

APA Newsletters

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NEWSLETTER ON AMERICAN INDIANS IN PHILOSOPHY

FROM THE EDITOR, ANNE WATERS

MEMORIAL IN HONOR OF VIOLA CORDOVA, PH.D., ANNE WATERS
“A Transnational Indigenist Woman’s Agenda”

ARTICLES

LILLIAN FRIEDBERG
“Why Don’t I See Red?”

JOHN COLLITON
“The Anishinaubae Story”

SAMUEL YUNXIANG LIANG
“The Fluctuation of Yin Yang: A Sex Model in Chinese Philosophy and Medicine”





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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Anne Waters

Every so often something happens in my life that gives me pause to think about what it is that we are really trying to do with the field of American Indian Philosophy, and the role of American Indians in that endeavor. It seems pretty obvious to just about anyone who takes the initiative to absorb our first four newsletters, that we are trying to articulate a skeleton of how indigenous being differs from nonindigenous being. To do this in a nonessentialized way, and with respect for the thought of the many different First Nations throughout the Americas, has been a goal in conveying a worldview. Whether epistemology, metaphysics, science, ethics or aesthetics, the authors have sought common philosophical ground to explain how some nonindigenous ways of being may be somewhat similar to indigenous ways of being, and yet also very different.

The passing on of Viola (V.F.) Cordova last November 2, 2002 was such an event that gave me pause to think about the meaning of this newsletter in the context of the lives of our American Indians holding a Ph.D. in philosophy. From the inception of the organizing for our APA Committee on American Indians in Philosophy in the mid 1990s, our visions aspired to create a discourse of American Indian philosophy that would express a harmonious voice of difference. As I look over the papers included in this volume of the newsletter, I discern a continuity of this theme of balancing differences. American Indians, in the APA, have moved from a silenced voice, to a space where we are able to begin constructing and deconstructing philosophical analysis of American Indian thought in the context of traditional philosophical reflection. And in so doing, we have lived within the observances of respect for traditional ways of being, sharing, protecting and maintaining our cultures.

In this volume we begin with a memorial in honor of Viola Cordova, one of our first American Indians to hold a Ph.D. in philosophy. In keeping with Viola's legacy of questioning, the second article, a piece by Lillian Friedberg, asks "Why Don't I See Red: Presenting the Absence of Native American Perspectives in the Discourse on Race in Philosophy." This paper calls to accountability recent critical race theory that has excluded consideration of the experiences of people indigenous to the Americas. Friedberg queries the historical hegemony that creates a situation where she and other American Indians must experience cognitive dissonance created by reading contemporary race theory. From the invisibility of Black Indians to the exclusion of the effect of the "one drop rule" as it affected Native populations, Friedberg tells us that the lack of inclusive philosophical discourse of

race mirrors contemporary political and legal debates, and uses exclusionary classifications based upon an ontology of language connected to a particular metaphysical worldview. It is no wonder that American Indians have been left out of the dialogue, for we have also been left out of philosophical circles that have given rise to critical race theory. The experiences of people indigenous to the Americas have been left out of critical race theory because of a systematic institutional exclusion from the dialogue. And when we have sought to be included, we have frequently been silenced because of not being understood. Friedberg draws our attention to the problems of communicating in efforts to enter the critical race theory dialogue: native conceptualizations of being and thinking cannot accommodate bifurcated categories and discrete ontological boundaries. If this is true, and I believe it is, the situation leaves us to wonder how critical race theory might be benefitted in dialogue with American Indians.

John Collition enters the dialogue of cognitive dissonance in "The Anishinaubae Story" when he reconstructs a sacred creation story as told to him by his uncle, Norvel Morriseau, a First Nations artist in Canada. Collition positions himself to counter the cognitive dissonance of authors who talk about the spiritual death of the Ojibwa. Moreover, he brings together similarities of origin stories by showing how an Anishinaubae Northeast story shares similar aspects of a Seminole Southeast origin story, and how other stories bear similarity to one another, though differing as we move from one region to another. We see how the language itself, and the stories of them, are connected to the land. Citing Fred Thomas, Collition turns the tables on those who would say that we are human beings in search for spirituality, by suggesting that we are spiritual beings trying to be human beings. Opening up the cognitive dissonance American Indians face upon reading philosophy of the Western tradition, and articulating how this tradition bumps up against our own, can benefit the continuing philosophical dialogue for everyone.

Finally, in "The Fluctuation of Yin Yang: A Sex Model in Chinese Philosophy and Medicine," Samuel Yunxiang Liang presents an analysis of why gender, in traditional Chinese thought, can only be presented as a dynamic interchangeability of Yin Yang. In thinking about this paper, I am struck by the similarity of Chinese thought with what American Indian philosophers have been talking about regarding native languages embracing an animism and a crossing-over of conceptual categories. I am also curious about the transformation from matriarchal (matrilineal?) to the patriarchal (patrilineal?) society that Liang tells us happened just before recorded Chinese history. Moreover, the dualities of Yin Yang are non-hierarchical and its dynamism is interchanging and non-teleological, producing a history that may be both static and cyclical, but not teleological. Again, we see the theme of potential for cognitive dissonance when

approaching Western thought from a non-Western perspective.

Viola Cordova, like myself, studied Eastern thought at the University of New Mexico in the Philosophy Department. We frequently talked about how Eastern ontological traditions seem much more comfortable than Western ontological traditions. Questions arise for me when I think about teaching American Indian philosophy. How does one teach critical race theory and political analysis so as to include, to include indigenist communalism and sustainability, metaphysics to include interdependency and value theory to include nondiscrete, nonbinary dualisms, etc. These are good questions for the times, because they bring forth the question of how the field of American Indian philosophy can be included in the contemporary philosophical discipline. Will this emerging field be merely tagged into or onto a traditional course in metaphysics, social and political philosophy, etc.? Or does there remain the possibility of teaching American Indian thought by teaching courses specific to American Indian metaphysics or epistemology, for example? Only time will tell how the hegemonic structures currently pervading the discipline of philosophy will react to American Indian, or America's indigenous, thought. Together these papers show that as humans, we are capable of different philosophical metaphors of system building, which are influenced by bounded geographic locations. In honor of Viola, and her search for the nature of humanity. Mitakuye Oyasin.

MEMORIAL IN HONOR OF VIOLA CORDOVA (V.F. CORDOVA), PH.D.

Anne Waters

The Lakota was a true naturalist—lover of Nature. He loved the earth and all things of the earth, the attachment growing with age. The old people came literally to love the soil and they sat or reclined on the ground with a feeling of being close to a mothering power. It was good for the skin to touch the earth and the old people liked to remove their moccasins and walk with bare feet on the sacred earth. Their tipis were built upon the earth and their altars were made of earth. The birds that flew in the air came to rest upon the earth and it was the final abiding place of all things that lived and grew. The soil was soothing, strengthening, cleansing, and healing . . . Wherever the Lakota went, he was with Mother Earth. No matter where he roamed by day or slept by night, he was safe with her. This thought comforted and sustained the Lakota and he was eternally filled with gratitude.

- *Land of the Spotted Eagle, Standing Bear,
Oglala Lakota (1868-1939)*

We are vanishing from the earth, yet I cannot think we are useless or Usen would not have created us . . . For each tribe of men Usen created, He also made a home. In the land created for any particular tribe He placed whatever would be best for the welfare of that tribe. When Usen created the Apaches He also created their homes in the West. He gave them such

grain, fruits, and game as they needed to eat. To restore their health when disease attacked them He taught them where to find these herbs, and how to prepare them for medicine. He gave them a pleasant climate and all they needed for clothing and shelter was at hand. Thus it was in the beginning: the Apaches and their homes each created for the other by Usen himself. When they are taken from these homes they sicken and die. How long will it be until it is said there are no Apaches?

-Geronimo (Goyathlay) (1829-1909)

Knowledge, in a Native American sense, is not equated with wisdom. Knowledge with the added awareness of its pragmatic implications comprises wisdom. The ability to clone human beings is certainly a bit of knowledge, but is it wise?

-Viola Cordova, American Indian Philosopher,
Jicarilla Apache/Hispanic (19 -2002)

A Tradition of Excellence: Luther Standing Bear

Luther Standing Bear (Ota Kte, Muchinozhin, Chief of Oglala Lakota, 1905-1939), perhaps more than any other American Indian writer of his generation, called for examination of American Indian philosophy and its relevance to education. He speaks from a Lakota heart, and experiences that lead him to embrace a notion of panIndian identity. A member and product of the first class at Carlisle Indian School, he decried the EuroAmerican way of being. Standing Bear is known for his belief that European immigrants were still foreigner and alien to indigenous Americas.

Standing Bear held that harmful effects of the injuries to American Indians created by robbing our youth of history, land, stories of patriots, language, songs, music, dance, and physical, mental and spiritual health, extended to the "white" population as well, though in different ways. Thus, the "Indian Problem" is really a problem of foreigners who are reluctant and unable to seek an understanding of American Indian ways, and adjust foreign ways to a new environment. Rather than learn about who American Indians are, our way of being and philosophy of life and living, nonIndians in the Americas have sought to destroy what they did not know. The means toward this genocide has been through murder, confinement, slavery, removals, reservations, forced acculturation without assimilation, and religious intolerance of belief systems that enforced a worship of foreign and written words (contracts), as against the power and sacredness of our own spoken words (covenantants). A major means has been through what has allegedly been called "education."

Explaining an American Indian philosophy of human nature, as against the name calling of "savages," Standing Bear called for the joint efforts of American Indians, young and old, to return to the Council of "talking things over" and to "double" educate our youth, both to live American Indian ideals and practices with pride, dignity, and traditional knowledge, while at the same time augmenting this native school of thought with the best of modern schools. He sought a reverse of the destructive ways, and a return to our indigenous heritage, along with educating foreigners about our ways and our philosophy, Standing Bear held that this activity might lead to a spiritual healing, creating a greater sense of justice, and love of life, truth, honesty, and generosity, in confronting "the Great Mystery." In making a choice of education, Standing Bear

admonishes “. . . unhesitatingly set that child’s feet in the path of my forefathers. I would raise him to be an Indian.”

Providing a critique and social commentary of the white ways of colonizing American Indians and lands, Standing Bear identifies and articulates “panIndian” philosophical tenets and beliefs in the context of discussing how an American Indian philosophy of human nature posits living as part of nature, interacting and interdependent with all of nature (all our relations). His example of human nature, and of a native community economics of sharing is well worth consideration in the context of Laura Cornelius Kellogg’s notions of equality in her Lolomi plan of sustainable community and self-managed development on reservations.

Standing Bear called for a new attitude toward American Indians by the U.S.A. government, and recommended changes in policy. These recommendations were taken up by American Indian activists in the 1960s and 1970s, during the American Indian Movements in the U.S.A. and Canada. However they are still applicable today. In 1933, Standing Bear proposed a bill to President Roosevelt requiring all public schools to teach the true role of Native people in history. Today we see the fruits of this idea in contemporary American Indian Learning programs throughout North America.

A model student at Carlisle, Standing Bear graduated from college with a recommendation from Richard Pratt (previously commander over African-American troops and American Indian prisoners in Florida). After graduation he accepted a position to teach Lakota children on the reservation. During his career as a teacher, he came to a deep personal awareness about his own life through his teaching (much like Gertrude Bonin, Zit Kala Sa). At the time of the Wounded Knee Massacre, when American Indians were indiscriminately shot down by EuroAmerican soldiers because they were dancing the religious “Ghost Dance,” Standing Bear was teaching at Rosebud. Standing Bear was so shocked by the reality of seeing the U.S.A. Indian policy of genocide acted out at Wounded Knee, that he moved to Pine Ridge, gave up teaching, and worked in an uncle’s store, clerked for an agent, and assisted the minister.

Never to return to teaching, in 1903 Standing Bear joined Buffalo Bill Cody and the Wild West Show, and remained with the show until 1912, when he began working on films at Thomas Ince’s studio in California. He later went on the lecture circuit, and eventually began writing the first of his four books. In these books he stresses Native values, harmony, and freedom; he advocates American Indian philosophy be studied along with other academic materials, and encourages professional American Indians to serve on reservations.

Via Standing Bear’s autobiographies and commentaries, he gave voice to American Indian attitudes, experiences, opinions, and aspirations, breaking into literary America, along with writers such as Charles A. Eastman, Gertrude Bonin, and Laura Cornelius Kellogg, as one of a small group of Native authors to be published and read by nonIndian communities. The first to articulate and advocate what we refer to today as American Indian Studies, Standing Bear remains an icon of vision, inspiring contemporary American Indian writers, educators, and philosophers.

First American Indian Ph.D.s in Philosophy in the U.S.: Viola Cordova & Anne Waters

Viola Cordova (V.F. Cordova), perhaps more than any other American Indian writer of her generation, called for an examination of European (Western) philosophy and its relevance to American Indian Thought. Being of Jicarilla

Apache (father) and Hispanic (mother) descent, Cordova’s work manifests values and traditions of both these cultures.

At the University of New Mexico, Cordova received her M.A. and Ph.D. in Philosophy in 1992. Her thesis was titled, “Navajo Philosophy.” Upon graduation she accepted a teaching professorship at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks. Subsequent to teaching in Alaska, in 1995-96 she accepted a position as visiting professor at Oregon State University, and in 1996-97 Dr. Cordova was a Rockefeller Foundation Fellow in Thunder Bay, Ontario, where she helped start the first university program in Native American Philosophies. Thereafter, in 1997 Cordova moved to Pocatello, Idaho, where she lived and wrote, while teaching philosophy and honors courses at Idaho State University.

In addition to teaching, writing, and painting, Cordova was an originating member of the American Indian Philosophy Association. She co-edited (with Anne Waters) the American Philosophical Association *Newsletter on American Indians in Philosophy* for which she wrote several articles, including “Native American Philosophy,” “Time, Culture, and Self,” “An Educated Indian,” “Bounded Space: The Four Directions,” and “Challenging the Status Quo: A Review. *Power and Place: Indian Education in America*, by Vine Deloria, Jr. and Dan R. Wildcat.” As well, Cordova contributed three papers to the first collection of articles published by American Indian Ph.D.s in Philosophy, *American Indian Thought: A Philosophical Reader* (Blackwell, 2003, Anne Waters, ed.). Included in this reader are Cordova’s papers titled “Approaches to Native American Philosophy,” “Ethics: The We and the I,” and “Ethics: From an Artist’s Point of View.”

Echoing many similar values and beliefs of Chief Luther Standing Bear, Cordova taught that American Indian students ought to learn about the history and culture of American Indians throughout the Americas. Moreover, she believed all students ought to learn about indigenous history in the Americas in order to improve humanity.

In 2002, after I forwarded an email announcement to Viola about an opportunity for a postdoctoral visit at a major university, I received a copy of a letter she sent to the head of the search committee. In this letter she cogently argued that rather than American Indians being brought in to visit universities and colleges in order to enable our mentorship by proven scholars, we ought to be brought in to educate those proven scholars to the ways of the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas, so as to better enable them to learn about their American environment as understood in the context of American Indian thought and worldview. This activity, Viola believed, would much improve our educational system.

Cordova was interested in concepts of human nature, rather than identity constructs. She thought that an American Indian worldview of interconnectedness and a sense of homeland could be important to all people, and much improve the world that we humans live in. When once asked, as an indigenous woman, to write a paper about American Indian women and/or feminism, she replied that she had never been oppressed “as a woman” but rather “as a Native American,” that her oppression as a Native American woman stood foremost in her experience with the world. Holding a contempt for feminists who would separate her being a woman from her being an Indian, she manifested the politics of many women of color womanists, choosing to ground her work in Native Studies and Philosophy, rather than Women’s Studies or feminism.

Viola epistemically validated my being in the world as the person I was; not as a subordinate, not as a curiosity, not as a

colleague, but as a similar equal in the world of humans sharing relations. I am forever grateful for her gaze. To the academic philosophers who thought she was curt, self-absorbed, impolite and frequently misguided, I say she was always respectful, kind, protective of others, on the mark intellectually, speaking her own mind, and sometimes appearing impolite to those who did not understand her ways of being and ideas. My own life has been enriched with Viola's presence, and I will deeply miss her ways of being in sharing our world. And as I finish this new volume of the *Newsletter on American Indians in Philosophy*, I hear the certain familiar sound of one hand clapping, and know that Viola is once again teasing me with philosophical inquiry.

Viola, I remember you in the summer of 1991, standing on the staircase of the UNM student union, telling me that you and I would finish our dissertations together, but that you would have a job to go to, something most all other graduates of the University of New Mexico (UNM) philosophy department did not have. I remember you talking about why we had to finish, and why it was important, because of what had happened to previous students in philosophy at UNM. Viola, I remember you at the conference in Canada, laughing inside and later together as we watched the nonIndian response to your analysis of the Apache concept 'Usen'. I remember telling you about the Native philosophy conference at Highlands, and how we laughed at presenters. I remember your introducing me to your closest of friends, Ted Jojola, at the Society to Advance American Indian Philosophy meeting in Albuquerque. And I remember you telling me, in between our giggling at the absurdity of living with a priestly confessional situated in the apartment you and I had both lived in at different times . . . your telling me how you liked it there, and would have stayed if they had made you an offer, but that they did not really want you there to teach philosophy, but to help in their university project. And I remember that although we shared a fondness for Wittgenstein, you reminded me that "They won't let me teach philosophy."

Viola, I recall how so many of us shared room space at the International Congress of Philosophy, at the IAPh, and at the divisional meetings of the American Philosophical Association. We all had breakfast with a publisher, and we plotted and planned program sessions, books, and newsletters, sharing voice within our philosophical discipline. I remember talking about your art, our children, siblings, and students we shared. I remember your high energy and how you were the one person I trusted to be blunt and give me the gift of your critique. I remember you now. Now, I remember how you helped us all become something more than ourselves, how you kept the energy moving, always questioning, always wondering, and always eliciting argument as to which path we ought to be taking. Now, Viola, we will take the path of teaching your philosophy that the discipline would not let you teach.

A Legacy of Excellence: Standing Bear, Viola Cordova, Students

Luther Standing Bear in awe, in pain, and in shock at the horror of his tribal brothers and sisters, their children, being shot at and massacred for practicing religious dance. Standing Bear, never again being able to teach. The cognitive dissonance lived.

Viola Cordova moving from her father's side, where she is encouraged to discuss deep philosophical ideas, to the Western European classroom where she learns the dominating language of outsiders creating hegemonic structure where she can only listen, in anger and frustration.

In 1997, I am privileged to work with one of Cordova's Native students in Thunder Bay, where he studies the words of Standing Bear and Cordova. He thinks about issues of Native identity, family, work, personal experience, education, and colonization, and in thinking about his own story, along with the experiences of Standing Bear and Cordova, he thinks of cognitive dissonance.

I am intrigued by the continuance and consonance of the words and ideas of Standing Bear and Cordova. In 1997 I am a visiting professor in Thunder Bay, literally following in the footprints of Cordova. A Native student, attempting a phenomenological approach to his world, reflects, and creates a pattern of showing how he understands the historical and cultural web of identity construction and cognitive dissonance in his own life. He has thought deeply, fostering an ability to engage in self-reflection, respecting and taking the opportunity to engage with two American Indian women holding a Ph.D. in philosophy. This continuity of Native thought and self-reflection brings forth, for this student, a partial healing via the practice of philosophical writing. It nurtures and creates a Masters thesis.

Both Standing Bear and Cordova recognized the ruptured consciousness into which Indian students frequently fall when we encounter colonial culture. Both critically challenged the academic education being taught to Native students, in method and content. Both recognized the importance of Native students receiving an education in consonance with their cultural historical ways of being and belief systems. Standing Bear and Cordova, from different tribes, different centuries, both announce a panIndian approach to Native education and healing, urging an immersion in Native cultural values, language, and ways of being.

Viola once mentioned to me that a significant difference between Indian and Western culture came over her one day as she observed a common event. One afternoon she watched her own daughter, and her daughter's non-Indian friend, come out of the house and place their small children in the front yard. As she frequently was, Viola was amused by her own perceptions. Late one night at a philosophy conference, Viola told me how her daughter placed her child directly on the ground, surrounded by grass and dirt, making it easy to spark the interest of the child to investigate natural surroundings, and other live beings, in a shared world. Yet her daughter's friend first came out of the house, and carefully lay out a square blanket on top of the ground. She then proceeded to bring out her child, and place her on the blanket, making certain to keep the child on the blanket, and away from her natural habitat. Viola explained how the difference of these two approaches to our naturally surrounding world helped her to understand an important difference of Native and European/Western culture. I was much impressed by her ability to read and interpret life from her own surroundings.

Mentor to many Native students, Cordova gave generously, sharing her time and her self as a suasionist on issues of Native discrimination in academe and human struggles in the world. She could frequently be found at conferences sitting in a chair and talking for hours with students and professors alike. I knew Viola as a close colleague, as one who would pick up the phone and occupy your mind for at least a good hour doing philosophy, and then spend another 20 or so minutes talking about particular philosopher's articles and/or actions, always leaving me to wonder about moral realms of our colleagues' activities. Ever critical of those who would deny American Indians a seat at the philosophy table of academe, she was never short of words nor perspicuous examples to prove her

points. Nor did she come up short in her loyalty to truth and kindness.

Cordova has been spoken about by Vine Deloria, Jr., whom Cordova deeply respected, in both person and scholarship. Deloria commented about Viola in an email, saying that “she was one of the most brilliant people” he had ever known. Other intellectuals have frequently talked about her inevitable ability to “speak the truth” even when it meant her political suicide within the discipline. Honest, insightful, and always to the point, Cordova was a gadfly of a Socratic Indian when it came to challenging philosophical ideas of hegemonic domination.

Via her published papers and her relentless questioning of “philosophical masters” Cordova opened doors in the academic world of philosophy that had been closed for centuries, and some, never opened! Disliked by some nonIndian philosophers for expressing her candid opinions, she stepped onto the philosophical stage with new ideas and a daringness to argue for the validity of Indian thought. Her oral abilities and straightforward discussion shocked many philosophers simply because they had never seen a Native American Indian with a Ph.D. in philosophy who would speak her mind so well.

This speaking of her mind however, many people thought, would be her demise in academic institutions. I quote from a student:

For a Student of Color it is not often that you can find Faculty of Color to look up to. Dr. Viola Cordova was certainly a professor I wanted to have a class with. Her ideas challenged preconceived notions about People of Color in higher education and that is possibly why she has decided to only be a visiting professor. Actually, this is why she is a visiting professor, she would probably not ever get tenure status because she definitely was not afraid to challenge the system. [Pellet, G. (Producer), & Nelson, S. (Director). (1996). *Shattering the silences: Minority faculty break into the ivory tower* (Film). NY: Gail Pellet Productions.]

Cordova’s contributions to philosophy will far outweigh the contributions of philosophy to her. Viola not only reached for the ball, she could catch it and throw it to another! Ever able and willing to participate in the philosophical dialogue that creates the world of humanity, Cordova gave us all a human ideal of questing for, and claiming space for, our own truths. She lived as though she had many relatives, and she did. Her standard will be difficult for others to live up to as we continue our academic, philosophical, and political struggles within or without academic institutions. In her passing on, I know she will remain in the struggle with us.

booshoo, halito, aquai, mas laters, Viola . . . we remember you Viola. Thank you for your gifts of presence in all of our lives. Thank you for your passion for life and truth. mtvo (mahdoh). Mitakuye Oyasin. (Prepared for the Memorial Service at UNM 3/28/03).

A Transnational Indigenist Woman’s Agenda **(for Viola)**

TWO MILLENNIA OF INDIGENOUS DIASPORAS, YET
WE ARE ALL INDIGENOUS TO THE PLANET

TWO MILLENNIA OF ALIENATION, YET
WE ALL STRUGGLE WITH THE NEED TO SURVIVE

WE NEED TO SURVIVE
TO FEED OUR CHILDREN
TO NURTURE OUR LOVED ONES
TO CARRY WATER IN OUR ARMS
AND FOOD IN OUR BELLIES.

WE STRUGGLE TO SURVIVE, BECAUSE
OUR LANDBASE, OUR ECOLOGIES
OUR PATTERNS OF BEHAVIOR
ARE VERY LITTLE NOW
UNDER DOMINATION

YET
THROUGH THE TOWERING HEGEMONIES
OF YOUR BEING
WE SURVIVE
FOR WE ARE
AFTER ALL
SURVIVORS

OUR BODIES ARE NOT SO HEALTHY
AS MANY OF YOURS.
YOU REMIND US OF THIS
EVERYDAY
EVERYWHERE ON TV IN MAGAZINES
WHEN WE GO TO SHOP FOR CLOTHES
IT IS ALWAYS
YOUR IMAGE
YOUR BEING
THAT WE SEE.
OUR BODIES HAVE SURVIVED THE POLLUTED WATER
THE RADIOACTIVE AIR WE BREATHE
ON RESERVATIONS.
WE SURVIVE
THE CITIES OF OVERPOPULATION
THE LAND NOW BARREN OF GIFTS
ALL BECAUSE
OF YOUR GREED, YOUR NEED, YOUR WAYS
ONCE FOREIGN
NOW FAMILIAR
TO OUR LAND
IN THIS WE REMAIN CONNECTED

AS WE ANNOUNCE
A TRANSNATIONAL GLOBAL MOVEMENT
BEING LED BY INDIGENIST WOMEN
IT IS HAPPENING.
FOR INDIGENIST WOMEN THERE IS ANOTHER WAY.
WE WILL NOT STAND BY
WE WILL SILENCE
YOUR VOICE THAT CRIES FOR ANOTHER WAR
ANOTHER RAPE
ANOTHER TAKING
OF GIFTS THAT BELONG TO OUR MOTHER EARTH

THIS TIME
INDIGENIST WOMEN OF THE WORLD
SAY NO
YOU MAY HAVE NO MORE TO FEED YOUR GREED
NO WE SAY
YOUR GLUTTONY
IS KILLING US ALL
YOUR ACTIONS
SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS
YOUR CONTROL
CAN NO LONGER
BE MAINTAINED
YOU WHO SAY

YOU NEED 4000 SQUARE FEET OF HOUSE
FOR TWO PEOPLE
YOU WHO SAY YOU NEED
THREE CARS FOR THREE PEOPLE
YOU WHO SAY YOU NEED
YOUR VACATIONS WHERE INDIGENIST
MEN AND WOMEN
WAIT UPON YOUR SELFISH DESIRES

YOU WHO SAY
YOU NEED YOUR BANK ACCOUNT FULL
YOUR RETIREMENT SECURITY
YOUR GRANDCHILDREN IN THE FINEST SCHOOLS
LEARNING THE ART OF TRADE
AS YOUR INVESTMENTS
PERFORM THE ARTS OF THEFT RUIN AND DEVASTATION
YOU SAY YOU LOVE AND NEED THE
AMERICAN WAY

BUT WE SAY TO YOU
YOU WHO DO NOT CARE THAT THE CARS YOU DRIVE
DEplete OUR RESOURCES
THAT THE LAND YOU SETTLED
KILLED OUR TREES
AND ALL THEIR RELATIONS
THAT WHAT YOU CALLED
ENTERPRISE
WE CALLED HUNGER
AS THE BUFFALO
NO LONGER GRACED OUR LIPS

YOU WHO DO NOT CARE
THAT THE RIVERS AND STREAMS
WHERE YOU PLANTED
YOUR WASTE
OF MANIFEST DESTINY
WERE THE
DINNER TABLES
OF OUR CHILDREN
WERE THE SLEEPING BEDS
OF OUR ELDERLY
OUR ANCESTORS

YOU WHO DO NOT CARE
THAT WATER MUST BE SOLD
FOR A DOLLAR A BOTTLE
THAT WATER IS BEING MADE
AVAILABLE
ONLY TO THOSE LIKE YOU
WHO CAN AFFORD TO BUY WATER
ONLY BECAUSE
YOU STOLE OUR WATER
OUR SACRED RESOURCES WE HAD SUSTAINED FOR
GENERATIONS

YOU WHO DO NOT CARE
THAT NOW THE AIR IS BEING SOLD
FOR TWO DOLLARS A MINUTE
IN YOUR FANCY MALLS
THE COMMODITY TRICKERY MARKETPLACE
YOU LURE OUR CHILDREN TO
FILLS YOUR NEEDS

YOU WILL BREATHE CLEAN AIR
YOU WILL DRINK CLEAN WATER
AS WILL YOUR CHILDREN TODAY
WHILE YOUR CHILDREN ARE STILL BENEFITTING
FROM OUR LOSS
OF YOUR THEFT
THAT YOU PASS ON
THROUGH THEIR BANK ACCOUNTS

YOU ARE WHO ARE STILL BENEFITTING
FROM THAT RAPE
FROM THAT THEFT
FROM THAT BRUTALITY
THAT GREED
THAT DESTRUCTION
THAT GENOCIDE
THAT HOLOCAUST

WE SURVIVED
ONLY BECAUSE WE HAVE ALWAYS KNOWN HOW
TO SURVIVE
NOW
WHAT YOU HAVE STOLEN
MUST BE GIVEN BACK
IF WE YOU ARE TO SURVIVE

YOUR LAW
SAYS WHAT WAS TAKEN
MUST BE RETURNED
GIVEN BACK
COMPENSATED FOR
YOUR LAW SAYS
WE MUST BE MADE WHOLE AGAIN
REPARATION
WILL HEAL
AS WE HOLD YOU ACCOUNTABLE
TO THAT LAW THAT IS
YOUR OWN

GIVE US BACK OUR WATERS
OUR STREAMS AND LAKES
GIVE US BACK OUR FORESTS
OUR TREES AND RELATIONS
GIVE US BACK OUR LIVES
THAT WE MAY ALSO
HAVE SOMETHING TO SHARE WITH YOU

INTERNATIONAL GLOBAL INDIGENIST WOMEN
ARISE AS WE
LEAD THE NEW GENERATION
WE DEMAND THAT THOSE WHO ARE STILL
BENEFITTING FROM THE THEFT
FROM THE POLICIES OF EXTERMINATION
AND BOUNTY ON OUR HEADS
WE DEMAND
A STOP TO WHAT HAS BECOME
COMMON
EVERYDAY
THIEVERY
AND MURDER
AGAINST
INDIGENIST PEOPLE OF THE WORLD
AGAINST THE EARTH

WE DEMAND YOUR CONTROL OF OUR IMAGES
IN MEDIA IN TEXT BOOKS ON STAGES
BE RETURNED TO US FOR OUR OWN
ARTISTIC ACHIEVEMENTS
AND REFLECTIONS
THAT YOUR TOURISTS WITH STOLEN DOLLARS
STOP TRYING TO BARGAIN THE FOOD
FROM OUR MOUTHS
AND WE DEMAND THE BEACHES OF THE WORLD
BE RETURNED
TO INDIGENOUS PEOPLE WHO
PRESERVED WHAT
YOU NOW DESTROY
WITH CAPITALIST TOURIST ENTERPRISES

WE WOULD LIKE
FOR YOUR PRIVILEGE
TO BE SUPPLANTED WITH
RESPONSIBILITY
TO OTHERS
WE WOULD LIKE
THAT YOUR DREAM
OF A BETTER LIFE
BE WILLED
FOR ALL OUR RELATIONS
NOT JUST YOURSELF

WE WOULD LIKE
TO EDUCATE OUR CHILDREN
ALL OUR CHILDREN
IN TRADITIONAL
INDIGENIST WAYS
TO PROTECT
AND PRESERVE

ALL THAT LIVES THE WORLD OVER
AS EVERY BEING IS ANIMATED BY
AND MANIFESTS
SACRED ENERGIES OF LIFE

WE INDIGENIST WOMEN ARE NOT RETURNING
TO OLDER WAYS
WE ARE BRINGING FORTH NEW WAYS
OF BEING OF LIVING
WITH THE VALUES OF THE OLD WAYS
WE ARE BRINGING
A DESIRE
TO LIVE AND SURVIVE
IN PEACE
IN HARMONY IN NATURE
FOR WE ARE NATURE
AND ONLY WITH GOOD RELATIONS WITH NATURE
WILL WE SURVIVE

SO PLEASE
TAKE YOUR IMPERIALISM
YOUR DOMINATING CAPITALISM
TAKE YOUR COLONIALISM
YOUR THEORETICAL CONSTRUCTS
THAT JUSTIFY
INEQUALITY
THAT JUSTIFY
IMPERIALIST PATRIARCHALIST
DOMINATING ECONOMICS AND RACISM AND SEXISM
TAKE YOUR IMAGES YOUR LUXURIES YOUR SAFETY
BACK
TAKE THEM BACK AWAY FROM US
AS WE INDIGENIST WOMEN
RECLAIM THAT
NEWLY OPEN SPACE
FOR OUR FUTURE
FOR OUR FUTURE GENERATIONS
FOR ALL OUR RELATIONS
FOR IN THAT SPACE
WE CAN BUILD
A NEW WORLD NOT OF COLONIAL HEGEMONY
BUT OF INDIGENIST WAYS OF BEING
WITH OUR LAND AND ALL OUR RELATIONS
WITH OUR RELIGION, WHICH IS OUR WAY OF BEING, WHICH IS
OUR LIFE

TAKE YOUR COLONIAL IDEAS BACK

WHAT YOU THINK ABOUT LIFE
TAKE IT BACK
WHAT YOU THINK MATTERS
TAKE IT BACK
WHAT ECONOMIC YOU ADVOCATE
TAKE IT BACK
WHAT HIERARCHY YOU HOLD
TAKE IT BACK
WHAT HEGEMONIC STRUCTURE YOU BUILD
TAKE IT BACK
WHAT GOVERNMENT YOU SET UP
TAKE IT BACK

TAKE IT ALL BACK
FOR
WHEN YOU HAVE TAKEN THESE THINGS BACK
YOU WILL ALLOW
MORE CLEAN AIR TO BREATHE
MORE CLEAN WATER TO DRINK
MORE SURVIVAL
OF OUR SPECIES
MORE CHILDREN OF HEALTH

WE ARE ALL INDIGENOUS TO SOMEWHERE ON THIS PLANET
AND THERE IS A TRANSNATIONAL
INDIGENIST AGENDA
AT WORK
HERE
TO PRESERVE AND PROTECT
THE HUMAN RACE
FOR HUMANS TO REMAIN
AMONG ALL OUR RELATIONS

ARTICLES

Why Don't I See Red?

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Presenting the Absence of Native American Perspectives in the Discourse on Race in Philosophy

There is no basic antagonism between black and red, or even between red and white. Conflicts are created when Indians feel they are being defined out of existence by the other groups. Historically, each group has its own road to travel. All roads lead to personal and group affirmation. But the obstacles faced by each group are different and call for different solutions and techniques.

Vine Deloria, Jr. "The Red and the Black"

Theology and Philosophy must aggressively act as critiquing disciplines that can correlate and synthesize the knowledge and experiences of our species and provide a comprehensive vision of what it means and has meant.

Vine Deloria, Jr. *The Metaphysics of Modern Existence*¹

I am not a philosopher, nor even a student of philosophy. I hold a degree in the Humanities, am a Ph.D. fellow in Germanic Studies and have published and/or presented on race-related issues in various domestic and international venues.² My experience with the rigors of Western philosophical discourse is restricted to a basic course in feminist philosophy (1984) and five years spent thinking, Being and Speaking with elemental feminist philosopher Mary Daly, some of whose work I have translated into German. Bearing these limitations in mind, the reader of this paper should not expect the following commentary to provide any significant contributions to the discourse on philosophy and race in its present form. To advance an argument defending or refuting nominalist, realist or constructionist positions on race in philosophy or to perhaps participate in a conversation on whether Kant's categories of race as expressed in his Anthropology allow for agency and rationality on the part of non-white beings would overstep the bounds of my academic competence. However, what I am qualified to do, from a general humanities perspective, and from a subject position informed by an intense and ongoing (i.e., lifelong) personal experience of race, racial categorization and racialized ontological confrontations with "universal" conceptual frameworks that cannot and do not account for my existence as a multi-racial, multi-lingual, multi-cultural Being is to point to a lack—a glaring absence in the discourse which, were it ever to be occupied by an attendant Presence, might have the potential to substantially alter the face of discourse on race and philosophy.³

In 1995, Ward Churchill published an essay titled "White Studies: The Intellectual Imperialism of U.S. Higher Education."⁴ In it, he argues that most if not all academic disciplines—philosophy first and foremost amongst them—are best categorized under the rubric of "White Studies" because they are "locked firmly into a paradigm of Eurocentrism, not only in terms of [their] focus, but also in [their] discernible heritage, methodologies, and conceptual

structure” (Churchill 271). With specific reference to the Queen of disciplines, Churchill states:

[...] from first-semester surveys through the Ph.D., philosophy majors—and non-majors fulfilling elective requirements [...]—are fed a consistent stream of data defining and presumably reproducing Western thought at its highest level of refinement, as well as inculcating insight into what is packaged as its historical evolution and line(s) of probable future development. [...] this is construed, for all practical intents and purposes, as being representative of philosophy *in toto* rather than of western European thought *per se*.” (273)

In Churchill’s view, “this sort of monolithic pedagogical reliance upon a single cultural tradition constitutes a rather transparent form of intellectual domination, achievable only within the context of parallel forms of domination” (271). Most importantly, he argues that it is not enough to include non-European contributions in the canons of discourse that delimit the parameters of any given discipline, while at the same time leaving the methodologies and conceptual frameworks essentially intact (272). Churchill suggests that simply introducing raw data from a diversity of non-European sources to the White Studies curriculum will have little impact in attempting to redress the Eurocentric bias of higher education because these materials will always be filtered through the lens of European conceptualization (278). What is required, in Churchill’s view, is a calling into question of the conceptual mode of intellectuality itself (279).

Churchill’s conclusions come as no surprise to any human individual whose existence (and experience of “personhood”) hovers anywhere near the “color line”, though for members of the human species who “enjoy” a privileged position situated far and above this not-so-imaginary line of distinction (be it ontologically real or real only by virtue of its social construction), Churchill’s statements may come as a revelation whose magnitude threatens to outdistance the appearance of such concepts as the categorical imperative and cognitive dissonance on the horizon of philosophical discourse. As Charles Mills has stated, in his preface to *Blackness Visible*, “a recognition of the centrality of race in the encounter between Europe and the non-European world, and its social, economic, political, moral and intellectual ramifications for both, may be [...] revolutionary in its implications for rethinking.”⁵ Recognizing philosophy to be but another subcategory of White Studies is a necessary first step in realizing the revolutionary potential for rethinking philosophy and race. Recognizing race to be a reality socially and intellectually constructed by the frameworks of White Studies to sustain the precepts and “truths” it holds to be “self-evident” is also a necessary first step in this process. But unless these first steps are followed by quantitative and qualitative leaps toward a fundamental reconfiguration of the way divergent ontologies and theories of human origin are integrated into conceptual frameworks, White Studies will never be challenged to the degree it must be in order to become relevant to or even cognizant of Native realities.

In recent years, the exploration of Eurocentric bias in White Studies has given rise to a new field of inquiry termed “critical race theory.” One might assume that, in the effort to avoid reiterating the same limitations posed by the White Studies paradigm, this discursive field would seek to embrace the entire spectrum of racial identities and categories in its purview. Sadly, however, with few notable exceptions, in “critical race theory” the fault lines of the racial divide have

again been drawn along the commissure of conflict between “black” and “white” within a conceptual framework whose pillars are constructed and whose parameters delimited by the very White Studies establishment the theories seek to challenge. This framing of the world in black and white is a familiar pattern which renders these debates as meaningless to Native Americans as similar debates in other academic, political and intellectual arenas. As Crow Creek scholar Elisabeth Cook-Lynn states in an essay on “America’s Oldest Racism: The Roots of Inequality,”

Because these debates are based on the experiences of blacks, whites and new immigrants, the result has been a failure to understand that for equality and democracy to be defined according to the original constitution and aboriginal intent, Indians must be seen as Indians, not as ethnic individuals in America. They must be seen as the original peoples, possessing dual citizenship in their own tribal nation(s) as well as in the United States. They must be seen as nations of people who occupied this continent for thousands of years with personal and national rights and who still do.⁶

Critical race theorists—from Naomi Zack, Lucius Outlaw, Richard Wasserstrom, Anthony Appiah, Henry Louis Gates, to Lewis Gordon and others—focus almost exclusively on issues relevant to the philosophical and political concerns of Blacks and (most often placed in opposition to, but often writing, acting and theorizing from the same set of basic assumptions as) Whites.

Recently, while browsing the stacks at the University of Chicago’s illustrious Harper Library where I’d been rerouted after discovering that Charles Mills’s *Blackness Visible* had actually been charged from the main stacks at Regenstein, titles leapt from the shelves to confirm my intuitive perception of the parameters set by our understanding of “race” in a US-American context, parameters that also inform and delimit the field of critical race theory: *The White Image in the Black Mind*; *The Black Image in the White Mind*; *Black on White*; *Black Power, White Resistance*; *The World in Black and White*. Having already had the title of this paper in mind, one spine in particular caught my eye: *Seeing Red*. “Aha!” I thought, “sounds like an American Indian version of *Blackness Visible*.” Upon reading the subtitle my original hopes were dashed: *Federal Campaigns Against Black Militancy*. In a country whose foundational principles and developmental history rest on genocide directed at aboriginal populations,⁷ one might expect a chapter on “Genocidal Images of Mixed Race” -- in a book titled *Race and Mixed Race* -- to include some discussion of the “half-breed” or “breed” or “mixed blood” people.⁸ And yet, the author, Naomi Zack, opens the chapter with the highly contestable claim that “In American history, racism as a form of oppression was first instigated by whites against blacks” (112). Accordingly, Zack restricts her discussion of the mixed-race category as it applies to black and white.⁹ The Native American scholar seeking to find himself in the annals of history recorded by George M. Fredrickson in his recent *Racism: A Short History* might discover, in the aptly titled epilogue “Racism in the Dawn of the Twenty-First Century,” that it is not the white settler population which suffers from a pathological superiority complex, rather “that “[m]any premodern communities—American Indian tribes, for example—have regarded themselves as superior beings and their enemies as utterly unworthy of respect but have nevertheless readily assimilated their captives and other strangers regardless of phenotype or cultural background.”¹⁰

Is this supposed to be a sympathetic portrayal of American Indians as tolerant savages who readily assimilate strangers captured in colonialist crusades throughout the premodern world? How is it that, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, such nonsense can appear in a Princeton University Press publication without demonstrating scholarly evidence or precedence to back up the claim?

The fact is, in the discourse on race and philosophy in this country, nominal mention is given to Native Americans, but the tacit (and at times explicit) assumption is that the real issue at stake pivots around notions of blackness and whiteness as these function as categories of being and/or reality. As Louis Owens, in his discussion of Toni Morrison's persistent dismissal of Native perspectives and identities, describes it, "Native American presence is implicitly invoked and routinely erased" (*Mixedblood Messages* 38). In another essay, Owens documents evidence of this same absence in postcolonialist discourse and points out that while "[t]hose of us attempting to find a theory appropriate to a discussion of Native American literature are expected to be familiar with the writings of Said, Bhabha, Trinh, et al., [...] there is no symmetry of expectation"; instead, Owens tells us, "one discovers an almost complete absence of Native American voices in works by major cultural theorists and respected writers."¹¹ This routine invocation and erasure coupled with the expectation that Native writers and theorists be conversant with the works of their African-American, Asian-American and Euro-American colleagues also characterizes the discourse on race in philosophy in its present form. The overemphasis on Blackness as a racial category in the discourse on race and philosophy is particularly unsettling in light of statistics provided by the APA [from the *Summary Report on Doctorate Recipients from United States Universities*, National Academy Press] which demonstrate that, in the period from 1991 to 1996, Native Americans formed the most underrepresented group of Ph.D.s awarded in philosophy.¹² One might assume that for critical thinkers, this conspicuous absence from the discourse functions as a red flag indicating that something fundamental is amiss.

But there are plausible enough explanations for the discrepancy: as Vine DeLoria relates the fate of his 1979 publication *The Metaphysics of Modern Existence*, his publishers at Harper and Row refused to do anything to promote the book because "no one will buy a book on metaphysics written by an Indian."¹³ Writing in 1999, Deloria elaborates on the difficulties that persist for Indigenous scholars attempting to contribute to and (hopefully) influence the discourse on race and philosophy (or any other Western discipline, for that matter):

It is exceedingly difficult [...] to break through the mind-set of the West and engage in dialogue and conversation with Western thinkers. The reception that the non-Western thinker receives is frequently one of paternalism, more often a chiding ridicule that a native would presume to enter the lists of educated people, occasionally a deep jealousy and resentment when the non-Westerner appears to have something important to say to the Western scheme of things. [...] Thus the potential for engaging in serious philosophical debate between and among the diverse cultures of the world is exceedingly remote." ("Perceptions and Maturity," 5)

The philosophical discourse on race presents a mirror image of the political and legal debates from which it stems. Deloria, in his 1969 publication, *Custer Died for Your Sins: An*

Indian Manifesto, comments on the exclusionary nature of the attendant political and legal debates: "By defining the problem as one of race and making race refer solely to black, Indians were systematically excluded from consideration."¹⁴ What is more, Deloria points to the historical basis for this kind of thinking in laws governing racial classification in the US in which Indians were often classified as whites in legislation designed to exclude blacks. According to Deloria's analysis, this led to a situation in which Indians were connoted in the Black imagination to be somehow "like whites" ("The Red and the Black," 169). The lack of resonance Native perspectives have found in the discourse on race and philosophy might be seen to reflect residual traces of this line of thought.

More important for our purposes here are some of the insights into Red/Black/White political configurations Deloria offers in this early essay because the same nuances may also inflect the discourse on race and philosophy as we know it today. Deloria discusses the difference between the way white supremacist ideology and action sought to exclude Blacks from society, while at the same time seeking to "tame" the savage Indian or "take in" the noble savage, ultimately turning him white—both literally and figuratively—through the processes of spiritual/philosophical and biological miscegenation, at times voluntary, at times violently imposed.¹⁵ Deloria reminds us:

It is well to keep these distinctions clearly in mind when talking about Indians and blacks. When the liberals equate the two they are overlooking obvious historical facts. Never did the white man systematically exclude Indians from his schools and meeting places. Nor did the white man ever kidnap black children from their homes and take them off to a government boarding school to be educated as whites. The white man signed no treaties with the black. Nor did he pass any amendments to the Constitution to guarantee the treaties of the Indian.

The basic problem which has existed between the various racial groups has not been one of race but of culture and legal status. The white man systematically destroyed Indian culture where it existed, but separated blacks from his midst so that they were forced to attempt the creation of their own culture.

The white man forbade the black to enter his own social and economic system and at the same time force-fed the Indian what he was denying the black. Yet the white man demanded that the black conform to white standards and insisted that the Indian don feathers and beads periodically to perform for him. (172-73)

Donald Kaufmann, in "The Indian as Media Hand-Me Down," has framed the disparity between the struggles of Black and Red people in this country in more simple terms, stating that "while Blacks [...] strive to get into American history, Indians try to escape from American history."¹⁶

In "Non-Cartesian *Sums*: Philosophy and the African-American Experience," Charles Mills addresses the subjectivity of the African-American experience and the way it shapes the discourse on race and philosophy from an African-American perspective, stating that "what is involved is a subject population simultaneously linked to and excluded from the dominant group [...] whose culture and worldview are, as a consequence, deeply motivated by the necessity of doing a critique of the dominant view" (*Blackness Visible* 5). The same

might be said of Native American perspectives in philosophy, and I would suggest that hardly any academically inclined “Indian” on the planet would dismiss current efforts—initiated largely by persons of African or African-American descent in this country and elsewhere—to render the whiteness of White Studies legible as a legitimate object of inquiry.¹⁷ Mills’s concept of “subperson” or “Untermensch” introduced as a descriptor for the subject position assigned non-White human entities in the White Studies paradigm is useful and provides a plausible framework for locating those persons who have no place to stand in a conception of the universe and of personhood which, as Mills rightly concludes, “is really predicated on taking personhood for granted and thus excludes the differential experience of those who have ceaselessly had to fight to have their personhood recognized in the first place” (“Non-Cartesian *Sums*” 9).

But just as the political concerns of Native Americans who share the rank of “Untermenschen” (or, in Kant’s view, who occupy yet another category perhaps best labeled “Unmenschen”, i.e., nonhumans) differ, so, too, do Native American philosophical concerns radically depart from those of African-Americans as these are reflected in the discourse on race and philosophy. These departures, too, are at least partially historically determined—based on disparate historical contingencies which can only be briefly outlined here. Deloria elaborates further on some of the historical considerations informing differing approaches to political and social philosophy among Blacks, Whites and Indians:

[...] Indian people have the possibility of total withdrawal from American society because of their special legal status. They can, when necessary, return to a recognized homeland where time is static and the world becomes a psychic unity again.

To survive, blacks must have a homeland where they can withdraw, drop the facade of integration and be themselves. Whites are inevitably torn because they have no roots, they do not understand the past, and they have already mortgaged their future. Unless they can renew their psychic selves and achieve a sense of historical participation as a people they will be unable to survive.

But it is not just the special legal status enjoyed by Native Americans as the original inhabitants of a geographical space that has since become the site of an ontological showdown between Blacks and Whites which makes it “exceedingly difficult [...] to engage in dialogue and conversation with Western thinkers.” A fundamentally different view of metaphysics and origins is at issue here, and if Vine Deloria is correct in asserting that “Indians will not work within an ideological basis which is foreign to them” and that “any cooperative movement must come to terms with tribalism in the Indian context before it will gain Indian support” (“The Black and the Red,” 195), then the participants in and purveyors of critical race theory will have to modify their conceptual paradigms to accommodate Native ontologies and accounts of origins if they ever hope to generate truly inclusive frameworks for understanding race, eliminating racism and successfully challenging the white supremacist tenets of White Studies. This cannot occur as long as Native perspectives are simply ignored, dismissed as “quackery” or subsumed under the categories of “people of color” or “minorities” and assumed to share certain “self-evident” perspectives that have been uncritically adopted as “truths.”

In contemporary debates about whether race is “real” as an ontological category, as a socially constructed category that some members of the human species have had the privilege of ignoring while others have not (Mills et al.), or whether it is an entirely fictional concept based on faulty empirical findings and should be eliminated entirely in a process of “deracination” (Zack et al.), one basic premise is given: that three races of the human species have come into conflict in the Americas—“blacks, whites, Orientals.”¹⁸ This basic premise poses the first obstacle to including Native perspectives on race and philosophy because in order for aboriginal Americans to so much as be registered in any real sense on this triumvirate scale, they must be considered a subset of one of these three races. The most commonly accepted misconception is to consider Native Americans a subset of the “Mongoloid” race who migrated to the Americas from Asia through the Bering Strait sometime during the Ice Age,¹⁹ though arguments have also been advanced to suggest that American Indian peoples be categorized as proto-Caucasoids.²⁰ Strict adherence to commonly accepted theories of monogenetic human origins in Africa would make all three racial categories subsets or evolutionary descendants of the Negroid race.²¹ Other theories in circulation include American Indians as remnants of the ten Lost Tribes of Israel, and even as descendants of extraterrestrials who arrived on Earth several thousand years ago.²²

Whatever the provenance of any given thesis on Native American origins, these speculative excursions all share two common features: they are hardly verifiable by dint of logic and reason or by scientific evidence; accordingly, they stand in direct contradiction to every variety of origin story known to the many nations, peoples and polities originally populating the geographic space now known to “belong” to the territorial possessions US government and its people. What aboriginal American origin stories (and hence ontologies) all have in common is a belief that Indians as peoples originated on this continent. Vine Deloria summarizes a belief that is likely characteristic of most, if not all, Native views of origin: “Most American Indians, I believe, were here ‘at the beginning’ and have preserved the memory of traumatic continental and planetary catastrophes, keeping the information sometimes in tales deliberately constructed to preserve as well as entertain (Deloria, “At the Beginning,” 119). Whether this implies that all other races have their origin not in Cro-Magnons migrating to the continent from Africa through Asia (alternately, through Europe or outer space), but rather from the land mass more appropriately termed “Turtle Island,” whether it might imply a polygenesis of human origins in four separate “races” or bloodlines, each with a specific geographic locus or whether it opens the floodgates for any number of interpretations of American Indian and/or universal human origins is ultimately irrelevant. What matters is that these theories of human origin form the basis of Native metaphysics and ontologies. And—whether “we” are firmly rooted in the traditions of Western thought or not—we have no certainty about human origins—we have only theories. Traditionally, even in sympathetic accounts of Native ontologies, theories of origin have been described as and conceived of as “myths,” but there is a growing amount of evidence to suggest that these so-called “myths” may in fact bear some scientific, historical and philosophical truth. That is, that these “myths” transferred through the generations in the form of “stories” may in fact reflect human memories of planetary traumas and triumphs.²³ As North Florida Seminole scholar Anne Waters has similarly stated in a recent paper on “Language Matters: or A Metaphysic of NonDiscrete NonBinary Dualism,”

Among the gaps [created by the psychological dismembering ... fueled by forced migrations and colonial extortions] there remained kernels of ontology: ideas about ways to be in the world; and ideas about ontological relationships in the world. Our stories held understandings of indigenous human science, technology, relations and sacred place in the world. [...] The metaphysics and epistemology remain intact among Indigenous peoples of the Americas.²⁴

The implications of validating Native theories of origins are substantial. As Ward Churchill points out:

Acceptance of the growing weight of evidence that American Indians didn't 'come from somewhere else' would address a few other matters as well. These begin with confirmation that we are and always have been, literally correct when we've insisted that we come from here, from this land, that we are truly indigenous to the hemisphere. And, if our Origin Stories are thus verified as accurate, it follows that the rest of our 'legends' are deserving of reconsideration for being exactly what we've always said they were: our History. (*Since Predator Came* 280).

Recently, I had the privilege of "eavesdropping" on a conversation between two prominent critical race theorists in which the following excerpt entered the exchange:

"The reality of rocks and buses are [sic] important to me, but the reality of race affects me on a deeper and more personal basis."²⁵

My first response to the quip consisted of resisting the temptation to ask its author whether the rock might assume greater ontological significance were it thrown through his living room window, possibly as a racist reaction to the reality of race affecting him on a deeper and more personal basis. At a deeper level, however, this statement once again illustrated the limited possibilities for engaging in discussions with even critical race theorists who so obviously and self-evidently place rocks and buses in the same category of being (an unthinkable coupling from the perspective of a Native ontology) and furthermore place both the rock and the bus in a separate, presumably inferior, category of being. The bus, consisting as it does of man-made matter, may matter as little to me (thinking and acting on the premises of an Ojibwa ontology) as to Sundstrom. The rock, however, speaks fluently to the precipitous breach in the conceptualization of being that occurs when seeking to bring any Western dialogue into conversation with Native beliefs about Being and beings.

An early (1960) anthropological study of Ojibwa ontology conducted by A. Irving Hallowell has been accorded some degree of validity by contemporary Native scholars. In it, Hallowell discusses with some accuracy the way Being and beings are configured in Ojibwa ontology. Speaking from the subject position of an outside observer, Hallowell states that "what we view as material, inanimate objects—such as shells and stones—are placed in an animate category along with persons which have no physical existence in the world. [...] An inanimate categorization would be unthinkable from the Ojibwa point of view. [...] Since in the Ojibwa universe there are many kinds of reified person-objects which are other than human but have the same ontological status, these, of course, fall into the same ethnoseme as human beings."²⁶ As Hallowell is careful to note, this does not imply any sort of dogmatic animism that might involve a consciously formulated "theory" on the nature of stones and attribute animate nature to *all*

stones in *all* times and *all* places (148). Rather, he states, "whereas we should never expect a stone to manifest animate properties of any kind under any circumstances, the Ojibwa recognize, *a priori*, potentialities for animation in certain classes of objects under certain circumstances" (148).

Hallowell goes on to relate an anecdote about a white trader who, upon uncovering a large boulder in his potato patch, called for an Indian, John Duck, to determine whether the stone had ever belonged to his pavilion or not. John Duck asked the stone, and the stone replied in the negative. The ontological reality reflected in this anecdote is clear, for, as Hallowell points out: "Speaking to a stone dramatizes the depth of the categorical difference in cognitive orientation between the Ojibwa and ourselves. [...] The] use of speech as a mode of communication raises the animate status of the boulder to the level of social interaction common to human beings. Simply as a matter of observation we can say that the stone was treated as if it were a "person," not a "thing," without inferring that objects of this class are, for the Ojibwa, necessarily categorized as persons" (149).²⁷ Hallowell's discussion of Ojibwa ontology resembles, if not in kind then in content, the ontology outlined in story form (to approximate the oral tradition from which it derives) in Ignatia Broker's *Night Flying Woman*.²⁸ Kenneth M. Morrison, discussing Hallowell's groundbreaking study forty years after its first appearance, points to the significance of the way the study clarified that, in Ojibwa thought, "persons are not defined by human physical shape, and so the Ojibwa do not project anthropomorphic attributes onto the world."²⁹ Vine Deloria confirms similar ontological views among other tribes: "the majority of stories of origin suggest a creation in which people are given, simultaneous with their creation, an awareness that they have been created. These traditions suggest that there was no essential spiritual/intellectual difference between peoples and animals."³⁰

Anne Waters posits a "nondiscrete nonbinary dualist ontology" whereby two categories of being might coexist in a complementary dualism that "would place the two constructs together in such a way that one would remain itself, and be also a part of the other" ("Language Matters"). What is perhaps most significant about Waters's model is that, because it eliminates the need for the "sharp bifurcation" of boundaries inherent to the binary system, it precludes any hierarchical placement of beings in relation to one another—hence notions of superior and inferior, rational and non-rational, animate and inanimate beings cannot be accommodated in this contemporary Native American ontology. Instead, this model presents us with dualisms that are nonbinary and nondiscrete and hence, "complementary." This has substantial implications for understanding concepts of race and, above all, for providing conceptual models that enhance our capacities for thinking race in ways that allow for more fluid definitions of being in relation to all beings mutually inhabitant in this space/time we call "here on Earth."

Pointing again to the significance of dissolving boundaries in the attempt to eliminate hierarchy, Waters explains the workings of Western binary dualism as follows:

[...] the color black and the color white come into contact with one another. Physically, as with paints, a grey appears, obliterating the black and white boundaries; ontologically, a conflict or struggle ensues, each construct vying for its own showing and placement over that of the other! This is why, in Western thought, it is important to keep sharply divided dichotomies bifurcated with rigid, clear boundaries operating at the margins. These

boundaries are what enables value judgment to be applied to the two constructs. That is, value of one above the other can be achieved only if they do not mix. (“Language Matters”)

In a model that enriches Adrienne Rich’s “Lesbian Continuum,”³¹ Waters illustrates her proposal for an ontology that might allow for a reconsideration of gender and (by analogy) racial categories of being. She suggests that we first visualize two boxes (discreet binary dualisms). Now, take the boxes apart, lay them side by side to form one continuous straight line, labeling one point +M/-F and the other +F/-M. Draw point +M/-F to point +F/-M, forming one circle, “recognizing that they go to infinity and wrap around each other in concentric circles that are in motion, so that there are multiple layers of spheres spinning in different directions” (Waters, email, 3 December 2002).

With the aims and issues at stake in thinking not in terms of gender distinctions, but rather in terms of race—I would add to this model the symbol (and reality) of the circle of life or the medicine wheel. The circle of life is represented symbolically by a circle with discreet boundaries drawn between four colors: Red, White, Yellow and Black (sometimes configured as blue). To these colors correspond four directions, four elements and four “races” (rarely identified as such, but rather conceived of as “relations” and not placed in hierarchical or binary, but rather reciprocal relationship to one another). This circle of life represents an Indigenous ontology. Were we to superimpose the circle of life upon Waters’s nonbinary nondiscrete dualism model, we would arrive at an ontological model by which “races” not only assume a horizontal configuration like the notion of “Quace” as developed by Mills, but in which the strict bifurcation of the binary dualist models produced by the West dissolve into a fluid and ever-changing process of exchange. What may appear to be a model characterized by discrete boundaries between colors, elements, and directions is clearly recognizable as actually having nondiscrete boundaries when the model is set in motion. Let us imagine here two disks with transparent color inlays, each in perpetual motion, each with four multi-leveled categories of definition for beings (i.e., color, direction, element, gender), each subject to the same principles guiding Waters’s nondiscrete nonbinary dualism model for gender, each possibly coming into contact with the other, but not necessarily. In this model, when the two categories of Being become superimposed upon one another, as is implied by contact between Beings (as through colonial contact or globalization, for example, or by kinship, physical proximity, etc.), neither one nor the other is obliterated, obscured, exterminated or placed in binary opposition to the other—rather, the motion of each in interaction with the other creates new categories of Being whose boundaries are not discrete and cannot be because they are in a perpetual state of motion, hence change. The boundaries are fluid and cannot be placed in static relationship to one another. Because they are transparent, they may overlap to produce “interstitial” (Waters, “Ontology of Identity,” see note 8) categories of being where new Beings emerge. Since they are not restricted to the dual binary system implied by a simple black and white scheme, various shades of Being become ontologically real, i.e., red + yellow = orange; red + white = pink; blue/black + red = purple. Such a model seems better equipped to accommodate to the racial realities—be they ontologically determined or socially constructed—leading critical race theorists to inject critical reflection into the White Studies paradigm.

Ward Churchill, in his “White Studies” paper, also invokes the circle of life, “Hoop” or “wheel” as an intellectual paradigm with the potential to challenge the Eurocentric bias of US higher education, in all fields of inquiry. Churchill’s map of the model is accompanied by a similar justification of its deployment: it dissolves the deeply bifurcated boundaries of the Western model.



He explains,

Within such a conceptual model, there is really no tangible delineation of compartmentalized “spheres of knowledge.” All components or categories of intellectuality (by Eurocentric definition) tend to be mutually and perpetually informing. All tend to constantly concretize the human experience of reality (nature) while all are simultaneously and continuously informed by that reality. [...] The Circle of Life [is] an organic rather than synthesizing or synthetic view, holding that all things are equally and indispensably related—which forms the core of the native worldview. (280)

Vine Deloria echoes these sentiments in his treatment of “Perceptions and Maturity”:

Western civilization seems clear, orderly, obvious and without possibility of reform primarily because it defines the world in certain rigid categories. The product of this clarity, however, is a certain kind of insanity that can survive only by renewed efforts to refine the definitions and that, ultimately, becomes totally self-destructive. (4)

What Native conceptualizations of being and thinking share is that they cannot accommodate bifurcated categories and discreet boundaries. Perhaps equally important, the models themselves and hence all boundaries and categories they embrace are in constant motion, always in relation to “the rest”—whereby “the rest” is thought to include people, plants, planets, animals and other forms of being not traditionally defined as being in Western frameworks. In these models, perpetual motion precipitates a certain motility of being—both the boundaries and the Beings navigating them have the power to move spontaneously and hence respond, in an ever-changing universe, to whatever contingencies and exigencies arise. This eliminates the need for the perpetual reinvention of the wheel in a process whereby definitions must be refined and revised in order to accommodate shifting realities and perceptions thereof.

Endnotes

1. Vine Deloria, Jr. *The Metaphysics of Modern Existence* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979) 207.
2. See Lilian Friedberg, “Drumming for Dollars: The Bottom Line between Appreciation and Appropriation, (forthcoming in *Bearing Witness, Reading Lives*, Gloria Anzaldua and AnaLouise Keating, eds; “Manger Malade: Eating Disorders in the North American Drum Community,” paper presented at the February 2003 conference “Cultures in Motion: The Africa Connection” [Knoxville, TN]); “Dare to Compare: Americanizing the Holocaust,” *American Indian Quarterly*

24(3) (2000) 353-80; “Mule Minus Forty Million Acres: Topographies of Geographic Disorientation in George Tabori’s *Weissman und Rotgesicht*,” *New German Critique* 84 (2001): 55-86; “‘Verbrechen, die ich meine’: Manners of Death as Thickly Descriptive Translation of Ingeborg Bachmann’s *Todesarten*,” *Monatshefte* 94(2) (2002): 189-208.

3. To clarify my use of the terms “absence” and “Presence” here: I am drawing on the terms as defined and used by Mary Daly: when speaking of “absence” I refer to the “presence of absence” as “a growth of nothingness, an expansion of emptiness that fills the mind. The meaninglessness of [white, LMF] male-centered myths and ideologies [...] experienced as mental/spiritual bloat [...] ‘stuff’ that packs the mind, which becomes a garbage heap of details without a focus. [...] It is a parade of images and ‘facts’ that are not facts because the context is a lie.” Mary Daly, *Pure Lust: Elemental Feminist Philosophy* (Boston: Beacon, 1984) 147. Presence, on the other hand, “implies a capacity to presentiate, that is, ‘to make or render present in place or time; to cause to be perceived or realized as present’ (OED)” (Daly 148).

4. It is difficult to ascertain the date of first publication of this article, which appeared in several different forms and forums in the 1990s; here, I am citing from what is apparently the most recent version, Ward Churchill, *From a Native Son: Selected Essays on Indigenism, 1985-1995* (Boston: South End Press, 1996) 271-93.

5. Charles Mills, *Blackness Visible* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), xiii.

6. Elisabeth Cook-Lynn, “America’s Oldest Racism: The Roots of Inequality,” *Why I can’t Read Wallace Stegner and Other Essays* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996) 136-41; here 141.

7. See for example, David Stannard, *American Holocaust: Columbus and the Conquest of the New World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Richard Drinnon, *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian Hating and Empire Building* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980); Russell Thornton, *American Indian Holocaust and Survival: A Population History Since 1492* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987); Ward Churchill, *A Little Matter of Genocide: Holocaust and Denial in the Americas 1492-Present* (San Francisco: City Lights, 1997); Lilian Friedberg, “Dare to Compare: Americanizing the Holocaust” *American Indian Quarterly* 24(3) (2000), 353-80.

8. Naomi Zack, *Race and Mixed Race* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 112.

9. Zack’s elision of the Native American “breed” (as mixed bloods were derogatorily identified throughout much of American history) is particularly glaring in light of the fact that, contrary to popular stereotypical misconception, most Indians today are actually of mixed heritage. Devon Mihesuah addresses this topic in *American Indians: Stereotypes and Realities* (Regina, SK, Canada: Clarity International, 1996) explaining that: “Indians had intermarried with Indians outside their tribes long before Europeans ever set foot on this continent. After Euro-Americans began to push many Indians off their lands, tribes were forced to join with other tribes for protection. And since contact, many tribes also had members who intermarried with Euro-Americans, thus producing a population of mixed-bloods who either adhered to the value system of their Indian mothers or Euro-American fathers [...] Some mixed-bloods knew the languages and customs of both parents’ cultures and served as ‘culture brokers’ or ‘cultural mediators,’ while others floundered as outcasts in both worlds” (103). Since the whole issue of blood quantum and the way the “one-drop rule” applies to Native American identity (both as a legal and ontological category) is highly controversial and characterized by vicissitudes quite unlike those relevant to the discourse on blackness versus whiteness in this country, one might conclude that Zack’s neglect of this aspect of mixed race identity was more a practical consideration than an intentional neglect. And in fact, she does address this shortcoming in her introduction, in the familiarly dismissive fashion of casting the void as an unfortunate (in her words “regrettable”) consequence of academic specialization (3). What is perplexing about Zack’s analysis is that she does not pause to consider the category of the “Black Indian” that has, in recent years, become a focus of attention among public intellectuals and cultural theorists. Considering the way that American Indian racial identity was often considered more white than non-white in the “black imagination,”

one has to wonder how many mixed race “mulattos” might not actually be “black Indians.” For more on this subject, see Jack Forbes, *Black Africans and Native Americans: Color, Race and Caste in the Evolution of Red-Black Peoples* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988); William Loren Katz, *Black Indians: A Hidden Heritage* (New York: Alladin, 1986); on the political modalities involved here, see Terry Wilson, “Blood Quantum: Native American Mixed Bloods,” and Maria Root, ed., *Racially Mixed People in America* (Newbury Park, CA: SAGE Publications, 1992), 108-26. As far as the philosophical modalities of Native American mixed blood identities are concerned, this category has in fact been successfully employed by many a Native theorist as a subversive challenge to racial politics in the Academy, see in particular Gerald Vizenor, *Manifest Manners: Postindian Warriors of Survivance* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1994) and Louis Owens *Mixedblood Messages: Literature, Film, Family, Place* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998); see also Anne Waters, “Ontology of Identity and Interstitial Being,” manuscript supplied by the author, October, 2002.

10. George M. Fredrickson, *Racism: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 155.

11. Louis Owens, “As If an Indian Were Really an Indian: Uramamericans, Euramericans and Postcolonial Theory,” *Native American Literature: Boundaries and Sovereignties*, and ed. Kathryn W. Shanley, *Paradoxa: Studies in World Literary Genres* 15 (2001): 170-83; here, 172.

12. Anne Waters, professor of philosophy at the University of New Mexico and President of the American Indian Philosophy Association, in a recent telephone conversation (9 November 2002), states that there are currently about 6 persons of Native descent holding Ph.D.s in philosophy, some of whom received their degrees not in the United States, but rather from Canadian universities.

13. Vine Deloria, Jr. “Perceptions and Maturity: Reflections on Feyerabend’s Point of View,” *Spirit and Reason: The Vine Deloria, Jr. Reader* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 1999) 4-16; here 5.

14. Vine Deloria, Jr. “The Red and the Black,” *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto, with a New Preface by the Author* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988 [1969]), 168-96; here 168.

15. The difference between the ways racial intermarriage functioned for African Americans and Native Americans is too complex to find adequate treatment here: one might sum up by stating that, in some cases, racial intermarriage in fact served as a survival strategy employed by Native women seeking to diversify bloodlines once the Native population reached dangerously low levels. But, the US government’s intents in this regard are succinctly summarized in the statements of Return Meigs who served as US agent among the Cherokee from 1801-1823. Meigs advocated intermarriage because, as he said, “by their intermarriages with the half Blood and with the whites the real Indian will disappear. The shades of complexion will be obliterated and not a drop of human blood be lost. [...] where the blood is mixed with the whites [...] there is an apparent leaning toward civilization and this disposition is in proportion to its distance from the original stock.” (Return Meigs, cited in Scott L. Malcomson, *One Drop of Blood: The American Misadventure of Race* [New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000] 67). In the minds of the settler population, then, miscegenation was seen as a genocidal strategy which, however, could not be prosecuted as murder since, “not a drop of human blood” would be lost in the process.

16. Kaufmann, cited in Lilian Friedberg, “Mule Minus Forty Million Acres: Topographies of Geographic Disorientation in George Tabori’s *Weissman und Rotgesicht*,” *New German Critique* 84 (2001): 55-86.

17. As Deloria has stated in “Perceptions and Maturity,” “Anyone who can raise the eyebrows of academics and evoke that ‘tut-tut’ casual disapproval usually is a serious thinker with a great deal to say” (7). While critical race theory, in my view, has done little to solve the problems we face concerning race as it functions in philosophy, it has nevertheless earned the “tut-tut’ casual disapproval” which, according to Deloria’s analysis, marks it as a field of inquiry with “a great deal to say.”

18. Anthony Appiah, cited in Ronald R. Sundstrom, “‘Racial’ Nominalism,” *Journal of Social Philosophy* 33.2 (2002): 193-210. Sundstrom reiterates the triumvirate version of race with the terms “Caucasoid, Negroid, and Mongoloid” (194).

19. For more qualified rebuttals of the various so-called “Bering Strait Theories” than I can provide here, see Ward Churchill, “About that Bering Strait Land Bridge...Let’s Turn Those Footprints Around,” *Since Predator Came: Notes from the Struggle for American Indian Liberation* (Littleton, CO: Aegis, 1995) 265-96, and Vine Deloria, “Low Bridge—Everybody Cross,” *Red Earth, White Lies: Native Americans and the Myth of Scientific Fact* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 1997) 67-92.

20. On the myth of Caucasoid origins of Native American peoples, see Heidi Knecht, Anne Pike-Tay, and Randall White, eds. *Before Lascaux: The Complex Record of the Early Upper Paleolithic* (Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 1993).

21. On the myth of migration from sub-Saharan Africa, see, in addition to the entire body of “orthodox” literature on the “origin of the species,” Nigel Davies, *Voyagers to the New World* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1979).

22. On the Ten Lost Tribes theory, see Robert Wauchope, *Lost Tribes and Sunken Continents* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970) and Ronald Sanders, *Lost Tribes and Promised Lands* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1978).

23. See also Vine Deloria, “The Traumatic Planetary Past,” *Metaphysics* 162-74.

24. “Language Matters,” Manuscript supplied by the author, 9. November, 2002. Waters’s comments indirectly address another common misconception that has been employed as an exterminationist and eliminationist strategy in White Studies: posing the “successful” extermination of the “vanishing race” of Red Indians as an empirical fait accompli—eulogizing Native Americans, speaking in past tense forms in a serial rerun of “The Way We Were,” assuming that the “few” remaining survivors of the American Holocaust and/or their descendants/dependents, inasmuch as they have physically survived, have somehow lost all of their original knowledge of Indigenist ways of thinking and being in the world. Certainly, no one would deny that much has been lost—in fact most Native scholars spend a great deal of time attempting to clarify the extent of the losses and the way grief (see also Winona Laduke, *All Our Relations: Native Struggles for Land and Life* [Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1999] 148) is a determining factor in developing contemporary Indigenous philosophy. However, thinking in terms of a bygone civilization, culture, and attendant philosophy, provides a convenient detour for people hesitant to confront real Indians in the real world. Waters continues on this point: “[t]he colonial project of dismembering the ontology of indigenous thought successfully failed.” Additional references will be from this version, cited parenthetically as “Language Matters.”

25. Email correspondence from Ronald Sundstrom to Charles W. Mills, September 24, 2002.

26. A. Irving Hallowell, “Ojibwa Ontology, Behavior and World View,” *Teachings from the American Earth: Indian Religion and Philosophy*, Dennis and Barbara Tedlock, eds., (New York: Liveright 1975) 141-78.

27. As examples of putatively “inanimate” objects assuming animate characteristics, I cite from my own gatherings: several million year old Lake Superior concretions (to speak to my being Red); several million year old rare volcanic rock from a historically sacred and geologically unique cluster of hills in the Rhine valley (to speak to my being White); a handful of red sand from the Sahara (to speak to the juncture or dynamic overlay [see Circle of Life in Motion model] of my being in relation to the Black/Blue); 40 to 50 drums, hand-crafted and carved by my Relatives in Africa, most of them I have transported from one Continent to the Other (to speak to the organic relationship between the Black and the Red, a relationship whose modalities I have chosen to pursue in my attempts to achieve a sense of full humanity in a world where this is “exceedingly difficult” to do); a Talmud—in Hebrew and in German—from 1926, Berlin (to speak to my being “a bit of a Jew” [Plath], fluent in the “murderers’ mother tongue” [Celan], hence necessarily tied in some way to the genocide against the Jews). These Beings are not things, they are speakers who spark creativity and keep the life cycle/circles in motion. Since these “things” are catalysts for motion, they are essential to maintaining the integrity of the ontological system, for as long as there is motion, boundaries remain fluid. It is when static models prevail that rigid bifurcation can occur and disrupt the balance of the cycle/circle.

28. Ignatia Broker, White Earth Ojibwe Elder, educated and “urbanized,” has written, in story form, a brief history and, you could say, ontology of the Ojibwe people. Broker similarly describes relationships existing between things which would not normally be ascribed *being* in the Western frame of things, but which reside in the same category of being in the metaphysical world of the Ojibwe. *Night Flying Woman* (St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1983). Broker’s work is a testimony to the “kernels of ontology” that have survived, as described by Waters.

29. Kenneth M. Morrison, “The Cosmos as Intersubjective: Native American other-than-human Persons,” *Indigenous Religions: A Companion*, Graham Harvey, Ed. (London: Cassell, 2000) 23-36.

30. Vine Deloria, Jr. “At the Beginning,” *Spirit and Reason* 102.

31. Adrienne Rich, “Compulsory Heterosexuality and the Lesbian Continuum” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 5 (1980): 631-60. It is encouraging to see someone “diving into the wreck” of so-called “postfeminist” (what I call post-Reaganite) scholarship to discover the ways that these early radical feminist writings still have validity today and often lend themselves ideally to applications outside the black-white dichotomy in the discourse on race. In the period from the mid-1980s to the early 1990s, while radical feminist thought flourished and found resonance in Europe, leading ultimately to the emergence of French feminist poststructuralist theory, I found that, upon my return to the US in 1992, feminism—a positively connoted affiliation in Europe—had become something of a four-letter word in US American academic and professional circles.

The Anishinaubae Story

John Colliton

Anishinaubae creation stories facilitate a need for humans to acquire self-identity and peace of mind. Spirituality is very important in every aspect of Anishinaubae culture and is a part of everyday activity. Mother Earth, the cosmos, and the living spirits or Manitous help people to live in balance and harmony with all created things. The spirit power of the Manitous allows elders to communicate with their ancestors and to talk to and learn from plants and animal beings. I am aware that traditional Anishinaubae elders speak the creation story by repeating the message given to them by their ancestors. This method of story-telling is known by the term ‘oral tradition.’

This paper will present the Anishinaubae story. Authors Basil Johnston, Norval Morriseau and Georges E. Sioui are members of the Anishinaubae, as are interviewees Fredrick Nowgesic, Florrie Sutherland and Fred Thomas. They give their own personal insights on the subject of creation. Other resource materials include the writings of noted authors Calvin Martin, co-authors Jennifer S. H. Brown and Robert Brightman, Christopher Vecsey, Dorothy M. Reid and co-authors Peggy Beck, Anna Lee Walters and Nia Francisco.

Although European influences, through writings for example, have contributed to social changes, these written influences have not seriously affected or altered the spiritual beliefs or oral traditions of the People. Anishinaubae today continue to practice their traditional beliefs and live in the traditional manner.

The spiritual death of the Ojibwa is recorded on the pages of Christopher Vecsey’s book *Traditional Ojibwa Religion and its Historical Changes*. He suggests that Ojibwa traditional religions have lost the sacred trust of the Manitous; the myths, the vision quests; in fact, the whole structure of belief has collapsed leaving only traces of “the religion.”¹ The author further states that Ojibwa people are also in a state of crisis concerning their belief in the Manitous, and, as a consequence, are also concerned about their personal identity.² This

particular circumstance is compounded, he continues, because today no single Ojibwa storyteller can pass on the complete creation myth. Old stories are fragmented. Therefore, he suggests that the passing on of the myths through oral tradition has become unimportant for the people.³ This paper counters those claims.

IN THE BEGINNING:

“How it rested on the Turtle”

Thus she heard the old traditions,
Heard the legends of her people
Handed down the misty ages
Through succeeding generations.

Thus she heard the ancient stories,
Heard the tales of awe and wonder:
How the world was first created:
How it rested on the Turtle.

How the Little Turtle clambered
Up the sky and gathered thunder:
Made the lights, the Wasakwoni:
Made the sun to rule the daytime:
Made the moon and stars for darkness.

Thus she heard of Nanabozho
In the long-age beginning,
In the days before the deluge
When the sons of men were stalwart,
How the oki rested on him:
How his goodness made him mighty.

(From *Legends of the Mississaugas* by W. Gordon Mills)

Land, its creation, and Turtle Island, is a sacred story that is shared by many Aboriginal people. Another example is the traditional story of the Seminole people who have relocated and settled in locations now known as the state of Florida. Their story also reveals that the earth was created on the shell of a Great Turtle, in a story told by a Seminole man.

...and there were ants and then this round thing (they didn't know what it was) came out of the sea. It was floating out in the big sea. Finally that Mighty One gave this big round thing to land and while he was resting it started cracking and ... he was trying to breathe; and then he made a loud hiss and this giant ant came over and said, “What will you do for me if I put you together?” and he said “The only thing that I can give you is inside of me. And there is no way that I can survive; but the only thing is that the Earth Children must crawl over me.” And the giant ant (there were four of them, four brothers) put this giant turtle back together and they sang, “chotoelaylay, chotoelaylay” – they said that four times. That means “rock layer.” That's the reason why the turtle has squares on his back. That's where he was put together and that's the symbol of the Earth. And then there's a mound, and then the Earth Children did come out under it, and we're living on it.⁴

The Seminole man tells the sacred story as it was told to him. His responsibility in revealing the details of how the earth was formed on the shell of a Great Turtle continues the oral tradition.

From time immemorial, the people of Turtle Island have used oral tradition to pass on messages from previous generations. One such message is the sacred story of how the earth was created. Story-telling elders continue to pass on the message of how the Great Manitous made the land

with the help of spirits and animals. It was the spiritual beings who created a place on which the red people could live and thrive on the gifts offered by mother earth. Life, nourishment, and medicine would be there for all living things to share. This place was called Turtle Island.

Basil Johnson, in *The Manitous – the Spiritual World of the Ojibway*, reminds everyone that even though the fear of Weenidigoes has diminished, their spirit and ideas continue to live on in today's world.⁵ Anishinaubae continue to receive spiritual and learning gifts from the elders, just like those of generations before. He continues by saying that the Anishinaubae continue to learn of their past and heritage from elders and others. People have been and continue to be instructed in matters concerning everything from their history, the land, the plant and animal kingdoms, astronomy, language, and their spiritual heritage.

In another book by Basil Johnston, *Ojibway Heritage: The Ceremonies, Rituals, Songs, Dances, Prayers and Legends of the Ojibway*, he suggests that Ojibway creation stories may contain a variety of themes and meanings. He continues by saying that time and contemplation are required to gain a fuller understanding of the stories. Their meaning and mystery are just as complex as those stories or legends of Greek, Roman and Egyptian cultures or, for that matter, the writings of the Christian Bible.⁶ The author mentions that there are a number of themes and meanings in the creation story; however, the overall gist or main idea of the creation of Turtle Island remains the same.

In her book *Tales of Nanabozho*, Dorothy M. Reid also writes about the Ojibway creation story but in a narrative style. She presents Nanabozho and the aquatic animals as living beings that have the ability to talk and communicate with each other. So it was that the Mighty One did converse with the Beaver and Otter on the dangers of their journey to the bottom of the sea. They tried desperately to gather a bit of earth from the watery depths but failed. Their failure prompted the Muskrat to take up the challenge. In a language of universal understanding the words spoken were: “No matter what may happen, O Mighty One, be sure to examine my paws carefully when I return,” said the Muskrat to Nanabozho. The story continues. After a full day and a night, the Muskrat breaks the surface of the water in a state of lifelessness. Nanabozho gathers the brave little animal to himself and opens his tiny paws. The Muskrat had succeeded in bringing a small lump of mud from the bottom of the great sea. Immediately the Mighty One calls the Turtle to the surface. The Turtle respectfully offers the Creator its shell as a place to rest the mud. When the mud was almost dry, Nanabozho began to knead it over and over many times. The ball of mud grew larger and larger on the back of the Turtle. Eventually the mud became a mountain that broke into a raft of mud on the surface of the sea. Later, Nanabozho asked a Bear to walk upon this raft of mud but quickly called him back. The Bear, because of his great size and weight, caused the water to ooze in his footprints. Nanabozho realized that to permit his journey the earth would have been one place of muskeg. This would not be good; therefore, Nanabozho calls the Bear's journey upon the raft of mud to cease.⁷ The preceding story is presented by having the Creating Spirit and the animals come alive. The land and its creation become a dialogue of thoughts, words, and deeds. It was and is a living story of creation.

“How it rested on the Turtle,” asks in contemporary literary terms the age-old question of how the earth was created. The answer, the poem suggests, is contained in the old traditions and the ancient stories. Passed onwards through the tongues of the story-tellers are the words of how Nanabozho and the

Turtle worked together to create a place for all to walk, swim and fly upon.

Kitche Manitou, The Great Spirit, began the whole idea of creating a physical and spiritual place for all the animate and inanimate things. So in the beginning he dreams of a sky containing countless stars and a sun and moon for earth. In his dreams he also see mountains, valleys, islands, lakes, grass lands, bushes, plants of all images, all things that could walk, fly or swim; in fact, everything that his wisdom thought of. So it was that the Great Spirit created rock, water, fire and wind and blew into them the breath of life and their soul-spirit.⁸ Much later, however, a catastrophe took place upon the world. Rain fell and covered the earth until the only living things left were water animals, creatures of flight, and the fishes.⁹ As time went by, the creatures of the sea saw that the spirit woman above was becoming weary and lonely. By convincing a giant turtle to surface from the depths and offer his back as a place of rest, the water beings offered sky-woman a place to come down to. It was from the turtle's back that the beaver, fisher, marten, and loon tried, but failed to gather soil from the depths. It was only the lowly muskrat that succeeded in gathering a small morsel of soil. However, it was enough for spirit woman. She had to spread the soil around the rim of the turtle's shell. It was only then that spirit woman was able to create a large island now identified as Michilimackinac.¹⁰

One contemporary member of the Turtle Island community is Norval Morriseau. Nationally and internationally recognized as an accomplished and talented Ojibway art painter and traditional story teller, he speaks of the connection his people have with the earth. In a story told by Norval, in his book *Legends of My People The Great Ojibway*, Gitchi Manitou was the Creator of the Ojibway people.¹¹ He says the Ojibway think of the earth as their mother and we are her children. The life-giving sun is the sister and the moon a brother. He also connects the "sky, water, fire and stone" as a whole or oneness to the earth.¹² His philosophy is shared by many of his brothers and sisters. This philosophy is similar to that of the Seminoles; that is, we are all children of the earth, and as children, we should always respect and love our Mother, the earth.

Another member of the present day Aboriginal community is "Dimensional Light in the Sky," Fred Thomas. Fred is a member of the Lac Seul First Nation. He says: "We are not human beings trying to be spiritual beings, we are spiritual beings trying to be human beings." He also relates that "living in our society today with so many other nations, we have a choice of belief. The Aboriginal way or European way, but one cannot have both. Traditional people do not believe in hell, they believe there is a better life after, but it depends on one's commitment to respect, help, or get along with others while on Turtle Island. One should never abuse another while walking the traditional road." He believes that all Aboriginal people are connected to the earth. Land provides the tools, food, shelter, crafts and medicines for the People. All these gifts are available on this placed called "Turtle Island."¹³

Florrie Sutherland lives at Constance Lake Indian Reserve which is located in the Cochrane District of Ontario. Her people were relocated to this area from James Bay. When asked where she is from, her reply is, "I am a member of the James Bay area Cree people of Albany." She mentions the fact that her last name was given to her family by a Hudson's Bay Company manager because their Indian name was too difficult to pronounce. Her father was once employed by the Company. He was responsible for grading and stamping furs brought to the trading post. Currently she is searching for her real family name. Florrie believes that elders can foretell what

will happen, but just as important, they have the ability to tell the stories of the past. To her traditional spiritual belief is more comforting. It is a happy place. It is a place where you see the people who have gone before you. It is a place where no one suffers. It is not a hunting ground, it is a meeting place where all the two- and four-legged travel to. It's a place where you can hug each other again, everyone in one place.¹⁴

Fredrick Joseph Nowgesic (European name) Wabinkesic (traditional name), was born and raised at Gull Bay First Nation reserve. His parents, brothers, and older sisters were born on Jackfish Island [First Nations] and were the original members of that community. He like many other "Indian" children, attended a residential school. Wabinkesic also admits that the "religion addiction" contracted at school has produced a lot of bad memories. As a Bear Clan member, he is well versed in both academic and traditional ways. He believes that everything is a spirit because everything was created by the spirit. He says we are spiritual beings because we are created from the creator. The people realize the importance of these gifts and, in return, offer respect to those things created by the Great Spirit. Given to us are language, minds, eyes, ears, feelings, touch, walk, all gifts. We are happy for these gifts, for to lose any one of them would create difficulties. To him there is no hell.¹⁵

Georges Sioui, author of *For an Amerindian Autohistory*, writes that the Wendat people proclaim the earth was created by a female named Aataentsic. When she departed her celestial world, the Great Turtle provided his back to her and she commanded the animals to gather and spread a small quantity of earth brought to her from the bottom of the sea. There a place was made for the human race. Her one son provided the good, while the other created obstacles to life. This balance would promote compassion and moral virtues.¹⁶

For countless generations, the Aboriginal people of "Turtle Island" received their traditional guidances through oral, and in some instances recorded, messages. Traditional people today maintain that their ancestors have passed on their gifts. Fred Thomas regards the stories told to him as a teaching of life itself. The messages received create an awareness to respect all living things. To others, like Florrie Sutherland, tradition has been given to her through dreams. She regards all her dreams as important in revealing things about herself and others. To her everything becomes related in time. Fredrick Nowgesic regards all things given to him as gifts. His gifts are stored in his bundle. The Creator gives the teachings to the elder and the elder passes them onward. He continues by stating that "we are only the voice, the vehicle of passing it. We are guided by the Creator.

Anishinaubae people do not believe in the Christian "hell." Theirs is a spiritual place where you can see others that have gone before you, a happy place where suffering ceases to exist, a place where the two- and four-legged travel where they want to or to be with whomever they want.¹⁷ It is a sacred layer prepared by Gitchi Manitou for all.¹⁸ Likewise, Wabinkesic has suggested that the Christian, Modern, Contemporary and Traditional elders have succeeded in perpetuating the healing circle.¹⁹ The traditional four directions provide the gift of moral guidance. It is taught that the east is where life begins with the rising sun, the south is where warmth begins and provides the animal spirits with a home during the winter time, the west is where water and the Thunder Birds and the great brown bear come from to provide safety, and the north is the powerful one, the land of the "Polar Bear." Everything is at a standstill because everything in its path is affected by its power.²⁰

Oddly enough, the spiritual and oral traditions of the "Turtle Island" people have remained intact. Despite disease,

European wars, the fur trade, colonization, religion addiction and assimilation attempts, to name but a few obstacles thrown in our path, we have survived. Many, however, have lost and continue to lose their dignity and lives in the process.

Through traditional stories, the ancestors and the Anishinaubae today are taught about life itself. Georges Sioui writes on the teachings of a Sioux holy man by the name of Hehaka Sapa. According to this traditional teacher, everything done by the Indian is accomplished in a circular fashion. This is so because “the power of the universe always acts according to circles and all things tend to be round.” He goes on to say that this circle knowledge is the foundation of our religion. The sky, the earth, the star, the wind, the bird nest, and the teepee all have circular form. The sacred circle nation meant a strong and happy people.²¹ For those who experienced the Christian teachings there still remains an attachment to ancestral beliefs. Norval Morriseau writes:

*I understood the loss I would have if I forsook my Indian religion for another and I served both. Being intelligent I am not confused or lost, but if I were ignorant, or if I did not understand either of my faiths, then I believe I would be lost. For I would not know what it is all about.*²²

Endnotes

1. Christopher Vecsey, *Traditional Ojibwa Religion and its Historical Changes* (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1983), 57.
2. *Ibid.*, 83.
3. *Ibid.*, 100.
4. Peggy V. Beck, Anna Lee Walters, and Nia Francisco, *The Sacred: Ways of Knowledge, Sources of Life*, Redesigned Edition. (Tsailie, AZ: Navajo Community College Press, 1996), 246-247.
5. Basil Johnston, *The Manitous: The Spiritual World of the Ojibway* (Toronto: Key Porter Books Limited, 1995), 235.
6. Basil Johnston, *Ojibway Heritage: The Ceremonies, Rituals, Songs, Dances, Prayers and Legends of the Ojibway* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976), 8.
7. Dorothy M. Reid, *Tales of Nanabozho*, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1963), 62-63.
8. *Ibid.*, 12.
9. *Ibid.*, 13.
10. *Ibid.*, 14.
11. Norval Morriseau, Selwyn Dewdney, ed., *Legends of My People the Great Ojibway* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, 1965), 119.
12. *Ibid.*, 15.
13. Fred Thomas, interview by author, transcript, Thunder Bay, Ontario, 7 March 1996.
14. Florrie Sutherland, interview by author, tape recording, Thunder Bay, Ontario, 11 March 1996.
15. Fredrick Nowgesic, interview by author, tape recording, Thunder Bay, Ontario, 29 February 1996.
16. Georges E. Sioui, *For an Amerindian Autohistory* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), 14.
17. Florrie Sutherland, interview by author, 11 March 1996.
18. Morriseau, 119.
19. Fredrick Nowgesic, interview by author, 29 February 1996.
20. Thomas, 7 March 1996.
21. Sioui, 8.
22. Morriseau, 107.

The Fluctuation of Yin Yang A Sex Model in Chinese Philosophy and Medicine

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The philosophy of Yin-Yang has had a great influence on Chinese culture from ancient times to the present. It is above all an ancient cosmological view that the world is composed of many pairs of opposite elements: darkness-light, moon-sun, night-day, cold-heat, female-male, and negative-positive; the relations between all those binaries are described as between Yin and Yang.¹

According to the legendary Yellow Emperor: “The principle of Yin and Yang is the foundation of the entire universe. It underlies everything in creation. It brings about the development of parenthood; it is the root and source of life and death; it is found with the temples of the gods.”² Here, as the cause of parenthood and life, Yin Yang is potentially perceived with a sexual overtone. In fact, the unclear origin of the Yin-Yang principle might just have stemmed from a primitive understanding of sex and its ramifications into a broader view of nature. This universal principle also framed the subsequent understanding of sex in China.

The oldest source for the Yin Yang concept is *I-Ching*,³ a book of divination art in the Zhou Dynasty, in which Yin and Yang are signified as a broken bar and an unbroken bar, respectively. Simply applying this reductive dualism to an understanding of sex would have resulted in a dualistic sex model similar to the early-modern one of categorical difference in the West. But according to *I-Ching*, the basic essences of Yin and Yang do not, by themselves, correspond to two sexes; it is the quantitative difference of the combinations of Yin and Yang essence that builds up a more complex Chinese sex model. Both bodies of man and woman have Yin and Yang essences, whose quantitative difference leads to the qualitative difference of male and female. This is best illustrated by the trigrams composed of three broken and/or unbroken bars, i.e., three elements of Yin and/or Yang.

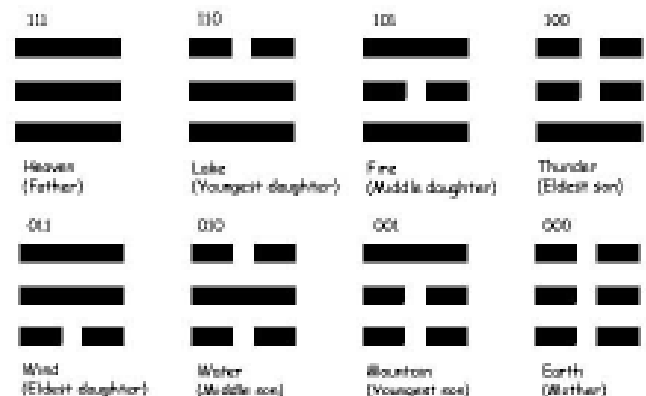


Fig 1.

All possible combinations of three elements of Yin and/or Yang produce eight different trigrams, which form a continuous scale of different Yin Yang quality that suggests an understanding of human sexuality that is much more complex than a simple dualism (See Fig. 1) The most Yang trigram, *Qian*, or heaven, is composed of three unbroken bars; the most Yin trigram, *Kun*, or earth, is composed of three broken bars. The other six trigrams are composed of both broken and

unbroken bar(s), positioned between the two extremes; and they symbolize lake, fire, thunder, wind, water, and mountain with varying Yin Yang quality. If the numbers 1 and 0 are substituted for the unbroken bar and broken bar,⁴ the trigrams can be arranged from 000 (earth), 001, 010, ... to 111 (heaven), or from 0 to 7 in decimal numbers. This numeric scale matches exactly the interpretation by *I-Ching* on the varied Yin-Yang quality from earth to heaven.

In this continuous scale, man and woman are not represented by the two extremes, *Qian* and *Kun*, the trigrams for heaven and earth, but by *Li* and *Kan*, the trigrams for fire and water, between the two extremes. The trigram for fire/man (101) is composed of two unbroken bars and one broken bar, and that for water/woman (010) is composed of two broken bars and one unbroken bar. This basically suggests that a mainly masculine man also has feminine quality and a mainly feminine woman also has masculine quality. Another important feature of the two trigrams is their symmetrical composition: one Yin is between two Yangs, or one Yang between two Yins. This further implies that there is still a balance of Yin and Yang in a body despite their quantitative difference, and also that male or female appearance may hide the opposite quality inside. The other four trigrams do not have symmetrical composition.

This more complex sex model is in great contrast with both the reductive sexual homology in the pre-modern West and the equally reductive sex dualism in the early-modern West.⁵ The Chinese interpretation of sexes as mutually inclusive of each other has produced a homologous body that varies along a continuous scale of different Yin Yang qualities. So the boundary between the two sexes is quite blurred, or at least overlooked. This understanding of sex has left entrenched marks in Chinese traditional literature and visual arts.

The Chinese language itself plays with this ambiguity of gender difference. Not only are all nouns genderless, but even the third pronoun, *ta*, can refer to both he and she.⁶ Moreover, in Chinese, the word *ren*, meaning 'person', is always used as referring to either a man or a woman. Only when it is necessary, *nan-ren* or *nu-ren* will be used to specify the sex of a person. Strictly speaking, these two words mean a male person and a female person, and are not quite the equivalents of English words 'man' and 'woman'. This rule also applies to words for animals in terms of their sex. There is one English word, 'wolf', which has similar structure to that of Chinese words for animals. 'Wolf' can mean either a male or a female wolf, and to specify its sex, an adjective is added to form 'he-wolf' or 'she-wolf'. The Chinese language only has this 'wolf' model for linguistic gender difference; it does not have word pairs like cow and bull. Chinese always use a neutral word unless it necessitates an addition of a gender adjective to specify the sex of the referred subject. This language model implies that sex is only an external quality of a homogenous subject, just as Yin Yang theory interprets sex as the quantitative difference of Yin Yang make-up in a homogenous body.

This sexual ambiguity has prevailed in the traditional performance arts of China. In traditional Peking Opera there were no actresses, actors played both male and female characters;⁷ while in other vernacular operas, like Yue Opera in the south⁸, there were no actors, actresses played both male and female characters. Face painting and costume disguised the true sex of an actor or actress, representing a fictional sex on stage, and implying that sex is but an artificial attribute to a universal person, a homologous body. This sexual ambiguity in theatrical life can even induce sexual confusion in the real life of actors, as in the story elaborated by a recent film,

Farewell, My Concubine, about the homosexual passion of a Peking Opera actor.⁹

In Chinese history and legends, the dramatic playing of another sex has sometimes happened in real life. The famous legend of *Hua Mulan* tells of a girl who played a male soldier for years while she lived in camps with her male comrades and outfought her enemy.¹⁰ Another story, *A Female Son-in-law of the Emperor*, tells of a well-educated girl playing a man to take a national exam, which only men were allowed to take, and winning the first-prize, which brought her great trouble as the first-prize winner had to marry the Emperor's daughter.¹¹ These stories suggest that children's education in Chinese history has provided chances for girls as well as boys to be trained in martial arts or literary arts. The sporadic incidences of such masculine female characters have further dramatized the inherent ambiguity and confusion of gender in Chinese culture. On the other side, feminine male characters were more commonly found within the emperor's palaces, where eunuchs mingled with concubines.

In Chinese traditional paintings and drawings, the representation of the body pays no attention to anatomic precision, especially the anatomical difference of sexuality. Human images are rendered by well-crafted linear sketches, which code, rather than depict, sexual difference through secondary characteristics, such as goatee/tiny lips, hairstyle and clothing. Otherwise the bodies themselves appear with no differences indicating that they are male or female. Always accompanied with poems or titles in well-executed calligraphy, Chinese paintings impress viewers with their elegant craftsmanship and the literary meaning. The image itself becomes a signal to be read rather than a picture to be gazed at. A western style phallic gaze and an objectification of women do not appear in traditional Chinese visual arts.

Even the traditional erotic arts in China are for reading more than for gazing at.¹² The female nude alone has rarely been the subject of Chinese erotic arts. Traditional Chinese eroticism is signified, if not quite represented, by sketches of coitus actions, in which bodies usually appear with minimal anatomic precision. These erotic arts appear in daily items more often used by woman and hidden from outsiders, such as the back of a mirror, a medicine box and a perfume vase. An ancient Chinese verse refers to the use of illustrated sex handbook:

When then the red flower shows its beauty
And exhales its heady perfume,
While she is staying with you in the night
And you feast and sport with her,
Pointing at the pictures you observe their
sequence,
While she keeps being bashful and ashamed
And coyly protests –
Such are the delights of carnal love.¹³

Obviously the Chinese erotic arts are to be used by both men and women, usually a couple together for seduction and foreplay; this is very different from Western eroticism that is mainly an objectification of women for the phallic gaze.

This lack of interest in representing anatomical precision of the body in Chinese visual arts only means that sex locates in the body's interior quality resulting from the interaction of Yin and Yang. Chinese traditional medicine believes in a homologous body that is composed of essences of Yin and Yang. Organs and substances of the body are attributed to either Yin or Yang quality.¹⁴ The legendary Yellow Emperor described the interior forces of a homologous body:

If Yang is overly powerful, then Yin may be too weak. If Yin is particularly strong, then Yang is apt to be defective. If the male force is overwhelming, then there will be excessive heat. If the female force is overwhelming, then there will be excessive cold. Exposure to repeated and severe heat will induce chills. Cold injures the body while heat injures the spirit. When the spirit is hurt, severe pain will ensue. When the body is hurt, there will be swelling. Thus, when severe pain occurs first and swelling comes on later, one may infer that a disharmony in the spirit has done harm to the body. Likewise, when swelling appears first and severe pain is felt later on, one can say that a dysfunction in the body has injured the spirit ...¹⁵

In such abstract terms, the Chinese want to understand the body in a cosmological way, if not an anatomical way. To conceive the body as a micro universe, Yin Yang also creates the body:

Yang, the element of light, originates in the pores. Yin, the element of darkness, moves within the five viscera. Yang the lucid force of light truly is represented by the four extremities and Yin the turbid force of darkness stores the power of the six treasures of nature. Water is an embodiment of Yin as fire is an embodiment of Yang. Yang creates the air, while Yin creates the senses, which belong to the physical body. When the physical body dies, the spirit is restored to the air, its natural environment. The spirit receives its nourishment through the air, and the body receives its nourishment through the senses.¹⁶

In this theory, the Yin Yang essences are not constant, but are in a dynamic interaction transforming life and death. This analogy between the human body and the cosmos further emphasizes a fluctuating sexual homology, whose dynamic nature brings in male and female quality only temporally. This is quite different from the static views of sex in the West.

This dynamism is reinforced by another interpretation of the eight trigrams by King Wen¹⁷, which further illustrates the complexity of gender difference in Chinese culture. From the most Yang (111) to most Yin (000), the trigrams are interpreted as father, youngest daughter, middle daughter, eldest son, eldest daughter, middle son, youngest son, and mother (Fig. 1). In a continuous scale from great Yang to great Yin, it assigns quantitative gender difference to eight different family (social) roles, which might also suggest different stages of personal development. So from the youngest son, who is closest to his mother, to the eldest son, boys are developing their masculinity and eventually become fathers. For girls, the same development in the opposite direction is outlined by the arrangement of trigrams. Indeed, this ancient shrewdness in the human psyche might have partially anticipated the Freudian theory of the Oedipus complex. This dynamic model emphasizes the temporality of gender quality, which also points to the interchangeability of genders.¹⁸

The dynamism and interchangeability of the Yin Yang sexual model are even better signified by the famous *Taiji* diagram (Fig. 2).¹⁹ The diagram is made of a circle whose interior is divided by an 'S' form curve into two contrasting areas of black and white, or Yin and Yang. The two balanced areas in combination form a circle, a symbol of perfect harmony; the two entities intermingle with each other dynamically (as suggested by the curve) in the process of transformation, which is implied by a small white dot within the black area and a black dot within the white area. The small dots symbolize germinal essences inside the area of opposite quality that might be transformed. At once this signifies the mutual inclusiveness and interchangeability of Yin and Yang, or the feminine and the masculine.

In a very terse and reductive manner, the *Taiji* diagram depicts the generation of life and the universe. It symbolizes the interaction of heaven and earth, day and night, which creates the universe. It also suggests that life originates from two distinct entities. It may be more than accidental that the divided shape is reminiscent of a moving sperm (or a drop of semen). If one half is conceived as a sperm, the other can be considered as the leftover of an egg being penetrated and fertilized. So this is a symbol of the origin of life.

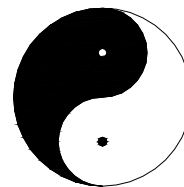


Fig 2.

While one may reject this assumption since the ancient Chinese could not have such a microscopic view of modern biological concept, it is undisputable that the diagram depicts a dynamic penetration of one entity into another. Then an implication of the origin of life is even more apparent: it could be a much-distorted and abstracted representation of the process of penetration (coitus) by one entity (an elastic penis) into another (an elastic concave body).²⁰ In any interpretation, the diagram symbolizes the beginning of life, as well as the beginning of the universe, the commonly perceived meaning of the diagram. What is unique about this life origination representation is that the relation between the penetrating and the penetrated is reversible. This feature again brings about the interchangeability between Yin and Yang.

Instead of a static and hierarchical dualism like the value of good over evil or man over nature in Western positivist philosophy, Chinese philosophy emphasizes the interchangeability of the dualities. There is a deep philosophical meaning in that: if you penetrate another, you may do it so well that finally you find yourself also penetrated by what you are penetrating. In other words, if you try to dominate another, you finally end up being dominated by what you are dominating. So the penetrated transforms into the penetrating naturally, just as the good transforms into the evil, and day into night. This is the key point in understanding an egalitarian relationship between two sexes in China: Chinese women may appear to be in an unprivileged position of being controlled by men, but the hidden fact may just be that the contrary is also true.

The Chinese have a long tradition of male dominated polygamy, but the objective of polygamy was to, more than enslave women, provide many sexual partners for men, who believed that, according to the influential Taoist teaching, having sex with only one woman or an older woman is harmful to his Yang essence.²¹ But this teaching applies to women as well and Chinese women also prefer to have more than one sexual partner. So polygamy produced a gregarious lifestyle of a big family, in which husband, wives, children by different wives, and servants were all in close daily contact. This actually also provided opportunities for a woman to have multiple sexual partners, such as a servant, a frequent visitor, a grownup son by another wife, or even another woman; while the master man might be unaware of all those hidden activities, or he did not bother to be aware of them. The Chinese literary tradition has produced quite a number of stories featuring the hidden side of big families.²² So a seemingly male dominated practice might have turned out to be advantageous to women as well. This further indicates the interchangeability of the social relationships between man and woman.

Chinese families appeared to be patriarchal, with the father as the head of household. But as men were to be preoccupied with outside businesses, women were to be more influential inside the family, and definitely more powerful inside bedchambers.²³ Further, the filial piety advocated by Confucianism was more of an obedience of the junior to the senior than that of women to men. As women tend to outlive men, the most powerful figure within a grand household was usually a very senior widowed grandma, like the famous Jiamu, in *The Dream of Red Mansion*. Above all a grand Chinese family clan seems to be controlled by the complicated dynamism within the household, rather than by the male master.

Even in the emperor's court, the mother of an Emperor could have great power. In the two cases of *Wu Zetian* in the Tang Dynasty and *Cixi* in the Qing Dynasty, women became the actual rulers of China.²⁴ Sometimes a courtesan and concubine can exert great influence on state politics. In the two cases of *Daji* in Shang Dynasty and *Xishi* in Wu Kingdom, the kings were overthrown due to a woman's influence.²⁵ On these undeniable roles played by woman, an ancient Chinese verse lamented: "A clever man builds strong ramparts, a clever woman overthrows them."²⁶

In contrast with the hierarchical Western sex models, the balanced co-existence and interchangeability of Yin and Yang have produced a sex model that is fluctuating and somewhat egalitarian. Why is there such gender egalitarianism in a culture that nevertheless assigned men and women into a rigid social hierarchy, especially when Confucianism became the dominating code in organizing family and society? In *Sexual Life in Ancient China*, R. H. van Gulik argues that the Yin Yang model reflected some matriarchal ideology preserved in Taoism. He believed that the transformation from the matriarchal to the patriarchal society happened just before recorded Chinese history and many early texts of China reflected the matriarchal past.

In *I-Ching*, the 63rd hexagram²⁷ *Chi-Chi* (Fig. 3) places the trigram for water/woman over that for fire/man to symbolize completion, and in the 64th hexagram *Wei-Chi* reverses the order to symbolize incompleteness. This may suggest some matriarchal themes in *I-Ching* and the later Taoism, which value the negative above the positive.

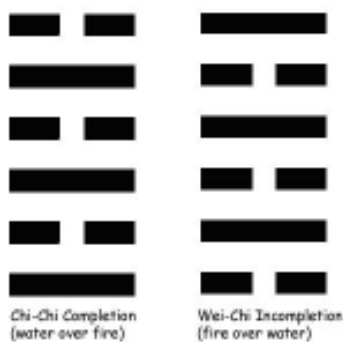


Fig 3.

Indeed, it seems that many other aspects of Chinese culture also recall the traces left by the transition from matriarchal to patriarchal society, when there was perhaps a gender egalitarianism. In the Chinese version of the creation story, the physical world was created by a male figure, *Pangu*, but mankind was created by a female figure, *Nüwa*, who created men and woman together without precedence, like Adam before Eve.

Compared with Western cultures, the Chinese culture seems to have preserved more matriarchal ideals. It is not

simply that Western cultures look forward, and that the Chinese culture looks back to its ancestors, eventually to its matriarchal past in their unconsciousness. Rather, there is a contrast in their concepts of time: in the West, time is a linear and steady development from present to future, somehow clear and predictable²⁸; in the East, there is a fluctuating overlap of present and past, somehow ambiguous and unpredictable.

These different concepts of time correspond to the different dialectical models in China and the West, namely the Yin Yang and the Hegelian dialectics. The binaries in Hegelian dialectics are hierarchical: one being progressive and the other retrogressive; one is to overcome another to produce a new set of hierarchical binaries in a linear historical progress. In contrast, the binaries of Yin Yang are non-hierarchical and its dynamism is interchanging and non-teleological: "when yang is at its minimum it changes into yin; yin then grows and when it has reached its maximum it changes into yang. For Yang harbors a Yin element and Yin harbors the embryo of Yang."²⁹ This dynamism produces a history that seems to be static and cyclical.³⁰ But rather than simple repetitions, the history in the perspective of Yin Yang dynamism also can be very complex. Just as Yin and Yang produce eight trigrams and sixty-four hexagrams, they also produce multiple diversities in a history no less complex than the positive, linear history of the Western model. The understanding of human sexuality is closely related to the understanding of tradition and history. Each might just be both the cause and the effect of the other.

Endnotes

1. The Yin-Yang concept is so all-embracing that various interpretations can be drawn from it. This is also the main feature of the classic literature of ancient China, the terse text of which tends to have inclusiveness and ambivalence, making many interpretations possible. In a sense, this is not unlike the ambivalence of the human body, from which many scholars in different cultures and times extracted different understandings. So, to a great extent, this essay is to extract a sexual connotation from the ambivalent text of Chinese ancient literature, especially *I-Ching*, in which the Yin-Yang concept was first recorded.
2. From *Inner Canon of Yellow Emperor*, (or *Yellow Emperor's Classic of Medicine*) Translated by Mark Coyle, in Patricia Ebrey (ed.): *Chinese Civilization: A Sourcebook*, 2nd ed. New York: Free Press, 1993, p. 77. Yellow Emperor as a mystic figure is known through some texts of the Zhou Dynasty. He was one of the first three Heavenly Emperors before the first dynasty. He has also been regarded as the ancestor of all Chinese.
3. Also translated as *Yijing*, or *Book of Change*, it is perhaps the oldest book in China, and it was selected by Confucius as one of *Five Classics*. The book was also the source for divination and *Fengshui* art in China. Many versions of English translation are available.
4. The Chinese believe Yin is related to even numbers and Yang to odd numbers.
5. For a detailed discussion on the evolution of sex models in the West, see Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*, Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1990.
6. Modern Chinese, influenced by the West, has invented a new written ideogram for the female *ta*, but it is still pronounced same as the male *ta*. Classical Chinese has a different ideogram for the female third pronoun, which has been rarely used, however.
7. The earliest Peking Opera did have both actors and actresses, but they could play characters of their opposite sexes. Contemporary Peking Opera also has both actors and actresses.
8. A local opera genre in the region in the Lower Yangze River region around Huangzhou.
9. Known as *Bawang Bieji*, in China, directed by Chen Kaige in 1990s.
10. Recently this story was adopted into an animated film by the Walt Disney Company.
11. This well-known story has been adopted in many versions for Peking Opera and other local operas in China.

12. For visual materials on Chinese erotic art, see *Erotic Art of China*, New York: Crown, 1977, and John Byron, *Portrait of a Chinese Paradise – Erotica and Sexual Customs of the Late Qing Period*, London: Quartet, 1987.
13. Chang Heng, Ch'i-pien in CSK, section Hou-han, ch.55, p. 10a-11b, cited by R. H. Van Gulik, in *Sexual Life in Ancient China: a preliminary survey of Chinese sex and society from ca. 1500 B.C. till 1644 A.D.*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1961, p.77.
14. The genitals of both sexes are considered as Yin in comparison with other parts of the same body, but in comparison with each other, male genital is Yang, and female Yin. For details of a Yin-Yang interpretation of body structure, see Charlotte Furth, *A Flourishing Yin*, Chapter One, *The Yellow Emperor's Body*, University of California Press, 1999.
15. From *Inner Canon of Yellow Emperor*, translated by Mark Coyle, in Patricia Ebrey (ed.), *Chinese Civilization: A Sourcebook*. 2nd ed. New York: Free Press, 1993. p.78.
16. *Ibid*, pp.77-78.
17. Or Zhou Wenwang, a well-known king of Zhou Dynasty.
18. This is comparable to the discursive sex model proposed by feminists like Judith Butler. See her *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, New York: Routledge, 1999. But the Chinese sex model emphasizes the interchangeability and the interdependence of men and women; its collective social character is quite different from the Western individuality inherited by the post-structuralist/feminist sex model.
19. The diagram was developed in the eleventh century, much later than *I-Ching* and the eight trigrams.
20. This view may be rejected by some as a willful interpretation of an ancient symbol. But keep in mind that all Chinese ancient texts are presented like a riddle, nothing is explicit. They seem to have condensed the multi-dimensional complex world into one-dimensional views, which are left as a riddle, or the Chinese box, for later readers to crack. So, like the classical Chinese texts that need to be interpreted in many different ways, any visual figure and symbol also needs to be deciphered into different meanings. In reversing the process, the interpretation of one-dimensional view for an understanding complex world can be boldly applied into many possibilities.
21. Taoism had the greatest influence on sexual behaviors in China. It believes that multiple partners, younger partners, and virgins are best for men. Also coitus without ejaculation is considered beneficial for nourishing man's Yang essence.
22. The most famous is *Jin Ping Mei*, the story of *Ximen Qin* and his many wives.
23. Ancient Chinese texts about sex render women as sex instructresses, men as pupils, see Van Gulik, *Sexual Life in Ancient China*, 1961.
24. Wu was a woman emperor; Cixi was a regent and, it is believed, had power over the emperor, her son, for decades, even when the latter was well into his adulthood.
25. Eunuchs sometimes had even greater influence on Chinese politics than women, such as Wei Zhongxian in Ming Dynasty, and Li Lianyin in Qing Dynasty.
26. The first two lines of *Chan-yang*, in *Shijing*, or *Book of Odes*, No. 264. Translated and cited by R. H. Van Gulik, in *Sexual Life in Ancient China: a preliminary survey of Chinese sex and society from ca. 1500 B.C. till 1644 A.D.*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1961, p. 29.
27. A hexgram is composed of any two of eight trigrams. There are 64 hexgrams in total, the interpretations of which make up the main content of *I Ching*.
28. Precisely, this Western concept was the one developed since the Ages of Reasons. It seems to be the most representative of modern Western culture, which has a great complexity that I cannot treat here at length.
29. R. H. Van Gulik, in *Sexual Life in Ancient China: a preliminary survey of Chinese sex and society from ca. 1500 B.C. till 1644 A.D.*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1961, p.41.
30. This seems to explain why the West has viewed Chinese culture as static and backward.