

Eva Marie Garroutte

## **Defining “Radical Indigenism” and Creating an American Indian Scholarship\***

In their influential book *Writing Culture*, James Clifford and George E. Marcus (1986) probed the challenges and limits of anthropological work. Rejecting the assumption that conventional research methods supplied tools for the neutral description, classification, and analysis of data drawn from the objective observation of other cultures, they argued instead that such methods often functioned as mechanisms of control and domination. The critique easily generalized to related disciplines, and the resulting loss of social scientific innocence helped create a space for members of subordinated and colonized groups, including indigenous peoples around the world, to call for new models of research that better reflected *their* interests, perspectives, goals, and voices (Rigney 2001).

In the intervening decades, indigenous scholars have begun the important work of articulating the values that might motivate such research and the general goals it must reflect (e.g., Rigney 1997; Warrior 1995; Weaver 1997; Alfred 1999; Smith 1999). They commonly express interest in the community-based or “participatory” research models that are increasingly finding currency in the academy, but they also set their sights on a more distant horizon. They call, as well, for a “new intellectual

---

\* This essay is an abbreviated version of an argument that has been developed more fully elsewhere (Garroutte 2003).

170 • Eva Marie Garroutte

agenda" – one that embodies truly distinctive perspectives and enables genuinely different types of interactions between researchers and indigenous peoples (Warrior 1999). Indigenous scholars hope for a vision of scholarship that they can call truly their own.

The distinctive theories and methodologies that might undergird such undertakings have been slow to emerge, however. In this essay, I make an early attempt at this daunting project. I define a new theoretical perspective that brings together the goal of contributing to the health, survival, and growth of indigenous communities with the goal of the academy to cultivate knowledge. I consider some methods of inquiry that might be appropriate to this new perspective, and I give it a name: Radical Indigenism. I then develop this perspective by applying its theoretical and methodological assumptions to a specific question of concern to indigenous communities in the Americas: the issue of American Indian identity. My specific and overarching goal is to demonstrate that it is possible to create distinctive bodies of thought and practice that can properly be called an *American Indian scholarship*.

### **Radical Indigenism: Theoretical Predecessors**

I will begin by briefly describing my understanding of the theoretical perspective that I am calling Radical Indigenism and pointing out the features that distinguish it from ideas that have preceded it, particularly ideas in the domain of post-colonial theory. The name Radical Indigenism reflects the Latin derivation of the word "radical": *radix*, meaning "root." Radical Indigenism, as I define it, illuminates differences in assumptions about knowledge that are at the root of the dominant culture's misunderstanding and subordination of indigenous knowledge. It argues for the reassertion and rebuilding of knowledge from those roots.

The kernel of a revolutionary American Indian scholarship, as I imagine it, is a rejection of the academy's long-standing assumption that the main reason to examine Indian cultures is to learn something about the *people* who practice them – their beliefs and values, their "worldviews," their psychological health or illness, the social structures they create. Radical Indigenism dares to suggest, as its fundamental theoretical premise, that American Indian peoples possess philosophies of knowledge that can be understood as rationalities – articulable, coherent logics for ordering and knowing the world. This assumption permits us to understand these philosophies not merely as

objects of curiosity (unusual things that people have *believed*) but as tools for discovery and for the generation of *knowledge*.

In crafting this new scholarship we have much to learn from the work of the postcolonial theorists.<sup>1</sup> These thinkers have taught us that non-Western peoples all over the world had – and *have* – viable intellectual traditions. They have showed us how those intellectual traditions have, nevertheless, often been overwhelmed, deformed, and rendered invisible by what Walter D. Mignolo (1994) calls "academic colonialism" – the attempt of Amer-European thinkers to construe them through foreign categories of thought. The postcolonial theorists have also pointed the way to a rediscovery of "alternative ways of knowing that may impinge on our current conception of knowledge, understanding, and the politics of intellectual inquiry" (Ibid.: 310). It is such a way of knowing that a new, American Indian scholarship must also seek.

But postcolonial theory may be limited in its ability to inform an American Indian scholarship. A persistent complaint directed at postcolonial theorists is that they have had difficulty really separating themselves from the categories of knowledge provided by the "academic colonialists."<sup>2</sup> The most serious criticism in this category concerns the postcolonialists' failure to grapple with very fundamental assumptions regulating the conduct of inquiry, and the difficulty is especially apparent when one considers indigenous philosophies of knowledge.

Kwame Anthony Appiah (1993), drawing heavily on the work of anthropologist Robin Horton, observes that models of inquiry that dominate the academy (which he calls "scientific," but are alternatively referred to as "modern" or "post-Renaissance") distinguish themselves from indigenous models in many ways. These include their pronounced experimental emphasis, their orientation to narrowly-defined sensory information, their value on the acquisition of new knowledge strictly for its own sake, their "adversarial" approach in which knowledge emerges from the competition of precisely-articulated theories, their value on the universal dissemination of knowledge, their preference for explanations in terms of material forces rather than personal agents, and their willingness to eschew questions of ultimate meaning. Many of these

---

<sup>1</sup> The field of postcolonial theory is extremely diverse. For a useful overview, see Childs and Williams (1999).

<sup>2</sup> There are various versions of this critique (e.g., Prakash 1992, McClintock 1993). Efforts to assess the utility of postcolonial theory specifically in regard to American Indian concerns include Stover (2001), Weaver (1998), and Vizenor (1994).

172 • Eva Marie Garroutte

differences derive from the modern interest in creating a thoroughly secular means of seeking knowledge.

The cultural ascendancy of scientific models of inquiry means that indigenous knowledge can be integrated into academic discourse only if it is pared down, sanitized of the spiritual elements pervading the models that birthed it. The sanitizing process typically means one of two things: either indigenous knowledge is presented as a set of “primitive beliefs” that have been superseded by modern “factual knowledge,” or it is reconstructed (without reference to the contrary assertions of the indigenous carriers) as symbolically rather than literally truthful. The first strategy portrays indigenous claims as simply wrong (although possibly interesting), while the second strategy allows them to be right only by “deny[ing] that traditional people mean what they say” (Appiah 1993: 116).

While postcolonialists have observed differences between conventional academic and indigenous models of inquiry, they have yet to work through their meaning for the practice of scholarship. What Appiah writes about indigenous African peoples is more broadly applicable. Their frequent conviction that the world cannot be approached with a model of inquiry that excludes assumptions about a spiritual reality, he observes,

means that most Africans cannot fully accept those scientific theories in the West that are inconsistent with such assumptions. . . . If modernization is conceived of in, part, as the acceptance of science, we have to decide whether we think the evidence obliges us to give up the invisible ontology [that is, belief in spiritual agencies]. . . . The question [of] how much of the world of spirits we intellectuals must give up (or translate into something ceremonial without the old literal ontology) is one we must face: and I do not think the answer is obvious (1993: 135).

The new, American Indian scholarship that I propose must confront exactly this latter question, and formulate an answer. Radical Indigenism urges resistance to the pressure upon indigenous scholars to participate in academic discourses that strip Native intellectual traditions of their spiritual and sacred elements. It takes this stand on the ground that sacred elements are absolutely central to the coherence of our knowledge traditions and that if we surrender them there is little left in our philosophies that makes any sense.

Perhaps we should say that the postcolonial theorists have led us to a high plane from which we may glimpse the landscape of a radically different schol-

arship. But they have not yet led us into the new country. We American Indian scholars, it seems, must find our own way. With the help of our tribal communities and those others in the academy who will join with us, we must find perspectives that respect and reflect distinctly American Indian ways of knowing the world.

*Radical Indigenism: Assumptions and Methods for an Inquiry*

Radical Indigenism requires that the researcher work within assumptions drawn from American Indian philosophies. Where can these assumptions be discovered? A common premise of indigenous philosophies is that the seeker looks to tribal traditions for guidance. American Indian speakers frequently refer to these traditions as embodied in their people's "Original Instructions" – the body of teachings about the nature of the world and how humans are to live in it. There are, I would suggest, at least three sources to which a researcher working within the perspective of Radical Indigenism may turn to discover Original Instructions on a specific subject. The first obvious place one must seek these traditions is in the statements of elders and others who know community lifeways from their own long experience. Second, we will want to see how (and if) those statements are grounded in larger bodies of teachings – stories, oral narratives, songs, dances, and other records. Finally, we might look to the ways that our ancestors created forms of community life that made flesh the teachings our traditions set forth. The examination of what sociologists call social structures may allow us to deduce traditional principles not only from what the ancestors *said* but also from what they actually *did*.

Having specified these three sources of knowledge, we have defined a simple methodology by which to proceed. We shall see, however, that this methodology can lead to genuine departures from the conclusions of more conventional scholarly approaches – that this methodology can properly be included under the rubric of Radical Indigenism.

### **Radical Indigenism and The Question of American Indian Identity**

In the pages that follow, I illustrate and develop the methodology just described by applying it to an extremely tendentious question of considerable concern to contemporary American Indian communities: the question of tribal "identity."

174 • Eva Marie Garroutte

Since the 1960s, a significant subset of the U.S. population has become interested in American Indian ancestry, and many people have begun to formally identify themselves as Indians even though they had previously identified themselves as some other race. The trend in racial identification is nowhere more obvious than on the U.S. decennial census, which has shown very large gains in the number of people identifying themselves as Indians every decade since 1960. The increases are far too large simply to reflect a high birth rate, and such trends have raised serious tensions in American Indian communities regarding the legitimacy of many people's claims to a tribal identity (Snipp 1986; Nagel 1996; Thornton 1997).

Indeed, today's identity conflicts are severe enough to be sometimes characterized as "race baiting" and "ethnic cleansing." A published letter to the newspaper *Indian Country Today*, in which one well-known activist attacks another, illustrates the animosity seething through discussions about who is a "real Indian." His object is not an Indian, the writer asserts, but "a former redhead, a 'white' female radio personality in New York who made an abrupt transition to Lady Clairol black hair-dye and a career as a professional Washington Indian some fifteen years before she was ever enrolled in anything other than night school."<sup>3</sup> In other recent examples, entire tribes have been indicted of inauthentic Indian-ness, and legal struggles have challenged their right to exercise the prerogatives of tribal nations (Benedict 2000; Clifford 1988).

The problem central to the identity conflicts is that individuals and groups who successfully lay claim to an American Indian identity may gain access to legal, political, economic, and cultural resources. At the individual level, these may include tax advantages, treaty rights, federal or tribal entitlement programs, specific legal protections, as well the privilege of voting in tribal elections, running for tribal office, or participating in community events. At the collective level, a group that receives federal acknowledgement as an Indian tribe establishes itself as a "domestic dependent nation" that is exempt from state laws and takes on a special relationship with the United States government (Canby 2004).

---

<sup>3</sup> "Enrollment" refers to the process by which Indian people formally establish citizenship in a tribal nation, the implication being that the individual only sought relationship with her tribe late in life. I have deliberately omitted publication information for this quotation, so as to discourage circulation of such rumors.

These benefits are sufficiently substantial that it is important that they be distributed appropriately, and this reality motivates careful contemplation of individual and collective claims to Indian-ness. At the same time, tensions about identity have also stifled useful discussion on a variety of subjects by creating an aura of suspicion, anxiety, and rage in many Indian communities (Garrouette 2003).

I believe that there is a way for American Indian communities to address identity issues with the seriousness they deserve, yet without being destroyed by them. I also believe that there is a way to bring together this project with the project of the academy to cultivate knowledge. That is why I have chosen the identity debates as a way to illustrate a methodology by which an approach within the perspective that I call Radical Indigenism might proceed. However, I conceive my remarks not as a prescription for how tribes should think, but as a way to encourage Native scholars and communities in their *own* conversations. I conceive it, as well, as a way to stimulate Native and non-Native scholars toward a conversation about the meaning of scholarship in a pluralistic world. In other words, the reader should understand that, in what follows, I speak only for myself, reflecting on my own interactions as an American Indian person in tribal communities and on my own scholarly work.

If we apply the methodology that I have proposed above – a model of inquiry that draws upon evidence collected from elders, sacred teachings, and records of historic social structures – to the task of building up (or recovering) a definition of tribal identity, what might we discover? The only way for a community really to arrive at an answer to this question is to seek, *as* a community, within its own knowledge traditions. But for the purposes of illustration, I will start the conversation down a specific pathway: I propose that a definition of identity that is available within many American Indian knowledge traditions is what I call a definition of *kinship*. As I see it, a definition of identity founded in kinship responds to at least two themes that one encounters across a range of tribal philosophies. One of these reflects a condition of *being*, which I call *relationship to ancestry*. The second involves a condition of *doing*, which I call *a responsibility to reciprocity*. I will begin by considering examples of how each theme is expressed in the philosophies of specific tribes, following the methodology I have laid out. That is, I draw first on the published and unpublished remarks of Indian people themselves, then on tribal stories that deal with this theme, a finally on a consideration of social structures that suggest specific principles related to it. I then consider

176 • Eva Marie Garroutte

the ways that the conclusions that suggest themselves differ from the conclusions that have followed from investigations carried out within more conventional intellectual perspectives.

### **A First Kinship Principle: Relationship to Ancestry**

The significance of relationship to ancestry for determining inclusion in Native communities is readily apparent in the published remarks by and about Indian people. Ella Deloria (1994), that monumental scholar of Lakota (Sioux) culture, wrote that the genealogical connections of her people were “assiduously traced and remembered, no matter how far back” (27). Scholar of Native American literature Elizabeth Cook-Lynn explains this genealogical preoccupation:

One cannot be a Lakota unless one is related by the lineage (blood) rules of the *tiospaye* [tribal community]. . . . [B]iology is *never* dismissed categorically. On the contrary, it is the overriding concern of the people who assiduously trace their blood ties throughout the generations (1996: 94).

Nor have ideas about the importance of ancestry disappeared. Sentiments about the significance of familial relationship for determining identity were frequently repeated by American Indian people with whom I spoke on this subject between 1999 and 2000.<sup>4</sup> For instance, Julie Moss, a Cherokee grandmother, described the significance of family relationship this way:

[i]n Cherokee culture, [relationship to ancestry] is *very* important. . . . It's *all*-important in Cherokee culture. Without it, it's like you're a person without

---

<sup>4</sup> As I have noted, this essay presents an argument that has been condensed and adapted from a larger project. That project drew on a range of published and unpublished sources, both contemporary and historical. Unpublished sources included interviews with twenty-two American Indian and non-Indian people who are, in one way or another, caught up in conversations, controversies, and conflicts about Native identity. The sample of research participants from which I selected illustrative quotations for this essay is more fully described in Garroutte (2003). Here it suffices to note that I conducted in-depth interviews with these individuals, mainly in person, between the summers of 1999 and 2000. Three interviews, however, were conducted by telephone, and one respondent answered interview questions in writing. Respondents were selected by me because of their diversity of individual characteristics and personal opinions. The small size of the sample forbids any claims to generalizability of the respondents' remarks. Instead, I use this material only to illustrate some of the many ways that Indian and non-Indian people today speak about their identity claims and those of others.

a . . . country. It's actually even worse than that. . . I think Cherokee culture operated on that [kinship principle] from ancient times, and it still does to this day. Because of the clan system and because of the extended family. . . It's part of being Cherokee. . . It's what we're *about*.

Other American Indian people that I consulted added that relationship to ancestry provided not only an organizing principle recognized by tribal communities, but also the conviction of tribal belonging for the individual. Melvin Bevenue, honorary chief of the Creek Nation observed that, if a person is born with tribal ancestry,

that [tribal] identity is *in* you from the day you're born. The *day* you're born. If you're an Indian, it's *there*. What . . . a Indian person has the hardest time [with] is *losin'* it, gettin' rid of it. Because it's *there*. Like a tiger or a lion has an instinct to kill to live. And that's *born* in them. Born in that tiger or the lion. The same way with a *human* being. The day you're born, if you're an Indian, whether you, you pet it [one's identity] and grow up with it [or not], it's there. . . It's [present from] the day you was born. It's *in* you. It *comes* that way. . .

This speaker's statement is reminiscent of the published remarks of N. Scott Momaday, a Kiowa-Cherokee author. Momaday hints at the significance of the intimate, physical connection shared among tribal people in his repetitive and oft-quoted statements about "memory in the blood" and "a racial memory that leaps across generations," linking him to his ancestors (Momaday 1997: 40). "I think that each of us bears in his genes or in his blood or wherever a recollection of the past. Even the very distant past. I just think that's the way it is" (Momaday 1989: 21). For Momaday, the people of a tribe share a powerful connection because of their genealogical relatedness. It is something heritable, fundamental and effectual.

Statements that privilege physical relationship as a determinant of tribal belonging have received scornful treatment in the scholarly literature, where they are dismissed under the rubric of "primordialism" or "essentialism." Prominent postcolonial theorists argue that essentialist ideas are colonial impositions – "the respectable child of old-fashioned exoticism," as Salman Rushdie asserts (1991: 67). Similarly, in a representative sociological critique, Jack Eller and Reed Coughlan (1993) lament the "poverty of primordialism," while Eugene Roosens, in his study of Native ethnicity in Canada, invests essentialism with distinctly threatening associations:

178 • Eva Marie Garroutte

The less critical can be led to believe that the “ethnic feeling” is a primordial, essential dimension of every human being, that it is inborn in the blood, that one can almost feel it physically, that one must fight to safeguard this “high value,” that one is indebted to the ancestors from whom one has received life and “everything.” Political leaders can create stereotypes that give almost religious exaltedness to ethnic identity and, via stereotypes, lead to economic and cultural wars with other groups and even to genocide (1989: 18).

Scholar of Native American literature Arnold Krupat (1989) is more succinct. He angrily labels Momaday’s claims to “memory in the blood” as “absurdly racist” (14).

In such assessments, essentialist ideas – ideas presupposing a tribal connection inherent to the individual’s fundamental nature – are displayed as the property of the intellectually deficient and the politically rabid. That leaves American Indian speakers and authors who have articulated ideas about the centrality of genealogical relationship in determining tribal identity in unfortunate company. But before rushing to the judgment that this is where they belong, let us proceed as a research program attentive to the perspective of Radical Indigenism might direct.

Is there evidence that these claims have a foundation in tribal philosophies of knowledge? If so, can they be understood *there* in more sophisticated ways than academic criticisms of essentialism propose?

Even a cursory examination reveals that sacred stories about the importance of kinship defined in terms of genealogical descent abound in tribal oral traditions. But to suggest the distinctiveness of American Indian ideas about kinship, let us examine only one type of story. Narratives of this general type appear in a number of different tribes and describe the birth and life of great mythological figures.<sup>5</sup>

In these stories, the hero is frequently born from a miraculous union of a spirit being and a human woman. His mother may not know the father’s identity, but the child knows, or sets out to discover it. Thus, when Water Jar Boy of the Tewa-speaking Pueblos in New Mexico questions his mother about

---

<sup>5</sup> Other stories might illustrate a similar point, but the type of story that I have chosen recommends itself both for the central focus on issues of kinship and also because of its distribution across many different tribes.

his miraculous paternity, "somehow [he] . . . knew the answer to his own question. He announced to his mother, 'I know where my father is, and tomorrow I will go and find him!'" On his ensuing quest, Water Jar Boy discovers a man sitting near a spring (within which the man lives) and recognizes him. The father joyfully leads Water Jar Boy into the spring to meet his other paternal relatives. "Water Jar Boy stayed in the spring and lives there to this day" (Cajete 1994). Although Water Jar Boy has never previously met these relatives, he shares a powerful and meaningful bond with them: a bond of common ancestry.<sup>6</sup>

In a thematically similar story told by the Cherokee of North Carolina and Oklahoma, the offspring of the thunder being and a human woman seeks his unknown father and is restored to his paternal family after a series of ordeals. Through his journey, he is cured of physical affliction and discovers the powers that are his birthright: he learns that he is the lightning being, with the power to rend the sky with his deadly bolts and strike down his opponents in battle. Lightning begins his quest physically disfigured and ignorant of who he is; he does not realize that he is a powerful spirit being. Healing and self-knowledge follow reunion with those previously unknown others with whom the hero shares a relationship of ancestry and, with it, an essential nature.<sup>7</sup>

Still another story, this one from the Hopi of Arizona, features a child conceived of the sun who seeks and finds his father. In the interactions that follow, he discovers extraordinary abilities that belong to him as the child of his father; he then returns to earth transformed from an object of village contempt into a radiantly attired teacher of how the people should live. As in the Cherokee story, a child's genealogical relationship has real consequences for who he fundamentally is and for what he becomes.<sup>8</sup>

My remarks here can only be suggestive. A proper interpretation of sacred stories requires that they be considered in the context of tribal languages, cultures, and community life. These interpretative tasks belong to those with very special competencies and, importantly, to tribal communities who take on such tasks *as* communities. But these examples of a story theme found across various tribes show evidence – not only in what contemporary elders

<sup>6</sup> For the full text of this story, see Cajete (1994: 125–27).

<sup>7</sup> For the text, see Mooney (1992: 311–15).

<sup>8</sup> For the text, see Erdoes and Ortiz (1984: 145–50).

180 • Eva Marie Garroutte

say but in what sacred stories relate – for a kind of traditionally-grounded essentialism (or, more likely, essentialisms) among at least some American Indian peoples. In so doing, they provide a context for remarks such as those of Momaday and other elders about the importance for tribal identity of genealogical relationship in and of itself. They invite tribal communities to explore these ideas further, by examining their own stories about tribal belonging.

The existence of essentialist themes in tribal sacred stories suggests that their academic dismissal as racist incitements or as colonial artifacts must be inspected carefully. Do the versions of essentialism that Native communities may discover in their traditional stories differ from the essentialist claims that arise in academic contexts and that have been so roundly criticized there? Do all essentialist definitions of identity come from the same intellectual place? Do they all function in the same way? Social scientific studies of kinship provide a context in which to explore such questions.

Whereas contemporary social scientists explicitly reject essentialist assumptions, anthropologist David Schneider (1984) shows that their work has often implicitly depended upon such assumptions. In his analysis of nineteenth- and twentieth-century studies of kinship, he concludes:

There is an assumption that is . . . widely held and necessary to the study of kinship. . . . It is the assumption that Blood Is Thicker Than Water.

Without this assumption much that has been written [by social scientists] about kinship simply does not make sense. . . . [This assumption posits that] *kinship is a strong solidary bond that is largely innate, a quality of human nature, biologically determined, however much social or cultural overlay may also be present* (original emphasis) (165–66).

The consistent orientation of kinship studies, Schneider summarizes, has understood “true” kinship as founded exclusively on biological relationship. Such an assumption clearly implies a kind of essentialism in that it posits a fundamental substance connecting relatives. This substance is conceived as a physical material – “blood” – that can, like other physical materials, be attenuated and eventually exhausted. The corollary of what Schneider calls this “biologistic” assumption is that the significance of kin relationship depends absolutely on the proximity of the ancestral connection: “Primary relatives are closer than secondary, secondary are closer than tertiary, and so on . . . [W]hat has been called ‘genealogical distance’ . . . is a measure of the mag-

nitude of the biological component and hence the strength of the [kinship] bond" (173).

How do these prevalent social scientific ideas compare to the essentialisms that might be expected to emerge from indigenous communities' contemplation of their philosophies of kinship? Certainly some modern American Indian people embrace a similarly biologicistic construction of identity. But others suggest the very different idea that Indian identity is a discrete, not a continuous variable. Momaday, for instance, makes no indication that his tribal "memory in the blood" is in any way compromised by being mingled with his European ancestry, and several of the American Indian people with whom I spoke went out of their way to reject such a conclusion. For instance, Anishnabe artist, teacher, and grandmother Kathleen Westcott argued that the simple *fact* of physical relationship is significant in a way that overwhelms any ideas about what the federal government refers to as "blood quantum," or degree of relationship:

When a person says they're Native, it's very important to me that they *are* Native. . . . It's *not* important to me what their blood quantum is. I really – honest to God – do believe that the teensiest, tinsiest – in order to use the language of blood quantum – blood degree is nevertheless the most powerful presence of ancestry. And I know that I'm not alone in that. I know that elders who I really, really respect see it that way.

From the perspective that such sentiments imply, one either belongs to the ancestors or one does not; the notion of fractionating one's essential substance is untenable. A discussion offered by Powhatan/Lenape/Saponi anthropologist Jack Forbes supports this contention and provides further insight into tribal versions of essentialism. In certain tribes, Forbes writes,

persons are descended in the female line from a "first" ancestor, usually a being with an animal or plant name. If, for example, one is a member of the "turtle" matrilineal lineage, one might find this situation: 500 generations ago the first "turtle" woman lived, and in each subsequent generation her female descendants [in order to respect incest prohibitions] had to marry men who were non-turtles, i.e., with other lineages in their female lines. A modern-day "turtle" person, then, might well be, in quantitative terms, one-five-hundredth "turtle" and four-hundred-ninety-nine-five-hundredths non-"turtle," and yet, at the same time, be completely and totally a turtle person (1990: 38–39).

182 • Eva Marie Garroutte

This example elegantly demonstrates that the essentialism of tribal philosophies can be founded on a different logic than that of Schneider's social scientists: a sacred logic to which quantification is irrelevant.

A second significant difference in the way Native and non-Native philosophies may construct essentialist ideas concerns assumptions about how the identity-conferring substance is transmitted. The biologicistic theories underpinning social scientific studies of kinship assume the essential substance is inherited through birth. In a number of Native philosophies, however, it appears that essential nature *can* be, but does not necessarily *have* to be, so transmitted. Alternatively, it can also be created ceremonially. We learn this from an examination of social patterns related to adoption practices in specific tribes.

Although some tribes, at certain historical moments, were very bounded and closed societies, others had strong, incorporative traditions. In the wake of disruptions introduced by European arrivals, for instance, "interethnic cooperation and acceptance of new members into the group to achieve a numerical advantage over other groups became an important strategy. . . . Some groups added outsiders who were captives, slaves, orphans, outlaws, social outcasts, mixed-bloods, trading partners, or fictive kin" (Miller 1994: 226–27).

Various American Indian individuals whom I interviewed gave examples of "outsiders" being incorporated into the tribe in ways that cause them to take on relationships that are understood in essentialist terms and that may even be spoken of as physical or "blood" relationships. For instance, retired educator Archie Mason told me that, along with Osage and Cherokee ancestry he,

can claim [to be] Ponca because of a relationship of two women long ago [in the nineteenth century]. A Ponca woman and an Osage woman, who was my relation, took each other as sisters. There are few people today who still acknowledge that relationship. Those of us that do, we are blood-related because of that. It [the adoption ceremony] was a very *special* ceremony held on the Arkansas River, between the Osages and the Poncas, a very special, spiritual thing way back there. . . . When that happened, there was a . . . connection between families. And today, I have Ponca people who are my *family*. . . . [W]e recognize each other as *blood*. We're the *same*. . . . I know that and it affects *me*. I tell my children and my grandchildren these kinds of things.

Archie suggests an understanding of ceremony as the vehicle for a powerful transformation by which the object becomes a different *kind* of person – in his case, a person related to other Ponca people in fundamentally the same way that those born with Ponca ancestry are related.

There is a long tradition, at least in certain tribes, of the kinds of practices that this contemporary speaker suggests. The tribes of the Iroquois Confederacy, for example, were at times very active in adopting outsiders (Calloway 1983: 194). Evidence suggests that, among the Iroquois, adoption rituals did not merely alter people's formal citizenship status; rather, they ceremonially *re-created* the individual, changing her essential nature in accordance with what I am calling a definition of kinship. For instance, Frederick Webb Hodge (1968), in his *Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico*, tells the story of two white sisters who were captured by the Seneca (a member tribe within the Iroquois confederacy) and prepared for tribal adoption. However, Hodge writes, "instead of both being adopted into one clan, one [sister] was adopted by the Deer Clan and the other by the Heron clan, and thus the blood of the sisters was changed by the rite of adoption in such wise that their children could intermarry" (15).

Had these sisters been born Senecas, they would have belonged to the same clan. All their children would have belonged to that clan as well and would have been restrained from intermarriage by incest prohibitions. But the Seneca ceremonial procedures permanently transformed the sisters' fundamental nature and being. The choice of wording – that their very "blood . . . was changed" – may, of course, reflect an outside observer's interpretation. Yet the consequences of the act are clear. The adoption ceremony made the sisters different from each other at a level that transcended straightforward biological relationship. It caused a *sacred* transformation that brought into being what nature had originally wrought otherwise. It seems to have bestowed, quite literally, a connection of fundamental substance to other members of the tribal body.

These new Seneca relatives are not properly described as "fictive kin" – the category to which anthropological studies of kinship since the nineteenth-century writings of Henry Maine would relegate them. They entered the ceremony as one kind of being and emerged as another. The kinship substance thus acquired is real and consequential, enabling new relationships – both social and physical. But it does not behave like the strictly material kinship

184 • Eva Marie Garroutte

substance assumed by social scientific theories because it can be created in ceremony. Given the limitations of the English language and of Amer-European conceptual categories, perhaps we can only say that the kinship substance implied here is both physical *and* more-than-physical.<sup>9</sup>

These observations, like the themes explored in tribal sacred stories, challenge the postcolonialists' claim that any embrace of essentialism necessarily represents surrender to non-indigenous ideas and values. These examples suggest that there are indigenous essentialisms quite different from the biologicistic, social scientific varieties. They also challenge the accusation that essentialist claims are necessarily racist: the essentialisms explored here have nothing to do with the idea of race, a concept rooted in the same biologicistic assumptions that have driven social scientific studies of kinship. Instead, the identity definitions that I have explored emphasize the unique importance of genealogical relatedness to tribal communities while also allowing, at least in principle, for people of *any* race to be brought into kinship relations through the transformative mechanism of ceremony.

### **A Second Kinship Principle: Responsibility to Reciprocity**

The definition of kinship that I think may be recoverable in at least some American Indian philosophical traditions comprises not only the significance of relationship to ancestry, but also the way that individuals behave. In this vein, Julie Moss described the life of small, Cherokee communities in Oklahoma:

I grew up in a . . . huge, extended family. And you never had to worry about anything. You always knew that you had help. If you needed food, that whole community helped you. . . . So I know what that kinship system does for you. . . . You know that if you venture out into the world, you don't have to do it by yourself. . . . And that whole idea of individuality and compet-

<sup>9</sup> Hartland's (1909–1910) extensive study of kinship philosophies argues that similar ideas have characterized many indigenous cultures:

Descent is . . . the typical cause of kinship and a common blood. . . . But kinship may also be acquired; and when once it is acquired by a stranger he ranks thenceforth for all purposes as one descended from a common ancestor. To acquire kinship a ceremony must be undergone: the blood of the candidate must be mingled with that of the kin. The ceremony, no less than the words made use of in various languages to describe the members of the kind and their common bond, renders it clear that the bond is the bond of blood (258).

itiveness wasn't really in our [Cherokee] culture, in that kinship culture . . . because it was all about helping one another and sharing everything. . . . There are communities that still practice that [way of life] to this day.

In tribe after tribe, one finds a conviction that The People – those who understand themselves as bound together in spiritually faithful community – are responsible to live with each other in particular ways. These ways of relationship constitute what I am calling a responsibility to reciprocity. It is likewise suggested by Christopher Jocks (1997) when he writes of "the ability to *participate* in kinship" (original emphasis). He regards kinship as an ongoing practice or skill, an active relationship that must be maintained, and that is not invariably tied to one's genealogical connections: "In every Indian community I am aware of there are a few non-Indians who have gained [entry into kinship relations]. . . . Generosity of time and spirit, respect and politeness, willingness to help out, and openness to learn, are what our elders seem to value most; and all of us who pursue this work [in American Indian Studies] know non-Indians who have succeeded in it." The same logic also works in reverse: "There are full-blood Indians who have lost this ability to participate in kinship. . . ." (172).

The foregoing observations suggest an emphasis on *behavior* in defining tribal identity that is quite different than the ideas that have dominated social scientific studies of kinship. Schneider's critique, discussed earlier, argues that the biologicistic preoccupation of such studies has long motivated social scientists to consider any kind of behavior as merely a "social and cultural overlay" upon the fundamental fact of physical descendancy. Accordingly, it makes little sense within social scientific frameworks to speak of kinship as a venue of willful participation.

Can a consideration of tribal sacred stories and social structures challenge the dismissal of behavior as an element of tribal identity?. As in the preceding discussion of essentialist ideas, I propose to look at a single story theme that appears across many tribes and invite communities to consider its implications. All over North and South America, tribal traditions include a theme of humans who marry animals, sometimes going to live in the animal village (Harrod 2000, Thompson 1929).

One illustrative story expressing such a theme is found among the Thompson River (Ntlakypamuk) Indians of British Columbia. In it, a hunter takes a deer woman for a wife and goes to live with her people in their underground village. He learns to follow their way of life, and the hunter and his new

186 • Eva Marie Garroutte

relatives quickly take on their proper roles, each making an appropriate gift to the other: whenever the people become hungry, one of the deer people offers itself and the hunter kills it. Everyone eats, and the hunter performs the ritual that allows the dead deer to return to life. Thus there is a full circle of reciprocity: the deer people share their flesh, each in turn for the others, while the hunter shares his skill with weapons and his attentiveness to ceremonial requirements.

In this particular story, the hunter is fully and permanently transformed: "The hunter never returned to the people. He became a deer." But stories of animal-human marriages do not always work out this way. In many stories, even if the human spouse temporarily takes on animal form, he or she may be unable or unwilling to entirely adapt to the requirements of living with the new community. Ultimately there comes a moment in which people make a choice, by their behavior, about the community to which they truly belong. Many times they end up back with human relatives.

The children of human-animal unions may also have to decide their place, and again their actions determine the answer. Thus, in the Thompson River story, the hunter's son makes a choice that is the opposite of his father's. Although in his youth he is a deer, when he grows older he decides to return to his father's village and live as a human: "He became an Indian and a great hunter" (Thompson 1929: 173). Although this child's ancestry – partly human and partly deer – gives him a potential claim on two communities of relatives, he eventually chooses to bring the gift of hunting skills to the human village. Thus, it is with humans that he belongs, and it is a human that he finally becomes. The story theme about marriages that link human and non-human communities provides a provocative starting point for a discussion of kinship conceived as an act of *doing* as well as an act of *being*.

Traditional social structures in a number of tribes likewise suggest an explicit recognition that tribal belonging could manifest itself as a kind of behavior, a relationship that was proven over time. Thus, among the tribes of the Iroquois confederacy, a trial period was required of adoptees, during which the new relatives proved themselves. After a ritual of initiation, "captives embarked on a period of probation – it might end months or years later or never – during which new relatives and fellow villagers judged whether they had truly become Iroquois" (Richter 1992: 69). Ultimate acceptance was contingent on what adoptees did:

Captives became one people with the Iroquois by *acting* like Iroquois. . . . For some adoptees, especially potentially dangerous adult warriors, the behavioral test might entail such a dramatic act as participation in a raid against one's former people. For women and children, however, the requirements were more mundane: doing one's share of the work, fulfilling one's kinship obligations, marrying one's new relatives' choice of a spouse. Usually that was enough. . . . A newcomer could secure a permanent place in the family by adequately performing the duties of the person she replaced (72).

The historic social structures of various tribes reveal the opposite situation as well; if some behaviors earned individuals a place in the tribal circle, certain acts could place one outside it. Sorcery was such an offense in some tribes; so was the murder of another tribal member. But seemingly lesser failures of reciprocity might cause others at least to question one's place in the tribal society. Ella Deloria's work explaining the importance of generosity in traditional Lakota (Sioux) society provides an example. A significant part of tribal life, she writes, was to participate in reciprocal exchange: to share one's possessions and to accept help from others whenever necessary. Further, those who sought the accumulation of wealth were met with distrust. "A man who showed that tendency was suspect, as if he were not quite human. *Tak-tanin-sni* they said of him; meaning 'what kind of thing (he may be) is not plain' (73). In other words, those who did not participate through reciprocal behavior in the kinship system could even bring into question their place in the classification of humans. Although the relatives of such an individual might still try to protect him, their task would not be easy. He did not act like a Lakota.

What might one learn about tribal identity by taking an emphasis on reciprocal behavior more seriously than social scientific studies of kinship have done? One limitation of any strictly biologicistic model of kinship becomes clear when considering the extended nature of the reciprocating community typically presupposed in indigenous philosophies. That is, social scientific analyses have concerned themselves primarily with the relationships of *humans* to one another, presenting elaborate diagrams and analyses of kinship terminology and detailed discussions of the behaviors that individuals expect from different categories of relatives.

By contrast, in tribal philosophies, people take their place, or find their identity, within a kinship network that includes not only other humans, but

also animals, plants, minerals, geographic features, the earth itself, celestial bodies, and spirit beings. They owe certain things to, and expect things from, all these entities. Acts of reciprocity in this extended community occur not solely – perhaps not even *primarily* – to benefit humans. As is richly illustrated in the story of the hunter who became a deer, reciprocity serves humans no better – and no worse – than any other member of the natural world. Humans are simply one set of participants in the vast cycles of giving and receiving, of covenant and celebration, that constitute kinship relations.

Indigenous perspectives on tribal belonging not only draw attention to more actors than conventional academic scholarship has recognized. They also reveal a different way to think about the behaviors by which humans establish and maintain kinship relations. Especially in the case of nonhuman relatives, these activities likely include ritual action.

Twentieth-century literature in the social scientific study of ritual activity – work by such disciplinary founders as Malinowski, Radcliffe-Brown, Homans, Parsons, Kluckhohn, Geertz, and others – centrally concerns itself with the *functions* of ritual, particularly its role in channeling anxiety. A central claim is that humans resort to ritual where rational contemplation and utilitarian technological intervention fail to produce a certain outcome – as in the hunting of game animals that may not show themselves. Ritual, as Bronislaw Malinowski writes, “is . . . generally to be found whenever man comes to an unbridgeable gap . . . in his knowledge or in his powers of practical control, and yet has to continue in his pursuit” (1979: 43).

The foregoing construction of the ritual reciprocation characterizing the relationships between human and nonhuman kin differs substantially from understandings that are more likely to emerge from tribal philosophies. Relationships with nonhuman kin are often characterized, in indigenous philosophies, by awe and respect, as well as by emotions much more positive than the social scientific concentration on anxiety suggests. In particular, many indigenous people speak of ritual reciprocation as a means of enjoying and expressing loving communion. Thus Herbert John Benally, writing from within Navajo philosophy, refers to “establishing an intimate relationship with nature” (1994: 28). Elsewhere, the same author characterizes this relationship as thanksgiving: “gratitude is directed to the water, the trees, the plants and animals that nourish and shelter, and especially to the creators, that their blessings would never diminish” (1998: 244).

Julio Valladolid and Frédérique Apffel-Marglin (2001) likewise describe the

understanding, among the Andean indigenous people, of ritual as a means of establishing profound emotional relationships. In preparing the fields for planting, the Aymara of Conima, Peru offer coca leaves and deep reverence: "Pachamamma, Holy Earth, please pardon us, please excuse us. . . . Thus saying, we kiss her on our knees" (656). The relationship continues as new life emerges and matures:

The plants . . . that [the Andean indigenous people] nurture with dedication and love are members of their families. When the small shoots emerge in the *chacra* [small field], they are their children; when they flower, they are companions with whom they dance and to whom they sing; and when they give fruit at the time of harvest, they are their mothers. Andean peasant agriculture is this nurturance, full of feelings as for their own family (660).

The sentiments described here can only be spoken of as love. They suggest the possibility of ritual relationships as a vehicle enabling people to experience the sheer joy of connectedness, the pleasure that comes from making and having relatives, the satisfaction of acting like a relative oneself. It is a perspective that makes the social scientific reduction of ritual behavior to a means for channeling anxiety feel considerably less satisfying – or at least less complete.

The foregoing observations about the importance for tribal identity of a responsibility to reciprocity, and the distinctive ways that this idea may be developed within indigenous philosophies, add another dimension to our understanding of what I am calling a definition of tribal identity founded in kinship. They show us that even strongly essentialist definitions of identity do not necessarily reduce to determinations of one's fundamentally-given nature: the ideas about tribal belonging just suggested imply that one must not only *be* a relative (in a genealogical sense), but that one must also *act* like one.

### **Radical Indigenism, Tribal Identity, and Tradition**

The definition of identity that I have explored sets some conditions for the compassionate incorporation, into tribal communities, of Indian persons whom other definitions can exclude. At the same time, being grounded in the value of reciprocity, it provides for protection of Indian communities from the abuse that can result from loosened boundaries, particularly the behavior of would-be "free riders" who attempt to exploit the privileges and resources associated with tribal membership without contributing anything to the community

190 • Eva Marie Garroutte

(See further Garroutte 2003). This is true because the themes of the sacred stories provide models of community life in which all members are held to a rigorous standard of responsible participation. The definition I have explored may let Indian people be more gentle with one another than we are now in discussions about tribal belonging.

Nevertheless, the particular ideas about tribal identity that I have proposed are less important than the larger perspective upon which I drew to generate them. The process I have attempted might be labeled a tentative exploration of the meaning and promise of the theoretical approach that I have called Radical Indigenism. This exploration responds to a common principle of traditional tribal philosophies by orienting itself to an expressly practical goal. It tries to assist tribal communities in conversations about identity, inviting them to their own work of creating new definitions by displaying themes about tribal belonging found in particular contexts. At the same time, it reflects another common principle of tribal philosophies by refusing to separate practical pursuits from spiritual ones. It is expressly oriented towards Original Instructions, and it looks to elders, sacred stories, and traditional practices in the attempt to uncover these. It draws upon these sources – ones that the academy has neglected or used in a different way – to generate ideas about a question that is important to Indian peoples today. It proposes a place in the conversations for those who live and move in Indian communities, in scholarly communities, or in both.

Of course I anticipate an urgent protest from my academic colleagues. The foregoing discussions urge recovery of “traditional” ideas about tribal belonging – an endeavor that will generate little scholarly enthusiasm. Salman Rushdie echoes a common sentiment when he asserts: “it is completely fallacious to suppose that there is such a thing as a pure, unalloyed tradition from which to draw. The only people who believe this are religious extremists” (1991: 67). Other scholars will certainly ask me what I can possibly mean by “tradition” – a word so slippery that most scholars have abandoned it. Happily, the answer elucidates the central premise of Radical Indigenism.

I am pleased to agree that “tradition” does not equate to some petrified pattern of life – to what The People have unchangingly done. American Indian communities have found such varied solutions to the problems of survival that individuals living in different historic periods might have difficulty even recognizing their ancestors. Even in relatively recent times, Indian people have continued to adapt and change, and their practices in relation to

kinship are no exception. Neither does "tradition," by my understanding, equate to ancient practice: to whatever The People did, at the most distant historical moment of which we have knowledge. Certainly, Indian people must take seriously our ancestors' struggles and solutions. But that does not mean that we enshrine a single moment as the enduring touchstone. As an old family friend, a Navajo ceremonialist, once said to me, "not *everything* people did a long time ago was 'traditional.'"

What then *is* tradition? Joyce Johnson, a Cherokee great-grandmother, makes a significant distinction:

Nowadays we [Indian people] have "culture" and we have "tradition," and they can be separate. . . . Culture has to do with outward things that let other people see that you are Indian: what we eat, what we wear, the things we make. Those can be *part* of our teachings from the past; some parts of culture come from spiritual teachings. But some things that have become a part of culture might even be bad.

By contrast, she says,

tradition is what is passed on orally, and it tells you the way you are *supposed* to be. It has to give us *good*. It has to give us *growth*. It is the lessons that were taught us by the ancient ones and the elders to help [each of] us be a better person, and closer to the Creator. And we have to use it in the way it is intended. . . . It's spiritual.

My approach to defining "tradition" is consistent with the goal of Radical Indigenism to respect the tenets of indigenous philosophies of knowledge; this approach accepts that tradition is fundamentally a *sacred* concept. As such, it is inextricably bound up with the idea of Original Instructions: the spiritual teachings that describe the way that The People must live. It designates the modes of thinking and acting that correspond to the fundamental principles of those teachings.

This definition of tradition has several implications. One is that we should not expect that our ancestors always chose to live in the light of their sacred teachings (any more than we do). Nevertheless, time cannot transform behavior into tradition if it departs from those teachings. Another implication is that many different ways of organizing tribal life may be equally traditional – though, to the extent that our ancestors responded to their Original Instructions, we may expect to find certain threads of continuity reflecting similar principles. We can expect that what Mohawk professor of political

192 • Eva Marie Garroutte

science Gerald Alfred writes, in his study of political life among the Kahnawake Mohawks of Quebec, is generalizable beyond that sphere:

There is no simple answer to the question: "Do ideologies/peoples/nations/cultures change or not?" They of course change – and they do not. . . . In Native cultures at least there exists a stable core which forms the basis of the political culture and nationalist ideology. There are also peripheral elements within the culture which are malleable and which do shift and transform, rise and fall in importance and relevance according to shifts in the political context and according to the exigencies of the general political and economic climate (1995: 188).

A third implication of the foregoing definition of "tradition" is that claims about it are ultimately validated through processes of inquiry that include a spiritual dimension, including such activities as dancing, singing, praying, dreaming, joining in ritual, and interacting with the natural world. Tradition, by my understanding, was first received in these ways, and indigenous philosophies allow for knowledge to continue to be so received. This means that, when communities seek knowledge in the context of their traditional philosophies, there is another place to look, in addition to those I have discussed. Tribal communities can validate what they learn from elders, stories, and their own histories by comparing their conclusions to what they learn through individual and collective ceremonial participation.

My definition of tradition is, of course, completely indefensible from the perspective of the social sciences, or for that matter, any other science. The same is true for its implications. This is precisely the point of the theoretical perspective that I call Radical Indigenism. Radical Indigenism respects the definitions and assumptions that characterize the philosophies of knowledge carried by tribal peoples. The rules of conventional academic inquiry relegate the types of explorations I describe here to the realm of faith and belief, rather than the realm of scholarship and knowledge. But there is a heavy price for following these rules. By excluding information derived from inquiries that include (or are infused by) spiritual elements, the academy also will never *really* encounter Indian people. Certainly it will not encounter them as equal participants in a common enterprise. It is simply not possible to split off or ignore the spiritual aspects of tribal philosophies and make any sense of them or the people who carry them. Radical Indigenism is an intellectual perspective that embraces this academically inconvenient truth.

### **American Indian Communities and Radical Indigenism**

There is a great deal that the academy might learn – not just *about* but also *from* American Indian peoples. Native communities have great traditions of knowledge that have not been appreciated or respected and Radical Indigenism insists that this situation change. But it is not only the academy that could benefit from the development of Racial Indigenism; modern Indian communities also have an investment in the creation of distinctively American Indian forms of scholarship. As Mohawk scholar Gerald Alfred (1999) has argued, part of the process of making American Indian communities whole and fully functional again is to recreate our institutions, including the institutions of scholarship and learning.

In addition, Radical Indigenism allows Indian people to settle their claims upon the academy, and even the larger society, upon a different foundation. For many years Indian people and their allies have asked universities to invest in the study and teaching of Indian languages, to recognize their histories and cultures, to divest themselves of stock holdings in corporations that are destroying the ecology of Indian homelands, to refuse funding for scientific research projects that entail the desecration of tribal sacred sites, and so on. Indian people have had very limited success in pressing such agendas because, to date, they have been unable to frame them as anything but *political* goals. They are subsequently relegated to the wish list dedicated to all the other campus "special interest" groups – the disabled, gays, bisexuals, foreign students, women faculty, Italian American students, college Republicans, and so on. The minimal resources universities dedicate to claimants on this list are divided among them all.

But from the perspective of Radical Indigenism, arguments that universities must protect American Indian land, languages, history, and cultures are not political claims at all, nor even religious or legal ones; they are *epistemological* claims. Radical Indigenism supports the assumption enshrined in tribal philosophies throughout the Americas: that relationships with all these things are rich sources of knowledge. Thus when scholars pursuing Radical Indigenism ask universities to protect sacred lands and our ability to be in relationship with them, when we ask them to support the teaching of our history, when we ask them to invest in the protection of our languages and cultures, we will be asking them to protect *the conditions under which we carry out our scholarship*. We ask for these things for the same reason that scholars ask for laboratory equipment, or books, or the protection of tenure: because they are

194 • Eva Marie Garroutte

the wellspring of what scholars working within the perspective of Radical Indigenism can *know* and *discover* through the means laid out in traditional philosophies of knowledge and of inquiry. Radical Indigenism offers Indian people a means to help the academy understand what we need in order to pursue a new, and distinctively American Indian, kind of scholarship.

### Radical Indigenism and the Academy

To accept Radical Indigenism will require the academy to make itself open to entirely new models of inquiry. I have argued that explorations within this perspective can properly be based upon the teachings of tribal elders, upon sacred stories, and upon knowledge of the ways that healthy Native communities functioned historically. In so doing, I hope that I have offered some suggestions that tribal communities might investigate further. But Radical Indigenism will ask the academy to accept a great deal more than this.

A fully developed Radical Indigenism presupposes that Indian peoples possess complete philosophies of knowledge that include not only the sources just named, but also knowledge that is received through ceremonial means: through dreams; through communication with the non-human relatives that inhabit the universe; through the collective, ritual seeking of spiritually faithful communities; and through interactions with land and language for which the conventionally-defined academic disciplines have no names and no place. It will likely ask the academy to allow for different constructions of the “observable,” of the relationship between mind and body, of the nature and powers of language, of the meaning and utility of “subjective” knowledge and of unique (nonrepeatable) events – and much more. It will require, in other words, not discarding or replacing fundamental tenets of scientific models of inquiry, but a willingness to allow other, very different models to stand alongside them. These models of inquiry posit a very different order in the world than the one that academic disciplines generally assume, but a world that is nevertheless not *disorderly*. Radical Indigenism will ask the academy to allow scholars to demonstrate that the diverse philosophies of knowledge carried by many different tribal peoples can be the basis for genuine, worthwhile scholarship.

These are truly monumental requests. It is therefore appropriate to consider *why* the academy should be motivated to expand its boundaries in such a way as to include Radical Indigenism under the rubric of scholarship. The

most compelling reason is that, by accepting indigenous perspectives on knowledge, conventional scholars might discover things that they presently do not know, and have no means to know, because of the limitations of the intellectual frameworks within which they operate. American Indian (and other indigenous) philosophies present whole new ways of thinking about the world and the relationships within it. And new frameworks do not come along very often. Karl Marx gave the social sciences one such framework. Sigmund Freud provided another. The academy never saw the world in the same way again after the work of these scholars. This is the reason that even those who do not think they were *right* still think they were *brilliant*. I submit that Radical Indigenism, properly pursued, has the potential to elucidate ways of thinking that would reorder our understanding of the world and everything in it even more substantially than these two modern "Western" thinkers did.

### Conclusion

If Radical Indigenism is to advance, and if it is to avoid exploiting Indian communities, it will require the participation of scholars who find ways to embed themselves in those communities as contributing members, who can look to traditional knowledge from a position of personal commitment, who can profoundly encounter the sacred stories and songs in the language that generated them, who contribute to conversations that the communities themselves understand to be important, and who make themselves answerable to the rules of conduct and inquiry that govern those communities. If the academy is willing to make a safe place for such people and the perspectives they carry, it will have to broaden conventional assumptions about what it means to do scholarship. The perspective of Radical Indigenism suggests a means by which such a process might begin, and by which it might inform conversations about American Indian identity, or anything else. Some American Indian (and non-Indian) scholars have already begun to enter into the ceremonial ways of knowing that belong to indigenous peoples, and to write and think about spiritual practice for their scholarship. I have discussed some of this work in my book *Real Indians*, and I believe that more will follow. It falls to the academy to make itself ready to hear the voices of these emerging scholars.