

THE CRUCIBLE OF AWAKENING

Issue 49 May 2009

Spring has finally arrived — such brightblossoming greendrenched glory! Looking through the window just above my desk, I see massive cedars fronted by plum, cherry, and apple tree blossoms swaying ever so slightly in the late morning breeziness. And I feel Spring within myself, both surging through and stilling me; new directions are buddingly alive, greenly aquiver with wonderfully compelling insistence.

Many use this time of year for some serious cleansing, both external and internal. We may have coasted for awhile during Winter, psychospiritually hibernating, getting cozy, not straying too far from our fireplace and kitchen comforts. But now we perhaps can see more clearly where we have been camping, where we have been plateauing, and begin rousing ourselves for a needed deepening, including spiritually.

And to go deeper spiritually, we need to see through our investment in staying put. Ask yourself not only if you have any longing to embody a deeper, more authentic level of spirituality, but also if you feel ready to do so. And ask yourself what you are doing with that longing. You probably intuit that if you align yourself with it, you will almost inevitably be faced with some challenges that ask — and have to ask — much of you.

Ceasing to expect spirituality to make us feel better or more secure is actually very liberating, however unsettling it might be initially. When we reach this point, we're likely not only ready to see and acknowledge any spiritual bypassing tendencies we may have (using spiritual practices and/or beliefs to avoid dealing with our painful feelings, unresolved wounds, and developmental needs), but also to start cutting through our investment in them. (My next book, which is all about this [*The Many Faces of Spiritual Bypassing*], probably won't be published for a year and a bit, but may be available in fairly-near-to-final form as a PDF download in the next few months — let me know if this download interests you.)

GOD AS THE ULTIMATE YOU

*You are forever, forever here
This is how You must now appear
In You I rise and fall
Pulsing with Your Call
Ever dying into You am I
Like clouds into endless sky
O Guide me, guide me on, guide me free
Guide me, guide me on, guide me into Thee
O May all things awaken me
Until there is only Thee*

With regard to how God (I'll get to God a little later) is related to/conceived of in contemporary culture, there often is more emphasis brought to first-person — God as the Ultimate “I” — and, especially, third-person — God as the Ultimate “It” — approaches than there is to second-person approaches — God as the Ultimate “You.”

And why? In part, because first-person and third-person approaches do not demand or make a priority out of relationship. The former is a matter of radical subjectivity — God as “something” with which to identify — and the latter is a matter of radical objectivity — God as “something” to witness. They both can certainly include heart, but for second-person approaches — God as the Ultimate “You” — there *has to be* heart, there has to be intimacy, there has to be a felt-to-the-marrow connection/communion.

Just as in any truly intimate relationship, there more often than not needs to be a significant loss of face, a willingness to lay everything bare, which is far from easy for most of us. The I-Thou relationship with God is more vulnerable, more overtly human, more obviously *personal*, than are first-person and third-person approaches to God, which tend to be primarily transpersonal/impersonal.

There's no substitute for having an I-Thou relationship with God.

In its beginning stages, such a relationship is basically a spiritualized child-parent “interaction” — in which God is little more than Santa Claus in holy drag — but in its mature stages, such a relationship is profoundly intimate, unplagued by parent/child transference issues, fundamentalism, egoic agendas, and other souvenirs of unresolved wounds.

The I-Thou bond develops from me-centered (what's in it for me?) to we-centered codependent (overrelying on or addicting ourselves to our interactions with God) to we-centered co-independent (keeping ourselves overly intact in our interactions with God) to being-centered (thoroughly committed to deepening our intimacy with God, while simultaneously deepening and honoring our individuality).

So we proceed from self-gratifying need to neediness to need-at-a-distance to pure need. Put another way, we transition from narcissism to unhealthy connection to relatively-healthy-but-distant connection to intimacy.

And is it any surprise that our I-Thou relationship with God mirrors and is mirrored by our other relationships?

Intimacy with God — intimacy with the Absolute Real — strips us of our masks and layerings, eventually leaving us nakedly present with What-Really-Matters, at home with what we never really left but only dreamt that we did, both rooted in and wholeheartedly participating in an Embrace/Openness in which Love and Awareness are inseparable.

And what is God? More than we can imagine. And much, much more than that, in the felt presence and irreducible mystery of which we are brought to our knees in awe, gratitude, untranslatable reverence, and a self-illuminating nakedness of being that empties us of all that we took ourselves to be, leaving only what we *truly* are.

Many of us prefer not to use the word “God,” often because of what is commonly associated with it, or because it's embarrassing to us to directly and unguardedly say it (it's easier to talk about “Energy” or “Suchness”

or “Spirit”). But I have grown to like it, because of what I have come to associate it with: Absolute Mystery in the ever-evolving, unsurpassably sentient raw, the Breath of the breath, the hyperbole-transcending Reality of Infinite, always-already present Being, simultaneously nothing and everything, forever making an appearance as all that is, in the face of which I bow in ever-fresh wonder and gratitude and speechless recognition, until there is only bowing, only Grace, only Love, without any dilution or diminishing of my me-ness.

This is God, the Eternal I-Thou-It, the One unimaginably beyond our human understanding, forever here on every scale and dimension possible, and with Which/Whom we can, miraculously and paradoxically, cultivate a relationship.

In first-person approaches to God, we relate AS God (through the filter of our individuality, however opaque or transparent that might be). In second-person approaches, we relate WITH God. In third-person approaches, we relate TO God.

As, with, to. I am, I love, I see. Identification, intimacy, recognition. The three faces of God, simultaneously separate and inseparable. Let us honor and embrace all three, both within and all around ourselves.

Let us make sure that our prayers — our *Divine personals* — touch, honor, and resonate with all three. May our prayers become so intimate with what they are reaching for that they become but articulations of gratitude, sanctuaries of sacred conversation that nourish us right to our core, regardless of our circumstances. May our prayers be dynamic vessels and launching pads for Grace. And in our prayers, may we hold nothing back from God, nothing!

When I was a young child, God simply was an all-pervading Radiance, felt mainly through my wide-eyed immersion in Nature — at least up until I began attending Sunday School. I simply could not swallow the dogma and buttoned-up piety being served there, eventually asking all kinds of questions (where did Cain’s wife come from?) that my beleaguered Sunday School teachers could not satisfactorily answer.

By the time I was eleven, I was an atheist, and proud of it. My first entheogenic experience (mescaline in 1970), featuring ecstatic hours of gazing at/into springtime flowers, effortlessly obliterated my atheism; a few years later, I began meditating, entering into a first-person and third-person relationship with God, with a particular fascination with altered states. It took me quite a while to realize that God was not an alternative reality!

In the late 1970s and early 1980s I did a load of Vipassana (Buddhist mindfulness meditation), which reinforced my orientation to God as the Ultimate It (and, to a lesser degree, as the Ultimate I); I also did some heart-centered/devotional practices then, but still mostly kept God at a distance, feeling more comfortable with a Supreme It or a Supreme I than with a Supreme You. My prayers were mostly along the lines of “May all beings be free from suffering” or “May I make as wise as possible use of all that happens to me” — very helpful to me, but still not relating with God in any significantly personal sense. I did feel love for certain spiritual figures, through whom I felt the Divine quite strongly, and I did now and then feel a profound I-Thou link with God, but it had not taken root in me; I mostly preferred relating to “Suchness” or “Mystery” or “Being” than to “God.”

This changed in 1994. I had a horrendous near-death-experience early that year (chronicled in my book *Darkness Shining Wild*), at the end of which my very first words were: “God, I love You so, so much — I understand, I completely understand, why there has to be fear and doubt and pain and despair, for without them, without facing and passing through them, our love for You falls short of what it needs to be.” I said this without any self-consciousness, feeling utterly vulnerable.

After that, I still continued my Buddhist-like prayers (“May...”), but now began adding, however slightly, something more overtly second-person in my prayers, eventually recognizing and defining prayer as a Divine personal. Being with Diane has only deepened all this; the I-Thou dimensions of our intimacy naturally flow into and resonate with the Ultimate I-Thou communion. And this is reinforced all the more by

The Crucible of Awakening

the Grace (I define Grace in part as a serendipitous infusion of not-by-us engineered guidance — for more on this, see my February 2009 Newsletter) we are together experiencing ever more deeply, especially since I was diagnosed with prostate cancer last October.

The I-Thou relationship goes both ways, and needs to be voiced and felt as such. We need to speak to God, and we also need to let God speak to us (which doesn't have to come through language!). In my poetry/lyrics, I can say/sing, as “myself” speaking to God, things like:

*O Father of my soul, O Breath of my breath
Taking me through death after death
O May I be a vessel for Your Light
As I sail through the night*

and, to bring in both Mother and Father:

*O Mother of my soul, O Cradle of my every birth
O Green, green heartbeat of my earth
O May I make room for Your Embrace
As I awaken to You in every place*

and I can also say/sing, as “God” speaking to me, things like:

*Love Me now, love Me full
Love Me bright, love Me day and night
I cannot be found because I cannot be lost
Love Me whatever the cost*

and I can also speak/sing as something in-between:

*Look for me
where the land is wild with naked wonder*
*Look for me
where jagged shores moan with white thunder*
*Look for me
where the sea is ablaze with dawn*

Look for me

where everything's already gone

Look, look for me

where joy and pain disappear into sun and rain

Look for me

where we must dance and die

Look for me

where forehead is an infinity of sky

Look for me

where you awaken in the night

Look for me

where there's nothing but unbroken light

Look, look for me

where joy and pain disappear into sun and rain

Is all this just me speaking to myself? Yes and no — yes, because the me doing the speaking and hearing is much more than my everyday self, being expressive of and infused to whatever degree with what I truly am; and no, because as I speak thus, I make room for and am “occupied” by more than myself. Put another way, when I am emptied of my usual self (or when that self-making or *selfing* process is “relocated” to the periphery of my being), I truly have room for an intimate relationship with God, which paradoxically allows me to be even more myself.

Here, the personal, interpersonal, and transpersonal all seamlessly coexist, coevolve, cocreate. Here, Grace is not a concept, but an utterly tangible reality, too real to be denied. Just like God. And just like you and me, both in our uniqueness and our unity of Being. We're all literally dying to be with God, to fully realize God, to be fully present *as* God, including God-in-the-flesh...

May Thy Will and my will be as one; may my will and Thy Will be as one. Amen.

FREE DOWNLOAD OF MEETING THE DRAGON!

We want as many people as possible to have a copy of this my latest book, because we feel so strongly about its topic (*Ending Our Suffering By Entering Our Pain*), and so we're offering it for now 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/Store/store.html>

and simply click on the download button for the PDF of Meeting the Dragon.

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 & 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.

BREAKTHROUGH

JUNE 6th-7th 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.

NOTE: We will holding a free evening talk/event Wednesday May 27th at Boulder Integral (2805 Broadway, Boulder) at 7:00pm. The evening's topic will be MEETING THE DRAGON: ENDING OUR SUFFERING BY ENTERING OUR PAIN. There will be a talk, a guided meditation, plenty of Q & A, plus music with Diane (featuring her new healing chants — very powerful/beautiful!) and a booksigning with Robert. For more info, contact <http://www.boulderintegral.org>.

BREAKTHROUGH

JUNE 20th-21st in WHITE ROCK, BC

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: 16133 9th Ave., White Rock. 10am to 6pm both days.

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

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.

2009/2010 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 FIVE 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):

June 25-29, August 20-23, October 8-11, December 3-6, Feb. 4-7.

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 Breakthrough: Boulder

June 20-21 Breakthrough: White Rock, BC