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**NEIGHBOURLY NETWORKS:
A PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH TO
RELATIONAL BALANCES OF SHARED BECOMING**

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INTRODUCTION

Indigenous communities continue to encounter barriers to actualising their worldviews. Implementation of existing legislation alone (for example, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in its current form) is insufficient when subtle forms of subjugation arise from incommensurabilities between paradigms. Legislative processes are going to require additional philosophical debate and creativity. In fact, the very concept of “Neighbourly Networks” requires discussion in contexts without a level playing field for these.

This article argues that part of the trouble relates to contemporary Western difficulties in engaging with Indigenous conceptions of agency in relationship. It first summarises some relevant shared ground between Indigenous worldviews and contemporary Western science and philosophy identified by others. It then offers some additional Western stepping stones to support understanding, while stressing that familiar ground can only be helpful as a starting point. The article therefore increasingly engages with Indigenous conceptions of agency in relationship on their own terms.

Through a discussion of Indigenous conceptions of shared learning and creation in a participationalist paradigm, two motivations for change are able to merge into one: empowering Indigenous worldviews to thrive on their own terms is first and foremost a matter of decency, and this is reason enough to pursue it. The term “decency,” along with “common humanity,” is used here in accordance with Raimond Gaita’s critique of a tendency in contemporary Western philosophy to refer to an individual’s dignity in terms which lack the depth of emotional and embodied realities (terms such as, for example, “inalienable rights,” “justice,” or “fairness”).¹ Intertwined with this is an opportunity for the contemporary West to learn how to take our own steps to regenerate our capacity for mutually responsive, interspecies kinship relationships in our own localities. The latter applies particularly—but not only—to the UK and to wider Europe, where interspecies networking has been neglected under the influence of Cartesian thought.

COLONISATION: “HAVE THEY LEFT?”

1.a) Motivation

Continued colonial injustice remains a postcolonial concern despite numerous legislative attempts to overcome it.² This article is going to argue that far from simply being a case of patchy implementation of existing legislation, the issue is complex. At least some existing legislation remains incapable of adequately relating to Indigenous experience due to incommensurabilities between paradigms. This means that consistent application of the existing legislation cannot always solve the problem. Indigenous philosophical thought will need to be at the core of legislative processes, alongside contemporary Western paradigms, in order for liveable ways forward to be found.

The United Nations’ Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples³ is a case in point. At first glance, it makes for encouraging reading in its attempt to move away from attitudes and behaviours associated with colonial subjugation. At second glance, questions arise. Well over a decade after the declaration was passed, and despite its widespread adoption,⁴ an Indigenous worldview’s ability to be actualised and to thrive continues to be anything but a given.⁴ It would be tempting to assume that it is solely patchy implementation which is to blame. However, it is going to become clear that more fundamental issues are at stake: some aspects of the declaration itself (irrespective of questions of implementation) are likely to require additional debate and creativity.

Incommensurabilities between paradigms may lie hidden in plain sight, and subtle forms of subjugation may arise where one paradigm’s assumptions render another paradigm’s concepts invisible. Indigenous ways of being in the world do not readily reduce to the categories provided by Enlightenment Western thought.⁶ Despite this, Enlightenment Western paradigms frequently continue to work on an assumption of their own universalisability.⁷ Where Western paradigms are in a dominant position in discourse, aspects of Indigenous experience may be rendered invisible by the debate’s overreliance on concepts previously familiar to the West. One example of this invisibility appears in Keith Richotte’s work: Richotte asserts that no mutual understanding is achievable between Indigenous and settler populations in relation to legislative processes (in Richotte’s case, in Canada) unless settler populations learn to engage with the dynamics of Indigenous story.⁸ Richotte’s point is relevant to this article’s discussion of agency being capable of residing in relationship—most notably, to co-creative relationships of interspecies kinship where the sacred may be experienced as part of the material—and thus to questions relevant to UNDRIP.

Section 2 of this article explores two case studies to illustrate some of the dynamics that may be involved. Section 3—taking Raimond Gaita’s thoughts on dignity empowering unique contribution as a starting point, and moving on to engage with Indigenous performative knowledge processes on their own terms—discusses some patterns of interaction which may contribute to our co-creating liveable, interspecies ways forward. The discussion is offered in a spirit of respectful neighbourliness in our shared, co-creative network of the universe.⁹ It is from this very respect for neighbourly difference that the need arises for the West to learn from and with Indigenous paradigms, and to do so in a spirit of attuning to the dynamics of a previously unfamiliar paradigm, rather than of appropriating its tangible manifestations.

1.b) Preliminary notes on the paradigms involved

1.b.1. Indigenous philosophies cannot be a monolith, but shared conceptual ground exists

Indigenous worldviews cannot all, of course, be tarred with one brush: the dynamic of their arising from locality means they are necessarily diverse.¹⁰ Shared conceptual ground, however, does exist. Leroy Little Bear, for example, asserted three interwoven elements of philosophical unity-in-diversity between Indigenous worldviews in the context of a ten-year series of transdisciplinary academic conferences now known as the Dialogues.¹¹ While this approach cannot do justice to each individual dynamic of each particular society's relationships on and with their land,¹² it does offer a starting point for philosophising between Indigenous and non-Indigenous paradigms.¹³

Little Bear's three elements speak to the following concerns: firstly, of the universe being alive and imbued with spirit; secondly, of human co-participation in an ongoing creation that shows patterns as opposed to obeying laws; and thirdly, of there being a 'manifesting' alongside a 'manifest' in this world, with the manifesting also being referred to as the spiritual and the manifest as the physical.¹⁴ Little Bear's later work shows the three to be inextricably intertwined, and their separation only having been a tool for initial knowledge transfer between paradigms.¹⁵ Not stated explicitly in Little Bear's three elements, but emergent between the lines, is a tendency for Indigenous worldviews to conceive of dualisms as not necessarily involving mutual exclusion.¹⁶

In this article, Little Bear's elements of philosophical unity-in-diversity are on the one hand referenced in the generalised form in which he proposed them, while on other occasions exemplified by the philosophical understandings of individual Indigenous societies, as appropriate.

1.b.2. Contemporary Western nuance, and its limited impact on the mainstream

Despite the above-mentioned tendency for contemporary Western worldviews to universalise, this tendency itself, of course, cannot entirely be universalised: Western scientific involvement in Little Bear's and his colleagues' ten-year series of conferences alone is testament to the West, too, being capable of nuance. Contemporary Western science's own recent insight, through its discoveries in relation to quantum theory, plays a part: the clockwork of Newtonian physics was found only to be explanatory of a subset of the world,¹⁷ and this insight featured prominently at the Dialogues. Related work by Karen Barad at the intersection of quantum physics and philosophy, culminating in her proposal of her theory of agential realism, is referenced below, alongside its kinship with Maurice Merleau-Ponty's later philosophy, as discussed in his Collège de France lectures.¹⁸

Two important caveats must be noted here. Firstly, the above Western examples of glimpses beyond Enlightenment Western comfort zones—although they provide helpful stepping stones on a journey towards engagement with Indigenous concepts—cannot carry us all the way to these concepts. The thrust of this article's argument will become increasingly evident in the following sections: stepping stones notwithstanding, there remains a point beyond which Indigenous worldviews can only be approached on their own terms, and these terms will require their own space to shine through. Linda Tuhiwai Smith's work in relation to methodology, alongside aspects of Krushil Watene's work referenced below, are relevant to this first caveat.

Secondly, the above Western examples of glimpses beyond Enlightenment Western comfort zones do not appear to have resulted in a mainstream Western paradigm shift.¹⁹ Cartesian conceptions of the physical world as an automaton enable an economically useful (at least in the short term) option of objectifying non-human nature:²⁰ the contemporary West can tend to concentrate on interacting with those aspects of the natural world seemingly reducible to reliable predictability, and then to apply overly restrictive forms of logic²¹ to empirical observations of a nature placed upon Bacon's rack and largely confined to Boyle's laboratory conditions.²² As a corollary, we not only continue to be more accustomed to learning *about* non-human nature than we are to learning *from* it,²³ we also rarely expect to engage in processes of shared learning and creation *with* non-human nature, in the sense of agency being granted space to develop in interspecies relationship and to thrive from there.²⁴ Rather, we tend to find ourselves surprised when others do.²⁵ We are, in other words, persisting in our reluctance to take seriously types of engagement lying beyond the edges of a comfort zone which is a mere 500 years old, and whose delimitations are by no means a given.²⁶

1.c) Two reasons for change, and a glimpse of their merging into one

At the beginning of this article, the need to challenge the current dominance of Enlightenment Western paradigms was presented as a matter of decency towards Indigenous societies (which would already be reason enough to pursue it). Based on what has been said since, this matter of decency is now also turning out to be one of rigour. Enlightenment Western societies have, on the one hand, excelled at leading the way with regards to much-needed scientific innovations such as vaccination programmes.²⁷ On the other, we have allowed our comfort zone to contract by allowing a tendency to reduce science to scientism to limit the scope of our learning.

To stretch ourselves in this regard is not usually viewed as a matter of scientific rigour, and may even give rise to accusations of its lack.²⁸ However, if science is to be conceived as a path to understanding the natural world, then rigour demands the inclusion of those experiences which initially do not appear to sit well with our existing expectations.²⁹ Under an Indigenous, richer understanding of science as relating to "systems of relationships and their application to the life of the community,"³⁰ an attitude of welcoming the unexpected will be conducive to shared innovation and becoming outside the laboratory, too.

This article is going to explore our widespread contemporary Western failure to engage with Indigenous conceptions of agency in relationship on their own terms (as, for example, in Richotte's comment regarding story) as an example of why it is important to challenge the current philosophical dominance of Enlightenment Western paradigms. Failure to engage with the dynamics of agency residing in relationship remains, first and foremost, discriminatory against Indigenous societies, and thus unethical. In addition—and now also taking into account a participationalist paradigm, as discussed below—it is going to become clear that a mainstream that renders *any* contribution invisible—in this case, Indigenous contribution on its own terms—is, in doing so, committing a two-pronged act of epistemic negligence: it is missing an opportunity to extend its comfort zone in relation to the already existing; and it is severing connections vital to Little Bear's co-creative thriving into the future of the networks affected.³¹

Conversely, if contemporary Western networks do find the humility to learn to attune to Indigenous conceptions of agentive interspecies rhythms and dynamics—it becomes conceivable that multiple, and again networked, benefits will ensue. Interwoven with our regeneration of agentive interspecies networks specific to our own, contemporary Western localities (particularly in Europe), and with the increase in Western capacity for engagement with Indigenous philosophies (and thus with shared processes such as UNDRIP) likely to be supported by this regeneration, new potential also emerges for addressing our current, contemporary Western failure to be respectful neighbours to others. For better or worse, localised networks are in turn networked into a global one, and the West could do worse than to learn how to end our current overgrazing of the world's climate commons.³²

2. Subtle subjugation: the perils of uneven playing fields

“... we've all been bathed in a vat of cognitive imperialism,” writes Leanne Betasamosake Simpson.³³ As stated at the beginning of this article, despite Indigenous rights now being enshrined in the UN declaration, Indigenous ways of being in the world continue to be difficult to actualise in the nation states imposed on them, and the trouble relates to paradigm. Enrique Dussel's “myth of modernity,” while not taking issue with an Enlightenment Western definition of rationality *per se*, leaves the reader in no doubt about the harm inherent in the dynamic of its assumption of its own superiority, universalisability and exclusive validity producing forms of subjugation.³⁴ Overt forms of subjugation have been addressed by UNDRIP.³⁵ Subtler forms, operating through tacit prioritisation of an incommensurable paradigm, remain to be resolved.

The dynamics of such subtler forms of subjugation are, for example, explored by Bruce Wilshire: a dominant paradigm's tacit assumptions may not only render invisible any ideas and phenomena beyond its own comfort zone, but may also result in their very concealment becoming concealed.³⁶ Examples from Indigenous contexts abound. Non-anthropocentric conceptions of persons as potential partners in interspecies relationship³⁷ become invisible in discussions of personhood based on arguments of analogy with human-specific capacities.³⁸ When personhood is tacitly (as opposed to explicitly) linked to membership of the human species, the resulting invisibility of non-anthropocentric conceptions of personhood itself becomes unlikely to be noticed. Relatedly, suggestions of engagement with ritual were met with “guffaws”³⁹ at their alleged superstition in a cross-cultural discussion of organic farming practices: incommensurabilities between paradigms had concealed any nuanced experiences of ritual as whole-bodied conversation with non-humans in an environment experiencing the sacred as being present in the material world.⁴⁰

At first glance, the trouble is simply that the capacities of a perceived “other” may be rendered invisible by its assignment to a category perceived not to have them, as contemporary Western theories of epistemic injustice suggest.⁴¹ At second glance, the trouble goes deeper, as capacities' invisibility tips into their inability to operate in contexts where discourse eliminates scope for capacity to be exercised. Eva Marie Garrouette and Kathleen Delores Westcott's comparative study of the constitutive capacity of story illustrates this point.⁴² In a dynamic of self-fulfilling prophecy reminiscent of educational opportunities being withheld from a student due to assumptions of their lack of potential, the scope for Indigenous story to do its work is curtailed in environments where incommensurabilities between paradigms result in its capacities being underestimated, and its opportunities to interact undermined accordingly. In other words, Western failure to understand a non-Western concept on its own terms has here resulted in the non-Western concept's inability to operate in a Western context.

A similar dynamic of tacit assumptions acting as constraints on co-creative reality is relevant to UNDRIP. The right to religious freedom, for example, is protected by UNDRIP's Article 12, while the right to subsistence is protected by Article 20.⁴³ The two are, however, treated as separate questions by UNDRIP, even though this (arguably Cartesian) separation does not travel well: where Leroy Little Bear's elements of philosophical unity-in-diversity between Indigenous worldviews are lived, such a separation cannot apply. Where relationships between humans and non-humans are grounded in conceptions of the universe being alive and imbued with spirit—where humans are co-participants, among other species, in the continued co-creation of the manifest as it arises from the potentialities of a manifesting understood to be spiritual in the material world—it is unrealistic to treat subsistence and religious freedom as separate issues, and then to expect legislation based on this categorisation to hold water when interacting with Indigenous communities as understood by Little Bear.⁴⁴

Predictably, legislation conceived from within a contemporary Western paradigm alone—although technically compliant with UNDRIP—thus struggles to relate to the needs of an Indigenous whaling community in what is now known as Alaska. The Iñupiaq community in question experiences whales and humans as part of an interspecies kinship group. The sacred is experienced as being present in the material in this relationship, for which Chie Sakakibara has coined the new term “cetaceousness.”⁴⁵ The relationship involves whales giving themselves to the community when they are ready to do so, in a dynamic which echoes, for example, Gregory Cajete's treatment of Indigenous humans' relationships with smaller animals hunted for sustenance.⁴⁶ Sakakibara describes an interspecies relationality incapable of being captured by causality alone: it is not, for example, a simple case of a whale unilaterally deciding to give itself, and the whale's decision in turn triggering unilateral human hunting activity. Rather, a mutually responsive interplay of humans and whales involving drumming and dance is described, whereby drumming not only forms part of a community's celebration of a successful hunt, but is equally part of the community's communication with a whale before the whale's gift is made.⁴⁷

Western categories such as “subsistence whaling” and “religious freedom,” severing the spiritual from the material, and locating agency solely in the (bounded) hands of the humans involved (as opposed to recognising its potential presence in interspecies relationship alongside this), cannot comprehensively engage with this dynamic. This means that UNDRIP's articles 12 and 20 are going to offer little potential for resolution here until a future version creates a way forward that links them.⁴⁸ At the moment, and in compliance with article 20, the encapsulating nation state of the USA is able to impose legislation with regards to quotas based solely on nutritional requirements, and these are able to override Indigenous experiences of a whale having given itself to the community as part of their interaction between whales and drumming and dance. Under article 12, the community is then permitted to engage in “religious” dance, but “religious” dance, now unable to interact with material interspecies practice, does not resolve the issue: the issue at stake is the unity of spirituality and subsistence experienced in co-creative interspecies kinship. This dynamic is not reflected in the current legislation separating religious freedom from questions of physical sustenance and locating agency in bounded entities alone.

The whaling dynamic can, in an extension, be placed into a wider context of land rights. The distress resulting from Indigenous peoples' separation from their land and from its fellow constituents has, on multiple occasions, found embodied expression in the deaths of some of those affected.⁴⁹ The need for redress—if such a thing is possible—is reflected in UNDRIP's Article 8; the need to prevent

future forced relocation is addressed in Article 26.⁵⁰ What neither succeeds in accommodating, however, are bilateral forms of belonging: land ownership is treated as unilateral human control of an object. Relationships of mutual belonging between land and its people⁵¹ are not addressed; assurance of land continuing to be honoured as a partner in mutually respectful and responsive interaction after a change of legal ownership is not considered.⁵² Customary ritual interaction with the land is again treated as an entirely separate matter of religious practice, based, again, on a Cartesian dualist distinction between the sacred and the material and on related assumptions of agency being located in bounded entities alone. The whaling case study already showed, however, that these are not universalisable.⁵³ Indigenous conceptions, as well as their lived realities, have been rendered invisible, and potentially unable to operate, by the tacit assumptions of a paradigm continuing to be treated as universalisable even after it has been found not to be.

The remaining sections are going to discuss how this conundrum may be addressed, and how much—in addition to the above-mentioned decency of eliminating a form of discrimination now that it has become known—stands to be gained by addressing it.

3. Once dignity has been acknowledged for its own sake, contribution is empowered to follow

This section returns to the point raised in the Introduction to this article of a matter of decency and inclusion simultaneously being one of rigour. In a first step, and arguing from a contemporary Western, representationalist paradigm, Miranda Fricker shows that epistemic injustice corrupts the knowledge base.⁵⁴ Still considered from within the same, representationalist paradigm (and not, as yet, from within a participationalist one), corruption of the knowledge base is unlikely to be helpful in an environment whose complexity already entails our scientific understanding only ever stretching to verisimilitude at most.⁵⁵ Fricker's work links epistemic injustice to discrimination, which is a denial of dignity. Elements of Raimond Gaita's thinking in relation to dignity are therefore going to be relevant as a starting point for this discussion in **section 3.a.**, at its beginning solely relating to bounded entities.

In **section 3.b.**, in an extension of these first reflections beyond the realm of an Enlightenment Western paradigm alone, this article is going to return to a point made in **section 2:** much of the subtle influence of this dominant paradigm relates to its reluctance to engage with the possibility of agency not exclusively residing in bounded individuals or groups.⁵⁶ Enlightenment Western paradigms do not tend to attribute a capacity for agency to relationships (nor, relatedly, to stories), whereas Indigenous conceptions of performative knowledge processes, understood from within a participationalist paradigm, are going to be shown to rely on it: a glimpse of the potentially acausal dynamics involved has already appeared in the above whaling example. **Section 3.b** is thus going to argue that the dignity of acknowledging agency in relationships constitutes a vital step in processes of returning space to Indigenous worldviews to be actualised and to regain their ability to thrive.

Based on a proposed richer application of Gaita's thinking with regards to dignity, **section 3.b** will further argue that if the Enlightenment West extends the courtesy of recognising agency in relationship to the Indigenous societies who rely on its presence, it is again going to enjoy what was initially, in the previous, representationalist argument, simply referred to as enhanced rigour.

However, under a participationalist paradigm now, as co-creative agency resides in relationship and allows for co-creative innovation, enhanced rigour is going to mean more than it did before: it is going to mean enhanced scope for shared becoming. This is where Karen Barad's agential realism comes to life as it meets Leroy Little Bear's shared philosophical ground halfway.⁵⁷ Enhanced rigour, under a participationalist paradigm, is going to mean that if the West finds the humility to acknowledge the dignity of agency in relationship, then we may enhance our own capacity for co-creative, interspecies interaction in our own localities. Based on the transformative characteristics of Indigenous paradigms,⁵⁸ regeneration of our own, co-creative relationships with more-than-human nature may well become interwoven with the development of our capacity for engagement with Indigenous worldviews on their own terms—which is, as the whaling case study shows, vital to processes such as UNDRIP. Finally, and through this interwoven dynamic, we may find ourselves growing into becoming more respectful neighbours and partners in inter-locality networking to those currently affected by our overgrazing of the global climate commons.

3.a. Raimond Gaita: on decency and rigour as both move towards a participationalist paradigm

Acceptability to an established mainstream can tend to be contingent on compliance with its pre-existing norms, even where these may be irrelevant to the job at hand.⁵⁹ When this plays out in plain sight, we readily admit that discrimination is unethical. **Section 2** showed that subtler dynamics may give rise to similarly unethical outcomes in the present. What is now at stake, in addition, is the ability of **section 2's** subtler dynamics to act as a stumbling block to our shared creation of liveable future ways of networking in the world.

Spinoza's network of individuals within the whole, too complex for any individual or group to grasp,⁶⁰ is one way of imagining the limitations encountered in the discussion of verisimilitude above. Given this complexity, and given our blind spots entailed by it, any individual or group arguably stands to benefit from interaction with those at home in different parts of the network from their own. Interaction need not mean agreement every time: any "other," too, is bound to be as fallible as we are.⁶¹ What it does mean, however, is that more is required than the mainstream's simply allowing those who meet its criteria to add themselves to it. If an existing mainstream wants to grow into enhanced familiarity with the complex network it can never fully grasp, it will need the courage to let itself be transformed by its interaction with the previously unfamiliar.⁶² If humans had allowed themselves to remain convinced that their own range of hearing was the only one, Nagel's bat would not have been available to make a philosophical point,⁶³ and ultrasound would not now be a diagnostic procedure in Enlightenment Western healthcare.

Raimond Gaita makes a pertinent point in this regard: the point of the inherent dignity of the "other," and of this dignity, once recognised, becoming empowered to blossom into the "other's" unique contribution which could not otherwise have been made and received. Gaita's point is made in relation to bounded individuals and to bounded groups.⁶⁴ Between the lines, however, the context of Gaita's remarks travels part of the way towards engagement with Indigenous knowledge processes on their own terms: between the lines, it is one of relationships and of meanings. It is through engagement with each other that contributions develop into shared meanings, and it is in engagement with each other that initially intractable predicaments may become capable of being resolved.⁶⁵ Gaita does not explicitly attribute agency to relationship. He does, however, welcome the necessary unforeseeability of outcomes of serious and equitable engagement between Indigenous and settler populations in Australia, and this arguably demonstrates openness to the idea.⁶⁶

3.b. Gaita's dignity, applied beyond bounded individuals and groups: allowing networks to breathe where the sacred is experienced in interaction with the material

Gaita's thinking carries echoes of Martin Buber's conception of *I-thou* relationships.⁶⁷ It is the non-objectifying engagement of *I-thou* which enables all contributions to be made, and it is here that a multi-faceted stepping stone to agency in relationship emerges—alongside, as a corollary, a much-needed levelling of playing fields and creating of neighbourly networks relevant to UNDRIP. Recognition of agency in relationships involves recognition of the dignity of the unexpected. It is in this sense that this section is a call for us to allow our networks to breathe beyond that which is capable of being preconceived, and to find ways of enabling our legislative processes to create space for this.

Buber's thinking goes beyond mere openness to material non-objectification: he locates the spiritual between the *I* and the *thou*,⁶⁸ and this shows kinship with the above-referenced parallels between Indigenous thought and Spinoza's which formed a stepping stone into the Iñupiaq whaling case study. The complexity of Spinoza's network, in turn, supports William James's comments on the impossibility of any one individual or group offering an exhaustive account of the sacred.⁶⁹

Despite the necessary philosophical diversity following from this, a piece of shared ground again appears between worldviews locating the sacred within the material world rather than beyond. Little Bear's elements of philosophical unity-in-diversity refer to the universe as being alive and imbued with spirit, and to humans as co-creators in a world that shows patterns rather than following laws. The dynamics of his "manifesting," which he links to the spiritual, interact with the "manifest," which he links to the physical, in this world. Little Bear's three elements do not talk about manifest objects to observe and to manipulate in this world, while placing sacredness into a separate realm: they talk about the sacredness of our co-creative participation with the manifesting.

Little Bear's dynamics between manifesting and manifest reappear in a group of Anishinaabeg authors' treatment of Indigenous story as dynamic in relationship.⁷⁰ In a predominantly verb-based language,⁷¹ a pattern emerges of eternal dynamics being encoded in sacred stories grounded in understandings of story as verb, and of story as being alive in relationship. Nouns may well manifest, through story, in time- and place-bound instantiations of storied, eternal rhythms of verb-based interaction.⁷² Dynamics of honourable harvest, encoded in stories of interspecies kinship, may become manifest from underlying rhythms in the manifesting, as geese may give themselves⁷³ and as enhanced sweetgrass growth may appear.⁷⁴

Crucially, what is at stake in this storied dynamic is not whether preconceived precepts are correctly applied. As with the whaling case study, a manifest quota of manifest geese on its own is not going to help. Rather, knowledge as process emerges in a dynamic of mutual, interspecies attunement, grounded in custom and experience without being determined by these. Under a paradigm acknowledging the impossibility of attaining sufficient understanding to justify unilateral control (such as Spinoza's or Leroy Little Bear's), universalisable precepts cannot reliably be preconceived. Rhythms and patterns for feeling our way together, conversely, can.

Much ethical discussion in the Enlightenment West centres on questions of what universalisable ethical principles to apply,⁷⁵ of who is eligible to benefit from their application,⁷⁶ and, in some cases, of what may constitute appropriate application of universalised principles to a particular situation.⁷⁷ The above conception of story as verb, understood as an eternal pattern of dynamic relationship to

be continually renewed in mutually responsive, co-creative interaction, is very different from this. Brian Burkhart theorises what is at stake in a relational understanding of ethics.⁷⁸ To illustrate, Burkhart draws parallels between ethical conduct and the harmonies created in a jazz band, whereby the individual player enriches the whole while at the same time being buoyed by the play of the whole.⁷⁹ Mutual attunement is key: dynamics of story as verb play out in shared learning and creation of new variations on eternal rhythms, and it is this renewal which at the same time keeps story as verb alive⁸⁰ and relationship responsive,⁸¹ reflecting the living, co-creative universe introduced by Little Bear.

None of this means that Indigenous groups would be likely to object to legislative processes playing a pivotal role in regulating behaviour: several of the Indigenous authors cited are qualified legal professionals as well as philosophers,⁸² and Indigenous scholars contributed to the conception of UNDRIP.⁸³ It is rather that in Indigenous settings, instruments for regulating behaviour tend to be able to breathe in relationship: their purpose is a forward-looking one of restoring justice by enabling communities to live harmoniously together into the future more than it is to mete out outwardly equal punishments for outwardly equal transgressions.⁸⁴ Desmond Tutu's leadership of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa famously drew upon precolonial conceptions of *ubuntu* as well as on Enlightenment Western conceptions of forensic process. This involved taking the courageous step of, in a volatile situation, daring to allow an innovative process to unfold which relied on story and meaning as inalienable elements of creating a respectful path to restoring justice, while acknowledging that, at times, this might carry a pricetag of an outward appearance of unfairness to some.⁸⁵ Fallibility, in a worldview centring relationality, is acknowledged as part not only of the human condition, but as part of the very condition of being alive.⁸⁶ It is disrespect which is deemed unacceptable,⁸⁷ and it is, crucially for the argument being made in this section, disrespect which "precludes the knowledge process."⁸⁸ In Tutu's example, the respect of *I-thou*, and of expectation of agency, was not only paid to the individuals involved: it was also paid to the unbounded entities of their relationships, and these were given space to unfold and to become open to co-creative renewal.⁸⁹

None of this renders *I-it*, or indeed legislative processes such as UNDRIP, obsolete. Tutu did not do away with the law; he created space for it to breathe in story and relationship.⁹⁰ It is when unilateral control replaces agency in relationship that knowledge processes are stifled, not when parameters are negotiated to support these.

Vine Deloria and Daniel Wildcat, in a discussion of the hubris of human aspirations to unilateral control, tellingly recommend Jacques Ellul for further reading.⁹¹ Ellul's work presents the ossifying effect of a sociological phenomenon of a self-perpetuating spread of standardisation he refers to as "technique."⁹² Mutually responsive interaction is no longer possible, because interaction has been reduced to the sole reign of standardised process.⁹³ A vicious cycle of depersonalisation and disregard may ensue.⁹⁴

It is in this sense that, considered from within a paradigm where the sacred is experienced to be located within the material world, the influence of Ellul's "technique" takes on an additional dimension. The unilateral control embodied in Ellul's "technique," with the purpose of ensuring ever-predictable efficiency in the smooth running of things, cuts us off from the possibility of agency being able to arise in *I-thou* relationship. It thus cuts us off from the possibility of engagement in processes of shared learning and creation as understood in Indigenous philosophies and

exemplified in Burkhart's jazz analogy. The objectification of *I–It* allows the objectifying agent to retain unilateral control of the relationship's development. This first precludes Buber's spirituality entering the immediate relationship between *I* and *thou*, and then, in the medium term, precludes the maturing in relationship described as sacred, for example, in Anne Waters's work.⁹⁵ Little Bear's co-creative activity, and Anne Waters's maturing in co-creative relationship as Brian Burkhart's jazz band improvises on an ever-responsive dynamic of patterns in a sacred manifesting, have been overruled by standardisation.

A stepping stone to what is at stake for Waters and for Little Bear may be found in William James's thoughts on our doorway to "the More" being located in our unconscious—in other words, in our relinquishment of unilateral control through our conscious, and in our allowing ourselves to remain open to the "other."⁹⁶

James's thinking is a mere stepping stone here, and by no means fully explanatory of Indigenous thought.⁹⁷ It is the stepping stone supplied by Gaita above which carries us more closely to Indigenous understandings of agency in relationship: Gaita's focus is on meanings embodied in interspecies relationships.⁹⁸ Most notably in the context of this discussion of agency being able to reside in relationship, Gaita actively embraces the unforeseeable quality in processes of *I–thou* relationship: the inability to preconceive unilaterally the outcome of a shared process of learning and co-creative activity, for Gaita, does not constitute a vagueness to be remedied, but an opportunity for shared becoming.⁹⁹ Gaita stops short of explicitly acknowledging either relationship or story as living, co-creative agents in the way that the above-cited Anishinaabeg authors do and as, for example, PRATEC would,¹⁰⁰ both chiming with Leroy Little Bear's elements of philosophical unity-in-diversity referenced throughout this article. What Gaita does do, however, is to show that there can be Western stepping stones to engagement with such forms of agency even for those of us without the benefit of first-hand experience of participation in multispecies kinship groups such as PRATEC's.¹⁰¹ The sacredness in the material which is lived in co-creative, interspecies relationship in the whaling case study—whatever else it may simultaneously be—is a sacredness of non-objectification, and this non-objectification needs space in the law to unfold in living, mutual responsiveness.

It has become clear that these thoughts, while relevant to legislative processes such as UNDRIP, are relevant to these precisely because they cannot be conceived as legislative issues alone. What is at stake is, first and foremost, a wake-up call for the contemporary West to regenerate our pre-Enlightenment openness to entering into our own, mutually responsive, interspecies relationships in our own localities,¹⁰² and to allow these relationships to begin to transform us.¹⁰³ Secondly, and through this transformation, we may become better placed fruitfully to engage in philosophical debate, resulting in approaches to the protection of Indigenous rights and capabilities which are sensitive to Indigenous requirements on their own terms. Finally, through the intertwined relationship of these first two steps, we may become more respectful neighbours in inter-locality networks to those currently affected by our Enlightenment Western overgrazing of the climate commons.

4. Conclusion: agency in relationship as a path to networked renewal

This article has argued that far from being a straightforward case of as yet patchy implementation of existing legislation, continued colonial injustice is also rooted in subtler forms of subjugation arising from paradigm. Teething troubles relating to aspects of UNDRIP in its current form, and to processes interacting with UNDRIP, similarly arise from this problematic. As previously stated by Krushil Watene, philosophical discussions are going to be needed in order to address this.¹⁰⁴

In particular, Keith Richotte asserts that no mutual understanding is going to be achievable between Indigenous and settler populations in relation to legislative processes (in Richotte's case, in Canada) unless settler populations learn to engage with the dynamics of Indigenous story.¹⁰⁵ Drawing on Leroy Little Bear's elements of philosophical unity-in-diversity between Indigenous worldviews, this article has shown that Richotte's assertion is, above all, one of agency being able to arise in story and in relationship, and that this agency-in-relationship is intertwined with Indigenous experiences of the sacred in the material, as opposed to its being located in a separate realm beyond.

This means that the dominance of tacit assumptions inherent in Enlightenment Western paradigms—such as the treatment of subsistence and of religious freedom as two separate issues, and such as the treatment of agency as an attribute only of bounded entities—will need to be challenged in order for Indigenous worldviews, and for lived realities of these, to be able to return to thriving. A case study of a whaling community in what is now known as Alaska showed that these tacit assumptions, and their reflection in the current version of UNDRIP, not only render invisible certain aspects of Indigenous being-in-the-world, but that they also place constraints on present and future realities which are capable of rendering these aspects defunct.

A proposed path to potential resolution began from a starting point of Raimond Gaita's assertion of the inherent dignity of all, once acknowledged, then becoming empowered to grow into everyone's unique contribution. Initially argued from within a representationalist paradigm, Gaita's matter of decency and inclusion was shown simultaneously to be one of scientific rigour, and of the prevention of epistemic injustice corrupting the knowledge base.

Moving towards argument from within a participationalist paradigm, Gaita's thought process was then shown to be capable of being extended beyond application to the bounded entities of individual persons and of groups, and thus to become a stepping stone towards engagement with Indigenous concepts on their own terms. Garrouette and Westcott's work showed that once the same dignity is extended to the agency capable of arising in relationship (and, relatedly, to that of story), Indigenous conceptions of performative knowledge processes become empowered to operate. Leroy Little Bear's conception of our interspecies, co-creative and simultaneously sacred and physical communion with the manifesting was shown to be integral to these. Jacques Ellul's thinking with regards to the self-perpetuating spread of standardisation referred to as "technique," conversely, showed that a vicious cycle of increasing depersonalisation and increasingly undignified treatment may be at the core of contemporary Western difficulties in our meaningful engagement with those around us.

While Western stepping stones—taken, for example, from phenomenological thought—were available to help initial engagement with Indigenous ideas, it was important to note that mere stepping stones are all that they are: they cannot be fully explanatory of Indigenous thought, for

the simple reason that Indigenous thought is not what they were conceived from. What matters is that Indigenous worldviews receive space to thrive on their own terms, and that inter-paradigm conversation—for example, as part of legislative processes such as UNDRIP—takes place on Indigenous worldviews’ own terms, too. Western stepping stones can help to create an initial, inevitably rough and ready map to serve as a starting point. They are not the territory.

If the contemporary West dares to relinquish the aspiration to unilateral control and embarks on a regeneration of what Martin Buber refers to as *I–thou* relationships with human and non-human nature alike, then the return of agency into relationships related to this, in the first instance, may foster a regeneration of kinship between the contemporary West and more-than-human nature. Based on the transformative character of Indigenous worldviews, such non-objectifying interspecies engagement may then become conducive to enhanced mutual understanding between Indigenous and non-Indigenous worldviews. Through the intertwined relationship of these first two steps, hope may then arise of the Enlightenment West’s becoming more respectful neighbours and partners in inter-locality networks to those currently affected by our overgrazing of the world’s climate commons.

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1. See Raimond Gaita, *A Common Humanity: Thinking about Love and Truth and Justice* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 5 and 81.
2. See Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonising Methodologies*, 2nd ed. (London: Zed Books, 2012), 19-26 and 198-216; and Dennis H McPherson and J Douglas Rabb, *Indian from the Inside: Native American Philosophy and Cultural Renewal* (Jefferson: McFarland & Co., 2011), 23-59. The section heading of "Have they left?" alludes to Linda Tuhiwai Smith's jokey reference to so-called postcolonial realities of continuing colonial subjugation (Smith, *Decolonising Methodologies*, 25).
3. United Nations, *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf (accessed 29 May 2024).
4. United Nations, "Adoption of the United Nations' Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: 14 Years Later," *Department of Economic and Social Affairs: Indigenous Peoples*, <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/news/2021/09/adoption-of-the-united-nations-declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples-14-years-later/> (accessed 29 May 2024).
5. For example, as recently as 2018, both mainstream research and mainstream practice in relation to Indigenous suicide prevention were shown still to be premised almost exclusively on Western assumptions, and therefore unsuitable for application in an Indigenous context. (Jeffrey Ansloos, "Rethinking Indigenous Suicide," *International Journal of Indigenous Health*, 13:2 (2018), 8-28, DOI: 10.18357/ijih.v13i2.32061 (accessed 29 May 2024)). Ansloos' discussion of his findings carries echoes of Linda Tuhiwai Smith's seminal work discussing incommensurabilities between Western and Indigenous research methodologies (Smith, *Decolonising Methodologies*). A powerful example of forms of continuing domination being capable of affecting all aspects of community life, as well as an illustration of a Mvskoke community's resurgence, can be found in Laura Harjo, *Spiral to the Stars: Mvskoke Tools of Futurity* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2019).
6. For example, McPherson and Rabb, *Indian from the Inside*, 147-8.
7. For example, Enrique Dussel, "Eurocentrism and Modernity (Introduction to the Frankfurt Lectures)," *boundary 2*, 20:3 (Autumn 1993), 65-76, www.jstor.com/stable/303341 (accessed 29 May 2024).
8. Keith Richotte, "Telling All of Our Stories: Reorienting the Legal and Political Events of the Anishinaabeg," in *Anishinaabeg Studies: Understanding the World Through Stories*, eds Jill Doerfler, Niigaanwew James Sinclair and Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiiik Stark (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2013), 379-96, at 385.
9. Scott Pratt, for example, offers a nuanced discussion of the difference between colonial forms of exploitative, universalising, potentially physically and epistemically violent expressions of neighbourliness, on the one hand, and what he terms an "Indigenous attitude" of interaction, pluralism, community and growth on the other: Scott Pratt, *Native Pragmatism: Rethinking the Roots of American Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 38. Pratt goes on to derive from this distinction an inversion of what contemporary Western societies would refer to as the "Golden Rule" (of doing unto others as you would have them do unto you), arguing that since the Golden Rule universalises (and is thus incompatible with respect for difference), the desirable neighbourly attitude proposed in his work involves interacting with others in a way that they are comfortable with (ibid., 163-5).
10. For example, Brian Burkhart, *Indigenizing Philosophy through the Land* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2019).
11. Glenn A Parry, *SEED Graduate Institute: An Original Model of Transdisciplinary Education Informed by Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Dialogue* (PhD thesis, California Institute of Integral Studies, 2008), 89, <https://originalthinking.us/pdfs/original-model-of-education.pdf> (accessed 29 May 2024). The Dialogues were initiated by a group of Indigenous academics led by Leroy Little Bear, and involved, amongst others, David Bohm and David Peat representing the discipline of quantum physics. Parallels between Indigenous thought and the findings of quantum theory were explored, alongside shared ground with aspects of contemporary Western philosophical thought (most notably, phenomenology and American Pragmatism) as it chimed with these. Elements of shared ground identified at the Dialogues are revisited at multiple points in this article, in particular those relevant to the dynamics of a participationalist paradigm.
12. For example, Andrea Sullivan-Clarke discusses issues of scalability in "Discovering Reality and a First Nations/American Indian Standpoint Theory," *APA Studies on Native American and Indigenous Philosophy*, 23:1 (Fall 2023), 4-8, <https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.apaonline.org/resource/collection/13B1F8E6-0142-45FD->

A626-9C4271DC6F62/APA_Studies_on_Native_American_and_Indigenous_Philosophy_V23n1.pdf (accessed 29 May 2024).

13. A similar point is made, for example, in an anthology in the field of Anishinaabeg studies describing its viewpoint as tribal and, simultaneously, as integrated into wider discussions of Indigenous worldview (Jill Doerfler, Niigaanwew James Sinclair and Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiiik Stark, “*Bagijiige: Making an Offering*,” in *Centering Anishinaabeg Studies: Understanding the World Through Stories*, eds Jill Doerfler, Niigaanwew James Sinclair and Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiiik Stark (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2013), xv-xvii, at xxvi.
14. Parry, *SEED*, 89. Some shared ground with Spinoza’s philosophy is immediately evident. Viola Cordova, for example, explores this further. In particular, and with relevance to the whaling case study discussed in **section 2**, Cordova focuses on the interplay between the individual and the whole, and on the sacred experienced as being present in the material. Viola Cordova, *The Concept of Monism in Navajo Thought* (PhD thesis, University of New Mexico, 1992), 89-91, https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/phil_etds/29 (accessed 29 May 2024).
15. For example, Leroy Little Bear, “Jagged Worldviews Colliding,” in *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*, ed. Marie Battiste (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000), 77-85.
16. This is discussed, for example, by Anne Waters, “Language Matters: Nondiscrete, Nonbinary Dualism,” in *American Indian Thought: Philosophical Essays*, ed. Anne Waters (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 97-115.
17. For example, F David Peat, *Blackfoot Physics* (York Beach: Red Wheel/Weiser, 2005), 170.
18. Examples of contemporary Western authors engaging with glimpses beyond an exclusively Newtonian paradigm abound. Besides those mentioned in these preliminary remarks, Louise Westling’s work at the intersection of philosophy and ethology features below. In addition, Radhika Govindrajan’s and Chie Sakakibara’s works cited both draw on ideas previously put forward by Deborah Bird Rose (of human participation in interspecies life processes rather than human mastery of these); see, Deborah Rose, “An Indigenous Philosophical Ecology: Situating the Human,” *Australian Journal of Anthropology*, 16:3 (2005), 294-305, https://openresearch-repository.anu.edu.au/bitstream/1885/50443/2/01_Rose_An_Indigenous_Philosophical_2005.pdf (accessed 23 December 2023). More examples can easily be found: the point being made in these preliminary remarks is not that the contemporary West cannot think beyond an exclusively Newtonian paradigm, but that we appear to have lost the habit of thinking beyond an exclusively Newtonian paradigm when we are *not* actively thinking.
19. A case study of continuing scientific tendencies in the discipline of botany, for example, is offered by Robin Wall Kimmerer in her account of a postgraduate student’s difficult experience with the committee overseeing her research when she attempted to submit a research proposal based on Indigenous experience of human interaction with the plant of sweetgrass (Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass* (London: Penguin Books, 2020), 159-60).
20. An example given by Marc Bekoff of legislation being passed to categorise laboratory-bred rats as beyond the reach of the Animal Welfare Act speaks for itself in this context (Marc Bekoff, *The Emotional Lives of Animals* (Novato: New World Library, 2007), 139).
21. Reference was made above, in the context of areas of philosophical unity-in-diversity between Indigenous “worldviews,” to Waters, “Language Matters,” pointing out that an exclusively Aristotelian conception of logic, while valuable, need not be all that there is.
22. For example, Ric Peels, “The Fundamental Argument Against Scientism,” in *Science Unlimited? The Challenges of Scientism*, eds Maarten Boudry and Massimo Pigliucci (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2017), 165-84.
23. Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, 346.
24. Enlightenment Western conceptions of non-objectifying forms of relationship do, of course, exist – for example, Martin Buber, *I and Thou* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 28, where Buber locates “spirit” between “the I and thou.” However, widespread use of factory farming methods – for example, “Compassion in World Farming,” *Farm Animals: Dairy Cows*, <https://www.ciwf.org.uk/farm-animals/cows/dairy-cows/> (accessed 29 May 2024) – provides ample evidence of our patchy (to say the least) extension of this attitude to members of other-than-human species.
25. For example, Radhika Govindrajan, *Animal Intimacies: Interspecies Relatedness in India’s Central Himalayas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 1-3.
26. In relation to the Western world, expectations of humans being involved in emotional, embodied and arguably spiritual relationships with parts of non-human nature are exemplified by two pre-Enlightenment Western myths cited by Louise Westling, *The Logos of the Living World: Merleau-Ponty, Animals, and Language* (New

- York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 49-60. In an Indigenous context, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson is an example of an author focusing on these (Leanne Betasamosake Simpson with Edna Manitowabi, "Theorizing Resurgence from Within Nishnaabeg Thought," in Doerfler et al., *Centering Anishinaabeg Studies*, 279-93, at 290). However, for the contemporary West, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (for example, *Decolonising Methodologies*, 149-50) notes an absence of any expectation of kinship relationships developing between humans and more-than-human nature – an absence which is also identified by Krushil Watene as one of the stumbling blocks encountered by attempts to build bridges between Indigenous worldviews and capabilities approaches as proposed, for example, in Amartya Sen's and in Martha Nussbaum's work (Krushil Watene, "Valuing Nature: Māori Philosophy and the Capability Approach," *Oxford Development Studies*, 44:3 (2016), 287-96, DOI: 10.1080/13600818.2015.1124077 (accessed 29 May 2024).
27. For example, World Health Organisation, "2023 Emerging Technologies and Scientific Innovations: A Global Public Health Perspective," *WHO Global Health Foresight Series*, <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/370365/9789240073876-eng.pdf?sequence=1> (accessed 29 May 2024).
 28. For example, the experience of Robin Wall Kimmerer's postgraduate student referenced above included being told by her committee that questions of relationship had no place in scientific enquiry (Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, 163).
 29. For example, Vine Deloria and Daniel Wildcat, building on Alfred North Whitehead's thinking, point this out (Vine Deloria and Daniel Wildcat, *Power And Place: Indian Education In America* (Golden: Fulcrum Publishing, 2001), 2-6).
 30. Gregory Cajete, *Native Science: Natural Laws of Interdependence* (Santa Fe: Clear Light Publishers, 2000), 66.
 31. Shay Welch points out that disrespect precludes the knowledge process (as opposed to its only affecting knowledge as the thing known): Shay Welch, *The Phenomenology of a Performative Knowledge System: Dancing with Native American Epistemology* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 45. Welch's examples and case studies are taken from the world of Indigenous dance, while Brian Burkhardt is cited below offering a jazz analogy to make a related point. What is at stake, in both cases, transcends contemporary Western models of epistemic injustice such as Miranda Fricker's referenced in **section 2**: it is clear that it is not only already existing knowledge which is negatively impacted by disrespect. It is, in addition, also our ability to co-create new realities and knowledges at the intersection of ontology and epistemology opened up in a participationalist paradigm.
 32. For example, PRATEC, *Climate Change in Andean Communities*, March 2009, <http://www.pratec.org/wpress/pdfs-pratec/climatechange.pdf> (accessed 3 May 2024).
 33. Simpson with Manitowabi, "Theorizing Resurgence," 280.
 34. Dussel, "Eurocentrism and Modernity," 75.
 35. Article 7, for example, enshrines the right to life, physical and mental integrity, liberty and security of person (United Nations, *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*).
 36. Bruce Wilshire, *The Primal Roots of American Philosophy: Pragmatism, Phenomenology, and Native American Thought* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 163-74.
 37. For example, Thomas Norton Smith's definition of a person as a potential partner in relationship (regardless of species) whose dignity is inherent and inalienable (Thomas Norton-Smith, *The Dance of Person and Place: One Interpretation of American Indian Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), 91). Relatedly, Deloria and Wildcat define personality as power and place, with power being the living energy of the universe, while place is defined as the relationships in locality (Deloria and Wildcat, *Power and Place*, 22-3).
 38. For example, Mark Rowlands, *Can Animals Be Persons?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), x. The blame for the anthropocentric argument in question cannot be laid at Rowlands' personal door, however: a few pages further in, Rowlands is citing Gaita and Wittgenstein, and, as I argue below, this is incompatible with an entirely anthropocentric conception of personhood. Rather, what appears to be at play is a dynamic of even non-anthropocentric arguments initially being pulled over onto anthropocentric terrain by sceptics, whereby the only option available to establish initial shared ground in potentially difficult discussions frequently appears to be a reluctant choice to begin with an argument from analogy with humans (see, for example, Bekoff, *The Emotional Lives of Animals*, 116-120).
 39. Frédérique Apffel-Marglin, *Subversive Spiritualities: How Rituals Enact the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 183.

40. For example, Grimaldo Rengifo, "The Ayllu," in *The Spirit of Regeneration: Andean Culture Confronting Western Notions of Development*, ed. Frédérique Apffel-Marglin with PRATEC (London/New York: Zed Books, 1998), 89-123.
41. For example, Miranda Fricker, "Evolving Concepts of Epistemic Injustice" in *The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice*, eds Ian James Kidd, José Medina and Gaile Pohlhaus Jr. (Abingdon: Routledge 2017), 53-60. Fricker asserts two types of epistemic injustice: type 1, testimonial injustice, whereby someone's epistemic contribution is dismissed due to prejudice against them; and type 2, hermeneutic injustice, whereby someone's epistemic contribution is prevented by society's failure to allow them access to its mainstream's concepts (thus making it difficult for them to articulate their contribution in terms likely to be found relatable by others). In Fricker's model, a Western-biased academic might thus subject an Indigenous philosopher to epistemic injustice of type 1 by categorising them as a "primitive" and thus dismissing their contribution. A recent example of this has been documented by Viola Cordova, *How it Is* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2007), 40.
42. Eva Marie Garrouette and Kathleen Delores Westcott, "The Story is a Living Being: Companionship with Stories in Anishinaabeg Studies," in Doerfler et al., *Centering Anishinaabeg Studies*, 61-79, at 75-6.
43. United Nations, *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.
44. A point intertwined with this – that Little Bear's co-creative activity in communion with the manifesting entails Richotte's suggestion of agency being capable of being present in story and in relationship – is revisited in **section 3.b** below.
45. Chie Sakakibara, *Whale Snow: Iñupiat, Climate Change, and Multispecies Resilience in Arctic Alaska* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2020), 6-17.
46. For example, Cajete, *Native Science*, 73 and 161.
47. Sakakibara, *Whale Snow*, 154-58.
48. The issue of whaling has been a contentious one. Sakakibara sees potential for resolution in some shared ground identified between animal rights groups and the Indigenous communities involved: both agree that whales should be able to lead healthy lives until their deaths from natural causes or from predation. Remaining disagreement mirrors debates in relation to "conservation" in the wider sense elsewhere (as referenced by McPherson and Rabb, *Indian from the Inside*, 92 and 127) – of whether humans are part of nature or outside it. It is the question of whether and when humans can legitimately be predators that the two parties cannot agree on. The remaining

disagreement in Sakakibara's example, again, arguably arises from tacit assumptions related to Cartesian dualism, although at the same time questions of inappropriate behaviour in relation to the interspecies kinship cited remain to be asked of commercial forms of whaling extending beyond respectful acceptance of a gift made to the community. Sakakibara's account readily concedes that not all Indigenous-led whaling expeditions are necessarily grounded in interspecies kinship, alongside her emphatic assertion that many are. While strongly disagreeing with any wanton killing of a fellow creature, I would nonetheless distinguish this from genuine forms of interspecies kinship described by Sakakibara. This distinction changes the nature of the debate, but does not reduce its complexity. Once it is interspecies kinship (as opposed to wanton killing) which is at stake, two questions may arise even when arguing from within an Enlightenment, predominantly representationalist, paradigm: firstly, whether it is possible for a non-human to consent to their own killing; and, secondly, whether it is possible for humans to discern whether or not this consent is being communicated. With regards to the former, I find de Waal's discussion of convergence helpful: it is not always an evolutionary necessity for similar capacities to have developed from the same ancestral trait, as exemplified by wasps' facial recognition being achieved by different parts of the organism than humans' (Frans de Waal, *Are we Smart Enough to Know How Smart Animals Are?* (London: Granta Publications, 2017), 71-3). This shows that the absence of a particular organ or biochemical pathway cannot be taken as conclusive evidence of the absence of a particular capacity in every case. It would be overconfident, therefore, to argue that it was a priori impossible for non-humans to consent to a particular course of action. With regards to the question of discernment, interspecies attunement, achieved without the involvement of human language, has been documented in a variety of scenarios, famously, for example, in the case of Montaigne and his cat (Michel de Montaigne, *Essays, Book 2, Chapter 12: Apology for Raimond Sebond* (Urbana, Illinois: Project Gutenberg, 2004), <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/3600/3600-h/3600-h.htm#chap12> (accessed 29 May 2024)). It would, thus, once again appear overconfident for contemporary Western science to rule out any possibility of Indigenous ritual having become sufficiently attuned within an interspecies relationship to achieve communication with phenomena such as, for example, a swarm of bees' waggle dance. Once the issue is then considered from within a participationalist paradigm alongside

- a representationalist one, the additional factor of shared learning and creation enters into the mix: an interspecies society based on mutually responsive interaction is arguably better placed to enact any necessary course corrections (arising, for example, from a change in circumstances) than a society predominantly relying on static forms of discernment of acceptable conduct (such as the sole use of predefined quotas based on a calculation of a community's nutritional requirements at a particular time) would be.
49. For example, Cajete, *Native Science*, 188.
 50. United Nations, *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.
 51. For example, Watene, "Valuing Nature," 292.
 52. For example, Pratt, *Native Pragmatism*, 151-4.
 53. More case studies can easily be found: the dynamic underlying the above whaling case study may rear its head wherever we fail to acknowledge the potential for agency to arise in relationship, and wherever we fail to respect the theory and practice of those experiencing the sacred as connected with participation in such shared agency. In other words, wherever we create a relationship of binary dualism between the rights of one and those of another (whether it be the rights of an animal "vs" the rights of a human community, or whether it be the rights of an allegedly inanimate part of non-human nature such as a river or a stone "vs" the rights of any other party potentially involved), we are thereby curtailing the potential for agency in relationship to innovate and to create a harmonious way forward. This does not mean animals or rivers should not have rights, nor does it mean that those around them should not have rights: it means that whenever these issues are debated, if Indigenous dynamics of interspecies kinship are to be honoured, then legislative processes will be required to allow space for agency in relationship to develop. This involves abandoning human aspirations to unilateral control over a preconceived process that an extraneous "nature" is then expected to operate in compliance with, irrespective of whether the process was conceived in a spirit of stewardship or not. Besides Sakakibara above, authors engaging with this question include Govindrajan, *Animal Intimacies*, 127-9; Cajete, *Native Science*, 211-212 and 305; McPherson and Rabb, *Indian from the Inside*, 92 and 127; and, with particular reference to the complexities (as well as opportunities) involved in recent discussions of granting personhood to allegedly inanimate parts of non-human nature such as a river, Vine Deloria, *The Metaphysics of Modern Existence* (Golden: Fulcrum Publishing, 2012), 177-88. **Section 3.b** considers some of the dynamics involved in more depth.
 54. Miranda Fricker, "Epistemic Contribution as a Central Human Capability," in *The Equal Society*, ed. George Hull (London: Lexington Books, 2015), 73-90.
 55. For example, John Polkinghorne, *Quantum Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 84.
 56. The question is arguably interwoven with concerns of determinism: the more we work on an assumption of Newtonian physics being all that there is (as opposed to accepting Newtonian physics as being explanatory of a subset of what there is, and embracing the stretch to our intellect and to our imagination introduced by the findings of quantum theory – for example, Polkinghorne, *Quantum Theory*), the easier it becomes for us to become trapped in a perceived dichotomy of our either being powerless cogs in an automaton already in motion, or of our otherwise being required to seize unilateral control of the automaton as our only conceivable alternative. Relinquishment of our aspiration to unilateral control – and, relatedly, of our conception of agency only being found in bounded entities such as ourselves as individuals – may then carry the insecurity-inducing prospect of our becoming helplessly passive. A different conception, undercutting this perceived dichotomy, was found to constitute shared ground between quantum theory and Indigenous worldviews at the above-referenced Dialogues: in a participationalist paradigm partially accessible through Karen Barad's theory of agential realism (which is, however, not fully explanatory of Indigenous conceptions of performative knowledge processes. See Karen Barad "Meeting The Universe Halfway: Realism and Social Constructivism Without Contradiction," in *Feminism, Science, and the Philosophy of Science*, eds Lynn Hankinson Nelson and Jack Nelson (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishing, 1996), 161-94), our co-creative activity is shown to unfold in relationship. Further engagement with this shared ground then explores its interaction, for example, with Spinoza's thought (Cordova, *The Concept of Monism*), as well as with Merleau-Ponty's – especially regarding our creation of circumstances placing constraints on what might otherwise have been conceived as a question of purely event-based freedom (for example, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Nature: Course Notes from the Collège de France* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2003) 176-8). Merleau-Ponty was aware of his philosophy's kinship with quantum theory (he cites the work of Mme Paulette Destouches-Février in this regard: *ibid.*, 97-8). However, even Merleau-Ponty's related assertion of the subject weaving the network that carries its existence (*ibid.*, 176),

- although demonstrably intended to be understood as co-creative, stops short of attributing agency to relationship itself (rather than to the bounded partners contributing to it).
57. The previous endnote, accessed from the previous paragraph distinguishing participationalist from representationalist paradigms, offers some thoughts on Barad's agential realism as proposed in her "Meeting the Universe Halfway." The extended argument which is now being made – of rigour, now, in a participationalist paradigm, meaning more than it did before – is at least as relevant to Barad's thought. Barad places particular emphasis on our taking responsibility for our involvement in what we are co-creating. An area where Barad's article stops short of fully engaging with Little Bear's thought process is that of the necessity of our fallibility in doing so.
 58. For example, McPherson and Rabb, *Indian from the Inside*, 159-61.
 59. For example, the genuine occupational requirement for a bus driver to be competent to drive a bus has been far from the only criterion in recruitment decisions relating to bus drivers: Elizabeth Jones, "The Bristol Bus Boycott of 1963," *Black History Month*, <https://www.blackhistorymonth.org.uk/article/section/civil-rights-movement/the-bristol-bus-boycott-of-1963/> (accessed 29 May 2024).
 60. While Spinoza emphasises the importance of our placing ourselves in a position to act from understanding as *much as possible* (for example, Benedict de Spinoza, *Ethics* (London: Penguin Classics, 1996), 127/ E4P23), his work also makes clear that comprehensive understanding of all parts of the network of relationships in its complexity is unattainable (for example, Genevieve Lloyd, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Spinoza and the Ethics* (London: Routledge, 1996), 120-129).
 61. For example, Anne E Cudd, "Multiculturalism as a Cognitive Virtue of Scientific Practice" in *Decentering the Center: Philosophy for a Multicultural, Postcolonial, Feminist World*, eds Uma Narayan and Sandra Harding (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 299-317, at 309.
 62. For example, Uma Narayan and Sandra Harding, "Introduction," in Narayan and Harding, *Decentering the Center*, vii-xvi, at vii.
 63. Thomas Nagel, "What is it Like to be a Bat?," *The Philosophical Review*, 83:4 (1974), 435-50, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2183914> (accessed 29 May 2024).
 64. Raimond Gaita, *A Common Humanity: Thinking about Love and Truth and Justice* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 104; and Raimond Gaita, *The Philosopher's Dog* (Abingdon: Routledge Classics, 2017), 193.
 65. Gaita, *A Common Humanity*, 106: Gaita points out that no one can (nor should) know in advance the outcome of complex processes of shared meaning-making, but that these can only unfold in mutually responsive relationship.
 66. *Ibid.*
 67. Gaita references Buber regarding the importance of mutual attentiveness (Gaita, *A Common Humanity*, 106). Buber's related thinking with regards to *I-thou* relationships is relevant to the points being made: Buber distinguishes between *I-thou* relationships on the one hand, which he conceives to be characterised by mutual responsiveness, and *I-it* relationships on the other. In the latter, the dynamic of immediate mutual responsiveness has been brought to a halt by the stasis introduced as attempts at propositional knowledge about the interlocutor replace participation (Buber, *I and Thou*, 9-10). Shared ground between Buber's thought process here and Barad's above-referenced theory of agential realism is evident. Relatedly, Brian Burkhardt offers aspects of Buber's thinking as a Western stepping stone to Indigenous understandings of processes of locality as interspecies kinship (Burkhardt, *Indigenizing Philosophy*, 121-2).
 68. Buber, *I and Thou*, 28.
 69. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (London: Penguin Books, 1985), 332-3.
 70. For example, Niigaanwew James Sinclair, "K'zaugin: Storying Ourselves into Life," in Doerfler et al., *Centering Anishinaabeg Studies*, 81-102, at 83 and 95-6. Sinclair first refers to story and relationship-making as an act of love, and subsequently explains that the Anishinaabemowin word for "love" occurs as a root word in many words relating to growth and becoming. He is careful to point out that "love" is here not to be understood in terms of romantic conceptions of pain-free togetherness, but is rather going to require hard work.
 71. For example, Sinclair, "K'zaugin," 91.
 72. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, in an Anishinaabeg context, distinguishes between two types of Indigenous story, with permeable boundaries between the two: *Aandisokaanan* are described as sacred stories encoding theories, while *Dibaajimowinan* are personal, ordinary stories. In a similar way to embodied ways of being in the world, the latter are described as expressions of the former, conceived to be echoing these (Leanne Betasamosake Simpson with Edna Manitowabi, "Theorizing Resurgence from Within Nishnaabeg Thought," in Doerfler et al., *Centering Anishinaabeg Studies*, 279-93.) A similar point is made by Sinclair (Sinclair, "K'zaugin," 91).

73. Ann Fienup-Riordan, "A Guest on the Table: Ecology from the Yup'ik Eskimo Point of View," in *Indigenous Traditions and Ecology: The Interbeing of Cosmology and Community*, ed. John Grim (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 541-58.
74. Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, 156-9.
75. A summary of some of those typically used in relation to environmental ethics can, for example, be found in Robin Attfield, *Environmental Ethics*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014), 30-69.
76. *Ibid.*, 9-15.
77. For example, Mark Johnson, "Imagination in Moral Judgment," in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 46:2 (December 1985), 265, www.jstor.org/stable/2107356 (accessed 29 May 2024).
78. Burkhart's argument centres on his disagreement with Enlightenment Western requirements of ethical treatment being based on an individual's perceived value, and with Enlightenment Western assumptions of allegedly equal value necessarily requiring equal treatment (Burkhart, *Indigenizing Philosophy*, 226.). Burkhart's conception of locality (as outlined in the remainder of his book) necessitates a nuanced, responsive approach to the ethical requirements inherent in any situation, as these arise from the mutually responsive relationships concerned as opposed to being linked to the perceived characteristics of any bounded entities involved alone.
79. Burkhart's jazz analogy (Burkhart, *Indigenizing Philosophy*, 292) shows shared ground with Spinoza's conception of an individual's *conatus*, once they are acting from reason, chiming with that of the whole (for example, Spinoza, *Ethics*, 177 (E5P38)).
80. For example, Sinclair, "K'zaugin" 83.
81. For example, Rengifo, "The Ayllu" 106. A similar point is made, for example, by Henderson: James Sa'ke'j Youngblood Henderson, "Ayukpachi: Empowering Aboriginal Thought" in Battiste, *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*, 248-78, at 262-4. Henderson also stresses the significance of the verb-based structures of Indigenous languages and describes Indigenous languages as continuously being forged by "creating a relationship with the living energy in an ecosystem ... an attempt to learn from being part of the flux" (*ibid.*, 262).
82. Examples include Anne Waters (<https://philpeople.org/profiles/anne-schulherr-waters-j-d-ph-d/publications?order=added> (accessed 29 May 2024)); Vine Deloria (University of Colorado Boulder, *Vine Deloria Jr.*, <https://www.colorado.edu/law/vine-deloria-jr> (accessed 29 May 2024)); Leroy Little Bear (<https://www.ulethbridge.ca/alumni/awards/2003/leroy-little-bear> (accessed 29 May 2024)); and Sa'ke'j Henderson (<https://www.cigionline.org/people/james-sakej-youngblood-henderson/> (accessed 29 May 2024)).
83. For example, Battiste, *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*. Battiste's anthology contains a collection of papers published in this regard.
84. For example, with regards to colonising powers taking responsibility for the harm inflicted on Indigenous populations, Linda Tuhiwai Smith offers positive examples of the use of healing circles in processes of reparation and potential reconciliation (Smith, *Decolonising Methodologies*, 156). Gregory Cajete prioritises the establishment of level playing fields over reparation payments for past wrongs, while emphasising the need for both (Cajete, *Native Science*, 307-9).
85. Desmond Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness* (London: Random House, 2000).
86. For example, Rengifo, "The Ayllu" 117.
87. For example, Burkhart, *Indigenizing Philosophy*, 286-7.
88. Welch, *The Phenomenology*, 45.
89. Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness*, 126-9.
90. For Buber, too, *I–It* as subject–object relation arising from previous experience constitutes one vital component of our interaction in the world. His point is that a liveable world relies on *I–It* being continuously open to being tempered by *I–thou*. What is crucial for Buber is our openness to the part played by *I–thou* alongside *I–It*, and to continuing interplay taking place between the two so that the *I–It* relationship remains subject to ongoing transformation by *I–thou* (Buber, *I and Thou*, 23).
91. Deloria and Wildcat, *Power and Place*, 163.
92. Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1965). Ellul's use of the term "technique" relates to a sociological phenomenon rather than to one of mechanical engineering: Ellul's work is not critical of the use of technology, but of an ever-spreading, eventually self-perpetuating standardisation affecting all aspects of life (*ibid.*, xxxiii).
93. Although referenced here by Deloria and Wildcat, Ellul's stance on our interaction with the sacred is based on a contemporary Western (in Ellul's case, Christian) paradigm, and would thus jar with an Indigenous one: "technique," for Ellul, rather than preventing interaction with the sacred altogether, relegates the sacred to being a cog in an increasingly rigid and depersonalised machinery. This is because Ellul is talking about a conception of the sacred which locates it in a realm beyond the material, with no reference being made to Spinoza's or to Indigenous thinking. Increasingly

- standardised acts of worship of a sacred conceived to be beyond the material may well continue to be possible as Ellul's "technique" spreads. Non-objectifying, mutually responsive interaction, conversely, is not (Ellul, *The Technological Society*, 226). Relatedly, Ellul outlines the relegation of what might otherwise be conceived as relationships to "human techniques" (for example, *ibid.*, 401). He asserts similar forms of damaging influence of "technique" on the non-human world (*ibid.*, 79).
94. Sole reign of standardised process, with ever-narrowing options for nuance, arguably already poses a problem. To make matters worse, a vicious cycle of mutual reinforcement has been shown to be able to operate between undignified treatment and depersonalisation (for example, Jonathan Glover, *Humanity: A Moral History of the Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Harvard University Press, 2000), 342): Glover shows that the trouble does not solely relate to those deemed unworthy then beginning to appear to be legitimate recipients of undignified treatment (which would already be problematic enough), but, vice versa, that those we have witnessed to be on the receiving end of undignified treatment may, as a result, then begin to be deemed unworthy.
 95. Anne S Waters, "Sacred Metaphysics and Core Philosophical Tenets of Native American Thought: Identity (Place, Space), Shared History (Place, Time), and Personality (Sacred Emergence of Relations)," *APA Newsletter on Native American and Indigenous Philosophy*, 21:1 (Fall 2021), 11-15, at 13-14, <https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.apaonline.org/resource/collection/13B1F8E6-0142-45FD-A626-9C4271DC6F62/NativeAmericanV21n1.pdf> (accessed 29 May 2024).
 96. James, *The Varieties*, 512.
 97. James, while clearly appreciative of non-human nature and while advocating kindness to non-human animals, mentions no expectation of wisdom arising from interspecies relationships (for example, James, *The Varieties*, 33 and 281).
 98. Examples of this can be found in his thought process in relation to our treatment of spiders (Gaita, *The Philosopher's Dog*, 100) and in his story of his response to a suspected terminal injury in a cat (*ibid.*, 26-7).
 99. Gaita, *A Common Humanity*, 106.
 100. For example, Rengifo, "The Ayllu."
 101. I include myself in this group: I am a learner as much as I anticipate the majority of my readers to be. As a Westerner based in the United Kingdom, I recently conducted some research in the discipline of environmental philosophy. The project looked at the all-but severance of contemporary Western relationships with the more-than-human world, and asked whether and how the West might, in our own localities, be able to learn from and with Indigenous philosophies to regenerate these relationships lost. I hope I came in humility. Whether or not I did, I certainly closed in humility: to my relief, and as a corollary of the project's engagement with the participationalist paradigm underlying the areas of shared ground sketched here, I saw a conclusion emerge that predicted no similarity of experience if and when the West embarks on its own journey of regeneration. Had this been otherwise, concerns of having fallen into the trap of validation would have needed to be raised. I was then generously invited to meet a group of Indigenous philosophers in an informal setting last winter. In the near future, I am going to be seeing some of the group's members again in a more formal context. Following completion of the above research project, I continue to try and honour the final step on Gregory Cajete's list of stages when creating a new object (Cajete, *Native Science*, 46-52) – the step of making the new object (in my case, the project's results) available to be used for good. From what has been said in this article about Indigenous philosophies being transformative philosophies, this will only be any use if I allow myself to become open to being transformed: I have been taking baby steps towards what I hope are going to become *I-thou* relationships with animals and plants where I live.
 102. Louise Westling was cited in this regard: Westling, *The Logos*, 49-60.
 103. Kimmerer, for example, cites Joanna Macy in this regard, emphasising that there is no need for us to wait until we have been transformed by some (unspecified) other means because it is in and through relationship that transformation is likely to take place (Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, 339-40).
 104. For example, Watene, "Valuing Nature," 294.
 105. Richotte, "Telling All of our Stories," 385.