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The Dance of Person and Place: One Interpretation of American Indian Philosophy. By Thomas M. Norton-Smith. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010. 192 pages. \$60.00 cloth; \$19.95 paper.

It is a massive understatement to say that the mainstream analytic philosophical tradition has failed to recognize the legitimacy of the philosophical traditions of indigenous peoples. This failure is rooted in the oppressive power relations that have shaped the histories of indigenous and western peoples. Educational institutions perpetuate the multifaceted and enduring phenomenon of colonization in that the existence, value, and philosophical legitimacy of indigenous knowledge systems continue to be systematically denied. Philosophy has not only been complicit in this dismissal, but especially culpable. Indigenous thought, on the rare occasions in which it is acknowledged, is presented as a model of superstition and ignorance. Until recently, few have thought twice about this.

Analytic philosophers who are of indigenous descent are left in a difficult place. If we do philosophical work sanctioned by the mainstream, we risk implicit acceptance of disparaging assessments of indigenous intellectual acumen. For many, this amounts to an abandonment of multiple responsibilities—to our ancestors and communities, ourselves, and those to come. Alternatively, we can abandon the assumptions, commitments, and methods of our analytic training and try instead to find some way of working respectfully with the assumptions and commitments of indigenous philosophical traditions, if not fully within them. Not only can such a choice set aside dialogue between different intellectual traditions, but fail to challenge presumptions of western philosophical superiority directly.

Shawnee philosopher Thomas Norton-Smith takes his responsibilities as indigenous intellectual far too seriously to publish only within the philosophy of mathematics in which he was trained. But the matter of initiating and furthering dialogue between western and indigenous philosophical traditions has been too important to him to abandon his training completely. Contributing to this dialogue may well be the responsibility of those, like Norton-Smith, for whom ontological pluralism and the viability and legitimacy of more than one well-made actual world are something much more than mere philosophical convictions. Nevertheless, they are especially well suited to defend these concepts on philosophical grounds.

It is crucial that entrenched assumptions within mainstream philosophy about the inferiority of indigenous thought be exposed, challenged, and left behind, and Norton-Smith articulates that challenge fully and profoundly. In this groundbreaking work he employs his considerable analytic sophistication to extend and refurbish constructivism to demonstrate that an American Indian

world version is neither false nor empty, but legitimate, and so constructs an actual, well-made world.

The author draws on the work of various indigenous scholars—especially that of Vine Deloria Jr. and Donald Fixico—to underscore the fact that while there are cultural differences in the way the world is perceived, experienced, and understood, the efforts of indigenous peoples to make sense of the world around them are no less systematic and philosophical than those of their Western counterparts. Indigenous peoples bring systematic methodologies to bear in identifying, categorizing, and organizing experience that may use different kinds of data and have as a goal something other than determining the mechanical functioning of things. This, however, makes only for differences from—not inferiority to—a Western methodological approach.

Embracing the constructivist tenet that those who speak “radically different languages—using radically different systems of identification, categorization, and ordering—will conceive of the world in radically different ways” (7), Norton-Smith notes that Western translations are unable to render the conceptual categories faithfully, and hence the ontology, of American Indian narratives. For example, Western languages tend to use gendered pronouns, possessives, and sometimes nouns to acknowledge and sustain gender difference as a fundamental distinction; American Indian languages tend instead to syntactically recognize and reinforce a different fundamental distinction between the animate and the inanimate. Differences such as this—sorely aggravated by the perversions of historical and contemporary colonialism—may well contribute to the ongoing failure to appreciate the legitimacy of American Indian world versions. As the author notes, this problem necessarily bedevils his own project, which is why he insists that he offers “at best, a rational reconstruction of American Indian philosophy—just one among many possible interpretations” (9).

Norton-Smith’s project turns on several key moves. First, he displaces Nelson Goodman’s constructive nominalism with a constructive realism about certain kinds of human activities, namely, world-constructing processes such as composition and decomposition, collecting and sorting, and weighting and ordering. Without this, he argues, constructivism is brought up short by a self-referential paradox and cannot offer an account of the ways of world-making that extends beyond Goodman’s own linguistically constructed nominalism. Goodman’s criteria for acceptable, non-western world versions are culturally unsophisticated, based on alternative conceptions of deductive validity or inductive rightness and different understandings of utility; those violating simplicity will be ruled out as unacceptable, and so false, rendering them unable to construct well-made actual worlds. To counter the cultural bias embedded in Goodman’s criteria, which allows for the acceptability only of Western

world versions, Norton-Smith introduces the notion of a cultural frame of reference to which the criteria for the ultimate acceptability of a world version can be indexed. This reinterpretation of Goodman's criteria makes explicit the implicit cultural nature of world versions; facts are fabricated within linguistically informed traditions. The result is a culturally sophisticated constructivist perspective in which an American Indian world is held to be one among many well-made actual worlds, and hence "worthy of philosophical treatment—and respect—from the Western perspective" (16).

Other important features of an American Indian world version are addressed, including an extensive discussion of how it satisfies culturally interpreted standards of deductive and inductive rightness, utility, and non-emptiness, thus constituting an actual, well-made world. Central in this is a procedural, rather than propositional, conception of knowledge and the use of relatedness as a world-ordering principle. Since procedural knowledge has to do with the usefulness of an action or performance in addressing some practical concern, truth within this world version is not a property of statements but of procedures, practices, and performances. More exactly, truth involves *respectful success* in achieving a goal, and so is a matter of degree. Procedures, practices, and performances that are respectfully successful are those that "are mindful of our proper place in a web of normative relations in which human and nonhuman persons" are embedded (64). The latter is especially important, given the expansive conception of persons typical of an American Indian world version. Because human persons are in a nexus of relationships—not only with one another, but also with many nonhuman persons with their own unique powers, desires and emotions—respect, and mindfulness of how our actions impact these others, are vital.

There are different ways of creating patterns of sense experience, of ordering both spatial and temporal experience. Within the west, a linear ordering principle predominates, undergirding a linear conception of time and space; within indigenous world versions, cycles and circles prevail, framing indigenous conceptions of time and space and ordering not only sense experience, but also the verification and transmission of knowledge. Norton-Smith identifies four central themes as coursing throughout, and typical of, the diverse belief systems of many North American indigenous peoples. Relatedness as a way of ordering sense experience is one, with circularity as another such central world-ordering principle. The animate, moral universe that an American Indian world version constructs is dynamic and interconnected; humans (and persons more generally) participate in its construction through their thoughts, actions, and ceremonies. Thus, indigenous ceremonies, such as the performances of specific dances at specific places, exhibit and embody circular, spatial, and temporal properties and orderings. The latter illustrates "the semantic potency

of performance” within an American Indian world version (95). Ceremonies literally make and remake a world that is animate, dynamic, and unfolding, rather than inert, fixed, and finished, a world continually being created by procedures and performances—the “dances of persons” alluded to in the title.

This sketch of the book’s key elements can only hint at the richness of its extraordinary and unique accomplishment. In scope, ambition, and (respectful) success, I know of no other work that comes close. More than a stunningly creative synthesis of relevant scholarship from within both the analytic and indigenous philosophical traditions, its highly original, extended argument exposes and erodes deeply entrenched assumptions about the inferiority of indigenous thought. Moreover, in the process of refurbishing constructivism so that it can display the intricacy, subtlety, and conceptual sophistication of an American Indian world version, Norton-Smith sets out a well-developed philosophical position in its own right. Finally, the denigration and dismissal of indigenous knowledge systems has been a global phenomenon that has accompanied, eased, and sustained the rise of the state system, and thus this “constructivist rendering of the Native world” (135) has significant implications for indigenous peoples not only in North America, but globally.

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The Edge of the Woods: Iroquoia, 1534–1701. By Jon Parmenter. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2010. 474 pages. \$49.95 cloth.

This innovative and provocative work asks scholars to rethink what they thought they knew about Iroquoian history before the Great Peace of 1701. Each chapter begins with an event that Parmenter ties to a specific aspect of the Iroquois condolence ceremony, allowing the author not only to develop a chronological structure, but also to place the reader within a particularly Iroquoian frame of reference. As a result, readers find themselves referencing the events described from an Iroquoian perspective, rather than the traditional Euro-American position. The “Edge of the Woods” portion of the condolence ceremony is centrally important. Arguing that this ritual “marks the metaphorical boundary between the secure/civilized/home and the dangerous/uncivilized/outlands in Iroquois symbolic thought” (xlvi), Parmenter shows how Iroquoians used the component parts of this ceremony to incorporate new people, new land, and new ideas into the *kanosioni* (or extended lodge) that represented the Five Nations in the years 1534 to 1701. This is where