

# THE CRUCIBLE OF AWAKENING

## Issue 42 October 2008

Welcome to the 42nd issue of my newsletter, which features an essay on an emotion that we all recognize — but for which there is no English word — plus two answers excerpted from my weekly Q&A Gaia/Facebook groups (*see pages 13-14 for more about these groups*), the first entitled “Dancing with Loneliness” and the second “Wholeness & Creativity.”

**Practicum News:** Our 2008/2009 US Practicum is now full, and will begin November 13th in Ashland, Oregon. Already there is considerable interest in us doing another US Practicum next year, so we are offering one beginning in either February or April of 2009. See pages 11-13 for more information.

**Book News:** I have almost completed a new book, entitled *Meeting the Dragon: Ending our Suffering by Entering our Pain*. All that's needed now is some time to pull it all together, time that is very hard to come by given how busy our work schedule is.

**Work Location News:** We will be doing more and more of our groups and training in Ashland, not only because we feel very at home there, but also because we strongly believe that our participants and trainees will also appreciate and really enjoy being in such a lovely place.

**Free Evening Talk/Event October 7th in Ireland:** Topics will include intimacy, relationship, working with the difficult stuff, and ending our suffering by entering our pain. The evening will feature an abundance of Q&A, plus songs of love, breakthrough, and liberation with Diane (and possibly some hands-on work with Robert).

Starting at 7:30pm in Clonmel, County Tipperary. For more information contact Siobhan Slater ([drumgenltd@eircom.net](mailto:drumgenltd@eircom.net)).

## Schadenfreude Exposed

There's an emotion, a very common emotion, for which there's no word in English (other than perhaps the extremely obscure and pronunciation-hobbled *epicaricacy*), an emotion that is all about taking pleasure in others' misfortune or suffering. This may not be the kind of emotion that we readily admit to having, but who among us hasn't felt it, and sometimes also acted as if they were not feeling it?

When those who have done us harm or committed a crime are clearly suffering, we may feel justified in taking pleasure at their downfall and might even do so publicly, but at other times we may feel the same kind of pleasure when certain suffering others have done nothing disturbing or harmful to us, in which case we ordinarily are not inclined to show our pleasure publicly or even privately (or even to admit it to ourselves).

German has a word for this emotion: *Schadenfreude*. This translates as harm-joy. Many other languages have a word for it, but not English. We have phrases that hover around or hint at it, phrases that convey some of the feeling of it, but without the overt pleasure, as if we're embarrassed to admit that it actually feels good.

For example, we may say, "he had it coming" or "I hope she suffers" or "it was just a matter of time before he fell" — these all perhaps hinting at a certain satisfaction we might feel upon seeing someone take a spill or go downhill, but not coming very close to indicating any real pleasure. But Schadenfreude with a stiff upper lip or impassive countenance is still Schadenfreude.

Unjustified Schadenfreude may be our most ubiquitous guilty pleasure, more often than not springing (unlike arguably justified Schadenfreude) from envy, an envy that pleasantly dissipates (leaving only a dark stain in the backcorners of our psyche) when we spot the fall or demise of the envied other.

The tabloids on sale at most checkout counters provide an instant Schadenfreude high — movie stars without any makeup, movie stars

messing up royally, movie stars down in the dump, their travails and photos inviting us to look upon them where they are not just like us, but worse. Their fall is *our* rise, leavening us with tiny bursts of satisfaction and secret yumminess, like a chocolate bar downed in the mid-afternoon whilst watching a soap opera. It's a vicarious shamefest; we're close to the shame, but not *that* close, so that we can see it and feel it without having it contract or shrink or expose us.

How quietly yet pointedly delicious it is to be on the other side of the glass. Someone else's fall amplifies the fact that we have not yet thus fallen; thus does Schadenfreude give us a little hit of immunity, which in itself provides a small but noticeable shot of pleasure. A cheap and easily accessible buzz.

Much of Schadenfreude's ancestry lies in the triumph we felt — and this goes back a *long* way — when the overcoming or downfall of others improved our lives in some way (and the better this felt, the more fully we'd participate in it). This can also be seen developmentally, when young children exult over getting something that another child clearly wants. Being higher up on the food chain can be a high, despite the cost.

As we get older and more cognitively sophisticated, our capacity for Schadenfreude deepens. We may still be driven by a certain core competitiveness and a corresponding envy, but now we can bring in finer distinctions as to what constitutes a fall in others, as well as dragging into the mix such potent ingredients as the ability to shame others. And if we ourselves can be shamed relatively easily, we may seek to escape the raw feeling of such shame not only through attacking others — or ourselves — but also through honing our capacity for Schadenfreude.

Our sense of justice and our Schadenfreude leanings are directly related. If we feel that others have behaved unjustly, we're more likely to feel some Schadendfreude toward them than if we knew they had not thus behaved. The enormous coverage given celebrity failings is largely fed by a powerfully pervasive cultural Schadenfreude. In this, major "news" networks are simply the Jerry Springer Show in drag, pandering as they do to the very same appetites of "less civilized" broadcasts.

There are many shades of Schadenfreude, ranging from malicious delight to sweet revenge to eruditely smiling contempt, but all involve an absence of compassion, coupled with an us-versus-them mentality. As such, Schadenfreude militates against forgiveness, and how could it not, given how it dehumanizes the offending or fallen other? Also, in the sense that it is a spectator sport — think of Romans at the amphitheater for a day of rousingly entertaining bloodshed — Schadenfreude keeps us *psychoemotionally* separate from the downfall that's providing us with pleasure. Thus does it disconnect us, even as it connects us to others who are also enjoying observing the same downfall.

Schadenfreude can be brought into clearer focus by examining its opposite, *mudita* (a Pali and Sanskrit Buddhist term), which basically means sympathetic/appreciative joy — the pleasure we take in others' successes and achievements. Many of us know this emotion in its purest form through the joy we feel over our children's breakthroughs and triumphs, so long as we are not caught in living through their successes (which of course often means overemphasizing their doing well, thereby bringing unnecessary and often injurious pressure to them). Mudita has an open heart; Schadenfreude does not. Mudita does not lose touch with the humanity of others; Schadenfreude does.

So what can we do about our Schadenfreude? Well, first of all, become sufficiently aware of it so that you can name it as soon as it arises in you. Then bring your attention into the actual feeling of your Schadenfreude. Notice the contraction in its expansiveness; notice its overlap with other emotions; notice its texture, color, directionality, depth, intensity, and so on. Study it closely, getting intimate with it to the point where its arising is just one more opportunity to deepen both your self-knowledge and your relationship with others. Instead of merely judging or dissociating from your Schadenfreude, have compassion for it and for the you who tends to indulge in it.

Everyone has some Schadenfreude; all we need do is see it for what it is, and not allow it to sit in the driver's seat. Don't worry about getting rid of it; rather, let it sit in the backseat, giving it some quality playtime with mudita.

## Dancing With Loneliness

Do not turn away from your loneliness. Do not reject it; do not treat it like a wallflower. Go to it; take its hand, and with great care bring it onto the dancefloor.

What you won't dance with, what you refuse intimacy with, what you're so ambitious to shed, is precisely the dance-partner you need (or at least need to approach), drawing out of you the very aversion, tension, and pain that's crying for illumination and love.

Become more sensitive to your loneliness, noticing in as much detail as possible its desperation, its craving for release from itself, its commitment to and investment in playing the unwanted or unloved one. Notice the intensity of your pull to get away from those sensations that characterize your loneliness. Fleeing, feeding, filling, emptying, sexing, seeking novelty — anything to provide some relief.

But what if you were to just sit there, sit *with* your loneliness, not doing a damn thing other than giving it your undivided attention? You might then come to realize that in your loneliness — and especially in your dramatization of it — you actually are closed off (and unavailable) to what you really are aching for.

As we enter into this process, we might also recognize our loneliness as a frightened, neglected child that has grown accustomed to being treated as a problem. A painfully troubled softness that we harden and distort by treating as an inconvenience. The more it cries, the more we push it away or try to silence it. The more it contracts, the more we isolate it. But instead we could turn off the TV or computer, stop drugging or overbusyng ourselves, and simply sit with our loneliness, letting it settle and rest in our lap, listening to it with an opening heart and curious mind, noticing its shape and breath, its bodily terminals, its tones, its textures, its shifts.

And shift it does, as we continue to give it undivided, compassionate attention, slowly perhaps, but surely; in this, our loneliness is akin to an

abused child entering the steady, well-grounded presence of genuine love and kindness. We can thus hold our loneliness and let it melt in warm-armed solidly present embrace, holding it close but not so close that it cannot breathe freely. Letting go of our desire to be elsewhere, we let our loneliness pervade us. Letting the desperation go, letting the compulsion to seek go, letting the ambition to let go — a spiritual “should” that’s so easy to *should-er* — also go.

Then our loneliness is not a rejected child, a loser, a misfit, a bog of neediness, but rather a vulnerable fullness warming us, a tender ticket to our depths, a far from dysfunctional catalyst for remembering What-Really-Matters.

And so we sit, our loneliness transmuting into aloneness — we may still be physically alone, but we are nonetheless palpably connected, especially at the heart, with so many others. Alone we are then, alone enough to be vividly and impactfully together with the primordial presence of Being, and yet also together enough to appreciate and savor our solitude, realizing that only when we are truly capable of enjoying being alone are we capable of really being in relationship.

We could do worse than to date our loneliness.

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## **Wholeness & Creativity**

Resting in wholeness, allow yourself to unguardedly sense the diversity that arises and is present in (and also *as*) wholeness, letting it touch you as deeply as possible.

And make sure not to let your sense of wholeness separate you from your separateness!

When you are truly embodying your innate wholeness, your individuality will become more vividly alive. Great artists find an intimacy with Being,

without having to turn away from the particular, so that their creativity celebrates both the universal and the particular, with idiosyncratic flair.

A perspective rooted in authentic wholeness does not negate “lesser” perspectives, but holds them close, giving them a voice that could not otherwise be accessed.

Rest in wholeness, do what you do with conscious care, and you will find yourself spontaneously engaged in a kind of everyday creativity. There’s no reason why washing the dishes can’t be a creative endeavor.

Instead of trying to produce art, *live* art, breathe it, rise and fall in it. Instead of trying to be an artist, be art, letting yourself be the beauty that you intuit in even the most mundane things and events.

Resting in wholeness, fully engage with whatever arises, and you’ll find that creativity isn’t something that you do, but something that you *are*. Express this with fitting focus and esthetically attuned care, and art will emerge, happily frameless while you fill it out. This asks for a kind of non-naïve innocence, a second innocence, a freedom from the “me” of being a so-called artist, a solid somebody who is creating the art. (In reality, *we* don’t do the art, but without us it can’t be done.)

Only in consciously being whole can we truly appreciate and make wise use of our separateness, so long as we don’t let our embrace of our intrinsic unity of Being separate us from our differences!

Resting in wholeness, full-bloodedly reengage with the world, so that your wholeness is not an escape from your separateness, but rather a way of illuminating, honoring, and fittingly expressing it through whatever form it takes. Doing so is an art, an art that truly serves one and all.

# Man Unbound

**A GROUP FOR MEN IN LONDON**

**OCTOBER 11th-12th, 2008**

**Man Unbound** is about doing what's necessary to reclaim our balls without armoring or numbing ourselves, becoming warriors who, finding a source of strength in their vulnerability, can take needed stands with both heart and full-blooded power.

To enter our true manhood, we need to stop turning away from the wounded boy in us, both protecting him and giving him what he needs to heal. We also need to become more emotionally literate, not turning our anger into aggression, nor our shame into guilt, nor our hurt into an excuse to shut down or get heady.

As we assume our real power, we must at the same time step more fully into our heart; otherwise, we won't be capable of real intimacy. No more hiding out in cognitive strongholds, no more avoidance of our raw strength, no more bypassing of our wounds, no more avoidance of our depths.

**Tuition:** CAD \$595 (or approx. £300). Accommodation and meals are not included. **There are 3 spaces left.**

**LOCATION:** Open Centre, 188 Old Street, London.

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# *Woman Unbound*

**A WEEKEND GROUP FOR WOMEN**

**OCTOBER 25th-26th in WHITE ROCK, BC**

**An increase in power does *not* have to mean a decrease in femininity.**

Being fully alive — passionately and deeply embodied — is every woman's birthright. Such aliveness requires embodying real power, so that what needs to be done and said gets done with maximum effectiveness.

But many women, however loving they may be, don't have full access to their true power and voice, and as a result have not sufficiently represented themselves, attracting situations and relationships that have only reinforced their inability to truly speak up and stand up for themselves.

**This group is about taking back the power that originally was given away in order to survive difficult conditions, and taking it back not just mentally, but also physically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually.**

**Doing so involves expressing, fully expressing, what's been held back because of fear, insecurity, and social pressures. Sometimes this is gentle and flowing, and other times it is necessarily fierce — whatever helps the passion flow.**

Part of what is needed is a reclaiming of anger (plus a clear differentiation between anger and aggression), so that it becomes a resource, a guardian of boundaries, a potent catalyst for needed change.

This group will involve deep letting go and opening, through a creative mix of psychotherapy, bodywork, sound-healing, group exercises, and spiritual deepening practices. The maximum number of participants will be 12.

**Tuition:** CDN\$595 plus GST. Nonrefundable deposit of \$200 required.

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## **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.

## The Crucible of Awakening

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, 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](mailto:info@robertmasters.com).**

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# ***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 November 1st introductory group). A nonrefundable deposit of CAD\$200 is required. Full tuition is due by October 22, 2008.

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**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.

## The Crucible of Awakening

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 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](mailto:info@robertmasters.com) to arrange payment.

**SCHEDULE:**

Tentative Date: 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.**

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**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 (usually Monday or Tuesday) 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. Please feel free to invite anyone you know who might be interested in my work and/or writing.

**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](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](mailto: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 (or otherwise); feel free to jump in at any point. Don't underestimate the importance and relevance of your voice! There are already 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](mailto: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](http://www.RobertMasters.com) and click on STORE.***

***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.***

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## **2008 Remaining Work Schedule**

October 3-5	Healing & Integration: Brighton, UK
October 7	Evening talk/event in Ireland
October 11-12	Man Unbound: Brighton or London, UK
October 25-26	Woman Unbound: White Rock, BC
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