

## **Dispelling Wetiko – Breaking the Curse of Evil** ©2013

by Paul Levy

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### **AFTERWORD** (page 269)

#### **All You Have to Do to See Is Open Your Eyes and Look**

In filling out a questionnaire for the publisher of this book regarding publicity, there was one question that asked, “What made you decide to write this book?” This question could potentially open up a huge file in my mind, as this book is a crystallization of a process that began more than thirty years ago. There was a particular moment in my life when I was twenty-four years old during which I walked through the proverbial looking glass and fell through the rabbit hole into a radically different universe from the one in which I had been living. From that moment on, my whole life radically changed, as I was now residing in a world of expanded possibilities, where even the seemingly impossible and miraculous seemed possible. As if a new part of me was being given birth to, I found myself playing a role in a cosmic, visionary drama that certainly had my highest attention. One of the main choices that has to be made when any of us tells our story is where to begin; telling the story of this particular episode in my life feels like it creates the context and completes the circle regarding how this book came to be. Previous to this questionnaire, I had purposely kept as much of myself out of the book as possible, as from my point of view, the subject matter of the book was the topic of primary importance, relegating, at least in my mind, the author to background status. It’s been reflected back to me from people who’ve read the first edition of this book, however, that it might be helpful to know a bit more about how I came to write about such matters. Well, we should be careful what we ask for. Here goes.

It was May 1981. For about a year and a half I had been doing an intensive meditation practice called *shamatha-vipashyana*,<sup>1</sup> also known as “insight meditation,” or the practice of mindfulness. One day I was sitting in meditation and all of a sudden, out of the blue, in one nanosecond, a bolt of lightning ignited in my brain. The lightning bolt didn’t come from outside of myself, but originated from within the inner sky of my own mind/body. At the time I had no idea that being struck by a bolt of lightning, as with Zeus and his thunderbolts, symbolizes in mythologies the world over the initiation of a spiritual process.

Within hours of being struck by that flash of lightning, I began merging with the spontaneity of the present moment, and entered into an ec-static (“beyond stasis”) state. The next day I began acting so unlike my ordinary, conditioned, repressed, and domesticated self that a close friend thought I was having a nervous breakdown and

had me brought, by ambulance, to Highland Hospital in Oakland, California. Little did my friend and I realize that I had gotten drafted into a psychospiritual process of an entirely different order—a spiritual awakening/shamanic initiation—that was blowing my mind as it was simultaneously revealing it. I felt on the cutting edge of the big bang itself; I had so “let go” that I was just following the process and going along for the ride. I was stepping out of myself in such a way that every moment was synchronistically and effortlessly creative and overflowing full in a way I had hardly even imagined was possible previously. I had become unselfconscious, as if a part of me that had always felt slightly out of phase with myself had gotten into alignment, resulting in my feeling truly “at one” with myself. I had tapped into an unfettered part of myself, as if I had stepped out of all restraints, as if released from any social conditioning, in that my actions were no longer a reaction to what I thought others thought of me. As if snapping out of a double-bind, I wasn’t limiting myself anymore, in that I was experiencing for the first time in my life that “I” wasn’t a problem to be solved. I wasn’t contracting against myself but simply getting out of my own way so as to let my light shine. It was as if I went from being a seventy-five-watt light bulb to transducing a million watts. I felt as if I had plugged into not merely a more powerful source of energy, but the very source of energy itself. This was a dangerous situation, however, as at the time I certainly hadn’t yet developed the container within myself to skillfully channel this boundlessly creative energy in a way that was socially acceptable. I had so surrendered to what was happening, which was not only the only thing that made sense to do, but the only thing that I could do, that I had stopped trying to control the situation. Little did I realize that as I entered the hallowed halls of psychiatry I was about to experience a particularly unique synchronistic event within the first minute of my arrival on the scene that would rock my world and change my life forever.

It feels like the right time to share this, as it feels like it’s not just my story, in that it has universal relevance for all of us. On the one hand, this synchronistic experience was tailor-made just for me, while on the other hand, it wasn’t just my experience, a circumstance meant solely for my personal consumption. The more I have contemplated this experience over the years, the more it feels like it is a revelatory experience that contains gifts for all of us, as if the experience was a cipher, which once decoded, unlocked a treasure trove filled with meaning-rich information. It feels right to share it now because it has taken me this many years to digest it and to integrate the meaning of what was being shown to me through this experience so that I’d be able to share the story from a more reflective place within myself, without overly identifying with the role. It also feels like the time is right to share this miraculous-seeming event because I’ve developed the psychological fluency so that I can now describe and articulate my experience in a way that I imagine will be received and taken in, instead of judged. Being archetypal, my synchronistic encounter is a self-reflection for all of us, revealing a process that exists deep within each one of us in potential.

## Setting the Stage

To place this event in context, a couple of years before this experience, I had experienced the culmination of horrific emotional and psychological abuse at the hands of my father, who, unbeknownst to me at the time, was not only fully taken over by what I now am calling wetiko disease, but was a portal for this nonlocal bug to enter the petri dish of our family system. Because he was so fully possessed by the wetiko virus, my father, like anyone so taken over, became the “revelation” of this higher-dimensional virus in human form for those who have eyes to see. All of what I write about in this book stems from having had the father I did; I didn’t have to study other books to learn about this pathology, I just had to watch my father. In a very real sense, I had an incredible teacher from whom to learn about wetiko.

Completely taken over by wetiko, my father became its “carrier,” a portal through which the field around him “warped” in such a way as to feed, support, and protect his pathogenic process. My entire family, my closest friends, and even the mental health system itself got enlisted in my father’s illness in such a way that they colluded with and enabled him in his pathology. Other people, to the extent that they were not aware of the deadly and contagious nature of the disease, got hooked through their unconscious blind spots and became unwitting conduits through which the nonlocal disease propagated itself. This is typical of the way that wetiko works. Seeing this process was my introduction to the nonlocal field.

The specific content of the abuse is unimportant to the story I want to tell here, and it would take a lot of time, energy, and words to fully do justice to the many-sided nuances of the story, so the details will have to wait for another time. The abuse from my father wasn’t obvious physical or sexual abuse, but was more hidden and covert, a psychological rape of the soul, a true mind-fuck, that only someone as psychically close as a parent can perpetrate upon a child.<sup>2</sup> The salient feature of his emotional incest is that I felt psychologically violated to my core, feeling as if the very sanctity of my psyche had been shattered, the boundaries of my sense of self not just transgressed but obliterated; to use an image: if my sacred self was a glass vase, it had gotten completely shattered into a million pieces. At the same time, in the midst of the worst of the abuse, something alien had penetrated me and been injected into the core of my being.<sup>3</sup> Something very dark and sinister, using my father as its channel of transmission, had forcibly entered me and had taken up residence within my mind/body that wasn’t there before. Little could I have possibly realized at the time that, as if bitten by a vampire, I had gotten a transfusion of the virulent wetiko virus, as if I had just received a “living” transmission from the “undead.”<sup>4</sup> It was overwhelmingly obvious to me that either this energy was going to make me one of its victims, or I was going to somehow vanquish, liberate, transmute, or heal it, or I “was a “goner.”<sup>5</sup>

The emotional abuse from my father was so toxic that I literally woke up with a fever the day after the worst of a series of “episodes”; from that day onward the fever lasted on and off (mostly on) for a year. I went to doctors and hospitals, and no

one could find anything physically wrong with me. Over the years I've realized that the fever was my mind/body's way of attempting to integrate the overwhelming and shattering nature of the emotional trauma I had endured. My shock was due to the dark depths of the psychic inheritance that I had received from my father, who by unconsciously and compulsively acting out his own unresolved abuse, was transferring something to me that he wasn't able to deal with within himself. In so doing, he connected me as a link in a chain to an unbroken lineage of violence and abuse extending far back in time. Like countless other recipients of abuse, I had been directly and involuntarily introduced to the "dark side." Shattered by the experience, I literally felt broken. Dropping down into the darkness of the unconscious underworld, it was as if a part of me had died. From that particular moment of abuse—Thanksgiving night, 1978—it was as if a "death imprint" was encoded into my soul, an experience, I imagine, to which many people who survive an overwhelming trauma can relate. This abuse changed the trajectory of my whole life, altering and reconfiguring both my psyche and my destiny, simultaneously severing and initiating a connection to a deeper part of myself. After the fever subsided, I was never even remotely the same, never to return to the seemingly normal life I had been living. It was as though my psyche had been run over by a Mack truck. It created enormous suffering for me, and yet, at the same time, it's what inspired me to find my calling. The over-the-top suffering was the very circumstance which led me to be doing such intensive meditation, which in turn resulted in my being hospitalized, which brings us back to the story of what happened next.

### **The Blind Woman**

In the very first room I was brought to in that hospital, a lounge for psychiatric patients, I saw among the group of patients a blind woman, whom I immediately felt drawn to and approached. Her eyes were a blind person's eyes, opaque, with no color or radiance at all. Without any thought on my part, I went right up to her and found myself staring at her eyes, saying over and over the following words: "All you have to do to see is open your eyes and look." These words were literally coming through me, having fallen into my head and out of my mouth; it was as if I were channeling them. I kept on getting closer and closer to her as I repeated these words, looking into her eyes all the while. What happened next, over the course of less than a minute, I will never forget. In front of my very eyes, her eyes began regaining their color and luminosity, going from the dead, diseased eyes of a blind person to normal, healthy, seeing eyes. She had regained her sight.<sup>6</sup>

At that moment, as if divinely choreographed, a beautiful woman doctor came into the room, gave me some pills to swallow, and brought me into another room. The attendants then strapped me down on a bed, where I was bound hand and foot. The accommodations were a bit on the "might makes right" side. And there I spent the night. I remember lying there knowing I was going through a profound spiritual experience. It was hard not to realize this, after just having had the healing interaction with the now ex-blind woman. My encounter with her helped me to inwardly know that I wasn't going crazy, but rather, was evidently going through

some sort of spiritual awakening process. There is a correlation between abuse and spiritual awakening: the seeming miraculousness of what had happened with the blind woman feels inversely proportional to the horror of abuse that I was passing through via my relationship with my father, as if they were inverted mirror images of each other. While tied up, I remember feeling that whomever I would think of, I was in some way connecting to and “bringing along” on my awakening, so I kept on expanding my imagination of whom I could bring along until I began thinking of everyone I had ever known and then some, which eventually included all sentient beings. Needless to say, I didn’t exactly get a normal night’s sleep that evening.

The next morning, after I was unstrapped, I was brought to a room and the only other person in the room, sitting across the table from me, was, coincidentally, that same ex-blind woman. She’s looking at me and lovingly smiling from ear to ear, not having said one word to me as of yet. All of a sudden, it was as if a closed fist in my heart completely opened; the thousand-petaled lotus of my heart chakra was blossoming. I then had the spontaneous realization of what had happened between the two of us the night before. I intuitively understood that her eyes had been physically fine; it was just that she was not letting herself open her (inner) eyes and look, which was “causing” her blindness to manifest at the physical level. It was as if she was keeping her inner, psychological eyes closed, was choosing not to look, and this was reflected through her apparent physical blindness. The night before I somehow “saw” this, as if a clairvoyant part of me had announced itself to both of us in a most eye-opening way. In addition, I somehow knew just what to say and do, as if I had become a conduit for some deeper, healing force to play itself out in full-bodied and fully visualized form. It was also clear to me that it was no accident that she and I had come together, which was clearly a synchronistic meeting, one in which we were both playing roles in a deeper drama. As if telepathically connected, within a few moments she said to me, “Aren’t you going to answer the phone call from Roy [my father’s name]?” These were, literally, the first words she spoke to me. Moments later the nurse came into the room and said my father was on the phone. Word had evidently reached my parents that their only child had been hospitalized with a nervous breakdown.

### **Descent to the Underworld**

While in the hospital I found myself in an absurd situation: I’m in the midst of a full-blown, life-changing spiritual awakening, while the doctors are interviewing me about my grasp on reality to see if I am crazy. In my “enthusiastic” (en-theos means to be filled with spirit) sharing with them about the revelatory experience I was having, I can only imagine how this confirmed in their minds that I was “certifiably” crazy. In essence, the more I authentically expressed my experience, the more I was convincing the doctors I was crazy. This reminds me of a line from an email that I received a few years back in which the person wrote, “When I told my psychiatrist that I thought my mission in this world was to spread the message of love, she prescribed me an anti-psychotic.

When this event happened with the blind woman, I couldn't possibly have been prepared for the energies that this synchronicity unleashed, both within myself and in the field around me. Not having had time to integrate the overwhelming spiritual experience that I was having, I was "crazy" not to realize that I shouldn't be talking about my

"non-consensus reality experience with people who were still entrained in mainstream, consensus reality. Many years later, my friend, the late Harvard psychiatrist Dr. John Mack,<sup>7</sup> shared with me his definition of being crazy: "It's not knowing who to tell, or not to tell, what you're experiencing." From his perspective, I was out of my mind to share my mystical experiences with his colleagues, and in retrospect, I fully agree.

Tragically, my parents bought into the psychiatrists' diagnosis that their only child had had a nervous breakdown, as in my parents' world doctors were genuine authority figures who "knew what they were talking about." In the words of the late psychiatrist R. D. Laing, "Attempts to wake before our time are often punished, especially by those who love us most. Because they, bless them, are asleep. They think anyone who wakes up, or who, still asleep, realizes that what is taken to be real is a 'dream' is going crazy."<sup>8</sup> I was let out of the hospital after three days, once it was reflected back to me by the doctor in charge that if I simply appeared normal and talked about my "problems," I could leave. After my release from the hospital, whereas all of my friends and family thought I had suffered a psychotic break, I knew something of great importance had happened to me.

Over the next sixteen months, I continued to have a series of over-the-top "non-consensus reality" experiences, as if I were being introduced to some sort of other, parallel reality that existed side by side with our normal, day-to-day world. This healing experience with the blind woman was not a physically impossible event, but rather a highly improbable one. Some other experiences that followed, however, so defied the conventional laws of three-dimensional time and space that they seemed physically impossible, as if they could only happen in a dream. Because I was in the middle of the process of metabolizing what was happening to me, I was still learning how to express my experiences in a way that didn't upset the applecart of consensus reality. I wasn't in a container such as a monastery or ashram however, which would have helped me over time to naturally assimilate my experiences, but rather, I was running around in an incredibly open and vulnerable state out in a world that did not understand the value or significance of such experiences.<sup>9</sup>

As a result, I was hospitalized at least three other times during this time period, as I tried to contain, understand, digest, and express the deeper process that was happening both within me and in my outer life circumstances. For the last hospitalization in September 1982, I was flown back to New York to spend three weeks in a hospital getting "stabilized" on "meds" so as to fix my newly discovered "chemical imbalance." Unfortunately, as fate would have it, I was concretized by the psychiatric system as being mentally ill. The psychiatrists were like the high priests

of a modern, scientific religion which had invested in them by the power of the state the ability to “deem” who was sane and to “doom” who was insane. By unconsciously identifying with their positions of power, rank, and privilege, they were monopolizing the role of the healthy one, unwittingly casting the patient—in this case, me—into the solidified role of the one who is sick. In consulting their hallowed diagnostic manual, the DSM, it was as if they were reading from a grimoire, trying to match what little they understood of my experience to something somebody wrote in a book. I felt both objectified and marginalized in my own treatment, as the doctors weren’t interested in consulting with me. I was literally treated as a mental “in-valid,” as if my perceptions were deleted from having any validity whatsoever, which was truly “crazy-making.” Describing the situation of a human being who is committed to a mental hospital, R. D. Laing writes, in words that accurately describe my experience, that he “is degraded from full existential and legal status as human agent and responsible person to someone no longer in possession of his own definition of himself.”<sup>10</sup> The psychiatrists didn’t have much of an idea of where or who I was in this whole process, and, frighteningly, they were in the position of making decisions which might greatly affect the rest of my life.

The psychiatrists, with the seemingly best of intentions, “hoped to one day make me a functioning member of society.” I was cast in the role of the “identified patient,” the one in my family system who was considered “sick.” Typically, the identified patient is considered to be the one in the family system who both “has the problem” and “is the problem.” Though the sickness in a family system is fundamentally nonlocal in nature, which is to say it pervades the entire system, it typically gets “localized” and is thought to exist only in the member who is cast in the role of the identified patient. This is an expression of the myopic and stunted psychiatric worldview, in which there is little connection between having one’s emotions disturbed, for example, and the state of the world, as if the greater context of the pervading social and political insanity is not relevant to one’s state of being upset. The psychiatrists treated me as if I existed as an isolated entity who had an “illness” that was unrelated to the family of which I was a part; it was as if they didn’t understand nor had ever heard about the idea of a family system. In a family system, the members are not seen as independently existing “parts” of the system; rather, all of the members are viewed relationally, which is to say relative to each other, as ultimately speaking, each member does not exist apart from the whole web of interrelations within the system. Since the family is a system which is contained within, as well as being an expression of, a deeper interconnected field, when a family member becomes “sick,” it is always an expression of a pathology in the family system and deeper field. The psychiatrists’ compartmentalized and solidified view of me was a reflection of their own inner state of fragmentation and rigidity. In becoming the identified patient, I had also unknowingly assumed the archetypal role of the “scapegoat,”<sup>11</sup> the sacrificial lamb who typically carries the family system’s (which in my case, now included psychiatry’s) split-off, disowned, unconscious shadow and madness.

In any case, I was assured, as if my prognosis were written in stone, that I was going to be mentally ill for the rest of my days; I was being given a life sentence with no possibility for parole, with no time off for good behavior.<sup>12</sup> The fact that I wanted to dialogue about this and question their diagnosis was proof, to the psychiatrists in charge of me, of my alleged illness. What the psychiatrists were doing was truly maddening. By myopically seeing people's behavior as pathological, the psychiatrists drew out the pathology in the person, which only further confirmed to them the correctness of their diagnosis in a self-fulfilling prophecy, as if they were both under a spell and casting one at the same time. The insanity of what the psychiatric system was unconsciously playing out was itself a crystallization of the more fundamental pathology of wetiko that pervades the underlying field of human consciousness. If I compliantly took on their idea of who I was, from their point of view this would be considered a successful "treatment." While I was under their "care," the psychiatric system wanted me to sign on the dotted line, making it financially worth my while if I agreed to take on their idea of who I was. In a truly insane logic—"wetiko-logic"—the fact that I refused to acknowledge their diagnosis as being accurate was simply more proof to the psychiatrists of how crazy I was. It wasn't just that they wanted to form-fit me into a temporary role; they wanted to inaugurate me into a whole new lifelong "career" as mental patient.

The whole situation was totally nuts. My saving grace was never falling into and "buying" the viewpoint of the doctors that was literally being "sold" to me as it was being forced down my throat. It couldn't have been more obvious from my vantage point inside myself that I was having a spiritual awakening. Fortunately, I never lost sight of this, even during the darkest of times, which allowed me to trust the process which was unfolding within myself. After getting out of the last psychiatric hospital in 1982, I felt ashamed and mortified at now having the stigma of being labeled, for the rest of my life, an "ex-mental patient." As I've healed over the course of time, however, I now "advertise" that I was locked up in psych wards so as to get the word out, as "I am not the only one." There are many other people who have suffered and are presently suffering through similar waking nightmares with the psychiatric system.

As time passed under their watch, the spiritual awakening component of my experience faded into the background, and the abuse came to the fore, front and center. Then, in a crazy-making double-bind, the fact that I wanted to talk about my father's abuse became the very thing for which I was further pathologized. Crazier still, in a seemingly never-ending game without end, my attempts at meta-communicating about the nature of the double-bind I found myself in were themselves pathologized.<sup>13</sup> In a true mind-bender, according to the psychiatrists, the care I was receiving from them was "for my own good."

In the psychiatric system, I found myself in a place that felt truly "bewitched," as if under a curse of and controlled by black magicians, where reality was inverted in a way that was truly get-me-out-of-here crazy. Don't get me wrong: there are plenty of well-intentioned psychiatrists, including the ones with whom I worked. I am not



talking about individual psychiatrists; I am talking about the underlying psychiatric system as a whole. It is important to acknowledge that in some ways the psychiatric system has evolved since the early '80s, but in other ways it has not, or has even gotten worse—with its increasing reliance on the use of medication to address most problems, for example. Our mental health system is an expression of the mental health, or lack thereof, of our culture. Within the psychiatric worldview, there is a consensual agreement and implicit, unreflected-upon set of assumptions with reference to behaviors and modes of thinking/perceiving that are considered “normal.” There is a way of understanding the very nature of health and sickness, as well as fundamental ideas of *who we are*, that all representatives of the “academy” have to accept in order for them to be considered card-carrying members in good standing. There is an axiomatic set, a way of perceiving the world that has been drilled into psychiatrists’ heads during their “training” in medical school that is required for them to become true initiates. The psychiatric system is set up to be a setup, in that built into the system is the unconscious set of assumptions of materialistic science, not the least of which posits that we exist as encapsulated, separate selves apart from the underlying field, which is nothing other than a cardinal thought-form inspired by the wetiko virus. In fact, for most psychiatrists, there is no concept of an underlying field of consciousness at all. Consciousness is rather understood as something that arises from matter and thus can be manipulated by material, that is, electro-chemical means (via psychiatric drugs, for example). It takes an exceptional practitioner of the art of psychiatry, a true doctor of the soul, to see through the implicit materialist in-doctrine-ation they have received as part and parcel of their very conditioning and training. Built into the non-level playing field of psychiatry, into the very organization and structure of the field, to the extent that self-reflection is not part of its practice, is the hidden abuse of power (which also gets played out, once internalized, within traumatized psychiatric patients’ heads). It takes more than good intentions for a psychiatrist to not unwittingly become an instrument for “the system” to play out its unconscious, destructive aspect. A true healer knows that they are meeting themselves time and time again in their patients.

Over time, however, I’ve been able to reframe my experiences in the backward “backwards” of psychiatry as a crucial part of my spiritual awakening. I now feel that my experience with psychiatry was a shamanic descent into the underworld, a journey into a true “hell realm,” into the depths of a modern-day Hades. The psychiatric system turned out to be one of the crucibles for my awakening, in that it gave me a living experience of how wetiko has incorporated itself into the mental health system. I was ultimately dreamed up in my interaction with the psychiatric system of having to choose between 1) stepping more fully into my power by staying connected to and standing for my experience, or 2) taking on their version of who I was—giving away my power, dissociating from myself, and falling into self-deception, which is to be complicit in my own victimization and become my own abuser. I was being dreamed up right to my edge, where I was asked to make a choice. In matters of my own experience, however, I am a true authority—fully “certified”—as I am “the one” who is experiencing myself.

While I was under their power, it was a waking nightmare: the more I was solidified in the role of being the sick one, the sicker I got, which in a diabolically self-perpetuating negative feedback loop, only confirmed to those in authority how “sick” I truly was. After the “care” of the mental health system, I had become truly “sick”; the wetiko bug had “taken me down.” My illness was like a particularized, acute “breakout” of an underlying, more fundamental systemic illness, pervading both my family and the psychiatric system, as well as the field of consciousness itself. Little did I realize at the time that the “archetype of the shaman” was the underlying template that was informing and giving shape to my experience.

Spiritual emergences/emergencies oftentimes become activated because of a deep experience of wounding, abuse, or trauma, oftentimes growing out of unresolved abuse issues from childhood; this was certainly true for me. The trauma initiates and catalyzes the deeper process of the “archetype of the shaman” to begin to formulate and crystallize itself in the unconscious of the future, potential shaman, activating the sense of feeling “called” by something beyond themselves. This precipitates a deeper part of the psyche to become mobilized, as the would-be shaman journeys deep inside themselves, flying on the wings of their creative imagination to address and become acquainted with what has gotten activated within them. In its initial stage, a shamanic initiation/spiritual awakening can, and often does, look like and mimic a nervous breakdown, as our habitual structures of holding ourselves together fall apart and break down, as if our inner “constitution” is being rewritten, so that a deeper and more coherent expression of our intrinsic wholeness can emerge. Oftentimes, when the archetypal process of spiritual awakening is first activated within us, our constructs about the nature of reality deconstruct such that we can appear, from the mainstream point of view, a little “crazy.”

According to consensus reality, I was “certifiable,” and I was in full agreement, in that I had certifiably stepped out of my self-entrancing, self-limiting, and self-binding conceptual, cognitive mind into a much more expansive space. As we awaken, we are, in fact, stepping “out of our (conceptual) minds,” while concurrently recognizing that we are “inside of our minds,” which is now discovered to be nonlocally “everywhere.” To find ourselves within our psyche is to become lucid and consciously recognize that we are dreaming.

The archetypal figure of the shaman “takes on” (which, interestingly, means both to confront, and take within oneself) the sickness of the collective field, becoming sick themselves, often to the point of near death, and yet, if surviving, becomes able to metabolize and heal their sickness in a way that is of benefit to the whole field. It was clear to me that what was playing out in my life was either going to make me very sick, maybe even kill me, or, if I was able to connect with my “shamanic body” (i.e., get in touch with and allow the deeper archetypal dynamic of the shaman to move, inform, and inspire me), the entire ordeal might wind up revealing itself as initiatory and potentially even useful, for both myself and others. In the archetypal

shamanic process, the shaman descends into the underworld of the unconscious and goes through the experience of madness, where they have to come to terms with the darker parts of their being without getting stuck in these realms.

We are all potential “shamans-in-training.” We are being invited by the universe to step into our shamanic “garments” and consciously participate in our own evolution. Instead of our ritual implements being solely limited to drums and rattles, however, as “modern-day shamans” our accessories might be the keyboard of a computer or the tools of multimedia, as we work to inspire change in the underlying consciousness of the field by a simple keystroke or the creative use of a video camera or website.

Our species and its civilization are currently in the throes of a collective nervous breakdown. If what we, as a species, are doing to ourselves isn’t collective madness, then what in the world is? Our underlying institutionalized and incorporated structures that are helping to keep us asleep are breaking down and coming apart. Just as within an individual’s psyche, only writ large on the world stage, we are going through a collective shamanic initiation process, a genuine “death/rebirth” experience. The false, illusory separate self, which experiences ourselves as alien from others, is “dying” as the fundamental framework by which we relate to each other and the world. At the same time, we are increasingly incarnating and giving “birth” to a truer sense of who we are, realizing our deep interconnection and interdependence with each other and all living beings.

I was one of the lucky ones, however, as I was able to extricate myself from the Stone Age, draconian horrors of our “might makes right” mental health system as soon as I possibly could. In retrospect, the overall treatment I received from psychiatry is truly staggering in its incompetence and level of abuse; I’ve barely scratched the surface in this Afterword. The psychiatric system’s egregious lack of insight into the nature of the mind is truly tragic and causes great harm. The extent of disservice and mistreatment that I received from the “mental health” community has been so traumatic and overwhelming that it has taken me more than thirty years to even begin to wrap my mind around the horror of what played out. The abuse I suffered at the hands of the psychiatric community, which embodied true psychological violence in the flesh, is so beyond my comprehension that even now I struggle to find the words. I struggle because the abuse was truly an “unspeakable” form of torture. I was lucky to escape with my sanity intact, over the years becoming a pioneer in the field of spiritual emergence.<sup>14</sup> Tragically, many others are not as fortunate, and their potential spiritual awakening/shamanic initiation process becomes aborted as they become bound and captive to the psychiatric establishment. The psychiatric establishment’s mal-practice is harder to see than in other, more concrete fields, and hence the incompetence and induced harm oftentimes go unrecognized, as they are operating in the province of the psyche, where much is hidden, shrouded in both mystery and misunderstanding to begin with.

My encounter with the blind woman, and then psychiatry, was also a turning point in my relationship with my parents, who bought in hook, line, and sinker to my psychiatric diagnosis. From that moment on we were living in two very different universes. Over the course of time my relationship with my parents deteriorated, becoming more and more fractured, disconnected, and estranged. Tragically, both of my parents died convinced, with the psychiatric community's blessing, that their only child was mentally ill. It was as if the deadly wetiko virus had insinuated itself into my family through the portal of my father, and nonlocally replicated itself through the psychiatric system in such a way that it ultimately consumed my entire family. I have no family-of-origin left. As a result of trying to shed light on my father's (and family's) illness, after my parents' death I've been shunned, ostracized, and banished from the extended family by my remaining relatives. There was something in the family system that was not supposed to be talked about, and I was talking about it. The silence about the abuse in a family system is itself a manifestation of the very sickness in the field of which the abuse is an expression. The extent of my father's madness was such that it resulted in my being excommunicated from my own family. I am still trying to wrap my mind around this. To say that I have feelings of anger, sadness, and grief about this is an understatement. Thankfully, I am blessed to have a huge, loving spiritual family, which only continues to grow. This entire ordeal has empowered me with an authority to author this book on wetiko that I could not have received by reading every book on the planet or receiving a million PhDs.

### **Psychiatric Dreaming**

Even though the situation with that blind woman actually happened in waking life, as did my nightmare with psychiatry, it is quite profound to contemplate what happened symbolically, as if it were a dream. To see our life in this way is to view the events in our life as if they are a dream that a deeper part of us, which I call the "deeper, dreaming Self," is dreaming into materialized form in and as our life itself. Just as if doing dreamwork on a night dream, we can ask ourselves: What is the meaning of this waking dream we call our life? How would we interpret it? What parts of ourselves are embodied in the different dream characters that we meet as our life unfolds? What are the symbols in our waking dream revealing to us?

As if iterations of the same underlying, inter-nested fractal, through my transactions with the blind woman and with the blindness of psychiatry, I was being introduced to the nonlocal field of consciousness that synchronistically informs our world, a burgeoning insight which years later would form the foundation for my work. This underlying, all-pervasive field drafts people into being its instruments and unwitting operatives, choreographing events in the world so as to materialize itself in living form. This seamlessly interconnected field ceaselessly animates innumerable nonlocal "hands" to set the "stage," arranging the scenes in the play of our waking dream so as to simultaneously veil and reveal itself, entrancing or potentially liberating us at each and every moment. A more fundamental aspect of

my being was making itself known to me, and was using my experiences in the world—with my father, the blind woman, and the psychiatric system—as its canvas.

Though very different on the surface, the figures of my father and psychiatry had a certain underlying, essential similarity, as if a deeper, unconscious process was emerging into consciousness, enacting itself in ever-novel and ever-the-same ways. Just like my father, to the extent that the psychiatrists were abusing their power, they were unconsciously acting out a form of violence masquerading as love. In abusing power, the psychiatrists were unwittingly acting out the deeper, underlying archetypal process that is making us all sick in the first place. Abusing power is related to the *archetype of the negative father*<sup>15</sup>, which is to say, at least in part, both my father and psychiatry were informed by the same deeper, archetypal pattern. Blindly enacting their shadow in their treatment of patients as “objects,” rather than fellow human beings with whom to be in “relation,” they had unwittingly become instruments for wetiko, a form of psychic blindness that doesn’t just believe itself to be sighted, but arrogantly believes it sees more clearly than others. In these psychiatrists, I had dreamed up, in Freud’s words, “new editions of the old conflicts,” only this time on “steroids” (actually psych meds). As if having a recurring dream, it was “déjà vu all over again.” Seeing the psychiatrists symbolically, as characters in my dream—embodied reflections of aspects of myself—is to recognize them as living figures existing within my own psyche. Seen as aspects of myself, the psychiatrists represented the parts of me that were not seeing, that were psychologically and spiritually blind. How interesting, that after my healing encounter with that blind woman, I became “committed” to engaging with more blindness, but on an even grander, more system-wide scale. It certainly got my attention, that literally, as well as symbolically, a deeper, blind part of myself was insistently showing up in my waking dream in ways that were getting increasingly harder to ignore.

Ours is a very dangerous time, “a time of grave peril.” We, as a species, are desperately in need of vision. “Where there is no vision, the people perish” (Proverbs 29:18). Both my father and the psychiatric system were informed and animated by the same unconscious blindness, which was signifying itself in different channels. Ultimately, as with any recurring dream, this deeper process is a reflection of a psychological blindness existing not only within my own psyche, but being archetypal, within the collective unconscious of humanity as well. This is to say that not only was my unhealed father process recapitulating itself with psychiatry, but my unique personal process was a reflection of a deeper, archetypal process woven into the fabric of the macrocosm. Seeing this correspondence is in the service of lucidity, for to realize the isomorphism between these multiple levels of reality—inner and outer, personal and universal—is to begin to realize that the entire multiverse, both microcosmically and macrocosmically, is enfolded within itself in such a way so as to be reflecting back something to us within ourselves; this is to step through the doorway into the miracle of self-reflective, lucid awareness. Seeing this “bigger picture,” we are dispelling the curse of wetiko that has befallen our planet by healing our own psychic blindness.

As is true for each of us as well, the symbolic events that were literally transpiring in my life were a synchronistic reflection and revelation of a living process deep within myself. It was as if everything that was playing out with my father, within the field of psychiatry, and for that matter, in every aspect of my life, was communicating to me through the symbolic dimension of my awareness, which is the same part of me that dreams my dreams at night. The spirit that animates synchronicities, if we can speak of such immaterial matters, is the same spirit which inspires our dreams at night. I was beginning to realize that the same deeper, dreaming Self that dreams our dreams at night is dreaming our lives. Though my close call with psychiatry almost drove me crazy and nearly killed me, I have learned something through my ordeal, an insight so profound that it can't be repeated often enough: how things turn out depends upon how we dream them. I am my own living proof.

### **Blind Woman Dreaming**

The experience between the blind woman and me was an epiphany in materialized form, a revelation in time encoded with catalytic information and hidden teachings. The encounter with the blind woman was a waking dream that the two of us were collaboratively dreaming up together. Being a mutually shared dream, we can look at what got dreamed up between us from either of our points of view: what dream character was I in her dream, and what part of myself was she? Who was I in her dream, but an insightful (i.e., "filled with sight") part of herself that she had been split off from, and hence projected out and dreamed up into materialization as a vision-filled figure in her waking dream? As if she had been waiting for me to arrive, I had become drawn in and drafted into playing a role in her dreaming process. It was as if I was sent by "Central Casting" because I was open and sensitive enough at that moment to simply pick up a voice that was being dreamed up in the field, waiting for someone to give it full-embodied, incarnate form. Just as I was the living representative of a part of herself, at the same time, seen as my dream character, she was an embodied reflection of a blind part of myself. In my dream, she symbolized the part of me that was refusing to look at something within myself. In healing her own blindness, she also stood for the part of myself that was now stepping into and embodying a new level of seeing, as if the blind part of myself was regaining its sight.

It was as if the blind woman was ready to heal her blindness, and just needed a verbal cue, a little reminder of what to do. Upon entering the scene I said my lines perfectly, with genuine aplomb, as if I knew the script, as if I had practiced for lifetimes. We stepped into each other's waking dreams in such a way that our interaction was a representation of what was going on inside both of our psyches, as if an inner situation, with both personal and archetypal dimensions, got dreamed up into materialization in front of and through our very eyes. At the same time that I was being dreamed up by her to help her heal, she was being dreamed up to pick up a (third) eye-opening role in my unconscious. We were collaboratively dreaming each other up, reciprocally co-arising relative to each other, as if we were both contained within and expressions of a higher-dimensional process.

The two of us were engaged in a mutual synchronicity that we were sharing, not just as passive witnesses sitting in the audience, but rather, as active participants in our own living revelation. Though this experience seemed like a “miracle,” with biblical connotations, it was actually a synchronistic, auspicious co-incidence of factors, a synergistic convergence of two beings coming together in a particular moment of time, revealing a deeper, more fundamental creative and healing process at play. At that moment my relationship with that blind woman was the medium through which a more grace-filled order of reality incarnated into the third dimension. She and I were just the actors through which a deeper process clothed, informed, and revealed itself. Unable to heal in isolation, the two of us were collaboratively helping each other to conjure up our own healing. The relationship between the two of us is a prototype, a microcosmic iteration of a fractal, of something available to us both individually, and en masse, as a species. Like the blind woman and I, each of us can come together and cooperatively help each other heal our psychic blindness as we more fully participate in our own conscious evolution. When we get “in sync” with each other, the deeper synchronistic field informs us such that it effortlessly, endlessly, nonlocally, and virally transmits and fractally explicates itself throughout time and space.

Through this experience, a deeper order of reality was revealing itself, with the two of us conscripted to be its instruments of revelation. This deeper dimension wasn’t something outside of ourselves that either of us could objectively contemplate as separate from ourselves, but rather, we were participating in our own self-revelation. I was enlisted in the service of being a conduit for something deeper to happen in the field. I didn’t do anything special, but rather, a miraculous-seeming event made itself apparent through a synchronistic encounter with another human being. “I” didn’t do anything, other than to just be myself. There was no “I” healing anyone other than being spontaneously present to what arose in front of me. There was no “I,” for in that moment, “I” was empty, an opening, simply allowing the universe to move through me so that healing could happen in the field.

Over the years I’ve come to realize that what happened between the two of us, when contemplated symbolically, as if it were a dream, was revealing a co-creative dynamic which is happening with everyone all of the time. With the majority of people, however, this mutual dreaming process—in which we are reciprocally dreaming each other up—is happening in such an unconscious way that it only serves to continually reinforce each other’s limited, wounded identities. We are co-dreaming with each other all the time; we are interconnected and interdependent in such a way that we only ultimately exist in relation to each other, which is to say that there is no separation between us. In a nonlinear, acausal process that happens outside of time, we are dreaming each other up to play roles in each other’s waking lives. Every part of the universe is evoking, while simultaneously being evoked by, every other part. The good news is that we can collaboratively support each other to recognize this in a way which helps everyone. The event with the blind woman was a materialized crystallization in form revealing, literally and symbolically, how we

dream up our world. Encoded in what happened between the blind woman and myself is a revelation of the dreamlike nature of our universe. Contemplating the experience with the blind woman symbolically, as if it were a dream, was the key which helped me to decipher and extract the blessing this situation was revealing, becoming the seeds which later helped me to articulate and develop my life's work.

"All we have to do to see is open our eyes and look." This is in essence what I am saying in a variety of ways throughout this book. Wetiko disease is a psychic blindness that believes itself to be sightedness. The moment we see the pervasive, nonlocal nature of wetiko, and the way it operates through the blind spots in our awareness, we have begun healing our psychic blindness and dispelling the curse of wetiko. "Seeing" wetiko involves stepping out of the denial it induces within ourselves, such that we simply "open our eyes and look." It brings to mind the saying of Jesus from the Gospel of Thomas, "The Father's kingdom is spread out upon the earth and people don't see it." All we have to do to see is open our eyes and look. As we teach what we need to learn, I am in essence talking to myself. In finding these words, and writing this book, I am helping to heal my own blindness."

## NOTES

- 1 I had become a member of the local Dharmadhatu (now called Shambhala Centers), started by Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. Within a few years I would start meeting a number of Tibetan lamas from the Nyingma lineage, who became my teachers and with whom I have become very close.
- 2 Psychological violence, by its very nature, is very challenging to describe in words; it doesn't easily lend itself to language. I plan on writing a book about it in the future.
- 3 Leonard Shengold talks about "soul murder," or "soul rape." His two books, *Soul Murder* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1991) and *Soul Murder Revisited* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), describe better than any other books I have found what played out between my father and me.
- 4 Instead of just expressing my opinion about this, I'd like to bring in what the unconscious has to say. In one of many "big dreams" I've had over the years that helped to show me what I was dealing with, within the first few years of this trauma, I dreamed the following: My father bursts into my bedroom without knocking. Seeing my art supplies, he angrily says, "I thought I told you to throw those out." I throw my art supplies in the garbage. He leaves. I immediately start looking in a mirror that is in my bedroom, and my reflection looks like the Incredible Hulk, in that I am totally muscular and powerful, so much so that my buttons are popping off my shirt, and I am completely outraged. Then I go to



find my father, and when I find him, I'm about to say to him, "Dad, you're possessed," but out of my mouth, to my complete astonishment, come the words "Dad, I'm possessed and you're possessed, but at least I'm doing something about it." I wake up.

A quick commentary on the dream: Notice my father transgressing boundaries by barging into my bedroom (my *temenos*, i.e., sacred space). Angrily "ordering" me to throw out my art supplies is symbolically expressing how he wants me to throw out the creative expression of my true self. Notice that I then did as told, throwing my means of creative expression in the trash, which symbolizes my complicity in my own victimization. When a mirror shows up in a "dream" (which itself is a "reflection" of our mind), it oftentimes is reflecting unconscious, split-off parts of ourselves that we are not in touch with, which can only be seen in reflection; these are parts of ourselves that we need to own and step into. I clearly needed to become more intimately acquainted with my rage and power. The final scene was an expression of my dawning realization, played out in the real time of the dream, that the evil that I was seeing in my father was my own condition. Possessed by the evil of *wetiko*, my father had unconsciously acted it out in such a way as to give the virus to me, which was something that I now had to deal with. Unlike my father, however, by doing spiritual practice, working on myself, going to therapy, creating art, studying, working on my dreams, etc., I was "doing something about it." As Jung points out, the figure of the father has an extremely large influence on the destiny of the child. Due to my father's inability to come to terms with the *wetiko* virus that had taken him over, it fell into my lap to have to come to terms with it. It was as if in my case, the "sins of the father," to use a biblical phrase, were "passed on" to the son.

- 5 I've since learned that when we are called by a deeper process, if we assent and cooperate with it, the universe constellates so as to support us in our endeavor, for it is the universe itself that is the "sponsor" of our calling. On the other hand, if we kick and scream, feel victimized and resist, this is when we can potentially become really sick.
- 6 If I were in my normal state of mind, which I clearly was not, I would have asked for her name and phone number, so as to be able to connect with her after I got out of the hospital and prove to people that I wasn't making this up. Trying to validate my experience while I was in my expansive state, however, was the last thing that was on my mind. A week after I got out of the hospital, I got together for lunch with the doctor in charge of me, and told him what had happened with the blind woman. He became very uncomfortable and claimed he couldn't talk about it due to patient confidentiality.
- 7 Kindly endorsing my work, John Mack said, "Paul is a living inspiration for transforming trauma."

- 8 R. D. Laing, *Politics and the Family, and Other Essays* (New York: Routledge, 1971), 82.
- 9 Cultures based on wisdom have the capacity to discern and recognize an individual who is potentially going through a process of spiritual awakening. Such wisdom-based cultures especially value such individuals and recognize that these people are being called by spirit to potentially become a shaman or healer who in the future might greatly benefit the community. Usually, what these would-be shamans or healers need is some time and a safe container for their process to naturally integrate into the emerging wholeness of their psyche.
- 10 Laing, *The Politics of Experience* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1971), 122.
- 11 Interestingly, this figure is related to the figure of the pharmakon, who originally was considered to be a healing agent.
- 12 I was informed that I needed to be medicated till I took my last breath. It should be noted that I haven't taken any psychiatric medication since 1983, with no "episodes," which, from the psychiatric point of view, would be impossible if I truly had what is now called bipolar illness.
- 13 People who are in extreme states, and are having nonordinary experiences, or who see things differently from the agreed-upon, consensus reality are (arche)typically pathologized by those in positions of power, which is the default setting for psychiatry. Psychiatry's unreflected-upon propensity to see only illness is an expression of psychiatry's own pathology. To put my experiences in context, they happened years before "Religious or Spiritual Problem" (Code V62.89) was accepted as a new diagnostic category in the DSM-IV (APA, 1994). When I was going through these experiences, although it was only thirty years ago, it was as if I had time traveled and was living in the Dark Ages. In the early '80s, the very concept or possibility of a spiritual awakening was precluded and excluded from the worldview of psychiatry.
- 14 See my interview in Seth Farber, *The Spiritual Gift of Madness: The Failure of Psychiatry and the Rise of the Mad Pride Movement* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2012) and Russell Shorto, *Saints and Madmen: Psychiatry Opens Its Doors to Religion* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1999).
- 15 **Archetype of the Negative Father** (from Glossary)  
Symbolically speaking, the prima materia, the very stuff which needs to be transformed in the alchemical opus, corresponds to lead, which relates to Saturn-Chronos, the archetypal figure of the negative father. One of the prima materia's many symbols is a weak and infirm old man, the mythic dying king, or "senex." This figure of the rigid-old-man-negative-father is symbolic of a calcification of consciousness which, out of fear of its own weakness, clings and

becomes addicted to power and control, dictating to all who fall under its dominion. The archetype of the negative father has to do with dominating and using force (“might makes right”) over others, rather than participating in a reciprocal, dialectical relationship. The dying old man symbolically represents a dominant position in consciousness which has outlived its usefulness, and thus becomes an obstacle to the further growth and development of consciousness. This archetypal figure of the negative father is in need of being liquefied, dissolved, and de-solidified, of being given an alchemical bath in the healing and renewing waters of the psyche. To be under the spell of Saturn-Chronos, the dark father, “Father Time,” is to be entranced by and absorbed in linear, “chrono”-logical time at the expense of the timeless, “syn-chronic” dimension of our being. Saturn, the corrupted patriarchy, mythologically speaking, is the governor of the prison, the one who binds us and seemingly limits our freedom, while simultaneously being the supreme tester and great purifier. Saturn-Chronos’s peculiar form of “blessing”—restraining us as it seemingly takes away our freedom—is almost always “cursed” by its recipient, and yet, is the very thing which catalyzes us to discover our own power and authority. Encoded in seemingly hidden form within this archetype is our own intrinsic power, as it challenges us to find and speak our true voice, access and step into our place of empowerment and true authority, and in so doing connect with the intrinsic wholeness of the Self. Due to its initiatory aspect, the archetype of the negative father is an unmediated expression of the Self, but in its darker aspect.

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