

# THE CRUCIBLE OF AWAKENING

Issue 58 February 2010

## FULL-BLOODED AWAKENING AND EMBODIMENT: A REVIEW OF AVATAR

When you are asleep at night and dreaming that you are doing something somewhere somewhen, where exactly are you? Are you the body/person in the dream or the body/person asleep on the bed, and if you are identified with neither—for you in fact are capable of holding both as objects of your attention—then just who or *what* are you? Do these bodies you “see” contain you, or do you contain them? Perhaps both are not literal containers for “you” but rather are expressions, different expressions, of the essential you, means through which you can relate *to* your current environment, however unusual or alien that might be...

The body through which we make an appearance in our dreams allows us to navigate and interact with our 3-D dreamscape—and however bizarre the scenery and context may be, we generally adapt to it fairly quickly, much like Jake, the protagonist in *Avatar*, does when he finds himself embodied as a native of an alien world called Pandora.

Whether our dreams frighten or elate or trap or wing us, we generally take them at face value, rarely asking ourselves at the time if we are indeed dreaming. But sometimes we do realize that we are dreaming while we are dreaming—and Jake finds himself in a situation akin to this, knowing that he is “really” back in human form in a sleep-like state

in a high-tech pod, even as he immerses himself in the world of the Na'vi, the indigenous people of Pandora. He is fascinated, blown away by the beauty, but not fully — he initially keeps his depths removed from the hypervivid wonder so greenly and vibrantly alive all around him, sticking to his role as a good soldier who doesn't question what he is being told to do, especially given what he has been promised by his commanding officer, Colonel Quaritch.

And we, with our 3-D glasses firmly on, enter the Na'vi world with Jake, resonating with his awkwardness and surprise and wonder, perhaps still somewhat conscious of where we're sitting, popcorn noises all around, absorbed but not fully absorbed, just like Jake. But it doesn't take long to really get into the film, unless perhaps we are a movie critic on the outlook for simplistically presented conflicts between greedy capitalists and noble savages. Like a city dweller who's been on a lushly treed hiking trail long enough to stop thinking about his or her city concerns, we soon stop looking at the Na'vi world as nothing more than sensual digital magic, just as Jake stops looking at it as nothing more than a place to exploit for a "higher" purpose. Before long, Na'vi reality becomes more real to him than his "normal" state — just as our dreams sometimes seem more real (at times much more real) to us than our so-called waking state, sometimes so much so that we feel a kind of fleeting grief upon reentering our usual state, as if we've lost something extremely precious and important — and intrinsic — to us.

As the film progresses, we feel increasingly at home in the Na'vi world, because what it so viscerally represents — our primal, radically connected nature in the fully-embodied raw — is starting to really resonate with us, unless we're locked away upstairs in our cranial headquarters, uneasy with such a blatantly unapologetic presentation of the noble savage motif. Jake now has the legs to stand a truer ground, and we feel something similar stirring in us, however slightly, grounding us to much more than our seat in the theater.

*Avatar* moves and shakes many people quite deeply, not just because of the incredible special effects, but also because they have been reminded

with considerable impact not only of their own primal nature-attuned core, but also of their estrangement or disconnection from it. So there's a simultaneous sense, however subterranean, of deep opening and deep loss, a more-than-intellectual recognition of having lost touch with something truly essential to us.

In this sense, *Avatar* serves as an awakening force, a jolt to our core, inviting us to awaken from the entrapping dreams we habitually animate. Earth *is* Pandora, getting ever closer to being one massive clearcut, and we know it, regardless of our distractions. The popcorn falls from our hands, waves of green energy branch through our torso, tears come, and something very deep in us starts to open, to unfurl, to reach through us with unmistakable urgency, calling us to a deeper life...

Some may view *Avatar* as a romanticizing or naive endorsing of a more primitive, “noble savage” state, a seductively regressive call to a prerational, naturoholic condition oozing oneness and a touchy-feely connection with all living things. And it's not all that hard to view *Avatar* as doing this, once we push aside the psychedelic visuals and armchair wonder — but if we choose not to be so literal and shed our disembodied rationality, we might sense a deeper layer to *Avatar*, beyond all the prerational exhorting that we had determined was there and critically zeroed in on.

And that layer, that marvelously fecund and expansive depth, is not prerational, but arguably *transrational* (both transcending and including rationality), especially as Jake plunges and plugs into it. We the viewers —and psychoemotional participants, too! — don't have to abandon our rationality as we root ourselves in our own Na'vi way of being (we can simultaneously reason and feel and intuit), though there is of course the danger of doing so, as exemplified by those contemporary spiritual aspirants enmeshed in magical thinking.

Going back to our roots doesn't have to be mere regression or an anti-intellectual trek, but it really does ask for a depth of embodiment that is not all that familiar to many of us. It is not a retreat, but a kind of

descent, a dropping-down or grounding that awakens and uplifts us (“Down” is not “up” having a bad day; “down” is where seeds grow and roots fly free). As a Na’vi, Jake gets more and more embodied, but not denser or thicker or cut off from subtlety and spirituality; his is far from a body-negating path! The more rooted he becomes, the more he can soar, really soar; he has developed the necessary ground from which authentic flight, responsible and lucid flight, can take place. There is great risk in this, but even greater risk in staying put. The Na’vi are so embodied that they feel the body/presence of Nature in a very palpable way; they literally plug themselves into the forest and its inhabitants. And as we witness this, we feel both our longing to be thus plugged-in and our disconnection from so doing in our lives. It is to *Avatar*’s credit that it has been able to put so many viewers in touch with that longing, if only for a few minutes.

Jake’s greatest flight is initially a descent, as he freefalls — and he has to thus fall — onto the back of Pandora’s mightiest, most feared flying creature, an enormous scarlet bird-dragon. Is this just another version of the white man being the hero, the savior, the man, for a tribe of in-trouble indigenous people? Or is it a heroic leap born of extreme necessity, a leap through which Jake leaves his usual self, both human and Na’vi, behind? Some might see a stereotype here, but I saw wild archetype, feeling it right to my marrow, like I was not just taking the leap, but was inside the leap, completely aligned with it. No thinking, just pure action, guts and heart and vision operating as one. Quintessential warriorhood, as practical as it is sacred. It wasn’t so much that I identified with Jake, but that I felt what he had become as a living force within myself, right down to my toes.

And to manifest this fully, to truly live such an ancient but everfresh passion (call it a full-blooded leap into life-enhancing connection/action), its opposite must be faced, deeply encountered. This is most strongly dramatized as the conflict, armed and otherwise, between Jake and Colonel Quaritch, who by the almost-end of the film is but the operator of an enormous humanoid killing machine, a monstrous metallic G. I. Joe figure amped up with enough steroidal intensity and

weaponry and square-shouldered violence to make a bloody mess of any opposition. Not something at which to wave flowers or spiritual platitudes! There's nothing subtle here — just brute force and an environmental insensitivity that is as insane as it is driven. The final battle is an ancient one, played out over and over again in myths and comic books and our own ecological illiteracy, but this does mean that it is stale or banal — because this very battle, however mildly armed, is going on in just about all of us, and not just now and then.

Many of us think we have to pick one or the other, especially when we live in cultures that are big on either/or considerations. But how about being rational, even transrational, and deeply emotional and full-bloodedly alive at the same time? How about being at home both in primeval forest and executive office? How about cultivating a second innocence, an awakened innocence, rather than regressing to a naive innocence or hiding out in cynicism and irony? Many of us have lost touch with our Na'vi territories, and are just not finding adequate compensation for this loss in our gains, in even the finest things that contemporary culture can offer, trapped in our very “freedoms.”

The “noble savage” of Pandora is a strawman for those who, knowing that many indigenous, nature-attuned cultures were appallingly barbaric, see *Avatar* as just one more film that overlooks or marginalizes the darker side of such cultures. But *Avatar* is not about showing the full spectrum of Na'vi behavior; there simply isn't time, and more to the point, there is no real point in doing so — what needs to be shown, and shown with enough depth and intensity to really sink in, is the relationship the Na'vi have with their environment. We need not to be told this — though we are to some degree — but to see and feel it as much as possible. There's no point leaving the theater with just the *idea* of interconnectedness, for other ideas will soon crowd it out. No, better to leave the theater actually feeling the reality of such interconnectedness, and not in a sappy or sentimental way. No need to romanticize it; just breathe it in and out, letting it branch and stream through your body for a bit, being aware that you are walking while you are walking, feeling each step..

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And what about the seemingly one-dimensional portrayal of the Terran capitalists and their military allies? Yes, of course they could have been given a more multidimensional presentation, but do we really need to be assured that the filmmakers get that the “bad guys” have more to them than their greed and violence and ecological stupidity? However they are presented, what they portray exists, and exists with enough abundance and force and sociopathic infusions to be a major player in the accelerating desecration of our world. In *Avatar* we are seeing the encounter (however heavy-handed) of two opposing archetypal forces; the film focuses mainly on what stands out most about each force. Early on the capitalist/militaristic/psychoemotionally illiterate force is pretty much fully formed and clear about its mission, but the nature-immersed/interconnected force is barely formed, being mostly embryonic, hardly having the legs to survive. As the film progresses, however, the latter force matures, flowers, becomes capable of taking the kind of stand needed to meet its opposition.

Sometimes in a dream in which there is extreme difficulty, as when we are being pursued by something monstrous, we simply have to turn around, and face it, even if it means our death. It is a stand that serves us well, even if we die — and usually in dreams when we (as a kind of “avatar” of our usual waking-state self) face what has been pursuing us, we do not die, but start living more deeply, more often than not absorbing the energies of our adversary, until we realize right to our core that we and this other being are one and the same. *Avatar* only skims the surface of this, but it does nonetheless show transformation occurring, as the ground underfoot becomes holy ground. There is deep communion with Nature, and there also is communion, at least to some degree, with subtle forces and even with consciousness itself. (I’d love to see an *Avatar*-like film that explores the far reaches of who and what we truly are in as visceral a way as possible.)

*Avatar* is, among other things, a fledgling awakening call on a massive scale; the destructive forces that it so compellingly displays are at this very moment literally eating away at our world, and at the same time eating away at many of us from the inside, asking not for some Disneyesque

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fantasy of Bambi with a submachine gun taking down all of the villains, but for an open-eyed empoweredness that arises from within each of us, a power overflowing with fierce compassion, a power which can effectively counter the psychoecological insanity and numbness that pervades our planet. *Avatar* is a movie and it is also more than a movie; treat it as both.

Look for me  
    where storms blow open the gates  
Look for me  
    where broken boats cross the straits  
Look for me  
    where the sea shines with shattered sky  
Look for me  
    where you can no longer lie  
Look, look for me  
    where joy and pain disappear into sun and rain

Look for me  
    where broken hearts take wing  
Look for me  
    where hidden longings must sing  
Look for me  
    where your body bends with grief  
Look for me  
    where you feel the birth of each new leaf  
Look, look for me  
    where joy and pain disappear into sun and rain

Look for me  
    where the first of us searched the sky  
Look for me  
    where the last of us is saying goodbye  
Look for me  
    where you're broken enough to be whole  
Look for me  
    where love's the ground and not the goal

## The Crucible of Awakening

Look, look for me  
where joy and pain disappear into sun and rain

Look for me  
where darkness sheds its shadow

Look for me  
where buried dreams still glow

Look for me  
where you forget and you fall

Look for me  
where silence says it all

Look, look for me  
where joy and pain disappear into sun and rain

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

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**SPIRITUAL BYPASSING:  
WHEN SPIRITUALITY DISCONNECTS US  
FROM WHAT REALLY MATTERS**

This, my next (and soon-to-be-edited) book, will be published by North Atlantic Books this Summer. Here is one of its endorsements:

**“This is a wonderfully significant and important book, and is highly recommended. Its contents are truly mandatory for this day and age.” — Ken Wilber, author of *The Integral Vision***

Chapter One follows.

**Dissociation in Holy Drag:  
An Inside Look  
at Spiritual Bypassing**

Spiritual bypassing — which was first coined as a term by psychologist John Welwood in 1984 — means the use of spiritual practices and beliefs to avoid dealing with our painful feelings, unresolved wounds, and developmental needs. It is much more common than we might think, and in fact is so pervasive as to go largely unnoticed, except in its more obvious extremes .

Part of the reason for this is that we, both personally and collectively, tend not to have very much tolerance for facing, entering, and working our way *through* our pain, strongly preferring our pain-numbing “solutions,” regardless of how much suffering such “remedies” may catalyze — and this preference has so deeply and so thoroughly infiltrated our culture that it has become all but normalized. So spiritual bypassing fits almost

seamlessly into our cultural turning away from the painful, as a kind of “higher” analgesic with seemingly minimal side-effects.

The side-effects, however, are far from minimal! Take, for example, the practice of *blind compassion*, a very common byproduct — and major reinforcer of — spiritual bypassing. When we are possessed by such “compassion,” we are exaggerately tolerant, undiscerningly inclusive, weakly boundaried, and confrontation-phobic, unable to firmly state and stand behind a real no — being stuck in unrelenting niceness — cutting those doing harm (including to us) far too much slack, absolving them of responsibility and making excuses for them based on their *potential*. When we are caught up in blind compassion, we lose touch with our integrity, power, clarity, and real caring — being truly compassionate only in name — again and again talking ourselves out of taking any sort of forceful or assertive action, even when violation is clearly happening. As far as side-effects go, blind compassion shares equal billing with the sloppy judgment that goes hand-in-hand with alcoholism.

Other side-effects of spiritual bypassing include emotional numbing and dissociation, a flight from and devaluing of the personal (see Chapter Thirteen), disembodied/disconnected living (see Chapter Sixteen), anger-phobia (see Chapter Eleven), premature forgiveness, nondual headgames (see Chapters Seventeen and Twenty One), weak or overly porous boundaries (see Chapter Twelve), stunted growth, lopsided development (with cognitive intelligence usually far ahead of emotional and moral intelligence), a surfeit of magical thinking (see Chapter Seven), a debilitating negativity about our negativity (see Chapter Two), and delusions of having arrived at a higher level of being.

The explosion of interest in spirituality, especially Eastern spirituality, since the mid-1960s has been accompanied by a corresponding interest and immersion in spiritual bypassing — which has, however, not very often been named, let alone viewed, as such. It has been easier and much more glamorous to refer to spiritual bypassing as — and *confuse* it with — transcendence and the possessing of a religion-transcending,

spiritually advanced or nondual perspective, buttressed by catchy one-size-fits-all statements like “don’t take it personally” or “whatever bothers you about another is really only about you” or “it’s all just an illusion.” Such is some of the more glaringly plastic terrain of fastfood spirituality, with its drive-through buckets of reheated secondhand wisdom, available for consumption and parroting by just about anyone (this being akin to Ronald Reagan’s claim to be an environmentalist).

But, thank God, the honeymoon with spirituality is starting to wane. Enough bubbles have been burst; enough spiritual teachers, Eastern and Western, have been caught with pants or halo down; enough cults have come and gone; enough denial of the need for psychosocial growth has happened; enough fascination with spiritual baubles, credentials, energy transmissions, and gurucentrism has occurred. But is this, valuable as it is, enough not just to enter a more authentic spirituality, but also to get *rooted* in it? For this to occur on any significant scale, spiritual bypassing will have to be outgrown, and that is not as easy as it might sound.

True spirituality is not a high, not a rush, not an altered state. It’s been fine to romance it for a while, but our times call for something far more real, far more grounded and responsible, something radically alive and naturally integral, something that shakes us to our very core until we stop treating spiritual deepening as a something to dabble in here and there. Authentic spirituality is not some little flicker or buzz of knowingness, nor a psychedelic blast-through, nor a mellow hanging-out on some exalted plane of consciousness, but a vaster than vast fire of Liberation, an exquisitely fitting crucible and sanctuary, providing both heat and light for what must be done. Divine dynamite. Dying to see, dying to live, dying into a deeper Life, until we are our true size, no longer seducible by any disguise or distraction, no matter how brilliant or ecstatic.

Spiritual bypassers like the light but not the heat.

When we’re caught up in spiritual bypassing, we’d much rather chitchat and theorize about the frontiers of consciousness than actually go

there (unless perhaps we could somehow be transported “there” in spiritual asbestos), sedating the fire rather than breathing it even more alive, making spiritual real estate out of the notion of unconditional love while not permitting love to show up in its more challenging or fiercer dimensions — doing so being for us just too hot, too scary, too out-of-control, bringing things to the surface that have been disowned or suppressed for quite some time.

But if we *really* want the light, we cannot afford to flee the heat. As Victor Frankl said, “What gives light must endure burning.” And being with the fire’s heat doesn’t just mean sitting with the difficult stuff in meditation, but also going into it, trekking to its core, facing and entering and getting *intimate* with whatever is there, however scary or traumatic or sad or raw.

We have had quite an affair with Eastern spiritual pathways, Buddhist and otherwise, and now it is time to go deeper, to not only get more intimate with the essence of these, beyond ritual and belief and dogma, but to also make room for the healthy updating — not just the fitting Westernization but also the *evolution* — of such pathways, so that they both cease encouraging spiritual bypassing (however indirectly), and consciously and actively cease giving it soil to flower. This won’t happen to any significant degree, though, in spiritual paths that do not and will not function integrally — working in-depth with our physical, emotional, psychological, mental, and social dimensions — to generate an ever-deeper sense of wholeness, vitality, and basic sanity.

Any spiritual path that does not deal in real depth with psychological issues, and deal with these in more than just spiritual contexts, is setting itself up for an abundance of spiritual bypassing.

If there is not sufficient encouragement and support from spiritual teachers and teachings for their students to engage in significant depth in psychoemotional work, and if those students who really need such work don’t then do it, they’ll be left trying to work out their psychoemotional

issues, traumatic and otherwise, *only* through the spiritual practices they have been given, as if doing so is somehow superior to — or a “higher” activity than — doing some quality psychotherapy.

And if such students want to work on themselves in ways that do not suit the teacher and teaching, they may be shamed for wanting to do so, as if their inability to effectively deal with their difficulties through the spiritual means they’ve been given simply signals a *failure* on their part. Spiritual bypassing views psychotherapy as an inferior undertaking relative to spiritual practice — not seeing that psychotherapy and spiritual practice *can* complement each other, and that psychotherapy in its more integral, emotionally-focused, body-including forms can be a spiritual practice unto itself.

Spiritual bypassing promotes and is largely occupied by the *idea* of wholeness and the innate unity of Being — “Oneness” being its favorite bumpersticker — but actually generates and reinforces *fragmentation*, by separating out from and rejecting the painful, the distressed, the unhealed, the far-from-flattering aspects of being human. By consistently keeping these in the dark, “down below” (when we’re locked into our *headquarters*, our body and feelings seem to be *below* us), spiritual bypassers aberrate them, and then, briefly turning on the lights, says in so many words: “See? Look at them, look how dirty they are, how uncivilized, how violent, how unclean!”

However, it is the very practice of spiritual bypassing itself that is unclean — and not just unclean, but arguably violent too, regardless of its peaceful demeanor and flagwaving espousal of unconditional love and gentleness, for its very neglect of its underlying pain, anger, and hurt is a kind of violation, akin to that of “otherwise caring” parents who leave their children without sufficient food or clothing or care.

Spiritual bypassing can look good, particularly when it is detachedly positioned above all the fuss and fury, but underneath all the rarefied finery and “higher self” pretensions, it remains not much more than

metaphysical valium with just enough of a cheerily caffeinated buzz to keep up a relatively pleasant or mellow appearance. Whatever its aptitude for small talk, its forte is presenting spiritual clichés as if they are not clichés. An example? Someone is really suffering, and the nearest spiritual bypasser states: “It’s just karma” or “Only love is real” or “It’s all an illusion, including your suffering.” Ouch. So easy to parrot. No compassion, no connection to the other’s pain, no real love. Just some zingy one-liners delivered with little or no feeling, much like a newscaster reporting the shallow and the deeply tragic in the very same, professionally modulated tone of voice. Resolutely *impersonal*.

Spiritual bypassing’s lack of *ground* and in-the-body experience keeps it spacially afloat. In it there is a penchant for premature forgiveness and emotional dissociation, which keeps its advocates busy keeping up appearances. Their anger-phobia (they confuse anger with aggression and ill-will) keeps them disempowered, riddled with boundaries that are an anemic shade of weak. The overdone niceness that characterizes so much of spiritual bypassing strands it from authenticity; and its underlying grief — unspoken, untouched, unacknowledged— keeps it marooned from the very caring that would unwrap and undo it, like a baby being readied for a bath by a loving parent.

In its turning away from pain, spiritual bypassing is a far from caring practice, no matter how much its devotees talk about love and immerse themselves in the latest spiritual manuals. Much of it is just a sugar-coated mix of spiritualized aversion, neglect, and numbness, held together by a net of unquestioned beliefs. Its presence signals deep pain, buried not so far away — which is why part of the appropriate response to spiritual bypassing is compassion, however fierce it might need to be.

Spiritual bypassing is rationalized repression and dissociation in holy drag, no better than any other “solution” to pain.

Those who use narcotics to get away from their pain may appear to be less spiritual or less evolved than those engaging in spiritual bypassing,

but the latter are actually not only in the same boat as the former, but also on the very same deck, no matter how eloquently or convincingly they are conveying their “higher” beliefs. “Higher” and “lower” mean less than little when we’re face to face with the irreducible Mystery of Being; then the “let *me* awaken you” slumming of the “Higher” gone to rescue or convert the “Lower” ceases to be animated. There’s just too much naked reality occurring right on deck, asking for something more real than our ideas about what’s what. All the pain on deck demands it.

Spiritual bypassing means not just the use of spiritual practices and beliefs to avoid dealing with pain and difficult personal issues, but also the bypassing of authentic spirituality. So spiritual bypassing distances us not only from our pain and difficult personal issues, but also from our own spirituality, stranding us in a metaphysical limbo, an airy zone of forced gentleness, niceness, and superficiality. Its disembodied nature keeps it spacially adrift, anchored only by the weight of its self-conferred spiritual credentials.

But let us not be too hard on spiritual bypassing, for every one of us who has entered into the spiritual has engaged in spiritual bypassing, at least to some degree — having for years used other means to make ourselves feel better or more secure, why would we not also approach spirituality, particularly at first, with much the same expectation?

To truly outgrow spiritual bypassing — which in part means releasing spirituality (and *everything* else!) from the obligation to make us feel better or more secure or more whole — we must not only see it for what it is and cease engaging in it, but also view it with genuine compassion, however fiery that might be or might need to be.

The spiritual bypasser in us needs not censure nor shaming, but rather to be consciously and caringly included in our being without, however, being allowed to run the show. Becoming intimate with our own capacity for spiritual bypassing allows us to keep it in healthy perspective.

I have worked with many who described themselves as being on a spiritual path, particularly as “meditators.” Most were, at least initially, preoccupied with being nice, trying to be positive and nonjudgmental, while faulting — or blaming — themselves for the pain they felt from having impaled themselves on various spiritual “shoulds” (such as “I should not show anger” or “I should be more loving” or “I should be more open after all the time I’ve put into my spiritual practice”). Fleeing their darker or “less spiritual” emotions, impulses, and intentions, they had, to varying degrees, trapped themselves within the very practices (and beliefs) that they had hoped might liberate them, or at least make them feel better.

(Even the most exquisitely designed spiritual methodologies can become traps, leading not to freedom, but only to reinforcement, however subtle, of the very “I” that wants to be a somebody who has attained or “realized” Freedom.)

Some traps-in-waiting advocate rising above our difficulties, preaching “Oneness” while dividing everything into positive and negative, higher and lower, spiritual and nonspiritual. Subtler traps-in-waiting, less densely populated with metaphysical lullabies and ascension metaphors, teach non-aversion through cultivating a capacity for dispassionate witnessing and/or devotional rituals. Subtler still are those that emphasize meeting everything with non-aversion and compassion. Each approach has its own value, including that of disillusioning us at a certain point toward further immersion in it, thereby “forcing” us to move on to more suitable practices.

The questioning of a particular practice often surfaces in conjunction with anger, especially anger that has been suppressed (including with regard to the practice and/or the “ruling body” behind the practice). Understandably, this anger is rarely validated by those in charge of such practices (be they gurus, spiritual teachers, or headliners on the metaphysical circuit), since it might “rock the boat” or shake “the spiritual tree” more than is deemed desirable. As my “spiritual” clients

become more intimate with their anger (including in its open expression), hearing it — and its roots — with a more open ear and heart (while also learning not to confuse it with aggression), they either abandon their spiritual practices, reenter them with less submissiveness and more integrity and creativity, or find new practices that better suit them.

Spiritual bypassing is not a small subject. Not to know it, and know it well — both in others and in ourselves — is to seriously endanger our well-being.

My purpose in writing this book is to present not just an anatomy of spiritual bypassing and its many faces, but also to invite the outgrowing of it, so that we might enter a deeper life, a life of full-blooded integrity, depth, love, and sanity, a life of authenticity on every level, a life in which the personal, interpersonal, and transpersonal are all honored and lived to the fullest.

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## ***BREAKTHROUGH***

### **February 20th-21st in MEXICO CITY**

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:** Mexico City TBA. 10 to 6 both days.

**TUITION:** US\$550. Nonrefundable deposit of US\$200 is required. Full tuition due by February 1, 2010.

## ***BREAKTHROUGH***

### **March 27th-28th in ASHLAND, OREGON**

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:** Ashland TBA. 10 to 6 both days.

**TUITION:** Sliding Scale: US\$400-\$550. Nonrefundable deposit of US\$200 is required. Full tuition due by March 1, 2010. Contact Diane at [dianebardwell@gmail.com](mailto:dianebardwell@gmail.com) to arrange payment.

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## ***BREAKTHROUGH***

### **April 17th-18th in BOULDER**

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:** Boulder TBA. 10 to 6 both days.

**TUITION:** US\$550. Nonrefundable deposit of US\$200 is required. Full tuition due by March 11, 2010.

## ***BREAKTHROUGH***

### **May 7th-9th in THE NETHERLANDS**

Three full days of deep, integrally-informed healing and awakening.

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

THIS GROUP IS LIMITED TO 14 PARTICIPANTS ONLY, so that everyone will have time to do in-depth work.

**LOCATION & TIME:** Venwoude, a beautiful retreat center less than an hour from Amsterdam. See [www.venwoude.org](http://www.venwoude.org).  
10am to 6pm all three days.

**TUITION:** US\$750 (approx. € 520). Nonrefundable deposit of US\$375 is required. Full tuition due by March 1, 2010.

**ACCOMMODATION & MEALS:** US\$265 (approx. €183 for shared dormitory), US\$325 (approx. € 228 for double room), US\$350 (approx. € 243 for single room). If you wish a single or double room, register as soon as possible. Pay online through the STORE page at <http://www.robertmasters.com>. Payment due by March 11, 2010.

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## ***BREAKTHROUGH***

### **May 15th-16th in LONDON**

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:** London TBA. 10 to 6 both days.

**TUITION:** US\$600. Nonrefundable deposit of US\$250 is required. Full tuition due by March 21, 2010.

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## **MASTERS INTEGRATIVE PSYCHOTHERAPY PRACTICUM**

*An opportunity to directly learn from a master psychotherapist and spiritual teacher (1) unique, exceptionally effective psychotherapeutic, spiritual, and bodywork/energywork skills; and (2) how to creatively and effectively integrate these in counseling and coaching work.*

### **2010-11 Apprenticeship/Training 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 exceptionally 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 counselor), 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. The location has not yet been set. 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.

**PREREQUISITE:** Previous work with Robert and Diane.

**TUITION:** US\$7000. Nonrefundable deposit of \$1000 required. Lodging and meals will be extra. Contact [info@robertmasters.com](mailto:info@robertmasters.com) to arrange payment.

**SCHEDULE:**

May 27-30, July 22-25 , September 9-12, November 11-14, January 6-9

## The Crucible of Awakening

For more information regarding groups and trainings with Robert and Diane, contact [info@RobertMasters.com](mailto:info@RobertMasters.com).

To join the Masters Center for Transformation (Robert and Diane's online work), go to: [www.masterscenterfortransformation.com](http://www.masterscenterfortransformation.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](http://www.RobertMasters.com) and click on STORE.

For other payment arrangements, contact [dianebardwell@gmail.com](mailto:dianebardwell@gmail.com).

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.

To get Robert's daily posts on Twitter, go to [www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com) and join, and then go to [twitter.com/RobertMasters](http://twitter.com/RobertMasters) to "follow" Robert.

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### **2010 Schedule**

February 4-7: Practicum, Ashland, OR

February 20-21: Breakthrough, Mexico City

February 25: Day for Psychotherapists, Mexico City

March 7: All-Day Group, Mexico City

March 27-28: Breakthrough, Ashland, OR

April 8-11: Practicum, Boulder, CO

April 17-18: Breakthrough, Boulder, CO

THE CRUCIBLE OF AWAKENING

May 7-9: Breakthrough, Amsterdam

May 15-16: Breakthrough, London

May 27-30: Practicum, location TBA