

THE CRUCIBLE OF AWAKENING

Issue 52 August 2009

*If you are looking for genuine transformation, you need
look no further than your fear.*

*In it there exists not only an abundance of trapped
energy, but also the very testing and challenge which we
need in order to live a deeper, more authentic life.*

In entering our fear, we end our fear of it...

EXCITEMENT IN DRAG: AN INSIDE LOOK AT FEAR

As simplistic as it may sound, fear often is just excitement in endarkened drag. If we are excited and then we contract, fear arises; if we are fearful and then expand, excitement arises. Same energy, different context.

This is not all that difficult to recognize when we consider our fear in its physical/physiological dimensions, but not so easy to recognize when we consider our fear in its mental dimensions (chronic doubt, for example).

One form that excitement can take (for better or for worse) is anger. Not surprisingly, fear and anger are biochemically all but identical. Same adrenaline, different directionality — fear retreats, anger moves forward. Same adrenaline, different intentionality — fear avoids, anger engages.

The Crucible of Awakening

Fear disempowers, whereas anger empowers, so long as it is not allowed to mutate into aggression. When the fearful get truly angry, they are not afraid any more, but just angry. Not that getting angry is the solution for fearfulness — but the arising of anger can really empower us, in contrast to the arising of fear.

Fear comes in many forms — worry, anxiety, panic, paranoia, angst, terror, dread, doubt — but fundamentally is just apprehensive self-constriction, a contractile aversion that takes shape as a mildly to deeply unpleasant gripping feeling that announces, compellingly and viscerally: *I am not safe; or I am threatened; or I am in danger.*

This message — scrawled in our own blood — may often be impervious to cognitive intervention. Consider the following example: If we suffered a particularly difficult birth, with our vital signs having accelerated for a significant amount of time into zones of extreme danger — so that our biological survival was clearly at stake — we obviously didn't mentally reflect on our situation (our brain not being developmentally capable of doing so), but rather automatically reacted by “doing” whatever most quickly and effectively reduced the danger, like going neurologically limp or “depressing” our vital signs.

Later in life, when in the presence of danger (real or imagined), we may then not only get afraid, but may also revert, beyond any mental counter-effort, to what originally had “worked” to save our life — withdrawing, shutting down, turning off, getting depressed, whatever does the job. Many relationships are ruined or kept in the shallows by such reversion (which is not always a result of birth trauma!) — the “depressing” of our vital signs both “saves” and debilitates us, making us all but incapable of sustained intimacy.

However it manifests, fear very easily undercuts our rationality. Fear that's allowed to infiltrate our mind doesn't waste any time generating thoughts that support and amplify it.

Animals get afraid — demonstrating the physiology and characteristic behaviors of fear — when actual danger is present and registers; the electrifying biochemistry of fear immediately enables them to flee or, less commonly, to freeze.

Humans, however, are usually far less practically inclined, at least after infancy, getting afraid not only in the present, but also projecting fearfulness into the past (as in guilt, which is shame injected with enough fear to keep us small) and the future (as in worry or anxiety), generally keeping ourselves not only chronically afraid, but also overcommitted or enslaved to whatever most successfully keeps us sufficiently distanced from our fear.

Fear can be adaptive or maladaptive. The rush of fear we feel when we are getting too close to a precipice is useful, immediately alerting and readying us for needed action (like stepping back). Worry, on the other hand, is far from useful — when we permit it to gnaw at us, and to enlist our cognition in its service, we're only keeping ourselves off track, bound up in a too narrowly framed view. Worry — which is socially acceptable anxiety — keeps us spinning in a cranial cramp, until we leave for more life-giving territory (perhaps after having “worried our head off”).

To journey into, unguardedly feel, and directly relate to our fear (instead of from it) requires that our usual distancing strategies, cognitive and otherwise, be exposed and disarmed — assuming, of course, that it is timely to do so. Our fear can then be touched and known from the inside, and eventually divested of its power to shrink, misguide, or intimidate us.

Our smaller fears, unpleasant as they might be, are not usually very difficult to temporarily escape or sedate — we know what we are afraid of; we are perhaps even oddly comforted by its uncomfortable or edgy familiarity; and we know when to throw it a piece of meat and when not to. We know it well enough to know how to take the edge off it, through positive thinking, sex, food, drugs, intense exercise, electronic fixes, and other such distracting preoccupations — such strategies give us some sense of control, regardless of what they cost us.

That is, when our fear has a concrete, everyday object upon which to focus or fixate, we are on miserable yet dependably familiar ground, seemingly far from the quicksands of our deeper fears. Thus do we tend to prefer the burdened beasts of depression to the monsters of the deep.

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And so thus do we tend to cling, however indirectly, to our everyday fearfulness, focusing on its mental content much more than the raw feeling itself. We then leave the nature of fear out of our inquiry, settling instead for explanations for why we are afraid. It's easy to use our reasoning powers to distance ourselves from our fearfulness, yet even from the loftiest and most seemingly safe neocortical towers we are not entirely out of the reach of our core fears.

Until we move toward our fear, we will be bound by it.

The key to working effectively with fear is to get *inside* it.

This means, among other things, that we need to have a clear knowledge of all the ways in which we have learned to get away from fear, so that when one of them shows up, we're capable of looking *at* it — rather than through its eyes — and, to whatever degree, saying no thanks. Getting inside fear means getting past its periphery, past its defining thoughts, past its propagandizing sentinels. Entering the dragon's cave.

Once we're within fear, under its skin, with our attention scanning our surroundings like a miner's headlamp, we can begin acquainting ourselves with its features, particularly those sensations and beliefs that together make it into a something we label "fear." The closer we get to it, the better we can see it. However, we need to learn not to get close too quickly, not to move so fast that we can't keep digesting and integrating what we're experiencing.

When we remain outside our fear, we remain trapped in it.

When we, however, consciously get inside our fear, it's as if it turns inside out. Getting inside our fear with wakeful attention and compassion actually expands our fear beyond itself. Once the contractedness at the center of fear ceases to be fueled, fear unravels and dissipates, terminating its occupancy of us.

In entering our fear, we end our fear of it.

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

A blue blaze of forget-me-nots
Haloes my scars and rings the zenbell
Dissolving amnesia's infectious anesthesia
Ancient seas seizing my sails
Waves aglitter with shattered dawn
My craft afire but far from gone
Riding through heaven and hell
Joining what's above with what's below
Without homogenizing the show

When the boat went under
Did you sink? Did you drown?
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 blue 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

BREAKTHROUGH

SEPTEMBER 12th-13th in WHITE ROCK, BC

A weekend of deep healing and awakening.

Cutting-edge psychotherapy, bodywork, and spiritual deepening all brought together to generate exceptionally effective work.

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. 10 to 6 both days.

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

PRIVATE INTENSIVES FOR INDIVIDUALS & COUPLES

Highly focused, very efficient, exceptionally deep transformative work with both Robert and Diane present, utilizing a fitting blend of cutting-edge psychotherapy, bodywork, energetic attunement, and spiritual deepening practices.

Instead of going to a therapist for 20+ sessions, consider seeing us for a far shorter and very likely far more effective time.

We've found that three to six hours is plenty for almost everyone. In the first hour what needs to be worked on is clearly identified and worked with in considerable depth. The succeeding hours (usually spread over several days) continue with this, allowing for proper digestion and integration. US\$550 for 3 hours. US\$200 for one-hour appointments.

Contact Diane at dianebardwell@gmail.com if you are interested.

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.

2010 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, energetics, 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.

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.

The Crucible of Awakening

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 and Diane).

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: US\$7000. Nonrefundable deposit of \$1000 required. Lodging and meals will be extra. Contact info@robertmasters.com to arrange payment.

SCHEDULE:

March 4-7, May 6-9, July 8-11, September 9-12, November 11-14

FOLLOW ROBERT ON TWITTER

“Intimacy transcends transcendence.”

This was my first post on Twitter; the second one was much less arcane! As of August 1st, I'll be posting daily thoughts, reflections, updates, and events on Twitter. If you already know what Twitter is, you can follow me at [@RobertMasters](https://twitter.com/RobertMasters).

For those of you who don't know about Twitter, it is a micro-blogging program that you can access through your computer (or other mobile device) on the Internet. Each Twitter post, or message, is no more than 140 characters long. If you are interested in finding out more about it, you can visit **<http://www.twitter.com>** and, if you wish, sign up for free.

If you want to see what I have been posting, you can visit my Twitter homepage: **<http://twitter.com/RobertMasters>**.

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.

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.

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

August 20-23 2009/2010 Practicum: Ashland

September 12-13 Breakthrough: White Rock, BC

October 8-11 2009/2010 Practicum: Ashland

December 3-6 2009/2010 Practicum: Ashland

2010 Work Schedule

January TBA 5-Day Couples Intensive: Maui