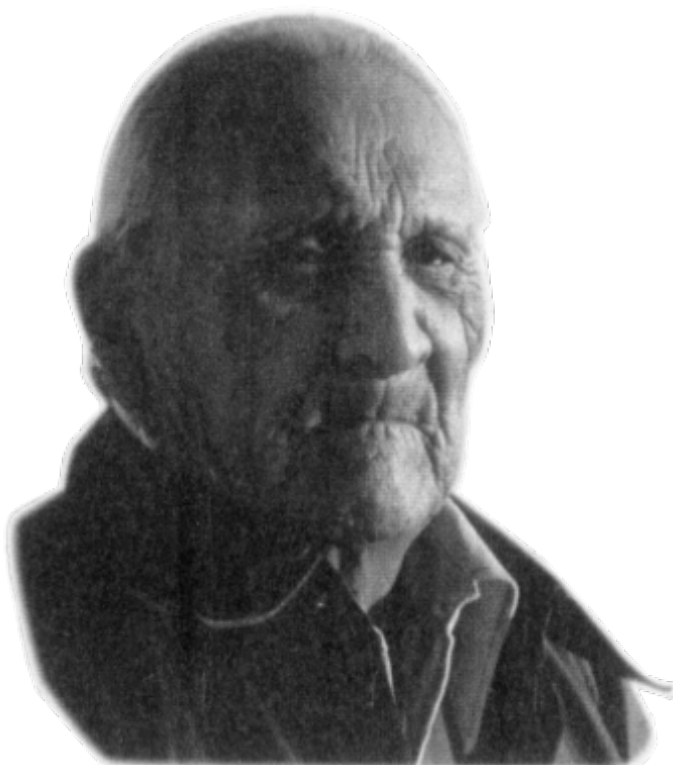


Liberation.org

For all of its strange twists and turns, what follows really is a story about liberation - everyone's potential liberation.

Introduction

In 1974, I had the great and undeserved good fortune to meet an old Sioux Indian Holy Man named Frank Fools Crow,



who invited me to come and stay with him in his cabin on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota. Frank Fools Crow was the Ceremonial Chief of the Sioux Nation. He accepted me as a grandson, and I made it my mission to learn as much as possible from that wise old man. I met several other medicine people and tribal elders and witnessed many things that violated what I thought was the scientifically defined nature of reality that I had grown up believing in. As amazing as the experience of these reality-altering miracles was, I was even more amazed at the utter humility of the medicine people whose prayers brought about these miracles, and the humblest of

all was Chief Fools Crow. It quickly became clear that the greater the humility, the greater the power that flowed through these Holy people. Humility is the key!

I have spent the years since then reconciling my experiences among the Sioux Medicine people and their many wise teachings, both verbal and non-verbal, with scientific theories and Western and Eastern wisdom traditions to come up with an integrated understanding that may provide some insights.

I'll begin my strange tale with a section titled "The Witch-doctor's Coin Purse," which describes the extremely strange events that led to my meeting Chief Frank Fools Crow, followed by my adventures on the Reservations, the teachings that the Lakota elders and medicine people so kindly and generously shared with me, and finally how those teachings can be reconciled with our Western scientific understanding and religious teachings and perhaps lead to our Liberation both individually and collectively.

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The Witch-doctor's Coin Purse

My adventure began on my 21st birthday. I was a philosophy and psychology major at Saint Louis University, and I was fascinated by the subconscious mind (or the unconscious, as Jung would call it.) I wanted to discover what things I was keeping from my conscious awareness and why I could not gain awareness of them. The psychologist Carl Rogers, whose approach to counseling was to see each person as doing the very best that they could with the tools at their disposal and therefore to maintain **Unconditional Positive Regard** for his patients, inspired me to examine myself with the same forgiveness, acceptance, and positive regard so that I could uncover parts of myself that might seem shameful and not feel I needed to beat myself up out of a sense of guilt.

I trusted that my subconscious was not significantly darker nor more terrible than anyone else's, and I believed that I had the power to confront the hidden parts and forgive whatever I might uncover as it was part of my personal humanity and pretty much the same as everyone else's subconscious humanity.

I later learned that this intention and attitude are essential elements of the Spiritual Journey. Our subconscious influences our actions in ways of which we are unaware, so if we are to gain full control of ourselves, then shining a light of awareness, acceptance, and forgiveness within the hidden parts of ourselves becomes essential and can produce a profound sense of absolution as we understand and forgive ourselves for having inherited an imperfect human nature (just like everyone else!)

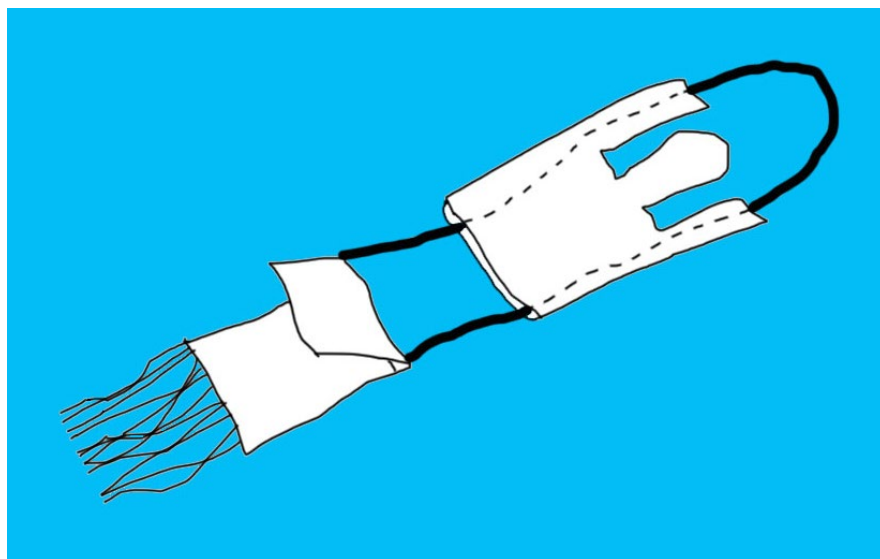
At that time in my life, I believed in nothing so much as I believed in science. I knew with absolute certainty that the ["Things that go bump in the night..."](#) had scientific explanations. That certainty in the supremacy of science was a source of great comfort and security in my life. I did not believe in psychic phenomena, magic, miracles, or things my simple understanding of science could not explain. I had been raised as an Episcopalian, and I admired and respected the wisdom of Jesus' teachings about loving one's enemies, as well as his many other wise teachings, but I assumed that the miracles described were faith healings, legends, and myths. As for God, I did not fully believe that God existed, nor could I be entirely certain that God did not exist. I was content with my uncertainty.

My Psychic Friend Ed

Among my group of friends was a large, rock-jawed fellow named Ed. Ed had been a psychology major at Princeton, and he was an exceptionally quick speed-reader. During his years at Princeton, he would typically go to the library, grab three or four books about psychology or other subjects of interest, read them in the library or check them out and read them in his room, and then return them and repeat the process the next day. Ed was brilliant and exceptionally well-read. Ed's deep understanding of psychology had helped me during a personal crisis that I faced at one time (more on that later.)

Ed also claimed to have psychic abilities. At parties and get-togethers, Ed would often regale us with tales of his psychic perceptions, magic, witches' talismans, power objects, and strange occurrences that I would have considered coincidences. I felt no need to tell Ed that I did not believe his wild tales because Ed was humble, friendly, and gregarious, and I could suspend my disbelief and enjoy his stories for their imaginative entertainment value without taking them seriously.

On my 21st birthday, a dear friend named Mary Beth gave me the gift of a carved leather coin purse of Nigerian origin. She saw it in a shop and thought it would be a good gift for me. It was!



The coin purse had a very heavy leather thong that would go around the neck. The thong was heavy enough that nobody could run up, snatch the purse, and break the thong with a hard yank. (It had about yanked my head off when it got caught on something.) There was an upper part with two hollow arms through which the thong

went to attach to the lower part. The upper part also had a head/tongue shape between the two arms. The lower part had a flap that covered a pocket and fringe connected to the bottom. The body of the coin purse was decorated with brightly colored leather designs. While all of the designs on the purse were bright and colorful, the overall appearance of the purse and my memory of it was unexpectedly and unexplainably dark, though I did not notice the overall darkness until it was pointed out to me later.

I began wearing the coin purse around my neck and slowly began feeling effects that I later associated with the coin purse. I started feeling exceedingly run down and developed a cough and a deep sense of malaise. It felt like my health and vital energy was in decline. During this time, I had a job at a high-rise apartment building near the Saint Louis University campus as a garage attendant. I sat in a room with a window overlooking the parking garage, and my presence kept vandals and thieves away. It was a perfect college student job because I was being paid minimum wage to sit by myself, alone, and study.

Testing the Witch-doctor's Coin Purse

One night in the garage, after I had finished my studies, I became bored and began examining the coin purse. I remembered Ed's tales about witches talismans and power objects, and I began to toy with the idea that the coin purse might have been made by a witch-doctor. I was feeling amused at the notion, and I devised a method to test what I thought was my humorous hypothesis. A very pretty girl named Debbie had given me a

small crucifix medallion on a thin chain to wear around my neck. While the crucifix didn't mean a great deal to me religiously, Debbie was incredibly pretty, so I was wearing it. I reasoned that if I took the crucifix and put it into the coin purse, closed it, and set it on the table, then, as I imagined the Hollywood screenplay of the scene, I expected the coin purse to start jumping around, smoldering, smoking, and finally bursting into flames as a disembodied voice shrieked "NOOOO! ARRGHHH!" The coin purse would quickly be reduced to ashes, and the crucifix would be glowing, pulsing, and thrumming audibly while hovering over the ashes. I didn't, of course, expect any of this to actually happen, but I was amusing myself. So I opened the coin purse, put the crucifix inside of it, and, as I was gently pulling it closed with a couple of fingers, the heavy leather thong broke! Suddenly, I was not the least bit amused. I felt a sense of panic. Being a student of psychology, I wondered if I had subconsciously pulled it extra hard. I tried tying a square knot with the thong, and as I tightened the knot, the thong broke in another place. I tried tying several more knots, but each time I gently tightened the knot, it would break again. It was as if the heavy leather thong had instantaneously deteriorated. This was messing with my scientifically based worldview that was the bedrock of my source of security and comfort in the world, and I was feeling a sense of panic with no grounding to stand on.

Going to See Ed

I knew Ed was a night owl and would be up, so when my shift ended, I went to his apartment. I put the coin purse in my coat pocket and closed the flap so that Ed wouldn't see it. I intended to ring his bell, pay him a friendly visit, and, after a while, pull out the coin purse and say, "By the way, what do you think about this...?" Ed lived on the second floor of the three-story apartment building. I rang his bell, and he came down the stairs to let me in. I forced a big smile on my face despite feeling freaked out, and Ed opened the front door. Ed said, "Preston!" and returned my smile for a second, but before I could say anything, his expression changed to one of horror, and though I was trying to grin and maintain eye contact, he was looking down at my pocket that held the coin purse out of sight, and he seemed terrified. I pulled the coin purse out, and Ed jumped back with his hands up defensively. He said, "I saw death all around you, and it was coming from your pocket!" My response to this was an unintelligible sound as my grip on my conception of scientifically based reality was slipping. I wasn't afraid that the coin purse might be deadly or a threat to my life. I was terrified that my scientific way of understanding reality was inadequate to explain what I was experiencing.

Ed invited me up to his apartment and then suggested that we should explore the coin purse by calling in whoever made it. I said, "If this is death, then why would we want to call its maker?" Ed assured me that so long as I did not jump out a window and hurt

myself, I would be perfectly safe. He pointed out how the overall aspect of the coin purse was unexplainably dark, even though all of the colors were quite bright and vibrant. Ed took four large candles, approximately two inches in diameter, lit them, and arranged them in a two-foot wide square on the hardwood floor. He put the coin purse in the middle, turned out the room lights, and had us sit on either side of the square. Ed said to turn off my thoughts and just feel with my imagination who might have made the purse. After a short period of time, maybe a minute or two, all four candles started strobing in a synchronized fashion. There was a window that was open about four inches and had a Venetian blind hanging down to the sill. The Venetian blind started banging against the window, and it felt as if the temperature in the apartment dropped twenty degrees. It felt chilly, and there was a palpable very unpleasant presence in the room, or so I imagined. But I didn't imagine the strobing candles, the banging window blind or the drop in temperature. I said, "Ed, I know we called this in. Now can we get rid of it?" Ed said, "Okay, now, with your mind, push loving energy into it. Think of Jesus or Buddha and push their love into it. That will exorcise it." Ed began rhythmically breathing and explained that he was focusing his "Chi." The room warmed up, the candles stopped strobing, the Venetian blind stopped banging, and the terrifying presence was gone.

Ed Disappears

We put the coin purse away, and Ed and I talked for several hours that night, after which he said, "I want to try something with you." He took two of the large candles, relit them, and placed them about three feet apart on the floor. He turned out the room lights, and we sat across from one another with the candles between us to our right and left. Ed said, "Just look at me. Don't think about anything. Quiet your mind and just look at me."

There is a phenomenon where, when looking at a page of dimly lit text and your mind wanders, the page of text can appear to grey out. If you blink and focus, you see the text again clearly. As I sat there looking at Ed, he greyed out! I could see everything around him, but he was greyed out. I blinked and focused, and I could see him again, but then he greyed out again. I blinked, he greyed out; I blinked, he greyed out. I said, "Ed! You're..." and he interrupted and said, "Yeah, I know. I'm disappearing."

These experiences were the death knell of my simplistic belief that science could explain all of the things that went "bump in the night!" On the one hand, I was in crisis and felt a great deal of terror as the foundational beliefs of my reality had crumbled, and that is an absolutely terrifying experience. (I now KNOW why, when the Angels appeared to the shepherds, the first thing they said was, "Be Not Afraid!") On the other hand, the Chinese word for "crisis" also implies "opportunity." I was a philosophy and psychology major

because I wanted to understand the deeper truths about existence and the deeper truths about ourselves, which included the depths of our subconscious minds. When I let go of my overly simplified scientific understanding, which had now, to my way of thinking, been conclusively shown to be inadequate, I opened myself up to the opportunities of even deeper mysteries and potential knowledge.

After that night, I became much closer to Ed. We moved into a three-bedroom apartment that we shared with Mary Beth, the friend who gifted me the coin purse that connected me to Ed.

Ed and I went on many adventures exploring psychic phenomena. Occasionally, we would hang out socially with students at Washington University (in St. Louis). When they would ask Ed what he was into, he would offer to show them, and he would tell one of them to look at him without thinking of anything. After about a minute, the student would exclaim that Ed was disappearing. Other students would say, "Do me next!" and Ed would disappear for each of the students in turn.

Documenting How Psychic Perceptions Are Acquired

During my many adventures with Ed, the thing that fascinated me most was to try to determine how (and if) a person could develop abilities like Ed's psychic perception. I was more interested in learning and documenting how a person could acquire these arcane abilities than I was in acquiring them for myself. (I wasn't sure if I was worthy of such abilities.) Exploring deep, mysterious truths and then documenting them has been my passion and is part of my reason for creating this writing and website. Many people have speculated that such psychic perceptions are abilities that people either have or will never have, but I do not agree with that assessment. I believe that it might seem so because most people are far too tightly bound to their own egos to be able to let go and open the doors of perception. Yet, I believe that there are ways (albeit painful) that we can tear down our egos and open ourselves up, as further sections of this writing will describe.

Books Worth Reading

While conducting our psychic exploration, we also researched literature that would bring us closer to piercing and comprehending the Mystery. We read books on Taoism, the Tao Te Ching by Gia-Fu Feng and Jane English, and The Way Of Chuang Tzu by Thomas Merton, the latest edition of which contains a preface by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. (I have come to view these two Taoist texts as incredibly effective manuals for outlining the process by which we can deconstruct the human ego.) Even during the time when I only believed in science, I still appreciated the wisdom of the Taoist teachings because they did not require me to believe in a deity whose existence I felt uncertain about.

Ed highly recommended Søren Kierkegaard's book containing the two essays Fear and Trembling, and The Sickness Unto Death. Ed believed that it was not possible to read and completely comprehend every word of those two essays without having a Spiritual Revolution. I suspected that it was Kierkegaard's essays that had opened Ed up to his psychic perceptions, but I never asked him.

We read the four books by Carlos Castañeda that had been published by that time. The most outstanding of those four books were number three, Journey to Ixtlan: The Lessons of Don Juan, and number four, Tales of Power. In books one and two, Castañeda had yet to comprehend the depth of what Don Juan was teaching him. In book three, Castañeda goes back and retells some earlier lessons, the significance of which had escaped him and had not been included when he wrote books one and two. Don Juan's teachings reach their climax and conclusion in book four.

Another book that I think is worth mentioning is Martin Bell's The Way Of The Wolf. It is a collection of short stories (Barrington Bunny, What the Wind Said to Thajir, and The Porcupine Whose Name Didn't Matter) and essays (The Wheat and the Tares, Counterquestion, and Rag Tag Army) that illustrate the depth and power of mystical Christianity. A final book for this list that I read that has become especially relevant in today's fraught political climate is Carl Jung's The Undiscovered Self. (Highly Recommended!)

Ed and I Pray For a Native American Teacher

We also read more of the wisdom of the American Indians. At one point, Ed and I concluded that Native Americans possessed the most powerful connections to the spiritual knowledge that was indigenous to this part of the world. We had no idea of how to seek out and find a teacher. We knew that if, for instance, we looked in the Yellow Pages for a Medicine Man, even if we found some, they wouldn't be worth seeking out, as really powerful medicine men or medicine women would not advertise or commercialize their abilities. Ed proposed that we make a prayer intention or request of the universe that the Medicine Person or medicine powers would somehow come to us, since we had no idea how to go to them. We made our prayer, asking, if it was the will of the Creator, or the Tao, or the Universe, that we would be led to a Native American teacher.

A few days later, as I was walking through a library, a design or shape on the spine of a book caught my eye and I pulled the book off of the shelf. On the cover of the dust jacket was a beadwork design that reminded me of the carvings on my coin purse, not because it seemed evil but because it felt powerful. The book was a hardbound copy of Joseph Eppes Brown's book The Sacred Pipe. It was about an Oglala Sioux Medicine Man named Black Elk discussing how the White Buffalo Calf Woman brought the Sacred Pipe to the Sioux, and the seven ceremonial rites of the Sioux connected to that pipe.

I checked out that book, brought it back to our apartment, and showed it to Ed. He read it in about forty-five minutes and was very impressed by it. I read it in a couple of days and was also very impressed. (I keep my mouth closed when I read so that my lips do not move. :-) A few days later, I was talking on the phone with a friend and former classmate named Baker who was an Anthropology major at Washington University (in St. Louis) and I told him about finding The Sacred Pipe. He told me that I should check out the book Black Elk Speaks by John Neihardt. Then he asked, "Did you know that there is an Oglala Sioux Medicine Man named Frank Fools Crow coming to Washington University in a couple of weeks?" I had not heard this good news and thanked him. I went to Washington University the next day to learn more about Chief Fools Crow's visit.

AT WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
NOV. 20-22, 1974

OGALALA SIOUX MEDICINE MAN FRANK FOOLS CROW

with
Matthew King
Interpreter



and
Don Clowser
Historian

Lectures and Slides on Sioux History , Medicine , and Life.

Nov. 20; Wed;	2:00 pm - 4:00 pm	Brown Hall
	8:00 pm - 10:00 pm	Graham Chapel
Nov. 21; Thurs;	11:30 am - 1:00 pm	Wohl Center Cafeteria
	7:30 pm - 9:30 pm	Wohl Center Formal Lounge
Nov. 22; Friday;	11:30 am - 1:00 pm	Lower Level Mallinckrodt Center
	2:30 pm - 4:30 pm	Rooms 303 , 304 Mallinckrodt Center

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I found the office in charge of the visit, and they gave me a poster for his visit. They told me that they could not find a photograph of Frank Fools Crow and had substituted a drawing of a Southwest Indian who bore no resemblance to Frank Fools Crow. I was glad to get the poster!

I Meet Frank Fools Crow

When I told Ed about Frank Fools Crow coming to Washington University, he was as excited and hopeful as I was that this could be the fulfillment of our prayer. During that time, I had been making flutes out of bamboo, so I took the best flute I had made, wrapped it in a clean white shirt, and brought it to the first talk with the intention of giving it to Frank Fools Crow as a gift. Ed was working and could not attend the first talk. I arrived at Brown Hall on the Washington University campus about an hour and a half early (I was excited!) and sat down front row, center in the empty auditorium, and waited. As the time of the talk drew near, the auditorium began filling up, and I saw Debbie, the pretty girl who had given me the crucifix, sitting on the aisle about eight rows back. I hadn't seen her in a while, so I decided I would try to connect with her after the talk.

Chief Fools Crow came in with his interpreter, a Lakota man named Matthew King, and a historian named Dan Clowser. At the end of the talk, I stood up and looked back to see where Debbie was going to go, and when I turned back, I was shocked that Chief Fools Crow had walked right up to me and extended his right hand to shake hands. I shook his hand and gave him the flute and shirt bundle.

The second talk was at 8:00 in the evening, so Ed was able to attend. It was held in Graham Chapel on the Washington University campus. While they call it a chapel, it felt more like a small cathedral than a chapel.

Chief Fools Crow was in the front of the chapel, and he saw me and motioned me to come up. When I came up to him, he extended his right arm, palm up, pulled back his sleeve, and began tapping and pushing his extended right forearm. As he did so, a lump grew under the skin of his wrist and it looked perhaps like he had a large marble under the skin of his wrist. I think my mouth was hanging open at seeing this. Then he brushed his wrist in the other direction, the lump disappeared, and he laughed. Matthew King told me that Chief Fools Crow had seven sacred stones inside his body that he used for healing, and he had shown me one of them. Later that evening, Ed told me that Chief Fools Crow was so powerful that Ed couldn't even look at him because his power was so great, and he shone so brightly. Ed said that he thought Chief Fools Crow might well be the most spiritually powerful human being on the planet.

I attended the next four talks, and during the talks, Chief Fools Crow said that we are always our own worst enemy and that the Spiritual path is for us to learn to fight our worst enemy, which is our selves. Matthew King told us that was the teaching that Chief Fools Crow most frequently shared with his Lakota People. Since then, I have come to appreciate the extreme importance of that teaching for us human beings as a means of moving us toward the ultimate and deepest truth.

Chief Fools Crow also said that Medicine Men are like hollow bones, and where the rest of us are filled [with the desires of our egos], they are empty, and because they are empty, Creator's Holy Spirit can move through them to heal the people.

A third teaching that Chief Fools Crow gave was that if we consider the worst person in the world, we cannot know, if we had been born in place of that person and grew up with that person's experiences, that we would have turned out any differently.

Matthew King told us that Chief Fools Crow sometimes knew what was going to happen, and someone in the crowd asked Chief Fools Crow to tell us all what lay in store for us. Chief Fools Crow told us that there was a time coming when there would be much death and destruction. Someone else asked what we should do about the coming death and destruction. Chief Fools Crow answered that we should pray. Another person asked how we should pray. While Matthew King translated this question to Chief Fools Crow and while Chief Fools Crow replied his answer in Lakota to Matthew King, I wondered if Chief Fools Crow was going to tell us how to pray with the Sacred Pipe. Instead, Matthew King translated, "However you believe; Pray THAT way!"

A fourth teaching was that we should never question or criticize how another person prays. That is between them and the Creator. If we see prayers or services that we think are wrong, we should silently walk away and say nothing.

During his visit, Chief Fools Crow and Matthew King actually visited Ed's, Mary Beth's, and my apartment, which Ed and I both took as a fulfillment of the prayer we had made seeking native spiritual guidance. Chief Fools Crow gave me a section of root that he told me to wrap in buckskin and tie around my neck with a rawhide thong. I did this, and later, Ed told me that the medicine bag that I had made was as powerful as the coin purse that had brought us together but that its spiritual energy was positive while the coin purse's energy was negative. While talking to Matthew King and Chief Fools Crow, Chief Fools Crow invited me to come and stay with him in his cabin outside of Kyle on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota.

Hitchhiking to the Pine Ridge Reservation

I met Chief Fools Crow in late November 1974, and on January 6th, 1975, I began hitchhiking from St. Louis to the Pine Ridge Reservation. I caught my first ride within five minutes of sticking my thumb out. The driver was middle-aged, and he was friendly. I was shocked that when he laughed, it sounded just like Chief Fools Crow's laughter. I hoped that might mean that Chief Fools Crow was guiding my journey, but I also thought it might just be a coincidence or my imagination. Heading West on Interstate 70 from St. Louis, I got a series of rides, one right after the other, and I didn't have my thumb out for more than five minutes before another car pulled over. The last in this series of rides stopped at a restaurant and bought me a large and rather delicious cheeseburger. After that ride, I did not get another ride for around twenty to thirty minutes, during which time I offered prayers of gratitude to my Creator. Eventually, a car pulled over. It was a very large Cadillac being driven by a huge burley man with a flat top crew cut. He called me "boy" and I called him "sir!"

I politely thanked him for stopping, told him where I was headed, and he told me that he was headed to highway 13 and that he would stop and buy me dinner before he headed South. I attempted to politely decline the dinner offer, having just been fed a large cheeseburger, but he wasn't hearing it. He had determined what was going to happen, and that was that. As we drove down the road, he said, "Boy!?" I replied, "Yes, Sir?" He said, "I'm a Jarhead!" I replied, "Yes, Sir!" He said, "Do you know what a Jarhead is, boy?" I replied, "No, Sir!" He said, "That's a MARINE!" I replied, "Yes, Sir!" He told me that he had recently retired as a Marine Bootcamp Drill Instructor. (He definitely looked the part!) We stopped at the Truckstop at the Highway 13 exit, went into the restaurant, and looked at the menu. I didn't want to impose on his generosity and saw that a hamburger was inexpensive, so I asked the waitress for a hamburger. "A hamburger!?, A HAMBURGER?!!!" he bellowed. I thought to myself, "Oh God! Please don't make me do push-ups!" He said, "WAITRESS!!" She said, "Yes, Sir!" He said, "Bring this boy a T-Bone steak!" She said, "How do you want the steak cooked, Sir?" He said, "How do you like your steak cooked, boy?" I said, "Medium Rare, Sir." He said, "Medium Rare, waitress, and then bring him two hamburgers and two cups of coffee for the road." And with that, he got up, went and paid the bill, and walked out. I never saw him again.

After dinner, with a couple of hamburgers in my pack and an even deeper sense of gratitude, I got back on the road and caught rides up Interstate 29 to St. Joseph, Missouri. It was late at night, and there was no traffic coming, so I climbed up an overpass to the small flat area a few feet under the bridge to spend the night. It was then that I discovered that my down sleeping bag was a summer bag with long seams that leaked

cold air. I slept with my winter coat on, and I had thermal underwear under my pants, so while not quite warm, I was able to get some sleep.

I got up early the next morning. There was still no traffic, and it was frosty cold. I packed up and started walking with quiet determination, watching the stars dance in the morning sky, with a sense of gratitude that brought tears to my eyes. I caught good rides, and by late afternoon, I arrived at Frank Fools Crow's cabin.

Chief Fools Crow lived in a log cabin that had electricity for lights, but a hand pump in the back yard for water, and an old wood-burning cook stove to heat the water and the cabin.

I arrived at a bad time because one of Grandpa's grandsons, a Viet Nam veteran with a Silver Star, had been shot and killed by Dick Wilson's "Goon Squad," and Grandpa was in deep mourning. I was welcomed despite arriving at a bad time. The night I arrived, a blizzard blew in. It was bitter cold, and there were reports of people freezing to death the next day. For the few weeks that I stayed at Grandpa's, I tried to make myself useful by chopping wood, pumping and hauling water, and doing what chores needed to be done. When I took the bucket outside and pumped it full of water, the water that splashed up on the rim of the bucket was frozen solid by the time I was done pumping. Grandpa's health deteriorated. He was coming down with pneumonia, and he ended up going to the hospital in Pine Ridge, SD. Grandma Kate and the family never made me feel unwelcome, but after a while, I felt that I was more in the way than I was able to be a help, so I decided to go back to St. Louis. I said my goodbyes or see-you-laters, and hitchhiked to Pine Ridge to visit Grandpa in the hospital. Above the patient's beds, there was a sign with the patient's name, "Frank Fools Crow," and under the name, the patient's religion, "Catholic". (CATHOLIC?!?!) This seemed as strange to me, as if the Pope went into the hospital and they listed his religion as "Hindu." Later, I learned that Grandpa was indeed Catholic, and when priests or nuns would visit, Grandma and Grandpa would gratefully pray with them and receive communion. For Grandma and Grandpa, the Story of Jesus, an utterly humble man with no ego, strongly connected to God's Holy Spirit, who could bring about miracles and heal the people, was intimately familiar. I told Grandpa of my plan to return to St. Louis, and he told me to come back at Sundance time.

First Vision Quest

I returned to St. Louis, and in the spring, I decided to try going on a Vision Quest (a period of fasting for up to four days with no food or drink.) I hoped that Grandpa Fools Crow would put me up on a Vision Quest, but I wanted to test myself to ensure that I could endure four days with no food or water. On a Lakota ceremonial Vision Quest (called a *Haŋbléčeya* , which translates "to cry for a vision"), one goes on the hill with a blanket or

buffalo robe, a pair of shorts (a dress for the women), and one's Sacred Pipe (Čhaŋnúŋpa-Wakǵáŋ). I went to a wildlife refuge named the Rockwoods Reservation outside of St. Louis and climbed up on a bluff. I had a pup tent and a sleeping bag (so not a traditional vision quest), but I stayed up on that bluff for four days and nights with no food or water. On the third day, I wondered if I could Sundance (fasting for four days while dancing). I tried standing up and dancing. Fasting with no food or water for several days makes you feel weak as a kitten. I don't think I made it for thirty seconds before I sat down feeling exhausted. I concluded that I did not have the stamina nor the willpower to endure four days of dancing while fasting, so Sundancing was not for me, or so I concluded.

Sundance at Selo Black Crow's Camp Lakota, 1975

I found a poster for a Sundance at Selo Black Crow's Camp Lakota, nine miles East of Wanblee, South Dakota on the Pine Ridge Reservation where Grandpa Fools Crow lived.



It was similar to this poster, but this poster was for the 1976 Sundance.

To get from St. Louis to South Dakota in the summer of 1975, I rode there on a Honda 100 motorcycle. It was capable of highway speeds, and the bike made the trip with no problems. I, on the other hand, was beat up by the trip and was exceedingly sore and miserable. The bike's narrow seat was fine for short trips around town but was so uncomfortable after several hours that I stopped at a lumber store along the way and purchased a twelve by thirty-six-inch wood board to sit on. I had no means to cut it to size, so I looked pretty silly sitting on that board that stuck out eighteen inches on either side, but I didn't care. It was better than riding on that narrow seat.

When I got to Selo's Camp, there were several young Lakota men who wanted to ride my motorcycle. One of them was an exceedingly humble young man named Dicky Moves Camp, who was around 16 years old. I found out that he was a Medicine Man who had a connection to Spirit from a young age. I let him ride my motorcycle because I figured that the Spirits would guide him and warn him not to do anything that would get him killed.



Selo poured my first Sweat Lodge Purification Ceremony (like an exceptionally hot sauna with songs and prayers). His Sweat Lodge had just been rebuilt. A few weeks earlier, on June 26, 1975, two FBI agents unfamiliar with the tinderbox conditions created by Dick Wilson's Goon squad, unexpectedly attempted to serve an arrest warrant outside of Oglala, South Dakota (approximately 100 miles from Camp Lakota) and they were killed. At that time, Selo had many European visitors inside his house, who had come to learn about Lakota Spiritual practices. Selo did not have a telephone (there were no cell phones), and he did not have a television. He had an AM radio in his automobile but only listened to country and western songs when driving, and you had to drive nine miles West to pick up mail, so nobody was aware of

the goings on in Oglala, one hundred miles away. Without warning, a Chinook twin-rotor helicopter buzzed Camp Lakota, hovered a few feet above the ground with a large machine gun trained on the house, and federal marshals wearing camouflage armed with M-16s began diving out of the Chinook and crawling on their bellies toward Selo's house. Selo got a tray and instructed everyone in his house to put their rings, watches, wallets,

and any valuables on the tray. As the marshals approached, Selo opened the door with his hands high above his head, pushed the tray in front of him with his foot, pointed down, and hollered, "This is all we have! Take it and leave!!" The flummoxed marshals said, "We're not here to rob you!" (They were there to assault and terrorize them.) Among other aggressive actions that day, the marshals declared Selo's Sweat Lodge (constructed of bent willow saplings covered with blankets and tarps) to be a bunker, so they tore it down.

When I arrived at Selo's camp a few weeks later, one of the twin-rotor Chinook helicopters buzzed Selo's camp. It was a most unnerving feeling as the low frequency "thump-thump-thump" of the helicopter blades can be felt inside one's body even more powerfully than they can be heard as the helicopter approaches, even before it is in sight. As the helicopter circled Selo's camp, I got the distinct impression that I had better not make any sudden moves that could be interpreted as threatening. That time, it did not land.

First Lowánpi (Medicine Ceremony)

I slept on the floor in a rectangular log cabin at Camp Lakota, and one day Selo told us that a Medicine Ceremony known as a Lowánpi would be held that evening after dusk in that log cabin.

The name of the ceremony, Lowánpi, literally means "we sing" (Lowán is "to sing" and the "pi" makes it plural.) The name was a code word used at a time when Christian clerics would punish the performance of Medicine Ceremonies. Lakota could say, "we are singing tonight" and not let on the true nature of the gathering. Years later, I knew a Catholic Priest whom I admired greatly named Father Fagan. He had a wonderfully dry, very British sense of humor and often made fun of himself. One day Father Fagan went to a house where they were going to have a Lowánpi Ceremony. He knocked on the door, and when it was opened, he asked if he could come in and pray with the people. Everyone was surprised, but he was welcomed in. He then asked if he could make an announcement to the attendees before the ceremony began. He was given permission. He told the people that when he was a young priest, new to the reservation, he used to come to this house and write down the license plates of the cars of the attendees so that he could deny them communion the following Sunday. He said that he now realized what a terrible sin that was, and he asked the people to forgive him. There were many tears, hugs, and much forgiveness. Father Fagan stayed and prayed with the Lakota people in their sacred medicine ceremony.

In preparation for the Lowánpi ceremony at Selo's, which would occur in complete darkness, a few other visitors and I took all the furniture out of the cabin, including the wood stove. We climbed up on the roof and put a coffee can over the stove pipe. We made a dirt and water mud plaster and plastered any cracks between logs that might allow light to leak in. We nailed rugs and blankets over all of the windows and the door, and we took the pillows and mattresses, rolled them up, and put them against the inside walls for people to sit on. During the daylight, we waited for ten minutes inside with all flashlights off (there was no electricity in that cabin) so that our irises could fully dilate in the pitch-black, and when there was no light at all, we deemed the cabin ready for the ceremony. After the sun went down, about fifty or more people came into the cabin that was lit by kerosene lanterns and sat on the rolled-up mattresses and pillows. The Medicine Man, Robert Stead, his helpers, and singers led by Willard Pipe Boy came into the cabin, and they began to set up the Ceremonial space. Robert Stead was a self-effacing, mousy little man whom nobody would meet and suspect of possessing great spiritual power. I had learned that it was precisely the extreme degree of self-effacing humility that was the mark of a powerful Medicine Person and that if he had seemed charismatic and filled with abundant obvious spiritual energy, then that would have been cause for suspicion and distrust. Robert Stead prepared his altar. He took a coffee can filled with grey gopher hill dirt, and poured a cone of this dirt on the floor. He then pressed a plywood board and twisted it down to make a round, flat circle of gopher hill dirt. After that, he took an eagle feather and used the quill end to draw a design in the circle of dirt. His helpers marked off an altar area, approximately six feet by six feet in the middle of the log cabin, by putting four three-pound coffee cans in the four directions. In these cans, they put Willow sticks upon which they tied flags that were black, red, yellow, and white, which are the sacred colors for the four directions. These colors also represent the different skin colors of the human race. When the Lakota pray, they pray for all humankind as well as for the animals, birds, fish, trees, rocks, rivers, oceans, and the entire planet. Nobody and nothing is left out of their prayers. The helpers then put tobacco ties around the cans and flags. (Tobacco ties are made by taking a piece of colored cloth approximately an inch and a half square, picking up a tiny pinch of tobacco and placing it in the middle of the square, and then folding the square and tying it on a long string so that the lump of tobacco was on one side of the knot (typically a clove hitch) and the rest of the square was on the other side. Tobacco ties on the string were placed about two or three inches apart from one another. A typical string has 405 tobacco ties and maybe six inches of loose string on either end. The 6' x 6' altar area gets completely encircled by the tobacco ties. Frequently, there are several sets of 405 tobacco ties around the altar depending on how many people are asking for a healing.)

Once the altar area was set up, the singers sang a pipe filling (opáġi) song and Robert Steed filled his Sacred Pipe (Čhaṇnúṅpa).

When the ceremony started, the helpers extinguished the kerosene lanterns. Robert Steed was alone inside the altar area. The singers began singing sacred calling songs to call the Spirits in, and THEY CAME! From all that I knew about Robert Steed, his self-effacing, quiet nature and his absolute humility, I had no reason to suspect that he was anything but a powerful medicine man, and yet when the Spirits came into that ceremony house and were shaking rattles and bells, and causing little lights to blink all over the place, I couldn't help my doubts. I kept wondering how the men were "doing the trick." How could they unerringly be walking all around in the pitch black and not be running into those of us who were sitting up against the walls? I kept struggling to come up with explanations of how "these men" were doing this. The little blinking lights were especially puzzling as they appeared to be little tiny spheres of pure white light that were clearly visible, but did not illuminate anything around them (such as a human arm). There were dozens of these little lights blinking all over the place with no apparent pattern, and they made no noise when they blinked and did not give off a pyrotechnic smell. I kept trying to hold onto my belief that there was a scientific explanation for what I was experiencing, but it was becoming increasingly difficult. I heard what sounded like a HUGE bird, I thought it must be an eagle, flapping its wings and flying from one wall lengthwise across the altar area, banging against the far wall, and then flying back. It was too fast for someone to have run, so I thought that someone had an eagle wing on a long pole (though nobody had brought any long poles into the log cabin.) My scientific explanations for what I was experiencing were becoming increasingly more implausible, crazy, and absurd.

It was a warm summer night and with all of the windows sealed up, and with around fifty-plus people sitting "cheek to cheek" against the wall, that little cabin grew hotter and hotter. All at once, there was a blast of ice-cold air that hit me. I breathed in through my nose, and the freezing air crinkled the inside of my nose, a sensation that only happens when breathing in air that is below approximately minus twenty degrees Fahrenheit. If I hadn't experienced the crinkling of my nasal passages, I probably would have told myself that I was sweating and got fanned, but I couldn't deny that nasal crinkling. With that, I completely gave up on trying to make scientific sense of what I was experiencing, and I silently prayed, "Thank You for showing me what a complete idiot I have been with my disbelief!!!!" and "Thank You for the gentle and wonderful way that you showed me my foolishness!!" After that experience, I no longer felt the need to come up with a scientifically acceptable explanation for spiritual phenomena, but when I experienced

things that I thought were scientifically impossible, I would silently or out loud, depending on the circumstances, make a prayer of deep gratitude and thanks for the gift of my experience of Them and Their incomprehensible beauty and playfulness that They shared with someone as unworthy as myself.

There was another aspect of these scientifically unexplainable events that I discovered, whether it be in a Medicine Ceremony, a Sweat Lodge, or a Sundance, whenever I experience things not in keeping with my normal understanding of reality, I always became completely lucid, focused, and centered in my body. It is as if my body is telling me to get it together and pay absolute, strict attention because something extraordinary is happening. This feeling of being COMPLETELY lucid, present, and centered in my body was exceptionally exhilarating.

Years later, I asked a medicine man if the Spirit helpers were ghosts of people who had come before, and I was told that, with few exceptions, the Spirits had always been Spirits and that they had always served the Creator. I reflected that in my European culture, the Spirits who had always been Spirits and had always served the Creator were known as Angels.

As the time for the Sundance drew near, a Medicine Man named John Fire, also known as Lane Deer (about whom the book Lane Deer Seeker of Visions was written) arrived with four or five stunningly beautiful young women. Grandpa Fools Crow never had stunningly beautiful young women hanging around him because he had Grandma Kate, and she was his one true love.

At one time during Selo's Sundance, I was sitting on the ground in the shade arbor as a round of dancing ended when the pipe got handed out. John Fire walked up to me, held out the pipe, and said, "Smoke!" I gratefully accepted the pipe, prayed silently for a second or two, took a couple of puffs and handed it back to him saying, "Mitákuye oyás'ín" which means "All - My Relations". That was the first time I smoked a Sacred Pipe.

After that Sundance, I made my way over to Chief Fools Crow's cabin. He and some other men had been discussing the Sundance, and he turned to me, and with a big smile, said, "Thákóža [Grandson], are you going to dance?" I had considered Sundancing when I was on my vision quest but decided that I did not possess the requisite stamina (I'm really very lazy and a wuss) so I had decided not to try. But here was Grandpa asking me if I was going to dance, and he seemed really excited for me to Sundance. I didn't want to tell him "No," and I didn't want to tell him "Yes," so I thought I would say something noncommittal, and I said, "Oh, I could, Grandpa!" Grandpa said, "Wašté!" (pronounced

"wash-tay' ") which means "Good!" and he made the Indian Sign for "Yes." I realized that Grandpa really wanted me to Sundance, so even though I felt I lacked the requisite stamina, I decided to try to Sundance because I completely trusted that wise old man. I figured that even if my attempt to Sundance failed miserably, it would, never-the-less, somehow serve the greater good. Perhaps my inability to endure the ultimate rigor of Sundancing (I have seen Navy Seals who could not complete the Sundance) would give needed encouragement to the Lakota people. Of course, I had no idea what I was doing. I didn't even know what questions I should ask in order to learn what I needed to know, and what items I needed to obtain in order to prepare and get ready to dance. (If there had been a book titled The Complete Idiot's Guide to Sundancing then I would have been abundantly qualified to read it.)

Visiting Pipestone Minnesota

On my way back from the Reservation after the dance at Selo's, I stopped in Pipestone, Minnesota, to visit the Pipestone National Monument. I was less interested in the tourist activities. I wanted to know if it was possible to obtain or dig up a piece of pipestone so that I could make myself a Čhagnúnŋpa to pray with. In the back, I found a garage/maintenance area where I met an incredibly kind native man named Chuck Derby, who worked for the Monument. I told him that I was hoping to get just enough pipestone to make a pipe bowl and that I wanted to pray with the pipe that I would make. When I was able to communicate my sincere desire to pray with the pipe, Mr. Derby very kindly gifted me a piece of pipestone large enough to make a pipe bowl and instructed me on how to carve it while in a state of reverence, praying the entire time. I thanked him and felt incredibly grateful for his guidance and kindness. I stayed in Pipestone until after the monument was closed for the day, and late in the evening, before sunset, when the shadows were getting longer, I walked the paths back into the trees to Pipestone Creek. It was one of the most beautiful places I had ever seen! I was stunned by the sheer beauty and obvious sacredness. I remember that it brought tears of joy and a profound sense of peace to me as I stood and witnessed the deep magic of that Holy place. I was reminded of the scene in "The Ten Commandments" movie where Moses sees the burning bush, and God commands him, "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is Holy ground." I don't remember if I took my shoes off, but I might have.

Guatemala

The following summer, 1976, I had the opportunity to join Rarihokwats who lead a group known as The White Roots Of Peace from the Mohawk Nation in upstate New York that

was going to Guatemala to offer assistance to the earthquake victims. They wanted people who were knowledgeable in construction, medicine and agriculture. We traveled in a large RV and a school bus. One of the people on our crew was a Mexican Indian man who was going to be an interpreter as he spoke the native Indian tongue (which I believe was Mayan.) He had a mother in Mexico City who we stopped and visited for a meal. Her house was in an exceptionally poor part of Mexico City that looked far poorer than most of the tiny cabins on the Pine Ridge Reservation, and her possessions seemed to be of far less value than those owned by the poorest of the Sioux on the Reservation, and yet when we entered her house, it liked to take my breath away. All of the little, worthless knick-knacks that she owned were cleaned, polished, and displayed on shelves with immaculate care. The inside of her house was so clean and tidy that I felt that I was entering a shrine. She kept everything up with such absolute dignity that it gave me the impression that I had entered the home of an exceptionally wealthy and respectable lady. She fed us a simple but very delicious meal for which I felt an extreme sense of gratitude. It is quite humbling when people who are dirt poor prepare food and offer it to me to eat when they are so poor in comparison to me, and it would be an insult to turn their gift down. All I can do is feel deep gratitude as I accept their gift. That afternoon, I came to realize that poverty in my country among those who have enough to eat, a place to stay, and access to medical care has more to do with a state of mind than it does with the lack of material wealth and possessions.

Our group made its way to the very rural parts of Guatemala, near the epicenter of the earthquake. We were in a small Guatemalan town on the evening of July 4th, 1976 (the 200th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, which was a huge Bicentennial celebration in the U.S.A.), and we were watching fireworks going off! But the fireworks going off had nothing to do with the U.S. Bicentennial. The fireworks going off in this small Guatemalan town were to celebrate the big market that was taking place the following day. It was a delightful irony!

My time with the White Roots of Peace ended a little earlier than the rest of the crew because I needed to get to the Sundance in South Dakota. I took a bus to the City of Guatemala and caught a flight to Miami and then hitchhiked to South Dakota.



OGLALA SIOUX



TRADITIONAL SUN DANCE

JULY 30-31 AUGUST 1-2

PORCUPINE, SOUTH DAKOTA

Narrator - Noble Red Man

*For Further Information: Contact Bicentennial Program
Birgil Kills Straight*

In 1976, the Sundance, for which Frank Fools Crow was the intercessor, moved to Porcupine, South Dakota. The previous year, it was in Pine Ridge. I arrived a few days before tree-day (when a Cottonwood tree is chopped down, carried by the men dancers, and planted in the middle of the Sundance Arbor.) The circular dance area, about a forty-foot radius from the cottonwood tree, is surrounded by a circular shade arbor that has an opening in the East (through which the Cottonwood tree is carried into the arbor by the dancers.)

Meeting Dawson Has No Horse

Before the dance started, I met an exceptionally friendly and humble Lakota Episcopal minister named Dawson Has No Horse (who was called Dawson No Horse.) He was dressed in black pants and a black shirt, and he was obviously a clergyman. I liked him very much. Dawson did not usually attend the Sundances. He prayed in the Episcopal church rather than with a Sacred Pipe, but that year he told his wife, Emily, "Let's go see how our Lakota People pray," and so they had come to the Sundance.

I asked Dawson if he would translate a message to Grandpa Fools Crow, and he agreed. We went to Grandpa's tent, and Dawson explained in Lakota that I had asked him to translate an experience that I had to ask Grandpa about. I told Dawson about my experience, and without saying a thing to Grandpa, or hearing a response from Grandpa, Dawson told me that when I eat a meal, I should take a little bit of the meat from my meal, go outside, dig a little hole, put the meat in the hole and cover it up. This would be an offering to Grandmother Earth. I thanked Dawson for that advice and told him that I would do that (and I do), but I asked him if he would tell my experience to Grandpa and see what Grandpa had to say. Dawson spoke Lakota to Grandpa, and Grandpa replied in Lakota back to Dawson, and Dawson said, "That is what Grandpa says to do." I accepted that, but I wondered how Dawson knew what Grandpa was going to advise.

A few days later, while the Sundance was going on, Dawson and Emily were in the circular shade arbor surrounding the dance circle. It was between rounds, so all of the dancers and helpers were out of the dance area and in the shade, resting. Dawson had a vision, nudged Emily, and said, "Do you see that man standing by the tree dressed the old way?" Emily said, "There is nobody out there. I think you have been in the sun too long. Let's go home." Dawson said, "No. He's calling me. I have to go." The man Dawson saw wore an old buffalo hide Sundance skirt. One side of his face was painted red, and the other side was painted black. On one side, his hair was braided, and on the other side, his hair was loose. He was motioning Dawson to come to him, out at the Sundance Tree in the middle of the dance circle.

The dance circle inside the shade arbor is a very sacred altar, and no one who is not a dancer or a helper is supposed to enter the sacred dance circle. For the Episcopal minister to walk up to the tree in his black pants and black shirt was shocking to the Lakota people in the shade arbor. Dawson walked up to the man standing by the tree in the middle of the dance circle, and when he got to him, the man disappeared! Dawson felt shocked, thinking, "What have I done?" when he saw that Chief Fools Crow had walked into the dance circle and was walking up to him. Chief Fools Crow announced to the people, "This is the man who is going to run the Sundance next year." (Of course, he said this in Lakota, so I had no idea what was going on.) People's jaws dropped, and they felt gobsmacked. Chief Fools Crow, who was Catholic, had handed the Sundance over to a visiting Episcopal minister who had not been involved with the Sundance or traditional Lakota ways of prayer!

After the Sundance ended, when Dawson was driving in his truck, he would hear thunder, and he would hear that man's voice in the thunder crying, "Hey, Heeey!" this frightened Dawson, as he thought he might get struck by the lightning. It kept happening, and Dawson grew increasingly worried, so one day, he went into the Wakpamani Lake Episcopal Church (that Dawson had built) and he knelt down at the altar and prayed. While praying at his altar, he heard the thunder again and heard that man's voice crying in the thunder, and he knew he wasn't safe, even in his own church. Finally, Dawson told his wife, Emily that he was going to go up on the tall hill behind his house to fast and pray. He told Emily not to tell anyone where he had gone. Usually when Lakota go on a *Haŋbléčeya* (Vision Quest), they go in a sweat lodge before, and they have black, red, yellow and white flags on straight Willow poles that mark off their altar area. The altar area is then encircled with four hundred and five tobacco ties on a long string. Dawson did not have any of that. He went up on the hill, and took out a sack of Bull Durham tobacco, and made four small piles of tobacco on the ground in the four directions, and stood in the middle. The sun beat down on Dawson, and there was no breeze. Dawson worried that he might die of heat stroke. He was there on the hill for three days, and as night fell on the third day, a thunderstorm came in. Lightning struck right in front of Dawson, and that man he had seen in the Sundance circle ran down the lightning and stood in front of Dawson. He said, "You can have the Holy Shawl, or you can have the lightning. Choose fast!" Dawson understood him to mean that he could choose the Holy Shawl and become a *Yuwípi* Medicine Man (who gets tied up in the Holy Shawl) or he could choose the lightning and be struck and killed by the lightning. Dawson said, "I'll take the Holy Shawl!" and the Spirit said, " *Wašté!*" (Good!) and disappeared.

The following morning, the sun rose, and then went back down. It rose again, and went back down. It did that four times, and the fourth time it rose, it made a diamond-shaped pattern around it with a Cross inside the diamond, all of different colors, and Dawson knew he was supposed to use this pattern of a brightly colored cross inside of a diamond for his Yuwípi altar.

After that, Dawson started holding Yuwípi medicine ceremonies, so by the time the Sundance came back around, Dawson was a full-fledged Yuwípi Medicine Man. Dawson did not stop being an Episcopal minister. He would talk about the Sacred Pipe and the Spirits while he was in the pulpit of his Wakpamani Lake Episcopal Church, and he would talk about Jesus while he was tied up in his Yuwípi altar. Dawson would say, "There is no difference! We worship the same God!"

High Horse Family Helps Prepare For Sundance

At the end of the 1976 Porcupine Sundance an elder named Luther High Horse, who knew that Grandpa wanted me to Sundance, came to me and asked if I wanted to Sundance. I said "Yes," and he said to come with him. I went and told Grandpa that Luther High Horse was going to take me to Sundance. Grandpa approved. Luther drove me to his house in Wanblee, SD, and discovered that I was completely unprepared. Luther and his family made me a Sundance skirt, got me a medalion, an eagle-bone whistle, made me a sage crown, wristlets, and anklets. They made me flags, and tied 405 tobacco ties to put on the tree. They also got me a rope to pierce with. I am still deeply grateful to the High Horse family for helping this dumb wašíčuŋ!

Sundance at Crow Dog's Paradise

Then Luther drove me over to Crow Dog's Paradise on the evening of August 5th, 1976, at the end of the first day of dance. That year, the intercessor for the Sundance at Crow Dog's Paradise was Bill Schweigman, who was known as Chief Eagle Feather. Luther and Bill Schweigman spoke, and I assume that Luther told Bill that Grandpa Fools Crow wanted me to dance. Bill had deep respect for Grandpa Fools Crow, so he told me to put my bedroll in the men's tipi, and I would dance in the morning.



CROW DOG SUN DANCE

AUGUST 5-8 * 1976

CROW DOG IS IN PENITENTIARY
BUT THE SUN DANCE WILL GO ON.
CROW DOG IS SPEAKING TO HIS NATION.

To all Indian tribes: The Sun Dance has been part of our heritage in the past and must continue to be so in the future. The original Dance occurs when the chokecherries are ripe. The purification day is on August 3rd. The Dance will be held on August 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th. The Dance will be at Crow Dog's, on the Rosebud Reservation, in South Dakota. All Spiritual Leaders, Chiefs, and traditional people are welcome. Food will be served two times daily. All Sun Dancers who have taken vows must be prepared. Autumn Dawn and Barbara Brave Bird could not be forgotten.



ROSEBUD RESERVATION * SOUTH DAKOTA

Each day, in the early morning, well before dawn, Bill Schweigman woke up the dancers in what seemed an unusual way. He hollered, "GOOD MORNING SUNDANCERS! The Spiritual Waitress is bringing you breakfast in bed! There's bacon, fried potatoes, ham, juice, and coffee!" The Sundancers, all of whom were fasting, would groan loudly at being reminded what they were missing, but it was all in good humor, and there was a sense of merriment to it all. We got out of our bedrolls, had a sweat lodge, and lined up to go into the arbor and dance. One of the surprising features of the Sundances on the reservation was that despite the fact that the men and women dancers were dancing beyond the edge of human endurance, with the men having the skin on their chests or backs pierced with Chokecherry pegs as big around or bigger than a number two pencil, the spirit of the dancers and the helpers was especially light and joyful, and not morose or heavy.

I would like to report that I danced strong, but that would not be accurate. I had started the dance on the second day of the dance. I knew that the men I danced with were one additional day more tired and thirsty than I was, so I knew better than to give voice to the complaints I felt. Suffice it to say that I got through the dance without making a complete and total fool of myself. While the dance was an extreme ordeal, there was yet a palpable and incomparably beautiful spiritual presence in that dance arbor that makes me ache and yearn for it even now, fifty years later. The memory of the overwhelming sense of the sacredness of the dance brings tears to my eyes as I type this. Even the piercing is not as it might seem to an observer who did not understand what was happening. Such an observer might think that the piercing was some sort of sadomasochistic ritual. What they would not perceive and could not feel is that the man doing the piercing loves his brother whom he is piercing and does not want to cause him pain, but is only doing so because his brother asked him in a sacred way to help him by piercing him. There is a sweetness and a loving tenderness to this bond that words cannot adequately express. (Of course, it still hurts!)

Dawson's Yuwípi Ceremonies

When I learned that Dawson had become a yuwípi medicine man, I began attending his yuwípi ceremonies. Dawson's yuwípis were preceded by a sweat lodge ceremony. In most of these sweat lodge ceremonies, when the reddish-orange glowing stones were put in the pit in a hole in the middle of the lodge, and the door was closed, Dawson would pick up a handful of sage (Mugwort), which I could see from the glow of the stones, and hit the pile of red glowing rocks with the sage while giving out a visceral grunt ("Húunh ") There would be a bright white spark where the sage hit the stones, and instantly, all of

the rocks in the pit would glow a bright, deeply saturated turquoise sky-blue color! The entire pit would be filled with glowing blue rocks! A leaf of sage might fall on the rocks, and it would glow red (so I knew I was seeing my colors correctly), but the rocks were that wonderful, deeply saturated shade of turquoise sky blue! It was the most beautiful color that I have ever seen!

The Spirit whom Dawson saw by the Sundance Tree and up on the hill was named Čhaŋnúŋpa Gluhámani (Who Walks With His Pipe), and he was a Sundancer Spirit, so during the yuwípi (which was held in total darkness), when the singers sang a Sundance song, all of us who had Sundanced were encouraged to stand up, dance, and blow our eagle bone whistles as Dawson told us this made Čhaŋnúŋpa Gluhámani happy when we danced with him. Once, when I asked about the Spirits, I was told that, with few exceptions, they had always been Spirits and that they had always served the Creator. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, the Spirits who have always existed and who have always served the Creator are known as Angels, and so they are! It should not surprise us that the manifestation of God's Holy Spirits would appear to us humans within the context of our understanding, and so for a Lakota, the manifestation of God's presence would become a Sundancer, while for Europeans with their soaring tall cathedrals, Angels might manifest with wings. Each is an authentic manifestation of God's love for us.

Touching the Face of the Spirit

Something that happened quite frequently in Dawson's Yuwípi ceremonies when one of the people or I had a question we wanted to ask, we would be sitting in the pitch black, and Čhaŋnúŋpa Gluhámani's hand would reach out and grab us by the wrist and pull our hand and arm up to touch the side of his head. Depending on whether we touched the side where his hair was braided, or the side where his hair was loose, Dawson could tell us what that meant in answer to our question. It always tickles me thinking about it, that in the pitch black, Čhaŋnúŋpa Gluhámani knew **exactly** where our arms and wrists were and could grab us precisely by the wrist without having to feel around to find our wrist. It also humbles me whenever I think about it, as it did when it happened, to know that one of God's Holy Spiritss would have someone as unworthy as myself touch the side of His face.

Visited by a Buffalo Spirit

One time during the ceremony, a Buffalo Spirit came into the ceremony. I could hear it clomping on the wood floor. I was standing and dancing to a Sundance song, blowing my Eagle Bone Whistle, and the Buffalo pressed its nose into my belly. I could hear and feel its hot, moist breath blowing out of its warm nostrils and onto my stomach. By that time, I

had witnessed so many things that violated the rules of science that I no longer concerned myself with trying to make "scientific" sense of what I was experiencing. Neither was I afraid. I unquestionably knew that the Spirits in the ceremonies are servants of the Creator, that they love us, and that they are a blessing to experience.

After a while, I became one of Dawson's singers along with Eugene Yellow Boy. Sometimes, John Around Him would come and sing, in which case Eugene and I would defer to him. John was a wonderful singer with a bright, clear voice. Eventually, I became one of Dawson's Yuwípi altar helpers, along with Eugene Yellow Boy. Eugene and I would help put up the flags, put the tobacco ties around the Altar area, pass Pipes in to be put on the altar for a blessing, tie Dawson up in the Holy Shawl (or blanket), gently lay him down, close up the altar, and turn out the lights. One of the things that Dawson would do was to invite people to bring their Pipes and fill them when the Opági (pipe filling/offering) song was sung. These filled pipes would be passed into the inner altar and put on a pipe rack to be blessed by the Spirits during the ceremony. When the ceremony ended, the pipes would be passed out to the owners, who would light them and pass them around to be smoked by all of the people. Once all of the pipes had been smoked, the feast would begin. The person or persons putting on the ceremony would bring food to feed the people who came and prayed for their healing. The food in these ceremonies was especially good and plentiful. There was usually enough food for people to take leftovers home.

Before the yuwípi began, Dawson would take flesh offerings from anyone who wanted to offer a few pieces of flesh as prayer offerings for the sick person's healing. The person offering their flesh would hold a Pipe and pray while the person taking the flesh would stick a sharp pin under a layer of skin on the upper arm, pull the skin up, and slice it off with a razor blade. The little piece of skin (maybe one millimeter in diameter) would be put in a square of red cloth and tied on a string like a tobacco tie that would go on the altar.

I almost always gave flesh offerings for the person needing healing. Eventually, Dawson tried to have me take flesh offerings from the people offering their flesh. At that time, I did not get the hang of it and fear I might have caused some undue pain to those offering their flesh (for which I am, still today, truly sorry!) Years later, I was tasked with taking flesh offerings as a helper at a Sundance, and I got the hang of it. I always tried to take the smallest piece of flesh that I could, sufficient to fulfill their desire to offer a bit of flesh, but with a minimum amount of pain. I would stick the pin in just enough to pull up a tiny

piece of flesh, position the razor blade for the cut very carefully, but cut off the tiny piece of flesh in one quick motion that took no more than a tenth or a twentieth of a second. After taking pieces of flesh from a giver, I would deposit the pin and razor blade in a red sharps container and get fresh ones for the next person. As I took the flesh, I would offer a prayer of gratitude for the gift that was being offered to the Creator, and pray for the health, wellbeing and the good intentions of the person offering their flesh.

The Most Memorable Flesh Offering

I remember my favorite and most memorable flesh offering. A very little girl came up to me at the flesh offering altar, quivering in fear. She was so afraid that she could hardly speak. Her mouth was dry, and her voice was shaking, but she said that she wanted to offer a flesh for her grandmother's health. Even though she feared giving a flesh offering because she thought the pain would be horrible, she was ready to make that sacrifice for her grandmother's sake. I fought back tears as I had her sit down. (I didn't want her to faint.) I handed her a Pipe to hold and pray with, blessed her by brushing her down with an Eagle wing fan, and prayed with her out loud for her grandmother's health, happiness, and long life. I stuck the pin under the tiniest piece of flesh I could manage, pulled up, and quickly sliced it off. The little girl looked around, startled, and said, "Is that it!?" I said, "Yes." Then, looking shocked and overjoyed, she said, "I didn't even feel it!!" Pouring tears of gratitude, I told her that I was glad and that was exactly what I was hoping for. I showed her the tiny piece of her flesh on the tip of the pin. There was a tiny drop of blood where I had taken the flesh. I let her watch as I wrapped it in a square of red cloth and tied it on the string with the other flesh offerings, explaining that it would be taken out and put on the Sundance Tree at the end of the day. I told her that she did not feel it because of how pure her prayers were.

Porcupine Sundance in 1977

When the Sundance was held in Porcupine in 1977, Dawson ran the dance with Grandpa Fools Crow giving advice, and both Dawson and Grandpa spoke in a meeting held in a tipi saying that I should be allowed to dance, but various headmen in the meeting insisted that a white man should not be allowed to dance, and so the answer was no. As this was being decided, I was outside of the tipi, and I saw a white flag fall from an upper branch of the Sundance tree. Dawson saw it, went into the arbor, picked it up, folded it, and put it on the altar. I asked Dawson what that meant because I wondered if it signified a white man being rejected by the Sundance, and Dawson said, "White is the color of purity, and what happened in that tipi was not pure."

At that time, after the Sundance concluded, a pow wow was held in the Sundance arbor for the four days after the Sundance. During the pow wow, one of the men traditional dancers had a heart attack and fell. There were doctors and medical people attending the pow wow, so they began giving him CPR. All of the Indian People drove pickup trucks and I was the only person with a van, and I had a bed in the back of my Volkswagen van which was where I slept. Since there were no cell phones and no police around to call for an ambulance, I got my van, and the doctors loaded the man who fell into the back of my van, and I drove as fast as I could to the Pine Ridge hospital while the doctors continued to give the man CPR. When we got to the hospital, they tried using a defibrillator on the man, but they could not revive him, and he died.

Ghost Dancing in Robert Stead's Lowánpi

I found out about another lowánpi taking place at Selo Black Crow's Camp in which Robert Stead was going to be the intercessor, so I went to Selo's. This time, when the lanterns were blown out, the calling songs were sung, and the Spirits came in and started moving around, I had already witnessed so many things that violated what I had understood to be the scientifically based nature of reality, that I had no doubts that the presences in the room were the manifestations of Holy Spirits.

Since I no longer harbored doubts about what was happening, I could turn my attention to my prayers for the sick persons to get the help and healing that they needed. There was something slightly different in what was happening in the room, and Robert Stead told all of us (in English) to stand up and dance, and that we were Ghost Dancing. One of the Lakota people sitting next to me told me that the Spirit of Chief Rain In The Face was in the room with us and wanted to Ghost Dance with us! I quite joyfully and gratefully stood up and Ghost Danced with Chief Rain In The Face!

When the ceremony and feast was ending, and I was preparing to leave, I thanked Robert Stead, and he said, " Huhh! They don't want you to Sundance with them, but Chief Rain In The Face was happy to Ghost Dance with you." I got kind of choked up and thanked him for telling me that.

The Yellow Panel Van

I was able to buy an old used yellow panel van. I took two-inch wooden cubes and taped them to the floor of the van in a grid about twelve inches apart. I had a company that sprayed insulating foam spray the floor, walls, ceiling, and rear door with foam insulation. I cut the foam off of the tops of the blocks on the floor, and put a plywood floor on top of those blocks. There were two windows in the rear door that I taped up so they wouldn't get sprayed with foam. I had two pieces of plywood that hinged at the bottom of the rear

windows and had one inch thick pieces of Styrofoam glued to the boards, so when I parked, I could swing these boards up which pressed the Styrofoam against the windows and an eye and hook would hold them in place. I sewed a large blanket and a print wall hanging together with a six mil. piece of plastic between them and Velcro strips along the edge. I would use the Velcro to hang the blanket and plastic between the driver and passenger seats, and the insulated back of the van. For a bed, I had a queen-sized piece of plywood on top of milk crates up against the rear door, and in front of that, I had a comfortable overstuffed chair behind the driver's seat, a reading light and a space heater.

When I was living with Grandpa and Grandma Fools Crow, I paid the local electric company to put a meter and a power outlet on a pole next to Grandpa's house so I could plug in my van and power my space heater and reading lamp without using Grandpa's electricity. I lived in that van all through the winter months, and my monthly electric bill was never more than about ten or twelve dollars. When I drove Grandpa and Grandma to different places, I took the blanket/plastic/wall-hanging down and Grandma sat comfortably in the overstuffed chair while Grandpa rode in the passenger seat.

Pow Wow in Rapid City.

One time I drove Grandma and Grandpa Fools Crow to a Pow Wow in Rapid City in my yellow van. We parked in a parking lot a medium distance away from the arena entrance and walked to the arena entrance.

Grandma was in a beautiful beaded snowy white buckskin women's traditional dress decorated with Elk teeth. Grandpa was in his full Chief's regalia. His war bonnet had a double row of Eagle feathers that went almost, but not quite to the ground. Each Eagle feather had a beaded shaft and some horse hair extending up from the tip of each feather. Grandpa had a long black hair wig that was tied in two long braids and each braid was wrapped in white animal skins with the paws and head still attached (maybe ermine or weasel, I don't know for sure.... More on them later.) He had an intricately beaded buckskin shirt and pants and a bone-beaded breastplate. He was every bit the Traditional Sioux Chief, Defender, and Warrior (though he never fought in the military.) What was really surprising and seemed incongruous at first glance, was that as we walked across the wide parking lot, Grandpa was carrying Grandma's frilly purse that was beaded with pretty flower designs, holding it out in front of him. It seemed incongruous until I realized that this is what a true chief and warrior does, helps his woman by carrying her heavy purse. Appearances be damned! I really wished I had a camera and could have taken a picture. It would have been a wonderful object lesson for the tough young warriors.

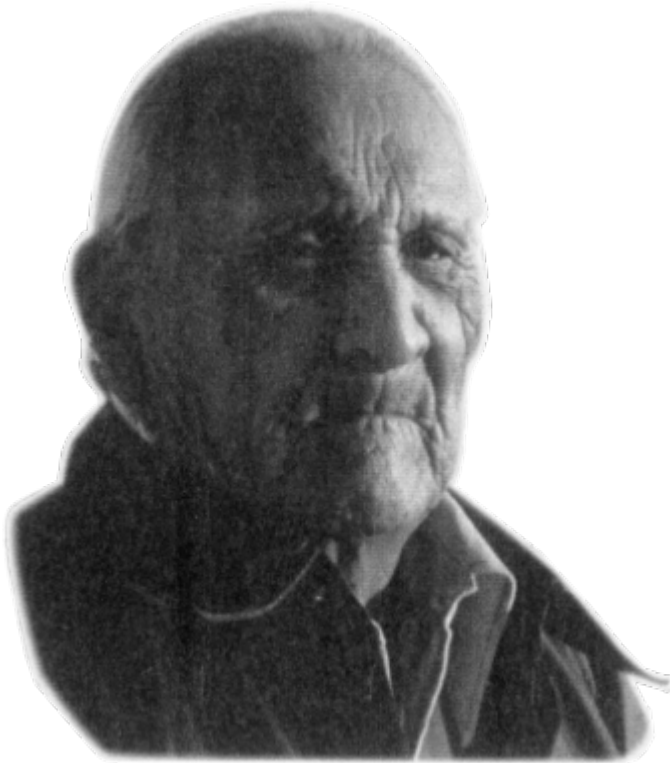
Grandpa goes to Treaty Meetings

I often drove Grandpa to different meetings, frequently up to Rapid City, and occasionally down to Denver. A treaty council meeting might be scheduled to begin at noon, and people would begin showing up around 12:45, visiting and drinking coffee, and then the meeting would start at around 1:30 to 2:00. Meetings would always begin and end with a prayer. (That was the case for treaty meetings, but even mundane meetings like a Tribal Council meeting to discuss trash collection would still begin and end with a prayer.) The discussions were always entirely in the Lakota language, so I never knew what was being said, but I could follow the emotional tone of the meetings, and they seemed to follow a pattern repeatedly. I don't know if my observations and what I think was happening are even a little bit accurate, and I loved Grandpa so much that I'm not an impartial observer, but here is what I observed: First of all, after the opening prayer, there seemed to be an information phase when organizers would lay out the issues. There seemed to be questions and clarifications, and then various head-men would stand up and discuss their opinions and points of view. Mostly these seemed reasonable and well thought out. A few of the head-men might get a little heated and passionate. Everyone spoke except Grandpa Fools Crow who sat quietly and observed. Finally, Grandpa would get up and gently speak while gesturing kindly to the men who had been speaking, all of whom had their heads down looking into their laps and looking like they were being told off, though that certainly wasn't Grandpa's tone. When Grandpa finished speaking, it felt as if the issue had been resolved. Someone gave a short closing prayer, and the meeting was over. Grandpa would stay around for a while and speak jovially to some of the attendees, and then I would drive him home. When we got home, he would sit on the couch with Grandma, turn to her, and enthusiastically tell her what happened at the meeting. Then Grandma would weigh in and Grandpa would respectfully look down while Grandma spoke her thoughts at length.

Grandpa and I Meet The Dalai Lama

One time when Grandpa and I were in Denver for a meeting (perhaps Everett Lonehill was with us) we were ushered into a hotel and up an elevator to a large area in front of a suite of rooms to meet the Dalai Lama. At that time, I didn't really know who the Dalai Lama was. I think I had heard of him and knew he was an important Buddhist leader, but I was more impressed by Grandpa Fools Crow. I politely shook the Dalai Lama's hand after Grandpa shook his hand, and following good Lakota manners, I didn't try to look the Dalai Lama in the eye when I shook hands with him. (When showing respect in the Lakota Tradition, one does not look an elder in the eye, but keeps one's head down.)

Grandpa Looks At and Through Me



There were several times while living with Grandpa that I would walk into the room and Grandpa would absolutely fix me with a stare. He didn't look angry or unhappy, he looked pretty much the same as he does in this picture, but I knew unquestionably that, in that moment, Grandpa could read my mind like an open book, and that if I had been harboring a secret, he would absolutely know it. It would throw me back into myself, wondering if I was praying sufficiently, and wondering what Grandpa was seeing inside of me. Then Grandpa would look away and I would relax. It was unsettling in the extreme to have someone look at you in a way that left no doubt that they could

see in and through you.

Dawson Names Me Pǎ́ésto

In the Lakota Language there is no "r" sound, so the Lakota found my name, "Preston" difficult to pronounce. One day, Dawson said, "Your name 'Pweston' is difficult to say, so I'm going to call you Pǎ́ésto because that is easy to say! Your name is Šúnjka Pǎ́ésto which is a dog with a sharp nose, like a Greyhound or a Hound Dog!" That name caught on quickly, and the Lakota started calling me " Pǎ́ésto," though some people called me Uŋkčé Pǎ́éstola, which means "sharp shit," but I don't think they realized that I knew what that meant. Perhaps I deserved that name. I am a fairly flawed person who is trying to do better, though not always succeeding.

Grandpa Names Me Naúnwizipi

Not long after Dawson named me Pǎ́ésto and the name caught on, Grandpa Fools Crow gave me the name Naúnwizipi which he said meant "jealous of him." When Grandpa would call out for me, he would shout "Jealous, hiyúwo!" (hiyúwo means come here) or "Nawízi!" (means Jealous.) I assume that there were people who were jealous of me, but

for the life of me, I can't imagine why. My pathetic existence, living in involuntary celibacy, was pretty lonely, and certainly not what I had hoped and longed for.

Grandpa Heals Dawson of a stroke

There was a Pow Wow (social dance) that I did not attend, but I heard this story from several of the people who were there and witnessed what happened. Dawson was traditional dancing (with a single bustle) and he had a stroke and collapsed. According to people there, Grandpa Fools Crow who was in his chief's regalia with the wig, came up to Dawson and untied one of the little animal skins with head and paw still attached from a braid of his wig, put the animal skin on Dawson's back and prayed. According to several people, that skin animated and started crawling over Dawson's body, went up to his head, started sucking, and then went limp and Grandpa picked it up and tied it back onto the braid of his wig. Dawson got up and was cured and fully recovered. I don't expect many non-Indians to believe that story, but I have witnessed so many miracles that violate what my understanding of Science says are possible that I absolutely believe it.

Pete Swift Bird

The Spirit came to Dawson and told him that someone was coming to put Dawson up on the hill for a hanjbléčeya, but Dawson shouldn't tell anyone what the Spirit said, and the person to put him on the hill would reveal themselves in due time. Dawson went about his business, and a few months later, while driving through the snow, a pickup truck pulled up behind Dawson and started flashing its lights. Dawson pulled to the side of the road to let the pickup truck pass him, but instead, the truck pulled in behind him and stopped. Dawson grew a bit concerned as the driver got out and walked up to Dawson. Dawson rolled his window down and discovered that it was Pete Swift Bird, a man Dawson knew but not very well. He wasn't someone who attended Dawson's ceremonies or church services. Pete said, "My brother Joe and I have been having sweat lodges every week to get ready to put you up on the hill for a hanjbléčeya this Spring." Dawson was surprised, but the Spirit came to him and told him that Pete Swift Bird was the man they had told him about. In preparing to go on the Hill, Dawson and I went to Pete Swift Bird's home for a Sweat Lodge Ceremony. Pete lived down a gravel road that led to a creek just past Pete's property, and there was a tall bluff on the other side of the creek. Dawson pointed out that bluff and warned me to never do a hanjbléčeya on that tall bluff across the creek, because several people had fasted up on that bluff and had died up there. I assured Dawson that I would not try to vision quest up on that bluff. Dawson also told me that Pete and Joe were heyókñas which are Sacred Clowns who would often do things backwards, but not to mention the subject of heyókñas to them as it was a sensitive

subject. Much later, when I went to Pete's for a sweat, he instructed me, "First pray to the West, then pray to the South, then pray to the East, then pray to the North" (which is counterclockwise. Lakota normally pray the way that the sun moves in the northern hemisphere, clockwise, West, North, East, and then South.) I accepted Pete's guidance gratefully and respectfully and gave no indication that he was telling me to pray backwards. When heyókħas do things backwards, it is not a joke or something that a person should make fun of.

German Medicine Man

At one of the Sundances, I met a German man who was a medical doctor. He spoke accented English conversationally, and I really liked him. I invited him to come to one of Dawson No Horse's Yuwípi Ceremonies. Before the ceremony started, he very humbly told Dawson that he had a satchel around his neck with some small stones that he would talk to and from whom he would receive guidance as part of his medical practice, and he wanted to know if it was okay to have those stones with him during the ceremony. Dawson said, "Yes, definitely!" and suggested that he take the bag of stones and hang them on the West flag of the altar to be blessed by the Spirits when they came in. He did this, and at the conclusion of the ceremony, Dawson told everyone that the Spirits had reported that the stones in the bag were speaking "Iyášiča" (Pronounced "ee-yah'-she-chah" - the Lakota word for German) and that our German doctor friend was indeed a full-fledged Medicine Man who received his guidance from Creator's Holy Spirits in those stones. I find it amusing that the Lakota word for German probably dates back to the time of the First World War in which many Lakota fought, and quite literally means "bad sounding speech" because the Lakota didn't like the sound of the German language, so the little stones were speaking that bad sounding language. I was also quite pleasantly surprised to learn that Creator's Holy Spirits were blessing and giving guidance to a humble German doctor.

I Dance in 1978

It turned out that the man I drove to the hospital was one of the headmen who had spoken against my being allowed to dance. At the time that I drove him to the hospital, I did not know that he had spoken against me. Of course, it wouldn't have mattered if I had known. A man needed help and so I tried my best to help him. When the Sundance was going to start in 1978, people were saying, "He spoke against a wašíčuŋ [white man] dancing, but when he fell, the wašíčuŋ tried to save his life." And so it was decided that I would be allowed to Sundance.

I was very glad that I was going to be allowed to Sundance, but I hoped that the Lakota would not simply open the Sundance up to any white (or non-Indian) who came and wanted to dance, because there are way too many crazy people who will want to come and try to dance without knowing what they are getting themselves into. My advice would have been **not** to say "No", but to say "Not yet." Let those non-Indians who would stand with the Lakota against the government and against those who would steal Lakota land, and who felt called to worship the Creator in the Lakota way, work with the Lakota, defending and serving the dances and ceremonies until the Lakota deeply knew their hearts and trusted them and their commitment to the Sacred ways. That could (and probably should) take years, as it did with me.

When Jesus Comes Back

One time at Pete Swift Bird's camp while waiting for the sweat lodge rocks to heat up in the fire, Pete said, "When Jesus comes back, **AND HE IS COMING BACK**, all those people in all of those churches, they won't even know, but that drunk in the alley, and the homeless family, they will meet him." (Pete really emphasized "AND HE IS COMING BACK") When he said this, I remembered that Jesus spent his time with those whom society rejected, with thieves, prostitutes, and tax collectors. Today He would spend His time with the poor, the migrants fleeing oppression, and the transgendered whom society rejects. He would be offering them solace and comfort, and standing with them and denouncing those who would reject and oppress them. As for the churches, do the churches sponsor soup kitchen's to feed the hungry? Is there an outreach program to serve those in need? Do they openly welcome poor immigrants and the gay and transgendered? In Matthew chapter 25 Jesus says, "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me." If we treat some people as "other" and not belonging to the group of people we choose to care about, then clearly, we also consider Jesus to be "other" and by extension, we reject God's Kingdom. However, it is not too late to openly repent of those sins, make amends, embrace the people we previously rejected, and open our hearts to God's forgiveness and absolution. There are no "others."

Yuwípi with only five people

Most of Dawson No Horses Yuwípi ceremonies had from twenty-five to forty or more people attending. There was one time when a person needing an emergency healing showed up, and there was no time to alert the regular attendees. The only people in the ceremony house that night were Dawson, the sick woman, Dawson's wife Emily, Eugene Yellow Boy, and me. Eugene and I each had drums and were sitting side by side singing the calling songs. I could hear Emily's clear singing voice as she was sitting across from us

in the ceremony house. I could hear the sick woman praying and Dawson crying, "Hey Hey!" from inside the blanket or Holy Shawl a short distance away from Eugene and me. And still, the Spirits were going around the ceremony house beating rattles and causing little flashes of light all over the place. If I hadn't believed and known the reality of the Spirits before, then this would have challenged my understanding and grasp of reality. As it was, I was not surprised at all. I had already experienced so many reality bending phenomena, that this just seemed ordinary.

The Spirit With the Extra Long Name

One of the stories that I heard from several sources was about a little boy who was deathly ill, and a Medicine Man was called to come make prayers for him. In the ceremony, the Medicine Man told the little boy that the Spirit was going to heal him, but the Spirit would like to ask the little boy for something. The Spirit's name was extremely long, very difficult to pronounce, and difficult to remember. The Medicine Man told the little boy that the Spirit really liked the boy's name, and if the boy would give his permission, the Spirit would like to share the boy's name with him. The boy gave his permission, and now that Spirit goes by the name "Scotty." I have heard that there are several Medicine People who have worked with the Spirit named Scotty. Creator's Holy Spirits never cease to amaze me with their incredible tenderness and sweetness.

Pete Swift Bird asks if I know Steve Lawrence

While visiting Pete Swift Bird, he asked me if I knew a blond, cross-eyed, white man named Steve Lawrence. I told Pete that I had not met anyone by that description named Steve Lawrence. Pete told me that he had put Steve Lawrence up on a hanbléčeya (Vision Quest) on the bluff across the creek from his place. This was the bluff that Dawson warned me to avoid because people had died who fasted up on that bluff. Pete told me about his experience of putting Steve Lawrence up for a hanbléčeya on that bluff.

Steve's Hanbléčeya on the Infamous Bluff

Many years later, I met Steve Lawrence. He was exactly as Pete Swift Bird had described him. He was blond and extremely cross-eyed. He was also a heyókħa, more so than even Pete Swift Bird. Being a heyókħa was not an act for him, it was part of who he was, and he was constantly doing things backwards. I liked him very much, and we became extremely close friends. He told me his experience of having Pete Swift Bird put him up on the infamous bluff for a hanbléčeya, and it matched the account that Pete had told me about. Steve said that he was in his hóčhoka (altar area), and he was feeling afraid that people might come to mess with him or give him a hard time for praying that way. A thunderstorm blew in, and lightning was striking all around him before the rain started to

fall. He was standing, holding his pipe up to pray, and static electrical discharges were making a sizzling sound, traveling up the stem of his pipe, which he was holding at an angle, and dissipating into the sky above him. He thought to himself, "It's a good thing these Wakínyan [lightning or thunder beings] are here because nobody would be stupid enough to come and mess with me now!" Then the rain started falling, and it fell long and hard, and totally drenched him. His blanket was completely soaked through. Eventually, the rain let up, then stopped, and the storm clouds blew away completely and left Steve under a bright canopy of stars without a single cloud in the sky. He kept praying, but then he saw some lights coming, so Steve got down very low, hoping that whoever might be driving towards him would not see him. A pickup truck pulled right up beside his hóčhoka and cut its engine. Steve stood up and heard Pete Swift Bird, sounding very surprised, say, "OH! You're Alive!!" Pete got out of his pickup truck, went to the back, pulled out a large sheet of plastic, and tossed it into Steve's hóčhoka saying, "Cover up, boy! You might get wet!" Steve said, "Yeah, Thanks, Pete!" trying to sound as ironic as possible, and Pete drove away.

The Sundance Helper's Gatorade

Years later, when I met Steve Lawrence, he was Sundancing, and between rounds, there was an area behind a helper's tipi where the helpers could take a break, and since the helpers were not fasting, they had bottles of Gatorade in this area. Steve wandered back to this restricted helper's area, and one of the helpers, noticing him said, "HEY! You can't be back here!!" so Steve sat down. He started eyeing the bottles of Gatorade within his reach, and another helper said, "You can't have any of those!", so Steve picked up one of the bottles of Gatorade, uncapped it, and was about to start drinking, when Linus Red Feather (a Lakota brother with whom I Sundanced at Grandpa Fools Crow's) who knew that Steve was a heyókħa, said, "Steve! Sit down and drink some Gatorade!" Steve looked like he had been slapped. Crestfallen, he recapped the Gatorade, put it down, got up, and left the restricted area. This completely went over the heads of the other clueless helpers, who told Linus that he shouldn't have told Steve to sit down and drink some Gatorade because that was against the rules.

Steve is Communicating With Spirits

As I spent more and more time with Steve, I began observing that he was communicating with the Spirits. This wasn't some psychic perception on my part, because I have no such psychic abilities, but having lived with Frank Fools Crow and Dawson No Horse, I knew what it looked like when those men communicated with the Spirits, and I saw Steve doing the same thing.

In 1982 I met a beautiful English teacher on the named Hindey on the reservation who was far smarter than I am, and for reasons surpassing understanding, she liked me too, and we got married in 1983. Around nine years later, Hindey was diagnosed with Hodgkin's Lymphoma, a form of cancer. She had a tumor that her oncologist described as being the approximate size of a Nerf football in her chest, threatening to collapse her superior vena cava. On a Thursday, they did a CAT scan of her body and discovered that she had tumors in her liver. They told us that they needed to determine if the tumors were more Hodgkins cells, or if they were a different type of tumor. They scheduled a CAT scan guided needle biopsy for the following Tuesday to determine the kind of cancer that was in her liver. (They were certain that the masses in her liver were tumors.) On that Friday, I drove to Steve Lawrence's house. I filled a pipe and offered it to him, asking him to do a medicine ceremony for Hindey. Steve protested that he was no medicine man, that he didn't know the first thing about doing a medicine ceremony, and that I was offering the pipe to the wrong guy. With tears in my eyes, I explained that I had seen him making connection with the Spirits, and I wasn't asking him to succeed. I was only asking him to pray and to try. I said that if we made prayers and nothing happened, then I would accept that, but still, I was asking him to pray and to try. Seeing the tears in my eyes, he couldn't refuse my request, so we set up a ceremony room in Hindey's and my apartment, putting aluminum foil over the windows with electrical tape and closing curtains in front of the foiled windows so there would be no shiny metal.



We asked a singer named Gary White Legs to come sing for us and Steve gave Gary the gift of a drum (pictured here) that he had been making for ceremonial use. Steve prayed and filled his pipe and handed it to his wife Deena to hold. We turned out the lights and Gary started singing the calling songs. Deena didn't believe any of it, but she and Hindey were friends and she was happy to pray for her friend. In the pitch black, Deena started seeing moving blue lights

and thought, "This is my eyes playing tricks on me" until the blue lights went under the stem of the pipe she was holding and reappeared on the other side, and then Deena thought, "Holy Shit! This is REAL!!" At the end of the ceremony, Steve told us that the

Spirit said that Hindey's doctor used to believe in Grandfather Jesus, but that he had lost his faith and now he just believed in Science, and so they (the Spirits) were going to teach him a lesson. They said the doctor would still have his work to do, the Spirits weren't going to fix everything, but the doctor was in for a surprise. On Tuesday, when they performed the CAT scan guided needle biopsy, they were unable to find any tumors. All they found were some fat deposits in Hindey's liver. There were no tumors! Hindey finished her cancer treatment and was cancer-free for over twenty years.

Word spread that Steve could do Medicine Ceremonies, and people started coming to Steve with their pipes in hand, asking him to perform medicine ceremonies. Steve made no effort to promote his connection to Creator's healing Spirits. That was all done by people who had received real help and cures. Steve behaved with the humility and the lack of ego that I had come to expect of Medicine People from spending time with Grandpa Fools Crow, Dawson No Horse, and Robert Stead except that Steve was extremely heyókħa, which was often very entertaining and humorous.

Some people with absolutely no knowledge of the facts made up lies about Steve, saying that Steve was claiming to have received an altar from Mark Big Road. Steve never said any such thing. When asked, Steve said "I don't have an altar. I just pray when people bring me a pipe and ask me to pray."

The Medicine Ceremony That Wasn't Needed

One of Steve's and my close friends, Bob had a daughter whose health was in decline and the doctors were extremely concerned about blood work tests that had very unfavorable results. The doctors were stymied and didn't know what the cause was. Steve went to visit Bob, and Bob told him that he needed to ask for a Medicine Ceremony for his ailing daughter who was very ill. The Spirit whom Steve mostly worked with, whose name was Swift immediately came and spoke to Steve. Steve relayed the message to Bob, "Swift says that she doesn't need a ceremony. Just tell her to stop eating candy from the rattle and she'll be fine." Genuinely confused, Bob asked what eating candy from the rattle meant. Steve said he had no idea but that was what Swift said, "Just tell her to stop eating candy from the rattle." They were both puzzling over the meaning of this when they heard what sounded like a rattle being shaken in the other room. They quickly opened the door and saw Bob's daughter with a bottle of sugar-coated Ibuprofen tablets shaking a few into her hands. They said "Stop!" before she could put them in her mouth. It turned out that his daughter had been dosing herself several times a day with Ibuprofen. The television commercials made them sound totally harmless, and she imagined she was getting some benefit from them. When doctors asked her if she was taking any drugs, she

thought of heroin and cocaine and said "No Way!" (or words to that effect). She stopped taking the Ibuprofen and her health quickly improved and returned to normal.

Teachings From Medicine People

However You Believe

When I first met Chief Fools Crow at Washington University, during one of the talks, his interpreter, Matthew King told that audience that Chief Fools Crow could sometimes predict the future. Someone in the audience asked what was coming in the future. Chief Fools Crow answered, and Matthew King interpreted that a time was coming when there would be much death and destruction. Someone asked what we should do to prepare for that time. Chief Fools Crow answered, "Pray!" Someone else asked, "How should we pray?" I quickly wondered if Chief Fools Crow was going to describe how to pray with the Sacred Pipe. Chief Fools Crow answered, "However you believe, pray THAT way!"

I was pleasantly surprised that Chief Fools Crow answered that way. In my understanding, Chief Fools Crow had validated all of the religions that his audience embraced. Chief Fools Crow was not alone in his validation of many religions.

Spokes On A Wheel

A few years later, my friend Ron Goodman shared a teaching that he heard from one of the Lakota Medicine People. (He told me who the Medicine Person was who shared this teaching, but I do not remember the name of the person.)

The teaching was, "You know, all of our religions are like spokes on a wheel. They all come into the Sacred Center where the Creator is. If you are on one of those spokes and you move to the outside, then you become worried about who is holy and who is not. You become very judgmental, and you better hold on tight to your spoke or you will be flung off. But if you move into the center, then it is all about Love and Compassion, and you can walk around all of the other spokes without ever losing connection to your spoke."

Having received these validations of various religions, I have embraced many of the wise teachings from the religions that I have learned about and may make reference to those wise teachings in my writing. If I do not mention wise teachings from a given religion, it is not a judgment of that religion, but merely an indication of the limits of my experience and knowledge.

The Spoke of Science

Surely the realm of Science is one of the spokes on the aforementioned wheel. The "Bible" of Science is the accumulation of knowledge based on thoughtful observation of the world around us.

From the mysteries of Jungian psychology to the mysteries of quantum mechanics the realm of science leaves us with dozens of new questions for every answer it provides.

One of the Islamic teachings is about the two books. The first book is a collection of all of the sacred writings such as the Quran and the Bible, and the second book is the book of the world around us. Both books were created by Allah (God) and we all should reverently study our religious texts as well as the Book of the world around us, ie. Science.

Six Blind Men Encounter An Elephant

The theologies and philosophies of the various religions (including Science) provide us with very different conceptions of the Sacred Center of our wheel. This should not deter us from seeking to understand. We are all very much like the metaphorical blind men encountering an elephant. One grabs the trunk and says, "An elephant is like a large hose." One grabs its tusk and says, "The elephant is like a spear." Another grabs its leg and says, "The elephant is like a tree trunk." One grabs its ear and says "The elephant is like a big leaf." The man who grabs the tail says, "The elephant is like a rope." And the man who puts his hands on the side of the elephant says, "The elephant is like a wall."

The perception of each of the blind men about the patient and overly compliant elephant is factual and accurate, and yet the true nature of the elephant transcends each of the descriptions. So it is with us in our attempt to comprehend the Sacred Center of our wheel. By combining all of our descriptions, we may get a little closer to understanding that which is beyond our capacity to comprehend with our language and descriptions.

In order to open oneself up to the Creator's will, the Lakota have a ceremonial practice that is known as the *Haŋbléčeya* which translates "to cry for a vision" in which a person fasts for up to four days without food or water. This is usually done in a six foot by six foot altar area up on an isolated lonely hill by a person with a blanket, a Sacred Pipe, and minimal clothing. The Lakota often spoke of "Going on the Hill" as a synonym for a vision quest. It is an opportunity for the person going on the hill to hopefully silence all thoughts, overcome our worst enemy, allow the ego to die, and thus open oneself up to Creator's Spiritual Guidance. One should not go on the hill intending or wanting to have a vision, because the part of us that would want to have a vision is precisely the part of ourselves that must die absolutely in order to receive a vision. This is very similar to the

Buddhist meditation practices. In Buddhist practice, one may seek to become enlightened through a practice of deep meditation, however, in order to become enlightened, one must completely relinquish and let go of all desires, and this includes letting go of the desire to become enlightened. As the old joke goes, "You can't get there from here."

Hollow Bones

Chief Fools Crow taught that Medicine People are like hollow bones. Where the rest of us are filled with our desires [of the ego] they are empty, and because they are empty, Creator's Holy Spirit can move through them to heal the people.

The Worst Person In The World

Chief Fools Crow taught that if we consider the worst person in the world, (Hitler comes to mind for me) we cannot know, had we been born in that person's place and grew up with the experiences that person grew up with, whether we would have turned out any differently. We all have the the human potential for good or bad, so we might have committed atrocities had we been put in bad circumstances and made many bad choices (and who amongst us hasn't made bad choices?) This teaching can help to prevent us from falling into the trap of thinking of ourselves as more righteous than someone whom we consider to be evil. It could have been us.

Never Criticize Anyone Else's Religion

It was especially important to Chief Fools Crow that we never criticize or speak ill of someone else's religion. That was between them and their Creator, and it was up to them to follow whatever Spiritual guidance they thought best. When discussing other religious practices, Grandpa would say " Tǎkóža, (grandson) WE pray with the pipe!" and I had the powerful and moving realization that the "WE" he was emphasizing and referring to was his family, and he considered me to be a member of his family, and those in his family who follow his guidance pray with the Pipe.

Our Worst Enemies

From Chief Fools Crow's four main teachings, I saved the most important until last. According to Matthew King, the teaching that Chief Fools Crow most frequently shared with his own people, in addition to being the teaching he most frequently shared with non-Indian audiences was that "We are always our own worst enemy, and the Spiritual Path is all about fighting our worst enemy, which is our selves." In the section that follows, I analyze this teaching in fine detail due to its central role in the process of

moving us closer to our Creator, and moving us away from the delusional thoughts and beliefs that we are exposed to and bombarded with as a consequence of living in our modern world.

Analysis

Reasoning and Justification

A desire to become a Medicine Person has always been seen as the height of foolishness by the Lakota People as the part of us that would enjoy wielding power is the part that has to die completely and be eliminated before those powers can flow through a person. And yet, who amongst us **has not** sat helplessly beside the bed of a sick or dying loved one and wished that our prayers could provide comfort, healing, and restoration?

It is my unshakeable belief that our Creator would like to have **MORE** men and women like Frank Fools Crow, Dawson No Horse, Robert Stead, and Agnes Pilgrim (a beloved and exceedingly humble grandmother I knew who had Medicine/Spiritual powers.) I believe that **our Creator wants us** to draw closer, even though doing so requires us to quite painfully tear down our egos and our inflated sense of ourselves. I believe that we should try to move closer to our Creator, not out of a desire for power or an expectation of a desirable reward, but **out of a sense of duty**. It is up to each of us to do the very best we can to serve our Creator, and that includes being willing to shine a searing light of truth into the dark corners of our souls while being prepared to forgive ourselves and be absolved for the things that come to light. The path to humility takes us through the valley of humiliation.

Additionally, the methods described in this writing are designed to pierce our delusions and promote a far greater degree of sanity, even if a person employing them does not succeed in becoming a medicine person. One thing is for certain, we cannot maintain delusional thinking and beliefs when in Creator's Holy presence. Nobody should even consider trying to go on a Vision Quest if they are unwilling to first go through the painful process of tearing down the delusions that we are all subject to. Our society tries to tell us lies about how wonderful we are (especially when they want us to buy something..."You deserve this shiny thing because of how awesome you are!")

The analysis that follows is designed to provide a compassionate understanding of ourselves and our all too human nature as we attempt to deconstruct our egos, tear down our self-righteousness, sit within our fallen nature, and make ourselves **ready to cry for a vision** and **ready to move closer to our Creator**.

I apologize if parts of this analysis seem cumbersome, repetitive, heavy handed, or overly wordy. I wish to leave no stone unturned in providing a full analysis of our human condition and how we might overcome it, and what traps and pitfalls need to be avoided. I also feel a sense of urgency, as forces of light are needed to illuminate (not fight, but illuminate) the gathering darkness that wants to crush our individuality, autonomy and freedom. The battle to be fought is within us! If we win this internal battle, the external conflicts will melt away like snow on a warm sunny day.

Fighting Our Worst Enemy – The North Star

The teaching that Chief Fools Crow most frequently shared with his own people was that "We are always our own worst enemy, and the Spiritual Path is all about fighting our worst enemy, which is our selves." Having spent fifty years trying to come to a deeper understanding of all of the teachings that were shared with me, I have come to appreciate why that was the teaching most frequently shared by Chief Fools Crow. In seeking to understand the Spiritual Path and how we humans can overcome our worst enemy in order to move closer to our Creator, the more I learn, the more those understandings point back to the importance of this teaching, which has become my North Star. As we battle our worst enemy, it is essential that we use the armor of Carl Roger's

Unconditional Positive Regard, which is another way of saying **Unconditional Love**, on ourselves so that as we uncover and pierce the minor delusions that all of us may have enjoyed believing about ourselves, and parts of ourselves for which we might be inclined to feel guilt and shame, we may forgive ourselves, secure in the knowledge that, despite our mistakes and flaws, we are lovable, loved, and absolution requires nothing more than realizing that we are absolved, because **we are all worthy of love and absolution!**

Chief Fools Crow's most frequently shared teaching is fundamentally the same as the teaching that Jesus most frequently shared with his people, which was, "Repent!"

When I was a young man I started reading the New Testament and I was surprised how frequently Jesus was calling on people to repent. I thought to myself, "Jesus sure is judgmental." Years later, I learned that Jesus wasn't trying to bring people to an awareness of guilt, shame, judgment, and condemnation, he was trying to bring them to an awareness of forgiveness and absolution. However it is of critical importance that we understand that we can only be forgiven and absolved for those sins or errors that we gain complete awareness of and fully acknowledge and confront in ourselves. The searing light of Creator's all-knowing LOVE must fully expose our deepest and darkest corruption in order to wash it clean and make it pure and new. **Judgment and condemnation are**

things we do to ourselves when we refuse to uncover and confront the corrupt parts (that all humans have) and be absolved.

It is said that, upon returning from a battle, when asked by His warriors what the next jihad would be, the Prophet Mohammed (Peace Be Upon Him) said, "We return from the lesser jihad to the greater jihad." The war we fight (struggle) with others is the lesser jihad, while the greater and more important jihad is the struggle with ourselves (Fighting our worst enemy.)

Knowing others is wisdom;

Knowing the self is enlightenment.

Mastering others requires force;

Mastering the self needs strength. -Tao Te Ching Chapter 33

We should not seek the enemy outside of ourselves
until we have conquered the enemy inside of ourselves,
because the external enemy is almost invariably
merely a reflection of our internal enemy.

"Knowing your own darkness is the best method for dealing with the darknesses of other people." – Carl Jung

"Your vision will become clear only when you can look into your own heart. Who looks outside, dreams; who looks inside, awakes." – Carl Jung

"Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it fate."
-Carl Jung

"One does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light, but by making the darkness conscious." -Carl Jung

Confirmation Bias

As a means of gaining some insight into the nature of our worst enemy, we should consider the phenomenon of Confirmation Bias:

We humans derive great joy and satisfaction from discovering that we are right (as opposed to being wrong, the revelation of which tends to make us feel bad.) We tend to notice and latch on to information **confirming** our **biases** while not noticing information that would show us to be wrong and in error. Discovering that we have been wrong is unpleasant and depressing, and we humans strongly prefer to avoid feeling depressed, so we can all too easily ignore information that would make us feel bad. This phenomenon

of Confirmation Bias is why the peer review process is so important in theoretical scientific endeavors. A scientist who comes up with a new and novel theory to explain some feature of the world around us submits the theory in a research paper along with the supporting evidence to experts in the field who can *impartially* consider the claims, free of the excitement and zeal that might have caused the scientist to overlook evidence that contradicts or disproves the theory.

In a way it is the same with all of us. We use our language to describe ourselves, and to describe all of the actions that we take, to ourselves in the form of a self-concept. We develop a theory or an understanding of ourselves in which **we are the heroes** of the story we tell ourselves. We desire to see ourselves on the side of Good. This theory or story helps us to feel good about ourselves and builds self-esteem. If we engage in questionable behavior, we find a way to rationalize and justify that behavior to ourselves so that our heroic self-image is not tarnished. In that process, we hide from our consciousness any awareness of the primal anti-social desires that prompted us to behave questionably. We have an innate sense (albeit wrong) that if we strongly believe in our own righteousness and heroic nature, then those around us will see us as we want to see ourselves, as worthy of being loved, included in the social group, and held in righteous high esteem in that group. This story that we so desperately want to believe about ourselves is the foundation of what Sigmund Freud called the "ego," and the primal anti-social desires whose existence we so equally desperately want to deny are the foundation of what Freud called the "id." We perceive this part that we hide from ourselves as Evil, and wanting no part of Evil, we cannot acknowledge or allow ourselves to be aware of its influence on our actions, and thus this influence goes unchecked.

At first blush, one might suppose that the enemy Fools Crow would have us fight, the part of ourselves for which Jesus says we need to repent, the part we struggle with according to Mohammed, or what we need to master according to Lao Tsu would be the primal anti-social desires of the id, **but that is not the case**. The real enemy is our **separation** from the primal anti-social desires, which is a function of language, self-concept, and confirmation bias.

How To Build A Bridge

To build a bridge to the understanding of our primal anti-social desires, we should consider their evolutionary origin so that we can recognize that these primal anti-social desires were, at one time in our development/evolution, essential for the survival of our species. Without their existence, we would not be here, so we have good reason to cut ourselves some slack and learn to forgive ourselves for harboring baked-in, unavoidable,

anti-social desires (just like everyone else.) The following, admittedly amateur explanations of evolutionary biology, are offered as a means to allow ourselves to employ **unconditional positive regard** on ourselves as we wrestle with a comprehension of the hidden parts of our human nature. **The deepest truths are not hidden from us, they are hidden by us.**

The Evolution of Survival Motivations

Eating, Moving and Reproducing

When life began on this planet, the first single cell was motivated by its chemistry to consume nutrients (the first and original survival motivation – we have to eat!) and to undergo cellular mitosis (dividing itself into two - reproduction - the second survival motivation). Eventually, cells evolved flagella, appendages that allowed cells to move towards more favorable survival conditions, either denser nutrients, perhaps more favorable temperatures, or other favorable conditions. And so the third survival motivation was to move about in order to increase chances of survival.

The first three survival motivations were in place before life evolved beyond the single cell, and yet these motivations are with us still. We consume food, we move to get food and to make ourselves comfortable, and we seek to reproduce, (*not necessarily in that order.*)

Defending a Territory

After life evolved into multicellular organisms with nervous systems and brains, survival motivations became more intelligent. Creatures that evolved from living in the oceans to moving onto dry land learned to protect and defend their sources of nutrition as a means of ensuring their survival. Thus, animals evolved territorial instincts and behaviors that motivated them to defend the territory that was the source of their food supply, **even from others of their own kind**, with the obvious necessary exception of at least briefly tolerating a mate for the sake of procreation, and tolerating offspring long enough for them to become self-sufficient and capable of survival on their own. The **territorial instinct** to defend an area large enough to provide necessary nutrition is the fourth survival motivation. The survival of territorial creatures depended on their ability to defend and protect a food supply from others of their own kind, and as they did not live in societies, there was no social contract requiring them to tolerate others of their own kind, let alone cooperate or share. So, killing an encroaching rival was necessary for the survival of the individuals and of the species. In coming to grips with the territorial

dynamic, consider our modern-day tigers. If a tiger invades the territory of another tiger while carrying a freshly killed small animal, the tiger whose territory was invaded will kill the invading tiger and seize the prey that it had been carrying. From the point of view of our socially oriented species, that would be murder and theft, but our judgments come from the point of view of people living cooperatively and observing a social/ethical contract that says murder and theft are wrong and violations of the social contract. Purely territorial species like the tigers not only do not have a social contract, but their survival and the survival of their species depends on their ability to defend a territory from such invaders. For tigers and other non-social territorial species, the survival of the species outweighs the non-existent social contract. Concepts such as selfishness, being self-centered, or greedy that have negative connotations for us living in societies can be seen as good and effective survival programming for our distant non-social, territorial ancestors.

Merging Social and Territorial Motivations

The fifth survival motivation is the social motivation. Its strength is based on the fact that a group of individuals that support one another can defend a far larger territory and stand a much better chance at survival than a single mated-pair of individuals. This probably began when it became advantageous to keep the offspring around to join in hunting or gathering. So, a family group was formed that would grow into a very large extended family/community. This should logically have led to the realization that territorial survival motivations should be abandoned in favor of the more efficient social motivations and the safety and security resulting from a universal group that provides for all of its members. But hundreds of millions of generations of territorial instincts/motivations are not so easily relinquished by creatures that lack the language skills and understanding to grasp the advantages of abandoning their primal territorial motivations in favor of social motivations, so the social and territorial motivations became blended.

Latent Territorial Motivations

If we examine the behaviors of our nearest genetic relatives, chimpanzees, we see evidence of this blending of the territorial and the social survival motivations. A troop of chimpanzees will support one another socially, but male chimpanzees will patrol and defend the borders of their territory, and should a foreign chimpanzee attempt to enter that territory, behaviors we associate with fear, anger, aggression, and hatred will take over, and the intruder will be driven away or killed. The fact that a member of a troop who wanders too close to the territory of a neighboring troop might be killed or so badly wounded as to perish from the wounds would be likely to further enhance the

determination of the patrolling males to treat intruders mercilessly, creating an escalation of animosity. Of course, in a large jungle area inhabited by many troops of chimpanzees, the chances of survival of all of the chimps would be significantly enhanced if the chimps could let go of their territorial motivations and embrace a species-wide community of mutual support. Unfortunately, the territorial survival motivational programming of billions of generations, the remembered history of animosity between troops, and an inability to comprehend the counter-productive nature of the territorial motivations prevent that from happening.

Confronting Territorial Motivations in Ourselves

As we grab a mirror and consider our own species, we find the same blending of territorial and social survival motivations with the added benefit of being able to know and understand what these primal social and territorial motivations feel like when we experience them.

The whole point of examining territorial motivations in the context of primal survival motivations is so that we can examine, understand, and see these primal feelings within ourselves, NOT as personal failings for which we should feel deeply guilty, but rather as inherited motivations that our reason and understanding (and our open hearts) allow us to overcome. Our primal territorial motivations cause us to categorize people as either being part of our society (people we can relate to and for whom we feel kinship) or "OTHERS," people other than ourselves and our kind whom we perceive as a threat because we primally fear they will dispossess us of our means of survival. The understandable response that *seems* appropriate when faced with a threat to our survival and the survival of our family and community is fear, anger, aggression, and hatred toward those we perceive as a threat. In the United States, many are afraid of poor immigrants trying to find a better life in our country, and some frantically want to build walls to defend our territory against these "Others" or try to arrest them, put them in camps, and deport them. There is a common refrain that immigrants are coming to steal our jobs and thus our ability to feed our families and ourselves, threatening our survival. These claims are used as excuses to dehumanize, torture, and mistreat immigrants, including children who are ripped away from their parents, put in cages and not allowed to bathe for weeks on end. There are some who categorize people as "other" for having different skin colors, ethnic identities, languages, religions, political beliefs, or belonging to different socio-economic classes. All of these reactions of fear, anger, aggression, and hatred to people whom we consider to be "Others" obviously trace to our latent territorial motivations. If we search our memories, all of us can find remnants of fear that we felt about a group of people whom we perceived as a threat. It has become popular for political leaders to

show aggression, encourage hatred, sew division, and create enmity between political groups that previously had differences but could tolerate one another and grudgingly work together. Some think that aggressively dividing groups by stirring up factional hatred, territorial anger, and fear makes them seem strong, while peacemakers and uniters seem weak. Of course, it is quite the opposite of what it seems. It is the uniters, peacefully reaching across the aisles, that create strength in numbers, while the dividers weaken us. True strength lies, not in aggression, anger, hatred, and division, but in restraint, resolve, finding common ground, learning to work with those we oppose, especially when confronting anger and aggression from our opponents.

The wars we fight are invariably caused by our latent territorial motivations. In 1902, the English poet, Thomas Hardy wrote,

"Had he and I but met
By some old ancient inn,
We should have sat us down to wet
Right many a nipperkin! [small drink glass]

But ranged as infantry,
And staring face to face,
I shot at him as he at me,
And killed him in his place."

...

...

"Yes; quaint and curious war is!
You shoot a fellow down
You'd treat if met where any bar is,
Or help to half-a-crown."

We perceive the primal antisocial territorial motivations as being evil. Hitler's evil sprang from territorial motivations in that he perceived and convinced his Nazi followers to believe that the "Others," Jews, Gypsies, Catholics, etc. were evil and a threat to Germany's survival, and thus deserving of anger, hatred, dehumanization, and genocide. Desiring to see ourselves as good, we hide these primal antisocial desires from our conscious awareness because we want to see ourselves as ethical, good people who are worthy of inclusion in society. Because good and evil becomes the dividing line between, **the parts** of ourselves that we recognize, and **the parts** we hide from ourselves, an

understanding of ethics is essential to our ability to forgive and embrace the hidden parts of ourselves.

Survival - The Ultimate Ethical Imperative

Ethics as a Function of Evolution

Charles Darwin's theories of Evolution, as explained in his book On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, provide insights into the evolution of life on our planet, from the first single cells up to modern-day humans, and how some species adapt and survive while others fail to adapt and become extinct.

In the dynamic of evolution, each generation faces a test. Will they adapt to changing situations so that their numbers increase and they thrive, or will they fail to adapt so that their numbers dwindle and they move toward extinction? Once a species reaches extinction, that is the end of the line. Sadly, there are no do-overs or second chances. It behooves us to keep in mind that we humans are the product of hundreds of billions of generations of competitive evolution. Competitive in the sense that we are part of a food chain and derive nourishment from eating other species, plant or animal (most of which evolved means to prevent themselves from being eaten), while trying to avoid being eaten by predators and parasites. We, and our ancestors all the way back to the first cell, have been tried by weather, drought, famine, disease, predators, parasites, and any number of challenges to our survival, and despite all of the challenges we have faced, we have adapted, survived, and thrived spectacularly, so much so that our overpopulation and the byproducts of our technologies are endangering the environment that our survival depends on.

We, humans, have been **programmed** by many billions of generations of evolution to be supremely efficient survival machines. Survival is our primal ethical imperative.

It is key to our understanding of ourselves that we accept the fact that we are supremely successful and extremely **well-programmed survival machines**. Our challenge is to fully understand the programming that evolution has built into us and learn to consciously control our programming rather than it controlling us in ways of which we are unaware, such as through our latent territorial motivations and fears.

Our happiness, sadness, joy, fear, and especially desire are all motivational aspects of our internal programming that evolved to help us survive. When we are thirsty, we desire water and our thirst makes us uncomfortable and prompts us to seek water, and so on.

The evolutionary programming that allowed us to perceive the advantage of keeping the offspring around to assist in the hunting or gathering and thus led to the formation of extended families and communities, created a conflict within us between the desire for the safety and security that living in a community provides and the selfish territorial desires to ignore the needs of others and seize all available food for oneself. Before the development of language our ancestors would have understood that they needed to ignore the territorial urges in order not to be driven out of the family and community.

The subject of ethics relates to the rules and principles that we consciously apply to our interactions with other members of our society based on the notion that we should not treat other people the way we would not want to be treated. Reciprocity of supporting one another is the foundational principle that makes living in society more efficient at ensuring our survival than living territorially. We do not want to be murdered, have our possessions stolen, be cheated, deceived, or lied to, because such actions threaten our lives and diminish our sense of safety, security and belonging, and so we should not do those things to other people whose acceptance of us as community members we crave.

Survival (adapting and thriving) is what we do best, and we have become so successful at it that we who live in affluent circumstances take the basic needs of survival for granted.

Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

The American Psychologist Abraham Maslow theorized that our motivations may be categorized into a hierarchy of needs. At the base or foundation of this hierarchy are the physiological needs for adequate food, water, shelter, and warmth. Lacking any of these will focus the individual on obtaining them. Next in the hierarchy of needs are safety and security, followed by belonging and love, social needs and esteem, self-actualization, and transcendence. In order to focus on the higher goals of self-actualization, love, and transcendence, one needs first to satisfy the lower-level needs. **A person needs to know that they have enough for their survival, and will have enough going forward.** Then they can turn their attention to flourishing, thriving, self-actualization, love, and transcendence.

Those of us in affluent circumstances are fairly high on Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, and we have the physiological needs of ensuring food, water, shelter, safety, and

security pretty well covered, so that we can take them for granted and we can shift the focus of our attention from baseline survival to thriving and flourishing. In Aristotle's Ethics he defines Eudaimonia as the good to be achieved. Abraham Maslow would likely point out that it is because the basic survival needs were met and not in question, that Aristotle could focus his attention on Eudaimonia (happiness, flourishing, and thriving.)

Of all of the things that we rank as Good and important to us in our ethical philosophies, survival (even when not in doubt) should be considered the indispensable foundation. There is no good that can be named that is higher than the survival of life on our planet, and the survival of our human species. All of the social ethical rules that we follow, such as not murdering, stealing, cheating, or lying (Kant's categorical imperatives) serve to increase our safety and security which ultimately helps to ensure our survival, the ultimate primal imperative.

The dynamics of evolution created social survival motivations, as communities stand a better chance of surviving than individuals or mated pairs, and the safety, security and increased chance of survival that motivated the formation of societies necessitated that members of those societies cooperate with one another instead of trying to kill and dispossess one another, as our latent primal territorial motivations would have us do.

Any ethical understanding is dependent on the survival and existence of beings capable of such understanding. All of our ethical precepts serve the purpose of ensuring our comfort, security, and, ultimately, our survival.

The social survival dynamics gave birth to ethical restraints on our territorial motivations, as our territorial motivations were overruled in favor of the security and safety that living in a community provides. That is why ethics are a function of the social survival motivation, which is a function of evolution.

The obvious next step in the evolution of our species is for us to gain full awareness and thus full control of and the ability to consciously and intentionally ignore the latent territorial part of our nature that has us viewing some groups of people as "other" and as a threat to our survival. If we can manage that, then all wars will end, along with starvation and malnutrition.

Mitákuye oyás'iny (All, My Relations!)

One of the most profound pieces of wisdom that the Lakota people shared was the word or phrase that the Lakota use and have always used at the end of a prayer in the same way that Christians use the word "Amen," though the meaning is different. That phrase is Mitákuye oyás'iny (which is often abbreviated to an approximate pronunciation of "Mee-

tah'-kwee yahs'-eehn") This phrase translates into "All, my relatives" or "All, my relations." This prayer, which is seen as a complete prayer in and of itself, acknowledges that we are related to every other person on the planet, that they are our relatives and deserve to be treated as such, but much more than that, it acknowledges our relationship with all other life on this planet, and with the planet itself which gave birth to all life. The Lakota have always known what our scientists figured out less than two hundred years ago: that we are related (through our cellular genetics) to all living things on this planet. The plants and animals are all our most distant cousins, and the Earth is our ultimate mother. While these sound like spiritual/religious statements (and for the Lakota, they are,) they are also pure, hard scientific facts.

Dependence On Food Chains

As the survival of each species is utterly dependent on the existence of the food chain (our food does not originate in grocery stores) and thus on an environment that enables the survival of all of the species in that food chain, the ultimate ethical imperative of survival should be understood to apply more broadly to the survival of the ecosystem as a whole, of which our species is a part. The ultimate foolishness and shortsightedness is to not concern ourselves with the health and well-being of the ecosystem that sustains us and upon which our survival depends.

The Fruits of Language

Our earliest, language-less simian ancestors evolved into social creatures who sensed the advantage of, and the need to, cooperate with one another and share the bounty of the group's hunting or gathering. They did this despite also having a selfish desire, born of our pre-social territorial nature, to grab all of the collected food for themselves. Perhaps there was an awareness of how they, as a member of the group, would collectively treat another of its members who tried to brazenly take all of the food. Expulsion from the group into which one was born and from which one has always obtained sustenance and a sense of safety and security could very well be a death sentence, devoutly to be feared. **The important point is that these language-less pre-humans were fully aware of and in touch with their territorial desires to grab all of the food for themselves but could balance these desires against the greater desire to remain a member of the community and were thus able to restrain their territorial desires.**

When our ancestors created complex language with past tense and future tense, this completely changed our experience and perception of reality. We came to see the world around us through the definitions, concepts, and ideas of language. For the first time, we could chronicle our memory of events and put our memories into a structure of

understanding with regard to time. It is as if our memories had been a disordered pile of photographic images, but now are laid out in rows of order both chronologically and by relevant subject. Our memories could also be defined with words and concepts rather than just images and feelings, which made them more durable, meaningful and communicable. If someone transgressed the social mores by overpowering, seizing, and stealing food or tools belonging to a weaker individual, the weaker victim could describe the crime to the community with details about what happened, what was taken, when, where and by whom.

Of course, we didn't just create definitions about the world and people around us, we also created definitions about ourselves. **We defined ourselves to ourselves as good and worthy of being a member in good and preferably high standing in our community.** In so doing, rather than recognizing that we had primal desires that were remnants of our territorial nature that we could be aware of, but whose influence we could simply ignore, we hid those desires from our conscious awareness by excluding them from our language-derived self-concept. Hiding them from our awareness did not eliminate them. On the contrary, it empowered them. It allowed them to influence our actions without us making a language-based, conscious choice. Sometimes, we might act without thinking about the reason for our actions, and then later, we may figure out a justification for our actions. The more we used our language to convince ourselves of our own goodness and righteousness, the darker and more evil the hidden primal territorial antisocial desires in us grew. It is clear that the only reason that our primal antisocial desires become Evil is because we hide them from our conscious awareness, which gives them greater influence over our actions precisely because we block conscious awareness of their influence, instead of examining them and consciously choosing not to be motivated by those desires because living in a society offers a far better chance of survival. The ancient territorial survival programming still influences our actions.

The Fruit of Language - Original Sin

This understanding provides new insight into the Bible's or Torah's story of Original Sin. The Original Sin was to eat the fruit of the forbidden tree, which was the **knowledge of Good and Evil**. In Genesis 2:19 Adam gives names to the animals, which is a clear reference to the creation of language. One of the fruits of language was that we began **defining ourselves to ourselves as good**, and thereby became separated from our unacknowledged primal, territorial, antisocial desires which we **defined as evil**, and whose existence we fervently wished to deny. This was the creation of the ego and the id. With the creation of language that we applied to our understanding of ourselves, we arrived at a **knowledge of good and evil**. So perhaps the Original Sin was the creation of

the ego, which we all still have and which still affects us. Viewed in this way, the story of Original Sin becomes introductory to the rest of the Bible. It says that the creation of the ego is the Original Sin that needs to be overcome, and the rest of the Bible is an instruction book on how to overcome the ego and undo that separation, which is the Original Sin. The Bible, then, along with many other religious texts, teaches us how to overcome our worst enemy, which is our selves. The story about Original Sin may be the deepest and most profound teaching in the Bible or Tanakh.

The Sociological Intent of our Religious Texts

Regardless of whether one believes that God divinely inspired the creation of the Bible (or any of the other religious texts), or whether the books of the Bible and other religious texts are the work of incredibly clever human beings (if one does not believe in God or Gods) we may yet consider the sociological intent of our religious texts. What is the overall intent of the guidance that our religious texts offer us?

The answer to this question, and **the intent of this writing, is to guide us toward the positive, non-self-destructive evolutionary advancement of our species. The evolutionary leap and liberation that may occur when we defeat our worst enemy (our egos) and acquire full conscious control over our built-in motivational programming, including our latent territorial motivational influences, will transform us and empower us in ways that we cannot even begin to imagine. This is the ULTIMATE GOOD and GOAL that we seek.**

In this writing, the two religious practices that are mostly discussed are the Lakota religious practices and the teachings of Jesus (I hesitate to use the term Christian or Christianity because there are too many examples of people claiming to be Christian and claiming to follow the teachings of Jesus whose actions are the polar opposite of what Jesus taught – they are the anti-Christians and are in deep need of repentance.) These two religious practices are discussed more than other religious practices due to this author's (my) familiarity with those teachings. Any religious practice that moves people toward the positive, non-self-destructive evolutionary advancement of our species is a true and authentic religion, whether discussed in this writing or not.

The Socialization Scale

If we consider our human species on a scale of socialization in which territorial, non-social, purely selfish tigers are at one end of the scale, and completely socialized and selfless ants and bees are on the opposite end of the scale, (no bee has ever been observed gathering nectar and setting aside a personal stash of nectar before returning to

the hive with the remainder of the gathered nectar) we can see that we human beings are somewhere in the middle of the scale. We want to be part of a social community because of its obvious survival advantages, and yet we value our individual autonomy and freedom and find a forced, coerced, or involuntary hive/collective consciousness to be frightening and undesirable in the extreme. Our challenge is to voluntarily move towards the more socialized part of the scale without forfeiting our freedom and autonomy.

The Tale of Two Golden Rules, and of Lower and Higher Ethics

Christians are aware of Jesus' Golden Rule, which is, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Few are aware that Jesus' Golden Rule was patterned after, and an improvement upon, another Golden Rule, that of Hillel.

Hillel was a wise Jewish teacher who may have been an exceedingly old man when Jesus was born or may have passed away before Jesus' birth. The timing is unclear.

As the story goes, there was a Gentile (non-Jewish) man who went to the Temple in Jerusalem with an intellectual challenge for the chief priests. He asked them to explain the whole of the Torah to him while he stood balanced on one leg. The chief priests, stymied by his challenge, threw him out of the Temple. He then went to Hillel with the same challenge, and Hillel said, "What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow. That is the whole of the Torah; the rest is commentary; go and study!" This became paraphrased as, "Do not do unto others what you would not want done to you" and this came to be known as Hillel's Golden Rule. Because Hillel's response was so pithy, clever, wise, and easy to remember and tell, this story and teaching spread very rapidly among the Jews. Jesus would certainly have heard this story while growing up and would have been familiar with Hillel's Golden Rule. Jesus' Golden Rule isn't simply a knockoff or a clever rewording of Hillel's Golden Rule. Jesus' Golden Rule represents a higher ethical standard. To understand this, it helps to consider an example in which we are not personally invested:

When we send our children out to play with other children, we give them two sets of ethical guidelines. First are the hard and fast rules: You may not hit, kick, spit on, call insulting names, or be intentionally cruel to the other children. These represent Hillel's Golden Rule of not doing to others what you don't want done to you. These rules are mandatory, and non-negotiable. A child who is caught violating them may expect to be punished. They represent the baseline ethical standard necessary for society to be able to function, that we must not intentionally harm one another, or treat others in a way that we would not want to be treated. Next comes the aspirational ethical guidelines. We say, "Be nice to the other children. Share your toys with the other children. Let them go in

front of you to climb up on the slide. Make sure that the other children are having fun. Love the other children. Treat the other children the way that you would like to be treated." A child who is wise enough to follow this optional advice will find themselves surrounded by children who really like them and want to be loyal friends. The loyal friendship of another child who really likes you and wants to spend time with you is ever so much more valuable and satisfying than even the best toys. Jesus' Golden Rule is all about loving and caring about others more than you care about yourself. It is about letting go of your own desires and serving others instead and thereby having all of your desires met. It doesn't seem logical that by not concerning ourselves with our own wellbeing and instead focusing our attention and actions on the wellbeing of others (LOVE), that all of our needs will be met far more effectively than in we only concern ourselves with our own selfish needs and desires, but it is deeply true. This teaching cannot be mandated. We cannot tell our children, "You **MUST** share your toys with the other children," because even if the child complies, they will do so grudgingly, without showing the other child the joy of sharing a toy with someone you really like, and without love, and they will miss the whole point. We have to **choose** to love. We cannot be forced to love others, or it would not be love. It would come from oppression, submission, and obedience, but not from the glad outpouring of our hearts. The difference between Hillel's Golden Rule and Jesus' Golden Rule is the difference between the Judaic teachings and the Christian revelations. It is the difference between the Old and New Testaments. **It represents one of the next steps in the evolution of our species, the recognition that by ignoring our own desires and living lives of service to others, all of our desires will be best fulfilled.** This becomes clear if we consider the difference between a society in which all of the selfish and self-serving people adhere to the baseline ethical code of not doing to others what they would not want done to themselves, and contrast that with a society in which each person selflessly concerns themselves with caring more about the needs of others than they do about their own needs, and being of service to all those around them, while each person finds themselves surrounded by loving people reciprocating and trying to serve them and concerned for their happiness, autonomy, and wellbeing.

The Need to Redefine Our Understanding of Ethics

"The unleashed power of the atom has changed everything save our modes of thinking and we thus drift toward unparalleled catastrophe." -Albert Einstein

Immanuel Kant based his categorical imperatives (such as that one should not murder, or steal, or lie) on the universalizability of these ethical precepts. He also took issue with using other human beings as a means to an end rather than as an end in themselves. One might wonder whether the ultimate basis for Kant's ethical theories is significantly

different from Hillel's Golden Rule, and whether a philosophy student with a short attention span who asked Immanuel Kant to explain his ethical philosophy while the student stood balanced on one leg might come away with a summation as concise as Hillel's Golden Rule. I do not mean to denigrate Kant's brilliant and deeply logical basis for arriving at his principles of universalizability and treating people as ends in themselves, but to point out that these principles are encompassed by Hillel's Golden Rule.

Both Kant and Hillel provide us with baseline ethical theories that might be viewed as minimal ethical standards for humans living together in a society, however they do not address the issue of our latent territorial motivations that are the cause of our wars and conflicts. Given that the greatest threat to humanity comes from "our modes of thinking" in an age of nuclear armaments, our species' survival, the ultimate ethical imperative, may depend on our ability to recognize the deeply buried latent territorial part of our nature and consciously choose to ignore the influence that our territorial part exerts on us. Our nuclear circumstances are pushing us towards an ultimatum, either evolve by overcoming the territorial part of our nature, or self-destruct. Let us hope that we choose wisely!

The Seemingly Impossible Ethical Challenge

As difficult as it is for us to embrace Jesus' Golden Rule, an even more difficult ethical challenge lies in Jesus' command that we should love our enemies and do good to those who have done bad to us. With this ethical command, Jesus is directly challenging us to gain awareness of, in order to set aside and not be influenced by, our territorial nature that would influence us to define, identify, and defend ourselves against perceived enemies. Jesus is giving us the advice that we, with our external point of view, would give to the various troops of chimpanzees if they understood our language, that their chance of survival would increase if they joined all of the troops together and let go of their unnecessary defensive territorial nature.

The Rocky Path to Humility

The most outstanding thing about the most powerful Sioux Medicine People was that there was nothing outstanding about them. They were the humblest, most self-effacing people that I ever met. They did not shine or stand out. They were dull. They were not charismatic, but rather subdued. They never bragged or boasted about the power that moved through them. They were, as described by Frank Fools Crow, hollow bones.

Where the rest of us are filled with the desires of our egos, they are empty. If you look at them in a quiet time, they do not glow. They are not suffused with an inner light. Most of the time they look as if they are always on the verge of tears - as if they are always crying

for their people while sitting in their emptiness. And because they are empty, the Creator's Holy Spirit can move through them to bless and heal the people. If you asked them if they were medicine people, they would likely say, "Oh no. It is not me. We just pray, and the Holy Spirit brings the medicine." From their perspective, this is not false modesty. This is how they see the Holy Spirit at work. They see it as a function of everyone's prayers.

Ikčé Wičháša and Ikčé Wínȟan (Simple Man and Simple Woman)

Within the Lakota culture, the highest compliment that can be paid to a person is to call them a simple man or a simple woman. In no way does this use of the word simple imply diminished intelligence, quite the contrary. It implies a profound depth and degree of wisdom that allows the simple person to be completely in touch with and at peace with their inner self. There is a similar concept in Taoism in which the wisest and humblest persons are seen as returning to the state of the uncarved block.

This description, and the unbelievable experience of witnessing the depth of humility exhibited by Frank Fools Crow, Dawson No Horse, Robert Stead, and so many others, begs the question, How can we learn to humble ourselves and whittle down our egos in order to move closer to the experience of these deeply spiritual beings? This surely is what Chief Fools Crow meant when he spoke of fighting our worst enemy, which is our selves.

The Problem

There is a problem with fighting our worst enemy, and that is that the punches we throw land in our own guts, and that is no fun whatsoever and tends to discourage us from fighting our internal enemy. Neither is it any fun to confront and gain full awareness of our self-deceptions and delusions and Repent of them. In fact, these spiritual practices that bring us to Humility do so by humiliating us in order to knock our egos down to size, or to preferably eliminate our egos.

All of us would prefer a spiritual practice that made us feel great, and wonderful, and "Oh! So Very Spiritually Connected!", but that is an illusion, and the part of us that would enjoy gaining spiritual connection (the desires of our egos) is the part that has to die completely before a connection can be made.

The authentic path doesn't lift us up; it lowers us down, depresses us, and makes us feel like the lowest of the low. It truly humbles us. In following the authentic path, it is essential that we hold on to unconditional positive regard, and also comfort ourselves with the realization that any of us, when given the choice of whether to spend time with

someone supremely convinced of their own righteousness or a completely humble person who doubts their own righteousness, will always choose to spend time with the humble person.

Our View is ALWAYS Subjective

"We don't see things as they are; we see them as we are." -Anaïs Nin

When we look at the world around us, we may as well be looking into a mirror, for the world we see is every bit as much a reflection of who we are within our depths.

What we see, we are!

Some years ago, a Christian neighbor was instructing her children to critically examine the literature they read and the television shows they watched in order to uncover satanic and evil influences that might not be readily apparent. If we focus our attention on finding evil influences in the world around us, we will surely find them, and it will give us a feeling of righteousness as we differentiate ourselves from the evil we uncover. It is intoxicating to feel ourselves to be morally and spiritually superior to things or people around us who we increasingly perceive as evil, or at a minimum, less righteous than ourselves. Some people, unlike my neighbor's children, may become fanatical about seeking out and differentiating themselves from the unrighteousness and evil surrounding them. They come to vehemently hate and revile the evil they see all around themselves while failing to notice that the evil they are seeing is a reflection of what has grown inside of them and is poisoning their hearts with feelings of superiority and hatred that make them feel powerful and righteous.

It is also possible to turn our attention to all of the things around us and the people around us that remind us of goodness and love, selflessness, self-sacrifice, and service. If we care to look, we can find ourselves humbled by the examples of kindness, mercy, and forgiveness that are everywhere to be discovered. Such observations do not make us feel superior and righteous, in fact they may make us feel unworthy and unrighteous as they open and fill our hearts with the manifest goodness we perceive.

The Righteousness Paradox

There is a huge difference between feeling righteous and being righteous. In fact, they are polar opposites. The more righteous we feel (self-righteousness), the less righteous we are, and the more righteous we are, the less righteous we feel. This is because the parts of us that cause us to feel righteous are the delusions of our egos. Truly righteous people are aware of their faults and shortcomings and feel humble and contrite. There is a well-known saying among shopkeepers that if a customer boasts of being very religious, do not

extend them credit, and do not let them pay by check. Make them pay cash and carefully examine the bills (because truly religious people don't boast about their faith.)

Holding on to an awareness of the righteousness paradox in order to prevent ourselves from falling into the sweet and seductive delusion of believing in our own righteousness, is the most effective tool in our arsenal to help us to whittle down and let the air out of our inflated egos, but it is no fun whatsoever, and when we do it correctly, it makes us feel like crap, and leads us into "The Desert." It is yet another reason that we need to employ Unconditional Positive Regard towards ourselves on our spiritual journey, not to make ourselves feel great, but to prevent ourselves from indulging in guilt, self-judgment, and self-condemnation. We need to embrace the awareness of our fallen nature while still knowing that we are loveable and loved.

Saying "NO!" to the Machine (that is us) and Freeing Ourselves From its Control Program

On the spiritual path, we need to overcome the delusions of our egos and we also need to overcome the motivational desires (including latent territorial motivations) that are the basis and the fuel for our egos. This means saying "NO!" to the powerful (desire) programming that evolved to keep us alive and help us to survive and procreate. One of the spiritual practices of the Lakota that is mirrored in many other wisdom traditions as a means of saying "NO!" to the machine is with a fast. Intentionally going for several days with no food or water, when a person has the ability to quit the fast early and go get some water and food, is an extreme example of how we have and can exercise the will power to say "NO!" in defiance of the control programming (our desires) that are screaming at us to take care of our body's physiological needs.

Understanding "The Desert" And How To Overcome It

Many contemplative priests and monks of various religious traditions (Buddhist, Christian, Sufi, etc.) have had the experience of finding themselves in a mental state of consciousness that they term "The Desert." After tearing down their egos and expecting to receive a blessing, they instead feel as if they have been abandoned by God or Allah and find themselves with no spiritual nourishment whatsoever, and they are in despair. There is yet another step to take on this journey. There is another way to say "NO!" to the control program.

The Highest Happiness And The Greatest Joy

There exists a happiness that is higher than any other happiness, a joy that is greater than all other joy, and when you experience this highest happiness and greatest joy, you do not laugh, you do not smile, you cry. Tears come to the eyes for the complete overflow of joy and happiness. It is the reason that people cry at weddings. The witnessing of two people we love and care deeply about coming together and creating the bond of marriage is so perfect that there is simply no way to improve on the experience, and all of our desires for anything additional cease and leave us. It is like holding a bucket under a waterfall. It instantly fills to the brim and then overflows as tears of joy. It is a state of perfect, profound peace. The perfection of this peace is due to the fact that all desires for anything additional have ceased while witnessing the marriage ceremony. There is simply nothing we could want that would in any way increase the joy and happiness we feel. If somebody brought some of our favorite and most desirable food to enjoy while watching the wedding, it would not interest us, as it would draw our attention away from the perfect experience. We may also experience this greatest joy when we view a beautiful vista or the clouds at sunset or sunrise. The experience of such beauty is so perfect that nothing could improve upon the experience, and so all of our desires are suspended. If the term "Nirvana" has any meaning at all, it must surely apply to this completely desireless state of peace and contentment, though these experiences, such as watching the wedding, are temporary while the elusive, completely desireless state of nirvana is considered permanent.

The Function Of Our Desires

In order to understand the function of our desires, we should consider their evolutionary function. As we may frequently need to be reminded, we human beings are the result of billions of generations of evolutionary adaptation. We are survival machines of the highest order, programmed to adapt, survive, and procreate with exceptional success. In order to be successful survival machines, we need to be motivated to do whatever actions will ensure our survival and procreation. That is where our desires enter the picture. In desperate times of food scarcity, it is easy to see how a desire to acquire an abundant food and water supply would be a survival motivation, how desires to obtain warmth, shelter from the elements, and security would be survival motivations, and how desires for love, companionship, and the gratification of sexual pleasure and orgasm would be species survival motivations. In a social, wealth and power-adjusted hierarchy in which those with the most wealth and power are **perceived** to be more likely to find suitable and desirable mates, produce offspring, and achieve a higher level of safety and security

for themselves and their families, we can see how desires for wealth and power are derived from survival and procreation motivations.

The Burden of Our Desires

We tend to associate joy and happiness with our desires because we anticipate the joy and happiness we will feel when we have achieved or acquired the object of our desires. This, of course, motivates us to actively seek the object of our desires. Our programming motivates us with desires, happiness, and sadness. We may be likened to a donkey harnessed to pull a cart, and the driver of the cart dangles a juicy sweet carrot in front of us, tied with a string on a long stick, just out of reach. We pull the cart, reaching for the carrot, until we reach the destination and are rewarded with the carrot, but then, just as we are savoring the carrot in our mouths, another larger, sweeter carrot gets dangled in front of us, and off we go. One of the problems with this motivational desire system is that evolution does not prepare us to recognize when our bellies are full, and enough is enough. And so we see exceptionally wealthy and secure millionaires who are unsatisfied and are desperately trying to become billionaires, and billionaires who instead of becoming beloved heroes by devoting their vast wealth to the betterment of all humankind, use it to try to manipulate government purely to increase their political power and enrich themselves even further. When they die the world will breathe a happy sigh of relief and say "Good Riddance!". They will not be mourned except by a few who didn't totally despise them, and they will quickly be forgotten except as examples of extreme poverty of spirit and foolishness. They are the sort of people who enrich themselves by impoverishing their workers, paying minimal wages with little or no benefits.

There are also billionaires who became wealthy by hiring good workers, paying them a full living wage with benefits and creating popular innovative products that are in high demand. After being wildly successful, some of these billionaires use their vast fortunes for the betterment of all humankind. They are a blessing and they are rightfully admired as heroes.

The Giveaway

"Those who know they have enough are rich." -Lao Tsu, Tao Te Ching ch. 33

Among the Native American tribes there is a ceremonial tradition of the Giveaway (called a Pátlač or Potlatch in the Chinook Jargon language of the Pacific Northwest) in which the most successful alpha males would **fiercely compete** with one another to see who could give away the most wealth. The person with the highest social status, the most loved and respected, was the one who gave away everything, including their home and all but the

clothes on their back, and went to live with relatives until they could reestablish themselves. The fact that some people who we call alphas are exceptionally industrious and driven to become extremely successful and often very competitive is an especially good thing when the society knows how to honor their spirit and provide them with a way to be abundantly successful that benefits the entire community and completely honors their hard work and success in the process.

The Lakota Chief Sitting Bull was once asked by a white journalist why his people loved and respected him as much as they did. He replied by asking the journalist if it was not true that among white people a man is respected because he has many horses and many houses? The journalist said that was indeed true. Sitting Bull then said that his people loved and respected him because he kept nothing for himself.

A white anthropologist being shown around the reservation by a Native guide asked who was the richest person in the tribe, and was introduced to a man who had nothing. Confused, the anthropologist took their guide aside and said, "No, I mean *really* rich, like that man who owns the huge new house and all of the shiny pickup trucks." The native guide said, "Oh! He's not rich. He keeps it."

Among the Native tribes, the highest social status and respect was afforded to those who did the most to care for the less fortunate, and thus the wealth of the tribes kept being redistributed, flowing, and cycling, instead of **stagnating** in the hands of a few. The **safety and security** that this **ethic** provided to **the entire society**, from the richest to the poorest, enabled the tribes to **deemphasize** the importance of wealth, so that everyone knew that they had enough, and would have enough going forward, and **everyone was rich**. There were still wealth inequalities within the tribes, but the poorest members knew that they were secure, their needs would be met, and they needn't fear starvation. In the rare instances when there was food scarcity, the entire tribe would face that together equally. Such misfortune did not only affect the poorest members nor did it affect the poorest members more than it affected anyone else in the tribe.

The traditional tribal way of life fully embraced and embodied Jesus' Golden Rule teaching of doing for others what you would hope someone else did for you. This was an enduring part of native tribal culture since long before Europeans invaded the Americas and brought with them the teachings about Jesus' Golden Rule that the invaders did not understand and practice nearly as well as the natives. In Romans 2:14 (King James Version) Paul wrote, "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves:" **The tragic mistake that the invading Europeans made was in assuming**

that since they were technologically superior to the native tribes, they thought that meant that they were spiritually superior to the native tribes as well. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

If we take Jesus' teaching as not just spiritual advice, but also as advice designed to move us towards the evolution of our species, then we can see that the next steps in the evolution of the human species would be to learn to live together and support one another within our society so that the poorest of the poor need not fear starvation and death.

How can we think of ourselves as "good people" if we have the power and technology to feed starving people who are just like us, but choose not to?

I put the words "who are just like us" in the previous sentence to trigger the territorial part that is in all of us that wants to object that the starving people in far away lands and distant continents who may have different skin color, language and customs are somehow not like us, and therefore we can be excused for not caring about them because they are "other." What we all know, but would prefer not to be reminded of, is that it is breaking the hearts of the starving parents to see their children starving. What these parents want for their children is exactly what we want for our children. They want them to grow up, work hard, be successful, and one day have children of their own. It doesn't matter if their skin color is blue, green, or purple; still, they are just like us.

The Peace Challenge – A Global Potlatch?

"It will be a great day when our schools get all the money they need and the Air Force has to hold a bake sale to buy a bomber" -Women's International League for
Peace and Freedom Poster circa 1965

Perhaps it is time for a global potlatch among nations **to see which nation is TRULY the most exceptional** and the most deserving of the highest respect among nations for ensuring that the world's poorest people do not have to starve to death. This would not be about eliminating wealth inequalities. It would be about ensuring that the poorest people in the world could yet have **the security of having enough to survive, and knowing that they will have enough going forward.** It could also be about providing rudimentary healthcare and access to culturally appropriate education so that the poorest would have a means of overcoming their poverty by virtue of study and hard work. Everyone would be afforded the opportunity to dream of a brighter tomorrow.

Some will say that such a challenge would be too costly, but considering that the militaries could be repurposed for the logistical distribution of food, we will surely find

that it is cheaper (and far more satisfying) to feed people than it is to kill them. The realization that the nations of the world were going to look after and support one another rather than opposing, trying to take advantage of, and going to war with one another, would make it clear that there was no longer a need, by any nation, for xenophobic militarization and war machines. Peace would reign, and economies built around feeding and supporting one another would cost less and be far more efficient, prosperous, and secure than military and defense economies.

Some will say that caring for the poor should be left to the various charities, and they will object to their tax dollars being used for such a purpose, as if a few more bake sales will fix the problem. It is to wonder why they would object to their tax dollars being used to feed people, but do not object to their tax dollars being used to kill them. Maybe there is fear in their hearts of which they should repent, let go and be absolved.

Many politicians in my country (the United States of America) like to boast about "American Exceptionalism," and how wonderful the USA is, and I agree that there are some wonderful things about the USA, but I think there are wonderful things about every nation on earth. Confirmation Bias adds to these politicians' ability to see the wonderful things about the USA while conveniently ignoring the disgraceful and shameful parts of our history **and our present** that they were elected to remedy. It should be obvious that an extremely wealthy nation with the largest military on earth (which could be repurposed for this endeavor) would have the greatest ability to lead the world in eliminating hunger worldwide while encouraging other wealthy nations to join the effort. A truly exceptional nation would jump at the opportunity to lead such a peace challenge.

Those who know they have enough are rich.

-It bears repeating!

Evolution has not taught us how to say "NO!" to the next juicy carrot being dangled before us, and how to sit in contented, desireless peace, completely satisfied with the carrots we already possess. Our bucket is overflowing under the waterfall, but it is not enough, and we find ourselves anxiously looking for a bigger bucket. We need to find the "OFF" switch, to turn off the motivational program of our desires and allow ourselves to rest in contentment. We have sufficient intelligence to look after our own survival needs and procreation interests without relying on our genetically inherited internal programming to motivate us. The ability to step outside of our programming and reject the next shiny carrot because we realize that our belly is full of carrots and we **know that we have enough** makes us rich and brings contentment and peace. As mentioned

previously, while crying at a wedding, it is the complete absence of desires that causes that happiness to be the highest happiness. As we ponder this, we may come to realize that our desires are not there to make us happy. They are there to create the anticipation of the increased happiness that we will achieve when we acquire the (ever so slightly out of reach) object of our programmed desires. Our desires are there to get us moving, to motivate us in accordance with our overly successful and therefore unnecessary programming.

And yet, sometimes there is no carrot dangling in front of us, just out of reach, to entice and motivate us and give us a purpose to live for and happiness to anticipate. When there is no carrot, or the carrot is hopelessly out of reach, and there is nothing to look forward to and to anticipate, we may become frantic. We believe that we need some goal (juicy carrot) to pursue that will give our lives meaning and purpose. Absent that, we may find ourselves rudderless and in despair.

Despair

"...So on we worked, and waited for the light,
And went without the meat, and cursed the bread;
And Richard Cory, one calm summer night,
Went home and put a bullet through his head." -"Richard Cory" by Edwin
Arlington Robinson.

Robinson's poem, about a young, handsome, healthy, supremely wealthy, and successful man who takes his own life, illustrates how our survival programming did not evolve mechanisms to recognize when the goal of its functioning has been completely met, and it could stop trying to motivate us to achieve even more. Thus, when we run out of carrots to pursue, or the objects of our desire become hopelessly unattainable, despite the fact that our lives are secure and our survival and prospects for a successful future are in no way threatened, we may find ourselves in complete despair for lack of an immediate attainable goal. We want the next sweet carrot to pursue, and there is none anywhere to be found.

Before my twenty-first birthday (when I received the Nigerian coin purse) I had been living in a dormitory at Saint Louis University, and a young woman was staying with me in this dormitory with whom I was desperately and hopelessly in love. She broke up with me and left, and I was devastated. (I wanted to marry her.) I was in deep and awful despair,

such as I had never felt before in my life. My friend Ed, the Princeton psychology major, came and visited me, and he asked me how I was doing in a way that let me know that he really wanted to know, and wasn't simply making polite conversation. I told him that I was in total despair and why. The advice he gave me was unexpected! He said, "Maybe you are not depressed enough! Consider that there is a time to be happy and a time to be in despair, and if this is a time to be in despair, then instead of trying to fight it and claw your way up to happiness when you feel as if you are drowning in despair, try to go deeper into your despair. Try to become more depressed. Try to sink lower." Ed mentioned Soren Kierkegaard's essay "The Sickness Unto Death" in which despair is the sickness unto death. Despair, in and of itself, is not a fatal condition, even though it feels as if it should be. Every part of our being desperately wants to be somewhere else and somehow else or even nowhere at all. That is the survival machine part of us employing negative reinforcement to motivate us to take life-saving, life-preserving action, even though we have no idea what action might possibly help us to feel better or benefit us. If we were completely out of food, or stuck outside in freezing cold conditions, then we would know what to try to do to increase our chances of survival, and we could be content with the anticipation of achieving our goal of getting fed or warm. We have not evolved a way to deal with frustrated desire while experiencing overabundant success. What Ed was suggesting was a means to short-circuit the motivational desires by **choosing to desire being in despair**. Relinquishing the tension and those desires to be elsewhere and instead choosing to desire despair felt like surrendering to death. Ed was showing me how I could say "NO!" to the built in survival programming. I trusted Ed's depth of knowledge in psychology, so I concentrated on letting go of my desires to be elsewhere and concentrated on **trying to desire to go lower** and on trying to be even more depressed. I was able to let go of the bodily muscle tension that was a byproduct of my anxiety and frustration, and so I relaxed into what I expected to be a maximum amount of unpleasantness. I was surprised to discover that all of the pain and unpleasantness I had been experiencing was being generated by my extreme frustration at my inability to claw my way up to happiness, and when I made going lower my intentional goal and relaxed into it, all of the pain and anxiety ceased, and I found myself in a state of low energy. I was still in despair, but since it was what I convinced myself that I wanted and desired, it was no longer the least bit painful. The frantic anxiety to claw my way up to happiness completely vanished, and I had truly learned how to **turn despair into a desirable experience**. In that process, I had temporarily short circuited and turned off the motivational mechanisms of the survival machine that is me. What I found surprising is that, having chosen as a goal to desire the undesirable, and thereby short-circuiting the desire-motivational mechanism, I was left in a state that most closely

resembled the tears one experiences when witnessing the marriage of two loved ones. It was a state of profound peace because nothing could improve upon it. There was nothing to desire.

For those who are unable to vanquish despair by embracing it fully, and yet still find themselves with no carrot to motivate them to get their cart moving, there is another solution to this problem. Find someone or some group of people in need and help them overcome their need. Let their need and its resolution become your new carrot.

All of this happened before my twenty-first birthday (when I was gifted the Nigerian coin purse.)

Ever since then, at times when I find myself in despair, I can usually allow myself to bypass the frustration, sink into it, and feel a deep and profound sense of peace. It is a comfortable place that is far more peaceful than my average, active, busy, desiring state of consciousness. This ability also allows me to sit with and relate to persons who are in despair and share their experience of despair with them without pain, because for me, that experience of sharing feels like connection and love coupled with a willingness to take on and take into myself the other person's despair while sitting in a place of peace.

Suicide – The Healthy Way

My friend Ed, the Princeton psychology major and psychic, used to like to say that a desire to commit suicide was actually very healthy, **just don't hurt your body**. His point was that when a person feels ready to end their existence, the part that they really want to get rid of is their ego which is the source of all of our frustrated desire, pain, and misery, and that is precisely the time when they should sit in complete silence and allow their egos to die and mentally make a leap of faith into non-existence (without doing anything to hurt their bodies.) The Lakota word *hanǵbléčeya* means "to cry for a vision" and the tears of someone who is ready to let go of their existence are precisely what is called for when Going On the Hill.

Teachings For Going On The Hill

There are three teachings that were shared with me about Going on the Hill.

We Expect Four Things

Selo Black Crow said, "When we Go on the Hill, we expect four things:

First, we expect that we are going to die up on that hill, and that has happened!"

I know that if we do it right, a part of ourselves, our egos, will die when we fast on the hill, and that ego death feels every bit as terrifying and final as the death of our bodies.

Then Selo said, "The second thing we expect is that we are going to go crazy and when they come to get us at the end of our fast, they will have to put us in an insane asylum for the rest of our lives, and that has also happened."

I have learned that when we fast up on the hill, we need to relinquish control of our minds and trust God or the Holy Spirits to take control of us. This may feel like insanity when we let go of our control, but the part of us that desperately wants to retain control (our egos) is the part of us that we need to let go of, even when that feels like going crazy. It helps to focus our attention outside of ourselves (and beyond our control.)

Selo continued, "The third thing we expect is to disappear. When they come to get us we will be gone, or maybe a few bones will remain. This too has happened."

Within the state of total mental silence and letting go of the ego, it may seem like non-existence or the void begins to form in front of us and around us, and we may perceive that the dark void is non-existence, or the death of the life and existence that we have known. Our duty in that moment is to will ourselves to step, or leap into that void and cease to exist. That void truly is the death of all of our hopes and desires. It is how we give ourselves back to our Creator and how we disappear to ourselves. This state can only be reached when we have completely torn down ALL of the delusions that we tell ourselves and that our society tells us. We have to be completely empty of all of the things (ideas and assumptions) that help us to feel good about ourselves and to value our lives.

In conclusion, Selo said, "And the forth thing we expect is to come back down off of the hill."

Tell Them "NO!"

Pete Swift Bird said " Pǎ́esto, when you go on the hill, if a mole comes up to you and says 'I have a gift for you,' tell it 'NO!' and if a buffalo comes to you and says 'I have a medicine for you,' tell it 'NO!' and if an eagle comes and says 'I will be your Spirit Helper,' tell it 'NO!!' Say NO to all of these things and hold out for God!"

This seemed like strange advice until I remembered that when Jesus fasted, he was tempted, and when he rejected the tempter, saying "Get thee behind me!" he overcame the temptation and received God's blessing. And when Sidhartha Gautama sat under the Bo tree, he was tempted by Mara, and when he rejected the temptation, he became the Awakened Buddha. We do not go on the hill to gain something or to achieve something.

We go on the hill to let go of who we are in order to be guided by the Creator's Holy Spirits.

Five Minutes

Grandpa Fools Crow said, "When you go on the hill, you can be up there for five minutes and They can come to you. It does not matter how hungry you are, or how thirsty you are, or how tired you are. All that matters is how ready you are to receive Them."

Going for several days with no food or water while standing in one place can help open the mind and can help a person to be ready to receive the Spirit's guidance, but if a person is fully open and ready to receive a vision, then it does not matter when or where that happens. I heard a tale of a woman who received an epiphany and a Holy Vision of God's Love while seated on a toilet in a public restroom. Such circumstances that we humans might consider distasteful, such as being on a toilet in a public restroom, mean absolutely nothing to God's Holy Spirit. If we completely let go of our egos (not as easy as it sounds) quiet all thoughts and make ourselves open to receive Them, They will come, no matter where we are or what we are doing.

The Reality Well Beneath Ideas, Understanding, Descriptions, and Words

It is a challenge to use words and ideas to describe the part of us that transcends Ideas, Understanding, Descriptions, and Words. The most important thing we can do when we go on the hill is to let go of the world of descriptions in order to perceive the profound reality beneath our words and descriptions. As we silence our thoughts and turn off our internal dialog, the cracks in our normal perception of reality begin as our reality that is constructed of definitions disintegrates. The part of ourself whose existence we have kept hidden becomes manifest. Our task is to yield to that part of ourselves. That yielding feels like losing control and it feels like death because our ego consciousness built of words and descriptions is all we know, so when we let it die, it feels like the death of our entire being. That is good! Let it swallow us!

Pay Attention

There are mistakes we can make when going on the hill. One of them is to be talking when we should be listening and paying attention. A vessel that is full to overflowing is not receptive. There are two forms of prayer, one in which we speak to the Creator, either out loud or in our minds, and the second form is one in which we let go of all of our words, silence our thoughts, open up and listen. When going on the hill, we only need to speak the words, meanings and understandings that we think the Creator does not

already know, which is to say, "What words do you think you can speak or think that the Creator doesn't already know?" Paying attention is first and foremost about not focusing our attention inward, but rather focusing our attention outward and letting go of our self-awareness. We human beings are programmed to be survival machines. When we go for a day or two with no food or water, our internal programming starts screaming at us through our desires, that we are thirsty and hungry and should immediately go seek water and food. It takes an intense act of the will to say "NO!" to our programming and ignore the desire for water and food that would pull the focus of our attention inward to attend to our bodily needs. As we turn our attention outward, we should widen our attention to encompass our entire field of vision rather than noticing and focusing on a single element. If we focus on a blade of grass, a leaf, or a cloud, then we will be thinking "blade of grass," or "leaf," or "cloud," and if we focus our attention on one thing, then we will be ignoring everything else in our field of vision. There is a Zen Buddhist teaching, "Don't think about elephants!" which causes us to think about elephants even though we were not at all inclined to think about them had we not been told not to. This teaching demonstrates what is sometimes called our "monkey mind" that is beyond our control unless we learn to quiet it by sitting in silence. People who go up on the hill in the Lakota tradition almost always take a Sacred Pipe with them. The Sacred Pipe is like a directional arrow (as opposed to a hunting arrow) which points us to the Creator (who exists in all directions.) Directional arrows are not meant to be the focus of our attention; rather, they are meant to point us to that which we should be focusing on, our Creator.

The Quantum Mechanical Explanation

Having repeatedly witnessed the violation of what I thought were the scientific rules that governed reality, I realized that I needed to broaden my understanding of the nature of reality and my scientific definitions. The theory that I came up with to reconcile my spiritual understanding with my scientific understanding has to do with the quantum mechanical nature of reality. In a very strange sense, I believe that our human egos in conjunction with our language have what I want to call a **mundane magical effect** which is sort of like magic in reverse in that it limits us to a solid reality. This is to say that our ego driven verbal mental thought processes render and lock into place a solid reality, the solidity of which is built of, and maintained by language structure, created descriptions, concepts, and understanding, and not the inherent nature of reality.

Quantum mechanics deals with the nature of reality in attempting to determine whether light is a particle or a wave. The classic Double-Slit experiment provides relevant evidence concerning what I am calling the mundane magical effect.

If we shine a laser through a single fairly wide vertical slit, we will see a dot of laser light on the wall (or target) on the other side of the slit since the slit does not interfere with the beam of laser light. If we start narrowing the gap in the slit, a property known as diffraction comes into play, and instead of seeing the dot grow smaller, the light begins to scatter and we see a widening horizontal beam of light with very dim light sidebands on either side of the solid main band as seen on this picture from Wikipedia's excellent [Double-Slit Experiment page](#):

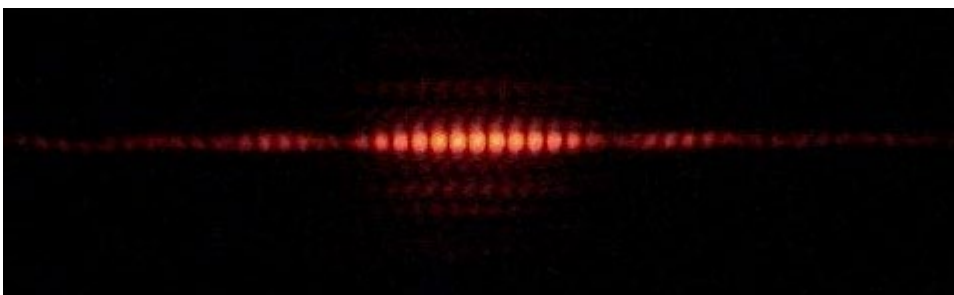
Single-slit pattern



Jordgette, CC BY-SA 3.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons

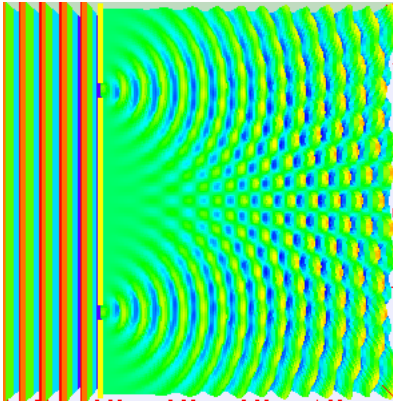
If we create two slits, side by side, extremely close, and shine the laser through both slits simultaneously, the wave property of the light scattering from each slit causes interference patterns where the peaks of two waves make a doubly bright part and the same when two troughs combine, but where a peak meets a trough, they cancel each other out and the picture that we get looks like this:

Double-slit pattern



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Here is a graphic to show how the interference pattern is generated:



Lookang many thanks to Fu-Kwun Hwang and author of Easy Java Simulation = Francisco Esquembre, CC BY-SA 3.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0>>, via Wikimedia Commons

(All of these pictures are from [Wikipedia's Double-Slit Experiment page](#))

If we only fire one photon at a time through the double slits, then note where each photon lands on the target, and accumulate many more of those strikes, we find that the pattern of photon strikes still shows the interference pattern that we saw, as if each photon interfered with itself.



Roger Bach, Damian Pope, Sy-Hwang Liou and Herman Batelaan See Roger Bach et al 2013 New J. Phys. 15 033018 DOI 10.1088/1367-2630/15/3/033018, CC BY 3.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0>>, via Wikimedia Commons

To make matters even stranger, this experiment was repeated with electrons, shooting one electron at a time through double slits, and over time, the target showed the same

interference pattern. The experiment was also conducted with whole atoms, molecules, and even complex molecules with as many as 2000 atoms with the same interference pattern emerging over time.

If complex molecules exist as both particles and waves, **then so must we exist as both particles and waves**, and perhaps it is our language created ego consciousness that limits our experience of the world around us to a solid, particle based, or particle perceived reality. This would be in keeping with the Copenhagen Interpretation of Niels Bohr and Werner Heisenberg. A good summary of the Copenhagen Interpretation is shown in a PBS video titled, "[The Quantum Experiment that Broke Reality | Space Time](#)" (to which I have added bracketed comments)

"According to the Copenhagen interpretation, physical systems generally do not have definite properties prior to being measured [by an ego consciousness] and quantum mechanics can only predict the probabilities that measurements will produce certain results. The act of [the ego consciousness making the] measurement affects the system, causing the set of probabilities to reduce to only one of the possible values immediately after the measurement. This feature is known as wave function collapse." Heisenberg may have preferred to call it a "wave function reduction" instead of "wave function collapse."

Perhaps those who can kill off their egos and transcend language structured reality, such as Chief Fools Crow, are enabled to interact with, and perceive, both particle and wave based reality, and that is why they can do things that are considered impossible or miraculous by all of the rest of us who are still burdened with our egos and locked in particulate, ordinary reality. So perhaps our language limited ego consciousness binds us to particulate reality. That is a difficult theory to prove when the proof requires the falsification of the commonly shared, language structured reality. It does, however, provide a coherent means of explaining both the religious reality as well as the scientific reality in a way that maintains the truths and integrity of each. Perhaps it also satisfies William of Ockham's razor test. ("Don't multiply entities beyond necessity" or as it is commonly expressed, "All other things being equal, the simplest explanation is probably the best.")

Copyright

One of the ethical teachings of the Lakota Medicine People was "What the Creator gives you for free, you should never charge money for." None of the Medicine People would ever charge a fee to someone whom they healed, or for attending or taking part in a ceremony.

In keeping with that ethical guideline, I published this as a webpage instead of publishing it as a book so that it could be freely available instead of costing money to purchase.

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Mitákuye oyás'ín

-Preston "Pǎ́esto" Moser
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