Book Review
Indigenizing Philosophy through the Land: A Trickster Methodology for Decolonizing Environmental Ethics and Indigenous Futures
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By Brian Burkhart

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In this stimulating contribution to Indigenous philosophizing, Burkhart promotes the elaboration of Indigenous metaphysics and epistemology in a tradition he locates both with his mentor Vine Deloria, Jr. and in the land. Simultaneously, in an assessment spanning from Thales and Aristotle to A. N. Whitehead and Arne Naess, Burkhart identifies some limitations of Western philosophy in comparison to Indigenous philosophy, particularly when Western thinkers are hampered by the narratives of coloniality that they reiterate. Burkhart draws on decolonial scholarship (including the work of Aníbal Quijano and Walter Mignolo) to differentiate between the *narrative* of colonial difference, which perpetually figures the Indigenous as the Other (insufficient, exalted, or otherwise) to the Western subject, from the *facts* of colonial difference, those aspects of difference irreducible to colonial aims or objectives, which Burkhart situates as emerging from and inherent in the land.

From this colonial critique Burkhart develops his central contrasting terms of locality and delocality. The latter is more easily summarized as those universalizing tendencies within Western philosophy, science, and moral law, which postulate universal rights and intrinsic and instrumental values. Delocalizing is also essential to the operation of coloniality, as it legitimates extraction, occupation, and the extension of one world system into another territory through assumptions of replaceability and universality. Though delocality parasitically layers itself over locality, Burkhart asserts that because this process is "never complete and always needs to be maintained, there is always left a remainder—the remainder of locality" (50). This hopeful arrangement suggests the promise of locality as a site of resistance and Indigenous revitalization.

Locality is the more challenging term to define because it is a collective noun for multiple lands or regions (perhaps better understood as "localities"); it is also always transformational, not a fixed characteristic or static thing, as delocality continually seeks to affirm. Locality is "a way to reference the manner in which being, meaning, and knowing are rooted in the land" (xiv), and "a process, not an abstract limit" (88). Locality's necessary plurality serves to distinguish its differences from Western thought, and Burkhart returns to three specific localities that he has familiarity with: the Lakota locality, from which his Deloria also philosophizes, and the Cherokee and Diné localities (Burkhart is a Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma citizen but grew up on the Navajo Nation). The examples emerging from these specific localities begin to offer some clarity and specific iterations of the concept of locality. Locality's openness and variability also prevents the binary of delocality/locality from becoming unnecessarily totalizing.

These terms lead to Burkhart's concept of epistemic locality, which he uses to label the various ways in which Indigenous actions engage locality and counter the delocalizing force of coloniality. Epistemic locality both presents facts of colonial difference and "makes room for thinking in locality" (50). Drawing from Lakota locality, Burkhart writes, "*Mitakuye oyasin* is a

concept, like all concepts under epistemic locality, that is rooted in the dirt . . . . Even the most inclusive concept (the interconnectedness of everything) is only meaningful and expressible in relationship to a concrete—in other words physical—land base" (69). Applying these ideas, the second half of the book addresses Western environmental ethics, arguing that it is bounded by its foundations in delocality. Instead, Burkhart invites readers to consider moral systems grounded in the facts (not the narrative) of colonial difference—that is, grounded in locality. To demonstrate the limits of Western environmental ethics, Burkhart cites its emphasis on intrinsic versus instrumental values, which are both helplessly predicated on a system of delocality that is inevitably anthropocentric, however stridently it might espouse biocentricity. Burkhart provocatively asks what non-value-based ethics might look like; he emphasizes relationships over entities, suggesting a process-oriented system of ongoing relations. This move to align relational ontologies with locality suits other philosophies (Indigenous, Eastern, and Western) that likewise foreground relationships.

In exploring these ideas throughout the chapters, Burkhart turns to several Native American voices widely recognized in U.S. history, including Black Elk and Chief Seattle. Burkhart deliberately chooses these voices because of preoccupations with the "authenticity" of their texts and speeches, which reduces the significance of these speakers to whether or not they can serve as ethnographic subjects. Refusing to retread such ethnographic containment, Burkhart instead aims to recuperate the texts by considering how they assert epistemic locality. For instance, in addressing the controversy surrounding the famous speech of Chief Seattle, he writes, "One cannot use the questions regarding the context and translation of Seattle's speech or the questions of its authenticity to show that the metaphor of life as relationship is not an authentic expression of Indigenous locality . . . . There is an abundance of similar and similarly misunderstood sentiments expressed by Native thinkers who are speaking from locality" (198-9). The recuperation of the work beyond these prescribed frameworks is powerful; however, in this instance it does seem to matter whether the words were Seattle's and not a contrivance of his supposed translator, Dr. Henry A. Smith, in order to ascertain that these words disclose *Seattle*'s locality. Another potential drawback of the delocality/locality binary is its potential to overstate categories of difference or to fail to account for the complexities of differences that emerge in relationships between localities. In each of the above speakers and writers, one might consider syncretic, cross-cultural motives or possibilities that emerge when they are taken as moments of exchange between localities and delocality—if not between multiple localities—a possibility that makes the authors no less Indigenous and need not confine their study to questions of authenticity. Insofar as these men were navigating multiple epistemes, languages, and societies, so might their words offer opportunities to nuance the divide of locality/delocality.

Considering portrayals of other philosophers, readers may question the monolithic figuration of The Western Thinker, which may seem too general in its conflating of Aristotle with Aldo Leopold as purveyors of the same sort of environmental ethics. Others may question whether A. N. Whitehead "took a radical turn against Western philosophy" rather than presented a new direction within it (230). These depictions might be better appreciated by recalling the book's subtitle, *A Trickster Methodology*; as such, these portrayals can be understood as turning universalizing tendencies of delocalized intellectual taxonomies back on themselves. Burkhart weaves in trickster stories throughout the book, most extensively through Iktomi, the Lakota Spider Trickster, in a manner as entertaining as it is educational. Cautioning thinkers about getting too caught up in binaries are just the sort of thing trickster stories are well suited to teach.

The possibility for some facets of non-Indigenous philosophizing to harmonize with examples of Indigenous epistemic locality offers promise for future decolonial collaborations and motivating philosophical exchanges. These differing schools of thought align both in prioritizing relationships before entities and in privileging the dynamic flows of localities that have never been wholly eclipsed by colonial delocality. Prioritizing relationships can also help redirect environmental ethics: "We cannot expect to discover right relationships with the nonhuman world if we do not include reflection on the nature of those relationships from the beginning" (268). Philosophers might continue working to recognize and reject the narrative of colonial thinking while respecting the fact of colonial difference. Critical regionalists and others will find *Indigenous Philosophizing with the Land* an invigorating work showing the promises of the local and of Indigenous difference, encouraging further reflection on relating to places and the Indigenous localities that inhere in them.