

## **Unconscious lifecycle of Master slave dynamics: A philosophy of shit.**

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Thank you Master Taino for that gracious introduction and welcome all - thank you. Yes, I have only missed one year, sadly the year Mr. McGeorge gave this keynote in 2007, God rest his soul. Indeed, apart from Master Taino and his family, I first met Vi Johnson, Glynda Ryder, Master J, Daddy Don and many familiar faces present here tonight at that conference. Indeed it was there I met my entire leather family, Master Jim and slave Marsha, Master Skip and his family, Master Z and his family, slave Pug, and others who are absent; Master Bert and slave Nadine, Master Steve aka Kozan, Master Scott and Slavette, and of course slave Robert who threaded us together like a string of pearls. My family of choice, each in their own unique and precious ways has been important to my journey. This evening I am also deeply humbled and honored to have present two members of my vanilla bio family, my two lovely cousins, Nelly and Sally who wanted to hear me speak. Please join me in thanking them for their courage to step into our bewildering midst to support me and this kinky collective.

It was a deep honor to accept the invitation to give this keynote, and you can image, immediately after accepting I fell into a deep questioning. In giving a key note one attempts to be relevant, set a tone, bring an issue into focus and hopefully be entertaining. But what is there left to say when following in the footsteps of some of the most revered speakers we have amongst us; I vividly remember the first key note well when Master Steve called us all home to family, Vi Johnson who asked us "What we were doing to protect what we love?"; Jack Rinella in his impassioned tirade; I wasn't here to hear Mr. McGeorge in 2007, but I was to hear Master Skip for calling out incivility and Laura Antonio last year whose use of "You Must Be This Tall to Ride This Ride" was a powerful rejoinder to take responsibility for our choices.

You can imagine I threw out idea after idea as too pretentious, already done, too ho hum when inspiration came out of the blue. It occurred on a nature walk in the magical grounds of the Ojai Foundation as part of an *ecopsychology* class for my PhD program in Depth Psychology. The oak trees whispered “speak to them through a metaphor of shit”. Being obedient to any call from the universe shit is the topic of my talk tonight . . . namely, “*The unconscious lifecycle of Master slave dynamics: A metaphorical philosophy of shit*”.

Now, since this inspiration to talk about shit came over me, I was overwhelmed with my own shit. Anxious not to offend anyone, I rang Master Taino to check whether I can use the word “shit” in public. After all, this is America, not Australia where shit is a common adjective before and after any noun. He said “slave Caroline, I trust you completely, you can say anything you like”. So, with that, I offer you my metaphorical philosophy of shit and its implications for our individual development in Master slave dynamics as well as the development of relationships within our leather tribe.

What the hell, you may well ask . . . is depth psychology or its relevance to Master slave dynamics? The long answer would bore you (*and me*), the short answer is it is delving into what is hidden, buried, underground; in other words the unconscious aspects of who we are and what motivates us. Depth psychologists have a passion for bringing up our “shit”. Let me explain.

The pioneers in depth psychology are well known names like Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung. Freud (*or ziggy as we Depth students affectionately call him*) was convinced that the primary human motivation comes from our sex drive; that when we repress, bury, suppress our sexual desires and drives shit happen. Namely, we get stuck in various developmental stages; which according to Freud, is what leads us to flawed psychological pathologies; surely you have heard terms slave like anal type or anal retentive. Indeed Freud called “somasochism” the worst perversion of them all. Back in the very kinky, but underground, late Victorian era of the 20th century Sigmund had a few radical ideas that are nowadays largely passé. BUT his fascination with sex, and also with shit, endures. Jung too had a fascination with shit. His

theory about the shadow came from his famous feces dream. He dreamt he produced a giant turd in which he found a nugget of gold. *(It's true! He was also poly for those of you interested).*

To sum up it is fair to say depth psychologists analyze how we get stuck in our shit and ways to work through it or get out of it. So Shit is metaphorically central and what inspired the essence of this keynote. So to begin, I am going to describe for you a model of shit as it relates to Master slave Dynamics then propose ways we get stuck in our shit and offer my thoughts on how to extricate ourselves from it.

Depth psychologists have observed that from potty training through to adult hood and old age we human beings have an intricate, at times troublesome relationship with shit. Existentially, **Shit Is**. I propose there are four distinct stages of shit in my model for the unconscious Master slave dynamics. These four stages roughly correspond to the four elements, the four shields, the four seasons and childhood, adolescence, adulthood and old age.

The first of these stages has to do with a sort of Master slave childhood in which we have an innocent, carefree, fascination with our shit. In a word, we are in **Awe shit** – *(I know I don't speak American and I have an accent – as my beloved ex Master used to say . . . spell that)* so let me spell that . . . A W E awwwe shit. Who hasn't experienced fascination with Shit . . . ? I recall my two year old son, his head half way down the toilet bowl waving goodbye to his turd treating it as part of himself *(which in all honesty it really is)*. At this stage our experience of shit is “attachment” because it is our creation.

So it is with the earliest experiences of Master slave dynamics. I invite you to be nostalgic for a moment, remember the start of our journey, the exciting newness of when we first step off the vanilla platform and onto the kinky train. . . it's where we are most playful, carefree, and able to laugh. Wow, look at all the shit I can do and get away with now. We playfully explore our shit; trying out every fetish, shiny new stuff, toys, new ideas, imaginations, fantasies. . . enjoying our awe moments of seriously twisted sensuality.

But eventually we grow tired with our shit. I mean, it is the nature of shit, to let's face it, become boring. We plateau in our fascination and that is when we come to the second stage.

How best to characterize this stage? Hands up how many of you have potty trained kids (or slaves or subs or bois)? Oh good, so you know something about the process. It is about suppressing natural urges so, after fascination with shit comes suppression of shit - usually from external sources like mum and dad, and just like potty training it's deemed a success when it is internalized. At this stage we have what I call the **oh shit** experiences of Master slave dynamics let me spell that - O - H. – oh shit, the baby has done a shit again.

You know - Oh shit! I am not perfect because (*substitute whatever the equivalent is of accidentally shitting in your pants*). Or worse, "Oohh shhit", \*MASTER\* is not perfect! (*Master did doo doo*). Or, oh shit, this "thing" (*obedience, being ethically responsible all the time*) is HARD; or the oh shit associated with the dross that comes up, our shadow is revealed: things we didn't want to know or see about ourselves, our shame, guilt, confusion, vulnerability, we can't hide our flaws. Our woundedness is exposed. NOT to hurt us, rather to give us an opportunity to grow whole.

Bidden or unbidden many teachers turn up to attempt to teach us humility, vulnerability, and worse ... not being in control. Though I am not a gambling person, I am certain enough to bet this weekend that you will hear one or more illustrious members of this group talk about various phenomena that manifests in this Oh shit stage.

We come face to face with our stuff at this stage and, ultimately when we are willing to eat our shit, we discover humility and realize we are strong enough to handle anything.

If we stay long enough in the "oh shit" stage something else happens in the unconscious Master slave dynamics. We realize that there are others out there with similar oh shit, it's not just me. Folks, shit magically begins to transmute from rugged individualism to collectivism. Oh shit moves into **Giving a Shit**. We start coming to these types of conferences and bonding with others in a collective oh shit thing.

In the "giving a shit" stage we form groups, we create forums slave, we educate, we conference, we workshop, we encourage each other to give a shit for this and that and sometimes great things happen. People are acknowledged recognized for their contributions, they are given leather as symbols, rituals are enacted to anoint Masters, sometimes slaves, and

more than that we start to see that we need to give a shit to protect us from social or political persecution. We keep working it out - through our fights, quarrels, lack of civility, we give a shit. As the years go by, we realize by gosh we have a photo of this event or of so and so hanging permanently in the Leather Archives Museum. We develop stories and myths about the old days, Laura-“middle-guard”-Antonio becomes “old guard” - why? Because we gave a shit.

Then, shit enters the fourth stage, a new realization breaks through; that in embracing our shit, working through our shit, and giving a shit we have been in service to something bigger than our own egos, something beyond our will put us in this place at this time - we recognize “**holy shit**”. This “holy shit” stage is transcendent and transpersonal. In depth psychological terms the holy shit experience is about “individuation” – by being in integrity and authentic to who we are, we “find” ourselves with a capital S. We can no longer hide or remain closeted. As we slip into a flow of being who we are we find a sense of contented peacefulness.

The holy shit experience includes feeling like our relationships are blessed, therapeutic healings take place, redemptive encounters happen, what was once lost is regained, egos dissolve, we forgive hurts. We walk through these experiences in deep gratitude, appreciation, wonder, awe. Guess what, we circle right back to where we started in the awe of shit, but on a different level.

So, Masters and slaves, these are the four metaphorical stages of shit in the unconscious life cycle of Master slave dynamics. However, as Freud poignantly pointed out, we humans have a tendency to get stuck in shit. Remarkably, we always find it easier to identify precisely where everyone else is stuck in their shit because our shit doesn’t smell – right?

We see people stuck in the awe shit stage and affectionately invoke the stereotypical pig archetype - self engrossed narcissism stuck in a state of play, play and more play - some of us even prey on them. The shadow aspect of this stage is an obsession with the body, sensuality and pleasure which can give rise to narcissistic fundamentalism; me, my way or the

highway and, superficiality. Asking 'why am I here', 'what do I want' are helpful depth questions that could help us get unstuck.

On the other hand when we are stuck in the Oh Shit stage the key question to ask is who am I, and particularly what am I afraid of? What am I not accepting/seeing?

However, potentially we do the most damage when we are stuck in the giving a shit stage because we can become dogmatic, fundamental, evangelical, even rigid. We give so much we create piles of shit everywhere – erecting rules, demanding standards; interpersonal conflicts arise: factions, cliques, incivility, community politics, power struggles, people leaving clubs, associations, gossip, smearing, slandering - and it is never me, always them.

This compulsion to give a shit comes from a deep place, because no man is an island. We humans are primarily social beings seeking affirmation for being; products of our immediate culture and society. In our evolving Master slave collective we have a somewhat loose series of sub cultures: an intersecting set of ven diagrams, not a community. Using the term "community" is comforting, but it is an illusion; a bed time story we tell ourselves to feel safe.

This is a difficult place because, let's face it, we have no easily defined acceptable ways to give a collective shit. In the Master slave collective dynamic we all give a shit in individually defined ways, staying carefully guarded against unity or, community because, under the pretext of not being offensive, we don't want to give up total control.

Instead we blindly adhere to the cult of individualism which weakens our will and our ability to form collective action. When we chant the individual mantra "no one tells me what to do", we are stuck in our entitlement to being individuals and doing things my way. We separate ourselves from each other; we don't build common visions, we don't build common values. The danger of being stuck here is that fundamental individualism cancels out the collective good. I believe it is possible to celebrate individuality within a shared, powerful collective good by asking 'who are we serving in doing or saying what we are doing or saying?'

However, the scariest place for me to be stuck is the Holy Shit stage because it can be delusional. When we run away from giving a shit, we rationalize avoiding conflict with a pseudo

“Master slave” Zen attitude which goes something like this: “your kink is ok, my kink is ok”. What is wrong with that you ask? This is an okay place to be, right? There is equanimity, peace, no one gets into each other’s spaces, we don’t offend anyone, everyone is safe, we have men only and women’s only play spaces at events and everyone is happy. Right? In my opinion, by avoiding the underlying conflicts amongst us, we wrap ourselves in a false delusional sense of “community” and we reinforce inauthenticity. We rob ourselves of developing real understanding and possible resolution for our differences. We run away from truly seeing into each other - we avoid seeing into each other’s wounds and humanity, because doing so would open our hearts and vulnerable again to disappointment.

Community means the hard stuff of learning to love each other’s shit - it is about acceptance of differences, unconditional love. After all, don’t we feel the most affirmed, accepted and loved when we find someone who loves us and our shit unconditionally.

The key question to ask ourselves when we are stuck in Holy Shit is this: can we respond to each other’s shit with unconditional love and acceptance? If we can, **that** is the gold in all this shit.

So as we proceed through this action packed weekend of people giving a shit, people exploring shit, people taking shit, remember these four cycles of shit are depth psychological processes for evolving more consciously. We all cycle through these stages beginning with Immersing ourselves in our awe shit - our mind, body and soul in synch; experiencing a state of innocence and awe, we define why we are here and what we want. Which brings us to The Oh Shit stage where the shadow is exposed, forcing us to be authentic. We define who we are. When we reach certain realizations about who we are and our shit, we concern ourselves with others, making connection and being of service to the whole. We get clearer about who or what it is that we serve. And finally, through our trials and tribulations, surrendering to the sacredness of it all, we can potentially find unconditional acceptance and love.

Allow me to leave you with an image, we Depth Psychologists love images . . . a lit stick of incense. There are plenty of cows in India, they are holy creatures, so there are always piles of cow shit everywhere. Instead of stepping into shit, Indians have found a way to make gold

out of shit; incense is made of cow shit. Next time you are enjoying the fragrant scents of a stick of incense remember, this is a creative example of how to find the gold in shit by not getting stuck in it. It's the Hindu version of understanding that, yes, there's a pony in here someplace! And there can be one for each of you, too.

Enjoy your weekend, go to as many classes as you can, have a quiet smoko out front with Guy Baldwin, buy Master Skip a cosmo and he might tell you some of his stories, visit Vi in her library and put on her white cotton gloves for a bit of kinky one handed Victorian erotica reading, buy something from the vendors, say hi to my beautiful vanilla cousins (*don't scare them*). Above all else, wherever you are in your journey, be present, fully immerse yourself in this shit and, know by doing so, you too are part of the wonderful tapestry of the history and culture of this organically evolving, collectively courageous, marginalized sexual minority. Thank you.