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APA NEWSLETTER ON

Indigenous Philosophy

KYLE POWYS WHYTE, EDITOR

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FROM THE CHAIR

Renewing the Indigenous Philosophers' Newsletter

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The newsletter of the American Philosophical Association Committee on the Status of Indigenous Philosophers has a long history, going back to the formation of the previous Committee on American Indians in Philosophy in 2001, and was once published regularly. Certainly there has been no meaningful (or even attempted) reconciliation between the APA and the thousands of Indigenous peoples everywhere—many of whose living philosophical traditions preexist the settler “homeland” to which the “American” in APA usually refers. Yet many of us feel strongly that this newsletter can at least keep flickering the little fire that is the involvement of Indigenous persons in the APA.

The newsletter has new editors, including Agnes Curry, Shay Welch, Shawn Burns, Anne Waters, and myself, who will be publishing the newsletter annually alongside the other APA committee newsletters. The newsletter will reflect the efforts of the editors and the committee itself in “assessing and reporting on the status of Indigenous people in the profession and with exploring the sources and supporting the development of Indigenous philosophy.” Speaking for myself only, I look forward to future engagement with the community of philosophers in the APA and hope that, even if only in small ways, the work of the newsletter can contribute to the resurgence of Indigenous peoples in their own homelands.

This renewal issue of the newsletter includes presentations from a panel at the American Philosophical Association 2014 Pacific Division meeting, and a book review. The panel, “Conceptual Schemes,” featured presentations by Ifeanyi Menkiti (Wellesley College), Thomas Norton-Smith (Kent State University), Naomi Scheman (University of Minnesota), and Lera Boroditsky (University of California, San Diego). (Professor Boroditsky’s paper does not appear here, but a version appears as “How Language Shapes Thought,” *Scientific American*, February 2011.) The book review, by Anne Waters, is of *Aztec Philosophy: A World in Motion*, by James Maffie, Ph.D., University of Maryland (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2014).

ARTICLES

Conceptual Schemes Invited Symposium: Introduction

Ivan Welty
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The papers gathered here were presented at the 2014 annual meeting of the American Philosophy Association, Pacific Division, as part of an invited symposium entitled “Conceptual Schemes.” The presenters were, in order of appearance, Ifeanyi Menkiti (Wellesley College), Thomas Norton-Smith (Kent State University), Naomi Scheman (University of Minnesota), and Lera Boroditsky (University of California, San Diego). (Professor Boroditsky’s fascinating paper does not appear here but a version appears as “How Language Shapes Thought,” *Scientific American*, February 2011.) In addition to presenting his or her own paper, each speaker also shared prepared comments on another of the papers. The papers appear here without those comments or the ensuing discussion, but they remain as potent a stimulus to thought as they were originally.

A short historical sketch might be found useful, by way of background. The idea of analyzing experience into a conceptual framework and its content first took hold of Western philosophy with Kant’s critical works, then reemerged forcefully in German and Anglo-American philosophy in the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Frege conceived his logic as a universal framework, the “laws of the laws of thought”; Russell and, in his own way, the early Wittgenstein followed, and behind them the Logical Positivists. Husserl projected Kant’s distinction into phenomenology while Heidegger sought to dissolve it by elaborating his notion of a world. The idea of radically alternative conceptual schemes was found useful in linguistics and anthropology, where von Humboldt, Sapir, and Whorf, among many others, came to terms with actual, deep-going differences. Quine, taking a behaviorist and scientific approach, bifurcated the idea of a conceptual scheme: on the one hand, “webs of belief,” including everything from observation statements to propositions of logic; on the other hand, methodological principles for revising webs of belief in the face of “recalcitrant experience.” Davidson turned Quine’s methodological principles against the idea that webs of belief could be mutually inscrutable, Kuhn, Feyerabend, and others put the idea of mutual inscrutability to good

use, while Goodman at least embraced pluralism. Interest in the distinction between conceptual scheme and content has been muted among those who take possible worlds as their scheme, but Kripke's observation that possible worlds are descriptions may yet open the way to new interest in that quarter (whose descriptions?). In political philosophy, liberals continue to develop the idea of a neutral framework (rights) within which diverse aims (goods) might be accommodated. Most recently, psychologists, including Boroditsky, have begun to investigate conceptual schemes empirically.

This historical survey hardly scratches the surface, but it does give a sense of the great swings in the humanities and social sciences between the idea of a single universal scheme and the idea of a plurality of possibly incompatible schemes. It also indicates how narrow a circle has been represented by the parties to this discussion, especially compared with the variety of putatively different conceptual schemes cited as examples in the course of the discussion. The discussants have been, mostly, white men schooled in a small number of philosophical traditions. This symposium was organized with a view to enlarging the circle, and it should come as no surprise that the papers leave us with a genuinely new and deeper understanding of their subject. As points of contact between different philosophical and cultural traditions multiply, the need and opportunity for more open philosophical discussion increases. The reader is urged to take in all of these papers at a single sitting: no less than when they were presented together at the symposium, they enrich each other.

Thanks are due to the authors of the papers, to Anne Waters for conceiving and making possible their publication here, and to Thomas Norton-Smith for seeing the project through.

A Problem of Translation, Or Is It Something Else?

Ifeanyi Menkiti
WELLESLEY COLLEGE

There are some expressions used in England which would make no sense in America, or used in America which would make no sense in England, even though both are English-speaking countries. There is nothing unusual about this sort of situation, and one does not have to lose sleep over it.

But there is perhaps something else, something which might turn out more interesting in regard to the articulation of conceptual schemes. It has to do with regional or local conventions which tend to fix meaning to words whose meanings are otherwise already fixed. Consider this real life contemporary example.

In the city of Boston's MBTA system, there are two calls made each time a train approaches a station. The calls go this way: "The next train to Alewife is now approaching" and then, soon after, "The next train to Alewife is now arriving." But the attentive train rider soon begins to wonder: Could

this call be equally made by using the sequence, "The next train to Alewife is now "arriving" [at the station]" followed, soon after, by "The next train to Alewife is now "approaching" [the platform]."

For although, in general use, "approaching" seems to be prior to "arriving," it is not clear that in the context of the design of a modern transit system "approaching" ought to come before "arriving." After all, isn't the point of the announcement to alert the passenger to get ready to get off, or board, the train? If so, *arriving* [at the station] and *approaching* [the platform] makes equal, if not better sense.

Does this mean that Bostonians should change their convention of use? Not at all. My point, rather, is that once Bostonians have committed themselves to the conventional use that "approaching" comes before "arriving," within the transit system, then certain meanings are fixed and "arriving" is not at liberty to come before "approaching." In London, however, things could be different. The folks in England (where English, one is reminded, first began) could well engage in a different convention in regard to their own underground system. The sequence could go something like this: "The next train to Piccadilly is now arriving [at the station]" and then soon after, "The next train to Piccadilly is now approaching [the platform]."

To drive home even further some of the complications arising from this matter, imagine this scenario. Imagine an African immigrant, who has just received her Ph.D. in English literature from Harvard University. She is standing in the Harvard Square stop of the MBTA's transit system trying very hard to explain to her visiting grandmother, who does not understand English, what "approaches" and "arrives" mean, and in what sequence they are related to each other. She tells her grandmother that "arrives" comes after "approaches" and that that is the natural order for English speakers. Imagine also that this same grandmother then goes to London the next month to visit the young woman's twin sister, also a recipient of a Ph.D. in English literature from the University of London. As they both stand on the platform in the London underground, an announcement comes through loud and clear, "The next train to Piccadilly is now arriving" followed, soon after by, "The next train to Piccadilly is now approaching."

The old woman then asks the daughter: "Why are they doing things backwards here? Why do they say "arriving" before "approaching"? What do they mean? "The old woman is confused and comes away convinced that some sort of holy confusion reigns in the minds of English speakers; the conviction, in other words, that the English language is somehow lunatic if the speakers are so free to change meanings as the mood strikes them.

And talking of "holy confusion," we find ourselves at an appropriate juncture here to turn attention to the claims of the African thinker Okot p' Bitek who in his book, *African Religions in Western Scholarship*, writes:

African peoples may describe their deities as "strong," but not "omnipotent"; "wise," not

“omniscient”; “old,” not “eternal”; “great,” not “omnipresent.” The Greek metaphysical terms are meaningless in African thinking. Like Danquah, Mbiti, Idowu, Busia, Abraham, Kenyatta, Senghor, and the missionaries, modern Western Christian anthropologists are intellectual smugglers. They are busy introducing Greek metaphysical conceptions into African religious thought. The African deities of the books, clothed with the attributes of the Christian God, are, in the main, creations of the students of African religions. They are all beyond recognition to the ordinary African in the countryside.” (88)

These are obviously fighting words. But apart from the fight, something quite serious, philosophically, and, in my mind, rather complicated, is going on here. Three issues immediately come to mind.

First, the passage raises the question of group inclusion, the question of how individuals are to be assigned to the communities said to share this or that conceptual scheme. Who belongs and who does not belong? The African scholars that Bitek takes up in his list, accusing them of bundling together with the missionaries and Western Christian anthropologists, might they insist that they have found some way of stretching the African conceptions of the Godhead so as to make things blend with the Western understanding, regardless of what else Bitek says is the situation in the African countryside. This would especially be the case with John Mbiti of Kenya, an ordained Protestant minister with a parish in Switzerland, and also the case with Francis Cardinal Arinze of Nigeria, who was prominently mentioned as a papabile during the Roman Catholic conclave to choose a successor to Pope John Paul II. These two Africans are also mapping their way in the modern world. They have not given up, and should not be made to give up, their Africaness. Their attempting to stretch meanings is not the problem, but rather whether or not their attempt has succeeded.

Second, how are we to match up the entities in these comparative investigations? Which entities are we to counterpose one to the other? Should it be traditional Africa to traditional Europe? Or should it be traditional Africa to today’s Europe, in all of its various manifestations? Clarity on this issue is important, and should make a difference, either in regard to the search for an accord, or in regard to the search for an ultimate separation. Thus, if one were to negatively compare modern Western physics to African traditional belief in spirits, then someone else might cry foul and would be justified in crying foul. Charges of “superstition” or “primitivism” often arise as a result of these inappropriate comparisons. As the Ghanaian philosopher Kwasi Wiredu has pointed out, for the idea of a superstition to be coherent there has to be a remove, either in space or in time. Space-wise, charges of superstition can fly either way. But just as the modern Western scientist does not see himself or herself engaged in a superstition within the scientist’s designated space, so, likewise, the African believer in spirits, a continent removed, does not see himself or herself engaged in a superstition. Both are located in two different conceptual spaces, each with

its own worldview, and worldviews do not trump each other. The same can be said, time-wise. For example, an educated New Englander of today may very well talk of the superstitions involved in the Salem witchcraft trials, but a resident of New England during the Salem witchcraft trials would not see what was going on as a case of a belief in superstitions. If this is so, one then has to conclude that it is the privileging of one space, or one time, over another that undergirds the negative comparative judgments regarding the existence of a superstition. There is here, in addition to the epistemic concern, a moral one as well.

Thirdly, within each national community, there are other embedded communities. Either these are communities of knowledge, or communities of affect. Or perhaps they have become communities of knowledge because shaped by an anterior fact of affect. Some say that the eye can only see what the mind already knows, what the heart already feels. Perhaps, perhaps not. In any case, this third consideration is intriguing in its own right. Consider in this regard this other passage from Bitek:

The Luo language bears testimony to the fact that the Nilotes, like the early Jews, do not think metaphysically. The concept of *Logos* does not exist in Nilotic thinking; so the word *Word* was translated into *Lok* which means *news* or message, as in the greeting “*Lok angoo?*,” “What is the news?” or “How are you?” And as the Nilotes were not very concerned with the beginning or end of the world, the phrase “In the beginning” was rendered “*Nia con ki con*,” which is “From long long ago.” We have already seen how the missionaries took the hunch-back spirit as the equivalent of the creator. The first verse of St. John’s Gospel in Luo reads as follows: “*Nia con ki con Lok onongo tye, Lok tye bot Lubanga, Lok aye ceng Lubanga.*” Retranslated into English, it goes, “From long long ago there was News, News was with the Hunch-back Spirit, News was the Hunch-back Spirit.”

Bitek then goes on to reason that the situation may very well be a hopeless one, calling attention to the pessimistic remarks of Evans-Pritchard who writes, “Missionaries have battled hard and with great sincerity to overcome these difficulties, but, in my experience much of what they teach natives is quite unintelligible to those among whom they labour.” And so Bitek adds:

The crux of the matter is that it never occurred to the missionaries that Africans do not think metaphysically; and that, in any case, as the current debate within the Christian Churches indicate, metaphysical thinking is perhaps a hindrance to the understanding of the nature of the deity. (85)

I have quoted Bitek extensively so as to give the reader a better sense of where else he could be going with his thinking in these matters. In his mind, all talk about the successful planting of Christianity in Africa should be re-examined. For if the Holy Book cannot be successfully translated into the African languages, how can the natives be said to believe appropriately?

Two things bear pointing out in regard to Bitek's animadversions in the above quoted passages. In looking at the passages, one notices a tone not only of "Please, do your own thing, and leave Africa alone," but also a tone of "You've got it all wrong about Africa, and you can't even do your own thing right."

There is a certain irony in all of this. The Europeans came, condescendingly saying of the Africans that they, the Africans, knew nothing, cannot do anything right. And now the Africans are saying of the Europeans, "You not only do not understand Africa, but you are the ones that can't do anything right; we have your sacred books to prove it."

Bitek would have us return to the basics of grounded speech, the kind of no nonsense communication one finds in the villages. In his views, we find a belief that established things are more reliable than things newly minted. No doubt, this orientation has much to recommend it. But we've also got to concede that the world is rapidly changing, and sometimes a new language and a new methodology is exactly what is needed. Consider these two pieces of advice: "If you have a toothache, call your grandmother," and "If you smell gas, call your grandmother." The first advice might be okay, but the second advice would not do. Commonwealth Gas, or National Grid, has more equipment, more expertise, than anyone's grandmother. In the gas situation, what is needed is action on an immediate scale. One would not be accused of weakening the authority of elders by bypassing the advice of one's elderly grandmother in favor of input from the young men and women who work for Commonwealth Gas.

We are constantly solving new problems brought about by our changing situations. And we keep refining our understanding of the machines with which we live, as well as the multiple causal stories surrounding the machines in question. Sometimes we are pushed to create a new language when the old will no longer do, as when in current psychiatric situations we come up with the expression "She had a breakdown" as opposed to "The spirits took control of her head."

It does not, of course, mean that we have to abandon the old lens of village common sense in all of this. That old lens of village common sense always will remain as a corrective. Suppose, for example, that it was found that cattle in Nevada tastes better than cattle in Minnesota, and soon some fast talking Nevadan begins claiming that the reason for the difference in taste is because of the neon lights and the musical dings from all the slot machines in Nevada. He says that the cattle in Nevada find the neon and the dinging very relaxing and so produce better beef. Village common sense is not likely to accept this kind of causal explanation. It will either tell the guy that he is in the pay of the Nevada Department of Tourism, or that he has had one drink too many. It is not likely that anyone would take this causal story seriously enough to call for further scientific investigation.

And, finally, there is an aspect of the problem of conceptual schemes that has to do with human interest encoding itself into myth and from myth into social fact. It is said,

for example, of the Masai of Kenya that they at some point believed that all the cattle in the world belonged to them, and so cattle raids were perfectly in order since the Masai were only recovering what God had given to them and others had illicitly taken. Now, imagine that the Masai decide to launch a cattle raid in England to bring back all the cattle in Britain to Kenya. I do not think that the British Navy should have to accept this. The big guns of Her Majesty's warships will have to settle the matter should the Kenyan government decide to back up the Masai claims. Here, in a way, there is not a serious conceptual disagreement between the English and the Masai. It does not appear to be a problem of the mapping of concepts from one space onto the other, but of the keeping of what one feels one is entitled to according to one's inherited notions of justice. The Masai understand what thievery means, hence their raid; and the British also understand what thievery means, hence their shooting back. Here is a lighthearted poem to settle this debate between the British and the Masai:

tomorrow the truth will be out,
 it will be out for sale
 in the public square
 and since my pennies weigh
 more than your pennies do
 the truth will belong
 to me, not to you

When all is said and done, language with which these belief systems are carried forward will continue to be our companion in the search for any solution. There will always remain a certain normativity to the whole quest because of this fact of language. A criminal, for instance, does not have a conceptual scheme different from the conceptual scheme shared by law-abiding citizens. There is, as I have just stated, a normativity to the use of "conceptual scheme" to describe a situation. It is for this reason that conceptual schemes cannot be said to be deviant vis-à-vis one another. They may be incompatible or incongruent and they may not match, lined up one against the other; but for them to be deviant they'd have to be lined up against a superior order of measurement. However, if this is done, then the deviancy in question would have to be against the superior order, not against each other.

I have stayed away from the problem of indexicals and what they may suggest in regard to translation and its problems. Suppose that Jack is devoted to his wife and that Jack says to his friend Peter, who, because of his wandering eyes, has been having trouble at home, "Do as I do,, and that Peter then says to Jack in reply, "Tell me when you are out on the road so I can come and be devoted to your wife." Has Peter understood or not understood the meaning of "Do as I do"?

The indexicals, we say, are always causing trouble. But is the problem with indexicality or with the inflationary

pressures of language, as such? The native speaker of a language is supposed to understand, but if it turns out that he has not understood, then why has he not understood?

Asking these questions within a local situation indicates to us how careful we have to be as we travel with concepts across borders. I suggest that we continue to use what might be called, in this context, a Principle of Interpretive Charity. For Africans, for instance, using such a principle in regard to Europe, it would go something like this: "They did not think much of our ways, but using the lens they had, they did the best they could; they were not bad people though some of them may have been bad." And for Europeans, the principle could have applied something like this, when contact was first made: "We do not quite fully understand these natives, but surely they must see some meaning in what they are doing; maybe one day we will come to understand."

Constructive Realism: Variations on a Theme by Nelson Goodman

Thomas M. Norton-Smith
 KENT STATE UNIVERSITY AT STARK

I. NELSON GOODMAN'S CONSTRUCTIVISM

According to Nelson Goodman's constructive nominalism, there is a plurality of internally consistent, equally privileged, well-made actual worlds constructed through the use of symbol systems he calls "right" or "ultimately acceptable" world versions. In other places I have argued that Goodman's criteria for ultimate acceptability are culturally biased against any non-Western world version—especially an American Indian version.¹ I also offered an interpretation of Goodman's criteria for ultimate acceptability that an American Indian world version satisfies, and so is numbered among the internally consistent, equally privileged, well-made actual worlds.² But that is not my present purpose. I intend to offer a realist variation of Goodman's constructive nominalism—called "constructive realism"—which preserves his original constructivist insights while rescuing his radical relativism—his "irrealism"—from the paradox of self-reference.

Goodman's fundamental insight is that the notion of a mind-independent world of facts is mistaken; "facts are fabricated," as he famously puts it.³ I've often used facts about my backyard bird feeder, visited on one particular occasion by a trio of cardinals, as an illustration. On that occasion, there were three red cardinals at the stationary feeder with a single bird atop it. Further, there was a rather meager pile of firewood to its right, it was the same feeder that I repaired last year, and there were no persons around it. And although I'm no ornithologist, I am confident that only one kind of bird—the cardinal—was exemplified by the critters around the feeder. These "facts" make true the corresponding statements about the red cardinals around my stationary feeder, and I know these things because my true beliefs are justified.⁴

So, it is true that "the feeder was not moving." However, isn't it also true that I, my feeder, and its avian guests were moving at 67,000 miles/hour, the speed at which the Earth races around the sun? If so, one wonders how the two contradictory statements, "The bird feeder was not moving" and "The bird feeder was moving," can be true in virtue of two competing facts. I continue to find Goodman's explanation convincing: Each of the statements is true relative to a different *frame of reference*—a different version or description of the world. Within a geocentric frame of reference the feeder is not moving, and within a heliocentric frame of reference the feeder is moving.⁵ A "frame of reference"—a *world version*—is grounded in the categorization and ordering of sense experiences employing a symbol system; that is, a version of the world is grounded in the fabrication of facts through the devices of a language. *There are no "bare facts" of the matter!*

The speciousness of the bare fact as an epistemological foundation is a commonplace in constructivist thought, for the pure content of sense experiences alone underdetermines how the world really is. Indeed, as Goodman argues, one cannot even describe what the pure given might be apart from the order or structure imposed by a description, for a description must be employed in the account.⁶ Thus, the question whether my feeder was *really* moving or not is empty, for without a conceptualizing intellect utilizing a system of description, there was no fact.

The remarkable thing is that there are many possible versions of my backyard world that are consistent with my sense experiences because the content of our experiences underdetermines how the world *really* is. Some of those alternative versions sound quite odd. For example, in a frame of reference wherein "cardinal" is regarded as a mass noun like "coal," then the statement "there were lumps of cardinal around the feeder" is true. In a frame employing the predicate "bleen"—where a thing is bleen if it is either blue or green—it is true that "the cardinals at the feeder were not bleen." Were "red" understood as an intransitive verb like "moves," then the statement "the cardinal atop the feeder redded" would be true, while "the cardinal atop the feeder was red" would not. "The woodpile was northeast of the feeder" might be the natural way of expressing the relative positions of the feeder and the woodpile in a world version without the adjectives "left" and "right." In a nominalist frame without kinds, it is true that "there were three individual cardinals at the feeder," but no fourth entity—the kind "cardinal"—they exemplified. Finally, in a Quinean inspired frame of reference wherein material objects come in temporal slices, it is false that "it was the same feeder I repaired last year." These are some odd facts indeed, for most contradict our habit of thinking and talking about the world, our preferred linguistically categorized and ordered frame of reference—but *not one of them is inconsistent with the content of our sense experiences!*

I argued elsewhere that some of these odd sounding "facts" are quite at home in American Indian world versions.⁷ Many American Indian languages like Shawnee and Choctaw, lacking the verb "to be," treat English adjectives like "red" as intransitive verbs like "moves."⁸ So, a Shawnee speaker

commenting on my backyard scene might say “meci skwaawa,” expressing about the cardinals the fact that “they redded.” As well, the Shawnee stem “skipaky-” applies to a thing if it is either blue or green—or better said, if the thing *bleens*.⁹ Lera Boroditsky shared during the symposium that the Tarahumara in Mexico also have a color word that includes both blue and green. Indeed, she shared, this way of categorizing is so common in indigenous languages that anthropologists call it “grue.” Moreover, according to Boroditsky, the Tarahumara organize spatial experience with respect to the cardinal directions and not by using analogues to Western categories “to the left of” and “to the right of.” And while “there were no persons around the feeder” is true in the Western version, in the Native frame of reference the fact is that *there were three persons around the feeder*.¹⁰ Since the way the world *really* is is underdetermined by the content of our sense experiences, there are many possible interpretations—world versions—of the events taking place in my backyard. In an English version, the cardinals were red and the woodpile was to the right of the feeder; in a Shawnee version, the cardinals redded, and for the Tarahumara, the woodpile was northeast of the feeder.

Goodman discusses several world constructing processes—ways of organizing sense experiences—but he cautions that his considerations are neither comprehensive nor exhaustive.¹¹ Importantly, while Goodman asserts that a “tighter systematization” of processes for constructing new worlds from old is possible, he denies that any such systematization will be “ultimate,” “for there is no more a unique world of worlds than there is a unique world.”¹² However, I will soon argue that a multiplicity of equally privileged constructed worlds does not imply a multiplicity of equally privileged world constructing processes; a relativity of worlds does not imply a relativity of ways of constructing them. In fact, I will maintain that there are *kinds* of world-constructing activities—with kinds understood not as Goodman’s “relevant classes in some world version or other” but as a realist does. But a little more needs to be done before that case can be made.

Three of the most common world-making processes Goodman discusses are composition, decomposition, and weighting, all of which depend upon—and help to determine—how the world is organized into objects and kinds. Composition is a process of uniting in a new version of the world what were before apparently distinct objects or kinds, such as using “the moon” to unite the cyclical reappearance of twenty-eight distinct “phases” with the resulting fact “that waxing gibbous is the same object as the waning crescent.” Decomposition is an opposite process, the dissolution of objects into distinct parts or the partitioning of kinds into sub-species, exemplified by the well-healed observation that Inuit languages draw far more distinctions in the snowy world than Western languages.¹³

The explanation of weighting, a third prominent process of world construction, is grounded in the observation that any two things have some property or feature in common, and so are members of a kind determined by that common feature in some world version or other.¹⁴ Consider two entities that are seemingly different in every respect, say

the solution to the equation “ $x^2 = -1$ ” and a performance of Mozart’s *Requiem*. And yet, they both have at least one thing in common, namely, I have chosen them to be considered, so they are members of the kind “things chosen to illustrate that any two things have something in common.” In short, what counts as an “essential” feature—and so, in turn, a kind of thing—is a function of our organization and categorization of objects and kinds—and purposes—in a particular world version.

But, of course, not all of the objects or kinds that can be constructed have a useful or familiar place in a particular world version; indeed, some kinds will be downright unwelcome, as is the case with the one determined by Goodman’s predicate “grue.” Quite unlike Boroditsky’s “grue,” Goodman’s “grue” applies to all things examined before time *t* just in case they are green and otherwise blue.¹⁵ Briefly, the well-known problem is that every observation of an emerald before time *t* confirms the general hypothesis that all emeralds are green. But why doesn’t each and every one of those observations likewise confirm the general hypothesis that all emeralds are grue? We clearly do not want to make predictions about grue things, as we do about things that are green; we do not believe that “grue” is projectable. The challenge, then, is to distinguish between hypotheses that are projectable—i.e., confirmed by evidence—and those that are not.

Weighting as a world-constructing process is Goodman’s solution to the problem of distinguishing projectable from non-projectable predicates. Not all kinds are relevant in a particular world; green is relevant in our everyday world version, but grue is not. “Skipaky-” is relevant in the Shawnee world version, but “green” is not. That is, the kind green is weighted more heavily than grue in the English world version, and it is so because it has become better entrenched as a result of actual past projections. “Green” is better entrenched than “grue,” and the projections “all emeralds are green” and “all emeralds are grue” conflict in their predictions about unobserved emeralds after time *t*.¹⁶ In cases of such conflict, the entrenched predicate carries the day and is deemed more relevant.

Again, this brief consideration of three world constructing processes—composition, decomposition, and weighting—is incomplete; indeed, there are more ways of remaking new worlds from old Goodman discusses—ordering, deletion, and deformation among them—and I would add sorting and collecting to the list. But we need not tarry, for we have sufficiently illustrated his views about the speciousness of the bare fact as an epistemological foundation and the construction of worlds through the use of constructive processes.

II. CONSTRUCTIVE REALISM

My very first philosophy professor, Bernard McCormick, made this argument about radical relativist views like Goodman’s that still resonates:

It cannot be the case that everything is relative, for the absoluteness of the claim is self-refuting. Either the claim “everything is relative” is itself relative, thus opening the door to absolutes, or

“everything is relative” is itself an absolute, so the claim is false.¹⁷

As I explained in *The Dance of Person and Place*, Goodman’s “irrealism” cannot escape this sort of self-referential paradox. Because his view is expressed in language, like every other statement, theory, model, or version, its objects and kinds—and its facts—are fabricated by that language. But the relevant kinds in Goodman’s constructivist theory include the very kinds of world constructing processes—among them composition and decomposition, weighting and ordering, sorting and collecting—used to make *all* world versions, including his own. So, if all relevant kinds are fabrications within a particular version, then Goodman cannot give a general account of “ways of worldmaking”! Metaphorically speaking, he can’t see beyond the bounds of his own particular version because he cannot give an account that applies to all versions.

Goodman argues that there is a multiplicity of actual, equally privileged world versions constructed using the materials from other world versions. Over time, theories and models are refinements of or reactions against their predecessors. But in another, more important sense, world versions must arise from something else—something that is not a mere part of an antecedent world version. Statements, theories, models, and the entire world versions that contain them are *products of our composings and decomposings, weightings and orderings, collectings and sortings*—that is, they are products of our acts of construction. How could there be the succession or multiplicity of world versions Goodman embraces without the various kinds of acts of construction—some pre-linguistic—that produce them? Rejecting such acts would be, by analogy, to deny that the acts of carpenters are necessary to transform the raw materials of boards and nails into a house. Houses are constructed from other materials, just as world versions are constructed from other world versions—but someone must engage in the acts of constructing.

Now, the acts of carpentry—hammering, sawing, and so forth—are independent of any particular house. And just as many different wooden structures can be built using a single set of tools, the many equally privileged worlds are constructed using a common set of world-constructing processes, like composings, sortings, weightings, and orderings. A multiplicity of worlds does not imply a multiplicity of ways of constructing those worlds. Moreover, it seems to me that we cannot give a general theory of how a multiplicity of actual worlds is constructed—a theory that applies to all versions without the perils of self-reference—unless world-constructing acts are understood as being members of kinds that are independent of any and all particular versions, and not just as relevant kinds of action in Goodman’s version of world-making. A rough, but yet helpful, way to think about what I am proposing—a view I call constructive realism—is this: Whenever the nominalist Goodman talks about a kind of world version constructing process—composition, decomposition, weighting, ordering, etc.—I understand them not as fabricated kinds—as mere extensions of a predicate weighted within Goodman’s particular version—but as genuine, realistically construed kinds of constructing processes that are logically

and ontologically prior to and independent of the multiple actual world versions their exemplars produce.

Consider again my backyard scene, focusing now on the meager woodpile next to the feeder. We have already seen how the statement “there are three sticks of wood” is the fabrication of a fact through the devices of a language. But let’s take a closer look at how we construct the fact. First, as Goodman teaches, we identify the sticks as individual objects—and not as temporal stick slices, stick mass, etc.—after which we collect them. Now, to say that I collect the sticks of firewood is to say that I represent or view the sticks as a collection. Collecting does not produce a collection—an independently existing physical entity.¹⁸ Instead, a collection is a product of an organizing of sense experience. When we collect we represent to ourselves that the objects collected are connected or associated, as when I earlier collected Mozart’s “Requiem” and the imaginary number *i*. And just as the specification of a predicate is a useful way to fabricate kinds, so the specification of a predicate is a very useful way to collect. I use the predicate “stick of wood to the right of the feeder” to collect the individual objects, that is, I regard the objects as a collection that has the cardinality three. So, “there are three sticks of wood” is a fact about how I have organized the world.

Interestingly, the work of J. Peter Denny suggests that in viewing my backyard scene, a native Ojibwa speaker would organize the world in a different way—seeing a different fact—saying “niswi-aatig-misan”—roughly translated as “three-one-dimensional-rigid sticks of firewood,” with the count word “niswi-aatig” meaning “three-one-dimensional-rigid” and the stem “misan” meaning “sticks of firewood.”¹⁹ Notice that the morpheme “-aatig”—meaning “one-dimensional-rigid”—is incorporated into the structure of the count word itself. According to Denny, this is just one of a group of numerical suffixes that are used to classify important properties of objects used in traditional Ojibwa life. Other classifiers include “-aabik” as in “midaasw-aabik-asiniin” (ten-hard stones) and “-minag” as in “niizho-minag-miinan” (two-three-dimensional blueberries). The crucial point to observe is that Ojibwa speakers organize the numerical world in a different way than we do. While our count word “two” applies to collections of stones or roots or bears, Ojibwa speakers employ three distinct count words with these collections, organizing the world in three distinct ways: “niizho-aabik-asiniin” means “two-hard stones,” “niizho-aabiig-miinan” means “two-one-dimensional-flexible roots,” and “niizh-makoog” means “two bears.”

From these and like comparisons, I argued elsewhere that indigenous numerical thought is genuinely different from that found in the Western tradition.²⁰ Using Goodman’s terminology, we might say that the speakers of these languages construct genuinely different numerical versions of the world. And yet, however different Native numerical world versions are from their Western counterparts, it remains the case that collecting acts—acts of viewing objects as collections, i.e., as entities with a cardinality—is the logically necessary antecedent to counting and to the rudimentary arithmetical facts about collecting and combining activities in each tradition. And if we are going

to give a general theory of world version constructing processes that applies both to Western and Native traditions, then the action kind collecting must be something more than the mere extension of the predicate “collecting” in a particular Western philosophical account. Thus follows my view that we are not to understand the kinds of world-making processes Goodman so well describes—composing and decomposing, weighting and ordering, projecting and collecting—as a constructive nominalist would, but as a constructive realist does.

Now, the foregoing is a logical argument that kinds of world-constructive acts must be independent of world versions to avoid the paradoxes of self-reference. But there is some empirical evidence for pre-linguistic constructive processes, at least in the case of collecting and counting activity. Based upon her work with preschool children—some just a few months old—Karen Wynn has proposed that human beings have a pre-linguistic ability to internally represent cardinalities and to recognize numerical orderings and relationships between small numbers.²¹ Wynn found that it takes a surprising length of time for children to learn that counting encodes the numerosity of count words—that the last count tag in a series actually corresponds to the cardinality of a mentally represented collection of objects. Her hypothesis is that human beings initially represent numbers in a way functionally equivalent to an “accumulator,” embodying the cardinal conception of number. However, *the cardinal conception of number is not inherently embodied in linguistic counting.* Wynn’s work leads me to believe that whether one ultimately counts in an English or an Ojibwan world version, we all *begin* by representing numerosities similarly prior to and independent of either an English or Ojibwan—or *any*—world version. And that pre-linguistic representing requires individuating, sorting, and collecting.

III. ANSWERING OBJECTIONS

I anticipate the obvious objection that I am giving an account of how a part of the world *really* is, but in describing it I am imposing an order, “for the talk imposes structure, conceptualizes, ascribes properties.”²² That is, I am simply giving one more world version, in this case about our organizing and categorizing activities, so, like Goodman, I cannot give a general account of world-making. Indeed, this is just exactly the objection raised by Erik Wedin:

Your version privileges certain organizing activities, among them sorting and collecting,” Wedin begins, “wherein the extension of the predicate ‘sorting’ will be all sorting performances and the extension of ‘collecting’ will be all collecting performances. Now, suppose we specify the predicate ‘scollecting’ that applies to all collecting performances before time *t* and otherwise to sorting performances. Nothing but the entrenchment of the predicate ‘collecting’ prevents our rejection of ‘scollecting’.

All the worse, for an attempt to privilege—apart from all world versions—our version-relative notions of composition and decomposition, weighting and ordering, sorting and collecting as kinds of organizing and categorizing activities.

The response to this challenge is that my account of constructive realism is not to be regarded as just another version of the world on a par with other world descriptions like either the naïve realist’s or NASA’s version of my backyard scene. Not unlike Kant’s project, I am giving a meta-theoretical account—a meta-version, if you will—of the kinds of constructive processes necessary to organize and structure *any* world whatsoever. Indeed, in order to specify the unwelcome predicate “scollecting” Wedin had to employ exactly those privileged world-ordering performances—individuating, sorting, collecting, and composing among them—that his counterargument sought to undermine. Anyway, should my account be regarded as just another world version on an ontological par with all others, then nothing said here applies beyond its bounds; and while I know how my house was constructed, how the one next door came to be is a real mystery.

The foregoing answers the objection that my organizing and categorizing action kinds are relative to one particular world version. In the APA symposium, Lera Boroditsky posed a challenge of a different sort: “Supposing that kinds of constructive actions *are* independent of the world versions they construct, why believe that the ones you identify—composings, collectings, sortings, weightings, orderings, etc.—are *privileged*, that is, the *only* ways of organizing and categorizing experiences?” In earlier correspondence, Alan Mattlage used my carpentry analogy to make a similar point: “You argue that many different wooden structures can be made using the same set of tools and the same acts of carpentry—hammering, sawing, and so forth. However, isn’t a different set of tools and actions necessary for making stone structures? One needs hammers and saws for wooden structures, but chisels and mallets for stone.”

I now happily grant the point—although the Norton-Smith temporal stage that presented at the symposium was not as willing to grant it. However, the objection is telling only against the claim that there is a *privileged* set of organizing and categorizing kinds of action—the one I discuss. It is not telling against the claim that such action kinds are to be construed as a realist does.

NOTES

1. Thomas M. Norton-Smith, *The Dance of Person and Place: One Interpretation of American Indian Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010); Thomas M. Norton-Smith, “Ultimate Acceptability, Cultural Bias, and an American Indian World: Reflections on Nelson Goodman.” *Enrahonar* 49 (2012): 41–51.
2. Norton-Smith, *The Dance of Person and Place*.
3. Nelson Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1988), 91–107; Nelson Goodman, *Of Minds and Other Matters* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 30–34.
4. Norton-Smith, *The Dance of Person and Place*, 17–19.
5. Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking*, 2.
6. *Ibid.*, 6.
7. Norton-Smith, *The Dance of Person and Place*.
8. Lee Hester, “On Philosophical Discourse: Some Intercultural Musings,” in *American Indian Thought*, ed. Anne Waters, 264–65; George Cajete, *Native Science* (Santa Fe: Clear Light Publishers), 26–27.

9. C. F. Voegelin, "Shawnee Stems and the Jacob P. Dunn Miami Dictionary," *Indiana Historical Society Prehistory Research Series* 1.8 (1939): 314.
10. Norton-Smith, *The Dance of Person and Place*, 77–94.
11. Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking*, 17.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid., 7.
14. Nelson Goodman, *Fact, Fiction, and Forecast* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 44.
15. Ibid., 72–83.
16. Ibid., 96.
17. Norton-Smith, *The Dance of Person and Place*, 39.
18. Thomas Norton-Smith, "An Arithmetic of Actions Kinds: Kitcher Gone Mad(dy)," *Philosophical Studies* 63 (1991): 217–30.
19. J. Peter Denny, "Cultural Ecology of Mathematics: Ojibway and Inuit Hunters," in *Native American Mathematics*, ed. Michael P. Closs (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 129–80.
20. For example, in Shawnee and Ojibwa languages, the number words are particles most often functioning as adjectives modifying nouns referring to collections of objects—and not as nouns—suggesting a commitment to numerical properties but not to numbers as objects. Thomas Norton-Smith, "Indigenous Numerical Thought in Two American Indian Tribes," in *American Indian Thought*, ed. Anne Waters (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 58–71.
21. Karen Wynn, "Children's Understanding of Number," *Cognition* 36 (1990): 155–93; Karen Wynn, "Addition and Subtraction by Human Infants," *Nature* 358 (1992a): 749–50; Karen Wynn, "Children's Acquisition of the Number Words and the Counting System," *Cognitive Psychology* 24 (1992b): 220–51.
22. Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking*, 6.

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Discombobulation and Epistemologies of Ignorance: On Having Your Conceptual Schemes Up-Ended

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I. BACKGROUND (HOW I CAME TO THIS)

I have been stimulated and generatively discombobulated over the years by a number of lines of theorizing, including, most recently, work in the epistemology of ignorance (Charles Mills et al.). As the flip side of standpoint epistemologies, epistemologies of ignorance study how privilege (notably whiteness) produces and reinforces systematic, resistant ignorance—not needing to know, not being in a position to know unless one learns from those one has learned to disdain, wanting/needing not to know, arrogantly denying what others try to teach, . . . And before that, and continuing, I learn from lesbian feminist philosophy (Marilyn Frye, Sarah Hoagland, et al.), epistemologies of resistance (Linda Alcoff, Maria Lugones, José Medina, et al.), transgender theory, and Wittgenstein. I have thought a lot about *making sense*, emphasis on the *making*—something we do, calling for attention to who "we" are; how to make sense differently, how to make different, resistant sense. Philosophers (not only, but especially) are taught to say "I don't understand" as though that means "you're not making sense," taking ourselves to be "intelligibility central": if it makes sense, it makes sense *to me*. We (I) need to learn to mean "I don't understand" as an autobiographical statement, thinking about why I might not be able to (might not want to) understand, hence, how I might come to.

II. AN EXAMPLE

Since the 1970s I've been arguing for seeing mental phenomena (beliefs, emotions, and so on) as socially constructed, as patterns of salience that, outside of webs of social meaning, have no coherence as complex particulars. (Hence, mental particulars are not physical particulars, and token identity theories are not significantly weaker than type-identity theories.) Others have argued for the socially constructed nature of *kinds*, notably those of gender, race, and sexuality; and in both cases the thesis of social construction is meant to show that things (particulars or kinds) that we had taken to be in some sense "natural" are not, that they do not pre-exist our ways of talking and thinking about the world.

While I still believe that such accounts are right, I have come to think about them somewhat differently. In particular, I have come to be troubled by what I think is an insufficiently attended to anthropocentrism in social constructionism. Of course, that such accounts are anthropocentric is obvious: what they are claiming is precisely that some things that we had taken to be in the world prior to and independent of certain forms of human social activity are in fact dependent

on that activity. Non-anthropocentric social constructionism doesn't make sense. Or does it?

III. A STORY

Paul Schultz, an Anishinaabe elder from White Earth, was (he died some years ago) a leader in a project and a group of people that have come to be known as Nibi-Manoomin Bridging World-Views (NMBWV). ("Nibi" is water; "Manoomin" is wild rice.¹) In explaining the Western, academic, scientific way of thinking, Paul sketched a pyramid with, at the bottom, stones: totally dumb and senseless; then plants, with a bit more on the ball; then non-human animals: sentient, moving; then, at the pinnacle of creation, humans: the smartest things around. By contrast, he sketched a pyramid representing indigenous worldviews:² stones, having been around the longest, know the most; then plants; then other-than-human animals; then, finally, humans: mere babies, ignorant, needing to learn from our elders. As an analytically trained philosopher³ with a family ethos of secular Judaism, atheism, and scientific rationality, I found the indigenous picture appealing but not something I could make anything like literal sense of: How in the world could stones *know* anything? But what if "I don't understand" really is a piece of autobiography, and doesn't mean "this doesn't make sense"? It didn't make sense to me, meaning I couldn't make sense of it. But I could try. . . .

I'm quite sure that how I have come to understand the indigenous picture is still—will no doubt always be—inflected by my own ways of thinking, but the degree of understanding that I have come to has changed the way I think about a lot of things, including how to understand social constructionism. Sense-making is a collaborative activity, and my on-going involvement with NMBWV has been a matter of learning to be an ally as much as learning to think differently, and the thinking differently has come through the working together.

IV. WHERE THIS TOOK ME

One thing that helped me understand was shifting from thinking about *knowledge*, especially understood as (something like) "justified true belief that p," to thinking about wisdom, and, specifically, about how it might matter to have been in the world for a very, very long time. One thought is that it matters only if what you lived through mattered to you, if it caught and held your attention, if you were shaped and changed by what you lived through. Thus Henry James's admonition, "Try to be one of the people on whom nothing is lost!" Not, on the face of it, a promising way to try to understand the wisdom of stones.

But what I came to realize is just how profoundly wrong it is to think of the non-human (or even non-sentient, or even non-alive) world as *indifferent*. Nothing is indifferent; more specifically, no *thing* is indifferent. To be indifferent is to be nonresponsive, or responsive in ways uninflected by your own distinctiveness and the distinctiveness of what you're responding to. It is not to pay attention, not to be distinctively shaped and changed by what you live through, not to shape and change the world around you in distinctive ways. But by these standards stones are hardly indifferent. They respond to some things, not to others: over time to

slowly dripping water, not (so far as we know) to being shouted at. And they respond in distinctively stony fashion, differently depending on what sort of stone they are and what has previously happened to them (lines of cleavage, for example). They are—as every geologist knows—narratives of the times they have passed through: the classifications of sedimentary, igneous, and metamorphic are genres, types of stories; and particular stones and rock formations bear the traces (in important ways just *are* the traces) of more particular, distinctive responses to happenings. And things around them similarly bear the traces of what those stones have done.

Narrative, most fundamentally, is space and time made salient—from space-time points to here and there, now and then, once upon a time, long, long ago and far, far away. . . . And being a *thing* is a matter of saliencies, of non-indifference: things are emergent loci of difference in webs of relationship, a matter of mattering, and of solidarity, of persisting through time and into the future, resisting disaggregation. (Spinoza called this *conatus*, a form of desire.)

Part of what matters is being recognized by the world around you as the sort of thing that you are. Think about labor unions: workers may share a sense of solidarity and may in certain ways act in concert, but something ontologically significant happens when they organize and achieve certification as a union. Being that particular kind of thing means being recognized by the world as having distinctive causal powers, supported by laws. Laws of nature work in similar ways, governing the behavior (shaping the vulnerabilities and capacities) of things because of the kinds of things that they are.

Solidarity in this sense is a lot like solidity, what makes a physical thing a thing. Think of the difference between a stone and a pile of pebbles. A stone has a comparatively robust narrative—how it came to be the size and shape that it is, how it came to have the composition it does—and a comparatively robust proclivity to continue in existence as the thing that it is. It also acts as a whole in causing events and in absorbing effects: if I kick it, my toes are bruised by the whole stone's mass, and if I kick it hard enough, the whole stone moves. By contrast, a pile of pebbles has a relatively shallow story—cast on the beach, perhaps, by the last wave—and relatively little tendency to continue as the thing it is—dispersed by the next one. The mass of the pile itself doesn't bruise my toes, nor does it move as one when kicked. But not all piles are created equal. Cairns and *inuksuit*, for example, are piles with thick, robust stories; there's something to be said about them, they mean something as wholes and communicate with those who participate in the stories and practices into which they are woven and from which they emerge, and the forces working against their disaggregation are no less real for being social rather than physical.

Seen in this way, social constructionism is not ontologically deflationary; it is precisely because and insofar as, e.g., mental phenomena, or races, genders, and sexualities are causally implicated in the world that they need to be understood as socially constructed: their causal efficacy is

inflected by their social meaning and cannot be accounted for if they are understood in nonsocial terms—as, e.g., brain states or as biological kinds. But what has become clear to me is that social construction is a special case of a broader, ontologically more fundamental, feature of reality. A socially constructed thing or kind is what is (is *anything* at all) because of how it fits into an ineliminably social set of narratives, shaped by saliences, by mattering, by perspectivity. Narrativity, salience, mattering, and perspectivity are all typically thought of as part of what we, as humans, bring to the world; but they are, I want to suggest, better seen as at the heart of thing-ness.

Of course, everything does what it does in its own fashion—that’s what makes it the thing that it is—so we (human animals) do narrative in distinctively human—as well as culturally distinctive—ways. And coming to know something is a matter of standing, and moving, in relationship with it: even though the stone has/is its own story, my knowledge of it is inevitably collaborative, and it may well differ from yours. And the stone-as-known is itself a real thing in the world; epistemic relationships are real relationships, and like all relationships, are part of what constitute things—knowers as much as the things they/we know.

I do not think that what I want to suggest is at odds with what Thomas Norton-Smith argues about world-making or what Lara Boroditsky argues about the role of language in shaping reality: I don’t want to argue against the world-shaping capacity of culturally diverse ways of understanding the world, but rather for the idea that underlying those distinctively human activities are modes of engagement and responsiveness—saliencies, non-indifference, mattering—that are not wholly new with us—and that we do actually have something to learn from—not just about—stones and the other non-humans with which we share the planet and the cosmos.

NOTES

1. See <http://blog.lib.umn.edu/cfans/diversity/2011/07/wild-rice.html>.
2. This is how Paul put it. I’m not sure what to make of the generalizing, given the wide range of indigenous cultures. There do seem to be striking similarities among indigenous cosmologies and ontologies—perhaps indicating just how anomalous Western modernity is?
3. Albeit not exactly strictly: I’m a Wittgensteinian. So it’s less a matter of commitment and more a matter of what I’m ignorant of and was taught not to understand.

BOOK REVIEW

Ontology Matters! A Review of Aztec Philosophy: A World in Motion

James Maffie, University of Maryland (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2014). 512 pp. ISBN: 978-1607322221.

Reviewed by Anne Schulherr Waters

INDEPENDENT SCHOLAR

This is a groundbreaking text for indigenous heritage philosophy in the Americas. This text by James Maffie, *Aztec Philosophy: A World in Motion*, significantly explores sources of, and importantly supports the development of, indigenous philosophy in North and Central America.¹ For those philosophers interested in America’s heritage philosophy, it opens another chapter of understanding a uniquely American metaphysic, ontology, and epistemology.

For those unfamiliar with the context of Aztec philosophy, Aztecs are of the Uto-Aztecan language group, and once occupied a vast array of city states throughout the Americas. Among these groups are what Americans name the “Ute,” “Shoshone,” “Paiute,” “Pima,” “Papago,” “Yaqui,” “Hopi,” “Zuni,” “Comanche,” and many others north and up the west coast, having heritage of groups north and west of what was known as the Valley of Mexico (today the area surrounding Mexico City). These groups and others share this Uto-Aztecan linguistic base. The merging of some members of these groups is a result of migrations, of people who became some of the predecessors of Aztec civilization. It is said in story that the Aztecs came from the place of herons (some say this is interpreted as place of “whiteness”), and that this place is north and west of the Valley of Mexico. It is also said that prior to some Aztecs’ arrival many lived in the Valley of Mexico including in an empire there named “Teotihuacan,” which had pyramidal temples, worshipped a serpent named “Quetzalcoatz,” and were overthrown around 600 A.D. It is debatable whether Teotihuacanos were UtoAztecan language speakers. It is said that later another empire named “Toltec” arose and survived until around 1100.² The Aztecs, it is said, arrived in the Valley around 1200, after some 200 years of warfare and forced migration, and settled on a marshy island. Only some say this place was named “Tetzcoco,” where they built a large empire and flourished in and around the Valley of Mexico, in what we know today as Mexico City, borrowing from the Toltec, Inca (Olmec), and Mayan groups. It was common that many temples survived the older empires, as well as agricultural knowledge, and religious ideas, and these earlier elements became part of what came to be named the “Aztec” culture. An aggregation of tribal and city state peoples, they moved to the Valley of Mexico, named themselves “Mexica” or “Tenochca,” and called the city they built Tenochtitlan. They say they had come from a place named “Aztlán,” and spoke Nahuatl. Many local groups bonded with them in power to create an empire of alliances, having an economy based primarily on corn. In 1521, Spanish explorers arrived in the Valley of Mexico to find spectacular Aztec cities. They came to explore and

conquer resources, and the Spanish Inquisition of the Catholic Church eventually imposed its authority, creating a caste system exploiting local labor, while at the same time depleting the wealth of gold and silver that had been enjoyed by Aztec. Aztec culture had a ruling elite, with about a quarter million inhabitants, at a time when Paris and London had no more than a hundred thousand each. Thus, the history of Aztec is long, and her people many. Aztec religion conceived four worlds, called Suns, that preceded the present world. Humankind was held to be wiped out at the end of each preceding world, and we are now in the Fifth World.³

Thus this book, and its well-explicated theory telling a story about the ontological and metaphysical world of the pre-conquest Aztecs of North Central America, should appeal to a broad national and international audience, in the Americas, and beyond. The text will appeal to those who are particularly interested in building the field of heritage indigenous philosophy in the Americas, and those concerned with the research and teaching of indigenous philosophy and philosophers generally.

James Maffie explores philosophical understandings of indigenous identity and diversity, and presents a fresh, new, and exciting view of one cultural tradition indigenous to the Americas. The text is not a cure for lack of knowing about general epistemic and metaphysical thought of America's indigenous philosophy. But it does invite both broad critical reflection as well as microscopic examination of an indigenous belief system. The text uses philosophical language analysis, as well as other interpretive devices. The author honors indigenous thought by taking it seriously, and showing how it matters to modern day understandings of the cosmos. Most importantly, the author show us how the use of our philosophical skills, when employed with respect for indigenous American worldviews, can open up a perspective of ourselves, as humans, that we might not otherwise have known.

It is impossible to know with certainty whether indigenous philosophers of Aztec thought historically held close to a belief system such as this book explicates. But the volume offers good explanatory reason to weigh in with a "yes" on this question. Most importantly, by explicating a different ontological, and hence epistemological and metaphysical, system of Aztec thought, it gives back to the Americas an important part of her heritage. And we can know with certainty that records and logic point to a logical soundness of some of the conclusions made in this book. Although the author does not identify as indigenous to this geographical area, a concerted effort was made to consult with indigenous philosophers, and indigenous scholars of other fields, over many years. Indeed, the citations provide a wealth of information, and any scholar would be pleased to peruse the extensive and carefully chosen bibliography. Maffie has worked on this interpretive project on and off, as far as I know, for at least fifteen years. And he shows in this impressive work a scholar's dedication to "getting it right," and an intellectual attention to detail required to work with the evidence. As best I can tell, he does "get it right." As a philosopher I believe the explanatory power of his interpretive system holds up well, and in areas where

he questions others' superimpositions, it is a delicate dance of subtle nuances at play.

This text challenges philosophers to think with interdisciplinary sensitivity and a keen acumen for detail. It challenges anyone familiar with Kantian metaphysical perplexities of the philosophical tradition of Western Europe. Maffie, as a well trained American philosopher, brings ardent analytical tools and skills to bear upon materials of anthropology, archeology, archaeoastronomy, art history, ethnohistory, linguistics, literature, religion, and architecture, and includes reflections upon evidence from records, calendars, statues, jewelry, weaving tools, and sacred objects. His interplay with a cornucopia of evidentiary materials shows a spirited ability to juxtapose and contemplate at once a mosaic of seemingly incommensurable data. It is with skill and care that correlations are drawn among the experiences of ancient, modern, and contemporary peoples of what is named by some "Mesoamerica." The strategic philosophical method is one of bringing hermeneutic, exegetical, phenomenological, and logic techniques to the project of reconstructing a unified system of a coherent corpus of information within a causal metaphysical and ontological fit. Ultimately, Maffie's method, as he well recognizes, must not only "fit" but provide greater explanatory power than previous constructive interpretations. It must "pay its fare" so to speak, and justify its turn away from some traditionally assumed Platonic metaphysical assumptions of a binary dualism. Rising to the occasion this author shows with perspicuity exactly where he believes others took a wrong turn on the interpretive path. It is not Platonic metaphysical Being, he insists, that we must use to interpret song poems, but rather the process Becoming metaphysic of a non-discrete, non-binary dual aspect theory of constitutional monism, as understood by the Aztecs.

The human-made Aztec metaphysical system, for Maffie, constitutes what Willard Van Orman Quine refers to as a "web of belief" (science), where our beliefs about sensory experience, physical objects, and causality create an epistemological continuum of a total woven makeup, weaving together and thereby uniting theory (underdetermined by experience) and data (subject to boundary error) (8-9). This web of belief theory, used by Maffie as explanatory metaphor, is beholden to human-made values, such as what constitutes sufficient empirical adequacy, simplicity of treating diverse phenomena, conservatism (preserving long held beliefs), unification (coherent account for diverse phenomena), generality (productive resolution of common problems), and explanatory power (its ability to "fit" empirical data with theoretical assumptions) (9). It is this Quinean metaphorical web that triangulates for Maffie a reconstruction of Aztec metaphysics, combining first ontology and second epistemology, and third using (both direct and indirect) evidence to construct his own interpretive schemata of Aztec metaphysic as a unifying process philosophy (12).

One of the nice things about this text is that Maffie is clear about where he is going with his interpretation of Aztec philosophy as a constitutional monism. He notes that several scholars, including Vine Deloria, Jace Weaver,

Viola Cordova, Brian Burkhart, and other Native American thinkers (myself included), “interpret many indigenous North American philosophies as upholding a like-minded constitutional monism according to which reality consists of a single, uniform, homogenous energy or power—usen, natoji, waken tanka, yowa, orenda, or nil’ch’i—that is neutral between spirit and matter, mind and body, and so on” (49).

Maffie holds that the heart of Aztec metaphysics embodies, as the title suggests, “Understanding a World in Motion.” A dynamic, vivifying, eternally self-generating and re-generating sacred power, force, or energy holds all together, and is named “teotl” (12). Teotl is process, movement, change, and transformation that engenders cosmos, where the “real” always “becomes” (12). It transforms as agonistic (complementary polar opposite) unity of inamic partners, and is thus consequentially constitutionally unstable and ambiguous (13). As such, reality is complementary, as patterns of motion and change dance in an interdependent struggle to become, to self-generate, in continual flux and change, without beginning. These “inamic partners represent dual aspects of teotl—not two metaphysically distinct substances” (13).

Teotl as cosmic weaver of all life, and all that is and is not, has different patterns of motion change: (1) olin (curvy motion change); (2) malinalli (twisting motion change); and (3) nepantla (middling motion change, which is the key to understanding the metaphysical and human existential condition, and Aztec philosophy itself). Each nomenclature is descriptive of a particular pattern of motion change according to a time-place (single and seamless) unity. Because teotl as process is about the transformation of complementary polar opposites, this is not a binary dualist ontology. Maffie is clear about this ontology: “Teotl, reality, cosmos, and all existing things are *characterized simultaneously* (emphasis added) by inamic pairs such as being and nonbeing, life and death, male and female, and wet and dry” (27). And again, “Aztec binaries appear instead to be two aspects of a single thing” (51)—dual-aspect theory. So, although at times it may seem to be, or the language of this text may make it appear to be, one of a discreet ontology (polar opposites), because it is a (dual aspect) monism, and all things are characterized simultaneously, it seems to be one of a non-discreet ontology, of a non-binary, yet dual-aspect nature.⁴

This ontology is not independent of an Aztec epistemology, as teotl’s nahualli, or guise, double, or mask (39). Just as a shaman possesses power to transform into her or his nahual (e.g., jaguar), so teotl possesses power to transform into its nahual, the cosmos (39). Thus, the cosmological becoming is teotl’s ongoing self shape-shifting and transformation (39). Teotl as quintessential transformer epistemologically presupposes a dualist ontology as an epistemological phenomenon of deception—one covers the face with a mask, as the mask and face are two distinct things (40). Because Aztec philosophy is ontologically monist, however, teotl and the mask are identical, just as the shaman and jaguar are one, while at the same time teotl becomes the cosmos (41). Maffie helps us understand this phenomenon by using the linguistic tool of perception “de re” and perception “de dicto.” Humans perceive teotl de re (about

what is said), but not de dicto (about the thing) (42). We see sun, bird, flowers, but not teotl’s nahual. Deception is only an epistemological moment of not recognizing teotl’s nahual, not a metaphysical moment (42).

Aztec metaphysics understands this shamanic transformation as it is played out in the cosmos (42). Thus, that which is real is characterized by what becomes, not by being, or is-ness (43). Aztec metaphysics cannot condemn something as unreal or illusory simply because it is ever changing, not impermanent; rather, Aztec metaphysics would embrace it for this very reason, as the real.

This conception of reality as ever-changing and impermanent is precisely the crux of Maffie’s disagreement with the metaphysics suggested by Miguel León-Portilla, who, according to Maffie, superimposes a Platonic metaphysic upon Aztec thought (43). The discussion of León-Portilla’s superimposition of, and hence subsequent value laden misinterpretation of, Aztec metaphysical becoming and impermanence as a seeing-as, through the eyes of a Platonic metaphysics, is well worth reading. The superimposition of Platonic metaphysics results in a misinterpretation of the value of what Maffie holds out as possible existential comments made by the Aztecs, upon an experienced impermanent reality. This discussion is central and crucial to Maffie’s disagreements with León-Portilla and others. An overlay of a metaphysics of Platonic Being misinterprets precisely what a metaphysics of Becoming is able to clearly grasp: namely, that Aztec metaphysics may point to a lamenting that there are existential consequences of the fragility, evanescence, and brevity of life. This metaphysics of Becoming, rather than a Platonic metaphysic of Being (and non-being), for Maffie, is what should be applied as an interpretive framework and context to Aztec song poems (47).

In such an interpretive framework of non-discrete non-binary dualism, song poems could be interpreted as an ontological reaction to, rather than an evaluative assessment of, the cosmos. The nature of this kind of reality then, for the Aztecs, is ambiguous, neither mind nor matter, but an electric-like energy or power (48). It is from this perspective that Maffie explains the Aztec grand unfolding of the universe, as recorded by the Aztecs. Again, understanding the de re and de dicto distinction is all-important in the recording.

Maffie approaches an interpretation of the all-important concept of “space-place,” which, like time, is located or situated within the cosmos. “Space is concrete, specific, qualitative, quantitative, alive, relational (nonsubstantive), locative, and timed” (421). Maffie offers by way of example the beautiful “Valley of Mexico” as such a place. For the Aztecs it was a place of interaction with “all relations,” of participation with the unfolding cosmos, an orientation, animated and charged with power. “It is a vast, intricate web of interrelationships between humans, plants, animals, mountains, waters, and sun—all of which are animated and charged with power. And its character changes with changes in time” (421). It is not difficult to recognize and understand the similarity of Aztec thought, as articulated by this author, with that of indigenous North America⁵ (again, as mentioned early on in the text, at p. 49). Maffie

offers to us not space nor place abstractly, but tied down, even if in flux!

Maffie disagrees with Leon-Portilla's interpretation of a metaphysic of being. For Leon-Portilla Reality is *per se* Being, as immutable, imperishable, and permanent. (Maffie says Leon-Portilla attributes this metaphysics of *Nezahualcoyotl* in *Cantares mexicanos* and *Romances de los senores de la Nueva Espana* (43)). Differently, the Reality Maffie would attribute to Aztec metaphysics is essentially characterized as a monism, a Becoming that embraces flux and change. It does not seem to denigrate change. It is not characterized by the Being of a Platonic style dualist ontology of a difficult to achieve experience of reality, coupled with the idea of an earthly illusion, such as Leon-Portilla imposes upon it. Because Leon-Portilla's ontology marginalizes the flux of Aztec metaphysics (rather than embracing it), he superimposes platonic denigrated *value* of impermanence upon it. Thus he denigrates an Aztec metaphysic of flux, of changing aspects. Because Leon-Portilla clings to the platonic idea that life is dreamlike, transitory, illusory, and hence not real, he misinterprets the ontology of Aztec thought. And for Maffie this is problematic because doing so denigrates change, impermanence, and transformative reality of Aztec thought.

Maffie is not so interested in objecting to Léon-Portilla's (and John Bierhorst's) interpretation of song poems as he is in suggesting that they have both imputed their own Platonic metaphysics of Being into their interpretations, imposing a Platonic ontology, rather than more carefully investigating an Aztec ontology of constitutional monism, as Maffie has done.

Rightfully, if Maffie is correct in his interpretation of Aztec metaphysics as a metaphysics that embraces Becoming, Aztec thought will need revisiting by many (43-47). This is because if Aztec metaphysics embraces a constitutional monism, it has no dualities, cannot reduce mind to matter, and a fortiori cannot claim mind is Reality, as platonic thought does. Aztec mind and body are merely aspects or facets of *teotl* (48). And *teotl* is ever in flux and change, or, a world in constant motion, as Maffie's title suggests.

In this similar vein, importantly, Maffie says that Lopez Austin's binary thought (50) of dualism attributed to Aztec thought, carries less explanatory power than Maffie's proposal of constitutional monism. Lopez Austin's error, for Maffie, is conflating binary properties with binary substances, failing to understand the nuanced differences—what Maffie might call the property/substance distinction (50). Properties are distinct from substances, and constitutional monism can embed complementary binary properties. Again, "Aztec non-binaries appear instead to be two aspects of a single thing (51) . . . dual-aspect oneness signifies wholeness in Aztec metaphysics. What's more, agonistic inamic unity is dynamic and diachronic. It is not a static condition or state of being" (153). Thus an animism grounded in self-empowerment (115). The sacred is the disclosing and non-concealment, or revelation, of a non-static state of ambiguous being, *teotl* (112). And in the center of *teotl* is "a time-place of safety, stability, support, familiarity, balance, and well-orderedness" (224).

Thus, importantly for Maffie's metaphysical construction of the Aztec web of thought, Aztec thought does not reify appearance and illusion, as the "Is" and "Is-Not" of Reality, but understands Reality itself to be non-discrete and non-binary. What appears discrete is in fact illusory, it is that which masks, which is also itself part of a transformative gyrating metamorphosis of Reality.

Return to the all-important seeing distinction between the "de re" of the thing itself, and the "de dicto" of the things under interpretation or description of a thing. Maffie uses Wittgenstein's "duck-rabbit" image metaphor to depict how Aztec see "de dicto" not "de re" (58). As the rabbit transforms, first a duck, then a rabbit, at once both the same yet different, the mind spins. The transformation, the change, the flux, in the spinning, the mind creates for us our very conceptualizations of an impermanence of becoming-in-the-world. It is this experience of cognitive change, of a relaxed dissonance of the mind, or again, an embracing of *teotl*'s showing of its changing self to us that is fundamentally different from a Platonic ontology. We try to peek in upon this Aztec understanding of a transformative moment, and in that moment are astounded by the change, the motion, as being spins itself into existence, continually regenerating itself. Yet for all of our effort, our experiencing remains de dicto, partial. We are unable to humanly grasp any permanence of this non-discrete, non-binary, dual aspect theory.

The point here is that although the complexity of *teotl* is real, is *de re*, humans perceive it only as *de dicto* (partial). Discrete boundaries are an illusion, a function of "how" we see (learn to focus). Illusion is a mental event, Maffie concludes, since We Are *teotl* (59). Two important claims stand out in this respect: (1) "Aztec constitutional monism affirms that reality consists of a *tertium quid*, a third kind of stuff that is neither mind nor matter (as customarily conceived in dualists). This third kind of stuff is electricity-like energy or power" (48); and (2) perhaps one of the more interesting claims in the book itself, and my favorite, is when Maffie tells us, "Given the identity of humans and the one—in our case, *teotl*—it follows that all human perception, both veridical and non-veridical, ultimately consists of *teotl* perceiving itself!" (59).

Failure to display an equal consideration of a different ontology to the study of Aztec metaphysics results in a superimposition of non-Aztec ontology onto an Aztec metaphysical system. Such a failure may result in an invidious academic disservice to our heritage. This is especially so if that imposed ontology denigrates the value of Aztec thought, reducing it to a simplistic discrete binary dualism, rather than teasing out the nuances of a non-discrete, non-binary dualism. This is important, because our interpretations of Aztec thought and understanding of self as cosmos makes a difference in how we approach this heritage philosophy. If the result of superimposing a false ontology onto Aztec cosmology means a lower value is given to Aztec indigenous thought, then this significantly and dramatically changes the current landscape of Aztec philosophy, and its role as America's heritage philosophy. To sum up this point, quite simply, "Ontology Matters!"

If Maffie is correct, it is certainly likely that an epistemic and ontological lack of knowing were at work in earlier interpretative analyses of song poems, and perhaps other interpretations of indigenous philosophies of the Americas as well. And that's okay, so long as further critical reflection upon Aztec ontology questions the impact of Maffie's challenge. If it is possible that a different historical moment, in a different ecological environment, has brought forth an interpretation of a very different understanding of the ontology of Aztec thought than what has hitherto been assumed, this should be taken into account in any further research of Aztec culture. This is because the ramifications of shifting from a discrete binary dualist ontology to a non-discrete non-binary dualist (as in dual-aspect of properties, not substances) ontology shows significant bearing upon other related areas of Aztec thought, such as value theory concerns of ethics and social and political thought, science itself, and the human place in an ever-changing, ever-coming to be cosmos. The lament of the Aztec song poems may not be so much about sadness but existential realization. If so, there may be a different lens of Continental existential thought that can be brought to bear upon these recordings.

In what follows I tie together the wrappings of each chapter in order to portray the development of what I understand to be important interpretive metaphysical arguments of the text.

Chapter one presents Aztec thought as a dynamic process monism: "Aztec metaphysics maintains there exists just one thing: the sacred energy-in-motion that is teotl" (62) where the cosmos is constituted by and "identical with the sacred electricity-like force of teotl" (62). Further, "Reality is defined by process, becoming, change, impermanence, and transformation" (62) where the cosmos is an artistic-shamanic, kaleidoscopic self-presentation of teotl's work of performance art (62).

Chapter two presents the animated nature of teotl's empowering energy, wherein a sacred force animates all existence. This chapter draws out the important difference between cognitive abilities of what we can understand about our perceptions of the cosmos, and the reality of the cosmos itself. Reality recognizes no distinction between sacred and profane, because teotl is sacred, and everything is identical with, constituted by, and vivified by it, thus making it power. "Teotl is sacred because it is power" (121).

Chapter three explores the dual aspect characteristic (where duality engenders unity) of an agonistic (competitive, involved in struggle or competition, striving for effect, provocative of place) inamic (foe, enemy, turned in opposite direction—stretched out to balance, two-scaled, counterweight) unity of unstable and non-teleological complementary polar opposites—what are called partners. The ambiguity of dual aspect unity is explored by looking at the struggle of inamic pairs (singles do not exist—172) that constitute and "explain the genesis, diversity, movement, and momentary orderliness of the cosmos" (143). Importantly, this chapter sets the stage for the critical understanding of the roles of pairs and ambiguity

in Aztec metaphysics: "Single things are not only internally composed of paired *inamic*, they are always externally paired with inamic partners. As a result Aztec metaphysics conceives apparently single things (such as Ometeotl and Omeyocan) as inherently and irreducibly ambiguous" (172). Two-ness is completion (147) signifying balance (152). Finally, as prelude to chapter four, this chapter also presents that the "how" of the process of "weaving functions as an essential organizing principle and root metaphor for Aztec metaphysics" (142).

Chapters four, five, and six each take up the three motion-changes of olin (curvy becoming), malinalli (gyrating, spiraling becoming), and nepantla (mutually reciprocative weaving as becoming), respectively. "*Nepantla holds the key to understanding Aztec metaphysics*" (14). Informative playful metaphors are used in explanation, such as bouncing balls, pulsating hearts, and earthquakes for olin; spinning fibers into thread, drilling fire, and ritual music, speech, and song for malinalli; and mixing, shaking and interlacing, such as the mixing of food ingredients, the weaving of warp and weft of a well-woven fabric, and (what may be questioned by feminists) the intermixing of male sperm and female ova. The motion heart of these sacred paired processes is clearly in the ambiguity of boundaries, wherein they act within a metaphysical system that defines the nature and constitution of the all-important notion of "teotl." And just as nepantla provides structure, teotl is the sacred transformative power of becoming; Maffie is clear that the idea of "teotl" as an abstraction, is *ours* (37). Understanding that weaving is a metaphorical organizational principle, nepantla is the structure of that weaving metaphor.

The metaphor of the woven floor mats, whether from palms or threads, wherefrom rulers rule, marriages join, women give birth, and an ordered and balanced pattern transforms otherwise unidirectional patterns into multidirectional patterns, operates as metaphor of transformation and motion-change. The stretching, the use of the batten, the process of weaving itself operates as metaphor wherein paired inamic components transform power within time-place. I have to confess that there is much I have not the background to understand about "the crossroads" (386), "balance," and "disorder," which is discussed in contexts of "sacrifice," "wrongdoing," and "bifurcations of divisive motion-change" (396), which seems to be a tortured affect, rather than graceful. So I leave it to those better understanding the "weaving metaphysics" to discuss this analysis, noting that the citations and credentials used by Maffie are impressive to this neophyte of Aztec culture.

Chapter seven I find much more manageable than chapters four, five, and six, which are very detail oriented and present unfamiliar evidentiary territory for me. This is the chapter where Maffie talks about two ways that his views of Aztec metaphysics conflict with traditional received views (452). First, as against the received view of a harmonious time-place without struggle, he places agonistic struggle at the center of the dualist pairs. Second, rather than holding the received view of interpretations "that there exist three essentially distinct kinds of time, and a commitment to the existence of two different kinds of time-place: sacred

versus profane" (452), Maffie posits a different theory of time-place.

In chapter seven, what we commonly think of as time and space become a single unity of "time-place." Time-place is the ontological being of process becoming, neither substantive nor relational, but the how of teotl change, or continual processing of transformation. As ontological becoming, teotl is sacred power, force, or energy; it is a monistic reality. It is uniform and homogenous. Maffie calls this "constitutional monism" (14), that is always teotlizing, or becoming, as sacred processing, and as regenerative of its own transformation. "Constitutional monism maintains all binaries are derivable from teotl" (54). The basic premise holding this theory together seems to be that this would be so only if the ontological boundaries of the "polar opposites" are non-discreetly bounded! The basic stuff of the universe, for the Aztecs, as so constitutive, and as ambiguous, is non-intentional, and non-agentive, and like the seasons, amoral (23). Nonetheless, it is dynamic, and as ever actualizing itself.

Chapter eight discusses all-important concepts of time and place as they play out in the universe unfolding itself, with us as part of that universe. To the extent that time-place has a central role unfolding the dynamics of Aztec ontological Becoming, the Aztec notion of time plays a central role in this non-discrete, non-binary, constructive monism as one that embodies qualitative differences. This is much the same as saying different kinds of time have different energies, characters, or personalities. Yet time is concrete, not abstract, and as relationship, it locates and situates teotl's becoming (420).

This last chapter undertakes to discuss how teotl as cosmic weaver, through the use of nepantla, recreates the cosmos, what is referred to as the Five Ages of the cosmos and all that is. Teotl, as transformative, is that which provides motion-change as weaver, is itself the weaving in process action, and becomes the woven, all at once. This weaving process operates as metaphor of the always becoming cosmos, which ontology, as a non-discreet, non-binary, dualist monistic ontology, organizes the metaphysics of the weaving process.

This is the chapter that pulls the ontology of the first seven chapters together. Remember that nepantla is the middling motion change, which is the key to understanding metaphysical and human existential condition, and Aztec philosophy itself (earlier). In chapter eight we find nepantla, as middling motion change, situated in the contextual understanding of the cosmos. The self-enforcing (and self-faceting) of teotl, reality, and the cosmos is a cosmological repeating of a 260-fold pattern. The 260-fold pattern is the "how" of cosmological process that self-generates transformative movement. This pattern is called the "tonalpohualli" (count of the tonalli). The tonalli is a concept about how the cosmos weaves its tonalpohualli. "Tonalpohualli" is the count of the tonalli. Maffie tells us it is the concept most "complex and difficult in Aztec metaphysics" (423). That which is made record of, recorded, or what is counted, read, and interpreted is called the "book of the tonallis" (423). This is how teotl becomes! (425)

For the braver readers, an account is given of the arrangement of the 260 (20 x 13) fold pattern, consisting of twenty named tonallis, and thirteen metaphysical forces, each having a unique essence or personality (425), and nine nocturnal forces for influence (426). In this chapter Maffie also discusses the pattern of days, called the "xihuitl" recorded in the book of the years, or year day book, (the "xiuhamatl") (430). This pattern, then, is the pattern that teotl discloses! It consists of a 365-day solar year.

Alongside this metaphysical pattern is an ontologically paired couple named "Tonacatecuhtli" (traditionally and herein interpreted as a male aspect) and named "Tonacacihuatl" (traditionally and herein interpreted as a female aspect). These dual aspects of the cosmos together are the "root and support" of a cosmological weaving. This is a weaving of a "seamless agonistic inamic unity characterized by full male and female characteristics and possessing full male and female generative and regenerative powers" (433). This weaving is accomplished by means of the "nepantla-defined process of reciprocal, back-and-forth interweaving and commingling that is continually creatively destructive, destructively creative, and hence continually transformative" (434). Maffie called this process of nepantla motion-change "cosmogonically primordial and metaphysically fundamental (434). "The paired inamic of agonistic inamic unity differentiate themselves into complementary quadruplicity" (434). All other "gods" and the Sun-Earth Eras come from the motion of these two paired couples (including Quetzalcoatland and Huitzilopochtli, who generate the first woman and man).

Lest readers get confused in the detail of this metaphysics and simplify it, Maffie tells us first that Tonacatecuhtli and Tonacacihuatl are always there, as there is no beginning to the patterning motion. They are always there because there is no bifurcation of Being and Non-being. There is only continual becoming and transformation. Second, there is no "primordial divine act of transforming nothingness into existence," as there is no solitary "nothingness," as all things come in pairs. Maffie tells us this may result in the cosmos being understood as fundamentally pantheistic (447). (A particular notion of "pantheism" is explored here, differing from contemporary popular notions.) Third, since time-place is co-extensional with the becoming or transforming cosmos, there is no time-place prior to the time-place of this dynamic pair of unity. And fourth, the cosmos is a self-woven folding pattern, and the weaving pattern is both cyclical (repetitive motion of weaves of warp and weft) and linear (a row of weaves has a unique focus in the fabric woven), yet because a continuing repeated pattern, a non-progress oriented, non-teleological, and non-eschatological cosmos. Maffie refers to these characteristics as presenting a metaphysics that is called "acosmogonic" (448).

In the end, Maffie affirms that his view of this metaphysical cosmology is not a substantive but a relational view. Space and time are not entities but relationships of processes and events. This universe is constitutionally monistic, processive, and agonistic, and Maffie readily admits, unlike interpretive views previously offered by others. "Ometeotl," the name given to the pairing of Tonacatecuhtli

and Tonacacihuatl, engages in the how of metaphysics, the nepantla of becoming and transforming that has always been in process as a weaving motion change, woven by time and place. Ometeotl is as a Sacred Energy, a Two Teotl, or God of Duality, and “Omeyocan” as describing the place of unified Twoness, is a continued nepantla-defined struggle of motion change and becoming. It is a dynamic and agonistic balance, neither static nor quietistic (461).

Maffie makes no qualms about asserting his metaphysical disagreement with scholars of the past. He states, “In short, the received view operates from a set of metaphysical assumptions that I believe are *alien* to Aztec philosophy: first, the equating of peace, harmony, activity, stasis, and perfection, on the one hand, and the converse equating of disharmony, agonism, activity, opposition, and movement on the other; second, the notion that harmony, equilibrium, and balance are produced by inactivity, stasis, and peaceful coexistence rather than inamic agonism; and third, the idea that an orderly cosmos must be created from a prior condition of absolute disorder” (461). The processing of reality as the nepantla motion change weaving-in-process, a unified pattern of Ometeotl time-place, forms a unifying “eurhythmy” represented by a diagram showing all other time-places, as integrated within Ometeotl time-place, are rhythmic tensions weaving back and forth (461-62).

The conclusion of the text is eloquent, and worth the quote.

Time-place is an immanent pattern in the modus operandi of teotl’s continual becoming and transforming. It is how teotl moves. Time-place is relational, not substantive. Since teotl has always existed, time-place has always existed. Since nepantla motion-change defines teotl, and since time-place is the modus operandi of teotl, it follows that nepantla motion-change is the modus operandi of time-place. Time-place weaves back and forth as teotl weaves the cosmos. The cosmos is a grand weaving-in-progress whose various patterns constitute various times-places. (465)

For scholars interested in heritage philosophy of the Americas, this text will delight with its metaphysical playfulness. It is, however, to be taken seriously. For if Maffie is correct in only some of his disagreements with traditionally received views, he has forever changed the weave of the rug! I encourage the use of this text in higher level undergraduate courses, and graduate courses. It will challenge the understanding of many students who may need a cognitive challenge. It will awaken them from a slumber of not knowing about this chapter of their own heritage, about America’s heritage philosophy. I highly recommend this book to anyone wanting to know more about the heritage philosophies of our native soil. And all American philosophers should be familiar with the metaphysics of these philosophies if they hope to have any kind of understanding of their own philosophical influences since coming to the Americas!

NOTES

1. This lively and amazing Aztec metaphysics and ontology book has 592 pages, including a comprehensive 35-page bibliography!
2. “A Toltec king, the founder of Tula in about 950, is a priest of Quetzalcoatl and becomes known by the god’s name. This king, described as fair-skinned and bearded, is exiled by his enemies; but he vows that he will return in the year ‘One Reed’ of the 52-year calendar cycle. In 1519, a ‘One Reed’ year, a fair-skinned stranger lands on the east coast. The Aztecs welcome him as Quetzalcoatl. He is the Spanish conquistador Cortes.” <http://www.historyworld.net/wrldhis/plaintexthistories.asp?historyid=aa12>.
3. I am indebted to Thayer Watkins, San Jose State University Economics Department, for his informative article, “History of the Aztecs,” located at <http://www.sjsu.edu/faculty/watkins/aztecs.htm> (homepage of applet-magic.com).
4. See Anne Waters, “Language Matters: A Metaphysic of NonDiscreet NonBinary Dualism,” in *Newsletter on American Indians in Philosophy* 01, no. 2 (Spring 2001): 5–14 . [Reprinted as “Language Matters: Nondiscrete Nonbinary Dualism,” in *American Indian Thought: Philosophical Essays*, ed. Anne Waters (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004) 97–115].
5. If not already obvious, the problematics of interpreting any North American Indigenous texts as understood within a Platonic metaphysical framework are overwhelming. Yet this is precisely what happens when such an ontology is superimposed upon American Indigenous thought. There is a need to understand that *America’s heritage indigenous philosophy* presented to American pragmatists a different metaphysic than they had known on the European Continent; an Indigenous metaphysic that influenced and affected the very development and growth of American pragmatic philosophy in the United States. Credit for providing this background metaphysical system has not yet been properly given to our heritage philosophy.