

The Gift Logic of Indigenous Philosophies in the Academy

In this paper, I discuss how the logic of the gift embedded in Indigenous philosophies relates to the prevalent ignorance and benevolent imperialism of the academy. I suggest that there is a pressing need for a new paradigm in the academy; a paradigm based on the logic of the gift as understood in Indigenous thought. With the help of the notion of the gift, I argue that it is possible to envision alternative ways of perceiving and relating to previously marginalized epistemes in the academy. In short, we need to conceptualize a new logic that would make the academy more responsible and responsive in its pursuit of knowledge.

The logic of the gift articulated here foregrounds a new relationship characterized by reciprocity and a call for responsibility toward the “other.” Thus far, much academic attention with regard to Indigenous peoples has focused on seeking to “acclimatize” Indigenous students to the university environment and academic culture. This approach is based on an implicit assumption that Indigenous people are in need of help. Further, these assumptions are premised on externalizing responsibility. Those who are ultimately responsible are always somewhere else.

Sami Worldview and Gift Practices

In Indigenous worldviews, the gift extends beyond interpersonal relationships to “all my relations.”¹ Put another way, according to these philosophies, giving is an active relationship between human and natural worlds based on a close interaction of sustaining and renewing the balance between them through gifts.

Instead of viewing the gift as a form of exchange or as having only an economic function as many classic gift theories suggest, I propose that the gift is a reflection of a particular worldview characterized by a perception of the natural environment as a living entity which gives its gifts and abundance to people if it is treated with respect and gratitude (i.e., if certain responsibilities are observed). Central to this perception is that the world as a whole is constituted of an infinite web of relationships extended to and incorporated into the entire social condition of the individual. Social ties apply to everybody and everything, including the land. People are related to their physical and natural surroundings through

genealogies, oral tradition and their personal and collective experiences pertaining to certain locations.

According to the traditional Sami perception of the world, like in many other Indigenous worldviews, the land is a physical and spiritual entity which humans are part of. Survival is viewed as dependent on the balance and renewal of the land, the central principles in this understanding are sustainable use of and respect for the natural realm. The relationship with the land is maintained by collective and individual rituals in which the gift and giving back are integral. The intimacy and interrelatedness is reflected in the way of communicating with various aspects of the land which often are addressed directly as relatives. The close connection to the natural realm is also evident in the permeable and indeterminate boundaries between the human and natural worlds. Skilled individuals can assume the form of an animal when needed and there are also stories about women marrying an animal (Porsanger 2004: 151-2).

An interesting, almost completely ignored aspect in the analyses of Sami cosmology and “religion” is the role of the female deities in giving the gift of life (to both human beings and domestic animals, mainly reindeer) and the connection to the land. One could suggest that the Sami deity Máttaráhkká with her three daughters signified the very foundation in the Sami cosmic order. Máttaráhkká could be translated as “Earthmother” (the root word *máttár* refers to earth and also to ancestors). Moreover, words for “earth” and “mother” in the Sami language also derive from the same root (*eanan* and *eadni* respectively). The role of women and female deities in Sami cosmology and the world order of giving and relations is a neglected area of study. Máttaráhkká and her three daughters are the deities of new life who convey the soul of a child, create its body and also assist with menstruation, childbirth and protection of children. In spite of the fact that the most significant gift of all, a new life, is the duty of these female deities, they have, in ethnographic literature, often been relegated to a mere status of wives of male deities. This reflects the common patriarchal bias of ethnographic interpretations of cultural practices.

Traditionally, one of the most important ways to maintain established relations and the socio-cosmic order has been the practice of giving to various *sieidis*. *Sieidi* is a sacred place to which the gift is given to thank certain spirits for the abundance in the past but also to ensure fish, hunting and reindeer luck in the future. Although the several centuries’ long influence of Christianity has severely eroded the Sami gift-giving to and sharing with the land by banning it as a pagan form of devil worshipping, there is a relatively large body of evidence that the practice of *sieidi* gifting is still practiced (Kjellström 1987; see also Juuso 1998: 137).

I argue that contrary to conventional interpretations, giving to *sieidi* cannot be completely understood through the concept of sacrifice. Even if *sieidi* gifts do have aspects of sacrifice, they are not and should not be regarded solely as such. They may have other dimensions that can be as significant—if not more so—as the aspect of sacrifice. Bones are given back, the catch shared and reindeer given to the gods and goddesses of hunting, fishing and reindeer luck represented by *sieidi*

sites as an expression of gratitude for their goodwill and for ensuring abundance also in the future. In this sense, giving to *sioidis* appears involuntary as it is done for the protection and security of both the individual and the community.

The Academy and the Reproduction of the Values of the Exchange Paradigm

The university remains a contested site where not only knowledge but also middle-class with its eurocentric, patriarchal and (neo)colonial values are produced and reproduced. As Althusser and others have exposed, the academy is one of the main sites of reproduction of hegemony. Not surprisingly, then, the studied silence and willed indifference around the “Indigenous” continues unabated in most academic circles. In the same way as Indigenous people remained invisible in shaping and delineating of the nation-states in the “New World” (see Hall 2003, 66), Indigenous scholarship remains invisible and unreflected even in discourses of western radical intellectuals. The politics of disengagement rooted in hegemonic forms of reason combined with the corporatization of basic values—accumulation of intellectual capital, competitive self-interestedness—deter many self-identified critics of hegemonic discourses from seriously committing themselves in elaboration of alternatives or engaging in the slow and demanding process of “ethical singularity.” In the spirit of the times, they count upon the revolution—a sudden rupture that appears from nowhere without much effort. Val Plumwood has pointed out the critical but usually hidden relationship between power and disengagement:

Power is what rushes into the vacuum of disengagement; the fully “impartial” knower can easily be one whose skills are for sale to the highest bidder, who will bend their administrative, research and pedagogical energies to wherever the power, prestige and funding is. Disengagement then carries a politics, although it is a paradoxical politics in which an appearance of neutrality conceals capitulation of power. (2002: 43)

The reality remains, as Gayatri Spivak reminds us, that mind-changing requires patience and painstaking attempts of learning to learn: “The tempo of learning to learn from this immensely slow temporizing will not only take us clear out of diasporas, but will also yield no answers or conclusions readily” (Spivak 1990). “Instant fix” models or reductionist sloganeering are simply not going to deliver the transformation. “Feel-good” transformation that does not address complexities or multiple realities and challenges will not get us very far. We must be able to see how cynicism and nihilism are not only counterproductive but serves the interests of power. Cynical attitudes particularly common among male intellectuals that suggest that envisioning alternatives is too idealistic only serves the hegemonic structures by creating new and sustaining old hierarchies and relations of power. Peter McLaren urges intellectuals and educators to deprivilege cynicism “in favor of a will to dream and act upon such dreams” (1995: 56).

Another contemporary reality is that, as the pervasive economic globalization has painfully demonstrated, sites of separatism are no longer possible. In a way or another, all societies and communities are affected by the forces of globalization that eliminate borders of all kinds. The pervasive nature of neoliberal corporate mentality is also reflected in the (willy-nilly) adopting much of its values. Particularly relevant in this context is the externalization of social responsibility. It seems that the corporate ethos according to which social responsibility is considered a distortion of business principles (Bakan 35) is also increasingly influencing the academy, where even “revolutionary scholars” prefer to point fingers and disavow their own personal social responsibilities. One repeatedly hears that we need alternatives and that we have to start creating them, but very few in fact get beyond that point.

Why, then, more academics are not envisioning alternatives? A brief visit to recent conferences in numerous fields and disciplines show that most scholars, including Indigenous intellectuals, are content to limit their thinking within existing, hegemonic paradigms and become satisfied in asking complacent questions such as “minimum requirements” for our participation in current structures. Ironically, those who do not limit themselves to telling others to create alternatives and new visions but attempt to elaborate them are ridiculed as utopian and idealistic even by those who call for alternatives. Maria Mies suggests:

The difficulty of even thinking of an alternative in our industrial societies is due partly to the concept of linear progress which dominates Eurocentric thought. People cannot understand that “going back” and looking for what was better in the past, or in non-industrialized societies, might be a creative method of transcending the impasse in which our societies are stranded.... They are also reluctant to step out of their given mindset and dream of another paradigm, unless they are offered a fully fledged model of another economy. They fear to join a process, which is already under way, and contribute their own creativity and energy. They want security before they step out of their old house. (1998: xvii)

The reality is that we have to have the courage to start from the scratch and participate in an on-going, unfinished process. Suggesting, as some academics have done, that we need to learn from the New Right because their strategies seem to work is not going to get us anywhere. One quickly learns that fabricating lies, manipulating fear, manufacturing myths and hostility toward the other in the name of uniting the nation and at the end, believing in these myths themselves is not going to teach us very much else than how utterly corrupt, savage and unconscionable the New Right is. It is impossible build viable alternatives with these tactics. Moreover, considering how the general spirit of distrust and disillusionment generated particularly by the Right appears to have affected also the spirit of much of the Left, it is clear that we do not need to learn from the Right. In our search for teachers and sources of learning, we need to look elsewhere,

scratch the surface deeper and broaden our horizons beyond the Right and Left. We need to start learning from the Gift.

There is an alternative vision of the human: those who have stayed in place for more than thirty thousand years.... Yet here too lies the experience of the impossible that will have moved capital persistently from self to other—economic growth as cancer to redistribution as medicine: *pharmakon*. (Spivak 1999: [PG NO?])

Scholarly “Give Back”

A central principle of Indigenous philosophies, “giving back” also forms the backbone of current research conducted by many Indigenous scholars and students. It expresses a strong commitment and desire to ensure that academic knowledge, practices and research are no longer used as a tool of colonization and as a way exploiting Indigenous peoples by taking (or as it is often put, stealing) their knowledge without ever giving anything back in return. After centuries of being studied, measured, categorized and represented to serve various colonial interests and purposes, many Indigenous peoples now require that research dealing with Indigenous issues has to emanate from the needs and concerns of Indigenous communities instead of those of an individual researcher or the dominant society. Indigenous research ethics assert the expectations of academics—both Indigenous and non-Indigenous—to “give back,” to conduct research that has positive outcome and is relevant to Indigenous peoples themselves (i.e., Battiste 2000: xx; Smith 1999: 15)

The principle of “giving back” in research—whether it is reporting back, sharing the benefits, bringing back new knowledge and vital information to the community, or taking the needs and concerns of the people into account—is part of the larger process of decolonizing colonial structures and mentality and restoring Indigenous societies.

Besides generating respectful and responsible scholarship, the recognition of the gift of Indigenous epistemes also provides it with a deeper, more informed understanding of contemporary Indigenous-state (or the dominant society) relations manifested in numerous and complex ways as well as of the different perceptions of the world which emphasize the relationship between human beings and the natural environment. Considering the destructive agendas of unlimited economic growth based on prevailing neoliberal, global capitalist and patriarchal paradigms labelled as “free trade” and commodification of all life forms is yet another reason for the academy and the mainstream society at large to recognize and become cognizant of the main principles in Indigenous philosophies.

At the same time, we need to remain vigilant of patriarchal, masculinist mechanisms of control that also exist within contemporary Indigenous scholarship. As a young Indigenous woman and junior academic, I have experienced the old boys’ network functioning in most unexpected academic spaces and

learned that in some cases, male-bonding and solidarity with other male academics is far greater than the unity of “Indigenous peoples” front” in working towards transformation and decolonization of our peoples and societies. Here of course lies the irony of the double standard—this is the very same front that is considered threatened when Indigenous women concur with feminist analysis and build alliances with non-Indigenous women and feminists. Yet more than once Indigenous women scholars have been faced with the male mechanisms of control which seek to silence and keep women, including young Indigenous women, in their place and stop them stepping on the toes of the authorities. These incidents have made it clear that if we adhere to these male mechanisms of control, we as Indigenous female scholars are allowed and can be critical only within carefully defined parameters.

The Future of the Academy and the Recognition of the Gift

I contend that the future of the academy is dependent on the recognition of the gift of Indigenous epistememes—recognition as understood within the logic of the gift that foregrounds the responsibility in the name of the well-being of all. As in Indigenous epistememes, the future of the academy is dependent on its ability to create and sustain appropriate reciprocal relationships grounded on action and knowledge. In other words, recognizing the gift requires acquiring and adopting a new logic that is grounded on the responsibility toward the other that is defined as the ability and willingness to reciprocate at the epistemic level, not only at the level of human interaction. The call for the recognition of the gift of Indigenous epistememes is a call for an epistemic shift grounded on a specific philosophy and as such, a more profound transformation than efforts toward the inclusive university seeking to “democratize” the traditionally Eurocentric curriculum and the canon. In the discourse of inclusion, the paradigm—the mode of thinking and relating, the relationship—remains unchanged as a one-way relationship where the flow of knowledge is always unilateral (and thus hegemonic), whether from Indigenous people to the academy (the scene of the native informant) or from the academy to Indigenous people (the scene of Eurocentric, hegemonic intellectual foundations of the institution).

The gift logic necessitates mind-changing—opening up to a new way of seeing and conceptualizing knowledge as well as our relationships and responsibilities. As such, it also exceeds analyses put forth by advocates of critical pedagogy. Cultivating critical thinking and social responsibility, critical pedagogy emphasizes the political and emancipatory nature of education. Many also advocate “revolutionary critical pedagogy” that foregrounds the social class and is informed by Marxist theories. For the most part, however, critical pedagogy is a white, male discourse and thus, not necessarily emancipatory for many other groups and individuals (Ellsworth 1989). In its articulation of the primacy of the social class or the processes of democratization, revolutionary critical pedagogy also usually ignores the fundamental question of expropriation of Indigenous peoples lands

and territories (see also Grande 2000: 51). Scholars of critical theory and pedagogy are apt to note how capitalism would not be possible without the unpaid work of slaves, people of colour and women, but there is again a studied silence about the usurpation of Indigenous lands. Perhaps it is strategic forgetfulness to ignore “the historical facts which are for many hard to swallow”—“that at best, the Anglo-American is a guest on this continent, and at worst, the United States of America is founded upon stolen land” (Silko 1980: 215).

The concept of revolution is inconsistent with the logic of the gift. Revolution is always predicated of violence of some sorts, whether physical, overt violence or more subtle forms such as structural, symbolic, or even epistemic. Revolutions take place to overthrow oppressive, hegemonic regimes. Further, observing the recent discourses of revolution by both the Right and the Left has left me somewhat wary of the potential of revolutions. If the neoconservatives can view themselves as revolutionary in their myth-making and battle against the evil in the name of saving the “nation,” revolution has literally come too close to terror and hegemony. In such revolution, there simply can be no liberation for the majority of the world’s population. Revolutions also are marked by the gender bias which merely reproduces patriarchal, hierarchical models as the ideals for new sovereignty (see Spivak 1985). As Maria Mies and Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen note, “[a]fter so many failed or abrogated revolutions, we no longer have confidence in the power which comes out of barrels of the guns of the international warriors” (1999: 120).

Yet another reason for not having faith in revolutions is because no transformation takes place if we are incapable of getting beyond the language of aggression. As we know, language mirrors but also constructs our reality and thus our values. We do not need replication and reinforcement of the language of violence, we need a language of new possibilities. Instead of opposition, we need participation and commitment. The logic of the gift that compels us to reconsider concepts such as responsibility, recognition and reciprocity. This does not mean that Marxist analysis and critique is no longer needed. There is no doubt that epistemic ignorance is sanctioned in the interest of global capitalist relations. But instead of relying on one theory and expect it to do all the work, we have to recognize that no theory alone can deliver change or do the job single-handedly. This is also where our intellectual maturity may begin—when we stop engaging in wholesale dismissals of useful tools called theories without first doing our homework.

I have also called attention to the fact that Indigenous epistemes cannot be recognized as a gift within the prevailing neocolonial, global capitalist system. The language and values of exchange market economy and male rationality have permeated all spheres of life, including the way academics view their responsibilities. Moreover, universities are increasingly run like corporations and are marked by the values of neoliberal ideologies. This directly and indirectly affects to what is considered important and relevant in teaching and learning. By counting on the wealth and profit the gift or aspects of it such as “traditional knowledge”

can generate for the advancement of the academy, this system only exploits and commodifies the gift by perceiving it as part of the exchange economy. In this system, knowledge is being commercialized—a trend reflected, for example, in the view of Joseph Stiglitz for whom knowledge is a global public good capable of producing benefits and “one of the keys to development” (1999: 320). The idea of the recognition of the gift challenges this ideology embedded in the current trend of universities on the road of “becoming corporate institutions motivated by profit-thinking” along the lines “[t]he more money one attracts, the more one is “excellent” (Kailo 2000: 65; see also Findlay 2000: 312).

Further, the concept of epistemic ignorance seeks to pave way to a new language that exceeds cultural discontinuity theories and analyses. Epistemic ignorance refers to the predominant, general resistance to, indifference and lack of recognition and knowledge of Indigenous worldviews and discursive practices in the academy. The concept assists to expose practices of active and passive “not-knowing” and mechanisms of exclusion in the academy which ensure that the gift remains impossible. However, it is clear that academy is not only benevolently ignorant but also in many ways, adamantly opposes Indigenous epistemes because they do not conform their learned views about the world, knowledge and rationality. Therefore, epistemic ignorance does not only refer to innocent not-knowing but also structures of power, ideologies that seek to maintain status quo, consolidate native informants and keep them in the academic reservations.

Instead of focussing on the question of what needs to be done for Indigenous people in the academy, we need to hold the academy responsible for its ignorance and therefore, for its homework. Creating Indigenous spaces and asserting their voices in the academy is an insufficient measure because these gestures do not guarantee that Indigenous people can speak or are heard and understood by the academy. The historic, cultural and social foundations of the academy continue to be informed by patriarchal and colonial discourses and practices, resulting in a situation where “[t]he conditions of intellectual life are circumscribed by these assumptions and practices” (Green 2002: 88). In addition to the conditions of intellectual life, also what is being heard is confined and defined by these parameters. Due to the selective, rarefied intellectual foundations of the academy, those coming from other epistemic traditions are either forced to “transcode” their systems of knowing and perceiving the world into the dominant ones or simply remain “unheard” or misunderstood.

What is urgently needed is an unconditional welcome and openness to the “other” epistemes in such a way that “translation” of these epistemes is not a prerequisite to be welcomed to the academy. The questions that we need to ask include: how to move beyond the pervasive and widely sanctioned benign neglect? How to transform mere tolerance to engagement and to active participation in the logic of the gift?

Epistemic ignorance, however, is not only an “Indigenous problem.” It is also a problem of higher education at large for it seriously threatens and limits “free and fearless” intellectual inquiry and pursuit of knowledge. Beyond the academy,

it is a problem of entire society. With the current suicidal economic priorities and destructive values, what is at stake is the long-term survival of everyone. Therefore, the problem of epistemic ignorance in the academy or elsewhere in society is not solved by adding “Native content” in curriculum or incorporating the “Indigenous” in critical pedagogy. Calls for raising awareness and increasing knowledge are not new—they can be found in almost any list of recommendations dealing with education and Indigenous peoples. In Canada, for instance, they are among the core recommendations in the *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* in 1996 and reiterated in the more recent report, *Learning About Walking in Beauty: Placing Aboriginal Perspectives in Canadian Classrooms in 2002* [REFS MISSING].

I argue that in the academy, Indigenous epistemes need to be recognized as a gift according to the principles of responsibility and reciprocity that foreground the logic of the gift. The recognition called for here, however, is of a specific kind. It is not limited to the often fleeting moment of recognizing diversity in terms of “other” identities and cultures associated with multiculturalism but as I propose, it stems from an understanding grounded in the logic of the gift. This recognition requires knowledge but also commitment, action and reciprocity—one must take action according to responsibilities that characterize that particular relationship. As the various gifts of the land cannot be taken for granted in this logic—if they are, the balance of the world which life depends on is disrupted—the gift of Indigenous epistemes cannot be neglected. If they are, the university has failed its profession. As the gifts of the land have to be actively recognized by expressions of gratitude and giving back, the gift of Indigenous epistemes must be acknowledged by reciprocating which includes the ability to understand not only the gift itself but also the logic of the gift behind it.

Changing our mindsets to the logic of the gift is a challenging, interminable process that requires a strong commitment to hospitality and a sense of responsibility toward the “other” on the academy’s part. Rather than simply comprehending otherness, it is a matter of recognizing agency of the other (see Spivak 1995b: 182). Knowing (about) other cultures or epistemes will never alone erase systemic inequalities and disparate relations of power and privilege in the academy or elsewhere in society. This is why the academy must be called into action by an unfaltering commitment to responsibility and reciprocity as discussed above. Echoing Spivak’s words, my work makes “a plea for the patient work of learning to learn from below—a species of ‘reading’, perhaps—how to mend the torn fabric of subaltern ethics...” (Spivak 2001: 15).

This plea is not romanticizing: “What we are dreaming of here is not how to keep the tribal in a state of excluded cultural conformity but how to construct a sense of sacred Nature which can help mobilize a general ecological mind-set beyond the reasonable and self-interested grounds of long-term global survival” (Spivak 1995a: 199). This mobilization, however, does not imply taking the easy but irresponsible step across the threshold of embracing a “land ethic” or the logic of the gift, for that matter, without addressing the contemporary realities

of Indigenous peoples. Nor it involves viewing Indigenous peoples as “nature folk” and picking and choosing aspects of Indigenous cultures according to the personal preference and need. It is not a call for simply paying tribute to Indigenous peoples and their land-centered practices or for merely employing them as inspirational symbols without knowing and acting upon one’s responsibilities as required by the logic of the gift.

Superficial cultivation of short-lived references to Indigenous peoples’ relationship with the land has nothing to do with the logic of the gift. Rather, they only romanticize and perpetuate persistent stereotypes with regard to “tradition” versus “contemporary.” The gift has to be read in its various contexts and one of the sites is the academy. Neither various gift practices nor the logic of the gift can be rendered as belonging only to “archaic” or “traditional” societies. The logic of the gift remains central in Indigenous epistemes. We are all contemporaries although some of us may have different ways of perceiving and relating to the world.

A commitment to openness and learning to learn will hopefully also assist people in the academy to see the links between issues such as the logic of the gift and contemporary land rights of Indigenous peoples—a question that, from the perspective of the dominant, often appears controversial, problematic and above all, political. The gift is a reflection of a worldview that emphasizes the maintenance of good relationships with the land. If there is no land to have a relationship with—that is, if the land is expropriated or used for other, more “profitable” purposes, whether in the name of civilization or globalized economy—not only the gift is made impossible but also the survival of the people is impossible. In other words, the subordination of the rights of peoples to the global “imperatives” of capital and profit does the same job as the earlier anti-potlatch law and other policies and measures of banning cultural practices of Indigenous peoples. The Bretton Woods institutions effectively continue the legacy of colonization and assimilation by making the conditions of the gift and other practices impossible. To turn Bourdieu’s [REF MISSING] theory of gift practices upside down: it is not the gift, but WTO, that is the most effective form of symbolic violence. The WTO *is* the new “anti-potlatch law” (see, for example, Bracken 1997; Cole and Chaikin 1990). Therefore, the bottom line is to change the values and thinking behind these values because—as Indigenous people in particular know—otherwise we kill the planet and ourselves with it.

The gift is a wakeup call to the academy and society at large. It is a collective vision for a common future that is more reasonable—if we recall, the non-hegemonic form of reason implies the ability to receive—as well as a more sustainable and just society. The gift is not only about applying new tools for teaching as sometimes suggested. The logic of the gift is not merely settling with minimum requirements within existing paradigms, nor is it just about “Indigenous voices” in the academy. It is a much more fundamental transformation of mindsets and values with a measure of creativity and radical break with previous practices. This transformation goes beyond incorporation of subjugated knowledge in the margins of an intact core of the knowledge. It is a radical change in the way

academics, students, administrators and others in the academy perceive the role and nature of “other” epistemes. As Luce Irigaray (1985) contends, there cannot be change in the real without a concurrent change in the imaginary. As long as the mainstream western society is dominated by a destructive imaginary, change is simply impossible.

The heart of the logic of the gift lays in the conceptual push to reimagine the academy as a site of responsibilities where epistemic reciprocity occurs. There is no single mode how this can be done. Rather, the logic of the gift is embedded in a practice that takes into account the multiplicities and specificities of each individual context. The very core of the gift logic is that there is not a single set of practices—this is evident in the multiplicity of gift practices of Indigenous peoples. The logic is shared but the practices vary from a context and situation to another. The intellectual maturity starts when we recognize that there is no one magic way, only the on-going active participation of everybody and endless ways of reciprocating, receiving the gift and taking responsibility. The logic of the gift cannot and should not be reduced “to a congerie of prescribed methods and techniques that sacrifice theory and reflection at the altar of high priests and prophets of practice” (McLaren and Farahmandpur 2005: 7). Advocates of “concrete solutions” who separate practice from theory are misguided in their dualistic mindsets and hyperseparation that reflects the ingrained modern consciousness, only reinforcing the politics of disengagement. As we can see in the relationship between the philosophy and the multiplicity of practices of the gift, theory and practice are inseparable and overlapping, one informing the other. For those, who are not sure how to practice the logic of the gift, one place to start looking is the gift giving practices themselves. Another place is self-reflection: How can we collectively and individually start transforming our values so that they would better reflect the basic principles of the gift logic, participation and reciprocity—the conditions of being human? How can we practice these principles in our work, research, teaching and daily academic life? What do we need to learn to ensure that Indigenous epistemes “can speak”? At the same time, we need to continue critiquing the patriarchal global capitalism and its values in the academy and engage in lesser used strategy of social justice—practising and living our alternatives—the gift logic, for instance—also in the academy.

This article is a version of a chapter in my forthcoming book, The Responsibility of the Academy and the Gift of Indigenous Epistemes.

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Notes

- ¹ The expression “All my relations” (or “all my relatives”) is commonly used as a way of concluding a prayer, speech or piece of writing by North American Indigenous people, reflecting the underpinning philosophy of the interconnectedness of all life (e.g., Vine 1996). In the introduction of an anthology of the same name, the editor Thomas King writes that besides reminding us of our various relationships, it is also “an encouragement for us to accept the *responsibilities* we have within this universal family...” (1990: PG NO FOR QUOTE?). Moreover, as Deloria contends, the phrase “describes the epistemology of the Indian worldview, providing the methodological basis for the gathering of information about the world” (Deloria, Foehner and Scinta 1999: PG NO FOR QUOTE?).

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