The ontological differences between wording and worlding the world

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Abstract

We propose a distinction between two onto-metaphysical orientations: one that reduces being to discursive practices, which we call 'wording the world'; and another that manifests being as co-constitutive of a worlded world, where language is one amongst other inter-woven entities, which we call 'worlding the world'. Speaking from Indigenous and racialized loci of enunciation, in this article we do not aim to dialectically propose an antithesis to the theses of modernity-coloniality or decoloniality, but to highlight the co-constitution of things in the world by making an ontology that is currently invisible, noticeably absent. We start with a brief outline of a common and arguably unavoidable pattern in scholarship in decolonial studies that tends to conflate knowing and being, inadvertently reproducing the modern-colonial grammar of wording the world that it, dialectically,

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aims to delink from. We then present a Māori philosophy of language that grounds a completely different relationships between language, knowledge and being to those that can be imagined and experienced within the grammar of modernity. In the final section we explore the implications of this philosophy for the call of decolonizing discourse studies, offering some (im)practical suggestions, given the current context of intelligibility and affective investments in academic settings.

Keywords

modernity-coloniality, decolonial thought, Māori language, metaphysics of presence; Indigenous ways of being.

Introduction

Coloniality has often been described and approached as a problem of the attempted universalization of a particular (Eurocentric) way of knowing and being, whose hegemony is asserted through systems of material domination and ideological manipulation (i.e. knowledge/power) (see for example Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Mignolo, 2007; Quijano, 2007). In turn, when different (marginalized) ways of knowing and being are posed as counterpoints to, or means for resisting, coloniality, they are often presented as "worldviews" that consist of concepts, values or convictions grounding alternative practices and forms of relationship (see for example Burman, 2016). The idea is to replace one, dominant worldview with another, less harmful one, or perhaps, with a proliferation of multiple possible worldviews. In both instances, however, knowledge is perceived to be the foundation of practice, and indeed of existence. This assumption reproduces an onto-metaphysics that tends to reduce being to knowing, knowing to the production of meaning, and the real to the ideal, what we call "the wording of the world". This ontology engenders particular conceptualizations of and relationships with language that perceive language to describe or construct a reality that is either apprehendable or constructed through the rational production of meaning by humans, and that is (relatively) controllable through human agency.

Politically, this can be observed in the search for shared meaning as the substance that defines the grounds for and that mediates our perception of institutions, relationships and collective action within modernity-coloniality. For example, most recognized movements against oppression have been built around 'naming the world' (or oppression) as a pre-condition for acting upon it for liberation (see for example the work of Freire, 1970; 2000). However, this dialectical form of liberatory reason reproduces the same onto-metaphysics that presupposes an individual who is an indepedendent agent, separate from nature and who, driven by desires for mastery, teleological progress, certainty, and autonomy (presumed to be elements of 'human nature'), exercises control over reality (Andreotti, 2016). If this aspect of rationality and set of desires are integral to the grammar of modernity-coloniality, what can be said about coloniality and decoloniality is already bound by what is intelligible (and perceived as ontologically desirable) within this modern-colonial grammar. Is it even possible then to write about what lies outside of this grammar? And if our history of articulable political resistance has also acquired legitimacy through the reproduction of this knowledge-based ontology, how can decolonization manifest itself "otherwise"?

We propose a distinction between two onto-metaphysical orientations: one that reduces being to discursive practices, which we call 'wording the world'; and another that manifests being as co-constitutive of a worlded world, where language is one amongst other inter-woven entities, which we call 'worlding the world'. Speaking from Indigenous and racialized loci of enunciation, in this article we do not aim to dialectically propose an antithesis to the theses of modernity-coloniality or decoloniality, but to highlight the co-constitution of things in the world by making something currently invisible visibly absent. We start with a brief outline of a common and arguably unavoidable pattern in scholarship in decolonial studies that tends to conflate knowing and being, inadvertently reproducing the modern-colonial grammar of wording the world that it, dialectically, aims to delink from. We then attempt to present a Māori philosophy of language that grounds completely different relationships between language, knowledge and being to those that can be imagined and experienced within the grammar of modernity. In the final section we explore the implications of this philosophy for the call of decolonizing discourse studies, offering some

practical questions and (probably impractical) suggestions, given the current context of intelligibility and affective investments in academic settings.

We use the term worlding the world to refer to a relationship with (and as part of) an unknowable reality of factual intra- and inter-woven beingness (Mika, 2013; 2017). We propose that the sensibility involved in the worlding of the world is ontologically different from the sensibility driven by the wording of the world. We write about this speculatively from a paradoxical space where we acknowledge that "wording" this reality (i.e. naming and writing about it as we are doing here) cannot do the job of "worlding" it. We draw on our experiences inhabiting Indigenous and racialized bodies navigating the interfaces of juxtaposed complex contexts within and outside of academia in different countries and contexts. We also draw on our interest in and appreciation of decolonial theory as a way of speaking that calls for a world where "symbols, relations of power, forms of being, and ways of knowing [manifest] beyond modernity/ coloniality" (Maldonado-Torres, 2017: 112).

Therefore, this paper is about several things. First, it is about the difficulties of writing about an onto-metaphysics that is not necessarily discussable within the grammar of modernity-coloniality. Secondly, it is about questioning the modern-colonial desire for mastery and certainty that prompts the indexing of reality into language and the tendency for relationships to be established and mediated through categories of representation. Thirdly, it is about gesturing towards the possibilities opened when we have a glimpse at de-centering humanity from the center of the world and sensing the world as unknowable in its totality and co-constitutive of the self. Lastly, it is about a responsibility we feel, as Indigenous and racialized scholars indebted to all things in the world, to attempt to signal a worlding ontology through a different form of speculative writing that does not act in service of the presumed totalization of the wording the world, but to the unknowable totality of the world's realness and facticity.

Wording the world into fragments connected by meaning

It is important to present a layered image of modernity-coloniality. If we see it an olive tree its roots and trunk could represent visible and invisible aspects of its ontology (ways of being), its branches could represent a variety of different modern epistemologies (ways of knowing) grounded on the same trunk. Its leaves, flowers and fruit could represent a multiplicity of methodologies, practices and outcomes (Andreotti et al., 2018). The roots of this modernity-coloniality tree are sustained within a metaphysics of presence (Mika, 2017), which would be the soil in this image. In the metaphysics of presence the world is experienced by humans as if it is fragmented and atomistic. Each thing in the world is perceived as highly evident and possessing static characteristics (Fuchs, 1976; Mika, 2017). Therefore, relationships with things in the world are mediated by descriptions that place things in their separate hierarchical categories. These relationships, in turn, are decided by the human self and are conceptual/notional in nature. It can be argued that the genealogy for this mode of thinking begins with Plato, who posited that it was through the permanence of the Form that things attain their identity. Within this ontology, language is mobilized in service to this fixity; it is used to describe and represent with truth the nature of things in the world. Language is said to "establish human kind's specialness and superiority over other species" (Kagan, 2014: 38).
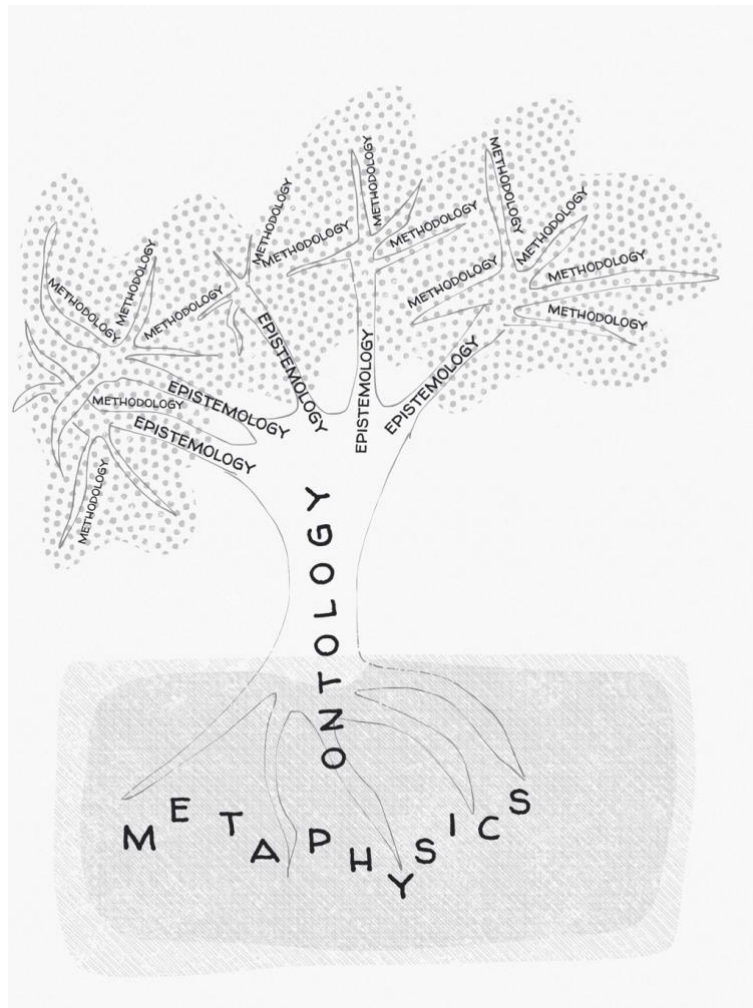
Figure 1 Modernity-coloniality tree

Even when it is said that language constructs the world, the same metaphysics is at play as the relationship with the world is still mediated by concepts created through language. The ordering of these language concepts in hierarchical structures (categories, cognitive frameworks, understandings, etc.) forms the basis of an onto-episteme or the frame of intelligibility (the part of the trunk that sustains the branches) of a set of bodies of knowledge (the branches themselves). Hence, we claim that, in the metaphysics of presence, the relationship with the world is mediated by knowledge to the point that being (in its onto-metaphysical dimension) is discursively always reducible to knowing (i.e. expressing an onto-epistemology as the totality of being) (Andreotti, 2016).

Silva (2017) traces the genealogy of this phenomena in Western philosophy to what she calls 'separability' – the separation of human beings from the land/world that precedes, but is always parallel to and resonant with the violence committed against Indigenous and Black female bodies. We contend that, through this separation, land is turned into property and/or resource subservient and submissive to man's desires and perceived entitlements. As a result, the intrinsic value of life which is tied to the inter-wovenness of a wider living metabolism of self-insufficient and

indispensable organs/entities, is rendered invalid. The living metabolism is perceived as and turned into a machine where the value of different parts, that are disposable and replaceable, is distributed according to their capacity for (re) production in/of pre-established market economies of different types of material or symbolic commodities (of use- or exchange-value). We argue that the erasure of the land as a living entity and the invisibilization of its labour, which is required to metabolically sustain life in the planet, is only a facet of a much deeper wound of separation that requires the numbing of our sense to our co-constitution with everything else, living, or not, past, present and future. The perception of time as linear and the notion that being is tied to form/identity and engendered through knowledge production arises from this wound-separation and forms the basis of modernity-coloniality's anthropocentric grammar (Ahenakew et al., 2014; Andreotti, 2014, 2017; Souza, 2011).

This modern grammar sets a specific relationship between modern-colonial ways of doing, saying, sensing, wanting, hoping, knowing and being (where knowing engenders being) that is different from the tree presented earlier (where a specific metaphysics engenders particular ways of being that engender related ways knowing/saying/doing) and that circumscribes the realm of what is intelligible, desirable and relatable within modernity-coloniality. The modern grammar sets conditions for what can be asked, talked and 'understood', restricting legibility to specific referents that are marked by anthropocentric, anthropomorphic, teleological, dialectical, utility-maximizing, logocentric, dialectical and allochronic modes of expression and experience (Ahenakew, 2016; Andreotti, 2016). Through academic language (legitimized by academic referential and deferential genealogies), our attempts to deconstruct these tendencies are mostly futile because our own intelligibility is dependent on the grammar and the intellectual, affective and performative economies the grammar itself sustains and is sustained by. In other words, if we decide to deconstruct all referents at once we are rendered unintelligible and unimaginable (and therefore irrelevant).

This grammar manifests in different ways in decolonial and anti-colonial scholarship (including our own scholarship), despite self-declarations of innocence (i.e. naming, critiquing or deconstructing something does not make us immune to its reproduction). We understand this as part of the argument of Ahenakew (2016) who problematizes how Indigenous epistemologies are interpreted through non-Indigenous ontologies. Using an analogy related to plant grafting, he refers "to the act of transplanting ways of knowing and being from a context where they emerge naturally to a context where they are artificially implanted" (323). He argues that seemingly radical and benevolent acts of inclusion offer only conditional, domesticated and sanitized forms of visibility for Indigenous modes of existence. Similarly, Cusicanqui (2012) challenges decolonial theorists who

> appropriate the language and ideas of indigenous scholars without grappling with the relations of force that define their relationships to them, thus decontextualizing and depoliticizing these concepts and marginalizing indigenous scholars from their own debates. (95)

This might be unavoidable in the broader field of decolonial studies given the privileging of a teleology of transmodernity, of narrativization, of dialectics, of articulable political struggle, of the theorization of coloniality as originating in human conquest and domination (rather than the

separation from the living wider metabolism) and of the use of the academic genre itself as a vehicle for decoloniality. The grammar can be found, for example, in Mignolo's (2003) assertion that

> 'Science' (knowledge and wisdom) cannot be detached from language; languages are not just 'cultural' phenomena in which people find their 'identity'; they are also the location where knowledge is inscribed. And, since languages are not something human beings have but rather something of what humans beings are, coloniality of power and of knowledge engendered the coloniality of being [colonialidad del ser]. (633)

Our aim in this paper is not to deconstruct decolonial theory or take it to task, since we find its critique extremely useful, but to point to a difficult predicament related to a prevalent philosophy of language that is expressed in the example illustrated in Mignolo's assertion and that currently permeates both colonial and decolonial thinking. This philosophy, that we call 'wording the world', engenders a specific and (academically) omnipresent perception of being as grounded in its totality in knowable knowledge(/power) and language. This philosophy resonates with those of Western scholars who have problematized rationality, language, representation, and being, like Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Derrida and Foucault, but whose inquiry has remained (anthropocentrically) focused on the relationship of the human subject with knowledge, truth and meaning. In the next section, using a different mode of writing, we invite readers to have a glimpse at a philosophy of language that grounds completely different relationships between language, knowledge and being to those that can be imagined and experienced within the grammar of modernity-coloniality and that manifests as, and is embedded in, the 'worlding of the world'.

A Māori philosophy of language that is and expresses the worlding of the world

The theme of interconnection between/within things in the world is a highly charged one and goes to the heart of how one represents the world. In this article we want to write counter to the ontology of presence that assumes that things should be represented with their own, single and static characteristics, privileging the single object in its autonomous resplendence. Instead we seek a speculative way of writing that considers the possibility of the full (unkowable) world within the 'thing' being apprehended. Even 'apprehension', we acknowledge, is a problematic term given the issue we are trying to write against; here, we raise the first of many impediments that militate against worlding the world instead of simply wording it. Indeed, in academic writing, the insistence that everything should be a "concept of" is ubiquitous and remains firmly intact, negating the co-constitution of writing, the theorising self and the world.

By 'world' we mean the reality of all things which are both seen and unknowable; the fact of existence and non-existence that precedes language and collapses both form and time. In this article we refer to this very material reality as nothingness/fullness, unknowable totality and/or worlded and worlding (worlded/ing) world. We contend that Te reo Māori (the Māori language), despite what it has suffered in translations into the metaphysics of presence through being grafted into non-Indigenous institutions (see Ahenakew, 2016), still overwhelmingly reveals the complex and interrelated nature of all things within and beyond perception. We propose that a Maori philosophy of language allows all things/entities to be worlded - to be seen as co-constitutive of each other. Language from a Māori perspective is one of these living entities in the world and is therefore in itself interconnected with the world. It is unique as an entity because it also (re)presents that interconnection. Language has its own life-force that is dense with the full interplay of the world.

Nevertheless, as Ahenakew (2016) warns, there is no guarantee that Te reo Māori will remain instinctively open to the idea of the worlded world. As the grammar of modernity-coloniality tends to translate Indigenous languages into its onto-metaphysics, and dictionaries are created with a version of the language that is intelligible to its grammar, Te reo Maori risks losing its ability to present the nothingness/fullness of the worlded/ing world. When Te reo Maori starts to be used as a simple translation of what people would say in English, Te reo Maori's capacity to present a different onto-metaphysics - a different sense and experience of the world - is gone. This translation (usually perceived as benevolent or 'revitalizing') could be interpreted as the last bastion of colonialism in the project of domestication of Indigenous thought: Māori land has been individualized and commodified (Park, 2006); Māori notions of health are now sourced in notions of "personal dysfunction" (Durie, 1985: 483); the Māori body has been essentialised (Hokowhitu, 2009), and so on. It would be unusual for Māori thought to be left alone by colonization, then. A Maori philosophy of language may be a 'last bastion' for colonization, but it is not immune to it.

However, our discussion here is more concerned with a theoretical view of language itself than one particular language, therefore we use Maori as an example of a gesture towards a philosophy of language that lies beyond the grammar of modernity-coloniality, in particular as it relates to form and time. As we have stated earlier, from a Maori vantage point, language is, like all other things or entities in the world, a confluence of all events and entities. Language is hence wedded to the world, inseparable from its reality. This reality of the nothingness/fullness resides in a particular notion of time. It is debatable whether Maori ever had a notion of 'time' in the first instance (Andreotti et al., 2018; Mika, 2017), but if we pretend/impute 'time' in Maori thought, then we would have to contend with it as a collapsed phenomenon, for Maori current philosophy posits the past, present and future as One (Mika, 2017). Categories of past, present and future (and hence linear notions of time) have been imposed on Maori through colonisation, but these distinctions are artificial and their indivisibility has massive significance for every utterance or declaration because it also re-addresses the idea of form and space. If time is collapsed, then it is difficult to sustain a currently teleological continuum in which things in the world occupy their separate position. In other words, if time is collapsed, then so are all things in the world. It is our intention here to consider language as a reflection of that immediate and primordial fact, in which if time is primarily non-linear, then language must ethically be collapsed with all things and articulate them in that way. If 'time' does exist at all for Maori as a concept, it resides within the world as much as language or any other entity, and hence loses its clarity of meaning, like everything else.

From a Māori philosophical perspective, language and all other things are both co-constitutive of the human self, but the human self is not placed at the center of the world. We suggest there are two main kinds of language in Maori thought (Mika, 2017). The first of these, what we call here primordial language, is the expression of the world itself. By 'world', we mean the 'world' as in 'earth' and 'nature' but also – and equally – the totality of emotions, ideas and invisible realms that are said to constitute our current reality. The world expresses itself in that most basic sense by the brutal fact of its insistence. This existence/insistence is (unknowable) totality; thus, the sheer facticity is a holistic one. A natural phenomenon such as a tree is immediately declarative of a particular fact, which is the fact of the worlded/ing world. The world is constantly – in fact, unremittingly – voicing its everythingness by virtue of the everything's facticity. This primordial language might best be thought of as a 'frequency' (akin to music), which can be translated as 'Rangi' in Maori – this term is, in turn, shorthand for 'Ranginui' or Sky Father, which is significant

in Maori traditional thought. Yet, it is not one resonance of many but that initial reverberation that conditions and comprises all that exists in the world.

There exists in the Maori language a homonym that serves a dual purpose of reflecting an utterance and this facticity. Here we encounter a signpost to a discussion about language, whilst keeping in mind that language is also that endurance of World. It should be noted at this point that a Maori worlded linguistics makes very little note between enforced distinctions of meaning. For instance, the Maori term 'whenua' means both land and placenta (at the same time), not one or the other. The term, 'mea', which hints at the primordial language we have just discussed, is a verb that similarly declares its fullness with the world, because it refers to both 'to say' and 'thing' (what is expressed) (Mika, 2016; 2017). Firstly, it suggests that 'saying' is imbued with thingness. Again, if I articulate something about the tree, I am in fact a representative of the world's facticity but not in a detached sense because I am also presented by the world, constructed and constituted by it. I am therefore not so much saying something about the tree but am enmeshed with the tree-world reality, which resonates in my speech as much as it does within all other things. Conversely, the fact of the thing is a mode of speech. The problem with this term for dominant western linguistics is that 'thing', paired with speech, is not a noun in the conventional sense but a presenting entity that presses within speech (thus, speech 'things' with the world) or, with its converse iteration, that a thing 'things' and thus speaks and reverberates. That discussion can best be simplified by the following: that 'thing' is another way of saying 'the full and unequivocal resonance of World', which is a form of 'saying'. The human self, then, can make an utterance but it resonates (not with but) all entities.

Human agency and language

Discourse analysts tend to posit a constructivist role of language. That view gives rise to an issue that, for Maori thought, must deal with the type of reality that is constructed. In fact, a Maori metaphysics of (collapsed) time would suggest that reality is always-already constructed, and language as we have seen is always-already constituted by the world, so language does not construct anything in particular. Language, then, is a reiteration of that always-already world. But what happens, then, to the supreme agency that is ascribed to the human self in conventional views of language? At this point, we arrive at a second, more directly related version of language to the dominant western canon, which privileges the human self with rational thought and therefore language. Yet we should retain that primordial reality of the worlded/ing world even in that discussion on human language, because it will be recalled that our speaking of the tree is indebted to that fact of the world. This world constitution-disclosure/language is not especially concerned with the certainty of the human self, despite the moments of clarity that we have about certain phenomena. Instead, the always-already world, or worldedness, is much more concerned with the Being-of-all-things that posits itself prior to knowledge. It may help the non-Maori reader to think of language as a device, but this device works both ways: one can use language whilst one is simultaneously devised by the world, including one of its entities: language.

Language hence shares similarities with all other things in the world for the human self because it faces towards a metaphysics and therefore announces the fullness and nothingness of all things whilst calling for things to be (re)presented in that way through it. In other words, it is dense with the unknowable totality of the world, but is immediately usable in that regard as a worlded

(re)presenter that is part of the worlded thing of language. We suggest here that a worlded language may not be language at all – in the same way that worlded time is not time and in Maori thought does not occupy a particular ontological category – but that it is simply one many facets of the expression of the world. While other authors do not seem to redefine language as a non-language languaging as we have, Abrams (1996) gestures towards the reductionism that language enacts when defined by dominant western thought. He argues that, in western thought, "language functions largely to deny reciprocity with nature – by defining the rest of nature as inert, mechanical and determinate – [so far as to render] our sensorial participation with the land around us […] mute, inchoate, and in most cases wholly unconscious" (71). Abrams does not take to task the possibility that 'language' as a concept or tool for communication is inadequate for indigenous thought but seems to be suggesting here (and we are repurposing his words somewhat within the context of worldedness) that nature should be seen as an equal player with language. We, again, infer from the equal playing field that the phenomena of language and things in the world are collapsed such that they are indistinguishable - language, as an entity, and humans, as entities, are both integral (and collapsable) to the worldness of "nature" (i.e. there is no man and/or/versus nature, there is only 'nature' as a primordial expression of a worlded/ing world).

A Maori worlded/ing discourse analysis: 'Hūtia te rito o te harakeke'

The discussion of 'mea' reminds us that there is a mode of expression that may, in part, refer to what we call 'language' today, but which is broader than what is experienced through modern-colonial onto-metaphysics. It is this more expansive language-world, in its usable form, that will inform the rest of this text because it raises the possibility of a form of worlded discourse analysis. Because we are academics, we see this point as essential, particularly for Maori scholars and students but also for those who want to try and represent the world within academic writing. Anecdotally speaking: we have noticed that indigenous audiences in general agree with a proposition of holism in writing. This act of holistic writing is an ethical one (Arola, 2013) that is not simply a Maori version of proper academic writing, but is also meant to protect things in the world and, ultimately, the (unknowable) totality of the world. At this point, we return briefly to our critique of the modern-colonial metaphysics and thus language and thought. Heidegger (1967) and Derrida (1997) problematised presence, which both critiqued for its relationship to logocentrism and anthropocentrism (importantly, without overcoming their anthropocentric mode of knowledge production). From Maori experience, the focus on the present in thought and language obliterates the possibility of the worlded/ing world by, firstly, fixing the characteristics or properties of the thing being represented and, then, parsing it out from its worlded status. This denial of the World is very dangerous for Maori who are constantly, from a young age, forced to engage with a particular essence of the object that gives it its overwhelming, separate 'thereness'.

A major challenge therefore presents itself in thinking about how to decommission that highly colonizing influence. We use the example of a proverb to illustrate the difference a worlded discourse analysis could make. There is a widespread Maori proverb that has been utilised by government departments and various other corporate entities throughout Aotearoa/ New Zealand. It goes:

> Hūtia te rito o te harakeke, Kei whea te kōmako e kō? Kī mai ki ahau; He aha te mea nui
> o te Ao? Māku e kī atu, he tāngata, he tāngata, he tāngata.

It is often loosely translated as:

> If you pluck out the centre of the flax bush, where will the bellbird sing? You ask: what is the most important thing of the world? I respond: it is people, it is people, it is people.

At the time of writing, a google search rendered 9040 results, attesting to the proverb's popularity. Yet the proverb is rarely critiqued for its anthropocentric and anthropomorphic emphases, despite overtly privileging the human self both in the first part, where the centre of the flax bush is often interpreted to be children surrounded by the community, and in its final stanza that elevates people as the most important thing in the world.

This traditional Maori proverb offers several possibilities for critique from a Maori worlded-language philosophy and discourse analysis. First, if language is worlded, then it must be read as if it incorporates things in the world, as we have reiterated up to this point. Whatever occurs at the beginning of the proverb, then, must be retained throughout its remainder and vice versa. To avoid a teleological 'leaving behind' of different parts of the sentence, a Maori discourse analysis would assess the sentence against the indebtedness towards the (unknowable) totality of worldedness. In that light, the first elements of the sentence must infiltrate within whatever (apparently) comes later, and thus the naturally occurring phenomena - flax bush, bellbird, world - must resonate with the fullness of the saying. Although flax bush and bellbird in particular offer no apparent connection to the human self, in fact they can be read as an ameliorating influence on the totalising statement that seems to privilege humanity. Already, through the introduction of an apparent metaphor - the natural world - a statement made by the human self about the human self is undermined in its certainty. By this, we mean that those phenomena that are non-human have actually constructed the reality of the saying. In a straightforward way, we could say that if the human being was truly as transcendent as the enthusiastic users of this proverb believe, then there would have been no need to refer to anything else apart from the human entity.

Two aspects arise here that need to be reiterated: a discourse analysis based on a worlded philosophy of language should consider the worlding that gave possibility for an utterance and it should view anthropocentric, anthropomorphic and dialectic tendencies with scepticism. We continue with the problem of anthropomorph/centr -ism. In its translation into English, the proverb 'Hūtia te rito o te harakeke' as it stands can certainly be challenged for the fact that it elevates the human self. At this point, we broaden the sense of one of the proverb's components out from its usual link to the human world. 'Te rito o te harakeke' is often linked with the central wellbeing of human communities - which is why it fits so snugly with the discourse of government - and it is then assumed that the world is a human one. But instead, it may be a metaphor for the wrenching out of the worlding world. It would then be more properly translated as 'if one pulls out the worlded world from the 'everything' (the centre of the flax that infuses all things in the world) then there will be no more resonance of any one thing as participant with the unknowable totality within every thing'. In other words, all things would be deprived of their relationship with the world in its unknowable totality, and in its place the human self would be centred with his or her desire to represent (word) the world and control it. The bellbird in this reading is simply another metaphor for all participants in a worlded reality. If the world is instead worded, then all those participants are similarly worded - impoverished and fragmented from the world as a whole.

The bellbird hence issues here a warning to humanity who wants to impose their will upon a world that is meant to world. Our quest for a more worlded meaning of the proverb takes a different turn with a return to some terms that we mentioned earlier - 'mea' and 'world' - which are by happy coincidence also components of the proverb. 'Most important thing' translates as 'te mea nui': 'of the world' as 'o te ao'. If we take to these terms, and then to the overall meaning of the sentence and then reinterpret the entire saying, in the context of that renewed worldedness, then we can reword even its denotative meaning so that the human self is no longer ascendant. Te mea nui may be reconsidered as 'that important declaration in its (unknowable) totality' and o te ao as 'participating in the fullness of that which constitutes all things'. Understood with this reconfiguration, this part of the proverb when completed becomes 'what is that important expression/declaration in its (unknowable) totality that participates in the fullness of that which constitutes all things?' 'People' become a mere saying of (unknowable) totality - and indeed an important saying - but in that acknowledgment of importance people are in fact reduced in significance because they are put in their place as a strong declaration that is not from the human self. To put this simply: the strong saying of the human self is in fact an indication of the strength of that human self's indebtedness to that saying. We have effectively amplified the 'saying' ('worlding') which has diminished the hitherto superiority of the human self. Humankind as an important declaration expressed by the world is now rendered the most humble within the world, and the proverb, in effect, now says the opposite of its popular representation.

Beyond but amongst the present terms: A discourse of nothingness

The imposition of the world and its insistence that it form the mainstay of a Maori discourse analysis continues with a consideration of phenomena that do not necessarily concern the visible terms and their meanings. This approach is far broader than those above and responds to a deeper issue at work in all statements that must be accounted for when this type of discourse analysis is being enacted. Reminiscent of Derrida's absence, this understanding signals that there is an unknowable totality of the world constituting a statement beyond that statement's visible and hearable components. Unlike Derrida's absence, though, Maori often attribute first causes to it, to the extent that it forms the negativing basis for all successive life (see Jones, 2013) including the human self. In Maori metaphysics and cosmogony, the term for this primordial start of all things, 'te kore', is often translated as a 'nothingness' or 'void' (in traditional cosmogony), but it can also refer to all phenomena of the world that are not 'there' (i.e. the fullness of the world). It is important to note about te kore that it always-already comprises all things, and to that extent it signals a Maori form of différance. Thus, one segment of the proverb that is particularly vulnerable to a Maori worlded discourse analysis is 'what is the most important thing of the world', for various reasons. To begin with, as we signalled above, the statement as a whole is only possible because of the world that is not immediately 'there' or perceptible as components of the sentence with their meaning. 'What is the most important thing of the world' can hence only be uttered in the first instance because of the absence of the world, thus immediately diminishing the alleged importance of the human self. Both declaration and the real human self are depreciated to the mere visible. Totality - the full unrepresented unknowable given force in an unexpected way through the statement - is, in that same instant, amplified.

An additional form of nothingness that characterises Te Kore (in its own full materiality) heralds itself in an experience with nothingness through a thing in the world, such as through our current proverb. Much traditional Maori ceremony revolves around acknowledging this first stage of

creation, in a way that references nothingness as a galvaniser of all things. In the case of the proverb, the primordiality of Te Kore calls to be acknowledged not as a signalling of an absent and hence another denotative meaning or a substance that allows something to be said (as we have discussed above) but as an existential reality. All things in the world form an opening to this abyss, and the proverb, like all other things in the world, discloses nothingness. In Maori thought, the next stage of encounter is then one of complete uncertainty. This 'next stage of encounter', incidentally, is indeed equivalent to the next stage of Maori cosmogony that comes after Te Kore, which is 'gloom' or Te Pouri (Mika, 2013). What is also disclosed alongside nothingness is a degree of vulnerability through a gloominess and a fallibility that is not dependent on a process of deconstruction, being much more all-encompassing than a human act. It is in this immediate experience of nothingness, though, that the proverb is again emphasised in light of its privileging of the world rather than simply the human self, for Te Kore responds within the proverb and draws the human self towards his or her own limitations around such themes as epistemic certainty, logocentrism and so on. Te Kore as a blunt force de-centres the human self and forces the human self to a secondary position also within the proverb.

To briefly summarise this section: through simply responding to the orthodox translation of one proverb - and its import of an anthropocentric and anthropomorphic worldview - we have dethroned the human self to fit with a metaphysics of worldedness and unknowable totality. The proverb, then, denotes that people, more than any other thing in the world, need to become aware of their worldedness, or their constitution by the world. Without this worldedness (which now replaces the people who were formerly interpreted to be removed from the centre of the flax plant), the bellbird (including the human self and all other things) does not have a place to sing because the sense of interwovenness has been removed. If nothing else, the proverb delivers a stark warning that "you too are worlded", both in its visible components and its engagement with nothingness.

Conclusion

When we were asked to imagine the task of decolonizing discourse studies, two responses emerged. One suggesting the need for 'digging deeper' into modernity-coloniality and its effects within a worlded world, another indicating the need for 'relating wider', for un-numbing or des-immunizing our senses to a worlded/ing world, a task that is not an intellectual endeavor but an act of affective disinvestment in the perceived entitlements, pleasures, safety nets and satisfactions of separability and the authority and entitlements it confers. Both tasks are somewhat impractical (and unappealing to many) because they undermine the security of the world as we know it, in particular, the academic world and its traditional task of wording the world.

Perhaps, in relation to the first task, a baby step that is doable through academic writing, would be the acknowledgement that the worlded/ing sensibility has been rendered unintelligible and that it has indeed been largely absent from academic thought. Ahenakew (2016) proposes that, in order to avoid the instrumentalization of Indigenous knowledges within the modern-colonial grammar, rather than trying to make visible what has been made invisible by modernity-coloniality, a more ethical task would be "to make what is invisible noticeably absent" (337). This can be done by acknowledging the limits, partialities and inevitable complicities in harm of the pervasive wording of the world in both coloniality and in well intentioned attempts to overcome it. This acknowledgement de-universalizes the claims of wording the world, creating perhaps a disposition of onto-epistemic humility before the unknowable totality of the world that could interrupt self-

congratulatory and innocence/virtue signaling tendencies in academic decolonial efforts. It could also have the potential to create a generative space of emptiness/nothingness where something is missing and is missed: a crack where the nothingness-fullness of the world can erupt, on its own terms.

A second moment of 'digging deeper' would likely inquire 'What would discourse studies look like if it infused non-anthropocentric, non-anthropomorphic, non-dialectic, and non-teleological manifestations of language and being in its practice?' However, in order for this question to be possible and legitimate, a few other questions would have to have been at the table beforehand. We list here some examples (borrowing from the 'Gesturing Towards Decolonial Futures' collective):

> How has the modern-colonial conditioning trapped us in 'conceptualizations of' […] that restrict our horizons and what we consider to be possible / intelligible? What restricts what is possible for us to sense, understand, articulate, want and imagine?
> What could engender a visceral sense of care and responsibility towards everything in ways that could override affective investments in modernity-coloniality and would not be dependent on meaning, knowledge, identity or understanding? What, beyond convictions, can offer an antidote to indifference?
> How can we engage and be taught by different systems of knowledge and being (including those that are part of modernity), struggles and attempts to create alternatives, (a)cutely aware of their gifts, limitations, and contradictions, as well as our own (mis)interpretations, projections, idealizations, and appropriations? (https://decolonialfutures.net/compass-questions/)

The second task of "relating wider" is even more complicated. 'On difference without separability', Silva (2016) states that "an ethico-political program that does not reproduce the violence of modern thought requires… the end of the world as we know it" (58). She argues that this would demand that we "release thinking from the grips of certainty and embrace the imagination's power to create with unclear and confused or uncertain impressions…without the abstract fixities produced by [Kant's] Understanding and the partial and total violence they authorize against humanity's cultural (non-white/non-European) and physical (more-than-human) 'Others'" (59). She also distinguishes between an Ordered World (of the European enlightenment) that is worded, and the worlding World as a Plenum, which she describes as "an infinite composition [of entanglement…] beyond space and time" (ibid). For Silva, the Ordered World is sustained by three ontological pillars based on notions that can be traced back to Kant and Hegel: sequentiality (historicity), determinacy, and separability. Silva proposes the principle of "non-locality" (64) as an orientation to existence that can allow us to imagine sociality without linear temporality and spatial separation, assuming that beyond our temporal physical conditions, at a sub-atomic level, we exist entangled with everything else (which resonates strongly with our worlded/ing world). Through the interruption of separability, sequentiality fails to explain the path of human progression, determinacy loses purchase since being cannot be reduced to knowing, and difference is no longer "a manifestation of an unresolvable strangement, but the expression of an elementary entanglement" (65). However, what Silva is calling for is an act of collective onto-genesis, something that exceeds what can be done through academic discourse.

Therefore, we acknowledge that our questions may be viable, but our suggestions are probably impractical in academic contexts. Drawing attention to Burman's (2012) concerns about the limits of what is possible within university settings created to universalize modernity-coloniality, we

conclude by echoing his suspicious warnings: "There is no way we are going to intellectually reason our way out of coloniality, in any conventional academic sense. There is no way we are going to publish our way out of modernity. There is no way we are going to read our way out of epistemological hegemony" (117).

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