

Review of: "The Uluru Statement from the Heart – A consideration from three perspectives"

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Acknowledgement of First Nations people

I am of French settler and Irish immigration descent. My workplace, Université de Montréal (Tiohtiá:ke/Montreal) is situated on land which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst many First Nations including the Kanien'kehá:ka of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, Huron/Wendat, Abenaki, and Anishinaabeg. I acknowledge and thank these diverse First Nations people whose presence marks this territory on which peoples of the world now gather.

Review

Through the lens of an Aboriginal perspective on naturalistic philosophy juxtaposing Ann Wilcock's complex conceptions of occupation (2007), this analysis provides a supportive, moving, and thought-provoking response to *The Uluru Statement from the Heart* invitation to relationship on the part of Australian First Nations people Turnbull's quest for truth and justice tugs at the reader's heartstrings, as evidence and reason reveal or emphasize the epistemic violence at the root of ill-being that continues to burden the Australian First Nations.

In the first part of his text, M. Turnbull applies the notions of "natural health" and then those of "doing, being, becoming and belonging", as occupational concepts (Wilcock, 2007) through which to holistically understand and support the *Uluru Statement from the heart*.

Wilcock's idea that *natural* health and occupation may be one and the same (Wilcock, 2007) indeed resonates loudly when considering many Indigenous contexts of living and wellbeing. In the words of the Whapmagoostui Iiyuu'ch, of the northernmost Cree village in Québec, "miyupimaatisiun" as a wellness-related concept, literally translates into "being alive well". Moreover, to 'be' or 'achieve' miyupimaatissiun, traditionally and prior to colonization, one must have been able to hunt, eat well and stay warm, all of which were contingent upon one form or other of occupation: trapping, hunting, building a tent, sewing, making a fire, preparing, and cooking game, etc. (Adelson, 2000) In this context, the overlap of natural health and occupation is complete, through the inextricable linkages between *doing* human survival activity, the natural environment, wellness and thrival. Many parallels may be drawn between Turnbull's demonstration of the impact of colonization (e.g., land dispossession and confinement, introduction of infectious disease, lifestyle change) on Australian Aboriginal people's health and the history and wellness of Canada's First Nations (National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, 2013).

Next Turnbull looks at ancestral *being, becoming, and belonging*, as grounded in First Nations people's connection and attachment to the Land, through natural and spiritual cycles of birth, growth, and reunion with Ancestors. Ancestral ties to the land, he argues, form the basis for claims of a sovereignty that should co-exist alongside that of the Crown and for calls to the necessary structural and constitutional reforms. Finally, invitation, through the Uluru Statement, to relational connection between First Nations people and other Australians constitutes a call to occupational engagements of doing, being, and becoming that will enable empowerment, truth-telling, justice, self-determination, and growth. The true believer in me is wanting to read "co-occupational engagements" but perhaps this is for later, as the Makarrata speaks, predominantly, understandably so, of agreement-making and co-existence.

In the last section of his text, the author brings in Aboriginal philosopher Mary Graham's (2008) perspective to examine the notion of belonging, from the point of view of both First Nations peoples and the "European settlers, belonging to a colonial culture". The contrast is provocative. We learn of Graham's axioms, cosmology, and position on how First Nations cultures and kinship systems immutably belong to the Land, following the natural Law of the Land. European settlers' sense of belonging, in contrast, may be ensured through acquiring citizenship papers or through a small number of generations, "tied to their European heritage [...] and without concept of, or relationship with, (nor sense of belonging to) the Land." As promised, Turnbull indeed has us "swimming in a stream that is filled with the blood and the anguish of First Nations people." I found solace in quotes of Graham's writing on land as "sacred entity, mother of all humanity [...], the template for society and social relations", and in her call for a "custodial ethic" of participation in Aboriginal law.

At the end of this reflexive and emotional read, Turnbull brings us back down to the concrete business of *the how*, again turning to Graham for wisdom: her thinking inspires and supports the application of notions of complementarity, co-observation, and co-learning, in the context of non-indigenous and Aboriginal relationships and more specifically for conducting research. My optimism for co-occupational engagement is renewed. I believe Turnbull has succeeded in making a case for the need for a naturalistic philosophical perspective in occupational science, to open new and promising occupational pathways.

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