

# Indigenous Philosophy



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APA NEWSLETTER ON

# Indigenous Philosophy

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AGNES B. CURRY, EDITOR

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## FROM THE CHAIR

This past year exhibits many changes and great new strides of progress for our committee. Shortly after I accepted a regular committee appointment, I also accepted an appointment as interim chair, filling in for Kyle Powys White, as he was called to other important academic duties. We thank Kyle for his dedicated passion, insight, and vision while steering this committee into action motivated toward forward-looking projects during his tenure. And speaking of tenure, Kyle this past year received tenure as full-time philosophy faculty at Michigan State University (East Lansing) and is now the first Native American philosopher to receive tenure in a philosophy department granting a doctoral degree. Congratulations, Kyle!!!

As new interim chair, and on behalf of this committee, I and we welcome new members of this committee who accepted appointments this past year. Brian Burkhart (California State University, Northridge) has returned as committee member, and has graciously accepted responsibility, alongside Jacob Held (continuing member, University of Central Arkansas) to present programming at our 2017 Central Division meeting. (If you are interested in participating, contact Brian or Jacob). Andrew Smith (Drexel University), shortly after his appointment, hit the ground running and has already put together, with Agnes Beatriz Curry (University of St. Joseph), our 2017 Eastern Division program. Papers from this program will find a home in our spring 2017 newsletter. Scott Pratt (University of Oregon) is also once again on our committee, and has promised to present us, with the help of Zayin Cabot (continuing member, California State University, East Bay) with a 2017 Pacific Division meeting program (contact Scott or Zayin if you have interest in participating). Andrea Sullivan Clarke, Muskogee Nation of Oklahoma, after finishing her Ph.D. in the field of philosophy of science at the University of Washington in Seattle, has accepted a post-doctoral position at Depauw University in Greencastle, Indiana. And last, but certainly not least, Lori Underwood (Christopher Newport University) has joined the committee as our new associate chair (see below for Lori's and my academic biographies).

I would like to thank our newsletter committee members for all of their support in preparing the fall 2015 newsletter, the spring 2016 newsletter, and now our fall 2016 newsletter. Newsletter editors anticipate receiving papers on topics of programming sessions from the three divisional conferences this academic year. We encourage all APA members, and current non-members with interest, to contact our programmers, and/or newsletter editors, or anyone on our committee, if they would like to engage in

doing indigenous philosophy at one of our APA divisional meetings, and to contact any of our newsletter editors to contribute to the newsletter.

Our newsletter has seen a few changes as well with the dedicated assistance of Agnes Curry and Erin Shepherd (APA national office). Agnes Curry accepted appointment as managing editor and is doing a terrific job of coordination and editing of the newsletter. Shay Welch (continuing member as newsletter editor, Spelman College), organized our 2016 Pacific Division program alongside Brian, and she has recently stepped forward as our newsletter book review manager. As chair of the Diversity Committee of the organization Feminist Ethics and Social Theory, Shay has contributed greatly to the visibility of Indigenous philosophers, a definite plus for our APA committee. We thank Agnes, Shay, and Shawn Burns (Shawn recently resigned due to other commitments) for their purposeful and generous time and representation given to making our newsletters a reality.

The committee is also making small steps of progress toward grant writing. We would appreciate anyone with interest, experience, or with time to give toward this effort, whether writing, consulting, or simply advising, to please contact Lori or myself via email as soon as you can. Our committee's 20th anniversary is coming upon us soon, and it would be assistive to the field if we, alongside those interested, could arrange an academic celebration in recognition of the work this committee has done during these past 20 years. We look forward to hearing from anyone interested who would like to participate, with a grant, or as program participant at any of our regional conferences.

As associate chair and interim chair, Lori and I thank all committee members for their contributions this past year, as well as those many persons who have contributed to the recent revitalization of this committee. We look forward to even more activity this coming year, and sharing as we continue to build this field of Indigenous philosophy. Finally, we invite everyone, in their own way, to begin to think about and celebrate our work of the past 20 years.

## BIOS

**Dr. Lori Underwood** currently serves as dean of the College of Arts & Humanities at Christopher Newport University. She is a professor of philosophy specializing in Immanuel Kant's ethical and political philosophy. Her most recent scholarship is an application of Kantian Cosmopolitanism and alterity theory to issues of global terrorism and the democratization movements of the Arab Spring. Dr. Underwood earned her bachelor of arts degree in philosophy and history as well

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as her master of arts in philosophy from the University of Memphis. She earned her doctorate in philosophy from the University of Missouri, Columbia. Lori is of Cherokee descent through both her maternal and paternal lines.

**Dr. Anne Waters**, J.D., Ph.D. Seminole, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Cherokee, and Jewish descent; a CIC, GPPC, NWSA, Pergamon Press, Liberty Fund, Helen Steiner, and Rockefeller Scholar, and recipient of NEH and National Science Foundation grants. Physically and psychologically challenged, non-binary retired feminist. Two doctorates (law and philosophy), and editor, philosopher, poet, and lawyer published in several international philosophy and American Indian journals and anthologies. Edited the only anthology by American Indians holding a Ph.D. in philosophy, *American Indian Thought: Philosophical Essays* (Blackwell, 2003), co-edited first American philosophy anthology of diverse and minority voices, *American Philosophies: An Anthology* (Blackwell, 2003), co-guest edited special issue of *Hypatia - A Journal of Feminist Philosophy: Indigenous Women in the Americas* (Indiana University Press, 2003). As co-editor of *Living Indigenous Philosophies Series* (SUNY Press), published *The Dance of Person and Place: One Interpretation of American Indian Philosophy*, and *Listening to Ourselves: A Multilingual Anthology of African Philosophy*. Founder and past chair of APA Indigenous philosophy committee, originator and current co-editor of the *APA Newsletter on Indigenous Philosophy*, serve on APA Board of Officers Task Force on Diversity/Inclusion. Member of Phi Sigma Tau and Barrister, Phi Delta Phi.

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## SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

We invite you to submit your work for consideration for publication in the spring 2016 newsletter. We welcome comments and responses to work published in this or past issues. We also welcome work that speaks to philosophical, professional and community concerns regarding indigenous philosophies and philosophers of all global indigenous nations. Editors do not limit the format of what can be submitted; we accept a range of submission formats including and not limited to papers, opinion editorials, transcribed dialogue interviews, book reviews, poetry, links to oral and video resources, cartoons, artwork, satire, parody, and other diverse formats.

In all cases, however, references should follow the *Chicago Manual of Style* and include endnotes rather than in-text citations. For further information, please see the [Guidelines for Authors](#) available on the [APA website](#).

The submission deadline for the spring 2017 newsletter is January 15, 2017. Please submit copies electronically to Agnes Curry at [acurry@usj.edu](mailto:acurry@usj.edu).

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## ARTICLES

### *Introduction*

Shelbi Nahwilet Meissner

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

The American Philosophical Association committee session on contemporary Indigenous philosophy was held at APA Pacific at the Westin St. Francis in San Francisco, CA, on March 31, at 9:00 am. The session was arranged by the APA Committee on the Status of Indigenous Philosophers and chaired by Shelbi Nahwilet Meissner, a Ph.D. student at Michigan State University. The first paper, titled "Environment Is Not Land: Coloniality, Locality, and Environmental Philosophy," was presented by Brian Yazzie Burkhart, director of American Indian Studies at California State University, Northridge. The second paper, "Native Cognitive Schemas and Democratic Ethics," was presented by Shay Welch, an assistant professor of philosophy at Spelman College. The third and final paper, "Indigenous Identity in Articulations of Existence in Latin American and Caribbean Thought," was presented by Gertrude James González de Allen, an associate professor of philosophy at Spelman College. A thought-provoking discussion with the audience followed the presentations. The papers by Shay Welch and Gertrude James González de Allen appear in this issue.

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### *Native Cognitive Schemas and Decolonizing Democratic Ethics*

Shay Welch

SPELMAN COLLEGE

Recent developments in political philosophy have attempted to remedy the exclusionary forces of Western political philosophy, namely, deliberative forms of democracy. Some feminist forms of deliberative democracy have moved towards norms that embrace communicative exchanges that acknowledge the validity and contributory pertinence of claims grounded in embodiment such as narrative.<sup>1</sup> Yet even deliberative theories of democracy remain tethered to foundational metaphysical and epistemological assumptions within Western political philosophy that proscribe marginalized groups from political participation. This is because informal expressions often utilized by members of oppressed groups are constrained by mechanisms of impartial, objective proceduralism that reformulate them. It is quite common for individuals making group claims to share their stories during political deliberations only to then have their stories interpolated by an authority into "proper" claims that "fit" the juridical structure of political decision-making characteristic of liberalism. But the impediments for marginalized groups to procure participatory skills is not the sole obstruction to inclusive democratic ethics. The other, and in many respects more substantial, calamity is that many marginalized groups—specifically, groups

who have been colonized—prioritize the very forms of expression, such as narrative, metaphor, and imaginative anecdotes, deemed unsophisticated or biased within Western philosophy. As such, non-Western marginalized groups are forced to function in accord with formalized proceduralism and abandon their cultural political norms and values or remain sequestered from active citizenship and decision-making.

Yet emergent theoretical strands of cognitive science have undermined the metaphysical and epistemological assumptions in Western philosophy that center the role of the mind in conceptualizing the world. Specifically, cognitive scientists have demonstrated the extent to which all of our cognitive concepts and relations materialize from the material—that is, to conceive the world, we must first receive the world. And this occurs primarily through our bodies. As such, all of our supposed conceptual schemas, as abstract and objective as we believe them to be, are constructed metaphorically in narrative form from our experiences from and interactions between our bodies and the world. Furthermore, not only are our conceptual schemas fully embodied to the foundation, they are equally imaginative insofar as we must fabricate these metaphors through our creative capacities that allow us to draw connections between embodied experience to ostensibly abstract relationships. Consequently, political expressions such as narrative, metaphor, and imaginative anecdotes are more authentic, direct expressions of knowledge from which the abstract extrapolations necessarily emerge. As George Lakoff and Mark Johnson argue, imagination is our mode of worldmaking.<sup>2</sup> Abstract juridical language is the imaginative product of our bodies; it is a second-order knowledge that is more biased than ostensibly informal expressions since we must use our imagination qua cultured experience to draw decontextualized connections in ways that make sense to us and those who similarly experience the world vis-à-vis shared values and norms. This is ironic since Indigenous languages and democratic practices that are exemplars of our cognitive, conceptual worldmaking are marginalized because the Western worldview wrongly pronounces such modes of political communication as uncivilized.

In this paper, I aim to further contribute to the project of decolonizing deliberative democracy by way of the new findings in cognitive science regarding the centrality of embodied and metaphorical schemas. A decolonized, deliberative democracy depicts democratic praxes as activities that produce a creative, relational freedom.<sup>3</sup> To do so, I demonstrate the importance of Native American cognitive schemas—imagination, metaphor, and narrative, which are unambiguously embodied—to democratic ethics and praxes. I argue that if we transvalue the relationship between formal, juridical modes and informal, narrative modes of communicative practices in democratic ethics, consonant with Native American democratic norms and values, then deliberative democratic models could yield more just and fair democratic relationships, processes, and outcomes. Shifting democratic ethics in the direction of a Native American worldview and democratic framework not only corrects many of the shortcomings in deliberative democracy regarding broad inclusion, it also specifically

addresses inclusion for Indigenous peoples that does not force assimilation to practices of the settler-colonial state. Practices of recognition are inadequate to assuring Indigenous peoples as active citizens since norms of recognition implicitly serve to legitimate the settler-colonial state. Only by allowing Indigenous peoples, and others, to draw from their traditional forms of knowing, and having those communications acknowledged as exerting valid political claims on the community, can Indigenous peoples truly be active citizens in a way that can generate a form of democracy with shared modes of decision-making.

## COGNITIVE SCIENCE, DELIBERATION, AND DEMOCRACY

The traditional, rationalist model of cognition is tied to old-school assumptions about mind-body dualism and maintains that humans' ability to reason and conceptualize is transcendent, universal, disembodied, devoid of emotion, and objective. That is, one is presumed rational to the extent that she possesses capabilities that allow her to draw conclusions about an ostensibly mind-independent world without reference to her body, emotions, or imagination. In short, rationality and cognition has historically presumed that persons map ideas of the mind, such as categories, concepts, and schemas, onto the world in a way that reflects that world as such in a neutral, non-interactive manner.

Western political philosophy assumes that the most just and effective channels for political participation and decision-making are exchanges of claims governed by procedural rules constituted by universal norms of mutual disinterest articulated through legalistic conceptual jargon. Such procedures function to scrub individual political contributions from bias and persuasion to ensure fairness. At a deeper level, the legitimacy of procedural mechanisms derives from the aforementioned metaphysical and epistemological assumptions, such that any political contribution shaped by or expressing embodiment, emotion, historicity, or creativity are presumed to violate constraints of reason. Ethico-political theory manifests as it does because the rationalist models conceive of cognition as an ongoing power "struggle" between the "force" of reason and the opposing "force" of emotion.<sup>4</sup>

Deliberative forms of democracy have made great strides in ameliorating this strain that rationalist assumptions place on inclusive, particularized, and active political participation. Deliberative democracy valorizes value pluralism and processes of collective decision-making that follow from and generate norms of equality and symmetry in the exchange of claims.<sup>5</sup> But deliberative democratic theorists do not reorder or revamp the rationalist assumptions. There has been no move to debunk established assumptions in a way that centralizes embodiment as the core of reasoning; embodiment, affect, and narrative—all facets tied to our subjective relationship to and perception of the world—have been placed at the periphery of cognition, as if these capacities are helping hands that better explicate our stances to others in concrete situations rather than as the core mechanisms through which reason and rationality itself emerge. Instead, they merely insert norms of

inclusion prior to the decision-making processes to reign in exclusionary tendencies rather than purport, as political liberalism does, that norms of inclusion are the outcome of rationalist procedures.

But cognitive functions derive the intelligibility of conceptualizations for the purpose of worldmaking via innovative imaginative metaphors tied directly to our subjective experience. Meaning itself is grounded in corporeality. Mark Johnson explains that meaning starts with making sense of the body sans language and then making them further intelligible in and through their animation, which then generates frames for abstractions like subjects and objects that can then be articulated.<sup>6</sup> Metaphors central to philosophical investigation are foundationally tied to the felt, perceived, and spatial orientations of the body in relation to others and other things in the world. Basic philosophical concepts such as twisted and circular begin with the “logic of movement” and then extrapolate to metaphorical cognitive conceptualizations for understanding broader phenomena. Johnson gives the specific example of the bodily orientation of straightness as substantiating the notion of “moral uprightness.”<sup>7</sup> Other examples include argument is war; mind is a machine; ideas and concepts are objects within containers to be possessed or redistributed; theories are buildings with foundations, framings, and levels; and understanding is defined at its very core as grasping.<sup>8</sup> Thus, the rationalist model grounding decision-making in Western political philosophy is at odds with and turns a blind eye to the reality of how we actually conceive of the world. The procedural rules of universality, mutual disinterest, and abstraction are static when, in fact, cognition and conceptualization are interactive.

Steven Winter<sup>9</sup> explains that we mistakenly perceive basic level conceptual categories as objective, self-evident descriptions of mental phenomena since our minds comport our bodily orientations to and with the world metaphorically to help us most successfully frame our experiences. We then systematically order and employ these tacit, foundational metaphorical categories to break down more complex experiences by constructing even more intricate metaphorical cognitive schemas with them. Because our conceptual categories are foundationally metaphorical, we consistently adapt to new circumstances through continual restructuring of mental descriptions. He argues that the fact that cognitive and conceptual categories can be formed by various and varying construction patterns demonstrates the inaccuracy of the rationalist models, which upholds that categories are definitional, homogenous, and rigidly bound.<sup>10</sup> These points emphasize the extent to which “human thought is irreducibly imaginative.”<sup>11</sup> He suggests that we fail to recognize the imaginative nature of our cognition because the metaphors themselves have become conventional and thus clichéd within our everyday language.<sup>12</sup> Thus, meaning is neither “in us” nor “out there” because it is the product of imaginative mental activity that allows us to order our experiences in meaningful ways qua embodied metaphor.<sup>13</sup>

How one interacts with the world thus determines her “intellectual operations” that guide her way of understanding them semantically and explaining them

linguistically.<sup>14</sup> And since metaphors are building blocks that capture embodiment, distinct cultures and social groups are capable of divergent cognitive, ontological schemas and ways of knowledge since different metaphorical structures focus on and highlight different aspects of mental and bodily experiences. This process is what explains and verifies claims by liberatory political philosophers that there is legitimate diversity in modes of moral reasoning that complicate democratic practices when deliberative procedures are based on assumptions of abstraction and universality. Even when deliberative theorists regard democratic practices as engaged activities rather than neutral, static procedure, the assumption remains that differences lie merely in pre-existing interests.<sup>15</sup> Because Western political philosophy traces back to the rationalist model, theorists can never quite reconcile the normative value of imagination and pluralism with the notion that pluralism extends beyond interests that result from differing experiences. They maintain that ethical deliberation and negotiation requires equal positioning, mutual intelligibility, and trust and that imagination and narrative are key to attaining those ground conditions. But what they fail to legitimize is the deeper, stronger claim that differing interests not only come from differing experiences, but that these differing experiences, specifically under conditions of colonization and oppression, prohibit mutual intelligibility all the way down to our cognitive schemas.

Because cognitive functions, and thus individuals, are inherently imaginative, narrative—rather than universal principles—is best suited to sound deliberation. Narrative is constituted by and through basic structures as image structures by yielding a certain unity among our embodied interactions. Image schemas are not representation, nor are they literal mental pictures; they are schematics that emerge to structure verbs. Johnson explains that in ethico-political theory, we operate with image schemas such as “weighing evidence” and “balancing the scales of justice”; it is the metaphorical nature of implicit narrative that permits successful moral judgments because it relies on assessment of the greatest diversity in context interpretation.<sup>16</sup> Narratives provide meaning by operating according to the metaphor of the source-path-goal schema by which life is characterized as a journey<sup>17</sup> and subsequently adheres to a comprehensible cycle of harmony, disruption, and restoration. Thus, explicit narrative becomes paramount to democratic ethics because our moral imaginations are both public and shared as a result of culturally conventional metaphors.<sup>18</sup> Because of its relative indeterminacy and multiplicity of meanings, metaphorical narrative aids citizens in the task of validating others’ alternative perspectives.<sup>19</sup>

Narrative is never determinate because it must be restructured by the listener. And when done under the false assumption of universality, attempts at imaginative interpretation ultimately fail because most community members do not comprehend schematics outside of the dominant narrative. Other schematics are dismissed as hysterical, emotional, childish delusions. This is a problem because imagination and metaphor are excluded from our metaphysics. Lakoff speaks to the way in which

neutralization of contrasts occurs in our semantics—which is another way of explaining how our logical binary categories are marked by hierarchy, e.g., subject/object. Only one partner of the binary is deemed neutral. We mark one of the partners as cognitively basic, but this is incorrect. He explains that we use “markedness” to neutralize the more culturally significant partner.<sup>20</sup> This quite easily translates into unethical and oppressive practices in democratic contexts: white, male, subject, straight, settler, etc. When imagination gives rise to metaphorical categories that quite literally shape the world, those who experience the world as oppressive will not conceive of the world in accordance with the dominant framework and so will not engage with others from the same cognitive platform. This means that not only are members of oppressed groups’ interests, experiences, and expressions different, their “intellectual operations” and thus their deliberative processes are different because they are operating, within the dominant schematic, according to cognitive metaphors that emphasize their experiences of being brutalized, demonized, and/or dehumanized bodies in the world—their cognitive structures actually reflect their existence as being physically manipulated and acted upon by others. Subsequently, oppressed persons are perceived as and communicate as marked others while simultaneously interpreting the world according to differentiated cognitive schemas for this very reason.

### **NATIVE AMERICAN DEMOCRACY, METAPHORS, AND NARRATIVE**

The Native framework views the Native mind as a metaphoric mind. In a political context, metaphors are distinctively driven by creative imagination and help us to make practical connections between participants when their lived experiences do not align. They are what help us deal with the complexity of experience and the complexity of merging endless amounts of perspectives regarding experience into a coherent cognitive conductor for coexistence. Metaphors can be revolutionary because they aid the imagination to see paradigm-shifting potentialities that move society and public practices to evolve in new directions rather than merely rehashing or repiecing old arrangements that fail to foster participation and creative contributions.

The foundational commitment of Native American democracy is that of respectful coexistence.<sup>21</sup> Taiaiake Alfred sees respectful coexistence as a universal value affecting all elements of creation, and he posits it specifically as the goal of justice.<sup>22</sup> Justice, therefore, requires the restoration of harmony to social relations and a perpetually renewing commitment to the integrity of all individuals and communities;<sup>23</sup> the process of justice, he states, is the healing of relations to ensure individuals can fulfill their communal responsibilities to one another.<sup>24</sup> Thus Native democratic ethics is grounded in the principles of renewal and reciprocity. Renewal requires frequent revisiting of political concerns and adjusting for changes in individual and community interests to ensure political harmony. The Native worldview is metaphorically structured around cycles in all things and so, politically, there is an expectation of changes in interests and perspectives that

results over time, which then requires that previously deliberated matters are renewed collectively.<sup>25</sup> Reciprocity requires that one respects others’ political contributions as inherently valuable. Political decisions are made through deliberative mechanisms that foster multifarious manifestations of claim-making via collective debates. The activity of listening serves as the main conduit for reciprocity.

Specifically, the praxis of narrative, which is the explicit practice of our core implicit cognitive intellectual operations, is the core principal apparatus of deliberation in Native democracy because it operates through the oral tradition and relies on the sharing of individual experiences for knowledge construction. Narrative practices bond members of the community because it helps individuals apprehend and deal with the complexity of the world by providing a storied picture through which to see particular instantiations of more general occurrences.<sup>26</sup> An audience is imbued with a “reactionary power waiting to be acted upon”<sup>27</sup> by speakers, and the stories told by others provide a medium through which to share experiences and generate meaning and connection from them. As a result, community members can better engage in public forms of deliberation because stories feed the collective imagination and reveal potential trajectories for individuals to determine and converge on the right path of respectful coexistence.

Narrative does not emerge from knowledge; rather, knowledge emerges from narrative because it cannot exist apart from communities. Narrative communicates differences because it connotes one’s subjective particularity through the uniqueness of one’s story, and it conveys the cultural specificity of social group membership by unveiling systemic patterns of shared histories and social locations between group members, which illuminate distinctive cognitive schemas. In light of multifarious expositions about differing lived experiences and preferences, individuals can see that their reference points mark their own perspective as just one of many rather than wrongly presuming their standpoint aligns with some conception of a universal frame. Moreover, narrative can exhibit subjective and social group interdependence because the process of distinction via metaphors of complement, rather than contrast, edifies how entrenched community members are in relations of mutual effect; stories, rather than claims, reflect how they are shaped by and through one another as a result of their motley social relations.

Narrative, then, has the capacity to foster discrete cognitive models in the demos since it abrogates misconceptions of an objective, universal standard for both subjectivity and personal trajectories. Any conception of a public must take as a foundational assumption that the community is constituted by many, as portrayed through difference, rather than one, or sameness. Narrative makes it possible for community members to discern some shared metaphors from which to build and sculpt dialogical understanding. When needs and interests are communicated and shared through narrative form, listeners can imaginatively grasp more meaning behind the values being invoked than they

would if the values had been presented as uncontextualized, impartial claims. Public narratives of plural perspectives and cognitive metaphors are essential for understanding individuals' needs for deliberative inclusion and the significance of difference since stories impart affective illocutionary force that can reorient the listeners focus of attention onto the aspect of the experience that matters most to the speaker. This affective force resonates in and can motivate listeners to hear and attempt to apprehend others' narrative to effect individual and social group participatory parity, which positions community members in relations of mutual respect for peaceful coexistence.

### DECOLONIZING DEMOCRATIC ETHICS

Because Western logic is binary and one partner is always marked as neutral, historically colonized and oppressed persons remain marked as Other rather than as "person." The notion of person as white, male, straight, settler, etc., results from our cognitive tendency to take the most notable member of a diverse group as its exemplar. This is explained by cognitive prototype theory.<sup>28</sup> Prototype theory posits that within a group of diverse members, one member will always be the paradigm. For the group of birds, a robin is a prototype whereas a penguin, although acknowledged as a bird upon reminder, is otherwise Othered. The same holds for moral concepts.<sup>29</sup> The concept of person is racist and sexist with respect to its prototype given its culturally contingent cognitive models and folk theories surrounding it.<sup>30</sup> When marginalized groups are marked by stereotypes and dominant groups are marked by the neutrality qua prototype, recognition can only be achieved through convincingly legitimizing one's group as belonging to that of persons and citizens and often requires extensive pleading and placating. Recognition is bestowed to the one seeking it by another's good graces that deem the seeker as minimally belonging—it can and often is refused. This is one reason why recognition fails as a viable practice for inclusive democratic ethics.

Subsequently, since recognition is granted by the one in power, the means of achieving recognition is either assimilating to, mimicking, and operating under the dominant schema and narrative. As such, the conditions of oppression remain fixed and given and marginalized folks just need to get with it, as it were. In effect, it requires the use of the oppressed's imagination to reorder their own cognitive schemas with no corollary responsibility by dominant groups or the State to do the same. It is for this reason that Glen Coulthard, James Tully, Robert Nichols, among many others, are advocating for politics of decolonization. As Alfred rightly argues, reinforcing, validating, and perpetuating Western values cannot eliminate implicit practices of colonization and engender peaceful coexistence.<sup>31</sup> For democratic practices to be ethically inclusive, oppressed groups must be able to sit at the sharing circle and help shape the story of society. Decolonization within the political sphere, and—more significantly—at the cognitive level, requires a massive overhaul by community members who historically have no particular reason to do so. This is why it becomes the burden of the oppressed to dismantle the settler state, and all of its war-like metaphors. But this burden does not end in their being devoured by the process. The path towards

decolonization that must and should be paved by the oppressed is a key means of active citizenry that procures the oppressed a seat at the circle instead of waiting for permission—recognition—from others to be citizens. Civic activity requires that citizens turn away from the status quo, imperial, and colonial governance relations in which they find themselves to build new diverse, political relations and practices, means to exercise political power.<sup>32</sup>

Decolonial practices can aid folks in challenging and restructuring the biased and racist and colonialist cognitive metaphors used to exclude certain kinds of democratic contributions. Because our cognitive capacities are inherently imaginative and consistently adapting or constructing conceptual metaphors, there is no empirical obstacle standing in the way of a demand that we give up biased schemas that substantiate exclusion in the demos. The very fact that oppressed groups already work under multiple cognitive schemas of metaphor evidences that the operation of multiple schemas in the demos is feasible. It is not impossible to intentionally intervene in conceptual metaphors once we know how they are constructed and then employ our imagination to rebuild them. One decolonial practice that can facilitate the reconstruction process is by forcing one prototype/stereotype to confront another to demonstrate that the concept under consideration contains more than is assumed.<sup>33</sup> Johnson points out that because we are imaginative beings, it is not cognitively difficult for us to move beyond what we take to be given qua our experiences by reflecting on aspects of experiences that others emphasize in order to develop novel organizations.

My claim is that if we place these cognitive activities at the center of our metaphysical and epistemological assumptions rather than at the periphery, we will not only have an empirically accurate model of cognition, we will have a more effective background framework for yielding inclusive deliberative practices since such practices would follow from, rather than exist in tension with, our worldview. As Andrea Smith says, the philosophical project is about the creation of new worlds for which we currently have no language and to be moved to "create that which we cannot now know."<sup>34</sup> However, the process is not entirely so far removed as to create the entirety of an entity. What we must do is look to Native American democratic practices to discover where Western society went wrong when they stole it from us.<sup>35</sup>

### NOTES

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8. Johnson, *Moral Imagination*; Johnson, *The Meaning of the Body*; George Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*; George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).
9. Steve Winter, *A Clearing in the Forest: Law, Life, and Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).
10. *Ibid.*, 75.
11. *Ibid.*, 5.
12. *Ibid.*, 68.
13. *Ibid.*, 106.
14. *Ibid.*, 65.
15. Anthony Laden, "Proposals, Engagements and the Key of Reasoning," *Freedom and Democracy in an Imperial Context: Dialogues with James Tully*, ed. Robert Nichols and Jakeet Singh (New York: Routledge Press, 2014) 13, 22.
16. Johnson, *Moral Imagination*, 10.
17. Winter, *A Clearing in the Forest*, 108.
18. Johnson, *Moral Imagination*, 201.
19. *Ibid.*, 203.
20. Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things*, 60.
21. Taiaiake Alfred, *Wasáse: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009); Lloyd L. Lee, ed., *Diné Perspectives: Revitalizing and Reclaiming Navajo Thought* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2014); Dale Turner, *This Is Not a Peace Pipe: Towards a Critical Indigenous Philosophy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006).
22. Alfred, *Wasáse*, 14.
23. *Ibid.*, 66.
24. *Ibid.*, 67.
25. Turner, *This Is Not a Peace Pipe*, 50.
26. Vine Deloria, Jr., *Spirit and Reason: The Vine Deloria, Jr., Reader*, ed. Barbara Deloria, Kristen Foehner, and Sam Scinta (Golden: Fulcrum Publishing, 1999), 67; Donald Fixico, *The American Indian Mind in a Linear World* (New York: Routledge Press, 2003), 29; Dennis McPherson and J. Douglas Rabb, *Indian from the Inside: Native American Philosophy and Cultural Renewal* (Jefferson: McFarland and Company, Inc., Publishers, 2011), 110.
27. *The American Indian Mind in a Linear World*, 27.
28. Johnson, *Moral Imagination*; Eleanor Roche and Barbara B. Lloyd, eds., *Cognition and Categorization* (Hillsdale: Erlbaum Press, 1978); Francisco J. Valera, Evan Thompson, and Eleanor Roche, *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1991).
29. Johnson, *Moral Imagination*, 88.
30. *Ibid.*, 99.
31. Alfred, *Wasáse*, 65.
32. Val Napoleon and Hadley Friedland, "Accessing Tully: Political Philosophy for the Everyday and the Everyone," *Freedom and Democracy in an Imperial Context: Dialogues with James Tully*, ed. Robert Nichols and Jakeet Singh (New York: Routledge Press, 2014), 209.

33. McPherson and Rabb, *Indian from the Inside*, 121.
34. Andrea Smith, "Native Studies at the Horizons of Death: Theorizing Ethnographic Entrapment and Settler Self-Reflexivity," *Theorizing Native Studies*, ed. Audra Simpson and Andrea Smith (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 225, 226.
35. Bruce Johansen, *Debating Democracy: Native American Legacy of Freedom* (Santa Fe: Clear Light Publishing, 1998).

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## *Indigenous Identity in Articulations of Existence in Afro-Caribbean Philosophy*

Gertrude James González de Allen

SPELMAN COLLEGE

### INTRODUCTION

This article, the outcome of a presentation given at the APA Pacific Division meeting in March 2016, links dialogues about being in Afro-Caribbean philosophy to indigenous identity. Specifically, it asks whether Edouard Glissant's rhizome theory is applicable to a variety of identities in the Caribbean, including indigenous identity. Because it is part of a larger project of identity in the U.S. Virgin Islands, "Indigenous Identity in Articulations of Existence in Afro-Caribbean Philosophy" represents a cross cultural dialogue in the Caribbean that is uniquely situated in the U.S. Virgin Islands. One of the questions asked in this article is whether Glissant's view of the Francophone Caribbean translates to other Caribbean contexts (especially the U.S. Virgin Islands). Sylvia Wynter is an important theoretical voice in this discussion in that she is a thinker from the Anglo-Caribbean who agrees with Glissant's articulation of identity. The argument here is that when Glissant's rhizome theory shifts to other contexts, indigenous identity and others like it lose their agency. Given this loss of agency by Glissant's theory, the manner in which U.S. Virgin Island women establish her child's identity via burial of the child's umbilical cord is offered as an alternate agency-filled expression of linking the self to a physical space, national identity, and a people. This dialogue has implications for thinking through questions of identity, migration, and immigration.

"Indigenous Identity in Articulations of Existence in Afro-Caribbean Philosophy" unfolds in four parts. First, the essay discusses the notion of rootedness from the point of view of an ordinary citizen in the U.S. Virgin Islands. Second, it examines how Glissant theorizes rootedness in a Caribbean context. Third, it shows how Wynter relates to Glissant's view. Finally, it concludes that both Wynter and Glissant fall short of accounting for psychic and embodied liberation, when Glissant's rhizome theory is fully espoused.

### CREATING NEW CONNECTIONS: THE UMBILICAL CORD

*Me navel string bury deh!*<sup>1</sup>

In the U.S. Virgin Islands, the mothers in the community where I lived valued their baby's umbilical cord (also known as navel string), which remained present in their bodies after birth. This string eventually fell off a few weeks after birth. The fallen umbilical cord would be placed in a jar or wrapped in cloth for safekeeping before being buried. The fallen umbilical cord was an important step in the development of the baby. This step was a shift from a home housed within a mother's womb to a home housed within the island onto which it was destined to grow. It marked an important moment in its relationship to her/his family

and the land of birth. The occasion was just as important as some later milestones, like crawling, walking, or speaking one's first words. As family members visited the baby, not only did the mother talk about the baby's progress, but she also announced the falling of the cord. This announcement was often followed by a demonstration of the cord in its separated state. This cultural practice of long ago in the U.S. Virgin Islands is being used not only as memory of the past, but also as a way to theorize Virgin Island identity via local women's cultural practices. I propose that the burial of the umbilical cord suggests a practice of linkage to the land of birth, a means of establishing stability, interconnection, and belonging in a constantly shifting world. This is an act that supersedes nationhood, citizenship, kinship, and other sociogenic markers of being Other, such as race, gender, class, sexuality, etc. Just like the rest of the Caribbean region, the U.S. Virgin Islands has been deeply affected by not only global but regional shifts of people. This movement has an impact on identity, but what is identity in this environment? Is it fundamentally marked by movement or some sort of rooting/planting upon arrival?

There is much said about the ways in which Caribbean people can be identified and constituted. Among these perspectives is Edouard Glissant, who suggests that Caribbean people should strive to be rhizome wanderers without attachment, such as a root, which can be considered predatory. In reflecting about this idea of identity by Glissant, the cultural practice of burying the navel string emerged. It seemed in stark contrast to what Glissant proposes. While it has been true that the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI) has been and continues to be a group of islands constituted in large part by immigrants, it has not followed that there has been little or no "rootedness." As I thought about a way to reflect upon this thought argumentatively, the image of the navel string came to mind. There is a way in which even those who have wandered into the USVI look for rootedness through situating their children in the new lands. Indeed, movement as in migration (forced or voluntary) is important to U.S. Virgin Island people, culture, economy, and politics—but so is settlement. This article proposes that neither root nor the rhizome metaphor is suited for metaphors of Virgin Islands' identity.

**MOVEMENT AND ROOTEDNESS IN THE U.S.  
VIRGIN ISLANDS: IS GLISSANT'S VIEW  
RELEVANT?**

The root is not important. Movement is. –Édouard Glissant

The Glissant quote at the beginning of this section points to the importance of movement to identity in the U.S. Virgin Islands as well as grounding this philosophical reflection within already existing theoretical frameworks in the Caribbean. In *Poetics of Relation*, Glissant uses Deleuze and Guattari's philosophical concepts involving rhizomes and roots to point to the invasive nature of colonization, which establishes itself in settlement dominating in its new location and nearly eliminating the local competing way of life. From this view, movement with rootedness as a goal is problematic.

According to Glissant, Caribbean people have an interesting dilemma of being exiled people who wander. An important dilemma arises: to grow and develop a people, a civilization, an individual, a nation in this wandering. In *Poetics of Relation*, Glissant adopts Deleuze and Guattari's view of cultural and citizenry relations and categorizations as rhizomic rather than rooted, where the cultural root system is organic rather than derived from a "predatory rootstock."<sup>2</sup> The key here is that there is no dominant aggressive and invasive root characterized, in most cases, by a nation. He posits that the individual/self-situates itself primarily in relation to the "Other," rather than in relation to a territory or nation. An individual flourishes and a culture emerges from the relationship. Movement is privileged in the sense that if the individual continues to move as a nomad does, growth and development can still occur. From Glissant's view, the individual can flourish because in the relation with the "Other" there is no deprivation.

Glissant's theory that movement is more important than root is a complex one since it has a variety of implications for this reflection of the U.S. Virgin Islands. Movement, as in the migration of people, in many ways is what has characterized lifestyle of the people of Virgin Islands from its pre-Colombian era. The native Arawak travelled between and among the Latin American and Caribbean corridor. So, in fact, to be of the region meant to migrate. During the post sighting and first mapping after Columbus's second voyage to the Caribbean there was significant shift. A series of European invasions drove away the natives, clearing the way for modern colonial settlement. Movement of people in the post-Danish era was represented by Virgin Islanders migrating to the United States en masse during the early twentieth century. In mid-to late twentieth century, movement is found in the waves of immigrant influx from a variety of intra-Caribbean nations such as Puerto Rico, Montserrat, St. Lucia, Antigua, St. Vincent, Trinidad and Tobago, and the Dominican Republic, among others.

Root, as meaning stabilizer or attachment necessary for growth, is less apt for characterization of the U.S. Virgin Islands' identity. Colonizing settlers behave in ways like plants with major root systems that grow, invade, settle, and become intransigent without relating to the other. Glissant's analysis is consistent with the nature of French colonization, which not only had the characteristic of invasiveness, but also a root that is totalizing. That is, not only was there a political and military invasion, but also a period of settlement that became absolute. In the Francophone Caribbean islands, such as Martinique and Guadelupe, French thought, culture, and way of life seeped, saturated, and infused itself into the cultural, political, economic, and social landscape. French colonialism is well known for the requisite of cultural, social, and political espousal of itself within the colonizing entity. These elements became firmly implanted in the French Caribbean. The goal was to make these settlements culturally, politically, and economically France. This is the element of rooting that is invasive and suffocating to the already existing. In such a climate, it is very difficult for other ways of being to survive. The invasive species makes it difficult for others to compete. There is little to no relation to the "Other." Instead, there is suffocation, forced conformity, territorialization, and re-classification.

Glissant suggests that a rhizome—as in a stem with the ability to produce all elements of a functioning plant, such as root stems as well as the plant’s new growth systems above ground—results in greater relation to the “Other” and is preferable. Furthermore, Glissant suggests that the major problem with European colonization is that there is rootedness without relation to the “Other.” This rootedness is therefore invasive and unwanted. But how does Glissant respond to intra-Caribbean and U.S. migration? What happens to those who migrate en masse and populate but who are not a colonial European Other? Glissant’s predatory root concept falls short of accounting for those, like undocumented workers, who root but who may not necessarily choose to engage the local life/people and may perhaps not be invasive. What about the native populations that were murdered, captured, and/or forced to leave their island homes?

Colonization in the Virgin Islands has a very unique history in that it changed colonizing hands many times. There were six colonizers before the United States. Many of these exchanges did not represent solid settlement with cultural and social stabilizers. That is, there was no cultural and social root that took over. It is true that the native Arawak and Carib populations had been decimated in the U.S. Virgin Islands during the first two hundred years of exploration and settlement of the Caribbean. Waves of explorers and would-be settlers accompanied by their respective military enforcement chased away and/or killed the native populations from the USVI. The idea of a predator root that would take over the islands while ignoring the native “Other” is not characteristic of the early colonization of the U.S. Virgin Islands (during the period up to and including the early phase of U.S. colonization). The islands had been used as political pawns. The U.S. Virgin Islands were frequently traded during post-war negotiations among European countries as well as sold. They were not necessarily prized enough as places for “rooting.” When the Danish acquired the USVI, they maintained a distant stance. Danish citizens had very little interest in settlement of the USVI. Thus, many of the plantations in the USVI were leased and operated by non-Danish citizenry. Many of the slaves learned English, and much of the business conducted was also in English.

Danish laws governed the Virgin Islands during its colonial rule. However, the Danish culture and traditions, though present, were not totalizing in the way the French and British colonial systems operated. Note that given this difference, no value is being placed on Danish colonization. The claim here is that Danish colonization was different in kind. Like many other European colonizing nations, the Danes simply wanted presence in the Caribbean to show political strength and grow economically. This military and economic emphasis was accompanied by some cultural and religious intentions. However, these were not totalizing. This means that the goal was not to make the Virgins Islands a mirror image of Denmark.

Glissant’s rhizome theory may not be apt for the Virgin Islands because it does not account for intra-Caribbean migration, which in some cases results in a rootedness in the U.S. Virgin Islands although this rootedness is

not necessarily invasive. The waves of migrants are not necessarily dominant and totalizing. For this reason, this paper offers another theoretical point of view named “change point,” which offers a perspective that emphasizes the intersection between exploration, migration, mapping, and its consequences.

**SYLVIA WYNTER AND GLISSANT**

Glissant’s poetics of relation theory, in which the rhizome model of Caribbean identity is developed, has had a significant impact on current Caribbean critical theory and philosophy of identity. Some Caribbean theorists argue for its legitimacy within the context of an instantiation of a valid expression of an anti-colonial discourse, a discourse that has deep roots in the Caribbean intellectual tradition. Among these is Sylvia Wynter. In the essay “Beyond the Word of Man: Glissant and the New Discourse of the Antilles,” Wynter argues that the root metaphor is a “blocking,” an impediment to a fully evolved Caribbean identity, especially in its Francophone manifestations. As such, Glissant’s rhizome theory is a necessary part of an attempt to disrupt “the existential reality of psychocultural blockade” in the Caribbean.<sup>3</sup> Second, this theory is in line with Glissant’s themes of “recapturing unrecorded history” and “preserving cultural identity” in the Francophone Caribbean. Third, and most importantly, Wynter proposes that this discourse is a response to a simple question with complex implications: How does a human maintain human beingness in a secular world? The complexity of the question is due to the fact that indigenous and African-descended subjects are systematically excluded from the categories Word of Man and Word of Human; this process began in 1512. Beginning in 1512, the secularization of Europe manifested in its first efforts to occupy the Americas and establish plantation systems. Occupation and plantation systems are two foundational elements for the Caribbean that give rise to Glissant’s Antilles. Indeed, many Caribbean theorists, such as Antonio Benitez Rojo, Roberto Fernandez Retamar, Edouard Glissant, Aime Cesaire, and George Lamming, among others, acknowledge these two elements as essential to what it means to be Caribbean. A more productive standpoint must be developed since the problem with Glissant and Wynter’s view of the Caribbean is that it is still bound within a colonial discourse despite its contestation of it. The Caribbean described is fundamentally a colonial invention, a contrived space which forced a variety of peoples to co-exist in the name of productivity. In this phase, it excludes indigenous people as essential elements of what the Caribbean has been.

Although Wynter acknowledges the importance of occupation and plantation systems to the foundation of modern and contemporary Caribbean identity, she does acknowledge the central role of the indigenous peoples within the larger discourse of European secularization after 1512. She writes:

As long as the human subject, Heidegger pointed out, continued to conceptualize and experience itself as a created being it would see no necessity to ask questions about being. . . . After Darwin’s *Origin of the Species* . . . the universal model of being that had been projected by Western

Europe from 1512 onward was displaced from that of the human as a created rational being . . . to that of human as a selected being. In this new representation, the human as an evolutionary selected natural organism now differed from other forms of organic life only by the fact that it created, "culture," . . . .<sup>4</sup>

From Wynter's point of view, after 1512, political, scientific, and cultural revolutions create a shift in humanism, namely, the concept of the "Abject as that of Adamic enslavement to Original Sin" given from the lay populations of Europe to populations outside of Europe; it was manifested within the binary relationship between "the settlers and the New World peoples (indios) and enslaved peoples of Africa (Negroes)."<sup>5</sup> The secular shift embodied within an evolved humanism was projecting an Ontological Lack unto non-Europeans. Wynter further proposes that the Negro (whom she terms "Nigger") and the indigenous population (termed "Native") are transformed into a genetic Lack; they are the counter-balance helping give further meaning to the term "normal human." Wynter postulates further that the literary figure in Shakespeare's *Tempest*, known as Caliban, has been an important figure for Caribbean writers, such as Cesaire, Fanon, Glissant, and Fernandez Retamar because as the first representation of "'native' or nihilated peoples (within a re-inscribed dichotomy of 'rational versus nature'), Caliban is also the first manifestation of the 'secular Other'; this first manifestation of the 'secular Other' is in contradistinction to a self."<sup>6</sup> Additionally, Wynter sees the creation of distinct group categories called the "Nigger" and the "Native" as the second manifestation of the secular Other; they are Others in contradistinction to the form of self-known as Man.

Wynter's support of Glissant's poetics of relation, then, is derived from the fact that in this theory Glissant clarifies the dilemma for the non-European subject in the Caribbean. The dilemma is the choice between maroonage, i.e., escape to the hills always living a life of looking at a past and an essential divorce from the larger community from which one escaped, or submission to the colonial system, which subsumes and erases one's sense of self.

## CONCLUSION

Wynter's support of Glissant's theory has its merits as it calls attention to the central crisis in Afro-Caribbean philosophy of identity, i.e., being the Abject and occupying the position of "Ontological Lack." This crisis among Antillean male writers, in particular, can also be seen in the existential dilemma in the insight that in attempting to liberate oneself and be "the universal Man," denial of one's physical self is required; this is an impossible position. However, the counter claim proposed here is that the project of trying to embody "a universal Man" is suspect as this "Man" does not embody all people. Second, Wynter's reading of "the Nigger" and the "Native" as both applicable subjectivities within the second manifestation of Otherness versus "Man" is indeed accurate. Nevertheless, it is precisely this notion of the "Native" which sometimes gets lost in theories involving plantation economies and cultures and in discourse of blackness.

At this juncture, it may be helpful to return to the practice of umbilical cord celebration and burial as a way to consider that perhaps liberation from the re-inscription of colonization may be in simple practices of self-assertion, such as the burial of the umbilical cord. Perhaps a woman's choice to announce her child's umbilical cord separation and its subsequent burial in the child's homeland is a very powerful de-colonial action. The power comes from the fact that there is a psycho-existential assertion of self that does not depend upon state acknowledgement of selfhood. The newborn's home is transferred from the mother's womb to the land of birth; despite any potential future migration, there is a clear place of beginning and solid space of belonging that exists beyond the secular humanistic binary of Other versus Man. Despite my uprooted condition of self-imposed exile, I live in Georgia, I own a home in Georgia, I have a job in Georgia, I vote in Georgia. But Georgia is not my home. This is an unmovable and unshakeable fact of my being, whether I am recognized as "human" or not. Thus, the starting point for psycho-existential closure should not be in an attempt to repair or ameliorate the binary construction of Other; it may be found in active practices of self-recognition.

## NOTES

1. "My navel string is buried there!" Mammo Muchie, Sanya Osha, Matlotleng Matlou, *The Africana World: From Fragmentation to Unity and Renaissance* (Pretoria: Africa Institute of South Africa, 2012).
2. Edouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 11.
3. Sylvia Wynter, "Beyond the Word of Man: Glissant and the New Discourse of the Antilles," *World Literature Today* 63, no. 4 (Autumn 1989): 638. Retrieved July 9, 2014, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40145557>.
4. *Ibid.*, 640.
5. *Ibid.*, 641.
6. *Ibid.*, 644.

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## BOOK REVIEW

### *Performing Indigeneity: Global Histories and Contemporary Experience*

Laura R. Graham and H. Glenn Penny, eds. (University of Nebraska Press, 2014).

Reviewed by Shay Welch

SPELMAN COLLEGE

The introductory chapter of this anthology is titled "Performing Indigeneity: Emergent Identity, Self-Determination, and Sovereignty." According to Laura Graham and H. Glenn Penny, the purpose of this anthology is to focus on aware, intentional, agentic, and reflexive performances of Indigeneity in both public and private domains. One of the main, overarching, and pressing questions highlighted throughout the book is whether the role of performing authentic and/or traditional manifestations of cultural practices reinforces or undermines notions of essentialism about and stereotypes of Indigenous peoples. This question is paramount because performance itself is a focal point for Indigenous ways of life and means of knowing. This supposition is a consistent assumption across the Native American worldview, as noted by Native philosophers Thomas Norton-Smith and Brian Burkhart. The purpose of this collection, then, is to articulate and defend fresh conceptualizations of Indigeneity as a process that is itself grounded in and underpinned by agentic performances, mostly of the traditional kind. The editors clarify this claim when they state

The concepts of performance and performativity are fundamental to understanding the emergent, processual, and contextual nature of Indigeneity. Scholars emphasize that people fashion and refashion identities through embodied speech and action. Individuals as well as groups produce identities through performances that often entail deeply contextualized and historically contingent creative acts. (2)

Moreover, they suggest that emphasizing the importance of, and defending, Indigenous performances shores up claims for cultural sovereignty and Indigenous identity in response to colonizing forces both locally and globally.

*Performing Indigeneity* is among one of the few books I've come across that includes and accounts for a vast array of Indigenous groups who are largely unrepresented in the scholarship and discourse on Indigenous philosophy. Although the contributors address a wide range of Indigenous groups and issues, *Performing Indigeneity*

appears to have a number of unifying and intersecting themes. First, all authors appear to be drawing on multifarious mechanisms and styles of performance that they believe are capable of combatting essentialist conceptions of Indigeneity. Secondly, nearly all of the authors assert that such performances function as political strategies aimed at developing and confirming cultural sovereignty. These performances are to be recognized as intentional and self-determining actions that shape and communicate the Indigenous identity of the individuals or groups affecting the performances. There is a sense, then, in which the conception of recognition politics undergirds the theoretical and descriptive claims of the authors. Third, though some of the contributors are themselves Indigenous, the articles portray information about Indigenous performances, but do not seem to be representing or conveying through Indigenous perspectives about those performances. As such, it becomes evident that the intended audience for this collection is a non-Indigenous reader who is unlikely to have background knowledge of Indigenous theories. More specifically, the contributions appear to be operating as attempts to persuade non-Indigenous readers of the significance of Indigenous performance in the settler-colonial framework rather than taking such significance as a given and then moving forward with claims that follow from a substantive givenness. That I come to such a conclusion can be recognized if one takes notice of the fact that all depictions of Indigenous performance are centered on and are enacted for non-Indigenous audiences. So while this aspect of the book may not appease Indigenous scholars' thirst for broader or deeper understandings of the role of performance in divergent Indigenous groups, there may be some positive contributory force among non-Indigenous scholars who are at the beginning of their journey to better understand Indigenous practices for purposes of inclusion.

Broadly speaking, this anthology may generate a number of concerns for Native theorists who work to articulate and conceptualize Indigenous perspectives and worldviews. However, I choose to highlight only three points of contention that are interrelated to one another and to the overall thematics of the book. First, this book offers a very narrow focus on Indigeneity. Because most of the authors center their discussions on the relationship of Indigenous performances for non-Indigenous audiences, it appears as if either the contributors do not see Indigeneity as capable of existing outside of its relationship to the settler-colonial worldview, or they do not themselves conceive of Indigeneity as consisting of more than processes of performance for the purpose of identity construction and cultural sovereignty. Second, though the readings address a multiplicity of issues and contexts, they all seem to reorient back to the conception of authenticity. As noted above, the main point of the anthology is to call into question essentialist renderings of Indigeneity, yet they do so with and through performances that are either authentic/traditional or questionable as authentic/traditional. For many Native scholars, a key goal is to give voice to the differing lived experiences of Indigenous peoples, and this often requires that we draw stark distinctions between Indigenous identity and preconceived notions of authentic

performance. In a sense, many Native scholars aim to inform their audiences that traditional lived experiences cannot and do not strictly define who Indigenous people are or can be. So, in a sense, many of the positive, liberating claims made in the book seem to be undermined through the very lens of the analysis employed. Third, the notion of performance itself is exaggeratedly narrow insofar as it is not analyzed as something that can be done without an audience or subconsciously. Though some authors summon Judith Butler's analysis of gender performance, they seem to miss her point that performance is something of which we are not always aware and, more often than not, not purposefully or intentionally deployed. All Indigenous people, like all people broadly speaking, perform their cultural and personal identities for themselves and for others, but this does not entail that performance is or ought to be only construed in the same manner as it is in dance theory.

Given that a number of the contributions imbue me with some consternation, I have chosen to highlight four chapters that I believe could provide some sociological groundwork for questions and topics that Native American philosophers have recently or are currently exploring. I should also reiterate that I approached my reading of this book as a Native American philosopher in search of more Indigenous worldviews to incorporate into or compare with Native philosophy. For this reason, my review of this book is constructed particularly with the interests and intellectual goals of Native American philosophers and the *APA Newsletter on Indigenous Philosophy* in mind. Thus, others who do not have such a narrow focus who engage this anthology may find fewer problematic questions raised for themselves and so are likely to see many of the other virtues intended and offered by the collection. I believe it is important to let future readers discover and determine for themselves the possible points of entwinement on their own accord.

The chapter I found most interesting in respect to the complex question I discuss above regarding how Indigenous people live and perform their identities is "Living Traditions: A Manifesto for Critical Indigeneity" by Bernard Perley. The focus of this chapter is to explore the various ways that Indigenous people must navigate the borders of their lives. Perley is a Masileet of the Tobique First Nation in Canada. But he is also an anthropologist. In this reading, Perley explains and examines the cultural tensions he experiences on each side of the fence; however, as he reminds us, he cannot separate his cultural identity from his professional identity. In order to guard against both the trauma and exhaustion of monitoring and managing his identity in relation to others, he proposes a praxis of critical Indigeneity. Critical Indigeneity consists of daily practices, including but not limited to humor, storytelling, and art, to engage oneself and others in an interrogation about assumptions of Indigenous knowledge (35); they are engaged practices of self-determination against the daily traumas of colonialism (53). More precisely, Perley argues that Indigenous people cannot rely on the state to protect Indigenous ways of life. For this reason, Indigenous folks must "take action by living their Indigenous traditions on their terms and in their everyday life" (53). Through such

practices, he claims that we can create mutually affirming social relations (32) insofar as they are consistently being negotiated through constantly adjusting performances of one's identity with and towards others (42). To demonstrate how critical indigeneity can be affected at the individual level, Perley depicts how the utilization of his triptych, which is a graphic form of ethnographic art, within the field of anthropology communicates and generates understanding about the trauma he and other Indigenous people experience. He explains that his intention for this ethnographic project qua critical indigeneity is to "immerse the participant in the Maliseet sacred space and evoke in the spectator the experience of the Maliseet sacred world" (51).

The benefits for Native theorists in Perley's article can be mined from his emphasis on the social, particularized, and informal praxis-based aspects of critical Indigeneity. One of the projects of current Native scholars is to articulate the particularity of individual Indigenous folk's ability to develop a strong sense of self and autonomy of identity in relation to others, whether within or outside of the tribe or reservation. In particular, Native scholars have been emphasizing the lived experience of urban Native Americans and the struggles they encounter as they try to understand and assert their identity sans traditional backgrounds largely tied to reservation life. Moreover, as I have argued elsewhere,<sup>1</sup> identities, even political identities, are fundamentally social. This means that others see us as who we are—either as we request to be seen or how forces of oppressions cause us to be seen—as a result of social interaction in our social relations. Thus I find Perley's identification of sociality and the centrality of cultivating mutually affirming relations a meaningful notion to aid Native scholars in further articulating their analyses of Indigenous ways of life within the settler-colonial state.

Chapter 3, "Culture Claims: Being Maasai at the United Nations" by Dorothy Hodgson, raises some very interesting questions about who gets to be considered Indigenous and how such recognition does or fails to be granted by others through the enactment of authentic cultural practices. The context in which Hodgson explores this analysis is that of the UN, focusing specially on the Maasia activists from Tanzania and Kenya who are not themselves first peoples, but who have been subjected to the forces and extermination mechanisms of the colonial state. Such traditional, tribal groups attempt to take up with the UN meetings on Indigenous peoples as a way of gaining defense for their rights to continue their ways of life. To do so, such groups are performing and, in some respects, exploiting and exaggerating stereotypical cultural codes and performances to gain recognition by both whites and other Indigenous peoples who are already accepted. In fact, she notes that many groups seem to compete for the most flamboyant of visual representations, including both displaying cultural symbols that are not permitted at home and also hijacking cultural symbols from other groups that they lack and need to appear authentically Indigenous to the white folks running the show. Thus Hodgson introduces the notion of "becoming Indigenous" to convey the processes tribal groups traverse for such recognition at and by the UN. She explains this notion thusly:

Complicated stories of historical injustice are condensed in cultural signifiers that, merely by their association with Indigeneity, imply a shared past of oppression and marginalization . . . for activists from Africa (and Asia) who have only recently become involved w/ the international Indigenous Peoples movement, the need to stress and symbolically mark their cultural connections with recognized Indigenous Peoples has been heightened, given the still-evolving definitions of Indigeneity. (76)

But the utilization and cooptation of stereotypical depictions for recognition raises problematic questions about the possibility of using cultural authenticity rather than history for political gains (60). The need to uphold authentic representations is more an expectation of the UN delegates than of other Indigenous peoples—though not completely. As such, critics regard such groups as political opportunists and as being highly complicit in the perpetuation of the conceptualization of Indigeneity as primitive. In response, Hodgson concludes that however complex and questionable such displays of culture are, these practices of cultural play allow activists the opportunity to represent themselves as they see fit in response to structures of power. While there may be political tensions that arise from this practice, she believes that this is one facet through which new Indigenous groups can express their “claims to self-identification and self-determination, the central principles advocated by the Indigenous rights movement” (77). Instead of diminishing or discrediting their agency, their participation in cultural staging “bridges the binaries of display and practice” (77).

Though this is one of the readings I found to be problematic in light of her conclusion, I do think it is highly relevant to the interests of Native philosophers. First, this idea of “becoming Indigenous” provides supple fodder from which scholars can explore what it means to be Indigenous or to come to one’s identity as Indigenous at an older age. The experience of coming into one’s identity as Native American or Indigenous in isolation or as a matter of heritage pride is rife with questions and concerns over the ethical nature of performing, or not, authenticity. This conception also serves as quite important for tribes who are not recognized by the federal government in their attempts to gain nationhood status, and I can see it being equally, though differently, useful to tribes or tribal members who have been disenrolled. Moreover, the notion would be highly pertinent and could generate profound insights into the experiences of black Natives. Secondly, this reading motivates questions of complicity in the reinforcement of settler-colonial impositions of essentialism on Native Americans. While these are all distinct questions, again, along with the purpose of this anthology, we again come back to the very nature of authenticity, what it means, whether it is real, and what its ethical status is or ought to be and for whom.

Chapter 10, “Haka: Colonized Physicality, Body-Logic, and Embodied Sovereignty” by Brendan Hokowhitu, was a very interesting reading insofar as it explored the cooptation of traditional Maori haka as a means to shape and symbolize the neocolonial nation of Australia. The haka has been

used both to essentialize Maori masculinity as violent while simultaneously manipulated by the state and corporations to depict a nationalism that is strong, aggressive, and proud. To aid the Maori and other Indigenous peoples in understanding their identity in these convoluted relations with the state and institutions that seek to exploit them when they cannot get rid of them, he argues that we must reframe these debates about essentialism into questions of sovereignty to uncover how Indigenous peoples want to reclaim their identities and represent themselves and their way of life. Hokowhitu summarizes his argument in the following way:

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the competing discourses surrounding haka and its “body logic” by, first, providing a genealogy of postcolonial haka, from its rendering as “savage” by early travelers to its marking as a postcolonial identity marker. Second, this chapter introduces the possibilities of haka in terms of what I refer to as “embodied sovereignty,” including the existential and everyday properties of Indigenous culture—that is, what culture “feels like” as opposed to the antiquation of Indigenous culture, which enables the temporal dislocation of Indigenous Peoples away from the present. . . . The process involved what I refer to throughout this chapter as “synthesis.” That is, the violent amalgamation (authentification) of one culture into another, which typically involved encompassing and reconfiguring the incomprehensible forms, the classification of Indigenous forms of knowing into Western ontological catalogs, or simply the denial that many practices even existed. The authentication element in this devolution is crucial because from the premise of Enlightenment reason, knowledge was authentic only if it was known to the mind. That is, Indigenous practices like haka, which conjured up horror and boggled the minds of the European, had to be either banned or made comprehensible to Western thought. The first principle of colonizing the Indigenous body, then, was to bring the philosophical underpinnings of the savage under the logic of the colonizer, to authenticate the inauthentic. (278/280)

Hokowhitu is largely concerned with the process of ethnic formalization qua authenticity requirements that serve the needs and imaginations of the colonizers that can ultimately lead to exclusion and discrimination if such expectations are not met in the ways colonizers find them entertaining or useful. His objective is to consider how traditional embodied practices such as haka, that when reclaimed or done as a means of voicing cultural sovereignty, can create a “radical alterity” (295). Again, the author brings us to the question of how we can gain control over our practices through practices of critical self-reflexivity. To do so, he posits that we must engage in processes of Indigenous embodied sovereignty as a political means of understanding what culture feels like to ourselves rather than what it looks like to others (292). He defines Indigenous embodied sovereignty as a critical body practice that questions the subjugating forces inscribed upon the body while affirming

the complexity, diversity, and multidimensional ways of being Indigenous (295–96). Such practices are a form of, and provide, a living existentialism and epistemology that circumvents questions of authenticity in that the internal critical reflection on the embodied practices is cut off from its presumed nature as spectacle.

In his account of the cooptation of haka by the state and how it was that the state used the haka in the boarding schools to teach the Maori rugby for its own purposes, Hokowhitu's article provides philosophers with two key ideas for developing Native theory. First, he provides a context for us to consider how the state exploits highly embodied and spectacular performances of Indigeneity. It garners up questions regarding how this synthesis Hokowhitu speaks to, translates, and functions at the intersection of colonization and biopower. For example, how and why does the state choose some practices of Indigeneity for itself over others? How and why does the state reinforce and encourage practices that it deems savage, and how does this allow the state to control both the lived conditions and the identity formation of Indigenous peoples? Is this really an instance, as I perceive it to be, of the state finding power in performances that it deems to be too powerful to exterminate? If so many other aspects of Indigenous life can be stamped out, why is it that this particular performance serves as a national anthem of sorts? I can imagine that there must be an endless array of exploration Native theorists can navigate analyzing such contexts through a Foucauldian lens. Second, I find his conception of Indigenous embodied sovereignty as existentialism quite fruitful. Though I am unsure of what, exactly, he means by using what culture "feels like" to serve as a means of sovereignty, I am sure that more can be said about this idea in relation to the Native American framework of procedural knowledge. Additionally, he provides examples such as the hair raising on one's neck during the haka, and this, to me, seems like it could provide an interesting point of intersection with the Native American metaphysical assumption of identity being tied to land given that our relationship to land is highly embodied.

Chapter 12, "Showing Too Much or Too Little: Predicaments of Painting Indigenous Presence in Central Australia" by Fred Myers, is yet another reading that raised my eyebrow more than once, but also generates a number of interesting questions for Native theorists. The overall purpose of this reading is to consider the limitations on access to Indigenous "property" by folks Indigenous creators deem unacceptable recipients or showcases. The frame in which Myers explores this question is through his experience of showcasing aboriginal acrylic paintings that represent the Tjurkurrpa (the Dreaming Places). The Tjurkurrpa is the invisible realm occupied by the Ancestral Beings from which the phenomenal world is shaped and structured (353); these paintings show features of the land that make visible and knowable powers that would otherwise be unknowable (354). According to many aboriginal peoples, these paintings are, in a sense, sacred and accessible only to initiated males since these paintings are believed to represent the truth, one that may be too dangerous for the uninitiated to witness. Myers claims that perceptions of art as cultural property are linked to the

desire for self-determination in that Indigenous people demand recognition of this property as representative of their sovereignty (352). Curiously, Myers admits that such art enhances aboriginal cultural status and bolsters political claims to right to land. But he also claims that such paintings occupy a border zone of performance in the sense that it is unclear "whose territories, on whose land one is standing—and therefore whose values should predominate" (357). In short, Myers simultaneously addresses paramount points for Indigenous peoples that 1) they own their art, 2) their art represents truth, and 3) recognition of art as property is a form of much needed political recognition while then suggesting that it is unclear who has the right to control these paintings. In the article, Myers makes ample argument to suggest that the state and museums ought to seek permissions via negotiation, rather than formal rules, in cases where art has a controversial subtext regarding accessibility. While the substantive claim is that control of culture qua "property" establishes relationships that ground claims of recognition (379), the undercurrent is a claim that the state or institutions should engage in negotiation over cultural artist exhibitions rather than institute formal regulations which would provide protection to museums and scholars who choose to use Indigenous art beyond the limits the groups (or part of the group) has set even for themselves. Negotiation, Myers points out, is to be used as a means of recognizing aboriginal agency—but implicit in this claim is that they do not have to.

The question of who controls Indigenous culture and art for the purposes of display and profit is not new. But the unique way that this reading presents the question is that the assumption is that the Indigenous Peoples are not as a matter of fact. It is unclear whether the author is making a strict statement of fact or whether there is some embedded implicit colonizing bias that any negotiations made with Indigenous people over the use of their culture is a gift. This bias may or may not be attributable to the author, but the fact remains that this is the general bias of anthropologists, sociologists, and museum curators, broadly speaking. So the interesting purpose of this reading is that it provides one way of viewing the problem, which can allow for Native scholars to prepare what a response would look like from an Indigenous perspective. I would be interested, say, in how Native American scholars would construe praxes of negotiation differently than Myers or whether or not Native theorists even accept his supposition that Indigenous culture and art do exist in such border zones. My guess would be that many Native theorists would have interesting remarks about the very notion itself. A third interesting point for reflection is the internal point of tension within Indigenous groups themselves over who is able to set the limitations on access to sacred works, regardless of whether it is a concern of cultural appropriation. Myers points out that there is quite a bit of conflict between community members over this point, and I think that this internal debate applies across all Indigenous peoples in relation to all kinds of performance arts and who is allowed to engage in which practices and in which roles. Looking back to the question of authenticity, Native scholars might take up this example and explore whether or not inter-tribal divisions on access in all areas of cultural expression are contemporarily legitimate.

Overall, I think this anthology, including its most problematic readings, can contribute in numerous ways to the future of Native philosophy. Because there is so little of what falls under philosophy “proper,” I believe sociological and ethnographic texts such as this provide excellent starting points for critical inquiry in our field.

**NOTES**

1. Shay Welch, *A Theory of Freedom: Feminism and the Social Contract* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan Publishing Co., 2012).