PREFACE

This book has been over ten years in the making. It was back in 1982 when one of our co-authors, Dennis McPherson, first contacted Lakehead University. At that time he was Executive Director of Weechi-it-te-win Family Services Inc., an Indian-run child welfare organization in Fort Frances, Ontario. He contacted Lakehead University because he wanted a Professor of Social Work to speak to his organization about Social Work practice with special reference to Native families and Native communities. But he wanted something else as well. He approached the Department of Philosophy and asked why that Department, in what professed to be a regional university, did not offer courses in Native Indian philosophy, more specifically in Ojibway philosophy. He pointed out that his examination of the Lakehead University calendar revealed that the Department offered courses in ancient Greek philosophy, in German idealism and British empiricism. It even offered a course in Eastern philosophical systems, in the philosophies of India, China and Japan. Why not North American Indian philosophies? To reply to this sort of question by saying that there is simply no such thing would be to reveal a kind of ethnocentric prejudice. When confronted with this question our other co-author, Lakehead philosopher J. Douglas Rabb, was forced to reply that no one in the Department knew anything about the subject.
Well, Dennis McPherson set out to rectify that situation. He registered as a student at Lakehead University and has since graduated from L.U. with a BA. and an H.BA. majoring in Philosophy along with a degree in social work (H.B.5.W.). He has also earned a law degree (LL.B.) from the University of Ottawa. Together with Professor Rabb he developed a philosophy course entitled Native Canadian World Views. This is truly a case of the student teaching the teacher. The course, team taught by McPherson and Rabb (students called it the Dennis and Doug show), was first offered in the spring of 1990. So far as we are aware it is the first course in North American Indian Philosophy offered by a Department of Philosophy at a Canadian University. The Calendar description reads as follows: "Philosophy 2805- Native Canadian World Views. This course is designed to introduce the student to the manner in which the world is viewed from the perspective of the Native peoples of Canada. Through a comparative analysis of the many interpretations placed upon the Indian perspective by mainstream society basic insights into the traditional Indian world view can be gained. The course discusses some of the distinctive aspects of Indian cultural perspectives. The significance of these aspects and their implications in contemporary issues concerning cultural, social, legal, political and economic matters is explored."

This book, Indian from the Inside, is in part a result of developing, preparing and teaching Philosophy 2805-- Native Canadian World Views. It is intended to be used as a text for this course, and to facilitate the development of similar courses elsewhere. However, we hope that our study will not be dismissed as "merely a textbook." We intend it also as a genuine contribution to scholarship in this area. Although we do not regard ourselves in any way as Indian spokesmen (one of us is not even Indian) we do have something to say, we do have something to teach. Although we do not speak for the aboriginal people of Canada, we do believe that the discipline of philosophy can teach us all how to listen to the aboriginal people of Canada. And we do mean "all" Indian and non-Indian alike. We argue that the discipline of philosophy can help the aboriginal people of Canada to listen to themselves, to acquire a deeper understanding of who they really are. After all one of the first imperatives of philosophy is to "know thyself." We also argue that philosophy can help the non-Native to listen to the aboriginal people of Canada. If philosophy can help a first year undergraduate to get inside the mind of an ancient Greek philosopher like a Socrates or an Aristotle, and to understand such thought, surely it can also help non-Indian North Americans to better understand their Native neighbours. It should he noted in passing that when the majority of undergraduates of non-aboriginal descent study ancient Greek philosophy and hence the origins of Western civilization they are gaining a better understanding of who they are, of their own background. Not so for aboriginal students who enter into a university setting. Aboriginal students have little opportunity for this kind of self-discovery, for this kind of typical university experience. Thus far universities have offered courses in "Native Studies." The perspective from which such courses are usually taught tends to externalize Indians or Natives, leaving them to be studied as objects: studying them from the outside. But how does the aboriginal, the Indian or Native, view herself or himself and the world from the inside? It is partly to answer this question that we developed a course in Native philosophy. It is partly for this reason that we have written this philosophical study of aboriginal World Views.
There is of course some difficulty in establishing just what is an authentic, traditional, Native world view. This is complicated, for example, by the fact that "McPherson" is a traditional Ojibway family name. Should we, for example, limit ourselves to discussing only "precontact" views? If so there is the additional difficulty of establishing just exactly what these are. The European discovery of America, usually recognised as occurring in 1492, represents what has been called a "documentary horizon" beyond which it is impossible to see, or at least to obtain any kind of written information regarding the aboriginal peoples of the Americas.¹

One of the few philosophers besides ourselves to have done any work in this area, Professor J. Baird Callicott of the University of Wisconsin, Steven's Point, suggests that it is possible to glimpse beyond this documentary horizon using a combination of three methods which mutually support and correct one another. The first of these involves using historical documents written as close to the time of first contact as possible. Such documents would include what is usually described in Canadian literature classes as "explorer literature." In so far as the discovery of philosophical views is concerned one of the more important set of documents is the Jesuit Relations, (1610-1791). These consist of edited versions of annual reports sent to France from the various missionary districts in New France relating the most important events of that year, hence the title Jesuit Relations.² As might be expected these are written with an obvious ethnocentric bias. However, the Jesuit philosophy is well understood and any trained philosopher should be able to make allowances for it. A good example of this approach is a recent article in Laval Théologique et Philosophique by Michael Pomedli. He concludes with the warning that: "From reading the Relations alone, our procedure must be that of caution and our conclusions tentative." However he goes on to say: "I think it is possible to move across cultural spheres, distinct as the native oral and the European literal are. The credibility for such a crossing are the facts that the missionaries made great efforts to understand native lifestyles and language, that they noted teachings quite opposed to their own, that they confessed that even alter conversion to Catholicism, natives lapsed into former patterns of life."³

Though Callicott does not mention Jesuit Relations, he does note that historical documents of this kind "portray Indian material and cognitive culture at first contact or more or less soon thereafter, prior to generation upon generation of ever-increasing cultural influence from Europeans." ¹ Callicott sees the ever-increasing cultural influence of European technologies as a barrier to the discovery of pre-contact, pre-Columbian, world views. "To buy guns, motors, and mackinaw jackets is to buy, however unintentionally, a world view to boot. For this reason, Callicott argues, the relatively recent (mid-19th century to the present) accounts and testimonials by Native spokespersons must be treated with care. For the same reason he suggests that the work of contemporary ethnographers must also be checked against historical records. At the same time Callicott insists that these more contemporary accounts can be used to cut through the ethnocentric bias of historical documents. "The often casual and unsystematic and always ethnocentric and distorted quality of these early documents can... be compared and cross-checked with the more systematic and objective, but always relatively recent, ethnographic accounts in such a way that ideally they mutually correct, supplement, enrich, and illuminate one another."
Callicott's more original contribution to this area of study is the development, with fellow philosopher Thomas W. Overholt, of a third method, a distinctively philosophical one, which can be used as yet another counter-check on each of the other two. In their book, *Clothed-in-Fur and Other Tales: An Introduction to An Ojibwa Worldview*, a book which we have found extremely useful, Callicott and Overholt examine the Ojibway narrative tradition, the "fund of myths, legends, and tales," using what amounts to a combination of philosophical analysis and literary criticism. They argue "that the narrative legacy of culture embodies in an especially charming way its most fundamental ideas of how the world is to be conceptually organized and integrated at the most general level, and that part of the special function of narratives within a culture is to school the young, remind the old, and reiterate to all members how things at large come together and what is the meaning of it all."

Unlike Callicott and Overholt, we do not discuss in detail specific Native narratives. Nor do we present a close textual analysis of Jesuit Relations and like historical documents. Such work constitutes the preliminary research upon which our philosophical study is based. It also provides a kind of background against which our general conclusions can be assessed. We expect, however, that most Native readers will either agree or disagree with us on the basis of their own lived experience. And that is as it should be.

We draw heavily, though not uncritically, on the conclusions and methodology of Callicott and Overholt, particularly in chapters one and four. We wish to thank them for their help with and personal encouragement in our development of the university course on Native World Views. *Clothed-in-Fur* continues to be a major text in this field. To their method of philosophical analysis we add another derived from the philosophical tradition of existential phenomenology. This we explain in some detail in chapter three, The Phenomenology of the Vision Quest. In this same chapter, chapter three, we also make much use of an account of the vision quest by Douglas Cardinal which was first published in *Intervox*, Vol. 8, 1989/90. We thank the publishers of *Intervox* for their permission to use it as we have.

We should also like to thank Professor Wesley Cragg, of the University of Western Ontario, for permission to use short quotations from the section on Aboriginal Rights in his book *Contemporary Moral Issues*. These appear in our discussion of Value, Land and the Integrity of Person, chapter four.

We thank also the following friends and colleagues who patiently read through earlier drafts of this manuscript and made helpful suggestions: Lakehead University English professors Michael Richardson and Kim Fedderson, anthropologists Paul Driben of Lakehead and Nelson Richardson of Medicine Hat College, lakehead University historians Patricia Jasen, Ernie Epp and Bruce Muirhead and Lakehead sociologist Bruce Minore.

We particularly wish to thank Anishnabe artist Amoo Allen Angeconebe for the drawing, "Anishnabe World View," which we are honoured to have on the cover of this book. Amoo has travelled and exhibited extensively in Canada and the United States, and has journeyed to Europe, North Mrica and South East Asia. He is currently completing the Bachelor of Fine Arts degree at Lakehead University having studied at York University and taught Native Studies at Dalhousie. His work
Amoo was an active participant in our first class of Philosophy 2805 - Native Canadian World Views (1990). We are deeply indebted to all of the students who have taken this course over the last several years and to Native Elders Ed Lyons of Couchiching First Nations and Jim Windigo of Nicickousemenecaning First Nations who were kind enough to spend some time talking with our classes.

Finally, we should like to give honourable mention to each and every member of our first class in Philosophy 2805 - Native Canadian World Views: Amoo Allen Angeconeb, Madeline Beardy, Nancy Bouchard, Brian Brisard, Carol Buswa, Katherine Buswa, Roy Chapman, Bonnie Couchie, Elaine Debassige, Ronald Delaney, Gilda Dokuchie, Philip Edwards, Sarah Faulkner, Jim Finlayson, Kimberley Gosnell, Gloria Hendrick, Dorothy McPherson, Jamie McPherson, Deborah Morrisseau, Paul Nadjiwon, Eleanor Pelletier, Judith Petch, Shelly Skye, Lorraine Sponchia, Cherrilee Watts, Lori Watts, James White, Mervin Wilson, and Peter Vanderkam. Together we found that the gizzard of the ruffed grouse can indeed hang aloft. Thank you one and all.

Dennis McPherson
Doug Rabb
Shuniah
1993

NOTES:


TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1 Some Philosophical Foundations 1
   Introduction 1
   Pan-Indianism and Ethno-Metaphysics 1
   The Save-the-Savages Argument 3
   Ethno-Metaphysics and Cultural Relativism 4
   Pragmatism and Metaphysics 7
   Ethno-Metaphysics and the Polycentric Perspective 10
   Notes 16

Chapter 2 Some Outside View Predicates 21
   The Outside View Predicate 21
   Growing Up 'Indian' 22
   What is an Indian? 23
   The Royal Proclamation 27
   Summary of the Royal Proclamation 30
   The Concept of Property 31
   Pre-Confederation Treaties 33
   Confederation 38
   Post-Confederation Treaties 40
   The Indian Act 43
   Notes 47

Chapter 3 Phenomenology of the Vision Quest
   Dancing with Chaos: An Interview with Douglas Cardinal 67
   Notes 81

Chapter 4 Values, Land and the Integrity of Person 83
   Notes 103
   Appendix I The Royal Proclamation 109
   Appendix II Treaty of 1779 117
   Appendix III The Robinson Superior Treaty 117
   Appendix IV Distribution of Legislative Powers 121
   Appendix V The James Bay Treaty - Treaty #9 127
   Appendix VI The Indian Act (excerpts) 131
   Bibliography 159