

# APA Newsletters

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## NEWSLETTER ON INDIGENOUS PHILOSOPHY

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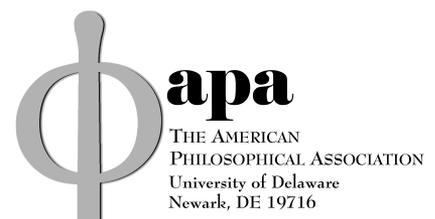
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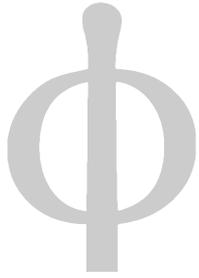
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## FROM THE EDITOR

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At the 2008 Pacific Division meeting in Pasadena, it was decided by the Committee on the Status of Indigenous Philosophers that in addition to submitted articles we would begin publishing the proceedings from the APA conferences. Since making that decision a number of new books written by Aboriginal/Native scholars have been the topic of lively discussions at recent conferences. These include *This Is Not a Peace Pipe: Toward a Critical Indigenous Philosophy*, by former CSAIP Chair Dale A. Turner, and Lorraine Mayer's book, *Cries from a Metis Heart*. Dale Turner's book tackles liberalism, challenging Native scholars to become "Word Warriors" in social political debates. Lorraine Mayer takes the personal narrative approach to revealing social injustice. Copies of the papers presented at the 2008 conference are in this newsletter. In some cases following traditional methodology scholars chose to give oral presentations. For obvious reasons, these presentations cannot be included; however, I would like to acknowledge their contributions. Brian Yazzie Burkhart discussed his perspective on *This Is Not a Peace Pipe: Towards a Critical Indigenous Philosophy* by Dale Turner and Lee Hester discussed his perspective on *Cries from a Metis Heart* by Lorraine Mayer. Both presentations were greatly appreciated by all those in attendance.

Lorraine Mayer

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

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### Name Change

The *Committee on the Status of American Indians in Philosophy* formally changed its name to the *Committee on the Status of Indigenous Philosophers*.

### Call for Papers

*Ayaangwaamizin: International Journal of Indigenous Philosophy* is seeking submissions for a special edition on the philosophy of Vine Deloria, Jr. Articles should focus on the works, life, and projects of Vine Deloria, Jr., as they contribute to a deeper understanding of philosophical issues and themes. Of particular interest are articles that convey the importance of Deloria's philosophical work to Indigenous communities. Example questions might be: How does Deloria's work contribute to understanding the nature of justice or even a deeper understanding of the problem of Indigenous justice in particular? How does Deloria's work contribute to a greater understanding of the nature of knowledge and importance

of Indigenous knowledge in particular? How does Deloria's work contribute to a greater understanding of the nature and importance of Indigenous worldviews?

### Vine Deloria, Jr. Memorial Awards

**Deloria APA Conference Travel Grants.** Native graduate philosophy students are invited to apply for \$500 grants to fund travel to American Philosophical Association conferences. One travel grant is reserved for each of the conferences with the following deadlines for the receipt of requests: December 1, 2011 for the Eastern Division meetings; March 1, 2012 for the Central Division meetings; April 1, 2012 for the Pacific Division meetings.

Applicants for the travel grant are asked to submit *electronically* a multi-paragraph statement (1) introducing the applicant and affirming tribal enrollment or affiliation, and (2) detailing the applicant's purpose in attending the conference. Since special consideration will be given to applicants who are presenting, it is especially important to detail and evidence any and all contributions that applicants will make to the conference.

**Deloria Philosophy Essay Prizes.** Indigenous undergraduate students are invited to submit a philosophy essay for one of five \$100 prizes. Submissions should be *electronic* and received by April 1, 2012.

An essay can be about any *philosophical* problem or figure, topic or methodology, tradition or movement, but contributions to or reflections on Native or Indigenous philosophies will be especially welcome. Submissions should be well-composed and conform to a standard style manual, e.g., the *MLA Style Manual*. Essays should be between six and ten pages in length, standard margins, and 12 pt. font.

### Recent Conference

The Committee on the Status of Indigenous Philosophers once again sponsored two sessions at the Central Division meeting held March 30-April 2 at the Hilton Minneapolis Hotel, Minneapolis. The sessions included:

#### Panel #1

Topic: Symposium on Environmental Justice and Indigenous Peoples

Chair: George Rudebusch

Northern Arizona University

George.Rudebusch@nau.edu

"Risking Recognition: New Assessment Strategies for Environmental Justice and American Indian Communities"

Robert Figueroa

University of North Texas

robert.figueroa@unt.edu

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“On The Killing of Navajo Sheep in the 1930s: A Case Study in Environmental Justice”

Brian Yazzie Burkhart  
Woodbury University  
brian.burkhart@csun.edu

“Environmental Justice and American Indian Communities: Political not Traditional”

Kyle Powys Whyte  
Michigan State University  
kwhyte@msu.edu

### Panel #2

Topic: Symposium on Vine Deloria, Jr.

Chair: Kyle Powys Whyte  
Michigan State University  
kwhyte@msu.edu

“American Indians and Philosophy: A Response to Vine Deloria”

Lorraine Mayer  
Brandon University  
mayerl@brandonu.ca

“Deloria, Sacred Places, and Circularity”

Thomas Norton Smith  
Kent State University  
tnortons@kent.edu

“Responsibilities vs. Rights: Vine Deloria, Jr. and Environmental Justice”

Luan Fauteck Makes Marks  
Tanam Institute  
luanmakesmarks@yahoo.com

### 2008 Author Meets Readers

#### Pasadena, CA

Author Meets Readers: *This Is Not a Peace Pipe: Towards a Critical Indigenous Philosophy* by Dale Turner

Adam Arola (University of Oregon)  
Shawn Burns (Stanford University)  
Gordon Christie (University of British Columbia)  
Brian Yazzie Burkhart (Pitzer College)

Author Meets Readers: *Cries from a Metis Heart* by Lorraine Mayer

Lee Hester (University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma)  
Scott Pratt (University of Oregon)  
Sandra Tomsons (University of Winnipeg)

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## ARTICLES

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### ***Responses to This Is Not a Peace Pipe: Towards a Critical Indigenous Philosophy by Dale Turner: Dialogue and Identity: Worries about Word Warriors?***

**Adam Arola**  
*Pacific University*

In my initial reading of Dale Turner’s *This Is Not a Peace Pipe*, I had one central concern: Would advocating for Indigenous intellectuals to adopt the role of word warriors generate a kind of cognitive dissonance wherein those who attempted to bridge the gap between the euro-american and the Indigenous philosophical traditions would end up belonging to neither? For those who have not read Turner’s text, let me lay out his concept of the word warrior as succinctly as possible. He writes:

An aboriginal mediator—a word warrior—is an indigenous person who engages the imposed legal and political discourses of the state guided by the belief that the knowledge and skills to be gained by engaging in such discourses are necessary for the survival of all indigenous peoples. (Turner 2007, 92)

As he explains, a word warrior must thereby be a person who in a certain sense belongs to both an Indigenous community while also being able to speak the language of euro-american philosophy, law, and politics. The task of such a person, as indicated by the quote just cited, is to mediate between these two worlds—and, in fact, insofar as such a person “belongs” anywhere, we may have to say that he or she belongs to this *between*. Here Turner is respectfully critiquing Indigenous thinkers such as Taiaiake Alfred who explicitly advocate for a kind of separatism wherein Indigenous intellectuals carve out and create their own communities, distinct from—and hopefully uninfluenced by—the academic and legal discourse of the euro-american world. Contrary to Alfred, Turner writes:

I am suggesting that instead of carving out their own communities and asserting their intellectual sovereignty within them, Aboriginal intellectuals must develop a community of practitioners *within* the existing dominant legal and political intellectual communities, while remaining an essential part of a thriving indigenous intellectual community. (Turner 2007, 90)

The objective is thus that word warriors will be able to simultaneously sustain and defend the integrity of Indigenous life and culture by employing, working on, and working with the intellectual traditions of the west while still being rooted in Indigenous culture.

It is at this juncture that my concern arises (or better said, arose—as I will explain in a minute). Wouldn’t this position end up generating a class of people who would find themselves in a radical kind of dissonance regarding their own identity? Can people actually inhabit such a middle space, such a between, without losing themselves in the process? Of course, Turner is smart enough to foresee this concern—and smart enough to recognize that it is one that cannot be explained away. Discussing the possible ramifications of Indigenous people (or anyone, for that matter) studying European philosophy as a

manner to try to understand the different worlds that Indigenous people and euro-americans inhabit, he writes:

Studying European philosophy may or may not help one articulate and understand these differences, but “thinking about thinking” can be a complex, anxiety-provoking process, and its effects on one’s identity can be profound. Studying philosophy is not like learning a mundane skill; it can change one’s way of being in the world, and one is not immune to this kind of change simply because one is indigenous—it depends on how seriously one engages *philosophy*. (Turner 2007, 117)

While I couldn’t agree more that studying philosophy radically alters one’s way of being in the world, I am left wondering at both Turner’s own position as well as my own worries—what, precisely, are we worried about losing in our encouraging people to adopt the stance of word warriors? What conception of identity are we working with here? On the one hand, we are obviously concerned with people losing their connection and commitment to the tribal communities out of which they have emerged. Turner explicitly notes that it is all too easy for Indigenous intellectuals to become “subsumed or appropriated by the dominant culture [and] yet continue to act as if they are word warriors” (Turner 2007, 117). The implication of this assertion being that something is lost in subsumption. But—to ask the question again—what, exactly, is lost?

On the one hand, the answer is easy: the status of a word warrior existing as a conduit, a mediator, a between, is lost. But that does not answer to the initial concern both Turner and I share: Isn’t the very position of a word warrior *always already* in danger of losing something of one’s self while serving as a mediator? Now, to get to the point of all this, I want to worry a bit about one claim that Turner makes in his text. While critiquing Alfred and others, he writes, “My argument is not a metaphysical one; that is, I am not claiming that Aboriginal ways of knowing the world are incommensurable with the legal and political discourses of the state” (Turner 2007, 73). Here I am left wondering, again, why? Why not a metaphysical argument? It would certainly seem to be moving too fast to suggest that there is no issue at all with the possibility or impossibility of commensurability between western and Indigenous philosophical traditions. Accordingly, it would seem to necessitate that we pay at least *some* attention to what exactly it is that constitutes the identity of an Indigenous or aboriginal way of being in the world, such that we fear this way may be lost or subsumed by a western philosophical mindset.

To that end, I want to begin with an assertion that Turner makes in his text; an assertion that I believe may unintentionally point us towards two different things at once: first, how to conceive (within reasonable bounds) of Indigenous or aboriginal identity, taken metaphysically; and second, why the status of word warriors may not be a threat at all towards living out such an identity, but rather, to put it in Hegelese, word warriors may be the *truth* of aboriginal identity. Again, in responding to Alfred, Turner writes, “In order to create the space for us to be free from colonialism, we must engage the dominant culture. We may not know what the process will look like, but we do know that it has to be a dialogical one” (Turner 2007, 108). It is this idea of dialogue that I would like to fasten on to, so as to claim that, at some level, the constitution of identity in many Indigenous traditions is itself a dialogical process, a conversation—whereas the western philosophical tradition more often than not carries itself forward, both epistemically and ontologically, via what Jason Wirth calls “the narcissism of monologue.”

My intention in this response is to single out two different bearings or comportments that one can exhibit in relation to the world. These comportments, which I will call dialogical and monological, are both kinds of prejudices. I am using this term—prejudice—in a manner that accords with Gadamer’s meaning when he says, “the concept of prejudice did not originally have the meaning we have attached to it. Prejudices are not necessarily unjustified and erroneous, so that they inevitably distort the truth.” Rather than seeing prejudices as necessary distortions, Gadamer sees them as necessary *tout court*; it is impossible for us to inhabit the world without having prejudged the world such that it discloses itself to us. He writes, “prejudices are biases of our openness to the world. They are simply conditions whereby we experience something—whereby what we encounter says something to us” (Gadamer 1977, 9). It is clear, however, that not all manners of carrying ourselves towards the world are identical to one another, i.e., they do not disclose the world in the same way.

Let us look briefly at what could be categorized as monological and dialogical comportments respectively, through an example regarding two different possible relations one can hold towards the land. Imagine walking into a forest—a plot of old-growth white pine in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan; say Esteban Pines at the northern tip of the Keweenaw Peninsula. Stepping into these woods, one could encounter these massive trees and think to oneself, “look at all the board feet of lumber, imagine how much money there is to be made by clear-cutting this forest so as to produce furniture!” Now imagine a second person walking into this beautiful stand and thinking to him or herself, “how beautiful! These trees should never be cut down; they should be preserved for future generations to enjoy their beauty.” These two positions—that of the logger and the environmentalist—are traditionally opposed to one another, but in fact they are instances of the same monological comportment towards this stand of trees.

Why monological? Isn’t the latter perspective—that of the person who enjoys nature—something different? No. These relationships to the forest are both instances of monologue because in both cases no real relationship is recognized; both the logger and the environmentalist take the forest to be a means, an instrument, possibly as means without an end. The end result of such an engagement with the world is to encounter everything as a means—even things which pose as ends; anything that *would* pose as an end—the generation of furniture so as to generate capital, or the experience of beauty for the betterment of an individual’s lived experience—is itself a means to further means *ad infinitum*. Thus the comportment exhibited by these two people who would—and certainly do—see themselves as exhibiting radically different relationships to “nature” is a comportment or a bearing wherein the individual implicitly or explicitly (and that may be the difference here) sees him or herself as giving the law to nature, framing its existence in terms of human purposes. It does not matter—strictly speaking—what these purposes are; so long as they are imposed without any attempt to engage in a conversation with the world such an engagement is a kind of narcissism.

So what of dialogue? What would a dialogical comportment look like? I argue that it would have to be a stance wherein one engaged the world with a sense of openness, a sense of wonder, a sense of relation. Entering into the forest with a question such as, “how am I to respond to you?” treats the world as an active participant in the dialogic creation of meaning; meaning that is not born of a univocal subject demanding that the world exhibits some particular characteristic or another, but rather meaning that is born out of an openness to the generosity, to the mystery, of being. Gadamer continues, “All

questioning and desire to know presuppose a knowledge that one does not know; so much so, indeed, that a particular lack of knowledge leads to a particular question” (Gadamer 2006, 359). A dialogical comportment would thereby be a comportment that enabled one to encounter the world as a partner in conversation; recognizing that any thing’s presence is itself always a question, presence is thus something to which we must respond. And thus, for one who engages the world dialogically, any sense of individuality is thus never *prior* to one’s belonging to a community, rather it is co-emergent with the community, the dialogic whole out of which one emerges. As Greg Cajete explains, “*As we experience the world, so we are also experienced by the world.* Maintaining relationships through continual participation with the natural creative process of nature is the hallmark of Native science” (Cajete 1999, 21).

It is my contention that Anishinaubae relations to the earth exhibit such a sense of dialogue, precisely because the prejudice—in Gadamer’s sense—of the Anishinaubae tradition is that all things are gifts of *Kitchi-Manitou*, the great spirit, the great essence, the great life, the great mystery, and need to be treated with reverence and respect accordingly. If the Anishinaubae, for example, practice Native science, as Cajete explains it, then “all relationships are related to other relationships. There is a vertical and a horizontal process, and these processes are constantly intertwining to create reality” (Cajete 1999, 41). To the extent that this perpetual process of intertwining is recognized, Viola Cordova writes, “The Native American’s response to the terror and awe inspired by the universe is to call it sacred. Its mysterious qualities are maintained. It is sacred precisely because it is beyond reification” (Cordova 2007, 109). The happening of *Kitchi-Manitou*, the great mystery—the mystery that is *zaegaud-kummik*, terrifying, but also beautiful—demands that we care for this world and respond to its 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. This destruction will certainly take place to the extent that the narcissism of monologue reigns. Only if we recognize the inexhaustibility of the world around us do we recognize that nothing can be assumed to be meaningful in any one univocal way or another; rather, meaning, and therefore identity and purpose, are only generated through the ongoing and constant conversation between oneself and the world. Accordingly, any identity is itself always a process, a *between*, something that is perpetually incomplete, but also perpetually in the process of being generated through our interactions with the world. Thus, one who comports him or herself towards the world dialogically would engage the stand of white pines as part of a living system, a system that is synonymous with the community of which the individual in question is a part. This would surely not preclude either cutting down these trees, nor reveling in their beauty, but the manner in which these acts are undertaken would be entirely modulated to the extent that neither of these acts would emerge simply out of instrumental reason; rather the integrity of trees in and of themselves and as parts of a whole would be acknowledged, respected, and even marveled at. I think that the truth of this claim can be seen in the respect paid to plants and to animals, e.g., in the offering of tobacco and the uttering of a prayer of thanks, when the life of a white pine or of a deer is taken to improve the life of a human. The fact that this offering and this prayer are offered both to the specific plant, to its *manitou*, and to *Kitchi-Manitou*, shows that this act is one that is not directed at God as some supreme end, rather it is directed at the particular life and the life of life as such—the process of life that is being.

Speaking on the theme of the book in question, but in a manner that I believe entirely accords with what I have just

presented, Turner writes, “This ‘incompleteness,’ though, is a virtue because it leaves philosophical dialogues as ongoing activities wherein meaning is constantly contested and renegotiated; and it is through the dialogical process that the participants can gain insight into the value of critical activity itself” (Turner 2007, 87). If the case that I have just presented is convincing, then Turner’s claim regarding the perpetual incompleteness of dialogue undertaken between word warriors and euro-american governments need not be seen as somehow or other threatening the integrity of Indigenous identity; rather it can be seen as its actualization. What does this mean? My claim is that incompleteness, negotiation, and process are the benchmarks of a certain conception of Indigenous identity—especially in light of the rejection of the distinction between the ordinary and the extraordinary found in the work of Deloria, Burkhart, and others<sup>1</sup>—and therefore when word warriors exist as a between, a conduit, a mediator between Indigenous culture and the world of euro-american philosophy, politics, or law, they can only do so successfully to the extent that they practice and live out this dialogue at the level of political interaction.

So where is the danger? It sounds as though I’ve painted a picture wherein dialogical engagement between word warriors and either western judicial-political systems or European philosophical tradition is the “truth” of Indigenous identity. Yet it is quite clearly not the case that judicial, political, or academic institutions have the same kind of existence as a stand of white pines. While engaging the trees monologically may have environmental consequences or even metaphysical consequences insofar as we gain our identity through our relations to the world, pine trees tend not to have the force of law on their side—at least not juridically speaking. Accordingly, the activity, comportment, and bearing of those who word warriors encounter in their existence within the courthouse, the parliament, or the classroom have just as much of a bearing upon the nature of the encounter. And to the extent that I am advocating, just as Turner is, for a “critical indigenous philosophy,” let us hear him out. Explaining the approach that word warriors are to take in the academe, he writes:

[this] approach makes an investigation of the meaning and praxis of colonialism a central activity of an indigenous intellectual community. The dialogue between indigenous intellectuals and their non-indigenous counterparts created by unpacking colonialism from the history of ideas generates the philosophical **battleground** for word warriors. This kind of intellectual **dialogue** can lead us to what I call a “critical indigenous philosophy.” (Turner 2007, 101)

To the extent that our encounters with the history of philosophy, for example, can amount to the unpacking of colonialism, we can only be successful to the extent that people have ears to hear what we are saying. Insofar as people continue to carry themselves monologically, our encounter with the history of ideas will be *precisely* a battleground—a conflict between two opposing sides, one that insists that dialogue can actually happen and thus would hopefully not try to see this dialogue as a *battle*; and another that insists that all conversation is, in fact, a battle. For most people who comport themselves in accord with the narcissism of monologue, the monologue of the sovereign that is above the law, actually engaging in open, incomplete, dialogue—actually negotiating—is unthinkable and impossible. Yet Turner’s vision is, for me, worth striving for. While worried slightly about this language of the battleground, I would like to close with a quote from Jean-Luc Nancy. Speaking about the need to move beyond this narcissism as it shows itself in state sovereignty, he writes:

I am well aware of the fact that all of this does not let itself be conceived of easily. It is not for us, not for our thinking, modeled as it is on the sovereign model; it is not for our warlike thinking. But this is certain: there is nothing on the horizon except for an unheard-of, inconceivable task—or war. (Nancy 2000, 141)

This leaves us with a choice, though a choice that we may not even understand how to make, to say, or to understand, between comporting ourselves dialogically or monologically; a choice then between dialogue or the battlefield. This is a choice that I believe Dale Turner has already made and gone a long way to elucidate, a path that he has begun to blaze; and his *This Is Not a Peace Pipe* is itself a weapon in the war of words that we may someday cease having to fight in lieu of actually having a conversation.

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## ***On the Sacred Inviolable and the Merely Fundamental: Comments on Dale Turner's This Is Not a Peace Pipe***

**Shawn Burns**  
*Stanford University*

#### **Acknowledgments**

First, let me thank Dr. Turner for writing what I take to be an inspiring and challenging call to action and change.

Second, let me thank the Committee for inviting me to read and comment on Dr. Turner's work. I am from Akwesasne, but despite the political activism that drips from the members of my tribe like water from melting icicles, I have only rarely taken the opportunity to really think hard about the nature of the relationship the Mohawks of Akwesasne, and every Indian Tribe really, has with the other political entities surrounding us.

Third, let me thank Dr. Turner once again, this time for inspiring me to think not only about the relationship Indians have with the colonial powers in North America, but also for inspiring me to think hard about the nature of Justice, and the nature of Rights, in general. My philosophical interests have

been primarily historical and epistemological, but I have found upon reflection that I have many strong opinions about justice, and the more I thought about justice and the First Nations, the more I realized how influential Mohawk resistance has been in forming the beliefs about justice that I do have. I am grateful to Dr. Turner for providing the opportunity for me to analyze my intellectual, political, and philosophical relationship with my own tribe.

#### **Turner's Explicit Criticism**

Turner argues repeatedly against "liberalism," and the way in which the Canadian state, by virtue of being a liberal state, is so constituted that it fails to acknowledge and respect the rights of Aboriginals living within the borders of the landmass over which Canada claims sovereignty. By "liberalism" Turner understands, I believe, the classical liberalism of Locke and Mill, heavily tinged by Rawls. The central idea in all of these versions of liberalism is equality of individuals: for Locke, the individual is the unit bearing the rights of life, liberty, and property; for Mill, it is the individual whose rights the state must respect except where the free exercise of those rights harms others within the state; and for Rawls it is the collection of individuals, with equal voice, who stand behind a veil of ignorance to decide on the just distribution of goods and rights. The emphasis on the individual in liberalism, Turner argues, predisposes it against recognizing those rights that Aboriginals commonly claim. Whereas the basis for justice in a liberal society is the equality of the individuals who comprise it, the basis for justice between nations, as Turner envisions the relationship that holds between tribes and Canada, is the equality of the collective voices of the states. The rights the individual members of those states have, those rights that will be respected through agreements, fall out of the collective, or group rights of the states entering into the agreements. As Turner spells out the conflict:

The disagreement between White Paper liberals and treaty federalists is not over whether individual rights are important, or central to a theory of justice, but rather over whether the *kind* of equality that Aboriginal peoples are demanding (i.e., equality between legitimate political entities—nations) can also play a role in our thinking about justice. (31)

So, while liberal approaches to Aboriginal relations fail to recognize the rights Aboriginals hold themselves to have, the liberal state is constitutively incapable of recognizing those rights so long as it views Indians as direct citizens first, and Indians from Indian nations, second.

Turner's criticism of the liberal state is intuitively plausible, and I think his motivation for criticism is well-founded. However, I don't think his criticism is broad enough, and he gives hints of a more far-reaching criticism of liberalism and European political philosophy that is never really developed. The consequences of such a development are much more severe for the liberal state than merely recognizing that some Aboriginal rights descend from their origin in the recognized equality between groups entering into agreements.

#### **The Implied Criticism**

The hint is contained in this passage from Turner's discussion of the Two-Row Wampum, and the nature of the practice of giving wampum:

Promises made in the public domain are elevated to the highest standards of diplomatic protocol. Of course, there are no guarantees that everyone will tell the truth, so even in diplomatic situations one is never "sure" the truth is being told. The Indigenous approach to resolving this unavoidable human problem is to

sanctify certain practices. Words are to be used in responsible ways, and in certain situations they bind a person to keep a promise. This was especially true if there had been an exchange of wampum. (50)

Two elements of liberal democracies almost guarantee that an agreement between an Aboriginal group like the Iroquois and a European power will go awry: (1) The long, and enshrined practice in liberal democracies of shedding itself of religious or spiritual entanglements. (2) The fundamental idea of democracy: the will of the majority determining the constitution and path of the nation. Sanctity functions as a guard against the whims of those who come after; but a liberal democracy that rejects religious or spiritual involvement in policy has a very difficult time guarding against those whims. And when the fundamental principle of the society is that its members decide what will or will not be respected, the whims can be even more devastating to agreements made in the past.

Although the American founders, heavily influenced by Locke, held that some rights were basic to the citizens of a nation, none were held to be essentially inviolate. The document in U.S. legal history that is the best candidate for being held sacred is the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights enshrined within. But even this document can be amended according to the will of those who come after. The rights guaranteed in the Bill of Rights are not guaranteed at all.

For Mill our right to free action extends only as far as the nose on your neighbor's face.

Rawls takes it even further. From behind the veil of ignorance no member of the just society has a right even to his or her own talents.

This, then, is the criticism Turner hints at, though never acknowledges openly: in a liberal democracy rights are fundamental, but they are also negotiable. But the claims by Aboriginal groups in Canada are claims about sacred items: rights and agreements. The basis for justice in a liberal society is not rights, but fairness. The basis for justice inherent in the claims by Native groups is recognition of the sanctity of rights.

If we treat justice as fairness, as Rawls would like us to do, rights become one commodity among many in the distribution of goods conducted behind the veil of ignorance.

### **The Import of the Implied Criticism**

We often use the metaphor of scales to convey the nature of justice: when a set of scales is in balance it is just; when it is out of balance it is unjust. In the liberal state, which views rights as commodities, there are two important ramifications: (1) Rights are conveyed, or granted, by the state; they are not just recognized as inherent. (2) Wrongs can be balanced out; the scales can be added to or subtracted from in order to achieve justice.

If the scales are our working metaphor for justice, then a violation of rights is not a special kind of crime, but is instead a crime that weighs more than others, and so requires more, that is, a bigger quantity, on the other side of the scales to balance it out. If rights are negotiable, as they appear to be in a liberal democracy, they can be bought. Indeed, I think that if we view justice as fairness we care that our exchanges be fair, and voluntary; but we don't care what is being exchanged, or even if it can be exchanged. In a liberal democracy that views justice as fairness rights can be exchanged just like any other commodity, so long as the exchange is fair, dealing in things that each party views as having an equal value.

But I think such a conception of justice misunderstands rights. Some rights cannot be traded away.

Equally importantly, I think these fundamental rights, whatever the final set turns out to be (someone else can attempt that articulation, I think), are *inherent*, not conveyed. They demand to be recognized by every individual and every state, not bestowed by the political entity that claims sovereignty.

And it is these, the inviolate and sacred rights, that form the basis of a just society, not the principles of fairness and equality. And I think this is the conception of rights that lies behind much of the criticism of the colonial dealings with Indians.

### **Radicalism**

It seems that despite my suburban lifestyle and my lifelong commitment to liberal democracy as a laudable political theory, I find myself approaching radicalism. And based on what Turner has to say explicitly I feel fairly confident that he is no radical. He wants the liberal state to exercise one of its great abilities, reflexive scrutiny, to acknowledge that it has miscategorized Native rights as a sub-species of individual rights instead of the *sui generis* form of group rights that he thinks they really are. I want the liberal state to recognize that it has misunderstood justice and rights in general, and I think a recognition of that will have the result of also acknowledging the rights of Indians who have a relationship with their neighboring liberal democracies. So although I think I am more of a radical than Turner, we have similar goals.

And really, if the liberal state is capable of changing in such a way that it will incorporate Native views on sovereignty, rights, and justice, and change its relationships with Aboriginal groups, it is more likely that it will happen in the conservative way that Turner thinks. I doubt that a liberal democracy could really withstand the shock of fully recognizing a special set of rights as inherent, inviolate, and the foundations of justice; it is anathema to the bargaining, trading nature of liberalism.

In closing, I'd like to invite Dr. Turner to offer some comments on just what it is about liberalism that he welcomes: he says, "I agree with Kymlicka that Aboriginal rights 'in their robust form' ought not to compete with liberalism" (58). For Kymlicka, this point might just be a pragmatic, rather than a philosophical, one: because liberalism is such a powerful ideology in Canadian politics (and many other colonial political states) that Aboriginal groups seem to have no hope of securing their rights if they are overly defiant of the liberal system in place. Is Turner's point a similarly pragmatic one? Or does he value liberalism itself to such a degree that he is unwilling to consider a stronger challenge to it?

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## ***Response to This Is Not a Peace Pipe: Towards a Critical Indigenous Philosophy by Dale Turner***

**Gordon Christie**  
*University of British Columbia*

Unquestionably, Dale Turner's *This Is Not a Peace Pipe* is an important text in the quietly emerging field of Indigenous critical literature. Within this field questions abound about methodological issues, political and social matters, and the epistemic role language, history, and identity may play in structuring discourse (and potentially reality). With so much work before them, it can be difficult for Indigenous scholars just to work out how time and energy should be expended. As an exploratory investigation into programmatic matters, Turner's work is valuable insofar as he begins a dialogue around how time and energy might be most effectively spent.

This constitutes one of the primary threads running through Turner's text—he provides an analysis that argues for the integration of Indigenous scholarship into a particular sort of larger political project, one providing direction for Indigenous research and work. This discussion is woven around several others—one that details a background set of conditions that frame the need for such direction, and another that provides an illustration of what the product of such work might look like.

The background conditions are (a) what Turner terms the “Kymlicka constraint”; (b) a need for an Indigenous voice in dialogue concerning the nature of Aboriginal rights, sovereignty, and nationhood; and (c) the heavy effect of colonialism (which weighs heavily on the lives of Indigenous peoples, and infects the political and legal landscape of Canada). The Kymlicka constraint consists of recognition that non-Aboriginal powers control essential matters framing how discourse is structured. As Kymlicka states in *Liberalism, Community and Culture*: “For better or worse, it is predominantly non-aboriginal judges and politicians who have the ultimate power to protect and enforce aboriginal rights, and so it is important to find a justification of them that such people can recognize and understand” (quoted on page 58). The need for an Indigenous voice is connected to the ongoing presence of colonial maneuvers. Royal Commissions, liberal philosophers, and government policies all share one common characteristic: the failure to open up space for Indigenous peoples to fully articulate their understandings of history, politics, and law. The ongoing presence of colonialism is felt not only in the lack of serious theorizing around its history and impact by non-Aboriginal scholars, but also in its overpowering impact on the contemporary lives of Canada's Indigenous peoples.

In Turner's analysis these conditions come together to spell out how Indigenous intellectuals should focus their energies—they should forcefully articulate an Indigenous “voice,” initially expressed within a discursive space bound by the Kymlicka constraint, with the goal of overcoming the continued effects of colonial policy in legal and political affairs. Seen in this light, the first three chapters (“White Paper Liberalism,” “Cairns' Canada,” and “Liberalism's Last Stand”) fulfill two objectives—on the one hand, they are meant to reveal how mainstream (non-Aboriginal) analysis ignores Aboriginal understandings of history, law, and politics, while, on the other hand, they illustrate how an Indigenous intellectual, trained in Western philosophy, can begin to work on the project of articulating an Indigenous voice (while working within the Kymlicka constraint).

“Liberalism's Last Stand” is focused on Kymlicka's liberal analysis of Aboriginal rights. Turner's thesis is that “Kymlicka's version of liberalism...is not tenable unless it recognizes Aboriginal understandings of political sovereignty” (59). The argument rests on a close examination of Kymlicka's characterization of Aboriginal communities as “national minorities,” and the question of how these national minorities came to be “incorporated” into the Canadian state. While Kymlicka arguably offers one of the most expansive mainstream liberal positions vis-à-vis Aboriginal rights, his remarks on incorporation reveal the same shortcomings evident in policies of the state (for example, the “white paper liberalism” of the late 1960s) and in the writings of more conservative liberals (for example, in the “citizens plus” approach advocated by Alan Cairns). The fundamental shortcoming is a form of selective historical construction. The liberal, no matter what form or stripe, begins from a position marked out by the contemporary ahistorical “fact” of incorporation, though there is no conceivable means by which such a situation can be justifiably defended.

When this “fact” of incorporation is set aside, the fundamental need for Indigenous expression emerges. On the one hand, the “problem” of Aboriginal participation can be seen as one of positioned perspective: just as an Argentinean expert on Canada might be able to write sensibly about Canadian matters, but cannot speak with a Canadian voice, non-Aboriginal Canadians can write sensibly about Aboriginal matters, but cannot speak with an Aboriginal voice. Turner's critique of non-Aboriginal analysis, however, seems to drive toward a deeper level at which this problem of Aboriginal participation must be appreciated: it is not presented just as a matter of positioned perspective (which would tie it to questions of “race” or “ethnicity”), but as a problem of politics: “sovereignty lies at the very core of Aboriginal existence, and history is the main source for understanding the complex nature of Aboriginal forms of political sovereignty” (67). It is a matter of exploring notions of “sovereignty,” “rights,” and “nationhood,” where such explorations are conducted in a more inclusive manner, and where they rest on the presumption that Aboriginal communities' understandings of these notions have to go into the construction of meaning.

We come, then, to the vision of how this process should unfold. How should Indigenous intellectuals go about articulating a voice that can speak to questions of sovereignty, nationhood, and rights? Turner works from another background condition, that the need is to open up space for Indigenous understandings. Kymlicka's constraint dictates that effort be put to the task of working within the dominant intellectual frameworks, so that non-Aboriginals come to see the legitimacy of emergent Aboriginal understandings. This necessitates the nurturing of “word warriors,” Indigenous intellectuals thoroughly trained in Western modes of thought: “I contend that a community of indigenous intellectuals—word warriors—ought to assert and defend the integrity of indigenous rights and nationhood *and* protect indigenous ways of knowing within the existing legal and political practices of the dominant culture” (74). Such workers must engage dominant discourse from within, but not be removed from Indigenous sources of wisdom, which necessitates their placement as intermediaries between Indigenous philosophers and the dominant system: “the wisdom of the elders...must inform and help shape the strategies word warriors use to engage European intellectual discourses” (74).

Two groups of intellectuals are defined: Indigenous philosophers, conversant in the many and varied ways that Aboriginal peoples *know* the world, and word warriors, “educated in the legal and political discourses of the dominant culture” (119). Working in concert, they must “engage European ideas both as a philosophical exercise and as a political activity. It is not enough to simply engage European thought on its own terms; indigenous intellectuals need to critically engage European ideas, methodologies and theories to show how they have marginalized, distorted, and ignored indigenous voices,” all the while striving to find an appropriate conceptualization within European philosophical discourse for the “spiritual dimension of our indigeneity” (114).

This is an ambitious and compelling picture of how Indigenous intellectuals should come together as agents in a collaborative political program. The aims of the program are three-fold: “(a) they must take up, deconstruct, and continue to resist colonialism and its effects on indigenous peoples; (b) they must protect and defend indigeneity; and (c) they must engage the legal and political discourses of the state in an effective manner” (96). Effectiveness is strongly influenced by Kymlicka's constraint (effort must be put toward successfully convincing non-Aboriginal institutions and parties), while

decolonization and the protection of indigeneity demand both (i) that the Indigenous intellectual continue to push back against dominant forms of theorizing and (ii) that as an *Indigenous* intellectual she be vigilant in meeting her responsibilities toward her community.

As compelling as this picture might be, it also presented as an invitation to discussion and critique. Some of the first questions are about audience, intent, and the place of the author in the vision presented. Who is Turner addressing? Clearly one primary target must be Indigenous intellectuals. This is certainly not the only direct target, but nevertheless it is impossible not to appreciate how programmatic Turner's piece is—he is making a call to other Indigenous intellectuals, putting before them his considered thoughts about how intellectual resources should be mustered, organized, and directed. The other primary audience would be those to whom the larger political project is directed—non-Aboriginal powers that typically exert tremendous control over the very parameters of debate around the nature of Aboriginal rights, sovereignty, and nationhood. This is not to exclude non-Aboriginal allies, but just as the Argentinean can only properly play a supporting role around certain political agendas within Canada, the non-Aboriginal scholar must play a supporting role in the struggle to open up, and fill, space for the articulation of Indigenous understandings. What role does Turner see himself playing? One small step back from the piece suggests Turner is a word warrior, as he has laid out this role. He is trained in the discourses of the West, he has a clear political agenda, and the two come together in the sort of work we see exhibited in the first half of the text. Oddly enough, though, he characterizes himself as “at best, a guide to intellectual landscapes” (117).

Appreciating, then, the intent behind this prolegomena, what can be said about the content? There are three general matters that come to mind. First, there are concerns about practical aspects of the program. Second, there are questions about the validity of certain positions advanced within the general argument, and about connections between aspects of the argument. Third, there are questions about the overall validity of the picture constructed—concerns, for example, about the likely value of mustering, organizing, and working in the framework envisioned.

On the practical side, one has to be concerned about how the various pieces of the critical program will be put in place. How will Indigenous communities nurture intellectuals willing and capable of playing a vitally important role as word warriors (of the sort Turner describes)? It is important to note that this sort of person is highly specialized—she is not simply a competent (nor even an exceptional) lawyer, or judge, or politician. Rather, she is first and foremost an academic, with a powerful grounding in one core pillar of the Western intellectual system, Western political philosophy. As this itself rests on deep and complex systems of epistemological, metaphysical, and ontological thought (the product of hundreds of years of ever-evolving self-referential philosophical rumination and construction), we are supposing the conscious development of a very specialized class of intellectuals, people who typically only reach this level of education after decades of schooling.

There are also questions about Indigenous philosophers. Turner seems aware of many of the problems with placing wisdom-keepers in such roles (some Aboriginal communities, for example, may be understandably reluctant to have sacred or “private” aspects of their knowledge laid bare to the world, even if through an intermediary). But there are also other questions, not directly addressed in this text, about how, for example, Indigenous philosophers and word warriors will come together and function together. Besides the fact that this will

differ from one Aboriginal nation to another, there are questions about how those steeped in traditional ways of knowing will work with those trained in Western philosophy to translate Indigenous understandings of politics, history, and law into forms useful in the larger political project. On top of this concern are questions about the varied impact of colonial policy—while some Aboriginal communities may have the human resources to engage in this sort of project, what of those devastated by the impact of residential schools, and other attempts at destroying the cultures and worlds of Aboriginal peoples?

Questions about inner workings of the program revolve around, *inter alia*, concerns about the place of Kymlicka's constraint in the overall argument, about whether the division of labor envisioned is necessary, and about whether each agent in this project must play the sort of role presented. All these sorts of questions ultimately circle back to the background conditions, and in particular to the first concern noted—whether the Kymlicka constraint must be accepted as structuring thought around how Indigenous intellectuals expend their time and energy.

Do we find ourselves in a world within which it is essential that work go toward convincing non-Aboriginal powers of the failings of their own arguments and positions in light of the unacceptable shadow colonialism casts over the legal and political life of Canada? What about alternative assessments of Indigenous life in Canada, pointing to other ways in which time and energy might be best spent? What, for example, of communities with longer vision, tied to generations-long resistance to colonial maneuvers, communities determined to continue to stand on ancient principle? Some communities carry powerful memories of their ancestors' struggles against the state and its institutions, memories that continue to drive forms of resistance to the state. These communities are well aware of the Kymlicka constraint—in one form or another it has been presented as “reality” for as long as Crown sovereignty (and Aboriginal incorporation into the state) has been presented as an immovable force. Resistance to imposed external force, for these communities, would encompass both resistance to state intrusions *and* resistance to the notion that energy must be spent in convincing powers-that-be (in *their* language of discourse) that intellectual space must be opened up around Indigenous understandings.

These concerns about the bits and pieces of Turner's overall argument bring us around to the general question about this work—whether it points debate in the direction of action that might lead to better outcomes for Aboriginal communities. For simplicity's sake, let us imagine two camps: (a) those willing to try to work with (or in relation to) various forces within dominant society, all with an eye to moving toward some form of reconciliation, and (b) those primarily only concerned with an internally defined mode of decolonization. Turner presents a powerful argument from within the former camp—he argues that some Indigenous intellectuals must branch off from (but remain connected to) the core of Indigenous wisdom, so that they might directly engage with Western forms of thought and discourse (as part of a political program of reconciliation). In the last chapter of his work he discusses a number of Indigenous intellectuals, some who fit this mold (John Borrows and, seemingly, Robert Williams and Elizabeth Cook-Lynn), and others who clearly do not (Taiaiake Alfred and Patricia Monture-Angus). As neither Borrows, nor Williams, nor Cook-Lynn is extensively trained in Western philosophy, they are at best proto-warriors—nevertheless, in Turner's mind they are the way forward for Aboriginal communities. Alfred and Monture-Angus, on the other hand, are said to be misdirected and misdirecting. While Turner agrees with the value of the sort of work on which

they would have Indigenous intellectuals expend energy, since they find direction for this work solely from within the project of decolonization (argued to be primarily a means of *disengaging* with the harmful effects of colonial policies and embedded mentalities), he takes issue with the visions they offer for how to move forward. He has this to say about Alfred's position on fighting colonialism:

As with the drive for indigenous forms of political recognition, in order to create the space for us to be free from colonialism, we must engage the dominant culture. We may not know what the process will look like, but we do know it has to be a dialogical one. ...Alfred is right to point out that colonialism has to end and that indigenous peoples can play a major role in bringing about that end, but we need to know how to go about doing so. (108-09)

In discussing Monture-Angus he quotes her, stating that "I no longer believe that Canadian law has a role to play in fixing the damage to this web [of relationships with family, clan and nation]" (113). He then goes on to say:

I do not agree that law does not have a role to play in securing a political relationship that will allow indigenous communities to thrive ...Her experiences as law professor show how hostile the dominant intellectual culture can be, but it does not follow from this hostility that indigenous peoples must not participate in these agonistic communities. (113)

Monture-Angus and others have, though, experienced the hostility of the dominant intellectual culture. Likewise, Indigenous leaders—both political and academic—have been witness to generations-long denial of the legitimacy of their political positions and arguments. At the core of Turner's thesis is the notion that political and discursive "space" will open, if the *right* sorts of arguments—sophisticated in the Western sense, yet ground in Indigenous understandings—are developed and delivered. One has to wonder, however: given the experience of Indigenous communities and individuals with the incorrigible attitudes of those in power in dominant society (acknowledged in Turner's text), how are we to imagine a dialogical process overcoming these attitudes? Will reason overpower firmly entrenched desires, interests, and attitudes?

The argument seems to be that no one with sufficient training in the philosophies of the West has yet articulated *in the systems of the West* (for the benefit of the powers-that-be) precisely what Indigenous understandings of Indigenous claims and interests might be. While Turner acknowledges one major question looming over this enterprise—namely, whether or not it is *possible* to articulate Indigenous understandings in the intellectual frameworks of the West ("Whether these [unique ways of understanding the world] can be explained to dominant culture, and understood by it...remains to be seen" [119])—one has to wonder why bother engaging in this exploratory work at all, if the desired political outcome itself seems unlikely to come to pass. The intellectual project Turner envisions only connects to emancipatory outcomes if we are to imagine that Indigenous intellectuals, working from within Western systems of thought, articulating Indigenous understandings in this alien language, are likely to be able to *persuade* non-Aboriginal forces with these still-to-be-developed arguments.

The concern is not particularly with whether or not Turner is being overly optimistic. His argument could be reasonably construed as being that the path he lays out is the best option (given a realistic assessment of the current situation), and not that there is any great chance of success down this route. Still, the path is offered at this point in contrast to other possible

paths down which Indigenous intellectuals might tread, which places the issue before this group to consider.

We arrive back, then, at the point initially made about this book. This is best understood as a programmatic piece, meant to stimulate discussion amongst the emerging class of Indigenous intellectuals around how best to proceed. In that regard the text performs admirably—whether one agrees with Turner or not, he has clearly presented fundamental issues that must be considered, all in the context of a need for there to be a community of Indigenous intellectuals debating these issues. One voice has been raised, and now others should respond.

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## **Responses to Cries from a Metis Heart by Lorraine Mayer**

**Scott L. Pratt**  
*University of Oregon*

When I was asked to respond to Lorraine's book *Cries from a Metis Heart* I accepted with some hesitance. I had already read a draft of the book and it was compelling and frightening—a painful account of cultural survival, death, growth, transformation, and finally hope. Along the way Lorraine took to task the so-called Western system of education, my own University, also Lorraine's doctoral degree *alma mater*, and the department in which she worked and I still work. I realized that my response would be a difficult one to prepare in significant part because I have known Lorraine for almost a decade, worked with her as a teacher and dissertation adviser, and yet, in reading her book, I was shocked by how little I knew of her past and her pain. I knew also that I could not affirm without question every claim she makes against the Western tradition or every explanation she gives of the causes of her torment. At the same time, I believed that Lorraine's work represents a crucial part of what it is to do philosophy regardless of what the core of the Western tradition has declared. Rather, her work represents an aspect of what has been best in Western philosophy as well—moments of reflection that have responded to crisis, failure, and loss. By drawing together personal narrative and analysis of the situation focused on the categories and relations that frame it, Lorraine is able to confront the limits and the confusion and realize—that is, make real—a transformation. In the Western tradition, Augustine's *Confessions*, Descartes' *Meditations*, Emerson's essays, and the work of Beauvoir and Sartre, whatever one thinks of their philosophical conclusions, are methodologically comparable to works thought to be on the fringes of philosophy: Du Bois' essays, the books of Charles Eastman and Jane Addams, and more recently the work of Vine Deloria, Jr. and Gloria Anzaldúa. This sort of philosophy must find a place because it finds the edges and, at the intersection of incompatible worlds and individual confusion and loss, it changes lives and ultimately brings hope. It is my belief in the power of Lorraine's book and my respect for her courage and vision that led me to want to respond to her work today and to be grateful for the opportunity.

There is much to discuss in *Cries from a Metis Heart*, but I will focus on what I take to be the operative notion of self that emerges in the book and which points to the theory of transformation that is at the center of her philosophical method. I begin with a quotation from the end of the first chapter, titled "Ambivalence":

I read in *Misty Lake* (a story about residential school) that humans need to learn how to suffer, and in order to understand that suffering we have to understand

our history; we have to come to know we were not responsible for what happened to us. My process of writing has taught me precisely that; it opened up a world of historical connection. I came to see the interconnectedness of my pain and my life's choices. I saw my children's lives intimately tied to my pain and I saw their choices destroying them much as mine had almost destroyed me. I came to see we have been victims of a past we had not created. As such, I came to see that living with a sense of victimization was not a place I wanted to live. I could visit it, yes, but only long enough to give me guidance, after that I would leave it behind and celebrate my life. (20)

At first it would appear that Lorraine is offering a contradictory starting point for her narrative. On one hand, she realizes that the story of her life—its pain and abuse—is not her fault. By telling the story, her readers (and Lorraine as author) will come to see that the terror of the present is a consequence of others' actions and not her own or her children's. On the other hand, Lorraine holds that it was her choices and the choices of her children that led to near destruction. One might argue that it can't be both: one is either a passive victim or one is active and brings about the results as a matter of choice. One cannot be both. A critic of Lorraine's position might then argue that she must embrace one or the other. If history is at fault, then she should set aside self-blame and the blame of her children. If choice is at fault, then the past is surely an obstacle, but one ought not blame the circumstances or the European immigrants that brought them about. The criticism may not be mistaken on its own terms (that is, from the perspective of a particular bivalent logic), but it is mistaken relative to the position Lorraine sets out in her book. Rather than offering a contradiction, Lorraine, I think, is offering a realistic description of the character of individuals as they are made by their circumstances and yet have within them the means to transcend the circumstances and make choices. This could be called Lorraine's transcendental deduction. The reality of choice is one that emerges in spite of circumstances, not as a product of them. It is a transcendental claim because there is nothing in the lived situation—the abusive marriage, the tormented childhood, the desperation of poverty—that can change the situation. Instead, in the midst of these situations, there is contact with something more—the saving tradition of the Metis, the advice of a friend, the recollection of a story—that amounts to seeing an opening in the wall, a vaguely porous boundary that offers an alternative. Choice marks the presence of an agent, a living person, who has the capacity to strike back or out. In effect, Lorraine adopts an ontology in which the individual person stands connected to (or disconnected from) other circumstances, communities, and times. Salvation involves recognizing the boundaries of the situation in order to see the alternatives that lie beyond and to make choices. While Lorraine does not explicitly frame her conception of identity in this way, it seems to me that her double claim that denies responsibility and simultaneously requires it expresses a key insight into both the nature of agency and the character of the Metis—the children of aboriginal and European parents who are neither fully Native nor fully European in descent. “We are,” Lorraine concludes, “not either/or—we are both” (11).

Circumstances of politics and history force Metis children to choose, as if they must truly choose between the cultures and people who bore them. The result is an identity at odds with itself. Some chose to be European and others to be Native. She asks: “[But] what happened to the relatives of children who became Indian and the relatives of the children who became white? I can tell you. Many later rejected their nieces, nephews, uncles, aunties and cousins as being not Indian

or not white like them. And the children, what did they do? Rather than blossoming in the beauty of their uniqueness, they denied themselves and chose to be one or the other.” Lorraine concludes: “The rejection of one side or the other is to my way of thinking a perceptual protection, a way to restore cognitive equilibrium—a way to try to become someone—of value” (16). But this cognitive equilibrium is to no avail.

The history that led to the necessity of choice continues to demand separation and division and the loss of oneself. To choose one “side” or the other is the wrong choice because it cuts one off both from her past and from the possibility of transformation. Linda Martin Alcoff, in her recent book *Visible Identities*, comes to a similar conclusion. For her, in the United States, “an important relation exists between purity and racial identity.” “It is easily apparent,” she continues, “that acceptance and status within a community is tied to one's racial identification and *identifiability*” (268). Those of mixed race descent are forced to choose between identities and this forced choice is disastrous: “without a coherent identity, an individual can feel an absence of agency” (269). Agents, for Lorraine and Linda Alcoff, emerge in the face of a choice and depending upon the choice made gain new life or lose it. Lorraine concludes that it is by embracing a position on the boundary as both Native and European that one finds hope. In the second through fourth chapters, Lorraine chronicles the consequences of a series of choices that divide her and her family from themselves and from each other. It is in this state of loss that Lorraine struggles against abuse, against her quest for meaning only in the eyes of her neighbors, in the loss of those closest to her. But in the fifth chapter, “Binding the Sash,” Lorraine reasserts the transcendental possibilities of a Metis identity. “We are,” she says about the Metis, “still the people who bind the sash, metaphorically symbolizing the holding together of a nation, a nation that no one can take away from us.” Here the character of what W. E. B. Du Bois called “twoness” becomes a reassertion of identity at the boundary between Native and European America and between a history of a tortured past and a hopeful future. In the poem “We Are Both,” Lorraine sings, perhaps to her sister, “We get awful huffy/when it comes to blood/I say Indian/you say white/Who hurt us?/Left us claiming/half ourselves?/Do I deny our dad/while you deny our mom?/We're neither right/not you or me/We're both/We're blended not/divided, separated/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” (70). This position or rather the recognition of a history at odds with itself—not of her own making, but still of her own choice—is where the narrative turns and identity is reborn (see p. 61). It is this transformation, almost transfiguration, that leads in chapter 6 to the Red River Jig. What I said earlier about Lorraine's transcendental deduction becomes apparent in the sixth chapter. In light of the self-realization of being between cultures and as such both, “I started to see,” she says, “where my power comes from and what I could do with it. I also realized”—and this is the transcendental part—“at moments of absolute weakness I was never truly alone, for women long gone guided me.” She continues, “The pain of my life had so overwhelmed my senses that I missed seeing the support that had been there. I have not done all this myself. I am not an island. I had people; I just could not see them, I could not feel them and most of all I could not trust them. Nonetheless, they were always there” (83). In effect, Lorraine's history placed her in a situation not of her making both in terms of the suffering she underwent and the rebirth she experienced. And yet the transition from suffering to rebirth marked the intersection of things beyond the present situation and a moment of choice. The tension described in the quotation at the beginning of this discussion was not a contradiction but a representation of the tension Lorraine faced

as a Metis between the oppression of circumstances and the recognition that there is something more. Gloria Anzaldúa, in her book *Borderlands/La Frontera*, offers a similar account of the experience of living as a mixed race woman. “Cradled in one culture,” Anzaldúa says, “sandwiched between two cultures, straddling all three cultures, and their value systems, *la mestiza* undergoes a struggle of flesh, a struggle of borders, an inner war” (100). The struggle has the potential to destroy but it also has the potential to generate something new, what Anzaldúa calls “a *mestiza* consciousness.” While conflict between nations and peoples continues, Anzaldúa argues that it is the *mestiza*, the women of the borderlands, who have the potential, through their embrace of their identity at the border, to transform both themselves and humanity. She concludes:

The work of *mestiza* consciousness is to break down the subject-object duality that keeps her a prisoner and to show in the flesh and through the images in her work how duality is transcended. The answer to the problem between the white race and the colored, between males and females, lies in healing the split that originates in the very foundation of our lives, our culture, our languages, our thoughts. A massive uprooting of dualistic thinking in the individual and collective consciousness is the beginning of a long struggle, but one that could, in our best hopes, bring us to the end of rape, of violence, of war. (102)

In the final chapter of *Cries from a Metis Heart*, titled “My Symposium,” Lorraine marks her transformation through philosophy, which she calls her “chosen vehicle.” It is, she says, “the search for truth, not the absolute, universalistic truth sought after by so many others. No, my truth is about our history, our philosophy, our ways of knowing and doing” (p. 97). This philosophy, she declares, is in contrast to the philosophy of the West. “[It] is only the Western European-descended philosophers that are blind to the limitations of their philosophy.” Such philosophers are the problem and not the solution, whose ways of thinking, thanks to their descent, are unable to transcend themselves or the destructive relations they impose on others. The irony here is that by her own claim, Lorraine is also a European-descended philosopher. One might argue that resulting view has a contradiction at its heart and, in this light, ought to be rejected. I think what is at work here is the same tension that emerged in the first chapter between responsibility and choice. Western philosophers, to follow this approach, are given an intellectual legacy that forms them and frames their ways of thinking. Their encounters with others, the ancient wisdom of Native people, for example, offer moments of choice in which they fail to be the transcendental thinkers they claim to be. Instead, Lorraine says, “when confronted with ancient, non-European-descended wisdom they balk and spew their jargon, possibly hoping we will forget, transcend their theft and genocide and walk humbly behind, grateful for any philosophical consideration they may toss about” (95). Yet when we try to identify who these philosophers are, Lorraine generalizes: “Western thinkers,” she says without qualification, “think they have evolved their philosophical tradition from the ancient Greeks’ love of wisdom.” She continues, “I am fascinated with the egos that blind them to the truth of their progression—a progression founded on theft, deceit, and paternalism” (95). Are these thinkers those of European descent alone? But Augustine, Averroes, Maimonides, and Spinoza were not “pure” Europeans. Is it only those who imagine themselves pure in family line that count? Who are these thinkers blind to the truth? It may be that Lorraine’s notion of the identity of these philosophers is strictly a matter of “blood”—a claim I would find difficult to accept. It is more likely that her claim is tied to the

character of these thinkers and the ways they live their family inheritance, culture, and history. If it is this latter idea, then the problem with Western philosophers—those blind egos—is a failure to mix, a failure to take up a position to recognize that there are others with different and still viable views and to learn something about being on a boundary. I suspect that Lorraine may stop me here and say that one cannot apply a notion of identity developed in the context of Metis experience to others who stand outside that experience. I would respond that if the limitation is correct and we can absolutely prohibit the application of such ideas across cultural difference, then it would seem to deny the central character of Metis identity: that it emerges across a cultural divide. Rather, I would argue that the blind Western thinkers in question are those who are made by their histories and then fail to make choices that will lead them to the boundaries to see that there is more. In contrast, Lorraine’s work, which instantiates both Native and European philosophies, provides a point of contact where people who are wholly within the tradition of the West can find themselves transformed, not to become Native or Metis, but rather to become something new themselves who will, in their own work, unsettle their people and culture and become agents whose choices promote growth and coexistence. When I first tried to prepare this response I simply wrote, “Where to start?” The anger and pain expressed by Lorraine speak for themselves. What purpose could my comments serve in light of this single, passionate narrative? But then I realized that the experience of being challenged, horrified, frustrated, and lost is not just an accusation to which there is no reply or a demand for an apology on behalf of some generalized category called the West. It was, rather, the construction of a transcendental moment in which the hurt and horror places the reader at the boundary between Native and European worlds. What will come of the transformation is unknown, but it has the potential to lead to a new territory in which those in the white world take responsibility for their own choices and in so doing learn their own humanity, atone for their sins, and look forward to a new dance.

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## ***Cries from a Metis Heart and Understanding Metis Philosophy***

**Sandra Tomsons**

*University of Winnipeg*

Lorraine, thank you for writing *Cries from a Metis Heart*. It is required reading in my introduction to Western philosophy course. I use it to engage students in philosophical inquiry in the areas of metaphysics, epistemology, social and political philosophy, and ethics. Meeting you, they encounter what I call “Metis philosophy” and simultaneously discover “philosophy” does not mean “Western philosophy.” They learn *their* fundamental metaphysical, epistemological, and normative beliefs are *their philosophy*; their worldview. This is a significant insight. In their society, even in the academy, “worldview” is frequently used to marginalize non-Western philosophies. Western philosophy is *genuine* philosophy; other cultures have worldviews. *Cries from a Metis Heart* opens doors to philosophical inquiry in my classroom that would not even be visible examining basic philosophical questions only from the Western perspective. On behalf of many students who have expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to learn from you, I say thank you.

My forward to *Cries from a Metis Heart* begins as follows:

“The story between the pages of this book is more than a cry from the heart of one Metis woman; it is a celebration of victory over oppressions and victimization. Lorraine Mayer, in poetry and prose, allows us into her heart, mind and spirit and also into the spirit and philosophy of the Metis nation.” *Cries*’ displaying of the spirit and philosophy of the Metis nation is my focus in what follows. My aims are simple: to allow Lorraine to correct my mistakes and improve my understanding of Metis philosophy so that I will not misinform my students. My questions pertain to cognitive dissonance, Metis identity, and Metis philosophy.

*Cries* brings readers into the perceptual reality of a Metis woman; a philosopher reflecting upon her experience and the history of the Metis people. Lorraine’s book allows me, a non-Aboriginal woman, to introduce my students to Aboriginal philosophy in the only manner which Lee Hester and Dennis McPherson argue is appropriate and safe for me as a non-Aboriginal philosopher. “The Indigenous person engages in philosophy by thoughtfully examining the world. The outsider examines Indigenous philosophy by thoughtfully interacting with the Indigenous philosopher.” Their compelling arguments and occasions interacting with Indigenous scholars (such as Lorraine, Dale Turner, James Sa ke j Henderson, and Thomas Norton) have jolted me to awareness of the Western philosophical conceptual framework informing my perceptual reality which have impeded my understanding and shown I must have Aboriginal guidance when entering this territory. However, like the released prisoner in Plato’s cave I also must be on guard against “I’ve got it now.” Thinking I have understood when I have not has been a recurring obstacle to fuller understanding. Recent readings of Lorraine’s book are leading me to ask whether it is a field of land mines for such as me. In particular, I need more than the words on the *Cries* pages to understand how to explain Metis philosophy.

The definition of philosophy Hester and McPherson provide (philosophy is a thoughtful interaction with the world, a complete way of life) provides a useful starting point from which to think about my questions about Metis philosophy (Hester & McPherson, 9). This means I am to avoid thinking of Metis philosophy as a static, unchanging set of epistemological, metaphysical, and normative beliefs analogous to the philosophical systems of Aristotle, Hume, or Kant. Beliefs belonging to the Metis worldview are integral to and discovered in Metis’ interaction with the world. Like the Western philosophical tradition, Metis philosophy is a living, changing, growing, critical inquiry grounded in Metis reality past and present.

This understanding of Metis philosophy works for me until I place it in the context of what Lorraine says about cognitive dissonance and Metis identity. Early in *Cries* she explains the unique, complex, and inescapably problematic circumstances of Metis experience and the implications this has for one’s self-understanding. The identity question for a Metis child is unavoidable. Deliberate choice is necessary. Typically, choosing an identity means one is rejecting a part of one’s two-part self. One chooses one ancestor and rejects the other, thereby opting for a way of life and philosophy. Lorraine chose to identify with the part of her that loved her. Her choice was to be Cree (14). Western philosophy deems her choice irrational. Passion, not rational deliberation, grounded her choice. Epistemologically, reasoned argument ought to be the basis for one’s decision to adopt a philosophy. Lorraine might laugh at this suggestion. Indeed, as she reveals the circumstances of a Metis child who is confronted with the racist attitudes and behaviors from both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, one is confronted with the impossibility of purely rational choice. Lorraine chose to become Cree. By identifying with those who loved and accepted

her, she chose a way of life. In the choice of the Cree way of life, she chose Cree philosophy and rejected Western philosophy.

A Metis child’s choice is explained as necessary; the means to escape cognitive dissonance. Lorraine explains cognitive dissonance as “the internal pain of confusion, of finding ourselves caught between inconsistent beliefs, values and ideas” (16). Her account exposes two tragic consequences of choosing to identify with one bloodline in order to escape pain and inconsistency. First, one alienates oneself from family members. Second, one rejects a part of oneself, a philosophy defining a different way of being in the world. Lorraine’s choice to be Cree separated her from family and community members who identified with their French ancestors and rejected their Cree “blood.” Her poem “No Respect” describes the conflict between two sisters revealing the tragic consequences when a Metis child chooses her identity. Racism seems inescapable whatever a Metis child chooses. Lorraine is called racist by her sister when she expresses contempt for White man. She experiences her sister’s racism in her sister’s loathing and contempt for Indian (16,17). In Chapter 1, aptly titled “Ambivalence,” Lorraine writes of an aunty whose “love came with deceit.” Aunty protested her brothers “marrying these half-breed women!” (11). This Metis woman had chosen to be French and employing the racist expression “half-breed” demonstrates her contempt of her Indigenous ancestors and her absorbing of the inferior/superiority dichotomy built into Western philosophy’s understanding of Indigenous peoples.

Metis identity choice may resolve cognitive dissonance in the sense that one has decided to live as Cree or French. But, has a Metis child in making this decision moved from one experience of cognitive dissonance into another because of the ongoing racism directed at her and by her?

In my reading of *Cries*, I see Lorraine pointing to a way out of the deep divisions within families and communities and the racism underlying these divisions. She demands the right to exist as both (i.e., as Metis); in particular, she demands the dignity to exist as part Indian (17). She claims that the Metis people can be reborn. “We can learn to take back our ancestry. We can come to see it in its fullness and beauty. We can learn to see it with pride and to wear it with honour” (61). In the poem “We Are Both,” Lorraine leaves no doubt that this rebirth involves the valuing of both Dad and Mom. It is recognizing

We’re both  
We’re blended not  
divided, separated  
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. (70)

Importantly, to be reborn is to recognize that neither Metis child who chooses Dad or Mom makes the right choice. Lorraine says to those who did not make her choice: “We were neither right, not you or me” (70). The option to be both, an option perhaps made invisible by racism built into the perceptual reality of a Metis child, is the better option. I understand the rightness of the option Lorraine proposes since Metis *are* both. To choose to be both promises a way out of racism, discord, and the terrible pain created by the either-or-choice. However, from the point of view of understanding Metis philosophy, I am not sure I understand the option Lorraine proposes. The normative

requirement to respect and value both ancestors, both blood lines is indubitable. What is less clear to me is whether reclaiming Metis identity means that one also agrees to accept both Eurocentric and Indigenous philosophies. And, if so, is this to confront a new form of cognitive dissonance?

Since Douglas Rabb, then the chair of the Philosophy Department at Lakehead University, introduced me to Lorraine and assured me that she would take good care of me during my residence at the Native Philosophy Project, Lorraine has been my personal guide inside the territory of Indigenous philosophy. I rely on her to gently or straightforwardly steer me in the right direction when I am misrepresenting Indigenous philosophy. I have taken Lorraine into my classes and introduced her to my students as an Indigenous philosopher trained in Eurocentric philosophy who challenges this tradition from the standpoint of Indigenous philosophy. Dale Turner's *This is Not a Peace Pipe: Towards a Critical Indigenous Philosophy* informed me that this introduction needs some revisions. Strictly speaking, Lorraine is not an Indigenous philosopher. Indigenous philosophers are those recognized in their communities as keepers of Indigenous thinking and worldviews, keepers of distinct ways of knowing the world (Turner, 9). Lorraine, because of her connections with her community and her training in Western philosophy, falls under Turner's category of Indigenous intellectuals "who are educated in Western European philosophy and who engage its ideas on its own terms" (Turner, 9). In my view, Lorraine demonstrates she is an Indigenous intellectual in *Cries*, and in her other published work.

Turner explicitly situates his discussion of Indigenous intellectuals and word warriors ("whose primary function is to engage the political and legal discourses of the state" [72]) in the context of First Nations peoples. When I read his work, aware of Lorraine's explicit identification with Indigenous philosophy and deep criticisms of Eurocentric philosophy, I confidently place my friend in the category of Indigenous intellectual. I am led by the resistance to colonization embedded in her research and teaching to call Lorraine a word warrior. However, as I read *Cries* with my students, I am not so sure. If Lorraine's philosophical roots are in Metis philosophy, and Metis philosophy is either a combination of or something other than either of the traditions which birthed it, is Lorraine an *Indigenous* intellectual? Is Metis philosophy Indigenous philosophy or is it something distinct from both Western and Indigenous philosophies?

I believe only someone who, like Lorraine, understands the question arises in the context of Eurocentric philosophical inquiry can answer my question. It is a question coming from an outsider. So, it might only arise and be meaningful because I bring inappropriate categories into the discussion of Metis philosophy. However, I eagerly await her answer.

Throughout her book, Lorraine writes of the Metis connection to their land, their grandparents, and all their relations. I see in these references hints of the metaphysics and values which I associate with what I will call Indigenous philosophy. I read

It wasn't European ways  
that taught us to love our mothers  
and not see them as chattel.  
It wasn't Europeans  
who granted Mother Earth  
the right to live  
for her own sake

and I am reminded of conversations in which she explained that Indigenous philosophy did not need to be informed either by feminist theory or environmental ethics. Hence, it is easy for a reader to think that these Indigenous understandings are

a necessary part of Metis philosophy. It is less clear that any aspects of Eurocentric philosophy are a necessary part of Metis philosophy. One of my students put it this way: "I think Mayer does not even really see two world views that make one. It seems to me that she thinks about, but does not own, the white part of her heritage. She never rages against the Aboriginal that made half of her. She never carries any warmth for her white side." While I can remind the student that Lorraine's rage against the colonizer is rage against the injustice she cannot tolerate and not explicitly against a worldview, I sympathize with the student's difficulty in finding in *Cries* a valuing of non-Indigenous philosophy.

There is no praise for Eurocentric philosophy as Lorraine rages against Tom Flanagan's racist theory of Aboriginal rights and charges Socrates and Plato with exchanging reality for metaphysical confusion (Flanagan, 64; My Symposium, 98). She credits philosophical activity with helping her move from a place of self-destruction to self-determination. But, this is not obviously praise of Euro-centric philosophy since I think she agrees that the activity per se is not Eurocentric. As she puts it, philosophy is and was her chosen vehicle. I think this means that it is the academic discipline in which she has chosen to take her stand as an Aboriginal woman who has something different to say than Western philosophy's philosopher kings have been saying.

The truth Lorraine describes herself as weaving in the Philosopher Queen is, like her strength, built on her ancestors' words (96, 97). Her truth is not absolute, universalistic truth still dominant in a Western philosophical tradition extending patronizing tolerance to cultural and individual perspectives. She claims, "my truth is a truth about our history, our philosophy, our ways of knowing and doing" (97). By situating her truth in history and rejecting the ahistorical privileged truth of Eurocentric epistemology; by disclaiming Eurocentric value hierarchies which proclaim women inferior to men and First Nations blood inferior to European blood; by praising Indigenous spirit-connection to the land and lamenting Eurocentric land consumption, Lorraine's philosophical stance seems to be firmly planted in Indigenous philosophy in opposition to Eurocentric philosophy.

Only when Lorraine claims, "I cannot tolerate injustice" (5) and speaks of racism stirring a deep sense of injustice (90) does she seem to employ a justice notion with deep roots in non-Indigenous philosophy and perhaps even assume the universal standpoint which she otherwise rejects. I cautiously make these claims because although I am aware that Eurocentric notions of sovereignty and rights are problematic for Indigenous worldviews, I am not so sure about the aspects of the notion of justice which Lorraine uses in her condemnation of colonization, racism, and child abuse. So, although I can understand her uses of the notion of justice from the point of view of my philosophical stance, I need to be informed of whether justice belongs to Metis philosophy and Cree philosophy. I also need to know if she thinks there is a distinction between Cree philosophy and Metis philosophy. Does the larger context of Metis philosophy transform the notion of justice so that, strictly speaking, it is neither the Eurocentric notion nor the Cree notion?

My students have expressed their appreciation to Lorraine for placing them in her experience so that colonialism and its injustice become visible. By making the Wehtiko visible and helping them catch a glimpse of the systemic injustice permeating Metis existence, they report experiencing a sense of injustice. However, they do not understand their experience as a stepping into Indigenous philosophy. Rather, they move into an experience they understood in terms of their Eurocentric

notion of injustice. By so doing, does the outsider impose on the experience a different notion of injustice? To broaden the question, how is Lorraine's perceptual experience, her experience of being Metis, informed by Eurocentric ways of understanding the world?

As a political philosopher seeking to understand the implementation of a just relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in Canada, I want to return to Turner's discussion of the political discourse he believes is required if Aboriginal rights as Aboriginal peoples understand them are to be recognized and respected in Canada. Informed by two philosophical traditions, which must be equally represented in the discourse, perhaps being Metis involves valuing and respecting all the participants in the discourse and their worldviews in a manner which facilitates the discourse. This does not require Lorraine to retract her condemnation of colonizers, which I believe is consistent with either worldview. Indeed, for the project Turner has in mind, it is not obvious to me that Lorraine's Metis philosophy and Dale's Indigenous philosophy need to be one and the same epistemologically, metaphysically, and axiologically. Perhaps the Metis, Cree, and Anishinabe peoples only need to agree on the injustice of colonization and the reasons why it is unjust in order for them to participate on the same side of the discourse. If this is the case, non-Indigenous outsiders, whose perceptual reality is informed by *Cries* and whose normative assessments are

informed by Turner's arguments in *This Is Not a Peace Pipe*, can join forces with Indigenous intellectuals like Lorraine and Dale to demonstrate the inadequacy of Western philosophy's accounts of Aboriginal rights. I believe such cooperation holds promise to remove obstacles to productive discourse about Aboriginal rights created by the not-so-informed non-Indigenous participants in the discourse. Thank you Lee Hester and Dennis McPherson for your comparison of Indigenous and non-Indigenous philosophy. Thank you Dale for the distinction between Indigenous philosopher and the critical philosophy engaged by Indigenous intellectuals. Thank you Lorraine for *Cries* and the way in which it confronts the question of the commensurability of Indigenous and non-Indigenous philosophies.

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