

Indigenous Agencies and the Pluralism of Empire

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ABSTRACT. In 1914, Francis E. Leupp, former commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, presented an answer to the so-called Indian Problem that some have called pluralist. This paper examines the development of Leupp's pluralism as part of the policies and practices of the genocide of American Indians as it was carried out in the years following the US Civil War. Rather than being a singular event in the history of US-Indian relations, I argue that Leupp's pluralism is part of the settler colonial system that persists and finds present expression in contemporary liberal pluralism. I consider two examples of recent pluralist theory, those of Charles Taylor and William Galston. I conclude by arguing that what both forms of pluralism—Leupp's and recent liberal varieties—have in common is a conception of agency that rejects the American Indian conception and conserves structural genocide as a central part of present-day society.

In 1914, Francis E. Leupp, former commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, presented an answer to the so-called Indian Problem that some have called pluralist (Adams 1995; Pfister 2004).¹ In his book, *In Red Man's Land*, Leupp recognized the diversity of American Indian peoples, languages, and cultures, and argued that the established policy of off-reservation Indian boarding schools was destructive.

By removing children from their families, forbidding the use of the children's first languages, and placing children from diverse tribes together, the schools undermined the children's sense of identity and the primary support of their families, while it also cut off the families at home from sharing what the children were learning. Leupp argued in favor of a system of on-reservation day schools that would teach English and vocational skills but would allow students to return home to speak their first language and continue to learn their tribal traditions (see Adams 1995, 308, and Hoxie 1984, 198–204). The resulting system would, Leupp claimed, respect tribal differences even as it gradually made individual Indians into productive citizens.

Leupp's archrival, Richard Henry Pratt, argued that such segregation and ongoing tolerance of American Indian cultures would allow Indian children to remain part of their primitive cultures and condemn them to live in poverty outside the bounds of civilized society. Pratt concluded, "Perpetual tribalism and the consequent endless control by the Indian System has always been the limit of Mr. Leupp's vision" (1915, 19). Instead, Pratt, the founder at Carlisle, Pennsylvania, of one of the first government off-reservation Indian boarding schools, held that in order "to civilize the Indian, get him into civilization. Then keep him there and increase his usefulness" (1915, 20). In a 1912 address to the Lake Mohonk Conference of "The Friends of the Indian," Pratt gave a response to Leupp's pluralism: "Are [the Indian's] picturesqueness, his art, his music, his Indian identity, his family relations, his property more important to be preserved than those of other men or the man himself? If, in preserving these, we destroy the man, where is the gain?" (1914, 223). Leupp agreed with Pratt's concern about the nature of indigenous American cultures. He concluded, for example, that "Like all primitive humankind, [the Indian] finds it difficult to reason from concrete to abstract. He is keen enough in observing phenomena, but his mind, untrained in the art of working back from visible effects to their hidden causes, or forward to their remoter resultants, dismisses all these relations as enveloped in impenetrable mystery" (1914, 133–34). Leupp also claimed, with Pratt and most of the other "Friends of the Indian," that it was essential that "among the lessons we shall have to teach the Indian is that of enlightened selfishness" (1914, 137) in order to correct the "dwarfing influence" (1910, 192) "of the Indians' social system" that Leupp called "patriarchal communism" (1914, 99). "It will sound like the paradox of 'being cruel in order to be kind,' when I explain that an impulse of selfishness is an essential ingredient of all true generosity" (1910, 137–38).

At the same time, Leupp argued that native cultures had aspects that could be valuably learned by whites as well, including "mental poise" (1914, 127), calmness, candor (1914, 129), "liking the simple life" (1914, 130), "patience and . . . indifference to hardship" (1914, 130), and aesthetics (1914, 132). If schools were properly structured, they would preserve these characteristics while changing the basic structure of native communities. By fostering interaction with the surrounding white communities, Indians would learn the "enlightened selfishness" of whites

and whites would learn what was worthwhile in Indian cultures (Leupp did not appear to wonder if these were compatible characteristics). Leupp even favored integrating reservation schools with whites from neighboring towns to foster the exchange (1910, 139). In an article in the Carlisle Indian School publication, *The Arrow* (and later in his commissioner's report of 1905), Leupp asked, "What good end shall we serve by trying to blot out these distinctions [between peoples]?" He continued,

The Indian is a natural warrior, a natural logician, a natural artist. We have room for all three in our highly organized social system. Let us not make the mistake, in the process, of absorbing them, of washing out of them whatever is distinctly Indian. Our aboriginal brother brings, as his contribution to the common store of character, a great deal which is admirable, and which needs only to be developed along the right line. Our proper work with him is improvement, not transformation. (Prucha 2000, 205)²

Leupp's pluralism favored recognizing group differences while actively fostering individualization. Pluralism, in this case, was a method for "improvement"—more efficiently making Indians part of the rapidly industrializing society by recognizing human differences while affirming a single conception of human agency.

Leupp described his program in 1910 as an answer to "a human rather than a race question," one that relied on "common sense rather than theoretical lines" (1910, 42). This meant keeping "steadily in view the necessity of making [an American Indian] into a citizen of the United States in the broadest and best sense of the term." At the same time, Leupp "realized fully the importance of [an American Indian] conforming his mode of life generally with that of his fellow countrymen of other races, never forcing him into such conformity in advance of his natural movement in that direction" (1910, 42–43). As a result, it was the policy of the Bureau of Indian Affairs when directed by Leupp to do "nothing to interfere with [an Indian's] preferences as to the clothing he shall wear, or the sort of dwelling he shall live in, or what and how he shall eat and drink, beyond laying down a few fundamental rules, equally applicable to mankind all over the civilized world" (1910, 43). Individual Indians, he said, "must respect the common decencies and the obvious rights of his neighbors." In effect, Leupp adopted a kind of pluralism to sustain his vision of the double aims at hand: to "citize" American Indians as individuals and to recognize, without interference, diversity among cultures. He argued in his 1905 policy statement that "American Indians will never be judged aright till we learn to measure [them] by [their] own standards, as we whites would wish to be measured if some powerful race were to usurp dominion over us" (quoted in Pfister 2004, 89). Paraphrasing Henry David Thoreau, Leupp concluded, "I would leave [American Indians to themselves], on the principle that any group of men are governed best when governed least" (1910, 43).

Leupp's pluralism was part of what Patrick Wolfe has called settler colonialism (1999). Invisible within settler society, settler colonialism is "structure not an

event” “premised on the elimination of native societies” (1999, 2; 2006, 390). The structure becomes visible only in the context of the history of the intersection of colonizers and indigenous peoples. From this perspective, as an instance of the imposition of a structure, Leupp’s pluralism is not simply a historical event, but part of a settler colonial system that organized the elimination of American Indian agency—a broad conception of who and what has the ability to act with a purpose—and replaced it with a new, narrow conception of agency that supported the acquisition of Indian lands and labor and became a model for the conception of agency that would dominate American society for the next century. The result of this structure is a form of “geno-cide,” where the term is understood in its root meanings as “tribe-killing” (Wolfe 2006, 398) and which Wolfe calls “structural genocide” (2006, 402–3). In this paper, I will examine the development of Leupp’s pluralism as part of the policies and practices of the genocide of American Indians as it was carried out in the years following the US Civil War. I will then argue that rather than being a singular event in the history of US-Indian relations, Leupp’s pluralism is part of the settler colonial system that persists and finds present expression in contemporary liberal pluralism. I consider two examples of recent pluralist theory, those of Charles Taylor and William Galston. I conclude by arguing that what both forms of pluralism—Leupp’s and recent liberal varieties—have in common is a conception of agency that rejects the American Indian conception and conserves structural genocide as a central part of present-day society.

I

From the end of the Civil War to 1890 a shift occurred in how the dominant American society understood its relation to indigenous Americans. In response to the 1862 Dakota War, the US white public continued to hold the long-standing view that American Indians were enemies and as such obstacles to the advancement of American civilization across the continent. The widely (though not universally held) response was that Indians would have to be exterminated if the United States were to fulfill its destiny in North America. L. Frank Baum, later author of *The Wizard of Oz*, captured the widely shared expectation in a commentary on the Wounded Knee Massacre of 1890 in the Aberdeen, South Dakota, *Saturday Pioneer*. “*The Pioneer*,” he wrote, “has before declared that our only safety depends upon the total extermination of the Indians. Having wronged them for centuries, we had better, in order to protect our civilization, follow it up by one more wrong and wipe these untamed and untamable creatures from the face of the earth. . . . Otherwise, we may expect future years to be as full of trouble . . . as those have been in the past” (1891).

When Congress passed the 1871 Indian Appropriation Act, it officially ended the ability of the US government to enter into treaties with Indian nations and

marked a changing attitude on the part of the white public. Arguing from the expectation that American Indians were no longer outside the borders but were people residing within the United States, Congress decided that treaties should be reserved for international and not domestic affairs. Instead of seeing indigenous Americans as enemies outside the United States, they came to be seen as people of an earlier evolutionary stage within the United States. While military conflicts continued until 1890 (during which time much of the western United States was actively occupied by the US military), the demand for extermination was slowly replaced by the expectation that American Indians as Indians would soon become extinct. The Indian problem was no longer a military matter, but a matter for human services and education aimed at caring for the last individual survivors of war and evolutionary change while Indians-as-such vanished from the continent.

In the 1870s, social activists led by many who had been involved in the abolition movement turned their attention to the treatment of Indians both on reservations and off. Amelia Stone Quinton described the resulting efforts in her 1890 report, "In Care of the Indian," published as part of a collection of reports titled *Women's Work in America*. Here "care"—mostly carried out by women—is marked by "labor, self-sacrifice, and heroism" (1890, 372) in order to accomplish "redemptive work among these native Americans, to whom we are under so great and so lasting obligation" (1894). In support of a petition to the US Congress in 1880, Quinton marked the shift in approach. "Finally," she wrote, "your petitioners therefore present the earnest conviction that the nation, which has spent five hundred millions of dollars in Indian wars . . . can best afford to make it to the interest of the Indian tribes among us voluntarily to become citizens of the United States, and not by the coercion of Acts of our Congress" (1890, 381). Genocide by war had been replaced with genocide by caring.^{3 4}

One of the clearest demands for the new approach to the "Indian question" came from Helen Hunt Jackson, who published *A Century of Dishonor* in 1881, a systematic account of the mistreatment and massacre of American Indians by the military and white civilians. Her portrayal—and the increasingly common understanding—was that Native peoples were the unfortunate victims of a system of greed that took advantage of the limitations of their "savage state." The problem, summarized in the preface by Amherst College philosopher Julius Seelye, was that Indians were held in a savage state by their cultural habits and tribal connections. The proper response was "through wise and Christian treatment" to make individual Native people members of the dominant community through education and citizenship so that their "special tribal relations will become extinct" (1881, 3). The savage/civilized distinction that had framed the earlier model of relations and demanded the extermination of American Indians became, in the work of Jackson and others, a distinction that marked the expected end of Indian culture and habit.

By 1890, leaders in Indian policy such as Pratt and Alice Fletcher, an activist for women's and American Indian rights and an ethnologist for the Peabody Museum at Harvard, reframed the distinction explicitly in terms of cultural

evolution: indigenous people were “primitive”—earlier in the evolutionary process than “civilized” European-descended peoples. The disadvantage was not biological but rather a consequence of being part of primitive societies. Properly understood, indigenous peoples were not enemies, separate from whites and possessing their own purposes and plans; they were an earlier stage of human development, driven by passions and concrete circumstances and evolutionarily unable to see or embrace the advantages of civilized society. As such, American Indians were not enemies but were instead deficient in relation to the dominant culture and so ought to be treated humanely in light of their deficiencies. As Fletcher explained in an address to the World Congress of Religions in 1893, “The point to be emphasized is that here in North America exists a race of great antiquity that has conserved social and religious forms which speaking broadly antedate those of the historic periods of the East. Here we can study not only the slow growth of society but the equally slow and unequal development of man’s mental and spiritual nature” (1894, 542). US Indian policy, rather than fostering this development served only to block it. Quinton declared, “Under the old order of things, the better human impulses were hindered or throttled; manhood and womanhood were humiliated and degraded, and many a character noble by nature, and many a mind finely endowed was stultified into utter helplessness and inaction by tyrannous conditions and the inescapable bondage of the reservation system, the sum of all oppression” (1894).

In 1879, Quinton and Mary Bonney founded the Women’s National Indian Association (WNIA) to lobby Congress to reform US Indian policy and grant American Indians legal and political rights (Quinton 1894).⁵ By 1893 other “Friends of the Indian” groups formed, including the Lake Mohonk Conference and the Indian Rights Association that together, through books, articles, lectures, and political action, generated two lines of response that became transformative for the dominant American culture and resistance against it.

First, in light of their inevitable extinction and their value as part of human history, as much as possible of Indian cultures should be preserved. Ethnographers, including Fletcher, and artists, some independently financed, others funded by the federal government, spread out across the continent taking photos, collecting stories and songs, artifacts, and bodily remains. Collecting indigenous cultural objects had been going on since the Spanish first arrived in the hemisphere, but after the Civil War such collecting grew even more widespread. These collections, in turn, became the objects of study in both Europe and the United States as a means of gaining new insight into the evolution of humankind and the superior value of European-descended culture. Among the results of these studies was an emerging theory of human agency that depended in the first place on living indigenous peoples and, in the second place, on the expectation that human development must be understood as a matter of *progress*, both intellectual and economic. Thinkers including Emil Durkheim, Marcel Mauss, and Lucien Lévy-Bruhl in Europe and G. Stanley Hall, James Mark Baldwin, William T. Harris, and

others in the United States reframed the understanding of human agency in a way that could incorporate the ethnographic materials collected among indigenous people into a coherent story that would explain the successes of European cultures. Ethnographic data became a kind of window into the past that would allow theorists to explain aspects of present culture both good and bad and the dominance of European thought and culture in the American hemisphere. It also provided a rationale for maintaining both reservations and cultural diversity.

At the same time, even as psychologists and anthropologists sought to explain and advance the progress of the dominant society, the theories also became instruments of genocide. Since it was the cultures of Native people that would eventually become extinct, the human beings who were trapped in them could still be saved. As a result, the theories that explained progress also provided a sort of road map for helping individual native people escape from the culture that had trapped them. Civilized peoples, whose ancestors were also primitive, demonstrated how present-day primitives could eventually advance (some distance) toward civilization. Using the theories of Hall, Lévy-Bruhl, and Baldwin that relied on the ethnographic data collected from American Indians, advocates for the Indians presented a broad policy that included the development of boarding schools and on-reservation day schools, the allotment of Indian lands, US citizenship, and finally the termination of Indian tribes.

For Pratt and the advocates of the Carlisle School, the theories of human development of the 1870s and 1880s seemed to argue for the active separation of individuals from their homes, languages, and other aspects of culture in order to create a single American culture. By 1900, the new theories of human development convinced Leupp that Pratt's program ignored both the value of diversity and the implications of such diversity for individuals. As Pfister observed, Leupp concluded that "Indians . . . [were hampered by] primitive instinct[s] common to all mankind in the lower stages of social development [and so] still evolutionary infants, were too primitive to be entrusted with so much land and government funds" (Pfister quoting Leupp 2004, 89). Here pluralism combines with a kind of deficit ideology⁶ that requires appropriate intervention by the public authority that is meant to foster diversity and the survival of difference.⁷

At the center of these developments was a theory of agency that provided a framework for the reeducation of indigenous people. The model affirmed that civilized agency was the agency of individuals acting rationally. Rationality—though defined in Enlightenment philosophy—became redefined as a stage of human development that followed the stage of prelogical thought characteristic of so-called primitive people (Lévy-Bruhl [1910] 1985, 78; Baldwin 1911, xiii). On this model, indigenous people, acting from within their cultures, were non-agents or at best semi-agents and, since only human beings count as potential agents, other things (including nonhuman individuals and groups) could only be taken as non-agents. To the extent Native peoples thought otherwise—believing, for example, that nonhuman animals, lands, and collectives such as species and

tribes were also potential agents—they could not themselves be full agents. Such a belief in nonhuman agency Lévy-Bruhl called the “law of participation” ([1910] 1985, 69–104). He argued that the transition to full agency required setting that law aside, thereby narrowing both what and who counted as agents. Individual humans could progress from the primitive stage of human evolution to the civilized one through the intervention of belief-change aided by education. And so education became a system for creating civilized agents. As Fletcher declared in 1890, “The task of converting the American Indian into the Indian American belongs to the Indian student” (quoted in Hoxie 1984, 35). Quinton framed the result slightly differently in 1894 identifying a “conscious character” as part of what marks the achievement of a particular kind of agency: “Today the Indian, man or woman, who is conscious of the possession of character, the impulse to action felt by ability, the aspiration of power, physical or mental, has freedom to go where he will and make his own life” and “Indian women are at last free to express the best that is in them, to embody in deeds the noblest instincts of maternity” (1894).

By the time that Leupp took over as Indian commissioner, the practical aspects of managing boarding schools and reservations convinced him that the boarding school model of making rational agents was unsuccessful. His alternative—on-reservation day schools—offered a process that recognized difference, not as part of some new pluralism, but as a new means of achieving the same, already-established end. Like Pratt, Leupp wanted to relieve individuals of the burden of their culture, but wanted to find a more efficient means of doing so. Leupp’s pluralism was formulated in the context of the development of US Indian policy that had long been committed to the extermination of Native peoples. In the wake of the Civil War, the policy was reframed in light of the evolutionary expectation that Native peoples would become extinct and the idea that individual Indians could be separated from their cultures and saved. As a result, his pluralism should be seen as a primary manifestation of an evolving conception of human society and agency and the structure of settler colonialism that not only framed American Indian lives but the lives of whites as well.

The history of the genocide of American Indians is often seen as a regrettable event in the history of North America, but, as an event, it is in the past. Such an account misses two key implications. First, the processes that destroyed Native cultures and killed Native people have not gone away. Native people, including Native scholars, make this plain (Alfred 2005; Grande 2004; Smith 2005; Tinker 2008; Vizenor 2009, among many others). And second, the structures that made such destruction possible involved both its victims and those who surrounded them (whether they were directly involved in Indian policy or not) whose lives were also transformed by these same processes. Settler colonialism affects both indigenous people and the colonizers. Understanding the structures that framed these processes allows us to see the ways that non-Native peoples of North America remade themselves as well. This “pluralism of empire” counted in Leupp’s work as an

extension of the genocide prosecuted by progressives, masked by care, but uncompromising in its expectation of the extinction of American Indians as indigenous peoples.

II

The development of Leupp's pluralism from the ongoing process that David Stannard (1992) has called the "American Holocaust" was not a singular event. Rather, it was the result of several factors that together led to a new conception of human agency and its attendant pluralism (Pratt 2011). These factors included ongoing developments in the liberalism associated with the abolitionist movement during the Civil War, the scientific revolution that began in 1859 with the publication of Darwin's *The Origin of Species*, the explosion of ethnography funded in significant part by the new scientific programs of the US government, the transformation of US Indian policies of removal and extermination, and the post-Civil War demands of imperialism and industrial capitalism. The new conception of agency that emerged in this context became a key instrument in the processes of genocide that persisted through the twentieth century reflected in the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s and in the work of political philosophers, including, for example, Charles Taylor and William Galston. The civil rights movement sought recognition of individuals who had been excluded from citizenship in "the broadest and best sense of the term" (to recall Leupp) while acknowledging and respecting racial differences. The activism of the 1960s set the stage for political philosophy that likewise took up the tension between universal human rights and cultural diversity and in so doing continued the structure of pluralism that emerged in the context of US Indian policy.

While there are significant differences between the pluralism of Leupp and the pluralisms of Taylor and Galston, all three are framed by (1) an ontological commitment to discrete human individuals who have certain rights that are inviolable, (2) the conception of groups as collections of individuals with shared values and not as agents themselves, and (3) the idea that valuing diverse groups and protecting individual rights requires that all members of the pluralist society endorse, as Galston put it, "the rule of law and a public authority with the capacity to enforce it" (2005, 3); that is, state sovereignty. Leupp's particular version of liberal pluralism provides a case study of the implications of this view when it is enforced at the intersection of indigenous and European peoples. On one hand, by promoting educational and other practices that undercut the integrity of tribal cultures, Leupp's program actively separated people from their tribal connections and lands. On the other hand, by affirming the "value" of pluralism, Leupp created an environment in which the very existence of tribal cultures came to depend on the need to foster individual self-interest. Taken together, these two aspects of

Leupp's liberal pluralism became a program of ongoing "tribe-killing." What the case study reveals is that liberal pluralism, despite its liberatory character when carried out within a context framed by European culture and philosophy,⁸ is part of settler colonialism.

Charles Taylor, writing in a context marked by the demands for group recognition by the Québécois and First Nations peoples of Canada, developed a conception of multiculturalism that affirms both the rights of established cultures and the recognition of individual rights that remain inviolable regardless of group membership. Taylor proposed a "hospitable" liberalism that is founded on the "presumption of equal worth." "[T]he claim," he wrote, "is that all human cultures that have animated whole societies over some considerable stretch of time have something important to say to all human beings" (1994, 66). The presumption provides a "starting hypothesis" from which judgments about aspects of other cultures can be made. The presumption allows members of different cultures to engage one another in ways that promote what Gadamer called a "fusion of horizons" where "we have been transformed by the study of the other, so that we are not simply judging by our original familiar standards" (Taylor 1994, 70). Taylor's liberalism operates against a background that calls "for the invariant defense of certain rights, of course ... [and distinguishes] fundamental rights from the broad range of immunities and presumptions of uniform treatment that have sprung up in modern cultures of judicial review" (1994, 61). He concludes, "Just as all must have equal civil rights, and equal voting rights, regardless of race or culture, so all should enjoy the presumption that their traditional culture has value" (1994, 68).

While Taylor and Leupp may appear to disagree on the presumption of the equal worth of different cultures, they in fact do not. For Taylor, the presumption is a framework for engaging others, not a final judgment of their value. "Liberalism," he writes, "can't and shouldn't claim to complete cultural neutrality. Liberalism is also a fighting creed. The hospitable variant I espouse, as well as the most rigid forms, has to draw the line" (1994, 62). Leupp is likewise willing to draw conclusions about Native cultures through his engagement with Native peoples and so adopts a position compatible with Taylor's "fighting creed." Leupp wrote, "Rarely indeed has any white sociologist attempted to study the red race as a whole, on philosophic lines. Every one who does, reaches the conclusion that it is inherently little better or worse than any other race, and that many of the traits which are popularly regarded as typically Indian are in fact not natural racial peculiarities, but characteristics of primitive peoples in general" (1914, 74). From a starting point of equal worth, his assessments of Native and white cultures are measured: he affirms certain aspects of both cultures as valuable and criticizes other aspects as problematic or primitive.

Taylor and Leupp also agree on the limits of judgment. Judgments of value are carried out with the expectation that "certain rights" of individuals remain invariant. As a result, the "groups" that have "rights" are to be understood, not as individual agents, but as sets of value commitments, which, as Taylor explained,

“have provided the horizon of meaning for large numbers of human beings, of diverse characters and temperaments, over a long period of time—that have, in other words, articulated their sense of the good, the holy, the admirable” (1994, 72). On this view, tribes, for example, are collections of individuals who share, among other things, a set of animating values that on the whole deserve respectful engagement—recognition—but not necessarily approval.

For Taylor, “hospitable” liberalism provides the starting place for what he calls the politics of recognition, which has been challenged by Glen Sean Coulthard in *Red Skin, White Masks* along lines comparable to the ones I have suggested with regard to Leupp. Coulthard concludes that the politics of recognition seeks “to ‘reconcile’ Indigenous assertions of nationhood with settler state sovereignty via the accommodation of Indigenous identity claims in some form of renewed legal and political relation with [in this case] the Canadian state” (2014, 3). Rather than fostering the coexistence of culturally different worlds, the politics of recognition reasserts the dominant society’s conceptions of individuality, agency, and group membership. “[T]he politics of recognition in its contemporary liberal form,” Coulthard says, “promises to reproduce the very configurations of colonialist, racist, patriarchal state power that Indigenous peoples’ demands for recognition have historically sought to transcend” (2014, 3). This is because liberal recognition comes at a price. Indigenous connections to the land, the nonhuman world and long-standing forms of tribal governance are “recognized,” but in so doing, indigenous peoples are required to live in a narrow world that sacrifices the agency of nonhuman others, the land, and tribal groups. The politics of recognition reasserts what Coulthard describes as “a relationship where power—in this case, inter-related discursive and nondiscursive facets of economic, gendered, racial, and state power—has been structured into a relatively secure or sedimented set of hierarchical social relations that continue to facilitate the dispossession of Indigenous peoples of their lands and self-determining authority” (2014, 7).

William Galston, a philosopher and political theorist with real-world experience as deputy assistant for Domestic Policy (1993–1995) under President Bill Clinton, proposed another version of liberal pluralism founded on the reality of “value pluralism” (“an account of the actual structure of the normative universe” [2002, 30]). Galston observed, “liberalism is about the protection of legitimate diversity.” This commitment is “expressed in public principles, institutions, and practices that afford maximum feasible space for the enactment of individual and group differences, constrained only by the ineliminable requirements of liberal social unity” (2002, 23). His version of liberal pluralism affirms three “key concepts,” all of which echo aspects of Leupp’s much earlier view. The first, political pluralism, understands social life as comprised of “multiple sources of authority—individuals, parents, civil associations, faith-based institutions, and the state, among others—no one of which is dominant in all spheres, for all purposes, on all occasions” (2005, 2). The second concept, value pluralism, grants that “the distinction between good and bad is objective” but that “there are multiple goods that

differ qualitatively from one another and that cannot be ranked-ordered” (2005, 2). Consequently, “there is no single way of life, based on a singular ordering of values, that is the highest and best for all individuals” (2005, 2). The third concept, expressive liberty, marks a presumption “in favor of individuals and groups leading their lives as they see fit” (2005, 2). A “pluralist regime” that endorses expressive liberty has as its end “the creation of social space within which individuals and groups can freely pursue their distinctive visions of what gives meaning and worth to human existence” (2005, 3).

Expressive liberty, however, is only one good among many and so requires limits as well. First, differing goods and so different communities “must be organized and sustained through the exercise of public power” that will lead to limits on the expressive liberty of some. Second, “there are some core evils of the human condition that states have the right (indeed the duty) to prevent” and so might “rightly restrict the actions of individuals and groups.” And third, the state has the right to defend itself against “internal or external threats” in order that it “sustain the free social space” required for expressive liberty. Liberal pluralists, Galston concluded, therefore endorse a “‘minimal universalism’—that is, the moral and practical necessity of organizing public life so as to ward off, to the greatest extent possible, the great evils of the human condition such as tyranny, genocide, cruelty and humiliation, mass starvation, and deadly epidemics” (2005, 3).

For Galston, between the individual and the state is a range of “intimate, expressive and associational” groups. Although it is not completely clear what makes a group, two aspects stand out. First, groups can be seen as present collections of individuals who share some common commitments to what makes a meaningful life. Second, as a consequence of value pluralism (that there are goods that are not hierarchically ranked), it is also necessary that groups and associations are something one can leave; that is, one has a right of exit. Susan Okin criticized Galston on this point, arguing in part that Galston’s claim that a solution to the oppression of women is for women to leave the group is at odds with his simultaneous critique of “autonomy-based” liberalism. Women, she argued, should have the right to justice at home, within the group that has oppressed them. Galston agreed with Okin’s critique but claimed that the best one could do in the face of an oppressive community was to seek a balance in resistance-by-exit and resistance-by-demanding fundamental change in the commitments of the group (Galston 2005, 182–84).

What Okin’s critique and Galston’s reply demonstrate is that the autonomous individual frames the context in which groups—tribes and communities—are to be understood and assessed. Like Leupp’s pluralism and Taylor’s politics, the survival of diverse cultures and groups depends on accepting a system that restricts agency to humans and requires the presence of diversity in order for them to flourish. The “structure that was once primarily reinforced by policies, techniques, and ideologies explicitly oriented around the genocidal exclusion/assimilation

double,” according to Coulthard, has become a structure “reproduced through a seemingly more conciliatory set of discourses and institutional practices that emphasize [indigenous] *recognition* and *accommodation*” (2014, 6). But the practices of recognition and accommodation, like Leupp’s demand that American Indians “be judged by their own standards” even as they become citizens “in the broadest and best sense of the term,” still remain, as Coulthard concludes, “*colonial* to [their] foundations” (2014, 6). The result is not an end to genocide, but the continuation of “tribe-killing” by other means.

III

Maria Lugones (1991), in “On the Logic of Feminist Pluralism,” argued that theories that fail to acknowledge pluralism are destructive. Her central target was feminist theories that failed to take into account differences among women, but her critique has a more general implication as well. Anytime one offers a theory that does not recognize the genuine plurality that characterizes human experience, it risks overriding the differences that matter—that is, obscuring oppressions and masking opportunities. The trouble with the pluralism of empire is that it acknowledges the plurality of human experience even as it insists on a universal conception of human agency and requires the recognition of a unifying authority. As a liberatory framework, liberal pluralism holds that individuals have the ability to resist their particular circumstances and identities. But in so doing the framework also sets aside the agency of others: tribes, nonhumans, ecosystems, and the land. For the pluralism of empire and its narrow conception of agency, every difference it affirms is evidence for human sameness.

The pluralism that Lugones requires reveals other selves as relational and purposive beings. “You block identification with [other selves] because knowing us in the way necessary to know [us] would reveal to you that we are also more than one and that not all the selves we are make you important. Some of them are quite independent of you” (2003, 73). A plurality of agents “is a world inhabited by beings who cannot be understood given your ordinary notions of responsibility, intentionality, voluntariness, precisely because those notions presuppose that each person is one and that each person . . . can effectively inform her actions with preferred descriptions that include intentionality, and do so all by herself” (2003, 73). Rather than accepting liberal pluralism, she points toward a broader conception of agency and a more complex pluralism of the sort that emerges in the context of indigenous thought.

From the perspective of many indigenous peoples, things of the world (singular and collective) are either agents or parts of agents or both and that each agent is something with the power to act in terms of a particular future (Pratt 2006; Pratt 2011). For human beings, agency is the ability to act with a conscious purpose. For

other agents, it may be the ability or power to act “in order to” bring about some next or future state. This idea of agency is suggested in traditional indigenous conceptions of power that go by the names *wako^oda* (Bunge 1984; Eastman 1911; Tinker 2004) in Lakota, *Manitou* (Jones 1905) in Ojibwe, and *orenda* (Hewitt 1902) in Wyandot, among others. In each case, power is at once individuating; that is, it marks an individual who acts, and unifying, since the individual action is bound to a character and kind that frames the action as something that can at once foster the individual and, in so doing, also contribute to determining its kind and relations with other things.

The implications for pluralism are straightforward. In a world of agents, agents are constituted in their places and so boundaries matter (as Lugones suggests), but other things—lands, tribes, peoples, laws, etc., are all interactive agents. From this angle, knowing is necessarily reformulated on the model (as Lorraine Code [1991] labeled it) of knowing others. “[T]he universe,” declared Vine Deloria Jr., “is alive” and its parts are alive so that “the earth nurtures smaller forms of life—people, plants, birds, animals, rivers, valleys, and continents” (1999, 49). If all things are agents or parts of agents, and agents act in terms of values and purpose, then a world of agents is an inescapably moral world. “In the moral universe,” Deloria concluded, “all activities, events, and entities are related, and consequently it does not matter what kind of existence an entity enjoys, for the responsibility is always there for it to participate in the continuing creation of reality” (Deloria 1999, 47). Here values and valuation are on every side, and the responsibility of agents—individual and collective—is heightened.

An indigenous conception of agency makes it clear how liberal pluralism is a product and instrument of genocide. It is a product—most visibly in its early form illustrated by Leupp—because it emerges as a practical response to the ongoing effort that Pratt defined in his 1892 address to the National Conferences of Charities and Corrections. He concluded, “A great General has said that the only good Indian is a dead one, and that high sanction of his has been an enormous factor in promoting Indian massacres. In a sense,” he continued, “I agree with the sentiment, but only in this: that all the Indian there is in the race should be dead. Kill the Indian in him, and save the man” (1892, 46). As post–Civil War policies and practices developed, they made ethnographic data a priority and the resulting data became resources for understanding human development as the evolution of human agency through a continuous process of change. This framework then provided an evolutionary goal for the US Indian system and guidelines for how that system should operate. In light of the practical failures of the policy that sought a single culture in the work of Indian boarding schools and land allotment, Leupp and his generation of reformers adopted liberal pluralism.⁹

As an instrument of genocide, liberal pluralism became a means of destroying the agency of Native people. Agents, for the liberal pluralist, are human and the scope of legitimate action is bound by invariant rights, by the values of the

surrounding group, and by the authority of a unifying government. Carrying out the liberal pluralist program preserves some differences (those relating to shared conceptions of human good, for example) at the cost of an even greater diversity of agents. What Lévy-Bruhl took as the definitive sign of primitivism, belief in the law of participation, actually marked what many indigenous thinkers have held as central to the reality of indigenous worlds. The rejection of this “law” by Western philosophers signaled, for indigenous thinkers, the central failure of European-descended philosophy.

If liberal pluralism is taken in light of the genealogy of Leupp’s pluralism, then it seems that liberal pluralism necessarily obscures the diversity of agents and actively undermines the ability of some things—tribes, for example—to be agents at all. If genocide is “tribe-killing,” then liberal pluralism is an instrument of the process. In this sense, liberal pluralism when it is established at intersections with indigenous peoples is dangerous. As Lugones suggests, such a view is ill equipped to recognize and interact with agents who do not fit the liberal definition or who actively choose not to be a part of the narrow liberal world. In the structure of settler colonialism, the agency of tribes is replaced by the agency of individuals alone and the agency of land and its role in fostering human and nonhuman communities becomes passive ground used and sold as a means to foster human agency alone. Pluralism, in this case, becomes a means of unification. As Wolfe concludes “settler colonialism renders outsiders convertible into insiders” (2007, 145).

In response to the implications of liberalism in its various forms, much work is now being done by some Native and non-Native philosophers to reestablish alternative pluralisms. Shay Welch, for example, argues for a nonliberal conception of individual autonomy grounded in American Indian philosophy (this volume). In social science, some theorists are working to develop the implications of indigenous worlds for research and teaching (Tuhiwai Smith 1999; Kovach 2010; Mertens et al. 2013). Others, like Richard Atleo (2011) and Daniel Wildcat (2009), are seeking to work from an indigenous world of agents to offer a response to environmental degradation and global climate change. For philosophers concerned with the status and circumstances of women, sexual minorities, people of color, and those in poverty, rethinking oppressions in the context of intersectionality of the sort advocated by Patricia Hill Collins (2011) can explicitly acknowledge agent ontology. Recent work by Karen Barad (2007) and material feminists (Alaimo and Hekman 2008) provide another means to recognize agency in and of the world and to generate new forms of pluralism. The genealogy of liberal pluralism marks it as part of a history of genocide and a narrowing of agency—human and otherwise. Indigenous alternatives can set the stage for a robust pluralism founded on the acknowledgment of and respect for the agency of all things and can potentially transform the relationship between and among European and indigenous peoples.

NOTES

1. Leupp was born in New York, attended Williams College, and worked first as a journalist and then as editor of the Civil Service Reform League newspaper. He became a lobbyist for the Indian Rights Association in 1889 and was appointed by President Cleveland to the Board of Indian Commissioners in 1896. From 1905 until 1909, Leupp served as the commissioner of Indian Affairs under President Theodore Roosevelt. He also served as a member of Roosevelt's "Cowboy Cabinet," which included Hamlin Garland (novelist), George Bird Grinnell (naturalist), Charles Lummis (journalist), Fredrick Remington (artist), and Owen Wister (novelist), and advised on a wide range of issues (Hoxie 1984, 103).
2. Leupp summarized his program later in *In Red Man's Land* using a passage from Theodore Roosevelt: "Help them to make it in such a fashion that when the change is accomplished we shall find that the original and valuable elements in the Indian culture have been retained, so that the new citizens come with full hands into the great field of American life, and contribute to that life something of marked value to all of us, something which it would be a misfortune for us to have destroyed" (quoted in Leupp 1914, 126).
3. The United States had defined American Indian nations within its borders as "domestic dependent nations" since the 1831 Supreme Court decision in *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*. The 1880 census officially redefined the relation between the United States and individual American Indians as a "care" relation: "By the phrase 'Indians not taxed' is meant Indians living on reservations *under the care* of Government agents, or roaming individually, or in bands, over unsettled tracts of country" (Bureau of the Census [1989] 1997, 30, emphasis added).
4. The connections between care as "self-sacrifice" and contemporary notions of care should be further explored. Recent work on embodied care (Hamington and Engster 2015) reframes the idea of care in ways that may be compatible with efforts to resist rather than foster settler colonialism.
5. For an account of the connection between the work of the WNIA, Quinton, and Fletcher on the women's rights movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Newman 1999, chapter 5.
6. See Gorski 2011 and Valencia 1997 for discussions of deficit ideology (or "deficit thinking") as both a product of colonialism and a present issue for education.
7. The same conception of human development that emerged in support of the genocide of American Indians also became part of the framework for the urban public school movement. Led by industrialists and educators influenced by these new theories, educators began to devise new curricula aimed at "civilizing" the masses of European immigrants who were flooding into America's industrial cities (Harris 1895).
8. There is much to say about the liberatory character of liberal pluralism (see Hay 2013 for a recent example). However, the point of this discussion is to consider liberalism in relation to indigenous peoples.
9. Much of the criticism of Pratt's off-reservation curriculum was documented by Estelle Reel, who, as superintendent of Indian Schools appointed in 1898, toured all 250 federal schools and, in 1901, produced a detailed report calling for new curricula across the entire system emphasizing practical skills and maintaining student ties to their home nations (Lomawaima 1996).

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