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Review of *This Is Not a Peace Pipe: Towards a Critical Indigenous Philosophy* By Dale Turner. Toronto

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This Is Not a Peace Pipe: Towards a Critical Indigenous Philosophy. By Dale Turner. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006. x + 182 pp. Appendix, notes, bibliography, index. \$55.00 cloth, \$26.95 paper.

By his own admission, Wittgenstein's famous imperative "whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent" can be paralyzing for Dale Turner. Turner says "I am indigenous, yet I am not an indigenous philosopher; and therefore I ought not to place myself in the privileged position of explaining the meaning of indigenous spirituality." Dale feels that "In a European philosophical context, having invoked a term like 'spirituality' [he] must then explain how this normative term is to be used in its rightful place and do so in the English language." Why must Wittgenstein's imperative be paralyzing? You cannot know what you do not know—but you can find out.

A late friend of mine, Dr. Viola F. Cordova, an Apache woman trained in the Euro-western philosophical tradition, who, for most of her lifetime was occupied in the "process of transmitting a world view and a value system," asked the questions Turner is alluding to. "How am I different? Why is it that I feel most comfortable among other 'Indians'? Is there something, despite the fact that the indigenous persons I encounter come from various and diverse groups, that we share? How is it that 'Indians' can identify each other as 'real'?" (*Ayaangwaamizin: International Journal of Indigenous Philosophy*, 1, no. 1 [1997]: 33). Dr. Cordova met Turner's challenge quite wittingly; she merely chose to say what it was not! For Viola, the issue is "Being," not inclusion, and I agree with her.

Turner, in *This is Not a Peace Pipe*, argues for the inclusion of Aboriginal voices missed by Canada's White Paper Liberalism of 1969, by the reshaping of liberalism in Alan Cairns's "citizen plus" theory, and by the shortfalls of Will Kymlicka's concepts of cultural constraints: "For better or worse, it is predominately non-aboriginal judges and politicians who have the ultimate power to protect and enforce aboriginal rights,

and so it is important to find a justification of them that such people can recognize and understand." Turner believes "that Aboriginal conceptions of political sovereignty must be included in political liberalism's justification of Aboriginal rights so that racist and oppressive policies that have held Aboriginal peoples captive for more than one hundred thirty years can be changed." The task of helping "non-Aboriginal peoples understand better the meaning and significance of Aboriginal forms of political sovereignty" is given to indigenous intellectuals in congruence with indigenous philosophers. Indigenous intellectuals (or Turner's "Word Warriors") such as Howard Adams, Marie Battiste, and Sa'ke'j Henderson (and myself) argue "that systemic racism is inherent in the very essence of mainstream universities in North America and it is not going to change. And why should it? These are Euro-western schools based on Euro-western values. They are not Aboriginal schools based on Aboriginal values. And all of the Dennis McPhersons [or Dale Turners] in the world are not going to change them" (McPherson, "Indian on the Lawn: How Are Research Partnerships with Aboriginal Peoples Possible?" *APA Newsletter*, 05, no. 2 [2006]: 18).

Turner's example of what he refers to as "indigenous philosophy proper" is that of "the Midewewin Lodge (Mide), a society of medicine people who are responsible for preserving Anishnabi philosophy and ceremonies. To become a full member of this lodge one must be of strong moral character (as judged by other medicine people) and undergo years of difficult training and study. All of this learning is done in the Anishnabi language, and all Anishnabi people, although most are not privileged to sit in the Mide, learn from these indigenous philosophers." I grew up with a number of the present members of the Mide and I am not sure where they received their "years of difficult training and study" other than in a residential school. Turner's other academic example of indigenous philosophy is *Black Elk Speaks*. The same *Black Elk Speaks* that gave us the concept of Mother Earth made famous by the hippy generation of the 1960s.

If we are to develop a critical indigenous philosophy as Turner suggests, it must be critical. As I argue elsewhere in regard to the "Wisdom of the Elders," "when interviewing Elders, I suggest that it is a sign of deepest respect to question what they say and to look for corroboration of and continuity in their story telling" (supra, McPherson: 8). We must respect that elder knowledge is localized, and we do not want our critical indigenous philosophy to be supported only by those "Elders" who wear a patch on their sleeve and charge upwards of \$300.00 per day.

I agree with Turner in that "Whether indigenous philosophies are articulable in English remains to be seen." But if ever they are, I doubt they will be concerned with the inclusion of indigenous rights, sovereignty, or nationhood as it appears Turner would like them to be.

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