HARVARD Kennedy School
CARR CENTER
for Human Rights Policy

FALL 2023
ISSUE 2023-01

CARR CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY
HARVARD KENNEDY SCHOOL

A Radical Reckoning with Cultural Devastation and Its Aftermath:

Reflections on Wub-e-ke-niew's *We Have the Right to Exist*

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Discussion Paper

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Carr Center for Human Rights Policy
Harvard Kennedy School, Harvard University
August 18, 2023 | Issue 2023-01

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> The violence has to come to an end. The only way that it can be stopped is for people to understand how they are being manipulated, and why.[1]
>
> —
>
> Wub-e-ke-niew

> The colonists violated the most basic principle of history: certain lands are given to certain peoples. It is these peoples only who can flourish, thrive, and survive on the land. Intruders may hold on for centuries, but they will eventually be pushed from the land or the land itself will destroy them.[2]
>
> —
>
> Vine Deloria, Jr.

> Too long, the earth has been a madhouse![3]
>
> —
>
> Friedrich Nietzche

ABSTRACT

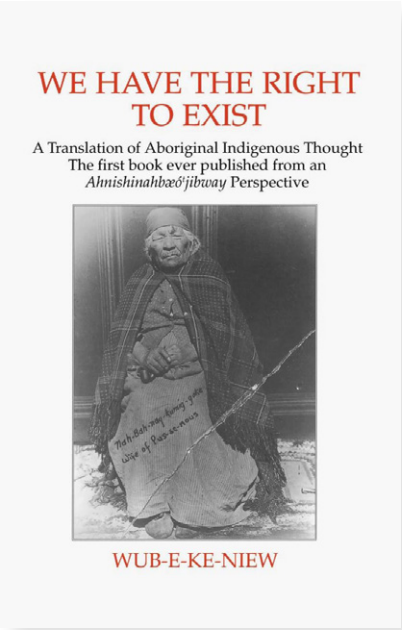
Wub-e-ke-niew's enormously unsettling book *We Have the Right to Exist* presents a version of indigenous philosophical thought as an alternative way of being human in the world that creates profound insights in times of ecological crisis and technological disruption. He also confronts especially his White American readers with a blistering assessment of centuries of cultural devastation with ongoing effects on contemporary society. His messages are radical, and some of them are potentially divisive within the Native-American community because most Native Americans are not actually indigenous in terms of Wub-e-ke-niew's standards. His views are very much worth reflecting on, and much of what he has to say about the consequences of the conquest and about the possibilities offered by Native American thought do not depend on these divisive views. His insights about Western civilization connect to internal criticisms articulated by thinkers like Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Latour and so make his text an excellent entry point for genuine engagement between Western and indigenous thought.

[1] Wub-e-ke-niew, *We Have the Right to Exist: A Translation of Aboriginal Indigenous Thought: The First Book Ever Published from an Ahnisinahbaeojibway Perspective* (Newfane, VT: Black Thistle Press, 2013), 106. Right before, we read this: "Under the direct violence of capitalism, communism, imperialism, Christianity and Manifest Destiny, the Western Europeans have taken the resources of Aboriginal Indigenous peoples all over the world, and have used socialism to redistribute the stolen resources to their own in-group." That socialism would be run together with imperialism speaks to the magnitude of the task Wub-e-ke-niew set himself.

[2] Vine Deloria, Jr., *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 177.

[3] Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, trans. by Maudemarie Clark and Alan J. Swensen (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 1998), section 22.

I. Introduction



On several occasions Wub-e-ke-niew refers to the Holocaust not just to draw parallels to how Native Americans have fared, but to insist that the American treatment of its indigenous populations inspired the Nazis. "Hitler often cited the fate of the Indians in the United States as a quite practicable solution when taking over a territory," Wub-e-ke-niew in one such instance cites from the memoirs of Albert Speer, one of Hitler's closest associates. And it does give pause: one of the quintessential perpetrators of mass atrocities took cues from what the US has done to indigenous peoples.[4] Wub-e-ke-niew's *We Have the Right to Exist* elaborates on these terrors, dwelling specifically on the cultural loss accompanying the genocide. What has been done to indigenous populations was not merely devastating *to them*—though the destruction has been staggering, and lasting—but has also facilitated the triumph of a way of life that jeopardizes humanity's future. "The time has come to scrutinize the pathology of Western-European culture," Wub-e-ke-niew writes,

> and to heal its dysfunctions that generate abusive social relationships, shattered families, rigidly armored psyches, and unconscionable waste of life. We have to make this a decent place for all living beings, and for generations yet to come.[5]

When Europeans conquered the Americas, they invaded cultural spaces that had developed separately over thousands of years. As Vine Deloria sums up, at the end of a book-length discussion of religious differences between American indigenous people and European invaders, "for this land, God is red."[6] Differences in how people see themselves in the world with repercussions for all domains of inquiry have persisted to this day. People steeped in either of these traditions typically look at the other with utter perplexity.

Wub-e-ke-niew's autodidactic background naturally leads him to write for the uninitiated, he provides a comprehensive glossary, and he does his best to bridge this gulf. Still, what it takes to engage with his ideas is a willingness to assess one's worldview from the outside—and more: it takes a willingness to seriously entertain the thought that as adherents to a triumphant worldview we (and just about *everybody we hold dear*) are part of an evil project in terms of countless past transgressions and contribute to advancing the ongoing ecological crisis. People typically wish to start their day without feeling disgusted by what they see in the mirror. Wub-e-ke-niew asks his readers instead to overcome their denial and deal with what the mirror actually shows them. He is a radical thinker, and section 2 says more about him.[7] One thing to note here that might encourage readers to engage with this kind of project is that the historical record shows that individuals who came to know both indigenous life in the Americas and the life European arrivals built, and had a genuine choice in which society to join, almost invariably chose to live the indigenous life.[8]

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[4] Wub-e-ke-niew, *We Have the Right to Exist*, 11. On Hitler's views on this, see also Wub-e-ke-niew, 130. Speer is quoted in a footnote. See Wub-e-ke-niew, 314. Wub-e-ke-niew also talks of a "Final Solution," "completely annihilating Aboriginal Indigenous people and then saying we never existed." Wub-e-ke-niew, 23. Moreover, reservations are not only prisoner-of-war camps, but also concentration camps. Wub-e-ke-niew, 56. For the ways US racial policies influenced the Nazis, see e.g., Carroll P. Kakel, *The American West and the Nazi East: A Comparative and Interpretive Perspective* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Stefan Kuhl, *The Nazi Connection: Eugenics, American Racism, and German National Socialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); James Q. Whitman, *Hitler's American Model: The United States and the Making of Nazi Race Law* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017). See also Timothy Snyder, *Black Earth: The Holocaust as History and Warning* (New York City: Crown Publishing Group, 2016), chapter 1. For a summary of some fault lines of this debate, see Ross, "The Hitler Vortex." These issues are sensitive not only because they strike a nerve for American readers, but also because they question the thesis of the German *Sonderweg*, distinctive trajectory, that led to the Holocaust.

[5] "Wub-e-ke-niew, *We Have the Right to Exist*, 85. See Wub-e-ke-niew, 85, 96, 243.

[6] Vine, Deloria, Jr. *God Is Red: A Native View of Religion* (Wheat Ridge, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 2003), 292.

[7] In his harrowing account of a mutiny on a British ship that got wrecked on a desolate island off the coast of Patagonia in pursuit of a Spanish treasure galleon in 1741, historian David Grann inserts the following reflection on how people become unwitting enablers of imperial ambitions and oppression: "They were consumed with their own daily struggles and ambitions—with working the ship, with gaining promotions and securing money for their families, and, ultimately, with survival. But it is precisely such unthinking complicity that allows empires to endure. Indeed, these empirical structures require it: thousands and thousands of ordinary people, innocent or not, serving—and even sacrificing themselves for—a system many of them rarely question;" David Grann, *The Wager: A Tale of Shipwreck, Mutiny and Murder (New York City: Doubleday, 2023),* 248.

[8] David Graeber and David Wengrow, *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity* (New York City: Macmillan Publishers, 2021), 19.

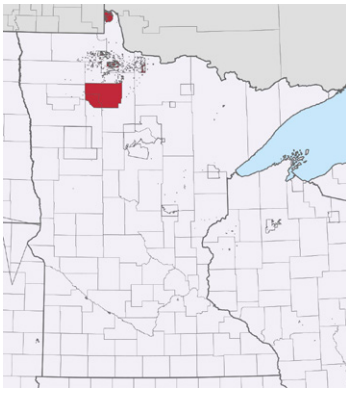
A first step into his endeavor is to reconsider the vocabulary. Wub-e-ke-niew rejects talk of Indians or Native Americans, and he does not think the nature of the problem is fully captured by talking about an onslaught by only White people. Section 3 turns to this topic. Section 4 explains the author's understanding of his own people, the Ahnishinahbæótjibway, and his view on how one belongs to this nation and what such membership entails vis-à-vis one's relationship with the land. This also makes clear what he means by "we have the right to exist." By that time the potential divisiveness of his project is in view—and what I worry about is not reactions of Euro-Americans to Wub-e-ke-niew, but the manner in which he implies that most Native Americans are not indigenous of the right sort ("aboriginal indigenous"—to wit, these are people who, to his mind, have been around as long as the land has existed, in groups in which belonging has passed through the male line ("patrilineal")).

Section 5 offers some comments on his strong views on belonging—which also reveal that by engaging his views one easily resorts to re-asserting positions Wub-e-ke-niew questions. Sections 6 and 7 turn to some essentials of what he calls the "Lislakh" worldview, with section 6 elaborating on some of Wub-e-ke-niew's major points about how language constrains worldviews and section 7 engaging with his comments on Western metaphysics. Section 6 also offers parallels to the work of Bruno Latour and section 7 to that of Friedrich Nietzsche. Unlike Nietzsche, Latour does not appear in the book, but both offer assessments from within the Western tradition that resonate with Wub-e-ke-niew's ideas. In Nietzsche's case it is also intriguing to note differences. Among Wub-e-ke-niew's explorations of positive themes in his people's worldview is that of the Ahnishinahbæótjibway understanding of time and that of their embeddedness into nature. Sections 8 and 9 discuss these topics. Section 10 concludes by reflecting on the importance of Wub-e-ke-niew's book. Wub-e-ke-niew is an original and idiosyncratic author. Again, in some cases his reasoning has limited appeal, and his understanding of indigeneity will be outrightly offensive to many. At the same time, he often gives us reason to rethink views we hold dear. That makes his radical reckoning with cultural devastation and its aftermath very much worth engaging with.[9]

2. Wub-e-ke-niew

Wub-e-ke-niew introduces himself as a member of the Ahnishinahbæótjibway (Ojibwe) of the Red Lake Reservation in Northern Minnesota. The Ojibwe—also called Chippewa, although this term has increasingly come to be regarded as corrupted—are one of the largest indigenous groups both in the US and Canada. The Ojibwe use the term "Anishinaabe" to refer to all Native Americans.[10] Wub-e-ke-niew puts these terms together (and uses a specific spelling) to designate a particular group at Red Lake, one with what he considers the right kind of ancestry ("aboriginal indigenous").

The Red Lake Ojibwe have a distinctive history: they managed to maintain common ownership of lands and thus to avoid the policies of Allotment that elsewhere broke up common holdings and thereby also enabled land purchases by Whites. The remoteness of Northern Minnesota has much to do with this unusual history. As Wub-e-ke-niew notes, his people could survive the way they did only because "from the White man's point of view Red Lake was an unpleasant, swampy backwater of the hinterland."[11] He was born in Red Lake, in 1928, and spent nine years in a religious boarding school after multiple personal losses. He describes such schools as political prisons inside concentration camps that inmates can leave only on pain of being beaten or chloroformed.[12] So he experienced the devastation wreaked on his people as pain in-



Map showing the location of Red Lake Reservation, Minnesota.

[9] While this is already a long paper, it is also incomplete in many ways because Wub-e-ke-niew touches on so many issues. This paper sets the stage for a book tentatively called *Political Theory After the Devastation: A Renewed Engagement with Indigenous Thought in the 21st Century.* I am very grateful to Linda Eggert for comments on previous version of this piece.

[10] Anton Treuer, *Ojibwe in Minnesota (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2010)*, 3. For traditional histories of the Ojibwe, see William W. Warren, *History of the Ojibway People, ed. by Theresa M. Schenck (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2009);* George Copway, *The Traditional History and Characteristic Sketches of the Ojibway Nation* (New York: Mint Editions, 2022). For a recent account, see Treuer, *Ojibwe in Minnesota.* Specifically on the Red Lake Ojibwe, see Anton Treuer, Treuer, *Warrior Nation: A History of the Red Lake Ojibwe* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2015). See also Christopher Vecsey, *Traditional Ojibwa Religion and Its Historical Changes* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1983).

[11] Wub-e-ke-niew, *We Have the Right to Exist*, xviii.

[12] Wub-e-ke-niew, 108. On these schools, see also Denise K. Lajimodiere, *Stringing Rosaries: The History, the Unforgivable, and the Healing of Northern Plains American Indian Boarding School Survivors* (Fargo: North Dakota State University Press, 2021); David Wallace Adams, *Education*

flicted on his own body and as indoctrination designed to rob him of his sense of belonging.

After warfare against indigenous peoples ended in the late 19th century, thousands of indigenous children experienced such a fate. "The death of culture was the focus, and boarding schools became the method," a history of the American Indian Movement (AIM) states.[13] Thousands also did in countries like Canada or Australia. Treatment often was so harsh that many children ended up in mass graves. At school Wub-e-ke-niew was expected to acquire just enough skill to be "a Helot laborer."[14] As far as the eternal life was concerned—for which converts were eligible, and which he envisaged as a place full of gold, given how insatiably the colonizers craved it—he saw himself "at the very bottom of the Heavenly hierarchy, spending eternity among strangers, polishing all that gold."[15] He escaped from boarding school when he was 15, worked sundry jobs, enlisted in the army, and was briefly deployed to Germany. Having worked as a truck driver for a decade, he eventually became a co-founder of the AIM before returning to Red Lake in his early 50s.[16] He settled down at the place to which he thought he belonged, starting the research that produced his book.

The book draws on a decade of inquiry about how White people documented the treatment of his people, as well as on "the oral tradition of the Ahnishinahbæótjibway, and on what my people are saying."[17] It appeared in 1995, and he died in 1997. Noam Chomsky praised the book in a quote on the cover. The publisher reports that it is used in college courses.[18] However, the book is rarely cited, and has had almost no impact on academic or political debates. Even Native-American writers have barely picked up on it. The main reason might well be that the author's rigidly patrilineal understanding of belonging disqualifies many, if not most, who identify as Native American—including of course many scholars—from being considered indigenous and aboriginal in his sense.[19]

So, to be sure, *We Have the Right to Exist* defends some extreme views. They are nonetheless worth studying for three reasons. To begin with, Wub-e-ke-niew formulates what one may call an *aboriginalist* response to European supremacism and thereby helps us see the whole space of positions within which a renewed intellectual engagement with indigenous peoples would occur. Secondly, in the intellectual neighborhood of his extreme views there are more moderate views that share much of the former's motivation without sharing their more implausible and alienating features. And thirdly, much of what Wub-e-ke-niew has to say does not depend on his extreme views on belonging.

Wub-e-ke-niew's reckoning with cultural devastation and its aftermath is profoundly unsettling. The autodidactic approach narrates the conquest of the Americas from the perspective of a highly insightful individual with a specific historical and regional grounding ("I am one of the few people surviving

for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875–1928 (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2020); Tim Giago, *Children Left Behind: The Dark Legacy of Indian Mission Boarding Schools* (Santa Fe: Clear Light Pub, 2006); Ward Churchill, *Kill the Indian, Save the Man: The Genocidal Impact of American Indian Residential Schools* (San Francisco: City Lights Publishers, 2004). See also Frederick E. Hoxie, *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880-1920* (Lincoln: Bison Books, 2001). For a fictional account drawing on themes from boarding-school life in Canada, see Richard Wagamese, *Indian Horse* (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2018).

[13] Dick Bancroft, Rigoberto Menchu Tum, and Laura Waterman Wittstock, *We Are Still Here: A Photographic History of the American Indian Movement* (St. Paul: Borealis Books, 2013), 25. The AIM is a grassroots movement founded in Minneapolis in 1968 to address poverty, discrimination, and police brutality against Native Americans. On the AIM, also see Deloria, *God Is Red*, chapter 1.

[14] Wub-e-ke-niew, *We Have the Right to Exist*, 238.

[15] Wub-e-ke-niew, Wub-e-ke-niew, 197. This is one of the many funny passages that accompany the sobering content of this work; on the famous Indian humor, see also Deloria, Custer Died for Your Sins, chapter 7; Lawrence W.Gross, *Anishinaabe Ways of Knowing and Being* (London: Routledge, 2016), chapter 5.

[16] *His role in AIM is also recorded in Treuer, Warrior Nation, 335.*

[17] Wub-e-ke-niew, *We Have the Right to Exist*, xiii.

[18] See "About Us," Black Thistle Press, accessed August 4, 2023, https://blackthistlepress.com/about-me/.

[19] (1) By creating such distinctions among indigenous people We Have a Right to Exist differs in particular from the gist of Vine Deloria's work, which typically focuses on showing how efforts of aid organizations, churches, or the government to "assist" Native Americans have often hindered rather than helped them. See e.g., Deloria, *Custer Died for Your Sins.* (2) One contemporary scholar so disqualified would be Anton Treuer, who has written widely about Ojibwe history, language, and culture, specifically also about the Red Lake Ojibwe. His mother is Ojibwe, his father is an Austrian immigrant. For his reflections on identity and the relevance of language for identity, see Anton Treuer, *The Language Warrior's Manifesto: How to Keep Our Languages Alive No Matter the Odds* (Saint Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2020). John Rogers/Chief Snow Cloud, the author of boyhood memories of Ojibwe life, would also be disqualified, see John Rogers, *Red World and White: Memories of a Chippewa Boyhood* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1974).

who can write [from this perspective]").[20] To be sure, while Native-American perspectives remain culturally underrepresented, many histories of the genocidal treatment of Native Americans are available, both at the macro level (history of the US or the Americas) and at the level of specific regions. Readers of this genre could be forgiven for not relying on a self-taught author who largely operated on his own. Moreover, some of Wub-e-ke-niew's reasoning about how long his people have been in their location (and about who qualifies to speak on this issue) could appeal only to people who are willing to take oral history *literally*, against any competing evidence and without entertaining the thought that its deeper meaning might arise in ways other than taking it literally.

Still, what is distinctive about this book is how it emphasizes the extent to which this conquest amounted to the apocalyptic imposition of an alien worldview from whose confines those in its grip have a hard time dislodging themselves—but which has increasingly come to be seen as an intellectual dead end that has thrown us into an ecological crisis of global and intergenerational proportions. Recognizing the book's virtues, philosopher Alexander Guerrero designated it a neglected classic for its ability to get readers to radically rethink views they have held dear.[21]

A theme throughout is the gulf between indigenous worldviews and that of the colonizers. This gulf has made it almost impossible for colonizers to grasp the mindset of those whose world they were erasing. There are internal mechanisms to the colonizers' worldview that keep them in intellectual bondage, creating psychological obstacles to questioning its validity. Wub-e-ke-niew mentions Nietzsche (as well as Jean-Paul Sartre and Timothy Leary, an American psychologist known for championing consumption of psychedelic drugs) for attempting to transcend these limitations. However, he notes that "their language and culture did not give them the understanding with which to live outside" of their cultural box—and so they "retreated back inside the prisons of their mind, and contended themselves making fun of it."[22] The conquerors also had considerable material incentives to endorse the validity of their mission. Who would not feel vindicated if one's god offered an "undiscovered" paradise that was largely "unused" and "unpopulated"?

3. Rethinking the Nomenclature: On Lislakhs and Indians

The conquerors' worldview is not fully reducible to Christianity (though Christianity is a key part of it), the conquerors are not merely White people (though "Euro-Americans," especially men, are singled out for distinctive blame), and Wub-e-ke-e-niew's people are neither "Indians" nor "Native Americans" (since such nomenclature accepts the conquerors' framing). He calls the conquerors "Lislakhs," "the inter-related and historically connected peoples who share societal, cultural, language, and/or patrilineal roots within that usually referred to as an abstract entity, Western Civilization." Section 4 below elaborates on the relevance of patrilineal descent. The Lislakh include the cultures around the Mediterranean, "Germanic people and the heirs of the Roman Empire (…), as well as Arabic (…) and the Moorish and other North African and Middle Eastern peoples who have common and long-standing historical relationships within the context of Western civilization."[23]

There seem to be two reasons for adopting a neologism. (That the word is new to the author too is revealed by the fact that he occasionally misspells it.) One is that Wub-e-ke-niew is intrigued by the role of language in shaping worldviews, and the term "Lislakh" is essential to a linguistic hypothesis about similarities across certain peoples who themselves tend to notice differen-

[20] Wub-e-ke-niew, *We Have the Right to Exist*, xxviii. As always, there was help involved, especially that of his wife Clara M. NiiSka, who also created an extensive website with many of his articles in local newspapers, typically in *The Native American Press/Ojibwe News*, and some of his letters to academics and politicians, see maquah.net/ Clara NiiSka herself seems to have died in June 2013. See "In Memoriam," in Macalester Today (Fall 2013), 47, https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/read/24798815/download-macalester-college. NiiSka's LinkedIn Page, https://www.linkedin.com/in/niiska, identifies her as a Macalester College graduate of the relevant age, and a Macalester publication lists her as deceased) but as of July 2023, the extensive materials on her website were still accessible. Some of this material concerns the intense dispute that arose about his estate after his death: Wub-e-ke-niew had officially resigned from membership in the Chippewa tribe and married Clara NiiSka in an Ahnishinahbæótjibway ceremony. After his death, his daughter from his first marriage claimed his entire estate for her family, enlisting the authority of a Chippewa probate court and denying the validity of NiiSka's marriage. As a result, NiiSka was expelled from her home and ultimately from the reservation.

[21] ALexander Guerrero, "Ethics in Place and Time: Introducing Wub-e-Ke-Niew's 'We Have the Right to Exist,'" in *Neglected Classics of Philosophy, Volume 2*, edited by Eric Schliesser, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), 261–86. Guerrero scrupulously refrains from criticizing the controversial views in any way. His discussion of *We Have a Right to Exist* is the only systematic one I could find.

[22] Wub-e-ke-niew, *We Have the Right to Exist*, 352.

[23] Wub-e-ke-niew, 251. He adopts this term from linguist Robert Wescott, attributing its introduction into English to linguist Carleton Hodge. See, e.g., Carlton T. Hodge, "Lislakh Labials," *Anthropological Linguistics 23*, no. 8 (1981): 368–82. See Wub-e-ke-niew, *We Have the Right to Exist*, 311. Wub-e-ke-niew's criticisms that trace the deep roots of the ongoing conflict between Western civilization and Native-American worldviews to the overwhelming influence of Judeo-Christian traditions on Western thought have much in common with Deloria, *God Is Red*.

"What is distinctive about this book is how it emphasizes the extent to which this conquest amounted to the apocalyptic imposition of an alien worldview from whose confines those in its grip have a hard time dislodging themselves—but which has increasingly come to be seen as an intellectual dead end that has thrown us into an ecological crisis of global and intergenerational proportions."

—

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Portrait of Amerigo Vespucci

ces more than similarities. The other reason is that a novel term pushes out pre-existing associations with "Western Civilization." Wub-e-ke-niew wants to reassess this cultural ensemble from the standpoint of lifeworlds overrun by it. Therefore he mostly ignores differences within this ensemble and groups under its influence. African Americans as an oppressed group do not appear, nor do Asian Americans, Jews, or other groups one may think deserve special consideration. By the time such groups interact with the people the author is concerned with, they share relevant traits and ambitions.[24]

Western European men do come up for distinctive assessment, especially the Catholic Church. In the 15th century, several Papal Bulls developed a view of global spaces that came to be known as the "Doctrine of Discovery." These declarations bestowed upon European empires permission to subjugate non-Christian lands. Most immediately, such permission was bestowed upon Spain and Portugal, which often employed navigators from outside of the Iberian Peninsula, including some Italians who left their marks on history. The Church of Rome saw itself as the ordained authority to make such pronouncements. European conquerors would later subordinate any arrangements for land use and occupancy with local populations to the Doctrine of Discovery. Such arrangements could be altered as it suited evolving imperial needs. The people European explorers encountered entered the realm of Christian civilization merely through discovery, and for centuries to come, would not be equals in the domain of international relations.[25]

When Columbus—one Italian serving the Spanish crown—reached the Western side of the Atlantic in 1492, he famously believed he was in India. The newly "discovered" peoples have ever since been stuck with the name "Indians." A Latin-derived term originally used to describe people living East of the Indus was now deployed to describe people living West of the Atlantic. Another Italian voyager, Amerigo Vespucci, realized that Brazil too was part of an entire continent previously not only unoccupied by Europeans but altogether unknown to them. What Columbus thought he discovered was indeed a new route to India, which Alexander the Great had already reached from the other direction two millennia earlier. Vespucci started talking about a "New World" to express the magnitude of the discovery. That reference inspired German cartographer Martin Waldseemüller to name this New World after Vespucci ("America"), and it caught on. After all, it had to be called something, to change status from unknown to known.[26]

Wub-e-ke-niew refuses to call his people "Indians" or even "Native Americans" since that means to buy into a framework created by conquerors (as would even the acceptance of the term "minority"). The term "Amerindians" never even appears. Use of such vocabulary to Wub-e-ke-niew amounts to condoning racism—a way of ascribing characteristics to people that have no basis in reality but generate hierarchies. "Native Americans" is broadly accepted as a term designating indigenous peoples, even among those who balk at talking about "Indians." But for Wub-e-ke-niew, this term is merely a politically correct alternative to calling people Indians and understates the profound connection indigenous people have with the land.[27] It also invites full-blooded descendants of conquerors to insists that they too are natives of sorts by now—except their ancestors got here later than those of the people officially called Native Americans.[28]

Many indigenous in the US are okay being called "Indians," if only because they have bigger battles to fight. In Canada, by contrast, the custom is to talk of First Nations, and then add Métis and Inuit—and altogether the debate and current situation around use of the world Columbus deployed when he got his location wrong varies across the Americas.[29] To Wub-e-ke-

[24] Women and non-Europeans "have had very little influence on the formation of the White man's policy and actions towards Aboriginal Indigenous people," but the author adds that "all those who benefit from the system share responsibility for that system;" Wub-e-ke-niew, *We Have the Right to Exist*, 309.

[25] On the Doctrine of Discovery, see Mark Charles and Soong-Chan Rah, *Unsettling Truths: The Ongoing, Dehumanizing Legacy of the Doctrine of Discovery* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2019); Robert J. Miller et al., *Discovering Indigenous Lands: The Doctrine of Discovery in the English Colonies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2015), chapter 2. See also Deloria, *God Is Red*, chapter 13.

[26] On Vespucci, see Felipe Fernandez-Armesto, Amerigo: *The Man Who Gave His Name to America* (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 2007); Luciano Formisano, ed., *Letters from a New World: Amerigo Vespucci's Discovery of America,* trans. by David Jacobson (New York: Marsilio, 1992).

[27] Wub-e-ke-niew, *We Have the Right to Exist*, 101.

[28] On this point, Vine Deloria comments: "Certainly many Americans chafe at the idea that only Indians should be called 'Native Americans,' and they argue, quite properly, that anyone born in the United States is a native American. But their allegiance is to democracy, a powerful idea, but it has no relationship to the earth upon which we walk and the plants and animals that give us sustenance;" Deloria, *God Is Red*, 61.

[29] Charles Mann, *1491: New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus* (New York: Knopf, 2005), Appendix A.

niew, this term covers up a program of genetic engineering, one typical of the execution of the Papal Bulls: the creation of "a mixed-blood community which is dependent on the colonizers for their identity and status but who are kept in place by a stigmatized identity," a process "a historian friend of mine refers to as 'penile [sic] colonization.'"[30]

Subsequently, groups that had little to do with each other were classified into tribes like Potawotami, Menominee, Secotan, Cree, or Chippewa (the group to which Wub-e-ke-niew officially belonged until he renounced any such affiliation). He does not theorize the term "tribe" in any way, but his overall theme is that the Lislakh classified people on the continent in ways that made them legible for administrative purposes.[31] The term "tribe" helped cement the otherness of these people. This is not the case, for instance, in the UAE, where Emiratis routinely refer to themselves as members of a tribe. In that context no otherness is cemented: on the contrary, belonging to a tribe conveys benefits of citizenship. As part of the Lislakh appropriation efforts, the Ahnishinahbæótjibway became Chippewa Indians, as did lots of Métis, descendants of French fur traders and indigenous women. (All this goes back to French penetration since the mid-17th century of what then became Canada and parts of the northern US, initially through the St. Lawrence River, from there around the Great Lakes, then further West and South.) As the author explains, at the time of writing, only about 200 of nearly 8,000 Red Lake Chippewa were Ahnishinahbæótjibway.[32] The desire to make indigenous populations legible also explains why individuals were increasingly pressured to use European names, the author himself being Francis Blake, Jr. (or Francis George Blake).

Once legible to the state indigenous peoples could be controlled through treaties (subordinate to the Doctrine of Discovery). For there to be treaties, someone had to be seen as authorized to surrender use and occupancy rights on behalf of a territory's inhabitants. Often, such authority was a fabrication of conquerors, typically people of "Indian" identity whose sense of self depended on Lislakh genetic engineering. These treaties created territories of often inferior quality and limited size that indigenous people were not expected to leave, which Wub-e-ke-niew describes as prisoner-of-war camps. Even the AIM could not break through these fabrications: "the Whites have always picked the leaders for the Indian community, because they created the Indians."[33] Being Indian, in turn, means to be trapped "into an abusive relationship with the United States."[34]

> **"Indians are critical in maintaining the fiction that the Euro-Americans have a legal and honorable right to the Aboriginal and Indigenous peoples' land."**
>
> Wub-e-ke-niew, *We Have the Right to Exist*

"Indians are critical in maintaining the fiction that the Euro-Americans have a legal and honorable right to the Aboriginal and Indigenous peoples' land," Wub-e-ke-niew writes.[35] To original inhabitants nothing about the idea of "selling land" would even have been comprehensible. The "only way out of this quagmire," he adds, "is for the people identified as Indians to claim their real identity"[36]—for them to acknowledge that, in virtue of their ancestry, they cannot count as indigenous in the relevant sense, and thus, should never have sold *other people's* land.

[30] Wub-e-ke-niew, *We Have the Right to Exist*, 20. Such genetic engineering amounts to "ethnic cleansing," Wub-e-ke-niew, 2.

[31] On legibility to the state, see James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998).

[32] Wub-e-ke-niew, xxv.

[33] Wub-e-ke-niew, xliv. The most prominent leader of the AIM was another Ojibwe, Dennis Banks, who would probably have resented these views. (The Bellecourt brothers, Clyde and Vernon, and George Mitchell, other prominent leaders of the AIM, were also Ojibwe.) Banks, in turn, does not mention Francis Blake in his autobiography. See Dennis Banks and Richard Erdoes, *Ojibwa Warrior: Dennis Banks and the Rise of the American Indian Movement,* Illustrated edition, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005). . Apparently it was Wub-e-ke-niew's son Steve Blake, an artist who died in 2008, who as a teenager designed the iconic AIM logo, which features an amalgamation of a face in profile with a hand held in a V sign (the two fingers suggesting feathers).

[34] Wub-e-ke-niew,, 55.

[35] Wub-e-ke-niew, 196.

[36] Wub-e-ke-niew, 180.

4. The Ahnishinahbæótjibway: A Patrilineal and Patrilocal Understanding of Belonging

Wub-e-ke-niew calls the Ahnishinahbæótjibway one of the "aboriginal indigenous peoples" of the continent. "Aboriginal" is a temporal term meaning "from the beginning." "Indigenous" is spatial term meaning something like "born within." The author puts these terms together to designate his people to stress both duration and particular temporal nature (from the beginning) of their presence on the land. His people "have always been here,"[37] and thus have a relationship with their land that is unique and profound. People and land are co-original.

Crucially, aboriginal indigenous peoples did not just get here earlier, but perhaps much earlier, than others. Wub-e-ke-niew dismissively equates the idea that his ancestors might have arrived through the Bering Strait with other, presumably similarly crazy, ideas such as "that they came from outer space, that they came from the East Coast, that they ate up all the Hairy Mastodons (and then presumably went back to Europe to eat up the Hairy Mastodons there)."[38] He variously insists his people have lived there "since the beginning of humanity about a million years ago—long before Adam and Eve were conceived of,"[39] that petroglyphs and birchbark scrolls reveal that they originated in the "early Pleistocene,"[40] a geological era that started about 2.5 million years ago, or that "this has been our land since human beings first existed through four ice ages and at least 36,000 generations. The bones of our ancestors, the living beings upon the earth, and the earth itself, are all one, inseparable."[41] Accordingly, any intrusion amounts to a "violation of Aboriginal Indigenous peoples' natural rights, human rights, property rights, and Sovereignty."[42] Wub-e-ke-niew also claims that when Columbus arrived, about one billion people lived in the Americas, an estimate vastly beyond the numbers debated in this context (where one tenth of this is a high number).[43]

Belonging to the Ahnishinahbæótjibway is settled through the male line. That is, they have a patrilineal view of membership and fall into *dodems*, groups of relations, each with a totem animal. (Of the original 32 *dodems*, only five survive at Red Lake at the time of writing, his own being the bear *dodem*.[44]) They practice exogamy, which means they discourage marriage with anyone remotely related, and, in that manner, have relations to many other groups that nonetheless have distinct identities. The Ahnishinahbæótjibway are also *patrilocal:* upon marriage a woman moves to the land of her husband. But they are *matriarchal* by paying special attention to voices of older women: to balance out the fact that wives join their husbands' group, they hold political and social power.[45]

This way of thinking of membership and identity has considerable consequences. To begin with, "Indians" are then those who have some indigenous ancestry but are not "aboriginal indigenous" because they lack patrilineal descent. Anyone whose father was aboriginal indigenous is too, as is any woman who marries a man who is, but nobody else is. (Mixed blood is not an issue: the exogamy automatically creates mixed-blood ancestry.) Accordingly, "all Indians have European ancestry at least on the patriline, and some Indians are entirely of Lislahk ancestry."[46] Aboriginal indigenous people have a deep sense of belonging to the ancestral land of the man's family. They can leave the land only on pain of ending up with a profound sense of alienation, which turns them into unbalanced humans. Wub-

[37] Wub-e-ke-niew, 1. As he tells us, "Ahnishinahbæótjibway" just means "we, the original people, who have always been here." Wub-e-ke-niew, 319.

[38] Wub-e-ke-niew, *We Have the Right to Exist*, 1. Later he would add as yet another idea as crazy as the Bering-Strait hypothesis that "we came from Egypt in papyrus boats," Wub-e-ke-niew, 165. Some of these positions that he mocks refers to views about the origins of humans in the Americas that have actually been defended, see Mann, 1491, Parts I and II; Jennifer Raff, *Origin: A Genetic History of the Americas* (New York: Twelve, 2022).

[39] Wub-e-ke-niew, *We Have the Right to Exist*, xv. He claims there is a spearhead in his family that European-American scientific inquiry dates as more than 150,000 years old.

[40] Wub-e-ke-niew, 1. On birchbark scrolls from Wub-e-ke-niew's region, see Selwyn H. Dewdney, *The Sacred Scrolls of the Southern Ojibway* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975). For related work, see Selwyn Dewdney and Kenneth E. Kidd, *Indian Rock Paintings of the Great Lakes* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973).

[41] Wub-e-ke-niew, *We Have the Right to Exist*, 246.

[42] Wub-e-ke-niew, 12.

[43] Wub-e-ke-niew, 12.

[44] Wub-e-ke-niew, 248. On the bear *dodem*, see also Warren, *History of the Ojibway People*, 22f.

[45] Wub-e-ke-niew, *We Have the Right to Exist*, 5f, 20.

[46] Wub-e-ke-niew, 250.

e-ke-niew reports that, when he was stationed in Germany, he "felt the disconnection from one's aboriginal indigenous place that Euro-Americans must have to live with on this Continent."[47]

Moreover, Euro-Americans are not simply criticized for invading. There is something inherently wrong with them because "they do not know where they belong;" Wub-e-ke-niew reprimands anyone with cosmopolitan attitudes by adding that "some call themselves 'citizens of the world' because there is no place on Earth they can call home."[48] Contrasting with a patrilocal view of belonging, Euro-Americans resemble locusts that spread around the world to exploit others. It is profoundly ironic to him that dislocated invaders call the original peoples nomadic and deny them any serious attachment to their land, not to mention the fact that only societies rife with discord could arise this way.[49]

When Wub-e-ke-niew states in the title of this book that "we have the right to exist," then what he means, more fully, is this:

> We, the Ahnishinahbæótjibway, have a right to exist as a Sovereign people in our own land. We intend to press for international recognition of Aboriginal Indigenous peoples' autonomy, and restore our community to the harmonious and self-sufficient conditions we maintained for eons. We were self-supporting before the Europeans got here, and we will be self-supporting again. This is our land.[50]

To be sure, he often speaks in the plural first person and seems to mean the whole range of aboriginal indigenous peoples, by contrast with Lislakh invaders. Still, he acknowledges that other such groups might have different views of belonging. He refers to Lakota and Dakota, pointing out that he can neither define nor speak for them.[51] He often talks about the Midé, the "ancient political, religious, and philosophical tradition/organization" of the Ahnishinahbæótjibway.[52] "Grandfather" Midé often appears in combination with "Grandmother Earth." But his people "do not see the Ahnishinahbæótjibway Midé as extending beyond our Aboriginal Indigenous lands—although there are other Aboriginal Indigenous traditions which belong in each place of Grandmother Earth."[53] So he recognizes that others might have very different traditions.

5. Some Comments on Wub-e-ke-niew's Views of Belonging

To begin with, Wub-e-ke-niew's jointly patrilineal and patrilocal take on belonging depends on a deep resonance between genetic set-up—with a special role for the Y-chromosome—and particular regions (in ways much more specific than how genetic adaptation occurs to climatic conditions). "Euro-Americans have no roots on this land," he says, even "the descendants of Lislakh immigrants are transients."[54] Even Native Americans who have practiced traditional ways would be transients if their father is of the wrong lineage. This is a strong view: the *overall* picture of ancestry, self-identification, recognition or stigmatization by others, participation in cultural practices, generations of dwelling in one place—none of that counts if the patrilineal ties are not there.

This view formulates what one might call a radical aboriginalist response to the Doctrine of Discovery. The latter presumes that the Catholic Church is entitled to a global viewpoint from which people and territories can be allocated to each other and gave European empires license to do as they saw fit. The former insists no male newcomers (invaders or not) or families started by them could ever belong to the land the right way and would forever be condemned to social ills arising from the fact that they live at the wrong place. As an extreme view this is worth stating because it formulates the other book-end view to the Doctrine of Discovery and thus delineates the space in which an engagement with indigenous views would happen.

But this strong view is misguided. What Wub-e-ke-niew says about how long his people have been here contradicts major positions of evolutionary biology, especially the Out-of-Africa

[47] Wub-e-ke-niew, *We Have the Right to Exist,* 203.

[48] Wub-e-ke-niew, 165. That colonization of other people's land can only generate unhealthy societies is also a theme for Deloria. See Deloria, *Custer Died for Your Sins*, chapter 8.

[49] What is also ironic is that the Minnesota state flag captures a White settler in the foreground toiling on a field with an Indian on a horse retreating into the background.

Minnesota State Flag

[50] Wub-e-ke-niew, liii.

[51] Wub-e-ke-niew, 211, 247.

[52] Wub-e-ke-niew, 252. See also p 8, 195.

[53] Wub-e-ke-niew, 204.

[54] Wub-e-ke-niew, 72.

theory of human origins. To be sure, there continues to be debate about just how and when indigenous peoples reached the Americas.[55] The insistence that indigenous people have been here "forever" is not *already* refuted because we know exactly how migration has unfolded. But Wub-e-ke-niew makes unfounded claims about the duration his ancestors have been on their land and about their exclusively intimate connection to that land. All of that seems implausible, not to mention the fact that it also precludes too many people from seeing themselves as indigenous in the right way ("aboriginal indigenous") and as having that especially intense relationship with the land.

However, and this is my second comment, Wub-e-ke-niew sometimes takes a more inclusive approach. "When you have that deep gut-feeling that you are part of this land, then you will belong here and will know that the land is to be looked at with reverence and respect."[56] This thought does not turn on descent, and certainly not on facts about the Y-chromosome. What it takes to belong is a proper appreciation for the natural world one is part of. Belonging is about right attitudes rather than right genetic connectivity: "Every human being can come into non-violent harmony with Grandmother Earth, with Grandfather Midé, with life and death, with the Great Mystery."[57] A self-understanding that one's people have a long-standing relationship with the ecosystem of a certain location is likely to help foster a respectful attitude towards that ecosystem. Many indigenous peoples around the world have a self-understanding of having inhabited certain places since times immemorial, and over generations have developed sustainable ways of relating to ecosystems. Such views deserve much respect. And while they are intellectually in the neighborhood of Wub-e-ke-niew's views, they do not depend on the implausible components of his stance.[58]

My third comment concerns Wub-e-ke-niew's criticism of Lislakh social science, especially anthropology, for its complicity in the subjugation of indigenous peoples.[59] By enlisting such sciences to object to his argument, as I just did, I endorse a standpoint Wub-e-ke-niew flags as coopted with oppression.

"A self-understanding that one's people have a long-standing relationship with the ecosystem of a certain location is likely to help foster a respectful attitude towards that ecosystem."

Presumably this is the reason Guerrero so scrupulously refrains from criticizing Wub-e-ke-niew. But we do need to record that the evidence he offers—involving petroglyphs and birch-bark scrolls, as well as a claim that his daughter owned a spear point that "by Euro-Americans' own scientific documentation" (not otherwise referenced) "was made more than 150,000 ye-

[55] (1) See Mann, 1491, Parts I and II; Raff, *Origin*. The issue continues to matter profoundly. Anton Treuer says: "Native Americans are not immigrants. They are indigenous to the Americas;" Treuer, *Ojibwe in Minnesota*, 4. For systematic doubts about what Western science says about the arrival of humans in the Americas, see Vine Deloria Jr., *Red Earth, White Lies: Native Americans and the Myth of Scientific Fact* (Golden: Fulcrum Publishing, 1997), chapters 3-8. To Deloria, "Western science today is akin to a world history which discusses only the Mediterranean peoples;" *Deloria*, 211. The position to be fended off is that Native Americans are immigrants like everybody else—they just arrived earlier. A position like this, however, requires either an Out-of-the-Americas theory of human evolution or else, and more clearly in Wub-e-ke-niew's spirit, a polygenetic view of human origins. Recent work on these issues concludes that "most scholars agree that the ancestors of the First Peoples came from Upper Paleolithic populations in Siberia and East Asia;" Raff, *Origin*, 274. However, there remains debate about how and when this happened: scholars have suggested that these arrivals happened 14-18,000 or even as far back as 30,000 years ago, but an outlier model that is at odds with genetics puts it back as far as 130,000 years; Raff, 275. But there is no view in the scientific debate that dispenses with the position that humans came to the Americas from elsewhere. Even a recent publication devoted to overturning much of what we know about human prehistory (in ways that gives special importance to insights gained from the indigenous peoples of the Americas) states that "perhaps the only thing we can say with real certainty is that, in terms of ancestry, we are all Africans;" Graeber and Wengrow, *The Dawn of Everything*, 81. See also *Craig Childs, Atlas of a Lost World.* (New York: Vingtage, 2019). (2) For how critical reasoning around the Bering-Strait hypothesis increased interest in informal-logic courses among Native American students, see Anne Waters, "That Alchemical Bering Strait Theory: America's Indigenous Nations and Informal Logic Courses," in *American Indian Thought: Philosophical Essays*, ed. by Anne Waters, (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2003), 72–83.

[56] Wub-e-ke-niew, *We Have the Right to Exist*, 73.

[57] Wub-e-ke-niew, 214.

[58] See also David F. Peat, *Blackfoot Physics: A Journey into the Native American Worldview* (Grand Rapids. Weiser Books, 2005) chapter 4. Peat helpfully writes: "Suppose that several thousand years ago, a people moved into a particular landscape and came into relationship with the spirit of that place. In a sense, those people would become inseparable from that land. They would, in fact, have been created by it. Thus it could be perfectly true when The People say that they have always lived there, for it was the land that created them, gave them form, language, and customs;" Peat, 108.

[59] This is a theme Wub-e-ke-niew shares with Deloria, see e.g., Deloria, *Custer Died for Your Sins*, chapter 4.

ars ago"[60]—could not possibly lead us near the conclusion that his people have been here since the early Pleistocene. The evidence he offers could not establish anything other than that his people have been here much, much longer than the Lislakh (or then also that his people have lived where they belong longer than some Lislakhs have lived where *they* belong). Also, in what is probably the argumentative low-point, Wub-e-ke-niew doubts the seriousness of science by insisting that interpretations of evidence he quotes have been offered by non-Ahnishinahbæótjibway researchers.[61] Though they would presumably apply scientific methods that get deployed around the world in lots of contexts and get corroborated from being deployed in such a broad range of contexts, researchers are disqualified *simply* for having the wrong father.

In response, one could insist that my whole approach presupposes the validity of (Western) science in much the same way in which the Doctrine of Discovery presupposed the validity of Christianity—and in this manner we have reached a long-standing conflict between indigenous and Western cultures. That is, I am as much of a Lislakh as the popes of the 15th century, showing the same kind of condescension to traditions that do not share the same starting points. Wub-ke-niew is clear that he proceeds from "the oral tradition of the Ahnishinahbæótjibway, and on what my people are saying."[62] When Oglala Sioux holy man Black Elk told his story of the reception of the sacred pipe to poet and ethnographer John Neihardt, he famously added: "This they tell, and whether it happened so or not I do not know; but if you think about it, you can see that it is true."[63] Much like Wub-e-ke-niew, Black Elk asserts the validity of oral history. Contemporary Native American scholar Marilyn Notah Verney has recently made a plea for the irreducibly oral nature of Native American philosophy, insisting that the act of writing it down "separates our being in the world, and we can lose touch and become isolation from all our relations."[64] So, Wub-e-ke-niew is already accommodating vis-à-vis his Lislakh readers to go this route at all. To this line of objection only a full-fledged exploration of the possibilities of science would suffice, in combination with a way of still finding value in oral histories. I acknowledge as much, and leave the matter here. That a defense of this magnitude is needed speaks to the depth of Wub-e-ke-niew's stance.[65]

This section takes nothing away from the claims of indigenous peoples about having distinctive relationships with the land. But we can and should interpret the normative relevance of that relationship without drawing on the claim that indigenous peoples have a deep kind of connectivity to the land *on very specific genetic grounds*—and that, therefore, only certain people could have such links whereas everyone who is indigenous matrilineally is transient. Not that there could not be communities that opt to see the world this way (and that would have a right to exist, as in the title of Wub-e-ke-niew's book). But this way of looking at the world would only create very limited claims on others, also as far land use and occupancy are concerned.[66]

[60] Wub-e-ke-niew, *We Have the Right to Exist*, xv.

[61] Wub-e-ke-niew, 350.

[62] Wub-e-ke-niew, xiii.

[63] John G. Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks: The Complete Edition* (Lincoln: Bison Books, 2014), 3.

[64] Marilyn Notah Verney, "On Authenticity," in *American Indian Thought: Philosophical Essays*, ed. by Anne Waters (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2003), 138. For more on these matters, see the epistemological contributions to Waters, *American Indian Thought*.

[65] Such differences in worldviews have implications for educational matters and the integration of indigenous children into mainstream educational institutions. See e.g., Gregory Cajete, *Look to the Mountain: An Ecology of Indigenous Education* (Durango: Kivaki Press, 1994); Vine Deloria, Jr. and Daniel R. Wildcat, *Power and Place: Indian Education in America* (Golden: Fulcrum Publishing, 2001). "Oral" tradition means, in any event in this case, that the human place in the world is conveyed through extensive narratives and in actual story-telling. For some of these narratives in the Ojibwe tradition and a discussion of how such story-telling relates to the Western philosophical tradition, see Thomas W. Overholt and Baird J. Callicott, *Clothed-in-Fur and Other Tales: An Introduction to an Ojibwa World View* (Washington, D.C: UPA, 1982). See also Dennis H. McPherson and J. Douglas Rabb, *Indian from the Inside: Native American Philosophy and Cultural Renewal* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2011); Gross, *Anishinaabe Ways of Knowing and Being*, chapter 7; Deloria, *Red Earth, White Lies*, chapter 2.

[66] The following letter to the editor appeared in *The Native American Press/Ojibwe News*—where Wub-e-ke-niew published columns for years—on August 15, 1997, two months before his death. It was signed by one C. E. Germaine in Minneapolis. It is worth quoting in full because it captures what are probably some common responses to his writing in the Native-American community: "During the heyday of the 'Thousand Year Reich,' there was a man who controlled the civil police and intelligence services by the name of Heinrich Himmler. He espoused the theories of racial purity. Today, in our midst, we have an individual who goes by the name of Obi Wan 'Ben' Kenobi (or some such nonsense) who preaches a similar theory of racial purity. In actual fact, Francis (Just call me Heinrich) Blake's tiresome diatribes about racial purity leave my stomach churning and they offer nothing positive to our struggle against the oppressor class. I think it's high time you deny him valuable newspaper space and instead devote his space to a more positivist writer for our cause. It's his problem if his shoes are laced too tightly or his problem with stomach gas is making him a crabby old man, but give us a break here! He might be the last of a Pleistocene group of 'full bloods' but the rest of us might want to venture into the next millennium, with our babies, women and children. I could list a group of non-full bloods (which would include Jim Thorpe, Quanah Parker, Maria TallChief) to illustrate the foolishness of Blake's racial purity myth but his foolishness would not accept the light of reality. A

6. The Lislakh Worldview: Language (and Some Connections to Latour)

Lislakhs have not only conquered the world and, in the process overrun indigenous peoples. They have also cultivated an overall worldview that prepares us poorly for the future in times when technological innovation is both disruptive and creates entirely new possibilities. Specifically, the Christians among the Lislakh find themselves locked into a metaphysical outlook that prevents them from seeing themselves as part of nature and therefore from taking care of it. They are primarily oriented towards a transcendent world and see the actual world as something given to them for their benefit. Their use of natural resources is unsustainable. Lislakh languages reflect an instrumental human-centered attitude towards nature and make it practically impossible for them to even conceptualize alternatives. For Wub-e-ke-niew, language matters profoundly for shaping attitudes and approaches to the world. Accordingly, his most important suggestion for Lislakh readers is to learn indigenous languages so they too can live in harmony with nature. Among the many gifts indigenous peoples have given the rest of the world, languages reflecting the right kind of attitude towards nature could be most salient.[67]

Let me elaborate on Wub-e-ke-niew's understanding of the Lislakh through his discussion of language since that topic matters deeply to him. He impresses upon us various points about Ahnishinahbæótjibway, each marking a contrast to Lislakh languages. First of all, Ahnishinahbæótjibway does not set humans apart from the world such that the former *act upon* the latter. "Rather than acting upon the world," he tells us, "one acts in concert with the other beings with whom one shares Grandmother Earth." His illustration is that in Ahnishinahbæótjibway, "a person harmoniously 'meets the lake', rather than 'going to get water.'"[68] A person meeting the lake thinks of the whole process as an ensemble of things involved in a joint operation, the human being one of them, rather than linguistically representing human agency as a domineering force over nature.

French sociologist and philosopher Bruno Latour

Secondly, he emphasizes that the Ahnishinahbæótjibway "do not see the world filtered through linguistic value judgements that one thing is worth attention, while another is below the level of awareness."[69] That something's being better than something else, the author tells us, is hard to express in Ahnishinahbæótjibway. He provides no examples, and perhaps that is hard given that this would be about illustrating the absence of something. But comparative assessments typically are not about all-things-considered assessments of certain things not being worthy of any attention at all but about conveying information about which of several things is more suitable for a purpose. It is hard to see how communication can function without the ability to convey such information.

But let us assume Ahnishinahbæótjibway has ways of emphasizing the importance of everything connected to human life while Lislakh languages fall short. Then his first two points relate intriguingly to the work of contemporary social thinker Bruno Latour. Latour draws attention to ways in which very different kinds of things always need to act in concert to generate outcomes, an insight that is lost if inquiry emphasizes human agency while drawing sharp distinctions between social and natural phenomena. We can read Latour as articulating key themes of Wub-e-ke-niew's critique from within the Lislakh tradition.[70]

Latour sought to dismantle the division between humans and nature as the development of modern science had come to understand it. Instead, he proposed to see the world as one large amalgam of hybrids composed of animals, plants, topography, climate, the biosphere, hu-

fool always falls short of his measure, so to attempt to enlighten him would be a waste of time. Tell that guy to have a nice day." The point about racial purity is misguided: the Nazis insisted on racial purity among other things by prohibiting mixed marriages, whereas requiring marriages outside of the *dodem*, to Wub-e-ke-niew, is one strength of his people's worldview. But this letter captures how others who identify as indigenous will not only feel excluded by his approach but feel that Wub-e-ke-niew distracts attention from efforts to improve their situation.

[67] (1) Wub-e-ke-niew, *We Have the Right to Exist*, 240. On the importance of the Ojibwe language for their worldview, see Gross, Anishinaabe Ways of Knowing and Being, chapter 4. Wub-e-ke-niew's points about Ojibwe are consistent with the Ojibwe-discourse analysis in Roger Spielmann, *"You're So Fat!": Exploring Ojibwe Discourse* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998). See also Peat, Blackfoot Physics, chapter 9.
(2) On Indian gifts to the world, the classic source is Jack Weatherford, *Indian Givers: How Native Americans Transformed the World* (New York: Crown, 1988). Weatherford concludes that, even though the gifts Europeans received from Native Americans were considerable, so little of the intellectual, cultural, and political history of pre-Colombian America is even known that "America has yet to be discovered." Weatherford, 255.

[68] Wub-e-ke-niew, *We Have the Right to Exist*, 218.

[69] Wub-e-ke-niew, 355.

[70] Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. by Catherine Porter (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1993).

man invention, and the interactions among them. Much as Wub-e-ke-niew did, Latour realized that the influence of human efforts had grown to such proportions that it upset the self-regulating natural system of the planet. To articulate the hybrid nature of so much human interaction he proposed the *actor-network theory* (ANT)—whose main point is that no entity is significant in isolation but attains meaning only through numerous changeable relations to other entities. These multitudes of relations are called "actor-networks," though Latour also talks about "actants" to emphasize the downsizing of human agency implied by this proposal.

Latour describes social worlds by tracing associations of humans and non-humans that make up collectives. Non-human things have agency if their presence makes a difference to the network (a causally interconnected set of things). Actants routinely get transformed into something through relations with others, thereby acquiring new meaning. If you follow a ball game, you can see how one player is being "translated" into the star of the evening while others are defeated. So it is in many domains, but academic inquiry of modern times has characteristically evolved to separate "nature" (the domain of natural science) from "society" (culture and politics) rather categorically. But Latour insists that in reality "we have never been modern:" there have always been many hybrids which were neither part of nature nor of society whose true (fabricated) character remained obscure: vaccines, technologies for long-distance communication, plastics, computers, genetically modified organisms, frozen embryos, expert systems, digital machines, ozone layer, endangered species, etc. Wub-e-ke-niew's illustration of his point about how Ahnishinahbæótjibway captures the embeddedness of human agency into an ensemble of things—an actor-network—paradigmatically illuminates Latour's approach. But Latour articulates his view as something that goes against the grain of scientific theory and linguistic practice. Wub-e-ke-niew's point is that Ahnishinahbæótjibway encapsulates this standpoint as the default.

Wub-e-ke-niew's third point about language is that Ahnishinahbæótjibway contains no word for truth, "because our worldview is based in living reality rather than in the idealized abstract."[71] Presumably what he means is not that his people do not have ways of conveying how they know things or how certain they are that something is one way rather than another. Instead, they are not engaging in philosophical discourse about *what makes things true*—which presupposes a willingness to look at one's context with detachment, and a willingness to theorize oneself in relation to one's context. They just are in the thick of that context. Freedom, too, is not theorized. Theorizing freedom—what it means and how one obtains it—also inevitably means theorizing conditions of unfreedom.[72]

Theorizing both truth and freedom involves abstraction: it looks at humans in their lifeworld from a distance. Etymologically, "to abstract" means to remove something, to draw it away. Abstraction is about removing certain specifics from something and looking at it from the standpoint of its possessing certain features. Abstract standpoints contrast with the full concreteness of something—where etymologically "concrete" means "having grown together." Abstraction opens up possibilities: the concrete could often exist in multifarious forms, and abstraction lets us see that. But abstract theorizing about the concrete inevitably generates a bird's eye standpoint from which subsequently social control can be exercised. Hierarchies might be introduced that did not exist before, which can be used to favor the interests of some over those of anyone else. For Wub-e-ke-niew Lislakh languages reflect centuries of such tendencies. Lislakh scholars tried to import these tendencies to the world of the Ahnishinahbæótjibway, when transforming their language into Chippewa.[73]

Hierarchical languages impoverish human relations. They alienate speakers from reality and lead them to destroy the things that sustain their lives.[74] Language also alienates people from each other so they can no longer feel each other's pain: ties among living things are broken, and individuals do not readily see themselves as part of a shared humanity.[75] Moreover, all the compartmentalization creates conflict among artificially created and separated groups "who might otherwise stand together and address the class system which oppresses them all."[76]

[71] Wub-e-ke-niew, *We Have the Right to Exist*, 256.

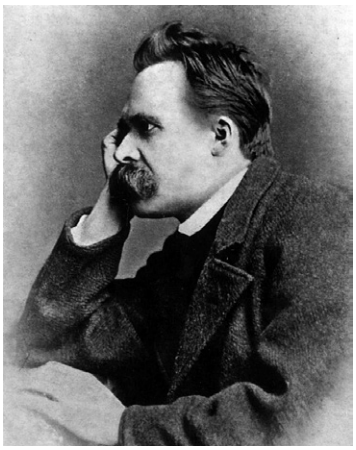
[72] Wub-e-ke-niew, 209. Strikingly, the absence of theorizing about what makes anything true or false is also key to the limited ways in which the recent public-reason understanding of liberalism makes sense of truth and thereby stays out of profound metaphysical and epistemological debates among different worldviews. See Joshua Cohen, "Truth and Public Reason," in *Philosophy, Politics, Democracy: Selected Essays* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009).

[73] Wub-e-ke-niew, *We Have the Right to Exist*, 223. The Ahnishinahbæótjibway are egalitarian and consensus-oriented, and their language has no concepts denoting ranked social status, subject peoples, or centralized government. See Wub-e-ke-niew, 159. One might say abstraction opens up the good kind of possibility as well. But Wub-e-ke-niew's response would be that there would have been no need for improvements.

[74] Wub-e-ke-niew, 222.

[75] Wub-e-ke-niew, 219.

[76] Wub-e-ke-niew, 98.



German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche

Fourthly, Ahnishinahbæótjibway does not contain any word for sin, "and neither God nor the Devil exists in my language or culture."[77] The point is that Ahnishinahbæótjibway is free from dualisms in the evaluative domain, which imply that something could (and often would) categorically fall on either the "good" or the "evil" side. Dualistic thinking—which, according to Wub-e-ke-niew, is pervasive in Lislakh languages—makes it possible for much peace and love to coexist with much violence. Sins are inclinations to be on the bad side, and guilt is a feeling one has when one is tempted to act that way. Sin and guilt also create psychological obstacles to leaving behind the Lislakh worldview. As Wub-e-ke-niew says, Judeo-Christianity uses the concept of sin to control people.[78]

How much hierarchical behavior is driven by or reflected in language is beyond my ability to assess. Let me just note that Wub-e-ke-niew asserts that his people did not discriminate against the Métis and treated them as humans, "although different from ourselves."[79] This comment makes one wonder about his larger point about hierarchies. For he suggests that his people did see the Métis as *others*—and from there the step to hierarchical thinking is small. In any event, Wub-e-ke-niew also offers some metaphysical comments connected to his observations about language, which I discuss in section 7. That discussion also creates a connection to Nietzsche, who like Latour formulated *internal* criticisms of Lislakh practices about which Wub-e-ke-niew states *external* criticisms.

7. The Lislakh Worldview: Metaphysics (and Some Connections to Nietzsche)

It is unclear how much familiarity with Nietzsche Wub-e-ke-niew had, as there is only one reference to his work.[80] Still, anyone who approaches his work with some sense of Nietzsche will realize that Wub-e-ke-niew looks at Western culture from the outside, from the standpoint of those destroyed by it, in ways that resemble Nietzsche's internal critique, from the standpoint of one whose personal socialization and education has occurred within it. Nietzsche thought Christianity had turned the world into a "madhouse."[81] He saw his mission in making people see the madness, unearthing how it came to this, and exploring what to do about it. Much of the work needed to these ends involved revealing how a cultural story that started with Christianity and the Romans has cast a long shadow and keeps even those in its grip who no longer believe in the Christian god.

The message Nietzsche's famous madman brings in *Gay Science*—that God is dead—is pitched at *atheists*.[82] They know there is no god. What they have not yet realized is that lessons from that insight go much beyond subtracting such a being from one's view of the world. After centuries of Christian dominance, how people perceive their inner lives and how they react to each other has been shaped by incessant and aggressive implementation of Christian doctrine. It is hard for people from such a cultural context to free themselves to see outsiders (or anything at all) with open minds. Similarly, Wub-e-niew notes that Euro-Americans have "almost insurmountable difficulty in seeing the extent to which they have lost their personal Sovereignty to Judeo-Christian religious institution." But he then further notes that Euro-Americans, "having no point of reference outside of the Christian worldview, they are cut off from awareness of their life, their relationship to the Earth, their bodies, and much of their minds."[83]

Christianity was founded as a religion for the underdog in a remote part of the Roman Empire, but eventually took over the Empire. What started as a slave rebellion became the state religion, and, in the process, created a psychology organized around a deep feeling of guilt, a sense of imperfection vis-à-vis an omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent creator god. Christianity, as Nietzsche says, offers "a metaphysics of the

[77] Wub-e-ke-niew, *We Have the Right to Exist*, 235.

[78] Wub-e-ke-niew, 205.

[79] Wub-e-ke-niew, 158.

[80] Wub-e-ke-niew, 352.

[81] Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality, Second Treatise*, section 22.

[82] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*, trans. by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1974), section 125.

[83] Wub-e-ke-niew, 209.

> “[Euro-Americans have] almost insurmountable difficulty in seeing the extent to which they have lost their personal Sovereignty to Judeo-Christian religious institution...
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> —
>
> Wub-e-ke-niew,
> *We Have the Right to Exist*

hangman,"[84] an outlook that keeps the mind focused and locks people into social hierarchies. Wub-e-ke-niew formulates this stance as well, noting that "the social structure of Western European Civilization depends on establishing metaphysical justification for its economic system, which functions so that the people at the top of the hierarchy claim most of the wealth created." Institutions and dogma of Judeo-Christianity "provide the foundation upon which Western European civilization occupies this Continent—and provided the rationalization for the genocide, dispossession, and enslavement of the so-called 'pagan' Aboriginal Indigenous peoples."[85]

To be sure, while Wub-e-ke-niew and Nietzsche agree on certain critical assessments, they write under very different circumstances and with very different goals. Nietzsche finds himself in the midst of a world that is bizarre to him but that has nevertheless developed right there over the centuries. Wub-e-ke-niew tries to comprehend an apocalyptic invasion that ravaged his people. Nietzsche wants to move beyond the current state of affairs, one way or another (one key term here being the Übermensch, the super-human), so that his culture has a better future. Wub-e-ke-niew insists that his people have a right to exist the way they traditionally have. He thinks it behooves the Lislakh to learn from his people.

Wub-e-ke-niew also reflects on why the Lislakh would invade the Americas in the first place. Christianity apparently did Europe no good in terms of building sustainable societies. Europeans who invaded the Americas departed a plundered wasteland devastated by war and rape, destruction of ecosystems, pollution of water, and numerous plagues.[86] They failed again, since dislocated people can only build societies bedeviled by any manner of social evils: "The Europeans who came here, homeless, two centuries ago, now have homeless people in the cities they have built here."[87] These are aspects of European civilization Nietzsche is not much interested in, but this analysis is consistent with his views.

8. Time

Among Wub-e-ke-niew's philosophically most interesting explorations of *positive* themes in his people's worldview is that of the Ahnishinahbæótjibway understanding of time and that of their embeddedness into nature. Let me discuss time first and embeddedness into nature next. Wub-e-ke-niew talks about time (with an underlined "t") when presenting the Ahnishinahbæótjibway view.[88] Here are some key ideas:

To begin with, Lislakh time unfolds like a line that starts somewhere, with Creation or the Big Bang (which Wub-e-ke-niew considers "metaphysically and structurally equivalent").[89] While this view does not necessarily make the line of time entirely straight, this does mean there is an experience of progression, of not revisiting the same place. Therefore, "the past vanishes into obscurity, perceived as dimensionless and infinitely small at the vanishing point of linear perspective."[90] The past no longer exists, and people in the present do not see themselves as responsible for it. For the same reason, old people are not respected much, and the focus is on the young. If the past is no longer accessible and does not need to be cherished, people close to joining the past do not need to be either.

Secondly, since the past does not exist, the future is not taken seriously either: "the Lislakh's future time has been stolen from them to balance the denial of their past time."[91] The idea

[84] Nietzsche, *Twilight*, et Al., Twilight, The Four Great Errors, 7.

[85] Wub-e-ke-niew, *We Have the Right to Exist*, 196. Wub-e-ke-niew would readily speak of "Judeo-Christianity" where Nietzsche was focused on Christianity. Wub-e-ke-niew's reference to the Lislakh worldview makes clear that he sees a broader juxtaposition between that whole cultural front that arose in the Mediterranean and the so-called New World, rather than any differences between Judaism and Christianity.

[86] Wub-e-ke-niew, 204. Christianity's notoriously exploitative relationship with nature was pointed out by historian Lynn White as well. Lynn White, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," *Science* 155 (1967): 1203–7. White's work, in turn, is discussed as part of Deloria's assessment of the Christian understanding of creation. See Deloria, God Is Red, chapter 5.

[87] Wub-e-ke-niew, *We Have the Right to Exist*, 225. For the overall influence of Christianity on contemporary American culture, see Deloria, *God Is Red*, chapter 13.

[88] Nina Emery, Ned Markosian, and Meghan Sullivan, "Time," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.* ed. Edward N. Zalta (2020); Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time* (New York: Random House, 1998); Sean Carroll, *The Biggest Ideas in the Universe: Space, Time, and Motion* (New York: Dutton, 2022).

[89] Wub-e-ke-niew, *We Have the Right to Exist*, 87. On how the linear understanding of time is also central to the Christian concept of history (as something that gradually would reveal the purpose of creation), see Deloria, God Is Red, chapter 6.

[90] Wub-e-ke-niew, *We Have the Right to Exist*, 86.

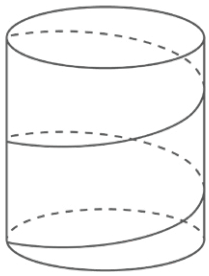
seems to be that the denial of the relevance of the past generates a focus on the present that then also denies the significance of the future. Consequently, the Lislakh do not plan for future generations. This point is exacerbated by the fact that Lislakh individuals do not feel empowered anyway within their hierarchies. To the extent that they have seen new frontiers, they have thought of them spatially: they "discovered" other people's land rather than securing the future of their offspring.

Thirdly, that time starts somewhere at least suggests it will end somewhere, and certainly that is so when the manner in which that beginning occurred is central to the way time is experienced. As far as Christianity is concerned, everything started with the divine creation, and history is what humans have ever since made of themselves and the rest of the world that was given to them. So indeed, there is much focus on the precise nature of that beginning. And this view of time then triggers an intellectual and emotional focus on *end times.* Instead of taking care of the future Lislakhs often engage in apocalyptic fears around the end of the world and speculate if anything could come afterwards (such as Judgement Day). Such worries create "a terrible hopelessness and sense of futility" as part of the Christian worldview, which the hierarchies exploit.[92] And fourthly, time is kept by clocks: it is measured and monetized. People literally sell their time.[93]

All of this is different for Ahnishinahbæótjibway time. Instead of thinking about a line into the future, the key intuition is that change unfolds along a circle: "the circle always comes around, and the past is never gone."[94] Those who have lived before us continue to be around, though no longer the physical way they used to be. While this might be hard to relate to, it helps to keep in mind that Christianity envisages an afterlife in which humans that were once physically alive have a presence in an altered manner. Indeed, it is a feature of many religions that they find ways of securing a lasting presence for persons after their physical deaths. Guerrero offers two ways of making it easier to comprehend Ahnishinahbæótjibway time.[95] One is to think of seasons. At a location with distinct seasons what one experiences as years go by is not naturally represented by a line that leads into the future, but by a circle that returns us to the same place. It is spring or summer *again*. It is time to plant seeds or bring in the harvest *again*. We find ourselves embedded into annual growth cycles all around us. In addition to changing seasons and life cycles of plants, we observe cyclical movements of celestial bodies and the ebb and flow of tides or weather patterns.

Guerrero's other suggestion is to think of nostalgia, the feeling one has when returning to places that have meant much to us in previous stages and which we associate with things that happened to us or with stories about what happened there to be the people we care about. Stories might abound about previous generations of one's family who all lived right there. As Guerero says, "time, then, or t̲ime, would not feel detached from place, would not seem to be some placeless abstract thing. It would not be like: OK, so, it was April 1997, so I was still in Los Angeles—where this requires a kind of complex mental calculation where one matches the measured time with one's own physical location in the world. Time would be more intimately grounded, placed. "

Let me suggest one additional way of thinking about t̲ime that might make it easier to find this view of time plausible or at least accessible. This third way also respects the intuition that, our experiences of cycles notwithstanding, we are not literally returning to the same ensemble of things year after year. Combining the intuition of time as a line into the future (backed up by the experience of change) and the intuition of time as a circle (backed up by the experience of reoccurrences) one could think of the progressing of time as a spiral inside of a cylinder, something like this:



Envisage yourself as a person travelling along such a line, with one turn around the cylinder representing progression within one year. There is a sense in which you return to the same place: for any given point, a year later you will be at a point right above, and the year after at a point right above that, and so on. In one dimension, and thus indeed in one sense, you are back at the

[91] Wub-e-ke-niew, *We Have the Right to Exist*, 88.

[92] Wub-e-ke-niew, 87.

[93] The importance of the clock for Western civilization was a major theme in Lewis Mumford's reckoning with technology. See, e.g., Lewis Mumford, *Technics and Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), chapter 2. For a contemporary classic in American-Indian studies that also very much captures differences in lived experience with time, see Kent Nerburn, *Neither Wolf nor Dog: On Forgotten Roads with an Indian Elder*, (San Francisco: New World Library, 2019).

[94] Wub-e-ke-niew, 88.

[95] Guerrero, "Ethics in Place and Time: Introducing Wub-e-Ke-Niew's 'We Have the Right to Exist.'"

same place on the outer surface of the cylinder. This captures the experience of seasons and other cyclical natural phenomena. Still, you are progressing, and do not return to the same ensemble of things. Eventually you die. Others who carry on travelling come back to the same place on the outer surface of the cylinder, and, in that sense, can reconnect to you. Within this understanding past, present, and future are more readily seen as interconnected and interdependent, in any event more so than if change is just captured by a line. But there are obvious limitations to this cylinder-analogy when it comes to capturing the totality of spatially-and-temporally lived experiences that Wub-e-ke-niew seeks to capture.[96]

Finally, for the Ahnishinahbæótjibway, "time is part of the fabric of reality, and cannot be bought or sold"—much as the land cannot be—and "has absolutely nothing to do with hours and minutes."[97] One might feel reminded of another critic of Western mainstream ideas, Martin Heidegger. In his 1953 *The Question Concerning Technology*, Heidegger argues that in our technology-shaped world we see everything around us as a standing-reserve, resources to be exploited.[98] This includes the whole natural world, even humans. He uses the term *Gestell* (enframing) to capture the relevance of technology in our lives.[99] *Gestell* literally is a linking together of things. The *Gestell* is a way of looking at the world (a horizon of disclosure, as Heidegger says) according to which everything registers only as a resource. *Gestell* deprives us of any ability to stand in caring relations to things. Everything is interconnected and exchangeable. Efficiency and optimization set the stage, demanding standardization and repetition. The counting and selling of hours and minutes are needed to maintain the schedules on which that whole system depends. Time is decidedly not part of the fabric of reality but part of a human-imposed commercial superstructure. As Wub-e-ke-niew tells it, the Ahnishinahbæótjibway never constructed that kind of superstructure.

German philosopher Martin Heidegger

9. Nature

The central importance of seeing humans as embedded into nature has been implicit throughout. Wub-e-ke-niew's patrilocal understanding of belonging makes one's "natural" environment critical, where the "natural" environment is the one with which one's family has a particular connection. Again, this is a strong and implausible view, but it is also in the neighborhood of more sensible views. To the indigenous people, land is a "living part of the Universe," one "to which one is inseparably related; Grandmother Earth."[100] Rather symptomatically, one aspect of the Christian understanding of nature is to use certain trees for Christmas decoration, which he considers "ritual deforestation."[101]

Indigenous people used land and other species in ways that made sure "there was enough left for future generations" and that nobody heedlessly takes more than what they need[102]. Wub-e-ke-niew repeatedly stresses that the arrival of Europeans with their different approach to land and wildlife amounted to the destruction of paradise.[103] Living a life embedded into nature is what becomes us as humans, whereas the inhabitants of American cities are "urban dwellers (…) embedded in layer within layer of Lislakh linguistic and cultural artifacts," and therefore are "often completely disconnected from reality, in the man-made context of the city."[104]

[96] For similar views on time from an Australian First Nations perspective, see Tyson Yunkaporta, *Sand Talk: How Indigenous Thinking Can Save the World* (New York: HarperOne, 2021). See also Peat, *Blackfoot Physics*, chapter 8.

[97] Wub-e-ke-niew, *We Have the Right to Exist*, 89f.

[98] Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays,* trans. by William Lovitt (New York; London: Garland Publishing, 1977), 17.

[99] Heidegger, 19.

[100] Wub-e-ke-niew, 165.

[101] Wub-e-ke-niew, 212.

[102] Wub-e-ke-niew, 204f.

[103] Wub-e-ke-niew, 7, 84. For a critical-theory take on subsequent dispossession, see Robert Nichols, *Theft Is Property!: Dispossession and Critical Theory* (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2019); Robert Nichols, "Theft Is Property! The Recursive Logic of Dispossession," *Political Theory* 46, no. 1 (2018): 3–28.

[104] Wub-e-ke-niew, *We Have the Right to Exist*, 95.

Guerrero offers a helpful analytical summary of the approach to nature involved here, whose basic components are something like this:[105]

> **INTERCONNECTION:** All living things in a contained ecosystem (like Earth, and at much smaller scales, too) are causally interrelated and interconnected in complex ways.
>
> **HARMONY:** When this interrelation and interconnection is sustainably beneficial for living things within the ecosystem, we can describe it as being in a state of harmony.
>
> **ETHICAL EVALUATION:** Actions are to be evaluated in large part, if not solely, based on their consequences with respect to harmony: do they promote and sustain harmony, or do they threaten and undermine harmony?
>
> **NO CAUSAL RESTRICTIONS:** Whether an action promotes or threatens harmony is a function of its full causal effects.
>
> **ALL THINGS MATTER:** All living things matter, morally.

There is much to say about this, also because it connects to long-standing questions about environmental ethics. Among the plausible competing views is what Bernard Williams called "enlightened anthropocentrism"—a view that pushes our concerns for nature far but keeps the human scale central because that is ultimately the only way we know how to live. But perhaps indigenous thought points us into a different direction altogether.[106]

10. Conclusion

Wub-e-ke-niew's view is extreme in some regards, and here I am not primarily concerned with the aggressive reckoning with cultural devastation and its aftermath he brings to the Lislakh (us Lislakh, I should say). For the worldview that has won out in recent centuries and led us into our ecological crisis such reckoning is appropriate. The part that concerns me is that his approach excludes many who are not of the right patrilineal origin from being considered indigenous in the right way (aboriginal indigenous) and looks at them as a group of people (literally) created as part of a demographic take-over strategy. Not all controversial and extreme views are worth engaging with (which automatically means rehearsing and repeating them)—but this one is because it comes as part of an overall reckoning with oppression rather than as part of an effort to perpetuate oppression. It offers the other book-end view to the Doctrine of Discovery.

Moreover, Wub-e-ke-niew holds views on time (time) and nature and offers critical stances on the worldview that has been dominant in recent centuries that are independent from the problematic aspects of his strong understanding of what it means to be aboriginal indigenous. And once one drops some extreme parts of this view (as one should), one ends up with a view of long-standing embeddedness at a particular place that is broadly shared among indigenous populations around the world. As far as all these various positions are concerned, Chomsky is right in his quote on the cover: "This study of aboriginal indigenous thought should be read, studied, and pondered by anyone who cares about the civilization and culture of the conquerors, and about the possibilities of human existence, thought and creative experience that have been marginalized and suppressed—not to speak of the terrible fate of the victims themselves."

What makes Wub-e-ke-niew's work distinctive is how he combines a powerful presentation of the central themes of his worldview with an equally powerful, devastating assessment of the worldview of the conquerors, a set of criticisms that resonate with criticisms by non-mainstream thinkers from within—which also makes it easier for those trained in the philosophical traditions of the conquerors to engage with Wub-e-ke-niew (and, I suppose, vice versa). Indeed, one reason to engage with this work just is a concern with the civilization and culture of the conquerors, partly to understand possibilities for criticizing it internally and externally, but also to see what to do with it now that it has created our current ecological crisis, and now that we have entered an age of considerable technological disruption for which we are poorly prepared, intellectually and morally. Now is the time to find new ways of engaging with indigenous thought. Reflecting on Wub-e-ke-niew's work is an excellent starting point. ■

[105] Guerrero, "Ethics in Place and Time: Introducing Wub-e-Ke-Niew's 'We Have the Right to Exist.'"

[106] Williams, "Must a Concern for the Environment Be Centred on Human Beings?" For a discussion of Native-American attitudes towards the environment and how those differ from those of the conquerors (with regular attention to the Ojibwe), see Bierhorst, *The Way of the Earth*; LaDuke, *All Our Relations*; Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*; Nelson, *Original Instructions*. For what these matters mean for indigenous education, see Cajete, *Look to the Mountain*, chapter 7. For the point that indigenous philosophy has been conducted by people who lived in and with nature whereas non-indigenous philosophy has typically been conducted by thinkers based in cities who were deeply attracted to a contrast between nature and culture, see Forbes, "*Nature and Culture: Problematic Concepts of Native Americans*."

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This publication was published by the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University

carrcenter.hks.harvard.edu

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