

David's Desk 192 Audio Companion

May 2023

This transcript has been edited for clarity and readability.

James: Hi, David.

David: Hi, James,

James: Welcome to another David's Desk.

David: Thank you!

James: Today we have a special guest.

David: Yes, this is a real privilege. We have William Bloom with us. I just want to say how happy I am. William and I have been friends for many years and I am just an absolute admirer of everything that that you do, William. You are, in my mind, definitely one of the preeminent spiritual teachers in our time. For those who don't know anything about him, William is an author and teacher, and activist. He lives in Glastonbury, England, and he is the founder of the Spiritual Companions Trust, which is an organization that fosters training and work in the area of holistic and person-centered spiritual healing, and healing in general.

William is a prolific author and a wonderful writer. His books include *The Endorphin Effect* and *The Power of Modern Spirituality*, and *Working with Angels, Fairies, and Nature Spirits*. But my favorite of your books, William, is *Feeling Safe*. That's a book that I've often recommended to people in my classes. It's unique; in my experience, there are plenty of books out on psychic protection—in fact, you have one. But I've never found another book that deals with the simple issue of feeling safe as eloquently and as fully as yours does. So I thank you for all these wonderful books that you've given us over the years.

Today, this David's Desk is an opportunity to talk about modern Mystery Schools. This came about because in William's e-letter, which is his equivalent of David's Desk, he sent out an essay about what constitutes a contemporary Mystery School. This in turn prompted James and me to have a conversation about ways in which Lorian might be a modern

Mystery School. And then I discovered that William had been asked by the Shift Network to create the equivalent of a modern Mystery School. And that's going to be our topic today, to have a chance for William to explain just what this is. But we're going to start by exploring a little bit of William's background. So James, over to you.

James: William, I've taken several classes with you and I use your books like *Working with Angels, Fairies, and Nature Spirits* as references in the classes that I teach here in in Lorian. I'm familiar with you on the screen and I'm familiar with your group classes, and I'm delighted to be part of this conversation with you around something that I'm really, really excited to share. What encouraged you or called you to start what looks to me in your curricula as an undergraduate program in metaphysics and personal and spiritual development? It's a very, very full year that I see on paper and it looks very exciting. Why is it that you said yes to the Shift Network?

William Bloom: First of all, hello everybody. Hello, you two. It's lovely to be with you. Five minutes ago in your intro, David, you said you admire what almost everything I do, which is a really dangerous thing to say.

David: [*jokingly*] I know, but I was being generous. [*laughs*]

William: [*laughs*] You were being courageously generous.

David: But it's true. actually, William. I really do admire what you do.

William: That is very kind and generous and sweet of you. So how come I'm doing this Mystery School with the Shift? All right. There's so many levels that I could answer this at. Essentially, though, from the time I was a teenager, I had a sense that I ought to be doing this. And I've been kind of waiting for the opportunity, wondering whether I was fit to do it, wondering if I understood it well enough. 25 years ago, when I was running a program at St. James's church, I started a program called the Open Mystery School. We met for 12 or 18 weekends. And during those weekends—there was a group of about 20 of us and I ran it for 10 years with a new group every year or so—we asked a very simple question. We looked at practices that were shamanic, that were Wiccan, that were Roman Catholic, that were Sufi, that were Tibetan Buddhist, that were African animist. We looked at all the practices and we said,

what are you experiencing in the middle of the practice? If we can deconstruct the words, the culture, what are you actually experiencing?

So here's a very simple example. In the creation of a medicine wheel—North, South, East, West, Above, Below, and depending on which tribe, group, posse you're with, there's going to be an argument about what goes in the North, what goes in the South. But the teaching is about, hey, learn to locate yourself. Where are you on this planet, in this ecosystem, in your body? Where are you? That's the actual lesson. So you you dive through the different systems of words and worship and you come to the essential element of it.

Equally with ceremony. You could see that there was a template for ceremony, and huge cultural differences in the language and the symbols, in the costumes—people like their costumes and their hats, and their paraphernalia, right? One of the things I realized, David and James, that we ought to get into is the older you get in a tribal religion, the bigger the hat you should have, right? And I think this is because the older you get, the smaller you get physically so you need a big hat to make up for it and assert your status in the tribe.

David: [*jokingly*] And to cover the bald head too.

William: Possibly, but then again, there are those systems where you have lots of hair or no hair or bald hair or top knots right? All of them symbolizing, basically, from your head you connect with spirit, right? So we did this for 10 years and it became very clear, no surprise to those of us who are instinctively mystics, that beneath the surface of all the different teachings is the same energy field, the same eco-reality. So I started to work it as what would a curriculum look like?

I think the most important thing about the way I and a little troupe of really good friends and colleagues have helped develop the curriculum is to start with: Look, here's you, here's source, the mystery. In what circumstances do you most easily connect with it? Okay, stay with that. And then do you know how to deepen it? Do you do it regularly? What's your practice? Some people get it immediately, some people need hand holding, some people need nagging, but it's a very person-centered approach.

Equally, when it comes to psychic intuitive phenomena, people have different ways in which their energy field and consciousness interprets

what it is they're picking up and they need to be enabled to identify how they themselves most easily pick up information, what their cognitive mode of interpretation is, what they've got inside their psyche, which kind of does the bullshit scanning, you know—the radar, the bullshit radar from it for internal and external stuff. Pick it up, reflect on it. And notice that actually what you're picking up is less important than the fact that you're able to and that you have a consciousness that's doing it and that consciousness needs developing. So it's that whole package, and like Einstein said, it may be complicated, but if you understand it, you can make it simple.

James: Yeah, it sounds like you're making an essential handbook for the human soul/being. Would another way to talk about your curriculum be as the essential elements that are the foundation or framework from which to go into a Masters or the PhD programs?

William: At one level, the Masters, PhD programs, that's a kind of very human construct to do with the way the mind can work and I'm not so bought into that. I'm more committed to the experiential side and people developing a reflective consciousness. Doing the intellectual work helps people to develop reflective consciousness and if they can punt it to a better understanding of the dimensions and expanded consciousness, then great. But one of the things that has been very clear—and Shift agrees—is that in the year long course, the most important thing is it's an even playing field for everybody, regardless of whether they're intellectual or whatever their learning style is. Historically—I don't know about you guys—but I've actually found that the people with the PhDs and the learning are quite often the most difficult students of all, because they have trouble coming back from their dissociation into mental thinking into an embodied experience of something that's subtle. Most of our experiences are subtle and if your mind is ticking away trying to analyze it, it's going to sabotage the experience.

David: Yes, this has been our experience. Absolutely. So William, you started the Spiritual Companions Trust, and that has a program as well where you've been training people. And from what you've been saying, in creating Spiritual Companions, did you have this larger “Mystery School” program underneath it as something seeking to emerge?

William: Yeah. I actually think in some way it was part of my maturation process because I didn't go to university until I was 30. I did do a doctorate at the LSE, I did do a teaching qualification in adult

education, and I've even done a qualification in what's called quality assurance, which is how to make sure that it's an even playing field for the folk we're assessing and for students doing the assignments. I sometimes felt in that process that I was eating tens of thousands of years of karma. There was a lot of it I wasn't comfortable with. I burnt out at one point with all the admin because our course is a UK government-approved course, it's on the register of mainstream courses, so there's a lot of paperwork and admin.

What it meant was that it clarified for me how we could handle learners into best doing their assignments and self-assessing in a way that absolutely didn't have the slightest vibe of criticism or "I'm a higher status than you" because a lot of our work—and your work David and James—is a form of deep democracy. When it comes to being on the path, it doesn't matter where you are located on the path; we're struggling with the same context. One of the things that is wonderful about Lorian is its deconstruction of hierarchy and patriarchy into something that's flat and equal yet at the same time, those who have a deeper learning or deeper experience are respected and listened to and challenged, of course. Doing the rigor of the mainstream education, doing the LSC doctorate, doing the qualifications, it gave me a kind of driving license just to steer it.

James: It definitely shows in the curriculum itself.

David: William, I wonder if you could just say more about your program, to do a deep dive into your program, so that people know just what it is that you're offering and how they could access it.

William: Thank you. The program is divided into two units—first six months, second, six months. The first six months is a kind of deep dive immersion into all the stuff that's directly relevant to you as an individual—your esoteric anatomy, how you connect with source (whatever you call it), how you understand, as I said earlier, your psychic/intuitive/interpretive mechanism—how it works, making sure you have a map so you understand what you're picking up. And understanding how you can use all that stuff very quietly to develop your own consciousness, deepen and expand your own compassion.

The second unit is how do you take all that grounding in spiritual, psychic, intuitive practice? How do you take all that and then use it for service to others? It starts with numero uno—regardless of whatever else

you're doing, you need to be a benevolent presence. There are anchored steps which you teach in embodied spirituality, there are very anchored steps in being a benevolent presence and knowing how to just be quiet because I'm reckoning that half of our learners will be more introverted and quiet and wanting to help others in a quiet way and the other half will be more extroverted, more able to go out there and maybe do coaching or ceremony or integrate it into their therapy practice. So the first bit is embodied benevolence, co-presence.

Integrated into that will be deep learning about what in Tibet is called Tonglen and in Christianity is called turning the other cheek. It's how you absorb other folks' suffering and transmute it within you when you're strong enough and resilient enough and stable enough to do that. But it's going to happen to you anyway, if you're caring for someone. Any good parent or friend knows this—if you hold someone who's suffering, you feel it and you smile into it, and you hold it and you shift it. It's a profoundly human experience.

The basic structure of working with devas in all aspects of life will be integrated, and then the basic structure of ceremonies and blessings. People will be writing reflective journals all the way through and there's some particular assignments. I want them describing how they connect with source. We have a checklist, we have them press a little button that says they've done their practice for the day—we have daily practice every day. Even if they lie about it, we know that if you lie for three or four months that will take you into the groove of actually doing it. So the first half is very, very personal.

The second half is how do you put it out into the world. It has two levels. One level is just experiential. What you're called upon to do in terms of assignments—there's not a lot, but you need to do a few of them. But if you're going to do it at level two, which is then a bridge into the Master's degree at Ubiquity, you need to be writing essays that have a deeper level of transparency and reflection and referencing and that the experience is the most important thing.

I'll tell you what, I really hope. This is what I really hope. I've hardly written about this or said it, but this is especially relevant in relation to Findhorn and Lorian and Mystery School and what we think ashrams are nowadays—all that stuff, right? I think in the last five years, all the notions of tribal, or geographically-based Mystery Schools anchored into the locality and the culture has just been blown apart, blown out of the

earth. It's not happening anymore. And if you believe in the white lodge of ascended beings—us lot but 1000 years down the line, maybe if we're lucky, and blessed—they're going, “whoa, look, what's happened to the planet!” right? “We did not expect this to be happening, we did not expect the internet and everything to be happening quite so fast.” The kind of work we guys are doing, which is online teaching, I think, is being kind of watched as a kind of “Does that work? Ooh if that works, we'll give it some energy.” “Does it not work?”

So deep down in my gut and my heart, the most important thing for me is that this online Mystery School is a homeopathic dose of a real blessing into the web. I cannot get ahold of Facebook's algorithms and change them. I wanted to do this five years ago, ten years ago, because herding everybody into posses of people who think the same way as you do is banal, it's stupid, it's dangerous. It needs folk like us to be delivering into the web stuff that dissolves the glamour, the psychic pollution and radiates a bit of love and wisdom. That would be my hope. Actually, that would be the most important thing for me. Wish me luck!

James: Definitely.

David: Boy, that brings up a lot for me, William. Interestingly enough, Maryn, my daughter, and James and I are right now doing an online course on how to work with the internet and your experience in cyberspace. It covers a lot of what you've been saying.

But a passion of mine—and this came out of an experience I had years ago with subtle colleagues—is how to make each person's dwelling—where they are physically in the world, their living room is how I put it to myself, their [personal] Mystery School—how that could become the crucible through which they engage with sacredness both in themselves and in service to the world.

It is exactly what you're talking about—this sense of the emphasis no longer being on these various places (though, they can still have importance) but on the experience of what's happening in the individual's life right where they are. Because that's where the mystery schools, so called, that's where the mystery is trying to embody itself and to express itself in the world.

Our program is very similar to yours in that we start with the individual, get them clear within themselves, and then how does that translate into

service out in the world? That seems to me to be a template that the powers that be are experimenting with, as you say—I love the way you put that. [*jokingly:*] I was kind of expecting that our participation in that might be more within 20 years rather than several 1000, but who knows? [*everyone laughs*]

William: I'm being humble. I'm deconstructing the glamour.

David: There you go, as indeed you should.

William: I am going to borrow your notion of the mystery school as being in your living room.

David: You are more than welcome to it! But that is, for me, the driving aim behind everything that we're doing. You know, William, sometimes I feel it so close—it's like I can reach out and touch it and I just feel the reality of that and how to communicate it to others. And then other times, it's like it's this distant horizon that I'm reaching towards. I think that's just the character of the work—that it ebbs and flows and there are those moments when we feel we were really on top of it and we're doing it and then it goes into a period where it all gets re-evaluated, so to speak, to see is this working? How well is it working? What needs to change? It's an ongoing work in progress.

William: Yeah. And I'll report back on how this project I seem to be leading will go. But the most profound experiences I'm having in meditation work or subtle work with people is simultaneously online. Historically, people were doing distant triangles of meditation and distant healing and prayers for this and that. There was an there was an understanding that there was a telepathic, etheric—whatever you want to call it—connection going on. But with the web, providing a kind of semi-anchored experience of that, I find and the people I'm working with find that the “where two or more are gathered” experience actually is deeper online than in person because for me, in person a lot of folk are more introverted and shy and mystical. They don't like being in a room with a load of people—the noise and the shuffling and the heavy breathing and am I going to catch a germ and all that kind of stuff. But they work online in the safety of the mystery school of their own home and they sing more deeply into it.

But the other thing we have in common, which I want to underline is, we, you especially, we're ahead of the curve in terms of embodiment.

Because so much of spirituality and psychic intuitive stuff 30 years ago was going up and out. You've made explicit, in my language, that Christ Consciousness needs to incarnate anchor itself fully in the body in order to fulfill our mission on the planet, as well as our own growth. It has to be fully experienced in an embodied way.

A friend of mine runs an embodiment movement online and he's got a mailing list of around 200,000 practitioners, and he's not into transpersonal consciousness or the kind of energy work that we might be into. You think of all the yoga and all the tai chi and all the dance and all the embodiment stuff that's happening on the planet, and you are one of the rare folk, Lorian is one of the very rare Mystery Schools/spiritual schools, which is absolutely handholding and explicit in telling people land it in your body. Incarnate it. Incarnate it.

David: Yes, thank you, William. That's true. Back in the early 90s, from 91-92, I started teaching online, there was a local net that was created called Chinook net that covered part of the Pacific Northwest. This is really before the World Wide Web took off. And I started teaching classes over it. At first, I thought, I'm not so sure about this—all my experience was in face to face groups. But I quickly discovered exactly what you said—that the field that was created online went deeper faster than anything that I had experienced in face to face work. So yeah, I think it's a very powerful tool and we're just starting to realize the depths and the extent of its power as a way of manifesting a new kind of spiritual school—one that is everywhere and nowhere.

William: I've loved watching people who said they were technophobes, hated technology, I just want to be with other people. I just want to be in landscape, and I tell them try it out, just try it out. Two or three sessions in, they go "oh, I like this!" As a teacher, I love it because there's less opportunity for the troublemaker, the energy vampire to take over as well.

David: Exactly.

James: You were talking about your vision, and how this work would go out around the world via the internet, and as I was listening, I noticed something like a perfume of the work that was coming through the internet beyond the narrow focus of the class. It's like it was infusing the cloud that's around the world with the hope and the sacredness of the work that's being done online. That was interesting.

William: Well, if we're gonna get really occult just for a moment, one of the things I've been exploring...I don't know if you do the same, but when I choose to give a talk about something I've never given a talk about before, in the exploration of it, I find myself learning stuff and having flashes of insights. I decided to talk about dragons, and my instinct, my intuition was moving towards there are flows of energy and electricity in the constellations, in the stars, in our bodies, and in the earth, and these have been metaphorically overlaid with the images of dragons because they're kind of appropriate. But a couple of days ago, I was thinking of the dimension in which they possibly exist as beings, and where I was going—this is work in progress—where I was going was there's an unfolding magnetism, a yin quality which creates form that holds everything in being. And there's another expansive energy, which is creative and expansion and our cosmos sits at the balance between the two. And where expansion meets contraction, there's a relationship, which is electric. And this is where the dragons live. And the etheric matrix which is reflected in the web, is a very comfortable place for dragons of compassion and love and insight to live. I haven't worked this one through fully.

But I remember 30 years ago, I wrote a short little booklet on devas and there was a digital version of it. And someone said to me, "Oh, the fairies must hate the digital version, right?" I said, "No, they love it because we didn't have to cut down any trees for it!" There's something there about another dimensionality beings, very large consciousnesses able to come in to support us. I'm making it up as I go along now, take no notice. I'm just burbling, burbling amongst friends.

James: But it's wonderful that through this conversation we're having, you're sparking insight for me and vision for me as I expand upon what it is and ride the energy behind the thoughts. It's wonderful.

William: That's what a good conversation is about, isn't it? I imagine the Tibetan monks going "I've got an idea—da da da da—what do you think of that?" And it looks very assertive and aggressive but it's not, it's just excited. An excited idea of "Tada! Maybe God doesn't exist! What do you say to that?"

David: Yeah, I love that that too. In fact, if I want to learn about something or delve into it more deeply, I'll start a class on it. Because then that forces me to do the work. [*laughs*]

William: You get the invisible help then, don't you?

David: Yes, that's right. And you have to be willing to say this may turn out to be nothing or I may get it all wrong but that's what exploration is about. Listening to you, William, and just thinking about what you're doing, I am filled with such joy, it's just exciting. I'm very excited about this program you're putting together. It's not really so much the excitement about the details of the curriculum, but the spirit behind it, the energy that's behind it, and I so recognize that energy—it's really the same that I work with. It just makes my day to see it emerging in this way, it's wonderful.

William: Again, staying slightly esoteric, I think the difference is—this is gonna be a huge generalization I'm going to put out there and I'm very curious to see what James thinks of this, actually—you belong to a secondary ashram, a love wisdom ashram. And that's been laying a very soft, educational, loving, wise background for some of this stuff. For all of this stuff. I am using that Theosophical Bailey language. I'm seventh ray, I'm more electric, I'm double Aquarian as well. So the way my structure is, I'm not that interested in making people feel safe, for example—which is an awful thing for an educator. [*chuckles*] I'm like, where are we going? Let's see if we can get there. But my mind, like yours, is absolutely fascinated by pulling together the patterns. So I think, if there's a difference esoterically (if anybody's interested in this kind of stuff), it's because there's a certain very futuristic thing going on in what I'm trying to anchor, and I'm not the initiator of it. I'm clear that I'm the road manager, the roadie trying to land it.

David: I have that aspect as well, but it's not as prominent. For me, it's definitely the love wisdom aspect that I'm working with. It's all required, isn't it, it needs every bit of it.

James: And we too are going through change. In fact, we have a year long program right now as well called Cultivating a New Gaian Ecology. It is at the edge of Lorian. It is at the edge of the teachings and it's taking them out into the world in a way that says you have the potential within you and we're willing to take you to the edge of that potential and you'll be safe in here because you have a very strong container in this program. And we have someone like you who's saying, I believe in you and your potential to do this work, because it's being called for now. You're here now to take this class, to take this program to learn these things and to

do what you came here to do. That's what I feel like. I'm very excited about it as well.

David: William, in David's desk, there is a link that people can click on to go to your homepage and get more information. Is there any other way that you would say that they could find out more?

William: That's probably the easiest, because I'll have the links.

David: What's your website address?

William: williambloom.com. I was lucky nobody else had it when I registered.

James: This has been a delightful, delightful conversation. And I do feel at times that we're throwing down something in front of each other and saying, what do you think about that? That's a wonderful image. So thank you very, very much for coming on and sharing about your wonderful project, your year-long training.

David: We'll just keep in touch and keep helping each other.

William: Well, David, you are one of the guest lecturers on my program.

David: That's right.

William: Just to be clear that everybody knows that.

David: It's already set for, I think, June or July of next year.

William: We'll have you landing in it with your vibe, which is great.

David: There we go. [*chuckles*]

William: Thank you, both of you, for your generosity of spirit to me and your welcoming and enthusiasm and theos-ism. I'm really grateful, really, really grateful. Thank you.

David: Thank you too.

James: Thank you as well.