

## **Time and Pluralism: Deloria and Martin on a Native Conception of History**

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How does a Native American philosophy of history involve time? Both Calvin Martin and Vine Deloria, Jr., claim that what distinguishes North American Native views of history<sup>1</sup> from Western views are differing attitudes towards time. This paper explores the question of temporal pluralism by comparing the views of Martin and Deloria on a Native American conception of history. Although Deloria's and Martin's views overlap in substantial ways, their views differ in a number of important ways. In examining those differences, we will look at some of the philosophical issues at stake in setting forth a Native American conception of history.<sup>2</sup> My focus, however, will be on the question of temporal pluralism.

Probably the greatest failure in Western philosophies of history has been its failure to take into account cultural differences in attitudes toward history. However, those who do take cultural difference into account have largely responded by positing (or implicitly accepting) pluralism as a primary principle. Primary principles tend toward the unlimited precisely because they are taken as primary. In the case of general cultural pluralism or relativism, the paradoxes which are produced are familiar. The pluralist is motivated by the desire to criticize certain cultures for the atrocities they commit against others resulting from their racism, and responds by positing pluralism. But the pluralism which legitimizes the victimized cultures, when posited as a first principle, also legitimizes the victimizers, and thus removes the possibility of justifying the critique which motivated it. Or pluralism, legitimizing all other views, also legitimizes the view that pluralism is false and thus seems to refute itself. Or pluralism, as an unlimited principle, tends toward the

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<sup>1</sup>Both Deloria and Martin deal only with Native Americans of North America. Following them, my use of the term "Native American" or "American Indian" refers to the Native people of North America.

<sup>2</sup>The phrase "tribal history" is in some ways attractive, but I have avoided it since it may beg some of the philosophical questions at issue.

incommensurability of different views. Motivated by the desire to achieve greater cultural understanding, pluralism ends up denying the possibility of cultural understanding. Finally, any attempts to supplement pluralism as a basic principle in order to solve these problems seem to be both (1) ad hoc attempts to avoid these problems, and (2) of troubled validity, since they are either undercut by the basic principle of pluralism, or they are accepted unconditionally and thus cast doubt on pluralism itself.

One sort of pluralism which has been put forward is "temporal pluralism"—the view that there are a plurality of times. Martin and Deloria raise this issue in different ways in their comparisons of Western and Native American conceptions of history. In examining this claim, I propose to discuss the similarities and differences between Martin's and Deloria's accounts of the Native American conception of history. Because Martin's temporal pluralism follows from a more general epistemological relativism, it is necessary to separately discuss the two aspects of temporal pluralism: time and pluralism. As I sketch the similarities and differences in their views, I will focus on (1) how each view stands up to the paradoxes of pluralism noted above, and (2) the specific issues raised in the philosophy of time. We will see that the differences in their views are quite important, as Martin's view runs into serious philosophical difficulties which Deloria's view avoids. In conclusion, I will return to the concept of temporal pluralism, and argue that what is at stake is not a plurality of times (conceived of as past, present, future), but a multiplicity of rhythms.

It must be stressed that in this paper I am not concerned with issues of cultural authenticity. I do not propose to discuss whether either (or both) of these accounts is an authentic, accurate, or adequate description of a Native American conception of history. I am simply concerned with analyzing the philosophical issues raised by these views and their differences.

Nor am I concerned, in comparing Deloria's and Martin's views, with their historical accounts; I am only concerned with their views which are relevant to the philosophy of history. Much of what Deloria has to say is concerned with historical matters, such as the occurrence of catastrophic astronomical events and the history of Christianity. Much of what Martin has to say concerns his historical account of the rise of the neolithic world-view. I leave these matters to the historians to consider.

## 1. Martin: Anthropological History vs. Biological Timelessness

In *The American Indian and the Problem of History*,<sup>3</sup> Calvin Martin claims that Westerners and Native Americans have profoundly different philosophies of history and philosophies of time (AlPH 6). These profound differences arise from different worldviews.<sup>4</sup> The Western worldview Martin calls anthropological; it relates to the past as history, and its characteristic is time. The Native American worldview Martin calls biological; it relates to the past as myth and its characteristic is timelessness.<sup>5</sup> Martin says that although these paradigms are "fundamentally antagonistic and irreconcilable" (AlPH 9), the Native American reality/thought-world is an "equally valid" reality (AlPH 28). Furthermore, Martin claims that the most fundamental questions are questions of worldview. "All of the key and fundamental questions of human existence tend to be asked differently and yield different answers on the basis of this anterior point of reference" (AlPH 8). In *In the Spirit of the Earth*, Martin puts the point this way:

Somewhere in here we slip into the fundamental nature of knowledge (epistemology) and reality (ontology), for it is clear we are dealing with two massively different structures of thought, even of being: the mythic and the historical (or rational, or empirical), one might call them. (ISE: 136)

At first glance, then, it would seem that Martin is motivated by pluralism as a primary principle.

### A. The Paradoxes of Pluralism

First I wish to look at how the paradoxes of pluralism are played out in Martin's conception. First, the question arises as to whether, on Martin's views, Native Americans have a concept of "history." Given Martin's claim that Native American and European worldviews are "fundamentally

<sup>3</sup> All parenthetical citations to *The American Indian and the Problem of History* (designated AlPH) are to the introduction, first chapter, and conclusion, which were written by Martin. In *In the Spirit of the Earth: Rethinking History and Time*, Martin changes terminology; comparing hunting-gathering (paleolithic) societies with neolithic societies. This change of terminology allows Martin to generalize his discussion, but reflects no change of position. This is clear if one keeps in mind that in *The American Indian and the Problem of History*, Martin means North American Native by "Native American." All references to *In the Spirit of the Earth* will be designated ISE.

<sup>4</sup> Martin also uses the words "paradigm"; "cultural universe"; "code of existence"; "reality"; and "thought-world".

<sup>5</sup> Martin notes the danger of such generalization. For my purposes this danger can be ignored for the moment. Locality and abstraction will be discussed in the section on Deloria.

antagonistic and irreconcilable," and that Native Americans relate to the past via myth (as opposed to Westerners, who relate to the past via history), one might be inclined to say that, according to Martin, Native Americans have a critique of the concept of history rather than a different concept of history. This raises the question of whether Native Americans' accounts of the past should be called "history." This is not merely a question of terminology, but involves the issue whether history from a Native American perspective is legitimate in history departments. Martin uses the term "sacred history" to refer to the Native American conception of history, so it is safe to say that he thinks that the word "history" is applicable to the Native American worldview.<sup>6</sup> I will assume that it is appropriate to use the word "history" with reference to Native American perspectives.

If then, there are two different worldviews, and that Western histories (which typically see history as a story of progressive technological advance) have followed from the Western perspective, then it would seem that Martin legitimizes these histories. They properly follow from the worldview of the people who write them. Why then should Western historians change the way they write history? Martin provides three answers to this question. First, he says that one must understand the Native American worldview in order to understand Native American behavior and Native-white interaction throughout history (ALPH 9, 33). This is completely unexceptionable, except that it neither supports nor follows from his pluralism. Everyone, with the possible exception of behaviorists, believes that understanding belief is important for the understanding of action. If anything this common sense idea is undercut by Martin's pluralism since understanding others' beliefs from a Western perspective is given complete legitimacy. Second, one might infer from Martin's claim that one has an obligation to write history from the perspective of those studied (ALPH 215) and his use of the phrase "historical colonialism" (ALPH 33), that one has a moral obligation to accept the Native American perspective simply because it is the *wisest*. This may seem to fit better with Martin's pluralism, but it is unsatisfying because it fails to recognize the intellectual respectability of the Native American perspective. Third, he often adopts a different mode of discourse, in which he claims that the biological

<sup>6</sup>The philosophical, conceptual, and linguistic issues raised by this issue are beyond the scope of this paper. For the purposes of this paper, I merely wish to establish that Martin doesn't think that his view implies that one cannot refer to Native American perspectives on history. It should be noted that some of the problems raised by this question are not at all settled in discussions of Western historians and philosophers as to what counts as "history." I would also note that, although I don't address this question, the issues in the philosophy of history raised in my conclusion are relevant to this discussion.

perspective is more basic, more fundamental than the anthropological.<sup>7</sup> In other words, Native Americans are right and Westerners are wrong. This is a plausible view, but it is not consistent with the rest of Martin's position. At this point Martin has given up pluralism altogether.

There is one more question which can be asked of Martin's (or any) pluralism. What justifies Martin's claim that the Native American worldview is equally valid to the Western worldview?<sup>8</sup> I find Martin's answer to this question highly troubling. Martin says,

The point to be made is that the (what I am calling) biological orientation of American Indian cultures was every bit as reasonable and practical (if one wishes to use these terms and concepts) as the Western anthropological paradigm. The proof is that Indians survived, they produced and thrived. When Europeans reached these American shores the indigenous population was demographically stable. If survivability of the species is the ultimate criterion of success for any philosophical system, and I would argue that it is, then the biological model obviously worked (ALPH 8-9)

This justification raises the issues that any such attempted justification of pluralism must. Is this justification true per se, or is it justified only within a particular worldview? If it is true per se, then it is possible to transcend these worldviews and Martin's pluralism has been abandoned. If it is valid only within a worldview, then which worldview? If the Western, then it turns out that the Native American worldview is not a separate and "antagonistic" perspective as Martin claims, and pluralism is undermined.<sup>9</sup> If the Native American, then it begs the question, since the question was what justifies the Native American perspective as equally valid. No perspective can ever justify itself to the other, if we accept Martin's account of worldviews.

But there is a far more serious problem<sup>10</sup> with Martin's point. Taking survival as the criterion for the validity of a worldview can never work to the benefit of dispossessed and marginalized peoples. On this view, peoples who are wiped out—whether through genocide, natural disaster, or cultural

<sup>7</sup>In *The Spirit of the Earth* Lewis far more heavily on this mode, but without giving up the pluralism.

<sup>8</sup>The pluralist could answer that, as a primary principle, pluralism cannot be justified. (This would not avoid questions about the scope and parameters of pluralism.) Martin, however, doesn't make this claim.

<sup>9</sup>cf. *In the Spirit of the Earth*, where Martin makes the claim that there are two truths, "hunter veritas" and "ecoholic veritas", which suggests relativism, as well as the claim that the former is "a piece of cosmic insight that has since been spectacularly confirmed by evolutionary biology, molecular biology, physics, and Freudian and Jungian psychology" (104).

<sup>10</sup>My problems. I am leaving aside the—as seems obvious to me—falsity of Martin's claim. One need only consider the standard responses to pragmatism.

conquest—not only lose their lives or culture, but also any claim on others to respect their ideas. Furthermore, it implies that those who are distressed or subordinated deserve their status because it suggests that their worldview is responsible for their current situation. Martin rather arbitrarily chooses the time of discovery to measure survivability. What if someone were to choose the year 1600 in which to apply this standard? Or 1900? Or 1940? Or 1997? This is history written by the winners—from their perspective as winners—with a vengeance.<sup>11</sup>

### B. *Anthropological History and Biological Timelessness*

Martin labels the Western perspective “anthropological”, on his view it centers on human beings, conceiving them as divided from, and outside of, nature. “The society (I prefer the term ‘geography’) of human discourse has narrowed from human/other-than-human to human/human. The other-than-human persons, both animal and plant, have been disenfranchised—defined or spoken out of discourse.” (ISE 28). Human beings are taken to be not only separate from, but superior to the rest of nature (ISE 59). Nature, distinct from and inferior to human life, exists for human use (ALPH 13; ISE 104). On this basis, Westerners conceive of history as the progressive movement toward redemption, which involves the domination of nature. Thus, the Western view of the world involves a narrative of progress which emphasizes change and time (ALPH 15-16; ISE 59-62). Martin calls the task at the heart of this narrative “the errand of time” (ISE 42).

In contrast to the Western perspective, Martin characterizes the Native American perspective as “biological.” Native Americans recognize “...our profound connection with other biological life, as well as with non-life forms and the various and sundry phenomena of Nature” (ALPH 202). Feeling the power which arises from this connection is the chief aim of life. “The chief aim in life in virtually all North American Indian societies was to be saturated with the primordial Power of Nature which seemed to pulsate throughout all creation” (ALPH 29). One aspect of this connection (or participation) in nature is that Native Americans conceive of themselves as being possessed by the land, rather than vice versa (ALPH 22-23). This “tenaciously guarded, overarching, and suffusing biological orientation and commitment” is “the mainspring of all North American Indian cultures and societies” (ALPH 212). A danger arises from Martin’s characterization of the dichotomy

<sup>11</sup>Martin no doubt doesn’t intend these consequences of his argument. But arguments outline the intentions of arguers and good intentions are insufficient. Martin establishes this point in his critique of Eric Wolf’s *Europe and the People without History*, (ALPH 11-13).

between Western and Native American “realities” as anthropological vs biological. This distinction is uncomfortably close to the distinction between culture and nature, which has often been used to subordinate tribal peoples. Some might attempt to use Martin’s categorization to justify the (past or present) subordination of Native Americans, since it seems to imply Native Americans are stuck within nature and don’t rise to the level of “anthropos.” Accepting this distinction runs the risk of reinforcing stereotypes. This attitude is not necessarily implied in Martin’s view, Martin wishes to revalue the nature/culture distinction, placing nature at an equal or higher level than culture. But the revaluation and the dichotomy are conceptually distinct. Gaining acceptance of the dichotomy will not necessarily lead to the acceptance of the revaluation. But without the revaluation, this categorization does have these connotations.

What is especially worrisome is that, given Martin’s view that all values are relative to a perspective, his response to the acceptance of the dichotomy without the revaluation loses all force. For others could say that Martin can value nature over culture if he wishes, but that they wish to value culture over nature. Martin’s pluralism would seem to leave him no response to such an attitude. At the very least, Martin’s use of this dichotomy is extremely risky.

If the Western perspective is fixated on time, as noted above, then, Martin asks, where does this leave American Indians? His answer: “in eternity” (ALPH 15) or in timelessness (ISE 84, 95). The eternal is a timeless ground which involves “timeless moments” or an “eternal now” (ALPH 16-20), a “continual present” (ALPH 198), a “suspended time” (ISE 13).<sup>12</sup>

The immediate question raised by this claim is its apparent absurdity. Don’t biological events take place in time? This seems to be both obvious and suggested by Martin’s phrase “biological time.” How then can the biological be timeless? Martin’s solution is to appeal to the “circle”—that is, a circular or cyclical time.<sup>13</sup> Martin draws on Eliade to provide an interesting and very powerful conception of myth and ritual as re-enacting of cosmic paradigms. I will leave this account aside, for my purposes, it is important to recognize that the appeal to the eternal, and the spatial representation of time to

<sup>12</sup>In his explication of the eternal, Martin cites Jung, Huxley, T. S. Eliot, and Mircea Eliade in ALPH (17-20). In ISE, he cites Eliade (144-45).

<sup>13</sup>More prominent in ALPH, this view persists in ISE: “Time, in mythic thinking, is a very different order of perception, obligation, and experience. Here time’s instruments are the myriad cycles of nature and its citizens, all thought to be taking place within the suspended moment, the still point, of creation. No image of a linearly receding past, nor of a terminal future.” (ISE: 73)

reconcile time and timelessness is a pervasive feature of the *Western* tradition.

Certainly, the eternal conceived as a timeless present is at the heart of the Western tradition. Plato was the first to conceive of the eternal as a present without past or future<sup>14</sup> and this idea was picked up by Augustine in the *Confessions*. I make this point not simply to raise the possibility that Martin is doing what he wishes to avoid—project his own Western concepts onto Native Americans. It is more important to see that there is no clash between the concept of the eternal and the linear view of time/history that Martin opposes. One can see this most easily by considering Hegel's philosophy of history. Hegel held what is perhaps the paradigm case of what Martin calls a linear view of history. Each historical stage forms an advance on the previous until the telos and fulfilment of history is reached in modern Europe. But Hegel believes that this is the way things look from the perspective of eternity. For Hegel, the line mediates between events in time and eternity, just as the circle performs the same work for Martin. If this is so, then Native American and Western views of the structure of time and history, as characterized by Martin, look remarkably similar. The only disagreement is over which spatial representation—line or circle—is the correct one.

The answer, I think, is that neither representation is correct. I would contend that the asymmetry between past and future is the distinguishing characteristic of time. This is why Plato could describe the eternal as a present without past or future. Detaching the present from the past and future effaces this asymmetry. A full justification of this position is beyond the scope of this paper, but I will mention three arguments for this position.

First, our experience seems to revolve around and confirm the asymmetry between past and future. We can remember the past but not the future. We anticipate and await the future but not the past. We can endeavor to bring about an event in the future, but not in the past. We deliberate about our future actions, but not about our past actions. Temporal asymmetry is pervasive, and it seems both to be confirmed by experience and to be a condition of experience.

The second argument is one considered by Aristotle, known either as Aristotle's "sea-battle" argument or as the problem of logical determinism.<sup>15</sup> The argument is a reduction to absurdity of the notion of timeless truth. If we assume that all statements are either true or false, then true statements about

the future are descriptive, just as true statements about the past are descriptive. And just as nothing can be done to alter the events described by true statements about the past, nothing can be done to alter the events described by true statements about the future. If it is true that there will be a sea-battle next week, then there is no genuine possibility (as opposed to a logical possibility) that the sea-battle can be avoided. As with any deterministic view, our failure to experience the world as deterministic is merely a function of our ignorance. But a fated future which is unknown is no less fated for that. Aristotle, who was on the lookout for sophistry, did not classify this argument as such. Instead, he concluded that truth was not timeless, and that statements about the future (concerning particulars), unlike statements about the past, are neither true nor false.<sup>16</sup>

The third argument I will mention is actually one part of Augustine's argument for the unreality of time (*Confessions*, Book XI), which I am using independently of its context and from which I draw conclusions which differ from Augustine's. In presenting an argument from which he inferred that the present had a very strange sort of reality with no duration, Augustine noted that we can take any length of time as the present, even an exceptionally long period. We can think of the present era, or century, or year, or day. But whichever length we choose to think of as present, part will be past and part will be future. We can't think of the current year as the present, because all the days prior to today are past, and all the days after today are future. This suggests that the present consists of today, but the argument can be repeated for the present day. All the hours which have already occurred are past, and those yet to happen are future. And the same holds for the present conceived as the present hour, minute, second, and so on indefinitely. Augustine concludes from this that the present has no duration, but this strikes me as a non-sequitur. Instead, one can conclude that the present is of indefinite length, and always includes within itself the asymmetry between past and future. This is every bit as strange a sort of reality as Augustine attributes to the present, but strange in a very different way.

Martin is thus quite mistaken to equate time as "past, present, and future" with "time as segmented linearity" (ISE 137), since the conception of time as past/present/future views time as fundamentally discontinuous

<sup>14</sup>Plato, *Timaeus* (37c).

<sup>15</sup>Aristotle, *De Interpretatione*, chapter 9.

<sup>16</sup>There is some dispute over the conclusion Aristotle draws from the "sea-battle" argument. I have adopted the traditional interpretation of Aristotle's views. For a survey of the arguments involved in the different interpretations, see *Necessity, Cause, and Blame—Perspectives on Aristotle's Theory* (92-96) in which Sorabji concludes that the traditional interpretation can cope with its difficulties better than the alternatives can cope with theirs (96).

between past and future. This is a discontinuity: no spatial figure, such as the line, can capture. Spatial representations abstract from the asymmetry between past and future, which is fundamental to the structure of time, while retaining the related, but secondary, idea of "sequence." It makes no sense to talk of a present without past or future because the past and future are part of the internal structure of the present. It is precisely because spatial representations abstract from temporal asymmetry that they can be drafted indifferently in an attempt to mediate between time and eternity. Such attempts at mediation are bound to fail because the spatial representation of time nullifies time. Thus, Martin's view of the Native American conception of history is based on a highly problematic conception of the eternal.

## II. Deloria: Time vs. Space in History

In *God Is Red*<sup>17</sup>, Vine Deloria, Jr. also contrasts Native American conceptions of history with Western conceptions. He does so in the context of a discussion of Native American religions rather than in the language of "worldview" or "paradigm." Nevertheless, one of his central points is that Native American religion is central to Native American life<sup>18</sup> and that it is not possible to distinguish sharply between secular and sacred.<sup>19</sup> (Even with regard to Western perspectives, according to Deloria, the line between secular and sacred is not easy to draw. Deloria argues quite plausibly that Western attitudes toward history are derivative of Christian attitudes.) I take his discussion of Native American religions to be at the same level of generality as Martin's "worldviews," and worthy of comparison.

### A. *Spatial Conception of History*

Like Martin, Deloria analyzes Native American perspectives in terms of a simple dichotomy. According to Deloria, Native American perspectives emphasize space, and Western perspectives emphasize time. "The western preoccupation with history and a chronological description of reality was not a dominant factor in any tribal conception of either time or history" (GR 112/98). And again, "Time is regarded as all-important by Christians, and it

<sup>17</sup> Parenthetical citations to Deloria's *God Is Red* (marked GR) in this section are to both the 1973 and 1992 editions in the format (first/second). If the point cited is made in different words in the second edition, the format is (first/second). Citations with one page reference are to the first edition.

<sup>18</sup> Hence his claim that it was only in the context of Native American religion that one could understand Native American political activism.

<sup>19</sup> "History is not divided into categories of explanation. It is simultaneously religious, political, economic, social and intellectual" (GR 200).

has a casual importance, if any among the tribal peoples" (GR 111).

Native American perspectives understand things in "spatial terms" (GR 80/6f 68) and use concepts in "a spatial or given sense" (GR 102). Deloria is not referring to space in the abstract, but to particular lands and places. "American Indians hold their lands—places—as having the highest possible meaning, and all their statements are made with this reference point in mind" (GR 75/62). According to Deloria, the "primary thesis of tribal religions" is "the relationship of a particular people with a particular land" which includes the "belief of many tribal religions that certain places have special sacred significance" (GR 269-270).

This relationship to the land is connected to views which are similar to Martin's views of the "biological" perspective. Deloria also explains that the Native American perspective involves the unity of all things as living nature. "The major difference between American Indian views of the physical world and Western science lies in the premise accepted by Indians and rejected by scientists: the world in which we live is alive" (*Red Earth, White Lies* 55). And nature is experienced as manifesting biological power. "Primarily in the world with which [the Native American] is confronted is the presence of power, the manifestation of life energies, the whole life-flow of creation" (GR 102/6f 88). Deloria's concept of "land" thus seems to overlap substantially Martin's concept of the "biological."

### B. *The Paradoxes of Pluralism*

Given that time is partitioned on the side of the Western perspective, the question arises—for Deloria as it did for Martin—as to whether Native American perspectives on the past are properly counted under the concept "history." Deloria uses the term "geographical histories" (GR 162/144), and notes that the factuality of sacred events is a matter of conviction for Native Americans; however, the conviction centers on where the event took place rather than on when it took place (GR 138/6f 122). Thus, according to Deloria, there seems to be little problem in characterizing Native American conceptions of the past as "history."

The other paradoxes of pluralism do not seem to apply to Deloria's view, as he treats worldviews differently than Martin. Deloria's judgments of the validity of a perspective arise from within his analysis of the different perspectives, rather than from a pluralism which precedes and is more fundamental than the analysis. Deloria never says that worldviews are all-encompassing totalities. And as far as I know, he never says, as Martin does, that Western perspectives and Native American perspectives are

"fundamentally irreconcilable and antagonistic," although he does note that the people holding these perspectives have been. Instead Deloria attributes conflicts between peoples to the conflicts over lands, which is the key explanatory concept of his view. Deloria's general claims about perspectives arise out of his analysis, rather than precede it. These differences are philosophically important; they indicate that Deloria doesn't take pluralism as a first principle and thus suggest that his views avoid the paradoxes which Martin's view faces.

### III. Differences Between Deloria's and Martin's Views

There are three striking differences between Deloria's and Martin's views. First, according to Deloria's account, the Native American conception of history is communal, in that it involves a relationship of a specific people with a particular place. This notion of community fails to appear in Martin's account. Martin puts forward an individualistic view of Native knowledge to the exclusion of the notion of community which is central to Deloria's account. "Shamans are in business for themselves...," he says, "...among hunter societies, all individuals are expected to acquire and wield spiritual powers unique to themselves..." (ISE 40). Because "community" is an anthropological concept rather than (or at least, in addition to being) a biological concept, Deloria's emphasis on tribal community precludes categorization of peoples according to the nature/culture distinction and with it the danger of suggesting that Native Americans are anything less than human.

The second difference between Deloria's and Martin's views concerns the relationship between experience and belief, and whether this relationship is the same for Westerners and for Native Americans. According to Deloria, the relationship between belief and experience differs for Native Americans and Westerners. Deloria notes that Western religions rely on teachings but that Native American religions rely on experience. From this he argues that Native American philosophical views arise out of experience but that Western philosophical views are abstractions from experience. For Martin, the relationship between belief and experience is basically the same for Westerners and Native Americans, since for both this relationship involves an all-encompassing worldview (albeit a different worldview in each case). This point of difference between Martin and Deloria strikes me as extremely interesting, but I am going to leave this point and focus on the next point of difference, as it relates to my main theme, time.

The third difference is that Deloria does not place Native Americans in the eternal or timeless. According to Deloria, Native Americans abstract from time in the sense that they don't take it to be very important; they don't abstract from time in the sense of escaping it altogether. Deloria only mentions the eternal in relation to Western religion. What Deloria recognizes is that the eternal is an abstraction not only from time but also from space, and as such is inconsistent with the importance of land or place. According to Deloria,

There appears to be a peculiar relationship between thinking in temporal and spatial terms. We are inevitably involved, whether we like it or not, with time, but when attempting to explain the nature of our experiences, we are often not necessarily involved with spatial considerations once we have taken time seriously. The whole nature of the subject of ethics appears to validate this peculiarity. Ethical systems are notorious for having the ability to relate concepts and doctrines to every consideration, except the practical situations with which we become involved. Ideology unleashed without being limited to the real world proves demonic at best. (One could predict, therefore, that space precedes time as a consideration for thought. If time becomes our primary consideration, we never seem to arrive at the reality of our existence in places but instead are always directed to experiential interpretations rather than to the experiences themselves. (GR 85/cf. 73)

I disagree with Deloria's conclusion that "space precedes time"; Deloria seems to be saying that we need to pay close attention to space because, unlike time, it's possible to abstract from space and these abstractions get us into trouble. Deloria here is strait jacketed by limits of the binary contrast of "space vs. time". This passage shows that what Deloria is concerned with is not so much the emphasis on time as the abstraction from place ("the reality of our existence in places"), and anything which abstracts from place he lumps under the heading of "taking time seriously". Eternity and Western historical thinking (as Deloria conceives it) both abstract from place, and thus both are squeezed under the category of time. But eternity is not a category of time. Rather eternity is timelessness, just as it is spacelessness.

But Deloria's basic insight is one I agree with. Deloria is opposed to the abstraction from the contextual and experiential particularities of events. The idea of an atemporal perspective is just such an abstraction, and my argument has been that an eternal, timeless, or atemporal, perspective is impossible. Deloria would seem to agree when he says in the above-quoted passage that "We are inevitably involved, whether we like it or not, with time." By not connecting the Native American perspective with the eternal, Deloria avoids the problems Martin runs into when he tries to claim that the biological does not take place in time but is actually timeless.

#### IV. Conclusion: Historical Pluralism as Plurality of Rhythms

We have seen that Martin's and Deloria's views of the Native American perspective on history, although similar in important ways, differ in important ways. I have argued that Deloria's view avoids the problems of pluralism which follow from Martin's views, and that Deloria's view also avoids significant problems in the philosophy of time which are raised by Martin's view.

In conclusion, I suggest that what differentiates the Native American perspective on history, as presented by Martin and Deloria, from the Western perspective is not a kind of temporal pluralism in spite of their claims to the contrary. The mistake arises from two directions. First, there is a failure to carefully distinguish between time (which involves the asymmetry between past and future) and the various related phenomena, such as rhythm and history, which are often referred to as "time."<sup>20</sup> Second, at least on Martin's part, there is a metaphysical mistake—some philosophers say it is *the* metaphysical mistake—of thinking that one can escape from time. There is no escape from the asymmetry between past and future.

What Martin and Deloria think of as temporal pluralism is really a pluralism of rhythms by which to gauge the passage of time or the currents of history.<sup>21</sup> I argued for arbitrariness, and the equal validity, of different measures of time in considering Augustine's argument in the first section of this paper. Braudel puts this point very well in his famous essay "History and the Social Sciences": "it is not so much time which is the creation of our minds, as the way in which we break it up" (48).<sup>22</sup> And it is to Braudel's appeal for a plurality of historical measures that we can get some sort of conception of historical or, as it is called, "temporal" pluralism. There are histories of the short span, based on the rhythms of an individual life, and histories of the *longue durée*, and many histories in between. The histories of the longest span Braudel says "almost border on the motionless" (32).<sup>23</sup> I

<sup>20</sup> I am not suggesting that "rhythm" and "history" are the only two (temporal) phenomena which are sometimes confusingly referred to as simply "time". There are many more, but these are the two relevant here.

<sup>21</sup> This confusion is quite widespread. For example, a book like Hall's *The Dance of Life* which purports to be about the plurality of times, is actually about the multiplicity of rhythms.

<sup>22</sup> I feel it is thought that I am suggesting, by citing Braudel, that Western conception of history already includes the Native American perspective; one should note Braudel's comments about the radical changes in Western approaches to history which would be required by an acceptance of the views put forward in this essay.

<sup>23</sup> The main difference between Braudel's view and those of Martin and Deloria, is that Braudel sees nature as both empowering and constraining, whereas Martin and Deloria treat nature as empowering.

would stress the "almost" and "border on".

The mistake Braudel charges social scientists with is thinking that they had escaped time altogether through the use of mathematics. This is the mistake characteristic of Western philosophy, going back at least to Plato, whose interpretation of the eternal was taken over into theology by Augustine, and we find in the followers of mystical traditions cited by Martin. But there is a tremendous difference between *almost bordering on* motionlessness, and complete motionlessness. It is the difference between the geographical rhythm and the eternal.

Recall the point of substantial agreement between Martin's and Deloria's account as to what is the Native American perspective of history—the special relationship to the land and its biological forces. From this it would seem to follow that it is this geographical span or rhythm which Martin is describing when he says, "Historians must now find another language, another symbolic grid, another category, by which to render ourselves and our habitat, one that does not disenfranchise the latter" (ALPH 219), and which he refers to as writing history in "embedded long-haul biological and geological terms" (ISE 122). And it is also what Deloria is referring to when he says, "The lands wait for those who can discern their rhythms" (GR 301/292).<sup>24</sup>

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