ON THE SICKNESS OF MODERN REASON

OR, WHAT IF...?

Murray Code

`*We have met the enemy, and he is us.*' Walt Kelly

ABSTRACT: Finding the methods and results of the allegedly rational thought of modern naturalists seriously deficient, Vine Deloria Jr., native Indian political activist turned naturalistic thinker, suggests that indigenous thinkers are in this respect more sensible than modern, scientistic naturalists. He traces their good sense to a consistent empiricism which strives to take into account all aspects of their concrete experiencing. Lacking however the support of a vitalistic metaphysics that can synthesize their best insights, their modes of thought tend to be dismissed as superstitious and irrational. Yet it is nonetheless possible to defend their core belief, that they dwell in a moral universe. To see this one requires a means to overcome the deadening effects of the abstract language of modern reason which presupposes the adequacy of the metaphysics of mechanistic materialism. This can be done starting with Samuel Butler's incomplete Lamarckian account of the evolution of this living cosmos, an account that can be supplemented by fashioning a vitalistic metaphysics based on the most salient characteristics of a living self using certain insights of A. N. Whitehead, Gilles Deleuze, S. T. Coleridge, among others.

KEYWORDS: Deloria; Whitehead; Deleuze; Coleridge; scientistic naturalism; native Indian cosmology; moral or ethical faculties, systematic reason; power; myth.

1. WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

To ask this famous question in 2017 under the threat of an imminent global catastrophe is to invite a host of interlocking questions, not the least of which is whether rescue is possible in the short time that we seem to have available. This is apart from the worry

whether a sufficiently determined collective will could be mustered to effect the necessary changes in thinking that are unavoidable. Then again, the impending environmental crisis, which is generally referred to as anthropogenic `climate change,' may be but one of many symptoms of a dying civilization that is passing through the last stages of its finite time on Earth.

But the real irony may be that the impending disaster is the price for a deceptive success, for the latter can be associated with an especially efficacious but ultimately toxic form of reasoning which is inherently prone to use coercive and violent methods.[1] For it is a kind of reasoning that plays down the need to frequently stop and think about what kind of thinking and living is conducive to a healthy civilization. That is to say, the civilization of the West has manifestly entrenched a collective mentality that has engendered economic and political institutions that promote a kind of mindlessness which has paved the way for global ecocide.[2]

What a great irony it would be, then, if the self-styled `civilized' representatives of European civilization, who were allegedly bent on civilizing the `savage" peoples of other lands, had missed a golden opportunity. They might have learned from indigenous peoples that all human beings dwell in a moral universe and so bear a certain responsibility for the well-being of Nature and all her creatures. They might even have learned something about the getting of wisdom from such thinkers as the Oglala Sioux medicine man Black Elk who Vine Deloria Jr. cites thus:

> After finishing his story, Black Elk paused, was silent for a time, and said: "This they tell you, and whether it happened or not, I do not know; but if you think about it, you can see that it is true."[3]

Deloria herewith prompts an intriguing question: What if the early conquerors of America had been really enlightened and inclined to ponder the question of the meaning of good thinking and good living. They might have, for one thing, been less inclined to associate good reasoning with the accidental trait of `whiteness.' They might even have developed a capacity to look more critically at their beliefs and actions and seen that their imperialistic behaviour was the sign of an unbalanced and hypocritical culture. In

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1. I elaborate on this theme in my article "Reason and Violence" in the *Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace, and Conflict*, Volume 3 (New York: Academic Press, 1999).

2. See, Arran Gare, *Nihilism Inc.: Environmental Destruction and the Metaphysics of Sustainability* (Como, NSW: Eco-Logical Press, 1996) for an extensive philosophical-historical account of how Western European civilization developed a nihilistic collective mentality that has led to the takeover of this culture by a predatory form of capitalism.

3. See the chapter entitled "If You Think About It, You Will See That It Is True," in Vine Deloria Jr., *Spirit and Reason: The Vine Deloria Jr. Reader* (Colorado Fulcrum Publishing, 1999, hereafter referred to as SR), p. 44.

the case of the invaders of north America, they might as a consequence have eschewed such presumptuous myths as "manifest destiny" and "American exceptionalism." For there can now be no question that such myths have conveniently covered over a moral vacuity that is sustained by an essentially dishonest collective mentality---one whose bad sense was first made manifest in the genocidal actions of the early colonists to remove indigenous peoples from the land they coveted.[4]

But Deloria indicates that it is not too late to attend more closely to the thinking of indigenous peoples and in particular to the kind of thinking illustrated by Black Elk who perhaps illustrates the best sort of thinking wherein it might be possible to `see' things that deserve the name of `truth.'

Whether or not this is so, Deloria does succeed in drawing out the questionable rationality of the modern conception of good sense. He is especially intent on showing that to get anywhere when trying to make sense of the world it is first necessary to venture into that vast and murky area of philosophical inquiry called metaphysics. The trouble is that few present-day self-styled naturalists engage in such risky venturing since they are evidently afraid of getting lost---which is quite possible since here there are no clearly marked paths to follow.[5] That metaphysics is nonetheless of primary importance when attempting to frame a just and reasonable account of some fundamental aspect of the naturing of Nature is however not that hard to understand---that is, once one acknowledges the great range of problems and questions that need to be addressed when

4. See, e.g., Thomas King, *The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native People in North America* (Anchor Canada, 2013). King traces the history of the duplicitous treatment of native Indians by the early (and later) colonists of America whose treaty-making was mainly a smoke-screen covering over the intention to seize ever more land. For an exhaustive discussion of how systematically the native peoples of America have been robbed of their lands by their supposedly civilized saviours, see, e.g., Geoffrey Yorke, *The Dispossessed* (London: Vintage U.K., 1990) and *Thomas R. Berger, The Long and Terrible Shadow: White Values, Native Rights in the Americas* (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press). Berger sums up the matter thus: `The colonies of Europeans established throughout North and South America---and the nation-states that succeeded them---adopted legal regimes....designed to ensure that Indian land passed into European ownership, whether that of individuals or the state.' (p. 109)

5. See Vine Deloria, Jr., *The Metaphysics of Modern Existence* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979, hereafter referred to as MME). Deloria's principal claim is that `the view of the world which formerly dominated Western peoples and which currently dominates Western science is being transformed into an ancient and all-encompassing attitude toward life, best characterized by the American Indian cultures and traditions' (p. ix). Thus in respect to his use of the general term `indigenous,' Deloria's study is important just because he takes pains to articulate a very basic challenge to non-native naturalists: to show why the attitudes of mind that inform the reasonings of native peoples are not more rational, as Deloria intimates, than the supposedly paradigmatically rational systematic reasonings of the moderns.

attempting to make sense of `good sense,' not to mention the idea of Nature itself.[6]

As Deloria indicates in a number of ways, there are many reasons for suspecting that it is fear of both complexity and uncertainty that accounts for a widespread aversion to metaphysics in modern philosophy. It is therefore no mere quibble to note that those who are prone to dismiss indigenous thinking as irrational and superstitious are just as likely to endorse a kind of mathematical mysticism. A strong Galilean faith in the unlimited powers of mathematical methods of reasoning bespeaks a closed sectarian cast of mind which effectively grants magical powers to, for instance, celebrated mathematical physicists (such as Stephen Hawking who envisages a scientific `theory of everything.') It is as though it were beyond doubt that a sufficiently detailed examination of a skeleton is capable of revealing all the vital characteristics of the living organism that once covered it.

It would therefore be well for me to stress that I am not denying that some essays in systematic reasoning are indeed capable of illuminating the signs of orderliness that manifest themselves in the naturing of Nature. I am rather questioning the very sanity of a collective mentality that has adopted the presumption that science is capable of mapping a straight and well-paved high road to wisdom. Although there can be no doubt that some forms of systematic reasoning can produce valuable knowledge, it is always in order to ask: of what exactly? Perhaps only the fact that the orderliness in Nature is amenable to mathematical methods of investigation. Such methods have without doubt proven themselves effective in exposing, for instance, the periodic or rhythmical patterns that infuse the spatio-temporal forms of organization that come and go in this restless world.

While this is no small achievement, it cannot justify a faith in the unlimited powers of mathematical symbolisms to reveal ultimate truths. The efficaciousness of these symbolisms suggests that what stands at the heart of this is the question of the role of symbolizing in `good thinking'; that is, the sort of thinking that appears to get some things `right.' This eventuality suggests a happy confluence of natural powers that can close, at least temporarily, the gaps that separate inquiring human minds from the worlding of the world.

The point is that what at first appears to be an insoluble mystery may not be so much an embarrassment for the orthodox modern naturalist as the best of reasons for venturing into the vast and open domain of metaphysics. Never mind that one may sooner or latter find oneself at a loss when seeking the next direction to move in. Perhaps

6. I have begun to explore aspects of the slippery problem of how sense is made in the first place in my *Process, Reality, and the Power of Symbols: Thinking with A. N. Whitehead* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008, hereafter referred to as PRPS).

only a neurotic fear of uncertainty stands in the way of modern thinkers from recognizing that some native thinkers like Black Elk need to be taken very seriously.

But be that as it may, it is an ever-burning question of philosophy: how the human organism might best conceive its place in the ongoing naturing of Nature. Or as Rising Sun might more poignantly ask: how a truly reasonable and responsible person might find `the proper moral and ethical road upon which human beings should walk'?[7]

2. ON BEGINNING TO THINK HARD ABOUT THINKING

Once one acknowledges that the usually suppressed possibility that natural philosophy involves moral/ethical questions that cannot be ignored without contributing to an endemic bad sense, it becomes evident that a perhaps unbridgeable chasm separates native cosmologists from their modern counterparts. The former do not doubt that they dwell in a living cosmos which is part of a moral universe. And the latter have great difficulty even conceiving this as a reasonable possibility.

So it is first worth pausing to note that Deloria's doubts about the sanity of the proponents of modern reason are far from unique. Consider, for instance, the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche whose critique of modern reason stems from a profound concern for the long-term health of the civilization of the West. Charging his contemporaries with dishonesty and self-deception, Nietzsche suggests that they are prone to embrace narrow perspectives in their quest for ever more exact knowledge; knowledge that is frequently merely superfluous if not harmful. He thus hints at a toxicity in modern reason which is contagious; indeed, he holds that some very prestigious educational institutions are engaged in the teaching of a kind of stupidity.

The evils that accompany this kind of toxicity are perhaps most evident in the steady retreat of the humanities from the halls of academe at a time when their assistance is most urgently needed. That is, at a time when a radical rethinking of the human capacity for reason is critical. Yet the leading intellectual and political thinkers in the culture of the West appear to have turned over to unimaginative bureaucrats the vital task of deciding what is the best sort of education for the young.

Hence when Nietzsche accuses the moderns of thinking with a bad conscience, he underscores in effect the importance of asking whether or not indigenous thinkers are victims of a culture so mired in bad sense that it has covered over its short-comings with a steady stream of propaganda touting the virtues of techno-scientific `progress.' Yet the evidence of steadily deteriorating ecologies and devastated environments ought to

7. SR, p. 43.

provide reason enough to wonder whether this culture's Achilles Heel lies in its conception of `progress.' I am referring in particular to the widespread tendency to look down on native peoples who insist on retaining their culturally entrenched, putatively irrational attitudes towards all of Nature and her creatures, living and non-living.

For it is just here, as Deloria makes clear, that the question of the presence of Spirit in the worlding of the world becomes pertinent. This presence is recognized by indigenous thinkers and strenuously denied by self-consciously rational moderns, which suggests the existence of an immense chasm separating these two modes of thought. The matter thus underscores the unavoidability of the question of how to think about the naturalist's task: of how one might fit the most salient characteristics of experiencing into a plausible and adequate picture of the cosmos. For without such a picture how could a thinking person begin to adjudicate conflicting pronouncements about what is actually going on in the world?

It is thus worth stressing that one of the largest obstacles in trying to achieve a balanced conception of good reasoning is what to make of the `softer' or affective side of thinking. That is, the non-rigorous side which is especially sensitive to, for instance, the cognitive significance of certain striking images and the emotions that accompany them. Or in other words, that side of experiencing which the indigenous thinker is least likely to ignore.

So it is also worth noting that Nietzsche suggests that thinking *tout court* is ultimately rooted in the realm of the imaginal. What else but an affectively guided mode of thought, if that is the case, could resolve the tensions that arise in the continual interplay of images, ideas, feelings, and emotions that accompanies all efforts to think? It is hardly self-evident that the affective or emotional undercurrents of thought are irrelevant to the quest for understanding.

To face the matter of good reasoning squarely, in other words, one needs to start with an open mind, especially in regards to the question of what kind of metaphysics is needed. It also calls for a closer look at how the world is actually encountered in the first place by warm-blooded experiencing animals. Here we perhaps arrive at the main motivation for Deloria's foray into metaphysics---which is not in fact his primary field of concern (which is mainly focused on the problems native peoples face in trying to protect their cultures). He is especially concerned by the lack of communication between Indians and non-Indians; indeed, he notes that these two companies `are speaking about two entirely different perceptions of the world.'[8]

By thus identifying perception as holding the key to finding a truly sensible way of

8. MME, p. vii.

thinking and living in this world, Deloria thus underscores the importance of the problem that the example of Black Elk point to and which suggests that the moderns have failed to think deeply enough about the meaning of `good seeing,' not to mention `reality,' and `truth.' Indeed, Nietzsche indicates that the moderns have so badly miscontrued the idea of `good seeing' that they are in no position to decide one way or another whether human experiencing generally bears witness to spiritual powers in Nature, let alone whether or not we dwell in a moral universe.

3. ON THINKING ABOUT EXPERIENCE

The above remarks are meant only to provide an indication of the range of questions that need to be addressed when comparing indigenous and modern conceptions of good reasoning. Deloria can be read as hinting that certain indigenous thinkers are privy to a kind of wisdom that at times enable acts of 'seeing' that belong to the order of visions. It may be, in other words, that the example of Black Elk attests to an unusual intuitive facility in thinking with images---one that suggests that some indigenous thinkers are indeed in possession of a certain wisdom.

But does this last notion not suggest a picture of the universe which is for the most part wrapped in an impenetrable mystery? It is not incidental that native cosmologists indicate as much when they presume that experiencing illustrates a general principle of relativity. Maintaining that such a principle is in fact the mainstay in the religious practices of North-American Indians, Deloria notes that they use the phrase "All my relatives" as an opening invocation and closing benediction for their ceremonies.[9] That this is no minor consideration is evident, ironically enough, from some of the more philosophically significant discoveries of modern physics.

Deloria himself notes that advances in quantum physics indicate that every knower is somehow intimately bound up what he/she knows. Although something of a paradox for the early modern naturalist, this anti-Cartesian result points towards the impossibility of clearly and distinctly separating observers from what they claim to see.

Consistent with the native cosmologist's principle of relativity is another, perhaps even more significant result of quantum physics that concerns the intriguing possibility that under certain conditions there may be perceptions that bear witness to instantaneous communications between widely separated forms of sensibility. Indeed,

9. SR, p. 52. He also notes that from the indigenous point of view, `Einstein's thesis ...is hardly revolutionary and probably just a simple corrective to the centuries of belief that human beings could know the innermost workings of the larger cosmos by examining phenomena on one tiny planet on the edge of a galaxy' (SR, p. 32).

the entire universe may be comprised of inter-woven communicative systems in which one part `knows' instantaneously what is going on in distant parts. This phenomenon (which is often referred to in quantum physics by the name of `non-locality') may even be implicated in those unorthodox perceptions that go under the name of ESP and which Carl Jung termed `synchronous.' It is not insignificant anyway that he links the phenomenon of `synchronicity' to the possibility of instantaneous communications of meanings---which his colleague Wolfgang Pauli associated with certain insights of the premodern alchemists.

This ever-expanding problematic suggests at any rate that modern physicists who insist on the indispensability of the `classical' language of pre-quantum physics are merely expressing a quasi-religious faith in the adequacy of `classical' concepts which reflect reflect a deep faith in the adequacy of the metaphysics of materialism which informs the `classical' achievements of Newton, *et al.* Jung, on the other hand, is suggesting that this metaphysics is incapable of doing justice to the fundamental notion of causality. In other words, the problem of how to interpret the results of quantum experiments indicates that Deloria is on the right track in stressing the importance of metaphysics in doing natural philosophy.

At issue, in short, is the question of what sort of metaphysically infused language is most suitable to express the cosmic activity of cosmogenesis (which is a term I will come back to). That is to say, what is chiefly at issue is how to speak about what is going on in both the near and far regions of the naturing of Nature. One of the most important lessons to be learned from science, in other words, is that it makes all the difference what sort of language you adopt to express your experimental results. Quantum physics points up the importance of first becoming clear, or at least clearer, about what is going on in the fundamental business of perception. It is highly significant that Pauli insists on finding a new way to talk about the connections between observers and observed; he urges replacing the idea of an `external reality' with that of a `reality of symbols.'[10]

Not only has the failure to deal with this crucial consideration led to a serious misconstrual of `good seeing' in modern thought. It has resulted in an unjust denigration of the sort of `seeing' that Black Elk seems to illustrate. This point bears directly on the

10. For an excellent introduction to the idea of a quantum reality, see Mae-Wan Ho, *The Rainbow and the Worm: The Physics of Organisms* (World Scientific Publishing Co., 3rd edn., 2008). Ho states, for instance, that `the quantum age entails a shift to a truly organic way of living and perceiving the world....that will reconnect Western science to the deeply ecological and holistic knowledge systems of all indigenous cultures' (p. 271). In Ho's view, a `quantum world' will emerge which is `radically interconnected, interdependent...where every entity, from elementary particle to galaxy, evolves like an organism, entangled with all there is in nature.'

nature of the large gap that separates indigenous cosmologist from those modern cosmologists who propagate, for instance, the Big Bang theory of the origin of the cosmos---which is a theory that appears to be about as far from the deliverances of ordinary or concrete experiencing as one can get.

Deloria thus understandably emphasizes the fact that `the Indian confronts the reality of the experience, and while he or she may not make immediate sense of it, it is not rejected as an invalid experience'---even if it happens not to conform to established `mental considerations and assumptions regarding the universe.' Again, he notes that:

> Indians believed that everything that humans experience has value and instructs us in some aspect of life. The fundamental premise is that we cannot "misexperience" anything; we can only misinterpret what we experience.[11]

In sum, indigenous thinkers may be the least likely of all types of naturalistic thinkers to commit what Whitehead calls the Fallacy of Misplaced Concreteness.[12] By the same token, it is not surprising that the interpretations of the moderns of scientifically controlled experiencings become increasingly fanciful as they become less and less dependent on accessible forms of imagery; that is, on that aspect of thinking that indigenous peoples favour when they indicate that what is most needed in cosmology is a synthetic rather than an analytic approach to the understanding of natural events.

Such considerations are at least in accord with the fact that a desire for an explanation attests to a special interest in a `something' that has captured the attention of a sentient, inquisitive form of sensibility---that is, the phenomena that appear to be both interesting and important. It is thus far from incidental that Deloria describes the `cornerstone' of explanation for primitive peoples in terms of `the presence of energy and power [which] is the starting point of their understanding and analyses of the natural world.'[13] The intensity of the emotions that accompany such heightened moments of experiencing is for them especially significant since this intensity may well be a sign of the presence of nonmaterial or spiritual powers in Nature.

Deloria thus sketches a conception of indigenous thinking that both starts with and keeps open the possibility that the worlding of the world is chiefly guided by more or less sensitive communications involving more or less perspicacious souls who enjoy different forms of sensibility. He notes that `the old Indians...saw and experienced personality in every aspect of the universe,' which is a view that can only be properly criticized from a

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11. SR, pp. 45-46.

12. Or as Nietzsche puts a similar point, the tendency to put first what ought to come last.

13. Deloria notes especially that `Western thinkers continually misinterpret the recognition of power by primitive people as if it were a conclusion they had reached rather than a beginning they were making ' (MME, 153).

perspective `large' enough to take in the whole universe and all its sense-making creatures. It is therefore one of strengths of the indigenous thinker to hold that every living inhabitant of this cosmos has its own peculiar ways of experiencing the world. And that the character of this experiencing is intimately bound up with the personality of the experiencer, which is a consideration that is directly relevant to the question of the kind and quality of the various kinds of spiritual powers involved in a process of world-making that is going on always and everywhere.

So it is worth reiterating that what is mainly at issue here is whether or not human beings dwell in a living cosmos---where the adjective presents a major challenge to would-be naturalists. Indeed, it makes no sense for a living human being to say that he/she is both infused with a certain degree of `quickness' and is also an inhabitant of an essentially dead universe. But without doubt it is not easy to elucidate the notion of `quickness'---although there is no reason why anyone who is conscious of being alive should think that the notion makes no sense. So nothing stands in the way of a native person claiming that he/she is but one vital element of a cosmic vitality that is replete with many different kinds of more or less `quickened' personalities whose very existence bespeaks a world replete with an immense variety of inter-connected, more or less vital souls.

4. SO WHAT MIGHT A GOOD NATURALISTIC EXPLANATION LOOK LIKE?

The foregoing remarks point towards the real difficulty that Deloria is addressing, which is how to conceive a vitalistic metaphysics informed by a general principle of relativity, one that is sympathetic to the indigenous view that we, the living, dwell in a moral universe. So it is important to note that Deloria is not suggesting that indigenous cosmologists do not have a critical attitude towards their fondest beliefs. Such thinkers are always prepared to jettison assumptions and presuppositions that cannot be justified in terms of the most salient aspects of concrete experiencing. Deloria is moreover not maintaining that the lack of communication between the Eurocentric colonists and native Indian thinkers could have been avoided if only both sides had found a way to reconcile their different attitudes towards concrete experiencing. Something far more important is at stake; something that bears directly on the question not only of the adequacy but also the sanity of the sort of reasoning that the moderns promote as `normal.'

Deloria is particularly critical of those moderns who encourage the hubristic tendency to associate the reasonings of indigenous peoples with primitive stages in the evolution of consciousness; that is, with ways of thinking that are `primitive' in the sense

of being essentially rooted in unthinking reactions to stimuli. This shoe is a better fit for the modern foot, he intimates, which is not to say he is claiming that indigenous peoples always walk upright along straight paths.

But all that seems clear at this point is that appeals to common sense are as useless as appeals to the objectivity of science's putatively rational and exact pronouncements. At the heart of the whole issue is the puzzle that keeps reappearing---how might one best frame a rational account of the naturing of Nature---which is itself an extremely vague notion that calls for a kind of reasoning that probably can only hope to get some things more or less right some of the time.

Apropos this tacit claim for the impossibility of exactly defining the idea of rationality, it is thus worth noting that Gilles Deleuze, one of Nietzsche's most gifted admirers, argues in some detail that common sense cannot supply sufficient grounds for elucidating the meaning of good sense.[14] He at the same time expands upon the failure of modern reason to come to terms with the fact that serious inquiry tends frequently to be traduced by what he calls the three `misadventures of thought'---madness, malevolence, and stupidity. One might therefore be tempted to think that the very idea of a communally endorsed good sense is a red herring. However, one can also cite as a counter-example the common practice of concert goers who spontaneously join in an enthusiastic applause at the end of a performance---thus signifying a common, more or less silent but unanimous value-judgment. Or perhaps better, an instance of more or less coherent instantaneity (synchronicity) in the valuing that experiencing inevitably involves. The plain truth is that most people often act spontaneously as though they had no doubt that all living beings dwell in a common world---as is witnessed by those dramatically charged moments when accidents leave no time for debate as to what is `real' or not.

It is also a strong possibility that this world includes a great variety of sensibilities whose different kinds of awarenesses bespeak many different kinds of reality. This observation should come as no surprise to pet-lovers who might even be disposed to use the word wisdom in some cases of animal behaviour. Although postmodern thinkers may have persuasively argued that the meanings of `real' or `true' or `good' are always contestable, this need be regarded as a hurdle to would-be rational thinkers only by those who insist that two different perceivers should `see' exactly the same `reality' at any given moment. The real difficulties in understanding perception, in other words, are also illustrated by Black Elk whose pause for contemplation suggests an unconscious

14. I discuss some of Deleuze's important contributions to the problem of the meaning of good sense in Chapter 7 of my PRPS.

enlistment of hidden powers that may at times lead to `true' or `real' visions. But whether or not such a conjecture can be justified, it is clear that different perceivers `see' different `realities' according to how well they have learned to `see.' For there is no logical difficulty involved in acknowledging that when some indigenous perceivers claim to be inspired by spiritual forces as well as moved by material ones, they may simply be stating a fact about their own peculiar history of learning *how* to `see.'

That modern thinkers are especially handicapped in respect to the problem of learning is perhaps the most important lesson to be learned from indigenous thinkers. In other words, it is necessary to face up to the possibility that `good learning' alludes also to the immaterial side of perception. The point bears directly on the possibility of a debilitating sickness of reason that both Nietzsche and Deleuze allude to. The latter traces the etiology of this disease to a `dogmatic image of thought' which constricts the inherent freedom of thought. This image can thus be associated with the widespread tendency to give precedence to the conceptual over the imaginal. As Deleuze puts the point, serious thinking is constrained to move only within the boundaries of a conceptually circumscribed `world of representation.'

It is thus especially noteworthy that Deleuze concludes his exhaustive critique of modern reason with the declaration that `all is contemplation.' Not only does he hereby open up thought to the possibility of intuitive powers, he also indicates that Black Elk's pause for contemplation may bear witness to an especially well-cultivated imagination---one that has perhaps access to salient features of the experiencings of long-dead ancestors.

In other words, whether or not Black Elk has really seen a `truth' may depend to a large extent on what he learned from his teachers and their ancestors about `good seeing.' Deleuze in fact refers to the long apprenticeship that is required for educing properly all the powers deployed by all the faculties that are involved in an act of perception. If these powers, as he intimates, are a gift from Nature that are given only in a state of latency, everything must depend on how they are subsequently educed.

When viewed from this Deleuzian perspective, then, it should not be at all surprising if a great many supposedly well-educated people never learn how to properly use all their natural powers---especially if their learning has been controlled by educators who are wedded to narrow perspectives that deny the existence of such powers.

At this point, we seem to have come full circle back to the heart of the problem of `good seeing'---for the thinking of Black Elk may be peculiar only in the sense that he learned to become an especially astute `listener' to faint resonances or dissonances in his visceral feelings that bespeak the existence of immaterial natural powers. In which case, what else but his emotions could teach him that he was an especially astute imaginative-

intuitive interpreter of the plethora of signs and signals that would seem to be the `stuff' of acts of contemplation?

Indeed, when Deleuze's ontology of event-encounters leads him to declare that `all is contemplation.' he evokes the image of thinking as a complex and uncertain mingling and meeting of `inner' feelings and `outer' worldly exigencies. Since the latter allude to more or less meaningful relationships that arise in the cosmic process of meaning-making, Deleuze's line of thought elicits a restless drama in which it is not always easy to tell the spectators apart from the participants. He in fact enlists the trope of `complicity' to express the formation of connections that link acts of minding to certain events belonging to the naturing of Nature. He thereby opens wide the door to nonmaterial as well as materially infused influences; specifically to imaginative powers whose exercise may be like that of good artists who evidence a special sensitivity to slight differences in the quality of the fleeting emotional intensities that accompany their ceative efforts.

In any case, once one acknowledges the emotional side of experiencing one must at the very least jettison all those fond hopes of systematic reasoners who yearn for a final and complete understanding of the universe. This renunciation is in fact not too hard to make if one regards emotions as impure mixtures, or perhaps better amalgams, of feelings and concepts. The intensity of any emotion aroused in experiencing can thus be interpreted as pointing towards particularly energetic creative-critical interactions between embodied feelings and ephemeral ideas.[15]

So it is well worth noting that this is a description to which many poets might subscribe, and especially those who regularly struggle with the problem of finding just the right word to express what cannot be said in propositional language. Non-representational painters or composers of contemporary music also illustrate the possibility that a kind of artful reasoning is being exercised, one that involves a rapid to and fro movement between the conceptual and the affective sides of thinking. This peculiar dynamic, which elicits the notion of a living reason, manifestly involves affectively guided judgments that do not presuppose a clearly envisaged goal. Indeed, the `art object' that many artists set out to create often only emerges as a pleasant surprise towards the end of their creative efforts, which are never really done. They thus indicate that only certain visceral feelings of `rightness' or `satisfaction' could provide a warrant for the claim that they have made something of value.

15. Abundant illustrations are afforded by theatrical dramas that revolve around dynamic interactions between concepts and feelings. Such as Shakespeare's tragedy *Othello* in which a failure to stop and think leads Othello to become an uncritical pawn of the cunning Iago who drops a series of corrosive hints as to Desdemona's infidelities.

In other words, Black Elk's pause for contemplation is not at all strange if one interprets it as akin to the enlistment of a natural artful or living reason that evidently takes time to find out whether or not it is `seeing' truth. For it is not impossible that Black Elk was able to cultivate such a reason during an earlier period of education in which his teachers showed him how to dynamically balance the contrasting poles of feelings and concepts.

5. ON BEGINNING TO TELL NATURALISTIC TALES

Briefly then, it is possible that an artful reasoner is someone who is capable of `seeing' what only a wise soul could have suspected was worth looking for in the first place. This allusion to the intuitive wisdom intrinsic to certain forms of indigenous minding indicates at any rate that the idea that consciousness can be explained scientifically is a dangerous delusion. That is, it is capable of undermining serious efforts to understand the `inner' processes that yield the actual world of concrete experiencing. It therefore places the refusal of indigenous thinkers to sharply divide the psychical from the physical side of experiencing in an especially good light.

In other words, in so far as the mindings of indigenous thinkers refer to a multifarious activity that is part and parcel of the worlding of the world, and inasmuch as this activity can be depicted as a dynamic inter-action of many kinds of personalities, the notion of wisdom may actually be indispensable to any adequate understanding of the worlding of the world. Put another way, it shows that the common or garden use of the trope of `seeing' for understanding makes very good sense. The trouble is that no notion seems more familiar or more obscure than that of understanding itself. Unless it is the self who is attempting to understand.

The sort of `seeing' that informs Black Elk's pronouncement of certain truths may refer to a long history of meaning-making by personalities who employed symbol-making powers to preserve in sound-symbols evocations of significance which accompanied certain striking images. More specifically, a genuine act of understanding may refer at bottom to the powers of certain words to bring back those insightful moments of primordial `seeings' that once upon a time were recognized as particularly significant. But if this is so, it would hardly be surprising if thinkers like Black Elk did not even attempt to articulate the reasons for their claims to `see' the `truth.' Yet such thinkers can nonetheless perhaps be credited with intuitively anticipating Deleuze's summary conclusion, that truth is a matter of production, not adequation.

When Black Elk paused to think about an account of events that belonged to the past, he perhaps also illustrated not only the truth of Deleuze's observation that `all is contemplation' but also the fact that the connective relationships that human beings

appear at times to establish between their mindings and the naturing of Nature attest to a kind of parallelism---that is, a kind of resonance between respective forms of ordering in Nature that (as Heraclitus might say) comes from being able to listen to the Logos. Deleuze in any case underscores the mystery invoked by the very idea of experience when he depicts this activity as dependent on an integration of all the contributions from all the faculties that happen to have been enlisted in trying to make sense. He indicates that the worth of each contribution depends on the quality of the education in previous periods of learning, which indicates that the problem of `good learning' is also relevant to the question of the quality of the sense that is being made.

Hence if the making of good sense presupposes a successful learning of how to integrate the contributions of the work done by all the faculties involved, what could perform such a unifying function if not a properly educated faculty of imagination? Furthermore, in so far as the powers exercised by faculties are merely latent, they may never be properly educed, let alone correctly deployed. Since this applies to the powers of imagination, Nietzsche has good reason to suspect that the moderns propagate an endemic bad sense. Furthermore, since the kind of learning involved in developing the powers of the faculties takes time, as the learning of little children reminds us, Deleuze aptly describes learning in terms of the trope of apprenticeship. It is far from incidental that he also holds that the most important learning takes place in the unconscious---which happens to be commonly identified as the home of a spiritual agency called the soul.

One ultimately arrives at the view, I am suggesting, aptly expressed by the poet Keats; that for all that the world appears to be a vale of tears, it would be more accurate to call it `a vale of soul-making.'

What else could further this sort of work but an artful reason infused with a certain wisdom? That the primary aim of the natural philosopher ought to be this elusive goal is in fact the gist of the philosophical musings of the poet S. T. Coleridge. Disgusted by the devivifying effects of modern reason he set out to frame a `true naturalism' informed by `realizing intuitions' that bespeak a special kind of `philosophic imagination.'[16] This is a special power that Deleuze appears also to be alluding to in his major work in ontology, *Difference and Repetition*. He remarks in the preface that it is no longer possible to do philosophy in the `old style'---by which he presumably means in the manner of a conscious and conscientious methodical thinker whose faith in reason is invested solely in the truth-revealing powers of rigorous logical argumentation.

16. I discuss the relevance of Coleridge's views on the role of imagination in natural philosophy in Chapter 6 of my PRPS.

As for what a `new style' might look like, once one has shaken oneself free of the modern naturalist's dream of finding final and complete answers to profoundly difficult philosophical questions, the answer to the question of how to conceive good reasoning may be implicit in Deleuze's observation that the history of philosophy is like a *collage* in painting. He herewith points the would-be naturalist towards a possible resolution of the *ur*-question of how best to do natural philosophy. What the would-be nonmodern naturalist needs most is a language based on what might be termed a unified *word-collage* comprised of what appears to be most valuable of the fragments of insights and intuitions that serious thinkers (and not just philosophers) have discovered.

This last thought lands us in front of another huge hurdle, however. In other words, the would-be nonmodern naturalist is here being urged to explore the possibility that the human animal is uniquely gifted in having evolved intuitive or imaginative powers or capacities to discern gems of wisdom that the ancestors have stored in their natural languages. These valuable remnants of so-called `primitive' modes of thought are for the most part inherently invisible, so to speak, to all those thinkers who restrict themselves to the conceptual `world of representation.' The implication, in short, is that the indigenous cosmologist who is able to move more or less freely in the realm of the imaginal may be more rational than the modern cosmologist. While he/she can finds some support for this from Nietzsche, it is still very much a moot question however what kind of thinker might be a better rationalist.

But assuming for the moment that the indigenous cosmologist has acquired a familiarity from the moment of birth with the efficacy of thinking in images, Black Elk may attest to the fact that indigenous peoples are able to `see' well just to the extent that in their early education they learned an essentially poetic capacity to think in images.[17] So it is also worth noting that indigenous peoples deliberately `distance' themselves from mundane concerns when anticipating particularly significant moments of cognition---as in dreaming, performing rituals, taking part in ceremonies, and so on. Anticipating fruitful encounters with numinous images, they also manifest an understandable respect for the mystery that experiencing evokes when their contemplations appear to enlist natural powers that are capable of intuiting/imagining aspects of the numinous side of the worlding of the world.

This convoluted situation suggests that the idea of evolution of consciousness needs special attention. It is a common belief among modern naturalists that consciousness has evolved from insentient material forms of organization. But if the evolution of

17. For an excellent discussion of four great Anglo-Saxon poets who illustrate this point, see Helen Vendler, *Poet's Thinking: Pope, Whitman, Dickinson, Yeats* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 2004)

consciousness alludes to sporadic growth in an ability to make a species-specific kind of sense in a drama involving many kinds of personalities, the related idea of emergence may refer to a relentless growth in the kinds of natural powers whose number and character need never be fixed once and for all.

So it is also worth noting that there is no compelling reason to think that evolution can be accounted for in terms of eternal, universal, and immutable `laws of nature.' Deloria in fact suggests that the idea of evolution would be better referred to as `cosmogenesis,' which is preferable to `evolution' just because it does not presume that an adequate story about this evolutionary world can be grounded in a `uniformitarian' interpretation of emergence.[18]

Indeed, adherents to neo-Darwinism frequently illustrate a systematic question-begging since it is hardly self-evident that evolution refers to a continuous development of ever more complex forms of organic organization from a single primordial form of material organization. Certain anomalies in the fossil record, which tend to be overlooked, as Deloria points out, indicate that the evolution of new forms of organization may well evidence abrupt interruptions in a cosmic process that have then resulted in differently constituted patterns of biogenetic development.[19]

There may even have been many occasions when Life on Earth was obliged to start its relentless growth over and over again under altered circumstances. But not necessarily from scratch, as it were. For if the cosmos is indeed alive, among all the natural powers invoked by the notion of a vital cosmogenesis there may be a power of unconscious memory which works in tandem with a creative power. That is a capacity to enlist previous forms of organization that may prove useful in new circumstances.

The world may refer, in short, to a cosmic Will not only to perpetuate some forms of life but also to engender new forms of life for reasons that can only be guessed at. There is no denying that Nature has frequently developed ways of inserting bizarre forms of Life wherever it can get a foothold. This consideration allows for the possibility that Nature has simply been unwise on many occasions---as perhaps in creating the human organism. But be that as it may, the very existence of the amazing variety of

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18. The term `cosmogenesis' Deloria borrows from Teilhard de Chardin. See MME, esp. Chapter VI.

19. There is empirical evidence, in other words, for the claim that catastrophic global events have played an important part in cosmogenesis. That this cosmic movement also involves a creative factor can be inferred from the `fact' that evolution has been halted and re-directed on account of, say, global catastrophes which have resulted in significant environmental upheavals. Apart from collisions with comets or large meteors, etc., a widespread decimation of organic life might also have resulted from dramatic alterations in global climate patterns, such as those envisaged by current predictors of anthropogenic climate change of the sort that is now threatening all life on earth. See MME, esp. Chapter XVI: "The Traumatic Planetary Past."

perduring organic forms of organization which are not all beneficial to Life itself bespeaks a hidden creative power which is caught up in an ongoing and necessarily uncertain struggle between existing natural powers in the engendering of ever more complex forms of organic forms of organization.

Thus in view of the mind-boggling complexity that I have only touched upon, it is hardly surprising that many proponents of neo-Darwinism stubbornly cling to the de-vitalizing and de-spiritualizing metaphysics of mechanistic materialism. The irony is that many such thinkers clearly view themselves as civilized human beings who take pains to ensure their conduct is (or at least ought to be) morally and/or ethically upright. Thus whatever they might say in public they behave as though they were in possession of moral/ethical faculties which are just as worthy of being taken seriously as those sense faculties that deal with influential impingements on their sense organs.

So let us just accept for the moment that claims that we all dwell in a moral universe are not unreasonable. Which is to say that when the topic of emergence is examined in the light of the notion of cosmogenesis it can generally be understood as alluding to the empirical fact that different species of organism enjoy different assemblages of natural powers that result in different ways of making sense. Perhaps it is a will to develop and exercise all the natural powers possessed by a sentient self that is behind what Nietzsche calls the `will to power'---a will that, following Deleuze, is exercised by each properly educed faculty to make the kind of sense it is capable of making. These `little' wills bespeak hidden desires, moreover, that conceivably drive the indigenous concern to find the proper moral and ethical road to walk on through life---a road that one can only hope will lead to the getting of that epitome of good sense called wisdom.

7. ON HOW TO TELL A PLAUSIBLE STORY ABOUT COSMOGENESIS

The above remarks are meant to elaborate on the question I am claiming the would-be nonmodern naturalist must face squarely: whether it is possible to frame a vitalistic story about a living cosmos that is capable of showing that we do indeed live in a moral universe. For among the emergent faculties that the human organism enjoys there may well be moral/ethical faculties that are evidenced by the fact that a good deal of human experiencing is concerned with resolving moral/ethical dilemmas.

Following the lead of Samuel Butler (1835-1902) I have already begun to explore this highly contentious matter.[20] Initially an enthusiastic admirer of Darwin, Butler became

20. What follows is a condensed version of a more detailed discussion that I have pursued in *Cosmos and History*, published at <www. cosmosandhistory.org> volume 9, no. 1; volume 10, no. 2; and volume 12, no. 1.

so repelled by the materialistic tenor of the Darwinian approach that he set out to tell a Lamarckian story of evolution. Rejecting not only the claim that chance and natural selection can provide a sound basis for a systematic account of evolution, he denied that this approach even deserved the name of a scientific theory. He proposed instead to give a teleological account of evolution which presumes that the naturing of Nature is bound up with a cosmic aim to attain to a certain wisdom.

Butler thus associates the idea of evolution with a vague intention to develop ever more complex forms of organization that include ever more sophisticated forms of sensibility in order to...what, if not increase the depth and range of the understanding that complex forms of sensibility allude to? Which is a vague enough claim that can take into account the general idea that the worlding of the world is replete with a variety of indissociable psycho-physical forms of organization called organisms whose lives are inevitably encompassed by uncertainties, given the hazards of contingent environmental conditions. But while his primary assumptions accord well with day-to-day human experiencing, he tacitly acknowledges that attempts to account for the human ability to make sense cannot avoid some very tricky metaphysical problems. Among these is of course the problem of how the naturalist might go about understanding the genesis of particular forms of organization in Nature itself---which leads to such questions as the nature and provenance of the forms of organization that the naturing of Nature spawns.

Rejecting the view that there must be an external Creator/Director of the worlding of the world, Butler thus brings the would-be nonmodern naturalist face to face with the question whether or not cosmogenesis involves a natural power that is responsible for the creation of habits and instincts that warrant speaking about the order in Nature in the first place. Indeed, such a factor may also be needed to account for the powers of unconscious memory which help make sense of hereditary processes that preserve most habits while engendering some new and better ones. Thus the question arises whether there is also a creative power that wills changes in extant habits with the aim is to enhance the wisdom that Nature has given certain nonhuman creatures whose behaviour bear witness to a special kind of knowledge about how to survive in a complicated, largely unpredictable world replete with hazards and obstacles.

Thus putting himself well beyond the pale of what the moderns deem rational and respectable in natural philosophy, Butler in effect allies himself with the thinking of indigenous cosmologists. His story of cosmogenesis, in other words, is consonant with those told by indigenous thinkers who appear to employ an artful form of reasoning that accords an important role in world-making to the notion of a soul. For although most moderns have no truck with the notion of soul-making, I am claiming that talk about souls is no more or less an offence against the ideal of rationality than the notion of an

organism in possession of a sentient body or an embodied mind. Indeed, all these elusive ideas are elicited at once by Butler who, following Lamarck, promotes the conception of an organism as an indissociable and sentient psycho-physical whole.

It is therefore especially significant that Butler's attempt to tell a plausible story about evolution revolves about the obscure trope of a living self. His incomplete story is thus a failure only in the trivial sense that he is obliged to leave his readers with a multi-pronged challenge: to produce for themselves a vitalistic metaphysical imaginary that can bring under one roof, so to speak, a plethora of bold conjectures involving the relationships that link the tropes of habits, memories, and power in living human organisms.

That is to say, in choosing to base his story-telling on an exploration of this complex of relationships he in effect enlists what might be called an anthropotropic metaphorics; that is, one that can be viewed as the basis of a `language of the self.' In other words, he can be read as providing an illustration of the sort of `single descriptive language' that, according to Deloria, indigenous cosmologists lack.

The question is, then, is this sort of language capable of synthesizing the most general and important characteristics of concrete experiencing---which may pertain to both the material and immaterial aspects of their living and thinking? For Butler's tacitly proposed `language of the self' evokes a picture of the world as a complex dance of inter-acting hierarchies of sentient beings in communication with one another. That is, if one assumes that the idea of a world comprised of a single self is incoherent.

So putting aside for the moment the ever-burning and very likely unresolvable question of what a `true self' actually is, the question that looms over all others is whether or not Butler was on the right track in suggesting that evolution (or better cosmogenesis) betokens a vague aim in Nature to evolve a kind of wisdom. By choosing to hinge his story-telling on the trope of an ensouled psycho-physical whole, Butler thus opens up the possibility that human forms of organization attest to the presence of a more or less wise Spirit that indigenous thinkers have long since intuitively sensed. For one can view his story as fully compatible with a general principle of relativity of the sort that indigenous thinkers intuitively locate at the very heart of the universe. Furthermore, in trying to come to terms with the problem of how to live and think well, they indicate that only a figuratively constructed story about the worlding of the world could lead to an coherent understanding of a world suffused with immaterial powers.

Put yet another way, Butler's story-telling may confirm the wisdom of indigenous seekers of wisdom who eschew the idea that there can be a systematic explanation of everything under the sun. I have been suggesting that nothing actually stands in the way of the presumption that we dwell in a living cosmos that evinces a spiritual power or powers that warrant speaking of moral/ethical concerns. These powers appear to be

sensed by indigenous peoples whose moments of intense emotional awareness seem not unlike those that adventurous artists experience when they set out to create they know not exactly what. For the `something' an artist seeks may be inherently unknown until the work has progressed to that happy moment where its worth announces itself---by means of heightened visceral feelings of `rightness.

Perhaps the true character of what Nature aims to produce in an ongoing cosmogenesis only gradually becomes definite during the course of the cosmic meaning-making. One may suspect anyway that the image of Nature as a fallible cosmic artist, which Butler encourages but which apparently fills modern naturalists with a fear of vitalistic thinking, is an inevitable by-product of attempts to do justice to the idea of a living cosmos. Since there are bad artists as well as good artists, it is not inconceivable that Nature has not always been wise in its creative efforts, as for instance perhaps in the creation of human organisms.

8. TOWARDS A COSMOGENY OF CONCERN

So it is worth another digression to try to show that conjectures such as the above are not metaphysically baseless. It is especially relevant to both Butler's and Deloria's projects that A. N. Whitehead's major work in natural philosophy is based on the assumption that the natural philosopher cannot avoid engaging in speculative metaphysics. More specifically, he too evokes a living cosmos when he puts forward a theory of actuality that involves an attempt to analyze concrete experiencing using an elaborate (some might say too elaborate) categoreal scheme that purports to expose the most salient aspects of experiencing. It is thus highly significant that for all the formality of his elaborate categoreal scheme, his early mode of expression of its main features makes continual use of such homely terms as `desire,' `satisfaction,' `appetite,' and so on. He thus suggests that in order to frame an intelligible picture of the worlding of the world, one ought to look at the most salient aspects of the experiencing of living, sentient organisms.

In other words, Whitehead's attempts to do justice to the idea of experience can be described as an elaborate exploration of a `single descriptive language' of the sort that Deloria calls for. Urging in effect the need for a language of the self, Whitehead introduces his categoreal scheme, which is meant to precisify this thinking about actuality, with references to the `self-functioning' or `self-creative' characteristics of actual entities. His theory of actuality thus underscores the significance of a later observation that an actual entity is first and foremost a focus of felt concerns. Indeed, in one place he describes his philosophy of organism as a critique of pure feeling. So if his/her readers are inclined to believe that they are themselves actual entities, and since

there seem to be few human selves who believe they are not actual entities, Whitehead's approach to natural philosophy is consonant with the indigenous assumption that the most emotional side of experiencing is anything but irrelevant.

The implicated image of a living cosmos which is a highly complex network of interacting, emotional personalities elicits a vast complex of soul-makers. Each of them has somehow assembled or been endowed with a complement of natural powers capable of `recognizing' more or less meaningful `objects of significance.' So if one grants that an individual actual entity can be imaged as a concerned self intent in its incessant becoming upon achieving a certain value-in-itself, the entire cosmos, when viewed as a process of processes of self-making, can be viewed in the same light. That is to say, the soul-making of this overarching cosmic Self would seem to be imbued with a vague purpose that can be linked to a Will to attain to a certain `quickness' in the most sentient forms of Life and Thought. Which implies that under the best circumstances cosmogenesis can indeed allude to the growth of a certain wisdom in Nature, although Whitehead's theory of actuality allows for a growth of bad sense too.

Recalling the wisdom of Heraclitus, who hinted that in order for an experiencing self to understand its place in the world, it must first develop a wise-enough soul, Whitehead's allusions to the self in the context of elucidating the idea of an actual entity indicate that anyone bent on understanding his/her place in the worlding of the world ought first to look `inwards.' Herewith also opening up the current relevance of Heraclitus to the quest to understand the inherent mystery of experiencing, Whitehead no doubt ensured his relative invisibility in modern philosophy. But a more important reason for his lack of influence on the moderns probably concerns his unorthodox approach to the fundamental business of perception.

The early Whitehead identifies this activity as the glue that holds the Heraclitean world of fluent events together. That is to say, he indicates that the coherence of the world depends upon a vast and intricate web of dynamic relationships between `percipient events' which bespeak a variey of modes of communication. That is, each such event is able to `recognize' aspects of the world that in one way or another mean something to it. These `objects of significance' may be material or immaterial since they presuppose `sense-awarenesses' that do not depend on the functioning of sense organs.

The early Whitehead, in short, opens up the possibility that perception generally enlists both material and immaterial powers that have the capacity to `recognize' specific `objects of significance' that in one way or another affect the well-being of the perceiving self. He thus begins to conjure up a living cosmos comprised of interacting selves infused with concerns that can take into account the concerns of other selves, which leads in turn to a complex picture of the worlding of the world as vast network of inter-linked

more or less localized assemblages of natural powers capable of making different kinds of sense.

That acts of perception may also be capable in principle of recognizing spiritually infused objects of significance is an assumption that becomes even more explicit in Whitehead's later, more elaborate theory of perception. This involves a process of amalgamating two more primitive stages of perception: called `causal efficacy' and `presentational immediacy.' These two stages become fused into a unity in an act of perception where the conjoining is due to an essentially creative functioning that he calls `symbolic referencing.' Suggesting herewith that this indispensable mediating process can be likened to poetic creation, Whitehead thus imbues his general conception of perception with an imaginative power of symbolizing that suggests that the best place to learn an artful reason is in the realm of art.

This being a possibility to which all the philosophers I have mentioned ultimately point, one can say that an artful reason is marked by an especially efficient, unconscious power of imagination. At the human level of sense-making, at any rate, there thus exists a certain freedom that time has shown brings with it certain responsibilities that give rise to all the moral/ethical dilemmas that so complicate human life and thought.

Whitehead also confirms that there is no direct or simple way to justify this convoluted sort of story-telling since there is no ultimate ground in which to anchor meaning-making. Which is to say that one of the main lessons that Whitehead teaches the nonmodern naturalist is that the yearnings of modern naturalists for simple and final explanations of complex phenomena are essentially irrational, if not dangerously unbalanced.

It is rather an enhanced wisdom they should be yearning for. Indeed, day-to-day experiencing continually reminds us that an overweening desire for simplicity merely distracts from the profound difficulty of making sense of a world that evidently cares only for the propagation of new selves from extant selves, not their survival. Whitehead underscores, in short, the primary importance of the question that Butler indirectly raises, whether the would-be naturalist can hope for nothing more certain that a plausible and reasonably adequate story about the naturing of Nature, one that is beyond the powers of systematic story-tellers to better, let alone criticize.

Butler tacitly asserts moreover that the only viable `method' available to the nonmodern naturalist is not unlike which is very familiar to every indigenous person who grows up in a company of vivid story-tellers, as well as to every poet and/or literary critic who recognizes the cognitive powers of figurative language. Indeed, while this line of thought may be anathema to those who dream of final and complete explanations of natural phenomena, it is hardly unfamiliar to any ordinary person who has discovered

at a very early age that accredited conceptual tools are frequently inadequate even for the communication of very ordinary observations. So it is worth noting that when it comes to unusual insights or intuitions that have no clear and definite material basis, the meanings communicated are more often felt than discerned. The tendency to suppress the affective side of experiencing may thus be modern reason's most egregious error, one that has unfortunately served to `normalize' the erection of conceptual smoke-screens whose major purpose appears to be to hide the mystery inherent in the very idea of experience.

9. ON EDUCATION AND THE `BANALITY OF EVIL'

All the thinkers I have mentioned point in one way or another to the wisdom of indigenous thinkers who hold that concrete experiencing must be the ultimate judge of whatever is valuable in the worlding of the world. This suggests that a world held together by a great variety of acts of `sense-awareness' is one whose coherence depends upon an interwoven, dynamic web of feelings of significance and/or importance. It is thus not a big step to the view that the strength or quality of the glue that holds the flux of events tegether depends on the personalities that happen to be directly involved. If this is so, world-making ultimately depends on the health of those elusive representatives of Spirit, or souls, whose characters can only be ascertained through contemplating `surface' behaviour; that is, the actual personalities exhibited in acts of experiencing. For a personality can be defined as the outward expression of an inner, spiritual `something' whose character can only be assessed by `outward' signs.

Nothing therefore stands in the way of the indigenous thinker maintaining that life in general involves a constant meeting and mingling of personalities that bespeak more or less perplexed souls. Furthermore, their entanglements involve imaginative sortings, siftings, judgings, and decidings. Butler partly illuminates this dynamic situation when he depicts the worlding of the world as a vast complex of interacting selves comprised of multifarious habits, unconscious memories, and peculiar assemblages of natural powers. To these three tropes Whitehead indicates that the trope of concern should be added in order to account for the symbolic nature of perceptual functioning. For that which holds the world together bespeaks more or less appropriate responses to many types of symbolism, not the least of which (in the case of the human organism) concerns the moral/ethical feelings of concern that indigenous peoples take for granted.

It is no secret that the quality of responses to relevant concerns may well vary from person to person and culture to culture. Nor should it be surprising that incompleteness, vagueness, and uncertainty infuse all dealing with the concerns arising in the multifarious modes of experiencing the world. Hence the conclusion must be that the

only way that the would-be naturalist can determine whether the immaterial aspects of experiencing are `real' is through acquiring a certain skill in judging the `rightness' of certain feelings of significance.

Which suggests, in short, that if the getting of wisdom is a prerequisite for making good sense, it is especially noteworthy that in the view of indigenous peoples, according to Deloria, a good education proceeds `from information to knowledge to wisdom.'[21] That is to say, it is not so much what one learns but how one learns that is crucial, which implies that the Western brand of education, which stresses the importance of acquiring technical knowledge is inadequate if not seriously detrimental to good thinking. Indeed, this sort of approach, says Deloria, `really says nothing and does nothing for the whole human being.[22] Which is to say that the moderns have developed systems of education that are more likely to traduce the human desire to understand both the world and themselves than to advance the getting of wisdom.

I have already noted that both Nietzsche and Deleuze indicate that the moderns have in fact instituted educational processes that teach a kind of stupidity---which is a kind that Nietzsche closely links to the obsession with acquiring ever more technical skills or reams of specialized knowledge. This kind of learning undermines those educators who instinctively believe it is their duty to try above all to educe all the latent powers that are given to each human infant at birth. It is thus highly significant that Deloria alludes to the wisdom of the `old ways' in which native peoples educated their young, ways that involved a constant telling and re-telling of stories. A good many of these stories appear to have been designed to sensitize young imaginations to the differences between the various personalities that the traveller will meet in his/her journey through life. They thus indicate that a story-telling approach to education is perhaps far more conducive to the education of active imaginations than one that pretends that the complexities of existence can be mastered by forms of reasoning that privilege systems of deadening rules and/or precepts.[23]

So it is also worth noting that the stories indigenous peoples tell each other are sprinkled with references not only to the conduct of noble but also that of ignoble souls, where the latter are often associated with the inconsequential Trickster whose antics

21. See esp. Part III of SR.

22. SR, p. 142.

23. See, e.g., W. S. Penn, ed., *The Telling of the World: Native American Stories and Art* (New York, Stewart, Tabori, and Chang) who associates story-telling with an aim to invest some words with sacred value whereby `the storytelling self loses his own "self" while the listening selves participate in the words of the story and create selves of their own, selves in relation to the selves listening, the selves telling, and all the selves who have come before..." (p. 10).

tend to spread trouble and confusion. But this is no hindrance to good learning since few lay persons would deny that many everyday moral/ethical dilemmas exemplify tensions that inevitably muddy the complex relationships that are continually forming and reforming between different personalities.

It is, in short, not hard to believe that in order to do justice to the needs, desires, or interests manifested by different personalities there is no high road to the goal of wisdom. It is thus not incidental that Deloria's praise for indigenous methods of education suggests that the natural languages developed by indigenous peoples may be replete with the sort of wisdom that Whitehead believes is concealed in common words and which it is the busness of the metaphysician to try to imaginatively reveal. This is a kind of wisdom that is invisible to Western systematic reasoners who eschew speculative metaphysics and of course the illuminating powers of imagination.

Instead of fostering understanding, the moderns tend to obfuscate it by privileging technically useful abstractions that further their overweening desire to acquire as much control (or secular power) as they can over Nature and all her creatures. One may thus suspect, in short, that a techno-scientific culture shot through with an overweening desire for control bespeaks a very sick collective soul with fragmented natural powers. There is certainly no lack of evidence that such a culture is capable of doing untold harm not only to itself and other cultures but also to all life on earth, as Hannah Arendt has exhaustively shown.

Being strongly motivated by a profound concern for the health of the collective mentality of the culture of the West, her study of the mentality of Adolf Eichmann in particular, which led her to coin the phrase `banality of evil,' indicates that nothing is more important to the health of a culture than a mentality prepared to frequently stop and think about the meaning of good sense, and hence the worth of the ideas and practices that have become `normalized' as the chief guides in day to day living and thinking.

10. MUST THE WORLD DIE FOR OUR SINS?

We thus return to the sticky question that I posed at the outset of this discussion---whether anything can be done to rescue a self-destructive culture that behaves like a voracious parasite unconsciously bent on destroying its only home in the name of progress.[24] It is moreover a culture that appears to have blinded itself to the possibility

24. See Vine Deloria Jr., *Custer Died For Your Sins* (New York: MacMillan, 1969) in which he observes that `America has yet to keep one Indian treaty or agreement despite the fact that the United States government signed over four hundred such treaties and agreements with Indian tribes' (p. 28).

that its material `successes' stem from a kind of culpable stupidity that warrants speaking of the `banality of evil.'

In other words, a denial of the existence of moral and/or ethical faculties, not to mention aesthetic and religious ones, warrants speaking of a culture imbued with a cultivated tendency to sin against nature. As Deloria indicates in his survey of modern thought, it is a culture that has developed an incoherent collective mentality that is remarkably tolerant of violent solutions to moral/ethical problems. He in fact suspects that `non-tribal peoples' `have no sense of morality and integrity at all.'[25]

Citing a few of the many examples he might have adduced to show not only the intrinsic shallowness of modern reason but also its pernicious influence on the `quicknesses' of Life and Thought, he notes that the invaders of north America not only forced upon indigenous peoples the assumption that it was in their interests to abandon their ancient tribal customs and adopt Anglo-Saxon ones. The colonizers also gave a license to self-righteous political and religious authorities to kidnap native children and force them to attend residential schools where they were forced to renounce their native languages on pain of severe punishment. Hence inasmuch as a natural language provides a living culture with the means to express its very soul, deliberate attempts to stamp out a native language can be viewed as an outstanding example of the evils that attend a `normalization' of cultural genocide.

The current global situation, in short, evokes the kind of stupidity that Nietzsche alludes to which follows from a love of narrow perspectives. This tendency of the moderns not only helps perpetuate a soul-destroying kind of evil-doing. It is continually being made to pervade the entire culture by narrowly-focused and ambitious managers who are more concerned with furthering practical (e.g. economic) advantages than with developing humanistic ideals. The result is a collective mentality that can be viewed, in short, as destined to fulfill Nietzsche's virtual prophecy, that a mode of thought prone to think with a bad conscience is doomed to consign itself to a prison of its own making. The rise of a greedy and imperialistic corporatocracy, in particular, has amply shown that, as Deloria puts it, the culture of the West has always had the potential for `a totalitarianism transcending anything experienced by ancient peoples.'[26]

Having embraced a conception of `progress' that is subversive of some of its proudest ideals, there are therefore ample reasons for thinking it does not at present have the wherewithal to save itself. But there seems little doubt that once upon a time the culture of the West was on the point of instituting a humane form of reasoning. That the current

25. SR, p. 141.
26. MME, p. 210.

situation however bespeaks a looming disaster is manifested by a degenerate collective imagination that is incapable of mustering a humble and respectful reverence for the wonderful fact of life itself, not to mention the inexhaustible mystery of thought.

As many indigenous critics of the early colonists have pointed out, it was never the native `savages' who were in need of being `civilized.'[27] Hence in regard to the question What If? that Deloria tacitly raises, when comparing the thinking of the moderns with that of indigenous peoples, it is not clear whether his optimism is warranted, for he remarks that

> the most fruitful avenues of development today are directing us toward a new type of social existence that parallels primitive peoples, perhaps incorporates some of their insights or unconsciously adopts some of their techniques, but which will be fully modern and capable of providing a meaningful existence.[28]

However, as Latour indicates, such a future can only come to fruition if reform requires above all a viable means to bridge the gulf between nature and culture. It is evident that more and more educational institutions are embracing the soul-destroying language and short-term thinking of monster business corporations. Furthermore, legions of would-be `progressive' thinkers appear to be more concerned with improving the `intelligence' of dead machines than the emotion-laden natural imaginative intuitions of warm-blooded human beings.

The point is that the radical changes required in order to begin a collective mentality to the point of thinking more wisely about how to live well would seem to depend upon a revolution in collective ways of soul-making. The outlook is thus far from promising, especially if Deloria is essentially correct and the predominant conception of a `good education' in the West is essentially inhumane.[29] In other words, it is necessary to first displace the soul-destroying educational institutions that protect the current *status quo*. On the other hand, there is still the possibility that the not yet indoctrinated young, who are more likely to have a respect for the powers of imagination than their elders, may be able to find much of value in the tenacity of indigenous peoples who have insisted on preserving their cultures in the face of enormous odds.

As for how to go about evolving a saner collective mentality, I have argued that

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27. See, e.g., Ronald Wright, *What is America? A Short History of the New World Order* (Vintage Canada, 2009) who shows that many of the `uncivilized' North American natives had actually established very civilized ways of living and thinking. Displaying a more egregious savagery, the armed, aggressive, and greedy interlopers established a polity that entrenched a systemic hypocrisy that has resulted in such hubristic myths as that America represents the world's best hope.

28. MME, p. 160.

29. SR, p. 142.

Deloria is right about the need to first develop a vitalistic metaphysical imagination that can serve as the principal instigator of a fundamental revolution in the manner in which we think and live. What Deloria himself hopes might transpire from a genuine revolution in the collective mentality can be inferred from his allusions to the work of Paul Radin. After studying many different aboriginal civilizations, Radin concludes that their `outstanding positive features' include `respect for the individual, irrespective of age or sex; the amazing degree of social and political integration achieved by them; and the existence ...of a concept of a personal security which transcends all governmental forms and all tribal interests and conflicts.'[30]

Thus to bring into existence this kind of civilization is not impossible given that some indigenous peoples have managed once upon a time to achieve it, and so its potentialities may yet exist in the unconscious memory of the species. Deloria also indicates, however, that the emergence of healthy communities depends on their finding ways to unite cultural values with localized natural knowledge. Such a unification requires, however, developing at the same time a single descriptive narrative. This does not imply that a reformer needs to repeat the kind of inquiry that Deloria has undertaken. It would be quite unreasonable, as he himself says, to expect ordinary citizens to pursue the sort of detailed inquiry into the metaphysical implications of the various achievements and deficiencies of modern thought that he has so admirably undertaken.

But this sort of inquiry is unnecessary, I have suggested, for once one has freed oneself from the constrictive shackles of modern reason, one is then free to contemplate the rich supply of potentially valuable metaphysical insights that are already available in the fragmented philosophy of the West.[31] I have furthermore argued that the outlines of a unifying descriptive language have long since been available in the attempt of Samuel Butler to tell a vitalistic story about evolution, one that might be described as based on a metaphorics of the self. That is, he begins to outline a language centered on the tropes of habit, memory, and power to fashion a non-systematic means of synthesizing the most important insights and intuitions of all types of thinkers.

Such a language must be able to do justice to the vitalizing myths that Nietzsche maintains every healthy culture in addition to eliminating the bad ones.[32] It is thus

30. MME, p. 160.

31. In other words, we have perhaps arrived at the heart of the crisis in Western philosophy which has failed to synthesize the best insights and intuitions that philosophy has undoubtedly produced. Thus Arran Gare argues that what is urgently required at present is a concerted effort in natural philosophy to fashion a viable, unorthodox type of speculative naturalism. See *The Philosophical Foundations of Ecological Civilization: A Manifesto for the Future (*New York, NY: Routledge, 2017).

32. This view is reinforced by Northrop Frye's view of the role that myths play in the enculturing of a collective mentality. Myths express the major concerns of a culture; that is, they refer to the hidden beliefs

possible that there may be many viable rivals when trying to frame an adequate vitalistic picture of cosmogenesis, for there is no reason to think that there is only one set of myths that can support a healthy, vital culture. By the same token, as Arendt's discovery of the `banality of evil' indicates, even an `advanced' modern culture that on the face of it has attained to a high degree of civilization can put itself in thrall to toxic myths. So history as well as present circumstances remind us that unless the collective mentality of the West can somehow learn to think more inclusively, and to embrace more life-enhancing myths, the outlook for the future is indeed grim.

that underwrite the ideologies that predominate in the culture and which direct if not control the modes of thought that are regarded as `normal.' Thus there exist, in short, both good myths and bad myths.