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Transforming the Coloniality of Occupation and Health: Reflections Based on the Uluru Statement from the Heart

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Abstract: *The Uluru Statement from the Heart provides a unique opportunity for transforming the coloniality of occupation and health in the Australian context. The article calls for critical consciousness of ways in which the coloniality of occupation is hidden in plain sight, leading to detrimental impacts on human and environmental health. A transformative, complementarity based perspective of occupation and health, is proposed. This perspective interprets the interrelated concepts of doing, being, becoming and belonging - which are the basis for the Occupational Perspective of Health (OPH) of Ann Wilcock - through the lens of The Uluru Statement from the Heart. It also draws upon thoughts concerning Aboriginal worldviews, including the custodial ethics of 'caring for Country', as explained by Aboriginal philosopher, Mary Graham. The perspective has applicability in multiple contexts involving First Nations and settler people in their relationships with each other and the Land.*

Keywords: Aboriginal worldviews; custodial ethic; coloniality; occupation and health; doing, being, becoming and belonging

"If you know you have benefitted from a crime, however remote in time or place, it imposes on you a duty of reparation" Sven Lindqvist, Terra Nullius (Launer, 2013)

Introduction

This article draws from material that has been published by First Nations people, and is freely accessible. It is not based on the acquisition of new information dependent on research that would require institutional ethics approval, but entirely on previously published reports. It embodies, however, an example of what Jane Palmer and Celmara Pocock phrase, 'an act of voluntary discomfort' (Palmer & Pocock, 2019). This article is part of a quest for truth-telling, dialogue, and a form of justice that addresses the ongoing *coloniality of occupation* in Australia. I have a personal connection with Aboriginal children separated from their parents and culture. Through a lifelong friendship (70+ years) with an Aboriginal man who identifies as a member of the stolen generation, and through personal research, I have

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developed a position of critical consciousness in regards to colonialism and racism in my own heritage. My European ancestors occupied lands taken from Aboriginal people and I recognise, I am a material beneficiary of their actions. My earliest years date from when my parents were with the United Aborigines Mission (UAM) as missionaries at Oodnadatta, Finniss Springs and Gerard, during the 1950s. (See, for accounts of the UAM from a *Nunga* perspective, Mattingly & Hampton, 1988). My critical consciousness is the basis for acknowledging the need for reparations at a national level; and, at a personal level, direct involvement in what Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people term 'caring for Country' (a concept that will be explained in the final section).

The research question

The question I have faced in writing this article is how to develop a *decolonial* perspective of occupation and health involving attributes of doing, being, becoming and belonging, given that these same attributes can also be used to describe the *coloniality* of occupation and health. The framework I have proposed invokes complementarity between the use of these attributes as drawn from the Occupational Perspective of Health (OPH, Wilcock, 2007) and a re-interpretation of them based on a First Nations perspective, via a sympathetic reading of *The Uluru Statement from the Heart.* This latter perspective is supplemented by Graham's (2008; 2023) discussion of Aboriginal worldviews. Graham proposes a custodial relationship with the land, which is taken as the ethical basis for developing complementary relationships between First Nations and settler colonial people, as a way of healing the intergenerational trauma involved in the coloniality of occupation and health. In my understanding of Graham's text, the term 'custodial relationship' is another way of saying 'caring for Country', as will be explained further in the final section. As a note on the phrase 'settler colonial' (Wolfe, 2006), this term applies to all people who have immigrated to Australia since 1788, and any of their descendents who do not identify as Indigenous Australians.

A background to the coloniality of occupation and health in Australia

The Latin origin of 'occupation' comes from the verbs *occupātiō* and *occupāre*: to seize, take possession, fill up a space or position. (Merriam-Webster. n.d.) The etymological roots of 'occupation' are entwined with, and historically inseparable from colonial conquest and domination of subjugated groups, no matter how *settled* and *habitual* colonial ways of life (i.e. its everyday occupations) have subsequently become. Through habituation, the coloniality embedded in everyday occupations goes unnoticed. This lack of awareness, as discussed by numerous decolonial scholars, is part of 'the coloniality of being' (Maldonado-Torres, 2007) in which the operations of colonial power are hidden, even from those who are most adversely affected by it (Freire, 1998). The phrase 'coloniality of occupation and health' draws its meaning directly from the decolonial tradition of critique. (Examples of decolonial research in an occupational science context include Ramugondo, 2015; 2018; Huff et.al., 2022; Lévesque et.al. 2022).

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In what follows, points that are salient to understanding the coloniality of occupation and health, specifically in the Australian context, are highlighted. This background draws specific attention to the prejudicial attitudes that led to devastating impacts on Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's health and to the Land as a whole.

For most of colonial history it was commonly accepted that prior to European settlement, the life expectancy of Aboriginal people was less than forty years (Blyton, 2009). Given the tendency of settler colonialists to judge by European standards, such estimations of a shortened lifespan, as underpinned by poor health, align with the life expectancy of people in Europe in the 1700s and early 1800s and would appear normal to them. However, shaping the attitudes of settler colonialists was a discriminatory view epitomised by 17th century English philosopher, Thomas Hobbes, that life in *a state of nature, was* 'worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short' (Hobbes, 1651, i. xiii. 9). This view aligned with denigrating descriptions of Australian Aboriginal people that appeared in British natural history in the early 19th century. The following extract is typical:

> The name kangaru is that given to the animals by at least some of the many hordes or packs of savage inhabitants which were found in Australia at the time it was first visited by Europeans... (Partington, 1837, p.3).

Natural historians from that era were largely sanguine about impacts of colonisation, not only on Aboriginal people but also on Australian native fauna and flora:

> *Koala* ... Not much is known of its dispositions and habits, and it seems so peaceable a creature that there is probably very little to be known. Indeed all the native mammalia of New Holland, though they are singular, are inferior in the development of their system of sensation to those of every other part of the world, and their resources are so few, that they will gradually disappear as the country becomes more thickly peopled. (Partington, 1837, p.17).

Noteworthy in the preceding extract, is the ascription of inferiority to native fauna, implicitly acceding to their demise in what is assumed to be a Hobbesian 'state of nature'. Darwin's theory of evolution based on natural selection, operative within the same colonialist, natural historicist mentality, offered no alternative to the seeming inevitability of the destruction of Aboriginal inhabitants.

> Writing to Ernst Dieffenbach (a German physician and naturalist working in New Zealand...), Darwin also observed the decline (at that time) of Australian Aboriginals *(sic)*, and commented: *The varieties of man seem to act on each other in the same way as different species of animals — the stronger always extirpating the weaker.* (Hayman, 2009, italics added for emphasis.)

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That First Nations people were healthier before colonisation than their European counterparts of the same era, appears not to have dawned on many natural historians and early settlers. Blyton (2009) provides textual evidence of explorer and settler accounts of elderly, healthy Aboriginal people caring for children whilst other adults were engaged in gathering food, as well as accounts of early colonists' admiration for their healthy physique. Rather than denigrating a nomadic lifestyle, Blyton suggests that the practice of regularly moving camp was for sanitary reasons. Following colonisation, settlers saw Aboriginal people dying in greater numbers than Europeans and attributed it to some inherent weakness and inferiority. This prejudice is characteristic of the generations that followed in the footsteps of settler colonialists, in some cases, up until the present time.

That First Nations people had survived on the Australian continent for over 60,000 years in a predominantly healthy state (compared to the subsequent decline, as a result of exposure to new diseases, break-up of families and destruction of community support structures) ought now to be finally accepted. This has required a long process of inquiry, accumulation of evidence and public demonstration of support that was, and still is, needed to dispel colonialist myth making (Blyton, 2009; Launer, 2013; Sherwood, 2013; Tatz, 2001).

More accurate descriptions of what First Nations people were doing over the vast span of 60 millennia includes not only that they were expert hunter-gatherers, but also, they had a substantial repertoire of knowledge concerning medicinal plants, as well as cultural practices that contributed to their survival and health (Nakata, 2007; Thomson, 1983). That their survival and health has been drastically compromised since 1788 is borne out in the historical record of genocide (Elinghaus, 2009; Tatz, 2001), removal from traditional lands (Commonwealth of Australia, 1997, *Bringing Them Home Report*), confinement to colonially imposed regimes on missions (Mattingly & Hampton, 1988), and exposure to new infectious diseases, the introduction of a diet that resulted in hitherto unknown dietary and lifestyle related conditions such as heart disease, diabetes and alcoholism (See Closing the Gap, Reports 2005 - 2020).

To this day, the rates of incidence of these diseases in First nations Australians grossly exceed the rates in populations descended from immigrants (ABS, 2018 - 2019). It is logical to infer that these rates were substantially lower prior to the arrival of Europeans, who introduced diseases to which indigenous peoples had not been previously exposed, and hence were highly vulnerable.

A note on developing a complementarity based perspective

Complementarity is a philosophical concept with a venerable history. From complementarity is derived a naturalistic concept of *The Way*, which in ancient China was called *Tao* (Waley, 1939; Le Guin, 1997). A similar concept appeared in ancient India (Dasgupta, 2014) and has found a place in modern physics, as developed by Neils Bohr (Pais, 1991; Turnbull & Barnard, 2023a).

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Complementarity, as understood in this tradition of thought, is expressed in the following lines from the *Tao Te Ching*:

For being and nonbeing
arise together;
Hard and easy
complete each other;
Long and short
shape each other;
High and low
depend on each other;
Note and voice
make music together;
Before and after
follow each other.
(Tr. Le Guin, 2019, p.4)

Complementarity is a way of understanding relationships between phenomena that, each on their own, are incomplete. They require each other in order to form the description of a whole. Such phenomena are not objects or objectified as entities; they are a representation through language of the way things are perceived in experience and conceived in thought. Taken together, they are constituted as a unity.

In terms of human action, complementarity is constituted by a relationship between activity and receptivity, in which activity is receptive, and receptivity is active. Phenomenologically speaking, activity and receptivity are entangled and mutually constituting opposites. They are not, strictly speaking, exact opposites, as in the way classical logic would conceive of the opposition of A and not-A, which when asserted together, results in a contradiction. The opposition is perhaps better written as 'non-A', conceived as an opening for possibilities provided by A that are not able to be fulfilled by A itself. The following lines from the *Tao Te Ching* convey the idea.

Hollowed out,
clay makes a pot.
Where the pot's not
is where it's useful.
(Tr. Le Guin, 2019, p.14)

The development of a complementarity based perspective, in this article, originates from an initiative by First Nations people, namely, *The Uluru Statement from the Heart*. This initiative is actively engaged in reshaping the political context. The onus for receptivity towards this initiative is placed on settler people. Critical attention needs to be placed on the term 'receptivity'. There is a moral depth to this term that can only be reached by consciously listening to, and embracing the emotional and spiritual intensity embodied in *the voice* of First nations people in their quest for justice. From this basis, there is ongoing hope that

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settler people will respond with actions, particularly in the formation of healing partnerships, demonstrating reciprocity, respect and support for the aspirations of First Nations people. The actual working out of reconfigured occupational arrangements requires dialogue in specific situations and contexts. It cannot depend entirely on centralised agencies of government. It is, foremostly, a 'grass-roots', people's initiative. This sets the stage for a reconsideration of occupational justice as a transformation of the power that, in its original form and direction, creates the injustice at the heart of occupation. The article fully supports the aims of *The Uluru Statement from the Heart*, for truth-telling, and for justice. This article focuses particularly on matters dealing with occupation (consisting of doing, being, becoming and belonging) and health.

A conceptual path towards transforming the coloniality of occupation and health

In 2007, Australian occupational scientist Ann Wilcock published an article entitled, *Occupation and Health: Are They One and the Same?* (Wilcock, 2007). In that article Wilcock proposed a definition of occupation as '*all the things that people do'.* Wilcock wrote, 'all the things that people do can be recognised as part of the human condition and relate to health or illness of a physical, mental, spiritual and social kind.' (Wilcock, 2007, p. 4). Wilcock also proposed that *'doing, being, becoming and belonging are essential to survival and health' and* 'that *'natural'* health and occupation *may be* one and the same' (Wilcock, 2007, p. 4, 5, italics added for emphasis). Her complex suggestion seems to require that the phrase *'natural' health and occupation* is comprehended as a composite of *doing, being, becoming and belonging.*

Although Wilcock (2007) made a case for a close relationship between occupation and health, she paid no attention to the relationship between occupation and colonialism. Therein lies the greatest obstacle to Wilcock's aspirations for an Occupational Perspective of Health (OPH). Wilcock, and many of those who followed in her footsteps (Hitch et. al. 2014a; 2014b) have failed to interrogate the coloniality inherent in everyday occupations. This is a prevalent oversight within a considerable proportion of the formative literature in occupational science. For example, Reed, Smythe and Hocking (2013), in an article expressly devoted to recovering the historical meanings of occupation, fail to note that in its colonial origins in ancient Rome, the concept of what humans do was subjected to a process of assimilation to the dominant culture. In this process *activity* was severed from its complementary other; *receptivity*. Specific forms of activity were enforced on vast numbers of the population including women, children, and slaves. Receptivity was replaced by compliance.

Hannah Arendt's groundbreaking contribution to understanding the connection between 'doing' and 'the human condition' takes an alternative route to that of Wilcock. Arendt introduces her historical study by way of the phrase 'to think what we are doing' (Arendt, 1958, p. 5) which provides a critical perspective on the notions of doing and the human condition. Arendt's analysis of the human condition, as she traced its changes from ancient times, is summed up in the phrases 'world alienation' and 'earth alienation'. Arendt notes

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that in ancient Greece and Rome, violence in the private sphere, as a means to obtain household order and economic stability, was a precondition for the male head of the house to obtain freedom and hence the right to enter the public sphere of politics. Freedom to engage in politics became a privilege of the few, the exercise of which depended on having shifted the burden of the necessity for labour, and of the need for work, onto others. These others, by very definition, had to remain unfree (i.e. merely compliant) in order to fulfil their social functions (Arendt, 1958, p. 31). Previously, Arendt had demonstrated the occupational conditions of possibility for totalitarianism (Arendt, 1973). Her subsequent analyses tracked the rise of 'the banality of evil' as a persistent undercurrent of thoughtlessness (among jobholders who simply follow orders) pervading contemporary Western society (Arendt, 1963; 1978).

A recent article, (Turnbull & Barnard, 2023b) develops Arendt's approach by distinguishing between *conditions for* and *conditions of* the human condition. Such an investigation has helped the author to better understand the *conditions for* the prevailing situation involving the *coloniality of* occupation and health. Most importantly, such prevailing conditions are subject to change by paying attention to the *conditions for* change. Such conditions have been provided, in outline, by First Nations Australians whose perspective is contained in *The Uluru Statement from the Heart*. The Statement is the voice of the First Nations people who issued it. It can be viewed at the following website: https://ulurustatement.org/

Reflecting on the Uluru Statement from the Heart

In the following reflections, the position I am coming from is an awareness (however dim) of my own coloniality of being, becoming and belonging. My approach to interpreting the *Uluru Statemen*t is to try to set aside my own preconceptions of these terms and take, as far as it is possible, the perspective contained in its words.

The Uluru Statement from the Heart makes mention of several factors that clearly concern First Nations People's *ancestral* being, becoming and belonging and their relation to present matters of urgent political concern involving issues of health, wellbeing, truth-telling and justice.

Being (and belonging): '*Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tribes were the first sovereign Nations of the Australian continent and its adjacent islands, and possessed it under our own laws and customs.*'

Here I note that there is an intrinsic relation between being and belonging underpinning this statement. There is a direct reference to the original possession of land. The term 'possession' in this instance does not mean ownership; it means custodianship of the Land by people who belonged to it (Graham, 2008). Furthermore, custodianship was collective. Subsequent colonial migration involved a dispossession of the original inhabitants and then a fulfilment of the original Latin meaning of the word *occupation*: to seize, take possession, fill up a

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space or position. Only then did it become "ownership" which was largely conferred to private landholders.

Becoming: '*This sovereignty is a spiritual notion: the ancestral tie between the land, or 'mother nature', and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were born therefrom, remain attached thereto, and must one day return thither to be united with our ancestors.'*

Here I note that 'becoming' is based on the spiritual notion of a natural cycle of coming from the land, having attachment to the land, and returning to the land and being united with the ancestors.

Belonging (and being): '*This link is the basis of the ownership of the soil, or better, of sovereignty.'*

Here I note that belonging is linked to the cycle of becoming and the original possession of land. It is the cycle of becoming in a perpetual relationship with the land that confers 'spiritual' sovereignty (i.e. sovereignty as a state of *being*). The ancestors, as well as the people, *belong to the land*, a state of being which no dispossession by colonial powers can extinguish.

These three ancestral concepts provide descriptive evidence for the enduring quality of First Nations sovereignty and the justification for doing what needs to occur based on the notion of empowerment, to bring about restitution of ancestral entitlements, including the entitlement to health.

'It (i.e. sovereignty) *has never been ceded or extinguished, and co-exists with the sovereignty of the Crown.'*

'With substantive constitutional change and structural reform, we believe this ancient sovereignty can shine through as a fuller expression of Australia's nationhood.'

'We seek constitutional reforms to empower our people and take a rightful place in our own country. When we have power over our destiny our children will flourish. They will walk in two worlds and their culture will be a gift to their country.'

Finally, *The Uluru Statement from the Heart* speaks of a relational connection between First Nations people and other Australians. This relational connection expands the notion of belonging in three ways, so that all Australians are prospectively included.

The first requires constitutional reform.

'We call for the establishment of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution.'

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The second is the notion of Makarrata and the establishment of a Makarrata Commission.

'Makarrata is the culmination of our agenda: 'the coming together after a struggle'. It captures our aspirations for a fair and truthful relationship with the people of Australia and a better future for our children based on justice and self-determination.' (Bold face added to capture the emphasis in the original.)

'We seek a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations and truth-telling about our history.'

The third is an invitation.

'We invite you to 'walk with us' in a movement of the Australian people for a better future.' (Bold face added for emphasis.)

The invitation suggests an ongoing relationship between First Nations people and settler Australians. The phrase '*walk with us*' provides a metaphor for many kinds of *relational engagement*. In what follows, I turn to Mary Graham's discussion of Aboriginal worldviews, as a way to understand the phrase 'walk with us' in terms of what transformations it entails.

A transformative, complementarity based perspective of occupation and health

The invitation to 'walk with us', that occurs in The Uluru Statement from the Heart, provides the key to a transformative, complementarity based perspective of occupation and health involving doing, being, becoming and belonging. It is a reminder of the inclusivity of Aboriginal worldviews to discover that (perhaps paradoxically, when considered from a European perspective) there is the possibility for settlers to become part of the sense of belonging inherent in an Aboriginal worldview. As Graham (2008) writes, "The land is a sacred entity, not property or real estate; it is the great mother of all humanity. ... Because land is sacred and must be looked after, the relation between people and land becomes the template for society and social relations. Therefore all meaning comes from land".

The perspective that Graham provides also points towards ways in which the invitation contained in *The Uluru Statement from the Heart* to be fulfilled; 'to walk with us'. Speaking directly to the question of whether settler people can participate in the Aboriginal sense of belonging to the Land, Graham (2008) suggests that this would not require full participation in Aboriginal law but only taking, for oneself, a custodial ethic. "Aboriginal law is valid for all people only in the sense that all people are placed on land wherever they happen to be, so that the custodial ethic, which is primarily an obligatory system, may be acted on by anyone who is interested in looking after or caring for land."

Before any vision to 'walk with us' can be realised, there is the need for a transformation in the consciousness of settler people leading to a transformation in relationships with First Nations people. Settler colonial worldviews are based on the primacy afforded to normative

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modes of *doing,* based on an assumption that *being, becoming and belonging* are legitimised by colonial power, the same power that authorised the Australian Constitution in 1901. Such an assumption is, for the most part, unconscious and its consequences unforeseen by those who hold to it. So long as normative *doing* is foregrounded in consciousness, power remains invisible to those who operate according to its inherent coloniality. It is this power that prevents many settlers from fully embracing an Aboriginal custodial ethic.

As Graham (2023) suggests, there is a process of *becoming* (transformatively, in one's *being*) for settler people, which is hard for them to understand. The process is both experiential and philosophical.

Experientially, it requires what Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr terms *Dadirri*: *inner deep listening and quiet still awareness* (Ungunmerr, 1988) that arises from a state of receptivity to the Land with all its phenomenological variety and richness. In Australia, settlers cannot fully experience the Land without first deliberately placing themselves in direct physical and spiritual contact with it for extended periods of time. It is about *being in place*: which may mean deliberately placing oneself in a position where one can learn to be receptive; where one can feel oneself becoming part of the Land and having a spiritual kinship with all those who have been placed in this position. It is also about *learning one's place*, which is about discovering a shared basis of activity and receptivity on which a custodial ethic towards the Land depends.

Philosophically, the transformative process involves an inversion of the ordering of the interrelationships between doing, being, becoming and belonging, in which, for occupational science (Wilcock, 2007), primacy is awarded to *doing*. As outlined by Graham (2008; 2023), Aboriginal (First Nations) worldviews begin from a different standpoint, which is one of *belonging*. Such belonging is not a matter of ownership of land and property; of what belongs to us, the settlers, the colonisers. It is a matter of *belonging to* the Land and *belonging with* its people and other natural inhabitants. As Graham states, belonging to the Land comes before being: "Being comes from and is shared by and with others (including the spirit of others), which first comes from the Land" (Graham 2023, p. 10). The challenge for settler people is to reflect, receptively, on how they are positioned in regards to this belonging.

Reflective receptivity (reflectivity) brings about a change in perspective, which facilitates a process of becoming. As Graham (2023) states, "Reflectivity is the moment of seeking completion of the self beyond a purely physical self, concerned only with survival. It is a process of understanding not only the self, but the self in relation to earth and others." (p. 5).

This reflectivity leads into an obligation to care for that which creates us. It is available, in principle, to settler people, since it is an ethic involving relationality, and is unlimited in its possible extension to all people. Relationality is based on what Graham (2023) terms 'autonomous regard' (AR), which is explained as follows: "Every person has physicality and spirituality, personhood and agency and is therefore an autonomous being. To maintain and

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protect one's own autonomy we demonstrate regard (full respect) for each other or others" (p. 5).

Graham writes concerning the custodial ethic:

> The aim is always to achieve stability, efficiency and harmony rather than advantage over others. This is accomplished through the combination of two Principles:
>
> The ethical principle of maintaining a respectful, nurturing relationship with Land, Place and community, and the organising governance principle based on autonomy and identity of Place.
>
> Both principles together form the Custodial Ethic. ... Either of the two principles on their own would not lead to a non-ego-based society; it is in combining and melding together the two principles that the Custodial Ethic emerges. Each is a counter to the other, so that together they hold each other in balance. (Graham, 2023, p. 12)

In my interpretation of this passage, the first principle relates to matters of the heart, of feeling and spirit. The second principle is the political principle that underpins the sovereignty of each of the First Nations. Each of the principles requires the other and is incomplete without the other. Graham's exposition of the custodial ethic, demonstrating complementarity at the level of principles, leads towards complementarity between First Nations and settler people whose sense of belonging is in a process of being transformed by this ethic. This transformation is not purely based on intellectual assent. Graham (2023) writes: "Feeling and emotional knowing bring with them motivation in the form of being moved by the other's situation, not simply being aware of that situation. Being able to conceive of other moral contexts and being able to understand more deeply the other people involved are major achievements in moral development" (p. 15).

As described in the preceding paragraphs, First Nations' *belonging* is active, insofar as it involves obligations towards the Land (termed 'caring for country'); and settler peoples' ways of *doing* are transformed through receptivity to it. Through this process of transformation, which is felt as *becoming* (whole, or more completely human) a change is initiated at the heart of *being*. This transformation is only possible because *being* is not fixed *a priori* by Western categories of ontology and metaphysics, but is *relationally open* to the Land, its people, and to Aboriginal worldviews, as expressed by Graham (2008; 2013). The complementarities of *activity* and *receptivity* are essential to this process of change in the order of relations between First Nations and settler people. All of these, taken together, involve a reciprocity between activity and receptivity on the part of both First Nations and settler people, in the form of a shared custodial ethic.

Some caveats are necessary. One vitally important aspect to consider for those willing to accept the custodial ethic that Graham has outlined, along with the invitation to 'walk with

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us' contained in *The Uluru Statement from the Heart*, is that First Nations peoples' knowledge is considered sacred, and is not freely available to those who come from a perspective of mere curiosity (Sherwood, 2010). For example, respect for First Nations women's knowledge concerning 'birthing on Country' is a hallmark of research conducted by Helen Myles and Isabel Tarrago (1992; 1996). In conversations with Helen Myles over the past decade, the author has learned the vital importance of acknowledging to whom the knowledge belongs and what outsider researcher's interests are in the matter. It is, as Myles describes it, a matter of *knowing one's place*. Such considerations apply generally to settler researchers in their relationships with First Nations people.

Second, fulfilling the invitation to 'walk with us' implies self-transcendence, and overcoming the competitive spirit that permeates Western culture. The self is overcome through relationalist practices, involving collective responsibility, that are concentrated in a particular Place. Graham summarises this ethos as follows

> The perspective of collective responsibility and obligation to look after Land, family and community is vital in transcending any inclination to gain advantage at the expense of others. This relationalist practice became concentrated through the intrinsic meaning of Place, that is, a particular locality (or localities) of Land within a particular region. Here 'Land' includes the Landscape and all living things within it, humans, spirits, animals, air, sea, rivers, moon, stars, birds, insects, the wind, language, dreams, etc. Place, then, comes to occupy the core interest, conscience and spirit of Aboriginal Culture. Collective values become the template for looking after the whole of Aboriginal society; in fact, they become part of the organising principle of Aboriginal society. (Graham, 2023, p. 11)

What is true for Aboriginal society is also true for settlers engaged in the process of *becoming* outlined above. The perspective of collective responsibility of which Graham writes, involves a form of self-overcoming, which is a strange process and for the most part unconscious. It is not something that occurs by doing anything that could be defined as adherence to a technique. It occurs, as Graham writes, through immersion in Place, involving Land, family and community. *Place* eventually takes the place of consciousness of *self*. Knowledge of Place (or knowing one's place) too, is a form of sacred knowledge.

Conclusion

This article has combined two streams of thought, one critical, the other transformative. The critical stream relates to colonialism in general and to occupational science in particular, by way of reference to Wilcock's occupational perspective of health (OPH). This perspective states that *doing, being, becoming and belonging are essential to survival and health.* The critique applies to the meanings attributed these concepts from a dominant Western perspective and how they are interrelated. Wilcock's definition of occupation as *all the things that people do,* and the emphasis on *doing*, obscures the coloniality at the heart of occupation as a coloniality of *being* (Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Ramugondo, 2015). The raising of

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occupational consciousness is a preliminary stage in the development of a transformative, complementarity based perspective of occupation and health.

The transformative stream of thought takes its cues from *The Uluru Statement from the Heart* and Graham's thoughts concerning Aboriginal worldviews and the custodial ethic such worldviews involve. The transformation, for settler people, occurs through receptive reflection (reflectivity) towards an Aboriginal sense of *belonging* to Place, which involves Land, family and community, and which leads to a deeper understanding of the myriad of ways in which settlers have occupied this country from a position of not-belonging (alienation).

Through reflectivity based on Aboriginal concepts of belonging, settler people are enabled to undergo a process of *becoming,* one that is attuned to Aboriginal worldviews and the custodial ethic inherent in them. It is through the adoption of this ethic, as facilitated by *walking with* Aboriginal people both physically and spiritually, particularly within an ethos of *caring for country*, that the possibility is opened for settler people to realise *for themselves* something of what it means to *belong* to the Land.

A transformative complementarity-based perspective of occupation and health, as outlined in this article, provides a template for the ongoing development of relationships, involving truth-telling and justice, between first Nations and settler people.

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