

Indigenous Philosophy



SPRING 2016

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Agnes B. Curry

Keeping the Flame

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APA NEWSLETTER ON

Indigenous Philosophy

AGNES B. CURRY, MANAGING EDITOR

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FROM THE MANAGING EDITOR

Keeping the Flame

Agnes B. Curry

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Welcome to the spring 2016 newsletter from the American Philosophical Association Committee on the Status of Indigenous Philosophers. This edition includes three articles. The first, by Brian Burkhart, unpacks the unique significance of Indigenous meanings of land and of relationship to locality for struggles against the life-denying effects of colonialism. The second, by Anne Waters, argues for the constructive roles that Traditional Indigenous Knowledges play for both addressing the increasingly dire challenges for planetary sustainability and articulating a balanced understanding of science. The third, by Larissa Couto Rogoski, traces out the subtleties of Gloria Anzaldúa's refiguring of rationality, the relational stance Anzaldúa asks of her readers, and the rewards of taking up such a stance. We invite you to read and we look forward to the possibility of dialogue on these topics, either in contributions toward APA sessions sharing scholarship or in submissions to the newsletter.

The committee has seen some changes since the fall 2015 newsletter. We bid an appreciative farewell to Kyle Powys Whyte, who stepped away as committee chair. We welcome the acting chair, Anne Waters, along with new members Scott Pratt and Andrew Smith. As a committee, we remain committed to all the facets of our charge. We provide a venue for scholarship on Indigenous philosophers and philosophies by all philosophers. We are also committed to providing particular support and advocacy for students who are members of Indigenous communities—particularly those on the land base we now know as the Americas—as they navigate the challenges of establishing themselves in the profession.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Invitation to Participate in APA Conference Programs.

We are in the process of planning conference sessions for next academic year. We welcome submissions on any area of philosophy including traditional subfields such as epistemology, metaphysics, ontology, science, mathematics, logic, social, political, ethics, and aesthetics as well as emergent subfields and questions about gender,

sovereignty, identity, Indigeneity, economics, history, religion, spirituality, and other recent areas of indigenous philosophical concern.

The Indigenous Philosophy Programming Committee has two representatives per APA Division who will do programming for APA conferences next year: Agnes Curry and Andrew Smith for the Eastern Division, Brian Burkhart and Jacob Held for the Central Division, and Scott Pratt and Zayin Cabot for the Pacific Division. Please contact these members if you are interested in participating in any programs or have suggestions. Deadlines will be posted on the APA website, or feel free to contact divisional representatives.

For the Eastern Division *only*, send papers or proposals with outlines to Andrew Smith (afs52@drexel.edu) and Agnes Curry (acurry@usj.edu)

For the Central Division *only*, send papers or proposals with outlines to Brian Burkhart (brian.burkhart@csun.edu) and Jacob Held (jmhheld@uca.edu)

For the Pacific Division *only*, send papers or proposals with outlines to Scott Pratt (spratt@uoregon.edu) and Zayin Cabot (zayincabot@gmail.com)

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

We invite you to submit your work for consideration for publication in the fall 2016 newsletter. We also welcome comments and responses to work published in this newsletter or the fall 2015 newsletter.

References should follow the *Chicago Manual of Style*; for further information, please see the [Guidelines for Authors](#) available on the APA website.

The submission deadline is June 1, 2016. Please submit copies electronically to Agnes Curry at acurry@usj.edu.

ARTICLES

“Locality is a Metaphysical Fact”— Theories of Coloniality and Indigenous Liberation Through the Land: A Critical Look at *Red Skin, White Masks*

Brian Burkhart

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Philosophical work on the structure of coloniality and attempts to articulate meaningful resistance to the coloniality of power as a larger structure of the “modern world system”¹ (as well as the concrete political realities of settler colonialism for Indigenous people in settler states like the United States and Canada) often employ anti-methods. Consider, for example, the manner in which Vine Deloria Jr. reductively criticizes Western science while also criticizing the reductive methodologies of Western science themselves.

Structurally, these anti-methods operate by using settler logic against itself, a kind of inversion of Wittgenstein’s ladder. Franz Fanon and other coloniality and liberation theorists employ the method of existential coloniality, the analysis of the nature of being of both colonizer and colonized. In addition, Nelson Maldonado-Torres describes a method he calls “decolonial phenomenology,” a method that brackets “the assumed validity and general legitimacy of European traditions of thought.”² Decolonial phenomenology provides a particularly powerful method for liberating colonized philosophy.

Indigenous philosophy is colonized by Western philosophy, on one level, through the guardianship principle that in the context of Indigenous nations within a settler state like the United State conceptualizes Indigenous nations as legal wards of that settler state. In the same manner, Western philosophy understands Indigenous philosophy as in need of guardianship and tutelage by Euro-American academic philosophy. Indigenous philosophy exists as a ward of Western philosophy. The bracketing of the validity and legitimacy of Euro-American academic philosophy removes the force of the guardianship principle of Western academic philosophy over Indigenous philosophy before Euro-American academic philosophy can even begin to take up its guardianship position. Thus, in the context of decolonial phenomenology, one need not prove the legitimacy of Indigenous philosophy, as the ward of philosophy, to Euro-American philosophers, as the guardians of philosophy, in order to become fully recognized as world philosophers.

The problem of the guardianship principle for Indigenous philosophy is only an application of the guardianship principle that exists in the relationship between colonizer and colonized writ large. In the context of settler states, this is ubiquitous throughout the processes by which Indigenous nations are recognized or not recognized as legitimate by their settler guardians. The indigenous struggle for decolonial liberation becomes increasingly a

struggle for recognition by the settler states that continue to colonize them. Dene political philosopher Glen Sean Coulthard, in his recent *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*, argues that “the liberal recognition-based approach of Indigenous self-determination in Canada” not only fails but actually “serves to reproduce the very forms of colonial power which the original demands for recognition sought to transcend.”³ Coulthard conceptualizes the liberation from this vitiating circle of domination through colonial power and the politics of recognition as beginning by bracketing the legitimacy of the settler state and its power to recognize Indigenous nation through the guardianship principle. Through this bracketing of the legitimacy of the settler state and settler state power, one can perhaps analyze the manner in which the settler state is able to reproduce the very colonial power that it is supposed to be giving up in the process of recognizing the legitimacy of Indigenous nations. From this perspective, one might see how the processes of recognition redirect Indigenous liberation strategies into movements that reproduce settler power. As Mohawk philosopher Taiaiake Alfred puts it

our nations have been co-opted into movements of “self-government” and “land claim settlements,” which are goals defined by the colonial state and which are in stark opposition to our original objectives. . . . Large-scale statist solutions like self-government and land claims are not so much lies as they are irrelevant to the root problems. For a long time now, we have been on a quest for governmental power and money; somewhere along the journey from the past to the future, we forgot that our goal was to reconnect with our lands and to preserve our harmonious cultures and ways of life.⁴

Coulthard and Alfred both recognize the origin of Indigenous liberation has always been in the land. Coulthard puts it thus:

The theory and practice of Indigenous anticolonialism is best understood as a struggle primarily inspired by and oriented around the question of land—a struggle not only for land in the material sense, but also deeply informed by what the land as system of reciprocal relations and obligations can teach us about living our lives in relation to one another and the natural world in nondominating and nonexploitative terms.⁵

Coulthard calls “this place-based foundation of Indigenous decolonial thought and practice grounded normativity” or “the modalities of Indigenous land-connected practices and longstanding experiential knowledge that inform and structure our ethical engagements with the world and our relationships with human and nonhuman others over time.”⁶ This foundation of Indigenous liberation in the Indigenous *meaning of land* is transformed into a foundation of Indigenous liberation as a struggle *for* land itself, which is a conception of land fundamentally at odds with the Indigenous meaning of land that was at the foundation of Indigenous liberation in the first place. Thus,

by the end of Coulthard's chapter on his own Indigenous nation's (the Dene) struggle regarding land, he shows that "the meaning of self-determination" for many Indigenous people has "reoriented from Indigenous struggle that was once deeply informed by the land as a system of reciprocal relations and obligations (grounded normativity) to a struggle now increasingly for land."⁷ The problem with Coulthard's position regarding the transformation of the foundation of Indigenous liberation in the Indigenous *meaning of or relationship to* land into a struggle *for* land as a mere thing is that it brackets only the legitimacy of the settler state and so can only see the source of this transformation in the colonial power of the settler state itself. This paper will use Coulthard's discussion as a foundation from which to extend the scope of decoloniality theory beyond the legitimacy of the settler state through the bracketing of Western philosophy more properly or decolonial phenomenology. In this regard, I hope to show that the nature of the transformation is not housed in the power of the settler state, but in the very conceptions of land and being in the Western philosophical imagination. I hope to show, at least in some small part, that it is only through an engagement with the philosophical concepts of land and being that a more powerful decoloniality theory can be articulated.

THE COLONIALITY OF RECOGNITION-BASED SUBJECTIVITY AND THE BECOMING OF THE SAVAGE OTHER

The level to which Indigenous decolonial efforts even in the academy are, in fact, based on concepts of recognition and recognition-based subjectivity, and the level to which recognition-based subjectivity is based on a coloniality of being, are both much deeper than Coulthard's analysis shows. Coulthard uses Fanon to challenge "colonized people to transcend the fantasy that the settler-state apparatus is somehow capable of producing liberatory effects."⁸ In Fanon's conception, without a break from the structure of colonial power, the best the colonized can hope for is "white liberty and white justice."⁹ Fanon claims that without establishing themselves as the creators of their own values and conceptions of their identity and its political relationship to the colonial state, colonized peoples will eventually be subtly shaped by the "seep" of colonial values that will undermine the possibilities of their liberation.¹⁰ Fanon and Coulthard only limitedly see, however, what more recent thinkers like Enrique Dussel, Nelson Maldonado-Torres, Walter Mignolo, and others see as the fundamental irrationality of the recognition-based subjectivity in the first place. The "seep" of colonial values and concepts happens at a level almost pre-conceptual since it happens at the level of the very concept of being human, of being a human subject in the first place.

Enrique Dussel details in a number of his works the foundation of the modern human subject in the *ego conquiro* (I conquer) that is a prototype of the Cartesian *ego cogito* (I think). It is in "the conquest of Mexico," Dussel writes, that we find "the first sphere of the modern ego."¹¹ The *ego conquiro* comes to light in the words of Ginés de Sepúlveda in the sixteenth century Spanish Valladolid (a debate regarding the ontological status of

Indigenous peoples in the Americas). Sepúlveda argues that the European culture grants the blessing of civilization to the fundamentally backward (*turditatum*) Indians who are not merely heathen but backwards or barbarian in their fundamental state of being. Sepúlveda claims that it is "in conformity with natural law that barbaric people be subjected to the empire of princes and nations that are more cultured and humane, so that by their virtues and the prudence of their laws, they abandon barbarism and are subdued by a more humane life and cult of virtue."¹² Of course, the relationship between barbaric and cultured people is tautologically defined by the principle of identity between European culture and superiority. As Dussel puts it, "the content of other cultures, for being different from [Europe], is declared non-human."¹³ Sepúlveda puts it most succinctly when he claims that it would be wrong to exercise violence against the people of America if they were found to worship the European "true God."¹⁴ The lack of civilization and humanity for colonized peoples is never brought under a rational principle as it is supposed but simply defined as such on the basis of being non-European and non-Christian. The irrationality of this "conclusion" exposes the irrationality of the supposed rational and principled basis of modern, enlightenment philosophy in general and modern human subjectivity in particular. This irrationality, seemingly made rational by Sepúlveda and the philosophers that follow, gives philosophical merit to the Eurocentrism at the heart of the political concepts of recognition. For example, in the United States, this principle of philosophical Eurocentrism justifies the religious claims of the Doctrine of Discovery that form the backbone of modern federal Indian law through the Marshall trilogy of Supreme Court cases in the 1820s and '30s, based on Eurocentric religious and legal claims initiated in the fifteenth century in numerous Papal Bulls that culminate in the *Inter Cetera* of 1493, which transferred title of all the Indigenous land of the Americas to Spain and Portugal by right of discovery.

Descartes's *ego cogito* that Dussel claims follows Sepúlveda's *ego conquiro* appears as a mere rational principle that attempts to defeat skepticism regarding knowledge of the external world. But as Nelson Maldonado-Torres argues, the Cartesian *ego cogito* arises from Sepúlveda's *ego conquiro* as both are fundamentally directed at "Manichean misanthropic skepticism," which "is not skeptical about the existence of the world or the normative status of logics and mathematics," but is "a form of questioning the very humanity of colonized peoples."¹⁵ This skepticism is the foundation of Sepúlveda's *ego conquiro* as well as Descartes's *ego cogito*. Originating perhaps in the Spanish Inquisition at the end of the fifteenth century, this skepticism seeks to find the "baptized men and women of Jewish or Muslim descent [who] were consider stained by the ancestral heresies," to seek out the "enemy within"—those who had converted but were guilty of carrying "stained blood."¹⁶ Modern skepticism begins, Maldonado-Torres argues, in the proto-racism of the Inquisition. The *ego conquiro* overcomes this skepticism of the humanity of the other through the creation of an *ego* that is undoubtable or unquestionable. The Manichean other to this undoubtable or unquestionable *ego* is relegated to the savage state. The savage other is no longer doubttable

or questionable (as he or she is in the Inquisition) but is completely known as the dominated other. The domination of the savage other solidifies the claim to confidence that is placed in the undoubtable and unquestionable ego. This domination is what brings the unquestionable ego into being. Its logical unquestionableness is manifested into an actual unquestionableness through the initial and continual domination of the savage other. It is through colonial domination that the *I am* of European humanness is fully actualized and the skepticism regarding the humanity of the Indigenous other is fully determined in the oppositional savage or non-human, dominatable other.

The irrationality of the Indigenous being becoming recognized as fully human is here exposed. The *I am* of European humanness exists only in relation to the non-human other. Thus Indigenous being can only become human by becoming what it is not: European. Alternatively, Indigenous being can become an approximation of what it is not through the approximation of European being by approximating the *ego conquiro*. This is why, even though Hegel's recognition-based subjectivity seeks to situate human subjectivity, in contrast to the seemingly solipsistic *ego cogito*, in relations of recognition that are constitutive of human subjectivity, the *ego conquiro* is maintained in recognition-based subjectivity and politics of recognition. Hegel asserts that "self-consciousness exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it exists only in being acknowledged."¹⁷ Dialectically, the master/slave or colonizer/colonized relationship is supposed to move beyond the *ego conquiro* through mutual relations of recognition. The *ego conquiro* of the master/colonizer, on this reading of Hegel, is not recognized as a *being for itself* because it is recognized by the conquered slave/savage who is a mere *being for the master*. Relations of recognition must move beyond the master and slave, "beyond the patterns of domination," a seemingly impossible task even in concept.¹⁸ Hegel clearly understands the *ego conquiro* as an essential stage in the development of fully human subjects. He writes in section III of *The Introduction to The Philosophy of History*, "The human being acquires confidence in himself (Zutrauen zu sich selbst)," and "Man discovers America, its treasures and its people, he discovers nature, he discovers himself (sich selbst)."¹⁹ Hegel's dominating subjectivity cannot move beyond this domination in relation to the savage other, I would argue. The savage other has become essentially savage and so can only become the kind of subjectivity that can recognize the colonizer insofar as he or she becomes something he or she is not. The only way the savage can hope to even approximate the kind of being that could give the colonizer the mutual recognition that Hegel claims he or she desires is to approximate the subjectivity of the colonizer, the *ego conquiro*.

FANON ON THE NECESSITY OF DECOLONIAL STRUGGLE OR DECOLONIAL RESISTANCE THROUGH THE LAND

Fanon sees the trap of the master/slave or colonizer/colonized through a lens of struggle. The liberation of colonized people through Hegel's dialectical progression to mutual recognition is undermined by the lack of struggle

in present colonial contexts. Unlike Hegel's master/slave story, colonizer and colonized are not locked in a life-or-death struggle. In colonized societies, "the White Master, without conflict, recognize[s] the Negro slave."²⁰ "The black man," he writes is "acted upon." Values "not created by his actions" or "born of the systolic tide of his blood" are thrown upon him from without. Thus being set free by the master here means nothing to the slave. The slave goes "from one way of life to another, but not from one life to another."²¹ For Fanon, it is through struggle and conflict, which he understands as often necessarily violent, that colonized peoples can shrug off the coloniality of their being. This kind of conflict is necessary, on Fanon's account, in order for recognition to achieve self-transformation for the colonized subject, for her to achieve the "inner differentiation" at the level of her colonized being that is necessary to achieve the realization of freedom.²² This is what Fanon understands as the break that is necessary for colonial struggles for "Liberty and Justice" to not merely be struggles for "white liberty and white justice," a non-alienated identification with the recognition conferred upon the slave by the master.²³

Coulthard rightly questions Fanon's instrumental view of the decolonial struggle. Coulthard points out that this view of colonial resistance does not match the views and practices of Indigenous people in their decolonial liberation strategies, particularly in the context of First Nations in Canada. This is why Coulthard and Alfred both reference as the foundation of Indigenous resistance a relationship to land. Fanon does not see a deeper Indigenous resistance that already exists in the Indigenous relationship to land. Fanon thinks struggle is necessary for the colonized to differentiate, to begin to become aware of the deepest manners in which his being is colonized. But from the perspective of Indigeneity and its ontological connect to land, Fanon's claim is not true. What creates the alienation from the coloniality of being that is necessary to manifest true acts of decolonial resistance is our, as Indigenous people, ontological kinship with the land. In this way, our being is never colonized to the point in which we do not experience the alienation of coloniality that Fanon thinks often requires a life-or-death struggle with the colonizer to achieve. No matter how powerful the colonial operation on human subjectivity through the *ego conquiro*, there is always a remainder of our Indigenous being that quite literally is in the land. Being is itself, in the context of Indigeneity, an ordinary and continual manifestation out of the land. It is, thus, this core of our being as Indigenous people that originates out of and continues to exist in the land that provides the differentiation necessary to begin decolonial resistance—and not, as Fanon says, the struggle itself.

Because of this lack of understanding of the intersection of Indigeneity and land that both creates the capacity of coloniality in the first place (a topic I will cover in the next section) and means that colonialism will necessarily always be incomplete, Fanon cannot see the scope of the possibilities of decolonial resistance that can exist outside and transcend the vitiation circle of human subjectivity, the politics of recognition, and the life-or-death struggle between the colonizer and the colonized. One way of

teasing this out is through what Black Elk says about the Black Road in his vision that is mirrored by the current visions of some young Wisca Wakan (medicine men) of the Lakota and Dakota nations. Black Elk is shown the earth in his vision as

lying yonder like a hoop of peoples, and in the center bloomed the holy stick that was a tree, and where it stood there crossed two roads, a red one and a black. "From where the giant lives (the north) to where you always face (the south) the red road goes, the road of good," the Grandfather said, "and on it shall your nation walk. The black road goes from where the thunder beings live (the west) to where the sun continually shines (the east), a fearful road, a road of troubles and of war. On this also you shall walk, and from it you shall have the power to destroy a people's foes."²⁴

The black road from Black Elk's vision corresponds to the Manichean struggle between the colonizer and the colonized, between good and evil. Using Black Elk's vision, one could interpret the great destructive power that comes through binary constructions of knowledge in the history of technology as well as the penchant for conflict that comes from Manichean understandings of identity. The civilized are good. The savage are evil. The colonized are good. The colonizers are evil. Following this black road from our own desires and fears to our own ideas about how to understand and deal with them in a modality of understanding relationships and conflict that is manifestly kinship-less results in violence and destruction. The red road, alternatively, goes from the unmanifest field of kinship itself in the realm of spirit in the red north to the body or manifest world of our actual kinship relations. When we walk on this road and when we attempt to achieve understanding of our relationships as a function of the red road, our desires and fears are transformed through our larger kinship as conceptualized through the movement through this unmanifest kinship field or our unparticularized kinship itself.

The power and destructive force of the black road is addictive. This ultimately (or at least fundamentally) destructive road, in Black Elk's understanding and his understanding of the world he lived in, was sometimes necessary. The black road can be seen as the nuclear option to coloniality. From Black Elk's vision, this road was presented as necessary for at least some Indian people to survive, but it was a road where most everyone dies. It was not a road of survival in a positive sense but survival in an almost tragic sense. In recent years, many young Wisca Wakan medicine men have had visions that mirror and extend ideas from Black Elk's vision. More than likely, these medicine men have never read Black Elk's words so the continuity is within the ceremonies themselves. The vision communicates the need to change the color of the West in the ceremonies from Black to Blue. In the context of this paper, there is little else that can be said about this change because the words, as the words in all Indigenous ceremonies, have power and so can only be used in the appropriate exercising of that power or in the context of the ceremonies themselves. Indigenous people do not,

for example, sing prayer songs outside of ceremonies any more than a neurosurgeon performs brain surgery outside of the operating room. What can be shared in this context is the manner that this transformation from black to blue manifests itself into the community, as seen, for example in the Thunder Valley CDC near Kyle, SD, in the Pine Ridge reservation. In this context, this transformation manifests itself as a commodity of hope. Rather than understanding the situation of the people in this community in the context of colonized victims, the Thunder Valley CDC conceptualizes its meaning in relationship to the future of the Lakota nation and its people as a meaning that transcends the Manichean conception of colonizer and colonized through an understanding of the Lakota people as transcending coloniality insofar as they exist and have always existed as beings that originate and continue as manifestations of the Lakota land. The conception of true liberation that arises in this transformation of the black to the blue is a liberation that arises through a regrounding of our Indigenous being in the land that is itself beyond the Manichean conception of colonizer and colonized.

JOHN WAYNE AS WILE E. COYOTE AND THE DECOLONIAL RESISTANCE OF LAND ITSELF

The John Wayne and John Ford films *Stagecoach* (1939) and *The Searchers* (1956) always seemed like Wile E. Coyote cartoons to me as a child. All of the Indian extras are Navajo and speak and dress like Navajo even though they are supposed to be Cheyenne, Apache, Comanche, and so on. The funniest thing about these movies, however, is that they are both presented as extensive journeys. The stagecoach travels for hundreds of miles across "dangerous" Apache territory, and *The Searchers* is a decade-long adventure across the entire Great Plains in the search for John Wayne's niece who was captured by Comanche as a young girl. This presentation is undermined, however, by the fact that John Wayne does nothing more than travel in circles on horseback or by stagecoach around and around the three rock formations of Tsé Bii' Ndzisgaili (Monument Valley) that early colonial settlers called The Mittens. What is interesting and illuminating about these films is that, while the reality is that John Wayne is Wile E. Coyote, the films are presented as serious cowboy and Indian conflicts and adventures. In this final section, I want to use the scenes of John Wayne circling around and around those Navajo rocks while pretending to go on long adventures across the Indigenous landscape of the Great Plains to articulate the manner in which Indigenous land itself, just as Indigenous being out of the land, resists colonization and has the power to move beyond the Manichean concept of colonizer and colonized. In the section above, I tried to show how modern subjectivity, the modern definition of being human, arises out of the *ego conquiro*, the ego that is defined by its ability to deny humanity or agency to others. The structure of domination exists in relationship to the modern conception of land as well. For example, the modern concept of property as articulated by Locke tells us that in order to own land one must become the kind of being that dominates the land in such a way as to deny access to others. Similar to the manner in which coloniality operates upon subjectivity, coloniality operates on the land. The way that coloniality is

able to operate in this way is that it functions necessarily on an underlying, pre-existing and more fundamental order I call locality. Locality is the ordinary and continual manifestation of being, knowing, and meaning out of the land, but locality is also the manifestation of the being of the land itself. Locality is a fundamentally important Indigenous concept. In fact, I would argue, it is a fundamental feature of Indigeneity itself. It is not a mere Indigenous concept, though, whatever that would mean. It is a metaphysical fact of being, knowing, meaning, and the land. Now, to understand this claim, we must harken back to the trickster anti-methods of Vine Deloria Jr. and others that use settler logic against itself. These trickster anti-methods are not merely deconstructive, however, since what Deloria and others are trying to reveal is an Indigenous conception of philosophical locality that is fundamentally real. This localized realism of Indigenous thought transcends the delocalized binaries of Western realism and social constructivism. At the very least, in this context, I think it is important to not merely allow all the Western philosophers from Plato to Descartes and following to speak philosophy proscriptively and Indigenous philosophers to only be allowed to speak philosophy descriptively. The descriptive requirement for Indigenous philosophy arises from the *ego conquiero* that concretizes the savage other as a mere passive artifact that is only capable of speaking authentic or inauthentic cultural truths rather than speaking as civilized philosophers are understood to—as fully human agents who are capable of perceiving and speaking truths even in an ideal or proscriptive sense. So it is in the spirit of Deloria's trickster anti-methods that I make the proscriptive philosophical claim that *locality is a metaphysical fact*.

Regardless of the status of that claim, it is clear that coloniality as a structure accepts locality as a fact. Coloniality must understand the concept of locality in order to operate upon it in the way that it does. But just as our being in its locality resists colonization—a remainder of our being always exists in the land in contrast to the coloniality of our being as colonized people—so the being of the land itself resists colonization. A remainder of the being of the land as locality always exists in contrast to the coloniality of land itself as a de-localized abstraction, as mere land. The colonization of our subjectivity and of land is never complete. Neither can be fully colonized because of their locality. The manner in which coloniality operates on the land can be illuminated by the experiences that any viewer of these John Wayne and John Ford films can have. Anyone who looks carefully enough can see that John Wayne is Wile E. Coyote, that he is doing nothing more than circling around those three rock formations over and over. The viewer that has this experience, that sees John Wayne as Wile E. Coyote, sees the locality of these Navajo rocks in Tsé Bii' Ndzisgaii.

How does this work? Let me attempt to explain this process more clearly. Coloniality operates fundamentally through an attempted obscuring of locality—in other words, through de-locality. De-locality is the attempt to hide all locality, both Indigenous and European localities. Coloniality operates first through the attempted removal of European locality from itself. Coloniality begins with an attempted abstraction out of European locality a de-localized, universalized

system of culture, values, meaning, being, and so forth. A locality that now floats free from the European land that is its ordinary and continual ground or being and meaning in locality is able to operate on land and people across the planet. Now this de-localized and then universalized European locality is then, at least attemptedly, injected into the Indigenous localities of the American continent in an attempt to remove and replace Indigenous localities with this universalized European locality, a European locality that has now become a de-locality or false locality because it is removed from and now floats free of the land that is its ground of being and meaning. However, the process of removing and replacing Indigenous localities with universalized European de-localities as the fundamental process of colonialism is never complete. Just as it does not work with human subjectivity, it does not work with the land. The Indigenous locality is still there. If the viewer looks closely enough, he or she can see it in those scenes in *Stagecoach* and *The Searchers*. It is the seeing of locality of Tsé Bii' Ndzisgaii in those films that transforms John Wayne into Wile E. Coyote. The fundamentally inept attempts by John Wayne and John Ford to obscure the locality of Tsé Bii' Ndzisgaii in these films appears, once the viewer sees the locality of these Navajo rocks, to be just like the inept attempts of Wile E. Coyote to catch the ever-present and always remaining Roadrunner.

The operations of coloniality on the land are generally not so inept and so generally not as funny. The experience we have as Indigenous people when toxic waste is dumped in the rivers of our localities, when a burial mound is bulldozed, when a pipeline is placed around our valleys and over our mountains is not one of laughter as it is with the inept attempted coloniality by John Wayne and John Ford over Tsé Bii' Ndzisgaii. There are often tears and heartbreak because it is hard for us to see the remainder of that land that still exists in its locality even after such attempts at colonial destruction. It is hard for us to see, after such seemingly complete colonialism through de-locality, the remainder of the being of the land that still exists, that will always resist this de-localizing process, that will never be completely colonized. It was just as hard, it seems, for Franz Fanon to see the remainder of being that existed and exists still for colonized people as that part of our being that is in the land, which is our locality. Thus Fanon saw little hope for Indigenous liberation that could come from outside of the Manichean circle of colonizer and colonized. The struggle was for him always within this circle rather than something that, as Indigenous liberation strategies show, can arise from our Indigenous being in the land or our locality.

NOTES

1. I. Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System* (New York: Academic Press, 1974).
2. N. Maldonado-Torres, "On the Coloniality of Being," 245.
3. G. S. Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 23-24.
4. T. Alfred, *Wasase: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom* (Toronto: Broadview Press, 2005), 31.
5. Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 13.

6. Ibid., 13.
7. Ibid., 78.
8. Ibid., 23.
9. F. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. R. Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 1952), 221.
10. F. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. R. Philcox (Paris: Presence Africaine, 1963), 9.
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Earthbound Sustainability in a Vast Universe: Red Lives Matter

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SYNOPSIS

A. Traditional Sustainability

"Sustainability" means ecological, economic, political, legal, agricultural, environmental, etc., sustainability, or continuity, and comes into play when "stability" flutters. Climate and environmental changes create a loss of communal land base, alongside losses of traditional localized indigenous knowledge and practice, and sometimes an admixture of cultures that join together for sustainability. Humanity has not enthusiastically embraced these environmental problems as a globally interconnected web of nation states that have survival problems—rather, the common response is to hope these survival challenges can be put off or be "kicked forward" to a later generation. Most sustainability issues, however, cannot be passed on to a later generation, for our crises are current and dramatic. Sustainability of humanity and all our relations on planet Earth may benefit from small-scale, diversely localized environmental practices of Traditional Indigenous Knowledge (TIK).

B. Indigenous Sustainability and Queries of "Western Science"

Traditional Indigenous Knowledge (TIK) can fill gaps of local and historical data because it can contextualize to locality and geography, and it carries histories about surviving climactic crises from many generations ago. TIK emphasizes cooperative, interdependent survival, or a balance of living well in reciprocity with all Being and all our relations. Traditional indigenous science is about how to achieve and sustain such a balance of life. No science is value free, and all contemporary Western science is justified to be used to solve environmental crises of human survival. Native science can be used in the service of the survival of humankind, all our relations, and our planet, for native science is a gift to the world as we know it. Tools of both Western science and traditional native science can be interjected, commingle, and be complementarily used alongside one another in efforts to sustain humankind and all our relations upon planet Earth and in the cosmos.

C. Western and Indigenous Science

Assumptions of metaphysical being and ontological relations support political governance of global economic and environmental theories that affect human sustainability. Indigenous scientific principles of "balance,"

“interdependency,” and “self-determination” can serve to open an international and global dialogue about human survival and use of natural resources. Knowledge about “localized” differences of traditional indigenous science bring diversely localized information, diverse perspectives of ontological relations, and diverse metaphysical-spiritual values to planning tables of Western science. As well, knowledge of “universal” theories of Western thought, theories of action a-contextualized from interdependency of relations, and hegemonic metaphysical spiritual values serve to interject Western culture into indigenous science. Yet negotiated sharing of scientific epistemologies of many nations can well serve our contemporary political and veridical struggles to sustain human life.

D. Traditional Indigenous Science

Indigenous localized knowledge, unlike Western global science, can “fit” together what appears to Western science as anomalous or irrelevant information about our environment into a localized geographical-historical context. This practice can make sense of climactic and environmental changes and solutions that Western science has not previously understood. Some successful localized indigenous principles could function as “sovereign practices of environmental pragmatics” because they are sound. Indigenous localized beliefs and sustainable practices are fruits of agricultural and medicinal diversity, developed over thousands of years and shared by traditional indigenous elders as native science.

E. *Buen Vivir* (Good Life) - *Vivir Bien* (Living Well)

The phrases “good life,” or “living well” describe a global movement led by indigenous scholars and leaders that responds to global (localized) sustainability crises. This movement (begun in Ecuador and successfully spreading to Bolivia and elsewhere) seeks to develop models of ethical action that reflect balance, respect, self-determination, cooperation, interconnectedness, and interdependency with all our relations. This political, economic, agricultural, and environmental theory translates to action-oriented practices that respect all life. This movement necessitates a shift from values of accumulation to a balance (even a strained balance) of respect for interconnected relations that are interdependent of all Being as webbed together. What this means for notions of self-determination and sovereignty is on the horizon, and yet unknown, but it is certain to embody an ethics of “take no more than is needed” while remembering the importance of retaining diversity of knowledge.

F. Poem: On Sustainability, Self-Determination, and Survival

A. TRADITIONAL SUSTAINABILITY

How do we humans think about the earthbound project of sustainability? To ponder this query, I believe we may not need to investigate epistemological questions about the “how” of human inquiry, or address binary or non-binary dualities or non-dualities of discrete or non-discrete logic of our thought. Rather, we need merely observe and contemplate what sustainability means for us in our immediate environment, with and among those with whom we share a common environment, humanity, and destiny of all our relations. To paraphrase Vine Deloria,

Jr., an indigenous philosophy may begin such a project by interjecting Western (non-indigenous) ideas into an indigenous worldview to examine and explain indigenous sustainability issues alongside Western (non-indigenous) sustainability issues.¹ (Though the words “indigenous” and “Western” are denotatively ambiguous and vague, they serve the purpose here of delineating particular types of curricular knowledge bases and history, having different origins, practices, and understandings about scientific theory. Connotatively, I mean to have them on an equal value par for purposes of this paper, for what is important is what we can know about our world and ourselves as part of that world.)

In this cooperative spirit today, then, we engage a few questions that matter to us. First is the meaning of the term “sustainability.” To sustain is to enable continuation, to maintain some balance of survival of our human species, and, for some, of the planet. Second, “sustainability” refers to climate change, and much has been written about our climactic shifts. Third, there are different types of sustainability—from global indigenous journals and papers to the many philosophy and science websites, including the website of the President of the United States; articles and books abound on the topics of economic sustainability, environmental sustainability, legal sustainability, and even governmental sustainability. As such, “sustainability” replaces the term “stability”—for “sustainability” only comes into play when “stability” flutters, or non-balance, or disharmony, comes into play. Folks that benefit from the former stability of colonial governments, or economic or legal systems, for example, have reason now to know that many hegemonic economic systems that maintain other systems in place, for instance, have lost or are losing stability. For some the lack of a stable government, economic, or legal system is good news, and reason to hope for a more balanced future of benefits and responsibilities. For others it may mean the opposite. But for all, sustainability of human life and all our relations are serious questions on the horizon that go hand in hand with sustainable systems of human interaction. And survival answers to these survival queries will demand some type of change in our human ways of being.

Consider, for example, the effect of less stable weather (when a weather system generates data of large fluctuations and change). How does this affect human sustainability? For some it means a drought that destroys vegetation and vegetative projects, critical to human survival, or at least survival for all. For others it means extreme flooding over plains otherwise full of fauna and flora. Weather conditions that create planetary instability call for human responses that can enable our maintenance, or sustainability, of crops and other forms of life to continue, so as to contribute to human species survival. This “sustainability call” is of utmost importance to farmers and all participating in the food industry. In the United States, primary players include California, where one-third of our nation’s food is grown; in Florida, where another one-third is grown; and in the Midwest, which also grows one-third of our nation’s food supply. Weather change is of utmost importance to end users of survival commodities—to everyone.

Conferences are held in Africa about the decimation of ecosystem species where lands are no longer as fertile, wet, and giving to animal life forms, once so necessary to survival of local communities. Conferences in the Americas discuss why American indigenous communities up north are still being pushed back from their shore fishing community cultures, developments that necessitate groups of differently cultured indigenous neighbors join together for survival. This North American admixture of culture and loss of land base has had an effect of lost localized geographical knowledge and culture. Such changes upend localized origination and medical information and practices as well as other storehouses of traditional elder indigenous knowledge that may no longer be applicable to the new geographical location. Such localized knowledge, however, if maintained and preserved, may prove helpful in the future to bring different knowledge bases to diversely changing communities and environments. In other words, the lack of weather stability, for example, bringing about non-sustainability of some cultural practice may mean bad news, but the sharing of informative indigenous knowledge bases by the devastated community, knowledge which enables adaptation, has the potential to bring about much good.

Consider another example. Due to increased climate shifts alongside overcrowded populations, a lack of clean drinking water (one-third of world does not have clean drinking water) and of sustainable food supplies (half of the world does not have a steady and reliable, or sustainable, food supply) challenges current lifestyles, both indigenous and Western. Western sustainability research for the next generation may not be so much about the exchange of personal wealth, but about how to best use human wealth to create sustainable lifestyles for humanity. This is because *right now human societal practices as a whole are non-sustainable*. If political and social change is to assist development of sustainable practices among all our relations, meaningful and knowledgeable conversations about sustainable and non-sustainable practices will need to be stimulated and need to occur on a regular basis. Such conversations can create a movement that can focus upon and develop sustainable lifestyles for humans alongside all our relations on our turtle planet, Mother Earth.

Inconveniently so, it may not be good enough today to simply try to "kick the sustainability ball" down to the next generation. There may not be leisurely or even adequate time to wait for the next generation to plan and exercise sustainable practices. People of conscience easily recognize that the sustainability movement needs now to be directed toward negotiation of survival practices, and economic and governmental distribution of survival goods, in order to maintain our necessary diverse species' sustainability among all our relations. Importantly, if we do not deal with these issues now, there may not be a next generation to kick the ball down to. As well, if the human species cannot be made sustainable, moral questions about leaving sustainability decisions to future generations resource management become moot. So the ball must be picked up and the next generation assured sustainability of human life in their own generation and hopefully, beyond.

This sustainability precept of action is close to another principle of sustainability dear to my own heart, namely, self-determination. Self-determination must be a part of sustainability decisions because the autonomy to exercise self-determinative rights to self-sustain maintains the balance of respect among all our relations. Without a right to exercise self-determinative sustainability practices, a society always owes something to someone or something for survival. Such imbalances of power relations between the owed and the owing opens up opportunity for disharmony (instability) among all our relations. Human action must "fit" within the context of all our relations, either fairly with a harmony of balance, or unfairly with a discord of equanimity. An imbalance of power relations can set up a rather uncomfortable exercise for the owing and thereby provide reason to upset the sustainability of the owed, had at the expense of the owing.

Some of you who know my work in this area of self-determination may think I mean something like political self-determinative governance here. And surely this is a part and parcel of a sustainable package for survival. Today, in using the term "self-determination," I mean to refer to "self-determination" as both individual and community ability to exercise a right to make community planning decisions in accord with plans to responsibly maintain and practice interdependent cultural knowledge respectfully, by paying homage to our interconnected environmental relations within our cosmos, both known and not known.

The importance of self-determination is that with it we can bring to our project of sustainability the wealth of intergenerational elder knowledge, of cultivating health, moral responsibility, and social forms of cooperation, alongside the use of more contemporary technologies as we understand them. How we apply together both Traditional Indigenous Knowledge (TIK) technologies with Contemporary Western Knowledge (CWK) technologies, will determine how we humans and all our relations can mutually benefit with those with whom we share our environment, planet, cosmos, or, as some say, all our relations (plants, animals, water, and all other being of the universe). For in this life sharing, and interdependence, we are all related.

When we adapt our ancestors' traditional, cultural, indigenous knowledge and physical and spiritual practices and ways of being to interjected contemporary Western knowledge, theory, and technical and spiritual challenges of science, we exercise our self-determination while we hope to sustain our lives within our own communities. When we adhere to tried and true traditional tribal values of cooperation, sustenance, community, and well-being, we hope to sustain balance in our cosmos. These are the values that have sustained our indigenous communities over time and that are close to us to use as we work toward learning how to sustain ourselves during our contemporary climactic changes, and other disaster oriented challenges. (Similarly, the "Western educational curriculum" could benefit by interjecting traditional indigenous knowledge into their own explanatory stories and theory developments.)

Sustainability is a unique part of traditional indigenous knowledge. That which has sustained us is alive and with us today and keeps us inspired and optimistic about the future. Traditional knowledge and practice about how to live among all our relations upon Mother Earth in both physical and metaphysical ways, is about facing survival paths of action oriented toward sustainable survival. Self-determinative aspects of traditional sustainable practices motivate their continued survival. This self-determinative sustainability is what I mean to refer to when I talk about "traditional sustainability."

B. INDIGENOUS SUSTAINABILITY AND QUERIES OF "WESTERN" SCIENCE

Much traditional indigenous global knowledge of Mother Earth has been lost in many geographical regions due to severe climactic changes or settler political overlay. Kyle Powys Whyte, a Potawatomie scholar of the Great Lakes region, has focused on the importance of modern-day scientists showing respect for traditional, localized indigenous knowing. He notes that traditional indigenous knowledge can fill gaps of both local and historical data, and filling these gaps beneficially can "expand the sorts of things that [Western] scientists consider in their research methods."²

Kyle's work recognizes and organizes some of the body of scholarship that Vine Deloria and others were working on when they wrote about the utility and value of native science during the past few decades. Kyle uses the insights of indigenous scholars to speak to how everyone can benefit from native science, or what we may call traditional indigenous cultural and environmental knowledge. This knowledge is both of a physical and spiritual nature, and it encompasses local practices and global, social, and political ordering.

Indigenous practices are born from interactivity with indigenous cosmologies; geographically located human origin stories; spiritual, ecological, and psychological states of ill- and well-being; and indigenous understandings of our human place among all our relations in the world as we know and understand it from our human vantage point of reflection upon our experiences. Alongside the more practical knowledge applications of ecological stability and sustainability, we have also developed rule guiding, or moral sensibilities, that guide how we respect all our relations for the sake of interactive physical and psychological survival and well-being for all.

In tandem, then, our knowledge of sustainability and our moral sensibility brings us a moral Native science of sustainability. Because Native science has not developed independently of our moral sensibilities, we act within other organizational principles of pragmatic survival that assist all our relations. We have had to learn to act so as to survive, sustain, and allow for the survival and sustaining of all our relations because our traditional indigenous knowledge has led us to believe we are indeed all related and, hence, all interdependent in our universe as we know it. For though the cosmos be beyond our historical imagination, we developed intuitive cognitive structures of correct and

incorrect ways of doing things that sought to maximize and balance our actions for practical reasons, and these ways have served us well in the past.

Whether these ways of being and acting in the cosmos, on our planet Mother Earth, can continue to sustain us is the kernel of the contemporary question of human and planet sustainability for indigenous and non-indigenous science alike.

During most of the twentieth century, scientists wanted to maintain that they simply "did science" and no moral judgments were involved in that process (i.e., that the doing of science was "value free"). The idea was that the way of something appeared to be, or was described, was held by some as simply a matter of scientific determination, and that such judgments were devoid of moral (ought) significance. Over time this idea eventually began to unravel, thanks to work in the philosophy of science. Not only were scientists susceptible to making value judgments in the practicing of their science, but all scientific judgments were made from a sense of doing things the way those who directed the scientists thought they ought to be done to serve their own hegemonic purposes.

Science had to face the reality that an overriding human element of moral control operates in the practice of science and recognize that some actions thought to be value neutral were harmful. They were harmful because they precluded sustainability and thus harmed our human environments of survival, and in tandem, all our relations.

That there may be choices about how we, as humans, interact with and come to understand all our relations of the universe, and that some of these choices could create non-sustainable environments became an important moral theme of several American Philosophical Association conferences in North America. During the 1980s academic discussions about value neutrality of Western science challenged a politics of a value-neutral science. Science was employed in political projects that backed free enterprise of unjustified accumulations of value, while it created unsustainable conditions in our human environment. *That there may be a choice of how we decide, or do not decide, to sustain humanity, our environment, and all our relations became a hot issue among philosophers working in areas of philosophy of science and social and political thought. They also became hot issues in global indigenous communities that empowered the challenge of Western science's notions about value-neutral science.*

It was in this historical context that it was theorized that the *sustainability* of humanity, and all our relations, may not be so much a function of biological superiority (à la Darwin, etc.), but of human choices regarding a sociology of economics and politics that led us to the current sustainability crisis. Traditional indigenous leaders began conversations with Western scientists about the lack of value neutrality of scientific practice, and the results are just now beginning to make a difference. Indigenous knowledge, i.e., traditional indigenous localized knowledge as science, is helping Western science to better understand the role of individuals and communities in sustainability practices.

More, indigenous social and political theory also questions the imbalance of survival tools in a hegemonic urban culture that contributes to a lack of sustainability among local communities, whether rural or urban.

This opening of the scientific dialogue, driven by environmentalists and traditional indigenous philosophers, came to dominate the dialogue of some philosophers of science who were people of conscience in the late twentieth century. And questions of this movement, questions about how certain societal practices determine our ability to sustain humanity and all our relations, remain with us today. And, as I mentioned earlier, sustainability questions cannot simply be kicked around to wait for the next generation to solve them. Moreover, we already have the tools and knowledge to solve many of these practical problems now, if proper focus can be maintained.

For indigenous science, this turn, this understanding of how values influence scientific practice, meant that Western science might begin to appreciate how traditional understandings of how and why indigenous science is led by values of respect for all living entities and a balance among all our interdependent relations. Importantly, when some philosophers of science ceased to ignore traditional indigenous knowledge, they pushed the envelope of reflecting upon science as academic sacred text and opened the crevice by which traditional indigenous philosophers of science could begin a dialogue with them about native science and all our relations. The devastation of ecological changes made the dialogue even more important and timely in the postmodern universe. And today, this dialogue continues among what has come to be known as “Western thought” and “traditional indigenous knowledge”—both together presenting human philosophies of science so necessary to human sustainability on Mother Earth in our universe.

C. WESTERN AND INDIGENOUS SCIENCE

That the pragmatic line of North American philosophical thinking finds its apex in scientific reasoning seems to me to be in consonance with American indigenous thought finding its apex of reasoning in preserving and maintaining a balance of sustainable practices. Of course, one never knows for sure how one’s thinking about a problem will change as things relevant to the project may change, including ontological, metaphysical, or cosmological information, and such things as climactic shifts (caused by events within, around, and outside of our immediate earthen environment). Nonetheless, this pragmatics of practice as presenting an apex of reasoning for what we call “Western science” (Western Science Knowledge) and “native science” (Traditional Indigenous Knowledge) can assist and sometimes come to complement one another. Thus, for example, questions about issues we may have left out of our theorizing about any particular climactic change, including traditional localized indigenous knowledge of sustainable practices, and our interdependencies with fauna and flora, may create new explanatory power of theory. This may be accomplished via a process of mutual interjection of concepts from one paradigmatic science to another. (I believe this theoretical approach is supported by the recent work of Kyle Powys Whyte, as mentioned earlier.)

Simply put, as we blend traditional indigenous knowledge (Native science) and Western science knowledge (Western science), a new millennium of an epistemology of scientific knowledge will emerge that engenders both localized and Western universalized principles of sustainability.

An epistemological openness to understanding our survival place in the cosmos means that we, as among all our relations, over thousands of years, learn localized information and practices to apply to particular geographical or climactic regions. These localized knowledge bases have enabled survival of our species over time. Rather than talk about what we humans “believe to be true according to scientific principles,” indigenous epistemology turns upon an “openness to informative guiding realities of localized experience” that make assertions about the world. These localized realities continue to aid humans to assess practical and sustainable living solutions. *The openness of this indigenous epistemology of assertion is positive in the sense that there is always an opening to adjust or change the practical as well as a theoretical base of belief and practice according to the needs of the community; where the use of the term “community” does include all our relations within our cosmos as we know it, and the term “needs” means a necessary balance that enables sustainable life.*

Two recent philosophical movements or philosophical developments, namely, pragmatism (logical science) and existentialism (phenomenological science), interactively gave rise to a wave of questions taken up by environmental philosophers. These have included questions about the social and political bases of ontological theories and positions as well as questions about the interaction of those ontological theories with metaphysical theories that reinforced political theories that maintained hegemonic international relations among nations. These political inquiries led to questions about how these ontological and metaphysical theories supported a political governance of global economic and environmental theories that affected human sustainability on our planet and in the cosmos.

It is important to understand how contemporary global hegemonic relations empower some individuals and nations over others through the use of science. It is also important to understand how our philosophical historicity of our time enables us to face the challenges of human survival today, interdependently with all our relations, while seeing on the human horizon hints of an environmental survival balance in the universe.

D. TRADITIONAL INDIGENOUS (NATIVE) SCIENCE

Indigenous localized geographical elder knowledge can supplement theorizing about sustainability among nonindigenous societal groups, whether among physicists, biologists, psychologists, economists, or any other specialized area of study. Indigenous localized geographical elder knowledge can do so precisely because they do something contemporary scientific theories cannot do—i.e., they can “fit” together information about our environment with our well-being. They can do so by continuing to learn and teach interactive ways of being with and among “all our relations” that have proven success records. A mutual transfer of knowledge bases from many

cultures can enhance human understandings of our world, our imaginative theories, and our human places within the “all” that simply “is” to us and “with us” as presented, however that “i” may appear to be presented to us, or appear to be taken in by us, via interpretations, or learned contexts of our life being, as we hope to sustain ourselves on Mother Earth. (Kyle Powys Whyte’s work has discussed the importance of cultural context groups in his examples of Karuk, Lake Sturgeon, and other communities and has also provided many examples of governance values of indigenous knowledges).

There seems to be no unjustified indigenous knowledge sovereignty as to sustainable practices. The sovereignty of knowledge is found in its application. It worked in the past, or worked somewhere else, and its justification for experimental usage is found in its ability to adequately address the sustainability issue at hand. In this sense indigenous knowledge is pragmatic. But it is more. Different global indigenous communities hold stories of the historicity of human experience and couple this with information about what is happening currently to arrive at planning steps to take to lessen catastrophic disaster among divergent groups. Among indigenous communities, many live outside the normal boundaries of artificial normalized urban city-states and do not have easy access to cultural “city” resources, hence local scientific creativity abounds, from archaeoastronomy to topographic to psychological sciences.

We indigenous communities need to, are beginning to, and continue to remember, reconstruct, assemble, exercise, improve, and transmit in our indigenous communities, and among all our relations, our experiences and practices of sustainability. This is done in tandem with bringing together indigenous ideas with “modern science and religion” only in ways meaningful to a particular community. What is important to a northern community may, however, also affect a southern community, and in this we are connected. In this way we carry on an indigenous value of information sharing and communal concern for sustaining our cultures, our humanity. This has been the message of one of my own mentors, Vine Deloria, Jr. (see any number of his some-34 published books), and indigenous science leaders such as Gregory Cajete and others too numerous to mention here.³

This message of interdependence practiced via information sharing is important. More, it is critical because localized indigenous knowledges hold vast amounts of information for sustainability in localized places, both in terms of food and shelter sustainability and governance survival. Sometimes this knowledge can be partly incorporated into other regions. The importance of understanding rice cropping, for example, and many other types of food sourcing as well as understanding ancient and contemporary confederacy relations among many nations developed toward the purpose of cooperative sustainability of cultures through respect and common goals has much to inform us about ways of being in the world that might assist contemporary cultures to balance (or locate harmony) with all our relations. In other words, daily practices and economic and political organizations, all function together on this continent, at least, via confederacies and cultural

sustainability practices to harmonize and balance cultural practice to sustain oneself and community.

There are many informational models used to help humans achieve sustainability on our Mother Earth via creating and maintaining balance within our families, communities, and all our relations. But for individuals and communities of common interest, understanding practical food and water source of sustainability, alongside the politics of sustainable relations, among all our relations, may perhaps be found most important by asking the central question of a geographical localized area: “Is life sustainable here, now, for our community?” Answers to the “here” and “now” of this query are serious factors that will lead to localized indigenous knowledge within a particular geographical area. This is because what works, for example, to grow food in the soil of New Mexico will not be the same as that required in Florida, or the Appalachia, or other places that grow most of our human diet in North America. And so the question of localized indigenous sustainable knowledge can begin by asking these essential queries, followed by seeking the reason why such sustainable practices of food and/or shelter gathering, and political social communities of sharing, are simply no longer operative for many. And, of course, one might hope that seeking answers to these questions would lead to understanding what needs to be done to sustain us all within in our cosmos.

Sustainability then, is a question for everyone and can be furthered by sharing localized information that “fits” the character and perspective of a group of persons in a particular place and time on Mother Earth or in the cosmos. Understanding that the future of humans will require cooperation of local indigenous scholars and philosophers (not necessarily academics or Ph.D.s) alongside local urban and rural scientists of many nations if we are to continue a human culture that respects localized indigenous knowledges. For it will ultimately be the understanding that it is our differences, our geographical peculiarities of how and why we do things differently, rather than our sameness of practices, that enable us to survive and sustain ourselves in any particular locality of economic, political, or climactic changes, because localized human beliefs and practices of agriculture and medicine, for example, reside in those particularized geographical locales. The fruits of localized knowledges and practices (for example, of agriculture or medicine) can be imported and exported globally, or throughout the cosmos, in time. But they can only be “homegrown” and created and developed in their own ecologically complex localized environment. Indeed, the laboratory of Western science is but one locality among many localities throughout history.

More, if an economic governance system fails sustainability, or if an ecological disaster tears asunder a communal sustainability, it may be the diversity of practice alongside an openness of diverse beliefs about those practices, not the sameness of many cultures, that will survive to assist another group to diversely sustain itself in a different localized geography. And this difference, created by difference of climactic and topographical locale, may mean the ultimate difference between human survival or not.

E. BUEN VIVIR (GOOD LIFE), VIVIR BIEN (LIVING WELL)

The last concept I want to say something about today is the sustainable movement of *buen vivir*, or good life. Concepts of *buen vivir* have been organizing principles of constitutional reforms in Ecuador (2008) and Bolivia (2009). I believe this is one of the most important political movements taking place today, that it is an ontologically relevant movement, and that it is happening on a global scale. This Latin American indigenous movement of *buen vivir* has the potential to transform an economy that is devastating our planet, Mother Earth, into a cooperatively human environment of balance and sustainability among all our relations. Notions of *buen vivir* have been successfully employed by indigenous scholars and activists, as developed in the Americas of Latin America, as a response to climate change challenges and protection of our interdependent environment.

Because how we respond to climate change will determine our ability to continue sustainable human culture, there is perhaps no more important issue for science at this time. In this context economics and related social, racial, ethnic, and cultural religious practices need to be examined in relationship to and in light of sustainability challenges. *Buen vivir*, as a concept of valuing a harmonious balance among all ecological systems, offers an ancient paradigm that has been revitalized in response to contemporary ecological crises. *Buen vivir*, if viewed as a paradigm of a scientific worldview, can be assistive in reinforcing models of an ethics of balance, of respect, interconnectedness, and interdependency with all our relations. Developing the “how” of how we ethically approach our ontological and metaphysical interdependent relations of our universe and cosmos and translating these relations into action-oriented practices that respect all life is at the heart of *buen vivir*. *Buen vivir* holds out that ontological and metaphysical understandings of our relations with all being in our environment is fundamental to taking pragmatic action in an effort to restore balance in our universe as we know it.

Buen vivir requires a shifting from a mandate of what some refer to as “Western” values of accumulation of resources for some at the expense of others who lose rights to autonomous living of self determination. This shift is toward a redistributive power scheme that seeks to balance relations and those things needed for survival of humans and all our relations of the cosmos via respect for the rights of all to self-determine their existence, including plants, animals, and both seen and unseen entities. In this sense issues of sustainability, as they relate to climate change, become issues that require a change of value, ethic, and politic as to how we approach respectful interactions with all our relations in the cosmos. It is about how we allow self-determination and individual autonomy to flourish amidst cooperative interdependent being with all our relations as we adapt by interacting with diverse and localized knowledge in the world as we know it.

IF we can understand our planet, Mother Earth, as sacred because our mother gives and sustains life as we know it, and IF we can understand humans, as we are so constituted

as part of all being, and all being as a part of us, ever in motion and ever responding to challenges of our abilities, to sustain human life in such an ever changing environment, as also always in motion and change, just as our universe changes, THEN we can name indigenous science as a *sacred challenge*, a *sacred task*, and a *sacred hope*. Sacred localized science can assist sustainability projects globally.

Some say that humans need to practice principles of *buen vivir* (good living), or *vivir bien* (living well) if we are to continue living on Turtle Mother Earth. Living well is not about politics of governmental relations; it is about relations among all being, among waters, dirt, sand, rocks, fauna and flora, and all other forms of living entities on our planet and within our cosmos.

Living well requires that if our sea levels rise, it means we must relocate and adapt to new economic mores and new ways of culture and being in and of the world. It also means that we must be open to assisting other forms of life when their sustainability is threatened, most importantly, out of respect for human interdependence, for in this we are all related.

Sometimes climate change and sustainability measures run hand in hand, like when the only sustainable way to adapt to a new location means significant diet and production changes, and thereby loss of traditional work patterns and associated rituals that tie into a larger ontological and metaphysical cosmology. It also means understanding that at the same time there will be loss with required adaptability; new ways of being will arise in response to the challenges brought on by the need to sustain a community. *It is our task, as a human task, to ensure that when we assist communities in adapting to climactic or sustainability challenges, we preserve rather than upset or disrupt the stewardship balance that surrounds and envelops us.*

Some ways of practicing living well include awareness of ourselves as a small part of this planet’s inter-related being, understanding the interconnectedness and interdependence of all our relations, and respecting the power of diversity in the creative cooperation of our cosmos. For indigenous nations in the Americas, this means that we need to remember and continue to teach our ancient ways of sustainable living, whether by interacting with the fish of the seas, oceans, and gulf waters, the corns and beans of traditional earthen farming, the herds of four-leggeds still yet on the plains, or the rice fields surrounding the Great Lakes. It means that those principles of learning to live in accord with different climates and species different from humans have served our purposes of survival well and have served the purposes of maintaining a balance of resources. It also means our children can learn the invaluable gifts of their ancestors on all continents and from all cultures as they are today being revived and passed down by indigenous scholars, including scientists and philosophers and practitioners globally. Kyle Powys Whyte reminds us that we are not a few, nor are we alone in the efforts to sustain our traditional lifestyles and values, but we do exist in the context of preeminent sovereigns whose adaptations to climate change and sustainability may differ from our own needs. As such, we must remember that

although we have different social and economic systems, our survival is linked to the survival of all humanity and all our interdependent relations, and in this we must adapt to challenges of sustainability. Whyte tells us the challenges are many:

Indigenous peoples encompass the 370 million persons globally whose communities exercised systems of self-government derived from their own cosmologies before an ended or ongoing period of colonization. Indigenous peoples now live within areas where states, like Australia or Canada, are recognized internationally as the preeminent sovereigns (Anaya 2004). Like other communities, indigenous peoples must adapt to climate-induced ecological variations like sea-level rise, glacier retreat, and shifts in the habitat ranges of different species.⁴

As an ontologist writing about “what is,” my work attends to nuances of belief systems that permeate different metaphysical systems. Metaphysical systems are merely organizational structures of ontological relations. Ontological systems help us to see what we see (and fail to see), understand what our conceptualizations can put together, can theorize about (explain) and make rational (or sometimes irrational) decisions based upon that ontological system. Those systems and the relations they entertain are a function of a history of particular human experience in particular locales. They are generational and they are grounded in cultural experience passed through generations. These relations “bathe” our experiences and help us to make sense of our lives. When faced with crisis, we employ our creative imaginations and reach for a difference that can change that crisis. In this way creative difference guides our survival strategies. And when we think about sustainability on planet Earth, difference is what we will need to call upon to enable our creative solutions that must be found and developed.

An emerged paradigm of sustainable scholarship is a unified notion that “all my relations” are woven together as an intricate web of Being. Such ontology shows on its sleeve how metaphysical systems affect how we understand humans as being “of” the world while at the same time “in” the world, and how this reflection bears out the pragmatics of our decisions, decisions that affect our community survival. I have thought much about how settler metaphysical systems influence indigenous community responses to global climate and sustainability issues. More comparative cultural metaphysical work is ahead of us, and this will hopefully lead the way to sustainable solutions of human existence among all our relations.

I have recently finished an extensive review of the indigenous Aztec metaphysical system presented in *Aztec Philosophy: A World in Motion* (James Maffie, University of Colorado, 2014). This review was published in the spring 2015 edition of the American Philosophical Association Newsletter on Indigenous Philosophy.⁵ This work, *Aztec Philosophy*, is partly about sustainability of life, all our relations, and the cosmos. Aztec thought focuses on issues of global sustainability, both as day-to-day community

survival as seen in recordings, and as communities that respond to global climactic change and challenges of the universe as they (Aztec) see and record it.

The social and political concept of *buen vivir* (good living) and the new Ecuadorean constitutional “Rights of Nature” (protection of human and all our relations ecological habitat) are in keeping with an Aztec indigenous metaphysical system. It is my hope that this ancient way (Equadorian) of thinking about things and our human place in the world can make a significant contribution to philosophy and other disciplines. It can tease out implications of philosophical, legal, economic, political, and scientific work; this can be accomplished if we use principles of *buen vivir* as applied to the rights of nature, with whom we are interdependent. I anticipate this emerging philosophy and law of indigenous Ecuadoreans can help articulate a dialogic scholarship that will engender a greater sustainability for humanity—a sustainability that can better preserve all our relations of our cosmos into the future.

Sustainability research clearly affects dominant populations, local indigenous communities, and the interactions of both. Pivotal issues affect Native American, American, and global indigenous and non-indigenous survival. Again, some specific issues of concern are climate changes of raised water levels, drought, and water shortage. There is a serious lack of improved water (82 percent of rural areas have none), 750 million people (1 in 9) lack access to clean water, 840,000 people die of unsafe water per year (one child per minute), and the lack of sustainable ecosystems (women and children spend 140 million hours a day collecting water).⁶

Sustainable issues also include yet unknown effects of fracking, the practice of digging deep holes into the earth to search for oil and natural gas. Sustainability is about our ability to preserve or develop environmental natural resources and about a developed response to the climactic changes causing sea level rises, river shifts, changed farmland conditions, glacier retreat, oil spills, shifting grazing conditions, and weather patterns affecting fauna and flora. It is about the many ecological disturbances or imbalances that threaten the sustainability of human lifestyles that were previously in harmony with the environment. Many tribal nations have already begun community action for sustainability when we learn to live with climate changes. Some cultures have had to move inland as their land disappears and a community infrastructure disappears with it. With shifting populations, cultures are challenged to learn new ways of adjoining cultures. Learning how to understand and apply pragmatic notions such as *buen vivir* to perceive human place, value, and responsibility is but one acting agent in a series of inter-related and inter-dependent actions, offering an ontology of value to both our local and global communities. Hopefully, this ontology of value will assist in solving some problems of sustainability that we now face and will face in the future. This ontology is an important contribution from the Indigenous Americas.

As I mentioned before, issues of sustainability are closely tied to self-determination and sovereignty. One

exploratory goal of continued sustainability research can explicate and apply these nuanced relationships of self-determination and sovereignty in the context of *buen vivir* and rights of nature, as has been done in Ecuador and Bolivia, in other governmental contexts. Linking together indigenous metaphysical sustainability theories with self-determination will continue to be a challenge, and can be assisted by concentrated academic and community support and accepting environments for these metaphysical and ontological philosophies.

Questions of sustainability for humans and all our relations, again, need to be asked at localized levels. Individuals need to know whether their current lifestyle is going to be affected, say, by a water crisis, when, for example, “the water crisis is the #1 global risk based on impact to society (as a measure of devastation), and the #8 global risk based on likelihood (likelihood of occurring within 10 years).⁷ The answer to this waters crisis question is “it depends.” What it depends on is how our global community reacts to the current water crisis.

Some may ask, “Can I sustain my own lifestyle if I grow my own food and make my own shelter?” The answer is that it depends. Yes, of course, you can grow tomatoes in your garden, but where will the water come from? And, of course, you can dig out a home in a large rock, but, again, where would your water come from? In my lifetime I remember well drinking water from a tap, even from any neighbor’s hose lying about their yard. But now I must drink only water of a certain type, of a certain composition. Without this water, I become ill and unable to have proper organ function. How many others will be in this place as we face a serious global risk in the next ten years?

Is life sustainable for you now, where you are? Can Appalachian or Aztec traditional farming techniques assist human sustainability on planet Earth? Can those in Australia? or Africa? Again, it depends, and it depends upon whether science will understand not only that but how it is that we are all related, how we are interdependent, and how although we can imagine self-determination, we are, ultimately, creatures of nature, of habit and creativity, of reciprocal and complementary community, and of balanced though sometimes strained interactions, among all my relations.

F. POEM

On Sustainability, Self Determination, and Survival

My dear sisters and brothers
of Ecuador
My dear brothers and sisters
of Bolivia
All dear indigenous scholars of the Americas
and on all continents
Thank you
for your sacred indigenous philosophy.

What is good for everyone? For all our relations
For all our relations today?
That is what you have called us together
to talk about.
This is what you must use to challenge.

Someone has created hegemonic relations
of an hierarchical ontology
holding humans at the peak of value
and all other of our relations
at the bottom rung of metaphysical value
and these values have made
a difference of survival.

But now it has been shown by you
your indigenous sisters and brothers
your non-indigenous brothers and sisters
that the hierophants of the hierarchy
is not humans having all encompassing value
that all others of our relations must
bow before the self-proclaimed decision makers.

For all my relations now have
inalienable rights, legal standing,
and a voice in matters of decision making
about their/our survival.

Inalienable rights, they say
All trees have standing, they say
and inalienable rights, they say,
to exist without human decision
made against their survival.

The measure of
the trees’ rights
are a matter of consequence
when consequences mean what is best
for planetary survival,
understanding this planet
Mother Earth, turtle’s back
is to be preserved not at all cost
and by all means necessary
but through respecting
inalienable rights
of all relations—of all entities.

Then by precept the question of what is good
for everyone, as it is for all our relations
Becomes that which is good for all
for all our relations to survive
And is no longer that which is good for the
corporate or family profit mark
to determine survival of a forest,
a tree, a community, a person.

And so I take a moment today
to thank our elders
for their good living
for the living well
for their teachings, and
for preserving their knowledge,
as we look to the day
when our marks of science will spread

to other nations
to be enacted as liberating
for all our relations interdependently
to help us survive.

NOTES

1. Vine Deloria, Jr., Introduction to *American Indian Thought: Philosophical Essays*, ed. Anne Waters (Wiley-Blackwell, 2003), xvi.
2. Kyle Powys Whyte, "What Do Indigenous Knowledges Do For Indigenous Peoples?" Draft paper published on academia.edu on website of Kyle Powys Whyte, Michigan State University, 2015, p. 8. http://www.academia.edu/11293856/What_do_Indigenous_Knowledges_do_for_Indigenous_Peoples
3. See Gregory Cajete, *Native Science: Natural Laws of Interdependence* (Santa Fe, NM: Clear Light Books, 1999).
4. Kyle Powys Whyte, "Indigenous Women, Climate Change Impacts, and Collective Action." *Hypatia* 29, no. 3 (Summer 2014).
5. Anne Schulherr Waters, "Ontology Matters! A Review of *Aztec Philosophy: A World in Motion*, by James Maffie," APA Newsletter on Indigenous Philosophy 14, no. 2 (2015): 11–17.
6. "Global Water Crisis: Water and Sanitation Facts," water.org, Available at <http://water.org/water-crisis/water-facts/water/>
7. As announced by the World Economic Forum, January 2015. See <http://water.org/water-crisis/water-facts/water/>

El Mar Does Not Stop at Borders: Gloria Anzaldúa

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Anzaldúa writes that she believes in an *organic writing*, a writing that is a living tissue and involves all of your body, mind, and experience. The meaning of her writing is complete nakedness, to be completely herself. To read Anzaldúa, it is necessary to read ourselves, to create a connection between myself (the reader) and the text (this explicit nakedness by Anzaldúa). Her writing is expository, open, and philosophical/literary. Understanding Anzaldúa is complex because it is to be between meanings and metaphors. Her text is literary: she writes poems; quotes songs; explains her epistemology; explains the world's metaphysics; utilizes concepts like *mestiza*, woman, *chicana*, *frontera*, et cetera, with a complexity such that we know that it is poetry and philosophy, and it is on the border.

Is there such a thing as a philosophical style? It would be impossible to answer this question without answering what philosophy is. Anzaldúa is not worried about being clear and limiting her thoughts inside an established thinking or philosophy. This paper will argue that Anzaldúa is a philosopher and has a style not so uncommon in the history of philosophy, and will unfold her concepts while trying not to reduce her writing to a simple mute text, but rather to unfold the mystery of her nakedness, as when we observe an artwork or hear a confession.

1. Gloria Anzaldúa's writing: put your shit on the paper

*alma entre dos mundos, três, cuatro,
me zumba la cabeza con lo contradictorio.
Estoy norteada por todas las voces que me
hablan simultáneamente.*

– Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*

Michel Foucault, in the essay "Self Writing" (1997), describes the *ethopoietic* writing in Latins such as Marcus Aurelius, Seneca, Plutarch, et cetera. One example is Epictetus, who saw the "meditation" as an "exercise of thought on itself that reactivates what it knows, calls to mind a principle, a rule, or an example, reflects on them, assimilates them, and in this manner prepares itself to face reality."¹ Plutarch, as Foucault says it, on the other hand understood the *ethopoietic*:

As an element of self-training, writing has, to use an expression that one finds in Plutarch, an *ethopoietic* function: it is an agent of the transformation of truth into *ethos*. This *ethopoietic* writing, such as it appears through the documents of the first and the second centuries, seems to have lodged itself outside of two forms that were already well known and used for other purposes: the *hupomnemata* and the *correspondence*.²

The *hupomnemata* was more than a notebook that helps the memory to remember something that has been read, heard, or thought; it was a writing to help with actions, to face reality, or, as Plutarch writes, to "transform truth into *ethos*."³ Foucault writes that the "aim of the *hupomnemata*: to make one's recollection of the fragmentary *logos*, transmitted through teaching, listening, or reading, a means of establishing a relationship of oneself with oneself, a relationship as adequate and accomplished as possible."⁴ This writing was a means to calm down the soul, because "[t]he *hupomnemata* contribute one of the means by which one detaches the soul from concern for the future and redirects it toward contemplation of the past."⁵

This writing style that is a union of reading, experience, and thoughts is not new in philosophy, as Foucault reveals to us about the Latins and *ethopoietic* writing. It is not the goal of this paper to affirm that Anzaldúa could be compared with these Latins in a restricted way. But it is possible to perceive that she would be a "post-*hupomnemata*" who utilizes her writing to help women to understand their world and their identity as a possibility for being manifold, as well as a lot of other concepts about living and action that she explains through her experience, culture, poems, songs, life, and reports. She is not worried about a contemplation of the past as a way that "detaches the soul from concern the future"; she thinks that a contemplation of the past will help us to change the future, and that it is necessary to realize a world that understands the borderland, to blur it. She explains that "[c]hanging ourselves we change the world, that traveling *El Mundo Zurdo* path is the path of a two-way movement—a going deep into the self and an expanding out into the world, a simultaneous recreation of the self and a reconstruction of society."⁶

However, her writing is ethical and concerned with changing the truths (the traditional concept that Anzaldúa actualized to “metaphors”) into a new ethos with new “truths,” new metaphors arising from a new society (Anzaldúa says that “We preserve ourselves through metaphor; through metaphor we protect ourselves. The resistance to change in a person is in direct proportion to the number of dead metaphors that person carries.”⁷) where the culture is not tyranny. Anzaldúa explains:

Culture forms our beliefs. We perceive the version of reality that it communicates. Dominant paradigms, predefined concepts that exist as unquestionable; unchallengeable, are transmitted to us through the culture. Culture is made by those in power—men. Males make the rules and laws; women transmit them. How many times have I heard mothers and mothers-in-law tell their sons to beat their wives for not obeying them, for being *hociconas* (big mouths), for being *callejeras* (going to visit and gossip with neighbors), for expecting their husbands to help with the rearing of children and the housework, for wanting to be something other than housewives?⁸

These metaphors are constructed to overwhelm those who do not fit, who are different, who possess a manifold of metaphors, dead or new (constructed from an exercise of putting our internal feelings in words, and expecting that the “reader” can live the metaphors and create their own new metaphors).

Anzaldúa, meanwhile, writes that it is not easy to be heard, to possess the voice to create your own speech when you are not the “men in power.” If you live in the *frontera*/borderland, evading the old metaphors that the cultural tyranny institutionalized, your voice is mute, your body is a tool, and your feelings do not exist. Anzaldúa writes about borders:

Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish *us* from *them*. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants. Los *atravesados* live here: the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulatto, the half-breed, the half dead; in short, those who cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the “normal.”⁹

When those that live in borderlands want to speak, they are treated as queer, something abnormal, an exception. Your gender is different, your skin so dark, your body is not made to think but to work, your language is a mix, you are disorderly, the old metaphor cannot define you, or, better, defines you as queer, as something different that is impossible to understand. Anzaldúa shows us, with all her work, how it is possible to kill those metaphors and create new metaphors, a new culture (*ethos*) to live according to the manifold. Judith Butler explains this subject in

Anzaldúa’s philosophy (in her “Americanized” view):

One could say that for her, the subject is “multiple” rather than unitary, and that would be to get the point in a way. But I think her point is more radical. She is asking us to stay at the edge of what we know, to put our own epistemological certainties into question, and through that risk and openness to another way of knowing and living in the world to expand our capacity to imagine the human. She is asking us to be able to work in coalitions across differences that will make a more inclusive movement.¹⁰

You can be *mestiza*; you do not need borders to stop you; you are this variety of feelings, sounds, experiences, and thoughts that you can share, learning to make yourself audible:

Unlikely to be friends of people in high literary places, the beginning woman of color is invisible both in the white male mainstream world and in the white women’s feminist world, though in the latter this is gradually changing. The *lesbian* of color is not only invisible, she doesn’t even exist. Our speech, too, is inaudible. We speak in tongues like the outcast and the insane.¹¹

About the difficulty in believing yourself a capable, thoughtful person who can write and speak by yourself, Anzaldúa says about her own experience:

How dare I even consider becoming a writer as I stooped over the tomato fields bending, bending under the hot sun, hands broadened and calloused, not fit to hold the quill, numbed into an animal stupor by the heat.

How hard it is for us to *think* we can choose to become writers, much less *feel* and *believe* that we can.

(...) The white man speaks: *Perhaps if you scrape the dark off your face. Maybe if you bleach your bones. Stop speaking in tongues, stop writing left-handed. Don’t cultivate your colored skins nor tongues of fire if you want to make it in a right-handed world.*¹²

La frontera/the borderland is something that you need to be allowed to cross, or enable itself to cross. You need to change according to what is necessary, according to how the “white man speaks.” When the woman wants to write, to be audible, she can do everything that is expected, being a good “right-hand,” or she needs to live the borders, sometimes as one who crosses, but many times as one who is in the border. She is a woman, but not only a woman, and she is being a woman in a different way than your mother or sister: she is queer and writes to create new metaphors that explain herself as human, not queer.

Anzaldúa translates her stories, feelings, and nakedness, and allows us to understand her writing as something

respectful. Anzaldúa's *self writing* is the creation of her own memory; it is organic writing because it allows her to transform her life in voice, complex and painful, but living to the reader. The world is not a safe place, like the reader is not always the person that produces a safe place inside themselves to build experience and transform writing into living speech—sharing feelings, modifying metaphors. Power is the big speech, so when you read a text like Anzaldúa's and think if you "buy it or do not," the path is closed, the text muted, the feelings disappear. Why? Anzaldúa does not think that you need to buy her ideas, because her text is that naked body that we observe, and she invites us to touch, to kill, or to talk with, like the performer that blurs the border of her own body and her artwork.

Anzaldúa has many thoughts about life, writing, being a woman, *mestiza*, et cetera, but you can try to understand all of her meanings as philosophy, understanding her epistemology. But when I say "epistemology," I refuse the experience; I could think, but that is not feeling what it is to be manifold. Thus, the seam of Anzaldúa's work is writing being manifold, her style is *mestizo*, she is all these tongues (epistemology, poetry, sounds, deities . . .) and talking about Anzaldúa should be talking with her, and the work of the reader is (as it occurs with the Latins which Foucault presented) reading the memories, notes, and experiences as a confession: a paper transformed into life. Foucault writes:

The role of writing is to constitute, along with all that reading has constituted, a "body" (*quicquid lectione collectum est, stilus redigat in corpus*). And this body should be understood not as a body of doctrine but, rather—following an often-evoked metaphor of digestion—as the very body of the one who, by transcribing his readings, has appropriated them and made their truth his own: writing transforms the thing seen or heard "into tissue and blood" (*in vires et in sanguinem*). It becomes a principle of rational action in the writer himself.¹³

Anzaldúa goes beyond this; not only what you read constitutes a "body," but all of your experiences:

It makes perfect sense to me now how I resisted the act of writing, the commitment to writing. To write is to confront one's demons, look them in the face and live to write about them. Fear acts like a magnet; it draws the demons out the closet and into the ink in our pens.¹⁴

1.1 EL MAR DOES NOT STOP AT BORDERS

I am going to create what happened to me. Only because living

isn't tellable. Living isn't livable. I shall have to create upon life. And

without lying. Yes to creation, no to lying. Creation isn't imagination,

it's running the huge risk of coming face to face with reality.

– Clarice Lispector, *The Passion According to G. H.*

The experience of *la frontera*/borderland is Anzaldúa's *leitmotiv*. Everyone has a home, a safe place to hide, to love, to come back, to feel protection. Probably the first home is the family, the parents' house, your spot in the world. But, when you feel queer within your family, home, country . . . ? Your skin is not the color that it should be, your gender is a problem, and you are foreign and you feel the loneliness of being who you are. Anzaldúa always lived *en la frontera*; that is central to Anzaldúa's experience/concept/metaphor in her texts. But her big issue is emphasizing that we do not need to cross the border or make the *travesía*, we can live inside the border and be an alien—only by being an alien can Anzaldúa create new metaphors. It is painful, but by exposing her "queer" and "alien" being she reveals the path to transforming herself and killing these metaphors—or became a bridge. She is *mestiza*, she speaks tongues, she is "left-handed," woman, *chicana*, writer. Anzaldúa lived the cultural-political border, as she says:

We [chicanos] are a synergy of two cultures with various degrees of Mexicanness or Angloness. I have so internalized the borderland conflict that sometimes I feel like one cancels out the other and we are zero, nothing, no one. *A veces no soy nada di nadie. Pero hasta cuando no lo soy, lo soy.*¹⁵

Living in the borderlands, being *chicana*, utilizing the writing to kill demons, (re)creating herself from the inside is the intense organicity of her work. Nakedness is the necessary experience to find other "clothes," namely, new metaphors for healing herself (and society).

Anzaldúa writes about the tradition of the shaman, who is responsible "to preserve and create cultural or group identity by mediating between the cultural heritage of the past and the present everyday situation people find themselves in."¹⁶ Anzaldúa says that we should be our own shaman, creating images that alter states of consciousness, conducting us to self-healing. Language and her new metaphors change our belief system, so *la curación*/healing is to be in control of your communication, of your life—"My soul makes itself through the creative act. . . . It is this learning to live with *la Coatlicue*¹⁷ that transforms living in the Borderlands from a nightmare into a numinous experience. It is always a path/state to something else."¹⁸

In the path of "being shaman," we find religion, archetypes, poetry, art, and all these places free the soul and imagination to create new images, new self-images. Anzaldúa explains: "In the ethno-poetics and performance of the shaman, my people, the Indians, did not split the artistic from the functional, the sacred from the secular, art from everyday life. The religious, social and aesthetic purposes of art were all intertwined."¹⁹

Image is important to Anzaldúa because it is the symbol that we create that matters; one image is thousands of words, it is a cluster of meanings. Therefore, once again

it is impossible to understand Anzaldúa's aesthetic-ethics without the experience—the body needs to feel the image; the stories are alive, muteness or deadness does not exist in the path of the shaman; everything is about the dance of meanings, the great performance about myself. If we want to understand Anzaldúa's aesthetic, we will need to observe her own work as art, as a huge performance:

My "stories" are acts encapsulated in time, "enacted" every time they are spoken aloud or read silently. I like to think of them as performances and not as inert and "dead" objects (as the aesthetics of Western culture think of art works). Instead, the work has an identity; it is a "who" or a "what" and contains the presences of persons, that is, incarnations of gods or ancestors or natural and cosmic powers. The work manifests the same needs as a person, it needs to be "fed," *la tengo que bañar y vestir*.²⁰

An example of the Anzaldúa's aesthetic/shamanism is Ana Mendieta's artworks. Mendieta was born in Havana, Cuba, in 1948, and she was sent to live in the United States in 1961 after the alliance between Castro's factions and Mendieta's father turned sour. Her exile informed the development of her ensuing work; she did not identify with a particular homeland and adopted various sites for her performances. About her work, Mendieta says:

My art is grounded in the belief of one universal energy which runs through everything: from insect to man, from man to spectre, from spectre to plant from plant to galaxy. My works are the irrigation veins of this universal fluid. Through them ascend the ancestral sap, the original beliefs, the primordial accumulations, the unconscious thoughts that animate the world.²¹

In her artwork *Untitled (Body Tracks)*²² from 1974, Mendieta, eliminating the «paintbrush,» is able to use her own body to control her desired outcome rather than relying on an objectification of the male gaze as dictator to the female body, the cultural tyranny of art (right-hand). Confronting Yves Klein's anthropometric painting from the 1950s where naked females painted with their bodies under the instruction of Klein's own male ego, Mendieta became instructor and participant in the gesture of her own female form, of her performance, her image.

Blood is a feminine, primitive symbol; it is both life and death, and the woman is the being that bleeds and does not die. Anzaldúa has a poem about this same theme called *La vulva es una herida abierta/The vulva is an open wound*. The blood, the bleeding body is a key to an internal self-discovery, to talk about blood, pain, and birth with the left-hand could be a start to talking about her (self). As Anzaldúa's poem says:

La pica le pica She bleeds 10 días de cada 24 She watches a chicken, neck wrung, twitch all over the yard. It bleeds then lays still. Dead. At night she stays awake to keep death away. Chickens peck each other when confined in small spaces. She is

afraid. No not of the blood but of what happens when someone or something bleeds.²³

Mendieta's works are imbued with symbolism drawn from indigenous religions such as Santería (a Cuban hybrid of Catholicism, West African and Caribbean spiritual beliefs, archetypal nature imagery, and Mexican funerary decorations). She believed she had more in common with indigenous artists than with her contemporaries; she did not see her work as more emotional and sensual than interested in formal qualities. Mendieta's works have plenty of meaning and symbols and carry her personal mark: the exile.

Just as Anzaldúa was *mestiza* and that is the healing and wound in her work, Mendieta was an exile from Cuba and lived her life until her tragic death in 1985, and that could be understood as an invitation to her "shamanism." Mendieta's *Siluetas Series* (Mexico, 1976) is an example of her organic art. In this series, Mendieta developed a personal mixture of performance and land art which she termed "earth-body work" and "earth-body sculptures." Her transient landscape interventions, designed to survive only as photographs, are small in scale and firmly rooted to her female body. In a statement she wrote about her work in 1981, she explained:

I have been carrying out a dialogue between the landscape and the female body (based on my own silhouette). I believe this has been a direct result of my having been torn from my homeland (Cuba) during my adolescence. I am overwhelmed by the feeling of having been cast from the womb (nature). My art is the way I re-establish the bonds that unite me to the universe. It is a return to the maternal source. Through my earth/body sculptures I become one with the earth . . . I become an extension of nature and nature becomes an extension of my body. This obsessive act of reasserting my ties with the earth is really the reactivation of primeval beliefs . . . [in] an omnipresent female force, the after-image of being encompassed within the womb.²⁴

Mendieta and Anzaldúa, it is possible to note, possess the same understanding of art, or, as Anzaldúa called it, invoked art: "Invoked art is communal and speaks of everyday life. It is dedicated to the validation of humans; that is, it makes people hopeful, happy, secure, and it can have negative effects as well, which propel one towards a search for validation."²⁵ Both Anzaldúa and Mendieta work in the *mundo zurdo/left-handed world*, from inside the darkness, femaleness, "primitiveness"—opposite from the right-hand world, the "rational." However, Anzaldúa's philosophy is not limited by just one thought, or, it would be wrong to think that she is not "rational," as the traditional division between feeling and rationality tells us. Anzaldúa believes in a different rationality, a mystical rationality that is an opening to support the manifold. Talking about new metaphors, the image that Anzaldúa suggests is the ocean and the shore. The ocean is the unconscious, the imagination, the underworld; the shore is rationality, the reasoning mode. The water is the connection between

ocean and land. The creative person/artist is as a boat that traffics between two worlds. Anzaldúa explains that she is concerned about these realities because her last name, "Anzaldúa," is a Basque name where "an" means above, the spirit; "zal" means the world of soul; and "dúa" is the bridge.²⁶ Between the ocean and the land we cannot see the borderland because water sweeps the land with kindness and bravery. We can walk on the seaside and have our feet wet and dry; we do not need to decide if we want to cross the border, we just need to want to walk on the border—because *el mar* does not stop at borders, or, simply become the bridge.

CONCLUSION

Anzaldúa wanted to be this big bridge between countries, colors, races, genders; she invented a voice for everyone who has been silenced, every alien in its skin, and all women who are subdued. She believed that every change initially is small, centralized in one soul, and takes shape in individual experience. She wanted to show us, from inside to out, in her writing how we need to listen, and utilize the silence to make movement, not slavery; in her writing she evoked the good and the evil from her life to talk with, learning to live as building the bridge first between who they said that she was and who she could be.

The bridge that Anzaldúa talks to us about could be more real than we imagine. Allow it to talk its language, have its color, be its gender, to possess its body and do not impose these for others, but concern it with hearing itself and transforming itself into something more than a thing, but a soul embodied in a body that is, itself, a bridge between inside and outside—in every meaning. Strengthen it until the point that you can say that it is proud, but with a pride that is more dignity by itself than a feeling of superiority. To become the lesbian black-color woman who wakes up and will make your own voice to be heard in your own language because it is not something else, an alien hidden from the (sick) normality. Anzaldúa's writing is that *ethopoietic* loaded with soul.

Pero nunca nos quitarán ese orgullo/ de ser mexicana-Chicana-tejana /ni el espíritu indio. / Y cuando los gringos se acaban—/ mira como se matan unos a los otros—/ aquí vamos a parecer/ con los horned toads y los lagartijos /survivors del First Fire Age, el Quinto Sol.²⁷

NOTES

1. Michel Foucault, "Self Writing," in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth* (New York: The New Press, 1997), 209.
2. Ibid., 209.

3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., 211.
5. Ibid., 212.
6. Gloria Anzaldúa, *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2009), 49.
7. Ibid., 122.
8. Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1999), 38.
9. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 25.
10. Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), 228.
11. Gloria Anzaldúa, "Speaking In Tongues: A Letter to 3rd World Women Writers," *This Bridge Called my Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (New York: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1983), 165.
12. Anzaldúa, *This Bridge Called My Back*, 166.
13. Foucault, "Self Writing," 213.
14. Anzaldúa, *This Bridge Called My Back*, 171.
15. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 85.
16. Anzaldúa, *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader*, 121.
17. *Coatlicue* is to portray the contradictory. It is an Aztec symbol of the fusion of opposites.
18. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 95.
19. Ibid., 88.
20. Ibid., 89.
21. Ana Mendieta, "A Selection of Statements and Notes," *Sulfur* 22 (1988): 70.
22. The performance is available on Youtube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QccOqJ2WG8k>
23. Anzaldúa, *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader*, 199.
24. Text extracted from <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/mendieta-untitled-silueta-series-mexico-t13356/text-summary>
25. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 89.
26. Anzaldúa, *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader*, 103, 105.
27. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 222.

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