

CRUCIBLE *of* awakening

welcome

Welcome to the first issue — #00 — of THE CRUCIBLE OF AWAKENING! No matter when you subscribe, you will initially get this issue. The next issue you'll receive will be the current one. And the back issues? They will all be available in the Newsletter Archives.

INTRODUCTION

Each issue will begin with one or two warm-up practices, on-the-spot, user-friendly things you can do in a matter of seconds.

A more challenging practice — which I call full-blooded practice — will follow (beginning with newsletter #01)

Next will come short pieces on **Body, Mind, Emotion, and Spirituality**, each offering you plenty to chew on — mini-meals these are, releasing their juices as you bite into them.

A section called **What's Cooking** will follow — the topic will be open every issue. This issue looks at the difference between pain and suffering.

Next comes **Movies Worth Hanging Out With** (beginning with newsletter #01).

And, almost last, **Questions** — I'll answer one question each newsletter (beginning with newsletter #01). Feel free to send me any question!

And last, **News** — workshops, new books, and so on.

Poetry will appear throughout, keeping my prose on its toes.

May THE CRUCIBLE OF AWAKENING be exactly that for you!

So here we go..

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Red Light Rejuvenation

Every time you arrive at a red light, interrupt — or derail — your train of thought and bring all of your attention to your belly, letting it soften, then soften some more. Soften the right side, the left side, the top and bottom, and the back of your abdomen. Notice how this makes more room for your breathing. The very intention to soften will have an immediate impact — try it! Even at this very moment...

BODY, MIND, EMOTION & SPIRITUALITY

Body

What we essentially are makes its appearance not *in* a body, but *as* a body. This does not necessarily mean that we literally *are* our body, but that our body expresses rather than contains us.

We need to shift from having a body to *being* a body, and from being a body to *Being*.

The body asks only to be loved, lived, and illuminated. The body is not some separate mass, but is continuous — and not just elementally — with all that is. The body is but precipitated Being, Light incarnate. It is not just matter. (And for that matter, matter is not just matter!)

It is crucial that we not only love what outlives this body, but this body also, for it too is a weaving of the Real, a unique flowering whose rise and beauty and singularity ache to be known before its demise.

Our body is not in the way.

Mind

What is the mind when it is without contents? Does the absence of thoughts mean the absence of mind? We can observe thoughts and the process of thinking, but can we observe the mind when it is without content, and if so, what then do we observe? How does such a mind differ from pure space?

If you are thinking about these questions, how do your thoughts about them differ from the thoughts that are being examined?

To wake up from the mind is to be free of self-deception. That such awakening is far from common is a sobering reminder that we are more entrenched in and identified with our mind — and not just our thinking mind! — than we think. When the mind is temporarily emptied of thoughts, we might mistakenly assume that we are free, forgetting that the usual us is just a thought away.

Food for thought.

Emotion

ANGER is not necessarily the same as *aggression*. Aggression involves some form of attack, whereas anger may or may not. Aggression is devoid of compassion and vulnerability, but anger, however fiery its delivery might be (or might have to be), *can* be part of an act of caring and vulnerability.

Aggression is not so much an outcome of anger, as an *avoidance* of it and its frequently interpersonal nature and underlying feelings of hurt and vulnerability. Viewing anger as aggression gives us an excuse to classify it is

a “lower” or “primitive” emotion. Something far from spiritual!

Nevertheless, anger is far from “primitive,” though what we *do* with it may be far from civilized. Rejected anger very easily mutates into aggression, whether active or passive, other-directed or inner-directed. Anger assigned to do injury, however subtly, is not really anger, but *hostility*. Anger that masks its own woundedness and vulnerability is not really anger, but hard-heartedness or hatred in the making.

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the one moment that is all moments

The one moment
That is all moments
Remains unsliceable by time
Except in the theatre of mind
Freedom just deepens the Mystery
No matter what the history

The one sound
That is all sounds
Remains lovers with Silence
Except in the theatre of mind
Freedom just deepens the Mystery
No matter what the history

The one love
That is all loves
Leaves no one behind
Except in the theatre of mind
Freedom just deepens the Mystery
No matter what the history

The one desire
That is all desires
Hotwires us to the Divine
Except in the theatre of mind
Freedom just deepens the Mystery
No matter what the history

The one moment
That is all moments
Holds all and keeps none
Only broken waves
Know the ocean
Everything is dying to live
Everything is dying to be free
Freedom leaves nothing but the Mystery
Nothing, nothing but the Mystery

a deeper solitude

I'm learning to wear my solitude	I bob between buoys	A sudden love for all
It's not a bad fit	Out on postcard seas	Turns me to sea
A bit tight around the chest	Balancing atop the waves	Then to shore
But I like its touch	Watching the shore	A deeper solitude this is
The more I hold it	All the bathers flowing to and fro	Connecting all the dots
The more it holds me	Colors spilling and shaping	

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The fiery intensity at the heart of anger asks not for smothering, spiritual rehabilitation, nor indulgence, but rather for a mindful embrace that does not necessarily require any dilution of passion, any lowering of the flames, nor any muting of the essential voice in the flames.

Spirituality

When your honeymoon with spirituality ends — and it will end, marked by the arrival of STDs (spiritually-transmitted disappointments) — and when your affair with being spiritually correct and spiritually in-style runs dry, you may say so long to spirituality, but it is a premature goodbye.

Disillusionment with spirituality is inevitable and necessary, so that spirituality might be thoroughly deglamorized. When that disillusionment has had its say — cynicism's couch now being no more than a pain in the ass — and when your fear of reentering the spiritual no longer frightens or disturbs you, your spiritual life really begins.

Most of the books will be gone; the ones that remain will feel like old friends you don't tire of revisiting, even if only for a page or two every couple of months. Most of the practices will also be gone; the ones that remain will feel as natural to slip into as your favorite jeans or T-shirt, at ease with both being worn and being worn out.

Then, instead of being at war with our weaknesses, we bring them into our heart. Instead of trying to eliminate what we don't like about ourselves, we develop a better relationship to it. Intimacy becomes more our path than transcendence.

And so emerging from our own ashes becomes no big deal, but just the way things are. We get up, brush ourselves off, and bite into what is next, bibless and happily anonymous, even if we are famous. Here the ten thousand sorrows and the ten thousand joys intermingle in unparalleled song, we their infinite notes, and we also the music that goes on, in the one moment that is all moments.

Suffering versus Pain

If you want to end your suffering, enter your pain

Though pain and suffering are often thought of as being much the same, they differ greatly from each other.

Pain is fundamentally just unpleasant sensation. Suffering, on the other hand, is something we are *doing* with our pain. Pain comes, often inescapably so, with life. It often also is, especially in its awakening or alerting capacity, necessary. Suffering, however, is far less necessary than we might think and is, in fact, a *choice*.

When we cannot sufficiently distract or distance ourselves from our pain, we generally turn it into suffering. How? By overdramatizing our pain. We make an unpleasantly gripping story out of it, a tale in which our hurt “I” all but automatically assumes the throne of self. I hurt, therefore I am — this is suffering’s core credo.

In so doing, we are simply *identifying* with our pain, overpersonalizing it.

Where pain is consciously felt hurt, suffering is the manipulation of that hurt into drama, a drama in which we’re likely so busy acting out — and being literally *occupied* by — our hurt role that we’ve little or no motivation to stand apart from it.

In the myopic theatrics of suffering, pain itself mostly just stagnates, like an unwanted exhibit in an art gallery. It is not really seen, not really touched. We may feel close to our pain when we are busy suffering, but it is not the kind of closeness that heals. It is, in fact, an unwelcome proximity, through which we generally just reinforce our suffering, if only because of our sheer desperation to be elsewhere.

The degree to which we turn our pain into suffering is the degree to which we obstruct our own healing.

When we’re busy suffering, we are all but bereft of healthy detachment. We’re then removed from the naked reality of our pain — our attention being more on our storyline than on the nonconceptual rawness of our pain — but not removed in a way that permits us to focus more clearly on what is actually going on.

As such, suffering is unhealthy separation from our pain. Suffering is pain that’s gone to mind, pain that’s doing time in mental cells, mental hells.

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The good news: The more intimate we are with our pain, the less we suffer.

To work effectively with our suffering, we need both to stand apart from its script and to cease distancing ourselves from our pain. Suffering may seem to keep us near to our pain, but it actually keeps us from getting as close to our pain as we need to, if we are live a more liberated life.

Suffering houses pain, but keeps it in the dark.

When we turn on the lights, the dramatics of suffering become transparent. Then the uncensored reality of our pain gets our full attention, particularly at the level where it is but unpleasant sensation. Then we can enter our pain with care, clarity, and precision, getting to know it from the *inside* — its fluxing weave and interplay of shape, color, texture, intensity, pressure, location, layering, and so on.

Often when we say we're in pain, we're not really *in* our pain, but rather are only closer to it than we'd like. But in fact, we're still *outside* it.

It is in the conscious and compassionate entry *into* our pain that we begin to find some real freedom from our pain. The hurt may remain, but our relationship to that hurt will have changed to the point where it's no longer such a problem to us, and in fact may even become a doorway into What-Really-Matters.

The healing of pain is found *in* pain itself.

As we become more *intimate* with our pain, we find that we are less troubled by it. Suffering is, among other things, a refusal to develop any intimacy with our pain. In fact, suffering only jails our pain.

But the cage door is open, already open, as we'll see if we just turn around, away from the screens upon which our suffering projects its stories. Then we begin to awaken, to exit our entrapping dreams. Awareness upstages suffering, dissolving its grip on us, taking us to the heart, the core, the epicenter, of our pain.

And there, in that place of hurt, we meet not more hurt, but more us. More healing, more peace, more sacred welcome, through which we become more capable of opening until we are openness itself.

NEWS

Writing

My book *Divine Dynamite* is for sale in bookstores and at www.amazon.com. It's been getting an excellent response! I expect to have 3 more books out before Christmas; excerpts from them will appear in upcoming newsletters.

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RadicalOpening®

I will be doing Radical Opening groups in Edmonton (May 21-22), Calgary (July 9-10), and Vancouver (July 23-24).

Radical Opening groups are small and intimate, being limited to **12 participants only**, so that there is enough time for everyone to receive in-depth attention. The groups involve therapy (in their focus on personal history), and they also involve much more than therapy, given their integral nature. Deep catharsis, psychodrama, and spiritual breakthroughs flow in and out of each other during the groups, in spontaneously apt ways. All emotions are welcome.

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

atmosphere is one of deep trust; each group is a safe place to let go of being safe. **Radical Opening** groupwork provides a crucible not only for personal healing, but also for awakening from all of our entrapping dreams.

Participants will learn to become more **intimate** with all that they are — dark and light, high and low, shallow and deep, neurotic and transcendent, dying and undying.

The structuring of the groups is not preset, but instead arises in accordance with group and individual needs. Each participant has an opportunity to work, in relevant detail and in sufficient depth, with his or her particular issues, and not necessarily just once in the group.

For more information, visit **www.RobertMasters.com** and click on **Groupwork**.

“The Radical Opening workshop was truly a radical opening for me. Robert’s unerring ability to tap into exactly where each person had a block was a very powerful experience. Not one of us was left to wither and hide behind our non-serving veils of life-choking beliefs. To the degree that each person was willing to open up, Robert assisted us with integrity, compassion, wisdom, wit, humor and sensitivity, challenging us to go further and deeper when it was clear that we were hovering at the edge of a big release.”

— Wendy Terriff

The next issue will be sent out in early May. I hope you enjoyed this one. If you have any questions that you would like me to address in upcoming issues, please let me know.

Blessings,

Robert

