classrooms across the country, without an attendant rise in the employment of Native American philosophers, would indicate that there is a confused expectation of what a Native American philosopher is.

Is he (or she) expected to have a bias that taints scholarly pursuits in the broad field of philosophy, per se? 'Taints' in a manner, for example, that would be unexpected in a Norwegian philosopher?

A question that commonly arises in the discussion of "Native American Philosophy" is whether one must be Native American to 'do' Native American Philosophy. Since the courses dealing with the philosophy of the Native American are increasing while there is no increase in the presence of Native Americans in Philosophy Departments, the answer to the common question would have to be—One need not be a Native American in order to do Native American Philosophy; just as one need not be Chinese to do Chinese Philosophy.

One apparently cannot, however, be Native American and teach a course on Spinoza, medical ethics, or any of the other possible topics open to non-Native American philosophers. Native American philosophers, according to the employment record throughout Academia, are expected to teach only courses relating to Native American topics.

The position of Native American philosophers suffers from the equivalent of "racial profiling" undertaken by policemen in numerous locations. African Americans know well the accusation of "DWB"—"Driving While Black". The practice of racial profiling in Academia is on the increase. I met a philosopher who happened to be of Mexican origin.

His Mexican origin was somewhat dicey—he was third or fourth generation American born. He was also a student of Analytical Philosophy. Nevertheless, he was hired to teach "Latin American Philosophy." "What exactly," I asked, "is that?" "I don't know," he responded, "I make it up as I go along."

The problem here is not that he was "making it up" in order to broaden the appeal to Mexican American students for the field of philosophy. The problem is that in the process of becoming an expert in "Latin American Philosophy" the Mexican American was beginning a process of rejecting his own American background. What began as an exercise in "broadening the curriculum" in order to offer "diversity", instead, became an exercise in creating a broadening in cultural and intellectual divisiveness.

Philosophy, of all of the disciplines in the Humanities, is portrayed as the most open of disciplines. No questions are barred, no topic deemed too esoteric or out of bounds to be open to examination. Being a Native American in the discipline tells quite another story.

The Native American, unlike the Norwegian, may not share what Ortega y Gasset calls "the spiritual wealth" which he sees as "the common property of Europe." The questions he poses, as a philosopher, may not be the same questions posed by those who come from a background of shared "spiritual wealth." By virtue of asking the "wrong" questions, the Native American quickly discovers that there are boundaries surrounding the discipline of philosophy. He discovers that there are "standard" interpretations of what the great philosophers are said to have said. He learns, in the process of acquiring his advanced degrees, that the act of posing a question follows a distinct format: He may ask whether a God does or does not exist. He may not ask why that question is of any relevance.

In the meantime, during the course of education, the Native American student learns to pose his own questions and they are drawn from his own context of "spiritual wealth." His questions are usually, if he dares brings them into the open in a classroom, deemed "more worthy of an anthropologist." Anthropology being, of course, the discipline that assigns itself the task of exploring the esoteric and barely humanoid existence and thought patterns of non-Western peoples. The Native American in a Philosophy Department, by virtue of his own non-Western background, poses an anomaly in the Department.

What then is meant in the announcements of available jobs when the institution states that there is a search for "Native American Philosophers"? It is obvious, again by the absence of Native Americans as faculty in Philosophy Departments, that those who post such job notices have a specific notion of what it is to be a Native American philosopher. And this is not the same thing as being someone who proposes a course on "Native American Philosophy," since we have seen that one need not be Native American to teach such a course.

I happened to be in a meeting once where there was a discussion about the need for more Native Americans on the faculty. Someone pointed out that they especially needed a Native American in mathematics. Sitting in on the meeting was a Native American with a Ph.D. from one of the Ivy League schools in mathematics education. When it was



pointed out that she was Native and in mathematics someone piped up, "Oh, but she's not a 'real' Indian!" A comment that is, unfortunately, all too commonly heard by Native Americans with Ph.Ds. Before one acquires the Ph.D a Native American is "just an Indian"—if she acquires the degree then she is "not a 'real' Indian." One is left only with the implication that 'real' Indians don't have Ph.Ds; or that by virtue of having successfully completed a course of studies, she no longer qualifies as a 'real' Indian. She is also, again unfortunately, not deemed a 'real' mathematician because she is "an Indian."

The Native American philosopher falls into the same category, or non-category as the case may be: No 'real' philosopher is a Native American. No 'real' Native American is a philosopher. The situation can be summed up by an observation made in 1810 by Samuel Stanhope Smith in regard to the education of "savages":

There are doubtless degrees of genius among savages as well as among civilized nations: but the comparison should be made of savages among themselves, and not of the genius of a savage, with that of a polished people. (From SAVAGISM AND CIVILIZATION by Roy Harvey Pearce.)

A suggestion might be helpful to those posting jobs "open" to Native Americans. Perhaps the institution making the posting could also state the qualifications, along with those for the job opening, to be used for consideration of an applicant as a 'real' Native American.

## Epistemology and American Indians

Lee Hester

Halito. Chim achukma? Sa-hoschifo-ut Lee Hester. Chatah sia hoke! Which is to say "Hello. How are you? My name is Lee Hester. I am a citizen of the Choctaw Nation. I begin my talks in this way to help emphasize the differences between Native American people and others living in North America. This greeting directly exemplifies differences in language and allegiance. To those that know the law, it points toward differences in legal status and the fact that there are laws that pertain only to American Indians. To everyone, it should point toward the deeper differences in culture and with some study, it perhaps hints at basic differences in world-view, or what might from a native perspective be termed "presence-in-the-world." I do not and cannot claim any special authority on these issues, I am neither a medicine-man nor an elder. However, I am an enrolled member by blood, I prefer the term "citizen;" of an Indian Nation; I grew up in Oklahoma—which in the Choctaw language means "Red People"—among Indian people, including my own relatives; my main associations are with Native American people. That, combined with a small amount of western philosophical training, may enable me to provide some observations—hopefully presented in a way which makes them meaningful.

The topic "Epistemology and American Indians" is a grand one. One which I undoubtedly don't have all the "answers" to, and maybe don't have any answers to. As I said, I'll mainly present some observations, though my Euro-American philosophical training will drive me to some

deductions based on the observations. Throughout this paper, I'll use terms like "Native American" or "Indian" as if my conclusions are readily applicable to the peoples of all the sovereign Indian Nations. This isn't necessarily true, though I do think there are many similarities from nation to nation. As Viola Cordova has said, any Native American has more in common with any other Native American than with any non-Indian. A short story will serve as a jumping of point for the rest of the talk. I have used this story elsewhere, so I hope I don't bore those of you that have heard it before.

A few years ago I was the professor of a course called "Native American Identity." I won't say I was "teaching it" for many reasons. One of them is that I tried, as much as possible, to use members of the Native American community—particularly elders—as the real teachers. I like to think it is because I recognize that they are the ones who can truly teach it, not just that I am lazy.

One of our speakers was John Proctor, the oldest living Creek medicine man. He is the uncle of Wanda Davis, a good friend of mine—so I was able to persuade him to spend a three hour session with the class one evening. Mr. Proctor is a key practitioner of the traditional Creek religion. He is the medicine man for a stomp ground. "Stomp ground" is the name given to the ceremonial grounds where the Creek practice their religion.

Mostly the students asked the kinds of questions you might expect. Since they thought of Mr. Proctor as a representative of a traditional religion, they asked him cosmogonic or cosmological questions.

I was surprised when one of the students asked the ultimate question... Remember—this was a class on "Indian Identity." The student asked, "What makes you Creek?"

Those of you familiar with the Native American traditions, or those that have attended one of my talks before, would expect the answer to be a rambling narrative that might *seem* not to be an answer at all. This is just what I expected. I settled back in my chair in preparation for Mr. Proctor's answer.

Without hesitation he said, "If you come to the stomp ground for four years, take the medicines and dance the dances, then you are Creek."

The answer was completely unexpected and thus even more forcefully illuminating. Mr. Proctor had listed a set of **practices** which made someone Creek, or more properly in context, a member of the traditional Creek religion.

If you asked a member of just about any *Christian* religion what made them Christians, you would get a completely different answer. My Missionary Baptist relatives would tell you that to be Christian you have to "Accept Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Saviour." Acceptance, faith—**belief**, is at the core of Christian religion and not surprisingly at the core of Euro-American philosophy. Just think about how you would characterize different philosophical schools, or different figures in the Euro-American philosophical tradition. This school believed this... the central tenets of that school were...this famed philosopher thought that...Beliefs, beliefs, beliefs.

Indeed, in the Euro-American philosophical tradition, it is unclear how one would go about doing epistemology at all without belief. The nature of justification, defeasibility,

facticity, truth and a multitude of other issues are up for grabs in epistemology, but there is one thing that is usually not questioned. Whatever knowledge may be, it would seem that it at least has to be a belief.

In the Euro-American philosophical tradition, the centrality of belief is clear. Though we may analyze what we are doing at great length; think up different ways of characterizing it, generally we go about asserting different views of "the way things are." These are generally expressed as propositions. To the extent that we buy into them, we "believe" them. Sometimes, at least according to some epistemologists, we not only believe them but actually "know" them.

John Proctor's answer points to a different way and the more I review my experiences in the Native American community the more I think that his answer is illuminating. It has helped me understand an interesting experience that I had while "teaching" in Canada. Here I put the word "teaching" in scare quotes, because I was more nearly learning than teaching. While in Canada I taught several classes, including an intro philosophy class attended by John Bigbear, an Anishnabe who was a member of the Northern Winds drum group and a practitioner of some of the traditional religion. John Bigbear and I had several interesting encounters, but there was one that is particularly important to this talk.

John came to me one day after class with a very serious demeanor. Generally he laughed and joked as is common among Native American people, but it was clear this time he had something important to say. He talked about the shaking tent ceremony and other ceremonies that a Euro-American might consider "superstitious." He ended by asking me if I believed in these ceremonies. I considered the question very carefully. Just what was my view? I have been trained in the Euro-American philosophical tradition, I've taught symbolic logic and other technical classes that are at the core of western philosophy. Did I really "believe" in the shaking tent?

I told John that I couldn't say that I either believed or disbelieved in them. I have seen and experienced things that I don't comprehend in various traditional ceremonies. They are just part of my experience. I know my experiences, but I can't say what I experienced. He explained that he too, did not "believe" in them, though it was clear from what he said that he also did not "disbelieve" in them. This was one of a couple of turning points in my relation to John. Shortly after this exchange he invited me to come to a traditional ceremony welcoming the bears back after their winter hibernation. As a member of the Bear Clan, this was an important ceremony for John. I was honored to be invited. It was a great experience, one which I shall always cherish.

Now, I think that our discussion, among other things, may have been a test. As a mixed-blood I am often tested. In fact, at least one western philosopher has suggested on the basis of how I look that I'm not a "real" Indian. In the Indian community, the tests are a lot more subtle. If I had answered that I believed, then was I gullible, patronizing or trying to play "real" Indian? The answer was bit more clear and just as negative if I answered that I disbelieved.

The way in which most ceremonies are approached also points to a form of what we might call non-belief. There is

always an interesting mixture of reverence and irreverence in Indian ceremonies. Just about the time that things seem most serious, someone will usually crack a joke. Often it will be the very medicine-man or elder that is conducting the ceremony.

A group of four elders, presided over by Freda MacDonald, conducted a ceremony to consecrate a set of two eagle feathers. One was for Lorraine Brundige, the other for me. As a part of the ceremony, we passed around water for everyone to drink in turn. I was the first person to Freda's left, so I was the first to drink. When the water again reached Freda there was still some left. She passed it to me. I looked uncertain. She said, "finish it." I tossed it off at one gulp. Freda started laughing good-naturedly. "Two feathers, two times around the circle," She explained. We all started joking about how I must be real thirsty, how people might think I was greedy for water and so on. It went on for some time. We finally finished the ceremony without a second circling of the water.

At the end of the ceremony, one of the elders I didn't know from a nearby reserve began to talk to me in Anishnabe. I had no clue what she was talking about. My Anishnabe is limited to "Meegwetch" which is "thank you" and "Ne'weeznin" which is the closest I can come to pronouncing the phrase for "Let's eat." However, the elder was clearly imparting something of great importance, so I sat and listened to her intently. After a few minutes Freda began laughing again. "Wrong kind of Indian," she said, "he's a Choctaw not an Ojibway."

Though its clear that such joking is partly to alleviate tension, gloss over slip-ups, and maintain harmony and goodwill, it also makes sense that this practice is much easier if you do not "believe" in a western sense. Certainly we have all seen humor used for these purposes in Euro-American ceremonies, but I think those that have experienced both would say the jokes flow much more freely and with less provocation, if any, at a Native American ceremony.

At this point it is important to repeat that this does not mean Native Americans disbelieve in our traditions. Far from it. The traditions are approached with great reverence. Indeed, I think the difference in Native American and Euro-American approaches is so basic and subtle that the English language strains to express it. Unfortunately, since most philosophical dialogue in this country is in English it is likely that when pressed to the limit it would be better to say that Native American people firmly believe in our tradition than to imply any less reverence.

This is because English has equated belief with truth. Now, I'm doing some Euro-American looking philosophy. I hope you don't mind. Euro-Philosophers express beliefs as propositions and assign them truth values. When we assert a belief we are asserting the truth of a certain picture of the world. There is, on one hand, our worldview... whether we are Native American or Euro-American... and on the other hand the world. What has been called metaphorically, "the map and the territory." I think most of us agree that we all live in the same territory. I think it is also clear that the maps held by the Native Americans and Euro-Americans are quite different. However, the main point of this talk is belief. Belief is our attitude toward the relationship between the map and the territory. Western belief generally implies some kind of

correspondence between the map and territory. The most extreme version of this is that we can have a completely clear and correct map, a one-to-one correspondence between the map and the territory. Or to put it in the vernacular, we can have the "Truth." This was clearly the project of the Enlightenment. Even though modern thought has cast doubt on this, the west still clings to it.

I would characterize the attitude of Native Americans as one of agnosticism concerning the relationship between our map and the territory. Though this may seem strange from a western stance, it is actually very practical. Indeed, I would argue that it can even make a great deal of sense given modern western understandings of the limits of knowledge. Think of Heisenberg and Godel. Using the map and territory metaphor, Heisenberg seems to be telling us that the clearer our map of any particular part of the territory, the less clear our map will be elsewhere. Godel seems to be telling us that when our map becomes too broad, it will be incorrect. If we go too far in detail or breadth, our map becomes confused.

The Native American map is not meant to be a high fidelity picture of the territory, but is an action guiding set of ideas. Indeed, the action guiding element is central. Remember the John Proctor story. Particular actions are what makes one Creek. One of the main puzzlements Indian people have expressed historically is how Europeans could assert the truth of our ideas, but act in ways that didn't correspond to the truths they asserted. Popular sovereignty, religious freedom, the sanctity of property, peace, brotherhood and all the rest seem to be ignored nearly as often as they are upheld. Of course one answer is that there are bad people and bad governments who do not maintain our own lofty ideas. Though this is true, I think it is worsened by western belief. If you are convinced that your map truly embodies the territory, despite the fact that it is necessarily incomplete or incorrect (and probably both...) then you are going to make many false turns. Your actions will be contradictory. When you have mistaken the map for the territory, you'll continue to claim that you have reached the right destination even when you are hopelessly lost.

Western philosophers are perhaps the best examples of this tendency and it is one that has cost them much in the way of practical influence in society. We have all entertained skeptical ideas, examined odd metaphysical systems and sometimes built careers defending our truth. But what if they are true? Many of the maps we have posited can't be followed. Just how should a solipsist act? Laying aside the question of truth, if your map can't be followed, what use is it?

The western rejoinder might be, "How can agnosticism concerning the connection between the map and territory be action guiding?" The answer is that it can't, but it is an attitude which can be very helpful. Though Native Americans may not know what the connection is between our map and the territory, there are some things that we do know. Key among these is our experience. This includes our own actions and the observed consequences of those actions.

The importance of direct experience and agnosticism concerning belief can be seen in various linguistic elements of the Choctaw language and other Native American languages. In Choctaw there is a marker to indicate when you are passing on second-hand experiences... a hearsay

marker. Such markers are common among Native American languages. In Choctaw, for example, the phrase "The cat is on the mat," might be translated, "Gatosat shukbo binili." If we say "Gatosat shukbo binili-miha," then we have disclaimed direct observation, we are saying that someone told us. Without the hearsay marker, the assumption is that what we are saying is a part of our experience. But the hearsay marker "miha" is just the beginning. There are a variety of markers that describe our attitude toward the source of the experience, its reliability, or whether that particular experience is shared. For example "Gatosat shukbo binili-hah?" means something like "Don't we agree that the cat is on the mat?" Some of the markers can be given rather humorous translations. "Gatosat shukbo binili-cho." has been translated by one linguist as, "The cat is on the mat, you idiot." The "cho" marker implies that the cat is right in front of you... that you should open up your eyes.

These markers generally pick out a relationship between the person speaking and the statement, rather than between the statement and the world. In English, a statement asserts a particular picture of the world, in Choctaw you are more nearly relating an experience.

Possibly the most telling example is the kind of response that a traditional Native person will give in answer to a question. I don't know how many Indian related conferences I have been to, where some non-Indian academic will ask a medicine-person or elder a question. The response they seek is a statement of the way things are, a truth, a detailed map of the territory. The answer that they get is a rambling narrative, of the kind I expected from John Proctor in the story I related earlier. The narrative is generally a story from their own life, maybe with a few traditional side stories. At the end, the academic is usually puzzled. Our reaction is often negative. In the worst cases, the academic may assert that the elder was just making up a story because they didn't understand our own traditions. I've seen this done again and again. One philosopher in Canada, whom I won't name, has even told me how he often has to explain Indian traditions to the Indians themselves. From his perspective, his map is right and they've lost theirs.

Fortunately or unfortunately many traditional values, including respect, will prompt the Indian person to sit still for an impromptu lecture on their own traditions. Some take mild amusement at the absurdity. You can imagine the kind of markers they might use in characterizing where they heard this information. Though Choctaw does not have a marker that means, "I heard this from a non-Indian who thinks he knows more about us than we do," it is possible that Kiowa does. They have a lot more markers of this kind than we do. Some elders, particularly those that are the most traditional, might just report it as straight news. Respect is a part of this, but the respect is partly born out of epistemic humility. When you do not claim to have a correct map of the world, then you do not claim to have the "Truth." You are willing to accept that other people have maps that are as good (or as bad...) as your own. When your map primarily traces your own path through life, then you are always eager to share stories and broaden your map. A traditional elder might well listen attentively to an anthropological lecture concerning his own customs and traditions. After all, it will be an interesting experience that may provide many insights—if only into the thinking of anthropologists.



Knowledge is narrative of a life lived in the world. The individual stories are what you know. They may or may not provide a map of the world, but they do tell you about the consequences of your actions. You can learn much even if you believe little. You can even be taught. Here another short story might be useful.

After a long day's work I was supposed to help unload a bunch of tables and chairs at the new Choctaw center in Oklahoma City. Mr. Amos Dorsey, an older full-blood Creek and I were going to work together. There was quite a bit of work to do and I wanted to get home, so I threw myself into the work—busily hustling back and forth. Mr. Dorsey began to work too, but a bit slower and only after watching me for a second or two. Indeed, as he worked and watched me, I could almost swear he was actually going even slower. Eventually, it was as if he was going in slow-motion. Of course, part of that was due to my haste. As we worked and I fumed a bit at his slowness, I finally realized that somehow he was actually getting more done than I was. Mr. Dorsey respected the task, understood the context and set about working efficiently. However, I think it was also an instance of teaching. I can't help but think he slowed down as he saw my thoughtless, disrespectful haste and then speeded up as he saw that I had learned my lesson and was working efficiently.

Now, we could assert some "Truths" here. We might say that "Haste makes waste." Yet of course, the "Early bird got the worm." Just about any "Truth" we might assert—particularly action guiding truths—are going to have contradictory "Truths" that seem just as good. Thus we have the contradictory actions. This search for "Truth" is the European tradition. The Native tradition does not abstract truths out of the stories, the stories are often abstract enough in themselves without further removing them from reality. The narrative is as close to the truth as you can get. In the end, I think that the two epistemic systems may converge. As the Euro-American tradition refines its truths, resolving the contradictions by adding more and more exceptions and greater and greater complexity, these truths may eventually more nearly resemble stories. In the meantime, Indian people will be waiting at the fire already telling some good ones.

## ***Ontology of Identity and Interstitial Being***

**Anne Waters**

### **Introduction**

This paper is about in-betweens of interstitial space, and cognitive dissonance of coming into being. In-betweens are not a nothing, though they sometimes appear this way. An interstitial gap, or space, when circumscribed with new defined angles (boundaries, or borders), creates a new interstitial identity. In these interstitial spaces (where being and non-being come together), we locate an American Indian metaphysics, where everything is, or rather everything is always, coming, into being some thing. This metaphysic can help draw an understanding of an apparent, or real, human cognitive dissonance. The dissonance may be a function of either indiscreet category classifications blending, a function of discreet category classifications

clashing, or the bringing into being of new identity. These collisions and overlays of blended meaning are part of the creative process in what I call "The Land of Uncertainty." In the Land of Uncertainty, when new being categories are created from cognitive dissonance, the dissonance relaxed releases new meaning. This paper argues that unity, or identity, arises from these relaxed interstitial weavings that arise from being coming-to-be in this Land of Uncertainty.

### **Voice Shifts In Uncertainty**

When I read poetry (or papers) I shift from one voice to another. I sing or shout, perhaps admonish or warn, and sometimes soothe or sound philosophically neutral. The inflection and rhythm of sound articulate my intent, as a speaker. Time span changes occur between the change of voice. In any given reading, my being-in-the-world rearranges and shifts from sameness to difference, and back again, with a same, or new, meaning. These shifts of voice, and new meaning born of cognitive struggle, interest me. My interest is as a philosopher, poet, lawyer, and most especially, as an American Indian. From this latter space of being, that is, as an American Indian, I focus my discussion.

Creating new meaning out of cognitive dissonance shifts my way of being, and fills interstices of coming to be. In this process my disposition toward indiscreet being enters the space of the discreet being, and change, or new meaning, happens. The interstitial gaps into which my non-discreet way of being moves are necessary in order to allow the shifting from a way of being holding one voice to hold another. This experience of shifting occurs sometimes as a willful shift, and at other times as an unknowing shift. Bilinguals and code talkers make these kinds of shifts on a regular basis and at an amazingly rapid pace.

My concern is how interstices of identity shifts carry potential to create an identity of what bell hooks would refer to as an insurgent intellectualism. In this paper, as I analyze the issue of identity in difference, I locate a place of conscience for people cognizant of identity difference. I discuss the geography of place as it is situated in identity formation. I then address the conscience that speaks to the interdependence of geographical space and identity formation as they relate to global resources redistribution.

### **Identity and Difference**

I read the story of mixed race identity from the lives of particular persons. This method seems necessary to understanding, and is playful and fun, engaging me as a puzzle might. The trick is to locate the subject while retaining subjectivity. This emphasis of locating subjectivity in a particular exemplar of identity enables me to locate sites of my lived experience that do not fit fixed identity.

To the extent that identity theories are political, they are about power and oppression. Understanding identity helps me understand politics, and understanding politics helps me understand the interdependency of identity and politics for oppressive colonial action. Thus, understanding identity politics helps me articulate practices of identity suppression (and oppression).

Cultures that locate identity in a politic of ideas, e.g., belonging to Greek thought, tend to colonize other cultures, and rule politically oppressive states. These colonial social cultures link individual identity with linear time (of discreet

human events and institutions) rather than a geographical place. Conversely, Indigenous cultures nurture individual identity formation with a communal interdependence and sustainability in a specific geographic location. Vine Deloria claims in *God is Red* the importance of geographical place identity for America's Indigenous people; and he clarifies the nature of our cognitive and hence practical struggles with a culture whose identity is found within linear time events.

Indigenous identity stories link communal identity to particular geographies, sometimes conveying patterns of hybrid beings. These hybrid beings sometimes interact with us in stories offering playful and humorous insight, or fearful and awesome insight! A hybrid being, going back one generation, has at least two original genetic blueprints, though there may be one or more cultural blueprints; the metaphor of a family tree of DNA, culture, language, or worldview can be understood as a model of grafted identity.

Race theory in the United States generally classifies biracial persons as individuals having two original DNA blueprints (genetic parents), with variant racial markers. As Naomi Zack has illustrated however, more properly, these persons can be thought about as mixed race individuals. On this model, everyone is hybrid as a result of hypothetical race markers, and historical global colonization. Using this metaphor, Zack articulates the non-discreet borders of racial identity, and the subsequent political uses of them. Zack shares with Deloria a suspicion about unified and theoretically constructed identities that are not grounded in particularity of real individual's lives. I feel an affinity with this position.

When we focus upon our Earth Mother and Sky Father around the globe, hybrid persons of nation and geography will be found; whether of different tribes or nations in Africa or Asia, India, Europe, or the Americas. Indeed, when Eric Von Sertima, in *They Came Before Columbus*, wrote about trade between Africa and the Americas, I don't think we need to assume he was just talking about trading cloth and food! Thus, around the globe, hybrids, whether by choice or force, assimilate to identities of cultural domination. This model of hybrid grafting helps me to understand how to teach a deconstruction of race, culture, and national identity theory. The extent to which an analogy can be drawn from exemplars of race hybrids to exemplars of cultural hybrids, may depend upon what we mean by 'culture' in the context of personal identity. And in this context of personal identity, to gather a meaning of culture, we can begin with the relationship between outer/inner cultural identity constructs.

### Outside/Inside Identity

Vine Deloria, in several of his books, claims that for American Indians, our tribes live in and through us. Implicit in his understanding of tribal identity is that identity manifestations i.e. our ways of being in the world, may or may not be a conscious awareness. American Indian identity and worldview, a history of place consciousness, preserved through oral history, manifests discreet geographical place symbols within consciousness that provides a conceptual framework of identity as place. American Indian consciousness, and hence American Indian identity, is cognitively of, and interdependent with, our land base. Though many things may be inferred from this claim, I focus

here first on what it means for inner/outer identity, and for consciousness and worldview preservation, by drawing an analogy to Asian identity.

Direct attention to an Asian American poet, Mitsuya Yamad and her poem "Mirror Mirror," helps articulate the differences of inside/outside identity. Matsuda's Asian American son is having problems at school being accepted by non-Asian students. He believes this is because he appears Asian on the outside; he is upset because he believes that because he is American on the inside, he should be accepted as an American. Social acceptance is so important, that her son is willing to ignore, and wipe out, any Asian identity on the inside that he might otherwise own. Our poet cautions him, however, indicating that as she sees his identity, he needs to turn the outside in; he is both American and Asian on the inside, and this is what America looks like.

This poem illustrates how identity is beyond visibility, and much deeper than external markers. Here, cultural markers create identity, distinct from any DNA features. Moreover, we emanate who we are and are not both by our physical appearance (how we appear to others as an x, y, or z), as well as by many intangibles, such as language (syntax and semantics), worldviews, values, positional vision, ways of thought, ways of being, and motivating actions. These are the things of culture, eg., being part of an interdependent universe, that live in and through us.

Another analogy comes from the work of Annette Arkeketa, a Creek playwright and poet. Throughout her work, Arkeketa suggests a sense of knowing identity from within, from a placed being. Understanding this sense of identity requires knowing that a Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Certificate of Degree of Indian Blood (CDIB) card is not necessarily an identity marker. In one of Arkeketa's poems this is shown to us through the eyes of her son. It is the metaphysic of his communal existence, as a member of a group, and the blended identities from which his identity, as a tribal member, comes into being. He calls forth tribal powers that already live in and through him as he mocks the BIA identity police, "CDIB! CDIB! I know who I be!...CDIB!" All the while, as he mocks the oppressed external identity marker, he suggests nothing really has changed from inside, but rather that change has been forced from the outside. The importance of Arkeketa's identity portrayal is that her son knows who he is, and this knowing comes from a tribal knowing.

The reality of identity is problematic for us frequently when we do not know, or cannot discern, another's cultural identity. For example, we may not know or have the ability to recognize or name cultural markers, codes, or differences. This may especially be true for individuals who are culturally isolated, having only the dissonance of not-being to push up against in understanding another's identity, rather than an affirmation of a particular cultural trait or way of being. Cultural isolation creates cognitive dissonance with cultural difference. Important to understanding identity problems as they relate to communicative dissonance is awareness that our communicative pathways are ninety to ninety-five percent non-verbal! Hence, cultural behaviors such as human movement patterns and eye positions become important to intra-cultural communication. The ability to

recognize the furniture of cultural communication assists to release initial cognitive dissonance.

Assume some person wants another to know and/or respect cultural difference. From an epistemological perspective, the subject knower must have a reference point of culture recognition. Because these differences can and do go unrecognized frequently by a subject knower, the phenomenon of passing occurs (intentional or not). In this way, culture markers, both internal and external, matter. False identity assumptions may occur unknown to either the subject or the subject knower. When this happens, potential communication slips past speakers.

What all this seems to imply is that if a person is to arrive at the ability to see, hear, feel, and appreciate that cultural difference, they must have the key to unlock a cultural conceptual framework. What seems obvious to Mitsuye's son, being Asian on the outside rather than the inside, clearly shows how he focuses (has been taught to focus?) on his external and internal being in the world. And Arkeketa's son, for those who yield power over him, is Indian only because he has met the qualifications of his colonizers; yet for himself, his family and community, the BIA CDIB card is irrelevant to his being Indian, and this Being having a heritage and culture. What the child knows intuitively is that who he is, is not who the card says he is, but is a lived relationship to those who share his place. He is who he is only as he lives relationship with all his relations in the universe. This worldview of an identity construct is a gift of coming into being by acting in the world. The gift of identity, the learning to see through his mother's eyes, is also a part of who he is, and is a creative force informing his nondiscreet identity.

The playful outer reality in these examples, is that cultural identity neither begins nor ends with physical appearance, promulgations of a national citizenship, nor discreetly unified categories. The lesson to be learned from these analogies is that identities of people are about a culture or about a relationship, in a way that we cannot presuppose to be true about discreet nationhood. In conclusion, whether or not the Asian American child is recognized by his peers as American, or the American Indian Creek child is recognized by a dominant colonial government as a Creek citizen, no one could seriously deny that they are these things, and that these things also create nondiscreet ways of being that are essential to (children's) cultural identity.

### Hearing as Being

I recall a conversation that took place several years ago relative to the issue of music and volume. Central to my musings about this conversation is the extent that music, or what and how we hear sound, is a function our being in the world, as cultural specific beings. The conversation I mention flowed from the process of listening to classical music with a colleague, and then listening to African-American music, and later American Indian music with that same colleague.

When African American music began playing, my visiting colleague asked me whether I had just turned the volume down. She then asked me to turn up the volume, to make the music louder. I complied with the request, wondering if perhaps my guest had a hearing difficulty (since I thought the volume was already sufficiently loud). After a

bit, the musical selection changed from African American music, to American Indian music. Almost immediately my colleague asked me whether I turned the volume up; and claimed that the music now sounded disturbingly and uncomfortably loud to her. I politely informed my guest that I had not subsequent to the initial request, turned up the volume. But try as I might, I never did get this person to believe that I had not surreptitiously changed the volume higher when playing the American Indian music.

My musings about the effect of the cultural music selection suggest to me that how we hear volume may also be, at least partly, a function of culture. In response to sharing this amusement with my partner, I was reminded that Harlem, New York, is a community of communal music on the streets, and that it is not played with a low volume! And I now recall that after my partner's child returned home from her first visit to Harlem, as a young African American college student, she seriously entertained the thought of packing up and moving to Harlem, so enamoured was she with the sweet sounds of street music!

Music is rooted in, and is about, a way of sharing. In a community that affords not much else by way of commodities, music can be sacred. Music takes on a special cultural meaning, just as the sharing of "fry-bread" takes on a specific cultural meaning, when we could afford nothing but a few bread makings in American Indian communities. Both music and frybread are intimately a part of the lifeworld of our American Indian communities. Both have played a role in bringing and holding people of a culture together.

More recently, American Indian are seeing our ways of music and dancing, as commodities, seep into dominant mainstream American culture, in much the same way that African American music has found itself co-opted by dominant cultures. Yet the ways of being from which these sounds and songs have come, are heard by the mainstream not as voices of the mainstream, but rather, as dissonant, and for some, discordant voices.

My point here is that many times, totally unknown to us, we emanate who we are by our body language as we move, as we talk, as we perceive the world, and also how we hear the world, through the sounds and rhythms of our environment. We may sometimes cringe at what sounds to others as carefully orchestrated musical harmony. These sound rhythms emanate from our body movement. This is how deep are our identity markers. For American Indians, the voice of the drum, the heartbeat of Earth Mother, in harmony with Sky Father, is a voice of our being, a voice of knowing our place among all our relations.

### Seeing as Being

In a 1992 "American Philosophical Association Blacks in Philosophy Newsletter" article titled, "An Autobiographical View of Mixed Race and Deracination" Naomi Zack, speaks of her experience having an African-American absent father, and being raised by a very present Jewish mother. Zack, is a culturally grafted person (as we all are in some sense.) As such, she claims that warps of her psychology of identity are the effects of warps in her external social reality. As a person of mixed race identity, she is appalled at the racial theory in our country that dictates each person shall have a race, and that they must choose between Black and White. The

problem, as Zack sees it, is that there is no place for mixed race persons.

Though I sympathize with Zack's position, I'm not sure whether I favor her overall thesis that a new universal be developed having a bias in favor of raceless races. (Though this may only be an indication that I am not clear about her meaning.) On the other hand, Zack recognizes that we must block the privileging of race via the use of racial designators. This makes some sense to me. I cannot help but wonder if such counsel could bring us culturally closer to a place where persons would be judged not by our racial affiliations, nor cultural contributions, but by the content of our character, our moral character, as Martin Luther King would imply, and our cultural moral character, to which Deloria frequently alludes. Blocking racial designators however, will not bar cultural dissonance, and ultimately I think, race theory is also about cultural dissonance and cultural domination.

Important for my work in critical identity theory, and my thesis here about the metaphysics of identity, are the reasons why Naomi Zack claims she identifies with her Jewish mother, and not her African American father. She says her mother was not an observant Jew, nor was she (Zack). Nevertheless, she says

...my mother saw the world with (what I take to be) Jewish eyes and felt the world with (what I take to be) Jewish fears, and I have never been able to avoid (what I take to be) the same apperceptions. In other words, I believe I 'identify' with my mother.

By analogy, I recognize my Jewish ancestry and heritage of my father, and I do believe I see the world with (what I take to be) a particular type of Jewish consciousness.

More important for myself, however, is that I understand the world with (what I take to be) and feel the world with (what I take to be) an American Indian, specifically a Northern Florida Seminole matrilineal consciousness. Thus, I have never been able to avoid (what I take to be) the same apperceptions of my mother. Or, as Zack would articulate it, I believe I 'identify' with (the worldview of the apperceptions of) my mother. But this identification is not a racial one so much as a cultural one that embodies racial dispositions. I believe I share much the same metaphysical and ontological understandings of the world that my mother inhabited, and that this sharing has led me to a similar skeptical epistemological position. I want to flesh this out a bit, to see how this might inform my understanding of the hegemonic world that surrounds me.

Over five hundred years of cultural seeing of the resistance of American Indians to colonization, assimilation, and genocide has informed our hearing of a different drum. After over five hundred years, our resistance, metaphorically speaking, is as much in our DNA (whatever DNA may ultimately turn out to be by some theory or another), as our heartbeats are resonant in our drum. Our seeing is a cultural seeing of resistance to dominance as shared from the eyes of those closest to us.

### Organizing as Being

I feel it is important for all people to recognize (especially in the U.S.) that indigenous people of color, and especially peoples of more recent tribal descent (500 years or so), really are, in some ways that matter significantly, sometimes

different from the dominant culture. In the ways that we cognitively structure how we exist in the world we are already at home in the Americas, and have a sense of belonging in our own lands. We have no need to return to a lost continent over the waters, or to study a "golden age" of scholarship. This sense of belonging is crucial to our ability to relax cognitive dissonance. [An important (moral) question is whether this difference ought to make a difference in the world, and in global politics. I will return to this question later, in the section "Politics of Being.".]

The process of discovering identity formation, it seems to me, is to first detect how our frameworks of recognition comprehend only what these frameworks have been trained to comprehend. I differentiate here between conceptual frameworks of understanding we use to interpret an outsider's world, and conceptual indigenous frameworks that give rise to worldviews and ways of being in the world, that complement particular cultural conceptual frameworks of understanding.

For philosophical clarification of these conceptual frameworks I refer to a German philosopher's framework, Immanuel Kant. I draw an important philosophical marker between my view and Kant's view. Kant held, and I do not, that universal concepts of space and time organize cultural conceptual categories. Kantian categories would admit of universal (and hence natural) categorical classifications of time and space, as part of the fundamental apparatus or tools of the human brain.

The conceptual frameworks I discuss are acquired ways of being in the world. They are socially transferred from one generation to the next; they are socially secured by defining identity place specific categories; the frameworks apprehend a worldview situating the identity of a person in a community; that community shares the place specific worldview; and hence share a (partial or complete) worldview about identity as nondiscreet. Moreover, it is the worldview that arises from the geographic place specificity, and events that take place in that space, that enable communally apprehended nonlinguistic communication to emerge. Some of this communication is nonverbal; it is behavioral. Some of what is communicated builds upon communally accepted beliefs about the world and our place in it.

Deloria once indicated, and I agree, that an American Indian identity could be grounded on a common "response to" the colonization of our land (*God Is Red*). In addition, I believe it could be grounded on a common response to the genocide of American Indians and our worldviews. This genocide has significantly influenced our contemporary relationships with one another, to the federal government, among indigenous nations around the globe, and amid all our relations.

Thus, apperceptions of a communal world are transferred through generation to generation, by a communal sharing of that worldview. As Annette Arkeketa and Vine Deloria have portrayed in their work, for American Indians the concept of space organizes; I refer to this cognitive organization as mindspace.

A mindspace is an idea about belonging to a place. It is formative to the worldview infrastructure of American Indian thought, and can be tangibly recognized in our cultural

productions. Being attuned, consciously or not, to the sights, sounds, smells, and breaths (air) of that space, where our ancestors live, is as fundamental to American Indian identity as are the sounds of the drum. Understanding mindspace is fundamental to understanding an American Indian standpoint, position, or worldview.

Second, all our relations (all living things) have a strong influence on the shaping of our identity. Thus, I see the world from (what I take to be) my mother's eyes, and that means my mother saw the world from (what she took to be) her mother's eyes. So also, then, I see the world from (what I take to be) my grandmother's eyes. And so on down through our mothers' lives, the transitive relation glues together the generations. For many American Indians, because we have been raised primarily to see the world from (what we take to be) our grandparents eyes, we reach back at least two generations for our early visions.

The question of what types of ontological relations exist in the world for American Indian thought, is perhaps best be understood by considering how ontological differences operate at the epistemological level.

Epistemology occurs when infrastructures of cognitive and affective frameworks, or worldview, come together in apprehending the world, or reality, as we come know it. Reality then, comes to us and is made by us in the world through all our relations including ourselves as part of that of which the world is made. This framework organizes schematic components of indiscreet concepts that originate out of our experience. The originating experience is a function of relaxing cognitive dissonance found in our experience of the world.

In this way, what I see when I look in a mirror, or hear my self speak, is not only what is in the playful mirror or voice, but it may be radically different from what you see or hear. I, and not you, am in the place of experiencing self-reflection on my identity in the present, the very moments as I live the experience. This is one way we can be tricked in the game of identity—for what we appear to be to ourselves may not be what we appear to be to others. We need to continue to think about this trick, as Maria Lugones might admonish us, playfully, with a sense of discovery, and also, with a sense of intellectual rigor.

Humans generally have some similar as well as differently organized schemata. Some cultural groups of persons have developed similar organized schema because of similar group cultural experience. Thus, although the ability or attentiveness to recognize others like oneself may sometimes be a difficult and complex task, like a game it may also be fun to play. Recognition is possible via cultural perspectives that live "in and through us" frequently at unconscious levels. We need only remember how we marvel when we learn things about ourselves that we did not previously know, to see why some folks do not grasp the same things we are experiencing when we experience them. Developing an appreciation for schemas of recognition however, for where our indiscreet conceptual borders get played out, might give others the ability to see by joining the dance of cognitive dissonance "as a subject knower from the other's perspective." The difference between theory and practice remains, however, and although I can articulate the theory, I do not know if this can be in practice.

What this means pragmatically, is that some of you may perceive what appears to you as an anglo woman, while some may perceive what appears to them to be "one of ours" as we say in Indian Country. Those who would identify me as the latter would have to know and recognize clues that may or may not be obvious to the perceiver, in order to correctly identify me. The reality before each is similar, but the schematic of recognition organizes according to indiscreetly bounded concepts of differences. It may be that relaxing cognitive dissonance is an acquired skill. I don't know, and the jury is still out on this one!

Before moving on to the political issues of this analysis, a final word. What we see, and hear, and know, and how we organize in the world is dependent upon what is programmed into our computers upstairs. As two persons look upon a third person, the third person's identity may be detected differently by observers. Of course, this happens every day. The important philosophical question of identity here then, is how some things going noticed, while others going unnoticed, creates value judgements about that third person in the world.

Worldviews embed value judgements. Values arise from particular places and historical events/experiences in those places. Value judgements are markers informing subjects about which aspects of the observed are important, and which are not important. Value judgements are markers informing the subject which attributes are to be paid attention to, and which are not; which attributes are to be recognized, and which are not. Perhaps most important, they mark which attributes are acknowledged as being (having existence) in the world, and which are not (to be).

### Earth Being

I am a person who generally enjoys interviewing. I am also a person who has done a good share of interviewing (both formal and informal) at philosophy conferences. Through these experiences I have come to realize that the colonization of the institution of matching job huntees with job hunters is fraught with cultural (mis)interpretations of behavior. The interviewers (like the Wizard of Oz), generally grant cordiality to job hunters only after all of the hoops have been jumped, hurdles crossed over, articulations of thesis dissertations made, and proper cultural innuendos asserted. Like the institutions of racism, sexism, and classism, there are protocols to be enacted to pass the tests of inclusion as a potential colleague (nonverbal secret rites of passage). My point, quite simply, is that there is no room for difference to be asserted. One either belongs or one does not belong according to sameness of affiliations. This difference makes a difference institutionally.

Given the context, and the situatedness in which I move through the world, I must be a person of shifting identities in the world to function successfully. Hence I have collected a variety of shifting identities from which I select an appropriate one at any given time or place. As a being with many shifting identities, one method I use to understand this complexity of living identity shifts within my "self," has been to write poetry. For me, poetry creates a space of story, and so it is with my poetry as with my stories, they embrace stories about my ways of knowing my place space in the world.



I mentioned earlier that when I read poetry I sound (I voice—I hear) very different at times, depending upon what I am reading, and who is in the audience. I hear an academic voice when I read academic papers; and sometimes, I will change this academic voice for effect. In the context of voice shifting, I have a special relationship to an indiscreet space within my being that recognizes all of my voice shifts among different audiences. What intrigues me, as a philosopher, is how this shifting of voice correlates to shifting identity. For an answer to this, I turn to the historical context of my coming to be in the world. In doing so, I will tell a story.

Living in an extended family, my primary caretaker was my grandmother, my mother's mother. My mother's mother was a Northern Florida Seminole woman, who said she would never live south of the hurricane line, which meant Tampa Bay. It was as clear as pure water for her that this is the way things were to be; there were certain things people were meant to do, and living below the hurricane line in Florida was not one of them. Hence, she would travel East and a bit North, but never travel South nor West. She would not travel west because, according to her, her people had always been from the East, and it made no sense to travel to a geographic place that was not home. She was willing to go as far as Georgia, where she had kin, but no further. I remember the year when we moved to Massachusetts, she said we had no business being there and ought to go back home as soon as we could manage. Manage—that was the word our elders used for being able to pick up, financially or emotionally; and move to where things might be better, financially, or emotionally. To manage was to find a place to be.

Fundamental to my mother's identity (apperceptions of the world) was that "real" Seminoles, which we were, had never signed a treaty with the U.S. I grew up with a consciousness that our U.S. citizenship had been forced upon my family, and that we were still, in some surreptitious way, at war with the U.S. And for this reason, we were told never to sign any membership rolls for Indians. Not that it mattered much to me, because there weren't any for me to sign. But the stories, and the admonitions, were powerful; they created a space of being, of identity, of knowing my "place" in the dominant world, that remains with me today. Moreover, because of the removals that separated and brought death to so many of our relatives, I was told about how our relatives migrated away from Florida, and how many still lived with fear of government power. I was told how some of our relations lived in hiding, and how some members passed when they could to survive, and how sometimes we did not survive when we couldn't.

As a child, my being Indian was to be a Seminole. My family was not just Indian, but a people with a long and serious history in the Americas. To be Seminole was to still be renegade, tergiversator, an insurgent presence in our own land. And to us, that land was everything that we had been and were still. Always, it was about the land. To be Seminole also meant my family had been forced by the government to live away from our community of origin. Our relations had dispersed throughout the southeast, some as far as Mexico and Texas. We had been forced away from a culture of fun loving games, and people loving groups, embracing and embraced by all our relations of the southeast who had

taught us how to survive, and how to treat all beings in our world.

Our old stories were stories of what it meant to be human and what it meant to be Seminole. They were stories about understanding ourselves in relation to those who shared and those who came to share our place. These included European immigrants and African Americans. And so, when my grandmother's, six foot five, brother would come up from Florida to visit us, to make sure his sister and her family was being well taken care of, he told us stories of change. He told us stories of a Florida he said my mother's mother would not recognize again, and would never see again. These stories brought with them a continued sadness, and a sense of loss.

My uncle told us stories of recent times, of how our grandmother married a man of mixed heritage, of Seminole, Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Cherokee descent. It was said that he might have been Creek as well, but for some historical reasons, we never mention this identity. James Hunter Henry came from Indian Country in Oklahoma, where twenty years ago, in Wewoka, I visited photographs of him, his likeness, and of his people. I never knew my grandfather; he died when my mother was seventeen years old, but I heard many stories about his family from Mary Hunter, in Tennessee. After many years Mary had gone back to the old records of allotment, and forced the government to give to her and her family the 25 acres that the government placed in trust, deeming full bloods to be incompetent to manage land. To this day, as far as I know, that land is still held by Eugene, her son. A picture of my grandmother and grandfather, taken when they were youthful, always hung in my grandmother's bedroom.

My mother left Florida when her father died, to take a job with a government program in the city. She took the job to take care of herself and her mother. Though she married a nonIndian from the midwest, over the years my mother kept in touch with her many relatives. When I turned twenty-one, I visited these family members as my mother took me on a sojourn, just her and I, through the land of my many ancestors in the Southeast. This was taken for the purpose of knowing who I was, and where and why my family of several generations had passed through, and been set to rest. I heard many stories then, from many relatives. Driving through several southeastern states, none of the resting places had any markers, yet my mother had historical memory of which graveyard, and which tree, and which hill or rock they rested upon or near. To this day I can see these resting places we visited, and the surrounding land, as clearly in my mind as I saw them many years ago. In this way, as Paula Gunn Allen might say, I hold an idea about who I am in the context of kinship, accountability, and responsibility.

Most important to my grandmother's way of seeing the world was an idea about herself as a Southern woman, a woman from Florida. And not just anyplace in Florida, but from Tampa Bay area. This was home, and had always been home for her, and for my mothers' mothers. The South was part of our blood running through our veins, and part of our breath bringing oxygen to our blood. The South was in our food we ate, in the smells of home, and in our stories of everyday. This South was us, just as the blood and bones of our grandparents and all our relatives, resting in the

Southeast, in the ground, the air, the plants, trees, flowers, rivers, and in all of creation in that place where our people still live. We were told we were a part of that land, and that that land, in the Southeast, that land and no other, was a part of us from which we grew to be who we were. The land had provided our food, and was in us, and we, in setting our relatives to rest, were in the land. When my grandmother cut oranges, she cut them with the smell and taste of Florida fresh in her nostrils and breath. And when I smelled the oranges, the juice seeping from her fingers as she cut for ambrosia, the oranges mixed with pecans and coconut, I knew it was a special smell, and that somehow my being in the world was connected to that smell.

Always, everyday of her life, my grandmother yearned to return home, to Florida; to return to that place, and no other. She finally returned home when she passed on after 99 years of living in this world. And when I walk with my grandparents and all my relations in returning to Florida, I am walking in that place where my family and ancestors lived, and live still. And when I smell oranges in the humid south, I smell of my grandmother, of my family, and of my people. That place, near the Tampa Bay area, is a part of an idea I have about myself, about what and who I am. I cannot help but to think that I am also, in some strange way, a part of what that place is now, a part of the invisible stories of Seminole survival, a part of my homeland.

### Eventful Being

Eventful Being is about historical context. It is about Muscogean Being blending with Seminole Being, in text, though not in Story. It is also about being from a culture that experienced cognitive dissonance in suddenly finding itself dominated by people of another shore, another place. As colonies of Spain swept across the Southeast, they first tortured and murdered our people, and then "traded our land" to the people of the Colonies of England. They did this in exchange for the Spanish privilege to more fully colonize, without interference from the North, another territory, indigenous communities of the Southwest. In asking why the Colonists from England would want Florida, land of crocodiles and mosquitos, we uncover hidden relations.

From my mother, back to my mother's mother, and her mother's mothers' mother, and on around through our matrilineal descent, from each generation back to creation from our Earth Mother, we, the people, have been agrarian, with a diet of corn, potatoes, squash, and fish. We have settled the lands, always building community, always building survival, and always accommodating other cultures the best we knew how, and for the best reasons we could find. Neither romantic nor dramatic, we simply survived the best way we knew how to manage.

Florida was a land rich with hiding places. Foreign capitalists in slave ships would stop in the Boston Harbor, unload Africa's human beings that would be sold into slavery, and then sail on to the Carolina coast. Here they would unload kidnapped human cargo human enslaved by the thieves who stole Africa's legacy, and sell it to the world. From this Carolina coast these foreigners would sail their human cargo completely around the Florida shores, staying clear of the land, and cut up through the Gulf of Mexico into what is now Mississippi, always fearing a mishap of

navigation might put them on the shores of Florida. For in Florida, not only could these people kidnapped out of Africa have a possibility to escape their enslavement, but the Africans, as the kidnappers knew, would be aided in these efforts by Florida's indigenous people. Such an assimilative culture were the Seminole, that our assimilation into our communities, of slaves escaped to Florida, by the early 1800's, threatened to destroy the plantation economic system, and with it, the Confederate States of America. Thus go stories of the Florida underground railroad, and the removals.

Our mother's children of generations had stories to tell. From the time when I was young, my mother told me how Florida far surpassed what became known in the history texts as the "underground railroad at the Ohio river." She would lean over me, tapping her finger on the page of the book, and tell me that "that" was not the way it was, that we also had a story about the way things were. Our land, Florida, was the land of indigenous southern hospitality, the land eventually populated by Spanish-Indian people, of African-Indian people, of people of color, of indigenismo. Many Africans fled to Florida to escape the newcomer's tortures; the newcomers practiced their capitalist trade, the legacy of slavery learned in the Colonies of England. These Africans migrated, and were welcomed, assimilated, and blended with many of our people. These are some of my mother's stories.

When I hear the old stories, stories about the struggle of Osceola, a Seminole man, and his wife, a Seminole woman, having her roots in Africa, I remember three interdependent connections in my being. In my Indigenous Seminole heart I feel one leg of Africa, and one of Spain. Through our indigenous being we have survived the colonization of Spain, and through this indigenous survival, our blending with Africa was made possible. Thus, while retaining our own worldview, we have partly taken on and absorbed the interdependencies of all our relations among three major continents. In doing so however, we have remained Seminole. And although many of us do not know our language, we know that it has survived, and that in it, we can find a mirror to our worldview that has been kept alive in and through us for generations. It is from this heart, this indigenous Seminole heart, and the mindscape it holds, that my identity and moral character coalesce together, ingathering all that we be, with or without CDIB!

The historical text that Osceola's wife was never found, though the U.S. government placed bounty on her, is a metaphor for the never found migrating Seminole: into the everglades, down through Mexico, off to the cities, and anywhere we could find to hide our people. We were dispersed in many directions, a diaspora from Las Floridas, forced from our lands, our places and spaces of being. From fighting one another, from Billy Bowlegs fighting stamina to Osceola's travels and deceptive capture, through the sickness of the snow and disease, the loss and genocide across the Trail of Tears, finally resting in Wewoka, we crossed over. Some Seminole remained in Florida, yet some Seminole are found today, near the "Hanging Tree" outside the courthouse of colonial Wewoka. Our presence stands as a tribute to our strength of survival, and our passion of

belonging with a community of ideas about ourselves. My presence and being come from that struggle.

These are stories that some Seminole have in our being, that we have remembered, and not forgot. These are stories of a powerful nation that sought to prevent what could not be prevented—the Civil War between the northern and the southern states. The economics of slavery, and the moral assistance of Seminole people in the flight of Africans out of that slavery, was an economic matter for the Confederation of States. In removing the Five Civilized Tribes beginning in 1830, the North hoped to appease the South's complaints about southern American Indian tribal support given to escaping African slaves. As well, the North hoped to improve its colonial economic development into Florida.

A partial disappearance of the stories, our deeds, our people, was caused by those who have committed genocide upon us. Finally, when "they" could not divide us by the color line, when "they" were in fear that "their own nation," lacking any unified identity, would collapse from North to South, they kidnapped many people of our Five Civilized Nations (having a long legacy of successful kidnapping), and took women, children, and men to armed military camps where many were surreptitiously killed, and others left to starve to death. This message left a stark impression upon those who escaped. This impression remains part of our being in the world.

These events live with us still; as in memory together we walk our lands of our ancestors. And in the walking we feel the energy of our being mixing with energy of those who have shed blood, and through this walking we, the indigenous people, remain on and in our land, our place, our cognitive space. We love our land, and we will not be moved without struggle.

That the current government continues genocide against us is a moral issue, is a religious issue, is a legal issue, is a sovereignty issue, is a survival issue, and is an identity issue. That newcomers to this land continue today to benefit from this genocide and land theft is a moral issue, is a religious issue, is a legal issue, is a sovereignty issue, is a survival issue, and is an identity issue.

### Political Being

American Indians are political beings, as all tribes share in struggle against the continuing genocide perpetrated on our people and nations. Echoing the words of many contemporary Indian scholars and intellectuals: "I am a member of a group which comprises over 500 distinctly identifiable ethnicities stretching across at least three noticeably different yet questionable racial divisions, that are lumped together in the category of Native American."

As an American Indian, I am a member of the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas (IPA). Part of an idea about myself in my mindspace is about how the blood and sacred agreements of the IPA have created and continue to create family and political alliances in our struggle that survive the ever-present genocide of global indigenous people. This genocide was begun over 500 years ago, and continues today by the same corporate interests, inspired by all newcomers to America's shores. The historical and present families of these newcomers have profited, enriched, and furthered their economic political interests at the expense of both

American Indians and African Americans. In the year 2001, 200,000 individuals from India alone will immigrate to the United States in search of these benefits. These newcomers receive innumerable government benefits, non-payment of taxes for seven years, ready made loans to open businesses, and educational dollars for their children to attend college. American Indians, and our African Americans brothers and sisters, will be denied these same benefits while many of our children go hungry. My cognitive apperceptions of these newcomers is as benefitters of the human and cultural genocide of American Indians and African Americans. My cognitive dissonance is that the newcomers seem to have no similar political understanding, nor express cognitive identity of this situation.

In North America today there are persons who have deserted their own economically troubled lands and people because of the difficulties brought on by political economic disasters of centuries of European colonial conquests, and the extraction of natural resources, and human labor. Those taking flight to the economic comforts of North America, to escape the anguish and distress of corporate and religious colonization, only further diversifies a group of people who have in the past benefited from, and continue today to benefit from, a global systemic genocide against Indigenous Nations. Without a Nation, a People cannot survive; and without a Nations people, worldviews cannot survive. Failure to recognize full nationhood to Indigenous People creates an active agency that denies our survival. This agency creates cognitive dissonance when we must stand against newcomers who we might otherwise welcome to the shores of the Americas. If the current global genocide against Indigenous people succeeds, the worldview of the historically most violent and intolerant peoples of the colonial world remains intact. This information precludes a cognitive coherence when I must at the same time be a part of such a system and struggle against such a system.

Failing to take a stand against those who benefit from the current economic global warfare, is like failing to step forward when your name is called to take your place in historical event.

As an insurgent political intellectual, philosopher, and academic, I walk in the footsteps of two insurgent academic intellectuals, Vine Deloria, Jr., and Angela Davis. From the blending of the work and life of these two indigenous scholars, I have chartered my own political identity. It is a lived identity, and a lived politic. I have found my path of political identity in the indigenous projects of Mexico, Central and South America, Africa, Australia, and India. It is the identity and philosophy of a Native woman whose heart is well above the ground, always in struggle against colonial supremacist patriarchal capitalism.

I find direct connections from the omnivorous corporate global exploitation of human labor and natural resources (that fills the pockets of large gluttonous investors around the globe), to the contemporary brain drain from other nations to North America (based on the "if you like capitalism you are smart" immigrant test). And from both of these, I have found connections to the contemporary associations of the block-headed parsimonious proliferation, and profit driven expansion, of the North American Prison Industrial Complex. In the Americas stakes drove the capitalist

entrepreneurs of human slavery to profit from mega-complex global corporate prisons at the expense of so many of my brothers and sisters behind those profit driven bars.

My identity as an American Indian, to Black Africans and African Americans is defined by my cognitive mindspace place, where my identity and my life are one of a struggle to survive human, economic and cultural genocidal madness. American Indians have been with this identity for a very long time. Yet always we are with the cognizance and cognitive dissonance of who we are, and who we are not.

I do not want a new place. My identity is in the soiled bloody mud of North America. And it is from this vista, as I see it, that I take a stand, and share my political identity dissonance. Like the mud, like the turtle, the alligator, the snake, the rabbit, and the swamps of my people, of my place, I am together in it, and I am myself, in it.

Three main historical eras of genocide continue: against American Indians, against Black Africans, and against Semites, or Jews. Race and ethnic purity are alive and well in the belly of the beast. Contributing to the beast's "divide and conquer" mentality toward "others," race and ethnic confusion is encouraged. Cognitive dissonance: Israel's people (and others) are walking this land, my place, with the Books of Law; and Africa's people (and others) are shoved into the infested prisons, in this land, my place, bearing the burden of humanities chimera with global capitalist cleansing. In conversation, it is frequently becomes difficult for me to determine just how far the notion of "others" or "we" extends in dialogue!

Yet one discreet boundary shows itself clearly: indigenous resistance to government and corporate takeover of minerals and land rights (which has been going on for a very long time). It has been going on so long, in fact, that to all appearances, colonized capitalists think it quite a rational and natural state of economic being. Thinking that a racist capitalism is quite the quotidian state of affairs requires no trick of vision; it is the obvious.

There is a fundamental irreconcilable difference between identifying as a member of a group engaged in indigenous sustainability of land and culture, and a member of a group supporting the continued colonization of global resources, including humans, by participating as a benefactor of that colonial capitalist regime. The newcomers to North America are part of a system that requires the correlative continued oppression of the people they leave behind in their nations, as well as those in the land they come to. Someone may soon hear the town crier: "Hey Folks, this is not a very viable situation—you cannot simply migrate to what has become known as the First World without it collapsing under the weight!"

This then, is another of my selves, a political identity grounded in my indigenous being. When our people, in this place, are starving, and are dying, from the byproducts of a rapacious capitalist culture, I cannot be silent. My place of being defines who I am politically, and it is in this place that my ancestors have fought for a very long time, and that we have watched, for 500 years, destructive, toxic, annihilative acts take place. In my self that springs from this knowing, my people have watched the interstices of the history of colonial racial economics secure a base to play itself out.

Cognitive dissonance is created from watching the reality of colonial economics diversifying in the Americas.

For many years I have been talking and writing about how we cannot have a global understanding of the world with integrity, until we place and face the racial-economic imperialism of the U.S. within this global context. The institutional processes that continue systematic historical events that colonize the Americas, are the collective responsibility of persons who benefit from, or who seek to benefit from, this unjust resource acquisition and recreation of the "Holy Roman Empire."

These events of colonization happen for me as we the indigenous peoples of the Americas are still here, in this place, rooted to the geopolitical events that enter our borders. Yet also, it is here, in the cognition of what America has been and remains for us, that we celebrate out being. Because individuals are used to carry out colonizing enterprises, whether consciously or not, one of my selves stays busy educating those who have the power to dislodge or interrupt the harmful hegemonic thinking about "what America is." As an educator, it is crucial that I remember coyote's relation to the moral universe. In this remembering, I know my selves in and with all my relations.

### Shifting Identity

Returning to our theme of creative cognitive dissonance, relaxed interstitial meanings, and shifting voices, I turn to what ties these activities together in my sense of identity. At once I am poet, playing with nuances of the language, grounded in my playfulness with a language that belongs to my colonizer. I play to survive. Shifting in the play, I become the serious philosopher, searching for some semblance of meaning relevant to my being in the world, at once participant of an academic elite, and simultaneously a stubborn word warrior against that same elite, seen as colonizer. Cognitive dissonance ensues. I shift and become the lawyer, the careful word crafter restrained from my passion for justice and fairness, admonishing my colleagues to join in the legal struggle for equality in a land not of my making or being. Cognitive dissonance ensues. Shifting again I become part of someone's problem, as I stand against the "American" system of false education, at the same time using my paycheck from that educational system to survive, to pass voice.

I shift in voice, in identity, because I am at once with and also against all that I have become. At once I am both, the entertaining poet, and the destroyer of colonial poetry. At once I am both, the dedicated philosopher, and the deconstructionist of EuroAmerican philosophy. At once a supporter of oral tradition, and also at once a writer of words on papers. At once a tribal member, and at once not a tribal member. I have learned to live with these cognitive dissonances. I am all of this, and more.

My shifting voices are my shifting identities in play. Yet always, most frequently hidden, is the convergence and coagulation of the selves—of who I am now in the becoming of this place where my people walked and where they and I walk still as we voice ourselves into being.

This paper is about in-betweens of interstitial space, and cognitive dissonance of coming into being. In-betweens are not nothing, though they sometimes appear this way.

## ***Native Science Assists a Science Major or Graduate Program***

### ***An Interview with Dr. Gregory Cajete***

**by Richard Simonelli**

Those who are college bound might have their sights set on careers in science or want to explore science majors at universities, state colleges or other post secondary schools. Science professionals work in areas of "pure science," such as research, or in "applied science" also known as technology. Computer science and software engineering are hot areas for computer science professionals now. Science-related courses span a spectrum from archeology to zoology and biology to wildlife management. The list of what science professionals do is endless.

Dr. Gregory Cajete from Santa Clara Pueblo, New Mexico, has written book called *Native Science: The Natural Laws of Interdependence*. The difference between the viewpoint of the Western science you'll study at school and the traditional knowledge of tribal cultures might be summed up by the second part of Dr. Cajete's book title: *The Natural Laws of Interdependence*. Native science understands the world as a highly interconnected and interrelated place. Its approach to knowledge is holistic and more inclusive than science as we know it today. It knows that we are all related and interdependent.

In this interview Dr. Greg Cajete talks about Native science and its relationship to studying science and going on to science careers. He discusses how Native science is an interconnected science and how you can include its viewpoint even at school. He talks about what Native science is all about and how knowing about the traditional knowledge viewpoint of tribal cultures can help as you study the many science courses you'll take at school.

#### **Question**

What is meant by Native science or traditional knowledge? Is it something that only took place in traditional times or is it still alive today?

#### **Dr. Greg Cajete**

Defining Native science is a really complex task but it is really all the kinds of things that a group of Native people did, or continue to do, that facilitates their ability to survive and live within the environments that they now live. Native science can be anything from the ways in which you predict the weather, to predicting the best time to plant based on watching the sun rise and set, to techniques that deal with certain kinds of ways to plant crops in positions to receive the summer rain and to grow as a result of that. It's a gamut of things. Sometimes it's referred to as technology but it's more than just technology. It's a guided sense of how to use technology in the context of living and also giving back, a kind of mutual, reciprocal relationship.

Native science continues to be practiced as a body of knowledge that is reflected in the history of various peoples all the way from the early paleo-Indians with technologies related to hunting. But it's also still with us today in things that Native groups do to hunt, to fish, to plant, and it is expressed in a variety of ways in different tribes.

#### **Question**

Suppose, for example, that we want to understand about frogs. How would Native science seek to know about frogs and what relationship would that have to how Western science might do it?

#### **Dr. Greg Cajete**

From a Native science perspective, the first thing would be to define what your relationship is to frogs from a cultural standpoint. You'd look at the depictions of frogs in art, the mention of frogs in traditional stories, and then based on that you'd begin to reflect or ask questions about how frogs actually interact with human beings in the context of a natural environment. You'd build a baseline sensibility about frogs in regards to one's life or the community's life. From that point on there are many directions you can take. You can reflect that understanding of relationship to frogs in traditional art forms. It might take the form of a design in pottery, or a design in bead work.

It can also take another direction which is to study the ecology of frogs. That is where the science of environmental relationships begins to come into play. You could explore the kinds of frogs that are in your immediate habitat and then begin to explore frog biology in terms of what frogs do, how they are a very important part of the eco system, the eco web. You might also study the kinds of things that are happening now to frogs where certain species of frogs are dying out as a result of pollution because they are also great indicators for the health of water, plants and the environment as a whole. They are kind of like barometers.

You can begin to see how Native knowledge and Western knowledge might work together in the context of trying to understand and gain a better, deeper appreciation and perspective of what frogs do for us as beings we interact with. We often don't pay attention to frogs until something dramatic happens, like a die-off in frog population, or a population of frogs that reflects a genetic dysfunction or malady of some type.

What I'm saying is that you can start with Native knowledge and use that to build on. Or you can start with science knowledge and then begin to explore the ways that Native knowledge complements what you are learning in the sciences. It just depends on you—on where you want to start. But what's important about Native knowledge is that it gives scientific knowledge a greater breadth of perspective and it provides real life as well as mythical and cultural examples of how certain kinds of animals and certain kinds of amphibians like frogs have played a role and how they've been thought of in the past as well as in the present.

#### **Question**

What is the place of stories, myths or visual art in Native science?

#### **Dr. Greg Cajete**

The place of stories, visual art, dance and ceremony is about celebration presented in a metaphoric way. In any of those forms Native knowledge is not presented to you literally, it is always presented metaphorically in order to make you think about relationships of the things that are important to you in your immediate environment and what your responsibility



is to those things; to bring home the importance of conservation and ecological balance. Some stories relate how if you if you disrespect certain kinds of animals they will have revenge on you, and that revenge can take many, many different kinds of forms. Disease can be one. Taking themselves away as a resource would be another. All of those kinds of warnings will come about if one transgresses key ecological relationships. Those are some of the uses of the stories which Native people have.

The dances reinforce the need and importance to respect certain animals and certain relationships. They remind us to remember to remember. Visual art as a symbol can be used in a variety of ways to help you to remember to remember that these things are important. These things have a cultural as well as an environmental or ecological value that needs to be respected. They express that you have a mutual responsibility to those creatures and entities that provide you with life, food and shelter. Those are the kinds of things that stories bring to us. They bring us a sense of meaning, a sense of why relationships are important. They provide a basis of discussion and reflection in establishing and maintaining certain kinds of relationships. This is prevalent throughout Native America.

Some ceremonies take place when the first salmon come up the river, or when corn is harvested, when berries are picked, or when hunting is done. All these relationships are life relationships which are re-established and remembered through the process of art, dance, ceremony and story. It's a complex which keeps reminding us that we are related to these other things and that we have to respect these relationships.

### Question

As students study science in college or graduate school, how can they follow a "parallel track" which includes the traditional knowledge of their own culture if they are interested? Who can they talk with if they become uneasy about what they are studying in contrast to the values they were raised with?

### Dr. Greg Cajete

There are a variety of possible resources. I was able to accomplish this in my own science major by taking social science courses over and beyond what was required. A lot of those courses were Native studies courses or courses in psychology and sociology. I focused a lot of the papers that I wrote on issues or readings which dealt with Native peoples. In the course of my study of biology, that allowed me to augment or increase the perspective through the social sciences. It allowed me to study history, Native studies, and contemporary Native issues, in conjunction with the formal study of biology.

In my day you had to do that because those two subjects were largely separated. But there are more and more courses these days in the more enlightened colleges, universities and programs which allow for a kind of integration. There is more emphasis now on team teaching in the sciences. With the rise of environmental studies there is more opportunity now than there used to be to actually create a course of study that does integrate a historical-cultural perspective with a scientific one. But that means that the students themselves have to take on the

responsibility of creating their course work in such a way that allows them to access these other programs and courses.

In some colleges the Indian program advisors will help students to do that if they wish. I think a lot also depends on the student also taking responsibility for their own course work and developing a program of study that works for them rather than simply receiving their course of study from an outside source and going through the motions of it. The student has to take a certain amount of responsibility for collaborating with the people who guide them in their courses of study in science to make sure that they include "perspective" courses. That includes not only Native studies and the social sciences, but also should include the aesthetic courses in the humanities and the arts. For me that is a well-rounded science program.

### Question

Which science courses or science-related career directions that can be studied in school and then entered in later life are most connected with Native science or traditional knowledge?

### Dr. Greg Cajete

Anything that deals with the environment, environmental studies and ecology. I also know that architecture now has a major part of its core curriculum moving in the direction of environmental planning. It's a kind of hybrid where architecture includes science and engineering. It works with the sense of place by studying communities and how communities evolve. It also includes the technical arts. Those are areas which have a great deal to do with the interests of Native science.

The medical field, including nursing, can also have a very large focus on Native issues, Native community and Native perspective if you form them that way. It requires that the Native student becomes a wise consumer of education and forces the advisors in various kinds of science programs to realize that the Native perspective is important to the student and that they want it as a part of their formal training. Through the process of collaboration, you can come up with courses that allow you to express or learn within the framework of Native science.

### Question

So the personal academic advisors play a pretty important role for a student to design a course of study that really works for them?

### Dr. Greg Cajete

Yes. And here is a word to science advisors wherever they may be. When they try to force a student into a lock-step curriculum without giving them the opportunity to branch out and have electives, to have avenues in which they can incorporate their Native perspective, then they are doing that student a great disservice. They exacerbate the feeling of isolation of the student. Advisors themselves, especially science advisors, have to start doing their homework about their students because they can guide students into too-narrow curricula. They have to have a certain amount of sensitivity to the needs of Native students, which they have not shown in the past, if they are to help in Native student retention and success.

### Question

Is this better than it was 5 or 10 years ago?

### Dr. Greg Cajete

It seems to go through cycles of ups and downs. For a while there was openness and sensitivity. But the pressures of the curriculum itself, and to graduate in a certain number of semesters, cause advisors to push everything to the side except what the student really, really needs to have. But for Native students you have to create a context in which other courses can be used to develop the student's scientific knowledge and literacy.

### Question

I think this is also especially true in engineering where there have been many attempts to broaden the curriculum but it had to go to five years to even attempt that. It was the demands of the engineering curriculum itself which forced it to be a narrow educational undertaking.

### Dr. Gregory Cajete

Yes, that's part of it. But the other part is that the science professors themselves have to start walking their talk about including a broader perspective of how the science they are teaching is applied to life and living. Science education, especially higher education, has a tremendously long way to go in terms of making science more relevant to students. It is a long-term systemic problem in which Native people suffer to a greater extent. But non Native students suffer as a result of this narrowness as well. The programs actually drive good students out.

### Question

What else would you like to say to Native students especially bound for the sciences?

### Dr. Greg Cajete

When you go to college as a Native student there is a double responsibility. Accepting that responsibility and being with it is really important in terms of your ultimate success. That responsibility is first to make it through the program. The other part of the responsibility deals with the responsibility you have for your own education. We have Native studies programs, Native student services programs, sensitive advisors, and a willingness on the part of many college professors and service people to work with native students. But ultimately it is the Native student who has to make the decision to succeed. They need to bring into their programs a perspective of their People.

### Question

How can that be done?

### Dr. Greg Cajete

The most important thing is to learn as much as you can about the history of your own people and the history of Native peoples as a whole as a part of your college training. Sometimes that includes taking a course or two here and there. It also includes self-education as being a foundation from which you then can build and apply the scientific knowledge that you are gaining. It is a hard road to travel because Native students have difficulty enough just navigating the system and passing the courses. There are

many ways in colleges and universities to learn about the Native perspective. There are great libraries. If you do a project, do one that relates to a Native issue. If you do a paper, focus on Native issues and history. That way you are doing self-education. It always begins with a sense of history and a sense of the issues. Then you apply the scientific knowledge you are learning to that.

### Question

Then the scientific knowledge becomes a tool and not an end unto itself?

### Dr. Greg Cajete

Right. I've used something I call the "archeology metaphor." Archeologists will dig bones and dig ruins to find out information so they can bring it back and augment the knowledge of the archeological community. But if you reverse that and say, "What I'm doing here in college is digging the bones of Western knowledge, Western scientific perspective, so that I can bring back to my own people something that is important about us and to us." It is crossing those borders and looking at yourself as a scout or an archeologist in a foreign land. That's what a college and a university is. It's a foreign territory. You are excavating and you are mining things that you feel are important. But in order to do that well you have to have a sense of purpose, history and the issues you wish to apply that knowledge to.

Gregory Cajete, Tewa, from Santa Clara Pueblo, is Assistant Professor at the University of New Mexico's College of Education and also teaches at the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe. He is editor of *A People's Ecology: Explorations in Sustainable Living* and is the author of *Look to the Mountain: An Ecology of Indigenous Education* and *Ignite the Sparkle: An Indigenous Science Education Model*. His latest book is *Native Science: Natural Laws of Interdependence*.

Dr. Cajete also operates his own consulting organization, Tewa Educational Consulting. He can be reached at (505) 753-8034.

## BOOK REVIEWS

**Gerald Mohatt & Joseph Eagle Elk. *The Price of a Gift: A Lakota Healer's Story*.** Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000. 236 + xiv pp. Illustrations, photographs, notes, index.

**Reviewed by Anne Waters, J.D., Ph.D.**

This outstanding new book is about Joe Eagle Elk (1931-1991) and Lakota ways of healing, about tiospaye (extended family of birth and nurture), and its foundation, mitakuye oyas'in (all my relatives). This is the spiritual place from which Joseph Eagle Elk struggles to be a good relative and fulfill his family duties as a healer to all generations.

In this book, Gerald Mohatt has put into transcript the tape recordings of Joe talking about his life; also included are transcripts from recordings of people Joe has healed. The current of this book flows through interstices of time and space, as we learn about personal healing, the life of a healer, and a traditional Ndn relationship between healer and healed.

Joe enables people to understand the deep meaning of our abilities to call forth our animal and plant helpers in the process of becoming grounded in our places of being. This is accomplished via four traditional powers: heyoka; wanagi, yuwipi, and tahca. Joe was born with a tawacin (purpose) of being a healer. Until he accepts this role, he wanders in life, having a recurring dream. This dream is a gift to help Joe find his way of sincerity and respect among the Lakota, to find his home, that place to which he (we) keep returning. The life Joe lives is a life of prayer, sacrifice, healing, and thanking. His strength is continually renewed in vision quests and sun dances, where he remembers himself equal with the two leggeds, four leggeds, winged ones, and all of plant life. Joe lives the life of Lakota Oyate (the people), a life of patience, acceptance, understanding, and spirituality. From the songs of the heart, he knows who he is, where he comes from, and that he is never alone.

The strength of humor, the medicine of talking (p. 79) in the right way, with care and respect, the art of listening, and the talent of vision are the inner tools of Joe's gift of healing. In the book we follow the imagery of Joe's world as he tells it to Mohatt. From his difficulties with the law, the years away from home working, his symbolic encounter with his eventual friend, the eagle, and finally, meeting his spiritual thunder power helpers, heyoka zik'ala and heyoka isnala (97).

Intrinsic to understanding Joe's stories of healing is the belief that medicines (plants, herbs, etc.) are people, are relatives. Allowing our hurt and pain to leave our bodies means the medicine has become our friend and that we can work together getting to know one another, in order to heal our body. In this way we need to create a good relationship with everything that goes inside our body. To be healed human persons take on the responsibility of

working together with the medicine people by thinking deeply about medicines, body, and healing. There is an especially helpful section in this book when an anonymous person talks about Joe's thunder power and its use. The person tells us that "Joe compared the creation and use of electricity with his own power that he received from the thunder beings (133, 134)."

Once Joe has accepted his place, his gift of human healing, he never questions his purpose. He learns to incorporate healing powers: of serious laughter in recognizing that we pick our home, our communities (171); of family story, bringing the community together through the ordinariness of being, in past, present, and future as one in community; of the ceremonial and community time web found in the symbolic synergy that merges place, meal, prayer, and spirituality; of reciprocity when empowering people, knowing that his work takes in the community and goes beyond himself; and of the intellectual truth of contraries, the ritual clowns that present to us our authenticity of Being.

It is very difficult to step outside the infrastructure of one metaphysical system to experience another. Yet Joe Eagle Elk comfortably renders a way of thinking about an indigenous metaphysical infrastructure, that the reader can grasp in theory (eg. the syntactical meaning of "all my relations"); he paints a picture of the praxis of living the infrastructure. In this way an indeterminate semantics of language opens up for the reader, and this opening up allows for an intellectual "closeness" to the infrastructure.

The mediative process of Joe, as healer, bonds patients with a new metaphysics; and in the communicative process, moves toward the purpose of self healing. In this way the healer is a teacher, a guide, and an enabler in the path from dependency upon healer, through autonomy of self healing, to finally discovering an authenticity of being (in harmony) among "all my relations."

Joe Eagle Elk live a life of moral dimensions, a life of giving and receiving, a life of transcending the dominant linear and material culture of our time. I recommend this book to anyone interested in a native worldview, and to anyone wanting to explore the meaning of "indigenous healing."

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### ***Call for Papers – Newsletter on American Indians in Philosophy***

#### **Spring and Fall 2002 APA NEWSLETTER ON AMERICAN INDIANS IN PHILOSOPHY**

**Viola Cordova and Anne Waters, co-editors**

Possible topics include: All Traditional Areas of Philosophy. Especially invited are philosophical thought related to Epistemology, Metaphysics, Ontology, Science, Math, Logic, Social, Political, Ethics, Aesthetics, Gender, Sovereignty, Identity, Indigeneity, Economics, History, Religion, Spirituality, and other areas of philosophical concern. We welcome papers from any philosophical tradition. Submissions must be limited to 10 double-spaced pages. References should follow the Chicago Manual of Style. Please submit 2 copies of manuscripts.

As attachment to email send to:

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### ***Invitation To Present Papers At American Philosophical Association***

Both the American Philosophical Association (APA) Committee on American Indians in Philosophy and the American Indian Philosophy Association (AIPA) invite scholars to submit papers or an outline of a presentation for inclusion in the Eastern, Central, and Pacific Division Conferences in the fall of 2001 and spring of 2002. Information about these conferences can be seen on the APA webpage. Possible topics include: All Traditional Areas of Philosophy. Especially invited are philosophical thought related to Epistemology, Metaphysics, Ontology, Science, Math, Logic, Social, Political, Ethics, Aesthetics, Gender, Sovereignty, Identity, Indigeneity, Economics, History, Religion, Spirituality, and other areas of philosophical concern. We welcome papers from any philosophical tradition. Submissions must be limited to 10 double-spaced pages. References should follow the Chicago Manual of Style. Please submit 2 copies of manuscripts:

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For the Central Division only, send papers/presentation outline to:

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### ***Invitation to Join The American Indian Philosophy Association***

The American Indian Philosophy Association exists in order to promote research, writing and teaching of American Indian philosophy, and philosophical analysis of issues specifically relevant to American Indians. This organization, involving hundreds of philosophers and many more students, seeks to facilitate understanding of America's indigenous philosophy in all educational curricula in the Americas, and especially curricula used to educate American Indians. This association, although affiliated with the American Philosophical Association, is an autonomous organization, academically and financially responsible to itself.

If you would like more information, or are interested in joining this association, please contact our current Secretary-Treasurer Thomas Norton Smith about details: Dr. Thomas Michael Norton-Smith, Associate Professor of Philosophy, 310 B Main Hall, Kent State University, Stark Campus, 6000 Frank Avenue NW, Canton, OH 44720, Phone: (330) 499-9600, ext 53302 or Fax (330) 494-6121 or email [tnorton-smith@stark.kent.edu](mailto:tnorton-smith@stark.kent.edu); or Dr. Anne Waters at email [brendam234@aol.com](mailto:brendam234@aol.com) or (505) 265-3912.