

THE CRUCIBLE OF AWAKENING

Issue 38 June 2008

ON THE RELUCTANCE OF MOST SPIRITUAL TEACHERS TO INCLUDE PSYCHOTHERAPY IN THEIR WORK

Not so many spiritual teachers include psychotherapy to any significant degree in the work they do with their students, even when it's obvious that the spiritual practices they are giving are not really working for some students, especially with regard to not addressing — or not sufficiently addressing — their deeper wounds and needs and psychosocial difficulties.

Rather than then having such students engage in some psychotherapy (and for the purposes of this essay, I don't mean conventional talk therapy, but body-including, emotionally literate, truly integral psychotherapy), further spiritual practice is typically recommended, as if the only answer is to stay with the spiritual path prescribed by one's spiritual teacher. If fault is assigned, it is almost always placed on the student, with none or very little brought to the spiritual system or teacher. (Such lopsidedness frequently characterizes dysfunctional relationships, generating endarkened shame and its compensatory offshoots.)

Many spiritual teachers/paths seem to view psychotherapy per se as something their students don't really need, or as something, at best, to be done before getting into spiritual practice, or, now and then, as possibly something for seriously troubled students. Regardless of its transformational capacity, psychotherapy tends to be viewed by many spiritual teachers as simply a reinforcer of egoity (which in its conventional forms it unfortunately often is).

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And why don't more spiritual teachers recommend *and* include psychotherapy for their students? Part of the reason may be that they themselves have never done any psychotherapy, or have had a less-than-positive experience with it. Spiritual teachers who state or imply that psychotherapy is a lesser undertaking than spiritual practice, a mere dwelling and digging around in one's personal history, are, however unwittingly, shaming those students of theirs who *really* need some psychotherapy, spiritually bullying and "shoulding" such need into a relatively mute and passive position.

A *lesser* undertaking? This is thick-as-a-brick elitism, revealing a spiritual teacher's ignorance (and inflated view of his or her teachings). How many spiritual teachers possess a more-than-shallow understanding of and familiarity with psychotherapy and its various schools? How many can distinguish — or even bother distinguishing — mediocre or superficial psychotherapy from the adept stuff? How many recognize that highly skilled psychotherapy is itself, without necessarily trying to be so, often potently *spiritual*? And how many have themselves undergone, or even considered undergoing, such therapy?

More and more psychotherapists are using spiritual practices and perspectives in their work — and personal lives — but are many spiritual teachers using psychotherapeutic approaches in their work (and personal lives)? No. Shadow-work (acknowledging, facing, and integrating what we have turned away from, disowned, or otherwise rejected in ourselves) for them is usually either viewed as a waste of time, a mere regression or lower activity, or as something to be approached only intellectually (especially given that it is now becoming spiritually fashionable to pay lip service to shadow-work). Students who are chronically stuck in very difficult states, states that their spiritual practices are not adequately reaching and addressing, are often told to simply go more deeply into their spiritual practices (as taught by their spiritual teacher), rather than to also — or to instead — do some in-depth psychotherapy.

We need more spiritual teachers who are also highly skilled in psychotherapy. This doesn't mean, however, that all spiritual teachers should be psychotherapists (nor that all psychotherapists should be spiritual teachers)! But we do need more who can wear both hats, and wear them well. And we need spiritual teachers who really understand psychotherapy and the need for it, even they

are not psychotherapeutically skilled. To tell students that directly expressing anger is not a good thing (regardless of *how* it is expressed!), as many spiritual teachers are inclined to do, is a disservice to students, who may then muzzle and mute their anger in the name of spiritual correctness, assuming that they are sitting with their anger when in fact they are just sitting *on* it.

The relationship between spiritual teachers and their students is frequently plagued by unacknowledged parent/child transference issues, spiritually camouflaged codependency, and cultism, not to mention spiritual teachers who lack psychological and emotional literacy, teachers who could use some psychotherapeutic work, regardless of their spiritual attainment and access to exalted states. I don't care very much about their capacity for entering into and abiding in various kinds of samadhi; I care far more about what they are *doing* with these states! It is very easy to confuse the attainment of such states with being at an advanced stage of spiritual practice (and with being a truly mature person!); students are usually very easily impressed by such spiritual credentials, perhaps feeling some pride in being so closely associated with a spiritual teacher who has certain powers.

Yes, honor the transpersonal, embrace and abide in (and as) it, but not at the expense of the personal and the interpersonal! Everything exists through relationship, so why avoid any of it? Why avoid getting intimate with *all* of it? Why relegate the personal and interpersonal to a lower status than the transpersonal or transcendent impersonal? To avoid any of it is to remain incomplete, regardless of our spiritual achievements. Real spirituality is radically non-avoidant, more-than-intellectually recognizing that if we flee anything in ourselves, it will multiply and fester and occupy every exit, enlarging itself so as to seize our attention, encoding its outcast will throughout the apparently healthier regions of us, exposing and deflating our spiritual ambition.

Psychotherapy is often viewed as being all about learning how to function better (through, among things, connecting the dots between past and present), but it's not just about that! Psychotherapy, and I'm talking about body-including, emotionally literate, skillfully expressive, existentially alive integral psychotherapy, is inherently spiritual, in that it invites in ever deeper (and therefore more inclusive) perspectives, opens (at the optimal time),

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psychospiritual gates from the inside, and asks (also at the optimal time) the big questions and goes for something more real than answers. Such psychotherapy is both crucible and sanctuary for the kind of healing that liberates and awakens us, especially when it is combined with fitting spiritual practices.

Contemporary spiritual teachers who in their teachings and work don't include psychotherapy, and who also act as if what they are presenting is, for *all* of their students, sufficient for spiritual awakening, are both deluded and dangerous. Yes, some students, a rare few, may not need any psychotherapy for their maturation, but their example should not negate the vast majority who would surely benefit from adding some psychotherapy to their spiritual practices.

Some spiritual teachers may not want to incorporate psychotherapy in their work with their students because they fear that some, perhaps many, of their students might leave them if they were to do some deep psychotherapeutic work. I recall being hired ten years or so ago by a company to work with their employees; in my interview with its president, he asked me if I thought that some of his employees might, after working with me, not want to stay with his company. He was clearly concerned about this. I replied that some might leave, and that my job was not to do whatever it took to keep them employed with him, but rather to help them take better care of themselves; sometimes this would mean that they would be renewed in their wanting to stay with his company, and sometimes it would mean that they would want to leave. What eased him was my asking him why would he want employees working for him who really didn't want to be there.

Spiritual teachers for whom integrity (personal, transpersonal, and interpersonal) is essential have more interest in what's *truly* best for their students than in keeping them. Such teachers not only have no aversion to their students doing psychotherapy, but in fact openly encourage it, in a clearly integral spirit. They recognize that spiritual practices may not sufficiently address or penetrate many students' conditioning, and that other approaches, including the psychotherapeutic, need to be included, not to negate the spiritual, but to augment and serve it. For them, an integral approach to healing and awakening is not mere theory, but a deeply embodied, ever-evolving practice in which intimacy with all that we are is the curriculum and practice-path.

This may be anathema to gurucentric spiritual paths, but it is balm and catalyst and extraordinarily deep support for trans-gurucentric spiritual paths, in which students are fully backed in keeping their critical faculties alive and well, even as they surrender ever more deeply to the core imperatives of their being. Here, spirituality is awareness and love functioning as one, requiring no negation of (or separation from) the personal or interpersonal.

Perhaps if we were to choose, as part of our spiritual path, intimacy over transcendence — including intimacy with all that we are — we'd be more at home, more deeply aligned with What-Really-Matters. And is not this precisely where psychotherapy needs to work, and work closely, with spirituality? After all, real freedom is found not in eliminating limitation (one of spiritual ambition's fantasies!), but rather *through* limitation. In turning *toward* our limitations and allowing them to serve our Awakening, we probably could not find a better team of allies than psychotherapy and spiritual practice.

WHEN TRUTH ARRIVED, DID YOU CRUCIFY IT IN A FIELD OF FACTS?

A bluish blaze of forget-me-nots
Cradles my scars and rings the zenbell
Dissolving amnesia's infectious anaesthesia
Ancient seas seizing my sails
Waves aglitter with shattered dawn
My craft afire but far from gone
Riding, riding the up and the down
Joining what's above with what's below
Without homogenizing the show
When the boat went under
Did you sink? Did you drown?

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When lies laid you low
Did you fall? Did you stay down?
When truth at last arrived
Did you crucify it in a field of facts?
When you condemned the executioner
Did you see in your hands the bloody axe?

My freedom is in my chains
Revealing through all that remains
The steps which I must take
Until my heart does fully break
A sobering swoon of forget-me-nots
Cradles my scars and schemes
Tomorrow's children painting my dreams
Without running out of color
A fiery rain of dying petals
Lighting the crooked way home

A DEEPER LIFE

A ONE-WEEK GROUP IN THAILAND

January 16th to 23rd, 2009

Deep, efficient, highly effective breakthrough work for those who want to make wise use of their difficulties, and who are ready to work through whatever is obstructing their liberation, in a setting of exceptional beauty.

Everything can serve our healing and awakening. Especially the difficult stuff. Going toward, into, and through whatever is troubling us, rather than just rising above or otherwise avoiding it, is a profoundly liberating journey. Along the

way we learn, firsthand, to be intimate with all that we are: high and low, dark and light, dying and undying.

This group will be both a catalyst and sanctuary for such deeply transformative work, providing a safe place to let go of playing it safe. The work will be not be prestructured, but rather structured in fitting accord with group and individual needs and energies.

All kinds of issues and concerns — from the deepest trauma to the seemingly trivial — will be dealt with, through a dynamic, creative mix of psychotherapy, bodywork, spiritual disciplines, dreamwork, and group practices.

We will have plenty of time — seven days! — for very deep work, plus time for spiritual deepening, and activities like staying in a treehouse one evening or night, while below us wild elephants roam.

And the group will be small, being limited to **18** participants only, so that there will be enough time for everyone to receive in-depth attention.

LOCATION: Phuiyara Resort in Western Thailand. For pictures and more information, see www.phuiyaresort.com. An exceptionally beautiful wilderness setting, adjacent to a national reserve forest. Nearby are hot springs, bat caves, wild elephants, waterfalls, and much more.

TUITION, ACCOMMODATION, AND MEALS: CAD\$2600. A deposit of CAD\$500 is required, nonrefundable after September 1, 2008. The fee of \$2600 also includes transportation from Bangkok to Phuiyara Resort, plus an evening in a wild elephant elevated watching house.

We will be eating very well.

PAYMENT: In Canadian funds either by bank draft (payable to Robert Masters at 16133 9th Avenue, Surrey, BC V4A 1A5) or by credit card online through the STORE page at www.robertmasters.com. Full payment is due by November 1, 2008.

RECOMMENDED READING: Robert's latest books, DIVINE DYNAMITE (revised edition) and TRANSFORMATION THROUGH INTIMACY.

We're only taking 18 participants, so early registration is recommended.

FREEDOM THROUGH INTIMACY

A Transformational Intensive For Couples

JUNE 7th-8th, in ASHLAND, OREGON

Intimate relationship has immense transformational possibility, especially when we approach its difficulties as opportunities instead of as problems. Opportunities for what? To know ourselves more deeply, to love and live more fully, to become intimate with *all* that we are — in short, to be freed from our suffering.

This group is for couples who want a more conscious, loving, and liberating relationship with each other, and are ready to cut through whatever's in the way.

Even if you already have a good relationship, consider coming, and taking your relationship from good to great to what it *really* can be.

Individual work will be given as much emphasis as couples work, using a spontaneously structured approach that creatively mixes psychotherapy, bodywork, dream exploration, spiritual practices, and dyadic deepenings.

LOCATION: Dolphin House, 9820 Wagner Creek Road, Ashland.

TUITION & LOGISTICS: 10am to 6pm both days. Limited to **6** couples only. A special reduced rate of \$475 per person (or \$950 per couple). A nonrefundable deposit of \$300 is required from each couple.

For more info, contact Eric Grace at 541-292-3895.

BREAKTHROUGH

DEEP HEALING & AWAKENING

JUNE 13th-15th, in ASHLAND, OREGON

Deep, efficient, highly effective breakthrough work for those who want to make wise use of their difficulties, and who are ready to work through whatever is obstructing their liberation.

LOCATION: Dolphin House, 9820 Wagner Creek Road, Ashland.

TUITION & LOGISTICS: A special reduced rate of \$475. A nonrefundable deposit of \$200 is required. The group goes from 4pm to 7:30pm Friday, 10am to 6pm Saturday & Sunday. Limited to **14 participants only**.

For more info, contact Eric Grace at 541-292-3895.

NOTE: We will be doing a Friday June 6th evening event (including a talk, some Q & A, maybe some work, plus music by Diane and a booksigning by me), and also a women's evening group and a men's evening group while we are in Ashland. Private sessions may also be available. For more information, contact Eric at 541-292-3895.

BREAKTHROUGH

DEEP HEALING & AWAKENING

JUNE 21st-22nd, in BOSTON

Deep, efficient, highly effective breakthrough work for those who want to make wise use of their difficulties, and who are ready to work through whatever is obstructing their liberation.

LOCATION: Lighten-Up Wellness, 129 North Main Street, Mansfield, MA (30 minutes south of Boston). The group will begin Saturday, June 21st at 10am and end Sunday, June 22nd at approximately 5:30pm.

TUITION & LOGISTICS: A special reduced rate of \$495 CAD. A nonrefundable deposit of \$250 CAD is required. Limited to **12 participants only**.

FREE EVENING TALK/EVENT: June 20th at 7:30pm at Lighten-Up Wellness, 129 North Main Street, Mansfield, MA.

HEALING & INTEGRATION

A THREE-DAY GROUP IN ENGLAND

October 3rd-5th, 2008

Deep, efficient, highly effective breakthrough work for those who want to make wise use of their difficulties, and who are ready to work through whatever is obstructing their liberation.

Everything can serve our healing and awakening. Especially the difficult stuff. Going toward, into, and through whatever is troubling us, rather than just rising above or otherwise avoiding it, is a deeply liberating journey. Along the way we learn, firsthand, to be intimate with all that we are: high and low, dark and light, dying and undying.

This group will be both a catalyst and sanctuary for such deeply transformative work, providing a safe place to let go of playing it safe. The work will be not be prestructured, but rather structured in fitting accord with group and individual needs and energies.

All kinds of issues and concerns — from the deepest trauma to the seemingly trivial — will be dealt with, through a dynamic, creative mix of psychotherapy, bodywork, spiritual disciplines, dreamwork, and group practices.

And the group will be small, being limited to **14** participants only, so that there will be enough time for everyone to receive in-depth attention.

LOCATION: Integral College, 2 Wilbury Crescent, Brighton, UK BN3 6FL

TUITION: CAD \$750 (or approx. £380). A deposit of CAD \$375 is required, nonrefundable after August 1, 2008. Accommodation and meals are not included.

PAYMENT: In Canadian funds either by bank draft (payable to Robert Masters at 16133 9th Avenue, Surrey, BC V4A 1A5) or by credit card online through the STORE page at <http://www.robertmasters.com>. Full payment is due August 15, 2008.

UPCOMING TRAININGS

Intuitive Integral Psychotherapy Practicum

2008/2009 UNITED STATES APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

**5 Four-Day Modules, 3 or 4 to be held in
Boulder, Colorado, and the other(s) in
Santa Barbara or Maui**

An opportunity to learn (1) unique and exceptionally effective psychotherapeutic, spiritual, and bodywork skills; and (2) how to combine these in counselling work.

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.

You'll learn to not rely upon nor necessarily impose structure, but rather to let it naturally arise from your relationship and interaction with those you're counselling. Working this way weans us from the security — the eventually deadening security — of operating from behind a preset structure or methodology, leaving us in a position that requires an appropriately creative response from us. Such creativity keeps us fresh, open, and alert.

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Throughout the training we will be working with body, mind, emotion, and spirit. Love, integrity, and presence will be the cornerstones of our practice.

The training will take place over 5 four-day weekends. Tuition CAD\$6800. A nonrefundable deposit of \$1000 is required. The training is limited to **12** participants. Previous work with Robert required.

Note: The Practicum is not just for therapists who want to learn a more intuitive, integral, and bodywork-including approach to their practice, nor just for those who are wanting to work in the counselling/psychotherapy field, but also for those who 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 counsellor-to-be.

Practicum Schedule

To be determined once 12 participants have registered. Mid-September is looking like a possible starting point.

Intuitive Integral Psychotherapy Practicum 2008/2009 APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM in England

The training will take place over 4 five-day modules. Tuition £4000. A nonrefundable deposit of £500 is required. The training is limited to **12** participants. Previous work with Robert required.

The training will begin as soon as there are 12 registered participants. It seems likely that we will begin October 9th-13th.

For more information regarding groups and trainings, or to register for them, contact info@RobertMasters.com.

All cheques, deposit and otherwise, should be mailed to Robert Masters, 16133 9th Avenue, Surrey, BC V4A 1A5.

Payments for groups (and my books and Diane's new CD) can also be made by credit card online at our new Store; 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.

2008 WORK SCHEDULE

June 6	Evening event in Ashland, Oregon
June 7-8	Freedom Through Intimacy: Ashland, Oregon
June 10	Individual/Couples Sessions in Ashland, OR
June 10	Men's Evening Event, Ashland, Oregon
June 12	Individual/Couples Sessions in Ashland, OR
June 12	Women's Evening Event, Ashland, Oregon
June 13-15	Breakthrough: Ashland, Oregon
June 20	Evening Event in Boston
June 21-22	Breakthrough: Boston
June 24-25	Individual/Couples Sessions in Boston
July 11	Evening event in Sacramento
July 12-13	Breakthrough: Sacramento
September 20-21	Breakthrough: Boulder, CO
October 3-5	Healing & Integration: Brighton, UK
October 25-26	Women's Intensive: White Rock, BC
November 26-30	Bodywork/Energywork Practicum: White Rock