TOWARDS DIALOGUE ON RECOGNITION OF INDIGENOUS DIFFERENCE:
DISCOURSES OF SELF-DETERMINATION IN DEMOCRATIC THEORY AND
INDIGENOUS SCHOLARSHIP

by

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ABSTRACT

This paper argues that conceptual dialogue regarding self-determination between democratic theorists and indigenous scholars is necessary before dialogue between the Canadian state and indigenous communities can be fruitful. This conceptual dialogue is impossible as long as democratic theorists and indigenous scholars essentialize each other's understandings of the self. Using Charles Taylor's theory of recognition, I argue that both democratic theorists and indigenous scholars present multiple ways of conceiving of self-determination and highlight the work of Dale Turner and Hannah Arendt as most productive for theoretical dialogue that may inform the more pragmatic dialogues between the Canadian state and indigenous communities.
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to my parents, Terry and Darlene
Introduction

Charles Taylor writes, "what... [recognition] requires of us is not peremptory and inauthentic judgments of equal value, but a willingness to be open to comparative cultural study of the kind that must displace our horizons in the resulting fusions." Debates about indigenous self-determination in Canada suffer from the unwillingness to engage in authentic recognition. This lack of recognition can be attributed to the fact that neither democratic theorists nor indigenous nationalists are critically engaged with the claims of the other. To make matters worse, democratic theorists and indigenous nationalists often approach the other with essentialistic understandings of the opposing philosophical tradition. Each party views the debate as between two polarized positions when, in fact, both Western democratic thinkers and indigenous nationalists provide multiple ways of conceiving of self-determination. It is essential to examine how these sets of perspectives compare and contrast, in order to highlight the most productive sites for dialogue.

Charles Taylor argues that through dialogue that recognizes the other we are able to come to understand ourselves better. In a Taylorite sense, the goal of dialogue is the

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2 While much of this paper has set up indigenous nationalists and democratic theorists as poles of an argument, this is not to dispute the very real potential that much indigenous scholarship could be read as democratic theory.
3 Much of the conceptual difficulty between democratic theorists and indigenous nationalists around ideas of self-determination can be attributed to the fact that indigenous nationalists are often attempting to articulate concepts from indigenous languages in English where no direct translation is possible. However, while translation is an important issue, this is a too simple way to view the complexities in the cross-cultural dialogue around the relevant unit of self for self-determination.
4 Some examples of scholars writing about indigenous 'rights' that do not engage critically and/or engage with the essentialistic understandings of the claims of the other are as follows: Tom Flanagan, First Nations? Second Thoughts. (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000); Alan Cairns, Citizens Plus: Aboriginal Peoples and the Canadian State (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000); Eva-Marie Garroutte, Real Indians: Identity and the Survival of Native America (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); and the works by Taiaiake Alfred and Patricia Monture examined here.
5 Taylor, Politics of Recognition, 34
development of understanding and self-transformation driven by a kind of internalization/recognition of difference of the other. For Taylor, the process of authentic dialogue changes our horizons, fusing them with the horizon that we encounter. In a more applied sense, dialogue between dominant strands of democratic theory and indigenous thought, in the Canadian context, can result in a greater recognition and understanding of difference as well as the highlighting of commonalities that promote mutual understanding, insight and discussion. Colonialism can only be overcome through a historical anti-essentialist dialogue in which the identities that structure the current Canadian context are transformed by a pursuit for true recognition. This theoretical interchange and exchange can help inform the dialogues between the state, Canadian society, and indigenous communities by developing a (post-colonial)\(^6\) conceptual framework in which more pragmatic discussions may be situated.

My main focus, as I look at dominant democratic theory and indigenous thought, is the question of the “self” as it relates to varied conceptions of self-determination. Regarding this concept of “self”, both democratic theorists and indigenous nationalists will have to be willing to build on productive similarities and mitigate their differences. To achieve real recognition, or a Taylorite fusion of horizons\(^7\), it is not necessary that the two cultural perspectives become exactly alike, but they must both intrinsically value the process and unpredictability of dialogue, must be willing to be changed by the process, and must not, by definition, delegitimate the claims of the other. These commonalities

\(^6\) Post-colonialism is understood as the ideal state where individuals/communities exist relatively free of the historical injustices perpetrated by colonialism. It is not meant to connotate the neglect of colonial legacies or the denial of the occurrence of colonialism.

mitigate the tendency to essentialize the arguments of the other. Without mutual, non-essentialistic understandings of the philosophical roots of European democratic theory and indigenous nationalism, any pragmatic resolution becomes virtually impossible.

Here, self-determination is understood as the ability of an individual or group to make and enact decisions. Autonomy is understood as separation from the influence of other individuals or groups. Therefore, some level of autonomy is necessary for self-determination but self-determination does not require complete autonomy. However, one must be completely self-determining to be completely autonomous.8

I argue that discussions of self-determination between the Canadian state and indigenous communities cannot be productive until conceptual and theoretical dialogue has begun regarding the relevant unit of the self. The Canadian state, influenced by much of liberal democratic theory, is rooted in Kantian understandings of the self that are unsuitable as a language for the claims of indigenous communities/nations. This dialogue will only have the potential for affecting the dialogue between the Canadian state and indigenous communities if indigenous scholars are willing to seriously engage with liberal claims of individual autonomy and if the democratic theorists (and consequently the Canadian state) are willing to shift from more liberal to more republican ideas of the self which would enhance the quality of dialogue between the state and indigenous communities.

In order to develop this case for potentialities of dialogue, first I discuss the public policy climate of Canada today, situating the discussion of indigenous self-determination

within the Canadian context. I will, then, examine three indigenous scholars, Taiaiake Alfred, Patricia Monture, and Dale Turner who highlight the diversity of viewpoints from indigenous writers on the complex issues of self-determination and autonomy. Then I will turn to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Immanuel Kant, and Hannah Arendt, whose work each provides concepts of the self that have been influential within democratic theory. Following these surveys, I will highlight a number of points of contact between the three democratic theorists and the three indigenous scholars listed above. The multiple similarities will reveal that there is not necessarily simply a cultural barrier preventing productive dialogue between mainstream democratic theory and indigenous perspectives on autonomy and self-determination. Rather each cultural milieu features competing ideas, and across this variety, there are multiple points of contact between democratic theory and indigenous scholarship. I will then turn to Will Kymlicka and James Tully’s respective work to problematize their viewpoints, through reference to my own analysis, as unsatisfactory for the challenge of recognizing difference and fusing horizons in the context of indigenous self-determination claims in Canada. I will argue that despite the creativity of Kymlicka and Tully’s respective attempts to navigate the cross-cultural dialogue, they are unable to fulfill the purpose of dialogue outlined by Taylor. Last, in light of the affinities I have shown between democratic theorists and indigenous scholars, I will make the additional claim that Arendt and Turner nonetheless provide the best examples of theoretical positions on the nature of the self and politics that may facilitate authentic dialogue between indigenous communities and the Canadian state regarding self-determination.
Current Context of Canadian Indigenous Policy

It is important to situate this discussion of who counts as “the self” in questions of self-determination within the discourses of the Canadian state in order to appreciate the ways in which the discourses of self within contemporary indigenous scholarship have responded to the Canadian context of colonialism. The Indian Act and the federal policy regarding self-government are considered here because they reveal the importance of liberal democratic theory to the recent changes in aboriginal policy in Canada.

Indian Act

The first Indian Act became law in Canada in 1876, and was subsequently amended several times. It was originally enacted to fulfill the federal government’s responsibilities outlined in the Constitution Act, 1867.9 The Indian Act sets out the institutional structure of band councils, reserves and status/membership. Under the Indian Act, band councils are not technically responsible to the people that elect them but, rather, to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. Section 81(1) states, “the council of a band may make by-laws not inconsistent with this Act or with any regulation made by the Governor in Council or the Minister, for any or all of the following purposes.”10 The Act goes on to list many limits ranging from provision of health-care to restrictions on beekeeping. As well, any by-law passed by the band council is subject to approval of the Minister within forty days (section 81(2)).

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9 Government of Canada. Constitution Act, 1867. The Constitution Act, 1867 states in section 91(24) that the federal government is responsible for “Indians and lands reserved for Indians.”
In regards to how it conceptualizes self-determination, the Indian Act articulates what the state of Canada considers the relevant self for indigenous peoples.\footnote{It should be emphasized this articulation of an indigenous self by the Canadian state in the Indian Act shows little correspondence to the any senses of the self articulated by democratic theorists or indigenous scholars. It is a colonial sense of self by definition.} The indigenous self, or “Indian” in the language of the Act, is “a person who pursuant to this Act is registered as an Indian or is entitled to be registered as an Indian.”\footnote{Ibid.} This registration is determined according to federal law. Under the Indian Act, the indigenous self is understood as less than the (non-indigenous) Canadian citizen. The indigenous self in this understanding needs to be protected by the Canadian state. The liberal right to self-determination has often been granted on the qualification of rationality.\footnote{See Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 24.} Under this earlier understanding, the indigenous self is defined as irrational and thus, unable to exercise autonomy or self-determination. However, in the last few decades, the Canadian state is moving away from conceiving the indigenous self as inferior to more egalitarian understandings of the indigenous self.\footnote{The White Paper policy released by the federal Liberal Government in 1969 is a perfect example of the application of a liberal egalitarian understanding of the self to the indigenous self. For the sake of brevity I will not discuss it here. For a good discussion of White Paper liberalism, see Dale Turner, *This is Not a Peace Pipe: Towards a Critical Indigenous Philosophy*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006): 12-37.}

Policy on Self-Government

In 1995, the Canadian government released “The Government of Canada’s Approach to Implementation of the Inherent Right and the Negotiation of Aboriginal Self-Government.” In this document there was a conscious effort to move away from the definition of the indigenous self as irrational that is found in the Indian Act. The policy guide argues, “Aboriginal governments need to be able to govern in a manner that is
responsive to the needs and interests of their people. Implementation of the inherent right to self-government will provide Aboriginal groups with the necessary tools to achieve this objective." Under this policy the federal government attempts to increase the autonomy of indigenous governments from the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

The source for the state of the right to self-government for indigenous communities is the constitution. The policy guide states clearly, "the Government of Canada recognizes the inherent right of self-government as an existing right within section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982. It has developed an approach to implementation that focuses on reaching practical and workable agreements on how self-government will be exercised, rather than trying to define it in abstract terms." And again, "Aboriginal governments and institutions exercising the inherent right of self-government will operate within the framework of the Canadian Constitution." In fact, the federal policy explicitly denies any origins to the inherent right to self-government prior to the formation of the Canadian state:

the inherent right of self-government does not include a right of sovereignty in the international law sense, and will not result in sovereign independent Aboriginal nation states. On the contrary, implementation of self-government should enhance the participation of Aboriginal peoples in the Canadian federation, and ensure that Aboriginal peoples and their governments do not exist in isolation, separate and apart from the rest of Canadian society.

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16 While I argue that this policy is influenced by liberal democratic theory, it does not necessarily reflect the most progressive of liberal democratic theory (see discussion of Kymlicka below) on the issues of freedom and self-determination.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid.
By locating the right to self-government within the Canadian constitution, the policy, by
definition, links indigenous claims to the state, in contrast to indigenous articulations of
the inherency of their claims to autonomy and/or self-determination regardless of the
state.

As such, the recent federal policy does not acknowledge any alternative
conceptualizations of the self beyond the liberal understanding articulated by the
Canadian state. Chandran Kukathas defines liberalism according the principles of
individualism, egalitarianism, and universalism.\(^{20}\) Reflecting such principles, the federal
policy insists on the individualism and universalism of the Charter: “self-government
agreements, including treaties, will, therefore, have to provide that the Canadian Charter
of Rights and Freedoms applies to Aboriginal governments and institutions in relation to
all matters within their respective jurisdictions and authorities.”\(^{21}\) Indigenous peoples are
not able, under this model, to articulate whether they wish to enshrine the rights-bearing
individual within their governments and institutions. This perspective is dictated to
indigenous communities as a non-negotiable good by the federal government.\(^{22}\)

The revised federal policy does not adequately address the ways in which
indigenous peoples are oppressed by the state’s imposition of liberal discourses of the
self onto them. This policy rejects the process of an authentic dialogue with indigenous

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According to this definition of liberalism, the Canadian Charter is both individualist and universal
as it applies to all Canadian citizens. However, because language and Aboriginal rights are
enshrined in the Charter, Canadian liberalism may not uphold Kukathas’ insistence on the
egalitarianism of liberal philosophy.

and the Negotiation of Aboriginal Self-Government.

\(^{22}\) It is important to note that I do not necessarily oppose the implementation of the Canadian Charter of
Rights and Freedoms within indigenous governments and institutions but, rather, I argue that these
decisions regarding the applicability of The Charter should not be made without the substantive inclusion
of indigenous perspectives.
nationalists about the meaning of self-determination, making discussions regarding the practical aspects of self-government conceptually senseless. The lack of conceptual clarity in this policy regarding inherency provides an example of why indigenous perspectives must be included in dialogue attempting to overcome colonial identities. Canadian state legislation, policies, and ways of formulating the problem and thinking about constitutionality stem from strands of modern Western democratic theory. We cannot expect the Canadian state and society to leave its Western philosophical underpinnings behind as they dialogue with indigenous communities. However, it is necessary to focus in on the critical political principles and resources within both Western and indigenous scholarship that are the most promising for the promotion of dialogue in the name of self-determination.

**Self-determination and Indigenous Theorists**

To capture some of the contours of indigenous thinking about self-determination, I will highlight the work of Taiaiake Alfred, Patricia Monture, and Dale Turner, all indigenous scholars writing within the Canadian context in response to the continued impact of colonialism on indigenous peoples in Canada. This survey will establish how each of these thinkers conceptualize the relevant unit of self for self-determination.

**Taiaiake Alfred**

Taiaiake Alfred is an important radical indigenous scholar. In articulating his goal for indigenous nations, Alfred prefers the term self-determination to sovereignty or self-government.23 He avoids the term ‘self-government’ because often he associates it with the current policy of the Canadian government: “[recent promises by the state are]…

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23 While self-determination seems equally rooted in Western intellectual traditions as sovereignty and self-government, Alfred argues that there is arguably more room within this concept for non-European ideas.
ensuring continued access to indigenous lands and resources by insidiously promoting a form of neo-colonial self-government in our communities and forcing our integration into the legal mainstream.”

Alfred similarly rejects the term ‘sovereignty’ as a non-indigenous concept: “‘sovereignty’ as it is currently understood and applied in indigenous-state relations cannot be seen as an appropriate goal or framework, because it has no relevance to indigenous values.”

For Alfred, self-determination is autonomy from the Canadian state. In adopting this position, Alfred offers the most separatist of the indigenous perspectives outlined in this paper. In considering the problem of self-determination, he takes each indigenous nation as the fundamental autonomous unit of the “self” in question: “we cannot preserve our nations unless we take action to restore pride in our traditions, achieve economic self-sufficiency, develop independence of mind, and display courage in defense of our lands and rights... The path to self-determination is uphill and strewn with obstacles, but we must take it.”

As much as Alfred articulates an inherent right to self-determination, it is only morally acceptable as a form of organization for indigenous communities if rooted in tradition: “Indigenous governance demands respect for the totality of the belief system. It must be rooted in a traditional value system, operate according to principles derived from that system, and seek to achieve goals that can be justified within that system.”

While Alfred articulates that indigenous communities are not stagnant, he feels that only through separation from the Canadian state can traditional indigenous understandings of the self be retrieved.

25 Ibid., 54.
26 Ibid., xii.
27 Ibid., 24.
I have two main criticisms of Alfred’s conceptualization of self-determination. First, he conceives of self-determination in a way that leaves the individual vulnerable as a potential self-determining actor. This is obvious in terms of Alfred’s conceptualization of consensus. For Alfred, consensus only works if those who fundamentally disagree leave the community in order to preserve the unity of the collective. For Alfred, this principle of consensus is rooted in tradition:

the basis of Iroquois governance was complete consensus on every issue or decision brought before the community as a whole. Failure to achieve consensus had a paralyzing effect on governance. Political disputes traditionally played themselves out as polarizing arguments, and the problem was resolved through the fractionalization of larger units and the formation of smaller, more homogeneous communities, usually on the village level.28

Alfred goes further, seeming to indicate that those who disagree with the majority opinion in their community will be forced to leave it. Here, in the case that the individual disagrees in principle with the community on an issue, the only action available to him/her is the abandonment of his/her/the community. This is a grave consequence for indigenous individuals whose culture is difficult to preserve when not surrounded by those who share similar history and culture.

Second, Alfred’s framework is limited for my project because he generalizes philosophical traditions, undercutting the potential for interaction and dialogue, which he does not promote anyway. He writes, “nowhere is the contrast between indigenous and (dominant) Western traditions sharper than in their philosophical approaches to power and nature. In indigenous philosophies, power flows from respect for nature and natural order. In the dominant Western philosophy, power derives from coercion and artifice—

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in effect alienation from nature." While he does not believe indigenous cultures are stagnant, he does adopt a view of indigenous philosophy in terms of "fixed and stable feature[s] common to all members of a natural kind." Alfred’s generalizes both indigenous and Western philosophy, neglecting the multiple ways in which dialogue is immediately necessary and completely possible. As Taylor outlines, misrecognition or a lack of recognition may negatively impact individuals or groups: "nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being." If, as Taylor articulated above, the dialogical is necessary for identity, and, given the historical reality of indigenous communities living amid, embedded in or side-by-side Canadian society and the powerful Canadian state, the pursuit of self-determination will be better served through thoughtful dialogue between indigenous nationalists and Western democratic theorists than through separatism and cultural generalization.

Patricia Monture

Patricia Monture’s work has concentrated on how the idea of self-determination for indigenous nations could result in a more just relationship between women and men, and between indigenous peoples and non-indigenous peoples. In fact, Monture sees rejection of the Canadian legal system as synonymous with de-colonization because “all the oppression of Aboriginal Peoples in Canada has operated with the assistance and the formal sanction of the law. The Canadian legal system is at the heart of what we must

29 Alfred, Peace Power Righteousness, 60.
reject as Aboriginal nations and as Aboriginal individuals." For Monture, indigenous nationalists must move beyond conflicts within mainstream Canadian law and politics.

Monture argues that the relevant unit for consideration of claims of self-determination is not the individual but the community or nation. Monture is "disturbed by what we see in self-government, the kind of self-government where we are merely granted authority of administering our own misery. This is not self-government as I understand it. Self-government requires the significant letting go of Canadian government power over the lives of Aboriginal citizens." In this perspective, self-determination (or self-government or sovereignty) is not a set of rights imposed externally by the Canadian state or international law, but rather as an internal set of responsibilities. Monture argues that rights-thinking is fundamentally individualizing:

this right is mine and I have it and I can defend it against you. It creates distance. We push people away. When I think in terms of my responsibilities it creates a different kind of thinking because it makes me think about what are my responsibilities. Am I having a good relationship and I would assert to you that's the Handenosaunee meaning of sovereignty. When you’re having good relationships you are acting in a sovereign way.

Thus, self-determination is alternatively articulated here as a fundamentally community-oriented project in a way that is not atomizing or individuating. However, Monture essentializes rights-thinking as always individuating. She does not examine how positive

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34 Ibid., 262.
35 Monture tends to use all three of these terms interchangeably to reflect a comprehensive governance project for indigenous communities. I believe this is not due to a lack of conceptual clarity on her part but rather on the inherent complexity in attempts to reflect indigenous concepts in the English language. Monture explicitly states, "it's First Nations peoples who are doing the work to make a language that wasn't necessary created to fit our ideas, fit our ideas and our life experience." (see *UBC First Nations Studies Program Land Claims and Governance Internet Speakers Series 6*: Monture, 6, 5 available online at http://fnsp.arts.ubc.ca/index.php?id=5084.)
ideas of freedom (such as a right to a culture, language, property, etc.) are provided by communities and do not need to be guarded against others in the same way as negative rights (freedom of speech, legal rights, etc.).

It should also be noted that while Monture advocates a radical re-evaluation of the relationship between indigenous communities and the Canadian state, she is not the radical separatist that Alfred is\(^{37}\) due to her focus on building good relationships. She notes the role non-indigenous peoples must play in inclusion of Aboriginal Peoples: “the offer to include must be meaningful to Aboriginal Peoples as well as satisfactory to Canadians. This dual standard of acceptability must always be maintained.”\(^{38}\) In my interpretation, the importance of good relationships applies both within indigenous communities as well as between indigenous and non-indigenous communities. Thus, while Alfred is unconcerned about overcoming the impact of colonialism on non-indigenous perspectives, Monture seems to indicate that the maintenance of a good relationships with the Canadian state and society is important. However, Monture overstates the ease with which indigenous nationalists can use the colonial discourses of liberalism while rejecting their legal/political systems.\(^{39}\)

In the theory dialogue I am advocating the problematic language of liberal democratic theory may be challenged and queried by mainstream and indigenous scholars together. Liberal constitutionalism and thus coloniality will only be truly challenged if liberalism itself is rethought from within, which can be facilitated by dialogue with

\(^{37}\) Alfred, *Peace Power Righteousness*, 64.

\(^{38}\) Monture, *Thunder in my Soul*, 157.

\(^{39}\) Patricia Monture, *UBC First Nations Studies Program Land Claims and Governance Internet Speakers Series 6*: Monture, 6, 5.
indigenous thinkers. I will be turning more explicitly to liberal democratic theory and the benefits of dialogue for indigenous scholars shortly.

Dale Turner

Dale Turner, another indigenous scholar, understands self-determination, like Alfred and Monture, as operating at the level of the nation between the Canadian state and indigenous nations. For Turner, this understanding of self-determination entails the separation of the governance of indigenous nations from the governance of the Canadian state so that individual indigenous nations may determine for themselves their own governance structures and policies.

Unlike Alfred’s and Monture’s, however, Turner’s justification of self-determination necessitates dialogue with the Canadian state. For Turner, colonialism was created through an interaction between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples. Thus, overcoming colonialism is possible only through a re-working of this interaction. Indigenous nationalists or the Canadian state working alone cannot overcome colonialism. “As with the drive for indigenous forms of political recognition, in order to create a space for us to be free of colonialism, we must engage the dominant culture.” He continues, “if a just political relationship has to be dialogical in nature, indigenous peoples will not be able to secure a ‘postcolonial’ political relationship without the help of non-indigenous people.” For Turner, any achievement of self-determination cannot

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40 Dale Turner, *This is not a Peace Pipe*, 94-95. While the Canadian state is not a nation in the sense usually used in political science, this is the common terminology used by indigenous nationalists in terms of the just relationship between Canada and indigenous nations. It reflects the idea of a highly decentralized federation.
be won without engaging in dialogue with the Western political philosophy\textsuperscript{43} and the
state.

This engagement with Western political philosophy and the state must be done
critically. For Turner, "these [Western] intellectual traditions, stained by colonialism,
have created discourses on property, ethics, political sovereignty and justice that have
subjugated, distorted, and marginalized Aboriginal ways of thinking."\textsuperscript{44} It remains
important that, according to Turner, "indigenous intellectuals... critically engage
European ideas, methodologies, and theories to show how they have marginalized,
distorted, and ignored indigenous voices."\textsuperscript{45} Turner refers to these indigenous
intellectuals as word warriors:

Furthermore, by making their way into the agonistic intellectual community of the
dominant culture—a community driven by non-Aboriginal institutions, interests,
and methodologies—word warriors will be able to create stronger and more
vibrant Aboriginal intellectual communities. Hopefully, in time, these people will
help forge the necessary legal and political spaces that will allow indigenous
forms of government—and consequently indigenous ways of being—to thrive
within a more inclusive Canadian democratic state.\textsuperscript{46}

While, for Turner, any movement to a nation-to-nation relationship requires dialogue
with the Canadian state, this dialogue requires critical perspectives on the ways in which
the discourses of democratic theorists have been used to justify the continuation of
colonial governance over indigenous communities/nations. Meanwhile, and a point less
emphasized by Turner, it is important not to neglect the role Euro-American intellectual
traditions can contribute to engaging critically with the history of colonialism and

\textsuperscript{43} While I discuss Western democratic theory, Dale Turner does collapse the entirety of Western
philosophy into the term "Western political philosophy." In referring to Western political philosophy as
such is not meant to collapse the analytic differences I plan to draw within the tradition, but rather a
reflection of Turner's own terminology. See Ibid., 69.

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 88.

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 100-101.

\textsuperscript{46} Turner, This is Not a Peace Pipe, 75.
account for the sometimes problematic ways in which indigenous scholars conceptualize the indigenous self.

Turner’s emphasis on dialogue between indigenous and non-indigenous philosophy makes his work the most consistent with my valuation of mainstream-indigenous dialogue to develop a richer discourse on the substantive content of the concept of the self in matters of self-determination. Turner writes,

empowering Aboriginal voices in the dialogue that determines the normative language of Aboriginal rights, sovereignty, and nationhood is a way of making [the need to operate within the dominant language and culture] less relevant to the political relationship. I believe this kind of accommodation embraces a more mature form of democratic practice than the way we currently understand the Aboriginal-Canadian state relationship.47

I argue that some indigenous philosophies, like some strands in Western theory’s canon of political thought, interfere with the development of recognition and dialogue, which is needed to resolve historical problems we face today. Whereas Alfred does not emphasize the importance of recognition for indigenous peoples, content to develop indigenous communities independently of the Canadian state, Turner insists that colonialism can only be overcome through a dialogue in which Aboriginal perspectives are given full power to represent themselves and Western philosophies are forced to adapt in order to escape the legacy of colonialism. Turner also calls on indigenous and non-indigenous scholars to engage critically with the history of Western political thought, a point underemphasized by Monture. However, despite these critical resources in Turner’s work, it is necessary to engage his ideas with the thinkers in the Western tradition because Turner’s work does not explicitly address the role of non-indigenous peoples in

47 Ibid., 121, [emphasis added].
overcoming colonialism. Now, I will turn to three influential Western theories of democracy that take up the problem of self-determination in order to track similarities and differences among them and the indigenous views surveyed thus far. I will then draw conclusions about which indigenous and Western democratic theories best serve the historical problem of the Canadian state and indigenous communities today.

**Self-determination and Euro-American Democratic Theorists**

The Canadian state has conceptualized the self in ways influenced by Kantian liberal democratic theory. However, it is important to examine the work of other democratic theorists in order to expand our thinking beyond Kant to see other resources for thinking through the problem of indigenous self-determination offered by European democratic theory. Toward this end, I will examine the thought of three prominent philosophers of self-determination in the Western democratic tradition: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Immanuel Kant, and Hannah Arendt. Through this discussion, I will compare this range of political thinking to the range I have highlighted among the indigenous scholars and then critique the applicability of the radical communitarianism of Rousseau and the radical liberalism of Kant to cross-cultural dialogue about the relevant unit of self-determination. Arendt’s more moderate definition of the self has affinities to important insights found in the work of Dale Turner and is valuable to the overall dialogical project.

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Jean-Jacques Rousseau

Jean-Jacques Rousseau articulates a radical conception of the self-determining self that is deeply linked to a positive understanding of freedom. For Rousseau, autonomy is realized through the principle that "the populace that is subjected to the laws ought to be their author." In his idealized communal republican decision-making, this principle is achieved through the rule of the general will. Rousseau distinguishes a private will and the general will:

in fact, each individual can, as a man, have a private will contrary to or different from the general will that he has as a citizen. His private interest can speak to him in an entirely different manner than the common interest... Thus, in order for the social compact to avoid being an empty formula, it tacitly entails the commitment—which alone can give force to the others—that whoever refuses to obey the general will will be forced to do so by the entire body. This means merely that he will be forced to be free.

In forcing compliance to the general will, the citizenry, as Rousseau envisions, ensures that each member of the state is the author of the laws that govern him so that each citizen remains free. Rousseau writes, "for since the sovereign is formed entirely from the private individuals who make it up, it neither has nor could have an interest contrary to theirs." Since the general will is always an expression of the common interest, citizens' higher interests will theoretically always be represented in the sovereign's decisions. For Rousseau, self-determination is achieved in submitting to and participating in the general will. In short, self-determination is understood as the elevation of the self to the general mindset of the citizen, away from the particularist mindset of the man. It is the sovereign citizenry that is the self-determining unit.

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51 Ibid., 150.
52 Ibid., 150.
There are some important similarities between Rousseau’s conception of self-determination and the one articulated by Alfred. Both address self-determination in terms of the positive freedom offered by communitarianism. Alfred articulates that political institutions and culture must reflect traditional culture in order for individuals to remain committed to the collective good.\(^53\) For Rousseau, self-determination is only achieved through governance by the general will. Both Rousseau and Alfred reflect positive freedom because they both require specific action on the part of the community (the provision of traditional culture or rule by the general will respectively) in order for their understandings of freedom to be possible.

However, these parallel dimensions of Alfred and Rousseau are not useful to present historical circumstances in Canada because they do not promote recognition of difference. Indigenous scholars who are developing discourse around self-determination may best serve their community interests, given historical realities, by promoting an exchange of ideas that take up liberal notions of the value of individual autonomy.\(^54\) As well, the act of recognition requires that both indigenous scholars and mainstream Western liberal thinkers accept the possibility that through critical dialogue their own perspectives may need to be critically analyzed, altered and/or expanded. In this similar perspective, Alfred’s and Rousseau’s political theories do not require a substantive exchange of ideas or acknowledgment of difference because they are so similar in their values and theories about the role of the community and the role of the individual in self-determination. For Rousseau, the republic is homogenous and for Alfred, any dissent is


\(^{54}\) This argument is not meant to limit the very real possibility that the Canadian state may have to look to other resources in the European democratic tradition with a less stringent commitment to individual rights. The Canadian state has expressed some limited willingness to do this in the past with the inclusion of section 35 in the constitution, which protects “aboriginal rights.”
excluded from the community. Dialogue is not required or valued in either of their political theories and thus, any call for dialogue between them would be unheeded. Both a substantive exchange of ideas and a willingness to recognize difference are required given the present historical relations between indigenous and non-indigenous people in Canada.

As well, both Rousseau and Monture focus on the smaller community as the most practical political unit for the achievement of the communal good. Monture writes, “I do not have much long-term use for national organizations, be they organizations of chiefs or women… We need to organize ourselves within our communities and worry less about national political venues.” As well, Rousseau expresses commitments that any functioning republic must be small and homogenous in order for the general will to govern effectively. However, this shared emphasis on small-scale political communities neglects the fact that any theory of post-colonialism must take into account the historical role of colonialism in the construction of the Canadian state, which cannot be undone by simply reducing the scale of the communities that dialogue. While Monture emphasizes good relationships, it is unclear how power dynamics would play out in negotiations between small-scale indigenous communities and the hegemonic Canadian state with its large territory/population and enormous resources. In short, I find neither the Rousseau/Alfred affinities nor the Rousseau/Monture affinities are well oriented to serve the problem of indigenous governance as it exists today insofar as it requires dialogue between distinct political entities that value different conceptions of self-determination. In fact, I would go so far as to say that these shared theoretical

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55 Monture, Thunder in my Soul, 263.
56 Rousseau, The Social Contract, 167
perspectives cannot generate a Taylorite understanding of dialogue because they do not fuse disparate horizons. As well, the "you go your way, I'll go my way" philosophies of Rousseau and Alfred and the under-emphasis on the politics of language and hegemony of the Canadian state in Rousseau and Monture do nothing to alleviate the impact of colonialism on indigenous and non-indigenous peoples. It does not require a shifting of perspective to a horizon beyond colonialism.

Immanuel Kant

Immanuel Kant is, arguably, the most influential democratic theorist to consider the question of self-determination, which he saw rooted in the rational capacity of each individual: "the ground of obligation here must not be sought in the nature of the human being or in the circumstances of the world in which he is placed, but a priori simply in concepts of pure reason."57

Kant's idea of freedom is fundamentally different from Rousseau's. He views the rational basis of human freedom as rooted in both negative and positive freedom. In regards to negative understanding of freedom, Kant writes, "will is a kind of causality of living beings insofar as they are rational, and freedom would be that property of such causality that it can be efficient independently of alien causes determining it."58 A negative understanding of human freedom implies the ability of an individual to use her/his will successfully to create a desired end without the interference of others. Kant, however, understands freedom in a positive sense as well: "the will is in all its actions a law to itself, indicates only the principle, to act on no other maxim that which can also

have as object itself as a universal law."59 Two moral laws must be followed in order to achieve a state of positive freedom. The first is commonly known as Kant's categorical imperative: "act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law."60 The second is his prescription for the ways in which rational beings should treat others: "for, all rational beings stand under the law that each of them is to treat himself and all others never merely as means but always at the same time as ends in themselves."61 When a rational being acts in accordance with these two moral laws, they will have achieved freedom or what Kant calls autonomy. It is here that his conceptualization of what I call self-determination is evident. The rational individual is self-determining when he abides by the two moral laws.

Here a major division in European democratic theory is evident; Rousseau's argument for self-determination is fundamentally communitarian whereas Kant's is fundamentally individualistic. Kant's understanding of the self is the one most closely articulated in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which enshrines the universal rights of Canadian citizens. Also, a divide between European democratic theorists and the indigenous theorists is evident; Kant provides a radically individualist perspective that none of the indigenous theorists do. Given the similarities between the Canadian state's policies and Kantian individualism, dialogue needs to be framed outside of this one (hegemonic) perspective. However, indigenous nationalists must be willing to talk about the self as community and as an individual.62 Liberalism cannot just be ignored because it is so pervasive in our present situation and because it has been so

59 Ibid., 52.
60 Ibid., 31.
61 Ibid., 41.
62 Again, this is not to imply that only indigenous nationalists need reconceptualize the self in order to dialogue. Liberal democratic theorists will be required to make similar concessions as well.
influential in colonialism itself. In fact, Turner argues that colonialism can only be overcome by real engagement between Euro-Americans and indigenous peoples because genuine engagement changes the ways in which liberal scholars and indigenous nationalists conceive of themselves.

At the same time that liberalism cannot be ignored, Kant's liberalism does not promote the idea of dialogue needed in our historical context. Kant insists that moral laws, which give substance to self-determination, are not rooted in experience, but rather must be universal. As Chantal Mouffe articulates, "the Kantian analysis of judgment [is unable] to grasp the kind of relation existing between the universal and the particular in the sphere of human action." For Mouffe, moral laws should be seen as dialogical and intersubjective. Indigenous nationalists, as it has been shown above, seek an understanding of self-determination that gives credence to the community as an important unit for self-determination and perhaps autonomy. Thus, the prevailing Kantian liberal perspective is fundamentally deaf to the claims for self-government that emanate from indigenous scholars today. However, among Euro-American theorists, Hannah Arendt provides a better resource for serving cross-cultural dialogue around self-determination.

Hannah Arendt

Hannah Arendt conceptualizes the agent of self-determination in terms of the act of disclosing one's self. For Arendt, the ability to disclose who one is can only be achieved in community: "this revelatory quality of speech and action comes to the fore where people are with others and neither for nor against them—that is, in sheer human

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63 Chantal Mouffe, "Radical Democracy: Modern or Postmodern?" Social Text 21 1989: 37.
togetherness."  

This condition of human plurality necessitates two things: equality and distinction.

If men were not equal, they could neither understand each other and those who came before them nor plan for the future and foresee the needs of those who will come after them. If men were not distinct, each human being distinguished from any other who is, was, or will ever be, they would need neither speech or action to make themselves understood.

Human plurality necessitates communication with each other because of the dual experience of equality (which presupposes similar experience) and distinction (which presupposes uniqueness).

Despite this enormous revelatory power-potential of action and speech, Arendt insists that this conception of autonomy does not produce predictable consequences. Arendtian autonomy is unpredictable due to the fact that individuals have little to no control over how their life stories will be recorded: “the trouble is that whatever the character and content of the subsequent story may be, whether it is played in private or public life, whether it involves many or few actors, its full meaning can reveal itself only when it has ended.”

The act of disclosing one’s self is available only in the moment of speech and action or in the construction of a life story, of which the individual can never be sole author and the full consequences can never been predicted. Taken together, the potential infinity of the consequences of human action and the inability to control, for certain, one’s life story demonstrate that speech and action are inherently unpredictable for Arendt. The requirement of human community for action and the unpredictability of action together mean that action has the potential to affect both the individual and the

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community. Also, this unpredictability allows for the potential that positions may change in the wake of dialogue. While it should be noted that the Canadian state's principles and philosophies are far more Kantian liberal than Arendtian republican, there are some familial resemblances between the two, such as commitments to individual autonomy, that allow Arendtian republicanism to be more accessible as a mode of thinking to the Canadian state and society than the work of Monture, Turner, or, certainly, Alfred.

**Dialogical Potential(ities) between Arendt and Turner**

The term self-determination has been shown to mean and entail substantively different things within the discourses of democratic theory and within the discourses of indigenous nationalism. In emphasizing the different ways in which democratic theorists and indigenous scholars discuss self-determination, I hope to highlight the importance of authentic dialogue that recognizes the inherent differences between these conceptions of the self. The Canadian state is at present inflexibly bound to a Kantian understanding of the self (reflected in its commitment to individual rights encompassed in *The Charter*) while all the indigenous thinkers considered here focus on the community rather than the Kantian individual. Between these two understandings authentic dialogue on governance will often be unproductive and slow-moving.

I suggest that the respective projects of Hannah Arendt and Dale Turner best provide intellectual terms for a dialogue regarding what counts as the self in self-determination. First, Arendt's conception of self-determination as action that discloses the self does not predetermine what counts as the self. As shown above, her conception does not explicitly reject the possibility that a community, through collective action, may reveal itself, nor does it limit the capacity of an individual to make himself/herself
distinct through individual action. At the same time, Turner's insistence on critical engagement with Western philosophy allows for a critique of the (colonialist) limits of Arendt's theory of action due to its situation within Western philosophy.

First, Arendt's theory of action helps clarify Turner's characterization of word warriors. Turner claims that word warriors will be able to challenge discourses to promote a more just arrangement for indigenous peoples. In order to do this, these word warriors must be able to generate power within the dominant intellectual community to affect change. Turner does not explicitly outline how this will be done. Arendt's theory of power is able to articulate one potential way that word warriors would be able to challenge old understandings and generate new ones: "power springs up between men when they act together and vanishes the moment they disperse. Because of this peculiarity, which power shares with all potentialities that can only be actualized but never fully materialized, power is to an astonishing degree independent of material forces, either in numbers or means." Under this understanding of power, word warriors, through collective action, are able to accrue power and challenge the status quo. Arendt's theory of generative power is helpful in understanding the human capacity that word warriors can capitalize on in order to critically shift the discourses regarding the self for indigenous self-determination.

Arendt's theory of action is also useful in terms of indicating where the power to assert self-determination is generated. Alfred, Monture, and Turner all indicate that indigenous nations are the self-determining actors and that self-determination should not be understood as a grant from the sovereignty of the Canadian state. Yet, within all of

67 Turner, *This is Not a Peace Pipe*, 75.
their scholarship, it is unclear how indigenous nations are able to assert this sovereign status against the order imposed on them by the Canadian state. For Alfred, the relationship with the Canadian state is defined as nation-to-nation but nowhere in his writings does he articulate how this relationship should be established with the Canadian state. Monture argues that the Canadian state must let go of its power over Aboriginal peoples. While I agree that this is an imperative action for the Canadian state from the perspective of justice, Monture presents minimal prescriptions of how this ‘backing away’ is to be achieved, let alone how to convince the Canadian state, state officials, and the general public that this is the just action that they too should take up. As well, Turner seems unsure where the generation of self-determination for indigenous nations originates.\textsuperscript{69} Hannah Arendt’s theory of action again provides one theoretically-developed way to understand how indigenous nations can assert power and change the colonial governing structure. Arendt argues that through acting together humans can withdraw legitimacy from state authorities and generate new communities: “popular revolt against materially strong rulers... may engender an almost irresistible power even if it foregoes the use of violence in the face of materially vastly superior forces. To call this ‘passive resistance’ is certainly an ironic idea; it is one of the most active and efficient ways of action ever devised.”\textsuperscript{70} This Arendtian concept of the power of popular revolt, seen in the American civil rights movement, could be used to operationalize how indigenous nations are able to generate changes in their relationship with the Canadian state.

\textsuperscript{69} Turner, \textit{This is Not a Peace Pipe}, 108.
\textsuperscript{70} Arendt, \textit{The Human Condition}, 200-201.
As well, Turner's insistence on critiquing the language inherent to Western political theory provides a challenge to scholars working with Arendt. Specifically, Turner raises apt questions that pertain to Arendt's conceptualization of the self. Arendt's situation within Western political theory has impacted her opinions of the capacity of indigenous peoples: "colonization took place in America and Australia, the two continents that, without a culture and a history of their own, had fallen into the hands of the Europeans."\(^7\)

Arendt's work must be read critically given her conclusion about indigenous peoples in America and Australia as without history or culture, and queried in terms of whether her substantive views of historical cultures are reflected in her theoretical and conceptual framework. Through dialogue with perspectives, like Turner's, that clearly articulate the history and culture of indigenous peoples, these racist conceptions of history can be criticized. Turner writes, "the dialogue between indigenous intellectuals and the their non-indigenous counterparts created by unpacking colonialism from the history of ideas generates the philosophical battleground for word warriors."\(^7\)

While, to a certain extent, Arendtian theories of self-determination can be used to critique the colonialism inherent in some of Arendt's work, the best way to overcome these deficiencies is through dialogue with indigenous perspectives.

**Alternative Conceptions: Kymlicka and Tully**

Kymlicka and Tully's respective discussions of liberalism and multicultural citizenship, and of Western constitutionalism and multinational perspectives both address, like my work, difficulties generated by the claim of indigenous communities/nations to self-determination. However, neither of their perspectives

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\(^7\) Turner, *This is Not a Peace Pipe*, 101.
satisfactorily addresses both the necessary commitment to the process of the dialogue or
the maintenance of some commitment to individual autonomy.

**Will Kymlicka**

For Will Kymlicka, “cultural membership gives rise to legitimate claims, and ... some schemes of minority rights respond to these claims in a way that not only is consistent with the principles of liberal equality, but is indeed required by them.”\(^{73}\) In contrast to most liberal philosophers, Kymlicka depicts culture as a fundamental liberal good, required for citizens in order to exercise the freedom of choice sought by liberals. Kymlicka maintains that our identities are formed based upon our cultural background and surroundings. Accordingly, if these cultural backgrounds were removed our ability to define ourselves in an authentic way would be limited: “our individual lives and our moral deliberations are related to, and situated in, a shared social context. The individualism that underlies liberalism isn’t valued at the expense of our social nature or our shared community. It is an individualism that accords with, rather than opposes, the undeniable importance to us of our social world.”\(^{74}\) For Kymlicka, the liberal conception of the individual is predicated on that individual having a vital cultural context. Kymlicka argues that cultural membership is a primary ‘good’ and for this reason should be part of a liberal theory, just as the autonomy of the individual (conceived by liberals as a good) is traditionally included within liberal theory.

Culture, for Kymlicka, does not have any intrinsic value. Rather, culture is valuable because through it individuals become able to exercise their agency. Kymlicka argues that the liberal value of choice can only be useful to people if they have

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mechanisms by which to make informed decisions. Culture, for Kymlicka, provides one important way that individuals can begin to make intelligent choices.\textsuperscript{75} In short, culture is valuable because liberalism cannot exist in the way we know it without a cultural context for choice. In this way, Kymlicka is able to frame a discussion of cultural rights within a liberal discourse instead of in opposition to it.

While Kymlicka begins the theoretical work required to inspire exchange between liberal philosophy and indigenous perspectives, his characterization neglects the need for a dialogue with indigenous ways of justifying autonomy (or other forms of self-determination from the Canadian state). His entire discussion of indigenous nations is subsumed by liberal discourse. This is understandable given that Kymlicka’s project is to justify minority rights to liberals, but his work does not facilitate meaningful dialogue between liberals and indigenous nationalists. Kymlicka is too bound to his own liberal commitments to allow his perspective to change through dialogue with indigenous nationalists. As Turner articulates, “from an Aboriginal perspective, it is unfortunate that an investigation into the meaning of Aboriginal sovereignty must begin with an examination of liberalism.”\textsuperscript{76} Kymlicka’s project fulfills the requirements for the beginnings of dialogue from the perspective of liberal democratic theorists but does not account for what indigenous nationalists may say in response to this liberal framing of the post-colonial problem and how liberals may be changed by these responses. For this reason, I favour the potentialities for unpredictable dialogue created by an interplay between Arendt and Turner, to Kymlicka’s liberal defense of minority rights, as the best

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., 165.
\textsuperscript{76} Turner, \textit{This is not a Peace Pipe}, 59.
forum in which to discuss the substantive meaning of self-determination for indigenous nations.

James Tully

James Tully seeks to uncover the ways in which the current constitutional order of Canada is illegitimate and that a more legitimate constitutional order between the Canadian state and its multiplicity of nations must be established through dialogue. For Tully, it is necessary to examine how we have conceptualized the "Aboriginal problem" in Canada in order to demonstrate how these ways of thinking have prevented a constitutional order that allows for authentic recognition of the multiple perspectives within Canadian society. Thus, his method is a call for the inclusion of multiple perspectives in dialogue, arguably more inclusive in practice than Kymlicka's emphasis on liberal philosophy.

Tully goes on to argue that the current Canadian constitutional order regarding indigenous peoples is unjust because it was not realized in a dialogue that included their perspectives. Tully argues that this exclusion is typical of the ideology of modern constitutionalism:

To presuppose that the initial conditions of popular sovereignty are a state of nature, a veil of ignorance, a set of European traditions and institutions, or an already existing national community is to beg the question of the politics of recognition. It dispossesses Aboriginal peoples of their constitutions and authoritative traditions without so much as a hearing and inscribes them within the Eurocentric conventions of modern constitutionalism.77

For Tully, this means that modern constitutional theory, which has defined much of modern political philosophy and determined the structure of liberal democratic states,

77 James Tully, Strange Multiplicity: Constitutionalism in an Age of Diversity, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); 82.
should no longer be assumed as the sole way to establish constitutions and constitutions based on this assumption should be re-evaluated.

Because of his commitment to dialogue, Tully does not provide a blueprint for the ideal constitutional order between Canada and indigenous nations. In this way, like Arendt, Tully is open to the unpredictable consequences of dialogue. As such, he imagines a process through which a more ideal constitution could be negotiated. For Tully, contemporary constitutionalism should be defined as process that respects "the three conventions of... mutual recognition, continuity and consent... If [these conventions] guide constitutional negotiations, the negotiations and resulting constitutions will be just with respect to cultural recognition."\(^{78}\) Mutual recognition requires that both parties are viewed as independent and self-governing nations\(^ {79}\); "the convention of continuity [requires the inclusion] of a people's customary ways and forms of government into new forms of constitutional associations with others"\(^ {80}\); consent requires that the dialogue continues as "negotiators must turn to their constituents, explain what has transpired, listen to their objections in their terms, reach agreements in the appropriate way on an acceptable response, and then return to the negotiations"\(^ {81}\). Thus, for Tully, a just constitutional arrangement is not a specific set of principles enshrined in law. Rather, like the Arendtian formulation, it is a continuous process.

Tully's theory of constitutional dialogue shares with my Arendt/Turner convergence a concern to critically re-evaluate Western political philosophy. However, it differs in one respect. I believe Tully underestimates the force and value of liberal

\(^{78}\) Ibid., 116-117.  
\(^{79}\) Ibid., 119.  
\(^{80}\) Ibid., 125.  
\(^{81}\) Ibid., 130.
democratic theorists' commitment to the individual: "if a contemporary constitution is to be culturally neutral, it should not promote one culture at the expense of others, but mutually recognize and accommodate the cultures of all citizens in an agreeable manner."82 For Tully, citizens are unable to stand in judgment of the ways in which individuals are treated within cultures (be it their own or others) as all cultures are deserving of constitutional recognition. Thus, while Tully's project clearly articulates the problematic nature of democratic theorists like Kant who privilege one cultural view over others, his theory does not highlight the benefits of the commitment of liberal democratic theorists to the individual. I maintain the importance of maintaining some commitment to individual autonomy in order to simply protect individuals within communities. This liberal commitment to individual autonomy is valuable to the fight against colonialism, despite liberalism's colonial history, because it provides a way to guard against hegemonic and essential understandings of culture through focusing a lens on individual experience. In this way, a commitment to individual autonomy may be able to protect women and other groups who tend to be marginalized in communal articulations of the good. Arendt's theory of action and speech protects individual autonomy because it requires that every individual must be able to act and speak either within the group and/or against the group. For Arendt, to curtail an individual's capacity for action and speech denies his/her humanity.83 Arendt's liberal tendency is framed within her requirement that speaking and acting occur within a human community. Thus, it is a less problematic liberal interpretation than the one offered by Kymlicka (or Kant) above. Tully goes too far in emphasizing only process and neglects any comment on the substantive aspects of

82 Ibid., 191.
83 Arendt, The Human Condition, 183.
the ensuing dialogue. It is essential to hold onto some fundamental values within the unpredictability of dialogue (i.e., recognition, individual autonomy), which act as "isolated islands of certainty in an ocean of uncertainty."  

**Conclusion**

It is vital that the Canadian state and indigenous actors engage in a dialogue regarding the relevant unit of the self for self-determination. However, the sense felt on both sides that there is no common ground hampers this dialogue. Yet, when one looks to a range of theoretical positions that characterize both Western democratic theory and indigenous political thought, one begins to see the potential for dialogue in a new light. That said, while there are important commonalities between Rousseau, Monture, and Alfred, none of these theorists are able to respond adequately to the stark reality of the commitments to liberalism found within Kantian democratic theory, the Canadian state, or to the multicultural scene in which colonialism's legacy plays out today. But, Kantianism is too extreme in its commitment to individualism to facilitate dialogue with indigenous nationalists. The concern for the individual's freedom within the community is satisfactorily addressed by Arendt's theory of action and speech. Arendt assumes dialogue is unpredictable but that in engaging in dialogue certain promises need to be made regarding the individual's right to act and speak in a community of peers. While a radical shift away from the strict liberalism of the Canadian state, Arendt is more accessible to liberal Canadians than Monture or Alfred, because of her explicit commitments to individual action and speech. The addition of Turner's perspective is necessary as an important rejoinder that critiques Arendt and to explicitly acknowledge

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84 Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 244.
indigenous perspectives on community and autonomy. However, engaging solely with Turner's work will not satisfy the conditions of dialogue because, like most indigenous scholars, Turner does not explicitly define what is required of a post-colonial, Western philosophy in order to dialogue with indigenous nationalism. This, I argue, is provided more clearly by Arendt.

While the Arendt-Turner dialogue may seem less systematized than either Kymlicka or Tully's respective projects, this unpredictability allows indigenous scholars and democratic theorists to generate new ways of conceiving of the indigenous self as applies to self-determination.

Often during political discussions about self-determination for indigenous communities, the emphasis in negotiations with the state is on administrative divisions of service (i.e., which government will be responsible for developing standards for the administration of health care, education and other social services). I refer to this discussion as dialogues regarding determination. It is vital, I argue, that a dialogue surrounding conceptions of the self is necessary before these discussions of determination are productive and conclusive. In order, to facilitate practical and policy decision-making by the Canadian state and indigenous communities, democratic theorists and indigenous scholars need to dialogue and work up theoretical terrain that can generate mutual, non-essentialistic, understandings of the self.
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