

THE CRUCIBLE OF AWAKENING

Issue 43 November 2008

To transcend yourself

Be yourself

To deepen your faith

Behead your hope

In freeing desires from their goal

We taste what it is to be truly whole

Exhale and a truer exhale

Fascinations unraveling

In fast dying tidepools

Attention noticing itself

Travelling from here

To here, from now

To now to a deeper now

Silence just said something

Don't lose it in the translation

Such an art it is

To learn our lessons by heart

While we roam in dreamland

Hungry for Home

TURNING TOWARD OUR PAIN

Turning toward our pain is an act of radical caring — and not just for ourselves, because we are then no longer fueling or supporting the turning-away-from-pain that has addicted so many of us to whatever keeps or seems to keep us removed not only from our pain, but also from the pain of others.

In turning toward our pain, we are also, however indirectly or slightly, turning toward others' pain (in both personal and collective contexts), one result of which is that our compassion for others not only deepens but also widens, and our interconnectedness and intimacy with all that is becomes much more than just a belief or intellectual construct.

Turning toward our pain is about bringing into our heart all that we have rejected in ourselves, all that we have ostracized, disowned, neglected, bypassed, shunned, excommunicated, or otherwise deemed as unworthy in ourselves. Our heart somehow has room for it all.

Opening ourselves to such qualities does not, however, mean that we then allow them to run the show, to act out, to run wild, anymore than we would allow a child — including our own reclaimed child-side — to drive our car. So we must proceed here with great care, sidestepping the minefields/mindfields of neurotic tolerance and let's-accept-it-all naiveté, keeping our eyes simultaneously open and discerning.

When something has been caged for a while, kept for prolonged periods from much of what it needs, it usually will not behave particularly well when it is released. Knowing this, we will not expect our pain to domesticatedly or nicely resonate with us when we no longer are protecting ourselves from it. Initially, it's enough to simply name our

pain and stay turned toward it, taking our time making its acquaintance, not expecting it to look or behave like a pet. As it comes more clearly into view, you may see something roughly akin to a dragon, something far from tame or civil or predictable, and perhaps even glimpse the treasure behind it.

In turning toward our pain, we are also turning toward our avoidance of our pain, allowing ourselves to see it for what it is, even as we feel its pull and hear its siren call, its promises of pleasurable release, its advertisements for itself.

Seeing this avoidance with any consistent clarity may be very difficult at first, as our distractions again and again seductively approach us, but it helps to know that they will thus show up — more often than not dressed to kill or thill — and that we are capable of naming the pain from which they are promising to remove us.

If, before reaching for your favorite fix, you simply ask yourself what you are actually feeling besides your urge to thus reach, and you then turn toward *that* feeling — which is probably painful, and tied in with certain strands of your personal history — and stay with that feeling, breathing it in, letting yourself fully feel it, you increase the odds that you won't significantly distract yourself from your pain (including by converting it to suffering).

In naming our pain, we may still be turned away from it or be at an angle to it, but when we turn toward our pain, rotating until we are facing it squarely, we are in full frontal contact with it, preparing ourselves to step forward by deepening our stand.

And deepen it we must, or we will be uprooted all too easily. As we strengthen and stabilize our stand, getting more used to facing our pain, we may notice that our longing to be truly free is, however slightly or sporadically, getting stronger than our longing to distract ourselves from our pain.

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We are now facing the dragon, perhaps feeling its heat and meaty threat as we open ourselves to its presence, breathing in its energies — but not so much as to overwhelm ourselves — and then breathing out in a manner that settles and further anchors us. We may feel like distracting ourselves, but we have too much at stake, and know we have too much at stake, to postpone, obstruct, or otherwise turn away from our pain.

So we stay put, but not rigidly. If we find it too difficult to stand where we are, we step back a bit, and then root ourselves there. Moving back from the fire is fine so long as we keep facing it.

Once you've turned toward your pain and have found a place or position where you know you can stand with sufficient solidity, root yourself, feeling your stand streaming down through your belly and legs into your feet, and then through your feet into the earth — and at the same time feel your stand rising up through you even as become more and more firmly planted, rising up and up, up through your torso, lengthening your spine and lifting your sternum, with your head effortlessly balanced atop your neck, your eyes both focused and spacious.

Even if you are shaking inside, sweating at the thought of more fully encountering what is in front of you, keep your full height, filling out your body with presence, so that you begin to embody your true size. No matter how slight this shift is, stay with it, breathing integrity and care into your intention to stand your ground.

Do not move forward yet.

Beware of the ambition that would have you move forward prematurely. Beware of playing the hero, the dragon slayer, the impeccable warrior. Do not take the dragon lightly. It won't lie down and roll over just because of your dreams of glory and breakthrough. What matters is that you take an open-eyed stand and do your best not to wander away from it. You may sway in the wind, but do not let it turn you away from your pain.

As you ground yourself, keep some awareness of the back of you, doing so in as easy a manner as possible. “See” with the back of your head, your shoulder blades, your sacrum, the back of your heart, sensing what is behind you, while remaining focused on what is before you.

Study the dragon as closely as you can from where you are. It is in sight. See it both in its totality and in particular ways: its position, its shape, its colors, its bulk, its movements, its odor, its teeth. And see how you have tended to treat it.

Don’t try to outstare the dragon, though. If you lock eyes with it for too long, you may lose touch with yourself to the point where you lose your footing. Better to look with clear focus for a little while, then look away for a bit, then look back at it again.

Give yourself enough time to acclimatize; facing your pain — which includes facing your aversion to it — so directly may be a very new experience for you. If your pain seems monstrous, it may be because you have treated it as such, keeping it from loving human contact so long that it has taken up residence in less-than-human forms.

As you stand your ground, cultivate a second-person relationship with your pain; before, you’ve probably had a first-person approach to it, namely identifying with it, as well as a third-person approach, keeping your pain as an unpleasant or undesirable “it” somewhere in the distance, just as you may have considered your body an “it” somewhere *below* your “headquarters”.

So now bring in a second person approach: Instead of relating from your pain, you relate to it. As such, you listen to it, you observe it without disengaging from it, you let yourself sense more than its surface features, you start to get inside it, you choose to be in relationship to it, no matter how alien it might seem. And thus you make the acquaintance of the dragon.

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And you keep whatever distance you need, deepening your stand, relocating it if you have to, without turning away to any significant degree.

If this sounds like something you think you can't do, think again: To turn toward your pain does not necessarily mean that you remain thus turned all the time! Rather, it means that you turn toward your pain, taking a stand there for long enough to start to get used to facing your pain. Of course you'll take breaks, sometimes frequent breaks. But so what?

So long as you keep turning toward your pain, and practice staying there, rooted as best you can, it won't really matter that you weren't able to always stay with it for very long. Acclimatization takes time. Take time for the necessary adaptation. Treat the process more like a long run over rough terrain than sprint training.

Turning toward our pain is a step toward real freedom. Turn as slowly as you need to, but do turn. You are worth it. So are we.

(Excerpted from my upcoming book: MEETING THE DRAGON: ENDING OUR SUFFERING BY ENTERING OUR PAIN.)

DIVING DEEPER

An Introduction to Robert & Diane's Work

November 1st in Ashland, Oregon

An experiential introduction to our work, especially intended for those who want to make wise use of their difficulties and who are ready to work through whatever is obstructing their liberation.

This group is limited to 16 participants only, who haven't yet attended one of our weekend workshops. All kinds of 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. *Not every participant will get to directly work* (due to time constraints), but will nonetheless still get to deeply participate in the group.

LOCATION & TIME: 306 Wimer Street, Ashland, Oregon. The group will begin Saturday November 1st at 10:00am and end at approx. 6:00pm.

TUITION: A special rate of only \$90 (our normal fee is \$275 for a one-day group). If you are also attending our November 22nd-23rd Breakthrough Group in Ashland, your fee for it will be reduced by \$90.

NOTE: EVENING TALK/EVENT: Thursday October 30th, starting 7:30pm at Hidden Springs Wellness Center, 1651 Siskiyou Blvd, Ashland. Free!

NOTE: PRIVATE SESSIONS will be available in Ashland from November 3rd to 20th. Both Robert and Diane will be present at most sessions.

To schedule sessions (either individual or couple), contact info@robertmasters.com.

BREAKTHROUGH

DEEP HEALING & AWAKENING

November 22nd-23rd 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.

This group is 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 bodywork, psychotherapy, spiritual disciplines, dreamwork, and group practices. Structure will not be preset, but rather will spontaneously arise in accord with individual & group needs.

LOCATION & TIME: 306 Wimer Street, Ashland, Oregon. The group will begin Saturday Nov. 22nd at 10:00am and end Sunday Nov. 23rd at approx. 6:00pm.

TUITION: CAD\$550 (or CAD\$460 if attending the Nov. 1st introductory group). A nonrefundable deposit of CAD\$200 is required. Full tuition is due by October 22, 2008.

BREAKTHROUGH

A Residential Group in Sweden

May 8th-10th, 2009

Deeply integral, intuitively structured work that gets to the heart of the matter with optimal speed and effectiveness.

This group is limited to **14** 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 bodywork, psychotherapy, spiritual disciplines, dreamwork, and group practices. Structure will not be preset, but rather will spontaneously arise in accord with individual & group needs.

LOCATION: Idöborg Retreat Center, Sweden (on an island approximately one hour from Stockholm). See <http://www.idoborg.se/index.asp>.

TUITION: CAD \$750 (SEK 4750) A deposit of CAD \$375 (SEK 2375) is required, nonrefundable after February 1, 2009. Full payment is due by March 1, 2009.

ACCOMMODATION & MEALS: SEK 2000, payable to Yashar Adellian (contact him at yashar.adellian@gmail.com). Full payment is due by March 1, 2009.

A DEEPER LIFE

A 5-Day Residential Group in England

May 13th-17th, 2009

Deeply integral, intuitively structured work that gets to the heart of the matter with optimal speed and effectiveness.

This group is limited to **16** 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 bodywork, psychotherapy, spiritual disciplines, dreamwork, and group practices. Structure will not be preset, but rather will spontaneously arise in accord with individual & group needs.

LOCATION: Duncton Mill, England: <http://www.dunctonmill.co.uk>.

Duncton Mill is a conference, meeting and retreat centre situated in the heart of the South of England, nestled at the foot of the glorious South Downs. The peace and stunning beauty of the setting creates a backdrop in which it is easy to relax and rejuvenate — a perfect place for deep work!

The Guardian (May 12th 2007) listed Duncton Mill first in the top ten worldwide best healthy retreats.

Surrounded by an organic farm, peaceful lakes and wooded hills, and situated in an area of outstanding natural beauty, Duncton Mill is blessed with an incredible range of indigenous wildlife. And it is just over an hour from south London and Heathrow.

TUITION: CAD\$1275, which is approx. £675. A nonrefundable deposit of CAD\$500 is required. Full payment is due February 1, 2009.

FOOD & LODGING: CAD\$660 (or approx. £350) for accommodation and all meals. Special dietary needs will be taken care of. Meals will basically be delicious vegetarian plus fish options. Full payment is due February 1, 2009.

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.

Masters Integral Psychotherapy Practicum

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.

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.

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

WE WILL ONLY BE TAKING TWELVE PARTICIPANTS.

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

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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.

LOCATION & STRUCTURE:

The Practicum will take place over 5 four-day modules. Some of the modules will be held in Ashland, Oregon, and some in Boulder, Colorado.

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: CAD\$7000. A nonrefundable deposit of CAD\$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:

Tentative Dates: February 12-15, April 16-19, June 4-7, August 6-9, October 8-11. If we begin in April rather than February, our last module will be December 3-6..

There already is considerable interest in this latest Practicum. If you are interested, please contact Robert.

ONLINE COMMUNITY

There are now two online communities centered around my work and writings. I encourage you to join both, whether your inclination is simply to drop in and check out the discussions or to add your voice to what's going on. In either case, you are welcome to join!

FACEBOOK 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. If you're not already a member of Facebook, it is easy to join at: **<http://www.facebook.com>**. Once you have joined, simply type "Robert Augustus Masters" in the Search box and then click to join the group.

GAIA, a social networking site (which is free to join), also has a Robert Augustus Masters discussion group, featuring the same intention and invitation (and weekly Q&A) as my Facebook group. The online culture of my Gaia group is lively 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 would like to participate in the discussions, you can join Gaia by going to: **<http://www.gaia.com/apply>**, or email Arthur Gillard (aqalicious@yahoo.com), the cultivator of the site, who will send you an invitation.

The format of my Gaia group makes it very easy to navigate through, with everything organized into 7 main categories: *Introduce Yourself; Ask Robert; Announcements & Feedback; Doing the Work; Robert's Writings; Other Influences, Teachings, Lessons, & Exemplars; and Potpourri for the Soul.*

Hope to hear from you, whether via Facebook or Gaia; feel free to jump in at any point. There are almost always a number of vital discussions going on in my Gaia group, among which you very likely will find some things that stir your interest.

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 (plus my 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.

2008 Remaining Work Schedule

October 30	Evening talk/event in Ashland, Oregon
November 1	Diving Deeper: Ashland, Oregon
November 13-16	Integral Psychotherapy Practicum: Ashland
November 22-23	Breakthrough: Ashland
November 26-30	Bodywork/Energywork Practicum: White Rock
December 13-14:	TBA