

# THE CRUCIBLE OF AWAKENING

## Issue 63 July 2010

*When the plunge is not later but now  
And how ceases to be just a question  
And love stretches us far past our edge  
And death brightens our breathing  
We are homeward bound  
Uprooted enough to find truer ground  
Until suffering is but bootcamp grace  
A liberating loss of face  
So even when it's hell we're not so far  
From having a terrible day well*

*When being off the path is truly the path  
And we cannot invest in any disguise  
Nor find any comfort in our usual highs  
We are also homeward bound  
Stumbling on when we fall down  
No longer keeping our pain in the dark*

*When we are brought to our knees  
And don't fight, flee, or freeze  
And rise up through our sorrow  
No longer romancing tomorrow  
We are homeward bound  
Joining in for another round  
Letting what's broken in us  
Ripen and deepen our wholeness  
Unlatching the gates — the key  
Appearing in our opening hand*

## That Too is Us

There's not much we have not thought — *thought* — of doing.

It's all there, the good, the bad, and the repulsive, morphing in and out of noticeability in the hermetic privacy of our own minds. The heavier or more bizarre stuff generally does its time in the less well-lit corners, feeding on backdoor hits of attention from us. We toss the beast — the smell and feel of which is never that far from our living quarters — a bit of meat, perhaps while simultaneously engaging in “higher” activities, such as keeping up appearances, or trying to be nonjudgmental or spiritual.

Thus do we stay out of relationship — avoiding intimacy — with what we find despicable, lowly, or at least unattractive in ourselves. We might even rationalize this distancing as being essential to the meditative practice of witnessing or dispassionate observation, as if separating ourselves from our less-than-flattering inner workings is somehow a spiritual act.

So what do we do with our personal yuckiness and aberrations, our demons, our dirty denizens? Do we house them, do we relocate them, do we jail them, do we try to bury or murder or disguise them? Do we play vigilant zookeeper to them — letting them out to do our dirty work — or pharmacological trough, or literary agent? To what degree do we reject them? Sure, they are not really monsters, but only shadowed leanings driven crazy by neglect and misguided handling, but if we truly saw them like this, how could we justify continuing our violence toward them?

A commonly favored housing project — at once an orphanage, holding tank, and trashbin — for our personal monsters is that conceptual

dropzone called Hell, although it could be argued that cultures (and lifestyles) quite unlike ours provide for us an even more convenient dumping ground for what we can't stand about ourselves.

In depositing so much of ourselves in those dirty foreign lands, in those ungodly religions, in those smutty back-alleys, and in that unseemly behavior of not-with-it others, we are literally all over the place, Humpty-Dumptyed near and far. All the King's horses and all the King's men cannot put us back together again, because the pieces — each waving its own flag — cannot by themselves see enough value in a reunion.

But the Real is not asking for a piece of you, but for *all* of you, not delivered as a forced coalition or a pabulum of shepherded submission, but as a true togetherness, a totality, a dynamic wholeness willingly enriched by its factional frictions and difficulties and strange mixes, along with the intimacy cultivated between them. The point is not to convert the broken many into the Undying One, but rather is to recognize them *as* none other than that One, without any prerequisite denial, annihilation, or homogenization of their diversity.

Trying to pull it all together — especially when in the throes of spiritual ambition — more often than not reduces us to overgoverned mush, so caught up in looking out for insurrections from within and below, that we do not sufficiently realize that it all is *already* together, already coexisting, needing not some heroic unifying effort, but rather only an openness through which becoming remains intimately peripheral to Being.

Seek God, and you won't find God, but only your dreams of God and what God can do for you, framed by hosannahs of hope. God comes more into focus when the difficult is turned toward and openly encountered, rather than just fled, drugged, lawyered, misread, or otherwise avoided.

Limit God to what's above, and what's below will likely eat us from the inside out, injecting twisted bolts of passion into the cool of reasoned

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thought, spawning a toxic logic beneath the treads of which we get so flattened that we can barely breathe.

So let your make-believe self out, and the Holy in, letting what's between inside and outside give up the ghost. Let out every last pretender to the throne of Self, every last squatter and manufactured somebody, every wannabe "I", every last habit and compulsion that insists on referring to itself as you — get them all out in the clear, not for obliteration or rehabilitation, but for exposure and illumination. Look at them milling around in the Holy's Courtyard, all dressed up in their resumés, all lost and all wearing your nametag, all veteran actors in your dreams, ready to play their part in whatever you are currently dramatizing. They may even continue to play their roles when you awaken in and from your dreams.

Why? Because authentic awakening is not a getaway from dreamstuff, nor necessarily an annihilator of it. If some monstrosity or horror is pursuing you in a nightmare, to the point that your fear shocks you into realizing that you are dreaming, choose to remain in the dream instead of fleeing to the "waking" state, and turn around and face what's chasing you. Chances are that the feared whatever will change right before your dream-eyes into something more approachable or even vulnerable, but even if it doesn't, the encounter is worth having, if only for the experience of ceasing to flee what you fear.

Sometimes the Holy will intrude in our dreams — because that's where we mostly reside — inviting us to leave our slumber. But do not let your embrace of the Holy separate you from the subterranean, homely, dirty, and malodorous petallings of self — they too ache to be known and touched, to be deeply met, without being made the subjects of some self-serving salvation game. Stop making them sit in the backseat, stop pretending that they are not your relations, stop treating them like weeds, or else you will just keep Humpty-Dumptying yourself all over the place, dragging what's left of you to the nearest bar. But even in the dispirited downing of one more Soul on the Rocks, the Holy Wakeup

Call still bubbles up, fluidly intact amidst all the frozen fizz and fuss, reminding us that this too is us.

The inherent inseparability of all that is is both the key unraveler of every dream and the ever unbroken light out of which every dream is constructed. In our presumed separation from all in the dream that appears to not be us, we are threatened by even the suspected possibility of such inseparability, for the reality of it signals the nonexistence of us as truly self-contained, independent beings.

But to consciously exist as the essence of that inseparability — what Joy! To consciously exist as Being — what Peace! To exist thus does not necessarily mean the end of our separate self-sense, but rather only the relocation of it, so that it no longer automatically centers — and masquerades as — us. Being no more seeks to eradicate ego than does the sky seek to eradicate its clouds. In fact, it is only through allowing Being to center us that our individuality can fully flower — then every last petal matters, including those with which we would rather not be associated.

Everyone and everything in our dream is us. Every object in our dream is us. Even the space between the objects is us. What artistry! We lie asleep, while our dreaming consciousness creates a cast of characters and objects, plus a fitting stage for them, with us typically getting the lead role. Put another way, we tend to identify with the “I” of the dream, acting out the relationships between that “I” and everything else in the dream. So when the scary pursues us, we take it to be not-us. Yet when we turn and face it, we often discover that it is us in dark disguise, and that it was chasing us only in order to make contact with us. Intimate contact. And light enters, effortlessly clearing the dream, leaving us as we are, present in — and as — what we never truly left, but only dreamt we did.

## **SPIRITUAL BYPASSING**

### **WHEN SPIRITUALITY DISCONNECTS US FROM WHAT REALLY MATTERS**

*This, my latest book, published by North Atlantic Books, will be out at the end of July and is available for pre-order on Amazon. Here are two excerpts from the chapter on cutting through spiritual bypassing:*

When transcendence of our personal history takes precedence over intimacy with our personal history, spiritual bypassing is inevitable. To not be intimate with our past, to not be deeply and thoroughly acquainted with our conditioning and its originating factors, keeps it undigested and unintegrated and therefore very much present, regardless of our capacity to rise above it.

Instead of trying to get beyond our personal history, we need to learn to relate to it with as much clarity and compassion as possible, so that it serves rather than obstructs our healing and awakening. This also means relating in similar fashion to our tendency to spiritually bypass, casting a lucidly caring eye upon the us who buys into it.

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In spiritual bypassing's realm, conceptual spirituality more often than not masquerades as real spirituality. Conceptual or emotionally disconnected spirituality can be very comforting and safe, very easy to trot out, very easy to use to rationalize our removal, especially emotionally, from the more difficult aspects of life.

Cutting through spiritual bypassing means turning toward the painful, disfigured, ostracized, unwanted, or otherwise disowned aspects of ourselves, and cultivating as much intimacy as possible with them. In order to do this, we inevitably will have to deal with our numbness, approaching it with as much care as possible, ceasing to numb ourselves to our numbness. If doing so seems to break our heart, we are on the

right path, even if we are on our hands and knees; when our heart thus breaks, it doesn't shatter, but breaks open, expanding to include more and more, with no dilution of depth and care. As we denumb, letting our heart remain raw, becoming more and more comfortable with our discomfort, we can see and feel what first drove us into spiritual bypassing. It would be an understatement to say that this is a challenging journey, for it asks of us a very deep vulnerability, a bareness of being to which we may not be at all accustomed.

Our unwillingness or inability to enter such vulnerability, to authentically connect with our childlike aspects (our innocence, wonder, prerational openness, et cetera), to feel genuine compassion for and connection with the child in us, especially when that child is hurt or traumatized, makes it very difficult, if not impossible, for us to truly touch and heartfully connect with the child in others, so we tend to keep our distance from those who are actively working with and through old childhood wounds, even when such work is clearly healing and potently integrative.

What spiritual bypassing would have us rise above is precisely what we need to enter, and enter deeply, with as little self-numbing as possible.

To this end, it is crucial that we see through whatever practices we have, spiritual and otherwise, which tranquilize, rather than illuminate and awaken, us. Meditative practices that tranquilize the mind can be very misleading, especially through the "zoning out" that they help catalyze, despite their undeniable calming and relaxing effects. Providing greater calm and relaxation is not necessarily always a good thing, particularly when it doesn't coexist with discernment and insight; some who find increased calm and relaxation through such meditative sedating may simply be rendered even more effective in their harm-doing.

Tranquilizers, meditative or otherwise, simply numb us, and if we have any investment in being numb, we may be drawn to meditative practices that make a virtue out of sedating us. Other meditative practices may also, of course, be used to distract us from our pain and difficulties, but as long as we are consciously and skillfully turning toward our pain and

difficulties so that we are close enough to them to effectively work with them, we will be less easily seduced by the desire to sedate ourselves.

Spiritual bypassing is more common than we might think; in fact, almost all of us who have engaged in spiritual disciplines have very likely done some time in spiritual bypassing's domain, especially when we were craving some distance from our everyday psychoemotional difficulties. Moving toward our pain may not feel good, but it is a necessary journey if we are to truly heal, through which our wounds and difficulties serve rather than hinder us.

Spiritual bypassing is not something to eradicate but something to outgrow. Let us treat it as such, recognizing that real spirituality is not an escape but rather an arrival.

"This is a wonderfully significant and important book, and is highly recommended. Its contents are truly mandatory for this day and age."

— **Ken Wilber, author of *The Integral Vision***

"This timely and penetrating analysis of spirituality's shadow provides a much needed counterpoint for those who tend to get blinded by its light."

— **Stephen Batchelor, author of *Buddhism without Beliefs***

"There is much wisdom and good information in this book. Robert joins a growing number of wise teachers who understand that the personal and the universal must be combined to bring true and genuine spiritual awakening."

— **Jack Kornfield, author of *A Path With Heart* and *After the Ecstasy, the Laundry***

"Uncompromising and truth telling, this book is an antidote to spiritual obesity. What emerges is the call to psychological clarity as essential to the mature spiritual life. Here is soul fuel for those who would enter the road less traveled — the deeply examined life as part of spiritual practice."

— **Jean Houston, Ph.D., author of *A Mythic Life***

"Robert Masters has given us a great gift — a tremendously useful guide to

examining our tendencies to spiritual bypassing, clearly the most comprehensive and accessible treatment available of this crucial topic. His work is a great contribution to the ongoing integration of psychotherapy and spiritual practice, and to our understanding of the meaning of spiritual maturity.”

— **Donald Rothberg, Ph.D., author of *The Engaged Spiritual Life***

“Traversing the muddy waters of contemporary spirituality requires a willingness to meet its seen and unseen challenges with ruthless self-honesty and keen discernment. Robert addresses “the many faces of spiritual bypassing” with intellectual rigor, hard-earned insight, and emotional intelligence. It is a lucid, well-written, and practical guide for both new and seasoned practitioners on the spiritual path.”

— **Mariana Caplan, Ph.D., author of *Eyes Wide Open: Cultivating Discernment on the Spiritual Path* and *Halfway Up the Mountain: the Error of Premature Claims to Enlightenment***

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## **CALLING IN YOUR BELOVED**

### ***A Transformational Group For Singles***

**July 10th & 11th in Boulder**

So many are yearning to be in a truly intimate relationship — a relationship that consistently enlivens, deepens, and awakens us — and wonder why they continue to find themselves either without a relationship or in relationships that don’t really work for them (but that they keep *hoping* will work for them). Many are having a relationship not with the other, but with the other’s *potential*. Some think that all that they have to do to attract their beloved is to wish

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and intend for that one to somehow show up, but wishing and intending is not enough, no matter how ardently we may believe in our power to manifest what we want.

Something more is needed, namely to face, really face, and work through whatever it is in us that's in the way of attracting our beloved. This means not only facing our doubts and self-defeating beliefs, but also facing and working through the *originating* forces that underlie such doubts and beliefs. We'll only have our heart's deepest desire when we cease fighting the preparatory fire.

That is, to attract our beloved, we cannot just sit back and think positively or do some affirmations — rather, we have to do some real work on ourselves, deep work, in order to be sufficiently *ready* for our beloved.

Full alignment with what we long for — a relationship that actually works on every level — is necessary, and this requires that we not only clearly see our conditioning, but that we also cease letting it run us. And we don't do this by somehow getting rid of our conditioning (such eradication being but a New Age fantasy), but by relating to it instead of from it.

In this group, we'll look at what is in the way of us truly attracting our beloved, and then we'll work with it, directly and deeply, through an intuitive mix of psychotherapy, bodywork, emotional release, Gestalt, and spiritual deepening practices.

All you need to do is bring your longing for deep relational intimacy to the group. That longing is your truest guide to attracting your beloved. This group will teach you how to make wise use of such longing, so that you can get more fully on track for meeting the one with whom you can be truly intimate.

We are only taking **12** participants, so early registration is recommended.

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

**TUITION & PAYMENT:** US\$550. Nonrefundable deposit of US\$200 required. Payment can be made online at the STORE page at [www.robertmasters.com](http://www.robertmasters.com). Full tuition is due by June 1, 2010.

## ***BREAKTHROUGH***

### **July 17th & 18th in Boulder**

A weekend of deep healing and awakening.

Cutting-edge psychotherapy, bodywork, and spiritual deepening all brought together to generate exceptionally effective work.

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

**LOCATION & TIME:** Boulder TBA. 10 to 6 both days.

**TUITION & PAYMENT:** US\$550. Nonrefundable deposit of US\$200 required. Payment can be made online at the STORE page at [www.robertmasters.com](http://www.robertmasters.com). Full tuition is due by June 11, 2010.

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## **WORK/EVENTS IN BOULDER**

### **July 7th to August 1st**

July 7: **Free evening talk/event in Denver:** Includes plenty of Q&A, some hands-on work, and chanting led by Diane.

July 9: **Free evening talk/event in Boulder:** Includes plenty of Q&A, some hands-on work, and chanting led by Diane.

July 8th-30th: **Individual & Couple Sessions:** Exceptionally deep, effective, and efficient work in 1 hr sessions (longer sessions available).

July 24: **All-day experiential group for therapists only.** The art of incorporating deeper emotional work into psychotherapy sessions very effectively and efficiently.

July 25: **Freedom Through Intimacy: A Transformational Intensive for Couples/Partners.** For those wanting a more conscious, loving, and liberating relationship, and who are ready to work through whatever's in the way.

**For more info, contact Laura at [laura@pioneeringwisdom.com](mailto:laura@pioneeringwisdom.com)**

# **MASTERS INTEGRATIVE PSYCHOTHERAPY PRACTICUM**

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

## **2010-11 Apprenticeship/Training 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, energetics, and spirit.

To this end, the training will blend exceptionally 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.**

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 counselor),

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

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.

**PREREQUISITE:** Previous work with Robert and Diane.

**TUITION:** US\$7000. Nonrefundable deposit of \$1000 required. Lodging and meals will be extra. Contact [info@robertmasters.com](mailto:info@robertmasters.com) to arrange payment.

**SCHEDULE:**

September 9-12, November 11-14, January 6-9, March 3-6, May 5-9.

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For more information regarding groups and trainings with Robert and Diane, contact [info@RobertMasters.com](mailto:info@RobertMasters.com).

To join the Masters Center for Transformation (Robert and Diane's online work), go to: [www.masterscenter.net](http://www.masterscenter.net).

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

Payments for most 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](http://www.RobertMasters.com) and click on STORE.

For other payment arrangements, contact [dianebardwell@gmail.com](mailto:dianebardwell@gmail.com).

To view previous newsletters, click on the NEWSLETTER button at [www.RobertMasters.com](http://www.RobertMasters.com).

To view Robert's blog, go to [www.RobertMasters.com](http://www.RobertMasters.com) and click on the BLOG button.

To get Robert's daily posts on Twitter, go to [www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com) and join, and then go to [twitter.com/RobertMasters](http://twitter.com/RobertMasters) to "follow" Robert.

### **2010 Schedule**

July 7: Public talk/event, Denver

July 9: Public talk/event, Boulder

July 10-11: Calling in Your Beloved, Boulder

July 17-18: Breakthrough, Boulder

July 24: Group for therapists, Boulder

July 25: Couples group, Boulder

September 9-12: Integrative Psychotherapy Practicum, Boulder

September 18-19: TBA, Boulder

September 26-Oct. 2: Bodywork Practicum, Gabriola Island, BC

October 9-10: Couples group, Mexico

October 16-17: Breakthrough, Mexico