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Is Ike Hawaii (Hawaiian Knowledge) Philosophy? : A Symposium on the Possibilities of Hawaii Philosophy

Michael D. K. Ing, Bruce Kaimi Watson, Kaipulaumakaniolono Keala, Kamalani Johnson, Tamara Albertini, Celia T. Bardwell-Jones, Sydney Morrow

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Abstract

In this first academic symposium on Hawaii Philosophy, Michael David Kaulana Ing proposes using the term Philosophy as a bridge conceptone that enables culturally diverse communities to articulate their own philosophical traditions while engaging in shared dialogue. The dialogue that would ensue would allow them to discuss their shared interests in meaningful ways. Following up on his proposal, Ing develops an understanding of Hawaii Philosophy that includes the emic Ike Hawaii, the etic Hawaiian Philosophy, and Klaimanao as a thought-carving middle space that enables Knaka Hawaii alongside others to search for resources far and wide to make meaning of the world we live in. Highlighting that Hawaii Philosophy can only take place insofar as it is grounded in practice, Kaipulaumakaniolono Keala cautions about Knaka Hawaii demarcating the boundaries of a field when the journey has just begun, while Kamalani Johnson argues that Hawaii philosophy must be rooted in a Kanaka-centered conceptualization of knowledge. Meanwhile, Bruce Kaimi Watson has chosen to remain visibly silent in this global forum for Knaka, offering a loud but quiet withholding. Tamara Albertini responds to Ings call for a distinctly Hawaiian framework of inquiry, which she describes as philosophical wayfinding. Writing as a non-Kanaka Maoli philosopher, she accepts this invitation in the spirit of the guest who does not arrive to consume but to tarry, perceive, and contribute with care. In so doing, she draws on her own methodology of bricolage and flnerieapproaches designed to resist the hierarchization and appropriation of philosophical traditionsin order to engage in a reflective exchange that foregrounds Indigenous knowledge systems. She particularly highlights genealogies of thought rooted in Native Hawaiian culture and embraces Ings notion of borrowing as a generative and creative contribution to the evolving landscape of World Philosophies. Celia Tagamolila Bardwell-Jones argues that Hawaii Philosophy practitioners adopt an ethic of hard incommensurability. She encourages Knaka Hawaii not to allow for integration,

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Is ʻIke Hawaiʻi (Hawaiian Knowledge) Philosophy? A Symposium on the Possibilities of Hawaiʻi Philosophy

In this first academic symposium on Hawaiʻi Philosophy, Michael David Kaulana Ing proposes using the term Philosophy as a bridge concept—one that enables culturally diverse communities to articulate their own philosophical traditions while engaging in shared dialogue. The dialogue that would ensue would allow them to discuss their shared interests in meaningful ways. Following up on his proposal, Ing develops an understanding of Hawaiʻi Philosophy that includes the emic ʻIke Hawaiʻi, the etic Hawaiian Philosophy, and Kālaimanaʻo as a "thought-carving" middle space that enables Kānaka Hawaiʻi alongside others to search for resources far and wide to make meaning of the world we live in. Highlighting that Hawaiʻi Philosophy can only take place insofar as it is grounded in practice, Kaipulaumakaniolono Keala cautions about Kānaka Hawaiʻi demarcating the boundaries of a field when the journey has just begun, while Kamalani Johnson argues that Hawaiʻi philosophy must be rooted in a Kanaka-centered conceptualization of knowledge. Meanwhile, Bruce Kaʻimi Watson has chosen to remain visibly silent in this global forum for Kānaka, offering a loud but quiet withholding. Tamara Albertini responds to Ing's call for a distinctly Hawaiian framework of inquiry, which she describes as "philosophical wayfinding." Writing as a non-Kanaka Maoli philosopher, she accepts this invitation in the spirit of the guest who does not arrive to consume but to tarry, perceive, and contribute with care. In so doing, she draws on her own methodology of bricolage and flânerie—approaches designed to resist the hierarchization and appropriation of philosophical traditions—in order to engage in a reflective exchange that foregrounds Indigenous knowledge systems. She particularly highlights genealogies of thought rooted in Native Hawaiian culture and embraces Ing's notion of borrowing as a generative and creative contribution to the evolving landscape of World Philosophies. Celia Tagamolila Bardwell-Jones argues that Hawaiʻi Philosophy practitioners adopt an ethic of hard incommensurability. She encourages Kānaka Hawaiʻi not to allow for integration, fusion or facile comparisons with Hawaiʻi Philosophy. Sydney Morrow leans on Ing's understanding of "bounded multiplicity" to develop an understanding of existential poverty afflicting post-contact Kanaka society. An alleviation of this poverty would require a different policy analysis as compared to standard economic-driven solutions, she holds. In his reply to his co-panelists, Ing reiterates that the practice of Hawaiʻi Philosophy must be guided by the principles of positionality, epistemic humility, hoʻokamaʻāina, etc. and must support the Kanaka community for whom Hawaiʻi is their ancestral home.

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Key words: Hawai‘i Philosophy; ‘Ike Hawai‘i; Hawaiian Philosophy; Kālaimana‘o; kīpuka; fundamental truths of existence; the philosopher as a bricoleuse and flâneur; intellectual wayfaring; existential and economic poverty; home; hard incommensurability; relationality; Kanaka Hawai‘i lifeways

An Outline of Hawai‘i Philosophy

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> “‘Ike i ke au nui me ke au iki” ([They] know the currents, big and small) (Pukui 1983: 131, no. 1209).

‘Ike Hawai‘i (Hawaiian knowledge) is Philosophy. For some people this a controversial claim because it threatens to open the category of Philosophy so wide as to render it meaningless, and for others it threatens to continue the process of colonization by forcing ‘Ike Hawai‘i into western categories. I believe that ‘Ike Hawai‘i can enrich and be enriched by other philosophies and that these threats can be mitigated. This article describes one way of conceptualizing a field of Hawai‘i Philosophy. I write for two primary audiences. First, I write for Kānaka Hawai‘i (Native Hawaiians) who, like me, want to learn more about our culture and want to see our ways of life brought into dialogue with the best and brightest of other peoples’. Second, I write for non-Hawaiian philosophers who are open to the possibility of a Hawai‘i Philosophy but are not knowledgeable of nā mea Hawai‘i (Hawaiian material; i.e., Hawaiian culture) or of the obligations involved in studying Indigenous peoples.

I should note at the outset that there are many Kanaka that have more knowledge of nā mea Hawai‘i than myself; and there are many philosophers more thoroughly trained in Philosophy as an academic discipline than myself. Yet, I work with sources in ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i (the Hawaiian language) and am the first Kanaka to have published in the field of Philosophy.[1] There are no (and never have been) Kanaka with tenured positions in a philosophy department. As explained below, non-western thought is rarely treated as an essential part of Philosophy. I hope this changes for the better, and I consider this article my part in advocating for change.

This piece will proceed in six parts. Part One briefly describes the ideology at play in the exclusion of non-western thought from the category of Philosophy and shows how similar attitudes are expressed about Kanaka thought. Part Two explains Philosophy as a dialogical project of intelligibly reflecting on how we might live a good life. Part Three introduces the notion of Hawai‘i Philosophy and identifies three approaches to it. Parts Four through six each detail one approach—Hawaiian Philosophy, ‘Ike Hawai‘i, and Kālaimana‘o. I also identify several principles of Hawai‘i Philosophy along the way.

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1 The Exclusion of Non-Western Thought

As explained by scholars such as Peter K. J. Park, the exclusion of non-western thought from the category of Philosophy parallels the rise of race-consciousness in the west (Park 2013). The dominant view before the eighteenth century was that Philosophy was a world-wide endeavor. Many of the men that became profoundly influential in shaping the field of Philosophy, however, were also profoundly racist. Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) wrote that people of the Pacific were not interested in self-development; instead, they devoted their lives "merely to idleness, amusement, [and] procreation" (Kant 2006: 33). Similarly, he stated that Native Americans were "uneducable" and "lazy" (Van Norden 2017: 22). David Hume (1711–1776) claimed, "There never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white, nor even any individual eminent either in action or speculation. No ingenious manufactures amongst them, no arts, no sciences" (Connolly 2015: 13). These views were part of their evaluations of non-White ways of thinking. Kant, for instance, wrote, "Philosophy is not to be found in the whole Orient [….] a concept of virtue and morality never entered the heads of the Chinese" (Van Norden 2017: 22–3). Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831) boasted that a single book of Cicero's was "more comprehensive and better than all the books of Confucius" (Van Norden 2017: 24). Chinese books, for Hegel, contained practical wisdom, but not Philosophy. Although none of these men commented explicitly on Kānaka Hawai'i thought, Hegel did comment on the "wholly crude and barbarous peoples" encountered by Captain John Ross in his 1818 search for a Northwest Passage (the same thing James Cook was searching for when he came to Hawai'i) (Hegel 1988: 229). Native peoples in Alaska, according to Hegel, belonged to a category of people "without any reflective thought or elevation to thinking (Hegel 1988: 224). It is not unreasonable to assume that he and his colleagues held similar opinions of "Sandwich Islanders."

Although none of these men ever stepped foot on Hawai'i, kindred views arrived with other Europeans in the late eighteenth century. Lorrin Andrews, head of the first school in Hawai'i and editor of the first Hawaiian-English dictionary, wrote in 1838,

> There is a great want of generic terms in the language. This is a peculiarity that distinguishes it from the English, but not from other uncultivated languages. No people have use for general terms until they begin to reason. And the language of the Hawaiians shows that they have never been a thinking people (Andrews 1838: 396-97).

Andrews' colleague, Sheldon Dibble, wrote in his 1843 history of Hawai'i,

> It is an almost entire destitution of the power of reflection—of originating thought, or of carrying on a continuous chain of reasoning. Among the uneducated heathen (I speak not of those trained in schools), instances are very rare of those who have strength and discipline of mind enough to connect three links of a chain together, and come to a satisfactory

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> conclusion. There are instances of native shrewdness that may surprise and startle you, but very little of the power of reasoning. They are just the opposite of what we call a thinking people (Dibble 1843: 257-58).

Dibble's book came from lectures he gave touring the United States, and his book was the first history of Hawai'i in the English language. It is no coincidence that all of these men, from Kant to Dibble, were involved in education. Part of the colonial enterprise is creating systems of education that reinforce social hierarchies. Philosophy, as an academic discipline is complicit in this.

This background is important because as inheritors of the institutions of this era (my institution, Indiana University, for instance, was founded in 1820), we must be aware of how ways of thinking, living, or being may be excluded from academic disciplines for illegitimate reasons. Even if racist attitudes toward others may have waned, the structures of our institutions may still reinforce racial hierarchies. There has never been a faculty member in the Department of Philosophy at Indiana University that specializes in a non-western philosophy. No one currently here believes that non-westerns are not thinking people, but justifications for exclusion have shifted to an unwillingness to divert resources in a "new" direction. Hence, institutional racism lives on.

This background is also important because it helps to explain why non-Indigenous people (especially those from colonizing cultures) who work on the philosophies of people that have been living under colonial rule must be aware of their positionality in ways that are different than if they were working with a culture that has not been colonized (e.g., China). For one, speaking as an "authority" on an Indigenous culture, especially if not having spent time in the culture and knowing the language (if the language is still extant), can reproduce the conditions of colonialism where the colonizer stands in a position of power over Native peoples. Second, "cherry picking," or producing decontextualized interpretations of material, which philosophers are more prone to do than other academics such as historians, can be seen as appropriating the material or disregarding emic understandings for the benefit of the outsider. Finally, there is the danger, pointed out by Potawatomi scholar Kyle Whyte and others, that using Indigenous resources to address non-Indigenous problems without considering the ongoing subjugation of Indigenous peoples is to continue the process of colonization by mining resources for the benefit of the colonizer (Whyte 2018). I refer to this below as the principle of positionality.

As scholars of non-western philosophies such as Bryan Van Norden, Jay Garfield, and Bruce Janz have argued, we may have reached a point where those that are going to be convinced of the possibility of non-western Philosophy have been convinced, and the question needs to be shifted away from "Is there such a thing as Chinese or Indian or African Philosophy" to "What does it look like to do these philosophies?" (Van Norden 2017; Garfield and Van Norden 2016; Janz 2009). Following this line of thought, I am not going to make an argument for nā mea Hawai'i qualifying as Philosophy; especially if addressing this question means measuring nā mea Hawai'i by imperialistic standards. Rather, I am going to describe what it might look like to do Hawai'i

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Philosophy. This does not wholly eschew questions of what counts as Philosophy and how nā mea Hawai‘i relates to Philosophy (as opposed to History, Literature, etc.), but it does set the expectations for the remainder of this article.

2 The Category of Philosophy

In writing about Philosophy, I have in mind projects that develop terms and approaches such as Comparative Philosophy, Cross-cultural Philosophy, Intercultural Philosophy, Multicultural Philosophy, Integrative Philosophy, Fusion Philosophy, Confluence Philosophy, Open Philosophy, Global Philosophy, and World Philosophies. I recognize that there are important differences between these approaches as well as between the ways different philosophers use the same term. I am less concerned with nomenclature, however, as Hawai‘i Philosophy shares the aim of these approaches in expanding the category of Philosophy. I take, therefore, a broad understanding of Philosophy: intelligible reflections on how we might live a good life. The "we" in this approach is an open-ended "we" (a kākou project), meaning that it could theoretically include all human and non-human beings in our relations with each other. Reflections are articulations of knowledge that are clarifying, interpretive, and/or creative. These articulations are not entirely contained (nor necessarily best represented) by the categories of metaphysics, ethics, logic, and epistemology. Nonetheless, those working within these categories can be fruitful conversation partners. Intelligibility presupposes that we can speak to each other in ways that we come to (perhaps not fully, but largely) understand each other's perspectives, feelings, and motivations. This is of course easier for those living in the same time, speaking the same language, and seeing each other face to face, but if carefully done it extends to people living in other areas, speaking other languages, and even living in different times. Intelligibility requires at least one conversation partner; and so, Philosophy is done in dialogue.

Philosophy is dialogical in that philosophers reflect on their questions with the most relevant conversation partners (hoa ʻike); whomever those may be, wherever (and whenever) they may come from. The conversation partners we dialogue with are constrained by practical limitations. In other words, we all operate from the contexts in which we live. At the moment, I find it possible to work with sources in the English, Hawaiian, Chinese, and Japanese languages. I cannot work with sources in German, Sanskrit, or Arabic. And even within the English language sources, I cannot work in any responsible way with material in the fields of Statistics, Chemistry, or Civil Engineering. These limits may change, however, as I become aware of other relevant hoa ʻike. If, for instance, I was committed to reflecting on the ways that surfing (heʻenalu) might contribute to living a good life, I ought to learn with those that have knowledge not only about the actions of riding a wave, but also with those that have knowledge of swimming, marine life, weather forcasting, surfboard construction, the history of surfing, and the sociology of surfers, for a start. A

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deeper understanding might also come from studying with people knowledgeable in climate change, ocean pollution, health science, brain science, religious studies, surf tourism, and in the economics of becoming a professional surfer. Of course, none of this fully considers the numerous languages and cultures that surfing takes place in—some of the best waves in the world are in Portugal, Tahiti, and Indonesia; and some of the best surfers are Brazilian, Australian, or Japanese. As Arindam Chakrabarti and Ralph Weber point out,

> Good creative philosophy in a globalized world should spontaneously straddle geographical areas and cultures, temperaments and time-periods (mixing classical, medieval, modern, and postmodern), styles and subdisciplines of philosophy, as well as mix methods, sprinkling phenomenology, and political economic analysis into analytic logico-linguistic or hermeneutic, or culture studies or literary or narrative methods—whatever comes handy (Chakrabarti and Weber 2016: 22).

Knowing everything (or even most things) about any one people's way of life is impossible. In coming to terms with the sheer breadth of our inquiry, it is important to recognize that we always know far less than we do not know. This is particularly important in working with time periods in Indigenous cultures for which few sources remain. Without epistemic humility we risk reinforcing the current constraints of Philosophy. I refer to this below as the principle of epistemic humility.

Philosophy, in this regard, is a bridge concept, meaning a term that allows diverse groups of people to articulate it in culturally specific ways for the sake of dialogue about shared interests. This space must remain open to deep cultural differences in terms, frameworks, and methodologies, but also be deeply committed to intelligibility across cultures. I call this the principle of interpretive elasticity.

3 Hawai‘i Philosophy

I use the term Hawai‘i Philosophy to describe a range of philosophical activity. I intentionally use the term "Hawai‘i" as the comprehensive category to capture these various activities rather than the term "Hawaiian," which I use to refer to specific kinds of activities within the comprehensive category. I do this because Hawai‘i is the Kanaka term used to describe the native peoples, places, and other beings associated with the islands (and surrounding seas) now referred to as Hawai‘i (i.e., nā mea Hawai‘i). The word "Hawaiian" is an anglicized form of Hawai‘i, and is thus fitting to describe anglicized (i.e., primarily western) interpretations of nā mea Hawai‘i.

I therefore take Hawai‘i Philosophy as intelligible reflections on living a good life that are rooted in nā mea Hawai‘i. As a comprehensive term, Hawai‘i Philosophy refers to philosophical

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approaches that range from what might be called Hawaiian Philosophy to ʻIke Hawaiʻi. In what follows, I will describe three approaches in this range—Hawaiian Philosophy, ʻIke Hawaiʻi, and between them, an approach for which I use the term Kālaimanaʻo. What differentiates these approaches are method and audience. Hawaiian Philosophy uses etic methods such as those currently employed in most philosophy departments to address people invested in the questions that arise in these (mostly non-Kanaka) contexts. ʻIke Hawaiʻi, on the other hand, relies on traditional methods of reflection and knowledge construction; it focuses on Kānaka Hawaiʻi and our allies in articulating ways of being that advance the causes of the Lāhui, the Kānaka Hawaiʻi community. These are not mutually exclusive approaches. Both are dependent on accurate understandings of Kanaka ways of life. For example, the term pono (good, right, properly situated) is central to understanding Kanaka conceptions of a good life. While there is no singular view of pono in Kanaka culture, every position within Hawaiʻi Philosophy must show how their understanding of pono is rooted in nā mea Hawaiʻi. This requires a certain degree of historical, linguistic, and cultural knowledge. Thus, these approaches share a basic interpretive method that strives for accurate representation as judged by the community that the Lāhui deems knowledgeable. The members of this community may or may not be Kanaka, but Kanaka are the ones to determine who counts as legitimate interpreters of the culture.

Where these approaches differ is in their creative elements. The questions and conversation partners brought to the notion of pono when doing Hawaiian Philosophy, for instance, might include "What kind of value theory does pono present?" put into dialogue with Aristotle and Bentham. With ʻIke Hawaiʻi, other questions might be posed, such as "What is a pono relationship between kānaka (human beings) and ʻāina (land, place, ecosystem)?" The relevant hoa ʻike in this approach might include Joseph Nawahī and the story of Hiʻiakaikapouliopele.

All three approaches to Hawaiʻi Philosophy can be done in ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi, English, or any other language since the methods they employ are not determined by the language, although it is important to note that each language is predisposed to certain approaches and that the language of the colonizer will always stand in a difficult relationship with the colonized. Furthermore, none of these approaches are predicated on the ethnicity of the philosopher—non-Hawaiians can do any kind of Hawaiʻi Philosophy, but, of course, they cannot be Kanaka philosophers. Thus, a Kanaka philosopher might do ʻIke Hawaiʻi ma ka ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi wale nō, and a non-Hawaiian philosopher might do Hawaiian Philosophy mostly in English; but a Kanaka philosopher could also do Hawaiian Philosophy in English, and a non-Hawaiian philosopher could do ʻIke Hawaiʻi ma ka ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi. Similarly, Hawaiian Philosophy could be done ma ka ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi (e.g., an article in Hawaiian about Kanaka metaphysics), and ʻIke Hawaiʻi can be done in English (e.g., Haunani-Kay Trask's poems), although it will usually be best expressed in the Hawaiian language. The time may also come when Hawaiʻi Philosophy is done in other languages including Māori, Fijian, Hindi, and Chinese. Indeed, a benefit of operating in languages other than English is that it avoids some of the issues of working in Hawaiʻi's colonial language. The philosophies from these cultures can also enrich Hawaiʻi Philosophy as explained below.

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4 Hawaiian Philosophy

Given the current demographics of philosophy departments, philosophers doing Hawaiian Philosophy will mostly use the methods of Analytic and Continental philosophies to address philosophers trained in those traditions, although in the long run other methods may be employed from other philosophical traditions to think about nā mea Hawai‘i. In many respects, this approach is nothing new. It is already done in Chinese, Indian, and Japanese philosophies, among others. As such, I will describe it only briefly and focus more on the risks of employing this approach as it relates to nā mea Hawai‘i. I will also address concerns about Hawaiian Philosophy being inherently colonial.

In short, Hawaiian Philosophy employs methods emerging from divisions in Analytic and Continental philosophies such as metaphysics, epistemology, logic, and ethics, as well as phenomenology and existentialism. A philosopher using this approach might, for instance, begin with a taxonomy of value theories ranging from Aristotle to T. M. Scanlon and ask, "What kind of value theories does nā mea Hawai‘i present?" Various aspects of nā mea Hawai‘i would then be situated in the taxonomy and brought into conversations about relevant value theories. If Davida Malo (1795–1853) in *Ka Moolelo Hawaii*, for example, presents a kind of exemplarist virtue ethic, the work of Linda Zagzebski might be fruitful in thinking about how Malo identifies moral exemplars. A responsible interpretation would consider not only the ways in which Zagzebski is useful in fleshing out how Malo articulates his virtue ethic, but also how Malo might offer alternatives to, or improvements of, Zagzebski's theory. Importantly, nā mea Hawai‘i is not wholly decontextualized in Hawaiian Philosophy, but is rather resituated in a new environment on that environment's terms.

It is worth stressing that there is nothing inherently wrong with understanding another tradition in the terms of one's own tradition. This is largely how understanding works—we begin with the familiar to understand the unfamiliar. There is something wrong, however, with thinking that one's own terms are capable of wholly explaining the other; or thinking that one's own terms are necessary for anyone to properly reflect on the other tradition; or thinking that one's own terms are the universal terms by which all humanity ought to be understood; or even just refusing to adjust one's terms in light of new knowledge. A danger of doing Hawaiian Philosophy, given the current propensity for exclusion in Philosophy, is seeing it as the only legitimate way of doing Hawai‘i Philosophy. Thus, the principles of epistemic humility and interpretive elasticity are key. Categories such as ethics can be useful in interpreting and elaborating nā mea Hawai‘i; however, if nā mea Hawai‘i becomes mere data analyzed under assumed universal categories in order that it *truly* be understood, then the result might produce novel understandings of nā mea Hawai‘i, but the method also reproduces hierarchies where only those who can think like the west are seen as capable of reflection. If nā mea Hawai‘i cannot make any interventions into the field, there is no genuine conversation. Part of what Kānaka Hawai‘i want is for our traditional body of knowledge

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to be respected as viable philosophies on our own terms, and not respected only if manipulated into ways of thinking that conform to non-native categories. This is especially true when it comes to the categories of the colonizer.

To avoid a kind of intellectual colonization, the principle of positionality must also be kept in mind. The proverbial table of Philosophy is littered with antiquated armchairs. Those doing Hawaiian Philosophy bear the responsibility of removing these outdated ideas and making room for others. They may not be personally responsible *for* the situation, but they stand in a special relationship with it such that they are responsible *to* the situation; and this engenders extra caution and extra kuleana (obligations). Philosophers involved in Hawaiian Philosophy have a kuleana to learn from and support the communities they study. This means not only learning the culture inasmuch as it enables them to do their work, but also learning why these communities might be reluctant to trust an outsider, what kinds of hopes they have for their futures, and what concerns they have for the present. If the philosopher's work does not benefit the community in ways the community finds meaningful, the philosopher should find additional ways to support the community. This may require, following Ashby Butnor and other feminist philosophers, that one "bracket one's own interests" (Butnor 2024: 28). In other words, philosophers doing Hawaiian Philosophy have an obligation to be an ally—a hoa Aloha ʻĀina, a companion in protecting and revitalizing the sovereignties of the people, places, and other beings native to Hawaiʻi. In short, the philosopher should work such that the community recognizes the philosopher as someone that cares for the community.

For the sake of clarity, I will state this bluntly: If you are not ready to fulfill these obligations, then you are not ready to do Hawaiian Philosophy (or Hawaiʻi Philosophy, for that matter, as similar obligations arise with other approaches).

Principles of humility, elasticity, and positionality are key to the success of Hawaiian Philosophy. These ensure a dialogue that mutually informs both Hawaiʻi and Philosophy. At the same time, Philosophy is a conversation with its own moʻokūʻauhau (genealogy). At its best, it is a global conversation in which Kanaka are but one mana (branch) of the genealogy. Thus, Kanaka ought to inform but not dictate the terms of the global conversation. As Hawaiian Philosophy develops, it may be articulated in the terms of Analytic Philosophy: Are Kanaka attitudes toward nanea (pleasure) a form of intrinsic attitudinal hedonism as articulated by Fred Feldman? How does hoʻoponopono square with John Rawls' theory of justice? Is the naʻau a form of Philosophy of Mind? It may also be articulated in terms of Chinese Philosophy: How might Mengzi's theory of *ren* 仁 help to explain aloha? How might Xuanxue articulations of dao 道 inform the notion of Pō in the *Kumulipo*? Does Kalapana present a kind of Zhuangzian perspectivalism in his hoʻopāpā?

Hawaiian Philosophy is a legitimate form of Hawaiʻi Philosophy. It is not about aspiring to Whiteness (inasmuch as Philosophy is preoccupied with western thought); but it does remain open

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to being inspired by White (or any other) authors. Indeed, Kanaka doing Hawaiian philosophy can be engaging in acts of resistance even if what they produce is a version of Analytic Philosophy.

5 ʻIke Hawaiʻi

Kānaka Hawaiʻi have been reflecting on how to live a good life as long as we have been a part of Hawaiʻi. A key term for these reflections in ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi is ʻIke Hawaiʻi. ʻIke is often glossed as "knowledge" in English; and like the term knowledge, ʻike has a wide range of connotations, which include awareness, perception, sense, and experience, among others. ʻIke also means "to see," and hence relates to sight. Kānaka Hawaiʻi have developed complex forms of ʻike as well as social structures to create, preserve, and perpetuate them. Central to these social structures are people recognized as specialists in specific forms of knowledge. These people might be referred to as kumu, loea, laeʻula, kilo, haku, kāhuna, or kālaimoku/kālaiwaʻa (a pēlā aku)—all various ways of signifying experts in ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi. The term kumu literally refers to the trunk of a tree. Metaphorically, kumu are sources of knowledge much in the way that trunks are sources for the branches of a tree. The term kālai literally means to carve. It is often paired with words such as waʻa (canoe) to refer to an expert in canoe-carving or, more metaphorically, paired with the term moku (district of land) to refer to an expert in governing. These experts have their own moʻokūʻauhau by which ʻike is passed from trainer to trainee (haumana). Since Kanaka originally relied on an oral tradition, ʻike could only be passed on via creating proper relationships with experts. Hence, ʻike was always tied to interpersonal relationships. ʻIke was, and is, a relational enterprise. In this light, those wishing to pursue ʻIke Hawaiʻi must continue to be a part of these relationships and communities by taking the time to create relationships and appropriately enter into these communities.

These ʻike have been articulated, practiced, and theorized for generations (Kanaka might say "mai ka pō mai"—from time immemorial). They are embodied in moʻolelo (histories, stories), kūʻauhau (family histories), kaʻao (tales), mele (poetry, songs), pule (prayers), hula (dance), kilo (observations of the ecosystem), kākāʻōlelo (oration, debate), kālaimoku (governing), lawaiʻa (fishing), mahiʻai (farming), kālaiwaʻa (canoe carving), and kaua (warfare), among other things. Unfortunately, like many other Indigenous people, the Kanaka population was decimated after the arrival of Europeans. By 1900, the number of Kanaka was less than 10% of what it was about a hundred years previous. By 1900, Hawaiʻi was also under the control of America, and so Hawaiʻi had a western style of education that included a ban on Hawaiian language in schools. Many forms of ʻike were lost; some may never be recovered. The systems by which ʻike were created, practiced, and preserved were nearly eliminated. It would not be unfair to say that what remains is a vibrant fraction of a fraction.

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This creates numerous challenges in doing Hawai‘i Philosophy, and ‘Ike Hawai‘i in particular. For one, revitalizing these ‘ike requires a tremendous amount of work. This includes not only the historical work of recovering knowledge but also the work of creating and decolonizing spaces to allow these forms of ‘ike to flourish. This understandably leaves less time and energy to thoroughly engage with other forms of knowledge; and it provides good reason to be skeptical of colonial forms of knowledge such as those embodied in the academy. Because of this, a certain degree of asymmetry in privileging nā mea Hawai‘i is expected and appropriate when involved in ‘Ike Hawai‘i, especially when done in Hawai‘i. In other words, not all forms of relevant knowledge will be given equal weight in doing ‘Ike Hawai‘i. It is done first and foremost for revitalizing the Lāhui.

At the same time, those creating ‘Ike Hawai‘i must be aware of the risks involved in this asymmetry. One risk is not being attentive to the limits of our understanding non-Hawaiian knowledge. Another risk is insisting that non-Hawaiian fields of knowledge accommodate ‘Ike Hawai‘i without first understanding the contours of those fields. These risks can be taken into consideration in the principle of ho’okama‘āina (becoming familiar), which I describe as follows.

Part of being Kanaka is being aware of the spaces we occupy and our relationship to those spaces. If we are kama‘āina (familiar) with those spaces, we have learned to care for those spaces/places with the actions and attitudes they deserve. Before we are kama‘āina, we are malihini (unfamiliar, strangers or guests). We enter spaces as guests, and we noho (sit, live, abide) in those spaces with ha‘aha‘a (humility). We do not dictate the terms of those spaces. We sit; we listen; we learn.

Similar to the way in which our ‘ike have extensive mo‘okū‘auahu, so do the ideas and ways of being of other peoples. The term mo‘o in mo‘okū‘auhau suggests continuity, perhaps referring metaphorically to the long connecting bones along the back of the mo‘o, or lizard. The term “mo‘olelo” could literally mean a series of words; and so, one way to think about mo‘olelo is as an ongoing conversation. We enter conversations as malihini, working to become kama‘āina. Practically speaking, this means that we ought to be aware of the terms we draw upon and discussions we enter into when doing ‘Ike Hawai‘i. We would not presume knowledge of ballet based on knowledge of hula (although I imagine there are good conversations to be had); and we would not tolerate someone who presumed knowledge of hula based on their knowledge of ballet. Similarly, terms such as “philosophy” and their surrounding discourses have their own mo‘okū‘auhau. We ought not presume knowledge about these terms without understanding their mo‘olelo. For instance, terms such as “epistemology” have become popular in talking about ‘Ike Hawai‘i, but the term is actually an entire subfield of philosophy with thousands of books written about it over hundreds of years. We ought not to presume knowledge about epistemology without taking a philosophy class anymore than we would presume knowledge of hula without having spent time in a hālau hula. We are often critical of hālau run by unqualified kumuhula; we ought not be unqualified kumu of epistemology or other areas of knowledge.

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Becoming kamaʻāina with these discourses takes time. We should only seek to change the contours of these discourses once we are kamaʻāina. In other words, terms with complex moʻokūʻauhau such as Philosophy cannot simply be whatever we want them to be. Hawaiʻi Philosophy is but one mana (branch) of a world-wide genealogy. We cannot demand that the field change until we are kamaʻāina with the lay of the land. We can, and should, vociferously point out ways in which the field has been (and is) parochial, sexist, racist, and otherwise unreasonably exclusionary. But we must be sure that our vociferousness is in proportion to our familiarity with the field. We must come to mālama (care for) the landscape of Philosophy in ways similar to the care we offer for the intellectual ʻāina of Hawaiʻi. This is the principle of hoʻokamaʻāina.

Relatedly, our comparisons between ʻIke Hawaiʻi and other forms of knowledge should be done within appropriate parameters. It is easy to overgeneralize (e.g., the west is...) and oversimplify (e.g., anything western is bad). However, the west (or Asia or Africa, etc.) is as diverse as the Moana (Oceania). Thus, we should be careful in using totalizing statements, especially if they serve to demonstrate the superiority of nā mea Hawaiʻi. Such statements are often done to criticize aspects of colonization (e.g., westerners see land as a commodity to be exploited while Kānaka Hawaiʻi see land as kin to be cared for), but these comparisons can actually leave us trapped in the gaze of the colonizer if they insist on defining Hawaiʻi in relation to the west—we become simply what they are not. Following Kanaka scholar Noelani Arista and others, we must be sure that the paradigms and tropes we employ do not leave us trapped within the very ones we are critiquing (Arista 2013: 13). This is not to say that we should avoid making critical comparisons, but rather that the comparison should be sufficiently accurate to justify the critique. Not all westerners see land as a commodity; and not all Kanaka see land as kin. There are, however, specific people that make these claims, institutions that embody them, and there are different degrees of consensus within groups of people regarding these views. Projects that compare all of "Hawaiʻi" with all of "the west" should be replaced with more focused ones that compare a narrow subset of material on an issue; for instance, comparing the work of Samuel Kamakau with that of Aldo Leopold (or John Locke or Karl Marx) on their views of land; or comparing the 1852 Kingdom of Hawaiʻi's constitution with the American constitution on their views of governing.

The simplistic binary of "the west vs. Hawaiʻi" is inadequate for creating the best forms of ʻIke Hawaiʻi and other kinds of Hawaiʻi Philosophy. We must continue to find effective ways of dismantling this binary while still identifying substantive differences in ways of being.

One way this binary has been critiqued is by asserting that ʻIke Hawaiʻi is largely incommensurable with western (or other forms of) knowledge. Incommensurability means to lack a shared standard by which to compare. In other words, this view asserts that nā mea Hawaiʻi simply cannot be comprehended by western frameworks. There are several ways in which this view plays out. Things could, for instance, be incommensurable linguistically—i.e., there is no way to render one language into another. They could be incommensurable foundationally—i.e., there are no shared views with which to understand each other. They could be incommensurable evaluatively—i.e., there is no way

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to determine which is better.[2] One benefit of identifying such incommensurability is that it enables ʻIke Hawaiʻi to operate in a context without being judged by imperialistic standards or manipulated by colonial agendas. A problem if pushed too far, however, is that incommensurability can cut off possibilities of mutual learning. Furthermore, since there are so few mānaleo (native speakers of ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi) and relatively few experts in many forms of ʻIke Hawaiʻi, the revitalization of nā mea Hawaiʻi is predicated on a certain degree of commensurability. In other words, the path to start back into the culture for many Kānaka Hawaiʻi will be non-Hawaiian ways of speaking, learning, etc. One way forward is to perhaps recognize soft forms of incommensurability—every translation is an interpretation; worldviews provide different starting points but can still be rendered cross-culturally intelligible; and some values are irreducible to others but there are better and worse ways of handling many of the problems we confront.

These soft forms of incommensurability are perhaps best captured by the principle of ʻikena makawalu. The term literally means "seeing through eight eyes" (note the appearance of ʻike), suggesting the value of multiple perspectives. ʻIke Hawaiʻi is a pluralistic tradition that tends to embrace multiplicity rather than trying to reduce things to a single value or view. Yet the multiplicity of ʻikena makawalu is a bounded multiplicity; not all views are right; and furthermore, the multiplicity of views coordinate with each other to produce an integrated understanding of the world. The idea that these views can be coordinated and integrated with each other is predicated on the assumption that they are mutually intelligible. In other words, while no one view is reducible to another, the multiplicity is still commensurable. Viewers do not look past each other; rather, they navigate the multiplicity together as a dialogical affair; meaning that relationships are formed and hoa ʻike are found—literally "companions in seeing."

6 Kālaimanaʻo

The Kālaimanaʻo approach sits between Hawaiian Philosophy and ʻIke Hawaiʻi. As mentioned previously, the term kālai literally means to carve. Carving is a slow, deliberative process. Manaʻo is often translated as thought or idea (among many other related terms). Hence, Kālaimanaʻo is "thought carving" or reflecting on ideas.[3] For the purposes of Hawaiʻi Philosophy, I understand Kālaimanaʻo as an approach that is informed more equally by etic and emic methods and concerns. Hence, it is not so much distinct from Hawaiian Philosophy and ʻIke Hawaiʻi as much as it is the fruition of a more sustained dialogue between them.

Kālaimanaʻo is based on the idea that we can be attentive to nā mea Hawaiʻi in ways that bring them into new conversations and yet remain faithful to their moʻokūʻauhau. Similar to ʻIke Hawaiʻi, Kālaimanaʻo seeks to articulate Kanaka ways of being that are rooted in traditional frameworks of knowledge, but unlike ʻIke Hawaiʻi, the relationship beetween nā mea Hawaiʻi and

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non-Hawaiian forms of knowledge is more symmetrical; and similar to Hawaiian Philosophy, non-native terms and concerns may be used to understand nā mea Hawai‘i, but unlike Hawaiian Philosophy, they do not direct the endeavor.

Kālaimana‘o is, in some regards, an extension of processes our kūpuna (ancestors) engaged in mai ka pō mai; but it is best documented in the Kingdom era (c. 1795–1893) where they understood and integrated knowledge from around the world in a context where they largely controlled how the knowledge was situated in a sovereign Hawai‘i. To describe this process, I use the term Hawai‘i ‘imi loa, which roughly translates to "the Hawaiian that searches far and wide." Throughout this time, Kanaka actively sought out knowledge from around the world.

In 1868, William Hoapili Ka‘auwai, a government official in the Kingdom, published a description of his trip to several places across the world in a newspaper series titled "Ka Moolelo no ka Makaikai ana a Puni ka Honua" (An account of touring around the world), which appeared in 20 installments in the Hawaiian language newspaper, *Ka Nupepa Kuokoa*. Throughout the series, Ka‘auwai writes as someone motivated by a kuleana to bring ‘ike back from abroad. As a part of his trip, he visited London, toured the English countryside, and even met with Queen Victoria. These trigger his reflections on the notion of Hawai‘i ‘imi loa. Ka‘auwai writes,

> Aohe ike a koe aku o kakou, oiai aohe i lehulehu loa na lahui o ka honua i loaa ka ike e like me ia. "Kanaka no hoi ha Hawaii ea?" "Ae no hoi paha, e ole no la hoi he Hawaii imi loa" (Kaauwai 1868).[4]
>
> There is no knowledge that escapes us, for there are not many peoples of the world that acquire knowledge like this. 'You are a person of Hawai‘i, right?' 'Perhaps so, if not a Hawaiian who searches far and wide.'

Ka‘auwai makes a bold claim—few people gather knowledge like Kanaka because to be Kanaka is to be a knowledge-gatherer. Ka‘auwai[5] published his account in one of the approximately one hundred newspapers printing articles in the Hawaiian language between the middle of the nineteenth century and middle of the twentieth century. These newspapers are a testament to the idea that "no knowledge escapes us" as they contain not only news items from around Hawai‘i and the world, but also long-running Hawaiian epics, chants passed down from previous generations, histories about other parts of the world, and translations of stories such as *Arabian Nights*, *Tarzan*, and *Julius Caesar*, among many other things. The term Hawai‘i ‘imi loa is explicitly invoked in several of these contexts to explain why Kanaka put in the time and effort to write as they did.[6]

The idea of Hawai‘i ‘imi loa as a form of knowledge gathering is also used by Ka‘auwai's contemporary, a Kanaka theologian named Kepelino Keauokalani, who described Hawai‘i ‘imi loa as an ahu, or altar made of rocks:

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> Ahu kupanaha ia Hawaii imi loa! E noii wale mai no ka haole-a, aole e pau na hana a Hawaii imi loa (Beckwith 1932: 143).
>
> The Hawaiian who searches far and wide is [like] a wonderous altar. The foreigner might go about gathering things, but the work of the Hawaiian who searches far and wide is never done.

An ahu is a cube-shaped altar made by stacking stones. In order for an ahu to last, it must be built with care. Stones must be carefully chosen and organized in ways to ensure that the altar will be sturdy. Ahu are built in layers with many inner stones remaining unseen in the finished product, but those stones too, must be slected with care to ensure a properly functioning ahu. Like Kaʻauwai, Kepelino sees the impulse to collect knowledge as a central trait of Kanaka identity. We not only collect knowledge, though, we organize it into a "wonderous altar." We make it a place for ceremony; a place significant for the community. Notably, the process of gathering is never complete; Kanaka are open to, and interested in, what the world might offer. These nineteenth-century records show that our kūpuna were multimodal—that they could think along with non-Hawaiian knowledge, and that they could do so without overwriting traditional ways of thinking.

Importantly, the ahu, although constructed of knowledge from around the world, is still a Kanaka space. Kanaka determine where, when, and how the ahu is assembled and functions. Thus, it might be said that the foreign stones of knowledge go through a process of hoʻohawaiʻi, or Hawaiianization. They are incorporated into a Hawaiian structure, yet they maintain their distinctiveness as individual entities. This principle of hoʻohawaiʻi is a key aspect of Kālaimanaʻo. Non-Hawaiian concepts are borrowed as needed to construct or reconstruct intelligible reflections on living a good life that are rooted in nā mea Hawaiʻi. I intentionally use the term "borrow" to describe this process because in an ideal sense borrowing entails an obligation to use something with care so as to return it for future use. Thus, borrowing differs from taking or assimilating. Borrowing is also a form of gift-giving in that the borrower ought to return the borrowed item with a token of appreciation; thus, borrowing fosters reciprocity. In a cross-cultural context, borrowing differs from appropriating in that one has the consent of those one borrows from.

The process of hoʻohawaiʻi entails borrowing any and all concepts, methods, and other forms of knowledge that are relevant for the concerns of Kānaka Hawaiʻi. Practically speaking, this may resemble fleshing out the approaches of ʻIke Hawaiʻi by bringing it into a more sustained dialouge with non-Hawaiian knowledge. I mentioned the term pono previously. In addressing the question "What is pono?" one might start by looking at a wide range of past and present nā mea Hawaiʻi, but it may also be helpful to borrow aspects of Aristotle's golden mean, Confucius' theory of *he* 和 (harmony) and/or Walter Bradford Cannon's notion of homeostasis. These concepts may help to explain, augment, or critique notions of pono to make it more beneficial for the Lāhui. Kālaimanaʻo, however, does not only serve the Lāhui; it also benefits non-Hawaiian philosophical

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communities by bringing nā mea Hawaiʻi into conversation with their terms. Thus, it may also address concerns beyond the Lāhui.

Kālaimanaʻo is not just a fleshing out of the questions posed within an ʻIke Hawaiʻi approach. It also addresses questions that our kūpuna could not have considered but are relevant for the Lahui; and are in turn cross-cultural conversations that we can contribute to. These questions take two forms. First, they are questions that our kūpuna would naturally be invested in if they had access to them. For instance, there is no term that fully captures the contemporary notion of sustainability in the ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi of our kūpuna, but they were deeply concerned with the ʻāina and practices of environmental stewardship such that they would naturally be invested in questions of sustainability. Second are questions of relevance that arise because of our current circumstances, which our kūpuna could never have imagined. Examples of these kinds of questions include, "What should be done about western scientific endeavors on our mountaintops?" or "How does the ability of the internet to create virtual communities complicate the identity of the Lāhui?" In both forms of questions, nā mea Hawaiʻi provides resources for thought; but both forms of questions are embedded in broader cultural dynamics that require engaging concepts and methods that are not native to Hawaiʻi. In short, they require reconstructing nā mea Hawaiʻi in light of a confluence of concerns. Thus, Kālaimanaʻo involves bringing the ʻike of our kūpuna into conceptually relevant discourses or even into discourses our kūpuna could not have imagined, which requires understanding not only nā mea Hawaiʻi but also the relevant discourses in as much as we are capable. As mentioned in the earlier section on Philosophy, this becomes a dialogical endeavor with hoa ʻike—whomever those may be, wherever they may come from. The only constraint is our practical limitations. Furthermore, rooting Kālaimanaʻo in our kūpuna is not meant to freeze nā mea Hawaiʻi in the past, but rather to ensure that it remains connected to a moʻokūʻauhau; that what develops becomes part of the moʻolelo, and not a new story altogether.

In taking a middle ground, Kālaimanaʻo can sit uncomfortably between Hawaiian Philosophy and ʻIke Hawaiʻi because it may seem too western to those creating ʻIke Hawaiʻi and not recognizably philosophical to those doing Hawaiian Philosophy; however, there is a pragmatic justification for Kālaimanaʻo. The existence of Kālaimanaʻo as a legitimate kind of Philosophy provides an important space for establishing a field of Hawaiʻi Philosophy. This is because those doing ʻIke Hawaiʻi already have space within Hawaiian Studies to develop ʻIke Hawaiʻi; and those doing Hawaiian Philosophy already have established paths for their approaches (e.g., Chinese and Indian philosophy). It is entirely possible for each group to go their own way, leaving only Hawaiian Philosophy within the field of Philosophy; thereby giving space to primarily Analytic or Continental forms of Hawaiian thought. Kālaimanaʻo, however, functions as a hīpuʻu (knot) to ensure a more robust Hawaiʻi Philosophy, binding both fields together. This does not make Kālaimanaʻo better than any other approach, but it does elevate its importance. It is also my preferred approach to Hawaiʻi Philosophy, although this is likely because of my own life experience in combination with a call from my kūpuna—Hawaiian, Chinese, and Euro-American ancestors.

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7 Conclusion

The first academic talk I gave on nā mea Hawai‘i was online during the COVID pandemic. Toward the end of my remarks, one attendee sent me a private message that said, "I just wanted to tell you—f**k you." A minute later when the Q&A began this same attendee repeatedly spammed the public chat with the n-word. It took another minute for the organizers to figure out how eject them from the event. I do not know who the attendee was or why they chose my event. It could have been random, but the effects were pointed. There is resistance to the legitimation of nā mea Hawai‘i as viable ways of being in our world. This resistance has a history; and the Academy, with Philosophy as a part of it, has created and inherited this history.

We are positioned to recognize the ways that Philosophy has been complicit in this history, to refuse further marginalizing meaningful voices, and to reconceptualize Philosophy as a more inclusive discipline. Supporting the development of Hawai‘i Philosophy is one way of making this happen.

I probably should not have waited until the conclusion of this article to say this, but I have not said much of anything new here. Those doing Comparative Philosophy (or other similar approaches) have not necessarily found a unique theoretical approach; and I have not said anything about ‘Ike Hawai‘i that those involved with ‘Ike Hawai‘i do not already know. I do hope, however, that this carves out a new intellectual landscape (lit., kālai‘āina). I hope it creates space for a Hawai‘i Philosophy with multiple legitimate paths forward and endless hoa ‘ike. I hope it brings together groups of people who may learn something about each other's approaches and perspectives. Indeed, I hope it creates a community committed to the fruitful pursuit of shared conversations about common concerns. This is my pule (petition); ‘āmama ua noa.

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1 See for instance, Ing (2022a, 2023).

2 I take this taxonomy from Wong (1989) and Connolly (2015: 67–104).

3 Mary Kawena Pukui and Samuel H. Elbert also define it as "discussion"; *Hawaiian Dictionary* (URL: https://hilo.hawaii.edu/wehe/?q=kalaimanao; last accessed on July 15, 2025). This is also the contemporary term used to represent the English word philosophy, although using it this way goes back at least to 1880; see "Ke Kahua Kalaimanao," *Ke Elele Poakolu*, 1 December 1880. All nūpepa cited in this article were accessed in their electronic versions available through the Papakilo Database.

4 All translations are my own, unless noted.

5 The difference in spelling comes from the insertion of diacritical marks, which were not standardized in nineteenth-century Hawaiian language materials.

6 For examples see Ing (2022b).

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Alaalawa ka Maka Alohilohi

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I Paka Paha no Kākou: Responding to Ing's Hawai'i Philosophy

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1 Ho'olauna

I must begin my response with a sincere mahalo to Michael Kaulana Ing for employing his ethos as an established philosopher to carve out a kīpuka for Kanaka Maoli philosophy on such a worldly stage. This does both kānaka scholars and the field of philosophy a great service and we all owe you thanks for both validating and opening up to discussion the fields of Hawai'i philosophy. It is my most fervent desire that this leads to intense debates, the adumbration of Kanaka Maoli theories in metaphysics, epistemology, ontology, ethics, materialism, idealism and every other subfield of philosophy that exists as I know that kānaka and our kūpuna have plenty to say in each regard. Above all, however, I am greatly inspired by the endeavor of this conversation because I believe that the crisis of the Kanaka Maoli today, be it at home or in the diaspora, in abject poverty or incarceration, in protecting wahi kapu, revitalizing our language or simply navigating the contradictions of capitalism under US-American occupation, is profoundly a crisis of philosophy just as much as it is a crisis of the material conditions of existence. Unfortunately, I do not have the space to develop this notion properly here, but this belief is grounded in both kanaka and non-kanaka philosophy, but especially for kanaka we recognize that the material and the immaterial are co-constitutive of one another. All this is just to say mahalo, this is an incredibly important conversation to have, now more than ever before.

In reading Ing's initial article, I have three principal concerns that I would like to engage with in this response: the first is Ing's definition of philosophy as "intelligible reflections on how we might live a good life" (Ing 2025a). The notion of the "good" or "a good life" is something that I would like to problematize as both too narrow a definition of philosophy in general and a concept that presupposes a given morality, something that kanaka thinking generally would never wholeheartedly endorse; second, I would like to enunciate a word of caution concerning the charting of categories for a discipline that does not yet exist—while I recognize the thrust of the paper presented is one of an invitation I am wary, however, of prematurely categorizing a field and possibly having the categories themselves shape the discourse; finally I want to offer an affirmative direction to the field of Hawai'i philosophy by arguing that there can be no Hawai'i philosophy in a vacuum and especially not in the absence of practice, particularly the constitutive bind that kanaka experience as practitioners of 'ike Hawai'i that is none other than a kapu. Without further ado, allow me to develop these arguments further.

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2 Philosophy as "Intelligible Reflections on How We Might Live a Good Life"

The notion of the Good has long stood in moral philosophy and finds its roots in Plato's fable of the cave, the Good being the dazzling sun that blinds those who are brave, or stupid, enough to leave their shackles in the cave. The sun is then the illuminator of truth, the light that will show us the right path to walk as we try to "live a good life" (Ing 2025a). This conception of the Good finds an elaboration in Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason* wherein he purports that what is good is objective. Kant argues that the subject must maintain the categorical imperative at the cost of their life because there is some transcendent Good that can be aspired to, this Good being a thing-in-itself that escapes mortality and has its position in the realm of divine holiness that exceeds the subject's transcendental finitude. This is quite simply an untenable position because, as Jacques Lacan alludes to and Dany Nobus demonstrates, there is a Sadean fantasy in this conception of the Good (Lacan 2006; Nobus 2017). Sade takes the notion of the Good, and this is where he is "more honest" (Lacan 2016: 650) than Kant, and calls it Nature, which is not a thing-in-itself, but is in fact a cruel and callous will to the *jouissance* of utter annihilation. Both ethical maxims force the subject to act in a way that considers "not whether their action is of any consequence to anyone else, but whether it lives up to their ideal" (Nobus 2017: 89). The subtle distinction between them (the fact that Kant's Good is beyond whereas Sade's is the manifest cruelty of *jouissance* as an order of Nature), however, unravels a good deal of Kant's categorical imperative.

This is ultimately what is at stake in Lacan's essay "Kant with Sade," namely the warning of the true form of desire when it is enabled "to call itself a 'will to jouissance'" (Lacan 2016: 652). Without some pathological inclinations, without some desire for the stupid pleasures of life, without the pleasure principle, all that is left is the death drive, the will to *jouissance*, the will to annihilation. In *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, Nobus notes that Lacan calls this "desire in its pure state […] that very desire that culminates in the sacrifice, strictly speaking, of everything that is the object of love in one's human tenderness—I would say, not only in the rejection of the pathological object, but also in its sacrifice and murder" (Lacan 1998: 276). Only when read with Sade can we unveil this hidden evil in Kant, "Sade reveals what rational human beings really want when they express their will in a pure, de-pathologized fashion: transcendental death and destruction" (Nobus 2017: 57). When any object(ive) is posited as a Good that must be pursued and upheld, it spells destruction for everything else before eventually destroying itself.

So where does this leave us? I think it points to at least one conclusion: we must necessarily maintain a certain pathological disposition if we are to stay alive and make life meaningful. This pathology, the irrational, the stupid, is what provides the conditions of possibility for meaning making. And in this vein, we cannot simply tear away the masks of pathology, we must conceptualize the Symbolic, Imaginary and the Real cohesively as interwoven with one another. In classic Lacanian formulation, it does not matter that the Emperor is naked beneath their clothes,

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the fact is that they are clothed. We must deal with the clothes, with the way in which symbolic meaning and imagined fantasies bind us to the real, naked world.

In addition to this problem of the Good which inevitably bleeds into any discussion of "a good life," the definition of philosophy as solely concerned with living a good life seems incredibly limiting. Recently I presented an essay at the Summer Institute for American Philosophy hosted this year at UH Hilo analyzing moʻokūʻauhau and mele koʻihonua as potentially a Hawaiian theory of the subject. I don't believe that any work like this, which takes traditional source material and outlines its potential philosophical implications, is always necessarily going to end up pointing to how to live a good life. It may well come to the conclusion that there is no good life, that we are doomed, or it may be a simple and humble attempt to problematize someone else's definition of philosophy, as I am doing here.

In articulating this critique to Ing in conversation in the Fall of 2024, he asked me to suggest an affirmative position to balance out my negation of his definition, a welcome challenge I will briefly take up here. Philosophy is the study of the real, fundamental truths of existence. I lead the definition with the orientation of philosophy toward the Lacanian real specifically in the context of Hawaiʻi Philosophy as any philosophy undertaken in the absence of the mystical that is the heart of much traditional Kanaka Maoli thought would be disingenuous. Kānaka have and still do recognize and prioritize the more-than-human that resides in that "dumb reality" (Lacan 1997: 55) that can only be placed beyond the signifier. The real, that which is foreclosed by the symbolic and therefore typically "lies beyond the limits of what can be thought to exist" (Nobus 2019: 209) especially in the disenchanted, highly mechanized and overly quantified world that we live in, always returns to disturb the symbolic world we live in and thus the addition of "fundamental truths of existence" to my definition. I hope that this affirmative offering may bolster robust future discussion.

3 Premature Categorization

When I was doing my MFA in Hawaiian Theatre, we had a similar debate about categories that I would like to bring up here. Tammy Hailiʻōpua Baker, in her dissertation, outlines three types of theatrical productions that bear some semblance of "Hawaiianess" about them. The first is the Local Theatre of Hawaiʻi, exemplified by Kumu Kahua Theatre, that is primarily written by Asian, mostly Japanese, settlers about their experiences. Edward Sakamoto would be the playwright to epitomize this genre. The second category is Hawaiian Theatre, these are plays written by Hawaiians about the Hawaiian experience like the *Kāmau Trilogy* by Alani Apio or the work of Moses Goods. The final category is Hana Keaka, which was long defined by Hailiʻōpua Baker to be "Hawaiian medium theatre," that is theatre written and performed in ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi; in her

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dissertation, however, she elaborates the constitutive elements of Hana Keaka as being composed of four kūkulu: ʻōlelo, kūʻauhau, hana noʻeau, and moʻolelo (Hailiʻōpua Baker 2019).

As myself and Ākea Kahikina were developing our thesis productions, *He Leo Aloha* and *Hoʻoilina* respectively, we found ourselves constantly revising the scripts to conform to the category of Hana Keaka because that is what we were trying to create. For *He Leo Aloha* I had not adequately incorporated kūʻauhau (genealogy) into the production which was based purely in 2019 and had no overt incorporation of kūpuna into the play, save for the traditional mele sung by the actors. The initial drafts of *Hoʻoilina* were not written mostly in ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi and thus needed to be revised to include more ʻōlelo in order to be a "Hana Keaka." These revisions, however, could not help but skew the original artistic visions that Kahikina and I had for our production, irrespective of whether or not it improved the play or made it speak to our particular political and historical moment better. In the case of Kahikina's play which dealt with inordinately wealthy Hawaiians, having them speak Hawaiian totally divorced the play from reality as it is a matter of fact that ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi is not the language of the upper classes; it is far more likely that a kanaka would have forsaken their language to earn money than it is that a kanaka with money would ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi. A merit of this revision was to entreat the audience to imagine what Hawaiian wealth might look like, but the fact that the revision occurred as a desire to accommodate criteria rather than develop a play is a cause for consideration.

So there is a problem with categorizing a nascent field: that it will most certainly shape the production of knowledge in that field irrespective of whether or not it is for the "greater good" of the discipline—then again, with such an expression we are already back at my first critique. While I respect the posturing of the categories as an invitation for various modes of sustained scholarly production, I want to caution Ing on the use of these categories as they will likely prove determinative for upcoming kanaka philosophers.

4 Ma ka hana ka ʻike: Philosophy is Kapu to Practice

On the whole, despite my reservations about categorization in general, I am inclined to agree with Ing's categories of Hawaiian Philosophy, ʻIke Hawaiʻi and Kālaimanaʻo, all of which being housed under the big umbrella of Hawaiʻi Philosophy. I do not have any particular problem with the terms employed nor their definitions, I understand why Ing chose these terms and I endorse their use with one caveat which is consubstantial with my affirmative point to further develop the general theory of Hawaiʻi philosophy: namely, that there is no philosophy of and by Kanaka Maoli that can be elaborated in the absence of practice. Whether or not one is doing Hawaiian philosophy, employing "methods emerging from divisions in Analytic and Continental philosophies" (Ing 2025a) or ʻIke Hawaiʻi which privileges the immanence of Hawaiʻi philosophy, that it should

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emerge from Hawaiian "tradition" and not have its "authenticity" tainted by haole sources, or even Kālaimanaʻo who "[sits] uncomfortably between Hawaiian Philosophy and ʻIke Hawaiʻi" (Ing 2025a) none of these types of Hawaiʻi philosophy are possible without the philosopher having been dedicated to an established cultural practice. Ing himself has strung out a nice list of these practices (Ing 2025a) and my only addition would be to qualify the list with the fact that not only are these cultural practices, but that they are also the sources of all Hawaiian knowledge.

Philosophy in ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi would be considered a kind of ʻike or manaʻo, thus his choice of the term Kālaimanaʻo for doing philosophy, literally carving out one's thoughts. The ethics of all ʻike Hawaiʻi (and this is found in hālau hula, fishing, passing on of moʻolelo, the training of kahuna and everything in between), however, dictate that not everyone is entitled to manaʻo or ʻike. ʻIke is reserved only for those who hana, those who work and do. The proverb "ma ka hana ka ʻike" has often been used by educators to express Hawaiian philosophies of education and experiential learning. It may be interpreted in a few ways: "in the work is the knowledge," "in doing you come to know," "by work is recognition," "when you do it you'll see," and, when it is delivered as a challenge, "prove it to me with your actions." There is an interesting dialectic at play in this proverb in which hana (work, doing) presupposes ʻike (vision, sight, knowledge) and ʻike presupposes hana. The very process of hana retroactively reconstructs the ʻike which enables it, or, in an Hegelian formulation, hana is an act which posits its own presupposed ʻike, "it is an effect which retroactively posits its cause" (Žižek 2022: 160). But not everyone is entitled to the hana that might bring about ʻike and ʻike is the prerequisite for manaʻo, as Halealoha Ayau declared recently apropos people giving their manaʻo without having the necessary ʻike:

> […] don't talk out of your ass. Your manaʻo is cute, but your ʻike is required […] if you've never engaged in it, you're not an expert in it, I'm sorry but S.T.F.U […] come armed with ʻike or follow those who do. You know the thing that really messes up cultural responsibility? It's this thing called democracy. Because they made everybody the same. That ain't our way. That's why we had kahuna. That's why we had chiefs (Halealoha Ayau, @hawaiiancouncil, November 11, 2022, Instagram).

What inspired this candid expression of Kanaka Maoli ethics was an ethnic Hawaiian who believed that they could sit on the Burial Council and consult on issues concerning ancestral remains without having any knowledge of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act or the history of how Kanaka Maoli have dealt with the unlawful excavation of ancestral remains.

In a Kanaka Maoli cultural context, there is no knowledge of which a certain commitment is not expected, there is no free market of information. Every student who is fortunate enough to learn anything, be it fishing or stories and everything in between, is expressly picked by a keeper of knowledge. In an installment of "Ka Hoomana Kahiko" Waimau writes,

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> Aole he hookahuna ana…Ina he makuakane ike koʻu i ka pule kuni, a i ka pule anaana paha, pule lawaia, pule kalaiwaa, a me ia pule aku a ia pule aku. A laila nana mai o ia iau a he keiki noho malie, a laila ao maila kana mea i ike ai... a make ua makuakane nei, ua loaa akula nae i kana keiki (Waimau 1865).
>
> There is no such thing as "kahuna training" [...] Should I have a father knowledgeable of black magic, and perhaps sorcery, or fishing prayers, carving prayers, and any other type of prayer, and then he shall look upon me and see a child of good temperament, then he will teach me what he knows [...] and when that father dies what he had is possessed now by his child.

This is how knowledge and its corresponding Kapu was passed on. The master's evaluation first gauges if a student is mālie. Being mālie is a necessary presupposition in the learning process. A master will not teach an unruly student. Part of the evaluation of a worthy student is a careful consideration of their temperance as Pukui reminds us, "A person who was likely to repeat all he heard was not trusted and so he did not learn very much" (Pukui 1602-1606: 135). We should read Pukui's reminder in valence with the ʻōlelo noʻeau, "I ʻolāʻolā no ka huewai i ka piha ʻole" (Pukui 1983: 1247). The proverb alerts us to the fact that ignorant people are to be identified by their shameless oversharing or, in the words of Pukui, "A person not very well informed talks more than one who is" (Pukui 1983: 1247). Not everyone has a right to ʻike and especially to repeat or express their manaʻo about some manner of ʻike.

So what does earn someone the right to ʻike, the hana constitutive of it, and the ability to express their manaʻo? In order to answer this question I have recourse to yet another proverb: "ʻIke ʻia nō ka loea i ke kūahu" (Pukui 1983: 1208). Pukui translates this to say that "an expert is recognized by the altar he builds," elaborating that the proverb suggests that "it is what one does and how well he does it that shows whether he is an expert" (Pukui 1983: 1208). In accord with the proverb "ma ka hana ka ʻike," my suggestion is that anyone interested in Hawaiʻi philosophy should get out of their office and into the field, into the hana that will develop their ʻike. One must find or build a kūahu worthy of their worship, as to hana is to hoʻomana the given object of their labor. There are many kīpuka aloha ʻāina (Peralto 2018; Baker 2018; McGregor 2007) in need of volunteers; it is in working at these important places of resurgence that one will discover Hawaiʻi Philosophy. Leader of the Protect Kahoʻolawe Ohana, George Helm, in a letter to President Carter protesting the bombing of the island Kahoʻolawe states that "the church of life is not in a building, it is the open sky, the surrounding ocean, the beautiful soil;" Hawaiʻi Philosophy resides in this "church of life" that is beyond the building. To be an active cultivator of this "church of life" is what it means to do Hawaiʻi Philosophy and, in order to do this, one needs ʻIke Hawaiʻi which can only be found in the ancestral practices of Kanaka Maoli.

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5 Haʻina ka puana

In conclusion, I would like to offer a note on rigor and what Ing has termed "epistemic humility." I share his frustration with Hawaiians who throw around terms like epistemology (Ing 2025a) and ontology without having a clue as to the philosophical traditions from which those terms emerge, especially when they claim that something clearly epistemic is ontological (most often simply for the fact that ontology has become a new academic buzzword in Indigenous Studies). To misuse a word with which one is not familiar in the Kanaka Maoli mind is to condemn oneself to death as it is found in the expression "ʻo ʻoe nō ka luaahi o kāu mele;" you alone are the fiery pit of your song. The belief that underpins this word of caution to an aspiring composer is that words are embedded with the powers of life and death: "i ka ʻōlelo ke ola, i ka ʻōlelo ka make;" in language there is life, in language there is death. What one speaks is invoked and what is invoked will exact its price on the speaker. While I do not have the space to properly elaborate the metaphysical presuppositions that bring kanaka to these conclusions, brief reference should suffice to make clear that carelessly employing a term that one does not have sufficient command over is not a very Hawaiian thing to do. In addition to urging scholars to practice "epistemic humility," I would also encourage kānaka to not present a fish like ʻUmiamaka who served merely a shell stuffed with sand.[1]

[1] The full expression is "Hewa ka iʻa a ʻUmiamaka, he ʻōkea loko" (Pukui 1997: 105).

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Kīpuka: Towards a Representative Model of Hawaiian Philosophy

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Mahalo for the opportunity to contribute to this conversation. I'd like to acknowledge that I come to this conversation as a Kanaka Maoli scholar of ʻōlelo Hawai‘i (Hawaiian language) and ʻike Hawai‘i (Hawaiian knowledge) whose experiences as a learner and educator of Kanaka lifeways serve as a foundation for my subjectivities. My moʻokūʻauhau (genealogy) roots me to Oʻahu, Hawai‘i, and Kaua‘i, and therefore, to the genealogies of thought of those places.

Generally, I appreciate Ing's conceptualization of Hawai‘i philosophy as an initial point of contact. As it relates to philosophy, Ing contends:

> Philosophy is dialogical in that philosophers reflect on their questions with the most relevant conversation partners (hoa ʻike); whomever those may be, wherever (and whenever) they may come from. The conversation partners we dialogue with are constrained by practical limitations. In other words, we all operate from the contexts in which we live (Ing 2025a).

As a conversation, philosophy requires a conversation between one knowledge system and another, in Ing's words, "hoa ʻike," or thought partners. This is particularly important in considering Hawai‘i philosophy because to understand with whom and with what one is in conversation, one must understand one's epistemologies and ontologies.

Ing's outline of Hawai‘i philosophy is structured epistemologically with a non-Kanaka audience in mind in three parts, defining each along the way: 1) Hawaiian Philosophy, 2) ʻIke Hawai‘i, and 3) Kālaimanaʻo. Hawaiian philosophy is defined as a philosophy whose epistemological grounding is philosophy that is not of Hawai‘i with engagement with Hawai‘i Philosophy; ʻIke Hawai‘i as philosophy rooted in Kanaka epistemologies and ontologies; and Kālaimanaʻo as philosophy whose methods equally draw from Hawaiian Philosophy and ʻIke Hawai‘i. As this conversation is among a global audience, Ing's conceptualization is understandable so Hawai‘i philosophies are intelligible to a global audience. However, as a conceptualization to forward our understanding of Hawai‘i philosophy, I argue that Hawai‘i philosophy must be grounded epistemologically in Hawai‘i knowledge systems. One way to do this is to move from a dialectic model of what is and is not philosophy to a Kanaka-centered conceptualization of knowledge.

Throughout Ing's outline, kuleana, or one's accountability to the knowledge and philosophies one studies, is a critical undercurrent. Directly emphasized in his section on Hawaiian Philosophy, Ing asserts:

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> To avoid a kind of intellectual colonization, the principle of positionality must also be kept in mind. The proverbial table of Philosophy is littered with antiquated armchairs. Those doing Hawaiian Philosophy bear the responsibility of removing these outdated ideas and making room for others. They may not be personally responsible for the situation, but they stand in a special relationship with it such that they are responsible to the situation; and this engenders extra caution and extra kuleana (obligations). Philosophers involved in Hawaiian Philosophy have a kuleana to learn from and support the communities they study. This means not only learning the culture inasmuch as it enables them to do their work, but also learning why these communities might be reluctant to trust an outsider, what kinds of hopes they have for their futures, and what concerns they have for the present. If the philosopher's work does not benefit the community in ways the community finds meaningful, the philosopher should find additional ways to support the community (Ing 2025a).

Importantly, Ing's assertion addresses the historical, intellectual violence Indigenous communities have faced and continue to face, namely the extractive mining of Indigenous knowledge to serve a western or colonial agenda. As such, I suggest re-envisioning Hawai‘i philosophy wherein Hawai‘i epistemologies and ontologies are at the fore. An example of this is Davidanna McGregor's "cultural kīpuka" concept and/or Leon No‘eau Peralto's "kīpuka aloha ‘āina" (aloha ‘āina preserved spaces) concept. Peralto succinctly iterates that cultural kīpuka and kīpuka aloha ‘āina include "the rural communities where kua‘āina have remained […] that have been bypassed by major historic forces of economic, political, and social change in Hawai‘i" as well as "individuals and ‘ohana […] who embody the everyday, enduring nature of aloha ‘āina and have stayed as po‘e aloha ‘āina, in places like Hāmākua Hikina that were not "bypassed by major historic forces of economic, political, and social change in Hawai‘i" (Peralto 2018: 2). Taking a concept like the kīpuka (cultural and kīpuka aloha ‘āina) as an epistemological center for Hawai‘i philosophy can be productive because it demands those that engage with its many facets (Hawaiian Philosophy, ‘Ike Hawai‘i, Kālaimana‘o) to situate their subjectivities relationally.

Reflecting on my scholarship, which I contend is a unique blend of Hawaiian studies, political theory, and literary studies, my work sits at the interstice of Ing's ‘Ike Hawai‘i and Kālaimana‘o categories, respectively. Many scholars of Hawai‘i Philosophy would situate their work similarly because Kanaka knowledge categories tend to be more permeable than rigid. If we were to translate these categories into the model of the kīpuka, both ‘Ike Hawai‘i and Kālaimana‘o would serve as the life-giving foundation of the kīpuka, i.e., the foundational pōhaku pele (lava rocks) as well as the integral kupukupu (fern), ‘ōhi‘a, and hāpu‘u plants that typically grow in kīpuka. Hawaiian Philosophy is the animals of the kīpuka whose livelihood is dependent on the foundation of the kīpuka. Understanding Hawai‘i philosophy requires each individual engaging with Hawai‘i philosophy to contemplate, understand, and define their relationship to the knowledge systems with which they are engaging.

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Hawai‘i Philosophy is a reflection of Hawai‘i life. Kīpuka biological life, including the flora and fauna, is ordered through mo‘okū‘auhau (genealogy). Kīpuka are formed after lava flows when the lava has hardened. As time passes, biological life begins to proliferate—the kupukupu being one of the first plants to sprout up, a signifier of a kīpuka. The foundational plants take root, as previously stated, which provide the foundation for the supporting plants and animals to proliferate. Each phase of the kīpuka is rooted relationally, the latter in reliance on the former. Like the kīpuka, the various textures of Hawai‘i Philosophy are and should be conceptualized through mo‘okū‘auhau because mo‘okū‘auhau demands accountability no matter the level of engagement. In other words, ‘Ike Hawai‘i and Kālaimana‘o are the foundation, and Hawaiian Philosophy is the proliferation.

To close, I’d like to bring in ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i scholar Mary Kawena Pukui’s proverb “E kuhikuhi pono i na au iki a me na au nui o ka ‘ike” as a “hoa ‘ike,” or thought partner (Pukui 1983: 40). ‘Ōlelo no‘eau, or Hawaiian proverbs like this, are understood to be no‘eau, or possessing skill and intellect, because their value is appreciated from generation to generation. Pukui’s ‘ōlelo no‘eau here speaks to one’s intimacy with the land, self, and knowledge. To know the “au nui” (large currents) and “au iki” of one’s land meant knowing the various winds, rains, famous sayings, and songs, among others. Advocating for a model of Hawai‘i Philosophy that is genuinely representative of Hawai‘i’s past, present, and future requires us to understand and uplift the au nui and au iki of Hawai‘i epistemologies and ontologies in a manner rooted in Hawai‘i’s lifeways, people, and language.

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Wayfinding Towards Each Other's Philosophical Islands: A Bricoleuse Responds to a Kanaka Invitation

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Michael David Kaulana Ing's essay on "Hawai'i Philosophy" (emic)—as distinct from "Hawaiian Philosophy" (etic)—marks a significant milestone as the first Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian) publication to engage with 'Ike Hawai'i (Hawaiian Knowledge) *as* philosophy. As Ing himself acknowledges, there are likely many Kānaka Maoli who possess deeper knowledge of nā mea Hawai'i (Hawaiian materials, culture, and traditions). However, he stands at the forefront of facilitating a bridge between Indigenous Hawaiian and non-Indigenous philosophical traditions. It is important to emphasize the plural here since Ing proposes to break the highly problematic binary of the "west *vs.* Hawai'i." A key notion in this endeavor is his *dialogical* understanding of philosophy.

If I may, as a non-Kanaka, draw upon a metaphor inspired by Native Hawaiian wayfinding traditions, Ing's approach can be seen as a form of intellectual navigation. He voyages across the vast ocean of philosophy as a bicultural—or possibly, multicultural—"ho'okele" (navigator, wayfarer), a steersman who is guided by the star alignments of his ancestors while also recognizing Greek constellations and more cultural sky maps in the starry night of philosophical inquiry. The safe journey is what matters—the methodology is there to support the navigation.[1]

In my view, Ing's "star map" marks a turning point, illuminating how Hawaiians and non-Hawaiians can foster a meaningful, *open-ended* philosophical dialogue by exploring each other's values, principles, and conceptual frameworks. There is no *telos* in this approach, no predetermined destination, no fixed horizon to be reached. Instead, it is the act of navigating together—of reading and re-reading the skies from multiple vantage points—that defines the value of the journey. Ing's methodology invites reciprocal orientation: each tradition locates itself anew in the presence of the other, not by losing its bearings, but by adjusting to a dynamic constellation of meanings. In this sense, philosophical wayfinding becomes a shared, evolving practice of relation—never finalized, always open to re-navigation.

In what follows, I will first address Ing's well-founded critique of western racism, then explore his subtle distinction between Hawai'i Philosophy and Hawaiian Philosophy, and how Kālaimana'o (lit.: "thought carving") occupies a strategic middle ground between 'Ike Hawai'i and Hawaiian Philosophy. Finally, I will respond to his invitation to dialogue by

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drawing on my own tools of comparative philosophy—my adaptations of *bricolage* and *flânerie* (Albertini 2024).

1 The Origin of Western Racism

Ing is right to critique the west's historical and institutional marginalization of non-western philosophies, tracing its origins to the rise of race-consciousness in eighteenth-century Europe. As a European myself, I wonder what transpired in the transition from the early Enlightenment to German Idealism. What became of the legacies of Lessing and Montesquieu, to name just two figures of the period? They were not necessarily interculturally sensitive, but at least they did not set out to diminish non-European cultures. When did the west's curiosity about other cultures and peoples give way to an assumption of their inherent inferiority? *Nota bene*, this mindset was not solely applied to colonized nations, whose supposed "inferiority" was often justified by their military or economic defeat. Rather, it extended to all non-Europeans, regardless of whether they had any direct contact with Europe.

Thankfully, there were exceptions. One notable figure is Wilhelm Dilthey's student, Georg Misch (1878–1965), who not only insisted that philosophy must incorporate perspectives from other world traditions but also structured his introduction to philosophy by interweaving concepts from Indian, Buddhist, and Chinese thought alongside western ideas. Regrettably, despite the existence of a partial English translation of his *Der Weg in die Philosophie*, his contributions remain largely unknown—even among North American comparative philosophers (Misch 1926).[2]

The exclusion becomes even more pronounced when considering Indigenous philosophies lacking a textual legacy. This is due in part to the dominance of canonical figures like Hume, Kant, and Hegel whose influence has effectively narrowed the field's horizons and obstructed access to non-western knowledge. In retrospect, it is striking that a relatively small group of European thinkers, however revered, could exert such an enduring influence over the intellectual imagination of future philosophers across multiple traditions that privilege written expression over orality. In my view, the responsibility for this lies not only with those who authored these racist teachings but also with those who readily accepted them or failed to challenge them critically both in western and eastern circles. Equally perplexing is how long it has taken to meaningfully challenge their biases and reassess their sweeping judgments.

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Ing further highlights how these exclusionary attitudes became embedded in academic institutions, shaping the very structures that define philosophy as a discipline. Sadly, while explicit racism has diminished,[3] its legacy truly endures in institutional frameworks that continue to marginalize non-western thought—whether through limited resource allocation or the failure to recognize new philosophical directions as equally rigorous and valuable. Moreover, Ing rightly underscores academia's complicity in reinforcing colonial hierarchies, not just through its historical omissions but through the very way it continues to define and delimit philosophical inquiry.

As I write this, I do not exempt my own Department of Philosophy at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. Though it was the first to expand its curriculum beyond the Eurocentric canon—incorporating Buddhist, Chinese, Japanese, Indian, and, eventually, Islamic philosophies—it, too, remained blind to the knowledge, values, technologies, and wisdom of Indigenous nations.[4] It pains me that this occurred on a campus that began under the Morrill Act as a land-grant college of agriculture and mechanic arts (1907).[5]

That said, while change has been slow, it is now underway. Today, the Department of Philosophy offers a course in Hawaiian Philosophy, recognizes 'Ōlelo Hawai'i as a philosophically significant language, hosts an Indigenous Speaker Series, and engages in community service in collaboration with Native Hawaiian initiatives. Notably, the twelfth East-West Philosophers' Conference featured an Indigenous Women's Network panel on "Intergenerational Transmission of Trauma and Healing Through Art" with Meleanna Meyer (Native Hawaiian artist, filmmaker, and community leader), Mililani Trask (Office of Hawaiian Affairs Trustee), Māhealani Ahia (PhD candidate), and Suzanne Lum-Vares (East-West Center President) serving as moderator.[6] More importantly, the Department of Philosophy requested a position in Indigenous Philosophy with focus on the Hawaiian-Pacific region in both 2022 and 2023. The Mānoa Budget Team, which reviews all hiring proposals, has thus far denied our initiative. A third submission request was made this year. The Department remains confident that the position will eventually be approved.

However, the challenge before us is not simply one of adding or including more traditions, but of fundamentally rethinking what philosophy is—and whose voices shape its future. The bricoleuse's response is simple: all voices must be heard. There is no elite in bricolage. The abstract holds no privilege over the concrete, the rational no claim to authority over the spiritual, the intellectual no dominance over the practical, and the written no precedence over the oral.

In addition, Ing argues that scholars interacting with the philosophies of colonized peoples must critically examine their standpoints to avoid perpetuating colonial practices. This requires more than just acknowledging historical injustices—it entails resisting decontextualized interpretations, refraining from appropriating Indigenous knowledge for

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external agendas, and actively addressing ongoing structures of subjugation. Drawing on Indigenous thinkers such as Potawatomi scholar Kyle Whyte, Ing introduces the first of his six principles, *the principle of positionality*. In other words, engagement with Indigenous philosophies demands cultural sensitivity, accountability, and an awareness of one's own intellectual and institutional vantage point.[7]

Ultimately, Ing advocates for a shift in focus—from debating whether non-western traditions qualify as philosophy to exploring how these traditions can be meaningfully practiced and understood on their own terms. A younger Tamara Albertini made a similar argument regarding the western perception of Islamic philosophy, which was long confined to medieval studies simply because it entered European discourse through Latin translations of Arabic texts from that period (Albertini 1997: 99-133).[8]

In the case of Hawaiʻi Philosophy, this means moving beyond imperialistic frameworks and recognizing nā mea Hawaiʻi as part of a living, evolving philosophical tradition—one that speaks in its own voice.

2 Hawaiʻi Philosophy, Hawaiian Philosophy, and Kālaimanaʻo

To fully appreciate the difference between Hawaiʻi and Hawaiian philosophy, one must first learn how Ing conceptualizes philosophy:

> Philosophy […] is a bridge concept, meaning a term that allows diverse groups of people to articulate it in culturally specific ways for the sake of dialogue about shared interests. This space must remain open to deep cultural differences in terms, frameworks, and methodologies, but also be deeply committed to intelligibility across cultures. I call this the principle of interpretive elasticity (Ing 2025a).

This passage led me to think of philosophical space as an ocean—one that can be navigated using different instruments. Just as no one owns the ocean, philosophy, too, belongs to no single nation or culture. Ing's emphasis on dialogue highlights the need to study one another's frameworks to communicate our diverse approaches in intelligible ways, which is what he means by the *principle of interpretive elasticity*, the second of his principles.

From a historical perspective, I see philosophy as largely "insular." While philosophical traditions—whether Chinese, Greek, Indian, or Indigenous—have at times influenced or been influenced by other cultures, they have primarily directed their inquiries toward their own worlds, cultures, and societies. What I believe Ing suggests is that we should dare to

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sail away from our "philosophical islands" and set foot on new ones—always mindful of the need for *epistemic humility*, the third key principle in his thought. When Hōkūleʻa approached Auke Bay on June 10, 2023, the crew first waited for Alaska Natives to grant them permission to come ashore.[9] This protocol, honored by both Native communities, serves as a valuable lesson for philosophers engaging across traditions—ideally before such interactions even begin. Intercultural etiquette demands careful and respectful navigation when entering another culture's philosophical tradition.

Ing's understanding of the dialogical nature of philosophy informs his conceptualization of Hawaiʻi and Hawaiian Philosophy in a way that avoids presenting them as opposites. On the contrary, Hawaiʻi Philosophy is a broad, inclusive term encompassing all philosophical activity rooted in nā mea Hawaiʻi. It prioritizes faithful engagement with Hawaiian culture and philosophy while remaining open to dialogue with non-Hawaiian traditions, which is why it is intended for both Kānaka Hawaiʻi and non-Hawaiians, emphasizing a relational and community-focused perspective. Moreover, it is open to a range of approaches, from traditional ʻIke Hawaiʻi to more westernized academic methods as adopted in Hawaiian Philosophy, such as Analytic and Continental frameworks. Hawaiian Philosophy thus focuses on discussing questions and concerns that arise in predominantly non-Kanaka academic contexts and uses categories like metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics to interpret and analyze Hawaiian concepts. Whereas Hawaiʻi Philosophy encompasses both emic and etic approaches, Hawaiian Philosophy predominantly employs western methods to reach a global philosophical audience.

There is clearly overlap between Hawaiʻi and Hawaiian Philosophy; the differences have to do with audience and methodology. But this is not where the interweaving of Hawaiʻi and Hawaiian Philosophy ends. One also needs Kālaimanaʻo to create a pathway between Hawaiʻi Philosophy and ʻIke Hawaiʻi—that is itself of a philosophical nature. Ing explains the challenge at hand:

> In taking a middle ground, Kālaimanaʻo can sit uncomfortably between Hawaiian Philosophy and ʻIke Hawaiʻi because it may seem too western to those creating ʻIke Hawaiʻi and not recognizably philosophical to those doing Hawaiian Philosophy; however, there is a pragmatic justification for Kālaimanaʻo. The existence of Kālaimanaʻo as a legitimate kind of Philosophy provides an important space for establishing a field of Hawaiʻi Philosophy (Ing 2025a).

Those focused on ʻIke Hawaiʻi are located within Hawaiian Studies, while Hawaiian Philosophy is open to other traditions. Without connection, these fields could diverge, leaving Hawaiian Philosophy dominated by Analytic or Continental thought. Kālaimanaʻo thus serves as a philosophical "hīpuʻu" (knot), uniting both fields to strengthen Hawaiʻi Philosophy.

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Ing is careful to introduce Kālaimanaʻo as an intellectual tradition deeply rooted in the knowledge-seeking practices of kūpuna (Hawaiian elders or ancestors), a connection that is also reflected in the term's etymology. 'Kālaimanaʻo' is a compound of 'kālai,' meaning "to carve," and 'manaʻo,' meaning "thought" or "idea." The act of carving may allude to canoe carving—a revered and intricate craft—or to any discipline requiring exceptional skill honed over generations. This metaphor evokes not only the precision of physical craftsmanship but also the shaping of insight through time and lineage.

This sense of ongoing formation—of knowledge still in the making—resonates powerfully with the unfinished carving depicted on the hopeful face of *Aloha ʻĀina* (2016), a 20-foot-long, six-foot-tall, two-sided mural that offers a Native Hawaiian perspective on the islands' traumatic past and aspirational future. Spearheaded by Meleanna Meyer, the mural is both a living work of art and an intergenerational statement.[10] As she explained to me in a private conversation, the carving is intentionally left incomplete, inviting the next generation to continue the work—both literally and metaphorically—of cultural restoration and renewal.[11]

Another connection Ing makes is to correlate Kālaimanaʻo with the concept of Hawaiʻi ʻimi loa, which he renders as "the Hawaiian who searches far and wide." This phrase refers to the active pursuit of knowledge from around the world while maintaining a distinctly Hawaiian framework. One of the two authors cited in this context is William Hoapili Kaʻauwai, who exemplified this tradition in the nineteenth century by traveling globally and documenting his learnings with the intent of bringing ʻIke back to Hawaiʻi. Significantly, in order to make his findings available to a wide Native audience, he published them in a Hawaiian-language newspaper. As Ing puts it: "Kaʻauwai makes a bold claim—few people gather knowledge like Kanaka because *to be Kanaka is to be a knowledge-gatherer*" (Ing 2025a; my emphasis). I expect that this extraordinary statement will find deep affinity with representatives of many—if not all—philosophical traditions.

To mention but one tradition, it brought to my mind the prominent Persian philosopher, theologian, and Sufi, Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazzālī (d. 505/1111), who in the opening book of his *Revivification of Religious Sciences* lists a series of quotations from the early period of Islam, all emphasizing the significance of the pursuit of knowledge as humanity's most distinctive feature. Here is one of his comments: "it is knowledge which distinguishes man from other animals. Furthermore, man is a human being… by virtue of his noble aims and ideals. [As a matter of fact*] he was only created to know*" (Faris 1966: 15; my emphasis). In other words, to seek knowledge is what makes us truly human.

The aesthetics of imagining diverse navigators sailing the ocean of philosophy lies in their capacity to recognize one another in each other's efforts across space and time; at times,

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they may even sail together—whether in person or in thought. However, one must be cautious not to draw conclusions too quickly or assume similarities prematurely. Moreover, whereas Ing embraces the principle of interpretive elasticity, he also insists that Indigenous voices must have the final say: "The members of this community may or may not be Kanaka, but Kanaka are the ones to determine who counts as legitimate interpreters of the culture" (Ing 2025a).

Undoubtedly, contemporary Muslim philosophers would resonate with this stance when it comes to non-Muslim interpretations of Islamic thought. While outsiders are welcome to come ashore, they do not have the authority to override Native understandings of the knowledge they encounter. In Ing's words: "We enter spaces as guests, and we noho (sit, live, abide) in those spaces with haʻahaʻa (humility). We do not dictate the terms of those spaces. We sit; we listen; we learn" (Ing 2025a).[12] The aloha of humility, woven throughout this passage, forms the ethical foundation for the kind of cross-philosophical dialogue he envisions. In what follows, I gladly take up his invitation—mindful of the commitment to humility inherent in Ing's philosophy and in my brand of bricolage—to explore the three remaining principles he proposes: *hoʻokamaʻāina* (becoming familiar), *hoʻohawaiʻi* (Hawaiianization), and *ʻikena makawalu* ("seeing through eight eyes").

3 The Kanaka Maoli and the Bricoleuse on the Dialogue Among Philosophies

I began exploring bricolage as an alternative methodology for comparative philosophy after being invited as a keynote speaker at a 2017 conference organized by the American University in Dubai. My paper focused on the question why Islamic philosophy remains marginalized in the field to this day. While revisiting Charles A. Moore's *Preface* to the proceedings of the first East-West Philosophers' Conference (1939), I noticed an imbalance in how he framed the relationship between "East" and "West." For instance, Moore spoke of "the significance of the philosophy of the East *for* the West" (my emphasis) —without expressing any concern that western philosophers might be intruding on Asian traditions (Albertini 2024: 5). The critique expressed here does not seek to single out Moore as a particular culprit. His recognition that western philosophers should not persist in their insularity was a step in the right direction. Had I lived in the 1930s or 1940s, I too might have used similar language. Yet, whereas intercultural sensitivity was not a prevailing theme at the time, that would not have absolved me either of a lack of self-critical reflection.

In 2017, as I was working on developing an interculturally sensitive methodology, I revisited Claude Lévi-Strauss' notion of bricolage (best translated as 'tinkering') and began adapting it to the needs of a reconfigured comparative philosophy. I envisioned it as a

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cognitively humble approach—one driven by intellectual curiosity and playfulness—yet without decontextualization as in the original setting.

While reading Michael David Kaulana Ing's essay, I could not help but notice the resonances between his approach and my own. This is hardly surprising. Scholars working in marginalized fields—especially those who themselves belong to minority communities—often give voice to parallel dissatisfactions. In seeking to overcome exclusion, they tend to recognize shared structural challenges that contribute to their discipline's marginalization and may, in turn, arrive at similar remedies.

The Principle of hoʻokamaʻāina

Returning to the earlier comment on imbalance, it is noteworthy that Ing, the Indigenous philosopher, cautions against "a certain degree of asymmetry in privileging nā mea Hawaiʻi" (Ing 2025a)—despite the fact that ʻIke Hawaiʻi was nearly lost. Ing warns that those shaping it must remain mindful of the risks inherent in such asymmetry: misreading non-Hawaiian knowledge or expecting it to adapt without first grasping its foundations. He states, "One risk is not being attentive to the limits of our understanding non-Hawaiian knowledge. Another risk is insisting that non-Hawaiian fields of knowledge accommodate ʻIke Hawaiʻi without first understanding the contours of those fields" (Ing 2025a). To avoid these pitfalls, Ing introduces the principle of hoʻokamaʻāina.

Part of being Kanaka is being aware of the spaces we occupy and our relationship to those spaces. If we are kamaʻāina (familiar) with those spaces, we have learned to care for those spaces/places with the actions and attitudes they deserve. Before we are kamaʻāina, we are malihini (unfamiliar, strangers or guests) (Ing 2025a).

The passage ends with the statement, quoted earlier, that emphasizes the need to sit, listen, and learn. While Ing addresses this cautionary device to fellow Kānaka Maʻoli, it is clear that non-Hawaiians attempting to engage with Kanaka philosophy must heed it as well. They must first acknowledge that they are "guests"; in time, they may become "familiar."

To navigate unfamiliar intellectual landscapes, the bricoleuse adapts the French notion of "flânerie"—originally an urban aesthetic category[13]—as a method of orientation. Rather than seeking mastery or quick appropriation, she practices a kind of philosophical strolling: lingering, observing, listening. This mode allows her to remain discreetly in motion—intellectually curious, attentive, and responsive, yet careful not to occupy or lay claim to any part of the landscape prematurely. Concepts are not picked up for immediate use; they are approached slowly, *in situ*, with an effort to acknowledge their original context and cultural grounding before engaging them further. The bricoleuse, like the flâneur, resists the pressure to arrive or consume, choosing instead to tarry, to perceive, and to trace lines

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of meaning with care. In her philosophy, world civilizations should serve as mutual "guardians" and nurture each other. They should not deplete but rather sustain each other in the spirit of […] 'deep hospitality'" (Albertini 2024: 12).[14] Responsible civilizations are both each other's hosts and guests.

Aware of the risks that appropriation poses in any cultural direction, Ing offers his own solution. This is where his principle of hoʻohawaiʻi comes into play.

The Principle of hoʻohawaiʻi

Ing expands on a model originally suggested by a Kanaka theologian named Kepelino Keauokalani, who introduced the metaphor of "ahu" (an altar made of rocks) to speak of knowledge gathering. He, too, operated with the notion of Hawaiʻi ʻimi loa: "The Hawaiian who searches far and wide is [like] a wonderous altar. The foreigner might go about gathering things, but the work of the Hawaiian who searches far and wide is never done" (Ing's translation). Like his contemporary, Kaʻauwai, Kepelino, considers the gathering and organizing of knowledge as a defining trait of Kanaka identity—transforming knowledge into a "wondrous altar" of cultural and communal significance.

This is quite different from the curiosity cabinets many European kings and princes began to assemble from the late sixteenth century onward, where tusks of elephants and rhinoceroses would be exhibited alongside a two-headed fetus and other exotic specimens meant to showcase the collector's reach and wealth rather than serve as an integrated system of knowledge. This type of cabinet, which eventually evolved into the modern museum, prioritized accumulation over understanding, displaying artifacts as objects of fascination rather than as parts of a living, interconnected tradition. In contrast, the ahu of knowledge is not merely a collection but a carefully constructed, meaning-laden structure—one that requires both skill and cultural responsibility to build. It functions like a matrix that organizes and connects elements of knowledge into a coherent whole, and it is also embodied in living human beings.

Moreover, the maintenance of the "knowledge altar" is an ongoing process, reflecting an openness to new insights without displacing traditional ways of thinking. The goal is to engage with non-Hawaiian knowledge while safeguarding Kanaka intellectual and cultural traditions. "Thus, it might be said that the foreign stones of knowledge go through a process of hoʻohawaiʻi, or Hawaiianization. They are incorporated into a Hawaiian structure, yet they maintain their distinctiveness as individual entities" (Ing 2025a). Therefore, this knowledge transfer should not be misconstrued as an act of appropriation. Conversely, even with stones carried from elsewhere, the ahu is not at risk of being "westernized," "sinized," or otherwise hijacked by a non-Kanaka philosophical culture; it remains a Native Hawaiian place of knowledge.

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To prevent unbalanced exchanges, Ing introduces the notion of "borrowing," which he redefines as reciprocal gift-giving. Borrowing thus implies an obligation to treat what is borrowed with respect and to use it in a way that preserves its integrity. This ensures that borrowed concepts are available for future use rather than being exploited or corrupted. Also, it suggests that those who borrow non-Hawaiian concepts contribute something in return, whether through recognition, adaptation, or meaningful dialogue—and vice-versa. If practiced with integrity, borrowing becomes an ethical act—one that affirms and strengthens the relationship between two communities of inquirers. Doubtless, this act advances a constructive alternative to the problem of ruthless co-option. In the present context, my "gifts" may include the invitation to consider certain aspects of Islamic or Renaissance Philosophy as possible steppingstones to build reciprocal relationships; Renaissance ideas that resonate with Ing's approach are touched on below. Another, entirely different steppingstone might be found in Martin Buber's powerful dialogical philosophy, first articulated in *I and Thou* (1923), where the authentic relationship between two subjects becomes transformational—both at the personal level and within a broader relational horizon.

The Principle of ʻikena makawalu

As stated at the outset of this response, Ing objects to the binary opposition of "the west *vs.* Hawaiʻi." Such framing oversimplifies the relationship between these intellectual traditions and hinders the development of ʻIke Hawaiʻi and Hawaiʻi Philosophy. While it is crucial to acknowledge differences, maintaining this rigid dichotomy is in the way of a more nuanced and productive engagement between the two knowledge systems. Moreover, an exclusive focus on these two frameworks limits the potential for dialogue between ʻIke Hawaiʻi and other non-Western philosophies. One issue to confront is the claim of incommensurability, which was applied both as a critique of non-Hawaiian worldviews and a protective mechanism on behalf of the Kanaka knowledge system.

Ing identifies three areas, in which the lack of a shared standard for comparison was articulated. One is "linguistic incommensurability" and says that some concepts in ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi (Hawaiian language) may not have direct translations in English or other languages, making full comprehension difficult. Another has to do with "foundational incommensurability," which maintains that the underlying worldviews and assumptions of ʻIke Hawaiʻi and western thought may be so distinct that they lack common ground for mutual intelligibility. Finally, "evaluative incommensurability" is concerned with the lack of an objective way to determine which knowledge system is best suited, as each operates within its own internal logic and values. While recognizing incommensurability helps protect ʻIke Hawaiʻi from being judged by imperialistic or colonial standards, taking this view too far risks cutting off opportunities for mutual learning and revitalization.[15] A way

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forward is to adopt what Ing calls a "soft incommensurability" approach, which acknowledges that "every translation is an interpretation; different worldviews provide different starting points but can still be rendered cross-culturally intelligible; and some values are irreducible to others" (Ing 2025a).

However, one should not misunderstand Ing to be suggesting that knowledge systems are entirely closed off from one another. On the contrary, it is precisely through engaging "multiple perspectives" that cross-cultural intelligibility becomes possible—while still honoring meaningful differences. This dynamic is beautifully captured in the principle of ʻikena makawalu (literally, "seeing through eight eyes"). As Ing notes, ʻike—meaning knowledge or understanding—lies at the root of ʻikena, clearly linking the act of knowing with the act of seeing.

As a specialist in western Renaissance philosophy—my first scholarly love—I cannot help but feel reminded of Antonio del Pollaiuolo, the renowned Florentine artist, and the tomb of Pope Sixtus IV, which he completed between 1484 and 1493. With the addition of "Perspective," the monument features personifications not of seven, but of eight Liberal Arts. It underscores the Renaissance's recognition of perspective as an essential intellectual discipline—one that embodies the integration of artistic technique with scientific inquiry. It also signals that with the inclusion of this eighth art knowledge could no longer be contained within the bounds of a traditional canon. In a similar vein—and drawing on the principle of interpretive elasticity—the bricoleuse suggests that the symbolic invocation of "eight eyes" opens the field of ʻIke to an endless plurality of perspectives: each shaped by its own context, yet part of a shared search for knowing.[16]

But openness, as Ing points out, is not without its limits. Thus the multiplicity of ʻikena makawalu should not be mistaken as a license to validate just any perspective. It is a "bounded" one; not all views are equally valid. More importantly, these diverse ways of seeing are meant to be brought into meaningful relation, forming a coherent and interwoven conceptualization of the world.

> The idea that these views can be coordinated and integrated with each other is predicated on the assumption that they are mutually intelligible. In other words, while no one view is reducible to another, the multiplicity is still commensurable. Viewers do not look past each other; rather, they navigate the multiplicity together as a dialogical affair; meaning that relationships are formed and hoa ʻike are found—literally "companions in seeing" (Ing 2025a).

This approach fosters the revitalization of ʻIke Hawaiʻi by enabling Kānaka Maoli to navigate both Hawaiian and non-Hawaiian ways of learning and knowing. I also see the value of the principle of ʻikena makawalu for western and other philosophers—those still

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waiting to be invited ashore. It clarifies that their perspectives do not override Indigenous ways of seeing; their knowledge systems are but one among many.

As with my brand of bricolage, there is no hierarchy, no ranking. No tradition—western, eastern, or Indigenous—is inherently superior or inferior. Each is a cultural expression of a people striving to make sense of their place: cosmically, within the natural world, in society, and among the family of nations.

Exploration and learning must go both ways, outwardly and inwardly. Ing is right, dialogue is to remain open-ended; when it closes, civilizations begin to fade. The recovery of ʻIke Hawaiʻi is not a museal project. As Ing states: "rooting Kālaimanaʻo in our kūpuna is not meant to freeze nā mea Hawaiʻi in the past, but rather to ensure that it remains connected to a moʻokūʻauhau [genealogy; my insert]" (Ing 2025a). What speaks to me here is the understanding that ideas, like people, have genealogies. By the same token, to cite two world traditions, western and Islamic philosophies are not merely concerned with preserving what once was, nor with clinging to a single fixed touchstone. Traditionally, all world cultures have made continual additions to their inherited bodies of knowledge. Now, all cultures may contribute to all systems of knowledge—provided all parties agree to the exchange of gifts. There is no dialogical relationship without reciprocity.

4 Looking Forward

Given my declared commitment to engage in the open-ended dialogue Ing envisions, this final section is not a conclusion in the traditional sense. I am still far from having fully absorbed—let alone addressed—all of Ing's innovative insights and bold proposals. Fortunately, the task of a response is not to be exhaustive. I see this not as an endpoint, but as the beginning of a conversation to which non-Kanaka philosophers have been graciously invited. That invitation helped ease my initial concern about being perceived as an intruder. At this point, however, I feel ready to "enter Native Hawaiian spaces as a guest" and to "sit, listen, and learn." For that reason, it is too early to offer more substantive—let alone critical—commentary.

Still, I would like to raise a few questions related to implementation. What happens, for instance, when consent is not granted, yet another party proceeds to appropriate or decontextualize knowledge—regardless of direction? Who determines whether a borrowing is truly reciprocal, or when a boundary has been crossed? Might there be a need for some form of protocol or shared understanding to guide such situations? And how might one initiate responsible engagement when the ontological, cosmological, and

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epistemological foundations of each tradition diverge so profoundly?

I do not see these as insurmountable challenges, but rather as questions that call for deliberation across multiple perspectives—ideally in face-to-face conversations that allow for communal, spontaneous, and context-sensitive inquiry.

Two essential takeaways stand out for me thus far. The first is Ing's notion of borrowing as a reciprocal gift—a framing I find both creative and deeply helpful. The second is the Native Hawaiian concept of moʻokūʻauhau, referenced earlier, which is closely connected to Ing's reflections on borrowing. What resonates with me in particular is the idea that thoughts and concepts, like people, have genealogies. Just as ʻIke carries with it extensive Kanaka Maoli genealogical lineages, so too do the ideas, practices, and ways of being found in other traditions.[17]

I learned that the word ʻmoʻoʼ in moʻokūʻauhau suggests continuity—perhaps metaphorically evoking the long, connecting bones along the spine of a moʻo (lizard). The same root appears in moʻolelo, often translated as "story." Ing proposes we think of moʻolelo as an ongoing conversation—one meant to carry forward a sense of continuity. In a western context, this is similar to how musicians describe themselves as students of Franz Liszt or another composer—not through direct instruction, but through oral transmission, embodied practice, and a shared sensibility passed down through an unbroken lineage of teachers and students. These lineages, like those carried in moʻokūʻauhau, are not only about names and dates but about sustaining a living connection to a way of knowing.

Again, participating in such conversations as malihini, we work—patiently and with care—to become kamaʻāina. In practice, to use Ing's words, this means remaining attentive to the specific terms we invoke and the discourses we enter:

> We would not presume knowledge of ballet based on knowledge of hula (although I imagine there are good conversations to be had); and we would not tolerate someone who presumed knowledge of hula based on their knowledge of ballet. Similarly, terms such as "philosophy" and their surrounding discourses have their own moʻokūʻauhau. We ought not presume knowledge about these terms without understanding their moʻolelo. For instance, terms such as "epistemology" have become popular in talking about ʻIke Hawaiʻi, but the term is actually an entire subfield of philosophy with thousands of books written about it over hundreds of years (Ing 2025a).

Conversely, the proper way to adhere to another philosophical space is, in a sense, to join a new lineage—one that invites us to contribute not from a place of mastery, but through

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relation. In doing so, we add to our cultural and philosophical genealogies, not by replacing one with another, but by participating in a shared and evolving conversation. This may be comparable to adding a new ancestral line—an expansion of one's cultural and philosophical inheritance through relational belonging. Reflecting on my own path, I have come to realize thanks to Ing's reflections on the Native Hawaiian notion of moʻokūʻauhau that my study of Islamic philosophy—shaped by years of immersion and inquiry—alongside my upbringing in an Arab country (Tunisia), has quietly woven new threads into the tapestry of who I am. It has given rise to an additional intellectual and cultural lineage, one that deepens my philosophical voice and grounds it in a broader landscape of belonging.

In this light, the act of borrowing preserves the original context of the gift since it is not robbed of its genealogy. And the "borrower" is presented with a new intellectual family to which they remain connected through the gift they received and that they reciprocate by inserting themselves into a preexisting moʻolelo to which they themselves contribute.

It is my hope that this text may be seen as a present—not as a claim to ownership or finality, but as an offering of appreciation and participation. By entering this ongoing moʻolelo, I seek to honor the intellectual genealogy that made it possible and, in return, to give my reflections as part of a shared and evolving conversation.

If this response is welcomed in that spirit, then it also marks a commitment to an ongoing relationship. For the goal of intercultural exchange is never to distort, displace, or destroy. Rather, when invited, we may step onto one another's islands of thought. Yet living on an island does not imply an insular existence. William Hoapili Kaʻauwai, the Native Hawaiian traveler and royal envoy invoked by Ing, is a case in point. Nor should we forget the journey undertaken by King Kalākaua—the first monarch to circumnavigate the globe in 1874—or the travels of Queen Kapiʻolani, Queen Liliʻuokalani, and Princess Kaiulani. Even beyond these well-known figures, the stories of less prominent Kānaka Maoli speak to that same spirit of openness: a willingness to engage with the world while remaining anchored in ancestral knowledge.[18]

Islands—whether physical or metaphorical—are open to all winds, all directions. The wayfarer needs to discover how best to approach them, without assuming possession or mastery, without presuming to anchor without invitation, without imposing a fixed meaning upon them, and without erasing the histories they hold.

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1 I am simplifying matters for the sake of the analogy. The ho'okele was "also able to read the weather and the ocean environment. They observed the sequence of cloud formations. They could determine wind direction and strength. They noted the changing patterns of ocean swells." The Migration patterns of birds, especially terns, also delivered important navigational clues. See: Hōkūleʻa—Ka Hoʻokele ʻAna—Navigation—Hōkūleʻa (URL: https://worldwidevoyage.hokulea.com/resources/curriculum/; last accessed on July 15, 2025).

2 *Der Weg in die Philosophie* (1926), was followed by a 2nd edition in 1950; the first part was translated as *The Dawn of Philosophy* (1950).

3 By way of illustration, one might consider how the prominent Orientalist Léon Gauthier once alleged that the Arab mind was inherently "separatist"—incapable, in his view, of creating an overarching unity in which opposites could be mediated. In contrast, he claimed that "fusionist" European thought integrates contrasting features more harmoniously (see Gauthier 1923: 66f). This claim is easily dismissed, not only because of its evident racist undertones, but also because the integration of thought is, in fact, a distinctive hallmark of classical Islamic philosophy. To give but one example: when al-Fārābī (d. 339/950) seeks to reconcile the ideas of Plato and Aristotle in his *Kitāb al-Jamʿ bayna Raʾyay al-Ḥakīmayn Aflāṭūn al-Ilāhī wa-Arisṭūṭālīs* (*The Book of the Harmonization of the Two Opinions of the Two Sages: Plato the Divine and Aristotle*), he clearly demonstrates what might be called inclusionist thinking. This intellectual orientation, it should not be forgotten, played a formative role in the making of the European Renaissance. For "lesser," yet equally troubling, Orientalist biases, see my (2010).

4 See the Department's Public Apology, (URL: https://hawaii.edu/phil/public-apology/; last accessed on July 15, 2025).

5 See (URL: https://manoa.hawaii.edu/history/; last accessed on July 15, 2025).

6 For the recording, see: (URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-_NixI_MKwU; last accessed on July 19, 2025).

7 It is worth noting that the concept of positionality has long played a central role in the social sciences, particularly within feminist theory. Scholars such as Linda Alcoff, Donna Haraway, and Patricia Hill Collins have been instrumental in advancing this line of thought. As Angela Davis remarked at the conclusion of her lecture at UHM on April 8, 2016, the fourth wave of feminism is marked by its commitment to supporting all marginalized communities.

8 A first timid attempt was articulated in Albertini (1997) and then, more forcefully addressed in Albertini (2010).

9 See: (URL: https://hokulea.com/hokulea-greeted-by-hundreds-at-auke-bay/; last accessed on July 15, 2025).

10 This mural was exhibited and honored as a healing painting at the 12th EWPC on May 24-31, 2024: 12th EWPC—2024—East-West Philosophers' Conference (URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FV15oE8Z-U8; last accessed on July 19, 2025).

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[11] "Whose grip is it/that holds the roughhewn work?/Did it spring up from inside of pain?/ Who will step forward to finish the carving?" (A. Ailée, from "Inside-Outside: One Timeline," poem dedicated to Meleanna Meyer).

[12] For an insightful and refreshingly humble approach to intercultural engagement, Holenstein (2003).

[13] Since articulating one's sources and the ways they are adapted to new contexts is a methodological imperative of bricolage, I need to clarify the historical context of flânerie. The French term 'flâneur' originally described someone who ambled through the city without fixed destination or agenda. In nineteenth-century Paris, the flâneur emerged as a character of aesthetic sensitivity, most famously shaped by Charles Baudelaire, who recast the figure as a poet of modern life. Walter Benjamin later expanded this image in *The Arcades Project*—as my colleague Steve Odin kindly pointed out—, presenting the flâneur as a symptom of modernity and a subtle form of resistance to capitalist acceleration. For Benjamin, the flâneur's slow and perceptive wandering was not passive, but a mode of reclaiming space and time through embodied perception. In this tradition, flânerie becomes an aesthetic and ethical posture: it privileges narrative potential over abstraction or appropriation—qualities the bricoleuse draws on to guide her intercultural engagements.

[14] For more on the subject of "deep hospitality," see Albertini (2023).

[15] Ing lists the following source on the subject: Wong (1989).

[16] An exciting comparative project could be envisaged by placing Ing's principle of 'ikena makawalu in dialogical relationship with the philosophy of Nicholas of Cusa (Nicolaus Cusanus, 1401–1464), who used the idea of perspective to explore some aspects of what we now call positionality—the insight that one's knowing is shaped not only by one's physical point of view. Cusanus mentions factors such as age and emotion; one would have to explore to what extent he would also have included religion, culture, gender, race, and social standing.

[17] Mo'okū'auhau is one of the five Core Principles proposed to help transform UH into a Native Hawaiian Place of Learning (https://manoa.hawaii.edu/nhpol/auamo/strategic-plan/core-principles/).

[18] See the stories of Harry Maitey (1807–1872), the name given to a Native Hawaiian who boarded a Prussian frigate in 1823 and spent the rest of his life in royal service in Berlin, and Jony Kahopimeai (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry_Maitey; last accessed on July 15, 2025). I am deeply obliged to Dr. Thomas Tunsch, Director of the Museum for Islamic Art in Berlin, for bringing this history to my attention.

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Ing's Kalaimanaʻo: Carving Thought in Between Hawaiʻi Philosophy

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Michael Ing's, "An Outline of Hawaiʻi Philosophy" is a timely study in Philosophy, which boldly addresses the discipline's own legacies of intellectual colonialism that have historically suppressed a study like this from emerging until now. Ing carefully identifies two specific challenges of the emergence of a Hawaiʻi Philosophy stemming from oppositional positions. On the one hand, a European Anglicized perspective excluded Indigenous knowledge systems as meeting the intellectual standards of modern philosophy. The condition for the possibility of a Hawaiʻi Philosophy became incredibly inchoate. On the other hand, an understandable epistemic distrust by Indigenous peoples generated an aversion to any "western" philosophies that failed to acknowledge the culturally rich philosophies of Indigenous peoples informed by place, land and ocean ontologies. In this sense, a Hawaiʻi Philosophy becomes resistantly hidden from the colonial categorization of modern philosophy. Ing is concerned that any dogmatic perceptions of the other fail to encourage the foundation of philosophical practice—one grounded in dialogue and conversation with diverse perspectives. Hawaiʻi Philosophy must be able to navigate these oppositional challenges.

I write this response as a Filipina settler to Hawaiʻi. As a Filipina settler who teaches Philosophy at the University Hawaiʻi at Hilo, I have reflected on the state of philosophy as one of the few Filipino tenured and full professors of Philosophy in the US (Bardwell-Jones 2020). Moreover, the University of Hawaiʻi system's aim is to become a Native Hawaiian Place of Learning in the context of what Ing rightly notes, "[t]here are no (and never have been) Kanaka with tenured positions in a philosophy department" (Ing 2025a). These contradictions in academia and higher education elicit questions of what does it mean to articulate a Hawaiʻi Philosophy in the context of the invisibility of Kanaka Philosophers in philosophy departments? What does it mean for non-Hawaiian philosophers to engage in Hawaiʻi Philosophy in the context of Kanaka absence in philosophy departments? Ing presents a comprehensive survey of the terrain of Hawaiʻi Philosophy offering pathways in which settler (non-Hawaiian) philosophers (and Kanaka philosophers) are able to position their own intellectual relationships to engage, learn and primarily become more aware of the "obligations involved in studying Indigenous peoples" (Ing 2025a).

I begin this response with a reflection of the state of philosophy at the University of Hawaiʻi system. I then consider the method of philosophy articulated by Ing as a practice built on dialogue. I then discuss the contours of Hawaiʻi Philosophy as outlined by Ing, in particular the distinctions between ʻIke philosophy, Hawaiian Philosophy and the favored approach used by Ing, Kālaimanaʻo philosophy. Finally, I discuss the framework of

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incommensurability. While soft forms of incommensurability are useful, I think there are some insights that ought to be embraced by hard forms of incommensurability.

1 Philosophy and Dialogue in Hawai‘i

"The Philosophy Department is racist." In *From a Native Daughter* (1993), Haunani Kay Trask documents the problems of colonialism in the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa specifically within the philosophy department. While this tragic situation has been addressed by the philosophy department at UH Mānoa in their recent apology, there still remains the question of how Hawai‘i Philosophy is able to be nurtured in academic departments in Hawai‘i.[1] However, understanding Hawaiian philosophy outside of the "canon" continues to remain a marginalized project in philosophy departments and there are not many philosophers who engage meaningfully in Hawai‘i Philosophy in general.

A second problem emerges for Hawai‘i Philosophy as the very university institution that houses Philosophy departments is itself erected on stolen lands and this becomes a grave problem not only for academia but in particular for philosophy. How can philosophy be taught with any intellectual integrity when the very existence of the university is predicated on Native Hawaiian land dispossession? This, of course, becomes further complicated in the context of the controversial building of a Thirty Meter Telescope on the sacred Mauna Kea. During widespread occupation of many activists opposing the building of TMT in 2019, Mauna Kea was managed by the University of Hawai‘i. As the occupation of the access road began to take shape, Pu‘uhuluhulu University, an experimental free school, emerged through the vision of one of the co-founders, Presley Ke‘alaanuhea Ah Mook Sang. Kanaka educators, activists, and cultural practitioners formed an authentic "Native Hawaiian Place of Learning" in the face of, and in resistance to, colonial occupation on Mauna Kea. Pu‘uhuluhulu University provided the condition for the possibility of Hawai‘i Philosophy to take root between the a‘ā and pahoehoe lava fields, becoming a confluence for all the various aspects of Hawai‘i Philosophy to vibrantly grow. Pu‘uhuluhulu University became the education center to perpetuate ‘Ike philosophy, Hawaiian knowledge, and Kālaimano‘o which spoke to a diverse group of people, including Kanaka Maoli (in Hawai‘i and in the diaspora), settler allies and Indigenous groups from around the world to genuinely understand and learn Hawai‘i Philosophy.

Ing develops a useful map in navigating the various dimensions of Hawai‘i Philosophy. More generally, he defines philosophy as "intelligible reflections on how we might live a good life" (Ing 2025a). Ing develops three principles that foster the aims of philosophy

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broadly construed. First, is the principle of positionality. The discipline of philosophy has been hostile to Indigenous perspectives assuming an epistemic posture of superiority. Following scholars such as Kyle Whyte, Indigenous resources have been utilized to address problems in non-Indigenous contexts (Whyte 2019). In this sense, Indigenous knowledges have been valued as supplemental knowledge to further the aims of non-Indigenous issues without considering how that very use may lead to perpetuating systems of colonization for the benefit of the colonizer. Rather, for Whyte, Indigenous knowledges ought to be utilized to contribute to the collective continuance and resurgence of Indigenous communities, thereby maintaining a governance value for the purpose of improving the lives of the Indigenous people where the knowledge is drawn from. Ing discusses the importance of understanding the "we" in dialogical relationships, which is an open-ended and radically inclusive project involving a diverse range of human and non-human participants. Since there is always a risk of misinterpretation between differently situated interlocutors, it is more realistic to understand the translation between speakers as always incomplete. For Ing, "Intelligibility presupposes that we can speak to each other in ways that we come to (perhaps not fully, but largely) understand each other's perspectives, feelings, and motivations" (Ing 2025a). Given the risk of misinterpretation, especially in cases of differently situated language speakers, Ing emphasizes the need to be aware of one's positionality and the power dynamics that condition the interaction. Though dialogue is essential in any philosophical project, well intentioned interlocuters may still risk perpetuating epistemic injustices.

While the principle of positionality aims to remind the knower in understanding their place and function as well as the deep fallibilism inherent in any dialogical exchange with other differently situated knowers, the principle of interpretive elasticity aims to remain committed to forms of intelligibility that may emerge across cultural differences. This principle understands philosophy, according to Ing, as a "bridge concept, meaning a term that allows diverse groups of people to articulate it in culturally specific ways for the sake of dialogue about shared interests" (Ing 2025a). In this sense, philosophy becomes a way to articulate the larger meaning making practices that emerge across cultures and offer pathways for many cultures, including western traditions, to learn about and develop a critical empathy for the terms, frameworks, and methodologies across cultures.

These two principles—positionality and interpretive elasticity—prepare the epistemic groundwork in understanding Hawai'i Philosophy. Rather than view Hawai'i Philosophy as a monolithic tradition of thought, Ing regards Hawai'i Philosophy as a comprehensive description of various philosophical activities rooted within the "native peoples, places, and other beings associated with the islands (and surrounding seas) now referred to as Hawai'i (i.e. nā mea Hawai'i)" (Ing 2025a). The term "Hawaiian" refers to specific activities in

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philosophy rooted within Anglicized (mainly western) interpretations of nā mea Hawai‘i. For Ing, Hawai‘i Philosophy aims to articulate reflections of what it means to live a good life anchored within nā mea Hawai‘i. The three approaches to Hawai‘i Philosophy: ‘Ike Hawai‘i, Hawaiian Philosophy and Kālaimana‘o differ with respect to the audience and the methodologies employed in articulating what goes into the good life in terms of nā mea Hawai‘i. These distinctions become crucial in navigating both the audience and varied interpretive methods when engaging with the various ways Hawai‘i Philosophy is conducted. However at the heart of any dialogical interactions with Hawai‘i Philosophy, “Kanaka are the ones to determine who counts as legitimate interpreters of the culture” (Ing 2025a).

2 Kalaimana‘o: Carving Thought and Altars of Knowledge

Ing’s perspectives of Hawaiian Philosophy draws upon the main traditions in academic philosophy: Analytic and Continental. While these two main traditions are practiced widely in philosophy departments, American and Pragmatist traditions have emerged as a bridge between these binary traditions in philosophy. However, if Analytic, Continental or Pragmatist schools of thought are utilized in attempting to understand the philosophies of nā mea Hawai‘i, the ethical perspective in employing a comparative method obliges the philosopher to be an ally to the Indigenous community, the Kānaka Hawai‘i. Ing clearly articulates this obligation as he writes, “In short, the philosopher should work such that the community recognizes the philosopher as someone that cares for the community”(Ing 2025a). In other words, Hawaiian Philosophy ought to be practiced in ways that the Indigenous knowledge is regarded as having governance value and not just supplemental value. Hence, Ing argues that the cultivation of epistemic virtues, such as the principle of epistemic humility and interpretive elasticity ensures that any understandings of nā mea Hawai‘i do not reproduce hierarchies, which establish one group’s intellectual dominance and superiority over the other and perpetuate systems of colonization. Ing offers a stern warning to any settler philosopher interested in engaging in Hawaiian Philosophy : “If you are not ready to fulfill these obligations, then you are not ready to do Hawaiian Philosophy” (Ing 2025a).

Hawaiian Philosophy requires the principles of positionality, humility and elasticity in order to be genuinely practiced. Ing carefully weaves the global context in which any cultural interlocuter offers a partial perspective on philosophical issues. The global conversation of Hawaiian Philosophy can be discussed within Analytic, Continental and

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Pragmatist traditions. This does not mean that Hawaiian Philosophy is "whitewashed" as Kanaka thinkers may utilize these philosophical traditions to resist the colonizing tendencies of those same traditions. However, with the principles of positionality, humility, and elasticity guiding the success of Hawaiian Philosophy, any misinterpretations may be corrected upon continued dialogue and conversation.

Unlike Hawaiian Philosophy in which non-Kanaka methodologies interact with the theories of nā mea Hawaiʻi, ʻIke Hawaiʻi is knowledge from cultural practitioners, established experts and kumu of this knowledge. Since ʻike maintains two meanings: one referencing to know and the other referencing to see, various kumu and cultural experts have their own genealogy, or moʻokūʻauhau, that have guided their own vision of ʻike. These familial relationships to their ʻike inform their knowledge of the world. While ʻIke Hawaiʻi has been threatened and minimized due to centuries of colonization, Ing emphasizes the governance value of this knowledge as he writes, "[ʻIke Hawaiʻi] is done first and foremost for revitalizing the Lāhui"(Ing 2025a).

With this in mind, Ing identifies the double-edged risk of not being familiar with non-Hawaiian fields of knowledge and not integrating ʻIke Hawaiʻi successfully or assimilating ʻIke Hawaiʻi in non-Hawaiian fields of knowledge without understanding the complex terrain ʻIke Hawaiʻi addresses. For Ing, the principle of hoʻokamaʻāina (becoming familiar) aids in addressing this concern. I understand this principle as the attitude one takes when one begins the process of inquiry. Following Dewey, a problematic situation emerges in which one must undergo the process the inquiry, which initially involves becoming familiar with the problematic situation (Dewey 1938). In this sense, we collect and interpret facts before a conclusion is drawn. In ʻIke Hawaiʻi this may take time and from Ing's perspective, may require us to sit, listen, as guests in spaces that may not be familiar and to stay humble throughout the process of inquiry. The radical space of open-mindedness cultivated throughout the process of inquiry ensures that one comes to know through seeing and observing the world unfolding before us. This may involve abandoning frameworks that have served colonial imaginaries and courageously taking up other interpretations of western thought that may speak against capitalist colonial values. Ing echoes Arista's concern of how paradigms of resistance to colonial oppression may in fact reinscribe conceptual frameworks that diminish Kanaka subjectivity (Ing 2025a). Moreover, examples within the western tradition provide an internal critique to the colonial tendencies in philosophical thought, such as Aldo Leopoldʻs notion of the land ethic, which criticizes the western capitalistic assumptions of land.

Finally, Kālaimanaʻo as a form of Hawaiʻi Philosphy becomes a practical placement in between Hawaiian Philosophy and ʻIke Hawaiʻi. Kālaimanaʻo underscores the act of

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"carving thought." For Ing, he understands this concept as a "sustained dialogue" between Hawaiian Philosophy and ʻIke Hawaiʻi. In this sense, Kālaimanʻo speaks to the art of knowledge through the artisanal craft of carving.[2] In discussing the concept of ʻike, Ing points out the ʻōlelo noʻeau proverb (Pukui 1983 131, proverb1208) that draws upon a notion of ʻike that differs slightly to the proverb stated in the beginning of the essay (Pukui 1983 131, proverb 1209). Ing cites 1209:

> ʻIke i ke au nui me ke au iki
> Knows the big currents and little currents.
> Is very well versed.

ʻIke is also depicted in 1208 as:

> ʻIke ʻia no ka loea i ke kuahu
> An expert is recognized by the altar he builds.
> It is what one does and how well he does it that shows whether he is an expert.

I would argue that Kālaimanaʻo also resonates well with 1208 as the practice of building the altar. This interpretation is consistent with Ing's claims that following Kanaka theologian Kepelino Keauokalani, the idea of Hawaiʻi ʻimi loa is a form of gathering knowledge and that ʻimi loa can be understood as an ahu or "altar made of rocks" (Ing 2025a). For Ing, the gathering of rocks and the building of a "wonderous altar" display the art of carving and crafting knowledge. The difference between ʻike in 1209 underscores being "well versed," being knowledgeable about a certain subject matter; whereas in 1208, ʻike is recognized by others in the craftsperson's work of art. The expert is relationally situated with the community. However, carving thought in this sense should not be viewed as remaining stuck in a past, but as driving forward that knowledge to address present and potentially future concerns. The carving continues regardless of the finished product. According to Ing, kupuna employed knowledge in multimodal ways such that the task of interpretation, the task of carving knowledge is never complete. Much like a craftsperson, as Aristotle had argued, the purpose of knowledge is not the final product of the altar, but the knowledge of how to build good altars. Knowledge is not necessarily sought for certainty but improvement and refinement towards building a good life. This does not involve abandoning the genealogy of the kūpuna, but generating abundant philosophical narratives to serve the community.

Ing concludes this reflection on Kālaimanaʻo as his favored approach in Hawaiʻi Philosophy as it is able to bind the non-Hawaiian fields of study in Philosophy and the Indigenous knowledges of Kānaka Hawaiʻi. Multiple sources of knowledge may lead to further understanding and growth that can benefit both the field of philosophy and Hawaiʻi Philosophy. Integrating knowledges from other cultures and fields of thought guided by

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the ethical obligation that any engagement with Hawai'i Philosophy requires a commitment to treat the knowledge resource as possessing governance value, ensuring that the appropriate use of the knowledge contributes to the collective continuance and resurgence of the community.

3 Incommensurability Reconsidered

Ing's mapping of Hawai'i Philosophy is much needed as scholars like myself, a Filipina settler teaching philosophy at the University of Hawai'i, aim to be allies to the collective continuance and resurgence of the Lāhui. It is disconcerting to me that philosophical works generated by Kanaka scholars, such as Ing, cannot be nourished within a philosophy department at the University of Hawai'i. Ing's essay demonstrates the disciplined and embodied commitment in reconceptualizing Hawai'i Philosophy in a way that invites participation in global philosophical dialogue with other philosophies. Hawai'i Philosophy is part of not just a marginalized outsider to world philosophies. This cosmopolitan spirit moves Hawai'i Philosophy outside of limiting perspectives and opens up a space of interaction between provincial boundaries and provides porous possibilities to learn more and engage with Hawai'i Philosophy.

And with any project of comparison, fusion, or integration lies the problem of incommensurability. The way I understand the problem of incommensurability has less to do with language translation, but more to do with the social and political implications of any attempt to fuse, integrate or at minimum compare philosophical concepts. In one sense, the project of comparison involves the danger of misinterpretation, the concepts do not translate seamlessly. In another sense, the project of fusion risks cultural appropriation in which the philosophical concepts are adopted inappropriately, such as assimilation, by dominant culture. Furthermore in another sense, the project of integration may involve moves to innocence in which allyship to an Indigenous culture may in fact reproduce unconscious forms of epistemic injustice, thereby denying the Indigenous people the governance value of their own epistemologies.

Ing carefully responds to the problem of incommensurability in the following ways. In Hawaiian Philosophy, the incommensurability that could potentially arise involves the risk of assimilation and cultural appropriation. In particular, the incommensurability is more obvious when Hawaiian philosophy is utilized by dominant culture. Ing responds by emphasizing the ethical obligation of any non-Hawaiian scholar engaging in Hawaiian Philosophy; any non-Hawaiian engagement with Hawai'i Philosophy must be guided by the intention to support the sovereignties of the Kanaka. If that obligation cannot be met,

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then one should not engage with Hawaiʻi Philosophy. In this way, Ing filters out non-Hawaiian scholars who may not understand the history of colonization in Hawaiʻi or the politics of settler colonization in Hawaiʻi. This presents non-Hawaiian scholars with a choice to self-reflect on their own political relationships to further the sovereignties of Kānaka Hawaiʻi. On the one hand, non-Hawaiian philosophers may just avoid engaging in Hawaiʻi Philosophy altogether, which would relegate Hawaiʻi Philosophy back to an outsider and marginalized position in Philosophy. A quiet settler resistance to learning about Hawaiʻi Philosophy is a much easier pathway to undervalue Hawaiʻi Philosophy in general.

On the other hand, non-Hawaiian philosophers may feel more welcome to engage in Hawaiian Philosophy once the ethical boundaries are set up and scholars are invited to learn more about Hawaiʻi Philosophy. This may involve scholars participating in cultural practices, such as learning hula, going on huakaʻi, learning ʻōlelo, working in loko iʻa (fishponds) and kalo fields.

In ʻIke Hawaiʻi, Ing describes the problem of incommensurability in the sense that ʻIke Hawaiʻi is largely incompatible and untranslatable to western culture and hence it is impossible to evaluate which concepts are better suited to address philosophical problems. One of the benefits of a framework of radical incommensurability is that ʻIke Hawaiʻi can operate without being forced to comply with or assimilate to dominant western culture's standards of philosophy. However, Ing is concerned about the benefit of mutual learning that could be lost when ʻIke Hawaiʻi is relegated to a forbidden field of thought. Moreover, Ing argues that since there are few native speakers and experts in nā mea Hawaiʻi, any cultural revitalization projects require forms of commensurability. Hence, he argues for soft forms of incommensurability in which "no one view is reducible to the other, rather, they navigate the multiplicity together as a dialogical affair; meaning that relationships are formed and hoa ʻIke are found literally companions in seeing" (Ing 2025a). Since ʻIke Hawaiʻi is a pluralistic tradition, according to Ing, any global or cross-cultural endeavors start from various locations and to a certain extent cautious agreement on some philosophical matters may create further stepping stones of dialogue to generate some forms of commensurability.

By the time Ing arrives at Kālaimanaʻo, the problem of incommensurability arises when the gathering of stones to build the wonderous altar becomes ungrounded to the genealogy of Hawaiʻi. The artisanal carving may veer too far from the core values of ʻIke Hawaiʻi. In fact, there is a risk of rendering kupuna knowledge as antiquated and frozen in the past, unable to be integrated into modern life in Hawaiʻi. In response to this incommensurability, Kālaimanʻo reconceptualizes the process of borrowing other concepts while remaining distinctive in nā mea Hawaiʻi. Ing understands the borrowing as a form of gift-giving, which requires the "return of the borrowed item with a token of

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appreciation; thus, borrowing fosters reciprocity. In a cross-cultural context, borrowing differs from appropriating in that one has the consent of those one borrows from" (Ing 2025a). While Kālaimanaʻo may benefit Hawaiʻi Philosophy, enhancing philosophical thought to benefit the Lāhui, the effects of this interaction may also benefit thought beyond the Lāhui. In this sense, Kālaimanaʻo carves a cross-cultural pathway for Hawaiʻi Philosophy to interact and learn from other world philosophies while maintaining its distinctive commitment to Hawaiʻi.

Ing does a good job in carefully navigating the challenges of incommensurability. And while there is value in seeking ways in which genuine and mindful commensurability can arise through dialogue with culturally different perspectives, it is still important to also maintain an underlying ethic of incommensurability in the context of settler colonization. I bring up two perspectives that articulate a relationship to incommensurability and decolonization: Tuck and Yang's call for an ethic of incommensurability and Kyle White and Shelbi Nahwilet Meissner's work on the problems of decolonizing American Philosophy. While Ing does not directly suggest that specifically Hawaiian Philosophy, ʻIke Hawaiʻi or Kālaimanaʻo could be considered decolonial philosophies, I do think it is important to consider why a form of incommensurability may be necessary in light of the settler colonialism in academia in general and American Philosophy in particular.

Tuck and Yang argue for an ethic of incommensurability, which specifically "stands in contrast to aims of reconciliation [which] is about rescuing settler normalcy, about rescuing a settler futurity" (Tuck and Yang 2012: 35). In the context of philosophy, an ethic of incommensurability may mean "relinquishing settler futurity, abandoning the hope that settlers may one day be commensurable to Native peoples" (Tuck and Yang 2012: 36). Tuck and Yang provide a rationale for insisting on an ethic of incommensurability as settler moves to innocence threaten any projects of commensurability, including cross-cultural philosophical projects. Some may regard this view as maintaining a position of separatism, which may undermine any pluralistic philosophical projects and stymie any possibility for cross-cultural interactions, especially with dominant culture. In my view, Tuck and Yang ensure that with any cross-cultural interactions with Indigenous people the starting point of the dialogue is already constituted by settler colonialism and the intellectual hierarchies that guide the dialogical process. An ethic of incommensurability is critical of a process of inquiry whose aim is commensurability and agreement. Rather than aiming towards the benefit of integration or fusion, an ethic of incommensurability suggests the dialogue should start without any optimism of commensurability. If the goal of cross-cultural or world philosophies is to achieve some measure of commensurability, then according to Tuck and Yang, the dialogue between Native and western (dominant) philosophies may already be undermined before it begins.

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In addressing questions about decolonizing philosophy, specifically the sub-discipline of American philosophy, Kyle Whyte and Shelbi Nahwilet Meissner argue in their essay entitled, "Without Land, Decolonizing American Philosophy is Impossible" (2021) that "American philosophy takes place on land as American philosophy is practiced today on campuses of institutions of higher education. Yet there is little or no regard for Indigenous voices, communities and sovereignties that spring first and foremost from that land" (Whyte and Nahwilet Meissner 2021: 50). Unless higher education institutions take seriously the need to rematriate Indigenous lands that universities are built upon, any form of commensurability could not be considered decolonial. In this sense, universities and the academy in general, which house philosophy departments erected on stolen lands, may be limited in cultivating genuine decolonial cross-cultural philosophizing until meaningful rematriation is implemented.

With these perspectives in mind, it may be useful to see how Hawai'i Philosophy is able to navigate the need to assert a form of incommensurability while navigating the need to be open minded to learn aspects of dominant western culture in ways that can uplift the Lāhui.

4 Incommensurability Reconsidered (Again): A Dialogue with Uncle Jimmy

On the glistening banks of the lava fields near the access road to Mauna Kea, our small philosophy department at UH Hilo led an informal workshop on Civil Disobedience at Pu'uhuluhulu University with the intention of facilitating a conversation, a dialogue about the historical and philosophical perspectives of civil disobedience and how it might apply to Kapu Aloha as practiced at the Mauna. Our first interlocuter to attend the conversation was Mr. James Naniole, one of the thirty-eight kupuna who was arrested for blocking the access road. After the workshop was over, we continued our conversation as he asked me about the philosophy of Heidegger. And as we discussed Heidegger's theory of technology, Uncle Jimmy stopped me and asked: "when you look at my face, what do you see?" Another permutation of the question he posed is: "when you speak to me in English and you see my face, what do you see?" Uncle Jimmy confronted my positionality when I spoke to him. As a settler Filipina philosophy professor working for the University of Hawai'i, Uncle Jimmy wondered, who was the conversation partner I was talking to? Though he has an interest in philosophy (mostly in the German tradition), Uncle Jimmy wondered how was I to understand the very ideas we exchanged through his 'ike Hawai'i. Despite the shared language of English, it was obvious to me (and Uncle Jimmy) that there will always remain a chasm of unintelligibility in our dialogues.

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Over the years, Uncle Jimmy has attended my philosophy classes at UH Hilo as a guest student and sometimes as a guest speaker and kumu. He shares his ʻIke Hawaiʻi with my students through his discussions of kalo planting or paddling. He is a kinesthetic thinker whose ʻIke is grounded in the body. He introduced himself to students in the class one semester as an activist and then later added that he doesn't believe the university should have been built here on stolen lands. He, then later added that despite that viewpoint, he still enjoys coming to my philosophy classes. It is this incommensurable tension that I find deeply philosophical as a reminder of the fallibilism inherent in any cross-cultural exchanges of knowledge. As our pilina, relations, with each other grows, I have come to realize that the goal of our dialogue is not to reach any kind of commensurability (linguistic, philosophical and political) and in removing that expectation from the dialogue, it seems we are able to focus on few points in our conversation and gain some semblance of temporary clarity. It is this incommensurability that drives both of us to continue our conversation and dialogue.

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1 See UH Mānoa Philosophy Departmentʻs apology here: https://hawaii.edu/phil/public-apology/ (last accessed on January 29, 2025); see UH Hilo Philosophy Departmentʻs tribute here: https://hilo.hawaii.edu/depts/philosophy/news/1469 (last accessed on January 29, 2025).

2 Uncle Jimmy introduced me to the concept of philosophy understood through Kālaimanaʻo. He understands the craft of carving as practiced by the artist, the craftsman. He also suggested to me that kālai can also mean to hew, such as hewing wood to build a waʻa, canoe.

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Homelessness in Hawai‘i

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After reading Dr. Ing's lead essay and thinking about what I may offer to this urgently needed discussion, I was momentarily intellectually paralyzed. I'd read several books about topics I'm interested in written by Kānaka authors about Kanaka issues, but I was trepidatious about entering into these spaces. As a graduate student at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, I focused my PhD research on homelessness in Hawai‘i and volunteered at a shelter for unhoused individuals. In my dissertation, I critiqued policies that I felt didn't center the needs of people experiencing homelessness in Hawai'i. As a young white woman from Texas, I also developed my sensitivy for actions and words that imperiled Hawaiian sovereignty.

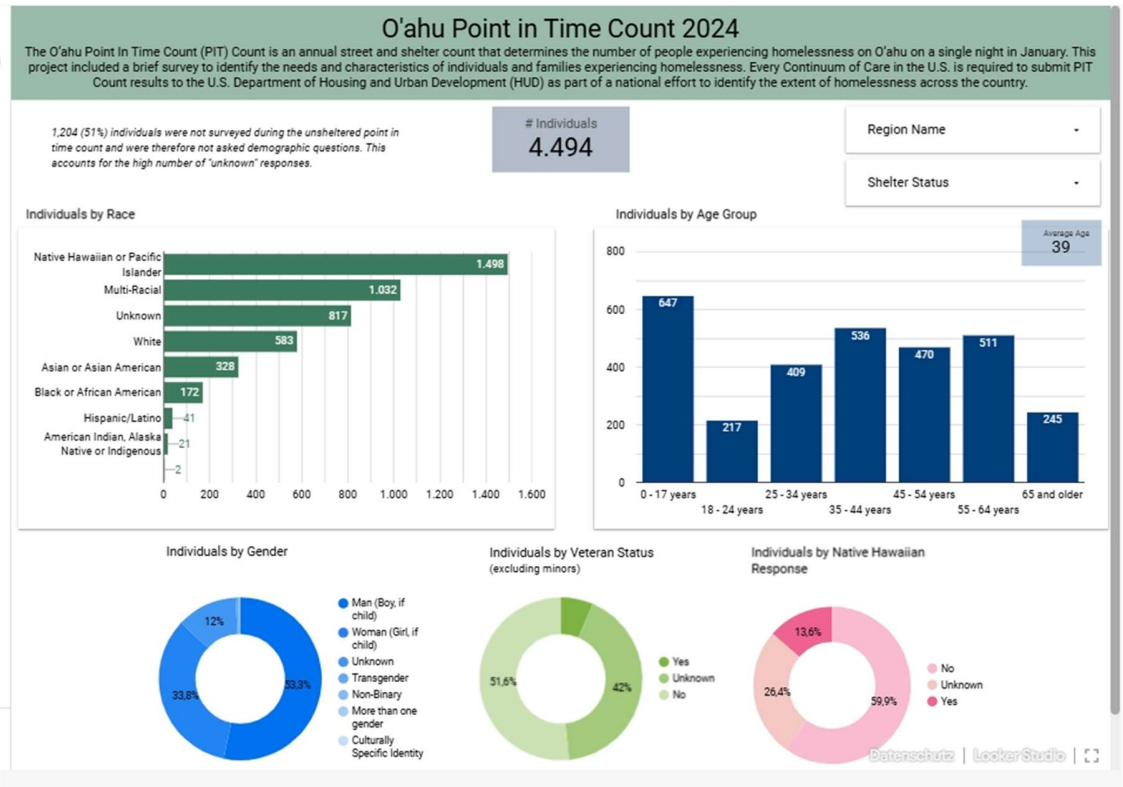
One of the many things that I appreciate about Dr. Ing's essay is that ‘Ike Hawai‘i emphasizes the continuities among ideas even as they stretch offshore. What harms Hawai‘i is not what is foreign to Hawai‘i but what is picked up and applied unreflectively, without familiarity or connectedness. There is no fear of novel ideas, in fact, there is pride in welcoming novelty into the tapestry of one's understanding of the world. In this essay, I use Pre-Qin Chinese philosophical sources, including the *Xunzi,* the *Mengzi,* and the *Zhuangzi* to establish a comparative philosophical framework. Dr. Ing's definition of ‘ikena makawalu, "seeing through eight eyes," fits my understanding of comparative philosophy. He writes that ‘ikena makawalu is a "bounded multiplicity." Here, "the multiplicity of views coordinate with each other to produce an integrated understanding of the world" (Ing 2025a). At the heart of a successful comparative project is the mutual intelligibility of each view. I use a comparative methodology to differentiate between economic and existential poverty, an issue I show to be mutually intelligible to both Pre-Qin Chinese philosophy and Hawai‘i philosophy.

I began my research on the predicament of homelessness in Hawai‘i in 2015, ten years before writing this essay. In my opinion, many things have changed for the better regarding the policies that have been implemented. However, these numbers indicate that positive changes still need to be made. This essay provides reasons I hope will propel changes in the attitudes and policies regarding homelessness and people experiencing homelessness. This essay contributes to scholarship about an issue specific to Hawai‘i and Kānaka Maoli (Native Hawaiians) from the perspective of a philosopher who hopes to be a "companion in protecting and revitalizing the sovereignties of the people, places, and other beings native to Hawai‘i" (Ing 2025a).

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The issue of Kānaka experiencing homelessness has never been more pressing. The number of unsheltered individuals in Hawai‘i increased by 87 percent between 2023 and 2024 (AHAR 2024: 10). According to the 2024 Point in Time (PIT) Count, 51% of the people experiencing homelessness in Hawai‘i identified as Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, even though those who identifity as Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander constitute about 28% of the population of Hawai‘i. About 43% of this group identify as Native Hawaiian according to 2020 Census Data (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023). Over the past decade, the United States has established federal programs that address the specific issues that beset different populations, for example, whether they are primarily Indigenous peoples, religious or racial minorities, veterans, or felons, and the unique problems they each face.



https://www.partnersincareoahu.org/pitc

The Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funds communities that establish a Continuum of Care (CoC) process. Federally recognized CoCs “allow each community to tailor its programs to the strengths and challenges in assisting homeless individuals and families within that community” (HUD Exchange). These programs serve a dire need in addressing local issues surrounding homelessness as a social phenomenon. They allow communities to strive to serve specific regional needs. The CoCs in Hawai‘i are integrated networks of service providers and

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advocacy groups, but the predicament of homelessness, especially among Kānaka Maoli, is stubborn. Contributing factors to this predicament require attentiveness to the issues faced by Kānaka Maoli in Hawai‘i. What follows in this essay depends on this social infrastructure but suggests a way of understanding poverty and isolation in Hawai‘i that heeds specific cultural needs. First, I will discuss the negative existential impact of colonization before moving to the distinction between existential and economic poverty.

1 The Psychological Burden of Hawai‘i Colonization

What issues do Kānaka Maoli face and how do these issues contribute to their overrepresentation among the homeless population in Hawai‘i? The colonization of Hawai‘i has had an indelibly powerful effect on Pacific Island cultures, people, ecologies, and environments. William Rezentes, a practicing psychologist in Hawai‘i, has novel diagnoses and techniques for treating Kānaka Maoli patients that focus on the difficulties and hardships they encounter in the transition to US-American ways of living. Kaumaha Syndrome is a feeling of being tired and weighed down, symptomatically similar to Euro-American diagnoses of depression, that is "rooted in a collective sadness and moral outrage felt by many Hawaiians" who "were coerced into submitting to foreign institutions, laws, and cultures and forced to either give up or be punished for practicing their traditional culture" (Rezentes 1996: 37).[1] Not only were their cultural practices discouraged or even banned since the U.S. annexed Hawai‘i as a trust territory at the end of the nineteenth century,[2] the shame they were made to feel has been internalized and preserved through generations, "leading to disease, poverty, homelessness, imprisonment, and cultural and spiritual disintegration" (Rezentes 1996: 37). This diagnosis preserves the supportive cohesiveness of the community in maintaining individual wellbeing.

In that vein, treating the ills of socio-economic distress may require community-directed approach instead of or in addition to direct assistance of an individual. In order to address the hardships of Kānaka Maoli that result in homelessness, one must realize that situations that result in solitariness are already deeply troubled and that improvement of individual circumstances will likely require the repair of community dynamics. According to Rezentes, those with psychological problems should be guided to "become more aware of their Hawaiian-ness and enhancing their self-identity through recognition of Hawaiian values" (Rezentes 1996: 89-93).[3] The realization they will come to is that colonial powers buried the seeds of self-resentment in the minds of Hawaiians that have sprouted into psychiatric limitations that add to issues surrounding economic poverty. This analysis of Kaumaha Syndrome is the first step of my development of the comparative idea of existential poverty as a type of poverty distinguishable from but often partner to economic poverty. Existential poverty is defined here by way of the comparative analysis that follows.

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2 Bridging Hawai‘i Philosophy and Chinese Philosophy

The understanding of self as located within family and community nexus in specific and significant places in the Chinese philosophical tradition has notable similarities to Hawaiian epistemologies and social arrangements. They each emphasize relationality and the importance of traditional understandings and rituals, for example. They also privilege harmony and responsiveness. Confucius famed prescience and deep understanding of his surroundings afforded him spontaneity and ease in discerning appropriateness (Morrow 2022: 258-60). Likewise, pono in Hawai‘i philosophy is defined as good and right(eous) as well as properly situated and sustainable, which indicates the importance of awareness and responsibility to the specific needs of the Lāhui in Hawai‘i Philosophy (Morrow: 2024: 41-2).[4] Epistemologically, for each of these sets of traditions, broadening one's knowledge of the connections between things, including the inextricable connections between people and their environments is paramount (Morrow 2024: 39). The topic of this section is to define existential poverty as a dearth of these sustaining relationships.

The Chinese philosophies I refer to frame a nuanced discussion about poverty that has no counterpart in Hawaiian mythology or pre-contact history.[5] Prior to contact with European and American explorers, missionaries, and industrialists, Kānaka were culturally homogenous, self-sufficient, and governed by a sacred ruling class and through ritual. Poverty in this historical context can be described as the condition of all of the common folk in the lowest class, but this undermines the importance of politico-spiritual hierarchy in Hawaiian culture and applies a contemporary, Euro-American conception of poverty as a lack of material resources risks destabilizing the cultural narrative of pre-contact harmony. However, Chinese philosophical traditions have never shied from discussing poverty. They lend a nuanced concept of poverty, defined in terms of both economic and existential limitations, that may be fruitful in discussing poverty and homelessness in Hawai‘i today.

The Chinese characters glossed most frequently in Pre-Qin Chinese texts as "poor" or "poverty" is qiong 窮. The meaning of qiong in Classical Chinese may be translated most simply as "exhaust" but its meaning cluster centers hardship and destitution.[6] For example, there is the hope that one's personal limitations (qiong) are not exacerbated or perpetuated by hard times (qiong). To maintain this hope, all that needs to be done, according to the *Xunzi*, is for leaders not to "press those who are already hard pressed (buqiong qiong 不窮窮)" (Watson: 1996: 32). This may not prevent falling on hard times, but it prescribes a way of life that is beneficial for everyone if put into practice. This is the message of Confucian self-cultivation also included in the *Mengzi* chapter 7A9, which describes the upstanding scholar-officials (shi 士) who, when poor (qiong), better themselves in private and when successful put their efforts into bettering the world.[7] This way of speaking about poverty contributes to its understanding as a systemic problem, rather than an isolated occurrence. It also indicates the difficulty of achieving exemplary moral consistency while living in dire straits.

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This is because there is more going on during periods of poverty than lack of material resources. Existential poverty, I argue, is what scholar-officials ought to work to avoid in the face of insurmountable obstacles.

Existential poverty picks up a theme in Classical Chinese philosophical texts that there is something more troubling than economic poverty during times of hardship. In the *Shiji* history of the Kong family, Confucius's response to the news that a member of Duke Ai of Lu's hunting party killed a lin (麟) illustrates this theme. The *lin* was an immensely auspicious, rare animal. The appearance of a *lin* is usually interpreted as heralding auspicious changes in the times. But when the *lin* was mortally injured during a hunt, Confucius was crestfallen.

> 「吾道窮矣！」喟然嘆曰：「莫知我夫！」子貢曰：「何為莫知子？」子曰：「不怨天，不尤人，下學而上達，知我者其天乎！」(*Shiji* 史記 1959).[8]

> "My way is exhausted!" He sighed, then cried out, "No one understands me!" Zigong asked, "Why does no one understand you?" "I do not resent Heaven, and I do not blame anyone. I study those around me and understand what is happening above me. Only Heaven truly knows me!"[9]

The first sentence of this exchange is striking because of its existential and spiritual implications.[10] In the *Analects,* dao 道 is a path that leads toward constitutive fulfillment and optimized living. And Confucius laments that his has been cut off! The harming of the *lin* signals his failure. In a book he published in 2017, Dr. Ing points out the ironic quality of Confucius' inability to bring into effect his vision. While Confucius knows the deep significance of the appearance of the lin, he has no way to disclose it or share it with others. "In his own words, no one recognizes him; only Tian 天 understands him. He lacks the kind of deep companionship that allows for full self-disclosure" (Ing 2017: 99). Failure includes being unable to show others that one's failure is ill-gotten and misplaced. This isolation prevents others from empathetic awareness of one's troubles and anxieties, which in other circumstances may motivate them to help. This is a foundational component of what I call existential poverty.

This passage illustrates the pervasiveness of concern for failure and success that begins very early in Chinese philosophical traditions. Many of these traditions foreground their interpretation of dao 道. Dao may be translated as path, way, and also follow and lead and often metaphorizes traveling unhindered and with ease (Morrow 2022: 263). Discussions of failure and success, which often use correlated opposing pairs of concepts, take on this dimension of movement and obstruction. The first characters in the pairs tongqiong 通窮 and daqiong 達窮 both have denote success and the second character, qiong 窮, failure, obstruction, and dead end. Moreover, tong 通 and da 達 each

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have the chuo 辶, the 'road and foot' radical that also forms the character dao 道 and indicates the importance of unhindered movement. The ancient Chinese existential *milieu* is formed around these metaphors of movement, which can also be seen in the early understanding of bodily channels that informs Traditional Chinese Medicine. Here, broadening one's knowledge and broadening one's impact on the world are tied together, and movement and travel are morally-inflected (Morrow 2022: 267-8). Indeed, the danger here is not only that one finds oneself unable to navigate the vicissitudes of changing fortune, but that constricted efficacy may invite moral censure.

In Classical Chinese, qiong indicates being stalled, stagnated, stranded, and prevented from smooth travel as a metaphor for failure and limitation. In modern Mandarin Chinese, qiong is synonymous with an economic sense poverty. My interpretation is that over time what was formerly the intersection of existential and economic poverty was impoverished of its psychological implications and favored a money-centered interpretation. I hope to restore the Classical sense of qiong to show that the two types of poverty are inextricably woven together and that this is important for addressing issues surrounding homelessness.

Concern for rhyme scheme, pun, and intertextual references in Classical Chinese complicate etymological studies that focus on just one word. Qiong is a general word and part of a concept cluster around the central metaphor of obstruction. Other words that mean limitation, limit, poverty, and exhaustion I take to be thematic for expressions of existential destitution in pre-Qin Chinese texts. For example, the *Shanmu* chapter of the *Zhuangzi* includes this account of Zhuang Zhou that differentiates between being poor (pin 貧) and in distress (bei 憊).

> 莊子集釋:「莊子衣大布而補之，正緳係履而過魏王。魏王曰：「何先生之憊邪？」莊子曰：「貧也，非憊也。士有道德不能行，憊也。衣弊履穿，貧也，非憊也，此所謂非遭時也。王獨不見夫騰猿乎？其得柟、梓、豫、章也，攬蔓其枝，而王長其間，雖羿、蓬蒙不能眄睨也。及其得柘、棘、枳、枸之閒也，危行側視，振動悼慄，此筋骨非有加急而不柔也，處勢不便，未足以逞其能也。今處昏上亂相之間，而欲無憊，奚可得邪？此比干之見剖心，徵也夫！」」(Zhuangzi 1956: 53/20/45-50).[11]
>
> Zhuangzi, wearing patched and course clothes and shoes tied up with strings, passed by the King of Wei. The King said, "How have you come to this state of distress?" Zhuangzi replied, "I am poor, not in distress. When a member of the scholarly class possesses a suitable path and the power to walk it but is prevented from doing so, they are not in distress. My tattered clothes and busted shoes are signs of poverty, not being in distress. It is what they call meeting with unpropitious times. Has Your Majesty not seen swinging gibbons up in the trees? Among the cedars, catalpas, and camphor trees they grasp and swing from the branches, soaring between the trees. Even the great hunters Yi and Peng would not be able to even take

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> aim at them. But when the gibbons encounter spiny mulberries, brambles, hawthorns, and citrons, they move warily, leaning awkwardly to one side, trembling, wincing and fearful. This has nothing to do with the muscles and bones. Their abilities are not depleted. Because it is dwelling in unsuitable conditions, the gibbon cannot express its abilities. Just the same, if a person is dwelling among a muddled upper class and confused and chaotic government ministers and hopes to avoid being in distress, how long do you think they can keep that up? Was not Bi Gan having his heart cut out a litmus test of this disorder?

Here, the *Zhuangzi* offers the sunnier side of the economic/existential poverty distinction. He is not afflicted with existential poverty but merely with economic poverty. There is a lesson in asceticism found here that is not conducive to the point I am making. I am certainly not saying that one should find the joys of poverty while unhoused. Rather, I take this vignette to indicate a preoccupation with existential poverty beyond its link to economic poverty. They can be mistaken for one another but one is dire and the other may be a result of bad luck, hard times, and even heedless government policies. In the next section, I will discuss a government policy that I believe has the potential to heed both existential and economic poverty among Kānaka experiencing homelessness.

3 Philosophy in Application: Housing First

The Housing First Initiative allocates state and federal funding for programs that connect those experiencing homelessness directly to permanent housing opportunities as well as access to programing that supports self-sufficiency such as drug-addiction, mental-health, and vocational preparedness counseling, among others. The central idea motivating this policy is that those experiencing chronic homelessness have not been suitably supported by programs that privilege incremental movement toward an ultimate goal of permanent housing. Here, I will briefly discuss Housing First before showing that this policy supports not only those who experience economic poverty but existential poverty as well.

Housing First is a strategy and set of policy suggestions written by New York-based psychologist Sam Tsemberis that has been adopted in many major U.S. cities. It recommends a shift in how money is allocated for infrastructure and personnel as well as an ideological shift in how to support people experiencing homelessness. Traditional programs support a gradual transition from homeless to housed that incentivizes positive changes on behalf of the individual by gradually allowing more independence and freedom. This system is also called the linear continuum or staircase approach. It starts with "low demand and low service provision (such as in an emergency shelter, safe haven, or drop-in center) and ascend[s] through increasing demands and more services

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[…] The staircase's top step is the attainment of one's own housing and a minimum of services required to maintain independent living" (Padgett 2016: 7). These programs are designed to measure "housing readiness" in a strict, supervisory setting. But there are many for whom the staircase of increasing expectations itself becomes a way of life as one complies, gradually meets benchmarks, but then relapses or breaks the rules, goes back to being unhoused, and then returns to the bottom of the staircase again. In stark contrast to this approach, Housing First puts chronically homeless individuals, those considered most service-averse, directly into permanent housing while promoting harm-reduction rather than coercion.

According to the State of Hawai'i Statewide Office on Homelessness and Housing Solutions (OHHS), "Housing First emphasizes the importance of client choice in housing selection and service participation and understands that including a client as part of the housing selection process results in better housing outcomes and retention" (OHHS). This empowerment of individuals experiencing homelessness in the process of housing selection is, I believe, a recognition of the importance of existential well-being.

Housing is more than shelter. It brings individuals into alignment with the prevailing patterns and expectations of society. Lack of sustaining and supporting relationships contributes to existential poverty, and bridging the divide between housed and unhoused overcomes a significant barrier to social inclusion. The world is riddled with obstacles and dead ends for those who are disconnected from the currents that harmonize the world. Housing First policies address existential poverty by providing a baseline requirement for social harmonization: personal and secure shelter, as well as encouraging community involvement and supportive services. I believe that Housing First policies recognize that although economic and existential poverty are bound together, focusing on the latter has sustainably successful results. This is especially true for Kānaka Hawai'i, who enfold their identities in belonging.

Perhaps we could say that the prevalence of Kānaka experiencing homelessness on land that is ancestor decimates relations of kinship. Thus, I believe, this essay intersects Dr. Ing's lead essay in that uncomfortable middle ground of Kālaimana'o. Homelessness is a modern affliction exacerbated and perpetuated by modern issues, many of which are the effects of the colonization of Hawai'i. Privileging Kānaka understanding in this conversation allows for uptake of new concepts "without overwriting tradition ways of thinking" (Ing 2025a). This conversation is enhanced by its cross-cultural approach to concern for the vitality of Hawai'i.

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4 Conclusion

Tailoring policy to address existential poverty is complicated. Aiding Kānaka experiencing homelessness requires that one take into account the psychological effects of colonization and the phenomenological effects of an ever-changing Hawaiian skyline. Promoting policy that nurtures bonds and acknowledges the harm done to these communities by privileging Kānaka ways of living and knowing goes a long way toward alleviating both existential and economic poverty. This essay is an exercise in the slow, deliberate process of Kālaimanaʻo, a form of cross-cultural discussion that enriches Hawaiʻi through engagement and, importantly, appreciation of borrowed knowledge (Ing 2025a).

Distinguishing between economic and existential poverty is important because generalizing in a way that roots poverty in a lack of material resources obscures the fact that people experiencing poverty stand at the intersection of many contributing factors. If poverty is simplified to economics, the fact that the system may itself generate inequality will be overlooked. A purely economic view of poverty risks ignoring issues of colonialism, as well as ableism, racism, gender inequality, and multi-generational poverty. Here, I've used resources from pre-Qin Chinese philosophy to inform a distinction between economic and existential poverty. It provides a different context for viewing the causes and effects of poverty. When put into conversation with the psychological considerations of Kānaka post-contact, elaborated by psychologist William C. Rezentes, this distinction catalyzes ways to promote Kanaka flourishing through programs that support those who are unsheltered. The effectiveness of these programs will be evaluated not simply through government reports, but in the approbation of Kanaka consensus. This, I take it, is something like what Dr. Ing takes as Kālaimanaʻo.

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1 According to the Hawaiian Dictionary *Nā Puke Wehewehe ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi*, the literal meaning of kaumaha is a weight, heavy, or heaviness, and its figurative meaning relates to wretchedness, troubled, depressed, tragic, etc. See: Pukui and Elbert (1986).

2 For example, the most charitable institution serving Kānaka Maoli, the Bishop Estate, initially banned hula on all campuses of Kamehameha Schools. See, Roth and King (2006).

3 These pivotal aspects of Hawaiian identity include inoa, the meaning of one's name, which is a powerful signifier of one's character; ʻohana, one's family and genealogy, which determines the connections among people and to Hawaiian culture; ʻāina, the land to which Hawaiians are rooted for nutritional and spiritual nourishment; lōkahi, the natural balance and harmony of the world; and aloha, literally "the sharing of one's inner self through one's breath." Aloha is the opening up of oneself to others that promotes unity and cohesiveness in the community.

4 This value is illustrated in the Hawaiian concept of pono. Pono is one of the central themes for describing morality in Hawaiian culture. It is described as "the integration of self with your environment, in the way you relate to people." And this practice "conveys the meaning of goodness, purity, wellness, integrity, righteousness, perfection and success." This according to educators

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interviewed in Manulani (2004: 153, 200). They affirm that this way of life was disrupted by the arrival of US-American and European colonists, who banned many Hawaiian practices as well as the Hawaiian language, and that this disharmony is yet to be remedied.

[5] Chinese philosophy is not a monolith. Rather, there is a discourse that orients different philosophies to speak to common themes. Hence the plural, Chinese philosophies, is used to indicate the different perspectives and contexts for approaching philosophical problems.

[6] There are several facets to the meaning reflecting the component radicals of its construction, its placement as a complementary-opposite pair, its grammatical function, and the time-period of the texts it appears in.

[7] *Mengzi* 盡心上：窮則獨善其身，達則兼善天下。(2006: 14.18/74/27).

[8] Translation based on Csikszentmihalyi (2006).

[9] I have chosen to translate *tian* 天 as Heaven, as it is most often translated into English, following the early translations of ancient Chinese works by missionaries, most famously James Legge. The Anglophonic study of Chinese philosophy acknowledges the problematic nature of allowing Christian interpretations and metaphors to penetrate the understanding of Chinese texts, but by my estimation has not achieved the consensus necessary to formulate another translation. Another method has been to leave this nuanced character untranslated, writing the pinyin, *tian*, instead of attempting to fit English into the ill-fitting conceptual mold. But this may assume too much about the reader, and actually forfeits the subtlety the concept conveys.

In an essay included in his translation of the *Xunzi*, John Knoblock provides a brief history of the concept of *tian* 天. "The ancient belief was that an anthropomorphic sky god, or Heaven, directed the affairs of the world and listened to the prayers of men. It was a directive moral force. Thus Heaven might 'send down' illness, death destruction, floods, or droughts in response to what men, particularly rulers, might do." Later, the concept became more metaphysical and abstract. It was considered an "impersonal Nature operating by knowable processes and principles that were certain and constant." See Knoblock (1988: 67-9).

[10] *Analects* 9.9 conveys a similar sentiment. 子曰：「鳳鳥不至，河不出圖，吾已矣夫！」The Ames and Rosemont translation reads, "The auspicious phoenix does not appear; the Yellow River does no yield up to its magical chart. All is lost with me!" (Ames and Rosemont 1999: 128)

[11] Based on Guo Qing Fan's *Zhuangzi jishi,* English translations in this chapter are my own unless otherwise indicated.

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ʻUkuliʻi ka Pua, Onaona i ka Mauʻu: The Blooming of Hawaiʻi Philosophy

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My mahalo (appreciation) to Dr. Monika Kirloskar-Steinbach for arranging this conversation, and moreover to the hoa ʻike who devoted their attention and time to reflect on this outline of Hawaiʻi Philosophy. I cannot adequately respond to every worthy point, so I hope they will forgive me in being selective.

I am particularly drawn to the responses from Mānoa, in part because I was born and raised in the area of Mānoa known as Paʻakea, where I still go back to when I visit "home." As Dr. Bruce Kaʻimi Watson stresses, it is crucial to reflect on where this conversation is taking place. Notably, I live in Bloomington, Indiana, where this journal is published by Indiana University Press. The editor is based in the Netherlands. The respondents live in Hawaiʻi and Oklahoma, with roots to places in America, Europe, Asia as well as Hawaiʻi. The *Journal of World Philosophies*, furthermore, regularly publishes articles from across the world. As Watson states, this is a global forum.

Watson is concerned with how accommodating we (Kānaka Hawaiʻi) must be to participate in such a forum. His concern is understandable given the history of Philosophy in general and the history of the Department of Philosophy at the University of Hawaiʻi-Mānoa in particular.

Watson provides an on-the-ʻāina (on the ground) account of doing Hawaiʻi Philosophy in Hawaiʻi, where, as he states, "philosophy [...] must determine how it fits within Hawaiʻi traditions of thought," not the other way around. It is not a coincidence that Kaipulaumakaniolono Keala and Kamalani Johnson are in departments other than philosophy at the University of Hawaiʻi.[1] To my knowledge, the Department of Philosophy at Mānoa has produced one Kanaka (Native Hawaiian) PhD (who did his work in Chinese Philosophy). Despite being widely recognized as leading the field of Philosophy towards a more inclusive, even global, approach, the department must come to terms with the fact that throughout its nearly 90-year history it has failed to create a position for Hawaiʻi Philosophy or even produce a candidate that could be positioned for such a job. Imagine if 75 (or even 25) years ago there was a professor of Hawaiʻi Philosophy in the department. Hawaiʻi Philosophy would now be in its third or fourth generation. With another hire in the philosophies of the Pacific, the University of Hawaiʻi would become the center of Pasifika Philosophy, producing graduates for not only Hawaiʻi schools, but for schools throughout the Pacific, not to mention the rest of the world. Instead, the department devoted most of its attention to the East-West paradigm, which, while a worthy endeavor,

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is notably ironic given that it takes place in Hawai‘i and effectively relegates Hawai‘i and the rest of the Pacific to the dash between the terms East and West.

Because of this, Watson's concern is warranted. At the same time, the discourse of Hawai‘i Philosophy ought to be a global discourse; it cannot be limited to Hawai‘i, even though "Hawai‘i" (in both concept and place) is first and foremost the prerogative of the po‘e ‘ōiwi (people indigenous to the islands). There are several reasons for this. The first is that "Philosophy" ought to be a category co-equally created by a more global audience. In this regard, the term "Hawai‘i Philosophy" shares characteristics with a term like "Chinese Buddhism" in that Chinese Buddhism is in fact Chinese, but Buddhism is not solely the prerogative of Chinese people to define. Thus, "Hawai‘i Philosophy" does not only belong to Kānaka Hawai‘i, although all participants should be kama‘āina (familiar) with Hawai‘i. As Watson points out, "The identity of kama‘āina cannot be self ascribed without mutual recognition and affirmation by other kama‘āina."

Secondly, Kānaka Hawai‘i live all over the world, with more than half living beyond the islands of Hawai‘i. While many of these Kanaka have been effectively driven out of Hawai‘i as a result of economic and other settler-colonial conditions, the spread of Kanaka around the world is also part of a longer tradition of our routedness, as I highlighted in the opening piece. Thus, Hawai‘i extends beyond the islands of Hawai‘i. Our engagement is not just with things that come to our shores, but with things that we seek out as a part of being Hawai‘i ‘imi loa (Hawaiians that seek far and wide). The conversation of what constitutes Hawai‘i itself, therefore, is also a kind of global conversation.

In short, I am advocating that we recognize two points that are in tension with each other. First, the ‘āina (lands) of Hawai‘i, as an ancestral home of Kanaka, must not only be decolonized but given primacy in the educational process of what constitutes Hawai‘i and Hawai‘i Philosophy. In other words, place educates, and it is impossible to be a kama‘āina and be unfamiliar with the ‘āina of Hawai‘i. This includes familiarity with what the ‘āina needs to thrive and what it takes to liberate it from its current context as a settler-colonial state. Second, the conversation about what constitutes Hawai‘i can happen anywhere the mo‘okū‘auhau (lineage) of Hawai‘i is found. This means that what makes someone a part of Hawai‘i is a genealogical connection stemming from the ‘ōiwi of Hawai‘i. Many Kānaka Hawai‘i are born and raised on other one hānau (lands of birth); yet they, too, are Hawai‘i; even the ‘āina of Hawai‘i. Thus, Hawai‘i is not limited to a geographic location, but is rather a lineage that began before the islands of Hawai‘i and runs through them to other parts of the world.

That said, not every work of Hawai‘i Philosophy needs to be written to everyone in the global audience. As I mention in the lead essay, I would hope that a wide variety of work will continue to emerge. Those doing Hawai‘i Philosophy primarily for the Kanaka in

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Hawai‘i should present their philosophies in ways accessible to them. At the same time, we must remain open to the possibility of non-Kanaka doing Hawai‘i Philosophy where their audience may be largely non-Kanaka, so as long as they participate with the proper training, including recognition as kama‘āina by Kānaka Hawai‘i and a deep sense of kuleana (responsibility) to protect and revitalize the sovereignties of the people, places, and other beings native to Hawai‘i.

This means that the principles of Hawai‘i Philosophy do not depend on context, but at the same time, the form that Hawai‘i Philosophy takes is shaped by its context as well as its audience. Hawai‘i Philosophy done in Mānoa for the kupa ‘ai au (the Native people) will look different than Hawai‘i Philosophy done in Bloomington for readers of the *Journal of World Philosophies*. Building on an example that Watson has shared with me more than once, those engaging Hawai‘i Philosophy in Hawai‘i ought not expect that others will do the work of rendering nā mea Hawai‘i accessible to them any more than one engaging French Philosophy in France would expect French translated into English (or any other language). Context engenders obligation, which I would include as part of the principle of positionality. I furthermore hope that there would be room for things such as publishing Hawai‘i Philosophy in ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i (the Hawaiian language) in contexts beyond Hawai‘i, as I would hope that there would be room for doing Hawai‘i Philosophy in languages other than ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i within Hawai‘i if the philosopher so chooses. I believe that Hawai‘i Philosophy should be a “both-and” approach in terms of developing in different contexts for different audiences, while always rooted in principles of positionality, ho‘okama‘āina, etc.

Kaipulaumakaniolono Keala raises a number of relevant issues. The first focuses on my use of the word “good” in defining philosophy. Keala has two primary objections to this. First, the notion of an objective Good ultimately undermines itself as it highlights one category of things while threatening those deemed not-Good; this kind of opposition creates a rigid orthodoxy that then must be maintained above all else. Second, sole concern with the good life is too limiting for philosophy.

Before I respond to Keala, I would like to say a word about the business of definitions. In the opening piece, I explain that I am not interested in making an argument for nā mea Hawai‘i qualifying as Philosophy; nonetheless, I recognize that some discussion of what constitutes Philosophy is necessary. The reason for this disclaimer is that debates over definitions can serve to perpetuate the precise kind of gatekeeping that I am critical of; and, furthermore, even if people are engaged in an open-minded discussion, it can still distract from the actual work of doing the very thing under discussion. As Amy Olberding points out, “[…] pursuing conceptual definitions of philosophy too often operates as mere diversion in discussions of inclusivity. Conceptions of just what philosophy *is* vary dramatically among philosophers, and if we must first converge on consensus regarding

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the nature of philosophical inquiry, we will functionally ever postpone addressing the pressing practical problem of how to do better than we have done so far in making the profession inclusive" (Olberding 2017: 1023).

With these ideas in mind, my definition was intended functionally as a bridge concept. I am therefore open to revisions and alternatives that might serve the same function (this is part of what I had in mind with the principle of interpretive elasticity). I did, and do, think that the "good life" can be sufficiently accommodating as I did not have in mind an objective sense of the Good or even a wholly moral sense of the term—as less overtly moral things such as pleasure and grief can certainly constitute at least portions of a good life. Part of my willingness to adopt the term may be because my go-to point of comparison is Chinese philosophy rather than western philosophy, and the term "good" does not have the same kind of metaphysical weight in the Chinese tradition. Admittedly, there are benefits and deficiencies in my comparative tendencies. While comparisons with the Chinese tradition may avoid some of the complicated colonial relationships that Hawai‘i has with the west, I may simply be unaware of all the unintended baggage terms such as "good" bring to the table.

At the same time, I am not sure that Keala's suggestion of philosophy as "the study of the real, fundamental truths of existence" avoids all the problems that he is concerned with, as "truth" is a similarly loaded term; and one, I would argue, that does not have as ready a counterpart in kuana‘ike Hawai‘i (Hawaiian perspectives/worldviews) (Keala 2025). Perhaps something as simple as "intelligible reflections about ourselves and our world" would work. Alternatively, it is interesting to think, if Kanaka could create a global conversation about philosophy, what would it look like? What terms would be central to the discourse? One of those terms would likely be "ola," meaning "life"; and so, philosophy might be something like intelligible reflections on the nature of ola. In a Kanaka worldview, ola goes beyond a binary of life and death. All things have ola (or mauli, life force) as all things exist in never-ending dynamic relations to each other. This does not mean that things do not die, but rather that when they die their state is transformed in our kin relations (mo‘okū‘auhau). Much more could be said about what I would call a mo‘okū‘auhau ontology (or a "mo‘ontology"), but the point here is that this line of thinking opens up comparative possibilities in cross-cultural reflection on ourselves, life in general, and the world around us; and that is how I imagine a definition of philosophy to function.

Keala raises another valid issue about premature categorization. The parallels with Hawaiian theatre are noteworthy. In that case, Keala and Ākea Kahikina felt compelled to revise their play to conform to categories articulated by Tammy Haili‘ōpua Baker, one of the leading Kanaka scholars of the developing field of Hawaiian theatre. Conforming to a certain category took precedent over their artistic vision, and, as Keala puts it, "a desire to

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accommodate criteria rather than develop a play is a cause for consideration" (Keala 2025). I know very little about theatre, but I certainly take his warning about the dangers of categorization to heart. While I am not sure that anyone will take my outline of Hawai'i Philosophy as seriously, I do think there are a few possible differences between the two ways of categorization. One possible difference is that the categories of Hawai'i Philosophy are not necessarily premature. In other words, Kanaka have been doing 'Ike Hawai'i for over a thousand years; philosophers have been using a comparative method similar to the one articulated in Hawaiian Philosophy for generations; and Kālaimana'o, as explained in the opening essay, is something that our kūpuna have been doing for at least two centuries. What is new is putting them together under the rubric of Hawai'i Philosophy; and perhaps this constitutes a second difference. Namely, Hawaiian Philosophy, Kālaimana'o, and 'Ike Hawai'i are situated on a spectrum rather than separated as distinct categories. Using the term "epistemology" does not disqualify one from doing 'Ike Hawai'i; nor does carving canoes (kālaiwa'a) disqualify one from doing Hawaiian Philosophy. There is fluidity between the approaches.

Relatedly, the terms Hawaiian Philosophy, Kālaimana'o, and 'Ike Hawai'i are not meant to be situated hierarchically.[2] All three are equally valid approaches to Hawai'i Philosophy and ought to be mutually illuminating if not enriching. In the concluding paragraph of the lead essay, I stated that I probably did not say anything new with regard to comparative philosophy and 'Ike Hawai'i; however, I do think I said something new for scholars in those groups in thinking about their relation with the other group. I tried to provide criteria by which those doing 'Ike Hawai'i might see those doing Hawaiian Philosophy as engaged in a worthy endeavor, as well as criteria by which those doing Hawaiian Philosophy might see those doing 'Ike Hawai'i as engaged in Philosophy. Thus, the categories of Hawaiian Philosophy, Kālaimana'o, and 'Ike Hawai'i are meant first to be other-adjudicating terms before self-adjudicating terms. In other words, they are meant less as categories that one should aim to situate one's own work in than as categories to mark how others might be legitimately practicing Hawai'i Philosohy. The terms serve to disarm the skepticism that those doing 'Ike Hawai'i might have about those doing Hawaiian Philosophy and vice versa. Admittedly, this is predicated on the assumption that we want others who follow the principles laid out in the lead essay to recognize our pursuits as worthy of their attention, and that we want to aim for these principles ourselves. In practicing Hawai'i Philosophy, one should pursue one's inquiries in the most fruitful ways possible, whether that means doing 'Ike Hawa'i, Kālaimana'o, or Hawaiian Philosophy; but one should also be aware of what it takes to do it responsibly as well as being aware of how one perceives others engaged in Hawai'i Philosophy. I believe that this will naturally engender critical reflection on one's own approach and enrich it when one takes the other approaches seriously.

At the end of the day, however, I cannot fully escape Keala's criticism of categorization since I do want us (kākou) to reflect on where the field is and where it might go; and while

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I imagine there are other ways of going about this, I cannot think of one that does not involve some kind of categorization, definition, or distinction. I do not know if Baker intended her terms to be descriptive or normative, but they certainly took on a normative dimension; and although I believe we are at least partially responsible to foreseeable misreadings of our ideas, I do not know what more can be done to curtail possible misreadings except to say that my intention for these categories in relation to each other is purely descriptive.

Keala also addresses issues of access and practice. I will pick up the question of access in my response to Dr. Tamara Albertini since she raises similar questions, but as far as practice is concerned, Keala states that "there is no philosophy of and by Kanaka Maoli that can be elaborated in the absence of practice." I support this sentiment in several ways, some of which may differ from Keala. The first, which I imagine we agree on, is that bodily involvement or personal participation in Kanaka lifeways will not only transform our understandings of them, but are essential to properly understanding them. Second, and perhaps in tension with the first, the actions of reflection and articulation (whether in speech or writing) are kinds of practices themselves. Haku mele (composers of song and poetry) articulate their songs on the basis of their reflections on people, places, events, or other things in the world. The practice of haku mele is as valid a Kanaka practice as is mahiʻai (farming taro); and while both require bodily participation, they require it in different ways. Philosophers ought to be seen as haku manaʻo (idea composers/creators); and the acts involved in this kind of haku are as valid as haku mele. That said, the subject of one's philosophizing ought to determine the kinds of practices one should take in haku manaʻo. I would only produce scholarship on hula in proportion to my knowledge of hula, of which, dancing under a properly trained kumuhula would constitute an essential part of a sustained analysis. But I might produce scholarship that theorizes Pō (primoridal darkness) in Hawaiʻi literature while not leaving the town of Bloomington. The practices involved in gaining proper knowledge of the latter include building competency in ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi, learning to interpret various source material, and situating my manaʻo in relation to those sources and other relevant conversations. We ought to be capacious in what we recognize as practice, but also demanding in what it means to have knowledge of nā mea Hawaiʻi.

My last point about practice is that practicing Hawaiʻi Philosophy goes beyond participating in the actions related to the aspects of nā mea Hawaiʻi one investigates. We ought to engage in practices that support the communities we reflect on, even if these practices do not directly relate to the things we philosophize.

These issues of practice are a good segue to Dr. Sydney Morrow's contribution as she exemplifies a philosopher who takes action. Her reflections are created in tandem with her

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experience in serving homeless communities in Hawai‘i. Her response not only reflects on Hawai‘i Philosophy but shows how Hawai‘i Philosophy might be done.

Her central argument is that economic and existential poverty are often (but not always, as in the case of the *Zhuangzi*) interconnected, and that many contemporary policies and organizations that address poverty focus first on the economic, while not paying sufficient attention to the existential; and the existential is, well, more existential. The Housing First Initiative, however, does a better job of prioritizing the existential and allowing the homeless to take a more active role in self-determination.

One valuable aspect of Morrow's approach is her usage of Chinese philosophical terms to inform the endeavor. As I mention in my opening essay, the language, terms, and frameworks of the colonizer sit uneasily with the colonized, and the default paradigm of comparative philosophy has often been to think about "the west" in relation to "the rest." This understandably can make the project of comparative philosophy distasteful to Indigenous peoples. Choosing another set of terms avoids many of these problems, but fewer people involved in these conversations are trained in non-western philosophy. Morrow's approach is fruitful because it brings to the fore terms that are helpful in addressing issues our kūpuna kahiko (ancestors of old) did not necessarily consider but would be invested in; and Morrow brings these terms into conversation with terms developed by Kanaka such as William C. Rezentes. In this way, she practices a kind of kālaimana‘o.

Although she does not fully flesh out her approach (covered in greater detail in her 2018 dissertation), I did want to think through a useful distinction others have employed in addressing similar issues, particularly with regard to Hawai‘i and Kānaka Hawai‘i. Morrow references the way in which "experiencing homelessness on land that is ancestor decimates relations of kinship" for Kānaka Hawai‘i (Morrow 2025). Morrow also occassionally uses language of "houselessness" instead of "homelessness" in her dissertation (Morrow 2018: 11-2 and 242-43). Others have documented how some Kānaka Hawai‘i make use of this distinction, preferring to see themselves as houseless rather than homeless; in part because "Hawaii is home."[3] In other words, the relations of kinship might be strained because a Kanaka lacks a permanent dwelling, but the kinship relationship is also a source of strength in that one can never be without a home when living (and being hānai—raised) on the ‘āina. This is a pilina (connection) not easily decimated.

Interestingly, in Chinese the term *jia* 家 refers to "home/house" as well as "family," so in talking about issues of "homelessness" in modern Chinese, other terms are preferred such as liulang 流浪 or lusu 露宿, literally "wanderer" and "uncovered [i.e., no] dwelling." The lack of a distinction between home and family is coincidentally similar to what Kanaka might mean in saying "Hawai‘i is home." More could be said about this, but what is worth

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stressing here is that using a non-western point of comparison can open up productive ways of thinking about nā mea Hawai‘i and issues that Kānaka Hawai‘i face today.

In Kamalani Johnson's response to the opening essay, he uses the idea of kīpuka (a patch of vegetation in a lava field) to think about a home for Hawai‘i Philosophy (Johnson 2025). Building on Davianna McGregor's "cultural kīpuka" concept and Leon No‘eau Peralto's notion of "kīpuka aloha ‘āina," Johnson argues that the kīpuka is a fruitful metaphor in showing that Hawai‘i philosophy must be grounded in Hawai‘i knowledge systems. He argues that ‘Ike Hawai‘i and Kālaimana‘o are like the rough soil and first plants to grow (i.e., the life-giving foundation), and that Hawaiian Philosophy is like the plants and animals that are supported by the foundation. They are related to each other in that Hawaiian Philosophy is dependent on ‘Ike Hawai‘i and Kālaimana‘o.

Building on his metaphor, I would say that a precondition for entering the kīpuka of Hawai‘i Philosophy is being kama‘āina. Anyone who does Hawai‘i Philosophy must practice principles of positionality, epistemic humility, ho‘okama‘āina, etc. I also want to consider an alternative metaphor that expresses the idea that all three approaches are grounded directly in Hawai‘i.

This metaphor goes beyond the pōhaku (rocks) of the kīpuka, but still remains in the lepo (soil) of Hawai‘i. ‘Ike Hawai‘i is like kalo (taro)—born as our oldest sibling, Hāloa, and with us mai ka pō mai (from time immemorial). Kanaka have cultivated kalo and understand it better perhaps than anyone else. It is part of our ‘ohana (family).

Kālaimana‘o is like the mau‘u (grass) of Malaia that Pā‘ao is said to have brought with him in his voyages to Hawai‘i. Pā‘ao arrived in Hawai‘i from Kahiki circa 1200 CE to find a robust society, which, according to the mo‘olelo (story), lacked ali‘i (governors) of proper lineage. Pā‘ao is not Kanaka Hawai‘i himself; yet he engages an issue that Kānaka Hawai‘i are invested in—namely, finding appropriate ali‘i. Thus, Pā‘ao went back to Kahiki to get Pilika‘aiea to serve as an ali‘i. In one of those voyages, Pā‘ao brought grass from the land of Malaia, which he planted on Hawai‘i island. Theoretically speaking, Pā‘ao integrates nā mea Kahiki (foreign things) with nā mea Hawai‘i to address topics of interest not only for Kānaka Hawai‘i, but for human beings more generally; namely, which people make the best governors. The grass represents the ways that a foreign entity can appropriately take root in the lepo of Hawai‘i and even join with nā mea Hawai‘i; similar to the way that Pilika‘aiea—a name that not coincidentally refers to a plant—took root in the mo‘okū‘auhau (genealogy) of the Hawai‘i ali‘i and became a mana (branch) of that genealogy. This is similar to how I understand Kālaimana‘o.

Lastly, Hawaiian Philosophy is like the horses that foreigners brought to Hawai‘i in the 1800s that led to the development of Paniolo (Hawaiian cowboy) culture. Horses feed from,

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and run around on, the lepo of Hawai‘i. They eat Hawai‘i grass and perhaps even the grass of Malaia. They are grounded on the lepo, but not in the same way as kalo or Pā‘ao’s grass. Paniolo use the horses to handle cattle and sheep, which are also not native to Hawai‘i but likewise feed off the ‘āina of Hawai‘i. The horses are used by Kanaka and non-Kanaka for initiatives that Kanaka did not create; and while ranching is not a traditional practice, there are nonetheless many facets of Paniolo culture that are recognizably Hawaiian, including that fact that many Paniolo are Kānaka Hawai‘i themselves. There are also many ways in which Paniolo culture contributes to cowboy culture beyond Hawai‘i. The horses, and Paniolo culture more broadly, represent a space where nā mea Hawai‘i are situated on non-Kanaka terms. This kind of situating can be detrimental to Hawai‘i just as horses can displace indigenous animals and destroy native vegetation; but if properly handled, this kind of situating can instead be productive of meaningful things where nā mea Hawai‘i inform and address non-Hawai‘i ways of life. With Paniolo culture, we are looking at two centuries of nā mea Hawai‘i being brought into a conversation that began long before the 1800s.

I believe that Johnson would agree with Dr. Celia Tagamolila Bardwell-Jones that nā mea Hawai‘i ought to have “governance value” and “not just supplemental value” when it comes to Hawai‘i Philosophy. I see things slightly different, however. In all three approaches, Kānaka Hawai‘i maintain governance value over nā mea Hawai‘i; meaning that we determine the appropriate ways in which nā mea Hawai‘i are brought to bear in philosophical projects. But in some cases of Hawaiian Philosophy, nā mea Hawai‘i might be appropriately borrowed such that it plays a supplemental role; where supplemental means to enhance or to support. This does not mean that nā mea Hawai‘i can be employed carelessly or without the concerns of a kama‘āina; but rather, it means that the way something is borrowed is sometimes more important than whether it determines the aims of the project it is used for. Importantly, as mentioned in the opening essay, if these aims do not enrich the Lāhui in ways that the Lāhui finds meaningful, the obligations to enrich the Lāhui ought to be fulfilled in other ways. To summarize my point, while I would expect that nā mea Hawai‘i would have a central role in most Hawai‘i Philosophy projects, we cannot rule out the possibility of it appropriately supplementing some lines of philosophical inquiry.

Bardwell-Jones is also right to push for further thinking about commensurability. Building on the work of Eve Tuck, K. Wayne Yang, and others, Bardwell-Jones argues for the necessity of maintaining “an underlying ethic of incommensurability in the context of settler colonization.” She states,

> Rather than aiming towards the benefit of integration or fusion, an ethic of incommensurability suggests the dialogue should start without any optimism of commensurability. If the goal of cross-cultural or world philosophies is to achieve

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> some measure of commensurability, then according to Tuck and Yang, the dialogue between Native and western (dominant) philosophies may already be undermined before it begins (Bardwell-Jones 2025).

Bardwell-Jones also builds on Tuck, Yang, and James Naniole in stressing the role of land in these conversations: "How can philosophy be taught with any intellectual integrity when the very existence of the university is predicated on Native Hawaiian land dispossession?" (Bardwell-Jones 2025)

Acknowledging incommensurability is to acknowledge the hard questions, which Philosophy, at least in theory, does not shy away from. For Tuck and Yang, incommensurability is tied with land dispossession in that decolonization is not commensurable with civil rights or other justice discourses because decolonization is not about resolving the tensions between groups and aiming for complementarity. Instead, decolonization unsettles settler futurity, particularly with regard to control over land. It is not concerned with questions about what decolonization will look like for the settler when sovereignty is returned to Native peoples. It ought not, therefore, be seen as adding a few things (like federal recognition) to the normal work of justice. Famously, Tuck and Yang state that "Decolonization is not an 'and.' It is an elsewhere" (Tuck and Yang 2012: 36).

This view of incommensurability is related to the decolonization of Philosophy in part because of the role that Philosophy has played in colonization. At the same time, this particular view of incommensurability and Philosophy not only centers on Indigenous interaction with the west, but I would argue also centers the west in relation to the rest. While there are good reasons for doing so, including the continued need for critique and decolonization in the field, the dialogue partners in Hawai'i Philosophy need not be the west. As we see in Dr. Sydney Morrow's work, fruitful conversations can happen between those doing Hawai'i Philosophy and those doing Chinese Philosophy; and aspects of these dialogues have already taken place between those doing Hawai'i Philosophy and those doing Māori Philosophy or Tonga Philosophy or Samoa Philosophy; and we can imagine similar dialogues between those doing Hawai'i Philosophy and those doing Native American Philosophy or Mesoamerican Philosophy, etc.; and these discussions need not focus on colonization (although there are undoubtedly many shared strategies for it). While Philosophy, as I have discussed it here, has a mo'okū'auhau that extends into the west, this does not mean that it must always involve the west. Admittedly, having a dialogue about Philosophy beyond the gaze of the colonizer is not likely right now for a number of reasons, but it is not beyond an imaginable Indigenous futurity.

This ethic of incommensurability is nonetheless important in preventing settler moves to innocence. Talk of "fusion" or "integration" in the context of comparative philosophy can be problematic; and Bardwell-Jones offers an incisive critique of my language that moves

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in this direction. I believe it is worth noting, however, that the commensurabilities I am most interested in, begin before we can apply this ethic of incommensurability. Bardwell-Jones states that "dialogue should start without any optimism of commensurability" (Bardwell-Jones 2025). The commensurabilities I pursue in the opening essay are largely about the very possibility of dialogue. The ability to dialogue is itself predicated on commensurability; and a meaningful dialogue requires more than just a minimum threshold of commensurability. The purpose of the dialogue, or what makes it meaningful, is where the ethic of incommensurability comes into play. In the opening piece I mention dialogue for the purpose of mutual learning. While mutual learning does open the possibility of fusion, it also remains open to the concerns of the ethic of incommensurability. Through dialogue, we may learn that two value systems are ultimately incommensurable, but even that judgement is based on a commensurability to be able to make such a judgement. In other words, my interest in commensurability has more to do with intelligibility than agreement, but Bardwell-Jones' (and Uncle Jimmy's) concerns deserve continued attention, particularly from those who control the academic spaces of Philosophy in Hawai'i.

I appreciate the words of Dr. Tamara Albertini, current chair of the Department of Philosophy at the University of Hawai'i in Mānoa. Albertini was the instructor of my first philosophy class, which was in 1995—my freshman year and the first year she was at the University of Hawai'i. In the intervening 30 years, Albertini has positioned herself as a leader in Comparative Philosophy. Her metaphor of the bricoleuse pairs well with the metaphor of the ahu (altar) I explain in the opening piece. I am also drawn to her notion of philosophical wayfinding. Here, however, I would like to continue the conversation by thinking through some of the questions she lays out at the end of her piece. While these questions would undoubtedly be better addressed, as she notes, in face-to-face conversations that allow for more communal inquiry, I do think some preliminary remarks can be made that might jumpstart the process. Albertini asks several questions including,

> What happens […] when consent is not granted, yet another party proceeds to appropriate or decontextualize knowledge—regardless of direction? Who determines whether a borrowing is truly reciprocal, or when a boundary has been crossed? Might there be a need for some form of protocol or shared understanding to guide such situations? (Albertini 2025).

These questions are not unique to Philosophy. In fields where Indigenous peoples have had more of a voice (such as Indigenous Studies), there is more discussion. To summarize aspects of it, within the academy we need to use the professional mechanisms at our disposal to prevent the appropriation of Indigenous knowledge. This includes reviewing potential publications before they are published; reviewing them publicly once they are published (especially if we are tenured); clearly communicating the problems of

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appropriation with editors at these publishing venues; refraining from citing or assigning for class work that appropriates; alternatively, citing this work critically by specifically mentioning the ethical breach; discouraging our institutions from hosting those who appropriate; discouraging organizations we control from allowing them to present their work; etc.

This relates to the question of who can give consent and who decides when a boundary has been crossed. Institutional Review Boards (IRB) at universities have been federally mandated in cases involving human subjects since 1974. Many Native American tribal entities have since established their own IRBs. This requires a researcher to clear both a university and a tribal IRB if they want to work with tribal members on tribal land (and in some cases even off tribal land). These tribal IRBs often go further than establishing guidelines on how people are treated when they are the subjects of research. They can extend to controlling the data generated from the research (data sovereignty) to requiring community co-authoring of publications (see Harding et al. 2011). More relevant for our purposes, these IRBs sometimes extend beyond researching human beings to studying other things of cultural significance for Native peoples. In these contexts, tribal leaders determine who and what are studied with their approval. They also spread information among their people about the IRB process and who has been approved. This situation is more complicated in the case of Kānaka Hawai‘i since there is no single entity representative of the Lāhui; but notably, the University of Hawai‘i, which is the only university I know of that positions itself as a Native Hawaiian place of learning, does not have an IRB that explicitly takes cultural concerns of Kānaka Hawai‘i into consideration (see "Office of Research Compliance").

These more robust procedures often parallel traditional practices of the Indigenous communities they come from. Kaipulaumakaniolono Keala's response mentions these in the context of Hawai‘i. He explains that in a Kanaka context "not everyone is entitled to mana‘o or ‘ike [...] there is no free market of information" (Keala 2025). Instead, students must be chosen by knowledge-holders who then determine the kinds of knowledge students were ready for. One implication of living in an oral society was that acquiring knowledge was predicated on the relationship one created with the expert; there were no written sources one could consult in private. Thus, knowledge transmission was explicitly a relational and communal endeavor. These practices are in tension with ideas about the democratization of knowledge as found in western liberal traditions. While each tradition has its drawbacks, one benefit of the Hawai‘i system is its communal accountability. Students trained in this system were more likely to be concerned with how the sharing of knowledge will impact the community. The system also made knowledge harder to decontextualize, extract, and commodify.

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This talk of learning in face-to-face conversations reminds me of a Chinese ʻōlelo noʻeau (wise saying) that goes, "Sitting so close that our knees touch, we can have a heart to heart conversation" 促膝談心. Community is harder to create with distance. Despite the ease of so-called modern conveniences to bridge the gap, being about to sit, work, move, talk, eat, and hope together in person builds a stronger community. I hope a community of Hawaiʻi Philosophy will continue to develop; and I hope that each of us has the courage to continue this dialogue.

ʻAʻole i pau...

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1 It is also worth noting that I am in a department of Religious Studies; and Dr. Celia Tagamolila Bardwell-Jones poses important questions in this regard: "what does it mean to articulate a Hawaiʻi Philosophy in the context of the invisibility of Kanaka Philosophers in philosophy departments? What does it mean for non-Hawaiian philosophers to engage in Hawaiʻi Philosophy in the context of Kanaka absence in philosophy departments?"

2 I suspect that Baker's terms were not meant hierarchically either.

3 McDonell (2014: 78). The full quote reads, "I'm just houseless. That's what I mean, we don't have a roof over our head, we don't have a shelter but this is home. Hawaii is home."

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(2024); a peer-reviewed article, “Confucius, Wisdom, and Political Participation: Benevolence and Timeliness" (2023); and book chapter, “Finding the Joy of Far-Flung Friends: Extending Oneself Through Terrestrial, Metaphysical, and Moral Geographies” (2022).

Bruce Ka‘imi Watson, PhD, Lecturer and graduate student at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa write as Hawai‘i, from Hawai‘i, in Hawai‘i, and about Hawai‘i. Inspired by the work of elders, he holds that it is critical to reflect on how and where philosophical conversations take place. Ka‘imi works ‘Ōiwi Philosophy, AinaMoana/Pasifika Philosophies, History of Hawai‘i and History of Education.

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