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ABSTRACT

This paper explores some examples of Indigenous philosophies from North America. It considers Navajo philosophy as presented by James McNeley and John Farella, Mabel McKay's Pomo Indian insights as presented by her student Gary Sarris, and spiritual insights into Indigenous education. These nondualistic philosophies describe the universe relationally, seeking to dissolve sharp distinctions and dualisms, emphasizing instead how the universe and individuals are connected, spiritually and materially. Indigenous knowing relies on a unifying logic that describes the universe as whole, as well as holy. This concept of w/holistic relationality is discussed in terms of Indigenous descriptions of Spirit, Dreams, and Holy Wind. A relational epistemology is supported by a relational ontology, the unifying spiritual belief that we are one with the universe. This relational ontology needs to be foregrounded as a conscious part of the curriculum, so its influence can be carefully considered and critiqued. Examples demonstrate how Native spiritual beliefs that reflect a relational ontology and epistemology can be translated into daily classroom practices and become an explicit part of the curriculum. (Contains references in notes.) (SV)

Native American Philosophies as Examples of W/holistic Relational (e)pistemologies

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Native American philosophies as examples of W/holistic relational (e)pistemologies[1]

Introduction

The best way to become aware of our own socially constructed "reality" and what we count as "knowledge" is to listen to other's voices that are outsiders to our own views. In this paper I turn to Native American philosophy to help me redescribe knowing in a relational manner.[2] There is tremendous variety in the diverse Indigenous tribes living in North America. Still, there are some common threads to their diverse views. In general, Indigenous philosophy is based on a sense of connectedness between individuals and the world around them. They use different organic terms to describe this concept of spiritual w/holeness. Navajos talk about the Holy Wind, the Pomo talk about the Spirit as Dreams, the Keres of Laguna Pueblo talk about the Sacred Hoop, and the Dakota talk about Skan, "the Great Spirit," as they all strive to capture a sense of indispensable interrelatedness. For Indigenous people the world in which we live is considered alive, and we are intimately a part of this life. They do not view themselves as autonomous, separate individuals in the traditional Euro-western classical liberal sense, but rather have contextual, communal views of themselves as individuals-in-relation-with-others.[3] Indigenous people do not separate spheres of knowledge into different compartments, as we have done in the Euro-west, rather they describe spheres of knowledge as being integrated and antihierarchical. Thus we find they consistently do not drawn sharp distinctions between science, philosophy, and spirituality, for example.[4] In general, Indigenous sense of time is non-linear and is more accurately described as cyclical, as co-occurring synchronously, in contrast to the Euro-western linear, causal approach.[5] Also of importance, Indigenous languages are historically oral and it is only in this past century that their languages have been translated into written forms.

Indigenous languages are unique to their tribes, not easily translated into English, and rooted in an oral tradition that seeks to maintain the spirituality of their teachings by treating the teachings like special property to be handled with care. Concepts that are central to various Indigenous tribes, which are learned through oral traditions of stories, songs, chants, and prayers, are considered sacred and are protected from sharing with outsiders, as well as with all insiders. These concepts are often only shared with the most educated within their tribe. Added to the exclusive quality of Indigenous spirituality is a lack of willingness to share their teachings with Whites in particular, due to their experiences of having White translators treat their ideas as artifacts, as Whites appropriate and reshape the teachings Native Americans have shared. Indigenous people's mistrust of Whites is based on the very real fact of colonization, which all Indigenous people share in common, across their diversity. All of these factors increase the chances of misunderstanding Indigenous philosophy. A White scholar, such as myself, attempting to write about Indigenous philosophy, must be critically aware of my own situatedness, not only as an outsider to the particular cultures, but also as someone from a culture guilty of colonizing them. I also have the problem of speaking a different language that is presented in a different form, which risks changing the meaning of the ideas expressed.

Added to the complexity of the subjectivity of the text is the subjectivity of the reader. Readers are also tied to particular locations, embedded with particular historical and political contexts. "(R)egardless of the reader's cultural and historical affiliations, he or she is not a perfect lens into the life and circumstances of either the non-Indian recorder-editor or the Indian narrator."[6] Sarris recommends that where the tensions are felt in the text and with the reader, that is the place to start to open up dialogue with the Indian and non-Indian narrator. Such a dialogue needs to validate and respect the subjectivities of text and reader. Texts are representations of interaction and the occasion for interaction. They can help us become aware of the chasms between our different experiences and world views,

challenging our assumptions and improving our awareness of ourselves. They can help us expose problems, not solve them.

For this paper I will consider Navajo philosophy as presented by James McNeley and John Farella, and Mabel MaKay's Pomo Indian insights as presented by her student, Gary Sarris. Others will contribute to the discussion as well. Gregory Cajete, in *Look to the Mountain*, will offer us spiritual insights into Indigenous education. My project is one of analysis and critique, as well as redescription. Indigenous people rely on stories and the use of metaphor to teach a lesson. Their practice includes chanting, singing, dancing, and basket weaving, as well as the telling of myths. Indigenous styles of relating ideas will affect my style of writing, for I will try to maintain some of the flavor of the traditions to help me represent the ideas as generously and respectfully as I can, as I rely on caring reasoning to help me.[7]

In describing a relational knowing that relies on a unifying logic rather than a binary or triadic logic, I am dissolving dualities created in Euro-western philosophy such as the mind/body, subject/object, knower/known. This unifying logic does not mean that the universe is one, and there is no room for plurality and diversity. The nondualistic universe I describe is a fluxual, open universe that has infinite possibilities for making connections and transactions, as it is not based on "real existents" that are external, permanent, and independent of human thought. Rather, the universe is a unity in the sense that Indigenous people describe as Spirit, Dreams, the Sacred Hoop, and Holy Wind, pure experience beyond differentiation.

First we have immediate experience, the mere *thatness* of experience. Then we create concepts to try to give meaning to our experiences. Concepts function to try to shape, organize, and describe this open, flowing universe, while the universe continually escapes beyond our artificial boundaries, like a fishing net trying to scope up the ocean's waters, catching some of the ocean life while much falls through and back into the ocean. Concepts need to be understood as an addition to pure experience, they cannot take

away from pure experience. They can bring meaning and continuity to our universe, but they also distract, deceive, and confuse us, so that we no longer notice discontinuities and what our concepts do not catch up in their net. We become "out of tune" with our awareness of what is primal stuff. All concepts are limiting for they are unable to penetrate and capture the flux and depth of pure experience; they serve to fix the universe in a particular way, into a particular description. The use of techniques such as meditation, prayer, singing, and chanting help us become more "in tune" with the universe, to listen to the spirits. These techniques serve to help remind us that thoughts deal only with a small part of the universe, no thought includes everything. They help remind us that not only are knowers in relation with each other, as personally connected at a micro level and socially connected at a macro level, but that these relations are plurally related to the whole of a universe that is loosely connected and nonrational.

Great Spirit and Dreams, the Pomos

The problems I point to in the Introduction are poignantly demonstrated with Greg Sarris's efforts to write Mabel McKay's story, at her request.[8] Mabel knew Greg needed a dissertation topic, and she wanted to help him figure out his own story too so she asked him to write her biography. Sarris was part of Mabel's Dream. Mabel McKay is a Pomo Indian from the Long Valley Cache Creek Pomo tribe. When she was born in 1907 there were only 6 members of her tribe left alive, and when she died in 1993 she was the last member. As a Pomo Dreamer, healer, and basketweaver, Mabel was adopted, when she was in her 40's, into the Kashaya Pomo tribe by her friend and fellow Pomo Dreamer and healer, Essie Parrish. Sarris got to know Mabel when he was a child and a friend of her son, Marshall. He ended up knowing her for over 30 years, recording her stories, and befriending her adopted family, only to find out later that he is in fact directly related to the Parrish family himself. Sarris was adopted as a baby, and discovered as an adult that his natural father was a mixed blood, half Filipino and half Miwok and Pomo Indian. It turns out that his great-great-grandfather was married to Essie Parrish's grandmother.

When Greg Sarris agreed to take on the task of writing Mabel's story, he planned on this as his dissertation. However, Sarris tells us he ended up writing his dissertation on Indian autobiographies, as he struggled with problems related to being the recorder-editor of Mabel's autobiography.[9] Mabel McKay's autobiography became her and Sarris's story woven together, published in 1994, after Mabel's death, and after Sarris learned what Mabel tried to teach him about storytelling and about life. The learning process for Native American's tends to be communal, informal, experiential, sacred, and it is grounded in oral traditions and storytelling. Mabel reasserted these tribal practices through her teachings with Sarris.[10] Sarris escorted Mabel McKay to many of her presentations and talks, and he learned from her a verbal art. Mabel engaged her audience in a dialogue and challenged their assumptions. She forced "her interlocutors to examine presuppostions that shaped and are embedded in their questions."[11] She would not let herself be recorded at invited talks, not wanting to be absent from any discussion of her world. Her talk points to what constitutes difference. She "makes the interlocutor immediately aware of the present context and of the ways the interlocutor may be framing her world, which does not close the discourse but exposes the chasms between two interpretive worlds over which the discourse must continue."[12] Mabel calls for dialogue that interrupts and disrupts preconceived notions. Her talk resists closure.

In his effort to write Mabel's autobiography, Sarris kept trying to order Mabel's stories into a linear fashion, and remove himself from the text, following Euro-western standards about biographies. Mabel told Greg her story had nothing to do with dates, it has to do with the everlasting. Mabel kept trying to implicate Sarris as a listener. Sarris learned that storytelling is an active, respondent activity. Mabel expected him to ask questions, respond, agree, disagree, take up the story in different contexts and innovate and renovate it.[13] Sarris ended up writing her stories as a dialogue between the two of them, a continuing conversation that is the story of his hearing her stories.[14] He explains to us that he uses a dialogical methodology to help "expose boundaries that shape and

constitute cultural and personal worlds." [15] He learned from Mabel that there are multiple voices in a written text, and they call for reflexivity. Sarris writes in a style that emphasizes a process, an on-going conversation. His writing is a dialogue with the text and the reader, as he collapses the dichotomy between personal narrative and scholarly argument and uses these different methods to communicate with and inform each other. [16]

The history of Pomo Indians is devastating. [17] The Pomos are from California, north of San Francisco, and north of the Coast Miwok tribe, which first had contact with Europeans. The Pomo and Miwok tribes in the southern area closest to San Francisco experienced more exposure to disease, enslavement, and cultural disruption then the northern Pomo tribes experienced. Padres forced Miwok and southern Pomo tribes into Spanish missions, and then when the missions were taken over by the Mexicans, the Indian tribes were raided and the people were traded as slaves. The northern Pomo tribes were also enslaved, but by the Russians instead, at Ft. Ross (1812). The Russians did not try to convert the Pomos and they protected them from the Spanish and Mexicans, thus making it possible for them to retain their culture. As a result, today there are many Pomos who still speak their native language, whereas there are no Coast Miwoks who know their native language and none have danced in 50 years. Sarris informs us that by 1900, disease, slave raiding, and starvation had just about wiped out the Pomo and Miwok people. In 1838, small pox alone killed over 90% of them. Today there are around 1000 Pomo's and around 100 of them are permanent residents on the Kashaya Reservation.

The Pomo resisted cultural domination and retained their culture and language. They have continued their traditions of storytelling, dancing, singing, and basket weaving. Yet, due to their oral tradition, there is no record of their pre-contact culture. Around 1871-1872 they revived their culture with the Bole Maru (Dream Dance), also called the Bole Hesi in the east. [18] They have had strong leaders who helped them maintain a national pride, and separation from White influence. Their Dreamers were predominantly women who, though not called chiefs, assumed the role of tribal leaders. Annie Jarvis was a leader from 1912-

1943, and Essie Parrish was the last Kashaya Pomo Dream leader, from 1943-1979. Mabel McKay, as an adopted Kashaya Pomo Dream leader, helped continue Essie's teachings until her death in 1993. However, the Pomos are currently splintered, due to forces they have experienced since the 1950's. Many Pomos converted to the Mormon and Pentecostal religions, while others maintain the traditional teachings. [19] While at first the Mormon's appeared to be tolerant and accepting of the Pomo traditional teachings, after establishing followers on the reservation, they began to teach the Indian traditions are satanic, devil worshipping, and they encourgaged the Pomos to reject their spiritual leaders, Essie, and Mabel. When Essie died in 1979, her tribe was deeply divided. Essie directed Mabel to close and lock the Roundhouse, which is the Pomo place of traditional ceremonies. It is customary that when a Pomo Dream leader dies, her songs, dances, and materials made by her, given to the people through Spirit's directions and guidance, are no longer used unless the leader gave special permission to do so before her death. The Pomos wait for the arrival of another Dreamer to guide them, and administer to them.

As a young child, Mabel McKay had no one to teach her how to be a leader in her tribe. [20] She was trained directly by the Spirit, who spoke to her in her Dreams. She started having dreams when she was around three years old. She would sleep restlessly, crying and humming in her sleep, and during the day she would glaze off with long, full stares. Because of the intensity and frequency of her Dreams, Mabel was a tired, fragile, undernourished child. Her immediate family, Sarah Taylor, her grandmother who raised her, understood about Dreams, but Sarah was not a Dreamer, and she often wished she had her brother or Old Taylor to consult and help her with the raising and care for Mabel. Sarah's brother, Richard Taylor, was a Dreamer, as was Sarah's grandfather or great-grandfather, Old Taylor. Richard was the last Dreamer to live at Long Valley Cache Creek, and when he died he was buried in the Roundhouse, and the door was locked. While Sarah understood Mabel's special gift and tried to help her and protect her, most of the rest of her neighboring Indian tribal members were fearful of Mabel. They knew Mabel was different even when

she was a child, but they thought she might be poisoned, and would maybe poison their children if they played with her. Mabel grew up feeling isolated from Whites and Native Americans.

Sarah took Mabel to the Wintun reservation in Cortina, and they lived with Sarah's son, Andrew and his wife Rosie. The Wintun had an active Roundhouse and participated in ceremonies and dancing, etc. But staying there did not work, again because people feared Mabel's spiritual power. When Mabel was twelve her mother tried to take her away, but Sarah was able to prevent this by asking the neighboring White lady, Mrs. Spencer, to take Mabel in. Mabel spent the next 4 years living with a White woman, only seeing her family for 2 weeks in the fall. She continued to Dream, but was forbidden by Spirit to tell Mrs. Spencer about the Dream work. Mrs. Spencer did get Mabel's physical strength up to the level where she was able to attend school. She attended a White school for only two years, long enough to learn the alphabet, how to write her name, and some basic mathematics. She had a hard time concentrating because she was exhausted from constant Dreaming. She learned she was very different from the other White children, and after two years of school she quit.

Beyond that formal schooling, Mabel's learning was through direct experience, with Spirit as her teacher. Spirit put things to her, taught her about good and bad, and she had to sort them out. Spirit advised her and made predictions to her about things that were going to happen to her. Spirit predicted she would meet Essie Parrish 20 years before she actually did. Spirit told her she would someday teach at colleges and universities. Mabel dialogued with Spirit in her dreams. She asked questions, and sometimes she got answers, sometimes not. Like Mabel's dialogues with Greg Sarris, her conversations with Spirit were interactive and open. Spirit predicted things and guided her, but she had the choice of listening or not. Mabel chose to listen, just as Greg chose to listen to her. To listen with care in order to really understand means trying to believe that which is being said is true. It is what I call *caring reasoning*.

Spirit taught Mabel McKay how to weave beautiful coiled baskets, using willow rod, sedge, and redbud, and Spirit taught her how to be a doctor. The baskets were for doctoring, for her patients to help them heal. Spirit fixed Mabel's throat for sucking out diseases. Mabel became a sucking doctor and she would suck out the diseases of her patients and spit them into a particular basket Spirit directed her to make for that purpose. However, Mabel did not begin doctoring until Spirit told her it was time to do so. As a teen-ager, she worked washing lettuce, traveling with a carnival, in a Japanese restaurant in San Francisco, and she met many different people. Then she returned to Sarah Taylor's home, and began to doctor patients, after a final initiation and further instructions from Spirit. She was officially announced and welcomed as a Pomo tribal doctor and patients began to seek her out. When they would come, Mabel would pray and sing, and Spirit would guide her on what to do.

Now Mabel McKay's baskets are on permanent display in the Smithsonian and other museums, for she is a world reknown basket weaver. However, Mabel only made baskets after praying to Spirit and asking for Spirit's guidance. According to Spirit, each basket has a purpose and a rule, and they need to be cared for, watered and feed, and blessed, for they are living. Mabel performed many healing miracles and became a famous medicine woman and spiritual leader. She was asked to speak often at colleges and university's and other famous spiritual leaders, such as the Pope, sought an audience with her. California Governor Jerry Brown appointed her to the first Indian Heritage Commission. Sarris tells us, "(h)ers was a life that gave, a life only in the Dream."[21] When she died in 1993 she was buried next to Essie Parrish in the Kashaya Pomo cementary, the last two Pomo Dreamers. It rained and thundered the day each of them was buried.

Mabel McKay's life, as a mirror of traditional Pomo philosophy, is an example of a life lived by a unifying logic. Throughout her life, Spirit guided her through her Dreams, and she was able to tune in and listen, enabling her to stay aware of pure experience beyond differentiation. Mabel worked for thirty years to get Greg Sarris to let go of his concepts he

kept trying to use to shape and order the open, flowing universe she experienced and continued to describe to him. Mabel repeatedly showed Greg what his concepts could not "catch up" in his net, what they missed and let fall through. Her basket weaving, singing, praying, and dancing were all techniques Mabel used to help her become more attuned with primal experience, with Spirit, and stay attuned, as well as expressions of that experience. Her stories and talk, in all their forms, helped to continually remind him, and others, that thoughts deal only with a small part of the universe, no thought includes everything. The story that Greg Sarris shares with us of Mabel McKay's life, and Essie Parrish's, reminds us that not only are knowers in relation with each other, personally and socially, but that these relations are plurally related to the whole of a material-spiritual universe.

Navajo's Holy Wind or Main Stalk

My two sources for Navajo philosophy are dissertations written into published texts, James McNeley's *Holy Wind in Navajo Philosophy*, which was his dissertation, originally written in 1973, and John Farella's *The Main Stalk: A Sythesis of Navajo Philosophy.* [22] Farella tells us, "The Navajos are probably the most studied group of people in the world" (p. 3). There are hundreds of volumes devoted to their religion, the formal rituals and symbolism of the Navajos, published in Navajo and English. Father Berard Haile alone spent over 50 years living in the Navajo nation and he took very detailed and precise ethnographic notes. The Navajo have a history of not being very good materialistically but they have been good with ideas, and good at adaption. When they returned home from the "Long Walk" to their lands from Ft. Sumner in 1868, there were 5,000-7,000 Navajos. Today the population is 140,000-175,000, contrary to the Pomo, who currently number around 1,000.

McNeley's *Holy Wind in Navajo Philosophy* is based of field interviews with ten Navajo informants, nine of whom spoke only Navajo, six being between the ages of 75-

94. Aware of the problems of being a recorder-editor, McNeley sought to preserve and faithfully to present the Navajo point of view (half of his text is a presentation of his informants' native voices, recorded in their own language). He sought out people who were least influenced by Euro-western acculturation. All of his informants lacked any significant formal education in White schools and all lived in the Navajo nation. A Navajo informant is a receiver of a particular variation of the Navajo sacred lore, which is customarily learned from an elder relative or singer with whom one is apprenticed. What the informant learns is not shared commonly with others, but instead is treated like valuable property to be guarded and protected. McNeley's research also involves extensive library research and was aided by his work as a social worker on the Navajo reservation where he later became a teacher. His presentation is based around the Navajo concept of *nilch'i*, which McNeley translates as the Holy Wind. [23]

Farella's *The Main Stalk*, which is his own dissertation work on the Navajos, was influenced by McNeley's work for it caused Farella to realize that what he originally set out to do is considered irrelevant and trivial from a Navajo perspective. Rather than try to hold his study to a rigorous and restrictive methodology which was again going to render lots of details on Navajos but make no sense of the whole philosophy, Farella decided to "open up" his study and turn it into an effort to offer a synthesis of Navajo philosophy, centered around the Navajo concept of 'whole,' *sa'a naghái bik'e hózhó*[2 letters are wrong] (SNBH). Farella relied on five primary teachers, four Navajo men and Father Haile's data, and three years of fieldwork in the Navajo nation, for his study. He also made use of the extensive literature available on Navajos.

Both Farella and McNeley are aware that Navajos, Dineh, have been studied from outsider's perspectives, with the researcher's methodology used as the measuring stick by which to measure Navajo views. Navajo philosophy has been presented as "religion," "beliefs," of "world views," which are outside of the Euro-western norm. Their ideas are treated as "artifacts." Researchers bring their biases into their reports, as they portray

Navajos as fundamentalists, and they translate their views as literal interpretations. Farella and McNeley, in their individual, separate projects, both make a concerted effort to present Navajo philosophy as the way the world is, and to let Navajos critique misrepresentations of their philosophy. Though they approach their work from different angles, in the end, Farella and McNeley together offer an important synthesis of Navajo philosophy which is why I turn to them in this paper.

I begin with McNeley's work because his text preceded Farella's and contributed to the synthesis Farella offers. McNeley's text is centered around a concept that is not generally described as having a primary role in Navajo philosophy, and is often translated in contradictary, misleading ways. McNeley argues that the Holy Wind, *nilch'i*, is the concept which links the Navajo soul to the immanent powers of the universe and is thus central to Navajo thought. *Nlch'i* has been commonly translated as 'wind,' but McNeley tells us 'wind' is an inadequate translation, for "*nilch'i* refers to the air or atmosphere in its entirety, including such air when in motion, conceived as having a holy quality and powers not acknowledged in [Euro-]Western culture" (p.xviii). Therefore, he uses the term 'Holy Wind.' He cautions us that "traditional Navajo's do not conceive of the Wind within one as being immutable or discrete from that existing everywhere," so "the Wind within one" serves better to describe their meaning than the usual translation of "in-standing" or "in-dwelling Wind Soul" (p. xviii). McNeley's central claim is: "Holy Wind gives life, thought, speech, and the power of motion to all living things and serves as the means of communication between all elements of the living world. As such, it is central to Navajo philosophy and world view" (p. 1).

McNeley begins his explanation of this central, key concept of Holy Wind with the Navajo creation story.[24] A mist, or cloud of light became the source of the Winds, and Wind made life possible, first in the underworlds with the deities (Holy People), by providing a means of breathing as well as providing guidance and protection, serving as a mentor and guide. First Man and First Woman create the Holy People, such as Dawn Man and Dawn Woman, Sky Blue Man and Sky Blue Woman, Twilight Man and Twilight

Woman, and Darkness Man and Darkness Woman. The Wind is thought to have emerged from below, the underworld, with the Holy People when they emerged from below. The Wind has diverse names because of various criteria, but Wind is a unitary being. The cardinal directions (north, south, east, west), which in the Navajo world are marked by four mountains, mark off the boundaries of the Navajo world, and mark the four different kinds of Wind, White Wind (from the east, representing dawn), Blue Wind (from the south, representing day), Yellow Wind (from the west, representing twilight), and Dark Wind (from the north, representing night). These Winds are also described in gender categories, although which one is female or male is debated in the various texts.[25] For all reports, however, there are an equal number of female and male Winds. The Winds lie on one another, and through the reproductive process Earth People are born.

According to McNeley, for Navajos, Holy Wind is believed to be in the individual from the moment of conception, producing movement and growth. Wind from the four cardinal directions is within each person, as different aspects of a single Wind that suffuses all living things. The Holy People have a primary role of governing human thought and behavior, as humans participate directly with the deities. The Holy People send messages by way of Messenger Winds to our earfold, giving warning and advice to us. The Wind talks to people, through a corner of their ear. Wind is closely associated with word and language. Natural phenomena, because they are endowed with inner forms and Holy Wind, are also able to think and live. They are able to provide guidance and instruction to the Navajo too. Although the Navajo believe that all people are born with Holy Wind within them, they also believe that there are evil Winds that can cause wrong conduct. If the Holy Wind is weak within us, then we are more susceptible to evil Winds. The evil Winds are called ghosts for they are the breath, the departed Winds of those who have died too young. A person can counteract the effects of weak Wind by petitioning the Messenger Winds and asking for their Holy Wind to be strengthened. The Winds provide forewarnings of harmful influences and they can be petitioned for help (p. 49). However,

Navajos believe people are responsible and accountable for their own conduct. They have the option to listen to the Holy Wind's advice, and, if they choose not to heed the advice of the Wind, the Wind weakens, and eventually withdraws its advice. When the Holy Wind withdraws its guidance from a person, that person will eventually die.

We understand, from McNeley, that the Holy Wind is a unitary being that is the source of all life, movement, and behavior (p. 50-51). The Navajos have subcategorized the Wind (White Wind, Blue Wind, Yellow Wind, and Dark Wind), but this should not be translated as different separate Winds. The Holy Wind is an omnipresent entity in which living beings participate. A unitary Holy Wind "envelopes the individual throughout life" (p. 52). Navajos describe individuals as directly participating in the primary source of all beneficial power. A healthy individual is one who heeds the advice of the Wind, living a life of proper relationship to one's environment, a life of beauty, harmony, order, and well-being (*hózhó*, one symbol is incorrect). McNeley compares the Navajo Wind concept to the Dakota concept of Skan, "the Great Spirit" (p. 61). Farella compares the Navajo concept of *sa'a naghái bik'e hózhó*, which he defines as "completeness" or "continuous generational animation," to McNeley's air that animates all being, the Holy Wind (p. 151).

For Farella, *sa'a naghái bik'e hózhó* (SNBH) means completeness, that which is whole. He tells us that the source of *sa'a naghái bik'e hózhó* is First Man's magic bundle, full of the reproductive fluids, flesh and life forces, that reanimate us. To understand Farella's offered synthesis, in terms of *sa'a naghái bik'e hózhó,* we must return again to the Navajo creation story. Farella begins with*diyin dine'é* - " the experience of being part of something larger and grander than oneself, the direct experience of oneness, something quite profound" (p. 23). The Navajo believe they descended directly from diyinii (gods, divinity, what McNeley calls "the Holy People"), and that the boundary between gods and people is flexible. All diyinii are *sa'a naghái bik'e hózhó* (whole). However, diyinii are often translated as "benevolent holy people" and are described as representing only "goodness" in contrast to *hóchxó,* which represents "evil." Farella is greatly troubled by the

dualism this kind of translation creates, which he claims is a misrepresentation of Navajo philosophy. He argues that diyinii is instead a concept of becoming and of process, a relationship, it is not an attribute inherent in a certain class or set of being (p. 31). Again we find translators have glossed the concept and reduced it to something more reflective of Euro-western thought.

One cannot list Navajo gods (the Holy People) from the most to the least powerful, for they are too complex and it depends on the context. Diyinii are on a power continuum, and all power, for Navajo, is based on knowledge. Mistakes and misfortunes are due to lack of knowledge. First Man was born from the place where Black Cloud (night) and White Cloud (dawn) meet, in the East; First Woman was born from the place where Blue Cloud (day) and Yellow Cloud (twilight) meet, in the West. The Navajo include gender as a primal universal quality, for the overriding theme of their religion is creation, and including gender assures creation. Gender is needed for reproduction, for birth, and the Navajo refer to intercourse, though usually overtly, as the source of creation. All creation is sexual or reproductive. These acts of creation are achieved ritually, through performance, even with the diyinii. Sexual fluid, semen, represents new life. First Man's medicine, his "bundle" or "basket" is the source of all beings. The magic bundle includes hide and stones (flesh and bones) and reproductive fluids.

In the dualistic translations, First Man is regarded as evil, and First Woman is good, but this is not the case for Navajo's. One is not evil, the other good. For them, First Man is omniscient; he is the creator; and he wanted to create *just* what he created. He is "neither fumbling or ignorant. His actions were purposeful and carried out with the knowledge of their ultimate result" (Farella, p. 49). For example, First Man created "packages" or "bundles," "sets of entities" that were necessary to the Navajo, even if they embodied both good and evil. These bundles create the preconditions that make the creation of current conditions possible. For example, death was introduced to help make it possible for births, as death and birth together make a complete cycle, one whole. Poverty and hunger were introduced

to remind us to continue to work hard for our food so that we can have abundance. The negative state is there to assure the positive will occur. These packages that describe any two phenomena that are in an on-going, permanent relationship of opposition to each other are called *alkéé naa´aashii* [1 letter is incorrect].

First Man ordered Coyote, his agent, to kidnap the water buffalo's children so that she would flood the underworld, where all the diyinii lived, in her efforts to find her children. This flood was needed to cause the diyinii to have to leave the underworld and come to the earth's surface. The movement to the earth's surface was necessary because the underworld was getting too crowded, and the diyinii did not have enough space to live in peace. The Holy People were unwilling to move away from what they knew to the unknown, instead they voted to stay below. Therefore, First Man had to trick them into moving. As a result of Coyote's kidnapping of the water buffalo's children, not only was First Man able to get the Holy People to move up to the earth's surface, but we also now have thunder and lightening on the earth's surface (the water buffalo's maternal anger), as well as rain, which is necessary for life of the earth's surface.

Another example of First Man and First Woman making plans for the world which are not necessarily perceived for their value at the time is the story of Changing Woman. Changing Woman is equated with White Shell Woman and Earth Woman. She is the nurturer, the provider, and the giver. She created the earth-people and what they need to survive. She has "responsibility for all those giving birth" on the Earth's surface, which is almost everything for the Navajo (including sheep, corn, plants). Changing Woman is whom the Navajo now sing too, as she is the daughter of the sky (father) and the earth (mother). She is who supplied the Navajo with sheep for their livelihood. First Man and First Woman are her grandparents, as they created earth and sky. First Man and First Woman foresaw a need to rid the Earth's surface of suffering (*nayéé*), so First Man taught Changing Woman everything he knew, and gradually relinquished control over to Changing Woman. He manipulated, behind the scenes again, and arranged for Sun to have

intercourse with Changing Woman, planning a union of which she was ignorant. And Sun, who did what he was ordered by First Man, did not know that the purpose of this intercourse was so Changing Woman would have twins, whose purpose were to slay *nayéé,* suffering. Suffering includes jealousy, fear, worry, as well as old age, poverty, and disease, anything that gets in the way of a person living her life (Farella, p. 51).

Similar to the Buddhist view of how one eliminates suffering, First Man and First Woman teach us, through Changing Woman and Sun's twins, that to get rid of nayéé, first you describe it and objectify it, then there is a battle, and then a celebration of what is basically a new way of looking at the world (Farella, 1984, p. 52). These are metaphorical, heuristic devises that simplify a very difficult and complex process (p. 53). Even though First Man and First Woman arrange the marriage of Changing Woman to Sun, they are saddened and angered by her move to live with Sun, in the West, leaving them behind, deprived of their grand/daughter and the services of their son-in-law.[26] The all-powerful creators are separated from the conditions they created. This is a key to Navajo philosophy, for again we find that they believe in free will. Holy People can guide us and try to give us advice, but what we decide to do is up to us. The teacher has to relinquish control over the student and let her decide for herself, just as First Man must relinquish control over Changing Woman, and he loses her to Sun, his arranged union to rid the world of suffering.

A final example of First Man's purposeful actions that can appear to some as signs of fumbling or ignorance is the story of First Man's bundle and his "forgetting" of it . We know that First Man's "bundle" is the source of all beings, so it is not something one would want to forget and leave behind. But, when the diyinii move to the earth's surface from the underworld, First Man leaves his bundle behind by "accident" and must send one to the birds back to the underworld to fetch the bundle. However, First Man does nothing by accident, his act of forgetting his bundle is done as a kind of instruction to Earth people. This is a lesson to show Navajos how to place or entice a part of a victim to the underworld, and

bring that part back to the surface, making him whole again (Farella, p. 81). With this action, First Man demonstrates how others can be harmed, but also how a cure could be effected.

Navajos have a concept that is similar to the Buddhist idea of nothingness, *samsara*, which means both emptiness and fullness. This Navajo concept is *alkéé naa´aashii*, [1 letter is incorrect], which we already ran into above in the description of First Man's packaged bundles of necessary good and evil, e.g. death/birth, poverty/wealth, hunger/abundance (Farella, p. 95). Farella defines *alkéé naa´aashii* as meaning cyclical, repeated creation. With this concept the Navajos even predict their own demise, for they predict that all life started this world as a unity, and then things got increasing complex and differentiated, and now the process has reversed and things are entrophying and becoming more unified, back to primal stillness. Each of our own life cycles also models this process, for we start out our lives indistinct within the womb, adolescence is when we reach the height of distinction, and by old age we are indistinct again. Navajos view this process as one of reanimation or renewal. Alkéé naa´aashii is a central feature of Navajo philosophy, meaning "increase with no decrease" (p. 99), generational increase or boundlessness, the continuance and immortality of life itself, the non-egoistic perpetuation of process (p. 100).

Farella tells us a Navajo initially comes into contact with the concept of reanimation with "the cardinal phenomena" (dawn, blue sky, twilight, darkness). The cardinal phenomena serve to summarize and to bring about the entire pattern of Navajo life (patterns of behavior and thought, larger temporal units, such as the seasons, associated with certain activities and thoughts), and they summarize qualitative difference (such as dawn and twilight being seen as good, in terms of safety, and day and night as bad, in terms of dangers). Dawn (white) serves to stir, to awaken (if we rise early and make plans, this leads to attainment of wealth), daytime (skyblue) is the time to carry out the activities one has planned (it is also a time of danger and death), twilight (yellow) is when people come together and activity ceases as we reflect on the day, and night (black) is the time of rest, as well as death and birth.

For Navajos difference is needed for it is essential for existence and growth. Continuation can only be assured if changes are embraced. Differentiation is the process that pervades all entities; it is identical with being. This concept, *alkéé naa´aashii*, deemphasizes "thingness" and emphasizes process, it breaks down boundaries and emphasizes relative (but not exclusive) boundlessness. "Alkéé naa´aashii is a concept that can describe *any* two phenomena that are in an ongoing, permanent relationship of opposition to each other" (Farella, p. 121, emphasis in original). Completeness results from a combination of the two. So, for a Navajo, gender difference, and sexual desire, assures that animation will occur through births. They describe males as providing strength and power and females as providing stability and safety, and it is the two together that result in completeness. The two pairs of most notable animators are the Sun/Moon and the Earth/Changing Woman. Alkéé naa´aashii describes the process of continuation, and like Zen Buddhists, Navajos encourage us to be aware of this process and accept it with indifference. Navajo's call people who try to use the process of reanimation to benefit themselves witches, who represent people caught up in the false illusion of egoism. Navajo's embrace a concept of no-self which is similar to the Buddhist concept of *anatman*.

The concept of reanimation (*alkéé naa´aashii*) emphasizes the flux and differentiation that exists in our world. *Sa'a naghái bik'e hózhó* [2 letters are wrong] emphasizes how difference works together to achieve completeness. It dissolves boundaries, such as ego, and helps us understand our world in terms of wholeness. *"Sa'a naghái bik'e hózhó* , then is completeness, but its source is the lack of completeness of the individual" (Farella, p. 181). *Sa `a naghái bik'e hózhó* is continuous generational animation, the Holy Wind that animates all beings (McNeley). Paradoxically, the Navajo philosophy of reanimation serves as a revitalization of the Navajo culture, through its emphasis on growth, adaption, and change. Their strategy is one of inclusiveness and relabeling, similar to Buddhism, but unlike many other Native American philosophy's, such as the Laguna Pueblos or Pomos, who have become more secretive and exclusive about their cultural teachings. Navajos emphasize

an epistemological shift, changing the way we perceive the world, rather than a technological emphasis on altering the world. They know how to use paradox. They change and adapt, but these changes help them thrive and stay the same, in terms of their philosophy. Certainly their philosophy serves as an example of a unifying view of the universe as connected and whole. Theirs is a philosophy that describes the universe as in flux, alive and continually in the process of renewal.

Paula Gunn Allen, a present-day Laguna Pueblo/Sioux Indian university professor who teaches Native American studies and literature, argues that Native American creation stories, such as the Navajo stories shared here, are not myths, in the Euro-western technological/scientific sense of *lies*, stories that are backward, ignorant, and foolish, that cannot be documented and are not based on facts.[27] Nor are Native American myths pagan folktales, as earlier Christians portrayed them. These biased definitions question the accuracy of myths and make it clear that they are not to be taken seriously (p. 102). Allen reminds us that for Indigenous people myths represent an articulation of thought or wisdom; "their referent is to the sacred world of ritual magic rather than to the external world of machine-verifiable facts" (p. 104). Myths are used by Indigenous people as a means of transmitting beliefs about the teleological nature of existence. Like rituals, that represent the 'literature' of an oral tradition, myths confirm and reaffirm the Native American's reality and serve as the memory of the tribe. Myths are based on prophetic visions, like Mabel McKay's stories that she shares with us based on her spiritual dreams. They "depend for their magic on relationship and participation" (p. 105). As Mabel insisted, we must relate to the myth or story on its own terms, attempting to "experientially accept the nonmaterial or nonordinary reality of existence" in order to hope to understand it (p. 105). Myths need our active engagement, our interactive dialogue with them. Allen sums up the healing, wholistic powers of myth this way:

> (M)yth shows us that it is possible to relate ourselves to the grand and mysterious universe that surrounds and informs our being; it makes us aware of other orders of reality and experience and in that awareness makes the universe our home. It is a magic: it is the area of relationship between all those parts of experience that commonly divide us from ourselves, our universe, and our fellows (p. 117).

Pre-contact Indigenous population is estimated at being between 20-45 million, while the 1980 consensus revealed there were 1 million Indigenous people alive currently in the United States, less than 1/2 of 1% of the more than 200 million U. S. citizens today. Many tribes face extinction, as Mabel McKay's life vividly illustrates. Indigenous people struggle today for physical survival as well as cultural survival. Part of their struggle is one of reclaiming their stories and myths, and rewriting them so that they reflect their philosophies and not their colonizers' views. We learned from Sarris, how the reshaping of Indigenous narrations takes place. We found in the presentation of the Navajo creation stories, that Farella accuses Euro-westerners of misshaping their stories into a good/evil dualism and McNeley highlights a central concept of Navajo philosophy, the Holy Wind, that translators have mistranslated in contradictory, misleading ways and ignored in terms of its primary role. Fortunately, Indigenous people are regaining control of their ritual memories and redescribing their heritage. They are listening to the Holy Wind and it is getting stronger inside of them, guiding them, healing them, and making them whole again.

Educational Implications

A relational (e)pistemology is supported by a relational ontology, the unifying spiritual belief that we are one with the universe. I want to suggest that the relational ontology that supports a relational (e)pistemology needs to be foregrounded as a conscious part of the curriculum, so its influence can be carefully considered and critiqued.

There are many ways to teach a w/holistic curriculum, I do not think there is any one right way. Let me share an example from Gregory Cajete, a Native American teacher, to help us see how Native American spiritual beliefs which reflect a relational ontology and (e)pistemology are translated into the daily practice of a school classroom and how their spiritual beliefs become an explicit part of the curriculum.

In *Look to the Mountain*, Gregory Cajete offers us spiritual insights into Native American education. Cajete is of Santa Clara Pueblo heritage, and at the time of his writing he had been an Indian educator for more than 20 years.[28] His book was the first major work by an American Indian on Indian education. Cajete tells us he wrote his book as an open letter to Indian educators. Cajete describes Indian focus in education as a relational orientation. Indian education brings out affective, subjective, communal relations, artistic and mythical dimensions, ritual and ceremony, and sacred ecology. "Education is an art of process, participation, and making connection. Learning is a growth and life process; and Life and Nature are always relationships in process!" (p. 24). Native Americans teach their children that they have mutual, reciprocal relationships between their social group and the natural world. They teach their children that relationship in community includes people, plants, animals, the whole of Nature. Cajete recommends a w/hoistic approach to knowing that is process focused, and appreciative of spirituality. It is an education that shows respect for individual, cultural, and biological diversity, and seeks to establish a reflective dialogue. Cajete does not hide Native American spiritual beliefs in his discussion of Native American education, rather these spiritual beliefs are foregrounded by him so that their guiding influence can be easily seen and they can be carefully considered.

For Native American's, according to Cajete, the spiritual ecology of Indigenous education is taught through breath, language, song, prayer, and thought. Much of this education is informal education, taught through experiences, storytelling, ritual/ceremony, dreaming, tutoring, as well as through artistic expression. Spirituality is not a religion for Native Americans, in the sense of a particular religious doctrine, but rather it is a way of life.

The tools used for teaching and learning include the cultivation of senses, and the ability to use language. Cajete presents many Native American stories within his text, including the Navajo story of Holy Wind I shared above, and each story is presented with the deepest respect. The stories are told to illustrate Native American spiritual beliefs, and their educational implications. We have already learned that the Mountain and Wind are spiritual symbols for Native Americans. These spiritual symbols are used to orient them, and they are viewed as a source of knowledge and guidance, as well as a source of life and creation. The Holy Wind is the Navajo's source of life, spiritual light, thought and wisdom, language, way of knowing, guidance, and creation.

Another spiritual belief Cajete shares with his readers is the Hunter of Good Heart. "The hunter hunts to perpetuate the life of family, clan, and community. The hunter represents the community to the world of animals and spirits; therefore, the community as well as the hunter is judged through his behavior" (p. 59). The hunter participates in the "great dance of life." Cajete shows how the Navajo deer hunting story and the Blackfoot legend of Scar Face serve to teach the lessons of how to be a hunter with a good heart. Such a hunter must learn how to prayerfully ask that a life be taken to sustain others, with the promise that those others' bodies will eventually be given back to sustain the hunted. The hunter must use intense concentration and application of skill in hunting, and the hunter must treat the prey with respect. After the prey is killed, the hunter with a good heart must celebrate and give thanks for the food received.

The orienting foundations of what Cajete calls "spiritual ecology" include: the Mythic (the tribe's language and culture), the Artistic/Visionary (winter element-deeply inward), the Environmental (connects a tribe to their place), and the Affective/Communal (summer element-outward, highly interactive, external dimension). Cajete sums up his description of Indian education as being about a journey "to find our face (to understand and appreciate our true character), to find our heart (to understand and appreciate the passions that move and energize our life), to find a foundation (work that allows us to fully our potential and our

greatest fulfillment), and to become a complete man or woman (to find our Life and appreciate the spirit that moves us)" (p. 68).

With this example in mind, we can envision all sorts of possibilities in terms of how to teach students to view their world in a wholistic and holistic manner. Teachers teach spirituality by the way they talk to their students and treat them, by the way they move through the classroom environment and how they care for it, by the way they treat the studying of other cultures and various subject areas, by the way they model for students how to live one's life as someone who is connected and related to others including their natural world. It is impossible to separate spirituality from education, for our spiritual beliefs serve as our compasses, guiding us in the choices we make and the meaning we give to our experiences. Given the impossibility of separating (e)pistemology from ontology, we can understand the importance of making teachers and students spiritual beliefs, and others in comparison, a conscious part of the curriculum. Making spirituality an explicit part of the curriculum, rather than implicit, makes these various spiritual beliefs available for public scrutiny. It protects students from the indoctrination of hidden spiritual beliefs rather than making them vulnerable to teachers' influences.

Conclusion

In this paper I explore some examples of Indigenous philosophies from North America for they offer excellent examples of nondualistic philosophies which describe the universe relationally, seeking to dissolve sharp distinctions and dualisms, emphasizing instead how the universe and individuals are connected, spiritually and materially. Indigenous knowing relies on a unifying logic that describes the universe as whole, as well as holy. I discuss this concept of w/holistic relationality, nonduality, in terms of Indigenous descriptions of Spirit, Dreams, and Holy Wind. I offer Indigenous philosophies as non-Euro-western sources that can help us understand how a relational (e)pistemology is supported by a nondualistic ontology which emphasizes that we are w/holistically

connected with our greater universe, materially and spiritually. Indigenous philosophies teach us how to tune into our primal experiences and they further help us develop the concept of knowers as selves-in-relation-with-others. The mistranslations of these nondualistic philosophies teach us how language not only attempts to add meaning to our primal experiences but also how language confuses, misrepresents, limits, and fixes our primal experiences, while the universe flows on below the net of language. My description of the Pomo and Navajo philosophies is meant to help us understand that not only are we related to each other personally, and socially, as I have argued elsewhere, but that we are related to a whole universe, materially and spiritually, stretching beyond the artificial boundaries of human beings. [29] My overall project is one of redefining (e)pistemology in a naturalized manner.

Endnotes

1. The lower case 'e' in (e)pistemology is used to symbolize a naturalized epistemology, instead of a transcendent Epistemology, which I capitalize to distinguish. This paper is derived from Chapter 6 and Chapter 9 of a larger project titled *Relational "(e)pistemologies"* (in review).

2. I use the term 'Indigenous people' throughout this paper as the preferred term used by natives, rather than 'Native American,' a White man's term. However, I want to specifically address Indigenous people of North America in this paper, not Indigenous people on other continents. I will use particular tribal names when I am talking more specifically, but it is important to note here that those tribal names are also White man's language, not the name originally used by the specific Indigenous tribe or nation. For example, Navajos call themselves "Dineh," meaning "the people."

3. R. Bredin. "Learning to Weave and to Dream--Native American Educational Practices," in C. Titone and K. Maloney (Eds.). *Women's Philosophies of Education: Thinking Through our Mothers* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1999): 131-147.

4. Kathy Hytten. "Using whiteness studies in the knowledge debate: An exploration of epistemological racism," *Philosophical Studies in Education,* 1999.

5. John Farella. *The Main Stalk: A Sythesis of Navajo Philosophy.* (Tucson, AR: The University of Arizona Press, 1984).

6. Greg Sarris. (1993). *Keeping Slug Woman Alive: A Holistic Approach to American Indian Texts.* Berkeley: University of California Press., p. 91).

7. author. "Caring reasoning," *Inquiry: Critical Thinking Across the Disciplines*,19(4) (2000): 22-34.

8. Greg Sarris. *Mabel McKay: Weaving the Dream.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

9. Sarris, *Keeping Slug Woman Alive.* Greg Sarris. *The Last Woman from Cache Creek: Conversations with Mabel McKay.* (Dissertation at Stanford University, Palo Alto, CA, 1989).

10. Bredin, "Learning to Weave and to Dream."

11. Sarris, *Keeping Slug Woman Alive*,19.

12. Ibid., 23.

13. Bredin, "Learning to Weave and to Dream."

14. Sarris, *Keeping Slug Woman Alive*, 4.

15. Ibid., 4.

16. Ibid., 7.

17. Ibid.

18. Sarris. *Mabel McKay*, 8.

19. Sarris, *Keeping Slug Woman Alive.*, 9-10.

20. Sarris. *Mabel McKay.*

21. Ibid., 164.

22. James McNeley. *The Navajo 'Wind' Theory of Life and Behavior.* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Hawaii, Honolulu, HI., 1973). James McNeley. *Holy Wind in Navajo Philosophy,* 5th printing. (Tucson, AR: The University of Arizona Press, 1981/1997). . Farella, *The Main Stalk.* I will include the text numbering within the text of the paper for references to McNeley, for all references are from the *Holy Wind in Navajo Philosophy*, as well as for Farella for all references to Farella are from *The Main Stalk.*

23. In my typing the Navajo words, there will be some misspelling due to my not having a Navajo keyboard for typing. For example, "l" should have a diagonal line through it. I will note other typing errors within the text.

24. I will come back to the Navajo creation story with my presentation of Farella's work. Farella adds much more texture to the story, but I do not want his details to shape McNeley's presentation of the Holy Wind.

25. Farella, *The Main Stalk.*

26. Changing Woman is sometimes described by the Navajo as being the daughter of First Man and First Woman, and sometimes she is described as the granddaughter, with Sky and Earth as her parents. In the stories about her leaving to live with the Sun in the west, she is placed in the daughter role, and Sun is the son-in-law. Farella tells us that the Navajo's are a society that emphasizes matrilocal residence, and Changing Woman's leaving to live with Sun represents one pattern for marriage and a cause for strife, a child's debt to her parents that cannot be paid, ensuing guilt, and anger and sadness on the parents' side (p. 61).

27. Paula Gunn Allen. *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions.* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986). All quotes are numbered within the text.

28. Gregory Cajete. *Look to the Mountain: An Ecology of Indigenous Education.* (Durango, CO: Kivakí Press, 1994. I use the term 'Indian' here because that is the term Cajete uses.

29. See Chapters 4 and 5 of *Relational "(e)pistemologies"* (in review).

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