

THE CRUCIBLE OF AWAKENING

Issue 48 April 2009

FREE DOWNLOAD OF **MEETING THE DRAGON!**

My book *Meeting The Dragon* is just out in hardcover, so why am I offering it as a free download? First, some background: Diane and I are really struggling financially (mostly because of dealing with my cancer), and are responding by moving as deeply as we can into what can only be described as grace, opening ourselves to new ways of being and working, intuiting that expanding our work is something whose time has come, something with which we need to fully align ourselves. And that expansion is not just about our groupwork and trainings, but also about Diane's music and my writing — for which we sense there is a much larger audience.

Diane's new CD project (chants of healing and awakening) is picking up momentum — she did a concert of such chants last night that was deeply moving for the audience (and me!) — and needs nothing else now but funding. I have a new book on spiritual bypassing at least three-quarters done (a sample chapter begins on the next page), and *Meeting The Dragon* is just starting to sell. We want as many people as possible to have a copy of it, because we feel so strongly about its topic (*Ending Our Suffering By Entering Our Pain*), and so we're offering it as a free download (in PDF format), under a Creative Commons license.

Please receive and share it and pass it along in the spirit in which we're giving it, as a gift. To download it, go to the Store page at my website (<http://www.robertmasters.com>), or simply open the following link:

<http://www.robertmasters.com/STORE/MeetingtheDragon-Freedownload.pdf>

Let's Stop Being Negative About Our Negativity

There isn't any such thing as a negative emotion.

There are, however, negative things that we *do* with our emotions, but our emotions themselves are neither negative nor positive. They simply are.

Consider anger. When we are being hostile, we are emitting unmistakable negativity, bristly and mean-spirited, tight and heartless — but to take this as an example of anger being a negative emotion misses the mark. Yes, we are angry, but we are filtering — and forcing — it through a darkly twisted lens, so that it is expressed not as clean anger (that is, anger free of aggression, blaming, and shaming), but as hostility. That is, we are doing something *with* our anger, something that holds and channels it in a negative context. Does this mean that anger is therefore a negative emotion? No. What it means is that we handled our anger negatively, putting a mean-spirited spin on it. *Our* choice. Hostility is not a negative emotion, but rather a negative framing and expression of an emotion, namely anger.

Take hatred. There's no doubt as to its negativity. But is it an emotion? Or is it something that we are *doing* with emotion? Hatred is not just anger, nor just hurt, nor just a mix of the two, but rather a combining of anger and hurt in a darkly contracted context in which an offending other (or others) is the object. So hatred is something that we are *doing* with emotion; we are not just saying that we are angry and that we are hurt, but are conveying this in a way that holds our offending other(s) in a very negative and sometimes violent light. There is a lot of energy

in hate; it can be very passionate. And it also can be very consuming (especially in its uglier or more obsessive forms), eating away at us, taking us down so far that it becomes part of us rather than just a place we visit now and then.

None of this is to say, however, that hatred is always a bad thing, just something to get over as quickly as possible. Sometimes hatred can be healing, as when it is given uninhibited expression under suitable conditions; for example, if someone has just murdered our child, it is, at least for a while, usually natural to hate that person, natural to cut loose with a great intensity of rage, grief, and hate, natural to want to hurt or even kill that one. If we allow such expression in a conducive setting — like that of high-quality psychotherapy — we are, sooner or later, not just broken down, but broken *open*, until we are but grief incarnate, making room for our woundedness without being overrun or governed by it.

This of course takes time, but not nearly as much time as is consumed when we only let our hatred out a little bit, so that it festers and feeds upon itself, encoding its dark will throughout us.

Those who fully express their hatred in a sane manner — doing no harm to themselves and others — are far more capable of real forgiveness for what has been done than are those who keep their hatred in or, in the spirit of spiritual bypassing, try to rise above it or inject it with niceness implants and premature forgiveness.

The road to genuine forgiveness is often paved with hatred. So give your hatred room to breathe and — under the right conditions — to cut loose, but don't allow its viewpoint of reality to become yours or to take root in you.

Go to the heart of hate, and you won't find hate, but great grief, heart-wrenching grief, a depth of being broken open that is agonizingly and exquisitely painful, soberingly spacious, and eventually liberating. And

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then forgiveness is not just some paint-by-numbers spiritual bypassing activity, but rather a tremendously powerful and empowering practice.

Like hostility, hate is not an emotion per se, but rather something that we are doing with our emotionality.

And even though hatred is clearly a kind of negativity, it is not only that. If it leads to deep healing, as it sometimes does, and that healing is obviously a positive occurrence, then how can we categorically say that the originating hate was indeed only negative? And what if we feel and express joy, which is universally acknowledged as a positive emotion, when a dear friend's children have just been killed in a car accident? Not so positive. Getting angry — supposedly a negative emotion — that you have just lost your job may give you the energy, the fuel, the sheer drive to pursue more fitting work very, very soon, which is, obviously, a positive thing. Getting angry about the abuse you are suffering in a relationship will help you form healthy boundaries, as well as providing much of the motivation and strength needed to either alter the relationship for the better or leave it.

The point here is that ascribing qualities like “negative” and “positive” to emotionality is inevitably a context-bound undertaking. Spiritual bypassing would just have us slap the labels of “positive” and “negative” onto emotions as if such qualities were absolute givens with regard to emotions.

Negatively expressed emotion is *not* negative emotion.

It's not just “negative” emotions that concern spiritual bypassing and elicit its taking-the-higher-ground moral elitism, but negativity in general. This is why it puts so much energy into looking and acting positive. But painting smiles and equanimous looks on pain just creates more suffering — and it also obstructs us from receiving help and support from others when we really need it. Being positive is so important to spiritual bypassing that it doesn't have much room for anything else.

What spiritual bypassing doesn't see is its own negativity. It is *negative about negativity*.

As you might expect, spiritual bypassing is a big fan of expansion, but is not so fond of contraction. It equates expansion with being positive, and contraction with being negative — expansion lifts us, contraction sinks us; expansion epitomizes yes, contraction no; expansion is “higher,” contraction “lower;” expansion frees us, contraction entraps us; and so on. In short, expansion is good and contraction bad, however cleverly this may be put.

But negative does not equal contracted, just as positive does not equal expanded. Expansion and contraction are more intertwined than we might think; when we inhale, for example, it may seem as if all that is happening is an expansion of the torso, so as to draw in more air, but there is also a contraction of the nasal tissues and upper throat, which tighten up a bit as we inhale.

There is nothing inherently virtuous about expansion — think, for example, of imperialism and colonization, as well as of metastasizing cancer cells — nor anything inherently nonvirtuous about contraction. Every movement we make includes *both*. Spiritual bypassing, though, still holds expansion as something “better” than contraction, as exemplified by its enthusiasm for “expanded” consciousness.

Perhaps our most contracted emotion is fear (with shame a not-so-distant second). Spiritual bypassing views fear as not much more than negativity. It floats above it, resisting its downward pull, numbing itself as much as possible to the presence and raw feeling of fear. But fear only becomes negative when we start believing its viewpoint and looking through its eyes and speaking its mind.

If we don't thus engage with our fear, but instead simply stay present with its energies, letting ourselves openly feel and track its sensations and courings through our body, we will fear it less and less. This is

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very hard for spiritual bypassing to grasp, given its powerful aversion to fear. In many ways, spiritual bypassing is just a relatively sophisticated strategy to avoid fear, utilizing the anesthetizing capacity of emotional disconnection as its primary tool.

(Many of us are afraid we'll get stuck or lost in fear if we move closer to it, but what actually happens when we consciously enter our fear, step by step, is that it ceases to grip us so tightly. The more deeply we move into our fearfulness, wearing our attentiveness like a miner's headlamp, the less fearful we become. When we remain outside or removed from our fear, we are trapped *in* it, but when we actually get inside it (cultivating intimacy with it), we are no longer entrapped by it, discovering — and not just intellectually — that it is but contracted energy, knotted-up vitality, excitement in drag.)

Being negative about our negativity fragments us, stranding us from our unresolved wounds and, especially, from the undressed feeling of such wounds — hurt, rage, grief, shame, fear, terror, loneliness, despair, and so on — all of which get lumped together as “negativity” or something far from spiritual. It's as if we have abandoned the child in us, fleeing its pain and helplessness and longing for safety and love in the name of a more “mature” or “spiritual” approach.

But all we've really done is escape from the very pain that, if fully felt and skillfully entered into, would free us to live more deeply and more fully and, yes, more spiritually. As such, spiritual bypassing is arguably a kind of child abuse. What else would you call the abandoning and neglect and dehumanizing of what is most vulnerable, innocent, and helpless in us?

Spiritual bypassing's negativity about negativity keeps it doing time in the shallows. Its unwillingness to develop any intimacy with anger, fear, shame, doubt, terror, loneliness, and other painful states keeps it superficial, partial, emotionally anemic, addicted to whatever helps numb it to its own negativity.

Such a flight from our more painful emotions is, of course, not limited to spiritual bypassing, but characterizes much of our culture (especially in the form of addiction). Some of us may flip to the other extreme, and act out our painful emotions, expressing them irresponsibly, thereby giving a bad name to such feelings, when in reality the real problem lies in our indulgence in their unskillful expression and over-expression. Spiritual bypassing spots such excess, and uses it to buttress up its own position, legitimizing emotional disconnection and dissociation in the name of not being negative.

The real concern here, though, isn't whether to express our "negative" feelings or not, but rather how we choose to express them. Repressed anger is implicated in various illnesses (weakening the immune system), but so too is *over-expressed* anger (think hostility). Beyond the polarities of anger-in (not outwardly expressing any anger) and anger-out (directly expressing anger) is the possibility of a truly healthy containing *and* de-containing of anger, in which whatever happens is infused with compassion, clarity, and vitality.

Turn toward your negativity. Stop pathologizing it, stop relegating it to a lower status, stop keeping it in the dark. Go to it, open its doors and windows, take it by the hand. Meet its gaze. Feel its woundedness, feel into it, feel for it, feel it without any buffers. Soon you will start to sense that its gaze is none other than yours, perhaps from an earlier time, but yours nonetheless, containing so, so much of you. Humanize it, humanize it fully. Keep something in the dark long enough, and it will probably behave badly.

Turn on the lights, slowly but surely. No rush to touch. Your simple presence is enough. Let your heart soften. Breathe a little more deeply, bringing what you called your negativity closer to you, moving and opening at a fitting pace. No rush. Let it shift, however slowly, from a distant "it" to reclaimed you. Let its pain and emerging longing break your heart. Your ambition to transcend it is now all but gone, as you realize right to your core that your real work is to reclaim and reembody

it. Now you are with it, with yourself more and more deeply, with your initial aversion all but gone. You are now holding what you previously termed your negativity in the way that loving parents hold their distressed child, bringing that one into your heart, feeling a rising desire and power to protect that little one. No negativity now. Just love, ease, recognition, presence, effortless wholeness. Life in the raw, too real to be sliced up into positive and negative, too alive to be shut down.

BREAKTHROUGH

APRIL 18th-19th in BOULDER

A weekend of deep healing and awakening. Two spaces left.

THIS GROUP IS LIMITED TO 12 PARTICIPANTS ONLY, so that everyone will have time to do in-depth work.

LOCATION & TIME: Boulder, TBA. 10am to 6pm both days.

TUITION: US\$550. Nonrefundable deposit of US\$200 is required.

BREAKTHROUGH

MAY 16th-17th in ASHLAND, OREGON

A weekend of deep healing and awakening.

THIS GROUP IS LIMITED TO 12 PARTICIPANTS ONLY, so that everyone will have time to do in-depth work.

LOCATION & TIME: Ashland TBA. 10am to 6pm both days.

TUITION: US\$550. Nonrefundable deposit of US\$200 is required.

MEETING THE DRAGON

A Weekend of Deep Shadow-Work

June 6th-7th in BOULDER

A weekend intensive of exceptionally deep integral work, especially intended for those who, knowing that if we want the treasure we're going to have to face the dragon, are ready to do the needed work.

Real shadow-work — the practice of acknowledging, facing, and integrating what we have turned away from, disowned, or otherwise rejected in ourselves — does not leave us intact; it is not some neat and tidy process, but rather an inherently messy one, as vital and unpredictably alive as birth. The pain it brings up is the pain from which we've been fleeing most of our life; the psychoemotional breakdowns it catalyzes are but the precursors to hugely relevant breakthroughs. Real shadow-work breaks us open, turning frozen yesterday into fluid now.

Limited to 12 participants only, so that everyone will have time to do in-depth work.

All kinds of issues and concerns — from the deepest trauma to the seemingly trivial — will be dealt with, through a dynamic, intuitive mix of psychotherapy, bodywork, spiritual disciplines, dreamwork, and group practices. Structure will not be preset, but rather will spontaneously arise in accord with individual and group needs.

LOCATION & TIME: TBA Boulder. The group will go from 10:00am to approximately 6:00pm both days.

TUITION & PAYMENT: US\$550. A nonrefundable deposit of US\$200 is required. Payment can be made either by check (payable to Masters Center For Transformation at 16133 9th Avenue, Surrey, BC V4A 1A5) or by credit card online at the STORE page at www.robertmasters.com. Full tuition is due by May 5, 2009.

Masters Integral Psychotherapy Practicum

An opportunity to directly learn from a master integral psychotherapist and groupleader (1) unique, exceptionally effective psychotherapeutic, spiritual, and bodywork/energywork skills; and (2) how to creatively and effectively integrate these in counseling work.

2009 USA APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

The purpose of this training is to deepen the capacity of participants to effectively counsel others through a dynamic, intuitively structured approach that integrates body, mind, emotion, and spirit.

To this end, the training will blend deep work on oneself and equally deep work with others, in personal, social, and spiritual contexts. Healing will be the primary intention and activity. Approaches that are taught and practised will be held, as much as possible, in a perspective that transcends them.

WE WILL ONLY BE TAKING TWELVE PARTICIPANTS.

THERE ARE ONLY THREE SPACES LEFT, SO IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN ATTENDING, PLEASE CONTACT ROBERT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

NOTE: The Practicum is intended for those who want to learn and practice a deeply intuitive, integral, and bodywork-including approach to psychotherapy, and who at the same time also want to participate with kindred spirits in a year of exceptionally deep personal (and interpersonal and transpersonal) work, during which they will learn skills that will serve them in every area of their life.

Graduates of previous practicums have not only found themselves at home with new skills (sufficient enough to begin working as an integral counsellor), but have also done work of such depth — and not just a few times, but *many* times — during the practicum that they invariably emerge more grounded, open, intuitive, and confident about both themselves and their ability to effectively guide others.

Much of the depth and quality of the work done has to do with being with a group of individuals who are all deeply committed to their own healing and awakening. In such a setting, there's not only more than enough safety and trust, but also a rare intimacy, generated by sharing such deep work both as a participant and as a counselor-to-be.

LOCATION & STRUCTURE:

The Practicum will take place over 5 four-day modules in Ashland, Oregon.

Each module will include individual and group work, plus facilitation by participants of each other's work (with fitting feedback and guidance from Robert).

After the training concludes, participants who have attended it in its entirety will receive a diploma indicating that they have completed a one-year training in Masters Integral Psychotherapy with Robert Augustus Masters.

PREREQUISITE: Previous work with Robert.

TUITION: \$7000. A nonrefundable deposit of \$1000 is required. Half of the tuition is due at the start of the first module; the rest is due by the start of the third module (unless other arrangements have been made with us). Lodging and meals will be extra. Contact info@robertmasters.com to arrange payment.

SCHEDULE (Please note new dates):

May 7-10, June 25-29, August 20-23, October 8-11, December 3-6.

ONLINE COMMUNITY

GAIA, a social networking site (free to join), has a group for people who have worked with me and/or who are interested in my work/writings to connect and discuss my work/writing or anything related to it. Once a week I answer questions from group members, which are sent to me from the group administrator, Arthur Gillard.

The online culture of my Gaia group is vital and inviting, and its powerful forum software is perfectly suited for meeting, discussing, and sharing with others who are interested in authenticity, healing, transformation, and Awakening.

You don't need to be a member of Gaia to see the posts there — just go to **http://pods.gaia.com/robert_augustus_masters**.

But if you'd like to participate in the discussions, you can join Gaia by going to **<http://www.gaia.com/apply>**, or by emailing Arthur Gillard (thinkintuit@gmail.com), the cultivator of the site, who will then send you an invitation.

The format of my Gaia group makes it very easy to navigate through, with everything organized into eight main categories: *Introduce Yourself; Ask Robert; Announcements & Feedback; Doing the Work; Dreams & Dreamworking; Robert's Writings; Other Influences, Teachings, Lessons, & Exemplars; and Potpourri for the Soul.*

For more information regarding groups and trainings with Robert and Diane, contact info@RobertMasters.com.

All checks (deposit & otherwise) should be mailed to Robert Masters, 16133 9th Avenue, Surrey, BC V4A 1A5.

Payments for groups and trainings (plus Robert's books and Diane's CD) can also be made online at our Store page; simply go to www.RobertMasters.com and click on STORE.

To view previous newsletters, click on the NEWSLETTER button at www.RobertMasters.com.

To view Robert's blog, go to www.RobertMasters.com and click on the BLOG button.

2009 Work Schedule

April 18-19 Breakthrough: Boulder

May 7-10 Integral Psychotherapy Practicum: Ashland

May 16-17 Breakthrough: Ashland

May 28-31 Integral Psychotherapy Practicum: Boulder

June 6-7 Meeting the Dragon: Boulder