

APA Newsletters

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NEWSLETTER ON AMERICAN INDIANS IN PHILOSOPHY

FROM THE EDITORS, KATY GRAY BROWN & LORRAINE MAYER

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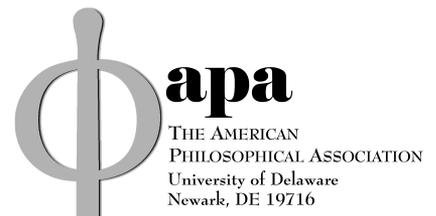
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FROM THE EDITORS

ARTICLES

The Vine Deloria, Jr. Memorial Fund

To commemorate the life and work of Vine Deloria, Jr., and to honor his memory and continuing presence among us, the Committee on the Status of American Indians in Philosophy has developed a proposal to establish, maintain, and raise funds to assist indigenous students pursuing philosophy. Such support will include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Prizes and awards for essays in philosophy
- Travel funds for attending philosophy conferences
- Scholarships for graduate work in philosophy
- Fellowships for research in philosophy
- Help organizing student conferences or sessions at conferences

None of the funds will be available to faculty of any kind, unless they are still completing their graduate work.

Funds will be solicited through a variety of means, including approaches to foundations and tribal councils, outside grant applications, and APA membership donations.

APA 2008 Pacific Division Meeting Session Planned

The Committee on the Status of American Indians in Philosophy will sponsor two sessions at the 2008 Pacific Division meeting in Pasadena. The first will focus on the new book by former CSAIP Chair Dale A. Turner, *This Is Not A Peace Pipe: Toward a Critical Indigenous Philosophy*. A second session will focus on Lorraine Mayer's new book, *Cries from a Metis Heart*.

Spring 2008 Newsletter

Our spring newsletter will be dedicated to teaching Native American philosophy. We welcome submissions of syllabi and your reflections on teaching Native works, either in courses devoted to Native philosophy, in courses devoted to nontraditional texts, or in courses that bring Native and canonical texts into dialogue.

Our spring newsletter will also feature responses to Dennis McPherson's article, "Indian on the Lawn," printed in this newsletter in the Spring 2006 issue.

Please send submissions by December 1, 2007, to:
Lorraine Mayer at mayerl@brandonu.ca
Katy Gray Brown at klgraybrown@manchester.edu

A Larger Scheme of Life: Deloria on Essence and Science (in Dialogue with Continental Philosophy)

Adam Arola
University of Oregon

Science manipulates things and gives up living in them. It makes its own limited models of things; operating upon these indices or variables to effect whatever transformations are permitted by their definition, it comes face to face with the real world only at rare intervals. Science is and always has been that admirably active, ingenious, and bold way of thinking whose fundamental bias is to treat everything as though it were an object-in-general—as though it meant nothing to us and yet was predestined for our own use.¹

—Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Eye and Mind*

In his seminal essay *The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking*, Martin Heidegger writes, "Throughout the entire history of philosophy Plato's thinking remains, in its various forms, decisive. Metaphysics is Platonism."² In an equally seminal text for the continental tradition, Friedrich Nietzsche famously calls Christianity "Platonism for the people."³ As a paper on Vine Deloria, Jr., this is certainly a fairly bizarre starting point, yet it is not chosen at random. I have been struck by Deloria's criticisms of Christianity along with his criticisms of the history of Western metaphysics, insofar as both of these movements play a central role in the way in which Western culture relates to the more-than-human world. Yet, I have also been struck by the fact that Deloria never explicitly connects this triad: Western metaphysics, Christianity, and the destruction of nature. The objective of this paper is thus to show how Deloria's critique of Christianity goes hand in hand with his critique of Western science and its origins in a Platonic metaphysics; I will put to work a number of insights from the works of Heidegger and Nietzsche in order to bring Deloria's criticisms into conversation with a different philosophical vocabulary, as well as to hint at the ethical consequences of Heidegger's critique of Western science and technology as is found in his *Question Concerning Technology* and *What is a Thing?* At the end of the day, I intend this paper to have two positive outcomes: first, I think that Heidegger may be able to provide a new and potentially more rigorous vocabulary with

which to discuss Deloria's claims about how the relational, or ecstatic, character of identity in indigenous engagements with the world serve to critique Western science, Christianity, and the history of metaphysics; second, Deloria may be able to provide concretion to some ethical ramifications of Heidegger's analysis of technology.

I. Platonism for the People

To begin, we must first establish what it means for Heidegger (and Nietzsche) to say that metaphysics is Platonism. What is metaphysics? What is Platonism? And in what sense do they say the same such that Heidegger feels compelled to speak of them as such? On the one hand, these questions have obvious answers—anyone who has spent any time studying philosophy is always already in relationship to these terms and, accordingly, has some sense as to their sense. Nietzsche is the thinker who, above all, determines the ways in which these words are understood in contemporary “continental” philosophy—and this is certainly the case for Heidegger. Metaphysics, though unnamed, is most clearly defined by Nietzsche in the *Twilight of the Idols* wherein we find the famous section, “How the True World Finally Became a Fable.” The opposition that emerges and is disrupted in this short and slightly obscure aphorism is that of Platonism in its highest form—the true world [*die wahre Welt*] versus the apparent world, its semblance [*die scheinbare Welt*] (TI, 50). Speaking on this exact same issue, Heidegger explains: “the distinction between the sensuous (*aistheton*) and the nonsensuous (*noeton*) is the fundamental configuration of what has long since been called metaphysics.”⁴ Stanley Cavell writes that in Platonism, “individual things present to our senses are knowable, are indeed what they are, by virtue of their ‘participation’ in, or ‘imitation’ of, the realm of Forms, which provides us with our armature of classification, to put it mildly.”⁵

How does this distinction between the sensible and the nonsensible, or the intelligible, surface in Christianity? Here, let us turn to Deloria. In *God is Red* he explains that Christianity's origin lies in the fall brought about by Adam's eating of the apple. He explains, “in this act as recorded in Genesis, humankind ‘fell’ from God's grace and was driven out of the garden by the angry God.”⁶ As a narrative of redemption, Christianity only makes sense insofar as this original fall is posited and accepted. But this fall has potentially unseemly consequences beyond denigrating humans as fundamentally sinful creatures. Deloria again: “With the fall of Adam the rest of nature also falls out of grace with God, Adam being a surrogate for the whole of creation.” The operative term in this passage is “creation,” as it is this sphere, the sphere of created entities, things which come into being and pass away, that is given to human experience of phenomena, but which the Christian narrative denigrates as fallen, Godless, and, in turn, not worth knowing. Bringing this point to light, Deloria says, “one aspect [of how the Christian doctrine bears on us today] is that the natural world is thereafter considered as corrupted, and it becomes theoretically beyond redemption” (GR, 79). Human beings alone have the possibility to be redeemed, insofar as they accept Christ as their savior and note that this salvation is explicitly connected to the human acquisition of immortality. Elsewhere, Deloria writes:

Christianity proclaims a good creation, at least as Yahweh finishes his work on the sixth day, but within a very short time the universe has crashed into evil because of the disobedience of one of the minor, and not too intelligent, species. Nature becomes evil and hostile toward our species and consequently we are in conflict with every other form of life. We come to believe that we are above all other forms of life. We come to believe that our salvation redeems the other

life forms simply because we are more important than they are. And we look for the destruction of this world and the creation of another world, where, presumably *we will not be allowed* to screw things up so readily. Because the universe is evil and must eventually be destroyed, we have no real responsibility to it.⁷

The major claim of this quote, that the account of creation in the Christian world eradicates any responsibility that humans may have to the more-than-human world, is something that we will return to extensively later in the paper. For now, we need only note that this “other world” that Deloria points out in this passage is precisely the “true world” that Nietzsche describes as being one half of the account of the world given by a Platonic metaphysic, while the created world is the apparent world, the false world, and maybe even the evil world.

In a different text, and a different context, Deloria explicitly connects this distinction between the temporal and the eternal to that of the sensible and the intelligible that we pointed to as the identifying trait of Platonism *qua* metaphysics. He writes, “this old belief [that the world could be explained via a mechanistic account] saw reality as something beyond our senses and means of apprehension, and Western people have held this belief since the time of the Greek philosophers.”⁸ Little needs to be said at this point to vindicate the connection I am making between a critique of Christianity and a critique of Platonic metaphysics in Deloria's work—he has done it for me. But what does require some explanation is exactly how a teleological account of history, as is found in Christianity, turns into a mechanical account of the workings of the natural world. This account has already been adumbrated insofar as in Platonism and Christianity the natural (i.e., temporal) world is seen as fallen and illusory, and, accordingly, and in a strange way, purposeless. Merleau-Ponty is helpful on this point: in his *Nature* lectures he explains that if God is understood as infinite, then “we can no longer ultimately distinguish attributes in Him; were they distinguished, one would have to take precedence over the other.”⁹ If we were to grant precedence to any one attribute over another, we would be ordering things in God, and things can only be ordered in a finite collection. The import of this is that once God is taken as infinite, we must thereby hold that God's will and understanding are identical; God cannot will something that He does not fully know. For this reason then, the order of creation is just that; it is ordered—as Merleau-Ponty says, “the effects are given with the causes” (N, 9). The shift from teleology to pure mechanism emerges once we realize that the teleological, or finalist, character of the universe is only knowable to God, as only He has the view of the all. This has a double bite: on the one hand, finality is only meaningful to humans as the idea of coming to culmination only matters to a being for whom the means and ends remain distinct; on the other hand, “the human cannot embrace the internal harmony of the World, because he can grasp only its parts, never The Whole” (N, 9). Nature thereby becomes a system of causes, the meaningfulness of which is knowable only to God, “finality and causality are no longer distinguished, and this indistinction is expressed in the image of the ‘machine’” (N, 10).

For Heidegger, taking the natural world as a domain that can be described by mechanistic laws is bound up with a specific conception of humanity's role in the world—namely, the center of the world, the site of meaning, and the creature for whom the whole of creation exists and to whom it belongs. The entrance into modernity is characterized by taking the world as a domain of objects, the coherency of which is anchored by the human subject. Heidegger writes:

Until Descartes every thing at hand for itself was a “subject”; but now the “I” becomes the special subject,

that with regard to which all things first determine themselves as such. Because—mathematically—they first receive their thingness only through the founding relation to the highest principle and its “subject” (I), they are essentially such as stand as something else in relation to the “subject,” which lies over against it as *objectum*. The things themselves become “objects.”¹⁰

Taking the world as something that stands over and against me means to understand that world as something fundamentally other than me, and insofar as I am subject, this means that this world is an object; it is the *Gegenstand* that literally “stands against” me. Thus, I must encounter that which stands against me, the objectivity of things, and bring it under concepts—literally grasp it so as to be able to represent it to myself—so that it becomes thinkable for me. Why must I engage in this process of bringing this world under conceptual determination? Why must I represent things? The reason is that insofar as the world is not like *me*, or I do not belong to the world, or the materiality of the world of sensuous experience is not like my thoughts, I have to make the world accommodate itself to me. For Heidegger, in *Age of the World Picture*, the implication of such thinking is that the world, as pure object, is essentially dead matter, the *hyle* that my mind transforms (*morphe*) into something that I am able to think. “But when humanity becomes the first and proper *subiectum*, this means that humanity becomes the being upon which all beings in their manner of being and their truth are grounded.”¹¹ The conception of the human as “that-which-underlies,” the *hypokeimenon*, of all beings brings us into the epoch wherein thinking is fundamentally constructing the world in which we live—hence, our thoughts as representational are instances of our minds forming the matter of experience, which is nothing, i.e., formless matter and, hence, unencounterable on its own terms.

On Heidegger’s account, then, when the human is taken as the center of creation, the rest of the world eventually becomes understood as a domain that presents itself to us passively, the mind actively takes it up and represents it to us. We become the givers of the law to the world around us. The world itself is presented as silent, passive, and ours for the taking, necessarily. In fact, one could say that the intelligibility of the world hangs on the fact that we bring the raw data of our experience under concepts in order to make it intelligible. Yet, this still does not explain the transition from the teleological account of nature given in creation to the mechanistic, purposelessness that modern science sees in nature.

Let us recapitulate how the accounts of nature and the subject Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty have given us relate to Christianity: first, the world is passive and meaningless on its own; this point has already been made. Second, and much more interestingly, the created world is made sense of by bringing the sense data of the world under concepts, which themselves are not, strictly speaking, of *this* world. That is to say, the concepts that organize the experience of the modern subject are intellectual entities, if they are entities at all, and this realm of intellectual entities, or intelligibles, is, yet again, the *true world* that Nietzsche described. Throughout the history of philosophy, and all the way up through Husserl’s early works at the very least, if you want to know what an entity is, you fasten on to its concept, the universal under which it belongs; as Heidegger says, you fasten on to its essence, its *Was-sein*, which for any figure throughout the history of philosophy who has a realist bent—in terms of the medieval debate between nominalism and realism—is eternal, unchanging, and only knowable as such.¹² Echoing Heidegger, Richard Rorty explains that this “‘idea’ idea” not only tells us about how we see the world, but

also how we understand what it means to be a human. This “‘idea’ idea” generates the view “shared by Platonists, Kantians, and positivists: that man has an essence—namely to discover essences.”¹³

If we think of concepts as universals,¹⁴ how are we to refer to that which is given to human perception in the sensible manifold? If we are speaking the language of metaphysics, the opposite of the universal is clearly the particular—that which is unthinkable on its own to the mind of the epistemologies of modern philosophy. Yet, in numerous places Deloria is quick to note that the emphasis upon universals, concepts, categories, or general laws is a particularly European approach to thinking. He writes, “the key to understanding Indian knowledge of the world is to remember that the emphasis was on the particular, not on general laws and explanations of how things worked.”¹⁵ Somewhat ironically, the key to understanding Deloria’s assertion, however, is that the way in which Indian knowledge takes up the world is not in terms of an opposition between universals and particulars, in other words, not in terms of a metaphysical opposition between the transient world of becoming, i.e., the created world, and the “true world,” i.e., the eternal world of concepts, ideas, and salvation. What is really at stake at this point is not an epistemic question, but an ontological question: What kind of ontology is necessitated in order to think of the world as split between particulars and universals? How is the world understood if these terms are thrown out the window? I will argue that the distinction has to do with a certain understanding of life. To put it in the form of a question, what kind of ontology is necessary insofar as we take the traditional indigenous assertion that “we are all relatives” seriously?

II. Life Beyond the Concept

For Nietzsche, the history of Western metaphysics, religion, and science is premised upon understanding the world as something that lacks life. This is exemplified by the emphasis in philosophy and science on knowledge as conceptual knowledge. Remember that in German the word that we translate as concept is *Begriff*, which comes from the verb *greifen*: to grasp. It is this act of grasping that we must take more seriously. Nietzsche writes:

All that philosophers have handled for millennia were conceptual mummies; nothing that is actual has come out of their hands alive. When they worship, they kill, they stuff; these gentlemanly idolaters of concepts—they become a danger to the life of all things when they worship. Death, change, age, even procreation and growth, are objections for them—refutations even. (TI, 45)

Refutations of what? Of truth, of the true world. In Deloria’s analysis of indigenous engagements with the world we see the exact opposite phenomena; life is privileged—in fact, life is the central category of indigenous thinking. He writes, “the universe is alive, but it also contains within it the very important suggestion that the universe is personal and, therefore, must be approached in a personal manner.” Deloria arrives at this conclusion in light of the equation that he presents that for him encapsulates indigenous, epistemic engagement with the world: “power and place produce personality” (PP, 23). For Deloria, these terms are best understood through the aforementioned thought about our relatives—I refer to it as relational identity. The identity of any particular entity in the world can never be discovered by distilling the essence out of a particular object such that one could arrive at an eternal *eidōs* that shines out of this particular encapsulation; rather, identity emerges in light of what Heidegger calls “referential totalities.”

Deloria describes this as follows: “everything in the natural world has relationships with every other thing and the total set of relationships make up the world as we experience it” (SR, 34). That is to say, the essence of any particular thing is *what it is only insofar as it relates to what it is not*. If this is the case, and the identity—insofar as this is understood as something that one seeks in epistemic inquiry—of a particular bird is sought, the only way in which to come to know “what” this bird is is to understand the web of relations in which it participates in a particular place at a particular time. In other words, to know the bird means to know the “personality” of the bird insofar as it plays a part in a structure that is larger than the body of the bird itself. This then necessitates that one has an understanding of the causal nexus that the bird participates in to make the web of relations to which it belongs behave the way it does. Knowing the particular bird then would mean knowing what the bird eats, where it builds its nest, what its different songs can tell us about this particular place. But these things are only knowable insofar as we have an understanding of the whole in which the bird participates. Here, then, the universal—or the genus, for example—is eschewed in lieu of knowledge of the network that this bird sustains and that, in turn, sustains the bird.

Sticking with our bird example, in Deloria’s mind, traditional Western science would claim to know the bird when it was able to identify the “specific difference” of the bird, and here we can see why Cavell begins an essay on collecting by discussing Platonism. This search for the specific difference then would prompt finding out what species the bird belongs to, and then identifying the genus that lies beyond that, and so on and so forth; each step of this process is a move by which our knowledge of the world is said to increase, but in doing so we move further and further away from the particular bird that we encountered. To use Heidegger’s language, the givenness of the particular entity is not enough to identify the bird—that is, it is not enough to say that we have a knowing relationship with the bird. The revolution that Heidegger introduces in phenomenology is to say that the identity of a particular given entity is *not* to be found exclusively by phenomenological reduction, i.e., bracketing things out of the world in which they “appear” to us; rather, the phenomenological project must continue and place this entity into the referential totality—the totality of entities that make it meaningful in the way it shows itself to us pre-ontologically in its usefulness or handiness, just as the bird is only meaningful insofar as it participates in the life-cycle of the forest—and also to understand that the particular referential totality, or the particular “place,” in which we encounter an entity is not the only totality in which this entity could be encountered historically. This tripartite structure of phenomenology, the steps of which he calls reduction, construction, and destruction, mean that an entity cannot be understood as static but, rather, must be understood as being what it is in virtue of what it is not in a particular referential totality, and also insofar as its presence in this particular totality is only one of many possible historical—and presumably cultural—totalities (GA 24, 28-32). Heidegger thus parts ways with Husserl—and a large portion of the Western philosophical tradition—insofar as he does not think that these particular totalities are ways of interpreting some eternal truth of things that stand behind the back of our interpretations. Rather, if we want to speak about the essence of things, we must speak of how things “essence,” in German, how things *west*. In the working notes to *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty notes his enthusiasm in light of his “discovery of the (verbal) *Wesen*: first expression of the being that is neither being-object nor being-subject, neither essence nor existence: what *west* (the being-rose of the rose, the being-society of society, the being-history of history) answers to the question was as well as the question *daß*.”¹⁶ Merleau-Ponty’s

enthusiasm stems from the fact that this thought enables us to pass beyond the essence/fact distinction, thus taking us beyond Platonism. For Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty then, this transformation of the noun *Wesen*—essence—into a verb points out that things are what they are insofar as they occur, and their occurrence is always in a referential totality. Thus, our understanding of a thing’s “essencing” is only possible insofar as we understand how it participates in a structure that both exceeds and determines its meaningfulness to us.

From both Deloria and Heidegger we have been given presentations of ontologies that take the world to be fundamentally active. Heidegger would say that the identity of an object hinges upon the way in which that object is ecstatic into the world to which it belongs. Deloria would say that the identity of a particular entity is only encountered through our engagement with that thing’s relatives; in other words, the other entities and processes that it relates to in being what it is. For both of these thinkers it is important to remember that the relationship between an entity and the totality to which it belongs is always reciprocal, that is to say, the entity is as determinate of the coherency of the whole as the whole is determinate of the identity of a particular entity. If we removed the bird from the forest, the forest would no longer be what it was, nor would the bird. It is at this point that the ethical ramifications of Deloria’s account emerge and fly in the face of the account of the Platonic, Christian engagement with the more-than-human world.

III. The Ethics of Relation

With regards to modern science’s impact on the natural world, Deloria writes, “science and technology reign today as the practical gods of the modern age; they give us power to disrupt nature but little real insight into how it functions.”¹⁷ Given what has been said thus far, why might this be the case? I argue that we should understand Deloria as saying that since science engages the world in terms of concepts that remove entities from the totalities in which they inhere due to their Platonic origins, science’s engagement with nature does not actually attend to the way the natural world works, i.e., in terms of relations, but, rather, violently rips things out of context. This is simple repetition, but it is our entry point for considering the ethical ramifications of taking entities out of their relations with other things and treating them as instances of eternal essences.

What does the Christian creation story tell us about the human place in the world? On Deloria’s reading of the Christian creation, insofar as humans are created last, as the pinnacle of creation, and as those beings that are given dominion over all others, we arrive at an understanding of the world which holds that this world is there for human use. This sense that the sensible world is there for our use is only amplified by the “fall,” as now the material world is considered to be the site of evil and degradation. Deloria writes, “the creation becomes a mere object when this view is carried to its logical conclusion” (GR, 81). Insofar as this world is thus something we have dominion over in light of God’s decree, and also something that is fallen and degraded, humanity’s exploitation of nature is not only considered to be unproblematic ethically—as this world is not the real world—but also something that we have the divinely given right to engage in. It is in the technological mindset that takes nature as at our disposal—or even that merely takes nature as a domain of passive objectivity that is there to be studied and surveyed—that we see the coincidence of Christianity and Platonically generated Western science most explicitly. Once we have an opposition between the “true world” that is beyond the apparent world—whether this true world is heaven, or the intellectual realm of concepts, or Platonic forms is trivial—the

sensible world, the world of experience, has been denigrated. When this is coupled with a sense that humans lie at the center of things, whether this is presented in terms of God's having granted us dominion or in terms of the human as the agent that organizes the otherwise unruly sensible manifold through our capacity for representation, the human, as the being whose essence is to discover essences, is granted license to do what it will to the more-than-human world.

For Heidegger, this sense of license to dominate manifests itself in mechanistic, technical thinking that takes all things as means to an end. Yet, for Heidegger, this taking of things as *Bestand*, stock or "standing-reserve," pushes us past taking things as standing over and against us as objects. They cease being objects, as even objects have a certain kind of integrity; rather, they become means to an end. He gives the example of an airliner on a runway saying that it is "surely an object." However, even in taking it as an object we ignore fundamentally how the airplane shows itself to us insofar as we operate in a technological manner: "Revealed, it stands on the taxi strip only as standing-reserve, inasmuch as it is ordered to insure the possibility of transportation. For this it must be in its whole structure and in every one of its constituent parts itself on call for duty, i.e., ready to takeoff."¹⁸ Though this disclosure of the world as instrument is not identical with taking the world as object, it is clear to see that it is intimately related with our taking the world as something over which we have dominion, the difference here is that insofar as we get caught up in a cycle of instrumentality our technology can get out of our control. Insofar as modern science investigates the world by asking, "What use is it?" (PP, 63), Deloria explains, "if we subdue nature, we become slaves of the technology by which the task is accomplished and surrender not simply our freedom but also the luxury of reflection about our experiences that a natural relationship with the world had given us" (SR, 4). We became slaves to the process of enslaving nature to the point, for Heidegger and Deloria both, where we begin to take ourselves as mere instruments as well.

It is in this self-instrumentalizing that we see the recoil of the treating of nature as a mere object, as something over which the human has dominion, in a disturbing way in Heidegger's text. The end result of the technological mindset for Heidegger is that we actually do begin to see things as defined by their relation to other things, but it is a way of understanding things that threatens to destroy the conception of humanity as the center of the universe while at the same time laying waste to the world around us. Writing about hydroelectric power he explains, "In the context of the interlocking processes pertaining to the orderly disposition of electrical energy, even the Rhine itself appears to be something at our command...the river is dammed up into the power plant. What the river is now, namely, a water-power supplier, derives from the essence of the power station" (BW, 297). At this juncture, however, humans are not merely the controllers of nature, but we became ordered and organized by the maintenance of the structures that we have set up for ourselves to live within. Things do become defined relationally, but it is now in terms of relational exploitation wherein humans themselves are exploited. The solution often presented is that we make our technologies more environmentally friendly; however, for Heidegger this is not a satisfactory solution, as for him this perpetuates the same relationship to nature in a slowed down manner. He writes, "so long as we represent technology as an instrument, we remain transfixed in the will to master it" (BW, 314). Deloria describes this phenomenon in terms of the reconfiguration of Christian theology to be more sensitive to ecological destruction. The problem is, according to him, that Christian theology itself is inherently destructive; thus, no transformation that remains within a Christian constellation

can "solve" this problem. Hence, "the response is inadequate because it has not reached any fundamental problem; it is only a patch job over a serious theological problem" (GR, 83).

So what is the solution? For both Heidegger and Deloria if there could be said to be a solution it is to be found in our need to attend to things as being what they are only in terms of how they are relationally defined. That is to say, we need to take a step back and attend to how things are what they are only insofar as they participate in a "larger scheme of life,"¹⁹ only in terms of which they gain their identity, and only in terms of which that scheme as a whole is as it is. Many indigenous creation stories, such as that of the Anishinaabe, hold that humans are the last beings created, just as in Christianity. But the import of this for the Anishinaabe is not that we have dominion over the world but, rather, that our existence depends upon the rest of creation. In effect, humans are the neediest of all creatures.²⁰ It is thus our responsibility to maintain the world around us in order for us to survive as the beings that we are. We learn from our brothers and sisters, the more ancient animals, and only thereby acquire knowledge of how to interact with others in the world. The knowledge gained in this way is always knowledge of a particular place with particular relations of particular particulars.

For Deloria, the fact that all things gain their identity, i.e., their personality, through their relations in a particular place means that all of our relations with the world are ethical relationships insofar as the concept of personhood in the indigenous world extends well beyond the bounds of the human. In fact, this whole paper has implicitly been arguing that not only are we all related, but that we *are* our relations. Our self-consistency as humans is premised on our relationship to what we are not. This has a double bite: from the Western perspective, it is to say that we must care for the world around us for the sake of our own self-preservation, as we are not self-sufficient; but, more importantly, for the indigenous mind it is to say that we *are* this scheme, we belong to it, learn from it, survive because of it, and therefore need to take care of it. In his later writings, Heidegger refers to this as the human participation in *das Geviert*, the fourfold: "earth and sky, divinities and mortals."²¹ For Heidegger, mortals, i.e., humans, participate in the fourfold by saving, which "does not only snatch from danger. To save really means to set something free to its own essence. To save the earth is more than to exploit it or wear it out...to spare and preserve means to take under our care, to look after the fourfold in its essence" (BW, 328-29). To present this in entirely different language, it is a mandate of *Gitche Manitou*, the great mystery of being, that we care for the four directions of this world and respond to their self-showing attentively—as to do otherwise would be to betray the very fabric out of which creation is woven and to destroy ourselves in this process.

Endnotes

1. Maurice Merleau-Ponty. "Eye and Mind," translated by Carleton Dallery. In *The Primacy of Perception*, edited by James M. Edie (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 159.
2. Martin Heidegger. "The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking," translated by Joan Stambaugh. In *Basic Writings*, edited by David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 375.
3. Friedrich Nietzsche. *Twilight of the Idols*, translated by R.J. Hollingdale (New York and London: Penguin Press, 1990), 50. I have done minor revisions to the translation on occasion. Cited as TI in the text in the future with slight translation modifications.
4. Martin Heidegger. *Hölderlin's Hymn "Der Ister"*, translated by William McNeill and Julia Davis (Indianapolis and Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 17.

5. Stanley Cavell. *Philosophy the Day after Tomorrow* (Cambridge: Belknap Press at Harvard University, 2005), 238.
6. Vine Deloria, Jr. *God is Red: A Native View of Religion* (Golden: Fulcrum Publishing, 2003), 78. Cited as GR in the text in the future.
7. Vine Deloria, Jr. "Christianity and Indigenous Religion." In *For This Land*, edited by James Treat (New York and London: Routledge, 1999), 147.
8. Vine Deloria, Jr. "Relativity, Relatedness, and Reality." In *Spirit and Reason*, edited by Deloria, Foehner, and Scinta (Golden: Fulcrum Publishing, 1999), 38. Cited as SR in the text in the future.
9. Maurice Merleau-Ponty. *Nature: Course Notes from the Collège de France*, edited by Dominique Séglaard, translated by Robert Vallier (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2003), 9. Cited as N in the text in the future.
10. Martin Heidegger. "Modern Science, Metaphysics, and Mathematics," translated by Barton and Deutsch. In *Basic Writings*, edited by Krell (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1977), 280. Cited as BW in the text in the future.
11. Martin Heidegger. "Die Zeit des Weltbildes. In *Holzwege*, hrsg. Friedrich Wilhelm von Hermann (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann GmbH, 1977), 88. Cited as GA 5 in the text in the future.
12. Martin Heidegger. *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*, hrsg. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Hermann (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann GmbH, 1989), 20. Cited as GA 24 in the text in the future.
13. Richard Rorty. *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 357. Cited as PMN in the text in the future. For Rorty the majority of the early analytic tradition is to be indicted alongside Husserl.
14. Rorty argues that this connection is made throughout the history of modern philosophy when post-Locke philosophers, and even more specifically post-Kant philosophers, write about the history of philosophy: "According to the standard neo-Kantian historiography, from the time of the *Phaedo* and *Metaphysics Z* through Abelard and Anselm, Locke and Leibniz, and right down to Quine and Strawson's reflection, which was distinctively *philosophical*, has concerned the relation between universals and particulars. Without this unifying theme, we might not have been able to see a continuous problematic, discovered by the Greeks and worried at continuously down to our own day, and thus might never have had the notion of 'philosophy' as something with a twenty-five-hundred-year history. Greek thought and seventeenth-century thought might have seemed as distinct both from each other and from our present as, say, Hindu theology and Mayan numerology" (PMN, 149).
15. Vine Deloria, Jr., and Daniel Wildcat. *Power and Place: Indian Education in America* (Golden: American Indian Graduate Center and Fulcrum, 2001), 22. Cited as PP in the text in the future.
16. Maurice Merleau-Ponty. *The Visible and the Invisible*, translated by Alphonso Lingis (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 174.
17. Vine Deloria, Jr. *Perceptions and Maturity: Reflections on Feyerabend's Point of View in Spirit and Reason*, edited by Deloria, Foehner, and Scinta (Golden: Fulcrum Publishing, 1999), 3. Cited as SR in the text in the future.
18. Martin Heidegger. "The Question Concerning Technology," translated by William Lovitt. In *Basic Writings*, edited by Krell (New York and San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1977), 298. Cited as BW in the text in the future.
19. Vine Deloria, Jr. *Red Earth, White Lies* (Golden: Fulcrum Publishing, 1997), 4.
20. Basil Johnston. *Ojibway Heritage* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990).
21. Martin Heidegger. "Building Dwelling Thinking," translated by Albert Hofstadter. In *Basic Writings*, edited by Krell (New

York and San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1977), 327. Cited as BW in the text in the future.

Encountering Indigenous Philosophy in the Story of a Metis Philosopher

Sandra Tomsons
University Winnipeg

Lorraine Mayer's *Cries From A Metis Heart* contains the story of an abused Metis woman and the story of the oppression of the Metis.¹ In poetry and prose that celebrates individual and collective victory over oppressions and victimization, Lorraine allows us into her heart, mind, and spirit and reveals the spirit and philosophy of the Metis nation.² She takes us on her journey through childhood abuse and violence in her family and the terror of spousal abuse it spawned. We watch spirit unfold as the child, who vowed not to hide in back alleys or to cover her brown Metis skin, grows into a woman dedicated to ensuring her grandchildren can dream. This book has a place in philosophy classrooms for many reasons. Lorraine's Ph.D. in philosophy and her comprehensive understanding of Indigenous philosophy are present in the book without making it unintelligible or uninteresting to those not interested in philosophy. However, her discussion of Eurocentric philosophy and Indigenous philosophy in recounting the two stories permits exploring the similarities and differences between the two. I examine here philosophy's role in oppressing and healing and the differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous philosophy that account for these roles.

Individual and Group Oppression

While relating her personal struggles and triumph, Lorraine recounts the story of Metis dispossession and colonization. As she moves painfully, slowly, and fully into her Metis identity, accepting the two nations that birthed her, she discovers the means to self-worth and healing she had sought for a lifetime. And she discovers her warrior voice, her contribution to healing the Metis nation and enabling Metis freedom.

The parallel between the domination Lorraine lives as a child and wife and the domination the Metis nation lives in its relationship with Canada is as compelling as it is shocking. The book speaks to those who have been sexually abused and devalued and those marginalized by racism. To both it offers hope, which comes from first understanding "I am not to blame," and then seeing "I can still become fully me." Lorraine rages at the sources of abuse. Not relieving individuals of their share of responsibility, she demonstrates that colonialism is the fundamental cause of the abuse she, her family, and her people suffer. The beliefs, attitudes, and attendant actions and policies of the Canadian state, which unjustly dispossessed and continues to illegitimately rule the Metis people, have eaten away at the Metis heart, mind, and spirit. A weakened community produces weak individuals. Like Lorraine, who overcame the forces attacking her pride and power, and ultimately her being, the Metis can withstand. Oppression does not have to win. Victory comes with reconnection to the source of energy for the spirit of the individual and the nation.

Lorraine shows us in her powerful biography and philosophical exploration of her life and Metis history that personal and community power and healing have their roots in the love and teachings of the grandmothers. These do not erase the huge problems facing a Metis person and the Metis nation. They do enable one to hold onto oneself and enable the Metis community to maintain its integrity. Lorraine demonstrates

that one can free oneself from the devaluing and disrespect for Aboriginal peoples built into Eurocentric philosophy. She uncovers the racism underlying Canada's ongoing decision-making regarding the Metis. Mistaken beliefs and unwarranted attitudes lead to unjust actions and policies and culminate in the continuing oppression of the Metis people.

Choosing a Philosophy

I am a non-Aboriginal woman, a Eurocentric political philosopher. My main research area is Aboriginal rights, particularly in Canada. For me, and I suspect non-Aboriginal readers generally, one of the most insightful aspects of this book is its vivid portrayal of the emotional and cognitive dissonance of Metis experience. A Metis person typically chooses to live as either French or Cree, thereby rejecting a part of oneself. And rejecting a worldview, a philosophy. Personal despair and family conflict attach to either choice. Lorraine's early choice was her Cree heritage.

I think it is primarily as a Cree woman that Lorraine experiences the world. She knows the philosophy of her French ancestry—its beliefs about knowing the world, about what is real, and about how to live. However, it is Cree ways of knowing, Cree understanding of reality, and Cree understanding of being in relationships that constitute her way of *seeing* and *being in* the world. And, for Lorraine, being Indian is a choice. She explains, "in truth I am not an Indian child. Yet I chose years ago to identify with the part of me that loved me, my mother's family." She recognizes that her chosen worldview understands being in the world in ways that are unintelligible within European philosophy. Epistemically, Western philosophy predictably even questions love being the basis for choosing a worldview. Where are the arguments in love? How does love justify beliefs? Lorraine answers the Western philosopher's questions. There is an argument. It resides in the contrast between the colonizer, whom she calls Wehtiko, who came, saw, and devoured everything, and her Cree grandmother's nurturing love and teachings that nurtured. Lorraine accurately sees injustice in the former and justice in the latter. She chose justice, a choice ultimately justified by the philosophy she challenges.

The Conceit of Western Philosophy

In "My Symposium," the last section of the book, Lorraine shows us that her chosen worldview is neither understood nor respected by Eurocentric philosophers. At best, these scholars judge her philosophy to be less than knowledge; at worst, it is not *real* philosophy but merely superstition. Non-Aboriginal people necessarily and unconsciously experience the world through a conceptual framework that creates obstacles to understanding and respecting Lorraine's wisdom. However, I see in her penetrating prose and poetry the power to help her readers overcome Western philosophy's presumed superiority.

One by one the barriers to respecting her philosophy fall as non-Aboriginal readers begin to see the world through her eyes. These eyes reveal that Eurocentric disvaluing of Metis persons, nation, or philosophy is rooted in epistemological prejudices. As Lorraine puts it, "philosophers from the Americas seem to be geographically blind. They do not seem to see the philosophies from other nations." Eurocentric philosophers declare they are searching for the truth and that Aboriginal understandings of reality, knowledge and ethics are "primitive or superstitious."³ Since philosophers in the Western philosophical tradition are committed to evidence-based judgments, the hypocrisy embedded in such assessments of Metis persons, nation, and philosophy is glaring.

The philosophy being judged is unknown by Western thinkers. Obviously, judgments about Metis philosophy based

upon ignorance are unwarranted. Furthermore, since this unjustified assessment of Metis philosophy provides the foundation for most Eurocentric judgments about Metis persons and the Metis nation, these judgments are unjustified and suspect. This matters. As Lorraine explains, these judgments assign lesser value to anything Metis than to that which is "Western." From the point of view of Western epistemology, Lorraine's exposure of the fact that most assessments of the Metis and their philosophy are unjustified has consequences. The beliefs ought to be discounted and the truth should be sought. However, the consistency with which those committed to Western epistemology's rational thinking, that is, reasoned or justified belief, have arrived at irrational conclusions about Indigenous peoples and their philosophies is alarming.

Lorraine claims that she is fascinated with the egos of Western thinkers that blind them from the truth about themselves. Europeans, and now Canadians, have undeniably benefited from and continue to benefit from their blindness; nevertheless, morally and philosophically they are poorer for these benefits. Western philosophy, like Indigenous philosophies, approves neither unjust actions nor unjust benefits. Moreover, it violates essential precepts of Western epistemology to profess to be searching for the truth while presupposing either that one already has it or that others do not. The blindness of Western thinkers that Lorraine exposes is profound, and it is enormously important that they come to see the blindness. Metis self-worth and sovereignty do not depend upon this discovery, but the full exercise of Metis freedom as individuals and as a nation does seem to depend upon the removal of unjust non-Aboriginal constraints. Eliminate the oppression that attends the blindness Lorraine exposes and the constraints disappear.

Becoming One, Becoming Whole

In "Binding the Sash" there is some suggestion that healing for Lorraine and for the Metis nation involves "becoming one." The individual and the nation must accept being Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal—must identify as Metis. In the poem "We are Both" Lorraine expresses the reality of the choices that racism wrought; but, she argues, it is impossible that a Metis person is only half a self.

"Me Indian
You white
As if we could just be one
And not the other
With a French dad
And "half-breed" mother
We are both
We are Metis"

Lorraine cannot continue rejecting one part of herself if she is to be fully healed. Without this wholeness, she will remain fractured and her spirit limited. Her healing requires reconciling the two philosophies that birthed her. When Metis individuals become whole, when they no longer split themselves in two, and they no longer deny and condemn a part of themselves, then the Metis community will be a free Metis nation.

Reconciling Philosophies

Lorraine's notion of reconciling Cree and French philosophies poses a challenge for Western philosophers. Lorraine describes the Metis experience as finding oneself "caught between inconsistent beliefs, values and ideas." Some, like James Tully, might suggest that these different worldviews are commensurable, at least in terms of their moral theories.⁴ Others, after analyzing Leroy Little Bear's comparison of Indigenous and Eurocentric worldviews⁵ or Dale Turner's

account of Indigenous epistemology,⁶ may be very pessimistic regarding the possibility that Indigenous and Eurocentric ways of knowing and being in the world can be reconciled. If Lee Hester and Dennis McPherson are correct, the Western philosopher's commitment to the law of excluded middle leaves Lorraine with no choice but to accept one philosophy and reject the other.⁷ If, with Indigenous philosophy, she refuses to admit the dichotomy, has she not rejected a fundamental tenant of Western epistemology? From the perspective of Western philosophy, by adopting Indigenous philosophical positions, Lorraine believes them to be true and Western philosophy's different claims false. Moreover, Hester and McPherson, like Lorraine and Little Bear, argue that Eurocentric philosophy presumes a superiority that places Eurocentric understandings on the truth side of the true/false dichotomy when philosophies conflict. Hence, Western philosophy must assess Lorraine's choice as really choosing to believe what is false. Are these not inescapable and insurmountable barriers to reconciling Cree and French worldviews embedded in Western philosophy's fundamental ways of thinking?

Lorraine's account of her experience of choice is important for Western philosophers because she is someone they will consider positioned to choose, since she can reasonably claim to understand both. As a Western philosopher her choice should be rational; it should be reasoned. As a Cree, there are ways to acquire understanding, and teachings to understand. My understanding of Indigenous epistemology and decision-making is that Indigenous ways to knowledge and understanding of the relationship between the teachings and one's living in the world differ significantly from the dominant accounts of both in Eurocentric philosophy.⁸ Lorraine informs us that "the mixed-blood child who experiences intense rejection from one of their ancestral bloodlines will naturally take into their identity the group that shows acceptance." In successive generations, the choice to reject one side or another "is to my way of thinking a perceptual protection, a way to restore cognitive equilibrium—a way to try to become someone—of value." Lorraine's account of the experience of choosing reveals that a sense of self worth is no less important to this decision than reason's push for "cognitive equilibrium."

In "No Respect," Lorraine claims "the right to exist as part 'Indian.'" But, her understanding of human freedom and how we are to be in the world is such that she does not deny her brothers and sisters the right to either/or. She insists on respect for Indianness and that there is a Metis right to "once again coauthor our identities with the land." Importantly, there is no universal rule, there is not one right choice for every Metis, and there is no external coercion. When she informs us she identifies with her Cree grandmother, in demanding respect for that choice, she does not condemn those who chose otherwise. However, for the Western philosopher, she cannot choose the Cree worldview without rejecting Eurocentric philosophy as less valuable, less true.

In what sense is Lorraine accepting her French grandmother? She understands Western philosophy, but to what extent is it part of who she is and her experiencing? Does being Cree filter Western philosophy in a manner analogous to the way she indicates being European imposes a normative framework when a Western philosopher examines Indigenous philosophy and way of life? Does she employ one conceptual framework? Is Metis philosophy essentially Cree? Is it a unified worldview containing selected bits from Indigenous and non-Indigenous philosophies? Lorraine's work prompts a non-Indigenous reader to raise these questions. They are important questions in the philosophical conversation that Indigenous and non-Indigenous people should be having in Canada (and probably elsewhere).

This is so, even if the questions only arise and have meaning within Western philosophy. If they do, it is important to know this and to understand why only Western philosophy provides a context for the questions.

Political Philosophy and History

In the "Binding the Sash" section, Lorraine forcefully attacks the racist views of political theorist and advisor of politicians Thomas Flanagan. Throughout the book, it is when she discusses the oppression of the Metis nation that she most explicitly wears her Western philosophy garb. She challenges on their own playing field the oppressive actions and policies of the Canadian state and the arguments of scholars who justify the oppression. Flanagan's work provides an important context for her detailed account of the entrenched conceit and prejudices of Eurocentric philosophy and the belief in European superiority and Aboriginal inferiority these prejudices fuel. In *First Nations? Second Thoughts*,⁹ Flanagan argued that differences between Indian tribes and European nations and between Indian way of life and European way of life prove European superiority and entitlements. Lorraine informs us in "Red Weeds" that as Europeans call some plants weeds and want to eliminate them, so they saw the Metis as inferior and aimed to replace them with superior human beings, namely, themselves. Hierarchical thinking of the sort Flanagan defends meant that, without guilt, "Metis weeds" were uprooted to make room for more valuable "settler plants." This thinking today provides the foundation upon which colonialism rests.

Lorraine responds to Flanagan's devaluing of Aboriginal people by insisting that her Indian "blood" provides a portion of her beauty. Confident in the value of her Creeness, she calls the actions that made Metis homeless "piracy." "Civilized" European nations are really lawless, greedy exploiters. "Scrip" explains how the government and marketers stole "our land," she concludes,

"but I remember scrip
I remember
Manitoba
and I remember 1870."

It is what Lorraine remembers that explains why her assessments of Canada's actions are different from Flanagan's. Her assessments are not based on an Indigenous worldview Flanagan does not respect. Her condemnation is not grounded in an Indigenous account of reality, nor is it based upon Indigenous normative principles that differ from or are inconsistent with Western philosophy's metaphysics and fundamental justice principles. Flanagan condones what Lorraine calls "oppression" because his essentially ahistorical account lacks the morally relevant information contained within Lorraine's richer historical account. What Lorraine remembers and what Flanagan ignores makes all the difference in arriving at accurate justice assessments. Epistemologically and morally, the historical data Lorraine includes is as relevant to getting the assessment right in non-Indigenous philosophy as in Indigenous philosophy.

If Flanagan's account was richer in historical fact and emptied of its false presumption of European superiority, his Western philosophy would lead him to the same assessments of what the "white folks" did as Lorraine. Liberal theory does not sanction lies, theft, and promise breaking. These are actions that Flanagan and Lorraine both call unjust. Flanagan's justification for what Dale Turner calls "White Orthodoxy"¹⁰ is built upon false claims that can be extricated from Western philosophy. For example, in dialogue with Indigenous "philosophers" a Western philosopher can be helped to discover how Western philosophy's artificial constructs such as "the state of nature"

have, in the past and in the present, provided false premises for justifying the Canadian state's presumed superiority.¹¹

Liberalism's fundamental values do not support Flanagan's racism or Canada's presumed superiority. There are several associated values (such as: wealth accumulation is the primary aim of economic activity; man ought to dominate, own, and exploit nature; we have the true god) that serve as premises for the arguments of Flanagan and like-minded Western philosophers. However, these, unlike the values upon which Lorraine basis her condemnation, are contested within Western philosophy. They were dominant in European political and social thinking at first contact with Indigenous peoples. Arguably, they continue to dominate decision-making and action in Western democracies. However, Flanagan's white orthodoxy is a minority position because liberalism, which has provided the dominant moral framework for Western philosophy since pre-contact, has progressed in its understanding of the notion of freedom. Human freedom no longer means that persons are only free to be Christian capitalists. Different ways of being in the world are understood in terms of individual preferences rather than ranked hierarchically and absolutely.

Throughout the book, Lorraine reveals the many-sidedness of Eurocentric philosophy's hypocrisy. Defining itself as the love of and search for truth, it arrogantly assumes that none is to be found in Aboriginal worldviews. The term "philosophy" it reserves for *its* wisdom. She correctly accuses contemporary philosophy of being "The Love of Western Wisdom." Also, she is right that only when Western philosophy *appropriates* "the wisdoms" of other peoples so that they *become* Western philosophy are the wisdoms of the others *real* wisdom. Western appropriation transforms what was superstition or dogma into knowledge. The epistemic prejudices underlying this conceit are invisible, unexamined, and unjustified. Hence, Western philosophers continue devaluing Indigenous worldviews because of the unwarranted value they ascribe to their own. Lamenting the misconceptions that Western philosophers have called truth, Lorraine does not decry Western philosophy's age old love of wisdom and commitment to search for truth. Its misconceptions, such as Flanagan's, not its love of wisdom and search for truth, are the sources of the injustices she battles.

Choosing Justice

In "The Fiddler Man," Metis dispossession is expressed in the sadness of the fiddler playing to the loss of his community, Ste. Madeleine.

"Cleared of Metis
Cleared for cows."

Repeatedly trampled, the Metis heart has resisted destruction and assimilation. Lorraine proclaims in "Red Weeds," the Metis live; moreover, they have escaped "the neat little Garden boxes" in which the Whiteman placed their relatives. The Metis are free. However, as revealed in other portions of her book, Metis freedom is not yet *fully* realized. It can only be partially realized by individuals or communities so long as Canada remains a colonial state. Lorraine shows her reader that while there is a colonizer in the land, to choose to be Indian is to choose to live out either self-destructive anger or a sense of injustice.

Lorraine has lived both choices. Her first choice, self-destructive anger, resulted in several abusive relationships, despair, and self-hatred. Also, it produced a deep guilt about her way of life and her parenting. Rage rooted in this anger, self-hatred, and unwarranted guilt offered no cure for a diseased life. By recovering pride, a self-respect routed in being Metis, Lorraine found her way out—her path to healing and her philosophy. In this choice, she replaced self-destructive anger with a sense of injustice that transformed rage against her

abusers and herself into rage directed at the colonizers. Seeing clearly that colonialism provided the seed for and nourished and sustained the diseased life flourishing in Metis communities, she named the injustices she knew non-Indigenous philosophers did not see. She made visible the theft, broken promises, genocide, racism, and oppression lived by the Metis, imposed by Canada.

Lorraine's choice to direct her rage at injustice is evident when she discusses truth following "My Symposium" "I realize I am here and I struggle because I do see injustice and I will continue to address the injustice with every fiber of my being." Until Canada understands and undertakes to respect Metis freedom and the Metis nation, Lorraine and her people will reside within an oppressive state. They will live in circumstances that make some response to injustice inescapable. Lorraine shows us that to oppose the oppression, if one undertakes the struggle, is burdensome in ways unnoticed by a non-Aboriginal person. It would be enough that the struggle is directed at a powerful state falsely perceiving itself as legitimately exercising authority over Aboriginal peoples. However, problematic divisions and conflicts within Metis families and communities must also be overcome.

From the point of view of understanding the difference between Eurocentric and Indigenous ways of being in the world, it is relevant that Lorraine explains her reasons for struggling in terms of her relationships (mother, grandmother, daughter, friend, and relative) and a responsibility to her family. The commitment is not to a universal justice principle, but to her relations—to her community. No one who knows Lorraine will doubt her recounting of her deliberate choices or her aim in making them. "I must pick up my pen and do battle. I must claim a warrior's courage. I must demand an academic place to be heard, I must or my grandson will blossom in a world not of our making."

The final section of the book explores the power and powerlessness of philosophy. Lorraine has revealed that Western philosophy "justified" colonialism and that Indigenous philosophy enabled her to do battle against oppression. Knowing the prominent place they accord justice, in a series of rhetorical questions she demands Western philosophers to explain where there is justice for Metis nation. "The Fiddle Man" asks,

"How many times must we
Lose our homes our land?"

Those upholding the value of justice steal Metis land and their livelihood and deny Metis values. They impose their values and dictate practices that "destroy the lifeblood on this planet." When she challenges *their* notions of justice she is told, "be fair." Rightly, she insists that Socrates, the father of Western philosophy, did not intend such hypocrisy to be the foundation for justice. Dissociating what is just from that which harms is at the core of his understanding of justice. Socrates would condemn, not defend, the colonizer's harming, and he would protest his voracious appetite for what is not his own.

Lorraine demonstrates that within Western philosophy there are arguments that purportedly justify the actions of the colonizers (Flanagan) and arguments that conclude these actions are unjust (Socrates). Western philosophy need not condone the oppression of the Metis. When those who experience the world through the lens of Western philosophy come to understand which arguments are unsound, there can be justice for the Metis and non-Indigenous Canadians.

Weaving Metis Truth, Unweaving Western Philosophy

Indigenous scholars regularly remind me of the hidden supports for Flanagan's conclusions embedded within Western

philosophy. These supports are false, unjustified beliefs, so there is much housekeeping to be done before Western philosophers can approach the topic of a just relationship with Aboriginal peoples without the danger of travelling down a nonexistent path. Lorraine concludes “Philosopher Queen” with these words:

“Philosopher Queen
Walks steadily on
Weaving the truth from
A distortion of years.”

As Lorraine weaves the truth, she contributes significantly to the housekeeping required in Western philosophy. By weaving the truth she unravels Western philosophy’s purported truth regarding Indigenous peoples, their philosophy, their way of being in the world, and their rights relative to the non-Aboriginal governments in Aboriginal territories.

Lorraine, a philosopher who is both inside and outside the Western philosophical tradition, is well positioned to critique its assumed superiority and the narrowness of its search for truth. Despite the academy’s devaluing of her and her philosophy, Lorraine discovered more than the depths of her anger as she worked her way to a Ph.D. She found an outlet for her warrior courage and the means to create a space for her wisdom. The strong voice with which she explained colonialism’s multiple injustices and the clarity with which she explained the Metis way of being in the world would allow her grandchildren to live *their* philosophy. Her dream is that they live Metis freedom, not the Canadian oppression that aims to destroy Metis spirit. As a philosopher (in the Western sense) with an Aboriginal philosophy, Lorraine has the tools which Dale Turner maintains Indigenous scholars must acquire in order to participate in legal and political discourses in ways that will promote understanding of and respect for Aboriginal rights.¹²

Women’s Equality

It would be remiss not to mention the strong anti-sexism voice within the pages of *Cries From a Metis Heart*. It is about a particular woman’s experience, but as Lorraine claims, “it is a book that speaks to many women’s experience.” Those women, sexually abused as children, who lived in the terror of their husband’s violence, whose lovers abused their children, or whose mother’s fear of hell kept them in an abusive relationship which they had the courage to leave, can all see themselves in her story. Lorraine allows those who have been victimized and oppressed to see themselves in ways that make self-respect and courage possible. For Metis women, understanding how to be in the world comes from their Cree ancestors, in particular, “the stories our grandmothers told. We carry them and we survive.” A grandmother who calls for a return to the grandmothers’ teaching Lorraine is not applauding tradition for tradition’s sake. Nor is she demanding for women the difference-denying equality fought for by feminists who dominate Western philosophy. I believe Lorraine is dreaming of harmonious families and communities in which male and female children come to understand their responsibilities. And, if I understand her aspirations for her grandson, some of these responsibilities will differ. She writes, “I do not want my grandson to grow in a world that holds no value for his blood, a world that denies his existence, a world that values only his maleness, a world that places him above his mother, his grandmother, and his great grandmother. ... I want him to know his responsibilities as a male child.” I know from many conversations, and it is implicit in this work, that Lorraine believes devaluing of women, especially the wisdom of women that has been so predominant in Western philosophy, is not supported in Indigenous philosophy. It used to be absent from Aboriginal communities. Feminism

is only necessary in Western philosophy because of the misconceptions about women embedded within it. These false beliefs are not part of Indigenous philosophies. The disrespect and devaluing Metis women presently experience in their communities is explained by colonialism. It is a reflection of the dominant society, in particular, an outcome of the imposition of Christianity. Therefore, respect for Metis women, like respect for the Metis nation, requires both a returning to the teaching of the ancestors and also making visible the misconceptions of Western philosophy that have become part of thinking in Metis communities.

Conclusion

Through the power of her poetry and prose, Lorraine brings her reader into her life and into the history of the Metis nation. I have not been unaware of my white-woman-middle-class privileges. However, by bringing me into her personal experience, Lorraine supplies an emotive content that enriches my understanding. This passion, which I identify with the sense of justice Socrates claims is naturally in the human soul, brings me into relationship and into awareness of responsibility. By bringing me into the experience of the Metis nation, Lorraine confronts me with the racism embedded in Western experiencing of the world that produced and sustains the colonial relationship. Again the response is a sense of injustice. She provides a context in which I am able to see the specifics of non-Aboriginal responsibility in creating and eliminating the relationship. In this context, I am able to see the specifics of the responsibility and the relationship. Lorraine enlists me, a mother and a philosopher specializing in social and political philosophy, in creating a Metis future for her grandchildren. This undertaking is not selfless. Only a Metis future contains an honorable future for my grandchildren—a future in which my grandchildren are not oppressing hers. When respect flows in both directions, then the justice of European philosophy and the harmony of Metis philosophy can create and sustain the peace and friendship between peoples that Lorraine and I have in our relationship with one another.

Endnotes

1. Lorraine Mayer. *Cries From A Metis Heart* (Pemmican Press, 2007).
2. The Western tradition’s rules for scholarly writing require me to use “Mayer.” However, “Lorraine” is the appropriate way to respect my friend and colleague. Since respecting others is a moral requirement and a rule for scholarly writing is not, I use “Lorraine” throughout.
3. In a discussion of Metis philosophy, it is important to determine whether it is Indigenous philosophy. If Metis philosophy is essentially Cree, then presumably this classification is correct. However, if Metis philosophy is “a reconciliation” of Cree and French philosophies, it might be outside of the categories of “Indigenous” and “Eurocentric.” Since the Canadian Constitution has determined that the term “Aboriginal” applies to Metis as well as the peoples who occupied the territories when Europeans first came to North America, the Metis philosophy can reasonably be called Aboriginal. Since Lorraine does not explicitly identify Metis philosophy with Indigenous philosophy but, rather, implies a distinctness in being Metis, I refer to Metis philosophy as Aboriginal.
4. See, for example, Tully’s “A Just Relationship between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Peoples of Canada,” in *Aboriginal Rights and Self-Government*, edited by Curtis Cook and Juan D. Lindau (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2000), 39-71.
5. Leroy Little Bear. “Jagged Worldviews Colliding,” in *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*, edited by Marie Battiste (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000), 77-85.

6. Dale Turner. *This Is Not a Peace Pipe: Towards a Critical Indigenous Philosophy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006). Chapter 5, “Towards a Critical Indigenous Philosophy” contains an important discussion of the notion of philosopher in Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal philosophy. Turner also refers to the “highly specialized forms of thinking” that constitute Indigenous ways of thinking about the world and distinguish Indigenous epistemologies from European epistemology.
7. Lee Hester and Dennis McPherson. “Editorial: The Euro-American Philosophical Tradition and its Ability to Examine Indigenous Philosophy.” *Ayaanguaamizin The International Journal of Indigenous Philosophy* 1 (1997): 3-9.
8. My understanding of Indigenous philosophy is based on listening to and my readings of works by Indigenous “philosophers,” in particular, Taiaiake Alfred, Leroy Little Bear, John Borrows, Janice Green, Sakej Henderson, Lee Hester, Lorraine Mayer, Dennis McPherson, and Patricia Monture Angus.
9. Flanagan’s announced aim is to refute what he terms “The Aboriginal Orthodoxy.” It constitutes a set of beliefs that he maintains permeate the thinking of academics and politicians. Since they are false, these beliefs contaminate their thinking and the policy recommendations based in it. In the interests of truth and justice, he attempts to justify the following claims about Aboriginal peoples: 1) They do not have the right to sovereignty. 2) They are not nations. 3) They do not have a unique relationship with the land. 4) At first contact, Aboriginal peoples, unlike European nations, were not civilized. Tom Flanagan, *First Nations? Second Thoughts* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2000).
10. *This Is Not a Peace Pipe*, 34.
11. See James (Sakej) Youngblood Henderson’s “The Context of the State of Nature,” “Postcolonial Ghost Dancing: Diagnosing European Colonialism,” and “Ayukpachi: Empowering Aboriginal Thought” in *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*, edited by Marie Battiste (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000).
12. See Turner’s discussion of word warriors in *This Is Not a Peace Pipe*, especially his account of Indigenous philosophy professors, pp. 112-21.

Red Willows remain strong in bundles
The young, old and in between
While only a few begin to open their eyes
The buffalo call and the Eagle cries make a strong return

Stand tall and strong
Pride is there for the taking
For Red is the color of race
Four and Seven is being embraced.

Mother Earth’s Child

Irene Balfour
Brandon University

I am here, not for myself, but for you
I gave myself to you, your family, your nation
I am tired and feel used, raped and abused

My child walk softly, slowly and gently,
For your steps are loud and clear
Don’t run but walk
For you may stumble and fall

My children, family and enemies
Look, listen and learn
For my wrath can be fierce and strong
When all needs to be said and done

Be careful my dear child
And always give thanks
For a new day and life
And for your gifts and teachings

Give me your frustrations, pains and tears
And let your tired spirit rest and be renewed
I am here, not for myself
But for you

POEMS

Strong Return

Irene Balfour
Brandon University

Hidden from the first visitors’ eyes and authority
Carried and kept secret for many years to come
Knowledge Keepers remain silent in the background
Fear of retribution should the secret be openly shared
Loyalty is only a word spoken with a hidden agenda,
For self-interest and prosperity, while the meek remain meek
The Martin and the Weasel make a strong return

Once silenced by fear and control by the first visitor
Words and songs tell many tales
Of frustration, anger, betrayal and poison