WORLDED OBJECT AND ITS PRESENTATION

A Māori philosophy of language

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Abstract

In an era concerned with the survival of Indigenous languages, language as a general phenomenon needs to be thought of as thoroughly connected to one's worldview. In this article, I propose a different conception of language that sides more with what I call 'the worlding of things' than linguistics. To foreshadow my speculations on language, I consider the possibility that, within the representation of one entity in perception, there exist all other entities. An entity is hence 'worlded'—a key aspect of the term 'whakapapa'. I then turn to think about language as a general phenomenon for Māori, and its complex ability to *world* an entity even as it adumbrates that thing's backdrop. I consider the verb 'to be' in that light, arguing that Māori identify language as a sort of gathering of entities rather than an instrument for singling out one thing as thoroughly and separably evident. This article is therefore as much about the full participation of the world as it is about language; it also aims to counter the belief that language is merely a conveyor of ideas.

Keywords

Māori, presence, absence, world, language, whakapapa

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Introduction

Intriguingly, it is often poetic and creative discourse that gets straight to the point of language and encourages our philosophical response. My article does not deal with poetic and creative discourses as such, but some preliminary remarks can be made about their ability to confront what academic convention simply cannot. In *Baby No-Eyes* (Grace, 1998), for instance, the central character, Baby, dies in an accident before her birth. She remains within the Wheiao (luminal space) for a long time as she has been inappropriately disposed of by medical authorities after the accident that caused her death. As her presence becomes noticeably more intrusive, Gran Kura instructs Baby's brother: "Tell it to get out, tell it off properly, that's what you do" (p. 239). Alongside the issues of dealing with body parts is the challenge posed by language on its own account. Baby's brother in the quote is encouraged to draw upon language as something other than just a transporter of rationalistic meaning. For all concerned in the novel, it is instead the stuff of the world—all-pervasive, unconditioned. Patricia Grace's novel perhaps displays this connection of language to the sublime more than any rational treatment of the topic can: language is, after all, not constrained by academic orthodoxy; it is not reduced to a provable entity; and thus it can be allowed its extensive sway among other things in the world.

There is a dual nature to language, especially when it is as much a part of the seen and unseen worlds as it is for Māori. It "resists comprehension because all approaches to it are already mediated by language" (O'Brien, 1995, p. 199). The challenge of talking *about* language whilst being in its thrall should not be too much of a deterrent, however, especially when the survival of Indigenous languages is as dependent on that sort of philosophical speculation as it is on the retention of those languages' words and so on. In an era that appears to be concerned with the survival of Indigenous languages, language as a general phenomenon needs to be thought of as thoroughly connected to one's worldview in order to ensure the survival of not just a particular vernacular but also one's deep orientation to the world. Here, I purposely depict language in a wider sense than simply its use in ceremony or its 'precise' rendition; I am arguing instead for a philosophy of language for Māori that considers language in its various forms—from general phenomenon to discrete word—to be dense with the full interplay of the world. As I do so, I note that one of the greatest deceptions imposed by colonization is that language is somehow separate from the complete whakapapa (genealogy) of the world and that it is simply a verbalized outcome of the mind that merely exists to scribe out one thing from its context.

With those problems in mind, I propose a philosophy about one entity having always been constituted by all others and, with that, a conception of language that peers more keenly into the disclosure of the world than linguistics, whilst acknowledging that signposts to a worlded proposition of language may be possible through an analysis of certain terms. I call this worldview 'worlded perception', and I add to the intricacy of that possibility by arguing that a Māori holistic philosophy of language holds perception to *present* the world rather than just cognitively apprehend and *represent* it. This contention is based on oft-cited holistic utterances that retain the idea simultaneously as form. My intention here is to show that language is immediately accompanied by all things; this proposition, though, asks for me to clarify the nature of that primordial accompaniment. I then turn to think about language as a general phenomenon for Māori, and its complex ability to foreshadow an entity even as it adumbrates that thing's backdrop. I consider the verb 'to be' in that light, arguing that a Māori philosophy can identify language as a sort of gathering of entities rather than an instrument for singling out one thing as thoroughly and separably evident.

Māori worldedness

Full attendance of the world within one entity

There is a Māori philosophy that attributes a vitality and holism to things in the world. Pere (1982) talks about this phenomenon in terms of what sits outside of the everyday realm and yet is part of it, when she states that "nothing was done or attempted without some thought being given to the spiritual side of things" (p. 54), and Marsden (2003) addresses the full complement of the world when he insists that "the earth is not simply *Papa* (rock foundation) but Papa-tua-nuku (rock foundation beyond expanse, the infinite)" (p. 22). A further and immediately related way of stating it is the following: that any one entity is immediately and actively constituted by all things. Raerino (1999) describes an inseparability of the self from the natural world, leading "a great chief [to] speak of himself as the mountain or the river; these cannot be objectified or externalized. They are not 'out there'; but 'in here'" (p. 73). In Māori philosophy, this instant relationship is shown in the notion of 'whakapapa', which interrelates things in the world (Roberts et al., 2004). 'Whakapapa' is therefore an immediate reference to the notion of 'worlding', a term which is immediately both noun and verb. The sort of relatedness I signal at this point connects with the idea that one thing is materially all others, although the rest of the world within the object may not be what the self has in mind. An object's construction by all other things, such that they all diverge within that object and have *become* it, is somewhat different to the idea that things are merely connected yet are individual—comprising nodes on a wheel, interlinked through the spokes that move through them to other nodes, so to speak. This immediate attendance cannot be directly experienced because it is an example of what Marsden (2003) generally contends is beyond our perception. The a priori full attendance of all things always structures our subsequent perception of the world—that is, it sets limits on our experience—but, importantly for a Māori worldview which privileges the vitality of a thing and its autonomy, it also exists independently of the mind. The totality of entities therefore exceeds the human self, yet it simultaneously engages with the speculative element, drawing the self on to ponder its possibilities and also establishing the horizons of that thinking. The collectivity of things in the world is utterly influential on the self, and just as significantly the latter dwells in conjunction with all those other things. One entity is, in a sense, driven against or with the others so that even the space it occupies is collapsed immediately with that of the others. Its locus is thus interrelated and, having its own origin in the dually material and mysterious Papatūānuku/Papa (Earth Mother) and all her related entities, is entirely engaged at all times with the world and those entities.

'Whakapapa' is also commensurate with notions of time, because Papatūānuku actively presents entities in their always-becoming nature. Any one entity always was correspondent with all others. The word 'always' is not incidental in that idea, and we should at this point visit this 'always' premise that proves confusing for dominant Western thought, which in general does not attribute entity status to concepts. This basic assumption is that, in Māori thought, a concept and a real thing are equally material, with genealogy showing the link between the two (Mika & Stewart, 2015). Indeed, form and thought are the same, to the extent that they have forever been enmeshed. It should further be remembered here that the linearity of genealogy does not do justice to the simultaneity of things, and there exist deep problems with the straightforward notion that whakaaro (concept) eventually begets āhua (form) (Royal, 2012). A key Māori philosophical concept is that, instead, past, present and future are collapsed, with the result that the genealogical (whakapapa) layout of entities (names and so on) is really an acknowledgement

of the complexity within any one particular entity being highlighted.

Clearly this approach to an entity heralds a dramatically contrasting idea about time to that held by Western modernity. A dominant Western philosophical response would probably be, in the first instance, that Māori are too wedded to superstitious thought and the entities that *are* that thought. Hence, we would seemingly be too superstitious in our thinking: we are *pre-rational*. This neo-Kantian proposition that argues for our apparent conceptual immaturity is based on the idea that true philosophical thought comes about through a distance from the object. Cassirer (1953), for example, believed that a truly philosophical reflection on an object is blocked when a 'primitive' society clings to the thing itself. Language, that most basic means of expression, for that society is therefore replete with myth and further ensnares the primitive group in the world of appearances. Language *is* its object. An Indigenous retort, in turn, might be that the detachment from objects and their infinite complexity is a sign of huge philosophical impoverishment, perhaps even being responsible for the lack of wellbeing that seems to afflict Western thought in so many ways, at least from an Indigenous perspective (see, e.g., Wildcat, 2001). A philosophical maxim that time separates phenomena from each other, placing them in a sequential line, is at the base of this Indigenous warning, because a philosophy of time structures the perception of the world by deciding how an object is to appear in advance. With a Māori notion of time (wā), phenomena emerge at once, and the human self has no choice but to share in that 'at-once' existence.

The presence of the imperceptible

While it is certainly difficult in colonized realities to escape Kant's (1998) insistence that one should not speculate on the thing-in-itself and instead just make do with knowing that one has represented the thing without its totality, a Māori worlding declares that simply resting with a shell of knowledge to form a shell around the thing is inadequate as an explanation of a full relationship with the thing and its world. The ingrained 'thing' may appear to be alone in the self's representation but its constant and active merging with the world and its total complement of animate objects (even where they are deemed by the West to be inanimate [Deloria, 2001a]) indicates that the human self is constantly urged to speculate on the nature of a thing *as* thoroughly interrelated. The path of thought that I suggest the world as a whole confronts us with here is a convoluted one, and is scribed out by those things in the first instance, so that our thinking is constituted and guided by them. In other words, our thinking is never distinct from the movement, revelation and recession of all things. Heidegger (1976) noted in relation to this lure that "what withdraws [as the most thought-provoking thing] in such a manner, keeps and develops its own, incomparable nearness" (p. 17). In a Māori context, I aver that our inability to grasp the complete nature of any one thing in perception, simply because it is so much more complicatedly related to all other things, draws us on to inquire into such themes as: What is mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge)? How is it that a Western worldview does not sit well within a Māori context? What is the nature of an utterance for Māori?—and so on. The paradox is that the things that limit our thinking call for us to contemplate them, with the result that we never fully transcend, or step outside, those things. This revelatory nature of things happens in a concrete way, and Royal (2008) encourages us to acknowledge the living world when he states that "he whakamīharo ngā āhuatanga o te Ao—arā, te whitinga o Tamanuiterā, te ngungurutanga o te tai, te pāuritanga me te awatea—ēnei tū āhuatanga o te Ao, he whakamīharo ki te titiro atu [the forms of the world are amazing—the movement of the sun, the lapping of the tide, the darkness and the light—these manifestations of the world

are amazing to see]" (p. 60) and relates the interplay of these phenomena to our thinking. I add that thinking (along with all other modes of existence) is also equally governed by the reorganization or movement of a distant entity as well. In relation to that proposition, the early German Romantic poet and philosopher Novalis (2007) would say, "What is thinking sensing etc. here—is burning, fermenting, thrusting etc. yonder" (p. 24). We can extrapolate two main facets to thinking here: first, that it is not the only attribute of humanity that is governed by things; and, secondly, that we are directed to think not only by those things that we can perceive but also by those that remain beyond our senses.

Language: A thing and its worlded enactment

Thus far, we can see that I have alternated between the problem of certainty and the possibility of mystery. Alongside the oscillation of one idea/form with another, there is another: the Māori writer on any matter alights on one with the other in the background, carries the one towards the other, and is thus responsible for ensuring that things in the world are expressed as if they are one. Language is an organic and overall phenomenon and is an obvious participant in this interrelationship of self with the complexity of other things. Arguably, all ways of expression are 'language' in a Māori sense; Heidegger (1971) also pushed for a view that language is its own master (but could not completely undermine what he himself described as the positing of language as human-centred and rational). This wider interpretation of language would encompass that things have a sort of communication with each other and with the self, such that the self responds. In that more expansive approach to language, an intriguing homonym exists with the term 'mea', which is most frequently used to mean 'to say' but can mean simultaneously 'thing, uncertain

thing, think, soon' (Williams, 1921). Where Indo-European languages strongly demarcate meanings between homonyms, for Māori terminology there may well be a cohesion that predicates or underlies all those terms, so that they all fall into a sense that accords with a Māori worldedness of holism and interconnection. In the case of 'mea', an equally perplexing unity exists between entities, where to say or speak may indicate to manifest a thing, and the attendant world, in that utterance. The human self is not alone in this act; other things in the world have the power to speak (Moon, 2003) in accordance with their own essential autonomy, yet in accord with each other. The fact that 'mea' also refers to something pending indicates perhaps that the human self has some way to go in catching up to that process: he or she is made aware of the 'thing' only at the time of thinking it, not prior to that step, when the thing has in fact already beckoned to the self and, in a certain oblique way, has spoken the human self (not just *to* the human self—the thing has claimed the human self by its revelation to him or her), who then goes on to respond.

There are two main aspects to my approach with the term 'mea'. First, there is an obscure method at work that uses the dictionary meanings to attempt to briefly unveil a potential for language; however, I am intent on not letting those meanings limit the potential of language or cut it off from the impact of the world's entities. Language hence displays possibilities for particularly creative thought when the self is not constrained by the dictionary. Language as I have posited it is resonant with Frege's idea of a 'reference' being accompanied by a 'sense' (see Klement, n.d.). From a Māori perspective, the sense might be described in various ways, including 'wairua' (spirit), 'mauri' (life force) or 'whakapapa'. The meanings of terms could either be read in consonance with their dictionary meanings, without identifying with a worldedness other than that prescribed by denotation, or they might be thoroughly bound with that sense that, for the self, is accessible

through speculative thought. Moreover, while one speculates on the possibilities of entities through language, those entities have claimed the self. On a personal note: I would hardly have turned to speculate on 'mea' if a certain configuration of the world had not encroached on my thinking. Quite what that arrangement *is* at any one given time is well beyond my knowledge. What we are left with in language, then, is a non-rational approach to those things and thus to language itself.

Secondly and relatedly, I am saying something about language itself, on the basis of my thought on 'mea'. Language—speaking, where 'a thing things' (to revert to a Heideggerean expression), and immediate temporality—is shared by all entities and their active revelation, administration to, or construction of, all other things including the self. It is productive for thought, by urging the self onwards to speculate on the interconnected nature of the world. Any one term has this potential, and despite where the speaker wishes to point precisely to an entity through language, language nevertheless reveals a world for the speaker beyond what he or she wishes to say. Novalis said of language that it "is peculiar because it only concerns itself with itself" (as quoted in Bowie, 1997, p. 65). He saw the world's uncertainty in language as the latter sets out to obscure what is made clear through the dictionary or the precise intent of the speaker, and he also sought to emphasize language as itself obscure. In both instances, the term, conveying the full essence of all things, urges the speaker on to excavate beneath its given (and comfortable) definition. If there is one way of referring to an entity that results in confusion, it is language, for the complete sum of entities provide us the latter in the first instance. Language, then, cannot be used as a means of precisely describing that which offered it. Allowing the disclosure of entities, language is complicated by the unknowable dance between things in the world, with the result that there is always an "overplus of meaning" (Otto, 1958, p. 5) that the self simply cannot pin down.

Any one thing, carrying with it the imprint of all others, retains to itself its own essence, so that all the self can finally describe is a vague impression of the thing.

Abrams (1996) states of the Dogon tribe in Mali that "spoken language was originally a swirling garment of vapour and breath worn by the encompassing earth itself" (p. 87). This seemingly mysterious, omnipresent depiction of language would be shared by Māori, and a Māori proposition about language places language most concretely in all things that exist. If, as I have suggested, language engages with the manifestation of all things in the world, then it is the totality of things that have made me concerned about the totality of things as an issue. When we speak, we hence utter the totality of the world, not simply a description of whatever it is we wish to discuss. Language therefore presents the *all* within whatever is our concern, and our concern is only *there* because of the *all* in language. This all is material, and issues us with ideas about it through its speech to us, as Hohepa Kereopa has identified (see Moon, 2003). A Māori view of this phenomenon—which is essentially bound up with notions of mystery and (pervasively in the West) mysticism—would suggest that language is thoroughly presentational, not just *re*presentational, because it manifests what may be called the All. Certainly the self can intend to represent one thing—say, for instance, a tree—through language, but language is more important for its ability to open up a clearing where things manifest, alongside that act of saying what something *is*. Here, we can be mindful of Heidegger's (1978) announcement that everything we do is within language. Somewhat divergent from Heidegger, though, Māori are more concerned with how the totality of things culminate in one utterance, or what the possibilities are in abstaining from saying anything. By this I mean that language plays a key role in expressing the engagement of entities with each other and with the self. Language as a whole should act in conjunction with this

totality of things, rather than seeking to single one thing out from its context as if that is its true nature. Its primary aim is not to distil the Aristotelian truth correspondence of a matter but to allow an entity and its culmination with others to manifest, and to offer the self some sort of comportment to all those entities.

In its pursuit of the entire world, language grasps the combined 'dark matter' of all things. The absence of entities in anything positively productive appears oxymoronic and, with that in mind, the Māori writer Nepia (2012) and the author (Mika, 2012) have emphasized the importance of nothingness in various solid, seemingly banal, acts, such as writing. Mainly signalled in the worlded terms 'korekore' (extreme nothingness/positive aspects) and 'kore' (nothingness), nothingness appears to have been largely overlooked in favour of bright clarity. Discussing an entity in terms of its graspable and permanent properties has consequences for those opaque, primordial yet everyday phenomena, and threatens to consign them to the realm of fancy. At least in academic convention, it is difficult enough to describe the fact that something arises or manifests (for instance, with 'ira' [there!]), let alone suggest that it holds some shadow aspect of its self away from our vision. However, it is a thing's ungraspability that can draw the self on to think and subsequently utter. Within korekore and kore lies the potential for mystery and amazement for the self, related to the non-presencing of aspects of the world. There is a particular philosophy at work here that does not comply with the demands of Kantian idealism or Cartesian rationalism. A Māori worlded speculation would suggest that those primordial entities within all things in the world defy the thoroughgoing presence of an entity in language. Those entities push for the reign of nothingness and darkness as part of the entity being manifested through language. They, like the things they give rise to, are fundamentally unknowable and are nevertheless influential and constructive. The fact that they are unknowable

suggests that they are conceptual issues as well as entities. Pihama (2001) notes that 'kaupapa' is an ancient notion: 'papa' refers to a ground or foundation (Marsden, 2003), and its initial disclosure ('kau') suggests it is as much to do with perception as it is a solid ground. It is this ground that gives rise to all things and that signals both the potential and the limitations of thinking.

Language: That *something* is

Korekore and kore share in Papa to the extent that they provide a strong emotive and speculative backdrop to the world. They participate with Papa by ensuring that the self is confronted with a non-foundational ground—one that ultimately cannot be fully understood or perceived. This ground is thus all-consuming, and is not really a ground at all in the sense that it is meant dominantly in English. It is instead pervasive, and if we were to imagine it geometrically at all then it might seem vertical and confronting, rather than something underfoot or superficial. Kore and korekore are therefore existential terms relating to one's continual, unavoidable encounter with the absence within a thing (Mika, 2013): they can result in a gloominess (pā-uri) for the self as the self is challenged by the out-of-bounds nature of the thing. This unobtainability of the thing, being its absence, may correspond conceptually with "dark matter" as "the dominant component of the physical Universe" for which "there is no persuasive theoretical explanation" (Cahn, 2007, p. 2551). I suggest that, for Māori, the darkness that Cahn speaks of is an emotional symptom of the active presence of invisibility to an entity. Alongside meaning 'a lack of light', it expresses the self's encounter with a thing's mystery—its hiddenness despite its appearance to the self. Thus, language for Māori descends to the opaque depths of an object and its own, autonomous and full speech with the rest of the world. Language here tries to retain this complete array of the world *as* invisible while

referring to one thing, and the self is aware that there is a backdrop to the thing being discussed that simply cannot be grasped but that nevertheless confronts and influences the speaker. Silence also participates in that voidness, perhaps by allowing that backdrop to manifest on its own, without the self's demarcation of any one particular entity. Its importance in Māori practice (Smith, 2007) arises from its reflection of simple nothingness, and its ability to give form to the hinterland, on its own terms, of any object.

Language's correspondence with things in the world and their interplay means that one term and its dominant use can disclose a great deal about how the world is to be approached and how its things are meant to relate. There are several possible examples here, with the most fascinating comprising those widely used ones that have become so embedded as to be overlooked. There is something about the Indo-European love of the verb 'to be', for instance, that both reveals and obstructs Being, depending on its use. When philosophers of language ask 'What *is* language?' then the verb 'to be' must be contended with. Somewhat ironically, the 'what-ness' of language, expressed in that question, is made the topic of concern through an aspect of language itself—in particular, 'is'. It is a striking characteristic of the Māori language that there is no such verb. There is undoubtedly a sense of 'to be' within our worldview, but our ability to point with certainty at a thing by saying *what* it *is*, is somewhat measured, and I suspect that this de-emphasis of the one thing shows itself in our language. Analytic views on language, which since Locke have placed ideational significance on language so that it is merely an expression of the content-bearing mental state of the speaker at the time (Lycan, 2000, p. 78) and which have remained dominant, rely especially heavily on the copula to represent that mental picture, and saying what a thing *is* asserts something about the thing in its self-evidence, detaches it from its context, and makes it utterly present to the self. Lamenting the problems associated with the forgetting of a deeper notion of 'to be', Hart (2013) contemplates the following, which is worth quoting at length here:

> Derrida . . . links this conflation of these two uses of "to be"—grammatical and lexical—to themes in the history of Western philosophy. It is the "full-fledged" use that Heidegger claims to seek to recover when he suggests that *being* has become both compromised and effaced: "'Being' remains barely a sound to us, a *threadbare* appellation. If nothing is left to us, *we must seek at least* to grasp *this last vestige of a possession*." This nostalgia for a return to the use of *to be* as *existence* is echoed, Derrida asserts, by Benveniste: "It must have had a definite lexical meaning before *falling*—at the end of a long historical development—to the rank of 'copula.' . . . We must *restore its full force and its authentic function to the verb 'to be'* in order to measure the distance between a nominal assertion and an assertion with 'to be'. The copula thus transcends the grammatical categories of particular languages . . . the "full fledged" notion of *to be* cannot be a category determined by language if it is to be possible to return from the effaced use of *being* to its "full force" and "authentic function". (p. 58)

For Māori, the problem is deepened because there is no copula to begin with. Hart, as we have seen, contends that the copula could act in one's existential favour if its significance is discovered, but clearly, whilst it acts out a reductionist role, it is capable of endorsing a reductionist worldview. Thus, any worldview that understates the idea that one thing could be represented in isolation to others is placed at risk through the introduction of a seemingly universal small verb and its historical twists and turns. In the case of the Māori language, the verb 'to be' is implied in certain grammatical particles, such as 'he' and 'ko' together with the rest of the sentence featuring each particle. I

would add that, imputed into Māori usage, the verb injects a false belief that what one wishes to discuss is all that there is to the discussion. Here, we may recall Derrida (1982) weighing in on the problem when he recalls Aristotle's role in "think[ing] time on the basis of *ousia* as *parousia*, on the basis of the now, the point, etc." (p. 61). Derrida proposed that there are no self-sufficient identities; they all involve their others, which are absent. The metaphysics of presence, as he would call this deep focus on what is before the self in all its solidity, engages with a set of positive hierarchies (Biesta, 2010) that ensure that a conception and its language draw on a notion of presence and "*always* [amount] . . . to reconstituting the *same* system [of Being of presence]" (Derrida, 1982, p. 60). Presence, that great Western unconscious preoccupation, does not acknowledge its absent partner.

But how can anything other about language be proposed, from a Māori perspective, when it is so tightly governed by preconditioned ideas of time and rigidity? What could language possibly be if it is not highly present? What about its 'isn't-ness'? The questions are brought about in part by the initial appearance of the 'is', so we have to deal with the 'is' while proposing something other about language. There is one issue that asks to be dealt with here, before we attempt to answer those questions. The fact that I am asking that latter question, in particular, shows a concern about language. Yet, it is language itself that has shown the concern about itself: language has provided a means for me to orient towards it. The fact that language *is* asks for my attention, and so my concern is not so much *about* language as *within* language. Interestingly, I have drawn on the verb 'to be' to explain that phenomenon: that language *is*, is participatory with the copula. *That* something *is*, not *what* it is, may very well be tied to the "full force" of the copula that Hart has spoken of. In Māori thought, the fact of language's existence, and the conundrum of access to speculation on that fact through language,

asks for the self to account immediately for his or her immersion in that act of speculating. For instance, I cannot philosophize on the fact of language without acknowledging the influence of my origins from Te Arawa, the impact of place in general (see Deloria, 2001b), and then of the place in which I am speculating about language, and so on, including the unfathomable connection between all these. My expression at any one time could very well be influenced by something that Western academic considers only nebulously connected to the self, including a geographical phenomenon, the activities of another group of people, and so on. In Māori philosophy, the possibilities here are disconcertingly infinite—disconcerting because they run counter to a project of empiricism that dominant Western thought and practice insist on.

Despite the liberating potential of the verb 'to be' for the West if its existential sense is recaptured, it is not mandatory for speculation on the mystery of a thing. *That* something *is* does not require the verb 'to be' in order to speculate. In a Māori context, the astonishment at the fact that something arises or manifests itself is different to saying *what* it *is*, and is displayed in a number of ways. Various Māori terms, I argue, express the immediate involvement of the self within an utterance, and thus the sublime nature of an entity in its participation with all others. The term 'ira', for instance, is 'essence' only insofar as it indicates the surprise that things manifest (Mika, 2015). Yet 'ira' also incorporates one's own existence in relation to the phenomenological surprise that 'ira' portrays about other phenomena: How could one possibly discuss 'ira' as a separate phenomenon when the term also indicates one's own intrinsic selfhood at the same time? That things are 'there' and the self's direct relationship to that fact are hence real concerns for the self. 'Whakapapa' also proposes that there exists a collapse of the self with all that the self is related to: it is not so much genealogical as continuously influential. 'Ako' indicates a particular vulnerability of the self in relation to

the external world (Thrupp & Mika, 2012); it is not always such a straightforward indicator of 'teach/learn', even if they are simultaneous. And in the absence of any particular term is the fact that the Māori self also *is*, resonating with particular concerns about presence and absence and also with such enduring philosophical and social issues as colonization and tradition.

Conclusion

The point of speculative philosophy for Māori, I believe, is to cast a cynical eye towards common sense whilst proposing something else. Both exercises demand a particular regard for language—not just for its discrete terms and syntaxes, its correct or even deliberately incorrect uses, as important as these are, but for the nature of language itself. Importantly though, language's relationship with Māori worlding of things and with our notion of 'ground' places limitations on what we can say definitively about language. Any philosopher of language is hence accosted by language, forced to speak of, yet within, it, and at the same time is pushed away from knowing it in its entirety. The curious distance that language seems to provide us with, when we seem to talk *about* language as Māori, has always already been made proximate by the fact that language is materially constituted by all things in the world that are animate. It remains the role of speculative language, and its intention to philosophize, to tentatively account for both the utterance and the visible/invisible worlds that Māori treasure. It is also the task of the language philosopher to remain open to the influence of language as an entity-filled phenomenon that may decide to disclose different facets of itself at its whim, and to be prepared for the uncertainty attending that revelation.

Glossary

āhua	form
ako	teach/learn/existential vulnerability
he/ko	particles of speech
ira	essence/"there!"
kaupapa	platform/conceptual base
kore	nothingness
korekore	extreme nothingness/ positive aspects
mātauranga	knowledge
mauri	life force
mea	say, thing, think, soon
Papatūānuku/Papa	Earth Mother/ continuously encountered ground
pā-uri	darkness/gloom
wā	time/space
wairua	spirit
whakaaro	think, thought
whakapapa	genealogy, layer, worlding/worlded
Wheiao	liminal space

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