

Schuon Lectures 2026 – Day 1

“What Can We Learn from Plains Indian Spirituality?”

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Nota bene: This lecture is the first of four lectures in a series entitled: “Schuon’s Path of Truth & Beauty: The Perennial Philosophy in the Modern Era.”

The original lecture was presented with PowerPoint and contained over 100 illustrations and nine film clips. This transcription of the audio portion of the lecture cannot convey all of the information on the slides and film clips. Interested readers should view the entire film recording of the lecture.

[Harry Oldmeadow] Welcome to you all. . . . It is appropriate that I should conclude my remarks by introducing Chief James Trosper, close friend and associate of Michael’s who will say a few words in the video clip which I am about to trigger, I hope, and at the end of which he will say a prayer. So how appropriate it is that we should begin these proceedings where we’re talking about sacred matters—we are talking about traditional wisdom. We are talking about truth, beauty, and goodness as it finds expression in the world’s great mythological, sapiential, and religious traditions, so it is altogether appropriate that we should begin with a prayer. So first Chief James Trosper will have a few words to say about Michael’s involvement with the Plains Indians and then he will say prayer which will be a kind of launching pad for Michael’s lectures.

[Chief James Trosper] I first met Michael in 1993. We were at a Sun Dance. They call that area the Wolf Mountains in Montana on the Crow Reservation. Tom Yellowtail was the Sun Dance chief for many years. He was a Crow medicine man and Sun Dance chief for the tribe. And he was the one that introduced me to Michael at that Sun Dance. I got to know Michael after that, and we became good friends and close. Our families are close. Michael is adopted into the Yellowtail family. Tom Yellowtail took him as a son. And in our native way, when somebody takes you as a relative, it is as if you become their blood, their blood relative. Michael knew my great-grandfather John Trehero. He spent a lot of time with my Grandpa John and Grandpa Tom Yellowtail, listening to their stories and learning from them. And so, you know, he holds a lot of wisdom and a lot of knowledge as well. And so, we are just really grateful that he is helping to preserve that and perpetuate it today. Michael has done a lot for our native communities, and you know, the things that he does, he doesn’t call attention to himself. A lot of times, the work that he does, he does quietly and without recognition. He has done a lot to help preserve our native language. An organization that he has supported and helped with over the years has helped a number of different tribes document and preserve their language. Most people don’t know that, you

know, Michael has contributed a lot, not only the physical effort and work that goes into it, but also financially. He has helped to preserve our language and it's something that is really important to our people. It's something that we need and it means a lot.

But what a lot of people don't understand is that, you know, before Michael was involved with the way of belief that he follows now, all the timing was perfect in the sequence of his life and he was able to go into the Sun Dance with our people and sacrifice—go without food and go without water for three days and three nights and to dance during that time and to pray. You know that ceremony is a powerful ceremony. It is a hard way to pray. And Michael experienced that. He went through that and he knows, he knows what it is. He has a different understanding and a different way of relating to our people by having gone into that ceremony and sacrificed the way that we do. For him to have that same understanding and to be given the things that he was blessed with for having done that. You know, we're just really grateful to Michael because of all of this, of all of this work in these areas: our sacred ceremonies, our languages, and education, and the way that he's helped preserve this wisdom and this knowledge from our elders through this book and through the video that he created. I'm going to offer this short prayer:

“Tam Apo,” our Father, we are so grateful for all these good things that you have given to our people—the sacred way that you've given to us to help us to live good lives. We pray and we ask that your blessings will be with our people, that we can stay strong in these ways that we can live the good things that you have given to us—these good teachings, all these virtues that you've given to our people. We pray that your blessings will be upon Michael, that your spirit will be with him and that the people that listen to him will be able to feel that spirit and that he will help them to understand. And we pray and we ask for Your help and Your guidance to be with him in this good work that he does among our people and among the people out there in the outside world. We pray and we ask for Your blessings, Your help and Your guidance. I say this in the name of *“Tam Apo.”*

[Fitzgerald] Thank you to Mr. Minnaar, Harry Oldmeadow, and of course, James Trosper. It is certainly fitting to say a prayer to start talking about sacred things.

We are here to talk about Frithjof Schuon, so why are we talking about Indians? What was Frithjof Schuon's relationship to the American Indians? This poem really puts it in perspective:

There are three spiritual worlds to which I belong.
The primordial world of the Vedas, then Sufism,
and then in the west, the world of the Indians.
Each branch of humanity has something to teach

for every cosmos shines in its own way.

Schuon wrote to Chief Medicine Robe in 1947, who is in an Assiniboine, “the love of the Indians is a family tradition.” There is a long story about that which is recorded in a biography that I have written. and *The Feathered Sun*, as Harry wrote “is a masterly conspectus of Indian metaphysics, cosmology and spiritual life.” He has a profound connection to the American Indians.

The Schuons and the Yellowtails met in 1953 in Paris. The Yellowtails were the first visitors in the Schuon home in Lausanne in 1954. This photo is from that occasion. Yellowtail said of Schuon, “he is my brother. We are in the same boat in all things.” Schuon wrote 3,500 poems at the end of his life and mentioned only three names. Yellowtail's name is mentioned five times. “Sun Dance chief Yellowtail was a pivotal figure in Crow life and one of the most admired spiritual leaders of the last century.” Susie Yellowtail is enshrined in the Montana Hall of Fame. This photograph is with me and Grandpa Yellowtail. I'm reading the biography of Susie in the rotunda of the state house in Montana, where she is in the Hall of Fame there.

I am an adopted member of the Yellowtail family. This photo is from my first summer there. The differences in the cultures are as varied as the 500 tribes, but there are unifying themes in their diversity. My intention is to reflect the fundamental volumes of all traditional Plains Indians. What was it like, the primordial world before the advent of the Europeans? Nomadic epidemic diseases unknown and 30% to 60% of the daily time was all that was needed. So, they lived a life in nature punctuated by the hardships. How do Indians conceive ultimate reality? There is a universal belief in a Great Spirit.

This is a film excerpt from “*The Sun Dance Way*.” You will see a Sun Dance chief, a close friend of mine, praying with a sacred pipe while Mr. Yellowtail explains the Maker of All Things Above. “*Acbadadea*” is the creator, the Maker of All Things Above, Who is above and beyond this world, but who has created and continues to give life to this world. When we pray, we always say “*Acbadadea*,” Maker and Creator of All Things, we pray to You.”

Black Elk is the most famous American Indian of the last century. There are more than one million copies of *Black Elk Speaks* that have been sold worldwide. This photo was sent from Black Elk to Schuon and engraved on the back, *Mitakola Heyhaka Sapa*— “My friend Black Elk”—through the intermediary of Joseph Brown. We will hear more about that in about a half hour's time. Black Elk explained,

We should understand that all things are the work of the Great Spirit. We should know that He is within all things. The trees, the grasses, the rivers, the mountains, all

the four-legged animals, and the winged peoples. And even more important, we should understand that He is also above all of these things and people.

Schuon was asked, “what is the religion of the Indians?” He wrote,

If we consider the old Indian religion, we must first state that it is subject to many variations due to the scattering of the tribes; but there is nevertheless a unity based on the symbolism of the Directions of Space and on the use of the Sacred Pipe, and above all on the idea of a Supreme Being. And this religion too, with its many forms and its different symbols is firstly discernment and then union – discernment between this vanishing world of dreams and the everlasting Reality which lies behind it, and union with this Reality even on this earth and in this life.

Each religion, as you all know, has a defining manifestation, or theophany. It can be a person or words from God—the Quran, the Torah and the Vedas. The defining theophany for not only the Plains Indians, but all American Indians, is Virgin Nature: a sacred Spirit animates all creation. It is a profound interconnectedness—each thing depends in a certain manner on all the others.

The Indians possess a primordial doctrine of nature. Schuon wrote, “The Red Indian culture is grounded on the unwritten, altogether non-theological wisdom of God’s free nature, its Book is the totality of God-created beings and things, beginning with the sacred Directions.” Schuon later added:

The Indian world signifies first and foremost the reading of the primordial doctrine in the phenomena of Nature – each man reads what he can understand – and the experiencing of nature as the holy, primordial Home that everywhere manifests the Great Spirit and everywhere is filled with Him; and this consciousness gives the Red Man his dignity, composed of reverence for nature and of self-dominion.

Creation stories are as varied as the tribes, but again there are reoccurring themes. God first created earth and the animals. The animals often help the Creator form the earth as we know it. Every element of nature is infused with a sacred Spirit. We learn the different qualities of God by observing the qualities of all creation. Schuon again:

Something that Ben Black Elk had explained to us occurs to me at this moment. The Indians do not worship rocks, trees, and animals. But because man was created after all the other creatures, it is only through these creatures that he can approach God. Which means that just as for us a book or a god man is symbol and mediator, so for the Red Indians, the whole of nature is symbol and mediator.

This photograph is from 1959 with Schuon and Ben Black Elk in South Dakota.

Plains traditions are shamanistic. Each individual can have a personal revelation. The visions give teachings that accentuate different ways of understanding God. An animal or an element of creation, such as the thunder, may help the seeker. Medicine bundles preserve the spirit of the animal helper. The Indian beliefs are one of the most inclusive belief systems that exist. They accept all other religions, and one never argues about a person's spiritual beliefs.

Humor is important to Plains Indians. It was and continues to be profoundly important. It can be a medicine, especially to cope with hardship, trauma, and societal challenges. In many traditions, the clowns and contrarians have sacred roles that provide comedic, often inverted, performances during ceremonies to highlight societal standards and teach the children. Semi-divine tricksters are central to many traditions—*lktomi* to the Lakota. Humor can also be just for fun. The photo is from 1971. Great memories.

The “giveaway” is a source of great prestige. This is a painting of a widow giving away all of her deceased husband's possessions. So everything is given away to the tribe at death. There was a giveaway at births, naming ceremonies, puberty celebrations, receipt of any honor or deaths.

Sitting Bull was with Buffalo Bill in New York City for four months. I trust everyone needs no introduction to Sitting Bull. He was often asked the same question: “How can there be so much poverty in the big cities?” He gave away almost all of the money he earned to news boys and hobos. He wrote, “All the Indians pray to God for life and try to find out a good road and do nothing wrong in this life. This is what we want, and to pray to God. But you did not believe us.”

Fundamental values. In 1910, the Boy Scouts of America were founded by Ernst Thompson Seton. Here he is making fire with a bow and a stick. Here are the three essential values: reverence for nature, charity to your neighbor, and individual self-reliance. Schuon was asked: “what was it as you read and learned about Indians that fascinated you?”

The Indian character first—courage, incredible courage; then self-domination; and dignity, the cult of dignity. Even now when I was in the far west 30 or 40 years ago, they were very dignified—the old-timers. And this I liked very much—this dignity and generosity, no pettiness, do you see. Courage, dignity, generosity and piety. They are always praying, do you see, to the Great Spirit?

What are the reasons for most wars? Quest for territory, material wealth, religious differences. None of these apply to intertribal wars. Before European contact, the contact between the tribes was very limited. Prior to the coming of the horse, they had just traditional weapons. The primary reasons for battles was to court danger for individual and

tribal honor, including protecting from trespass at disputed edges of territory. They never harm women and children, rarely scalp, and then only to honor the spirit of an extremely brave opponent. The first mutilations, massacres were by Europeans.

How then did a man become chief? Four war deeds. Steal a horse, capture a weapon in hand-to-hand combat, lead a successful war party, and count first coup. If you look where the red circle is in the photograph, you will see that it is a “medicine whip.” This is a Charlie Russell painting. That man was not using a weapon, just “first touch.”

The role of men was protection, hunting, teaching boys after the age of eight. Role of women was to teach the girls, care for boys until eight, own the home, keep the camp. Women warriors were rare. This Onondaga proverb, “the heart of the family is the mother because life comes from her.” Most clans were matrilineal. “The lineal descent of the people of the five nations shall run through the female line. Women shall be considered the progenitors of the nation. They shall own the land and the soil.” And this Cheyenne proverb is particularly on point: “a nation is not conquered until the hearts of its women are on the ground. Then no matter how brave its warriors or how strong its weapons, it is done.”

The role of grandparents—I am happy to be a grandparent—guiding the younger generations. “The grandfathers and the grandmothers are in the children. Teach them well.” “Remember your children are not your own but are lent to you by the creator.” The role of the clan: Ella Deloria wrote quite well about it.

We can safely say that the ultimate aim of all Dakota life was quite simple. One must obey kinship rules. One must be a good relative. In the last analysis, every other consideration was secondary—property, personal ambition, glory, good times, life itself. Without that aim and constant struggle to attain it, the people would no longer be Dakota. In truth, the family unit, parents and child, was not the final and complete idea it is elsewhere. It was an integral part of the larger family, the “*tiyospaye*” (clan), bound together with blood and marriage ties. The individuals constituting these larger groups bore definite relationships to each other and owed one another definite duties. They functioned as a unit materially and spiritually in a never-ending interplay of honoring one to another, young and old.

Her summary is simple: “I am not afraid. I have relatives.”

The clans remain important. This photograph is the grand entry of the Whistling Waters clan of the Crow tribe on July 4th, 1991. From the left you have Thomas Yellowtail, Joe Medicine Crow, myself, and then John Pretty On Top. I am a clan brother with Joe Medicine Crow and Pretty On Top. We will hear about them later. Joe Medicine Crow was awarded the

Presidential Medal of Freedom, America's highest civilian honor. John Pretty On Top—we will hear about him a bit later. They are very important people in my life, as well.

Where are we? We have an overview of Indian culture and worldview. Now we explore their spiritual practices.

Ohiyesa was born in a buffalo hide tepee in 1858 in the wilds. He lived in the traditional way until he was 15 years old. He went on to become a medical doctor. We will hear his wisdom several times over the coming days.

In the life of the Indian, there was only one inevitable duty, the duty of prayer. His daily devotions were more necessary to him than daily food. He wakes at daybreak, puts on his moccasins, and steps down to water's edge. Here he throws handfuls of cold, clear water into his face, or plunges in bodily. After that he stands erect before the advancing dawn facing the sun as it dances on the horizon and offers his unspoken. His mate may proceed or follow him in his devotions but never accompanies him. Each soul must meet the morning sun, the new sweet earth in the great silence alone.

The spiritual roles of men and women are equal. The celestial messengers tend to be women. Women have visions and are intercessors with the sacred. Some ceremonies are separate for men and women, but the women are equal participants in the most important the vision quest, the sweat lodge, prayer with the pipe.

Thomas Yellowtail's words explain the sweat lodge and the vision quest:

We participate in the sweat lot ceremony throughout the year to prepare ourselves for the Sun Dance. So it is an important part of the Sun Dance religion. When a person has the proper intention and observes all of the rules, the sweat lodge purifies the person. Not only on the outside but also throughout his inner being.

The Sweat Lodge is called the “little brother of the big lodge,” the Sun Dance Lodge. It is similar in construction. You cut 12 small poles from tree saplings and bend them over and tied them together. You should say a prayer before cutting each tree because the tree has allowed us to use it for our prayer ceremony. I have already spoken about the meaning of the form of the Sun Dance Lodge and this meaning is also true for the sweat lodge.

Hey, hey, hey. Hey, hey, hey. Hey, hey, hey. [Indian singing]

We should always offer a smoke and prayer before and after each sweat lodge ceremony. We will bring sweet grass, sweet cedar or sweet sage into the lodge and

purify the whole lodge with a smoke before we start. We can also purify the lodge with the smoke from the "*kinnikinnick*" tobacco used in the pipe while we pray.

When everyone is in the sweat lodge and the doors closed, we begin to say our prayers. As we pray, we throw dippers of water on the rocks and steam fills the entire lodge. The prayers are the same as the Sun Dance prayers we have talked about. All of the participants should be praying right along during the entire ceremony. Everyone may not be praying out loud. That doesn't matter. But one should pray in one's heart during the sacred ceremony. That is the purpose of the ceremony: to purify the participants both inside and outside. There is no light in the lodge except the red glow of the hot rocks. The smell of the sacred incense fills the air. We have entered into another world which is beyond our physical world. When the water is thrown onto the rocks, the heat does not merely cleanse us on the outside. It also goes all the way into our hearts. We know that we must suffer the ordeal of the heat in order to purify ourselves. In that way, we can reemerge from the sweat lodge at the end of the ceremony as new men who have been shown the light of the wisdom of our spiritual heritage for the first time. This allows us to participate in all of our daily tasks with the fresh remembrance of our position on the earth and our continuous obligation to walk on this earth in accordance with the sacred ways.

Yellowtail also explain the rite of the Vision Quest:

Before a man goes out on a vision quest, he must first consult with a medicine man. A man must be humble before the Great Mysteries will grant him anything. A humble man will ask for guidance from a spiritual man. The instructions for the prayer may depend on the young man's intention. It is very important to undergo a purification before and after every major undertaking. So he must take a sweat bath to prepare for the vision quest. Right after he or she is through with a sweat bath, the vision seeker will go and spend three or four days upon the hill or high mountain.

In the olden days, the man going out to seek his vision would wear a buffalo robe, moccasins, and sometimes a loin cloth. When he reached the area of the retreat, he removed all of his clothing and was exposed to nature unless he covered himself with his robe while he slept. I instruct those who ask my advice to follow the traditional way of the old-timers.

When a person is on a vision quest, he must have certain attitudes and intentions for his prayers to be sincere and then he must carry these over into his daily life. If you participate because you know the purpose of the rights and you want to express your gratitude and love of the sacred ways then you may eventually receive a great reward

for those who have been sincere in the solitary invocation. “*Acbadadea*” will send a reward in the form of some medicine power. There are many different medicines a person can receive in different ways, different animals, different birds or one of the powers of the universe.

When a person returns to the world after a vision quest, he must take a sweat bath using sage to purify himself again before he gets back among his people. Then the meaning of the vision must be explained by the medicine man at home. The medicine man knows what must be done by the recipient of the medicine in order for him to protect it. The recipient of the medicine usually is instructed to make a medicine bundle that will preserve and protect the medicine power. These bundles serve as a constant reminder of the spiritual gifts we have been given and the corresponding attitudes which must always be present in order to safeguard our spiritual blessings.

The Sun Dance is a rite of both tribal and world renewal in addition to the individual relationship to God. It is a reoccurring central rite. [film narration] “This is the remarkable story of the preservation of ancient cultural and spiritual way of life, the Sun Dance Way. Although the form of the Sun Dance varies amongst the tribes, the intention of personal, tribal, and world renewal through days of suffering and prayer is a common theme. Spiritual leaders from many tribes fought to maintain the Sun Dance of their grandfathers in the face of a government bent on its destruction.

Hey, hey, hey. [Indian singing]

The entire film, *The Sun Dance Way*, is on the World Wisdom YouTube channel. It is 45 minutes long, but it is available there for free.

Schuon wrote of the opening of the Sun Dance,

It was one of the most powerful things I have ever witnessed. The consonance of all these impressions—the Sun Dance Tree under the starry sky, the flickering fire, the thunderous drumming, the wild, proud singing, whose melody cascaded from high to low, the wonderful and timeless figures and faces—resulted in a truly grand and majestic image, indeed as powerful a one as senses or imagination can grasp.

The Sun Dance is a prayer for the whole community. At the bottom here, you have the three stages of the Morning Ceremony for the Crow and the Shoshone. It starts with the greeting of the sun, the four morning songs, and the sunrise prayer. As Schuon writes:

The Sun Dance in a sense is a prayer of the whole community. But the various tribes believe that without the annual performance, the world would end. For those who dance, it is a union with the Great Spirit. And afterwards, the Sun Dance should

continue as a spiritual vibration in the heart. It is a symbol of our connection with God. In the Sun Dance, we are like an eagle flying towards the sun. Like him, we are above earthly things in the pure air of the high mountains and a holy loneliness with our creator. The Sun Dance attaches us to the Great Spirit. Those who have attended it can never forget it.

Where are we? We have an overview of their traditional culture. For the next section, we are going to talk about 400 years of Indian history. I am going to go through it very quickly. The summary is this: a primordial world goes up in flames in the conflict with modernity.

Pilgrims arrive at Plymouth Rock. 1620 or 1621 is the first Thanksgiving. The Indians save the pilgrims—Wampanoag Indians. In the next almost 50 years, it is the standard situation where the English encroach and their cattle trample the Indian corn. Empty promises do nothing. Finally, an Indian kills the marauding cow. Colonists kill the Indians. Retaliations. This is King Phillip's war. Many tribes tried to remain neutral, but the colonial army massacred a neutral Narraganset village in a surprise attack. The bloodiest war in US history on a *per capita* basis. 25% of the colonists were killed. 50% of the Indians were killed. Four tribes ceased to exist. Captives were sent to the Bahamas. The son of the chief who welcomed the pilgrims is drawn and quartered.

The Indians, as you probably know, did not have a written language. The winter count was their annual summary. Each year there was a special symbol of the most important event that happened. The year 1780 was the first major epidemic coming to the Sioux. Many died of smallpox. The European diseases ultimately killed over 80% of all native people.

The Cherokee provide another good example. They are one of the five civilized tribes. They did everything that the European conquerors told them to do. They had their own bilingual newspaper. You see here their houses. In the bottom right is the courthouse. But, Congress enacted the "Indian Removal Act." They created an "Indian Territory" in Oklahoma to be "forever secure." The Cherokee were herded into concentration camps and they had to migrate from their area in the yellow to the area in red. During this time, 33% of the tribe died. 33% of the tribe died.

1862, the transcontinental railroad starts. 20 million buffalo remain, but the wanton slaughter begins.

Red Cloud's War, up until very recently, was the only war ever lost by the United States military. This photo is the 1868 Council. So, the Sioux won the war. They retained very large part of South Dakota, which you see here in blue. And, they were guaranteed the right to hunt in the "unceded territory."

Completion of the transcontinental railroad brings buffalo hides and bones to eastern markets and settlers to the West. You can see the wanton slaughter. Gold is discovered in the South Dakota hills. Custer's Last Stand—the Sioux and the Cheyenne wipe out Custer and the Seventh Cavalry. We will come back to that Cavalry. The result was that it accelerated the extermination of the buffalo as a stated policy to force all Indians onto reservations.

1881: the virtual extinction of the buffalo. As few as 2,000 exist, and there may have been as many as a 100 million in 1500 A.D. when the Europeans first came. This is the loss of something ineffably sacred. It was not just the source of material needs, including food, shelter, clothing. It was holy. It was the sacred representative of Mother Earth. Here you see the buffalo on the center pole of the Sun Dance Lodge. The deliberate extermination of 20 million buffalo from just 1862 to 1881 utterly crushed the sacred world of the Plains Indians, and forced the last nomads onto reservations. This is a wound in the heart of all Plains Indians.

Sitting Bull surrendered. This is his home on the Standing Rock Reservation.

“The Secretary's Orders of 1884” are very important because they outlaw all sacred ceremonies—it only allowed small social gatherings. Geronimo's surrender marked the last of all Indian warfare in the west.

By the mid-1880s, you already have large industrialization in the West. And, by that time many more tribes have been moved to Indian Territory. Again, they are promised the land to be “forever secure and guaranteed” for the tribes. But in 1887 the “Dawes Act” allots 160 acres for a farm and 80 acres for a ranch, and all excess land was to be given away under the “Homestead Act.” The Oklahoma land rushes gave away 7 million acres in one day, 15 million in that short period of time. “Forever secure” meant 50 years from the time of the Trail of Tears.

Then you have a 50-year period of forced cultural assimilation. Each family is arbitrarily assigned to one or another Christian denomination. The children are forcibly taken from the homes. There's a long story about Tom Yellowtail as a child being hidden in the mountains by his grandmother, but he was found by the Indian police. The teaching only goes to the sixth grade in most reservation schools and most time is spent working.

“Kill the Indian to save the man,” is a slogan at Carlisle Indian School. Girls in this photograph are gathering husks. This is the Navajo boy two years later. Cast off clothing. No native language. Severe punishments. Susie Yellowtail tells the story that on several occasions she was found speaking Crow and the punishment was that she could not see her parents the next weekend. But the parents don't know that. So, they are going to go 20

miles on horseback or by buggy to this Indian reservation school and then they are told that their daughter cannot see them because she was speaking their native language. Imagine what that would be like.

Families subsist on government rations. The ration day again requires travel from up to 20 to 30 miles away by buggy or by horseback and then they have to wait. Terrible conditions—they never received the promised goods.

In 1890 you have the Wounded Knee Massacre. This photograph is the camp at Wounded Knee Creek where it happened in the year following the massacre. This is the burial of the dead in a mass grave afterwards. They were peaceful Ghost Dancers who were traveling from the Standing Rock Reservation to Pine Ridge. They were stopped in this valley here by the military, the Seventh Cavalry. Where have you heard that name? Custer's old troop was now reconstituted, and they literally wiped out everyone except for a very few survivors. The last vestiges of Plains Indian morale are utterly crushed at this point.

In 1900, there are only 237,000 Indians. “Surplus” land is still being given away.

This 50-year period is important for the Crow. They literally did not practice their ancestral Sun Dance for those 50 years, and it was completely lost. The Sun Dance that they now practice is the Shoshone form that was preserved by John Trehero, whose photograph you saw in the introductory clip.

This photograph is a typical home on the reservations in 1890. The role of the men is completely taken away and alcohol becomes a refuge. The role of the women is exponentially harder and leads to a stereotype that women have a secondary status.

Missionization: Each family was arbitrarily assigned to a Christian denomination.

Interesting: the native peoples generally respect priests because they see they are sincere. Most priests and missionaries are exclusivist and reject all native traditions. Native faith is inclusive. So the Indians ask, “What are the teachings of the religion?” They conclude that “there is no difference from our teachings, but the whites do not follow Christ's teaching.”

The 1934 we have the “Indian Reorganization Act.” This is John Collier, who was the architect—he was responsible for the “Indian New Deal.” It was controversial because it did not go nearly as far as most people wanted, but it repealed the Dawes Act and the Secretary of the Interior’s Orders of 1884. This is crucial. The Indians can once again openly practice their traditional culture, and each reservation can establish a tribal government; but there are very limited powers at this point.

So the mid-30s to 40s are the low point. Over 90 million acres of Indian reservations were taken away. This is land “forever secure” that was taken away during the Dawes Act. The

loss of many sacred ceremonies, including the Crow Sun Dance. Intense poverty from the loss of the land and the many hardships. The report to the Indian Bureau of 1945 written by John Neihardt, who was a famous friend of the Indians. "The Oglalas simply are not any longer a tribe in the social sense. Their old culture is dead. They recognize no leader. They are mostly just poor people living together in a land that cannot support them all and laboring under psychological, social, and economic hardships."

Where are we? We have got an overview of variety of different things. Culture, spiritual traditions, history. Now we learn Schuon's role in perpetuating the spiritual traditions. We then will see the winds of cultural renewal begin.

So, we have spoken about this before: *Black Elk Speaks* is the most famous American Indian book ever written. It is the acclaimed story of Lakota visionary and healer Nicholas Black Elk. It was published in 1932 and remaindered in 1934. And, all of the copper plates that it was printed on were melted down for war efforts. So it was completely out of stock for 30 years. Almost no one was interested in Plains Indian culture during the late 30s and 40s, with one exception. In 1946, Joseph Brown wrote to Schuon for spiritual advice. Schuon asked Brown to send him books on the American Indians. *Black Elk Speaks* was one of the books sent to Schuon. Schuon then asked Brown to find Black Elk because Schuon thought the Lakota holy man had more to say. Brown answered the quest and found Black Elk at 1947. One result is *The Sacred Pipe, Black Elk's Account of the Seven Sacred Rites of the Ogalala Lakota*. Schuon wrote the introduction to the French edition.

In 1947, Black Elk officiates at weeklong ceremonies. I should say that all of this information is preserved with extensive correspondence that Brown wrote to Schuon and John Murray, some to Whitall Perry, as well, both close friends of Schuon. Without those letters, we would not have the contemporaneous record that is documented. Many of those are in Harry Oldmeadow's book, *Black Elk: Lakota Visionary*. I highly recommend it. So, with Brown's support, Black Elk officiated a week-long series of ceremonies attended by over a hundred old Lakota from all the Sioux reservations. Brown's letter to Schuon explains Black Elk's role.

Never have I seen a priest officiate at a right with more dignity, confidence, and majesty. Many of the old men, still strong and handsome, now rose and one by one gave a short speech, most of them expressing that they had neglected the pipe given to them by Wakan Tonka, and that it is now a necessity that they use it once again. It was agreed that the pipe of every old man be handed down to the most worthy of his descendants.

I believe these ceremonials may be more important than the actual book, *The Sacred Pipe*, in revitalizing Lakota spiritual traditions.

Now, Schuon's influence also helps to preserve the Crow spiritual traditions. This is a picture taken in our front yard in October, 1980, one month after Schuon's immigration to the United States, with my wife and I, the Yellowtails and Mr. Schuon. The Yellowtails are the first visitors to see Schuon after his immigration to America. Then, Schuon introduced Joseph Brown to Yellowtail in the 1950s. I was Brown's teaching assistant at Indiana University. Brown arranged for me to spend the summer of 1971 living with the Yellowtails. I was adopted, as you know, into the family. And then Yellowtail introduced me to Schuon. Schuon supported my recording of Yellowtail's biography. The result, Yellowtail's words and images preserve the Crow Sun Dance for future generations.

[Film clip entitled "Preserving Native Wisdom"] "American Indians are reluctant to speak about their sacred ways to outsiders. However, over the last 150 years, spiritual leaders from many tribes have spoken about their sacred ceremonies because they believed that it was important to preserve their sacred wisdom for future generations. In every case, their decision was preceded by prayer. and a request for guidance from their medicine fathers. Yellowtail's book about the Crow - Shoshone Sun Dance is one example.

When Yellowtail received the certitude from his medicine fathers that he should record and preserve his sacred wisdom, he entrusted the task to his adopted son, Michael Fitzgerald. Fitzgerald met Susie Yellowtail in 1970 when she came to speak at Indiana University. Fitzgerald spent the following summer living in the Yellowtail's home in Wyola, Montana. Every year thereafter, the Fitzgerald family visited the Yellowtails during the summer, always attending the annual Sun Dance and often camping with the Yellowtails. For the rest of the Yellowtails' lives, they spent two weeks each October in Fitzgerald's home in Bloomington, Indiana. Following the death of Susie Yellowtail, Thomas Yellowtail spent a month with the Fitzgeralds. Yellowtail gave Fitzgerald permission to photograph the annual Sun Dances he attended during Yellowtail's life. In addition, he gave Fitzgerald exclusive permission to videotape the 1989 Crow Sun Dance held in Yellowtail's honor. This authorization by Yellowtail created a unique visual record to help accomplish Yellowtail's desire to preserve and explain the Sun Dance religion for future generations.

Yellowtail's permission to produce and sell the film and books that helped to prepare was on condition that all profits from those projects be donated to various American Indian charities. During his visits to the Fitzgerald's home, Thomas Yellowtail regularly spoke on videotape about the Sun Dance, Vision Quest, Sweat

Lodge, and Daily Prayer. He also made use of these taping sessions to explain and sing important ceremonial songs in order that they be preserved correctly. In addition, Yellowtail encouraged other Crow and Shoshone elders to speak on tape about the traditional ways in hopes of awakening American Indian youth to their spiritual heritage.

James Trosper: “The Yellowtail book and the film that was produced by Michael. It is really a guide for the wisdom of how to conduct those sacred ceremonies and the purpose and the meaning behind them are all contained in that in that book. It shines a light on the path that helps us to be able to return back to the Creator. The Yellowtail book, it is really a guide not only for those of us that are on this path, but for our young people. It doesn't matter if they come from a family that has lost those traditions because all of that knowledge and that wisdom is contained in that book and is preserved there. So even if they weren't raised in a family that taught them those traditions, they can read that book and learn. The Yellowtail book is very valuable not only to our people, but it will be a help and a guide to other people and maybe help them get closer to their own religion and their own beliefs.”

Each Sun Dance is a miracle. No book or film is responsible for perpetuating the Sun Dance way. This is a very important point. It is the sincerity and sacrifices of the Sun Dance chiefs, the participants and their families that keep the tradition alive. Each Sun Dance is a miracle in the midst of the modern world.

Disclosing esoteric truths while protecting esoteric practices. It is a challenge. The knowledge of how to conduct sacred rights was historically limited to the leaders of the respective traditional societies, thus esoteric in nature. Indian spiritual leaders who have publicly disclosed that esoteric wisdom are not alone. Schuon recognized that those who have the ability to speak with authority about esoteric truths are now obliged to do so. “One of the paradoxes of our times is that esoterism, discreet by the force of things, finds itself obliged to assert itself publicly for the simple reason that there is no other remedy for the confusions of our time. For as the cabalists say, it is better to divulge wisdom than to forget it.”

At the same time, the Sun Dance Way must be preserved for Native People and protected from the casual non-native spectators and participants, what Yellowtail called “Hollywood Indians.” Schuon advised strict limits on non-natives attending a Sun Dance. Yellowtail explains,

We cannot allow non-Indians to interfere with our religion. I have heard many Indians complain about white participation because of some bad experiences. It

troubles me to have this problem because some non-Indians are sincere. The best way to limit non-Indians to only those who know the four morning songs that we sing at the sunrise ceremony. These songs should be known by every dancer, both Indians and non-Indians. If someone has taken the trouble to learn these songs, then they will have shown that they have a good intention. It may be that this prevents some non-Indian who has a good intention for participating for one or two years until he has taken the trouble to learn the song. But this type of rule will encourage everyone to learn about the religion if he really wants to follow it.

So, the winds of change start. I am going to go very quickly here. You start to have more Sun Dances and pow wows.

Where are we? We have a variety of overviews, including Schuon's role in preserving the Plains' spiritual traditions. We now turn to the experience of the last 70 years that is marked with triumphs and tragedies. I am only going to touch on a few salient examples, which are circled in red. Now, the winds start to blow.

In the 1970s—this is almost too hard for me to believe—a government study documented that 3% of all Indian women of childbearing years were sterilized in government clinics without their knowledge in a three-and-a-half-year period from '73 to '76. Connie Yellowtail was a dear friend. She told me that a friend of hers went to the local clinic for an appendectomy and then could not have children. She went for further medical advice and found that she had been sterilized without her knowledge. Think about this: 3% of all women across the United States of childbearing age were sterilized without their knowledge in a three and a half year period. How could that have happened without widespread coordination at some governmental level, because these are all government clinics? Why wasn't someone prosecuted for these crimes?

Now the winds start to blow forward. There is a series of laws that empower native people. All very good. Then in 1980 the Supreme Court ruled that the U.S. illegally took the Black Hills from the Lakota. They awarded the Sioux tribe \$110 million. The Sioux refused to take it, so there is currently over \$1.3 billion dollars in a fund with aggregated interest. Is this a proof of reverence for Virgin Nature and a disdain for worldly riches? But what an injustice!

In 1992 Congress issued the misplaced trust funds report. The report states that at least \$2.4 billion dollars was lost by the government administration of the Indian trust funds in just a 19-year period, not including interest. Billions more are untraceable over a hundred years. In 2010 all these problems are uncorrected.

An explosion of interest in traditional ceremonies takes place in the 1970s and '80s. Multiple Sun Dances occur now on many reservations and there are pow wows throughout

the country—it is an irreversible momentum for traditional cultural renewal. But only 1% of the land in the continental United States remains in Indian ownership. In 2010 the trust fund lawsuit was finally settled: \$1.4 billion total, less than \$2,000 person. Recall: at least \$2.4 billion was unaccounted for in just 19 years, not including interest. So is that fair? Today the circumstances on the reservations are complex and multi-dimensional. Lowest life expectancy, violent crime 250% more than average. Poverty: 36% of the Indian families with children are below the poverty line. Six of the seven poorest counties in the United States are on Sioux reservations in South Dakota and North Dakota. All are unsolved problems. No end in sight. Has our country repaid the debt it owes to American Indians? Ponder that question.

So, we have witnessed the disastrous clash! The so-called “enlightened civilization” continues to treat our indigenous peoples unfairly. We now explore the lessons we can learn from Native People.

Why do 70% of First Peoples prefer to retain their cultural identity and live on or within an hour's drive of a reservation? These are some of my close friends. American Indians speak of the idea of living in two worlds—one represented by the traditional cultural ideas of the ancestors: the other by modern industrialized world.

The encounter, as we know, was tragic. A primordial world was crushed by Europeans who acted in large part in the name of Christianity. American Indians have good cause for intense hatred, both ethnic and religious. So how did the Plains People view Christianity? A fascinating paradox emerges. On the one hand, Native People intensely oppose their European conquerors and reject modern industrial civilization. On the other hand, traditional Plains People overwhelmingly accepted Christianity. Christ appears as an irresistible spiritual reality. Spiritual teachings are identical. Christ and the Christians, early Christians, were persecuted by the governments of their time. Many Indians become dual participants in Christianity and their ancestral traditions. The testimony of some of history's most prominent native people provides an insight.

This is an interesting question: why did a Crow Sun Dance chief, John Pretty on Top, my clan brother, why was he chosen to represent all American Indians at the very first pray for Peace Day in Assisi with the Pope and the Dalai Lama. He was told that he was selected because he was the only American Indian spiritual leader who was not also a Christian. Now, there may be a little hyperbole there, but I think it is true; and it is certainly what he was told.

Here is John Trehero again. “Do not mix the rights of other different religions. It is bad medicine to mix a practice of one religion into the rights of another religion.” Plains Peoples

will fervently take part in their ancestral rights in the traditional manner and then later go to church and pray in a Christian manner. Sitting Bull: “we both pray to only one God. You should say nothing against our religion, for we say nothing against yours. You pray to God. So do all of us Indians as well as the whites. We both pray to only one God who made us all.”

So how do traditional first peoples understand other religions? Yellowtail explained:

As we know this earth is round like a wagon wheel. In a wagon wheel all the spokes are set into the center. The circle of the wheel is round and all spokes come from the center and the center is You, *Acbadadea*, The Maker of All Things Above. Each pole can be considered as a different religion of the world which has been given by You to different people and different races. All of the people of the world are on the rim of the wheel and they must follow one of the spokes to the center. We all pray to the same God, to You. Help us to see this wisdom. Aho. Aho.

So, what does an Indian paragon conclude? We are back to Charles Eastman. “I have come to a conclusion that this Jesus was an Indian. He was opposed to material acquisition into great possessions. He was as unpractical as any Indian and set no price on his labor of love. These are not the principles upon which the white man has founded his civilization.” That was recounted to Ohiyesa by an elder.

Here is Eastman’s conclusion. “It is my personal belief after 35 years’ experience of it that there is no such thing as a Christian civilization. I believe that Christianity and modern civilization are opposed and irreconcilable and that the spirit of Christianity and of our ancient religion is essentially the same.”

We close with an eagle’s eye view. Schuon:

The destiny of the red man is tragic in the true sense of the word — a tragedy being a desperate situation caused not by chance but by the fatal clash of two principles. The crushing of the Indian race is tragic because in its deepest and most intimate nature this noble people was opposed to ‘assimilation’; the red man could only conquer or die; it is the spiritual basis of this alternative which confers on the destiny of the red race an aspect of grandeur and martyrdom. It was not simply because they were the weakest side that the Indians succumbed. They did so because they represented a nobility and a spirituality that was incompatible with the white man’s commercialism. because they embodied a character, an idea, a principle, and being what they were, they could not be unfaithful to themselves.

This great drama might be defined as the struggle, not only between a materialistic civilization and another that was chivalrous and spiritual, but also between urban civilization (in the strictly human and pejorative sense of this term, with all its implications of artifice and servility) and the kingdom of Nature considered as the majestic, pure, limitless raiment of the Divine Spirit. And it is from this idea of the final victory of Nature (final because it is primordial) that the Indians draw their inexhaustible patience in the face of the misfortunes of their race; Nature, of which they feel themselves to be embodiments, and which is at the same time their sanctuary, will end by conquering this artificial and sacrilegious world, for it is the Garment, the Breath, the very Hand of the Great Spirit.

Now, imagine you are an Indian in the late 19th century. You witnessed your traditional culture being destroyed. Your environment has been desecrated. Your sacred rites are lost. The dominant society is largely bereft of virtue and there is no going back for the collectivity. What is your response? So where are we? We have been introduced to a variety of elements of the Plains Indian beliefs, culture, spiritual practices and their response to the religion of their subjugators. As our week unfolds, we will continue to consider if Native beliefs can help us understand the root causes for the environmental crisis, better understand the key tenants of the perennial philosophy, provide a model for interfaith dialogue, and provide a model for each person to make your choice about your individual spiritual life.

As we begin with a prayer, we end with a prayer. This is Dr. Joe Medicine Crow. He actually won all of the elements of a traditional war chief in World War II. Ken Burns gave him about eight or nine minutes in his documentary on World War II. This Presidential Medal of Freedom recipient will close:

This project of yours going to help a lot of people so I'll be glad to do my part with a Crow Indian prayer: [Crow language prayer] So. Heavenly Horse Spirit, today it is my pleasure to have talked to Mike and his son there about the life of Tom Yellowtail, particularly about his work in the Sun Dance Way. They are doing this to carry on Tom Yellowtail's legacy of helping people through the Sun Dance Way. So I pray for these friends of ours from Indiana that they may go home, get home safely, and complete their work. Aho

The Lakota have a phrase “*mitákuye oyás'ŋ*.” It is difficult to translate. It can mean “all things are related” or “we are all relatives.” It is the way that they often close any important talk.

* * *

We have about 20 minutes left for Q&A. If there are any questions on paper, please pass them forward to me. Thank you.

Q: “Granted we can benefit from the wisdom of all authentic traditions. Could we say that the Native American tradition is supra-formal so that all can benefit from following it in practice as well? What would be the conditions for such practice?” **A:** Well, practice. We are talking about syncretism—the American Indian possibility. Yes, it is supra-formal to answer that question, but it is very difficult for me to recommend to anyone that they would try to follow the American Indian Way in addition to their own tradition. Does the question imply in addition or alone? [Mr. Minnaar] The question says, “as well.” [Fitzgerald] So it seems like it is “in addition.” Once you start talking about practicing two religious traditions, you are on a slippery slope to heterodox syncretism. There is a lot to be said. We will touch on that again on Thursday when I talk about new religions and what defines an intrinsically orthodox religion. But Schuon's recommendation is to follow one intrinsically orthodox religion and not to blend it. There are two issues here: One is syncretism and the other is eclecticism. To a certain extent we all follow eclecticism because we all look at different sources for ideas. An idea from a Christian tradition may enrich us very much, as you had with classical Greek wisdom influencing Christianity and Neoplatonism influencing Sufism. These are examples of eclecticism. But not with literally practicing two forms. Yes, the American Indians are doing it, but it is not something that I think we can recommend as a practice.

The second question is about dual participation. Key proponents, such as Charles Eastman and Black Elk, were known for practicing their ancestral tradition as well as the Christianity that was later introduced to them. We can say a bit more about dual participation. To a certain extent we have touched upon it; Schuon points out that a shamanism is a special possibility because a religion is a crystallized form, whereas a shamanism—and you have this situation with Shinto in Japan with Buddhism and the Bon Po and Taoism with Buddhism in China—these are examples of shamanisms that are, in effect, close to and embracing a religious form. But it is not two crystallized forms—it is not two religions. And so it can be done—to have a dual participation with those who are in the shamanistic traditions. But as Trujillo said, it's important not to mix the sacred rites. Do one one day and then one another day, but do not mix the practices of the sacred rites. One moment.

Syncretism and dual participation come up frequently when I give a talk. So I've got some quotes here and I think it is important to state on my own that Schuon is against what I will call a “pick and choose” where you look at all religious traditions and you think I like this rite I like that rite and you put together from a smorgasbord of possibilities. That is out! His

criteria for an intrinsically orthodox religion is three-fold: Divine origin, adequate doctrine and effective spiritual method. Again, we will talk about that on Thursday, but here is what he has to say.

Syncretism is a perspective which mixes different religious elements. This may not be a bad thing, and we have a certain right to do it slightly without disturbing orthodoxy. Some Orthodox Sufi orders adopt negro music and are orthodox nonetheless. If an orthodox Muslim displays the arts and crafts of another traditional culture in his home, he is being syncretic. However, if you mix the doctrine or the rights between religions into one methodical practice, it becomes heretical.

So, I recommend against it. Find your religion. You will hear a lot more about that on Thursday from both Schuon and Yellowtail.

Q: Could you compare the Sun Dance to religious rites of other religions? Pilgrimage for instance. **A:** Well, the Sun Dance, as we said, has two elements. One is the individual praying to God, as represented by the Center Pole. The Center Pole is God who touches down and makes that Holy during the Sun Dance. So that individual is traversing—where you are running toward the center pole and backwards. You saw some of that in the clips. That is a sacred pilgrimage from the perimeter. The symbolism of the Sun Dance Lodge is that the modern world—the world of forms, so to say, the illusion—is on the perimeter. As you move toward the center, you move toward God. So, the very image of the Sun Dance is a pilgrimage toward God. That is an important point to keep in mind.

Q: There is another question here. From the Native American perspective, there is a harmonious relationship between man and nature, one with kinship and alliance. In modern world, so-called environmentalism, devoid of spiritual connection with nature, isn't saving the planet. Can the Native American outlook bring about any paths to a solution? **A:** Well, I'm not optimistic that there will be any solution of a collectivity of our problem with the environmental desecration. Tomorrow we will view that in more detail with a number of quotes from Schuon. But I think the short answer is that certainly the beliefs of the American Indians—once you understand that you are literally a relative with all creation, particularly the animals, the directions but all creation—once you know that you are a relative, you cannot destroy your mother and your father. So, if you adopt the Indian point of view individually, each of those individuals who adopts that point of view will in their own small way be a partial solution to the environmental crisis. But it is a major problem. If I had not ... I came close to being an environmental activist in my youth. I will just leave it at that.

Q: So many American Indians belong to the Native American Church. What do you think about the ritual use of peyote? **A:** Good question. I will answer that with some stories. This one is from John Trehero, and Yellowtail has it in his book. When John Trehero was a young man, he took a vision quest in a cave in a lightning storm and lightning hit him—he was knocked out. The people that he was with—two men—left him there, thinking he was dead. He was not. He had a three-day visionary experience meeting Seven Arrows, one of the Medicine Fathers who preserved the Sun Dance during its time of lapse. Seven Arrows showed him two paths going up over the hill. One path went up just a little bit to here, and stopped. The other went on and on and on without end. This medicine father turned to Trehero and said, "You have to choose a path. You cannot take two paths. This path that goes up here just a little way and stops right here. It is the peyote path. This other path goes on and on without end. It is the Sun Dance Way. Choose one. Trehero chose the Sun Dance Way. I asked Schuon, Mr. Schuon, some years later. I told him the story and asked him what he thought. He said it is exactly that. He also said that during his summers—the two summers he spent living with the Indians—he was asked on a number of occasions if he would like to participate in a peyote ritual. Each time he declined. So, I think those stories put it in the proper context.

Q: Another question. Schuon used the term "old-timers." Can you help us understand what it means to be an old-timer? **A:** Not very well, no. When people ask me that I always say I would like to tell you, but I can't because one of the most grievous troubles in this current day is the fact that there are no great examples. You have very few sages and saints. Yellowtail was a man who lived in the real world—not the world of forms that we live in, this transitory reality, artificial reality, in effect, that we live in. And he was always praying in his heart or singing a Sun Dance song or thinking about what he had to do for that summer's Sun Dance. So, here is someone who is not really of this world. Mr. Schuon was exactly the same. I have told the story before that we were interviewing him on film, in would have been '92, and we had a lapel mic on him, as I have on me right now, and we had no idea while we were in the other room that it was on—but we had left the lapel mic on. When we eventually reviewed the film, he was silently just invoking on his breath the name of God. In and out, in and out. So, here is a man who is God-centered. He was conscious at every moment of a focus on the next world and what is Real—with the Supreme Being.

Q: Another question, why did some tribes make peace quickly while other tribes fought almost to the end like the Sioux? **A:** It is another good question. Each tribe eventually came to the certitude that they had lost—that their way was gone. And there are different ways that they came to that certitude. The Lakota and the Sioux, with Sitting Bull and many of the holdouts, fought almost to the end. Literally, they were in a situation where there was nothing left. The story of Chief Joseph running from the pursuing army almost getting there

[to Canada], but finally there was no way that they could go that last 20 miles. So those tribes fought to the death. And if you had been a young brave and you had lost your family, you would probably be inclined to do that.

But now let us turn to the Crow. Plenty Coup was the most famous of the Crow chiefs. He had a vision as a youth. The vision was that it was a beautiful plain in front of him. There were buffalo, tipis, large oak trees—just an idyllic circumstance. And then a huge cataclysmic storm came in and ripped everything up. When the storm cleared, the only tree that was left was the willow tree that bent in the wind. All the oaks were gone that had resisted with their might and their strength. All of the wingeds were gone. The only one that was left was the chickadee. And the chickadee is the bird that mimics the call of other people—he learns from others and mimics. And gone were all of the buffalo. In its place were a strange new animal with long horns—cattle. No one had ever seen those at that time. So, he told this story to the learned elders and they said, "Oh, my goodness." This is really the story of what is happening with the influx that is coming of the European industrialization and we cannot withstand it. So, the Crow were one of the first to make peace. Again, they had a certitude. Plenty Coup became the most famous of the Crow chiefs and this vision really saved, to a large extent, a lot of suffering of the Crow.

When I look at all of the different reservations in the West, the Crow reservation is the most fertile and productive from an agricultural point of view. The Lakota, the least. Mr. Schuon explained that when he drove around the Lakota Reservation, the way he knew if he was on the Lakota Reservation was if the land was completely worthless for any economic or agricultural enterprise. So, the Lakota were punished very, very greatly for their resistance. But again, coming back to the essence: each one eventually learned but in different ways.

Q: You said the Sun Dance has three intentions individual, tribal and world renewal. Are the intentions the same for every tribe? **A:** Well, first the Sun Dance is a rite of the Plains Indians. Indians in many other geographic locations do not necessarily have a Sun Dance. The Crow accentuate the individual relationship to God—the Supreme Being. Their morning Sunrise Ceremony is for world renewal. The Cheyenne are on the other extreme. There will be very few Sun Dancers in a Cheyenne Sun Dance, historically. There are a few more now, I understand, but the ones we saw, and historically, you might have nine, you might have 13. A great deal of the Cheyenne ritual of the Sun Dance takes place in tipis, away from the public where there is painting, there is singing of songs. So, there are secret rituals which are really done in private and that represents world renewal. For those 13, or however many people there are participating, there is an individual relationship to God. But the accentuation is really on the tribal renewal and the world renewal. The Lakota and Sioux are in between, I would say. You have now many of the Sun Dances, including two

with Fools Crow, where there were are probably 150 people dancing. There are differences in the rite, but with the Lakota each dancer brings a sacred pipe into the lodge. They are put in a special sacred place and then at different moments, it depends, maybe somewhere between four to eight dancers will come to the perimeter, facing the audience with their pipes, and ask an audience member to come. Then they ritually give them but take them back four times. On the fourth time they transfer the pipe to the person from the audience. They go back and then there will be, let us say, 20 people from the audience who will be sharing and smoking that sacred pipe and offering that prayer. So that is the tribal renewal aspect of it. There are a number of other points. You also have in the Lakota way the piercing, which has direct symbolism of the connection to heaven to God touching down on earth. With the Lakota you have really quite a good balance of both.

Q: A last question perhaps. Did Schuon recommend any specific books on the American Indians? **A:** In a number of different contexts, there were several books that he recommended and there were also some that he quoted that are long out of print. Hartley Burr Alexander's "The World's Rim" was a required reading by Joseph Brown. Mr. Schuon on quotes from it. But I would say that the two Black Elk books are central. The Yellowtail book, he wrote in a letter after he read it, that in a certain way it completes the two Black Elk books. So, those three were central. He really liked Ohiyesa and Luther Standing Bear's "My People the Sioux" and "Land of the Spotted Eagle." Highly recommended is Fools Crow book. Fools Crow was Black Elk's nephew. He was a very famous medicine man, Sun Dance Chief in the last half of the 20th century and attributes everything he knew to Black Elk. Things keep coming back to Black Elk in the Lakota way. I would say that those are— Harry, what would you add? [Oldmeadow] I think you've covered it very well, Michael. I mean, the ultimate book, from my point of view is the Schuon book, "The Feathered Sun," which is incomparable. [Fitzgerald] Thank you. I don't know how many of you can hear Harry. He has pointed out that "The Feathered Sun," Schuon's own book, is really the ultimate. I should have added that Mr. Schuon really liked the various anthologies of Indian oratory and quotes, often from the various sources. But unfortunately, the history of the European encroachment happened so quickly in the eastern areas that you have very few accounts that are contemporaneous during that time of the lost traditions. I like Harry's book, *Black Elk: Lakota Visionary*, as I have mentioned before. It provides a lot of context for Joseph Brown, Black Elk, and Mr. Schuon in their roles.

Can we call it a day?