**Cross-Cultural Dialogue: The Concept of Autonomy
as a Case Study**

A Thesis

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ABSTRACT

This study is an examination of cross cultural philosophical discourse between North American Indigenous cultures and the dominant Western culture. The methodological approaches used in this study are modeled after the work of Michael M. Pomedli, Thomas W. Overholt and J. Baird Callicott, and George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. A case study of the concept of autonomy is used in exploring the possibility of such discourse. This case study is particularly relevant in light of Indigenous peoples' continuing struggles for self-government and appropriate education, as well as their attempts to re-assert their unique cultural perspectives. Examples of both Western and Indigenous uses of the concept of autonomy are compared and contrasted in demonstrating that, although there are differences in their uses of this concept, they can be rendered intelligible one to another. Cross-cultural dialogue is indeed possible.

Dedicated to my mother and father (Judy Zieske and Herman Dekker)
who taught me to discover my own answers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

"Relationship, surely, is the mirror in which you discover yourself. Without relationship you are not; to be is to be related; to be related is existence. You exist only in relationship; otherwise you do not exist, existence has no meaning. It is not because you think you are that you come into existence. You exist be cause you are related; and it is the lack of understanding of relationship that causes conflict."[1]

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[1] Jiddu Krishnamurti. *The First and Last Freedom.* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), 104.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

I see around me a world of many diverse cultures, a multicultural world. I also see a world that is rife with conflict, an ongoing struggle between culturally diverse peoples who are trying to make a place for themselves in today's global arena. We are now experiencing more cross-cultural interaction than there has been in any other previous age. More and more we are faced with the *otherness* of cultures which are not our own. Unfortunately, the diversity of these cultures seems to be a persistent catalyst for the ongoing conflicts which are presently being faced by people the world over. The resolution of these conflicts is of great concern to me.

Here in North America, one such conflict has been playing itself out for centuries between the Indigenous inhabitants and its European colonists. These distinct cultural traditions have been living side-by-side for generations, yet they remain distant. Rather than incorporating the understanding, respect and reciprocity of Indigenous peoples, mainstream Western culture has marginalized Indigenous peoples through attitudes of mere tolerance and isolation. For centuries, the voices of Indigenous peoples have either been silenced, or have, at least, fallen on deaf ears. For example, here in North America, the silencing of Indigenous peoples' voices was not only carried out institutionally, as in the case of the Residential school system, but also through a variety of other government policies of forced assimilation. Recently, though, there has been a concerted effort amongst Indigenous peoples to regain their voice.

Unfortunately, colonists have not felt it necessary to learn Indigenous languages. In order to make themselves heard, Indigenous peoples have had to pursue their attempts

at communication in the language of the dominant culture, which, in North America, involves a predominately English-speaking audience. Importantly, this involves a process of cross-cultural exchange between cultures whose perspectives exhibit significant differences; and these differences stem, in part, from their having developed out of either oral or literate traditions. It is a process which is fraught with difficulty. Regardless of the fact that numerous Indigenous peoples today speak English, the various cultural perspectives which they are attempting to articulate to a Western audience developed within the framework of oral traditions. Louis Owens, a Choktaw author, argues:

> For the Indian author, writing within consciousness of the contextual background of a non-literate culture, every word written in English represents a collaboration of sorts as well as a reorientation (conscious or unconscious) from the paradigmatic world of oral tradition to the syntagmatic reality of written language.[1]

Even taking into consideration such attempts at communication, a seeming incommensurability between world views seems to plague the relations between Indigenous peoples and the dominant Western culture.[2] These problems are not simply a matter of translation difficulties. In their paper "Wakinyan Hotan, The Thunder Beings Call Out: The Inscrutability of Lakota/Dakota Metaphysics", Leroy Meyer and Tony Ramirez (Pine Ridge Lakota) argue: "Although translation from one disparate way of thinking to another is difficult, coming to understand another way of thinking is not a

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[1] Louis Owens. *Other Destinies: Understanding the American Indian Novel* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992), 6.

[2] For discussions concerning incommensurability, see: Leroy Meyer and Tony Ramirez. "Wakinyan Hotan, The Thunder Beings Call Out: The Inscrutability of Lakota/Dakota Metaphysics" *From Our Eyes: Learning From Indigenous Peoples* (Toronto: Garamound Press, 1996), 89-105; Dennis McPherson and J. Douglas Rabb. "Transformative Philosophy and Indigenous Thought: A Comparison of Lakota and Ojibwa World Views" *Papers of the Twenty-Ninth Algonquian Conference*, David H. Pentland, Ed., (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba, 1999), 202-210; and Ian Hacking. *Representing and Intervening* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983).

question of overcoming the difficulties of translation. Coming to understand another world view is 'learning how to reason' in the style of the other world view."[3] The question which must be asked, then, is as Dennis McPherson (Ojibwa) and J. Douglas Rabb indicate: "what is it about literate cultures rooted in Western European civilization which makes it difficult for their people to come to grips with the Indigenous oral traditions of North America?"[4]

The question, then, which I have put to myself is whether or not differences such as those which seem to exist between Western and Indigenous perspectives, serve as an impassable barrier in the attempt to resolve issues of cross-cultural conflict. In other words, is the establishment of meaningful cross-cultural discourse, philosophical or otherwise, possible between people from very different cultural perspectives?

The problem we are faced with is understanding what is involved in the attempt to gain access to another worldview. What is involved here might best be referred to as an exploration, or an *unpacking*, of Indigenous peoples' use of concepts, including those concepts which have been appropriated from Western philosophical traditions. In other words, my aim here is to discover what it is about these cultures, or worldviews, which sets their use and appropriation of concepts such as *autonomy* apart.

I have chosen to focus on the concept of autonomy, first of all, because of its use in discussions concerning Indigenous peoples' struggles for self-government. Secondly, it

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[3] Leroy Meyer and Tony Ramirez. "Wakinyan Hotan, The Thunder Beings Call Out: The Inscrutability of Lakota/Dakota Metaphysics" *From Our Eyes: Learning From Indigenous Peoples* (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1996), 92.

[4] Dennis McPherson and J. Douglas Rabb. "Transformative Philosophy and Indigenous Thought: A Comparison of Lakota and Ojibwa World Views" *Papers of the Twenty-Ninth Algonquian Conference*, David H. Pentland, Ed., (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba, 1999), 207.

is a concept which seems to lie at the heart of both Western and Indigenous peoples'

views on human relations. In the case of Indigenous peoples, this concept arises in

connection with relations with other *human* persons as well as with *other-than-human*

persons. In other words, it is a concept which lies at the heart of any answer to the

question of how we ought to live our lives. Since advancing our understanding of how we

might begin to resolve the conflicts between Indigenous and Western peoples is one of

the general aims of this study, an exploration of the concept of autonomy seems to be a

logical choice. Moreover, it is, in my estimation, a concept which is also useful for

exploring Meyer and Ramirez's argument that "[c]oming to understand another world

view is 'leaning how to reason' in the style of the other world view."[5]

In expressing and defending their own perspectives, Indigenous peoples make

frequent use of such concepts as *autonomy*. The important question is whether or not

Native and non-Native people mean the same thing in their use of such concepts. In "A

Definition of Culture", Ojibwa scholar Dennis McPherson presents a discussion

involving the difficulties of defining culture. During his discussion McPherson makes a

few comments regarding autonomy and related concepts which are relevant here. In

regard to the concept of *culture*, he argues that the *problems* to be faced in arriving at a

definition of culture are themselves rooted in our *cultural differences*. In the case of

Aboriginal peoples, he argues that "an Aboriginal view of culture begins to unfold with

the lived experiences of real people as a seat of power as well as the power culture has to

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[5] Meyer and Ramirez, "Wakinyan Hotan, The Thunder Beings Call Out: The Inscrutability of
Lakota/Dakota Metaphysics", 92. The addition in square brackets is my own.

create and sustain identities, both individual and communal."[6] In other words, an

Aboriginal view of culture is one which is rooted in a person's relationship to the world;

it is a relationship which is the source of meaning in our lives.

McPherson acknowledges that the concept of culture is somewhat nebulous and

understood in many different senses, but argues that if *"culture* is understood as an

abstract category, an object of study, a policy field, a bounded topic distinguishable from

other topics that are *not culture*, and, in other words, a historically, politically, and

geographically specific phenomenon, then constructing separations between *culture* and

not culture is one of the most difficult areas of cross-cultural communication between

Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples."[7] Reflected in this approach is a distinct split

between knowledge about one's culture as something to be *analyzed and defined* and the

lived reality of one's culture. One result of these cultural differences is that arriving at a

mutually satisfying definition of a concept such as culture becomes markedly more

difficult.

Cultural differences also make Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal agreement on the

concept of autonomy just as difficult. McPherson presents a comparison between North

American Aboriginal views on the concept of autonomy and a Lockean characterization

of Western peoples' understanding of this concept.[8] He does so, he says, in order to

illustrate a "fundamental difference in the perspectives and cultural practices of

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[6] Dennis McPherson. "A Definition of Culture" *Native American Religious Identity: Unforgotten Gods*,
Jace Weaver, Ed., (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1998), 78.

[7] *Ibid.*, 79.

[8] John Locke (1632-1704) is one of the more renown early modern Western (British) philosophers. He
made a great impact on European political thought with his *Two Treatise on Government* (1690).

Europeans and Aboriginals."[9] In characterizing the Western attitude, he presents both the common notion that it is the 'right of an individual to be self-governing' as well as a more refined legal interpretation, making reference to the rights and powers of independent nations. Moreover, he notes that, in order to enjoy the benefits of *civil society*, individuals in Western culture must give up certain freedoms so as to benefit the many. In regard to North American Indigenous peoples' use of this concept, and its difference from that of Western culture, McPherson argues:

> Within Aboriginal society, each member exercises his or her individual right to give to the group, each exercises 'equality, liberty, and executive power,' each exercises autonomy. Each has a right to self-governance. One must be careful, however, not to confuse the concept of the individual with that of autonomy or vice-versa. Nor should one even consider the two terms to be in any way synonymous. The concept of individual rights, along with concomitant strict, legalistic regulation of individual behaviour, are foreign to most Aboriginal traditions.[10]

Just as cultural differences can lead to Indigenous and Western notions of *culture* which differ in important ways, both of these cultural traditions exhibit formulations of the concept of autonomy which vary in notable ways. McPherson has also explored the effects of these cultural differences in a previous paper, co-written with Rabb. In their paper, "Some Thoughts on Articulating a Native Philosophy", McPherson and Rabb present a "critique of Kantian ethics from a Native American perspective."[11] In illustrating these differences McPherson and Rabb cite the *Native Literacy and Life Skills Curriculum Guidelines* in which the "word *'autonomous'* is used to describe the Native

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[9] McPherson, "A Definition of Culture", 92.

[10] *Ibid.*, 92.

[11] Dennis McPherson and J. Douglas Rabb. "Some Thoughts on Articulating a Native Philosophy" *Ayaangwaamizin: International Journal of Indigenous Philosophy* 1:1 Spring (1997), 12.

Indian child, whereas his or her non-Native counterpart is said to be '*dependent.*'"[12] This example, in referring to children as *autonomous*, stands in stark contrast to the renown 18th century Western philosopher Immanuel Kant's articulation of the concept of autonomy. Traditional interpretations of Kant's work hold that Kant would not, on the basis of his arguments, recognize children as being *autonomous*, i.e., as being capable of freely subjecting themselves to rational principles.

The question with which we are now faced is whether or not the meaning of the English words used by Indigenous peoples is the same as what their Western audience understands by those words. Or, has their meaning been altered, and if so, in what way, through their use within the context of this other worldview? In other words, the question we are faced with is whether or not the analysis, or interpretation, of meaning in a cross-cultural context can be carried out in a meaningful way. This might, at first, seem a trivial question, but our use of concepts such as *autonomy* can quickly take on great significance. When it comes to the restructuring of our education systems in the name of 'appropriate education' it is our children's futures we are taking into our hands. Moreover, words such as *autonomy* and *autonomous* also lie at the very heart of discussions concerning social freedoms and reforms, such as Indigenous peoples' struggle for self-government.

One seemingly insignificant example arises in the title of the McPherson and Rabb article "Some Thoughts on Articulating a Native Philosophy". Take note, please, of

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[12] McPherson and Rabb, "Some Thoughts on Articulating a Native Philosophy", 15. The italics are my own. Also, see: British Columbia Ministry of Education. *Native Literacy and Life Skills Curriculum Guidelines* (Victoria, BC: Ministry of Advanced Education and Job Training, and Ministry Responsible for Science and Technology, 1989), 13-15.

the fact that in the title of their article they refer to '*a* Native Philosophy', when the title might just as easily have been 'Some Thought on Articulating Native Philosophy'. The use of the word 'a' seems to convey the connotation of it being a discrete body of thought to be studied, and represents, in an important sense, a split between Native philosophy as merely a topic, a field of study, or a set of ideas to be analyzed or defined, and the lived, all encompassing, reality of that philosophy. To a Western reader, this seemingly ineffectual 'a' caries with it the history of Western peoples' persistence in classifying things, including *what is* and *what is not* Native philosophy: that what McPherson and Rabb are attempting to articulate, philosophically speaking, is a 'set of ideas to be analyzed or defined'. In fact, this is what McPherson and Rabb hope to avoid.

If we find that these difficulties in communication can be overcome, then we can, through a continuing process of discourse, begin to share and learn from the valuable insights which each culture possesses. On the other hand, if the problems involved in cross-cultural interpretation cannot be overcome then we can search out ways to simply live with the problem of incommensurability. However, the premature and pessimistic acceptance of the inevitability of incommensurability is an act which serves no other purpose than to allow us to retreat to the security and single-mindedness of our own particular culture. Given the present global interaction between cultures, such a retreat is not only futile but merely perpetuates the problems with which we are currently faced. If we are going to function effectively as a global community we must develop more fully our understanding of all diverse cultures.

In short, this study is concerned with advancing our understanding of the problems faced by both Indigenous and Western peoples in communicating effectively

their ideas to each other, as well as their attempts to understand the perspective of the other. Philosophically speaking, the problem is *not* a matter of which culture has the right definition or formulation of a particular concept, but rather, a difficulty in understanding the context in which a particular concept has been used and why it has been adopted.[13] Gaining access to the *other's* perspective, or the conceptual framework of another culture, is our paramount concern.

Careful attention must be paid to the ways different cultural perspectives shape not only the structure of our expressions but also our perceptions of the world and our formulation of the concepts we use to talk about it. For example, David Abram, in his book *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human-World*, writes:

> As we grow into a particular culture or language, we implicitly begin to structure our sensory contact with the earth around us in a particular manner, paying attention to certain phenomena while ignoring others, differentiating textures, tastes, and tones in accordance with the verbal contrasts contained in the language.[14]

Any attempt at resolving cross-cultural conflicts must take these issues into account. Understanding how a concept is being used in a worldview other than one's own involves more than simply translating their words and concepts into one's own language. If we are going to agree with Meyer and Ramirez that "[c]oming to understand a world

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[13] For further discussion related to cultural authenticity and cultural invention, see: Allan Hanson. "The Making of the Maori: Cultural Invention and its Logic" *American Anthropologist* 91:4 December (1989): 890-902. and Todd Dufresne. "Anthropology and the Invention of Deconstruction: A Brief Survey" *Alternative Routes* 12 (1995): 63-79.

[14] David Abram. *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human-World* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), 255.

view is 'learning how to reason' in the style of the other world view,"[15] then we must keep issues such as those which Abram mentions in full view at all times. The distinct traditions, and geographical circumstances, of a People work together in unique ways to produce distinct cultural views on the world.

The methodology of this study relies on the work done by Rabb in his article "Prologues to Native Philosophy: Some Research Methodologies".[16] However, I have found it necessary to apply the methodologies he has outlined in my own particular way. The reason for these adaptations is that, as Rabb has argued, such discussions seem to, by their very nature, generate "new research methodologies in response to novel research problems".[17]

My goal here is to examine whether the seemingly insurmountable differences between Western and Indigenous perspectives can be overcome and, thus, allow room for meaningful cross-cultural philosophical discourse. In pursuit of this goal I have chosen, first of all, to look into both the European analytical and phenomenological traditions. I also look to the traditions, narratives, and contemporary critical discourse of North American Indigenous peoples for philosophical insights about language, meaning, and perception. Secondly, in presenting a case study of the concept of autonomy it necessary to look into all three of these divergent perspectives for any implicit or explicit discourse on the concept of autonomy. Several different formulations of the notion of autonomy are

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[15] Meyer and Ramirez, "Wakinyan Hotan, The Thunder Beings Call Out: The Inscrutability of Lakota/Dakota Metaphysics", 92. The addition in square brackets is my own.

[16] J. Douglas Rabb. "Prologues to Native Philosophy: Some Research Methodologies" *European Review of Native American Studies* 9:1 (1995): 23-25.

[17] *Ibid.*, 23.

presented in the hope that each particular view can be more clearly understood through comparison with other formulations. To be clear, it is not my contention that each of these cultures has a static notion of autonomy which can be clearly contrasted with any other culture's formulation of that same concept.

My case study of the concept of autonomy, presented in Chapter Four, involves two adaptations of a method developed by Michael M. Pomedli in his book *Ethnophilosophical and Ethnolinguistic Perspectives on the Huron Indian Soul.* Throughout my study I will refer to his method as *conceptual archaeology.* My study has also been inspired by and modeled after the work carried out by Overholt and Callicott in *Clothed in Fur and Other Tales: An Introduction to an Ojibwa World View.* Rabb describes their methodology as one which "amounts to a combination of philosophical analysis and literary criticism."[18] My focus, however, is on philosophical literature as opposed to imaginative literature, such as the Ojibwa narrative material which Overholt and Callicott examine. The aim of this philosophical analysis is to extract implicit and explicit philosophical concepts, or insights, contained in the three distinct traditions which are involved in my investigation (analytic, phenomenological and Indigenous). Although I do look at some literary texts, the bulk of my concern is with philosophical literature.

In the case of Overholt and Callicott, their concern is with "the most general, or macro, of all conceptual systems"[19] through which they wish to "provide some access to a

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[18] *Ibid.,* 24.

[19] Thomas W. Overholt and J. Baird Callicott. *Clothed in Fur and Other Tales: An Introduction to an Ojibwa World View* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1982), 20.

very different way of viewing reality for an audience of non-specialists by means of an approach which is informal."[20] In other words, their intent is to elucidate common themes and concepts throughout Ojibwa narratives so as to provide at least a cursory glimpse of the perspective which created those narratives. Their focus is on the narrative tradition of the Ojibwa in particular and, especially, with the "pedagogical and archival purposes"[21] of these narratives. In their own words, *Clothed in Fur and Other Tales* is an attempt at the analysis of Ojibwa narratives in order to answer the following question: "what is the shape of the world as it is mirrored in these narratives?"[22] Thus, their concern is with both the philosophical and literary aspects of these narratives.

My purpose here differs from their work in a way to which Overholt and Callicott themselves point. Given their general approach to the Ojibwa worldview, they argue that such a "world view might be more rigorously approached through multiple micro-belief-systems studies"[23] with the hope of arriving "at a precise formulation of the 'structural meanings' (i.e., the culturally conditioned structure of usage) of various concepts."[24] In other words, they are arguing that a more thorough understanding of a culture's belief systems might be had through the examination of specific aspects of that culture's belief system rather than through an examination of that culture's general worldview.

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[20] *Ibid.*, 21.

[21] *Ibid.*, 20.

[22] *Ibid.*, 140.

[23] *Ibid.*, 20.

[24] *Ibid.*, 20.

This study is offered as an attempt at the analysis of one such micro-belief system. The hope is that, in examining the specific uses of concepts in a particular culture, a more complete understanding of the formulation, or articulation, of those concepts can be obtained. Thus, a more thorough understanding of that culture's general worldview can be arrived at as well. My examination also differs from the work of Callicott and Overholt in that their concern is with only the Ojibwa culture, whereas my concerns are cross-cultural. I compare and contrast formulations of one particular micro-belief-system, that of autonomy, in different cultures, both Native and non-Native.

It is necessary, first of all, to gain a clearer picture of some of the complicating factors which might affect a culture's formulation and expression of a particular concept. An examination of these complicating factors is carried out in Chapter Three. More specifically, my concern in Chapter Three is with exploring insights on the relationship between perception and meaning, and its influence on the articulation of concepts within both Native and non-Native worldviews. An exploration of this relationship involves both (1) languages' roots in the physical landscape, and (2) the relationships between language and the living landscape and a peoples' perceptions of their surroundings. This Chapter also involves a critical examination of the impact of the differences between orality and literacy on the use of concepts in Indigenous and Western cultures. This discussion, however, is merely a preamble to Chapter Four in which I present a cross-cultural examination of the concept of autonomy, with the aid of a few carefully selected examples from both Western and Indigenous traditions.

The methodological approach of my fourth and final chapter, involves a twofold adaptation of Pomedli's *conceptual archaeology*. My concern is with the *use* of the

concept of autonomy in both Western and North American Indigenous cultures. It is my intent, in comparing and contrasting specific uses of this concept in these divergent cultures, to demonstrate the relevance of such factors as orality and literacy in examining, or understanding, the specific uses of the concept of autonomy which arise in a particular culture. My hope, in sum, is to shed some light on how we might move beyond the communication problems which continue to plague the relations between Indigenous and Western peoples.

My personal interest in this subject material is a result of my exposure to courses in both the Philosophy Program as well as the Indigenous Learning Program at Lakehead University. Along with my increasing awareness of the historical and contemporary struggles of North American Indigenous peoples came a need to understand these problems to their fullest. In my estimation, there is an urgency to these issues which requires a requisite amount of careful attention and thoughtful investigation. I do not presume to speak for Indigenous peoples, not being one myself, but I do offer up this investigation for what it might be worth. I offer it in hope that it might aid Indigenous peoples in their efforts in even some small way.

My aim in this study is to show that developing an understanding of Indigenous peoples' use of Western concepts such as 'autonomy' is possible, and that Indigenous uses of such concepts, and the various worldviews in which those concepts are used, need not remain inaccessible to a Western audience. It is not simply a matter of pinning down correct and incorrect uses of such concepts, but rather a matter of coming to see that there is indeed a common ground which allows for the mutual intelligibility of Western and Indigenous peoples' cultural perspectives. It is this common ground which opens up the

possibility of such cross-cultural exchanges. Only through developing a clearer understanding of how concepts such as autonomy are being used within these various cultural perspectives can we begin to move beyond the cultural and philosophical stalemate between Western and Indigenous peoples here in North America.

CHAPTER TWO: PHILOSOPHICAL METHODOLOGIES
IN A CROSS-CULTURAL CONTEXT

Pomedli's Conceptual Archaeology

Central to this study are the problems involved in articulating and interpreting the

meaning or use of particular words or concepts between different cultural perspectives,

for example, perspectives such as the Ojibwa worldview and the Western worldview.

Indigenous peoples' present day efforts to articulate their perspectives, rooted in oral

traditions, to a Western audience, grounded in literate traditions, are hampered by a

dilemma which is now referred to by some academics as the incommensurability

problem. Differences between these cultural perspectives seem to limit the ability of these

divergent groups to communicate effectively their positions one to another. An invaluable

aid in exploring the difficulties of cross-cultural communication is the methodological

approach found in Canadian philosopher Michael M. Pomedli's study *Ethnophilosophical*

and Ethnolinguistic Perspective on the Huron Indian Soul. It is, in particular, his method

of *conceptual archaeology* which has provided me with a framework for pursuing a

cross-cultural treatment of the concept of autonomy.[1]

Unlike Western traditions, the Huron people did not keep written records of

individuals' philosophical thoughts. This means that there are no direct sources to look to

for linking particular views with specific Huron individuals as is the case with Western

philosophers like Plato and Aristotle. Given this lack of first-hand accounts required for

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[1] Pomedli's methodology is described in this way by J. Douglas Rabb in his article, "Prologues to Native Philosophy: Some Research Methodologies" *European Review of Native American Studies* 9:1 (1995): 23-25.

acquiring a complete understanding of the Huron peoples' understanding of soul, Pomedli

turned to the *Jesuit Relations* (along with other historical texts) in hope of finding a link

to the thoughts of pre-contact Huron people. He did so arguing: "Since the early Hurons

themselves did not leave any written documents, our primary source materials are the

accounts, sermons, dictionaries and grammars of 17th- and 18th-century explorers and

missionaries to North America."[2] Such a choice might at first seem to be an incredibly

daunting task when one considers the degree of ethnocentric bias these works are

understood to contain. However, Pomedli made this choice on the grounds that religious,

or spiritual, matters were important for both the Jesuit and Huron peoples. Thus, the

Jesuits were better able to gain access to Huron religious concepts than other scholars

with more political or economic interests in North America. This is not to say, however,

that there were no difficulties to be faced in accessing the Huron worldview through such

early contact literature. Pomedli writes that:

> although the missionaries initially tended to deny the existence of or
> trivialize the content of Huron spiritual practices, these same missionaries
> gradually began to realize that there was some validity to both the form
> and content of Huron beliefs.[3]

Pre-contact Huron thought, then, is available to us, but it is shrouded by a veil of

European thought. The problem which must be addressed, Pomedli argues, "is how to

ferret out the early Huron strands in a largely European garment."[4] The approach which

Pomedli employs for solving this problem is twofold. The first aspect of Pomedli's

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[2] Michael M. Pomedli. *Ethnophilosophical and Ethnolinguistic Perspectives on the Huron Indian Soul* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1991), xi.

[3] *Ibid.*, xii.

[4] *Ibid.*, 1.

approach involves a familiarization with the religious and philosophical presuppositions of 17th-century European thought. The second aspect involves a re-examination of the translations of the various Huron concepts of soul, making allowances for the presuppositions of the translators. In other words, we must develop an understanding of the philosophical and theological traditions according to which the missionaries of that era were trained so we can more readily recognize its influence on their writings, influences such as the limiting and elimination of certain uses of that concept. In his review of Pomedli's methodology Rabb reminds us that looking to the *Jesuit Relations* for insights into the Huron concept of soul can be justified on the grounds that "the Jesuit philosophy is well understood and any trained philosopher should be able to make allowances for it."[5]

Pomedli begins his investigation with an account of the philosophical training of the Jesuits. He looks to the philosophies of both Plato and Aristotle. The reason for this is that both of these philosophies have had a formative influence on Christianity, and Western religious thought in general. Although they differ substantially in their positions on the nature of the soul, both philosophers made important contributions which have had a lasting effect on European thought. Pomedli writes that according to Plato's other-worldly notion of the soul, "the soul's proper life is not with the body, then, but with the world of ideas, from which it descends, and to which it returns upon the body's death."[6] In contrast, Aristotle's position is that the body and soul are "not two different substances…, nor does the soul preexist or exist without the body; it naturally constitutes

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[5] Rabb, "Prologues to Native Philosophy", 23.

[6] Pomedli, *Ethnophilosophical and Ethnolinguistic Perspectives on the Huron Indian Soul*, 8.

with the body a single living being."[7] Plato and Aristotle helped establish the European religious belief in the "spiritual interrelationship"[8] between an immaterial soul and a corporeal body. In addition to this view of the soul there was also the Aristotelian notion of an "unmoved mover, the soul of the outermost heavens,"[9] which strongly influenced the concept of God in Western monotheistic religions.

In his examination of the Jesuit's training Pomedli also looked to the theological doctrines of both Thomas Aquinas and Augustine of Hippo. Although these doctrines find most of their grounding in the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle, Pomedli reminds us that it was, for the most part, the theological teachings of scholars such as Aquinas and Augustine which formed the religious, or spiritual, bias which missionaries brought to their interpretation of Huron beliefs. It is these theological beliefs for which allowances must be made in an examination of Huron beliefs in texts such as the *Jesuit Relations*. This process, however, was only the first stage of Pomedli's method.

Since the Jesuits were missionaries, their efforts were aimed at translating Christian teachings, such as catechisms and sermons, into the Huron language. Huron words were used to express Jesuit beliefs which were not fully compatible with the Huron words which had been chosen. Pomedli explains:

> Since the Jesuits in particular wanted initially to translate and consider their culture and religious traditions as normative and even as absolute, it was difficult for them to appreciate another cultural thrust. The Huron

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[7] *Ibid.*, 13.

[8] *Ibid.*, 12.

[9] *Ibid.*, 15.

words, squeezed into European Procrustean beds, remain articulate, nevertheless.[10]

In other words, although Huron words were endowed with European religious meanings, we still have a rich record of Huron religious terminology at our disposal. It is at this point that Pomedli looks to both early-contact dictionaries as well as the later compilations of those dictionaries which "communicate native ideas more directly and frankly than the early-contact dictionaries do, and also more frankly than the French, Latin, and Italian *Relations* which were written for European readers."[11] It is, then, through a combination of compensating for European biases, such as the belief in only one type of soul, and an examination of dictionaries containing numerous Huron terms used to denote different types of soul that Pomedli attempts to clarify our understanding of the Huron peoples' conception of soul.

Pomedli's conclusions are not as surprising as one might expect. His conclusions do, however, provide a stark contrast to the conclusions contained in historical documents such as those of the Jesuits. Pomedli notes that the "Jesuits characterized the Huron position very simply by stating that they did philosophy with their feet rather than with their heads."[12] The demeaning intonation of this statement reveals to us the self-inflating arrogance and single-mindedness of these early missionaries. However, behind this veil of European philosophical and religious predispositions, Pomedli claims that we find that not only do the "Hurons give evidence of an insightful concept of the soul"[13] but also that

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[10] *Ibid.*, 2.

[11] *Ibid.*, 2.

[12] *Ibid.*, 155.

[13] *Ibid.*, 157.

"the Huron heritage presented a rich spiritual mosaic."[14] As a result of their biases, Pomedli concludes:

> The missionaries… missed many opportunities to appreciate the content and ramifications of the Huron conceptions of the soul… [and that these] missed opportunities tended to heighten the differences between two religious approaches, adding further justification to the necessity to convert Hurons to Christianity.[15]

Pomedli's method, then, involves an examination of European translations of Huron concepts to demonstrate the limits of those very translations that were used by missionaries to explain the nature of Western religious beliefs to the Huron people. He demonstrates those limits through a comparison of the Jesuit's narrow translation of Huron concepts and the numerous Huron terms found in dictionaries which were compiled during that same era.

Two Adaptations of Pomedli's Conceptual Archaeology

In order to carry out the case study which I present in Chapter Four, I have found it necessary to adapt Pomedli's method in two ways. Whereas Pomedli looked to European historical records for insights into the Huron conception of the soul, I, in a sense, turn Pomedli on his head. Rather than exploring the adoption of Huron words by missionaries to explain the Christian concept of soul as Pomedli does, my first adaptation of his methodology involves an examination of the present day adoption of Western terminology (such as the concept of autonomy) by North American Indigenous peoples in

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[14] *Ibid.*, 155.

[15] *Ibid.*, 3. The addition in square brackets is my own.

an attempt to make their own particular worldviews more clear to the dominant Western culture.

Indigenous peoples have been unceasing in their efforts to re-assert their cultural heritage and bring an end to the perpetuation of misguided Western interpretations of Indigenous worldviews. As a result of the history of forced acculturation (including language acquisition) which has been experienced by Indigenous peoples in North America, they have developed a familiarity with the perspectives and traditions of the Western worldview. It is this familiarity with both their own traditions as well as Western traditions that is of importance. Unlike the Jesuits who lacked prior exposure to the traditions of North American Indigenous peoples, present day Indigenous peoples have the advantage of that familiarity on which to base their choice of Western concepts in articulating their own perspectives and traditions to a Western audience.

Thus, the particular concepts Indigenous peoples adopt from Western traditions can provide significant insight about Indigenous cultures based on their affinity for particular Western concepts. Moreover, the particular concepts which they choose to adopt can reveal not only insights about the content of Indigenous cultures but also their *reasons* for gravitating toward particular concepts from Western traditions. There seems to be little wonder in the fact that Indigenous peoples, having been marginalized by the dominant Western mainstream culture, have adopted concepts such as autonomy in their attempt to clarify and re-assert their cultural presence in North America. It is not my intent, however, to claim that the adoption of these concepts signifies a direct correlation between Indigenous peoples own concepts and those they have adopted from Western

traditions. Rather, I argue that Indigenous peoples recognize certain affinities between some of their own views and the content of certain Western concepts, in whole *or* in part.

My second adaptation of Pomedli's methodology concerns the formulation of Western concepts in their original Western context. Where Pomedli was concerned with the biases of the Jesuits in their translation of Huron concepts, my concern is with the cultural biases of Western philosophers in articulating those very concepts that Indigenous peoples have seen fit to adopt. In the case of Pomedli's work, missionaries who came to North America brought with them both religious and philosophical biases which resulted in their tendency to limit the content of Huron concepts. These limitations resulted in missionaries downplaying certain Huron uses of the concept of soul which contradicted, or were incongruent with, Western religious views. Pomedli writes: "Reductions of sacred native terms to a pejorative understanding was quite common."[16] In a similar way, the biases or assumptions of Western philosophers have resulted in a tendency to limit the content of certain concepts, thus limiting the parameters of their usage. For example, although Kant writes that autonomy is the "basis of the dignity of both human nature and every rational nature"[17] he seems to restrict autonomy to only human persons, with the exception of granting it to *higher beings* such as angels and God. This restriction seems to involve the assumption that humans are the only creatures on Earth which possess a rational nature, or at least are persons.

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[16] *Ibid.*, 156.

[17] Immanuel Kant. *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Trans., Lewis White Beck, in Beck *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals and What is Enlightenment?* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1995), 53.

Kant admits that we can only know other beings insofar as they are appearances, but he fails to recognize the possibility that some other species on earth might also have a sense of *inner experience*, that they might be an *in itself*, a noumenal self, which is, in some sense, rational, though maybe not identical to human reason.[18] I also suggest, as Pomedli does, that not only established philosophical views but also theological views (such as religious hierarchies in which, generally speaking, God is on top and animals are near the bottom) have also contributed, in part, to the tendency to limit the meaning, or more precisely, the *use* of such concepts as *person*, *self* and *autonomy*. It is these predispositions, both philosophical and theological, which we must keep in full view when examining the possibility of affinities between what is meant by both Indigenous and Western peoples in their *use* of a word such as *autonomy*.

The aim, then, of my twofold adaptation of Pomedli's methodology is to explore, on the one hand, the use of Western concepts by Indigenous peoples and, on the other hand, the use of those very same concepts by Western philosophers. In describing some particular uses of the concept of autonomy I hope, as I stated previously, to bring into relief the different contexts, or conceptual frameworks, in which we find the concept of autonomy being used. In other words, an examination of what Overholt and Callicott refer to as the "formulation of 'structural meanings' (i.e., the culturally conditioned structure of usage) of various concepts."[19] Unlike Overholt and Callicott, the focus of my concern is, of course, with the concept of autonomy.

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[18] This is discussed again in Chapter Four, p. 74-76.

[19] Thomas W. Overholt and J. Baird Callicott. *Clothed in Fur and Other Tales: An Introduction to an Ojibwa World View* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1982), 20.

Lakoff and Johnson: The Use of Metaphor

Also central to my discussion in Chapter Four are Lakoff and Johnson's arguments concerning the role of metaphor in reasoning processes. They argue: "Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature."[20] Just as Pomedli gave consideration to the philosophical and theological biases of the Jesuits in his study of the Huron peoples' notions of soul, it follows from Lakoff and Johnson's arguments that we must also consider the influence particular uses of metaphor have on peoples' understanding and use of concepts. In *Metaphors We Live By*, they argue:

> Since metaphorical expressions in our language are tied to metaphorical concepts in a systematic way, we can use metaphorical linguistic expressions to study the nature of metaphorical concepts and to gain an understanding of the metaphorical nature of our activities.[21]

Lakoff and Johnson provide the following useful example to illustrate their point. Consider a metaphor used, generally speaking, in Western culture: the 'Argument is War' metaphor, which arises in several forms, such as "'I *demolished* his argument.'... [and] 'He *shot down* all of my arguments.'"[22] The point which Lakoff and Johnson are trying to make is not just that we talk in such metaphorical terms, but also that we think and act in such metaphorical terms. They argue:

> We plan and use *strategies*. If we find a position *indefensible*, we can abandon it and take a new *line of defense*. Many of the things we do in arguing are partially structured by the concept of war.... It is in this sense

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[20] George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), 3.

[21] *Ibid.*, 7.

[22] *Ibid.*, 4. The addition in square brackets is my own.

that the ARGUMENT IS WAR metaphor is one that we live by in this culture; it structures the actions we perform in arguing.[23]

In contrast to this use of metaphor, Lakoff and Johnson urge us to imagine a culture which does not make use of this particular metaphor, a People who have, for example, framed their understanding of the concept of argument (or argumentation) in terms of the metaphor of a *dance*. Lakoff and Johnson argue that in "such a culture, people would view arguments differently, experience them differently, carry them out differently, and talk about them differently. But we would probably not view them as arguing at all: they would simply be doing something different."[24]

Although Lakoff and Johnson's concerns are primarily with the use of metaphor in a Western context, their arguments are, nonetheless, very significant for cross-cultural contexts. In the case of Western and Indigenous cultures, a failure on the part of Western people to understand what is being articulated by Native peoples might very easily result from an unfamiliarity with the metaphorical frameworks in which concepts are being used, e.g., those arising in oral traditions. In a Western context, a metaphor such as 'the letter of the law' provides a clear example of a metaphor which relies heavily on literate traditions for its meaning.[25] In their recent book *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought*, Lakoff and Johnson argue: "Metaphorical idioms are philosophically important in... [that] they open up the possibility that a

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[23] *Ibid.*, 4. The italics are my own.

[24] *Ibid.*, 5.

[25] This example is discussed again in Chapter Four, p.77.

significant part of the lexical differences across languages may have to do with differences in conventional imagery."[26]

Moreover, it seems likely that a failure on the part of some Western philosophers to recognize the philosophical perspectives of Indigenous peoples as *philosophical perspectives* also stems, in part, from an unfamiliarity with the metaphorical frameworks within which those views are being articulated. Given the relevance of metaphor to reasoning processes, as Lakoff and Johnson demonstrate in *Metaphors We Live By*, they argue:

> we have found that metaphor is pervasive, not merely in our language but in our conceptual system. It seems inconceivable to us that any phenomenon so fundamental to our conceptual system could not be central to an account of truth and meaning.[27]

Since my study has in view just such issues as exploring the use of concepts within particular conceptual frameworks, I find Lakoff and Johnson's arguments extremely useful for my case study of the concept of autonomy. It is our understanding of these culturally conditioned uses of concepts which serves as a ground for resolving philosophical problems regarding the nature of such concepts, as well as problems arising from the use of these concepts in attempts at cross-cultural philosophical discourse.

In regard to such attempts at examining the meaning of concepts in a cross-cultural context, Pomedli argues: "One approach to studying, comparing and evaluating diverse cultural forms and specific themes in cultures is to label the task as impossible. This judgment is based on the premise that cultures distinct in time and varied in

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[26] George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 69. The addition in square brackets is my own.

[27] Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 210-211.

development are quite foreign and their concepts incommensurable."[28] However, in both Pomedli's and Lakoff and Johnson's arguments we see that this is not the case. The various perspectives of other cultures are accessible to us. What is required, Pomedli says, is that we "become acquainted with the terrain"[29] of each of these cultural worlds. We must develop a familiarity with not only the landscape of metaphors unique to each of these cultural worlds but also the ways a People engage and reason about the world in which they find themselves. We must develop a familiarity with, or an understanding of, the underlying ground which ultimately allows for the possibility of rendering each of these cultural perspectives intelligible one to another.

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[28] Pomedli, *Ethnophilosophical and Ethnolinguistic Perspectives on the Huron Indian Soul*, 1.

[29] *Ibid.*, 1.

CHAPTER THREE:
Language, the Lifeworld, and Ways of Reasoning

In contrast to the so-called problem of incommensurability, an essentially isolating view according to which different *cultural worlds* must ultimately remain inaccessible, African-American writer Charles Johnson argues that "what we have from the standpoint of phenomenology, are not different worlds but instead innumerable perspectives on *one* world; and we know that when it comes to the crunch, we share, all of us, the same cultural Lifeworld."[1] There are, to be sure, difficulties which must be faced in exploring the use of concepts in a cross-cultural context, e.g., between Indigenous and Western worldviews. However, if approached with openness and humility, these difficulties can be overcome. To do so, we must turn our attention to the 'ways of reasoning' which underlie these diverse cultural perspectives, and some of the factors which serve in shaping those 'ways of reasoning'.

Husserl's Phenomenological Project and the Lifeworld

The Western philosophical tradition which I look to for insights in this chapter is that of phenomenology. David Abram argues that it is phenomenology which "has most forcefully called into question the modern assumption of a single, wholly determinable, objective reality."[2] Edmund Husserl, the founding father of phenomenology, saw the development of Western philosophy as the ongoing pursuit of ideas about an objectively

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[1] Charles Johnson. *Being and Race: Black Writing since 1970* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 44.

[2] David Abram. *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), 31.

determinate (and ultimately knowable) universe. In rejecting these pursuits Husserl argued that only "a radical inquiry back into subjectivity...can make objective truth comprehensible and arrive at the ultimate ontic meaning of the world."[3] This involves a rejection of the idea that our ideas correspond to (or are perfect representations of) the objects they are about. In other words, the peculiarities of subjective experience cannot be pared away from the objects which the sciences study.

Husserl saw phenomenology as the science of experience. He saw that previous philosophers had, knowingly or unknowingly, ignored people's daily experience of the world in attempts to describe reality as it is in itself. In contrast, Husserl saw reality as being fundamentally experiential. In a cross-cultural context, Husserl's arguments lead us to the position that different cultural perspectives are not attempts at describing the world in itself, descriptions which cultures have either gotten right or gotten wrong. Rather, different cultural perspectives can now be viewed as reflections of different groups of people's subjective experience of the world. For Husserl, our experience of reality is profoundly subjective. Abram captures Husserl's sentiments when he writes:

> For whatever we perceive is necessarily entwined with our own subjectivity, already blended with the dynamism of life and sentience. The living pulse of subjective experience cannot finally be stripped from the things that we study (in order to expose the pure unadulterated "objects") without the things themselves losing all existence for us.[4]

However, Husserl did not and could not stop there. His subjectivism meant that he had to deal with the problem of solipsism: the possibility that an individual's perceptions are merely a product of that individual's own mind. In other words, the problem which

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[3] Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, Trans., David Carr, (Evanston: Northern University Press, 1970), 69.

[4] Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, 34.

Husserl had to contend with was that if it is only perceptions that we are in direct contact with, then we can no longer be sure that objects and other minds have any substance beyond our perceptions of them. If it is only our private perceptions that we are in direct contact with, then there is the question of whether we can actually know that those perceptions are not simply products of our own imagination. In a larger, multicultural context, it is the question of whether these different cultural perspectives arise in connection with a group of people's shared experience of the world, or whether these sometimes radically different perspectives are simply some sort of collective delusion. To avoid the problem of solipsism a common ground is required. In *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, Husserl writes: "The Nature and the whole world that are constituted 'immanently' in the ego are only my 'ideas' and have behind them the world that exists in itself."[5]

However, Husserl was still faced with problem of providing his critics with an answer to the problem of how we come to know that there are other selves, or objects, in the world. For Husserl it was the human body which provided a clue to answering this question of the existence of other selves. David Abram, in *The Spell of the Sensuous*, relates Husserl's response to this problem, writing:

> Husserl struggled long and hard to answer this important criticism. How does our subjective experience enable us to recognize the reality of other selves, other experiencing beings? The solution seemed to implicate the body – one's own as well as that of the other – as a singularly important structure within the phenomenal field. The body is that mysterious and multifaceted phenomenon that seems always to accompany one's awareness, and indeed to be the very location of one's awareness within the field of appearances.... While one's own body is experienced, as it

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[5] Edmund Husserl. *Cartesian Mediations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, Trans., Dorion Cairns, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960), 89-90.

were, only from within, these other bodies are experienced from outside; one can vary one's distance from these bodies and can move around them, while this is impossible in relation to one's own body.[6]

In other words, of all the objects that I meet in my experience of the world, my own body is, in Husserl's words, the only "which I '*rule and govern*' *immediately*"[7] from the 'inside'. I experience the world through the senses of this body. The human body acts as a center of experience for my awareness. I am aware of the world around me through this body. Now, I also see around me other human bodies. Husserl's argument is that in recognizing the similarities between those other bodies and my own there is the further recognition that each is also a center of experience, another Self. Husserl writes: "The 'Other', according to his own constituted sense, points to me myself; the other is a 'mirroring' of my own self and yet not a mirroring proper, an analogue of my own self and yet again not an analogue in the usual sense."[8]

Other's bodies are a part of my field of experience, but I recognize along with that body a subjective center of experience which guides the other's body through its own field of experience (its experience of *other objects* in its field of experience which it does not *rule and govern immediately*). I have a perception of myself as a *center of experience* (which includes the phenomenon of my own body insofar as I exercise control over it) as well as an experience of phenomena which I do not have this sort of control over. As for a phenomenon which resembles my own form (other humans), I make the supposition that this other form, or human body, is also a *center of experience* which experiences the

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[6] Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, 37.

[7] Husserl, *Cartesian Mediations*, 97.

[8] *Ibid.*, 94.

world in a similar twofold fashion. Thus, an individual's experience of the world involves an experience of what is *Self* and what is *Other*.

A part of that *Other* is other *centers of experience*, or *other persons*; and they, too, contribute to my sense of *Self* through their responses to me. As Husserl says, *the other is a 'mirroring' of my own self*. But the *other* does not provide a perfect reflection of myself, it is *not a mirroring proper*. Other people provide me with a view of myself which would be, otherwise, inaccessible to me. They, in a sense, watch my social back. Similarly, in a cross-cultural context, we see that there are different cultural perspectives in the world, or different worldviews. What follows is that we can now view other cultures as *analogues* of our own culture. Different cultures do not live in different, completely separate worlds. Rather, other worldviews provide us with *perspectives* on this world which would otherwise be inaccessible to us. They show us different ways of perceiving and thinking about the world which aid us in understanding our own perspective. In other words, as noted above, "what we have from the standpoint of phenomenology, are not different worlds but instead innumeral perspectives on one world"[9].

So, in responding to charges of solipsism, Husserl has presented us with a view of reality which not only counters the previous philosophical position of an objective physical realm (matter) which is observed by an independent observer (mind), but also opens up to us a view of the world which provides a very new ground for our knowledge and experience of our surroundings. Abram, in *The Spell of the Sensuous*, describes Husserl's position as one in which:

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[9] Johnson, *Being and Race*, 44.

The "real world" in which we find ourselves, then – the very world our sciences strive to fathom – is not a sheer "object", not a fixed and finished "datum" from which all subjects and subjective qualities could be pared away, but is rather an intertwined matrix of sensations and perceptions, a collective field of experience lived through from many different angles.[10]

An individual's experience of an object, or phenomenon, in the field of appearances is not simply a subjective affair. It involves an experience of what Husserl referred to as an intersubjectivity, the experience of phenomena by many experiencing subjects. For example, objects such as rocks and trees are experienced (in unique ways and from unique angles) by many different persons. Husserl referred to this *collective field of experience* as the Lebenswelt, or Lifeworld. The lifeworld is what is immediately present to us before we begin to organize and analyse our experience. Husserl writes that "the life-world, for us who wakingly live in it, is always already there, existing in advance for us, the 'ground' of all praxis whether theoretical or extratheoretical."[11] Moreover, as I show in discussing the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and David Abram, this lifeworld is not simply *there* in a passive sense, but plays an active role in shaping our experiences and perspectives, both individual and cultural. Importantly, Husserl makes note of the fact that "[t]here has never been a scientific inquiry into the way in which the life-world constantly functions as subsoil, into how its manifold prelogical validities act as grounds for the logical ones, for theoretical truths [such as physical theories set out by Newton or Einstein, or ethnometaphysical theories about the world/reality in general]."[12] As Abram notes in *The Spell of the Sensuous*:

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[10] Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, 39.

[11] Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, 142.

[12] *Ibid.*, 124. The additions in square brackets are my own.

Husserl's writings seem to suggest that the life-world has various layers, that underneath the layer of the diverse cultural life-worlds reposes a deeper, more unitary life-world, always already there beneath all our cultural acquisitions, a vast and continually overlooked dimension of experience that nevertheless supports and sustains all our diverse and discontinuous worldviews.[13]

Husserl, unfortunately, argued that the thing which experienced this lifeworld was a transcendental ego, a 'mind' separate from the world of phenomena. In our experience of reality each of us is aware of ourselves as a center of experience as well as a physical being (which we have control over), but our *sense of self* arises as a result of being a center of experience. It is as though, in Husserl's view, our body is merely a tool for experiencing the world; it is a tool which facilitates our experience of the world, but which does not contribute to our experience of the world in any significant way. In other words, his philosophical tendencies led to what Abram aptly describes as the "lingering assumption of a transcendental ego,"[14] the immaterial aspect of our Self which has an experience of being in the world but which also is somehow separate from the world.

Merleau-Ponty: A New Ground for Experience

It was precisely this notion of a transcendental ego which French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty rejected in responding to Husserl's work. It was, instead, the body as subject, our physical selves which Merleau-Ponty saw as central to our experience of existing in the world. It is our physical existence which allows for the possibility of contact with the lifeworld, of interaction between others, and ourselves. Where Husserl saw the *Self* which does the experiencing as an transcendental ego,

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[13] Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, 41-42.

[14] *Ibid.*, 45.

Merleau-Ponty argued that our most basic experience of the world is a physical one, that our bodies are merely a part of a larger body which is the world around us: the fabric of the lifeworld. To clarify what he means by the marriage of our bodies to the world, Merleau-Ponty uses the word Flesh in the collective sense. He writes:

> That means that my body is made of the same flesh as the world (it is a perceived), and moreover that this flesh of my body is shared by the world, the world *reflects* it, encroaches upon it and it encroaches upon the world (the felt [*senti*] at the same time the culmination of subjectivity and the culmination of materiality), they are in a relation of transgression or of overlapping.[15]

This shift in focus, from the transcendental aspect of our experience of the world to the material, or sensual, experience of the world, means that it is our physical being which grounds us in the lifeworld. In other words, we are merely one part of a larger, organic, physical whole. Merleau-Ponty argues further that if that is indeed the case, then "our existence as sonorous beings for others and for ourselves contain everything required for there to be speech from one to the other, speech about the world."[16] It was Husserl's goal to ground both philosophy and the sciences in a *science of experience*; but as Abram has argued, Merleau-Ponty has provided a more useful ground by rejecting Husserl's notion of a transcendental ego.

Whereas Husserl, in spite of his comments on the character of our bodily experience, uses the 'ego' as a ground for our *sense of self*, Merleau-Ponty grounds our *sense of self* in our bodily experience of the world. In this view, as we will see, differences between both individual and cultural perspectives arise as a result of

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[15] Maurice Merleau-Ponty. *The Visible and the Invisible*, Trans., Alphonso Lingis, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 248.

[16] *Ibid.*, 155.

differences between their particular relationships with the larger, organic whole. In regard

to this bodily grounding in the world, Merleau-Ponty argues:

> All my knowledge of the world [my world view], even my scientific
> knowledge, is gained from my own particular point of view, or from some
> experience of the world without which the symbols of science would be
> meaningless. The whole universe of science is built upon the world as
> directly experienced, and if we want to subject science itself to rigorous
> scrutiny and arrive at a precise assessment of its meaning and scope, we
> must begin by reawakening the basic experience of the world, of which
> science is the second-order expression...[17]

Science is concerned with the facts of the world, such as the composition of

objects or the mechanisms which determine the behaviour of those objects, but our

relationship to those objects is also a part of our experience of reality. Science contributes

only in part to our understanding of objects, as science is itself "built upon the world as

directly experienced."[18] How we feel about certain sights, sounds and textures, like the

howling of wolves, the delicate and intricate beauty we see in a spider's web, and the awe

one might feel while looking into the night sky all add greatly to the meaning the world

holds for each of us; and for each of us that meaning is different. The meaning things

have for us does not simply correspond to the scientific facts about those things, but

rather, things take on meaning in relation to the whole history of our subjective and

intersubjective experiences.

In rejecting Husserl's transcendental tendencies Merleau-Ponty argues instead that

there is a reciprocal relationship between the sensuous, physical landscape and our

physical bodies. We touch and are touched by the world. In other words, Merleau-Ponty

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[17] Maurice Merleau-Ponty. *Phenomenology of Perception*, Trans., Colin Smith, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), viii. The addition in square brackets is my own.

[18] *Ibid.*, viii.

is arguing that it is our physical selves and not our subjective perceptions which ground us in the lifeworld. Moreover, it is this reciprocal relationship which makes possible not only our scientific ideas but language itself. Contemporary analytic philosopher Donald Davidson's views on language and meaning are particularly relevant here. Davidson also holds that language and the world are "part of a single conceptual scheme..."[19], and that "[t]hought itself depends upon other people and the events we share in the world."[20] Davidson rejects the sort of simplistic referential theories of meaning, or *correspondence theories of meaning*, espoused by earlier philosophers such as Gottlob Frege and the early work of Ludwig Wittgenstein (though Wittgenstein did eventually abandon his correspondence theory).[21] That is not to say, as we shall see, that Davidson completely rules out the importance of the notion of correspondence for his own theory of interpretation.

Simon Evnine, in his book *Donald Davidson*, writes that according to Davidson's theory of "holistic and normative theory of radical interpretation... the meaning of a sentence depends on its relations to other sentences, and those relations must, by and large, be those of consistency, *coherence*, and rationality."[22] In other words, unlike the

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[19] Baird and Kaufmann. 'Introduction' to "The Method of Truth in Metaphysics" by Donald Davidson, in *Twentieth Century Philosophy*, E. Baird and W. Kaufmann, Eds., (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1997), 328.

[20] *Ibid.*, 329. The addition in square brackets is my own.

[21] See: P. Geach and M. Black, eds. *Translations from the Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege* (Philosophical Library, New York, 1952); and Ludwig Wittgenstein. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Trans. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961).

[22] Simon Evnine. *Donald Davidson* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 140. The italics are my own.

correspondence view of truth where the meaning of a sentence depends on its relation to the world, in "a coherence theory, this link with the world is lost."[23] Evnine argues:

> Davidson's theory of interpretation thus appears to face the same problem as the coherence theory of truth. It can either guarantee that the mere agreement generated by the Principle of Charity suffices for objective truth (and not just truth according to the interpreter) by identifying truth with (some form of) agreement.... Or else, it allows that truth exceeds mere agreement, in which case interpretation, and the coherence and consistency it brings, do not ensure that what is agreed upon is objectively true. In order, therefore, to answer the skeptical challenge, Davidson has to show 'that coherence yields correspondence' (1983, p. 307),...[24]

The problem here, simply stated, is that if the truth of a sentence depends on its coherence with other sentences in a particular theory or worldview, then there is no guarantee that sentences (or theories) are true beyond that theory or worldview. The problem is that if there is nothing beyond, or beneath, these larger theories (about which they can be correct or incorrect), then there is no frame of reference for determining the truth or falsity of any particular theory or worldview. However, it seems as though the lifeworld, which, as both Husserl and Merleau-Ponty argue, underlies all our diverse individual and cultural perspectives on the world, might provide the link which Davidson requires in order to demonstrate the claim "that coherence yields correspondence."[25] Individual sentences are meaningful in that they are coherent within a particular theory or worldview. But what of those larger theories or world views themselves? According to

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[23] *Ibid.*, 140.

[24] *Ibid.*, 141. Cf., Donald Davidson. "A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge", reprinted in E. Lepore (Ed.) *Truth and Interpretation. Perspectives on the Philosophy of Donald Davidson* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 307-319.

[25] Donald Davidson. "A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge", reprinted in E. Lepore (Ed.) *Truth and Interpretation. Perspectives on the Philosophy of Donald Davidson* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 307.

Johnson, "what we have from the point of phenomenology, are not different worlds, but innumerable perspective on one world,"[26] a phenomenological lifeworld. Moreover, the correspondence we are looking for is not the kind which the early Wittgenstein sought to establish: the isomorphic relationship (between language and the world) upon which his referential, or picture theory, of language relied. Our intimate participation in, or the fact of our being intimately woven into the fabric of, the animate terrain of the lifeworld (with all its sounds, smells and textures) not only makes possible speech and language, but also serves as the ground, or frame of reference, for the larger theories or cultural perspectives we construct in the attempt to make the lifeworld meaningful to ourselves. In other words, it is to this phenomenological lifeworld which larger theories and cultural perspectives ultimately correspond, including, our most sophisticated modern scientific theories.

For Merleau-Ponty, that larger context is the physical landscape, the *Flesh* of the world, to which we are intimately connected. He writes that the "whole universe of science is built upon the world as directly experienced."[27] The world we know is the one we construct for ourselves, and how we construct and talk about that world is shaped by our physical and perceptual experience of it. An ongoing dynamic of reciprocity exists between ourselves and the Flesh of the world.

Philosophically, what follows from Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological project is that worldviews can be understood as providing *cohesion* to both our bodily and our subjective experience of a lifeworld which underlies all our various cultural perspectives.

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[26] Johnson, *Being and Race*, 44.

[27] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, viii.

It is not a question of establishing an exact *correspondence* between our views and the world as it is in itself. For example, just as a house has more meaning to me than just the shelter it provides from the elements, i.e., how it feels as a home, what the world in general means to us is more than just the totality of the scientific facts about it. For some people the world inspires great awe, they *see* tantalizing possibilities all around them. To others the world might feel cold or hostile, seeing only cruelty and indifference around them. Subjective experiences, such as the ones I have just mentioned, serve an integral role in shaping our views on such things as whether or not there is a creator, or whether or not to view animals as other-than-human persons which are deserving of our respect.

Given the depth of the links between language, the land (or the *Flesh* of the world) and our perception, or experience of the world, examining the relationships between these various factors is of paramount importance. In order to *see* how different cultures perceive the world we must develop some degree of access to their worldview, or general theory of the world. Understanding the *other's* worldview requires, in turn, an understanding of the historical relationship between all of the factors which helped shaped that culture's unique perspective. Both David Abram and Walter Ong put forward arguments which resonate with Merleau-Ponty's argument that language is rooted in peoples' contact with the physical landscape in which they centrally find themselves.

Abram and Ong: Orality, Literacy, and the Lifeworld

In *The Spell of the Sensuous* Abram's overriding concern is with the increasing alienation from nature which is typical of science based, Western cultures. This alienation which he discusses parallels, in an important way, the dissociation from physical reality

which Merleau-Ponty saw and rejected in Husserl's notion of a transcendental ego (that we are fundamentally mental beings and ultimately separable from physical reality). Individuals from science based, Western cultures have, in a sense, forgotten that they are of the same *flesh* as the world. Abram, too, sees that mainstream Western society has lost touch with the physical landscape. A question which Abram dedicates a considerable amount of time to discussing in *The Spell of the Sensuous* is: "how did civilized humankind lose all sense of reciprocity and relationship with the animate natural world, that rapport that so influences (and limits) the activities of most indigenous, tribal peoples?"[28] In answering this question, Abram argues that at the heart of this problem of alienation is the written, phonetic alphabet.

During the course of his discussion he draws our attention to Socrates' poignant and age-old reminder that writing should only "serve as a *reminder* to a reader who already knows those things that have been written."[29] In other words, Socrates was concerned about the power of the written text and its debilitating effects on human memory. Socrates saw many pitfalls in the technology of writing, just as Abram does. However, in no way does Abram want us to abandon the written word.

Abram hopes to re-unite the written word with the magic and sensuality of the lifeworld, that realm which underscores both the written and the spoken word, which nourishes our sciences as well as our physical beings. In re-discovering this relationship we can begin to re-orient ourselves, our senses and thoughts, to the living landscape. At the outset of his book Abram reminds us that

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[28] Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, 137.

[29] *Ibid.*, 114; Cf., Plato. *Phaedrus*, Trans., R. Hackforth, in *Plato: The Collected Dialogues*, ed., Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 278a.

Our bodies have formed themselves in delicate reciprocity with the manifold textures, sounds, and shapes of an animate earth – our eyes have evolved in subtle interaction with *other* eyes, as our ears are attuned by their very structure to the howling of wolves and the honking of geese.[30]

The sights, sounds, smells, and tastes which are peculiar to different locales on earth have helped to shape the people of those areas in unique ways. How each of us grows and changes is intimately connected to our experiences with the physical, animate environment. Our senses are in continual contact with the world, touching and being touched. It is on these grounds that Abram argues:

To the sensing body *all* phenomena are animate, actively soliciting the participation of our senses, or else withdrawing from our focus and repelling our involvement.... Each thing, each phenomenon, has the power to reach us and influence us.... Thus, at the most primordial level of sensuous, bodily experience, we find ourselves in an expressive, gesturing landscape, in a world that *speaks*.[31]

In being confronted with this landscape we are forced to decipher our relationship with and understanding of this primordial experience of reality. We learn to echo its sounds, its grunts and whistles, and are shaped by its many other influences which we seek to make meaningful to ourselves. The sensual world, then, provides the tapestry of experiences, or the larger context, which underlies all our diverse languages and cultures. Abram argues that what this means for oral cultures such as the many varied North American Indigenous cultures, is that:

In the absence of phonetic literacy, neither society, nor language, nor even the experience of thought or consciousness, can be pondered in isolation from the multiple nonhuman shapes and powers that lend their influence to all our activities....[32]

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[30] *Ibid.*, 22.

[31] *Ibid.*, 81.

[32] *Ibid.*, 123.

It is Abram's contention that the written, phonetic alphabet has facilitated a radical development in human communication. Writing allowed thought (and textual communication) to move beyond the context of the physical landscape. Thought and communication were no longer limited to the context of our everyday lived experiences. Citing numerous historical examples, he contends that along with the shift to the phonetic alphabet our senses also underwent a shift of their own. The once mysterious and animate landscape (with all its rich contours and textures) which had engaged our senses was replaced by the sterility and flatness of the written page. Moreover, Abram draws our attention to the fact that the letters of the alphabet no longer carried with them their connection to the phenomena in nature which inspired their development. He notes such examples as the letter 'a' which originated from the ancient Semitic *aleph-beth* (as its first letter, aleph: Ⱶ), which "is also the ancient Hebrew word for 'ox'. The shape of the letter, as we can see, was that of an ox's head with horns; turned over, it became our own letter *A*."[33] The effects of this separation, or dis-association, of letters (and, eventually, words) from their natural referents have pervaded most, if not all, aspects of literate peoples' consciousness. Abram writes:

> Only by training the senses to participate with the written word could one hope to break their spontaneous participation with the animate terrain. *Only as the written text began to speak would the voices of the forest, and of the river, begin to fade. And only then would language loosen its ancient association with the invisible breath, the spirit sever itself from the wind, the psyche dissociate itself from the environing air.*[34]

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[33] *Ibid.*, 101.

[34] Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, 254.

Today, in Western mainstream society, this ancient association is all but a distant memory. Written, phonetic languages, such as English, no longer reflect the formative influences of the living landscape on literate peoples' ways of thinking and perceiving. The connection between our words and the living landscape has been severed. It is this alienation from the natural world which now underlies Western thought processes. In their article "Transformative Philosophy and Indigenous Thought: A Comparison of Lakota and Ojibwa World Views", McPherson and Rabb comment on Abram's conclusions:

> This profoundly detached view of 'nature' is, of course, the one which many of us still unthinkingly presuppose today. That is why we fail to fully comprehend indigenous world views such as those of the Lakota and Ojibwa. That is the root of the incommensurability problem. With difficulty it can be overcome. The whole point of Abram's book is to overcome it.[35]

A key point which I would like to draw attention to here is that this profoundly detached view of nature is *unthinkingly presupposed*. This presupposition is a product of the structure of language (and in particular, languages such as English). In general, how and what we think is governed by the language we speak. Suppositions such as this detached view of nature are made explicit only when the structures of language itself are brought under examination. Rupert Ross (an Assistant Crown Attorney in northwestern Ontario) presents an example, in his book *Returning to the Teachings: Exploring Aboriginal Justice*, which demonstrates very well the unthought presuppositions of languages. After three years of interviews with Indigenous peoples from numerous communities Ross notes that they "describe their verb-world as one where each person's

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[35] Dennis McPherson and J. Douglas Rabb. "Transformative Philosophy and Indigenous Thought: A Comparison of Lakota and Ojibwa World Views" *Papers of the Twenty-Ninth Algonquian Conference*, David H. Pentland, Ed., (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba, 1999), 209.

primary focus is not on each separate thing but on all the movements and relationships between things."[36] Ross goes on to describe the impact of these different languages on how speakers of these different languages view the justice system:

> For instance, when we thought of a "justice system," our Western-trained, "thing-searching" eyes saw only offences – long lists of them, all precisely defined, all subdivided according to their seriousness. We then treated those lists as if they *were* the justice system.... As soon as you being to look at the justice system through "process-searching" eyes, however, it shows itself as a collection of four *processes* through which those offences, and the people who committed them, are manoeuvered.[37]

The four processes Ross describes are: 1) the *bail process*, 2) the *plea-discussion process*, 3) the *trial process*, and 4) the *sentencing process*.[38] Adopting a *process-based approach* to the justice system, Ross argues, "seems to offer ways of avoiding some of the problems that will continue to plague us as long as we stay with an *offence-based approach*."[39] Noting that a large portion of cases in Canada are resolved through guilty pleas rather than through trials, he argues that it is the first three processes which he describes that are involved in most people's experience of the justice system. The number of guilty pleas could be increased (which would further reduce the number of trials), he argues, "if the courts support healing processes as alternatives to jail or fines."[40] Viewing the justice system as process-based rather than an offence-based system will allow

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[36] Rupert Ross. *Returning to the Teachings: Exploring Aboriginal Justice* (Toronto: Penguin Books, 1996), 239.

[37] *Ibid.*, 239.

[38] See p. 239-40 in *Returning to the Teachings* for a more detailed description of each of these processes.

[39] Ross, *Returning to the Teachings*, 240. The italics are my own.

[40] *Ibid.*, 240.

Western culture to accommodate Native communities' demands for increased involvement in the justice system, such as the ability to impose alternative, culturally appropriate sentences. The point here, he argues, is not to perpetuate Native peoples' inclusion in the Western justice system, but that "those processes can be dramatically improved *by anyone's standard*, by gaining strong aboriginal involvement. Once communities become involved in these matters, they can more easily shift from them into strictly healing processes instead."[41] In other words, a shift to a justice system which is more in keeping with the verb-world in which Native people see themselves participating.

Walter Ong's *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* is concerned with how the technology of writing has shaped, and continues to shape, literate peoples' ways of thinking and perceiving, and how they communicate those thoughts and perceptions. Understanding the influences the technology of writing has had on literate peoples might also aid in our attempts to understand the difficulties which are faced by Western people in attempting to gain access to the worldviews of cultures rooted in oral traditions. I look to Ong's work at this point for two important discussions he presents. These discussions help us to understand, in an important way, how the nature of both the spoken and written word have shaped oral and literate peoples' use of language, respectively. Moreover, in familiarizing ourselves with the effects of writing and orality on how people use language, we can begin to better understand the unique ways oral and literate peoples use particular concepts, including, of course, the concept of autonomy, the principal focus of this study.

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[41] *Ibid.*, 241.

As a preliminary note I should clarify that, like Abram, Ong is not in favour of abandoning written tradition. Rather, the point he seems to be making is that in becoming more aware of the profound changes which writing has brought with it we can both understand those changes more fully and ensure that these changes do not go unchecked. In discussing the relationship between orality, literacy, and human consciousness Ong argues, first of all, that in the case of oral cultures the "restriction of words to sound [as opposed to the visualness of the written word] determines not only modes of expression but also thought processes."[42] He argues in respect to literate cultures that:

> Without writing, the literate mind would not and could not think as it does, not only when engaged in writing but normally even when it is composing its thoughts in oral form. More than any other single technology, writing has transformed human consciousness.[43]

In other words, oral and written traditions each shape humanity's reasoning processes in their own way. The technology of writing has allowed for what Ong refers to as a *context-free language*. This realm of context-free language has thus become the background which must be given consideration when deciphering the use of any particular concept by literate peoples. For example, any attempt by Indigenous peoples at understanding Western philosophers' use of such concepts as space and time must take into consideration this context-free language which has helped shaped Western philosophers' articulation of these concepts.

Ong's arguments also help us to understand Meyer and Ramirez's claim that: "Coming to understand another world view is 'learning how to reason' in the style of the

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[42] Walter Ong. *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London: Routledge, 1989), 33. The addition in square brackets is my own.

[43] *Ibid.*, 78.

other world view."[44] Given the profound effects of writing on human consciousness it seems that understanding 'how to reason' in the style of the other requires that we examine the role orality and literacy play in shaping human thought processes. Ong argues outrightly that: "More than any other single invention, writing has transformed human consciousness."[45] Generally speaking, Ong's point is that this *context-free language* which writing allows for has resulted in a characteristic detachment from the natural world among literate cultures. It is the text (the written words themselves) which the reader now directly engages and not the author of those words. The senses of literate peoples have undergone a shift from being attuned to the sensual phenomena of the physical landscape to the written word. Abram argues: "There is [in literate cultures] a concerted shift of our attention away from any outward or worldly reference of the pictorial image, away from the sensible phenomena that had previously called forth the spoken utterance, to the shape of the utterance itself, now invoked directly by the written character."[46] In contrasting written and verbal discourse, Ong writes: "real speech and thought always exist essentially in a context of give-and-take between real persons. Writing is passive, out of it, in an unreal, unnatural world."[47]

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[44] Leroy Meyer and Tony Ramirez. "Wakinyan Hotan: The Thunder Beings Call Out: The Inscrutability of Lakota/Dakota Metaphysics" *From Our Eyes: Learning From Indigenous Peoples* (Toronto: Garamound Press, 1996), 92.

[45] Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 78.

[46] Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, 100. The addition in square brackets is my own.

[47] Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 79.

Cultural Perspectives and the Concepts of Space and Time

The technology of writing has served to restructure basic aspects of human consciousness and, thus, human perception as well. Two basic human experiences which writing has affected, Ong argues, are our experience and understanding of the concepts of space and time. Abram, too, looks to the concepts of space and time in order to illustrate his argument that the written, phonetic alphabet has been a central factor in the alienation of people from their natural surroundings, the sort of alienation which has become characteristic of Western mainstream society. I include these examples in my study in order to demonstrate the lack of understanding between Native and non-Native peoples which results from such fundamentally disparate uses of language, such as oral and written traditions. In other words, the following discussion regarding the concepts of space and time is intended to illustrate not only how writing has restructured literate peoples' consciousness, but how this re-shaping of literate peoples' consciousness has made it very difficult, seemingly impossible in some cases, for Native and non-Native people to engage in meaningful communication with each other.

As for the concept of space, Ong argues that it is the technology of writing which has made possible the notion of abstract, absolute space, a notion which plays prominently in the evolution of the consciousness of literate peoples. One of the results of this evolution of consciousness, he argues, is a "growth in explicit philosophical concern with the self, which becomes noticeable in Kant".[48] In regard to the effect of writing on the literate mind's perception of space, Ong writes:

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[48] *Ibid.*, 178.

By removing words from the world of sound where they had first had their origin in active human interchange and relegating them definitely to visual surface, and by otherwise exploiting visual space for the management of knowledge, print encouraged human beings to think of their own interior conscious and unconscious resources as more and more thing-like, impersonal and religiously neutral. Print encouraged the mind to sense that its possessions were held in some sort of inert mental space.[49]

Abram, too, recognizes the impact of print on human consciousness. He argues that it was the accelerated spread of written texts, made possible through the invention of the printing press, which allowed the *effects* of the written word to spread through the general population of Europe. Prior to the printing press, he argues, a "thorough differentiation of 'time' and 'space' was impossible as long as large portions of the community experienced the surroundings as animate and alive, as long as material (spatial) phenomena were still perceived by many as having their own inherent spontaneity and (temporal) dynamism."[50]

In contrast to the orality of both North American Indigenous cultures and the early European oral traditions, writing allowed for what Abram describes as "the dominion of alphabetic reason over a natural world increasingly construed as a passive and mechanical set of objects."[51] In other words, nature no longer had to be directly present for it to be thought about; the permanence of the written word provided the illusion of a realm of ideas/concepts which could be considered in isolation from the objects which they represent. Abram argues that "only when a qualitative term is written down does it become ponderable as a fixed form independent of both the speakers and of situations."[52]

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[49] *Ibid.*, 131-132.

[50] Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, 199.

[51] *Ibid.*, 199.

[52] *Ibid.*, 111.

It is in this way, then, that the concepts of space and time became a source of inquiry and heated debate among European scholars. However, it was not the everyday bodily experience of space which scholars were concerned with. Their focus was the idea of space itself, that empty void which was thought to be leftover if all the objects which filled it could be removed. After centuries of debate, renown philosopher Immanuel Kant took up these ideas in his *Critique of Pure Reason*. In regard to space, Kant writes: "Space is not an empirical concept which has been derived from outer experiences."[53] For Kant, space was, generally speaking, a property or aspect of mind, or as Kant says: "By means of outer sense, a property of our mind, we represent to ourselves objects as outside of us, and all without exception in space."[54] Space is not necessarily a property of things in themselves. In other words, Kant's arguments lead to the possibility that the world does not, in itself, possess the property of spatiality. He argued instead that it was the perceiver who brought the appearance of spatiality to his or her experience. In fact, Kant refers to both space and time as sensible forms of intuition and goes so far as to conclude that space "must therefore be regarded as the condition of the possibility of appearances, and not as a determination dependent on them."[55] In commenting on Kant's arguments, Abram writes:

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[53] Immanuel Kant. *Critique of Pure Reason*, Trans., Norman Kemp Smith, (London: MacMillan Press, 1993), B38.

[54] *Ibid.*, 67.

[55] *Ibid.*, 68.

> Kant's work seemed to establish more forcefully than ever that, at least as far as humans were concerned, 'space' and 'time' were distinct and inescapable dimensions.
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> Needless to say, Kant's writings could not be translated into Navajo or Pintupi.[56]

The difficulties faced here result from the dramatic differences between each of these culture's notions of space and time. In Kant's writings, *space* is understood as something which our minds add to our experience of the world. The concept of spatiality is something we add to our experience of the world and not something which is derived from our experience of the world. However, in oral cultures, the understanding of space is one which is connected with, or derived from, an experience of the world. Space is understood as a sense of place, not as some abstract notion which can be pared away from our particular experiences of the world. Moreover, the differences here must also be viewed in connection with oral and literate culture's understanding of time, because, as we have seen, the meaning, or use, of any particular concept cannot be fully understood in isolation from other concepts. In Meyer and Ramirez' words, we must take into consideration the "network of inferential associations"[57] which exist between concepts in any particular worldview.

In regard to oral and literate peoples' differing notions of time, Ong argues that, prior to the advent of writing, or at least its thorough adoption by Europe's general populace, and the use of European calendrical systems, "people did not feel themselves situated every moment of their lives in abstract computed time of any sort."[58] A

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[56] Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, 201.

[57] Meyer and Ramirez, "Wakinyan Hotan: The Thunder Beings Call Out: The Inscrutability of Lakota/Dakota Metaphysics", 92

[58] Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 97.

straightforward reason which Ong offers as support for this claim is that the "abstract calendar number would relate to nothing in real life."[59] Time, prior to the popularization of writing and print in Europe, was perceived as a very natural phenomenon. The passage of time was indicated by the cycles of Nature, the coming and going of seasons, the regular, and sometimes irregular, cycles of the bodies which fill the sky, and the onset of aging; hours and minutes were meaningless. However, with the advent of writing the passage of time could be divided into increments and its passage carefully recorded as moving forward from an arbitrary, yet fixed, moment in time, e.g., the birth of Christ.

Calvin L. Martin's *In the Spirit of the Earth: Rethinking History and Time* deals extensively with this contrived sense of time. Discussing ancient peoples' need, or desire, to master such things as agriculture, i.e., the timing of the planting and harvesting crops, Martin notes that it was the discovery of *celestial time* that facilitated this mastery. He comments on this newly acquired sense of quantifiable time, writing:

> The priests who figured this out must have sensed themselves ushered into the presence of the almighty beings. It was verily a "fall out of nature into knowledge," maybe the Fall that damns us all: bewitched by time.... Time's arrow – the cosmic monster that has proved itself infinitely more terrifying than any projectile ever devised by the paleolithic imagination.[60]

Prior to this contrived sense of time, success in agricultural matters (as well as in animal husbandry) was largely attributed to "plant and animal volition, plant and animal permission."[61] This early, animistic approach, however, did not *ensure* any sort of success in these matters. For these early peoples, Martin argues, "the secret to the riddle of plant

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[59] *Ibid.*, 98.

[60] Calvin Luther Martin. *In the Spirit of the Earth: Rethinking History and Time* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 57.

[61] *Ibid.*, 56.

and animal production and reproduction was timing: time, which became a clock."[62] In this way, then, another aspect of the natural world could be objectified, or measured out. It was objectifications such as these which allowed for such colloquial sayings as 'having spare time'. Moreover, the writing down of past and future moments in time seems to have given them a reality of their own, thus adding support to the perceived reality of abstract, linear time.

The differences between senses of time in oral and literate cultures can be looked at on two levels. The first is an ordinary sense of time, and the second is a larger overall sense of time (which shapes oral and literate cultures' notion of ordinary time). The everyday sense of time for oral cultures, commonly referred to as cyclical time, is grounded in the direct experience of movements of the lifeworld, for example, the cycle of the seasons. There are, of course, exceptions such as the Aztec and Mayan cultures of South America which developed sophisticated calendrical systems, allowing for an increased sense of abstract time, a development which was quite possibly one factor in the downfall of these once prosperous civilizations.

Like oral cultures, there is also, in literate cultures, an ordinary sense of time which is divided in to past, present, and future, for example, the sense that yesterday was Monday, today is Tuesday, and tomorrow will be Wednesday, a chronology of days and weeks. However, this ordinary sense of time for literate cultures contrasts with that of oral culture in that it is not derived solely from a lived experience of the world. Instead, ordinary notions of time in literate societies are grounded in larger abstract notions of time, for example, the abstract notions of time which were argued for by both Kant and

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[62] *Ibid.*, 57.

Newton (although, it should be noted that their notions of time are substantially different). Abram writes that for Newton absolute time is "an independent reality that we cannot perceive directly, but which underlies all material events and their relations."[63] Ordinary time, in oral cultures, is also rooted in a larger sense of time. However, this larger sense of time is not viewed as being independent of lived reality. This larger sense of time might usefully be described as the sense of an ever-present 'here and now', to which we are intimately connected. Abram provides a characterization of this larger sense of time. He writes:

> When I allow the past and the future to dissolve, imaginatively, into the immediacy of the present moment, then the 'present' itself expands to become an enveloping field of *presence*. And this presence, vibrant and alive, spontaneously assumes the precise shape and contour of the enveloping landscape, as though it were its native shape![64]

This larger sense of time not only shapes the ordinary sense of time experienced in oral cultures, but is also intimately *connected* with the sense of space which is found in oral cultures. In literate cultures, a larger sense of time also shapes the ordinary sense of time, but this larger sense of time (and space as well) is, in contrast to oral cultures, understood as being *independent* of ordinary reality. Moreover, space and time, in literate cultures, are also understood as being distinct from each other. In other words, the notions of space and time which arise in oral and literate cultures are, fundamentally, at odds with each other. It is on these grounds then that Abram argues that Kant's notions of space and time could not be translated into either Navajo or Pintupi. Any attempt at some sort of

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[63] Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, 200.

[64] *Ibid.*, 203-4.

cross-cultural, philosophical discussion about space and time is severely hindered by these drastically different cultural perspectives.

Abram's point, in general, is that it was specifically the written, phonetic alphabet which made possible this shift from the examination of the everyday sensual experience of space and time to the consideration of space and time as abstract objects of thought. Moreover, he contends that it was not merely our experience of space and time which was affected, but that a more pervasive, more general overall alienation from the whole of the natural world has resulted from the adoption of phonetic writing: an alienation from our *Mother Earth*. To reiterate, Abram's claim is that it is the written, phonetic alphabet which has facilitated 1) Western culture's alienation from the natural world, and 2) a view of nature as simply a *resource* which has the sole purpose of servicing mankind's needs. However, the importance of this alienation is not limited to the concepts of space and time. These differences between oral and literate peoples' formulations of the concepts of space and time are indicative of differences in the overall perspectives of oral and literate peoples which have, in turn, led to the sort of incommensurability which is central to the present day conflicts between Western and Indigenous cultures here in North America.

Moving Beyond the Incommensurability Problem

In light of these fundamental differences between oral and literate cultures, the question which remains is: how are we to resolve, or move beyond, this sort of incommensurability? The key to the solution, Abram argues, is understanding our participation in the lifeworld which underlies all our diverse cultural perspectives. Karen

A'Llerio, in her recent Master's thesis. *Craft, Ritual, and World View: Ojibwa Ontology through Transformative Philosophy*, looks to Abram's discussion of the lifeworld in his *The Spell of the Sensuous* in the hope that it will "provide a common ground both literally and philosophically"[65] for "understand[ing] the meaning of Ojibwa crafted objects."[66] A'Llerio writes:

> If, however, Western and Native people share a common life-world, how can our perceptions, organization, and interaction with it be so different – to the point of incommensurability? Abram responds to this apparent dilemma by explaining:
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>> It should be evident that the life-world may be quite different for different cultures. The world that a people experiences and comes to count on is deeply influenced by the ways they live and engage that world. The members of any given culture necessarily inhabit an experienced world very different from that of another culture with a very language and way of life.... And yet, despite this multiplicity, it would seem that there are basic structures to the life-world that are shared, elements that are common to different cultures and even, we may suspect, to different species... (41-42)
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> Therefore, what appears as incommensurability is such because we have not looked deeply enough. We have been seeking understanding between cultural life-worlds, without seeking our commonalities at the deeper life-world level.[67]

In other words, it is our shared participation in the lifeworld which opens up the possibility of mutual comprehensibility in cross-cultural contexts. This failure to look deeply enough into this *common ground* has severely hampered Western peoples' understanding of Indigenous peoples' use of such Western concepts as autonomy. Developing an understanding of this mutual participation in the lifeworld provides us with a means of responding to the following question which is posed by McPherson and Rabb: "what is it about *literate* cultures rooted in Western European civilization which

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[65] Karen A'Llerio. "Craft, Ritual, and World View: Ojibwa Ontology through Transformative Philosophy" (Master's Thesis, Lakehead University, April 1999), 20.

[66] *Ibid.*, 20. The addition in square brackets is my own.

[67] *Ibid.*, 31-32.

makes it difficult for their people to come to grips with the indigenous *oral* traditions of North America?"[68]

Ong, following his own extended discussion of the effects of the technology of writing on human consciousness, makes what might best be described as a disclaimer, stating: "To say that a great many changes in the psyche and in culture connect with the passage from orality to writing is not to make writing (and/or its sequel, print) the sole cause of all the changes."[69] Though this may indeed be the case, it is my contention that when it comes to pursuing solutions to the seemingly radical incommensurability (and the resulting misunderstanding and conflict) which has resulted from the differences between cultures rooted in oral and written traditions, it is precisely the effects of the technology of writing which must be brought under close scrutiny. So, even though writing has brought with it, and opened up, many invaluable possibilities for humankind, the technology of writing also involves a corresponding set of dangers, namely, the danger of losing touch with the foundation, or ground, which we are ultimately striving to understand though the power of language: our intimate connection with the sensual lifeworld. A delicate balance must be maintained. Neither the technology of writing nor the spontaneous reciprocity present in oral cultures can be wholly abandoned. Achieving such a balance is precisely Abram's point when he declares: "*Our task, rather, is that of taking up the written word, with all its potency, and patiently, carefully, writing language back into the land.*"[70]

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[68] McPherson and Rabb, "Transformative Philosophy and Indigenous Thought", 207. The italics are my own.

[69] Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 175.

[70] Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, 273. The italics are my own.

Cross-Cultural Relations and the Notion of Dissociation

In our present circumstance these changes in the evolution of human consciousness have been shaping the minds of literate peoples in gradual and, hence, almost imperceptible ways, for over two thousand years. It is no wonder that we are faced with the lack of understanding which has developed between oral and literate cultures, and specifically, such relationships as those between North American Indigenous cultures and the mainstream Western populace.

Ian Hacking, in *Representing and Intervening*, presents a discussion regarding the subtle changes which theories undergo over time. These changes lead to what Hacking describes as a sense of *dissociation*, or radical incommensurability; and it is a notion which both Meyer and Ramirez and McPherson and Rabb have found useful for understanding the process of distancing between oral and literate cultures. One instance of the usefulness Hacking's notion of dissociation can be seen in McPherson and Rabb's examination of systemic discrimination against Indigenous people in the Western education system. In regard to these subtle changes which theories under go over long periods of time, Hacking argues that a "long enough time, and radical enough shifts in theory, may make earlier work unintelligible to a later scientific audience."[71]

Although Hacking focuses his attention on the development of and changes between scientific theories within the history of European traditions, his arguments are, nonetheless, well suited to my present discussion. In fact, his arguments serve very well

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[71] Ian Hacking. *Representing and Intervening* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983), 69.

for clarifying and expanding on both Abram's phonetic alphabet thesis and Ong's orality

– literacy arguments. Hacking writes:

> An old theory may be forgotten, but still be intelligible to the modern
> reader who is willing to spend the time relearning it. On the other hand
> some theories indicate so radical a change that one requires something far
> harder than mere learning of a new theory.[72]

Two points interest me here. The first is the 'radical change' which Hacking

mentions. The advent of writing, as we have seen, has been an central factor in inducing

precisely such radical changes in theories. The technology of writing has allowed for

radical developments in theories in all facets of the cultures of literate peoples, from

ethical theories to economic theories. The second point which interests me here is the

'something far harder' which Hacking states is required. In his article "Language, Truth

and Reason" Hacking makes a very important admission. He writes: "I do admit that

there is a real phenomenon of disparate ways of thinking. Some styles of reasoning have

become so firmly displaced that we cannot even recognize their objects."[73] It is here that I

return to the *different styles of reasoning* which Meyer and Ramirez discussed. Meyer and

Ramirez make use of Hacking's work, arguing that the inability of people rooted in

Western tradition "to understand the essence of Lakota/Dakota metaphysics can be

understood to derive from a specific kind of incommensurability that Ian Hacking... has

called dissociation."[74] The problem, simply stated, is that "missionaries misinterpreted

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[72] *Ibid.*, 69.

[73] Ian Hacking. "Language, Truth and Reason" In *Rationality and Relativism*, Eds. Martin Hollis and S. Lukes, (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1982), 59-60.

[74] Meyer and Ramirez, "Wakinyan Hotan: The Thunder Beings Call Out: The Inscrutability of Lakota/Dakota Metaphysics", 89-90.

the metaphysical significance of the traditional Dakota/Lakota culture."[75] The problem was not missionaries' inability to understand particular words but rather the overall, or collective, significance of those words. Native utterances were interpreted in terms of the missionaries' own particular Western 'way of reasoning'. The result was a misrepresentation of Dakota/Lakota thought. Therefore, Meyer and Ramirez argue: "Understanding this problem will enable us to be more discriminating in considering the interpretive descriptions of Lakota/Dakota world view presented within literature, law and social science."[76]

Their point (and Hacking's as well) is that gaining access to different worldviews involves more than simple translation. It requires the *more difficult process* of learning to reason according the overall framework of another worldview. The changes in the literate mind's consciousness which have been induced by the technology of writing have led to just such a difference in 'styles of reasoning'. These changes which the written word have brought about have, thus, made it immensely difficult for literate peoples to gain access to the styles of reasoning of oral cultures, or even to recognize them as *forms of reasoning* .

The expansion of the technology of writing has involved a *dissociation* from our "spontaneous participation with the animate terrain."[77] Possibly even more importantly, the technology of writing has also brought about profound changes in human consciousness. These changes have, according to Ong's line of reasoning, resulted in a *dissociation* from a communal sense of self. This communal *sense of self,* grounded in

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[75] *Ibid.,* 93.

[76] *Ibid.,* 90.

[77] Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous,* 254.

one's participation with the myriad communities of an animate landscape, was replaced

by a more individual *sense of self* based, instead, on an abstract notion of a mental

substance which transcends the physical landscape. Ong writes that,

> The evolution of consciousness through human history is marked by
> growth in articulate attention to the interior of the person as distanced –
> though not necessarily separated from – the communal structures in which
> each person is necessarily enveloped.[78]

This *process of distancing* has led to not only a *dissociation* from both the natural

world and a fundamental (communal) sense of self, it has led, moreover, to a sense of

dissociation from other persons. In terms of the lack of understanding which exists

between Indigenous and Western cultures, this process of distancing has had a twofold

effect. First, the abstract notion of *mental substance* has, in Western culture, led to a view

of self as an individual *ego* which is understood (or defined) as being ultimately separate

from other selves and objects. The net result of this notion of individual egos, in Western

culture, has been a separation of individuals (from each other). The *self* is no longer

understood in terms of its membership within a particular community, but rather in terms

of its apparent isolation from others in being a fundamentally mental being, a Cartesian

ego.

Second, in understanding themselves as discrete mental entities, each of which is

unique and distinct (and ultimately disconnected) from each and every other being, there

has been a separation of individuals in Western culture from the comprehension of

Indigenous communal societies: a distancing from what it means to define oneself in

terms of one's membership in various communities, including both human and other-

than-human communities. Western people, generally speaking, move about, and relate to,

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[78] Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 178.

the world as an individual *self* which engages an immense and ultimately unknowable *other*, whereas Indigenous peoples view themselves as participating in a vast and varied set of communities which are discovered through actively developing relations within those communities. It is, in part, because of such differences as the way each of these different senses of self are grounded, that oral and literate peoples alike have experienced overwhelming difficulties in their attempts to understand each other's cultural traditions. Stated simply, these difficulties have made living in the world together, or establishing a balanced relationship between the various cultural traditions which comprise our present global community, a very complicated affair.

The usefulness of notions such as *dissociation* for examining and understanding cross-cultural relations has not only been demonstrated by Meyer and Ramirez in their paper "Wakinyan Hotan: The Thunder Beings Call Out: The Inscrutability of Lakota/Dakota Metaphysics", but has also been echoed by McPherson and Rabb in their recent article "Walking the Talk: An Application of Anishnabe Philosophy or A Tearful Trail Toward Culturally Congruent Education". In their article, McPherson and Rabb state that it is their intent to "use Ian Hacking's notion of dissociation or radical incommensurability as a philosophical framework for understanding discrimination."[79] Their use of Hacking's work in examining the issue of discrimination reflects, very clearly, controversial conclusions and calls to action that Benjamin Whorf presents in his essay "Language, Mind, and Reality". Whorf writes:

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[79] Dennis McPherson and J. Douglas Rabb. "Walking the Talk: An Application of Anishnabe Philosophy or A Tearful Trail toward Culturally Congruent Education" *Ayaangwaamizin: The International Journal of Indigenous Philosophy* 2:1 (1989-1999): 89-99.

Thus, one of the most important coming steps for Western knowledge is a re-evaluation of the linguistic backgrounds of its thinking, and for that matter of all thinking.[80]

This call to action involves a careful examination of the *unthought presuppositions* which have shaped. and which continue to shape, Western ways of thinking. McPherson and Rabb, for instance, are arguing that the Western attitudes which govern both the administration and content of educational institutions make it extremely difficult for such institutions to effectively respond to Native students' needs. McPherson and Rabb argue, in reference to "the attempt of Native people to be heard"[81] in this context, that

It follows that when a modern university administration attempts to understand what culturally appropriate education means to Native students without realizing that the entire non-Native world view may well be incommensurable with that of the students, the decisions reached may well result, not merely in misunderstanding, but in actual systemic discrimination.[82]

The attempt to adapt Western educational institutions to meet Native peoples' needs must involve a re-evaluation, or re-thinking, of the attitudes which guide decisions regarding the content, delivery, and administration of education in Western academic institutions. However, this re-thinking of Western attitudes in not enough. The implementation of the kind of culturally appropriate education which McPherson and Rabb have in mind requires that educators and administrators develop a deeper understanding of Native peoples' perspectives and needs. In other words, McPherson and

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[80] Benjamin L. Whorf. "Language, Mind, and Reality", reprinted in *Language, Thought, and Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf*, Ed., John B. Carroll, (Cambridge: The M. I. T. Press, 1966), 247.

[81] McPherson and Rabb, "Walking the Talk: An Application of Anishnabe Philosophy or A Tearful Trail toward Culturally Congruent Education", 90.

[82] *Ibid.*, 92.

Rabb are arguing that a "dissociation from their own Western world view is required,"[83] a re-orientation of thought and meaning.

If it is the animate lifeworld which is at the basis of the meaningfulness of all these varied cultural perspectives, as has been argued throughout this chapter, then a recognition of that fact is the first step in reaching mutual understanding between the Indigenous people of North America and its Western settlers. Using this insight it is now possible to take one further step: an evaluation of the actual use of particular concepts. In terms of this study, this final step involves turning our attention to Indigenous peoples' use of the concept of autonomy in articulating their desire for such things as self-government, and culturally appropriate education.

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[83] *Ibid.*, 92.

CHAPTER FOUR:
Cultural Perspectives in Applying Concepts

Two adaptations of Michael Pomedli's method of *conceptual archaeology* provide the framework for my cross-cultural treatment of the concept of autonomy. Pomedli's work involved examining material with obvious cultural biases (e.g., the *Jesuit Relations*), while taking into account these biases as best as possible in an attempt to gain a clearer understanding of the Huron people's use of concepts which the Jesuits used as translations of their Christian concept of soul. My first adaptation of this methodology concerns Natives peoples' appropriation of the Western term *autonomy* and the cultural biases (or worldviews) which serve as a context for Native peoples' particular uses of this concept (as well as Indigenous interpretations of relevant arguments of Western philosophers). The aim of my second adaptation of Pomedli's methodology is to take into consideration, or make allowances for, the Western cultural biases which have shaped, or limited, the use, or articulation, of the concept of autonomy by Western philosophers such as Immanuel Kant.

Throughout this chapter I also make use of the arguments of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson put forward in their recent book *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought*, concerning the role of metaphor, or use of conceptual metaphors, in reasoning within a particular conceptual framework. Their discussion aids in my attempt to demonstrate the possibility of circumventing the so called problem of incommensurability in that it provides a framework for understanding how cultural biases relate to the ways concepts are used within a particular worldview. Lakoff and Johnson argue that metaphorical idioms "open up the possibility that a

significant part of the lexical differences across languages may have to do with differences in conventional imagery. The same metaphorical mappings applied to different images will give rise to different linguistic expressions of those mappings."[1]

One account of the concept of autonomy, in Western philosophy, comes to us through the work of Immanuel Kant. In the case of Indigenous peoples' use of the word 'autonomy' I have looked to a variety of materials in order to get at Indigenous perspectives on this concept. The first is the contemporary academic discourse of Indigenous peoples in journals such as *Ayaangwaamizin: The International Journal of Indigenous Philosophy*, books such as Robert A. Williams, Jr.'s *Linking Arms Together: American Indian Treaty Visions of Law and Peace, 1600-1800*, and government publications such as the British Columbia Ministry of Education's *Native Literacy and Life Skills Curriculum Guidelines*. The second area includes anthropological materials such as Dorothy Lee's *Freedom and Culture*. Lastly, I also look to insights contained in traditional materials of North American Indigenous peoples such as the Constitution of the Iroquois people as well as the *Gus Wen Tah*, a treaty belt of the Iroquois people.

The concern which has led, in part, to my choice of the concept of autonomy for this study is the growing use of this Western word 'autonomy' by Indigenous peoples in connection with various social issues such as culturally appropriate education and self-government. My choice is also, in part, a response to the growing body of academic discourse put forward by Indigenous peoples, which McPherson and Rabb, for their own

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[1] Lakoff, George and Mark Johnson. *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 69.

part, describe as "a critique of Kantian ethics from a Native American perspective."[2] This body of discourse is, I argue, a valuable source of insights into not only Native peoples' own understanding of the concept of autonomy, but also into Native peoples' worldviews in general. Moreover, a critique from an Indigenous perspective provides an 'outsider's' view of our Western philosophical uses of this concept from which we can learn much.

In criticizing Kant, Native scholars have tended to emphasize the aspects of Kant's work they dislike most. However, within an historical and social context, there is a sense of urgency among Indigenous peoples to re-assert the distinctness of their cultural heritage. I shall argue that this urgency is often accompanied by a tendency to simplify aspects of Western philosophy (or, at least, equate a particular philosopher's use of a concept with its everyday use in Western mainstream society) in order to emphasize the differences between Western and Indigenous perspectives.

Kant's Use of the Concept of Autonomy

In examining Kant's use of the concept of autonomy it is important to look not only at his own words but also, according to Lakoff and Johnson, at some of the underlying factors which have shaped Kant's own use of this concept. One factor which they point to is the metaphorical framework which underlies Kant's articulation of various concepts, including the concepts of *self*, *reason*, as well as *autonomy*. Moreover, as Lakoff and Johnson argue, it is a metaphorical framework of which Kant was largely unaware. Kant states that his aim in writing *The Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals* is "nothing more than the search for and establishment of the supreme principle of

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[2] Dennis McPherson and J. Douglas Rabb. "Some Thoughts on Articulating a Native Philosophy" *Ayaangwaamizin: The International Journal of Indigenous Philosophy* 1:1 Spring (1997), 12.

morality."[3] Kant's arguments are, indeed, forceful, but that is not to say that they are without problematic aspects. Like so many other great thinkers Kant was a man (and a product) of his time. Although Kant sought to provide a *universal ethic*, his arguments have been shaped (or conditioned), in part, by both the language in which he wrote and the cultural situation of his time.

The idea of self-government, or self-legislation, is one which plays a key role in Kant's ethical theory, and can clearly be seen in his "third formulation of the principle [of morality], viz., in the Idea of the will of every rational being as a will giving universal law."[4] Kant writes that the "will is not only subject to the law, but subject in such a way that it must be conceived also as itself prescribing universal law."[5] This focus on the will as adhering to a law which the will itself prescribes is notable in that it stands in stark contrast to competing ethical theories which rely on either consequentialist principles such as happiness or external laws such as ethical theories grounded in theological arguments. As a result of this focus on the *will*, Kant argues that

> Nothing in the world – indeed nothing even beyond the world – can possibly be conceived which could be called good without qualification except a GOOD WILL.... Thus the good will seems to constitute the indispensable condition even of worthiness to be happy."[6]

For Kant, moral principles are dictated by reason itself, and more specifically, by what he describes as *practical reason*. The possibility of being able to choose to follow

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[3] Immanuel Kant. *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Trans., Lewis White Beck, (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1995), 8.

[4] *Ibid.*, 49. The addition in square brackets is my own.

[5] *Ibid.*, 48.

[6] *Ibid.*, 9.

the principles which reason sets out requires freedom. Our evidence, Kant argues, comes to us from our experience of being able to choose, or to will a certain thought or action. Although we might not, as Kant states, be able to prove the reality of freedom in itself we can, nonetheless, "say that every being which cannot act otherwise than under the Idea of freedom is thereby really free in a practical sense."[7] This freedom which is required for our ability to choose, or make decisions (moral or otherwise), is closely related to Kant's division of reality into the noumenal and phenomenal realms, the world as it is in itself and the world of appearances, as it is for us. According to Kant, it is homo-noumenon who is free, as opposed to homo-phenomenon (who, as a physical being, is limited by natural laws, such as gravity, etc.). Kant writes: "The rational being counts himself, *qua* intelligence, as belonging to the intelligible world [as homo-noumenon], and only as an efficient cause belonging to it does he call his causality will."[8] Each of us is not only an appearance for others but also an end-in-itself: a being with the freedom to chose how to act. It is along these lines that Kant writes:

> Everything in nature works according to laws. Only a rational being has the capacity of acting according to the *conception* of laws (i.e., according to principles). This capacity is the will. Since reason is required for the derivation of actions from laws, will is nothing less than practical reason.[9]

It is because of this capacity to self-legislate according to rational principles that all rational beings must be viewed as ends-in-themselves. All persons must be viewed not only as *beings* in our field of appearances, but also as ends-in-themselves. In other words, a person is a being who should not be used simply to further one's own purposes, a being

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[7] *Ibid.*, 65.

[8] *Ibid.*, 71. The addition in square brackets is my own. Cf. note 16.

[9] *Ibid.*, 29.

who can propose an end, and who is therefore deserving of our respect. It is on these grounds, then, that Kant argues that "an end in itself does not have mere relative worth (price) but an intrinsic worth (dignity)."[10] Rational beings, in being able to freely adhere to rational principles, are worthy of respect and are granted moral standing. This moral standing can be clearly seen in the following formulation of the categorical imperative: "Act so that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of another, always as an end and never as a means only."[11] In other words, one ought to respect the autonomy of other persons (as well as one's own). Kant writes: "Autonomy is thus the basis of the dignity of both human nature and every rational nature."[12] Ethically speaking, a person is said to be autonomous, then, when acting according to rational principles alone, rather than acting, for example, out of fear of punishment or simply from desire or self-interest.

Kant's focus on *reason*, or what he refers to as 'pure practical reason' (through which the individual discovers the necessity of the moral law and secures autonomy), as the source of dignity of human beings has been a key point of contention with some Indigenous scholars. For Kant, the capacity of *practical reason* sets humanity apart from the rest of the natural world. Because humanity is free to choose to follow the dictates of a universally applicable system of reasoning, humanity alone is deserving of the dignity which this moral freedom makes possible. Humanity alone has moral standing. However, Lakoff and Johnson argue that although Kant may indeed have thought he was grounding

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[10] *Ibid.*, 52.

[11] *Ibid.*, 46.

[12] *Ibid.*, 53.

his ethical theory in a universal system of reason, in actual fact he "was brilliantly working out the entailments of a close-knit cluster of conceptual metaphors that he inherited from Western philosophy and the Judeo-Christian tradition."[13] In other words, there is no one universal 'way of reasoning' which we (humanity) make use of in moral, or practical, matters. Rather, different worldviews make use of different 'ways of reasoning'. Kant was merely making explicit the implications of one particular 'way of reasoning' which is made use of in Western thought.

Indigenous Responses to Kant's Use of the Concept of Autonomy

Kant's position has been criticized from an Indigenous perspective. For example, it is McPherson and Rabb's expressed intent in their article "Some Thoughts on Articulating a Native Philosophy" to demonstrate "why such an ethic is necessarily ethnocentric (and why that is wrong)"[14] Their concern is that Kant grants moral standing to only human persons, which, as they argue, "is very different from the Native American notion of a deep respect, perhaps even a religious respect, for a nature that consists, for the most part, of what have been called other-than-human persons."[15]

Developing an understanding of this contention between Western and Indigenous peoples' use of the concept of person is crucial for understanding Native and non-Native peoples' various uses of the concept of autonomy. In contrast to Native peoples' broad

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[13] Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 415.

[14] McPherson and Rabb, "Some Thoughts on Articulating a Native Philosophy", 13.

[15] *Ibid.*, 13.

use of the concept of person (which includes other-than-human-person), Kant's use of

this concept is far more narrow. Kant writes:

> Man in the system of nature (*homo phaenomenon, animal rationale*) is a
> being of slight importance and shares with the rest of the animals, as
> offspring of the earth, a common value (*pretium vulgare*).... But man as
> regarded as person – that is, as the subject of morally practical reason – is
> exalted above any price; for as such (*homo noumenon*) he is not to be
> valued as a mere means to the ends of others or even to his own ends, but
> as an end in himself.[16]

In order to be considered as a person a being must possess a rational nature, or in

Kant's words, be the subject of *morally practical reason*. Here on earth, humans, and

only humans, are viewed as possessing this inner (moral) worth which elevates them

above thinghood, or animalhood, to the level of personhood. In responding to this narrow

use of the concept of person (a use which includes only human beings, as *homo

noumena*), McPherson and Rabb cite the above passage of Kant in arguing that his

position reflects a characteristic Western attitude of "complete alienation from the earth.

The offspring of the earth have only a common value (*pretium vulgare*), whereas man

alone has dignity, an intrinsic value worthy of respect."[17]

This Western tendency to downplay the role of nature can also be seen in Kant's

argument that "whatever is above all price and therefore admits of no equivalent, has

dignity"[18]. He does however admit that "Nature and likewise art contain nothing which

could make up for their lack."[19] In other words, although they contain a value which

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[16] Immanuel Kant. *The Doctrine of Virtue: Part II of The Metaphysics of Morals*, Trans., Mary J. Gregor, (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 99.

[17] McPherson and Rabb, "Some Thoughts on Articulating a Native Philosophy", 14.

[18] Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 51.

[19] *Ibid.*, 52.

cannot be replaced, the offspring of the earth, as phenomenal beings, have only a common value. Nature in itself (the noumenal aspect of reality), however, Kant argues, must remain unknown to us. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant writes: " We need not... deny that, outside all appearances [of natural phenomena], there are purely intelligible grounds of the appearances; but as we have no knowledge of these whatsoever, we must never attempt to make use of them in our explanation of nature."[20] So, although Kant draws the conclusion that "Autonomy is thus the basis of the dignity of both human nature and *every rational nature*"[21] he proceeds to discuss the concept of autonomy in relation to only human beings, or *homo noumena*. He does not, because he can not, say if Nature has its own *rational nature*. In other words, we can talk about human beings in terms of both a noumenal and a phenomenal self; but as for what lies behind the appearance of nature, or natural phenomena (such as rocks, trees, and animals), we cannot say. We cannot, on the one hand, deny the possibility that Nature might indeed possess a rational nature, nor can we, on the other hand, affirm the possibility of a purely intelligible Nature which might underlie nature. The sentiment which underlies Kant's argument here can be understood in terms of the early Wittgenstein's dictum that "[w]hat we cannot speak of we must pass over in silence."[22] In other words, since we cannot know Nature beyond its appearance, we must talk about Nature only in terms of its appearance.

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[20] Immanuel Kant. *Critique of Pure Reason*, Trans. Norman Kemp Smith, (Houndmills: MacMillan Press, 1993), 551. The addition in square brackets is my own.

[21] Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 53. The italics are my own.

[22] Ludwig Wittgenstein. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Trans. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961), § 7.

An interesting parallel to Kant's division of reality into the noumenal and phenomenal realms can be seen in Indigenous thought. Ojibwa scholar James Dumont writes: "Ojibwa man is always *religious man* because he knows that as a 'soul/body' he moves about in both ordinary and non-ordinary reality… and realizes, further, that… he must establish, once and for all, absolute contact with the spirit world."[23] Although Kant does recognize that humans belong to both noumenal and phenomenal realms, man as a noumenal being is separate from Nature, representing a fundamental separation between man and nature, a separation between self (as a moral self) and other. However, we see in Dumont's words that for Indigenous peoples there is not this stark separation between self and other. Through the vision quest, one discovers, as McPherson and Rabb write, that "we are not really *apart from* the earth and other people. We are a *part of* the earth and other people."[24] For Indigenous peoples it is non-ordinary reality (or the noumenal) which unites man and nature, whereas for Kant it seems the noumenal separates man from nature.

Orality, Literacy, the Use of Metaphor, and Ways of Reasoning

Indigenous criticisms of Kant's use of the concepts of reason and person (or *self*), such as those put forward by McPherson and Rabb, very closely parallel, in their substance, Walter Ong's arguments in *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*. Central to Ong's work is the argument that the shift in consciousness which

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[23] James Dumont. "Journey to Daylight-Land: Through Ojibwa Eyes" *Laurentian University Review* 8:2 1976: 39.

[24] McPherson and Rabb, "Some Thoughts on Articulating a Native Philosophy", 17.

accompanied the adoption of writing in Europe is one of the notable factors which is responsible for European culture's characteristic alienation from the natural world.

Stated in terms of Lakoff and Johnson's arguments, the written word has opened up new metaphorical possibilities to the members of literate cultures. For example, in Western culture, people have access to metaphors such as 'the letter of the law' for expressing the concept of strictness, or stringency, a metaphor which relies heavily on the use of the written, phonetic alphabet. In oral cultures, such a metaphor does not seem to be possible. We see here, then, what Lakoff and Johnson mean when they say "that a significant part of the lexical differences across languages may have to do with differences in conventional imagery."[25] The visual images of letters and written words are not a part of the *conventional imagery* which the members of oral cultures have at their disposal.

Similarly, David Abram, in *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World*, argues that it was the development of the written alphabet which allowed Western thinkers to "stand at a new distance from the natural order, their thoughts inhabiting a different mode of temporality from the flux of nature, which they now question and strive to understand."[26] Whereas Western thinkers tend to use the concept of person in a more abstract sense (a self which somehow transcends the natural world), Indigenous peoples tend, as Ong argues, "to use concepts in situational,

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[25] Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 69.

[26] David Abram. *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), 108.

operational frames of reference that are minimally abstract in the sense that they remain close to the living human lifeworld."[27]

Lakoff and Johnson suggest that the written word opened up new metaphorical possibilities, metaphorical possibilities which have eventually led to, or allowed for, the development of a variety of different schools of philosophical thought. They argue that the 'Thought as Language' metaphor:

> is central to the Anglo-American philosophical tradition. Its effect is to view the concepts expressed by language as linguistic symbols meaningless in themselves and requiring interpretation. What follows from that metaphor is that analysis of language is analysis of thought.[28]

In other words, metaphorical frameworks such as the 'Thought as Language' metaphor have led to the analytic tradition's view of language where words (and their meanings) are understood as being products of the human mind, separate from the inert, discrete entities which they name. Language, in this view, is a strictly human affair. Whereas, in Indigenous thought, the kinds of metaphor which arise are, as Ong argues, much less abstract (than the Western notion of 'linguistic symbols'), which has, in turn, led to, as he says, the use of concepts in a "situational, operational frame of reference."[29] Moreover, Indigenous peoples' understanding of language itself, generally speaking, is shaped by their particular use of metaphor. As Abram writes: "Indeed, for many oral, indigenous peoples, the boundaries enacted by their languages are more like permeable membranes binding the peoples to their particular terrains, rather than barriers walling

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[27] Walter Ong. *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London: Methuen, 1984), 49.

[28] Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 442.

[29] Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 49.

them off from the land."[30] So, rather than holding a view of language as being merely a human construct, as is in the case of the Western analytic tradition, Indigenous peoples hold a very different overall view of language. Abram argues:

> By affirming that the other animals have their own languages, and that even the rustling of the leaves in an oak tree or an aspen grove is itself *a kind of voice*, oral peoples bind their senses to the shifting sounds and gestures of the local earth, and thus ensure that their own ways of speaking remain informed by the life of the land.[31]

In order to better understand Native and non-Native peoples' unique uses of concepts we must make allowances for not only factors such as the oral or written nature of their traditions, but also the unique influences of the specific conceptual frameworks (and the metaphors used within these frameworks) in which their respective worldviews developed. The meaning of a concept must be viewed in the context of the conceptual framework in which it is being used. In examining how concepts are being used in a particular cultural context, we must be sure not to view concepts as having discrete meanings which can be determined in isolation from the use of other concepts in that particular cultural perspective.

Although it is no longer acceptable to say that the various concepts we use correspond to the world as it really is, how we use concepts, and language in general, depends upon our connection to the world, our participation, as Abram says, in "this dynamic, interconnected reality that provokes and sustains all our speaking"[32] In light of the depth of our connection to the animate, physical landscape, Abram argues:

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[30] Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, 256.

[31] *Ibid.*, 256. The italics are my own.

[32] *Ibid.*, 85.

"Ultimately, then, it is not the human body alone but rather the whole of the sensuous world that provides the deep structures of language."[33] Lakoff and Johnson's arguments also provide an innovative exploration of the links between 1) our physical bodies and our ways of reasoning and communicating, and 2) the role of metaphors in understanding and articulating concepts. In viewing language and the world as comprising one systematic whole, Lakoff and Johnson's arguments parallel, in an important way, the arguments of David Abram, as well as those of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Donald Davidson. Lakoff and Johnson write: "The mind is not merely embodied, but embodied in such as way that our conceptual systems draw largely upon the commonalities of our bodies and of the environments we live in."[34] The imagery, patterns, sounds, and other aspects of the landscape upon which we are situated are woven into, and support, our conceptual frameworks, and our ways of communicating about the world. It is this grounding in the physical landscape which also serves as ground for our sense of self. But, as Lakoff and Johnson argue:

> There is no Fregean person – as posed by analytic philosophy – for whom thought has been extruded from the body…. Because our conceptual systems grow out of our bodies, meaning is grounded in and through our bodies. Because a vast range of our concepts are metaphorical, meaning is not entirely literal and the classical correspondence theory of truth is false.[35]

It was the goal of Frege and philosophers with similar views to rid language of the vagueness of metaphorical meaning, and replace it with precise logical meaning. But, as Ong and Abram have argued, the static appearance of written text – the written, phonetic

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[33] *Ibid.*, 85.

[34] Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 6.

[35] *Ibid.*, 6.

alphabet – gave the illusion that words had static and precise meanings. For philosophers such as Frege, language was understood as being about the world, but not dependent on the world. Words and concepts were understood as having meaning in a very *literal* sense. The problem which arises in the correspondence view of language and meaning, as Lakoff and Johnson note, is that "because ideas have to be literal if they are to fit the world, they cannot be metaphorical. That is why the very idea of a conceptual metaphor is at odds with this interpretation of the [correspondence] theory."[36] However, given the view that meaning is largely a matter of coherence with a particular context, it follows that, as Lakoff and Johnson argue: "Metaphor is centrally a matter of thought, not just words."[37] Metaphors arise when concepts are used in novel situations, for example, in the attempt to articulate our ideas about things which we cannot easily point at, such as love, our idea of self, and the idea of autonomy. Although metaphor is largely a matter of thought, it must be remembered that language itself is not completely a matter of human thought. Language finds its roots in our connection to the physical landscape. Lakoff and Johnson write: "Since reason is shaped by the body, it is not radically free, because the possible human conceptual systems and the possible forms of reason are limited. In addition, once we have learned a conceptual system... we are not free to think just anyway."[38] Which kinds of metaphors are used within a particular conceptual framework are not, then, completely random, nor up to us.

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[36] *Ibid.*, 120. The addition in square brackets is my own.

[37] *Ibid.*, 123.

[38] *Ibid.*, 5.

Moreover, Lakoff and Johnson indicate: "The fact that abstract thought is mostly metaphorical means that answers to philosophical questions have always been, and always will be, mostly metaphorical."[39] In contrast to the efforts of Western analytic philosophers, such as Frege, to resolve philosophical problems through purely linguistic analysis, Lakoff and Johnson argue: "Metaphorical thought is the principle tool that makes philosophical insight possible and that constrains the forms that philosophy can take."[40] In terms of this study, understanding the metaphorical use of particular concepts, such as the concept of autonomy, can be viewed as a gateway to, or a tool for, understanding how to reason according to a particular conceptual framework. An understanding of the use of metaphor as tool for articulating meaning and our beliefs about the world provides a useful way of gaining access to the world views of North American Indigenous peoples. Lakoff and Johnson's approach is indispensable in establishing meaningful philosophical dialogue between individuals grounded in different worldviews.

Autonomy and Other-Than-Human Persons

Whereas Kant grounds his notion of person (beings deserving of respect) in the capacity a being has for rationality, Indigenous peoples' use of the concept of person seems grounded, rather, in the simple fact that they are *beings*, that *they exist*. In *Freedom and Culture*, Dorothy Lee writes that in Navaho society: "Adults and children are valued

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[39] *Ibid.*, 7.

[40] *Ibid.*, 7.

for their sheer being, just because they are."[41] It is *not*, as it is with Kant, that beings are valued because they have some special capacity, and hence, it is understandable that to Indigenous peoples, Kant's focus on the human capacity for rational thought seems like quite the dubious assumption.

Cree philosopher Lorraine Brundige criticizes Kant's ethical theory, arguing that this is "one significant instance, where the aboriginal view is diametrically opposed to that found in one particular non-Native world view."[42] Her criticism is that Kant does not think that we have any direct duty to animals, that they are not worthy of our respect. She notes that, in Kant's philosophy, the status of animals arises not in connection with any direct or indirect duty we might have to them as other beings, but only insofar as Kant thinks that "he who is cruel to animals becomes hard also in his dealing with men."[43] The status of animals, here, seems to Kant an afterthought, a secondary, and relatively unimportant consideration; or it is, at least, a consideration unworthy of much philosophical consideration.

McPherson and Rabb criticize Kant on similar grounds in their article "Some Thoughts on Articulating a Native Philosophy". Their concern lies with Kant's anthropocentric (human-centered) attitude. Kant has not simply failed to consider other-than-human beings, he views them as belonging solely to the phenomenal realm. In other words, he views their behaviour as causally determined, as opposed to being governed by a (rational) *will*. Other-than-human beings are not *free* in the same sense that we humans

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[41] Dorothy Lee. *Freedom and Culture* (Prentice-Hall, 1959), 10.

[42] Lorraine Brundige. "Continuity of Native Values: Cree and Ojibwa" (Master's Thesis, Lakehead University, April 1997) 36.

[43] Immanuel Kant. *Lectures on Ethics*, Trans., Louis Infield, (New York: The Century Co., n.d.), 239.

are. McPherson and Rabb argue that "Kant himself thought he had justified the application of causal explanation to everything in what he called the phenomenal world, the world we discover through sense perception."[44] Indigenous peoples, they argue, hold a very different view on the status of other-than-human persons. These *other-than-human persons* are afforded dignity and respect; they are regarded as relatives and are treated accordingly. This view of other-than-human persons (or, use of the concept of person) is one which has developed within the larger context of various Indigenous worldviews. McPherson and Rabb note that "the entire narrative tradition plays an important role in helping the individual formulate a view of the world and thus decide what sorts of things deserve the respect accorded to 'persons'."[45]

Just as Pomedli gives consideration to the religious and philosophical training of Jesuit missionaries in order to understand their reasons for translating Christian concepts (into the Huron language) in a particular way, consideration must also be given to reasons for Indigenous peoples' particular use of concepts. In terms of this study, consideration must be given to the factors that shape how Indigenous peoples use concepts which have been adopted from Western philosophical traditions. In carrying out this *conceptual archaeology* it is important to look at not only the 'network of inferential associations' between various concepts, but also the metaphors which are used to articulate those concepts. It is important to remember that these uses are not random, but, rather, that Indigenous peoples' use of the concept of person has been shaped through the ways in which they explore their relationship with the lifeworld. One such formative influence

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[44] McPherson and Rabb, "Some Thoughts on Articulating a Native Philosophy", 13.

[45] *Ibid.*, 16-17.

which McPherson and Rabb mention is the *vision quest*. Used in conjunction with (or, in the context of) the whole narrative tradition, the vision quest is intended to facilitate the individual's exploration of his/her relationship with the lifeworld, the tapestry of life into which we are all woven. McPherson and Rabb write:

> One of the things discovered during the vision quest is that we are not really *apart from* the earth and other people. We are rather a *part of* the earth and other people. The experience seems to bring about the realization that willing the good of others is not in any sense a form of self-sacrifice, given the enlarged sense of self acquired in the journey into non-ordinary reality.[46]

Care should be taken here to avoid misunderstanding, for, McPherson and Rabb warn that this notion of an enlarged sense of self "may convey a sense of arrogant individualism, which is not intended and is certainly not present."[47] For my purpose here, it will suffice to say that, generally speaking, Indigenous peoples have a sense of *self* which is substantially different from the Western notions of a *self*, as either an objective observer of physical phenomena or as a distinct moral self (which Kant argues for in his moral philosophy). Indigenous peoples' notion of person seems to dissolve the distinction between the individual's ordinary sense of self (as an individual human being) and the other beings we are in contact with, whereas Western notions of *self*, such as Kant's, seem to reinforce this distinction.

In terms of Kant's moral theory, this distinction is very clear.[48] Here on earth, the only moral agents are humans. Just as Indigenous peoples' use of concepts have been

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[46] *Ibid.*, 17.

[47] *Ibid.*, 17.

[48] It should be noted that the extreme nature of the Kantian distinction between man and nature led, in part, to a cultural backlash: the Romantic Movement.

shaped by a backdrop of largely unthought formative influences, or pre-suppositions, so have Kant's. A *conceptual archaeology* of Kantian thought must then begin with an understanding of some of the social, philosophical, metaphorical factors which have played a role in shaping Kant's thought. Kant's proclivity for focusing on human beings (and our rational capacity) is not all that mysterious. Living in cities, buying food at the market, and other such things, do not lend themselves well to developing and maintaining a relationship with the physical landscape. With increasing numbers of people living in cities, adults and children alike began to orient their sense of self to reflect the human relationships with which they almost exclusively concerned themselves. The technology of writing has also acted as a catalyst for this propensity to focus on only *human* beings. Ong states: "Writing introduces division and alienation, but a higher unity as well. It intensifies the sense of self and fosters more conscious interaction between persons."[49] By Kant's day, the individual's personal relationship with lifeworld, had become, in a sense, irrelevant. It was human affairs with which individuals, and especially philosophers, were concerned.

Another central factor, as we have seen, which served in shaping Kant's thought (or his articulation of concepts such as autonomy) is the unthought use of metaphor. Two such metaphors which underlie Kant's use of the concept of person are, as Lakoff and Johnson argue, the *Society of Mind* and *Family of Man* metaphors. The Society of Mind metaphor (which, as Lakoff and Johnson note, is also central to the modern science of psychology) provides a way of understanding or defining *mind*. The mind in this context is understood as an intangible, mental substance, or a Cartesian self which is distinct and

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[49] Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 179.

separate from material substance. Moreover, as Lakoff and Johnson argue, this metaphor

"imposes a structure on the mind, producing a metaphorical conception of what the mind

is and how it operates."[50] Lakoff and Johnson write:

> In the [Society of Mind] metaphor, the mind is conceptualized as a society
> whose members perform distinct, nonoverlapping tasks necessary for the
> successful functioning of that society.... For example, since each person in
> the Society of Mind is a separate autonomous agent, each faculty of mind
> is separate and autonomous.... Since society is structured hierarchically
> with an executive giving orders, so too the mind has a hierarchical
> structure and an executive in control.[51]

In our daily affairs, according to Kant, it is the faculty of reason (or practical

reason) which ought to have 'executive control' over our decision making. In the

metaphorical terminology of Lakoff and Johnson, reason can be understood as a *Father* in

the Society of Mind, a *Father* whose role it is to govern over the other persons (or

faculties of mind) in the Society of Mind metaphor. In the above quote we also see that

the Society of Mind metaphor relies on a very specific notion of society as being

hierarchically structured (with only one person exercising control over all other persons

who comprise this society). Kant's use of the concept of person relies not only on this

metaphorical conception of mind, but it also reflects what Lakoff and Johnson refer to as

the Family of Man metaphor. They write:

> This metaphor entails that we all have a moral obligation to treat each
> other as we would family members, according to an ideal model of what a
> family is.... In other words, this metaphor projects family moral structure
> onto a universal moral structure. For example, it is a consequence of this
> metaphor that just as each child in the family is subject to the same moral
> authority and moral laws, so each person in the world is subject to the
> same moral authority and moral laws...

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[50] Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 413.

[51] *Ibid.*, 410 and 413. The addition in square brackets is my own.

This metaphor, however, is very general. It does not say anything about what type of family humankind is to be.[52]

Just as the Society of Mind metaphor relies on a specific social structure, the Family of Man metaphor relies on a specific type of family structure. According to Lakoff and Johnson, Kant's work reflects a *Strict Father* version of the Family of Man metaphor, wherein, metaphorically speaking, *Reason* holds (or ought to hold) executive or absolute power in making decisions regarding moral matters. Lakoff and Johnson outline the overall arrangement of the metaphorical framework which underlies Kant's moral theory with the following diagram:

THE UNIVERSAL MORALITY AS STRICT FATHER MORALITY METAPHOR

Strict Father Morality		*Universal Rational Morality*
Family	→	Humankind
Each Child	→	Each Human Being
Other Children	→	Every Other Human Being
Father	→	Universal Reason
Father's Moral Authority	→	Universal Moral Authority
Father's Commands	→	Universal Moral Laws
Obedience To Father	→	Obedience To Universal Moral Laws
Family Moral Relations	→	Universal Moral Relations
Family Nurturance To Be Morally Strong	→	Universal Nurturance To Be Morally Strong[53]

The cumulative effect of these various metaphors, including the Society of Mind and Family of Man metaphors, serves, as Lakoff and Johnson argue, as the "basis for Kant's claim that morality is founded on universal human reason issuing from absolute and universally valid moral commands."[54] Persons, or members of the moral community,

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[52] *Ibid.*, 420.

[53] *Ibid.*, 422.

[54] *Ibid.*, 421-422.

are, therefore, those beings which hold membership in the Society of Mind and the Family of Man: *human* beings.

Although it might be argued that in some instances Indigenous peoples hold a somewhat dualistic view of reality as we saw in James Dumont's comments regarding the Ojibwa peoples' recognition ordinary and non-ordinary realities, such a dualistic view finds its place within the larger context of *spiritual holism*. The Ojibwa, like most Indigenous peoples, do not view themselves as holding membership in one or the other of these realities but both. According to this view there is only one community, or *Family*, and all beings hold equal membership in that community. It is not a hierarchical community. What follows is a very different use of the concept of person. Holding a view such as the spiritual holism of Lakota/Dakota peoples, as Meyer and Ramirez argue, "would entail responding to the world according to the exhortation: Mitakuye oyasin! – 'We are all related!'"[55] This use of the concept of person can also be seen in Indigenous peoples' use of such similar phrases as 'All my relations'. Thomas King (Cherokee), in the 'Introduction' to *All My Relations: An Anthology of Contemporary Canadian Native Fiction*, writes:

> 'All my relations' is at first a reminder of who we are and of our relationship with both our family and our relatives…. But the relationships that Native people see go further, the web of kinship extending to the animals, to the birds, to the fish, to the plants, to all the animate and inanimate forms that can be seen or imagined. More than that, 'All my relations' is an encouragement for us to accept the responsibility we have within this universal family by living our lives in a harmonious and moral

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[55] Leroy Meyer and Tony Ramirez. "Wakinyan Hotan: The Thunder Beings Call Out: The Inscrutability of Lakota/Dakota Metaphysics" *From Our Eyes: Learning From Indigenous Peoples* (Toronto: Garamound Press, 1996), 105.

matter (a common admonishment is to say of someone that they act as if they have no relations.[56]

Autonomy and Children

McPherson and Brundige have each put forward criticisms concerning the status of children in Kant's ethical theory. These criticisms involve not only differences regarding the concept of *person*, but also Indigenous scholars' response to the Kantian notion of *heteronomy*. An *autonomous* being, according to Kant, is a being who is free to impose on himself or herself laws (as discovered though a universally applicable system of reasoning). Kant argues that we can lose our autonomy (and fall into a state of heteronomy) in two different ways. McPherson and Rabb provide an excellent summary of these two ways:

> We are... always in danger of losing our autonomy in one of two ways: (1) by giving in to a desire instead of exercising our own will power and acting on principle, on the moral law, in which case we become merely part of the causal order (homo phenomenon); or (2) by submitting to a law imposed by another, in which case though our behaviour is law-governed, it is not autonomous since the law is not self imposed.[57]

Since it is unlikely that Kant viewed children as being able to recognize and impose upon themselves rational moral principles, children are, therefore, not viewed as autonomous beings. Brundige, and McPherson and Rabb put forward nearly identical interpretations of Kant's views on children and heteronomy. Brundige writes:

> An autonomous person is one who is free to impose laws on him/herself, therefore being a self-governing agent. We achieve this state, according to Kant, by acting out of moral principle rather than from desire. Thus only

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[56] Thomas King. *All My Relations: An Anthology of Contemporary Canadian Native Fiction*, Thomas King, Ed., (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1990), ix.

[57] McPherson and Rabb, "Some Thoughts on Articulating a Native Philosophy", 14.

rational beings are capable of this ability to self-govern. As children we must first be governed by others. Kant calls this type of governing heteronomous. Autonomy then results from heteronomy.[58]

Similarly, McPherson and Rabb write:

> Still, it is important to learn to govern our behaviour according to laws or moral principles. As children we are governed by rules imposed by parents, teachers, etc. – by adults. As we achieve adulthood, having already learned law-like behaviour, we continue to impose on ourselves such laws as we still accept. In short, heteronomy is the first step toward autonomy.[59]

In these two interpretations of Kant's arguments, children learn law-like behaviour from parents (or generally, from adults). In a sense, children learn to mimic the behaviour of adults, and then, once adulthood is reached, we simply "impose on ourselves *such laws as we still accept.*"[60] In each of the two characterizations of Kant's position on children, by Indigenous scholars, mentioned above, children are seen as being incapable of freely imposing upon themselves law-like behaviour. Children must submit to the law of their parents and teachers; children are, therefore, in a state of heteronomy, not autonomy. Since children are not *fully* capable of acting autonomously, they have only limited moral standing.

Such a view of children (as heteronomous), however, does not arise in Native societies. Brundige argues that the "European or Euro-Canadian world view toward children has always been in direct opposition to that of the North American aboriginal people"[61], and that Indigenous peoples "do not believe as Kant, or other Europeans, that

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[58] Brundige, "Continuity of Native Values: Cree and Ojibwa", 48.

[59] McPherson and Rabb, "Some Thoughts on Articulating a Native Philosophy", 14-15.

[60] *Ibid.*, 14. The italics are my own.

[61] Brundige, "Continuity of Native Values: Cree and Ojibwa", 51.

children should be governed from without."[62] Likewise, McPherson and Rabb argue: "Heteronomy may well be an implicit part of the Western philosophical tradition stemming from ancient Greece. However, it most certainly is not a concept native to North America."[63] Indigenous people do not see themselves as having a right to govern over their children, as is the case in Western traditions. In regard to these differences between Native and non-Native views on children, McPherson and Rabb argue that "[o]ne point on which all researchers seem to agree is that Native children are given much more freedom than their non-Native counterparts."[64]

One publication to which McPherson and Rabb make several references in their own work is the British Columbia Ministry of Education's *Native Literacy and Life Skills Curriculum Guidelines*.[65] Written by a committee made up primarily of Native people, it serves as an excellent example of Indigenous peoples' use of the concept of autonomy. Although the committee reminds us that any "discussion of cultural learning styles is fraught with danger because of the tendency toward stereotyping,"[66] the distinction they draw between Native and non-Native learning styles is clear. The Native child is described as "independent and autonomous."[67] Non-Native children, on the other hand,

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[62] *Ibid.*, 51.

[63] McPherson and Rabb, "Some Thoughts on Articulating a Native Philosophy", 15.

[64] *Ibid.*, 15. The addition in square brackets is my own.

[65] See, Dennis McPherson and J. Douglas Rabb. "Some Thought on Articulating a Native Philosophy" *Ayaangwaamizin* 1:1 Spring (1997): 11-21.

[66] British Columbia Ministry of Education. *Native Literacy and Life Skills Curriculum Guidelines* (Victoria, BC: Ministry of Advanced Education and Job Training, and Ministry Responsible for Science and Technology, 1989), 13.

[67] *Ibid.*, 13.

are said to be "dependent and controlled."[68] Moreover, the committee suggests that the Native child is "considered a person... [and is]... free to explore his own environment,"[69] whereas non-Native children are "watched and controlled by parents throughout childhood."[70] In other words, the Native child's "autonomy allows him his own decisions."[71]

A significant problem arises if we are to understand this use of the concept of autonomy in a strictly Kantian sense. The problem here is that Native people might be viewed as making the claim that Native children are, in a Kantian sense, fully rational beings. It seems, rather, that Native children are simply granted the freedom to develop their reasoning processes without excessive external direction (from parents and other community members). A key notion, then, connected with the concept of autonomy is that of non-interference. Brundige, in her study documenting the principle of non-interference, relates the following example concerning parenting methods which are commonly found in Native communities:

> I asked her [an Ojibwa Elder] whether children learned through watching others. She answered that she had been asked that question many times. As she thought about the answer she began to realize that learning was done by watching parents as they were the role models. She said, "You watch them; whatever they do, you will do." It was obvious that she, like the Cree Elder mentioned... [earlier in her study], had to think about how it was they came to learn. Neither Elder was aware of being taught, at least not in the Western sense of teaching, that is by shaping.
> In the chapter on non-interference I talked about a mother who provides options for her child to help him make decisions. Both the method used by this mother and the method discussed by the Elder are means for teaching

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[68] *Ibid.*, 13.

[69] *Ibid.*, 13. The addition in square brackets is my own.

[70] *Ibid.*, 13.

[71] *Ibid.*, 15.

responsibility or abilities such as hunting, trapping and cooking that are accomplished through a way of life called "respect." Children watch then, they [model] engage in the activity.[72]

Just as Native peoples' uses of the concept of autonomy have been shaped by their particular cultural traditions and perspectives, these traditions have also served in shaping their particular interpretations of the arguments of Western philosophers. My suggestion is that Indigenous scholars' recognition of the differences between Native and non-Native perspectives has had an influence on their characterization of Kant's ethical theory, and specifically, their view that autonomy requires a stage, or phase, of heteronomy. Brundige, and McPherson and Rabb's interpretations both rely on the recognition that there is, in the Western philosophical tradition, a tendency to view the world and time itself, in a linear fashion. We can see this influence in that they see Kant as arguing that autonomy and heteronomy are sequentially connected. In other words, these Native interpretations of Kant seem to indicate that heteronomy must necessarily precede autonomy in a person's natural development from childhood into adulthood; a view which is radically different from the Native view.

Indigenous Interpretations of Kant: Critical and Problematic

In arguing for such drastic differences in worldviews, Indigenous peoples are better able to set their own views apart from both the Western worldview and the arguments put forward by Kant. McPherson and Rabb write:

> In this critique of the Eurocentricity of Kant's moral philosophy, we hope
> to have illustrated one possible way of articulating a Native perspective
> that would be of interest to the Western philosopher and yet not force this

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[72] Brundige, "Continuity of Native Values: Cree and Ojibwa", 132-133. The first two additions in square brackets are my own.

truly Indigenous North American philosophy into the mold of Western thought.[73]

In carrying out their critique, however, McPherson and Rabb may have, though inadvertently, actually forced Kant's moral philosophy into a mold which it does not quite fit: the mold of *traditional Western thought*. They have argued, as has Brundige, that the subjugation of children to the will, or laws, of their parents is compatible with Kant's moral philosophy. Admittedly, it is a position which may very well be compatible with Kant's arguments, but it is not the only position that can be inferred from Kant's arguments. Given their particular interpretation of Kant's arguments, that heteronomy is required for autonomy, I suggest that Indigenous scholars have missed aspects and interpretations of Kant's moral philosophy which might be of use to Indigenous peoples in their criticisms of the Western worldview in general (for example, traditional Western parenting methods such as the disciplining of children both verbally and physically).

Kant's focus on fully developed rational beings is indeed a problematic aspect of his ethical theory. In being charitable we must assume that Kant did not see people as suddenly one moment becoming rational, but rather that *reason* is something which develops from childhood on through the rest of our lives. Moreover, it should be noted that Kant, himself, believed that most people (adults) remain in a state of heteronomy. Kant writes: "Laziness and cowardice are the reasons so great a portion of mankind, after nature has long since discharged them from external direction..., nevertheless remain under lifelong tutelage"[74]

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[73] McPherson and Rabb, "Some Thoughts on Articulating a Native Philosophy", 20.

[74] Immanuel Kant. "What is Enlightenment?", Trans. Lewis White Beck, in Beck, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals and What is Enlightenment?* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1995), 83.

With a deep sense of concern, Kant argues that individuals should strive to achieve an increasing degree of autonomy. That an individual, i.e., a child, should necessarily undergo a stage of heteronomy is a position which does not necessarily follow from Kant's arguments. Rather, the Indigenous position that children be granted the freedom to make their own decisions (though not in an absolute way), is a position with which Kant would likely concur. In "What is Enlightenment?", Kant argues:

> Enlightenment is man's release from self-incurred tutelage. Tutelage is man's inability to make use of his understanding without direction from another. Self-incurred is this tutelage when its cause lies not in lack of reason but in lack of resolution and courage to use it *without direction from another*.[75]

Imposing heteronomy on children seems counterproductive to their becoming autonomous. Forcing a stage of heteronomy on children is likely to hinder their ability, in later years, to act on their own accord as autonomous adults. To illustrate my point I look to a similar argument Brundige puts forward. Citing her discussion with a Native Elder, she writes:

> The way I understood... [his] statement is: if you raise a wolf in a cage he will not learn the skills necessary for his survival as a wolf. So when you release him and he is free to go, he will not be prepared for survival. Now if you raise a child within a restricted environment, when it is time to let go, he/she will not be properly prepared for the environment the child will be entering.[76]

For Kant, enlightenment is a release from *self-incurred* tutelage. Imposing heteronomy on children would seem to make this release from *self-incurred tutelage* much more difficult. So, it seems that we need not tell our children how to act and

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[75] *Ibid.*, 83. The italics are my own.

[76] Brundige, "Continuity of Native Values: Cree and Ojibwa", 57. The addition in square brackets is my own.

reason, but rather, tutor, or show, our children how to act, and provide them with the tools required for them to develop their *reason*. Setting an example for our children is very different from telling our children how to act.

It is precisely this sort of *lack of direction* (or, non-interference) which Native parents afford their children. As Brundige writes: "They believe their children have the right to make their own decisions unhampered by parental coercion."[77] In contrast, the right of parents to disciple their children, in Western mainstream society, is a right which has been embedded into Western cultural traditions long before Kant's day. It is not a right which is necessarily derived from, or justified by, Kant's ethical theory. This authoritative parental role, in Western culture, Brundige argues, maintains its integrity through being viewed as a God-given right, and is thus absolute and inviolate. In Native society, however, the *non-interference* which children are afforded is not absolute. Brundige states:

> There are times when interference is necessary; for example, it would be ridiculous to image a Native mother deliberately letting her child crawl into a burning fire-pit because that is where the child wanted to go. She would of course remove her child from the danger. It is important to stress that non-interference means not interfering in a manner that is likely to cause emotional harm. Dignity must not be harmed. All persons are deserving of respect and dignity, even children.[78]

The inability of Western people to comprehend this non-interference which Native parents afford to their children stems, in part, from a failure to interpret this non-interference in terms of the full context of Native peoples' cultural traditions and Native *ways of thinking*. A Western misconception seems to be that Native peoples are arguing

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[77] *Ibid.*, 48.

[78] *Ibid.*, 46.

that their children are somehow fully rational human beings and are therefore left to their own devices, except in dire circumstances. Brundige argues: "Non-interference is misunderstood by many non-natives and led to the forced removal of many Native children from their homes."[79] Native peoples' granting of autonomy to their children and the freedom which they afford them must, instead, be viewed in the context of Native society as a whole. Social practices, or cultural tools, such as the narrative traditions and the vision quest are important features of this larger context. These aspects of Native culture are crucial for: 1) shaping how individuals reason about the world, and 2) assisting the individual in learning how and where to exercise his/her reason (without compromising his/her own, or another's, autonomy and dignity). McPherson and Rabb argue:

> the [narrative] tradition feeds into, and to some extent governs, the vision quest, just as the vision quest in its turn feed into and reinforces the narrative and other traditions. This mutual interaction leads to the development of individual persons who actively will the good of other persons, both human and other-than-human, in their mutually shared community.[80]

It is through these traditions that children learn to both give consideration and afford respect to other-than-human persons. In other words, these traditions provide the means for children (and adults as well) to formulate a sense of identification with beings from both human and other-than-human communities. Deeply embedded in this process is the notion, or activity, of empathetic projection. Lakoff and Johnson argue:

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[79] *Ibid.*, 54.

[80] McPherson and Rabb, "Some Thoughts on Articulating a Native Philosophy", 18. The addition in square brackets is my own.

Empathetic projection is, within Nuturant Parent morality [as opposed to Kant's Strict Father morality], also the major capacity to be developed in the child. Empathy – the focused, imaginative experience of the other – is the precondition for nurturant morality. Empathy links moral values to spiritual experience.

Empathetic projection is possible not only with other people, but with animals.[81]

Empathetic projection involves more than just a simple, 'imaginative experience of the other'. The experience provides a framework for establishing relations with the other. As Lakoff and Johnson argue: "Embodied spirituality is more than just spiritual experience. It is an ethical relationship to the world."[82] One example which Lakoff and Johnson offer is the spiritual experience of shamans in Indigenous cultures. They write: "Shamans in aboriginal cultures around the world observe animals closely by empathetically 'becoming' the animals,... an experience of being in the body of a very different kind of being."[83] Abram also provides a characterization of this spiritual experience of shamans:

It is this, we might say, that defines the shaman: the ability to readily slip out of the perceptual boundaries that demarcate his or her particular culture – boundaries reinforced by social customs, taboos, and most importantly, the common speech or language – in order to make contact with, and learn from, the other powers in the land.[84]

It is this communication the shaman relies on for orienting "the content of the prayers..., the countless ritual gestures..., [and] the daily propitiations and praise that flow from her toward the land and *its* many voices."[85] This sort of communication is also

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[81] Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 566. The addition in square brackets is my own.

[82] *Ibid.*, 566.

[83] *Ibid.*, 566.

[84] Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, 9.

[85] *Ibid.*, 11. The addition in square brackets is my own.

central to the vision quest. Douglas Cardinal relates his own experience of the vision quest:

> After 24 hours you get bored of listening to yourself complain. So you start looking outside yourself and you start seeing a whole myriad of life around you.... On the second day, like the elders say, you have to 'come in power.' If you set yourself in power with every living thing, then you can see – really *see* and communicate with every living thing. So then you start having these magical experiences.[86]

These cultural traditions are intended to aid in children's development. These traditions take place in a social context, a community; and it is a community comprised of more than just human persons. It is in the context of these traditions that children are afforded the freedom to develop their own rational capacities, their own way of thinking about things and doing things. A child's autonomy is grounded in his or her membership and participation, as a unique individual, in a *mutually shared community*.

Western mainstream society stands in stark contrast to this mutually shared community in which Indigenous peoples participate. In Western society, individuality is held at a premium. The Western notion of community does not reach as deep as Indigenous peoples' understanding, or use, of this concept. The larger community, in Western society, does not seem to provide the same sort of cohesion between individuals as the mutually shared community we find in Indigenous societies. Nonetheless, adults and children alike learn to use the concept of autonomy in a variety of social contexts, for example, in the context of their particular family traditions and also in a larger social context (in either a secular or religious context). Kant's ethical theory has, in its own way,

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[86] Douglas Cardinal. "Dancing with Chaos: An Interview with Douglas Cardinal" in McPherson and Rabb, *Indian From the Inside: A Study in Ethno-Metaphysics* (Thunder Bay: Centre for Northern Studies, Lakehead University, 1993), 70.

shaped the public, or social, uses of the concept of autonomy in Western society. However, we must be careful not to equate socially prevalent uses of this concept with a conclusion which might not necessarily follow from Kant's moral philosophy: that heteronomy is a *necessary step* in reaching autonomy.

My suggestion is that the end result which Kant's work had in view is a society not all that different from the Indigenous view of a *mutually shared community* characterized by McPherson and Rabb. In fact, McPherson and Rabb go so far as to write: "Are we really suggesting that this Kantian ideal, this kingdom of ends, may actually have been achieved on earth by pre-contact North American civilizations? Yes, this is exactly what we [McPherson and Rabb] are claiming."[87] Moreover, we see that Kant had, as an ideal, a view of society very different from the one in which he lived. Kant writes:

> Statutes and formulas, those mechanical tools of the rational employment or rather mis-employment of his natural gifts, are fetters of an everlasting tutelage.... Thus the public can only slowly attain enlightenment. Perhaps a fall of personal despotism or of avaricious or tyrannical oppression may be accomplished by revolution, but never a true reform in ways of thinking. Rather, new prejudices will serve as well as old ones to harness the great unthinking masses.[88]

Kant, here, is criticizing the blind acceptance of laws as an absolute guide to acceptable behaviour in Western society. Moreover, it is not simply one particular set of laws which Kant is criticizing here, but, rather, the blind acceptance of any sets of laws or formulas. Kant does not want to see one set of laws simply substituted for another.

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[87] McPherson and Rabb, "Some Thoughts on Articulating a Native Philosophy", 18. The addition in square brackets is my own.

[88] Kant, "What is Enlightenment?", 84.

Rather, he is looking for a much more fundamental kind of change. He is looking, he says, for a *true reform in ways of thinking.*

The parallel I wish to draw here is that if individuals (adults) in Western society reach autonomy through the unfettered or unhampered use of their capacity to reason (in some form or another), then individuals might be more likely to have the courage to exercise their capacity for reason if they are allowed to do so as children, though not in an absolute way. Imposing a stage of heteronomy on children seems to only hinder their ability to achieve autonomy as adults. Strict adherence to laws or rules set out by parents can not reveal to the child the principles upon which those laws or rules are grounded. Each of us must discover those principle for ourselves, and we must afford others the freedom to do so on their own terms, or in their own way. So, whereas Indigenous scholars argue that Kant saw heteronomy as a necessary prerequisite for autonomy, Kant's own arguments seem to suggest that this need not be the case. It is not a view which follows necessarily from Kant's position.

Autonomy and Constitutional Issues

In contrast to 1) socially prevalent uses of the concept of autonomy and 2) traditional interpretations of Kant's views on the moral standing of children, Kant has also put forward arguments which reveal a use of the concept of autonomy with much clearer parallels to Indigenous uses of the concept of autonomy. The following two examples deal with individual autonomy in relation to society, but each in a unique way. The first example concerns the rights of individual nations (as autonomous political entities). The second example concerns the relationships between individuals in a social

context. This second example can also be seen as the problem of balancing *individual rights* against *the rights of others*. How a People resolve this issue will be reflected in their use of such concepts as autonomy.

Though there are, admittedly, differences in Western and Indigenous uses of the concept of autonomy, there seem to be parallels which reflect a fundamental similarity in their sometimes divergent uses of this concept. In "Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch" Kant's use of the concept of autonomy is clarified through its application to political matters. In the section entitled 'No State Shall by force Interfere with the Constitution or Government of Another State' Kant writes:

> interference by foreign powers would infringe on the rights of an independent people struggling with its internal disease; hence it would itself be an offense and would render the autonomy of all states insecure."[89]

Kant argues for the autonomy of nations, or states, on the grounds that a "state is not...a piece of property (*patrimonium*). It is a society of men whom no one has any right to command or to dispose except the state itself."[90] States, in their relations with each other, are in a 'state of nature': a 'state' very similar to the one in which, according to Western thinkers such as Thomas Hobbes, pre-contact Indigenous peoples lived.[91] So, having argued for the autonomy of nations, or states, Kant goes on to make the following claim regarding the establishment of peace between all nations.

> A state of peace, therefore, must be *established*, for in order to be secured against hostility it is not sufficient that hostilities simply be not committed;

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[89] Immanuel Kant. "Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch" in *Critique of Practical Reason and Other Writings in Moral Philosophy*, Trans. and Ed., Lewis White Beck, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), 309.

[90] *Ibid.*, 307.

[91] For further discussion, see: Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1914), p. 64-65.

and, unless this security is pledged to each by his neighbor (a thing that can occur only in a civil state), each may treat his neighbor, from whom he demands this security, as an enemy.[92]

In *The Constitution of the Iroquois Nations: The Great Binding Law, Gayanashagowa*, under article 84, a section entitled 'Rights and Powers of War', the Iroquois constitution states that "Whenever a foreign nation is conquered or has by their own will accepted the Great Peace their own system of internal government may continue, but they must cease all warfare against other nations."[93] Here we see an implicit declaration of the autonomy of all nations as well as a striking parallel to Kant's insistence on the autonomy of all nations and their right to govern themselves as they choose without interference from other nations. Furthermore, Article 88 of the 'Rights and Powers of War' deals explicitly with neighbouring nations which fail to assent to mutual peace. It reads:

> At the third council the War Chief of the Five nations shall address the Chief of the foreign nation and request him three times to accept the Great Peace. If refusal steadfastly follows the War Chief shall let the bunch of white lake shells drop from his outstretched hand to the ground and shall bound quickly forward and club the offending chief to death. War shall thereby be declared and the War Chief shall have his warriors at his back to meet any emergency. War must continue until the contest is won by the Five Nations.[94]

Failure by a neighbouring nation to agree to peace seems, in both Indigenous and Western cases, to represent a failure to make an explicit acknowledgment of the autonomy of nations (as well as individuals). Moreover, a failure to assent to peace

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[92] Kant, "A Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch", 311-312.

[93] Parker, A. C. *The Constitution of the Five Nation or The Iroquois Book of The Great Law* (Albany: The University of the State of New York, 1916), 53.

[94] *Ibid.*, 54.

represents a corresponding unwillingness to maintain and protect the autonomy of all persons and nations. The political discourse which arises in both of these cultural traditions demands the explicit acknowledgment of each other's autonomy. The reasoning behind this demand for peace and security is dealt with by Kant in a footnote he makes regarding declaration of war on dissenting nations. Any nation's or individual's failure to assent (to peace), Kant argues, "deprives me of this security and injures me, if he is near me, by this mere status of his even though he does not injure me actively (*facto*); he does so by the lawlessness of his condition (*statu iniusto*) which constantly threatens me."[95] Although the Iroquois Constitution makes no direct comment on the reasons for declaring war on dissenting nations, I argue that the authors of the Iroquois constitution would concur with Kant's position on the threat such nations pose through their *condition of lawlessness*.

Robert A. Williams Jr., in *Linking Arms Together: American Indian Treaty Visions of Law and Peace, 1600 - 1800*, deals extensively with Indigenous legal traditions during the colonial period of North American history. Williams' voice is applicable here in that he is not only a Professor of Law and American Indian Studies at the University of Arizona, but a member of the Lumbee Indian tribe of North Carolina. A central concern in his book is the relevance of Indigenous legal traditions to Indigenous peoples' persistence in arguing that "the world's tribal peoples are entitled to the same basic human rights of cultural survival, *autonomy*, and self-government recognized as belonging to the peoples from Europe who colonized them."[96] I draw on Williams' work

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[95] Immanuel Kant, "Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch", fn. 312.

[96] Robert A. Williams, Jr. *Linking Arms Together: American Indian Treaty Visions of Law and Peace, 1600 - 1800* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 5. The italics are my own.

for both his use of the concept of autonomy and his discussion of the Iroquois constitution and its placement within the larger context of Indigenous peoples' struggles against the colonizing efforts of Western governments. My specific concern with his discussion is with his use "of the *Gus-Wen-Tah*, the Two Row treaty belt."[97] The Gus-Wen-Tah, Williams argues, "is a part of a long tradition of Iroquois resistance to the West's vision of Indian rights... [and] was presented centuries ago by the Iroquois to the Western colonizing nations that first came to North America."[98] The Iroquois peoples' presentation of the *Gus-Wen-Tah* to Western peoples reflects one instance of Indigenous peoples' insistence on the relevance of their own traditions to their relations with the West.

Williams' consideration of the present situation of Indigenous peoples is put forward as a response, he says, to the fact that "the emphasis of most scholars who have written on the role of law in the relations between Indians and European-derived peoples focuses almost exclusively on the story of 'the white man's Indian law.'"[99] This story, he argues, is one which embodies the attitude that Indigenous peoples' continued survival depends upon rules and principles which are "the exclusive by-products of the Western legal tradition brought to America from the Old World."[100]

Rather than continue to look at this Western-based view of Indigenous peoples' relations with Western colonial powers, Williams looks, instead, to the ways "American

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[97] *Ibid.*, 4.

[98] *Ibid.*, 4. The addition in square brackets is my own.

[99] *Ibid.*, 6.

[100] *Ibid.*, 6.

Indians sought [and still seek] to apply their traditions to the problems of achieving law

and peace on a multicultural frontier."[101] Williams' argument is that these Indigenous

traditions contain a vision of law and peace which reflects Indigenous peoples' notions of

autonomy and self-government as a framework for establishing relations between

Indigenous and Western nations. Williams writes:

> In countless treaties, councils, and negotiations, American Indians insisted
> upon the relevance of the principles contained in tribal traditions such as
> the *Gus-Wen-Tah* for ordering the unique and fractious kind of
> multicultural society that was emerging on the continent.[102]

The *Gus-Wen-Tah* provides a symbol for the mutual recognition of friendship and

equality which the nations of the Iroquois confederacy hoped to establish with Western

peoples. As a vision of peace between nations, the *Gus-Wen-Tah* provides another

valuable source for understanding Indigenous peoples use of the concept of autonomy. In

regard to the symbolism embodied in this treaty belt, Williams writes:

> In presenting the *Gus-Wen-Tah* to solemnize their treaties with the
> Western colonial powers, the Iroquois would explain its basic underlying
> vision of law and peace between different peoples as follows: 'We shall
> each travel the river together, side by side, but in our own boat. Neither of
> us will steer the other's vessel."[103]

The integrity and autonomy of individual nations is paramount in this *vision of*

law and peace. We see in this quotation, as well as in the Iroquois constitution itself, a

notion of autonomy which emphasizes not only the individual autonomy of nations, but

also an acknowledgment that treatied nations *shall each travel the river together*. We see

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[101] *Ibid.*, 5. The addition in square brackets is my own.

[102] *Ibid.*, 5.

[103] *Ibid.*, 4.

here an acknowledgment that regardless of our individuality we share a fundamental

connection: we make this *journey* together. Williams writes:

> According to American Indian multicultural constitutionalism, different peoples in a relationship of close connection were expected to embrace the sacredly revealed truth of their shared humanity as a basis of normative action toward each other....They imagined themselves as obligated to sustain a constitutional tradition of human solidarity with each other. These values, customs, and traditions reflected a basic paradigm of American Indian visions of law and peace: as human beings in a world of diversity and conflict, we are under an obligation to *link arms together*.[104]

In terms of Lakoff and Johnson's arguments, we see here the various metaphorical

structurings of a peoples' understanding of a particular concept, in this case, the concept

of autonomy. The metaphors of *traveling the river together, not steering the other's*

vessel, and *linking arms together*, provide a framework for understanding how Indigenous

peoples are using the concept of autonomy, as well as an insight into their unique ways of

reasoning. A holistic understanding of Indigenous peoples' use of the concept of

autonomy requires that we look at these metaphors not one at a time (in isolation from

each other), but rather at the cumulative effect of their meanings. In their book *Metaphors*

We Live By, Lakoff and Johnson argue:

> a metaphor works when it satisfies a purpose, namely, understanding an aspect of... [a] concept. When two metaphors successfully satisfy two purposes, then overlaps in purposes will correspond to overlaps in the metaphors. Such overlaps, we claim, can be characterized in terms of shared metaphorical entailments and the cross-metaphorical correspondences established by them.[105]

Each of these above mentioned metaphors reflects only one particular aspect of

the concept of autonomy. Individually, each of these metaphors can show us only part of

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[104] *Ibid.*, 123. The italics are my own.

[105] Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), 97. The addition in square brackets is my own.

the picture, and so, it is only through considering their cumulative effect that we can reach a more complete understanding of Indigenous peoples' use of the concept of autonomy, an understanding of what Indigenous peoples mean, or have in mind, in their use of the Western word 'autonomy'.

First, there is the metaphor of *traveling the river together, side by side*. Embodied in this metaphor is an attitude, or vision, of working at joint purposes, as opposed to working at cross-purposes. We also see in this metaphor an attitude of independence, in that although we travel the same river together we do this *side by side*, as opposed to traveling the river, as it were, in the same vessel. Furthermore, there is, in this metaphor, an acknowledgment of the equality of each of the parties involved. We see here a situation where one party does not *lead* the other parties involved, each travels by the other's side.

Secondly, the metaphor of *not steering the other's vessel* seems to carry with it an acknowledgment that each party shall not only be viewed as independent, but that each party shall at all times be allowed to make decisions of their own accord. Each party maintains their individual integrity.

Coupled with these metaphors which arise in the *Gus-Wen-Tah*, there is also the important metaphor of *linking arms together*. There is not only a recognition of the equality and independence of each of the parties involved, but also an acknowledgment of the need to establish, or develop, a sense of solidarity. This solidarity serves not only to foster a sense of affinity between the parties involved, to help and protect each other, but does so while recognizing differences. This solidarity should not, however, be understood in terms of a sense of nationalism. Rather, it is a solidarity in the pursuit of peace and

friendship between parties, or nations, with differing traditions (differences which in some cases led to war). Williams argues:

> That is why, in Indian diplomacy, a treaty was told as a special kind of story, a way of imagining a world of human solidarity where we regard others as our relatives.... For Indians of the Encounter era, a treaty, told and retold as a story over time, was envisioned as a part of a constitutional tradition of law and peace achieved between different peoples in a hostile and chaotic world.... Through this tradition, the Iroquois fulfilled the lawgiver Deganwidah's sacred command issued at the founding of their ancient confederacy: to make the Tree of Peace prevail.[106]

The vision of law and peace which is contained in the Great Peace embraced by the Iroquois is one which Kant might very well have had in mind when he declared: "A state of peace, therefore, must be *established*, for in order to be secured against hostility it is not sufficient that hostilities simply must not be committed."[107] It is not enough that hostilities simply not be present, the establishment of peace must be actively sought. So, although Indigenous and Western traditions diverge in certain aspects of their use of the concept of autonomy, such as Indigenous peoples' inclusion of other-than-human beings into the moral community, the similarities in usage here seem to indicate the possibility of different cultures arriving at notions of autonomy which overlap significantly, thus providing the opportunity of rendering their respective worldviews mutually intelligible.

Autonomy, the Individual in Society, and Religious Attitudes

In *Freedom and Culture*, Dorothy Lee presents an insightful discussion which deals with the concept of autonomy in its connection with Native peoples' view of the individual's role in the context of a society, as well as its connection with religious

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[106] Williams, *Linking Arms Together*, 113-114.

[107] Kant, "Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch", 311-114.

matters. Throughout her book she makes reference to a variety of Indigenous cultures, but she also presents "a brief sketch of the culture of the Navaho Indians, to show how the principle of autonomy is supported by a cultural framework."[108]

Lee is well aware that we are all equally faced with the problem of trying "to decide how much our principle of personal autonomy involves. We find ourselves asking such questions as: to what extent can we allow a child to make its own decisions."[109] In other words, we must decide, in a sense, how we are going to use the concept of autonomy. Lee notes that there are many drastically different systems of social order and each of these must deal with this concept in its own particular way. For example, in contrast to a position where one must decide *how much* autonomy to allow a child, Lee argues that "for many of the societies we know, it would be [a] presumption for any person to 'allow' another to take what is essentially his prerogative – the right to decide for himself."[110]

Lee notes that in some Native societies we find "a conception of individual autonomy and democratic procedures which far outstrip anything we [Western people] have practiced or even have conceived of as democracy."[111] This notion of autonomy, she thinks, can be seen in the various patterns of social behavior of North American Indigenous peoples. As I mentioned in Chapter One, McPherson (an Ojibwa scholar) also argues that there is "a fundamental difference in the perspectives and cultural practices of

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[108] Lee, *Freedom and Culture*, 5.

[109] *Ibid.*, 6.

[110] *Ibid.*, 6. The addition in square brackets is my own.

[111] *Ibid.*, 6. The addition in square brackets is my own.

Europeans and Aboriginals."[112] In light of these differences, McPherson puts forward the following warning:

> One must be careful... not to confuse the concept of the individual with that of autonomy or vise-versa. Nor should one even consider the two terms to be in any way synonymous. The concept of individual rights, along with concomitant strict, legalistic regulation of individual behaviour, are foreign to most Aboriginal traditions.[113]

In the case of the Navaho, Lee argues that there exists not only a social structure based on "a tightly knit group, depending on mutual responsibility among all its members, a precisely structured universe"[114] but there is also "great respect for individual autonomy and integrity."[115] The kind of radical use of this concept which Lee has in mind is in its connection with children. She notes, as I have as well through previous examples, that the degree to which Indigenous peoples recognize children as being autonomous would to most people in Western mainstream society seem extreme. The crucial point which Lee wants to make is that this use of *individual autonomy* has to do with the cultural framework in which it is being used, in this case, the Navaho culture.[116] Lee describes Navaho society, in part, as one in which

> Adults and children are valued for their sheer being, just because they *are*. There is no urge toward achievement; no one has to strive for success. In fact, neither is there reward for success, nor is success held out as a reward for hard work. Wealth may be the result of hard work and skill, but...[n]o good Navaho becomes and remains "wealthy" in our [Western] terms.[117]

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[112] Dennis McPherson. "A Definition of Culture" *Native American Religious Identity: Unforgotten Gods*, Jace Weaver, Ed., (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1998), 92.

[113] *Ibid.*, 92.

[114] Lee, *Freedom and Culture*, 10.

[115] *Ibid.*, 10.

[116] However, this is not to imply that each present day Navaho person uses the concept of autonomy in precisely the same way as Lee describes in *Freedom and Culture*.

[117] Lee, *Freedom and Culture*, 10-11. The additions in square brackets are my own.

Self-interest is viewed as being destructive to the integrity of the social whole. Each member of Navaho society comprises a part of the whole in a way no less important than any other member's part in the whole order of Navaho society. What follows from this, Lee argues, is that "the individual remains inviolate. No one coerces another among the Navaho."[118] Autonomy is granted equally to all members of Navaho society. Lee notes that, in Navaho society, children are not forced to 'go to bed' at certain times, a situation which holds true of most Indigenous societies. Brundige documents the principle of non-interference in Mohawk, Cree and Ojibwa societies and makes the claim that the "last thing the Native people at the point of contact would have used on their children was 'the rod of discipline'."[119] Moreover, Lee argues that an individual in Navaho society is not directly told by others how he or she *is* and *is not* supposed to contribute to the group as a whole. In pointing to these aspects of Navaho society, Lee has "tried to show that law and limits and personal autonomy can co-exist effectively, that spontaneity is not necessarily killed by group responsibility."[120]

Lee also wants to argue that the religious views of the Navaho have played a crucial role in achieving this delicate balance between social order (laws or traditional patterns of social behaviour) and individual autonomy. Unlike Western mainstream society where people generally "identify six days with the secular in life and only the

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[118] *Ibid.*, 12.

[119] Brundige, "Continuity of Native Values: Cree and Ojibwa", 49.

[120] Lee, *Freedom and Culture*, 14. This point is also argued for by Dennis McPherson in his essay "A Definition of Culture", which I discuss in Chapter One of this study, p. 4 - 6.

seventh with religion,"[121] in societies such as that of the Navaho, "religion is rarely absent from the details of everyday living."[122] Even though religious attitudes are intricately woven into the Navahos overall social framework, Lee argues that "it is doubtful that religion as such has a name; Kluckhorn reports that the Navaho have no such word."[123] Religious attitudes and practices are not reserved for special occasions, e.g., Sunday church services. In other words, there is not the same kind of separation between religious and secular activities as there is in Western society.

Lee illustrates the unity of religious attitudes and secular activities in referring to the agricultural activities of the Navaho. She writes that, "[w]hen the Navaho planted his corn sunwise [moving with the sun from east to west], his act reflected a total worldview, and it would be nonsense for us [Western observers trying to understand such activities] to separate the planting itself from the direction of the planting."[124] Similarly, it makes just as little sense when attempting to understand the daily lives, or daily activities, of Indigenous peoples to separate the strictly secular from the strictly sacred. The carrying out of social activities, and the particular relationships between individuals in Navaho society are both, Lee argues, "a continuous part of a total activity."[125] The same can be said of the Ojibwa, as Dumont argues: "Ojibwa man is always *religious man*"[126].

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[121] *Ibid.*, 165.

[122] *Ibid.*, 165.

[123] *Ibid.*, 165.

[124] *Ibid.*, 165. The additions in square brackets are my own.

[125] *Ibid.*, 165.

[126] Dumont, "Journey to Daylight-Land: Through Ojibwa Eyes", 39.

Although the Indigenous societies of North America, in general, the Navaho included, might not refer to the religious attitudes which pervade their social order as *a religion*, they do, indeed, acknowledge a relationship between the individual and the spiritual dimension of life. Lee refers to such North American Indigenous spiritual terms as *yapaitu*, *manitou*, and *wakan* (the latter being central to the phrase 'Wakanyan hotan' which Meyer and Ramirez's discuss). Importantly, she also argues that

> this is what they reach through faith, the other end of the relationship; the relationship itself is unnamed. Apparently, to behave and think religiously, is to behave and think. To describe a way of life in its totality is to describe a religious way of life.[127]

It is this connection between individual autonomy, society, and religious attitudes which I am interested in exploring in Kant's work in order to show parallels which Indigenous scholars, such as Brundige and McPherson, have missed. Admittedly, Western mainstream society seems to hold an essentially Kantian view of individual autonomy which stresses balancing individual rights against the rights of others in secular activities. However, many other influences have shaped the use of the concept of autonomy in Western society. Brundige argues that it is also religious attitudes, such as those stemming from the Old Testament, which shaped the Western notion of autonomy, and, in part, led to traditional Western attitudes such as that "parents have a God-given right or duty to disciple their children, whether physically or verbally."[128] Such religious beliefs (implicit in English common law) have also been relied on for sanctioning the use, in Western society, of such inventive systems of disciple as the 'rule of thumb', in the

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[127] Lee, *Freedom and Culture*, 165.

[128] Brundige, "Continuity of Native Values: Cree and Ojibwa", 49.

sense that it was acceptable for a man to beat his wife so long as the object was no larger than the circumference of his thumb.[129]

My point in all of this is that Kant's own particular view on individual autonomy is not necessarily one which is used in everyday social interactions in Western society, though I do admit that the prevailing social attitude did have an influence on Kant's articulation of the concept of autonomy. Kant's arguments concerning both the concept of autonomy and political and social matters are, at best ideals, ideals which, to some people, might seem both austere and extreme. In his essay, "What is Enlightenment?", Kant makes a few remarks regarding the connections between individual autonomy, society, and religious matters. Kant writes:

> I have placed the main point of enlightenment – the escape of men from their self-incurred tutelage – chiefly in matters of religion because our leaders have no interest in playing the guardian with respect to the arts and sciences and also because religious immaturity is not only the most harmful but also the most degrading of all.[130]

It seems that for Kant there is a connection between autonomy and religious, or spiritual, matters. This sense of religious maturity is to be present in not only religious activities, it is a religious attitude which ought to be present in all our daily activities. Developing this religious attitude is the responsibility of the individual, and it is not, in Kant's view, something which ought to be legislated. In a similar way, Lee argues: "The specific formulation differed in the different tribes [of the Indians of the Plains], but, essentially, in all it was believed that each individual and particularly each man, must tap

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[129] For further discussion, see: Jennifer Baker Fleming. *Stopping Wife Abuse: A Guide to the Emotional, Psychological, and Legal Implications… for the Abused Woman and Those Helping Her* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1979), 270.

[130] Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 89.

this universal force if his undertakings were to be successful.... The relationship with the divine, in... [the case of the Sioux], is personal and intense.... Each man, each pre-adolescent boy, had to achieve the relationship for himself."[131] The parallels between Kant's views on enlightenment and Native attitudes such as those of the Sioux are striking. For both Kant and the Sioux this sense of religious maturity is required for, as Lee says, "enhancing and intensifying the being of the man who acted."[132] It is this sort of religious attitude which ought to serve as an aid in guiding the individual in his or her relations with others.

Kant's view of the relationship between individual autonomy and social relations seems to be something like the following. A good society ought to allow its members the freedom to live together in good conscience. It allows its members to develop their talents on their own accord. Good society seems to result when individuals contribute to the whole in their own way. In Kant's 'kingdom of ends' this result is achieved only when universal law is applied by each member. In regard to the point Kant is trying to make about the individual's role in society, he writes: "It is the freedom to make public use of one's reason at every point. But I hear on all sides, 'Do not argue!' The officer says: 'Do not argue but drill!' the tax collector: 'Do not argue but pay!'... Everywhere there is restriction on freedom."[133] Kant seems to be expressing a fundamental dissatisfaction with his own society.

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[131] Lee, *Freedom and Culture*, 173. The additions in square brackets are my own.

[132] Ibid., 173.

[133] Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 84-85.

So, it seems to follow from Kant's remarks that good society arises when each member understands for himself the need both, 1) to maintain his integrity as an individual, and 2) to contribute to the whole while remembering, at all times, to acknowledge and preserve the autonomy of others. Or, in Kantian terms, good society arises when its members have awakened to one of the touchstone principles of his moral theory: the categorical imperative. In the *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant writes:

> The practical imperative, therefore, is the following: Act so that you would treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of another, always as a end and never as a means only... For all rational beings stand under the law that each of them should treat himself and others never merely as means, but in every case at the same time as an end in himself. Thus there arises a systematic union of rational beings through common objective laws. This is a realm which may be called a realm of ends (certainly only an ideal) because what these laws have in view is just the relation of these beings to each other as ends and means.[134]

A sense of moral conscience, or religious maturity should be present when we conduct our daily, or secular, affairs, and should pervade our whole life and all of our social interactions. It is a sense of religious or spiritual maturity which has long been embraced by North American Indigenous peoples. Admittedly, Kant's referring to this realm as merely an ideal does seem consistent with his expressed dissatisfaction with the culture in which he participated as a member. Nevertheless, Kant's remarks contain striking parallels to the attitudes of Indigenous peoples. For Kant, too, it seems as though the truly autonomous man is at the same time a *religious man*.

Though a demonstration of the mutual intelligibility of Western and Indigenous use of concepts, such as autonomy, might very well be carried out in various ways, in this

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[134] *Ibid.*, 46 and 50.

study, I have been concentrating on one such possible way. In contrast to the efforts of 16-17th century Western philosophers to see the world as the passive object of scientific investigation, we now recognize, through the work of Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, and Abram, that such a picture of the world is itself merely a philosophical construct. We see now that there is a common lifeworld which underlies all our views on this world, scientific or otherwise. The result of this fundamental shift in Western philosophical thought has been that it is easier for those who hold a phenomenological perspective to appreciate the possibility of there being mutual intelligibility between such different perspectives as those we find in Western and Indigenous traditions.

In this study, we have begun to see that it is possible to develop not only an understanding of how and why Indigenous peoples are using the English word 'autonomy', but an appreciation of the perspectives which have served in shaping their Indigenous employment of this concept. Seeing, now, that it is possible to develop such an understanding, we must continue to do so if we are to bring an end to the persistent conflict, conceptual and otherwise, which exists between Native and non-Native peoples here in North America. Only then can we begin to move from mere tolerance to understanding, and finally come to see the full significance of Charles Johnson's claim that, despite our differences, "when it comes down to the crunch, we share, all of us, the same cultural lifeworld."[135]

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[135] Charles Johnson. *Being and Race: Black Writing since 1970* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 44.

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