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Article abstract

At a certain time during the filming of Daki Menan I began to question my own readiness to make metaphor of the experience of others. I began, instead, to regard the literal words of the Temi-Augama Anishinaabe elders with whom I was working as accurate representations of what they thought, especially the way they thought about how the world worked. But if this move to literalism were justified, I had to acknowledge that what I thought to be the parameters of being would change. This paper is about that change, as mediated through the concept of attentive receptivity.

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Dwelling Telling: Literalness and Ontology

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At a certain time during the filming of Daki Menan I began to question my own readiness to make metaphor of the experience of others. I began, instead, to regard the literal words of the Temi-Augama Anishinaabe elders with whom I was working as accurate representations of what they thought, especially the way they thought about how the world worked. But if this move to literalism were justified, I had to acknowledge that what I thought to be the parameters of being would change. This paper is about that change, as mediated through the concept of attentive receptivity.

> Ecological thinking…requires a kind of vision across boundaries. The epidermis of the skin is ecologically like a pond surface or a forest soil, not a shell so much as a delicate interpenetration. It reveals the self ennobled and extended rather than threatened as part of the landscape and the ecosystem, because the beauty and complexity of nature are continuous with ourselves. (Paul Shephard, quoted in Sessions, 1995, p. 132)

Metaphorization and Literalism

[c. before you were telling me about being in touch…]

being in touch. [1]
being in touch is
waking up in the morning
[looks, points]
and you walk out
walk down to the beach there
look around

I don't know
I look

[1] Chris Beeman began to transcribe the words of the elders with whom he worked in poetic form while writing his dissertation. Partly this was to honour the pauses in phrasing that he found to be much more pronounced than in English. Partly this was to remember the distinction Wade Davis made between the poetry of the shaman yielding to the prose of the priest (2003, personal communication). His words appear throughout the transcriptions in square brackets.

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I look out there
and I say
"good morning"

I'm talking to people that have been here
gone
ones that are still coming yet
what they going to bring?

[c. do you mean the people, like the beings on the planet?]

yeah and the people that have been through here

and you try to get in touch…
try to get in touch with them there

if you're really feel good
you'll bend down
and you'll feel the ground
feel the water
touch the leaves

(Michael Paul, during an interview for *Daki Menan* (Land of ours), Beeman, 2004)

My first response[2]—before noticing it *as* a response—in encountering a statement such as Michael Paul's was to regard it as metaphor. By this I mean that I supposed Michael Paul could not have been speaking about what actually happened—he had to be consciously choosing symbols that would help me make sense of his words. One of the phrases that I interpreted as symbolic was "people who have gone before." You can hear me in the tapes questioning this. I ask, do you mean people, like 'beings'? He politely begins his response with "Yes," perhaps to gently accommodate my lack of understanding, but the words that follow tell a different tale. As an afterthought, beings in general might be included, but he meant people—his ancestors, who really were here, right now.

At a certain time during the filming of *Daki Menan* I began to question my own readiness to make metaphor of the experience of others. Perhaps this occurred when the learning that consists in the *uncertainizing* of one's ideas, set in. I began, instead, to regard the literal words of the Temi-Augama Anishinaabe elders with whom I associated as usually accurate representations of what they thought, especially of what they thought about how the world worked. (I am leaving aside for the time being that all language can be construed as necessarily metaphorical—that words by their nature *stand for* things.[3]) It occurred to me only later that if this move to literalism were justified, then what I understood to be the parameters of being would also have to change. This paper is about that change, as mediated through the concept of *attentive receptivity*.

Perhaps some history would help to explain how I came to be associated with Alex Mathias, Michael Paul, and other elders of the Temi-Augama Anishinaabe people. Temagami is a large and varyingly defined region in central Ontario. It is known nowadays for its rugged canoeing, combining

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[2] Because this portion derives from Chris's dissertation, it is written in the first person singular. These passages are the beginning point of our discussion. As the paper proceeds, the discursive voice becomes plural to represent our mutual participation in an unfolding conversation. Stories from Chris's research appear in the singular.

[3] Ricoeur (1974); Donald (2001); Ong (1991)

lake and river travel. It has recently been opened to mining prospecting. It was also the site of a major clash between environmentalists, Aboriginal people and logging and corporate interests, two decades ago, and this conflict continues in less public forms to this day. At issue in this conflict was and continues to be the cutting of ancient forests.

In this paper, we quote two Temi-Augama Anishinaabe people. Alex Mathias is an elder who has moved from Bear Island to what has been his family's land for many generations. There he lives semi-traditionally. Michael Paul identifies himself as being from one of the last families to "really live off the land" in the area.

Chance brought me to Alex's one summer. Alex, his wife, Mary Carol, and I spent that afternoon in conversation. Alex shared with me his concern about how western education was poorly serving the interests of his people. Later, in thanks, I sent him a documentary film that three others and I had collectively directed and produced that explored this and other issues in the context of theories of development relating to Ladakh.

The next summer, I returned to make a long solo canoe journey that would mark a change in my position with respect to the natural world. I stopped in at Alex's at his request. He and Mary Carol presented me with an idea for a documentary film that would tell the story of the sacred site under Alex's care which was threatened by proposed clear cut forestry operations. They requested my help in making it. I left for my solo trip, both excited at the prospect and concerned that if I helped, it would put my own doctoral research in jeopardy. The canoe journey was successful, but the success I experienced, predicated as it was on an intact more-than-human world, urged me to agree to the request Alex and Mary Carol had made. So, for the next year, I moved my doctoral research slightly to the side of my desk as I made this film to help protect the sacred site.

During this time, Alex and I became friends, the threat of logging increased, and Mary-Carol passed on. I attribute our friendship to several reciprocal factors. My willingness to both sincerely attempt to understand and represent Alex's position to a wider audience was balanced by Alex's generosity in sharing his particular knowledge and general ideas. I worked for no monetary recompense and was interested in the broader issues that immersion in this task opened; Alex freely shared his stories with me, as did other elders such as Michael and Leo Paul, initially to make the film, but later, I believe, out of an interest in sharing, articulating and understanding our worldviews, which had several points of correlation. The result had at least two aspects. Publicly and accessibly, there was *Daki Menan*, which has served to represent the ideas of Alex, other elders, and western environmentalists, regarding the sacred site called *Chiskon-abikong*; Place-of-the-rock. More theoretically, there were a dissertation and papers such as this one.

The words quoted in this paper come from interviews made in preparation for this film. The quoted segments do not all appear in the film, but the selected words are about the relationship between people and the world-not-human. This has become the focus of my intellectual work as I reflect on the generously shared words and stories of the elders to try to make sense of my own culture's position.

Attentive Receptivity and Meander Knowing

Attentive receptivity is the descriptive name[4] we give to a state of being that is different from the one normally occupied by human enactors of being in Modwestcult.[5] *Enactors of being* is another phrase that

[4] Descriptive names like *attentive receptivity* are conveniences when encountering something for the first time. Long ago a friend heard from an Anishinaabe elder, and I transcribe this only from memory, that an early Anishinaabe word for coffee sounded like *Neebish-ah-beteski-bodeeg-getchi-bosaagamig*, a description of the flavour, colour, aroma and temperature of this culturally novel drink.

slows language to the pace of thought. We find it helps to re-introduce meaning to the noun "beings" that has mostly forgotten its verbal root (Wienpahl, 1979). To simply say "human" tends to connote what it is we have always thought is the only way to be human—which is ourselves, in Modwestcult. In comparison to this other expressions of human-ness are seen as modifications.

We also use the term to emphasize that enacting being is what we humans do. In a colonizing move so subtle as to be almost completely invisible to anyone except those who are affected by its intolerance, Modwestcult has, by its inherent alienation of other modes of being, replaced with an instrumental model most other ways of interacting with the world. The mode of being that is inherent in Modwestcult consists of mobility without penalty; perceived isolation or independence from the ecological processes that actually keep us alive; a historically unprecedented use of non-renewables to satisfy wants more than needs; generally fragmented human relations reduced to short-term interactions, normally for instrumental purposes; competitiveness; the culture of the individual; the culture of the human; and the hubristic conception of linear human progression to a position of superiority over what has gone before in human and ecosystem history (Capra, 1988; Naess, 2005).

We want to emphasize that we are not speaking about Modwestcult as simply theoretically equivalent to something like late capitalist enterprises such as those found in Western Europe and North America, though in practice it tends to correspond with these. We are speaking about a way of interacting with place that transcends culture and amongst the powerful idea creators has become the only language in the language of being. Most of us simply cannot comprehend, because we cannot live, anything beyond our own way of being in the world.[6] We have only known this way of being, and for those rare few who do see other possibilities, ours is usually regarded as the most "successful" (by which we mean most likely to successfully dominate that of others). Other ways of being appear to us to be impoverished, certainly, but more accurately, moribund. We are what appears to work, and what appears to us to not work is not only distasteful, but pitiable.

Exactly the opposite is true. Yet we remain aware of the problems in conceiving of the degree of difference to which we are referring. We are not referring to culture, to gender, to race, to ethnicity, or to religious or spiritual practices, or to anything recognized within scheduled castes of difference. Nor are we referring to states of mind that might appear to mitigate the disturbing enactment of our profligate existence. We are referring to way of being, by which we mean, not only how one thinks in the world, or appears in the world to other people, but how one enacts being in the world. The characteristic most noticeably different between the being of Modwestcult and that expressed by Michael Paul in the earlier quotation is, as Modwestcultists would understand it, our relationship to the world that we think of as outside of ourselves.

And this is precisely the point of crossover. For, from our perspective, Michael Paul sometimes very literally be's (enacts being) in conjunction with the world-not-human in such a way that the human-place divide is bridged.[7] Even when members of Modwestcult do their best to bridge the same divide, it is still preserved, at least as a conceptual one. If we give Michael the respect he is owed by literally, rather than metaphorically, interpreting his words, then the conclusion we think necessary is that it is a different kind of world/self being that exists in this moment of—forgive us—interface.

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[5] Modern western culture. We prefer the neologism, because it expresses in abbreviation restless cultishness. We use both of these terms interchangeably in this text. Modwestcult is normally inhabited by *homo mobilis*, who best expresses the mode of being described herein.

[6] Edward T. Hall's (1973) work in culture has some resonance here. The idea is that one only discovers one's own culture, or perhaps that one has a culture, through comparative means. One has to bump up against another to see one's cultural context. We are suggesting a similar pattern, though ontologically enacted.

[7] One of the authors suggests that the ancestors to whom Michael Paul refers might be, after all this talk of literalism, an invented metaphor, created to enable speech across ontologies. What if self and place are not merely conjoined but are actually identical? The name "conscious place" suggests itself here. Perhaps ancestors are a kind of cultural metaphor, a metaphor chosen to help Modwestcult make sense of an idea whereby self and place are actually not separable.

Literally interpreting Michael Paul's words is uncomfortable here precisely because it carries with it the danger of being absolutely counter to the belief system and containing cosmology that we grew up with.

We understand Michael Paul, as well as some other elders, to sometimes perceive himself, his surroundings, the place he calls home, to be part of a very complex identity that is composed of at least two aspects of the same thing, which to us would appear distinct. These are what we, in Modwestcult, would conventionally see as the human body as it is delineated from the world outside it through the large organ of the skin, and the world that is sometimes immediately and sometimes more distantly responsible for that body's survival.[8]

So, in Michael Paul's version of the self, self and place co-create both living and ideation. The ideational aspect Chris has earlier called *meander knowing*. Meander knowing is an epistemological condition, akin to Noddings and Shore's "intuitive" (1984). This way of knowing is characterized by a reduced directing of knowing, a receptivity to what the "other" (in this case the natural world) brings, a lateral breadth of awareness and an attunement to the unexpected and rationally unexplained intuitive mode of knowing. *Meander knowing* is a way of knowing that may occur in association with multiple enactments of being, including spiritual practices, meditation, the making of art, fasting, and certain forms of exercise. We posit that, on the other hand, *attentive receptivity* is a particular *ontological* condition. If it is such then one must look for hints of its nature, not in the kind of thinking that accompanies it, but in the nature of the enactment of this kind of being. We posit that this is one in which the well-being of what had been conceived of as a separate self is balanced with the well-being of what had been conceived of as the separately existing world that contains the self both by doing and by not doing, through livelihood labour.

Let us begin by exploring the last term. For the purpose of this investigation, we are calling *livelihood labour* that which directly and unintermediatedly enhances the well-being of the self-place whole. It is labour that keeps the human component of the whole alive while benefiting the world-not-human. By livelihood labour we mean the kind of work that forms a closed loop of ecological interdependence (Beeman, 2006). One example is small-scale, low-input, organic farming. Another is what Alex and Michael Paul would call living "traditionally."

By *not doing* we mean not engaging in ways of living that are inherently destructive of an ecosystem—which[9] is the larger home of the self. Thus, attentive receptivity entails being, non-self-destructively. In the category of self-destructively being we include virtually every conceivable aspect of living in Modwestcult as described earlier: high consumption, a tendency to conceive of being as an individual project, lack of concern for any but those which are of instrumental value to us, including people, and so on.

By *doing*[10] we mean engaging in inherently ecologically balancing activities that both consider and enact the welfare of the aspect of the self-place whole that is the general ecology at each turn, with the capacity and limit of the self-place whole that is the person doing the enacting. As the previous sentence will attest, these ideas are difficult to express in the language we have. We hope you will forgive us, compromising accuracy for simplicity, if we sometimes lapse into more conventional expressions that derive from Modwestcult's separations of self and place. In common phrasing, then, this would entail living in direct interaction with place such that one's own living and the well-being of the place inhabited are considered and enacted in a life praxis that ensures the continued well-being of the self-place whole.

Central to this notion is that understanding and conceptualization, much as they are considered by those of us occupying the state of being characterizing *homo mobilis* to be under human guidance and

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[8] See Beeman, (2003). Dolgo conceives of this close interconnection with place as literally being responsible for the well being and continued existence of his family.

[9] See Naess (2005).

[10] Heidegger's *dwelling* probably comes closest. The project of finding an adequate term forms another project.

aegis, are actually place-human co-creations.[11] So when Michael Paul later says, "It's you / This place is telling you / what to do," he means this precisely, and not as metaphor. At least, I think he does.[12] Let us assume for the time being that Michael means what he says, in as literal a way as is capable of being transmitted to the way of being that we occupy.

It's You

This listening quality that Michael refers to, listening to the voice of the more-than-human world, is one of the characteristics of the kind of knowing that accompanies attentive receptivity, meander knowing. Michael says: "This place is telling you (a person) what to do." This would mean that Michael Paul's position is not one of *determiner, controller, director or will-expresser*. He is in the position of receiving, hearing, listening (or being an enlightened interpreter if you accept Thoreau and Emerson)— but to what? And of what? To the "place," which I take to be representative of the local world. And to its immensely deep and wide capacity for something like the loving co-creation of meaning that is rooted in the co-habited territory between personal and placial (see Casey, 1993) interest.

This place is also part of the self, but clearly not the part that determines, directs, controls, or wills. It cannot be identical to what Michael Paul refers to as "you" because in the statement given, it is trying to communicate with this "you". Assuming for the moment that identical things do not need to listen to themselves to interpret meaning, Michael is advocating listening not to a god outside, nor to will, inside, but to something like *the expression of non-human being-within-an-ecosystem* to determine what will be his expression of being, today. In this kind of listening, human-directed will is temporarily or perhaps usually relinquished to the will of the ecosystem.

And yet to describe it in this way lays emphasis upon two separatenesses communicating with each other. We do not think this feels quite right. The problem we are faced with is interpreting the words spoken to Chris, who is known to be from Modwestcult, by a person who partly participates in this identity and partly, does not. What further complicates this is that Chris has an interest in this state of being because of his own experience with it. We are, in fact, attempting to make sense of the world which we inhabit and which inhabits us, through listening to the generously shared stories of elders from an adjacent culture, who seem to have elegantly carved one understanding of this relationship. The conundrum of how to interpret an interpretation that is articulated by someone who has familiarity with and occasionally enacts, but who does not necessarily occupy this state at the moment of interpreting, is at the heart of this paper.

For interpreting this interpretation, we turn to Martin Heidegger. In Heidegger's concept of the *Dasein*, the "there-being," the being-that-is-in-the-world, ex-ists through the quality of "thrown-ness;" it is inextricably linked to the world. That is, the ontological entity called *Dasein,* (the being that is saddled with the project of and capable of reflecting on its own being)—the human being—always is, in a context. In a representative later work *Building dwelling thinking* (1977) we understand the notion of *dwelling* to describe a kind of being that may occur when the world in which *Dasein* is, is not regarded merely instrumentally. In this concept of dwelling, the interest of person-place presides over either the person or the non-human world, taken individually.

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[11] E.g. Durrell, 1971; Thoreau, 1992: Leopold, 2001.

[12] It is also possible that the idea of "place" is a metaphor, as stated at the outset, that Michael needs to use in order to get across the rough notion of what he is articulating when he is speaking with a person like Chris whose world view he knows to be trapped in the prison of separate identities. In other words, it might be that what we take to be literalism is itself a more sophisticated metaphor than we at first am capable of comprehending. Only when we shed the veil of the separateness of our own and other things' identities are we capable of understanding what lies beneath this metaphor.

In an etymological examination, the root of *dwelling* is linked to that of *building*. The built bridge that Heidegger imagines may serve both the human and the more-than-human world. Viewed instrumentally, the bridge allows people to pass without getting their feet wet. But viewed with the interests of the locale, the bridge *spans*, exercising a capacity to "… *gather* the earth as landscape around the stream. Thus it guides and attends the stream through the meadows" (p. 330).

Beneath Heidegger's awkward and apparently romanticized description is an attempt to show how, in an ideal way, human building, in the sense of *preserving-dwelling*, can honour the non-human world while meeting human needs. Building can take the literal form of the bridge across the stream, or the bridge can serve as metaphor for the bringing-to-human-consciousness of nature. Heidegger appears to be positing an ideal relationship with place; a model that can inform human-place relationships.

Thus "the bridge lets the stream run its course and at the same time grants their way to mortals so that they may come and go from shore to shore" (p. 330). The ideal metaphorical and literal bridge makes way for people but does not destroy the world that it is imposed upon. It is a spanner not an obliterator. The bridge built properly brings into proximate relation the human and the more-than-human.

Turning to Michael Paul's worldview for assistance again, in his statement, the place is *telling*; the place is actively involved in this relationship. It is not a passive reflection of what we in Modwestcult would like to think of the active agency of the person. It is not giving subtle signals, not warbling in incongruous birdsong. It is telling. In another passage Michael Paul says, "If you know how to listen/ you can hear all this." Clearly, the onus is on the human participant to learn how to hear the place.

Many questions arise. How is it that Michael knows he is hearing what the place is telling him to do, and is not, for example, just making it up? How is it that he knows he is not being deceived? And if we are to take seriously this self-place being, what would it be for this kind of entity to make something up? Or to deceive? Perhaps listening to place might be a skill akin to, say, the non-linear way of thinking involved in learning to read poetry, that is culturally learned and passed on. Having been raised such that place-as-externally-manifested-self was listened to as a matter of course probably contributes to the skill amongst those Aboriginal people who still live in alliance, rather than competition, with place.

Presented; Presencing; Present

Amongst the elders Chris has worked with in the Temagami area, what we are here describing does not appear to be understood as a strange or unusual mode of being. Take, for example, how Alex Mathias speaks of hunting for moose or partridge:

> Well I believe…
> the partridge is presented
> to me—to us—because
> if I wasn't meant to get a partridge
> I wouldn't even have seen it

Or in another passage:

> I believe the moose
> is presented to me
>
> when my freezer starts
> getting a little low

We particularly appreciate this passage because it effortlessly combines a symbol of western culture – the propane powered freezer – with a cosmology utterly un-western. In this view of things, the *interests* of the partridge and person, or moose and person, intersect. This view will be seen as strange to many people from Modwestcult, precisely because this view of the world tends to interpret animals as inherently competing for scarce resources, inherently interested in their own survival as independent beings. It is a perspective saddled with the worldview underlying our dominant economic system.

But the word "presented" is used. Alex Mathias, like many elders Chris has spoken with, uses language very precisely. In speaking to Chris, who is unversed in the Anishinaabe language, we think his choice was for good reason. "Presented," in this context, does not require a specific presenter. It could be, as some would have it, the "Maker." It could also be understood as just the way things work out. Certainly, it is suggestive of a kind of dance or theatre, both of which are presented.

We think it is more likely that the presenter, the presented and the presented-to are somehow linked in this narration. The verb lends itself to this. It is curiously neutral, or perhaps more accurately, bi-valent. It lies between what did the presenting and what does the perception of presentation. In either case, a crucial and difficult step for those of us in modern western culture to take is to begin to see in this narrative the interests of the person operating in this paradigm who lives, the animal that dies, and everything else that is an apparent by-stander as linked, with something like a shared interest. Or perhaps, there are no interests at all.

One way of viewing shared interests or lack thereof is the narrative that may unfold around the event. In other words, in telling the story of events-in-the-world in more ways and from more perspectives than are normally considered in Modwestcult, all participants have a part. We leave the investigation of this idea of narrative as perspectival collector, and especially the co-incident aspects of culture and meta-narrative, as viewed through Aboriginal stories, for a future project.

While we acknowledge the precision of Alex's use of "presented," we would like to push this concept a little by introducing another commentator. Martin Buber also uses the root of the same word in a discussion about dialogue: to make yourself *present* to the other. (Buber, 1970) We want to play with the notion of *presented* becoming *present*. If the sentence were instead, "I believe the partridge is present to me," there becomes room both for the intention of the partridge in fulfilling its part in the narrative, but also for the sense that it makes itself present to a person who is also present. Both participants that we might notice in this story, as well as the environment around the story itself, would in some sense give over their control, or relinquish will, or listen to what is not the known self but what is part of the self. Making ourselves open to relationality, we are present and invite the presence of the other. In this sense, the partridge or moose becoming present to Alex makes them available as food in the co-creation of self-place being.

However, from the perspective common to Modwestcult of the competition of species for shared resources, valuing life as we know it in a superficial and practical reckoning, the killing of an animal may seem a senseless tale. More likely, it could be said, it is a pernicious one, a justification for brutal slaughter that has much baser motivation—greed, perhaps, or a taste for ecologically "expensive" protein.

Chris writes: One day I helped Alex with his trapline. Later, I asked Alex to teach me how to skin the animal he had caught. I admit that the image of the flesh-cradled eyes of the skinned beaver still stare back at me. And yet, I have also to admit that I do not know if they stare with condemnation, with sadness, with horror, with pain, with simple absence, or with love, or admonition that I not waste its life. All of these are possible, as is the idea that I tell these stories in order to justify what Wade Davis calls the central contradiction of hunting-gathering cultures; that we who live must kill what we most love to survive (Davis, personal communication, 2003). Modern western culture has massively expanded the ecological breadth and depth of the human footprint, but it has also successfully disguised these tracks. We do more damage, but we do it away from the watchful eyes of the beaver, which tell us, again and again if we remain open to listening, that it has died as a direct result of our

actions, and that what goes with being killer carries with it a responsibility to acknowledge the broader notion of the whole self that includes the once-living beaver.

Killing the Self

And so, a question that occurs to us is, do we ever kill a part of ourselves that a greater part, perhaps a truer or more wholesome part, may survive? Of course the answer is, that self-reflective people who want to live well, *must* do this all the time. Certainly, we change through acknowledging, building over, actively choosing to no longer be who we once were—though perhaps, were we to view this from a purely existential perspective, the part of ourselves we wish to change would never be quite killed. We give up habits that were part of who we were before we now are. We dispose of practices we think to be destructive or unwholesome. We jettison possessions that limit us. We even do harsh, blunt, or direct things to people we love in the interests of their project of growing, and as part of our project of thoughtfully loving, because loving them entails honesty, always, and the capacity for fierce directness, sometimes. And of course, this can be misguidedly carried to the extent that the practice of killing part of ourselves is not a necessary harshness, but cruelty, without purpose or wholesomeness.

We think, once again literally, of the extended notion of self. Do we also kill a small oil-rich and fine furred animal that is part of a wider expression of ourselves in order that a greater part of ourselves may continue to be? And is it possible that roughly this question could be asked so that it does not appear in form or actually express a utilitarian motivation? We doubt that accurate answers to these questions can be enacted by one who is not living directly and immediately in conjunction with place such that the integrated interests of person and place intertwine. By "directly and immediately," here we mean that the actions that correspond to one's continued existence are met without intermediation of, for example, an economic system that first abstracts one's labour into cash.

How, then, do we know we have the right to kill? In answer to this question, when about to begin a long solo journey, Alex Mathias said that killing was not a question of right or wrong. For him this was a misguided way of thinking. The question ought rather to be, was one willing to some day be food for another being? This was the balancing bargain.

Of course, one might be willing to trade sated bloodlust for one's own death, and this might appear to satisfy the conditions from the point of view of an external observer, but this would not satisfy the internal conditions of self-place identity. Clearly, the perspective that Alex offers is dependent upon the idea that what are normally considered separate—say what Modwestcult would refer to as self and place—are part of the same thing. But our primary purpose with this record of thought is not to make an ethical argument any more than every argument has right action at its core. Our purpose is mostly to try to understand what it would be like for self and place to be intertwined in the way that Alex and Michael appear to, and to see if it is possible to reconcile these with the way of life lived in the culture from which we came.

As intimated earlier, Chris has some experience of a state of being that corresponds with the experiences of Michael and Alex, and it is probably this that attuned him to some of their ideas. He began to understand this in long solo canoe journeys or after many years of small-scale farming. What links these to Michael's and Alex's experience is that they are circumstances in which all directly knew that their well-being and the well-being of the ecosystem were intertwined through the actions of almost every moment. In the case of small-scale farming, Chris engaged in shaping the world around him such that it would allow the food to grow that he would later eat, but also so that would be healthy as described from its own perspective, were this available. He was participating in the unalienated cycle of eating his own labour. In the case of a particular kind of canoe journey, he had ensured a more intimate acquaintance with the land through which he traveled through by having to correspond, communicate with, and at least come to intimately know it through his interest in the food it provided.

This identification of one's own life needs with the particular place one is inhabiting so that the self-place identity makes intuitive sense—what is good for one is good for the other—is the lynchpin of this perspective. Possibly this is why Chris was in a position to see the significance of something that was presented as food, or something like the thoughts expressed above—food for thought—that he might not otherwise have seen.

Given these experiences, a further point of interest is this: Michael is not a "traditional" hunter-gatherer. That is, as an adaptive and dynamic view of culture would require, he is in the world in ways that are most suited to what he chooses to do. If it is still the case that he sometimes conceives of the self-place relationship as intertwined, perhaps it is possible that others who are not Aboriginal people can do likewise, just as it is possible that the less direct reliance on his own labour might squeeze him away from the state of being at hand. In other words, the enactment of attentive receptivity *both* relies on long-term experience of living in conjunction with place *and* the conceptualization of such an experience. Perhaps this latter is the only transportable aspect of attentive receptivity.

To summarize, here is how we understand the relationship between the different terms mentioned: *attentive receptivity* is a state of being attainable through a long-term and conscious and enacted interdependence with an ecosystem. It has the qualities of an openness, attunement, of being the surface upon which is laid meaning. *Meander knowing* is the kind of thinking that accompanies this state and it has characteristics related to the state of being. Knowing in this way is not will-directed but receptive. It is not instrumental, but derives its purpose from the act of engagement with the more-than-human world. It is related to the intuitive mode of knowing, which occurs at the wayside of being.

In conclusion, what we are left with is a very literal difference, not merely in how the self is conceived of as being, but in the kind of "self" that is in the "world." If this is the case, it is incumbent on us as educators to design learning strategies suited to these different selves.

Taking Selves to School

We have tried to show thus far that there are different kinds of selves than the one we acknowledge in Modwestcult; the kind we address here is an ecologically integrated one. If it is the case that there really are discernibly different selves, differentiatable by not merely culture (which we see as both a representation of and, to a much more limited extent, shaper of, underlying ontology), nor language, (again, which we take to be reciprocally related by mostly the embodiment of an ontology), nor race, gender, religious or other beliefs; in other words, if there really are deeply different ways of being in the world, then it behooves us as educators to pay attention to this, rather than to the merely scheduled castes of difference, in designing educative practice.

Let us consider the notion of self-reflection. A very simple idea, or seemingly so. Teacher candidates are required to engage in it endlessly, or so we are led to believe. In any case, we, as teacher educators, take for granted that we know what is entailed in this process. A teacher candidate theorizes what would be a good way to teach this subject or this module. She attempts it. She then re-theorizes and reflects on her experience. This is mostly a noble enterprise, containing the seeds of so much that is good in praxis.

But what if the self, in self-reflection, is operating differently? Start with the notion that it cannot separate itself, even conceptually, from the more-than-human world that contains it and in which it teaches; at least, it cannot do so with the same certainty as the teacher candidate who conceives of her teaching in accordance with the underlying principles of individuation of Modwestcult. The degree of separability does not exist. Or perhaps the self is one so integrated with a distant ecosystem that the sterile and removed classroom cannot possibly contain it. What is now left of the self for mind

to reflect on? The broader question that contains this idea is, "What would it look like to live, be, and reflect with a different sort of self?"

Perhaps this self has learned its utter interconnectedness with respect to a greater ecological whole in the way that Alex Mathias and Michael Paul express it. For it to separate its human aspect, and to have this reflect, would be an act not congruent with its position. Or perhaps this self understands and continuously enacts its interdependence with all living forms, including students, making "reflection" meaningless. Too many mirrors, so to speak. We attempt to imagine what is reflected in a mirror that is as variegated as the experiences of all the participants simultaneously becoming self-conscious before it. Curiously, it is narrative again, the consciously chosen thread of story from one or more positions, that makes more sense here—but we wonder if this would necessarily lead to what most of us reading and writing papers like this one would conceive of as self-reflection?

The example given above is not to suggest that the exercise of self-reflection would be impossible for the kind of person that we would like to suggest is in an ontologically different position. We would like to claim, however, that it would be a different kind of event. We are also suggesting that if we consider this sort of difference seriously, literally, and not as metaphor for something that our culture neatly absorbs and contains, then what we have hitherto imagined as difference in a system of learning that seems obsessed with accommodating difference is still of the most trivial kind.

If this very simple example holds, and it is one that is fundamental to the practice of teachers, then we have a problem. The problem is certainly there with respect to the education of Aboriginal teachers and students, and this goes part way to explaining why it might be that so many of both have troubles with the system of learning Modwestcult so glibly believes inclusive. But it is also a problem for the kinds of learners who inhabit our schools and are not so visibly and culturally distinct: People who really do inhabit the world differently ought to be troubled by being forced into the ontological position presupposed by Modwestcult; for this is a position that diminishes, localizes, alienates, and individualizes their humanity. *Homo mobilis* might well be the worst species yet to aspire to selfhood.

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